

Coping Techniques

- *Be patient and allow yourself plenty of time to work through your grief. There are no shortcuts to minimise your grieving.*
- *Remind yourself that feelings of guilt, anger, questioning, and intense sadness are normal.*
- *Express your feelings by talking about your loss and pain. Reminisce about the good times as well as the not so good. Remember – crying is a healing process.*
- *It may be therapeutic to keep a journal or to write about your feelings.*
- *Remember – you are not to blame. The choice to die was not yours.*
- *Accept that you will never fully discover all the reasons “why” suicide was chosen.*
- *Look after yourself. Allow yourself proper rest and daily exercise. Make sure you eat regular, nourishing meals, and that you have adequate fluid intake. Limit use of caffeine and alcohol and be aware that medication can interrupt or prolong the natural healing process.*
- *Allow friends and professionals to help.*
- *Joining a survivor group may be beneficial.*
- *Time.*

Survivor Groups

Many survivors of suicide benefit from joining a support group. A survivor group enables you to meet with others who have experienced a similar situation. It gives the opportunity to share common problems and reactions, and to form strong bonds. This can break down the isolation often felt by survivors. Members of survivor groups can learn more about suicide, share information and the “myths” of suicide can be dispelled. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of a support group is to enable survivors of suicide to find a renewed reason for living. If you wish to know about such groups contact us for further information.

Further Reading

- **AFTER SUICIDE:
HELP FOR THE BEREAVED**
Dr Sheila Clark (Hill of Content)

For 24 hour Service and General Enquiries
please telephone our Funeral Advice Line: **(03) 9373 7000**

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Surviving Suicide **SURVIVING SUICIDE**

This brochure aims to assist you to survive the coming days and weeks as you begin to work through your grief.

Survivors

You are experiencing one of the most devastating events that can occur – the death of a significant person in your life, through suicide. You, as a survivor of suicide, are left not only to cope with the trauma of the suicide, but to deal with your own feelings and unanswered questions.

Issues which Affect Survivors

SHOCK & DENIAL: Initially you may be in shock. You may feel numb all over. You don't want to believe what has happened: "It's a bad dream and when I wake up it will all be over". Shock is nature's way of protecting us from the full impact of such tragic news.

GUILT: You may believe you were responsible for the suicide. You think that if you had picked up the warning signs you could have prevented the suicide.

ANGER: Anger may be self-directed: "Why wasn't I there that night? Maybe I could have saved him". You may feel hostility towards others – doctors, counsellors, teachers, friends (even other family members): "Why didn't they stop her?" Often anger is felt towards the person who suicided. "How dare he do this to me! He has ruined my life".

BLAME: You may be looking for something or someone to blame, in an attempt to answer the question "Why?" It is important to realise that there is no fault in suicide. Factors contribute to a person choosing suicide rather than fault.

STIGMA & SHAME: Stigma, whether real or perceived, may cause you to feel alienated and wanting to withdraw from the outside world. You may feel as though you're a failure, and your self esteem is low. You may even attempt to lie about the circumstances surrounding the death to avoid the stigma associated with suicide. It is important to realise that talking realistically about what has happened and sharing your feelings with trusted friends will best assist you in your grief resolution.

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES: Tiredness, sleep disturbances, mood swings, anxiety, difficulty in concentrating and changes in appetite are all normal reactions to a traumatic loss. The thought process of "replaying" the incident over and over again, looking for clues as to "why?" is very common.

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS: It is normal to have suicidal thoughts yourself following the suicide of a close relative or friend. The desire to escape the pain and be with the person you have lost is often quiet strong. You can often help alleviate these feelings

The Funeral

Often the first reaction is to arrange for the funeral to take place as quickly and quietly as possible. Because feelings of shame and disgrace may exist, a private family service may be planned. It is important not to overlook the value of a funeral service. The funeral gives others the opportunity to extend to you their love and support, as well as allowing them to say their "goodbyes". It is equally important not to rush the funeral. You need to allow yourself sufficient time to make informed choices about the funeral arrangements. Organising time for a viewing of the deceased is critical in assisting both family and friends to accept the reality of death.

Helping Surviving Children

It is essential when dealing with children that clear, correct facts are given about the suicide. Simple and direct language should be used. Children can often feel responsible for the suicide. It is vital to constantly reassure them that the suicide was not their fault. Be alert for suicidal thoughts, feelings or acts, and seek professional help if required. Encourage children to be involved in making decisions. For instance, choosing the flowers or selecting the music for the funeral service. Allow the children to attend the funeral service. Don't place additional responsibilities on children. Encourage them to spend time with their friends and become involved again in activities and routines.