***In the first few hours and days:***

* Almost immediately, you need to inform different people about what happened. Convey the basic details of what you know about what happened in order to:
  + Contact your family and friends. This will also provide a support network around you.
  + Make necessary contacts with medical, law enforcement or legal professionals.
  + Engage the resources you need.
  + Solve problems.
  + It is important to ask someone you trust to tell the story when you are too tired, overwhelmed or need a break. This will help you protect yourself and save your strength for the many important things you must handle.

***In the next few weeks and months:***

* After the event, you will be left with the raw power of your story. You will need to shape it into something you can carry so that the emotions don’t drown you. This is not an easy task.
* Not telling your story is like carrying a weight so heavy, it crushes you. Carrying this burden takes all of your energy; keeping the story to yourself presents you from getting the help or relief you need.
  + You become isolated and afraid to meet new people because they might ask you questions.
  + Preventing any disclosure of your story, will more and more restrict who you are or who you could be as a whole person.
  + Worst of all, the story can come out in unexpected ways, such as in anger or in reckless behaviors, such as drugs and alcohol abuse.
  + Silence is deadly; it leaves you feeling hopeless, angry, and isolated.
* Constructing How to Tell Your Story
  + You will want to have different versions of your story to tell in different situations.
    - It is important to discern whether a person is ready to hear your story, and then, gauge what is appropriate to tell them.
  + Tailor one version of your story into a short, easily delivered form. Have it ready when you need to tell it in unfamiliar or public situations.
    - This short version protects you from the overwhelming emotions. You don’t have to share your grief and sorrow every time you share your story.
    - It also gives you a sense of privacy and a sense of control.
  + Start by constructing a few sentences about what happened, including the following:
    - The person’s name
    - Your relationship to the person
    - When the person died or was killed
    - A brief description of what happened
* Writing out your story
  + It is a container for your thoughts and feelings.
  + It is a healing experience.
  + Let’s people know what you are struggling with.
  + It can help others in their struggle.
  + One of the greatest benefits is transforming this tremendous burden into something you can use and be in control of.
  + Where to start:
    - Write what happened.
    - Name the date, place and time.
    - Names the people involved and their relationship to you.
    - Write the first thing that happened.
    - What happened then? What were the main events?
    - What was the outcome?
  + Write about who you were the day of the traumatic loss
    - I was happy, sad, depressed, optimistic . . .
    - I like doing the following things . . .
    - I worked at . . .
    - My family members were . . .
    - People would describe me as . . .
    - I worried about . . .
    - I had dreams of becoming . . .
  + Remember the pain of a traumatic loss is only a part of your story, although at first it will seem like all of it. There are other parts of your story: the kindness of others, how people reached out to you, what they did you support you and the occasional surprising miraculous things that happened. Write about them too.

***As time goes by, especially after the first year:***

* Your story will become incorporated into your life; and someday in the future, it will become something you have learned to carry so well, you will be able to look at it without the pain you feel right now.
* Many people that you meet, will find it difficult to imagine that you have experienced such a traumatic loss, but you will know, as a whole person, and not as a shell left over from one horrific experience.
* You will have your life back again, although, your experience will change you forever.

*A Grief Like No Other,* O’Hara, K. (2006)