

Dealing with Suicide as a Chaplain

Death brings with it many emotions especially grief. A suicide brings even more painful emotions. It is very challenging to deal with a family whose family member has committed suicide. It takes a special thought and action. Hopefully this guide will assist you in dealing with this difficult time.

Difficult Family Situations and Difficult Funerals

Here are some helpful tips and suggestions:

- First thing to remember is that it is always proper to make contact with the family upon learning of a difficult situation or a death. Don't delay. A simple phone call expressing concern or condolence is always in order.
- It is okay to feel awkward. But, don't let that feeling of awkwardness and uneasiness prevent you from reaching out and ministering to the family and those affected by the situation.
- With a death, the next thing to do following the initial phone call is to show up. But do not show up unannounced!!! Place a second phone call and ask the family if it would be okay for you to drop by the house sometime. If they say it would be okay, ask them when would be a good time. This way they can prepare for your visit and may even invite other family members to be present so they too can meet you.
- Allow family, friends, and Post members to talk and express their feelings. Because of the social stigma associated with suicide, people are often reluctant to talk about it. If a bereaved person wants to talk, then *listen intently and provide a safe and supportive environment*.
- Families bereaved by suicide often feel guilty, shame, anger, alone and isolated. The stigma attached to suicide makes it even harder for them and intensifies these feelings. Again, listen to them and provide an environment where they feel free to express whatever they are feeling or to remain quiet and say nothing at all.
- On this site is also a copy of the Memorial Service that will act as a template for a female who died by suicide. With a few adjustments it will also work for a male suicide. Conducting a funeral for someone who took their own life is always difficult – even for the seasoned minister. Hopefully the attached Memorial Service will give you some guidance should you ever find yourself in a similar situation.