Surviving a Suicide Loss:

Resource and Healing Guide

afsp.org/loss

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

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Dear Friend,

We write to you as fellow suicide loss survivors, those who have lost loved ones or friends to suicide. Some of us are recent loss survivors; some of us lost loved ones a few years ago; and others have been suicide loss survivors for decades. Each of us has struggled in our own way with the pain and complexity of suicide loss.

We each met through the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and are members of the AFSP Loss and Healing Council, which works on behalf of suicide loss survivors throughout the country. Together, we have created this resource guide from our own experiences, hoping it will touch, inform and guide you on your own journey of healing.

When survivors of suicide loss meet, there is often a painful embrace of shared understanding. To see someone else who has been where you are now, and who may be further along in their journey of understanding, can be healing and provide hope. The burdens of loss and loneliness, pain and grief, anger and questions, sadness and guilt, belong to all of us.

When we stand together and express our emotions, we begin to heal. When we come together and talk, we are less lonely. We hear our own questions and concerns voiced aloud by others, and feel a sense of comfort that someone understands. The overwhelming intensity of our painful thoughts and emotions are diminished when spoken and shared.

Healing is not a linear progression and our loss is not meant to be "overcome," but rather integrated into our lives as loss survivors. Throughout our lives, we may have challenging times and re-experience our grief emotions, though hopefully

less intensely; that does not mean we are not healing and moving forward in our journey.

At some point when we take a look back, we might recall a hug we were too numb to feel, a book we were too scattered to absorb, a card that our tear-dimmed eyes wouldn't allow us to read, or a story about our loved one that we listened to with both anguish and gratitude. Within those recollections, we may begin to see the many small wonders of progression that have since marked our path. Let those moments of reflection and recognition of your healing progress continue to lift you up and keep you moving forward with hope.

As fellow survivors of suicide loss, we urge you to remember these few but important things:

You are not alone.

There are resources and people to support you.

There is no universal time frame for healing, but you will move forward from the place where you are now.

We wish you strength and courage as you travel through your grieving, toward a place of healing.

Be well,

The AFSP Loss and Healing Council

Coping with Suicide Loss

Where Do I Start?

Know that you are not alone.

If you have lost someone to suicide, the first thing you should know is that you are not alone. Each year, nearly 48,000 people in the United States die by suicide – the grieving family and friends they leave behind are known as *suicide loss survivors*. In fact, research shows that during the course of our lives, many of us will lose someone we care about to suicide. That means there are millions of suicide loss survivors who, like you, are trying to cope with this heartbreaking loss.

Suicide loss survivors often experience a wide range of grief reactions, including some or all of the following:

- Shock, especially early on – you may feel numb or disoriented, and may have trouble concentrating or focusing on usual tasks
- Symptoms that resemble depression, including disturbed sleep, loss of appetite, intense sadness, and a lack of energy
- Anger towards the deceased, another family member, a therapist, or yourself
- Relief, particularly if the suicide followed a long and difficult mental illness
- Feelings of guilt or regrets, including thinking, "If only I had …"

These feelings usually change in intensity over time, and may diminish as you develop your ability to cope and begin to heal.

Why Did This Happen?

The majority of people who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental health condition at the time of their death.

Suicide is primarily a health issue. Many individuals who die by suicide experienced symptoms of a mental health condition at the time of their death. This mental health condition may not have been diagnosed, or may have been diagnosed and treated, but treatment did not prevent your loved one's death by suicide.

It is also possible that you may not have seen any signs that your loved one was struggling with a mental health condition, or that signs your loved one was struggling were not obviously present. Some people who have thoughts of suicide do not share those thoughts with others, and many hide their distress. Even when there are signs, that doesn't mean that all suicides can be prevented. It is not uncommon for suicide loss survivors to wonder if there were signs that were missed, or if anything could have changed this as an outcome.

Many suicide loss survivors struggle to understand the reasons for the suicide, asking themselves over and over again: "Why?" Many replay their loved one's last days, searching for clues, particularly if they didn't see any signs that suicide was imminent. Suicide is complex, and there is no one reason why someone ends their life.

Because many do not know how to respond to a death by suicide, some suicide loss survivors may experience a lack of understanding or support from those around them. They may also not be sure of how to feel about the loss, or what they should say when someone asks about how their loved one died. It is important to recognize that you are not alone; that these feelings

are understandable; and that it is up to you how much you wish to share with others about your loved one's death. We hope the information included here helps you to decide what is best for your family, and we know that talking openly about suicide can be helpful and healing to you and those around you. Despite its complexity, we continue to learn more every day from science about what influences suicide as an outcome. Mental health conditions, life and environmental stressors can all play a role in suicide risk.

Just as people can die of heart disease or cancer, people can die as a consequence of having a mental health concern. We should also remember that many people with mental health concerns do not go on to die by suicide, and that the interaction between life stress, biology and mental health is a dynamic and individual one.

Psychologists Bob Baugher and Jack Jordan explain it in this way:

- *"[O]nce a person has decided to end his or her life, there are limits to how much anyone can do to stop the act. … In fact, people sometimes find a way to kill themselves even when hospitalized in locked psychiatric units under careful supervision. In light of this fact, try to be realistic about how preventable the suicide was and how much you could have done to intervene."*
- *"… Medical research is also demonstrating that major psychiatric disorders involve changes in the functioning of the brain that can severely alter the thinking, mood, and behavior of someone suffering from the disorder. … The illness produces biological changes in the individual that create the emotional and physical pain (depression, inability to take pleasure in things, hopelessness, etc.) which contribute to almost all suicides."*

Bob Baugher and Jack Jordan, *After Suicide Loss: Coping with Your Grief*. (See bibliography)

You may never know exactly why your loved one ended their life, but over time, learning more about suicide can help you to understand what may have contributed to their death. It is important to note that you do not have to have all of the answers to begin to heal, and many suicide loss survivors find that learning about what contributes to suicide can be helpful.

Suicide Bereavement 101

Survivors often wonder how bereavement after suicide compares to bereavement after other kinds of death.

Jack Jordan, a psychologist who has studied suicide bereavement, describes three aspects that research shows make suicide grief unique:

1. "… Suicide loss survivors seem to struggle more with questions of meaning-making around the death ('Why did they do it?') … survivors often struggle to make sense of the motives and frame of mind of the deceased."

2. Suicide loss "survivors show higher levels of feelings of guilt, blame, and responsibility for the death than other mourners ('Why didn't I prevent it?'). … Occasionally, survivors feel that they directly caused the death through mistreatment or abandonment of the deceased. More frequently, they blame themselves for not anticipating and preventing the actual act of suicide …"

3. Suicide loss "survivors experience heightened feelings of rejection or abandonment by the loved one, along with anger toward the deceased ('How could they do this to me?')."

Excerpted from Jordan, J., Is Suicide Bereavement Different? A Reassessment of the Literature. Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior 2001; 31(1): 91-102. See also Sveen, C-A. and Walby, F., Suicide Survivors' Mental Health and Grief Reactions: A Systematic Review of Controlled Studies. SLTB 2008; 38(1): 13-29.

It is important to note that whatever you are feeling during this time is a human reaction to an extremely stressful loss. You may have feelings of anger, sadness, confusion, and fear, among others. Your thoughts and feelings may also be informed by what you know about suicide and what you've heard or learned about suicide over the course of your life, as well as your previous experiences with sudden loss. We also know that cultural and religious beliefs may play a role in how you experience suicide grief, and it is important to note that different traditions may have different rituals that are part of your grief.

There is no one way to grieve a suicide loss, and you may find that those around you are grieving in different ways. It is important to allow space for yourself and those around you to grieve in the way that they need to. Some may want to talk about the person that died, and the death, while others may feel less of a need to talk about what happened. Many suicide loss survivors find that talking to others who have experienced a suicide loss (such as in a support group) can be helpful as they process the many feelings associated with suicide loss.

What Do I Do Now?

It's important to remember that you can survive the pain. There may be times when you don't think it's possible, but it is.

Here is some guidance from fellow suicide loss survivors:

- Some survivors struggle with what to tell other people; although you should make whatever decision feels right to you, most survivors have found it best to simply acknowledge that their loved one died by suicide
- You may find that it helps to reach out to family and friends; because some people may not know what to say, you may need to take the initiative to talk about the suicide, share your feelings, and ask for their help
- Even though it may seem difficult, maintaining contact with other people is especially important during the stress-filled months after a loved one's suicide
- Keep in mind that each person grieves in his or her own way; for example, some people visit the cemetery weekly; others find it too painful to go at all
- Each person also grieves at his or her own pace; there is no set rhythm or timeline for healing
- Anniversaries, birthdays and holidays may be especially difficult, so you might want to think about whether to continue old traditions or create some new ones
- You may experience unexpected waves of sadness; these are a normal part of the grieving process

- Some survivors find comfort in community, religious, or spiritual activities, including talking to a trusted member of the clergy
- Many survivors use the arts to help them heal, by keeping a journal or writing poetry or music
- Try to take care of your own well-being; consider visiting your doctor for a check-up
- Be kind to yourself. When you feel ready, begin to go on with your life; eventually starting to enjoy life again is not a betrayal of your loved one, but rather a sign that you've begun to heal

Here are some additional suggestions:

- Know you can survive; you may not think so, but you can
- Struggle with "why" it happened until you no longer need to know "why," or until you are satisfied with partial answers
- Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings, but that all your feelings are normal
- Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses; you are not crazy – you are in mourning
- Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself; it's okay to express it
- You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do; guilt can turn into regret through forgiveness
- Having suicidal thoughts is common; it does not mean that you will act on those thoughts
- Remember to take things one moment or day at a time

- Find a good listener with whom you can share, call someone if you need to talk
- Don't be afraid to cry; tears are healing
- Give yourself time to heal
- Remember, the choice was not yours; no one is the sole influence in another's life
- Expect setbacks; if emotions return like a tidal wave, you may only be experiencing a remnant of grief, an unfinished piece
- Try to put off major decisions
- Give yourself permission to get professional help
- Be aware of the pain of your family and friends
- Be patient with yourself and with others who may not understand
- Set your own limits and learn to say no
- Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel
- Know that there are support groups that can be helpful; if you can't find one, ask a professional to help start one
- Call on your personal faith to help you through
- It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, such as headaches, loss of appetite, or inability to sleep
- The willingness to laugh with others, and at yourself, is healing

- Wear out all your questions, anger, guilt or other feelings until you can let them go; letting go doesn't mean forgetting
- Know that you will never be the same again, but that you can survive and even go beyond just surviving

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Handling the Holidays

Do what you think will be comfortable for you. Remember, you can always choose to do things differently next time.

Below are some considerations and guidance for the holidays:

- Think about your family's holiday traditions; consider whether you want to continue them or create some new ones
- Remember that family members may feel differently about continuing to do things the way they've been done in the past; try to talk openly with each other about your expectations
- Consider whether you want to be with your family and friends for the holiday, or whether it would be more healing for you to be by yourself or go away (this year)
- Keep in mind that sometimes the anticipation of an event can be more difficult than the event itself

- If you find it comforting to talk about your loved one, let your family and friends know that; tell them not to be afraid to mention your loved one's name
- Some survivors find it comforting to acknowledge the birthday of their loved one by gathering with his/her friends and family; others prefer to spend it privately
- Some survivors have found the following ritual helpful for a variety of occasions:
  - Light two candles, and then blow one out; explain that the extinguished candle represents those we've lost, while the one that continues to burn represents those of us who go on despite our loss and pain
  - Simply leave the one candle burning (you can put it off to one side) for the duration of the holiday meal or event; the glowing flame acts as a quiet reminder of those who are missing
- Above all, bear in mind that there is no "right" way to handle holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays; you and your family may decide to try several different approaches before finding one that feels best for you

For Your Friends

When friends ask how they can help, you might want to give them a copy of this section.

When there has been a death of a loved one by suicide, survivors will experience a depth and range of feelings. It is important to honor and respect the needs of the survivors in the days, weeks and months following the suicide. Often you may feel helpless. These guidelines help you understand what may be comforting to the family. However, before you assume responsibilities, we believe it's important to ask survivors whether they need your help. Some survivors gain added strength from performing many of the responsibilities below, while others may want to rely on friends or family for support and guidance.

Since recently bereaved people may have trouble concentrating or making decisions, instead of simply asking "How can I help?", you might try asking if you can help with specific tasks, like babysitting, dog walking, grocery shopping, cleaning the house, watering the lawn, or organizing paperwork.

- Surround them with as much love and understanding as you can
- Give them some private time; be there, but don't smother them
- Show love, not control
- Let them talk; most of the time they just need to hear out loud what is going on inside their heads; they usually aren't seeking advice
- Encourage the idea that decisions be made by the family together
- Expect that they will become tired easily; grieving is hard work
- Let them decide what they are ready for; offer your ideas but let them decide themselves
- Keep a list of phone calls, visitors and people who bring food and gifts
- Offer to make calls to people they wish to notify

- Keep the mail straight; keep track of bills, cards, newspaper notices, etc
- Help with errands
- Keep a list of medication administered
- Offer to help with documentation needed by the insurance company, such as a copy of the death certificate
- Give special attention to members of the family – at the funeral and in the months to come
- Allow them to express as much grief as they are feeling at the moment and are willing to share
- Allow them to talk about the special endearing qualities of the loved one they have lost

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Here are two other thoughts:

- Write down a story about their loved one (especially one that they might not know themselves) and give it to them, so that they can read it when they're ready
- Don't be afraid to say their loved one's name; don't worry about making them cry; it hurts so much more when no one talks about the person they lost

The Survivor Community

Survivor Stories

Knowing that others share the same experience can bring hope and healing.

Many suicide loss survivors find it helpful to hear others tell their stories. The following are excerpts from stories shared by survivors who were both honoring their loved one and sharing how they have coped.

- *"… There is a litany of feelings that all survivors of suicide know too well. The flippant use of 'I could just kill myself'; the incessant wondering of why? why? why?; the anniversary of the death and its importance (no matter how long it has been); someone remembering that this is the day your world stopped and then started differently; the fear of memories yellowing and becoming harder to recall; and the instant connection that many survivors have with one another. …" (Tinka)*
- *"Have I reached acceptance? Resignation perhaps. When the front door creaks open, I no longer expect to see [my wife] come in. For the longest time I did slip occasionally. I would find myself starting to clip an article to bring home to her. At book sales I still sometimes reach for a book that I think she'd like. … I never was a macho type, but I am of the 'Men don't cry' generation. Grief has permanently loosened my tear ducts, and today it doesn't take much to get me teary and choked up. … In addition to crying more easily, I think I've developed a greater empathy. I'm more likely to try to understand, and make allowances for why people act the way they do." (William)*

- *"…During the first couple of months after my sister's suicide, we talked about her incessantly. We reminisced about how she acted and looked. We had an insatiable desire to reconstruct the weeks before she died. We recounted the last conversations, moods, phone calls, photographs and meals, hoping that somehow our memories would explain the answer to why she'd killed herself. That question still gnawed at our guts, creating a big, black, empty hole …" (Debbie).*

- *"… The incredible emotional pain of the loss of my son was ever present. Recurrent tears, heaviness in my chest, frequent sighing, and the inability to sleep became commonplace. Although the structure and routine of my office was somewhat comforting, I found it difficult to concentrate or focus on tasks – at work or at home. It was as though my brain was rebelling against this experience. Or possibly this was my brain's way of forcing me to be gentle with myself in my grief …" (Linda)*

Several of the books listed in the bibliography at the end of this guide also contain survivor stories, including *No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One*, in which author/survivor Carla Fine writes:

- *"… Since [my husband's] suicide, I felt increasingly isolated from my friends and family. They had no idea what I was going through, all their well-intentioned advice and words of comfort seemed ignorant at best and tinged with cruelty at worst. … I thought about the singular bond suicide survivors share with one another. Even though each of our situations is unique, we all experience similar stages in our grieving. When we meet someone else who has been there, it makes our personal chaos and isolated secrecy seem a little less frightening."*

Hearing how others have struggled through and survived the pain, confusion, questions, and stigma of suicide loss is an important part of the healing process for many survivors.

Helping Children Cope

Listen to their questions, and try to offer honest, straightforward, developmental and age appropriate responses.

Suicide loss survivors frequently seek advice about how to discuss suicide with children. Here are some suggestions:

- Tell the truth – in simple, age-appropriate language; explain that their loved one died of an illness – a brain illness; an example for an elementary age child:
    - "I have something I need to tell you that is really hard. Mommy died this morning when you were away at school. Mommy's brain was not working right. She died because she took more pills than you're supposed to take, and her body stopped working."
- When you have a choice, tell them as soon as you have the news, in a place where both you and they will feel comfortable; often, not telling the truth can lead a child/teen to create a story that may be worse than what actually happened
- Reassure them that the death was not their fault
- Resist the urge to keep the suicide a secret out of fear that the child will copy the behavior of the deceased; just as families with hypertension, diabetes or heart disease are educated about early warning signs and prevention, relatives of suicide victims need to understand the early

warning signs of depression and other mental illnesses so they can obtain proper treatment

- Reassure them that you, together with other appropriate adults, will take care of them
- Let them know they can approach you at any time if they want to talk about it; communication with your child/teen is very important to everyone; understand you are all grieving, and use this as an opportunity to ask questions and share together
- Children may express their feelings by crying, withdrawing, laughing, or expressing anger at you or others; risky behavior, or fighting with siblings, are also common reactions; be aware this may be a response to the loss, and seek the right support for your child or teen
- Resume and maintain the child's regular routine as much as possible; encourage them to stay engaged with activities that make them feel successful; these routines and activities are usually the first things to disappear after a loss
- The greatest gift you can give children is your assurance of love and support
- Allow them to express their feelings, answer their questions, and provide them with affection
- Play! Kids grieve in spurts; they may not always be sad or crying, and want to engage in play; play is an important part of healing for children, and allowing the space to play will help them heal and grow

AFSP partnered with The Dougy Center, The National Center for Grieving Children and Families to create a booklet of information on talking with children and teens about suicide. If you have children or teenagers, or are supporting them, we highly encourage you to read this invaluable resource. You can find this booklet, *Children, Teens and Suicide Loss*, at **afsp.org/ChildrenTeensAndSuicideLoss**.

Support Groups

It can be so powerful to connect with other suicide loss survivors, and speak openly about suicide grief and loss with people who really "get it."

Being in the presence of other suicide loss survivors can play a crucial part in the healing process. The support and sense of connection felt through sharing their grief and experiences with other loss survivors can help break the isolation suicide loss often brings. The most common way this sharing and connection occurs is through suicide loss survivor support groups. These groups provide a safe place where loss survivors can share their experiences and support each other.

It is natural to feel a bit unsure about going to your first support group meeting. One loss survivor described a support group:

- "We found it very useful … everyone tells their story and you can open up and they tell you things. You stop feeling like you are the only unlucky people in the world. That it does happen to other people as well, even if it's a small number. You're not the only ones, which is comforting to know that there's other people."*

Some suicide loss survivors attend a support group almost immediately, while some wait years; others attend for a year or two and then go only occasionally – on anniversaries, holidays, or particularly difficult days. You may find that it takes a few meetings before you begin to feel comfortable.

You may also find that the group setting isn't quite right for you. Whatever you feel works for you, the hope is to find fellow loss survivors who may become additional support or friends, who come together based on the common bond of understanding that results in the pain and tragedy of suicide loss.

AFSP lists United States and international suicide bereavement support groups as a public service to loss survivors. We do not run, recommend, endorse or fund any of the groups we list. If there is not a local support group in your area, there are several online, monitored groups available to you. To find a local or online group, visit **afsp.org/SupportGroups**.

* Ross, V., Kolves, K., Kunde, L., & De Leo, D. (2018). Parents' experiences of suicide-bereavement: A qualitative study at 6 and 12 months after loss. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(618), 1-10.

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day is an event in which survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding, and hope through their shared experience.

In 1999, Senator Harry Reid, who lost his father to suicide, introduced a resolution to the United States Senate, leading to the creation of International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day in the United States and around the world. Also known as Survivor Day, the day was designated by the United States Congress as a day on which those affected by suicide can join together for healing and support. It was determined that Survivor Day would always fall on the Saturday before American Thanksgiving, as the holidays are often a difficult time for suicide loss survivors.

We support hundreds of large and small Survivor Day events around the world each year. At these informative and caring events, survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding, and hope through their shared experience. While each event is unique, all feature an AFSP-produced documentary which offers a message of growth, resilience, and connection. At events both large and small, it is inspiring to see people coming together to support each other, as they find a way to heal together.

To learn more, visit **afsp.org/SurvivorDay** or (in the United States) reach out to your local AFSP chapter at **afsp.org/chapters**.

Healing Conversations Program

Personal support for suicide loss

Healing Conversations welcomes survivors of suicide loss as they are, wherever they are in their grief, for a meaningful moment of connection.

Different than a support group, *Healing Conversations* is a one-time visit that connects those who have lost a loved one to suicide with trained volunteers who are also survivors of suicide loss. Our volunteers know what it's like to lose someone to suicide, and they help others navigate this challenging journey by offering support, connection and resources.

While our volunteers won't have all the answers, they are able to point those who are grieving to places they might find ongoing comfort, such as a local support group.

They can also suggest books, films, or coping strategies that were particularly helpful in navigating their own grief journey.

Whether you've lost a partner, family member, friend, co-worker, or anyone else to whom you were close, *Healing Conversations* can provide perspective and understanding.

To learn more, visit **afsp.org/HealingConversations**.

Complicated Grief

Most suicide loss experiences have a degree of complexity due to the very nature of suicide and the complexity of human relationships. What we know about suicide grief is that there is not a set timetable or "schedule" for how you experience grief-related emotions. We do know, however, that the intensity of those emotions, i.e. how strongly they are felt, does tend to change over time. As we integrate the loss into our daily living, we naturally begin to think of, and connect to, aspects of the person's life other than how they died. We form a connection to the person we have lost, beyond their suicide death, and begin to recall memories associated with their life and the connection we had to them while they lived. This process can take considerable time. As time passes, many loss survivors find that while they never forget about the suicide loss, they are able to resume a connection to life (albeit changed) and connect to positive memories of the deceased. Many suicide loss survivors are able to integrate the loss with some support from peers, family, friends and their communities.

Some suicide loss survivors, however, experience a type of grief that may benefit from more direct mental health support. The term *complicated grief* refers to a grief reaction in which the individual seems "stuck" at the same level of intensity of emotions (or one specific emotion) related to the loss, and this is unchanging over a long period of time: at least six months

or more. This is not to suggest that grieving is complete in six months, but that the intensity of the grief is unchanged for a six month period or more.

Individuals experiencing complicated grief find it very difficult to integrate the loss into their overall life, and may find themselves unable to focus on any other aspect of their lives other than the suicide loss. They may find themselves organizing their lives around proximity to the loss. Others experiencing a complicated grief reaction may find that they are going to great lengths to avoid reminders of the loss, and that doing so makes it difficult for them to engage with others or their daily activities.[1] Some individuals who have complex trauma histories or previous challenges to coping can be at higher risk for a complicated grief reaction in response to suicide loss.[2] Suicide loss survivors who have a complicated grief reaction may also notice that they have intense yearning to be with their loved one that does not change over time, and overwhelming thoughts about the person who died.[3]

If you feel that you or someone you know may be experiencing a complicated grief reaction, it is important to know that mental health treatment, such as counseling, can help. There are specific treatments for *complicated grief* and you do not need to cope with it alone.[4] You can learn more about complicated grief at the Center for Complicated Grief at Columbia University: **complicatedgrief.columbia.edu**.

[1] Tal, I., Mauro, C., Reynolds III, C. F., Shear, M. K., Simon, N., Lebowitz, B., ...Zisook, S. (2017). Complicated grief after suicide bereavement and other causes of death. *Death Studies, 41*(5), 267-275. 20210328005741178207194 8

[2] Shear, K., & Shair, H. (2005). Attachment, loss and complicated grief. *Wiley Interscience*, 47, 253-267. 20210328011710290798306

[3] Moutier, C., Pisani, A., & Stahl, S. (2021). Chapter on suicide loss, in Suicide Prevention: Stahl's Handbooks (Stahl's Essential Psychopharmacology Handbooks). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[4] Zisook, S., Shear, M. K., Reynolds III, C. F., Simon, N. M., Mauro, C., Skritskaya, N. A.,...Qiu, X. (2018). Treatment of complicated grief in survivors of suicide Loss: A HEAL report. *Psychiatrist.com*, 79(2), e1-e7. 20210328014646109787 3688

When You're Ready

Little by little, healing, hope and growth will take place. For many, volunteering can be a part of that journey.

When you feel you are ready, you may find it healing to get involved in the work of suicide prevention and/or supporting other survivors of suicide loss. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention offers many opportunities through our network of chapters for people to make a difference in achieving our mission of saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide.

Our *Suicide Bereavement Support Group Facilitator Training* program shows suicide loss survivors far enough along in their own healing the "how-to's" of creating and facilitating a peer-to-peer support group. It is appropriate both for survivors who would like to start a new group, as well as those who currently facilitate a group and would like to increase their knowledge and skills. AFSP offers two versions of this program: adult group and children and teen groups.

The *Healing Conversations* program pairs trained suicide loss survivors (also far enough along in their own healing) with more recent loss survivors.

Those who are interested can also get involved in supporting International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day (also known as Survivor Day) at local events throughout the world.

These are just a few examples of how people can become involved as volunteers. AFSP offers many other ways to get involved, from joining an Out of the Darkness™ Walk, to becoming a volunteer field advocate and helping our public policy office in Washington, D.C., to pass suicide prevention policies that will save lives.

Many suicide loss survivors find healing in supporting and helping others, and we cannot achieve our mission of saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide without our dedicated, passionate and empathetic volunteers.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, we encourage you to reach out to your local chapter. To find a local chapter, visit **afsp.org/chapters**

Memorials

The AFSP Memorial Fund is a meaningful and lasting way to honor a loved one while helping others. Thoughtful gifts made to Memorial Funds help AFSP continue to pursue our mission. Family and friends can visit, leave notes of support, share stories, and donate to your Memorial Fund web page at **afsp.org/MemorialFund**.

Memorials can take various forms other than financial contributions. Many survivors of suicide loss find participation in the arts, nature, or events dedicated to the memory of their beloved to be meaningful. Volunteering for a specific cause that was of personal interest to your loved one also carries meaning.

Do whatever means the most to you. Whether symbolic or tangible, these memorials can have a positive effect on the donor and one's environment, and can sometimes help in providing closure.

For memorialization of youth/students, please refer to the guidance in *After A Suicide: Toolkit for Schools* at **afsp.org/AfterASuicideToolkit**.

We are each in charge of our own journey of healing. May you always be traveling further.

Resources

Organizations

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

199 Water St, Fl 11
New York, NY 10038
(888) 333-AFSP
afsp.org
Creates a culture that's smart about mental health through education and community programs, develops suicide prevention through research and advocacy, and provides support for those affected by suicide. Has local chapters in all 50 states with programs and events nationwide.

American Association of Suicidology

(202) 237-2280
suicidology.org
Promotes public awareness, education and training for professionals, and sponsors an annual *Healing After Suicide* conference for survivors.

American Psychiatric Association

(888) 357-7924
finder.psychiatry.org
Help in locating a psychiatrist, who is a medical doctor that specializes in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

American Psychological Association

(800) 374-2721
locator.apa.org
Help in locating a psychologist, who is a professional specializing in diagnosing and treating diseases of the brain, emotional disturbance, and behavior problems. Psychologists can only use talk therapy as treatment; you must see a psychiatrist or other medical doctor to be treated with medication.

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention

(613) 702-4446
suicideprevention.ca
Online list of Canadian survivor support groups. Promotes public awareness, training, education, advocacy.

The Compassionate Friends

(877) 969-0010
compassionatefriends.org
For all parents, siblings and grandparents who have experienced the death of a child, brother, sister or grandchild. Sponsors support groups, newsletters and on-line support groups throughout the country, as well as an annual national conference for bereaved families.

Text TALK to 741741

Text with a trained crisis counselor from the Crisis Text Line for free, 24/7

The Dougy Center

The National Center for Grieving Children & Families
(503) 775-5683
dougy.org
Publishes extensive resources for helping children and teens who are grieving the death of a parent, sibling, or friend, including the booklet created in partnership with AFSP:
"Children, Teens and Suicide Loss."

Finding Mental Health Care

afsp.org/FindAMentalHealthProfessional
List of resources gathered by AFSP.

International Association for Suicide Prevention

+33 562 29 19 47
iasp.info/postvention.php
An international organization with a postvention task force and newsletter. Website lists organizations and support groups for survivors of suicide loss around the world.

Link's National Resource Center for Suicide Prevention and Aftercare

404-256-2919
www.thelink.org/nrc-for-suicide-prevention-aftercar

Melanin & Mental Health

melaninandmentalhealth.com
Connects individuals with culturally competent clinicians committed to serving the mental health needs of Black & Latinx/Hispanic communities.

National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide

(866) 899-5317
nopcas.org
Provides resources to minority communities in the areas of survivor support and suicide prevention and education, including sponsoring an annual conference.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Dial 988 (Press 1 for Veterans, press 2 for Spanish)
Text 988 (English only)
988lifeline.org
The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the United States. We're committed to improving crisis services and advancing suicide prevention by empowering individuals, advancing professional best practices, and building awareness.

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

(952) 946-7998
save.org
Grassroots nonprofit organization that educates about depression and provides resources on suicide and depression, a newsletter, and survivor conference.

Suicide Information and Education Centre

(403) 245-3900
suicideinfo.ca
Computer-assisted resource library with extensive collection of materials on suicide, including information kits, pamphlets, literature searches and clipping services.

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

(877) GET-SPRC

sprc.org

Features an extensive online library of information on suicide prevention and surviving suicide loss, a nationwide calendar of events, and customized web pages for survivors, teachers, teens, clergy, and more.

Tragedy Assistance Programs for Survivors (TAPS)

(800) 959-TAPS (8277)

taps.org

Provides comfort, care and resources to all those grieving the death of a military loved one through a national peer support network and connection to grief resources, all at no cost to surviving families and loved ones.

The Trevor Project

(866) 488-7386

thetrevorproject.org

Provides confidential support for LGBTQ youth in crisis, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Trans Lifeline

(877) 565-8860

translifeline.org

A 24/7 hotline available in the U.S. and Canada staffed by transgender people for transgender people.

We R Native

www.wernative.org

A comprehensive health resource for Native youth, by Native youth, providing content and stories about the topics that matter most to them, including suicide & grief.

Online Resources

For the most recent information about online resources, visit **afsp.org/loss**

allianceofhope.org

Provides a 24/7 online forum for suicide loss survivors.

asianmhc.org/apisaa

Provides a therapist directory for Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian American (APISAA) communities.

afsp.org/books

A listing of books from which we hope loss survivors will find helpful information and guidance as they navigate their healing journey.

pos-ffos.com

Hosts parents of Suicides and Friends & Families of Suicides internet communities and online support groups.

siblingsurvivors.com

Created by a survivor after she lost her sister to suicide.

survivorsofsuicide.com

Contains general information about surviving suicide loss.

thegiftofkeith.org

Created by a survivor family; contains information and resources about surviving suicide loss.

therapyforblackmen.org

A directory to help men of color in their search for a therapist.

therapyforlatinx.com

An online database that makes it easy for Latinx people to find mental health professionals in their own communities.

Bibliography

Survivor Guides

New titles are periodically added to this bibliography. Visit **afsp.org/books** for a comprehensive listing and the most recent additions.

After Suicide Loss: Coping with Your Grief
Bob Baugher, Ph.D., and Jack Jordan, Ph.D., 2002.
This excellent handbook is organized chronologically, around the first days, weeks, and months of a suicide loss. It includes straightforward information about psychiatric disorders, and when to seek professional help, as well as practical strategies for coping and healing.

Dying to Be Free: A Healing Guide for Families after a Suicide
Beverly Cobain and Jean Larch, Hazelden Foundation, 2006.
Co-authored by the cousin of Kurt Cobain (the lead singer of the band Nirvana who took his own life in 1994) and a crisis intervention specialist, this book combines personal accounts from survivors with practical guidance for coping with suicide loss.

Healing After the Suicide of a Loved One
Ann Smolin and John Guinan, Simon and Schuster, 1993.
So many survivors struggle with wondering, "Why" and "What if?" This book contains case studies and advice to help survivors begin to heal.

Lay My Burden Down: Unraveling Suicide and the Mental Health Crisis Among African-Americans
Alvin F. Poussaint, M.D., and Amy Alexander, Beacon Press, 2001.
One of the few books about suicide and mental health problems within the African-American community.

Reaching Out After Suicide: What's Helpful and What's Not
Linda H. Kilburn, MSW, 2008.
Available from KP Associates, LLC (KPAMASS@aol.com). The author, a clinical hospice social worker and survivor of her daughter's suicide, offers practical advice for well-meaning friends and family who want to reach out and be supportive after a suicide, but aren't sure what to do or say.

Silent Grief: Living in the Wake of Suicide
Christopher Lukas and Henry Seiden, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007.
Co-authored by a psychologist and a survivor of multiple suicide losses, this book is written with sensitivity and understanding, and offers simple, constructive suggestions for healing, along with straightforward information and a message of hope.

Suicide and its Aftermath: Understanding and Counseling the Survivors
Edward Dunne, John McIntosh, and Karen Dunne-Maxim (Eds.), W.W. Norton and Company, 1987.
This compilation of articles and essays captures various dimensions of the many different aspects of the experience of surviving after a suicide loss. Although written by and for professional counselors, it's very readable for the general public.

Suicide Survivors' Handbook – Expanded Edition
Trudy Carlson, Benline Press, 2000.
Providing specific suggestions and practical advice from other survivors, the author addresses the questions: Why? What about shame and guilt? How long does the pain last? What helps? How do you deal with others?

Suicide of a Child
Adina Wrobleski, Centering Corp., 2002.
A basic guide for early bereavement after your child's suicide. Comfortable, compassionate, easy-to-read observations and personal messages.

Survivors of Suicide
Rita Robinson and Phyllis Hart, New Page Books, 2001.
A compilation of advice and survivor stories.

Touched by Suicide: Hope and Healing After Loss
Michael F. Myers, M.D., and Carla Fine, Gotham Books, 2006.
Co-authored by a psychiatrist and survivor, this book offers detailed steps, practical suggestions, and compassionate advice for how to cope with all aspects of suicide.

Survivor Stories

A Force Unfamiliar To Me: A Cautionary Tale
Jane Butler, Hamlet Books, 1998.
A mother's personal account of her son's depression and suicide. Explores some of the familiar challenges many survivor families face, such as how to handle the holidays and the struggles of grief between the parents of a child who dies by suicide.

A Special Scar: The Experience of People Bereaved by Suicide
Alison Wertheimer, Routledge, 2001.
The author (who lost her sister to suicide) presents interviews with 50 survivors, and covers a wide range of issues, including the press, stigma, guilt, anger and rejection.

Before Their Time: Adult Children's Experiences of Parental Suicide
Mary and Maureen Stimming, Temple University Press, 1999.
Presents adult children survivors' accounts of their loss, grief, and resolution following a parent's suicide. Separate sections offer perspectives on the deaths of mothers and fathers. Also includes the reflections of four siblings on the shared loss of their mother.

Blue Genes: A Memoir of Loss and Survival
Christopher Lukas, Doubleday, 2008.
Christopher (Kit) Lukas, co-author of Silent Grief: Living in the Wake of Suicide, survived the suicide of his mother when he was a young boy. Neither he nor his brother were told how she'd died, and both went on to confront their own struggles with depression, a disease that ran throughout their family. In 1997, Kit's brother Tony, a Pulitzer-prize winning author, took his own life. Blue Genes is Kit's exploration of his family history, his personal journey and his determination to find strength and hope.

Dead Reckoning: A Therapist Confronts His Own Grief
David C. Treadway, Basic Books, 1996.
The author, now a successful family therapist, was just twenty when his mother, a longtime alcoholic, took her own life. Even as he counsels his clients on how to deal with death, loss and grief, he finds himself increasingly unable to manage his own. Turning to his own therapist for help, Treadway includes the reader on his journey of healing as he finally comes to terms with his mother's death.

In Her Wake: A Child Psychiatrist Explores the Mystery of Her Mother's Suicide
Nancy Rappaport, Basic Books, 2009.
Dr. Nancy Rappaport, a child psychiatrist, lost her mother to suicide at the age of four. Encouraged by her own children's curiosity about their grandmother, and fortified by her professional training in psychiatry, she began to look into her mother's life and death. Drawing on court papers, newspaper

clippings, her mother's unpublished novel, and interviews with family and friends, she explores the impact of her mother's suicide from the perspective of a daughter, psychiatrist, wife, and mother herself, in this deeply personal memoir.

My Son...My Son: A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss or Suicide
Iris Bolton and Curtis Mitchell, The BoltonPress, 1995.
A mother's account of her progression through the grief process after the suicide of her 20-year old son.

Never Regret the Pain: Loving and Losing a Bipolar Spouse
Sel Erder Yackley, Helm Publishing, 2008.
In her memoir, Sel Erder Yackley, mother of three, provides the reader an intimate glimpse into her family's struggle to understand, cope with, and grieve the bipolar disorder and ultimate suicide of her husband, a well-respected judge.

No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One
Carla Fine, Doubleday, 1996.
Following the suicide of her husband, the author interviewed over 100 suicide loss survivors. She weaves their experiences into her book, creating a story of loss, grief and survival.

Remembering Garrett: One Family's Battle with a Child's Depression
United States Senator Gordon H. Smith, Caroll & Graf, 2006.
A personal account by the U.S. Senator from Oregon, whose 21-year-old son took his own life, and whose speech on the Senate floor led to overwhelming bipartisan support for the passage of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, which increased federal funding to prevent youth suicide.

Sanity & Grace: A Journey of Suicide, Survival, and Strength
Judy Collins, Tarcher/Penguin, 2003.
Musician Judy Collins shares her own story about the loss of her son to suicide, and her own struggle with mental illness.

The Empty Chair: The Journey of Grief After Suicide
Beryl Glover, In Sight Books, 2000.
The grief process as experienced by a variety of people dealing with different emotions following the suicide of a family member.

The Suicide Index: Putting My Father's Death in Order
Joan Wickersham, Harcourt Inc., 2008.
Wickersham uses an index – the most orderly of structures – to try to make sense of her father's suicide. The family history, business failures and encounters with friends and doctors are assembled into a philosophical, deeply personal and beautifully-written exploration of the mystery of her father's life and death.

Helping Children

After a Parent's Suicide: Helping Children Heal
Margo Requarth, Healing Hearts Press, 2006.
Written by a bereavement counselor who lost her own mother to suicide when she was just under four years old, this book offers constructive, compassionate and clear suggestions for helping children.

After a Suicide Death: An Activity Book for Grieving Kids
Available through The Dougy Center (see **Organizations**).
Developed for use with children, this workbook combines explanations of mental illness and suicide for different age groups, creative exercises, practical advice, and quotations from child suicide loss survivors.

But I Didn't Say Goodbye: For Parents and Professionals Helping Child Suicide Survivors
Barbara Rubel, Griefwork Center, Inc., 2000.
Told from the point of view of a child, this book is intended for adults to read and then share with children.

Child Survivors of Suicide: A Guidebook for Those Who Care for Them
Rebecca Parkin and Karen Dunne-Maxim, 1995.
This practical guide offers advice for family members, educators, and others who deal with young suicide loss survivors.

My Uncle Keith Died
Carol Ann Loehr, Trafford Publishing, 2006.
Written in clear, simple language easily understood by children, this book offers hope and practical ways to explain suicide to children. It explains the difference between sadness and depression, and describes how chemical imbalances in the brain cause illnesses that can result in suicide.

Someone I Love Died By Suicide: A Story for Child Survivors and Those Who Care or Them
Doreen Cammarata, Grief Guidance, Inc., 2000.
An illustrated book that explains depression and suicide in child-friendly language.

For Adolescents and Teenagers

After
Francis Chalifour, Tundra, 2005.
Nominated for the Canadian Governor General's Literary Awards 2005, this autobiographical novel tells the story of 15-year-old Francis, whose father took his own life. It explores Francis's struggles with guilt, anger, profound sadness and search for hope during the first year after his father's suicide.

After a Suicide: Young People Speak Up
Susan Kuklin, PutnamPublishing Group, 1994.
Nine personal accounts of survivors, many of whom are teens. Each account focuses on a specific topic, such as losing a parent, losing a sibling, seeking therapy, support groups.

For Men

Men & Grief: A Guide for Men Surviving the Death of a Loved One and a Resource for Caregivers and Mental Health Professionals
Carol Staudacher, New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 1991.
Of particular interest are separate chapters addressing bereavement experienced during boyhood, adolescence, and adulthood, as well as a chapter on the effect of alcohol abuse on grief. While the book does include some discussion of bereavement after suicide, the focus is on the male experience of bereavement, generally.

Real Men Do Cry: A Quarterback's Inspiring Story of Tackling Depression and Surviving Suicide Loss
Eric Hipple, with Dr. Gloria Horsley and Dr. Heidi Horsley.
Quality of Life Publishing Co., 2008.
Hipple, former NFL quarterback for the Detroit Lions and survivor of his 15-year-old son's suicide, candidly shares his own lifelong struggle with depression, including his bankruptcy, imprisonment for drunk driving, and ultimate decision to seek treatment. A practical guide for men and the women who care about them.

Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing
Thomas R. Golden, Golden Healing Publishing, 1996.
This book, by a licensed clinical social worker, explores the stereotypically "masculine" experience of grief.
In the author's words, "[a] man reading these pages will find

a book that honors the uniqueness of a man's path toward healing. A woman reading this book will benefit not only from gaining a deeper understanding of the men in her life; she will find herself in these pages."

When a Man Faces Grief/A Man You Know is Grieving: 12 Practical Ideas to Help You Heal From Loss
Thomas Golden and James Miller, Willowgreen Publishing, 1998.
This book focuses on grief in general (not grief after suicide, per se), exploring the authors' view of the "masculine side" of healing. The book's format is unique: the first half of the book provides guidance to the grieving man himself; turned upside down, the book then offers his family and friends advice on how best to help him. The twelve suggestions in each half of the book are practical and straightforward.

When Suicide Comes Home: A Father's Diary and Comments
Paul Cox, Bolton Press, 2002.
A father's perspective on the first year following his son's suicide, this book is written in a simple, straightforward way – an easy read for early grief. While written from a father's perspective, female readers (especially spouses) have said that it helped them better understand the male experience of grief.

Poetry / Inspirational

A Long-Shadowed Grief: Suicide and its Aftermath
Harold Ivan Smith, Cowley Publications, 2006.
Written from a Christian perspective, this book by a survivor of his cousin's suicide and former funeral director explores the aftermath of suicide through the lenses of spirituality and theology.

Finding Your Way After the Suicide of Someone You Love
David B. Biebel, D.Min., & Suzanne L. Foster, M.A., Zondervan, 2005.
Co-authored by a suicide loss survivor and a minister, this book looks at the experience of suicide bereavement from a Christian perspective.

From the Ashes Flies the Phoenix: Creating a Powerful Life After a Suicide
Gretta Krane, Inspiring Enterprises, 2006.
The survivor of her husband's suicide, Gretta Krane shares her own journey, with the hope that it will inspire others to find self-discovery, growth, and hope in the aftermath of suicide loss.

Healing the Hurt Spirit: Daily Affirmations for People Who Have Lost a Loved One to Suicide
Catherine Greenleaf, St. Dymphna Press, 2006.
Written by a longtime survivor of multiple suicide losses, this non-denominational book encourages loss survivors to explore their grief through a series of simple readings and daily affirmations.

Incomplete Knowledge
Jeffrey Harrison, Four Way Books, 2006.
The second half of this book of poetry (in particular, the moving sequence titled "The Undertaking") speaks eloquently of the loss of the writer's brother to suicide, delving into isolated moments in the immediate aftermath and extended process of grief.

Suicide and Mental Illness

An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness
Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D., Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.
In this memoir, the author, an international authority on bipolar disorder, describes her own struggle since adolescence with the disorder, and how it has shaped her life.

Darkness Visible
William Styron, Random House, 1990.
A powerful and moving first-hand account of what depression feels like to the sufferer.

Demystifying Psychiatry: A Resource for Patients and Families
Charles Zorumski and Eugene Rubin, Oxford University Press, 2010.
The authors, both psychiatrists, explain modern day psychiatry – including the mental illnesses most closely associated with suicide risk – in this straightforward primer developed for a lay audience.

Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide
Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D., Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.
Weaving together an in-depth psychological and scientific exploration of the subject, this book traces the network of reasons underlying suicide, including the factors that interact to cause suicide, and the evolving treatments available from modern medicine. Includes a particular focus on suicide by adolescents and young adults.

No One Saw My Pain: Why Teens Kill Themselves
Andrew Slaby and Lili Frank Garfinkle, W.W. Norton and Company, 1995.
Written by an expert on suicide in young adults, this book looks at many examples of adolescent suicide, and explores the complex factors that may contribute to it.

The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression
Andrew Solomon, Scribner, 2001.
Winner of the National Book award. A sufferer of chronic depression, Solomon shares his own story, while presenting the problem of depression in a broader social context.

November of the Soul: The Enigma of Suicide
George Howe Colt, Scribner, 2006.
From National Book Award Finalist George Howe Colt comes this comprehensive (500+ page) and scholarly exploration of suicide. Based on in-depth reporting and case studies, and extensively footnoted, Colt considers suicide from a wide range of perspectives, including cultural, historical, biological, and psychological. (While an excellent treatise on the topic of suicide, this book is probably best for survivors who are further along in their healing. Newly-bereaved survivors may find it a bit overwhelming.)

Understanding Depression: What We Know and What You Can Do About It
J. Raymond DePaulo Jr., M.D., John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002.
The Psychiatrist-in-Chief of the Johns Hopkins Hospital presents a comprehensive, user-friendly guide to depression, including the latest research in brain chemistry, psychology and pharmacology.

Why Suicide? Questions and Answers about Suicide, Suicide Prevention, and Coping with the Suicide of Someone You Know (2nd ed.)
Eric Marcus, HarperOne, 2010.
Eric Marcus was 12 years old when he lost his father, Irwin, to suicide in 1970. More recently, his sister-in-law also took her life, prompting him to reconsider his own experience and revise his original, and well received book. Marcus integrates his personal experience and journalistic skills in this comprehensive yet accessible primer on all aspects of suicide, its prevention, and aftermath. The book, arranged in a simple question and answer format, allows readers to easily access reassurance and understanding while coping in the aftermath of a loved one's death.

We Remember Them

At the rising of the sun and its going down, we remember them.

At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
we remember them.

At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring,
we remember them.

At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer,
we remember them.

At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn,
we remember them.

At the beginning of the year and when it ends,
we remember them.

As long as we live, they too will live;

for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them.

When we have joy we crave to share, we remember them.

When we have decisions that are difficult to make,
we remember them.

When we have achievements that are based on theirs,
we remember them.

As long as we live, they too will live;

for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

– Rabbi Sylvan Kamens & Rabbi Jack Riemer

Closing Thoughts

We encourage survivors to gather, to remember, to speak aloud the precious names of those lost to suicide. You are in a safe place with those who understand.

If you are new to the tragedy of suicide loss, we hope you will find time to connect with other loss survivors and share the collective grief with those who need no explanation.

There is no map on this path to becoming whole. It is a painful journey – full of twists and turns, bruised hearts and misunderstandings.

Small wonders appear on this path but we may be too sore or fragile to recognize them. But there will be a day when you can look back and know that they were there.

We share your loneliness. We share your sorrow. We share your questions. We honor those we love who have been lost to suicide.

May the radiance and beauty of their lives never be defined by their deaths. Survivors of suicide loss are the most courageous people we know. Be well, be peaceful, be hopeful.


afsp.org/loss
American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention