

Be Merciful and Compassionate

Never tell your friend, "you know exactly how they feel." Don't tell them how they should feel. Give them freedom and permission to grieve and express themselves how they need to. Don't tell them not to cry. Let them know they are safe with you. Don't try to take the hurt away. Don't rush them or push them, journey beside them. Be a companion. When they are ready to share details be attentive and let them know you are ready to listen. The road to healing is long and your friend needs someone who will do the "long haul" with them not a sprint.

Holidays and Grief

Holidays, birthdays & anniversaries can be some of the most difficult times. Special events magnify the absence of loved one. Respect the bereaved person's wishes for those special events and understand that pain is a natural part of their healing.

Speak the person's name who has died. Make sure your friend knows you haven't forgotten what an important role the deceased person played in their life.

Resources in Your Community

Research what supports and services are available in your community. See if you can find a support group where your friend can speak freely and openly with other people experiencing the same kind of loss. Explore the options for counselors, therapists, pastors & grief support workers.

Resources

Book—Finding your way after the suicide of someone you love by David B. Biebel & Suzanne L. Foster

<https://thelifelinecanada.ca/resources/survivors-of-suicide-loss/>
<http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/Survivors.pdf>

<http://lifethereshope.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-suicide-survivors-bill-of-rights-dr.html>

<https://thelifelinecanada.ca/wp->

[24 Hour Crisis Line](#)

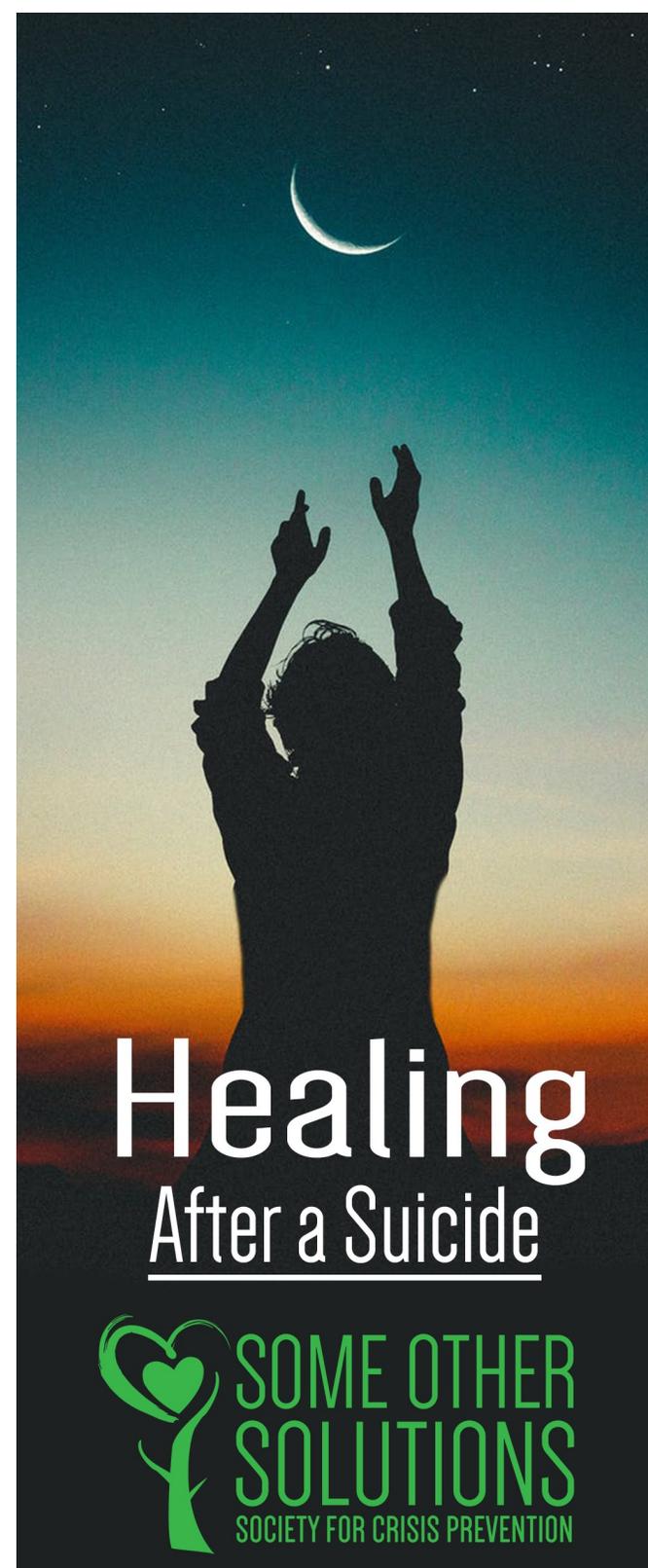


780-743-HELP (4357)

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Alberta Human Services



Healing After a Suicide



Suffering in Silence

There is still much work to be done concerning social stigma surrounding suicide. Due to this complication, survivors of suicide carry immense pain of loss but don't know who to talk to or if it's safe to express it. Living in silence can complicate the healing process.

As with any loss, the only way to experience healing is to authentically mourn. Bereaved people grieving the loss of a loved one need to talk, cry and vent their feelings to experience healing. Suicide survivors need to be able to do the same and not be left in silence, feeling forgotten and ashamed. Survivors of suicide need safe, unconditional, non-judgemental support. They have been traumatized by an unexpected death and often left to navigate through the wilderness of grief, alone.

Grief following a suicide may leave the mourner feeling like they have a disease or are contaminated. Grief is NOT a disease. Death is a part of life, albeit a tumultuous, unpredictable, scary, roller coaster like experience. It's paramount that the survivor of suicide not judge themselves but be kind to and love themselves. The lack of judgement from others and themselves promotes feelings of honesty with their pain which will help to heal their pain. Facing the pain with trustworthy, supportive people assists in the bereaved person knowing they are instrumental in facilitating their own healing

*"No one ever told me that
grief felt so like fear"
C.S. Lewis*

Go With your Gut

Reach out. Sit with the survivor of suicide and just listen. Sit in respectful silence. Be physically present and listen carefully and without judgement. Practice the art of 'active listening' and don't worry about what to say. True cathartic healing comes often from repeating the same stories over and over. The person grieving needs to talk. Listen each time like it was your first time.

Show you care by action. Help with duties, responsibilities and tasks. Have practical, hands-on love. Here is a list of suggestions as to things you could do; mow their lawn, help plant their garden, shovel their driveway, make some meals, pick up kids from school, go for a walk with them, sit and listen, walk their dog if they've lost interest in going out. Help lighten the load in any way you can. Be attentive and aware.

Don't give "buck-up" messages like; "You're strong", "You'll get over it", "Be thankful for the time you had with them." This will hurt the person and make their journey much more difficult.

Survivors of suicide are going to experience much searching and yearning for answers and understanding. Don't tell them their loved one 'didn't know what they were doing', "they must have been crazy" that will only complicate matters. The conclusions that each individual draw from the death of their loved one is what's important, not your thoughts on it.

Content taken in part from
Dr. Alan Wolfelt.

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Accepting the Acuteness of Grief

The grief that follows a death by suicide is very complicated. The immense feelings that will be expressed by the survivors of suicide can be unsettling. The grief bursts will be sudden, strong and may leave the bereaved person feeling completely overwhelmed by their own reactions and feelings. Rage, anger, guilt, remorse, fear, confusion and shame will surpass what is expressed in other kinds of deaths. Do NOT pass judgment or condemnation. Be supportive, gentle, kind and loving

Questions that are often asked by people that are grieving but particularly with such a sudden and traumatic death as suicide are, "am I going out of my mind?," "am I crazy?," "am I losing it?" An experience of this magnitude may feel "crazy" or "weird" but this is a very 'normal' response when navigating through a traumatic death such as suicide. There is a myriad of involuntary emotional and physical responses to loss which can leave a person feeling like they are living through a horrific movie scene. It's important that they know they are not alone in those feelings, that others have felt the same thing and have come to know a softening in their grief over time.

*"Getting better means being patient
with oneself when progress is slow...
It means finding safe, supportive
persons with whom to share the
pain."*

By: Janice Harris Lord