



When a Loved One Dies by Suicide

Helping Yourself in the Aftermath



01 Give your friends and family permission to talk about your loved one.

People worry about upsetting suicide loss survivors or “reminding” them about their loss. They’re afraid of the reaction if they mention your loved one’s name. So they often remain quiet, not understanding the way their silence makes everything worse. Let people know that you want to hear your beloved’s name. That you’re eager to share stories and memories and talk about what you miss and love about them.

02 Make a list of how people can help.

After a shattering loss, it’s hard to think of what you might need when friends or family members ask what they can do for you. One way around this is to make a list – e.g., a meal; milk, bread & toilet paper from the grocery store; the light by the front door repaired, etc. Then when someone asks how they can help, show them the list. They can choose what works best for them, and you get exactly the kind of help you need.

03 Hibernate when you need to, but not for too long.

Spending time with anyone outside your closest circle can be painful after the death of one of your essential people. It's okay to stay home or spend time alone as you navigate the early months after a loss and during those days when your grief intensifies.

04 Move your body.

Walking is a wonderful way to process grief. There's something about the repetitive rhythm of putting one foot in front of another that soothes and comforts. Walking can also offer a temporary escape from thinking about your loss at all.

05 Find your people.

Those who are approximately the same distance from their loss can walk with you as you navigate life in the aftermath. Those who are farther along in their grief journey can offer ideas or suggestions on what helped and provide reassurance that you, too, can find a way to survive.

06 Connect with others who've had a similar loss.

As kind as people who've had a devastating loss can be, there's a level of understanding and support that only comes from someone who's experienced exactly the same kind of loss (e.g., child, spouse, parent).

07 Allow yourself to be where you are.

Everyone approaches loss in their own way, and there's no one timetable for grief. Some days, you may want to sit with your pain. On other days, you may want to ignore or avoid it. It's your choice.

08 Say 'no' when you need or want to.

You'll know what activities you can and can't handle. What people you do and don't want to see. Set boundaries when and where you need to. This is a time to put yourself first.

09 Learn to live with ambiguity & unanswered questions.

You may not understand why your loved one died or why they didn't ask for help. You might wonder why you didn't see it coming or whether there was more you could have done. Sometimes the answers will come in time. Sometimes they won't. Either way, remember that all you can do is your best, given the information you had at the time. We have less control over other people than we realize, even those we love dearly.

10 Find a way to make meaning from your loss.

For some, this means launching a nonprofit, writing a book, choosing a new career path. But meaning can also come from helping someone who's struggling, planting a garden, volunteering for a cause your loved one cared about or sharing stories with a younger family member who doesn't remember or never knew your loved one.



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