

Losing a loved one to death by suicide is extremely devastating and is very hard to explain. How do you begin to bring understanding to something so misunderstood? As feelings of guilt surface, there are many questions; what didn't we see, what could we have said, and why didn't we understand the depth of our loved one's pain? How do we talk to children about death by suicide? This is what we have come to understand:

- Be honest. Sometimes being honest is a very dark place when it comes to suicide. If we truly believe suicide to be a side effect of an illness – we talk about the illness and not the suicide. I told my daughter, her daddy died of sadness.
- Don't let how someone died define who he or she were. Our loved ones are so much more than how they died. Focus on how they lived and don't let them be forgotten. Share stories, make your loved ones favorite meal together and explore places you shared as family. Remember, Love Never Dies and neither should their memory.
- If your child is old enough to be on social media, monitor what they are searching, what others may be saying and assure them their loved one is now in a good place.
- Less is more. The details of the death are private and for the family. The less that is known about the where and the how, the less others can talk and gossip.
- Open conversation is imperative to reduce the stigma attached and welcome healing. Allow questions and provide the best possible answer you can. If you don't know how to answer, acknowledge the question and let your child know you're not sure how to answer but will talk about it again soon once you know the answer.
- Greif counseling can be key to healing as it provides an opportunity to open up, share tough questions and monitor the mental health of the child. Depression, PTSD, anxiety and trauma may occur as a result of this type of loss.

LOVE NEVER DIES and your loved one will never leave your mind and heart. Having them with us for as long as we did was a gift, as difficult as your loss is our hope is that you will discover the many gifts your loved one left behind. When you do, healing begins, your purpose becomes clear and your sharing your story will help heal you and it will help heal someone else. It is then we understand the meaning of love heals.