



## **Don't Call Me Lucky *(En Español)***

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Gratitude is extended to the following injured victims for their comments and suggestions: Emilie Anzalone, Ann Barks, Sue and Tracy Cook, Ruth Meserve, Bonnie Moore, Donna Nayduch, Ed and Kay Neil, John and Susan O'Keefe, Sandra Padden, and Tom and Pat Satterly.

*I tell them my body is like an automobile. Once it has been totaled, no matter how well it's repaired, it's never quite the same.*

- Susan O'Keefe, Injured Victim

*It's not like a cake that didn't turn out right, which we can throw away and start over. All we have is what is there today.*

- John O'Keefe, Susan's Husband

### **What It Feels Like Now**

You have been injured by a drunk driver. You may be experiencing physical pain beyond anything you have ever felt before. In spite of the pain, you may rejoice simply because you are alive. Or you may truly wish that you had died, feeling that to have escaped this kind of pain would have been a blessing.

More than likely, your moods vary. You sometimes feel one way and sometimes another. How you feel about going on with your life depends on pain, success or failure on any given day, and the amount of hope you have for the future. Perhaps you are more stabilized in a middle position, disturbed and angry because this happened to you, but committed to getting better as soon as you can.

A whole variety of emotions, thoughts and experiences probably feel bad. It can help to know that many things you feel and think are quite common among those who are injured.

You may struggle with the direct, personal memory of the crash. You may be haunted by the memory of a violently powerful impact and the sounds of bending metal and shattering glass. You may remember terrible pain. You may recall that you seemed to be moving in slow motion, believing you were going to die, and somehow reviewing much of your life and thinking of those

you love. The total loss of control you felt may still haunt you. You may remember how you felt when you realized you were still alive -- the awful silence at first, inventorying your body, and then searching for others.

Even though you don't consciously choose to think about it, you may re-experience the crash or other violence in unanticipated flashbacks or nightmares. You may have night terrors - violent dreams from which you awaken but remain frozen, unable to speak or move while the violence rolls on, even though you are aware that you are in your bedroom and awake.

You may have amnesia for the crash. Perhaps you became unconscious at the point of impact, or trauma to your brain may have affected your memory. Psychological reasons may prevent you from remembering what happened, a protective device within human beings which keeps them from remembering something too painful to remember.

You may be experiencing feelings which seem foreign to you. You may be frustrated that you are having such a difficult time coping with your injuries, especially if you were a strong, independent and autonomous person who always saw crises as challenges.

You may not only feel angry, but enraged. Your anger may focus on the drunk driver for having made the insane choice to drink and then to drive. You may have vengeful fantasies and wishes about the drunk driver which trouble you, even though you know that fantasies and wishes are harmless.

Your anger can spill over onto others who may or may not deserve it -- your family and friends, doctors and nurses, insurance agents, attorneys. You are probably angry at yourself for not having been able to avoid the crash, even though you know you did everything you could to prevent it.

You may find yourself feeling guilty for being alive, especially if someone you love was killed in the crash. You may feel that the death was your fault, even though you know it wasn't. You could also feel guilty for being a burden on others or for not carrying out your normal responsibilities.

You may be frustrated with those who attempt to comfort you. You may feel misunderstood by those who say, "You're just so lucky to be alive," because you don't feel lucky at all. You may struggle with a response when they say, "You are feeling better, aren't you?" knowing they want you to feel better so they will feel better...but you don't. The word "time" may become a four-letter word you hate to hear. You are tired of hearing "It will just take time," or "In time you'll learn to live with the pain." You wish people would stop asking, "Are you okay?"

Besides coping with your physical injury, you may worry about other things: what this has done to your family, money, your future, dreams which may never be fulfilled. Even though resources to

help out are usually available, you may find yourself focusing only on the despair you sometimes feel.

The tension you are under may make it difficult for you to sleep. You may find that food doesn't appeal to you, or that you feel tired and confused. You may have difficulty concentrating. And there is always the pain.

This is the aftermath of serious injury. It is both physical and emotional. Only someone else who has experienced it can truly know how difficult it is.

### **Injury and Grief**

People grieving someone's death go through a somewhat predictable grieving cycle. It includes shock and denial at first, anger and rage which weave in and out for a lifetime, guilt over not having been able to protect the one they loved, deep sadness and depression. Eventually, acknowledgment of the death will come, although rarely full resolution of it if the death came at the hands of a drunk driver. For these people, accommodating the reality of the death into their lives still means sorrow about what happened, grief spasms from time to time, and anger at the criminal justice system which considers drunk driving a minor crime. For many, it results in a strong commitment to end drunk driving in America.

As an injured victim, your experience is likely to be different. You have many grief cycles going on at once. If someone you love died as a result of the crash, you are experiencing what has just been described.

However, you are also coping with other grief cycles. You start a new grief cycle every time you learn more about the seriousness of your injury. Sometimes medical people and families relate to you out of a conspiracy of silence about your injuries. Because they genuinely care about you, they may believe you can't cope with knowing the full extent of your injuries, so they break it to you little by little. Sometimes, they truly may not know the full extent of your injuries, especially if you have closed head injury which often is not diagnosed until long after the crash.

Grief cycles begin again each time you try to do something you thought you could do, and fail. You try to walk, and discover you can't. You try to reach or lift something, and find that you can't. You may function well at the hospital, but find that you can't at home. Or you may function well in daily living at home, but fail when you try going back to work. If you have had head injury, your judgement may be impaired and you may attempt many things you can't do.

You experience grief if a good prognosis doesn't come true. Doctors may decide on further surgery. Medical procedures sometimes don't work. You may push your doctors to tell you how long healing will take, and if the time line they give you isn't correct, you grieve.

You grieve the loss of friends and even family members who are unable to cope with your injuries and therefore abandon you. It is painful to realize that those you always thought you could count on, can't be counted on anymore.

And you grieve the loss of dreams you had for your future which are now impossible. Realizing that you must compromise your plans to compensate for your injury is a burden which may at times feel unbearable. Coming to grips with a new future takes a long time.

## **Going Home**

When you go home from the hospital, everyone in the family will have to adjust. Home is where you and your loved ones had established a fairly predictable routine. Many, if not all, components of that routine must now be re-evaluated in order to compensate for your injury. Comparing the new life with the old presents a vivid contrast. Climbing stairs or taking a shower at home takes on a different significance than it did in the hospital. You may become angry when you find that you can't scrub the floor, take food out of the oven, or have the energy to complete household tasks. Adjusting work schedules, budgets, and restructuring the house are big undertakings. Frustrations, pressures and tensions will mount. You must now rely on others in the family to perform many of the tasks you once were able to do. While they know it has to be this way, they can become exhausted and resent it. Obviously, it's not your fault, but you wish you could ease their burden. Even if they willingly help you or care for you, you may feel guilty about needing that help.

Children in the home will need special attention. They are vulnerable and can be very shaken by the fact that someone who is supposed to take care of them is now injured and unable to. They may be horrified by physical changes they see or experience. They may be forced to grow up too quickly by assuming more responsibilities. Children are sometimes overlooked because so much of the family's resources and energies are focused on the one who is injured. Watch carefully to see if a child begins to withdraw, becomes noticeably noisier or quieter, receives poor school grades, or stops spending time with friends. Teenagers are likely to begin acting out their frustrations by running away, using alcohol and other drugs to soothe themselves, or other disruptive behaviors. These warning signals indicate a need for you to encourage them to speak out about their fears and frustrations. Counseling may be in order. Talking with someone outside the family offers a healthy and constructive outlet for them. Many find it helpful to ask another family or adult to take their children on special outings or just invite them to spend time in a less stressed home.

Marriages and significant relationships can be stressed by injury. Some stress comes from financial worries. Simple fatigue from working so hard to keep life functioning is stressful. Other relationships suffer when people hide too much of what they feel and think about the changed circumstances from each other. Some partners try to protect their injured loved one by not talking together about important things. They believe they are making life easier for a loved one, who

may instead feel left out. If it is difficult to talk honestly about concrete circumstances and feelings resulting from the injury, consider inviting a trusted friend, clergy or counselor to facilitate such conversations.

Understanding the complexity of coping with injury and its aftermath doesn't have to bewilder you. It can give you hope. Knowing how difficult it is can help you be more patient with yourself as you grapple with the many components of your recovery. It should help you celebrate victories which others may see as small, but which you know are monumental.

### **How Long Will Recovery Take?**

Your recovery period obviously depends upon the seriousness and permanence of your physical injuries. More than anything, it depends on the hope and courage you have in following the advice of your physicians, no matter how tired and frustrated you get. Your ability to accept temporary or permanent limitations will also add considerably to the quality of your life and lives of your family and friends.

Some victims withdraw, turn inward, and cut off their social contacts because they are embarrassed or depressed about their injuries. They can't accept what has happened to them: their appearance, their changed abilities, their new realities. Their self-image is not one of a noble survivor but that of a miserable victim. They may never recover physically or emotionally because they focus on the past and have no commitment to the present or future.

Other victims accept their new limitations and seek constructive ways to compensate for them. They talk openly about the trouble their injury causes them and seek help, sometimes in the form of going from doctor to doctor until one is found who understands and knows how to treat their injury. They learn to feel comfortable asking for help when they need it. If family and friends abandon them, they seek out other social groups where they can make new friends. They aren't afraid to be assertive in saying things like, "I can't ski or bowl anymore, but I do play a mean game of Trivial Pursuit or Bridge." If getting up and down is difficult, they sit through the entire church service rather than choosing not to go because they can't participate exactly like everyone else. They seek out facilities for the disabled and go to places that accommodate their injuries rather than sitting at home.

Physical recovery may or may not ever be complete. Even if your injuries are not severe, you may move a little slower than others or may experience intermittent pain. Emotional recovery may never be complete. Even though you may compensate for your injuries to the maximal level, you may continue to feel anxious when riding in a car. Tailgating, speeding, passing and intersections may take on new meanings for you. Returning to the scene of the crash makes you feel anxious.

You will have to find a way to cope with the senselessness of what happened to you, because it will pop into your mind from time to time for the rest of your life. Many people find that focusing on

the randomness of the crash is useful. They conclude that God did not do it to them, that it wasn't their fault, and that the driver did not single them out to suffer. Instead, the drunk driver, being a human with God-given free will, made two bad choices, one to drink and the other to drive. Victims could not have known not to be there. To ponder over the "if only's" accomplishes nothing and wastes energy. Focusing on the present and the future is the better choice, even though it is not always easy.

### **Why is it So Hard to Maintain A Positive Attitude?**

Even though your capacity to think and reason maturely may have led you to develop a positive philosophy about your injury, you may find that your feelings lag way behind. That is normal. In life, human beings do three things: they feel, they think, and they act. Thinking can be rational or irrational and it can be changed. Behavior can be good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, and most people can control the way they behave. In fact, despite vengeful fantasies, the law expects control over behavior. But feelings are simply feelings. They are what they are.

You feel the way you do because something very unjust has happened to you. Before the crash, you probably carried the vague belief that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. While you knew that evil existed in the world, you didn't think something bad would happen to you. Now you've learned that bad things can happen to good people, and your safe, naive world view has been destroyed. You now realize you are as vulnerable as anyone else to the evils of life, and you probably feel more vulnerable than others. This new awareness can leave you feeling crazy, confused and angry. You may think others don't take life seriously enough.

If you are feeling angry, give yourself permission to feel it! You have that right! The trick to recovery is learning to accept and to express what you feel to those people who are willing to try to understand (or, better still, to others who have been injured in car wrecks because they really do understand). Suppressing your feelings only increases your frustration and depression.

It is amazing that the more you allow yourself to express your feelings, no matter what they are, the sooner you will get through them. Trying not to feel them, to cram them down, or to think of something else so you won't feel them, doesn't work. They crop up anyhow, in the form of unanticipated outbursts, symptoms of depression, gaining or losing weight, or getting sick.

It is far better to express your anger when you feel it, cry (even wail and moan) when you hurt or are frustrated, and fantasize explicitly when you are feeling vengeful. If you do, you will probably find that you then can think more clearly. If someone you love lives with you and is willing to allow you to express your feelings openly as you recover, you are blessed. If not, you may find release

from writing your feelings in a diary or journal. Some people benefit from attending support groups of persons who are also recovering from injury. Pain clinics often have such groups. Others find professional counseling helpful and say they could not have survived emotionally without it.

## **Recovery**

What does it mean to recover from the pain and rage and sadness you feel as you cope with your injuries? It means continuing to seek medical treatment until you are as pain-free and mobile as possible. It means coming to grips with your limitations. And finally, it means doing the perfectly ordinary things you did before the crash:

- Feeling good when something good happens;
- Feeling hopeful about your future;
- Giving attention and energy to everyday life;
- Laughing and being cheerful;
- Feeling at peace with yourself;
- Finding ways to socialize with others.

These things may not be achieved completely, depending on the seriousness of your injury, but they can be achieved to a large extent. None of it will be easy or quick. Recovery takes patience and hard work. But you owe it to yourself, and to those who need you and love you, to try to recover as much as possible.

## **What You Must Do To Recover**

***Learn all you can about your injury.*** The more you understand about your injury, the more patience you will have with yourself and your doctors as you progress through healing. You have a right to know. If you sense that your physicians are unable or unwilling to take the time to answer your questions, seek out a hospital social worker who may be able to help.

Because your body is so complex, your physician may be unable to predict the course or completeness of recovery, frustrating as that may be to you. Nevertheless, you can expect your doctor to discuss your case. If you are not satisfied with treatment, talk that over with your physician. You may find that a second opinion from a specialist gives you peace of mind or helps you decide to change doctors or hospitals.

Don't stay with a doctor simply because he or she is familiar. You need the best care possible while your body has the most ability to benefit from it. Being treated as a "patient" may leave you with little sense of control over your own life. It is important to regain some control by making your own decisions about treatment using the best medical advice you can find.

**Learn about head injury.** During the crash, your brain may have been thrown forcefully against one side of your skull and then bounced back and hit the other side with almost the same force, severing neuron connections and killing brain cells. Severe cases of head injury are obvious. The victim suffers from loss of physical coordination, speech and many thinking skills. There is now evidence that persons with left hemisphere brain damage are more prone to depression than those with right hemisphere damage.

Milder head injuries are not as easy to identify. It is often after the physical injuries, such as broken bones and internal bleeding, have been treated, and even after the patient has left the hospital, that head injury becomes apparent. It is called mild closed head injury if the skull was not fractured. You may notice that you can't concentrate or think as clearly or quickly as you once did. You may experience relationship problems, headaches, mood swings, dizziness or difficulty with your memory. Specific symptoms vary from individual to individual, but there is almost always a personality change. Because it is difficult to determine whether you have head injury or are just depressed about what happened, you may hesitate to check it out. You will be wise to consult a neuropsychologist or neurologist specializing in head injury if you suspect that head injury may be responsible for your depression.

**Strive for honest communication.** You may find that your family and friends avoid discussing certain components of the crash or your injury with you. They may talk down to you, as if you were a child. When you experience a great deal of pain, you may regress to a more child-like state and need to be taken care of. Later, though, you will decide that you want to communicate with those around you in a more adult, straight-forward manner and begin to solve some of your problems yourself. Seek out at least one good friend or relative who will understand this need. Ask his or her help in deciding how and when to:

- Contacting your employer about sick and disability leave, insurance, and benefits;
- Learn about the driver's liability insurance and consider a civil personal injury lawsuit.  
You might want to consult an attorney who specializes in personal injury suits and is willing to help you decide what to do on a *pro bono* or hourly fee basis;
- Contact the District Attorney's Office about criminal charges against the drunk driver;
- Plan for child care and your own personal care when you go home from the hospital;
- Obtain bids for adjustments that must be made in your house or apartment to accommodate your injuries and learn how to obtain the necessary appliances or devices you will need for your care.

The very fact that you were hit by a drunk driver can make you feel helpless, as if you have no control over what happens to you. You didn't have control then, but you do have control over

what happens to you now. The more you are able to direct your own life, the quicker you will recover emotionally.

**Seek Out Available Resources.** Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991, you could be entitled to a number of accommodations. It is appropriate, for example, to ask your employer for adjustments to your work space, hours, or responsibilities to allow you to continue employment. Check on your rights and negotiate as tactfully as possible with your employer.

Ask your physician whether rehabilitation after hospitalization will help you. Although it is often painful, try to stretch your abilities as far as possible. A rehabilitation specialist can also inform you of available devices or materials to make your life easier.

You may be entitled to financial benefits. If you were injured while driving to or from work, check on Worker's Compensation benefits. If you will be unable to work for six months or more, you may be eligible for Social Security Disability benefits. Although these applications are often originally denied, follow through on appeals. Since benefits are paid only from the date of your application, file for benefits as soon as you think you could be disabled for six months. You also may get funds for retraining, education, or equipment necessary for future employment from your state Vocational Rehabilitation agency. Finally, find out if you qualify for your State's Crime Victim Compensation Program.

**Work at Accepting Your Limitations.** It is not difficult to remember what happened to you. You are reminded of it every time you take a shower, look in the mirror or take a step. You may be shaped or move differently than you did before. You may become physically and mentally exhausted sooner than you once did. You may need to plan your time and energy carefully, almost on an hour by hour basis. Little by little, your self- image must be adjusted to your new reality. Understand that you will grieve over what has been lost.

Grieving is painful, but is better to do it openly rather than pretending that you are tough and that what happened to you doesn't matter. When you are sad, cry. When you are angry, say so. Anger can turn into blaming which makes everyone miserable, so own your anger by making statements like, "I get so mad when," rather than "You make me mad when." When you are afraid, ask someone who loves you to be especially near. Write your feelings in a diary or notebook. If you can't find someone willing to share your grief, consider seeking a counselor.

Understand that you can't "cry it out" one time and then be done with it. As mentioned earlier in this brochure, you are experiencing many grief cycles as you come to grips with your injuries. You will be sad and angry time and time again.

As you grow to accept the limitations of your injuries, try to be in touch with both your feelings and rational thinking. Feel what you feel. It is okay to be overwhelmed by your feelings sometimes, as long as you are not overwhelmed all the time. But try to base most of your behavior on rational and appropriate thinking.

***Construct Your New Self-Image So That Your Life Has Meaning.*** You must accept that you are a person who has survived a terrible trauma, that you are changed, and that you are going on with your life. It will not be easy; however, it will get easier than it is now. You must set goals for yourself. Spend time with people who accept you as you are, and find a way to do meaningful work. Keep your goals realistic. Work on them one at a time so that you don't overwhelm yourself. You have the right to happiness and satisfaction regardless of what happened to you.

Your interests, concerns and values may be different now. Your life may be divided into two segments: before the crash and after the crash. You will probably discover strengths you never knew you had. You may have a new sense of compassion and sensitivity to people that you never had before. You may now take joy in things that, before the crash, were commonplace. You may cherish your mate, your children, your parents, in a new and profound way. You may discover how to reach out to others who are hurting, and when you do, you will be surprised to learn that you feel better, too. As far as possible, move your focus from what you lost to what you can do now.

***Pay Attention to How You Communicate.*** Most people who fail to recover as much as they can, fail because they get stuck in the past. While it is therapeutic to tell the story many times at first, in an effort to gain more understanding of it, the need to tell it again and again should decrease over time. People who are stuck spend all of their time thinking and talking about the crash and the nature of their injuries. They review the same memories, tell the story the same way time and again, and depress themselves anew every time. While telling about these same memories may be an effort to get people to understand, it usually prompts the opposite reaction: others get so tired of hearing about it that they withdraw.

Pay attention if you see that your family and friends are deserting you. It is true that some will abandon you because they have problems coping with your injuries. It is also true that you can run some of them off with constant talk of the crash and your pain. Listen to those closest to you. If they think you are stuck and not moving forward in coping with your injuries, you may need to talk it out with a professional counselor. A counselor may help you decide what to tell and what not to tell in order to keep your friends and move on toward recovery.

You will upset yourself if you expect miracles. Recovery from serious injury takes a great deal of patience and work. You will probably find that you make progress for awhile and then either reach a plateau or regress. That ebb and flow is natural although upsetting. When you have down

times, it is okay to withdraw for awhile and deeply grieve. In time, though, you should be ready to gear up and try again. Reasserting control over your life is essential. As long as you can see that you are making progress, even though it is slower at some times than others, you are probably okay both physically and emotionally.

### **Involvement in MADD or Other Organizations**

Many injured victims say that "injury over-spends energy" for a long time. In other words, coping with recovery from the injury takes all the time and energy they have. The thought of involving themselves in something requiring contributions of time and energy may seem overwhelming. Your local MADD chapter may have within its membership other injured victims of drunk driving crashes who can help you feel understood. If you do not have family or close friends to depend on for support, regular phone contact with other injured victim in MADD can be a lifesaver. It is true that those who best know what it is like are other injured victims. You may be helped by hearing how they have learned to cope. They may also know resources for counseling, financial assistance, civil suits and other concerns you might have. One of the most valuable services MADD provides is helping you learn about the criminal case against the drunk driver who hit you. MADD Victim Advocates will go to court with you if you choose to go. They can also prepare you to testify in court.

Later on, if you begin to feel that you have enough energy to work in MADD, you might decide to visit other recently injured victims to help give them hope and share what you have learned. If you like to give speeches, you might become part of MADD's Speaker's Bureau or Victim Impact Panel and tell others what the crime of drunk driving has meant to you and your family. You might be interested in writing letters to legislators or attending legislative hearings about drunk driving and victim rights.

Many people find that it helps them a lot to do something constructive to stop drunk driving. Others are not interested in that at all. It will be up to you to decide if and when you want to get involved.

### **Family and Friends**

Family and friends can be a blessing as they aid in your recovery. They can also hinder your recovery. Following are some suggestions for family and friends of injured victims. If you agree with the suggestions, you might want to pass this brochure on to them.

### **Tips For Family & Friends of the Injured**

- Even though your focus is primarily on your injured loved one, *understand that you, too, are traumatized*. Learning about the crash, rushing to the hospital, and seeing your

loved one in pain, pale, bloody and lifeless is a trauma all its own. You probably experienced shock, anxiety, and terrible dread. Seek the help and support you need in order to cope.

- **Remember that it could just as easily have been you** who was injured. Being aware of the fact will give you humility and patience.
- **Recovery of your loved one will rarely be complete.** Even if the physical injuries totally heal, emotional scars will remain. If the injured victim has fears and anxieties, understand that they are normal following a traumatic crash, and do your best to accommodate them.
- **Try to be a nurturer rather than a caretaker or rescuer.** A nurturer encourages the victim to take care of himself as much as possible and then assists with the rest. A caretaker does it all without involving the victim in his own recovery. Try to be aware of the needs of the victim and offer your assistance without insisting on it.
- **Work toward normalizing the victim's experience, not minimizing it.** Making light of the seriousness of the injury or intensity of the pain is cruel and demeaning. Helping the victim understand that others with similar injuries have the same difficulties helps him feel normal, not crazy.
- **Learn to be comfortable with rage and despair, and encourage expression of them.** Understand that talking about the darkest of human emotions is far healthier than stewing about them inside. Understand that vengeful fantasies and wishes are harmless, and can even be therapeutic. Remove the phrase, "You shouldn't feel that way" from your vocabulary.
- **Expect guilt,** especially if someone else was killed in the crash. Gently encourage the victim to approach his feelings of guilt with rational thinking. If there are components of the crash for which the victim may legitimately be guilty, help him understand that this component is only a small part of the complexity of the crash. Carrying full responsibility is irrational and unnecessary. More than likely, the fault was entirely the drunk driver's.
- **Expect anniversary reactions.** No one can explain it, but injured victims often experience a resurgence of the physical pain as well as depression on or near the anniversaries of the crash, even though they may not realize it's the anniversary.
  
- **Allow the victim to tell and re-tell the story of what happened.** Telling the story helps one come to grips with it and also helps bring to the surface forgotten memories. Understand the importance of the telling and retelling. Only if the story is exactly the same time after time with no new awareness or understanding should you be worried about the victim being stuck in grieving about the crash.
- **Help the victim label his or her feelings.** It helps to more accurately describe what is going on inside.
- **Understand that it is normal for the victim to move forward, then fall back** as he or she progresses through recovery.
- **Help the victim process nightmares, flashbacks, and night terrors.** Be available to sit with the victim following night terrors and talk until he or she can respond.
- **Help the victim talk about second victimizations.** Impatient medical people, the media, frustrating insurance adjustors, persons in the criminal justice system,

rehabilitation personnel who seem uncaring, and family and friends who abandon are all sources of additional stress for the injured. Be especially sensitive to the trauma of giving depositions or testifying in court. It is extremely humiliating to have the defense attorney probe for reasons the victim "asked" to be injured or was "responsible for" the crash. Defense attorneys sometimes even try to show that the victim was attempting to commit suicide.

- **Give honest, reasonable recognition at signs of recovery.** Don't give excessive praise or label the individual as "an inspiration." The duty to be an inspiration or to be strong can be a burden. But do notice each achievement.
- **Encourage the victim to socialize, but don't insist on it** until he or she is ready. Offer to set up links with other injured victims. Offer to take the victim to support groups. Offer to help the victim attend plays, musicals or other activities he or she enjoyed before the crash. Try to re-establish hobbies if possible.
- **Take care of yourself.** Seeing the one you love suffer so much can break your heart. Ongoing physical care of the victim coupled with worries about what the future holds can be both physically and mentally exhausting. Get regular medical check-ups, take stress vitamins, and spend some time each week with healthy people who love you. Maintain your social relationships and be with your friends when you can. Don't be shy about asking them to help you with care of the victim.

### ***Don't Call Me Lucky***

*I live with my injuries.*

*People say to me, "Aren't you lucky!"*

*And they don't understand*

*Why my face suddenly freezes*

*And my voice becomes tense.*

*I can say I'm lucky*

*If I so choose on any given day.*

*But when others say it,*

*I feel as if*

*They discount my pain*

*And don't recognize my costs,*

*Counting me only as alive or dead*

*No matter how hard it may be*

*To endure living.*

*Some days I am glad:*

*Life itself is all that matters,*

*And I savor it.*

*But when I hurt too much,  
Or am told I won't fully heal,  
When I can not work or play as before,  
Or feel I'm a burden on others,  
Then I don't feel lucky at all!  
I feel cheated!*

*Some days I even wish  
I had died rather than live like this.  
So please don't tell me  
That I'm lucky  
To only be injured.*

*Tell me instead  
You are glad I'm still here,  
And let me know why.  
Tell me that you care about  
My grief, pain, anger and adjustments.  
Tell me you willingly rehear  
My disappointments, loss and frustrations.  
And have patience while I relearn to live.*

*Then someday I can tell you  
How lucky I am - to have someone  
Who understands and accepts my sorrows  
And who also shares my joys.*

*Dorothy Mercer*

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