

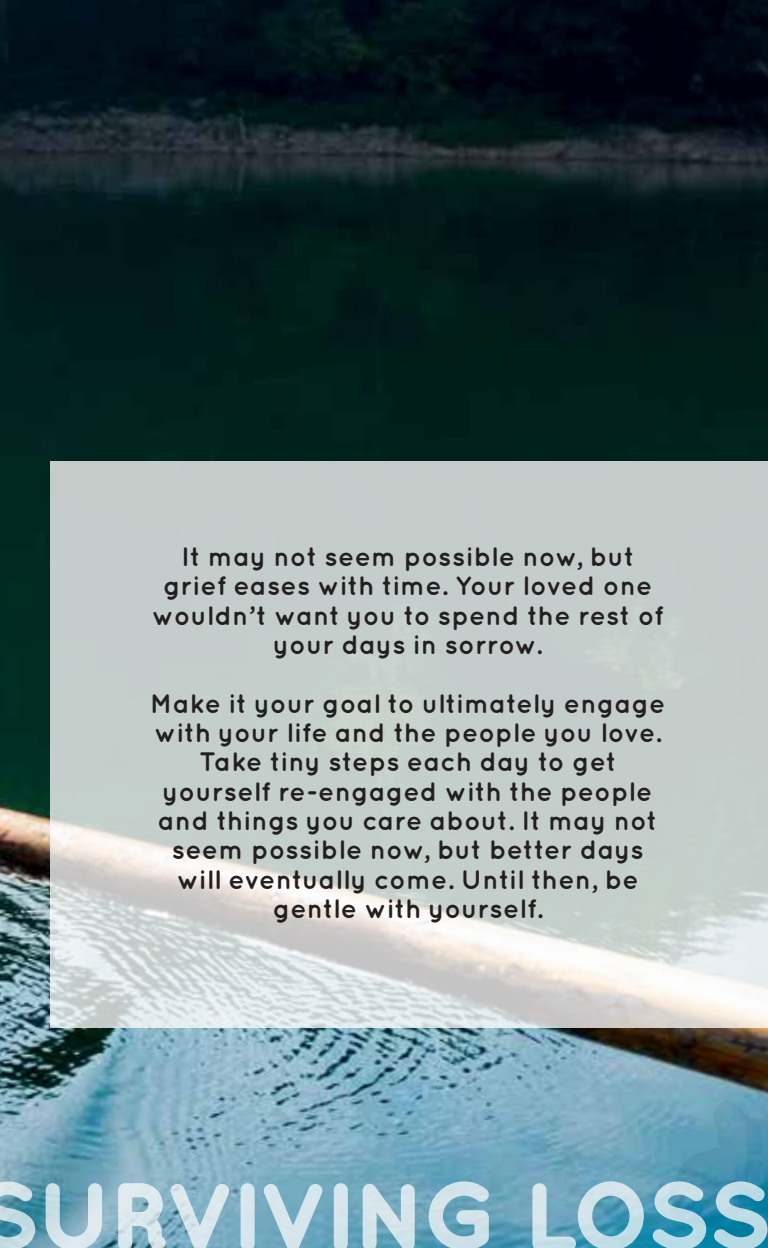
WHEN
SOMEONE
YOU LOVE
DIES BY
SUICIDE

Friends FOR
SURVIVAL

A NATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAM FOR
SURVIVORS AFTER A SUICIDE DEATH

Though you are in the midst of one of the most painful losses a person can experience, please know you are not alone in your journey. This guide was created to help you navigate the waters ahead.





It may not seem possible now, but grief eases with time. Your loved one wouldn't want you to spend the rest of your days in sorrow.

Make it your goal to ultimately engage with your life and the people you love.

Take tiny steps each day to get yourself re-engaged with the people and things you care about. It may not seem possible now, but better days will eventually come. Until then, be gentle with yourself.

SURVIVING LOSS

CHECKLIST OF STEPS TO TAKE FOLLOWING A LOSS

- Get a notebook to document important conversations with authorities, creditors, service providers, etc. Note the date, name of the person you spoke with, contact information, and specific details from your interaction. You may not remember these details later.
- Ask for help with items from your task lists (family, friends, neighbors).
- Make arrangements for dependents and pets, if applicable.
- Contact the coroner, hospital, and/or funeral home to make arrangements.
- Make a list of tasks you need help with such as grocery shopping, yard maintenance, repairs, cleaning, childcare, etc.
- Make a list of family members who need to be notified.
- Make a list of calls you need to make, such as insurance companies, creditors, employers, schools, etc.
- Ask someone to help with funeral plans, including reception details such as food, beverages, and seating.
- Write an obituary and gather photos to share at the memorial service.

- Order extra copies of the death certificate, which you will need when dealing with banks and other organizations.
- Locate important documents: social security card, will or estate plan, birth certificate, marriage license, military discharge paperwork, insurance policies, bank statements, and financial documents.
- Update your estate plan.

NOTIFY THE FOLLOWING

- Social Security Administration
- DMV (can help prevent identify theft)
- All three credit reporting agencies. Also, get a current copy of a credit report to identify all open accounts.
- All creditors, banks, and related accounts. Request they be closed.
- Insurance companies: Review/cancel policies
- Employer: Inquire about pensions, 401K plans, insurance policies, benefits, and final paycheck.
- Post Office
- Trust/estate attorney: to begin the probate process.

UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION AND SUICIDAL IDEATION

Depression is an illness of the brain. It's also an illness that lies to its victims, telling them that their loved ones will be better off without them. When a person reaches the point of being suicidal, he/she typically falls into what's known as the Suicide Trance. The brain gets stuck in a sort of loop, and the pain victims feel when stuck in this thought-loop has been compared to feeling like surgery without anesthesia.

You may not have been aware that your loved one was struggling. People suffering with depression and suicidal ideation are often masters at hiding their pain. However, suicide is often the result of years of struggle.

GETTING THROUGH YOUR GRIEF

When experiencing a traumatic loss like suicide, you may initially think that the pain will never subside, but it will not last forever. Though we can never fully "get over" the loss of someone we love, we can take steps each day to keep moving forward.

It's important to process the pain and ultimately come to terms with how life is different as the result of such a great loss. Not processing the pain can lead to all kinds of new problems: anger, substance abuse, over-eating, under-eating, job loss, poor parenting, health challenges, and depression.

PROCESSING ANGER

Some family members struggle with anger, either at the beginning of the grief journey or down the road. It's entirely normal to be angry. You might be angry at your loved one who died, your God, the therapist who was supposed to help, the medications that failed, or the traffic that delayed you from getting home on time. Anger is a normal part of the grieving process. Allow yourself time to process the anger and make peace with it, and remember that suicide is nobody's fault.

MANAGING THE GUILT

After a suicide loss, guilt is experienced by nearly everyone left behind. There are so many woulda- coulda-shoulda thoughts. It's important for you to know this:

- We cannot control the actions of others.
- People have arguments every day and don't take their lives.
- Marriages break up every day and people don't take their lives.
- People have financial struggles and hardships and get bullied, yet don't take their lives.

It is absolutely never the fault of those of us left behind, no matter what we did or didn't do or what transpired in the days or hours leading up to the suicide. Their actions are not our fault or responsibility.

ACCEPT HELP: You may not be used to asking for help or accepting it, but now is not the time to be prideful. Accept all offers of support, and don't be afraid to ask. People want to contribute, but most don't know how.

SELF-CARE: Find healthy ways to feel better. Take walks, enjoy hot baths, read books for pleasure, spend time in nature, paint, cry if you need to, get a massage, take up a new hobby, and find other activities that make you feel good.

CHANGE ROUTINES: Holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and other milestones can be triggering. Try changing the way you experience these events by holding them in a new location, creating new traditions, or skipping them altogether.

MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES: People in grief are at higher risk for illness and accidents. Take care of your health and get a physical within the first year. Exercise can help release pain and raise endorphins.

GET SUPPORT: Find a therapist who has experience with grief and/or suicide loss. If you have children, they need an age-appropriate outlet to deal with their loss, too.

STRATEGIES THAT MAY BE HELPFUL

SOCIALIZE: Even though you may want to decline or cancel every social invitation, connecting with friends and family can provide a mood boost and remind you that you are loved.

JOIN GROUPS: Support group meetings, like those offered by Friends for Survival, can help you feel less alone in the journey.

GIVE BACK: Some people find it helpful to devote time or money to a cause that matters to them, or to start their own mission. Follow your heart and volunteer if you feel called to do so.

WRITE: There is something so freeing about getting thoughts and feelings out of your head. Try keeping a journal where you let your thoughts and grief flow. You can capture memories of your loved one so you don't obsess about forgetting them. You can also try writing your loved one a letter, and then writing the response you think he or she would give. Writing can be incredibly healing.

STRATEGIES

**SUTTER HOSPITAL:
CHILDREN'S BEREAVEMENT ART GROUP**

Creative support for grieving children 4 to 17. Children are grouped according to age, development, and type of loss. No cost to families, donations encouraged.

www.sutterchildren.org

SUTTER HOSPITAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Groups include support for: Adult Grief, Spouse/ Partner Loss, Children and Teens, and creative workshops. Open to the public.

[www.sutterhealth.org/
services/home-health-hospice/
grief-bereavement-support](http://www.sutterhealth.org/services/home-health-hospice/grief-bereavement-support)

**ALLIANCE OF HOPE:
ONLINE SUPPORT FOR SUICIDE LOSS**

Offering an online discussion forum where you can connect with others who've lost a loved one to suicide.

www.allianceofhope.org

AMERICAN ASSOC. OF SUICIDOLOGY

An organization that advocates suicide prevention, offers training, support groups and resources.

www.suicidology.org

**TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
FOR SURVIVORS (TAPS)**

Offering compassionate support to those who lost a loved one while serving in the Armed Forces.

www.taps.org

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Support for parents who have lost a child.

www.compassionatefriends.org

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION (AFSP)

www.afsp.org

THE DOUGY CENTER

Resources for children, teens, young adults and their families grieving a death can share their experiences.

www.dougy.org

NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS (NAMI): SACRAMENTO CHAPTER

Community advocate for mental illness services and support.

www.namisacramento.org

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY OF SUICIDE LOSS SUPPORT GROUPS

[www.suicidology.org/suicide-survivors/
sos-directory](http://www.suicidology.org/suicide-survivors/sos-directory)

CAMP HOPE: FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN

www.camphopeca.com

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts.

1-800-784-2433

Find more helplines, chat online or text at:

www.suicidehotlines.com

NAL RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One by Carla Fine

The Invisible String
by Patrice Karst (Children's book)

Finding Peace Without All The Pieces, After a Loved One's Suicide, by LaRita Archibald

Silent Grief: Living in the Wake of Suicide, by Christopher Lucas and Henry M. Seiden, Ph.D.

Rocky Roads: The Journeys of Families Through Suicide Grief, by Michelle Linn-Gust, Ph.D.

Healing after the Suicide of a Loved One, by Ann Smolin CSW and John Guinan, Ph.D.

All the Things We Never Knew,
by Sheila Hamilton

For additional book suggestions, see
Support Resources at
www.friendsforsurvival.org



This program is funded in part by the Division of Behavioral Health Services through the voter approved Proposition 63, Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).

WWW.FRIENDSFORSURVIVAL.ORG

Support and education for survivors of
suicide loss. Monthly meetings held around
Northern California. Contact for meeting location
and times at (916) 392-0664.

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