

## **MANNER of DEATH:**

The **MANNER** of a person's death is...in the final analysis...a legal determination or finding based on evidence and opinion. It is usually routinely assigned, but it is always subject to dispute/challenge and might not come to a truly finalized assignment until decided after thorough discovery & disclosure of all case facts in a court of law after all appeals are exhausted. That is, if someone wants to contest a manner of death, it is ultimately decided in a court of law...court actions tending to drag along slowly. Outside of court proceedings, such findings are legally made by government-employed or elected medical examiners or coroners. Medical opinions or conclusions obtained during the case investigation are usually given great weight, whether from general doctors or pathologists trained in (and practicing) forensic pathology (remember the TV program, Quincy)? In our fast-paced society, decisive information (not yet put forward) is sometimes absent at the time that the manner of death opinion is by a coroner or medical examiner. Manner of death can have immense importance in whether people undergo intense personal investigation, go to jail, receive large lawsuit awards, or receive multiple (double or triple indemnity) payments on life insurance policies.

## **THERE ARE 5 CATEGORIES OF MANNER OF DEATH:**

1. **NATURAL MANNER of DEATH:** the death is purely a consequence of one or a combination of natural diseases.

2. **UNINTENTIONAL, NON-NATURAL DEATHS:**

**>accidental manner of death:** unintended and essentially unavoidable death, not by a natural, suicidal or homicidal manner [**also see others, [below](#)**]

**>accidental manner of death because of failure of judgement or supervision:** This mostly applies to children (small child drowns as the parents are distracted). This might also include adults with known or unknown underlying health problems who either knowingly "push the limit" or "push the limit", ignorant of the danger [FA10-160].

**>accidental manner of death because impulsive suicidal display/threat gone bad:** a young male gang member, in a verbal battle with his mother, brandishes his loaded and cocked pistol against his own head as he tries to get his own way. In the excitement and tension of the situation, the pistol accidentally is set off and kills him.

**>accidental manner of death because sham suicide went bad:** a distraught young man who was unable to get a job returned home to live with his parents. Wanting to be able to live without responsibility, a long-running conflict had developed between him and the parents. Hoping to gain sympathy and get his way long term, he set up a rope and noose in his closet and slipped it around his

neck as he sat on a stool and pretended unconsciousness, hoping to set up a sham suicide that would shock his parents into yielding to his demands. But, somehow, the stool tipped over. Before, he could loosen the strangling noose, he blacked out and slumped enough to fatally tighten the choke hold of the noose around his death.

### **>homicidal manner of death:**

**by good deed:** if one human is responsible for the death of another but in an involuntary way & without legally negligent behavior, the death may be legally called "involuntary manslaughter". Were you in the right-hand lane of a 4-lane road & were to wave a driver waiting at a parking lot exit to come across in front of your stopped lane and the driver's intent (known or unknown) was to LEFT turn and he/she gets T-boned & killed by an unseen moving driver in the other lane on your side, you MAY be guilty of involuntary manslaughter (though society may not yet be ready to label it as such)!

**by sustaining sympathetic attention:** an episode (30 May 2011, "The Unreal World") of the TV series, Body of Proof, is about the mother of a girl with a disease requiring treatment. Mom substituted sugar pills for the real medicine to keep daughter sick so that Mom would not lose the constant sympathy that she craved from her circle of friends. The daughter dies, having other complicating diseases, too. [HERE](#) is the written story. Though I am not aware of it yet leading to a death there are supposedly very rare instances of victimization of the perpetrator that were alleged to be true but were actually falsified to gain attention or to exploit or manipulate others called Falsely Alleged Victimization Syndrome or FAVS. An excellent 30 minute example of this is Forensic Files TV show [episode 23](#) first shown in season 2, "Sealed with a Kiss", concerning school teachers Joanne Chambers and Paula Nawrocki.

### 3. **INTENTIONAL, NON-NATURAL DEATHS:**

**suicidal:** Death caused by self, with some degree of conscious intent. A permanent solution to what could be a temporary problem! One should always be very skeptical on hearing of a multi-injury death (multiple gunshot wounds; multiple stab wounds) being ruled as a suicidal manner of death [FA09-40]!

While [Munchausen](#) syndrome deaths are self-caused by the deceased, society does not...by convention...count these as suicidal. There are a few recognized instances of secret set-ups for suicidal death by another (such as suicide by cop); and there are others less conventionally recognized types of suicidal degrees of recklessly indifferent risky behavior (FA11-110; also drunken speeding death of Jackass member Ryan Dunn June 2011). Society also does not count self-caused deaths as suicide (1) due to calculated (society sometimes even celebrating such deaths when happening under celebrated & advertised challenges) deaths in high risk activities (remember lucky Evel Knievel but not-so-fortunate Mt. Everest climbers?), (2) ignorant (alcohol binge drinking) & reckless behavior as one often sees among teenagers, (3) poor lifestyle habits,

or (4) known self-destructive habits...when the deceased unequivocally knew that he/she was putting his/her life in danger. And, homicides can be made to look like a suicide (faked suicide [see CBS's 48 Hours episode about 2008 of a Baptist preacher faking his wife's suicide), or wife shoots husband in head to fake suicide & importance of blood spatter patterns and powder patterns (Forensic Files season 16, #68 "Second Shot at Love", video [HERE](#)), or an accident (faked accident).

**homicidal:** death caused by another human [[check out types & degrees](#)] in a (1) **conscious** way & to now include (2) such **unconscious &/or mentally ill** or deranged way as [Munchausen by proxy deaths](#) or include cases where the killer was in a frantic "survival mode", essentially unconscious acts which result in the death of another.

4. **UNDETERMINED:** not enough evidence, yet or ever, to choose the manner of death. A startling example of such is the case of spontaneous combustion in 1951, [Mary Reeser](#) (I think it was a murder). I saw the episode in June 2015. The video of this true case is available on line via The Travel Channel (I saw the episode on The Discovery life Channel, Direct TV), as an episode of Mysteries at the Museum with the title, "A Pile of Ashes and Bones".
5. **UNCLASSIFIED:** too complex to classify; it either stays in that category or has to be clarified and declared legally with action in a coroner system or medical examiner system or rarely in a court of law.