

Survivors often experience a wide range of grief reactions, including some or all of the following:

Shock is a common immediate reaction. You may feel numb or disoriented, and may have trouble concentrating.

Symptoms of depression, including disturbed sleep, loss of appetite, intense sadness, and lack of energy.

Anger towards the deceased, another family member, a therapist, or yourself.

Relief, particularly if the suicide followed a long and difficult mental illness.

Guilt, including thinking, "If only I had...."

These feelings usually diminish over time, as you develop your ability to cope and begin to heal.



SUICIDE PREVENTION COUNCIL
of St. Joseph County and Surrounding Areas

Brochure Courtesy of:

The Center for Hospice and Palliative Care

Support After Suicide

AFTER SUICIDE SUPPORT GROUP

The Center for Hospice and Palliative Care
Life Transition Center
215 Red Coach Drive, Mishawaka, IN 46545
(574) 255-1064
www.centerforhospice.org

Monthly educational and support group for suicide survivors facilitated by a licensed mental health counselor. Individual counseling is available. For more information call the Life Transition Center. There is no fee.

RYAN'S PLACE

Middlebury, IN
(574) 202-1688
www.ryans-place.org
A Center for Grieving Children and Teens

MADISON CENTER

Emergency Services
(574) 234-0061

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

of St. Joseph County
(574) 234-1049

For more information visit our website at
www.sjcsuicideprevention.com
or call (574) 220-6381

Crisis and Suicide Intervention National HOTLINE

1-800-273-TALK

Local Help: Emergency Services
(877) 234-0061 toll free
(574) 234-0061 local
(operated by Madison Center)

Surviving After Suicide



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YOU ARE NOT ALONE

If you have lost someone to suicide, the first thing you should know is that you are not alone.

Each year over 30,000 people in the United States die by suicide — the devastated family and friends they leave behind are known as “survivors.”

There are millions of survivors who, like you, are trying to cope with this heartbreaking loss.

Suicide Survivors

It is estimated that there are six survivors for each suicide. Using this figure, 186,000 new people each year become “survivors” of their loved one’s suicide.

The surviving parents, children, spouses, siblings and other relatives and friends, are left to struggle with the overwhelming grief and intense emotions of what seems to be a confusing and senseless death. Unfortunately many survivors suffer alone and in silence.

It can be powerful to connect with other survivors and can be such a relief to be able to talk openly about suicide with people who really understand.

For many survivors, a crucial part of their healing process is the support and sense of connection they feel through sharing their grief with other survivors. The most common way this sharing occurs is through survivor support groups. These groups provide a safe place where survivors can share their experiences and support each other.

Coping With Suicide Loss

Some survivors struggle with what to tell other people. Although you should make whatever decision feels right to you, most survivors have found it best to simply acknowledge that their loved one died by suicide.

You may find that it helps to reach out to family and friends. Because some people may not know what to say, you may need to take the initiative to talk about the suicide, share your feelings, and ask for their help.

Even though it may seem difficult, maintaining contact with other people is especially important during the stress-filled months after a loved one’s suicide.

Keep in mind that each person grieves in his or her own way. Some people visit the cemetery weekly; others find it too painful to go at all.

Each person also grieves at his or her own pace; there is no set rhythm or timeline for healing.

Anniversaries, birthdays, and holidays may be especially difficult, so you might want to think about whether to continue old traditions or create some new ones. You may also experience unexpected waves of sadness; these are a normal part of the grieving process.

Children experience many of the feelings of adult grief, and are particularly vulnerable to feeling abandoned and guilty. Reassure them that the death was not their fault. Listen to their questions, and try to offer honest, straightforward, age-appropriate answers.

Why Did This Happen?

Many survivors struggle to understand the reasons for the suicide, asking themselves over and over again: “Why?” Many replay their loved ones’ last days, searching for clues, particularly if they didn’t see any signs that suicide was imminent.

Because suicide is often poorly understood, some survivors feel unfairly victimized by stigma. They may feel the suicide is somehow shameful, or that they or their family are somehow to blame for this tragedy.

You should know that 90 percent of all people who die by suicide have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of their death (most often depression or bipolar disorder). Just as people can die of heart disease or cancer, people can die as a consequence of mental illness.

Try to bear in mind that suicide is almost always complicated, resulting from a combination of painful suffering, desperate hopelessness and underlying psychiatric illness.

Other Ways to Cope:

Some survivors find comfort in religious, community, or spiritual activities, including talking to a trusted member of the clergy.

Be kind to yourself. When you feel ready, begin to go on with your life. Eventually starting to enjoy life again is not a betrayal of your loved one, but rather a sign that you’ve begun to heal.



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