

Post-cardiac arrest care

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

A careful and sensitive delivery of bad news to surviving family and friends can hopefully avoid making a bad situation worse.



Introduce yourself

Begin by introducing yourself. Find a **quiet place** to talk, ideally with space for everyone to sit down. The conversation may be brief, but it shouldn't feel rushed.

Ask

It may be helpful to ask what is already known about the situation. This will help guide what information to present, and may help you understand how much detail to provide.

Be straightforward and brief

You may provide some brief background information first, depending on what questions arise, but **avoid medical jargon**. During an emotional event like the death of a loved one, it is difficult to process detailed information. Be straightforward, and **avoid euphemisms**. It should be made clear that the patient has died.

Allow silence

Acknowledge their loss, and offer your condolences. Offer to answer questions, but allow for silence and don't feel compelled to keep talking. Most emotional responses last less than two minutes.

Don't forget the staff

Staff may also be affected by the loss of a patient, either consciously or otherwise. It may be therapeutic and educational to provide a summary of the events (debrief), and an opportunity to answer questions. This may be done immediately, or later in the shift as time allows.