



# Suicide Loss

**Grief Support Packet**



## Our Mission

To prevent suicide through training, education, advocacy, and supporting suicide loss survivors.

### About SAVE

SAVE is a national nonprofit working to end the tragedy of suicide through education and training programs, advocacy work at the state and national level, and providing support to those impacted by the tragedy of suicide.

### What We Do

**Educate individuals at risk of suicide and those who interact with them.**

- Distribute complimentary educational resources to local community organizations.
- Deliver suicide prevention awareness presentations to various groups and communities.

**Train individuals and community stakeholders to identify those who may be at risk for suicide and how to support them.**

- Educate high school and college students on cultivating help-seeking behaviors through The Green Bandana Project program.
- Grant free access to the online QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Gatekeeper training.
- Provide affordable, self-paced online training options for the general workforce and high risk occupations.

**Advocate for those impacted by suicide at the state and national level.**

- Advocate for more robust public and private resources to support mental health and suicide prevention programs and policies.
- Distribute concise policy briefs to state and federal legislators.
- Provide testimony in support of legislation at the state and federal level.

**Support individuals, families, and communities after a suicide loss.**

- Connect families with other suicide loss survivors through the suicide loss survivor support group database.
- Honor the lives of those lost to suicide through the Named Memorial Program.
- Provide free support materials on suicide grief.



### Who We Serve

- Youth ages 14-23
- Adults and Seniors
- High Risk Occupations (Law Enforcement, construction workers, emergency healthcare workers, athletes and more).
- Suicide Loss Survivors

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# Why do people die by suicide?



People may contemplate suicide for a variety of complex and interconnected reasons, and it's important to note that each individual's situation is unique. While it's impossible to pinpoint a single cause for suicide, several common factors are frequently associated with suicidal thoughts and behaviors. These include:

- **Mental Health Issues:** Mental health conditions, such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse disorders, can significantly increase the risk of suicide. These conditions can lead to feelings of hopelessness, despair, and intense emotional pain.
- **Psychological Factors:** Some individuals may experience overwhelming emotional distress or psychological pain that becomes unbearable. They may perceive suicide as a way to escape this pain and suffering.
- **Environmental and Life Stressors:** Difficult life circumstances, such as financial problems, relationship issues, bullying, academic or work-related stress, loss of a loved one, or a major life change (like a divorce or job loss), can contribute to feelings of hopelessness and despair.
- **Social Isolation:** Feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and a lack of support can increase the risk of suicide. People who feel disconnected from others may not have access to emotional support or resources.
- **Previous Suicide Attempts:** A history of previous suicide attempts is a significant risk factor for future attempts. Individuals who have survived previous attempts may continue to struggle with suicidal thoughts and behaviors.
- **Access to Lethal Means:** Easy access to lethal methods, such as firearms or medications, can increase the likelihood of a suicide attempt.
- **Lack of Access to Mental Health Care:** Limited access to mental health services or the stigma associated with seeking help can deter individuals from seeking treatment for their mental health issues.
- **Family History of Suicide:** A family history of suicide or a history of suicide among close friends can increase an individual's risk, potentially due to genetic, environmental, or learned factors.
- **Substance Abuse:** Substance abuse can impair judgment, exacerbate mental health issues, and increase impulsivity, making individuals more vulnerable to suicidal thoughts and actions.
- **Perceived Burden on Others:** Some people who contemplate suicide believe they are a burden to their loved ones and think that their death would relieve the perceived burden.
- **Cultural and Societal Factors:** Cultural and societal norms, beliefs, and attitudes about mental health and suicide can influence an individual's willingness to seek help or discuss their struggles openly.

**! If you or someone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts, seek help immediately from mental health professionals or crisis hotlines. Dial 988 for crisis support. Suicidal thoughts are treatable, and support is available to help individuals find hope and healing.**

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SUICIDE AWARENESS  
VOICES OF EDUCATION  
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# Suicide Grief: Making Meaning Out of Loss



Coping with the loss of a loved one to suicide is an incredibly challenging and painful experience. Finding meaning and healing in the aftermath of such a loss can be a complex and individual journey. Here are some strategies that may help you make meaning out of a suicide loss and begin the process of healing:

- **Seek Professional Help:** Consider working with a mental health professional, such as a therapist or counselor, who specializes in grief and loss. They can provide you with guidance and support tailored to your specific needs.
- **Connect with Support Groups:** Joining a support group for survivors of suicide loss can be immensely beneficial. These groups offer a safe space to share experiences, emotions, and coping strategies with others who have gone through similar experiences.
- **Educate Yourself:** Learning about suicide, mental health, and the factors that may have contributed to your loved one's struggles can help you gain a better understanding of their experience and reduce stigma.
- **Remember Your Loved One:** Create a meaningful way to remember and honor your loved one's life. This could include setting up a memorial, planting a tree, or participating in an event or charity in their memory.
- **Express Your Emotions:** Allow yourself to feel and express the range of emotions that accompany grief—sadness, anger, guilt, confusion, and more. It's essential to acknowledge and process these feelings rather than bottling them up.
- **Write or Journal:** Consider keeping a journal or writing letters to your loved one as a way to express your thoughts and feelings. This can be a therapeutic and private outlet for your emotions.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Caring for your physical and emotional well-being is crucial during the grieving process. Ensure you eat well, get regular exercise, and get enough rest.
- **Find Meaning in Helping Others:** Some people find meaning in their loss by using their experience to help others who may be struggling with mental health issues or who have experienced a similar loss. Volunteering for a mental health organization or suicide prevention program can be a way to give back and find purpose.
- **Rituals and Traditions:** Consider creating rituals or traditions that help you commemorate your loved one on special occasions, anniversaries, or holidays. These rituals can provide a sense of connection and continuity.
- **Accept That Healing Takes Time:** Grief is a unique and non-linear process. It's essential to be patient with yourself and allow time for healing. There is no set timeline for when you should feel better.
- **Seek Spiritual or Faith-Based Support:** If you have faith or are part of a religious community, you may find solace and support through your faith and spiritual practices.

Healing from a suicide loss is a deeply personal journey, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Seek the support and resources that resonate with you. Making meaning out of such a loss can be a long and difficult process, but with time and support, it is possible to find ways to remember and honor your loved one while moving toward healing and acceptance.

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# Providing Support to Someone Experiencing Suicide Loss



Supporting someone who has experienced a suicide loss can be challenging, but it's essential to be there for them during this difficult time. Here are some guidelines on how to appropriately help someone who is experiencing a suicide loss:

## Be there and listen:

- Offer your presence and a listening ear. Let the person know that you are there to support them whenever they need to talk or just be with someone.
- Avoid judgment, criticism, or trying to provide immediate solutions. Allow them to express their feelings and thoughts without interruption.

## Show empathy and understanding:

- Understand that they may be going through intense emotions like guilt, anger, confusion, and sadness. Let them know that these feelings are normal.
- Use empathetic statements such as, "I can't imagine what you're going through," or "I'm here for you, and I care about how you feel."

## Avoid insensitive comments:

- Be cautious with your choice of words. Avoid saying things like, "I know how you feel" or "It's for the best." Instead, acknowledge their pain without trying to compare or minimize it.

## Encourage professional help:

- Gently suggest that they seek professional help, such as therapy or counseling. Grief can be overwhelming, and trained professionals can provide valuable support.
- Offer to help them find a therapist or counselor if they're unsure where to start.

## Be patient:

- Understand that grief doesn't have a set timeline. People may grieve differently and at their own pace.
- Continue offering support even after some time has passed. Grief can resurface, especially around anniversaries or triggering events.

## Assist with practical matters:

- Offer assistance with practical tasks such as meal preparation, housework, or childcare if they're comfortable with it. Grieving individuals may struggle to focus on daily responsibilities.

## Encourage self-care:

- Remind them of the importance of self-care. Encourage them to eat well, get enough rest, and engage in activities that bring them comfort and relaxation.

## Stay connected:

- Continue reaching out regularly, even when it seems like they're doing better. Isolation can exacerbate feelings of grief and loneliness.

## Respect their privacy:

- Understand that they may not want to discuss the details of the suicide, and that's okay. Respect their boundaries and only offer support where they're comfortable.

## Educate yourself:

- Take the time to learn about suicide, grief, and mental health to better understand what your loved one is going through. This knowledge will help you offer more effective support.

Your role is to provide emotional support, not to "fix" the person's grief. Grieving is a unique and personal process, and your presence and empathy can make a significant difference in their healing journey. If you believe they are in immediate danger or need urgent help, do not hesitate to call emergency services or a crisis hotline.

# Common Misconceptions of Suicide



## MISCONCEPTIONS

### Suicide is a selfish act

Many people believe that those who die by suicide are selfish because they leave behind grieving loved ones. In reality, suicide is often a result of overwhelming emotional pain, and individuals who die by suicide may not be in a state of mind to consider the impact on others.

### Suicide can't be prevented

Suicide is preventable, and interventions can be effective. It's essential to provide support and resources to those in crisis and to seek professional help when needed.

### Talking about suicide may encourage the idea

Some people fear that discussing suicide openly will give someone the idea or permission to act on it. However, open and empathetic communication about suicide can actually be a crucial first step in helping someone who is struggling.

### Suicidal people just want attention


This is a harmful stereotype that dismisses the pain and struggles of individuals who are experiencing suicidal thoughts. Most people who contemplate suicide are dealing with genuine emotional pain and suffering.

### Suicide is a rational option for really bad situations

Suicide is often the result of distorted thinking, extreme emotional pain, and a sense of hopelessness. It is not a rational decision, but rather, a desperate response to overwhelming circumstances.

### It's impossible to know if someone is contemplating suicide

Many individuals who contemplate suicide may appear fine on the surface; however, they often do or say something that indicates they are struggling. Pay attention to these indicators (warning signs of suicide). Reach out to people who may be struggling, even if they seem outwardly okay.

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# Explaining Suicide to Children



A question often asked after the suicide of a loved one is "What should I tell the children?" The answer: the truth, regardless of how difficult it may be. Discussing a suicide death with children is a delicate and challenging matter. It's crucial to approach the conversation with sensitivity, honesty, and age-appropriate language. Here are some general guidelines you may follow:

## 1. Choose an Appropriate Setting:

- Find a quiet, private space where you can talk without interruptions.
- Ensure that the child feels safe and comfortable during the conversation.

## 2. Be Honest and Direct (Age-Appropriate):

- Use clear and simple language appropriate for the child's age.
- Be honest about the situation, but avoid graphic details or unnecessary information.

## 3. Use Empathetic Language:

- Express your own emotions to help them understand it's okay to feel sad, confused, or angry.
- Reassure them that their feelings are valid and that it's okay to ask questions.

## 4. Provide Reassurance:

- Emphasize that the child is not responsible for the death and couldn't have prevented it.
- Assure them of your love and support, and encourage them to share their feelings.

## 5. Encourage Questions:

- Let the child know that it's okay to ask questions and that you'll do your best to answer them truthfully.

## 6. Maintain Routine:

- Keep a sense of normalcy and routine in their daily lives as much as possible. Consistency can provide a sense of security.

## 7. Offer Professional Support:

- Suggest that they talk to a counselor, therapist, or a trusted adult who can provide additional support.

## 8. Monitor and Reassess:

- Keep an eye on their well-being and be prepared to revisit the conversation as needed.

Remember, these are general suggestions, and every child is unique. Professional guidance is crucial to ensure that you handle the situation appropriately based on the child's age, emotional maturity, and individual needs. It's also important to consider involving mental health professionals who specialize in grief and trauma to support both you and the child through this difficult time.

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# Suicide Loss Survivor Resources



In the aftermath of suicide loss, it's important to have resources and support. This page outlines specialized resources for suicide loss survivors, offering access to grief support groups, helplines, online communities, and more. We hope to provide assistance, understanding, and connection for individuals navigating the complexities of grief and loss.

## 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

- Dial 988
- 24/7 free confidential crisis support
- Visit: [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)

## Crisis Text Line

- Text "SAVE" to 741-741
- 24/7 confidential crisis support
- Visit: [crisistextline.org](https://crisistextline.org)

## Veterans Crisis Line

- Dial 988, then Press 1
- 24/7 confidential crisis support
- Visit: [veteranscrisisline.net](https://veteranscrisisline.net)

## AFSP - I've Lost Someone

- Provides resources, information, and support for loss survivors
- Visit: [afsp.org/ive-lost-someone](https://afsp.org/ive-lost-someone)

## Alliance of Hope

- Provides information sheets, a blog, and a community forum for loss survivors to share their stories and offer support
- Visit: [allianceofhope.org](https://allianceofhope.org)

## Local Resources

### SAMHSA Mental Health Resource Locator

- A resource for finding mental health resources local to you.
- Visit: [findsupport.gov](https://findsupport.gov)

## Friends for Survival

- Newsletter, support group, and helpline for loss survivors
- Toll Free Suicide Loss Helpline: 1-800-646-7322
- Visit: [friendsforsurvival.org/](https://friendsforsurvival.org/)

## Helpline Center

- Provides resources, information, and support for loss survivors
- Visit: [loss.helplinecenter.org](https://loss.helplinecenter.org)

## SAVE - Grief Support

- A directory of grief support resources
- Visit: [save.org/grief-support](https://save.org/grief-support)

## TAPS - You Are Not Alone

- Support and resources specific for military suicide loss survivors
- Visit: [taps.org/suicide](https://taps.org/suicide)

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