



Help is just a phone call away...

## How can I support someone dealing with the aftermath of a suicide?

Family members, friends or co-workers of someone who has committed suicide may suffer alone and in silence. The isolation that surrounds them often complicates the healing of grief. Survivors feel emotional pain from the loss and may be reluctant to, or not know how to, deal with these feelings. You want to help, but you may not be sure how to go about it. This handout will guide you in turning your care for a family member, friend or co-worker into positive actions.

### Accept the Intensity of the Grief

Survivors of suicide may be struggling with intense emotions including guilt, anger and sadness. These emotions may go well beyond the intensity of emotion experienced with other types of deaths. Try to be understanding, compassionate and patient with those who are hurting.

### Listen with Your Heart

Caring support begins with your ability to be an active listener without judging. Don't worry so much about what to say. Concentrate on the words that are being shared with you. You don't have to have an answer. You just have to care.

### Avoid Simplistic Explanations and Clichés

Some clichés can be extremely painful for suicide survivors, so choose your expressions of support wisely. Also, be careful to avoid passing judgment or simplistic explanations of the suicide. Don't say that the person who committed suicide was "out of their mind" or "crazy." Suicide survivors need to search for their own personal meaning for the death.

### Be Compassionate

Think about your helping role as someone who "walks with" not "behind" or "in front of" the one who is grieving. Allow the person to experience the hurt, sorrow and pain that he or she is feeling without criticism, instruction or explanations about how he or she should respond. Never say you know how they feel because you do not.

### Understand the Uniqueness of Suicide Grief

Keep in mind that the grief following the suicide of a loved one is unique. Be patient with this process. The process for the grief generally is painful and complete healing may take a long time.

### Be Aware of Holidays and Anniversaries

Survivors of suicide may have a particularly difficult time during special occasions like holidays and anniversaries. These events are painful reminders of the absence of the person that has died. Respect these occasions for grief as a natural part of the healing process.

### Respect Faith and Spirituality

If a faith is part of the survivor's life, encourage them to incorporate this into the grief and healing process. Encourage them to talk about any conflicts of faith they may be having. Support reliance on faith if this would be helpful. Your task is not to debate theology, but to listen and offer support.

**For additional information, call Best Care EAP at 402-354-8000/800-801-4182 or email to [EAP@BestCareEAP.org](mailto:EAP@BestCareEAP.org)**



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