

THIS IS NOT YOUR FAULT, BUT IT HURTS...

Grief is a powerful emotion. It affects all of us at some point. Most people find the loss of a loved one the most intense and difficult experience of their lives.

Losing a loved one to a suicide death may leave you feeling like there are a lot more questions than there are answers.

Suicide deeply impacts us. Some people have described it as feeling like you have been hit hard in the stomach.

The impact of suicide can lead to a lot of different and often conflicting feelings and reactions. Some of these are:

SHOCK, ANGER,

DISBELIEF, GUILT, SHAME,

**DIFFICULTY THINKING AND LOST
CONCENTRATION,**

**HELPLESSNESS, SADNESS,
REMORSE,**

DEPRESSION, RELIEF



Many people will try to blame themselves when a loved one takes their own life. They will think about what they “should have done.” They think thoughts such as “I should have known.” These kinds of thoughts are not helpful. In fact in most cases, you wouldn’t have been able to stop a person who was determined to take their life. Don’t blame yourself. It was not your fault.

A person may or may not give any clue that they are thinking about killing themselves. Even when they do hint, the clues they give are not always clear.

Most suicidal people don’t kill themselves on a whim, or a sudden impulse. A person contemplating suicide will most often give it a lot of thought. They may make a plan days or even weeks in advance.

Suicide is not usually a random act. In most cases (with the exception of adolescents or teens) the person will actually plan out the details of their suicide.

Many people who have been depressed for a while, will suddenly seem to greatly improve. It’s as if they get better. Often this occurs because they have made the decision to take their life, and they experience relief having a plan in place.

It is not uncommon for people in our society to expect quick solutions. They often think that shortly after the funeral, the period of mourning should be over.

The fact is, most people who have suffered loss from a suicide have reactions far longer than from most other kinds of death. It is not uncommon for people to feel the pain of loss five years or more later. We all grieve differently. However, with time the loss will become easier to bear.

Most people will go through a cycle of grief. Usually they will start with what is called the impact stage. This is marked by shock and disbelief. It may feel like it is all a bad dream, and all you have to do is wake up.

Very often this is followed by what we call the recoil stage. During this time, a person may feel numb, or may feel a lot of different emotions, including anger.

Finally, a person will usually come to a point that their mind is able to accept the awful truth of the loss. We call this the acceptance stage. It often includes sadness, deep sorrow and depression.

All of the emotions you feel are normal. You may feel like you are losing your mind, but it is just your brain trying to deal with information that is difficult to accept. The news is too awful and tragic.

Why did they have to do this? There are lots of reasons people give for wanting to kill themselves. The most common theme seems to be pain. They want the pain to stop. This may be physical pain, but more often it is mental.



It is very likely that they had some sort of feeling of hopelessness. They wanted the pain to go away, and somehow they thought this was the only answer.

We may never know why your loved one took their life. Sometimes, during the grieving process we just need to take one day at a time. Sometimes, we need to focus on just one thought at a time. Attempting to guess the reason why too often takes us down an unproductive path. Sometimes, it is enough just to focus on the fact that they are gone, and not try to figure out the reason why, or how they died.

SEEK SUPPORT

Many people have a difficult time talking about their loss after a suicide death. This often brings feelings of being isolated.

It is easy to think that no one has ever hurt the way you do. Actually, no one probably understands your pain like someone else who has been through a similar loss.

There are several good support groups available to help you through this difficult time. One of them is, **Friends for Survival, Inc.** They are a national outreach program for survivors of suicide loss. They offer ongoing support to those who have lost a loved one to suicide.

Friends for Survival will give you a chance to speak to someone who can truly understand what you are going through. They can offer a bridge across the gap between despair and renewed hope.

Marilyn Koenig, a survivor of suicide loss herself says, "Those whose loss is recent can lean upon the shoulders of those who have made progress in the difficult task of working through grief."

You can reach Marilyn Koenig, and Friends for Survival at **(916) 392-0664**, or at their website: **www.friendsforsurvival.org**

HELP FOLLOWING A SUICIDE DEATH



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