



EMPLOYEE SERIES

Tips for dealing with suicide bereavement

Grief is a normal response to losing someone important to us. When someone dies by suicide, those bereaved often experience a very complicated form of grief caused by a combination of sudden shock, unanswered questions of 'Why?' and feelings of 'What could I have done?'. They may experience a range of emotions highlighting the dramatic personal effect suicide can have and the important but difficult task of helping someone bereaved by suicide.

For those dealing with the suicide of someone they know, it's important they feel free to talk about their reactions to suicide openly and honestly, to find support to make sense of what has happened, deal with their grief and learn how to live with their loss.

How does suicide bereavement affect us? Suicide loss can impact on physical and mental health. Its important people bereaved by suicide are treated with compassion and support.

They may experience:

- Shock, numbness, denial
- Searching for reasons 'why?'
- Guilt
- Anger/blame
- Despair
- Listlessness
- Stigma and shame
- Loneliness/disconnection
- Depression
- Thoughts of suicide themselves



Help and support after a loss by suicide. If you are dealing with the suicide of a friend or loved one, it is important to find support to make sense of what has happened, deal with the grief and learn how to live with your loss. The pain of suicide loss can't be eased quickly but there are things you can do that will help:

- **Take time out.** It's ok to give yourself time out from the pain you are experiencing by doing something you enjoy, even if you don't feel like doing it at the time.
- **Stay connected and accept support.** From friends, family, and support networks. This will reduce your sense of isolation and feelings of loneliness associated with grief.
- **Honour the deceased person.** Talk about them, keep a journal, share memories and photos.
- **Stay healthy.** Eat well, exercise, try to sleep and avoid drugs and alcohol.
- **Prioritise daily tasks.** Only do what is essential, avoid making major decisions until you can think more clearly.
- **Ask for help if you need it.** Talk to a counsellor/psychologist, a helpline like Lifeline, friends and family to find comfort, support and ways to cope.
- **Join a suicide bereavement support group.** Sharing your experience with others who have been through similar experiences will help you realise you are not alone and that you can survive.

If you would like to book an appointment and /or speak with one of our Counsellors, it's as easy as calling 1300 66 77 00 or New Zealand 0800 327 669 or visit our website www.accesswellbeingservices.com.au



Remember, if you are thinking about suicide get help immediately.



How you can help someone bereaved by suicide? If you know someone bereaved by suicide, you can help by:

- Listening
- Accepting their rage, guilt, depression, self-centredness and blame-placing without judging them
- Letting them cry
- Not asking "why" or if there was anything that could have been be done
- Encouraging them to talk about the death with any children - they need help too
- Mentioning the loved one by name
- Including the bereaved person in your normal activities
- Realising that working through grief can take years and that the hurt is never forgotten
- Urging them to wait before making any major changes such as moving, giving away possessions or quitting a job
- Understanding they can't just 'get over it' but grow their lives around it
- Suggesting they join a suicide bereavement support group
- If and when appropriate, asking them if they are thinking about suicide.

Getting them professional help if they need it



Supporting children bereaved by suicide. Children who have lost someone to suicide need lots of help and support. Their reactions will often differ from an adult's.

- Ensure you talk to them in a safe place where there are no distractions
- It is important to be honest with children about what happened. Ensure an appropriate person talks to them as soon as it's possible to do so
- Reassure them it's not their fault
- If you are unsure about how to talk to them or how to support them, see a counsellor. If they are not coping and you are concerned, get professional help

Source: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/topics/suicide-bereavement>

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