

Normal Reactions to Suicide Loss

How to Support People Dealing with a Suicide Loss

It is important to support people who are grieving. Relatives, friends and the larger community can help. Here are some suggestions:

- Respect the timing and pacing of the individual's grief process. It is a difficult journey. Encourage them to make choices that are right for them.
- Listen compassionately. Be understanding and patient. Offer to do specific tasks or chores.
- Reassure survivors that what they are feeling is normal.
- Find suicide loss supports in the community.
- Contact the bereaved person on a regular basis.
- Learn about the impact of suicide loss. This will help you offer support in healthy ways.

Be courageous. Talk to people who have lost a loved one by suicide. Let them know you heard. Ask them how they really are. This is important even if it has been some time since the actual death.

Resources and Support Groups

Klinic Community Health Centre:

After Suicide Bereavement Support Group and individual counselling regarding a suicide loss (204) 784-4059
SPEAK – Survivors of Suicide Support Group (204) 784-4064

Canadian Mental Health Association

–Manitoba (204) 953-2350

Compassionate Friends

–Winnipeg Chapter (204) 787-4896
Self help organization for parents grieving the death of a child

Your Privacy

Klinic adheres to all privacy and personal health information legislation. All medical and counselling services, whether received in person or by phone, are documented. It is the right of any client of Klinic to access their personal health information.

Klinic Services

Information	(204) 784-4090
Health Services Appointments	(204) 784-4090
Teen Clinic	(204) 784-4090
Public Education & Training	(204) 784-4066
Teen Talk	(204) 784-4010
Project Choices	(204) 784-4072
Volunteer Information	(204) 784-4006
Drop-In Counselling	(204) 784-4067
Family Violence Counselling (Evolve)	(204) 784-4070
Manitoba Farm & Rural Support Services Toll Free (Brandon)	1-866-367-3276
Dream Catchers	(204) 784-4042
SPEAK (Suicide Prevention Education Awareness Knowledge)	(204) 784-4064
Trauma Counselling	(204) 784-4059
Sexual Assault Crisis Counselling Appointments	(204) 784-4049
Speakers / Education	(204) 784-4048

24-Hour Telephone Services:

Manitoba Suicide Line Toll Free	1-877-435-7170
Crisis Line	(204) 786-8686
Toll Free	1-888-322-3019
Sexual Assault Crisis Line	(204) 786-8631
Toll Free	1-888-292-7565
Senior's Abuse Support Line	1-888-896-7183
TTY Deaf Access Counselling	(204) 784-4097

If you have comments or concerns please call
and leave a message at (204) 784-4018



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Suicide Grief

Suicide grief is unique. The grief process may be very different from the grief that follows other losses.

Grief involves many layers. It may affect you mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Grief is also an active process. It involves making choices.

Each person's grief process is unique. It will depend on things like your personality, your relationship with the person who died, your personal history, and your supports.

Normal Reactions to Suicide Loss

Shock and Numbness

Losing a loved one by suicide is one of the most painful incidents you can experience. The pain may be so overwhelming at first that your natural reaction may be to turn off some of your emotions. With time, the numbness will leave and you will need to go through the pain that is buried.

Guilt

You may feel guilty when you think back. You may wonder if you missed or ignored warning signs of distress. Maybe you feel guilty because you gave up trying to help as you needed to keep some distance to protect your own health.

Depression

The world as you knew it changed the moment your loved one died. Grief affects everything. It can change your sleep patterns and eating habits. You may find it hard to concentrate. You may have lower energy levels and feel less motivated.

“Why” Questions

“Why” questions will come over and over again as you try to understand the reason your loved one died by suicide. This is a normal part of the healing process. You are trying to make sense of the death. With suicide, even when you think you have touched upon the answer, the “Why” questions may keep coming.

Shame

You may find it hard to talk about how your loved one died for fear of being judged. You may be afraid of what people are thinking. Some people still think that all people who die by suicide are mentally ill or come from dysfunctional families. Rather than making up stories for them, it is okay to say that you are not ready to talk about your loss.

But you are not being judged by everyone. Some people want to help but do not know what to say or do. Let your family and friends know what you need from them.

Deep Sadness

Deep sadness is normal. You may have other feelings as well. You may feel depressed, helpless, hopeless, afraid, anxious, abandoned or rejected. You may feel like a failure.

Anger and Blame

You may be angry and blame the people you feel are at fault. These may include doctors, counsellors, friends and family. You may blame yourself. You may even blame the person who died.

Relief

You may feel relief after a suicide, especially when your relationship with the person who died may have been very difficult or if you have watched this person suffer for a long time.

Denial

You may find it hard to accept the reality of the suicide at first. You may move in and out of denial as you grieve. This often happens in the initial phase of grief.

Fear

You may fear that other family members or friends will die. You may lose self-esteem. You may lose confidence in making decisions and solving problems.

Spiritual or Religious Beliefs

Your previously held spiritual beliefs and values may be challenged. You may question the meaning or purpose of life after your loss. You may also be afraid that your faith community will turn its back on you.

Suicidal Thoughts

You may have suicidal thoughts because your grief is so intense. You may just want the pain to end. Having thoughts like these is common. It does not mean that you will act on them. But it is important to find help. It is important to talk about your thoughts and feelings. Take time to look at the list of resources on the back of this pamphlet. If you need help, call:

- Manitoba Suicide Line 1-877-435-7170
- 24-hour Crisis Line 1-888-322-3019

Reaching Out

Your family and friends may not be able to give you all the support you need. Reach out for help. Call your doctor or a counselling agency. Other resources include Canadian Mental Health Associations, people in your faith community, bereavement support groups, crisis lines and the Manitoba Suicide Line. See the list of resources and support groups listed on the back of this pamphlet.

Coping Strategies

Claim Your Right to Grieve

It is important to grieve. You have to go through the pain of the suicide loss in order to find relief. Remember that the grief process takes a long time. It may never be completely resolved, but it will get less painful.

Express Your Emotions

Grief is emotional. Make time to grieve and express your emotions. Let people you trust know when you need their support. Teach them how to be helpful. People may not know what you need; tell them. Talk to other people who have experienced a loss by suicide.

Actions

It is healthy to be active. Rather than just think, find something to do. You may want to try journaling or writing letters. Exercise such as walking can be very helpful.

This document has been modified to plain language to benefit all readers.