

Complicated Grief

Understanding Why

- Suicide involves complex factors and is not the result of a single event.
- Those who die are usually seeking to end unbearable psychological pain that may have been apparent or hidden and not shared.
- A point was reached where the pain was greater than the person's resources to tolerate it or to see other solutions.
- While it is natural to ask "Why?", we may never know the answers to this question.

Grief after a suicide death is often more complicated than other losses you have experienced. Police and other authorities need to be involved in the death investigation. There may be a final note or communication raises questions for those left behind. You may have feelings of shame, guilt or blame, and feel isolated due to the stigma that is sometimes attached to suicide. Conflicts may arise concerning your own religious or spiritual beliefs or the beliefs of others who are reacting to the suicide death. People may ask how your loved one died; it can be healing to be honest when responding. While you do not need to hide that your loved one died by suicide, it is your personal choice how you respond.

Most people ask
"How am I going to get through this?"

Fresno Resources

Hinds Hospice, Fresno Survivors of Suicide Loss

The grief experienced with suicide loss can feel overwhelming, as we wonder if others can relate, or understand. Since 1984, Hinds Hospice Fresno Survivors of Suicide Loss has been providing support in our community to those grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide.

Hinds Hospice offers a number of services to include support groups, individual and family counseling by licensed clinicians, peer-led support groups, resources, and annual memorial events.

Hinds Hospice also provides outreach and suicide prevention education in our community, and conduct workshops and trainings on the grief specific to suicide loss.

We know the power of survivors connecting with one another, at a time that can feel very lonely. Peer support can offer hope, understanding, and the reminder that you are not alone. Fresno Survivors of Suicide Loss offers peer to peer support connection opportunities in addition to the Local Outreach to Survivors of Suicide (LOSS) Team.

The LOSS Team, comprised of a clinician and a peer support volunteer, is contacted by first responders at the time of a suicide death, providing support and resources to those present. The LOSS Team can also provide support with a delayed response visit to those whose loved one may have died outside of Fresno County, or did not receive immediate support.

We welcome you to call to access services, or with any questions you may have. Visit fresnosos.org or call (559) 322-5877

The LOSS Team is an MHSA funded project of Fresno County.



Funded by counties through the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63).



suicideispreventable.org

Help and Support After Suicide

Information and resources to promote healing



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Surviving Suicide Loss

Complicated Grief

No two grief experiences are the same. Some or all of the reactions below are often experienced by people who have lost someone to suicide. They may come and go like waves or they may feel constant and overwhelming.

- Shock and disbelief; the events seem unreal.
- A feeling of isolation -even in a crowd.
- Loss of concentration and inability to focus; problems going back to work or activities.
- Compulsive behavior such as overeating, excessive shopping, use of drugs, or excessive use of alcohol.
- Physical and/or mental exhaustion.
- Guilt for not having prevented the death.
- Blame, or questioning what you or others did or did not do.
- Anger or a sense of rejection or abandonment.
- Spiritual struggles.
- Relief, if following a difficult struggle with illness or behavior.
- Anxiety and worry about yourself or others and fear that another suicide will occur.
- Deep and profound sadness or depression.



What to Say

If you know someone who has lost a friend or family member to suicide, the most important thing you can do is reach out and listen. Express your condolences and offer support the way you would to anyone who has lost someone close to them. Offer to help with meals or other tasks. Ask them about the way the person lived, not just about their death. For example: ask what the person's name was if you did not know them, or what activities they liked or their favorite song.

Talking to a Child About Suicide

It may seem gentler to avoid the conversation or to conceal the actual cause of death, but more often than not children understand more than we realize. It is important to have a conversation that is age-appropriate but also honest to avoid undermining their trust and potentially creating a legacy of shame and secrecy that can persist for years.

Children grieve differently from adults and may have a different understanding of permanence. This helpful booklet from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention can help you navigate these conversations:
www.afsp.org/wp-content/flipbooks/childrenteens/suicideloss/inc/pdf/flipbook.pdf.

Supporting someone who is surviving suicide loss

Be willing to listen as they talk about their loved one and the difficult and often confusing emotions they are experiencing. You do not need to offer answers, just be willing to listen with compassion.

Support After A Suicide Death

Many people who have lost someone to suicide are helped by connecting with others who have been through this experience. Reaching out to a suicide loss support program can alleviate the isolation that many survivors may experience, and the shared experience and wisdom of others can offer hope to find your way through this experience.

Resources

If you are having thoughts of suicide, or are concerned about someone else, please call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 [TALK]**. A trained counselor will answer your call 24/7.

Hinds Hospice, Fresno Survivors of Suicide Loss
For more information, visit fresnosos.org or call **(559) 322-5877**

Friends for Survival (916) 392-0664
www.friendsforsurvival.org

Friends for Survival has offered support for those bereaved by a suicide death for over 30 years. Call their help line, sign up to receive their newsletter, and visit their web site for links to resources and reading material.

Know the Signs: Directory of Support Programs for Survivors of Suicide Loss in California: Visit the "Reach Out" page at www.suicideispreventable.org

Suicide: Finding Hope:
www.suicidefindinghope.com/home

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Support After A Suicide Loss: Visit:
www.afsp.org/find-support/ive-lost-someone/

After A Suicide Resource Directory: Visit
www.personalgriefcoach.net

