

Grief After a Suicide

What is Grief?

Grief changes your life
Grief is an emotion, not a disease
Grief is a natural reaction to death and loss
Grief can help us better understand who we are
Grief is a personal experience; no two people grieve the same way

The Grief due to a Death by Suicide is Difficult Because....

Suicide is generally not culturally acceptable and carries with it a stigma;
The question 'why' someone completed suicide often may be difficult to answer;
Feelings of guilt and shame are most often associated with a loss from suicide.

Normal Grief Feelings due to a Death by Suicide

You will feel many emotions after your loss. Freely give yourself permission to experience those emotions. You may have feelings that are not listed here. Like the waves of an ocean, your grief will sometimes be very powerful and overwhelming. At other times, your grief will seem more gentle and even comforting.

It is **okay** to feel **confused** and in **shock**.

- "Everything is so unreal."
- "This can't be happening to me."

It is **okay** to have feelings of **denial**.

- "Nothing has happened so I am going to act as if nothing has happened."
- "He/she is not dead so everything is going to be okay."

It is **okay** to have feelings of **shame**.

- "Everybody thinks I should have been able to prevent the suicide."
- "Maybe I would be better off dead too!"

It is **okay** to feel **guilty**.

- "I should have seen the signs and stopped the suicide."
- "If only I had ..."

It is **okay** to feel the **physical effects** of grief.

- "I can't sleep and I'm not hungry."
- "I have a headache, maybe I have a brain tumor."

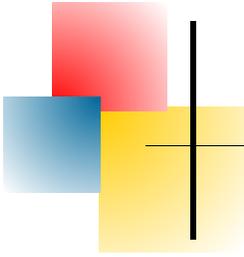
It is **okay** to feel **fear** and **abandonment**.

- "Am I capable of completing suicide?"
- "Is anyone else I know going to complete suicide?"

It is **okay** to feel **angry**.

The Suicide Resource Group, Wellington-Dufferin is dedicated to the reduction of suicide and suicidal behaviour and its impact on individuals, families, and communities.

If you find this fact sheet useful, please feel free to make copies and pass it along to others.
For more information about the Suicide Resource Group, please call 519-766-4450 x231



Grief After a Suicide Continued. . .

- **Self-directed:** "Why wasn't I able to prevent the suicide?"
- **Community-directed:** "Why couldn't they (doctors, counsellors) do something?"
- **Directed to the person who committed suicide:** "You have ruined my life!"

It is okay to feel **relief** and **happiness**.

- "Your suffering is over."
- "I remember the good times we had together."

Signs that You Need Some Help with your Grief

Ask yourself the following questions. Answer them honestly. It's okay to ask for help.

1. Are you becoming dependent on illegal or prescription drugs or alcohol since your loss? **Yes** _____ **No** _____ Drugs and alcohol numb the pain rather than helping you deal with your grief and move forward with your life.
2. Are you experiencing signs of depression over long periods of time? Signs of depression include constant crying, loss of interest in activities, family and friends, tendency to isolate yourself, preoccupation with suicidal thoughts, hopelessness and despair. **Yes** _____ **No** _____
3. Are you becoming overly involved with activities, family and friends as compared to before the suicide? **Yes** _____ **No** _____ Excessive busyness is a way of avoiding the pain of grief.
4. Are you preoccupied with the deceased or with the idea of death? **Yes** _____ **No** _____
5. Are you unable to carry out the simple day-to-day tasks of living? **Yes** _____ **No** _____
6. Are you becoming violent or acting out your feelings inappropriately? **Yes** _____ **No** _____

Reaching Out for Help

- **Talk, Talk, Talk.** Talk to someone that you trust. This person could be a family member, friend, teacher, clergy, counsellor or physician. Join a grief support group. Share your story over and over again.
- **Ask for Support.** This is not a sign of weakness but a sign of courage.
- **Keep a Journal or create a Scrapbook.** Write, draw or scribble your thoughts and feelings. There is no right or wrong way to journal or make a scrapbook.
- **Get creative or physically active:** Swim, go hiking, learn a new sport, paint, play an instrument, cook, write a poem or story.
- **Be yourself and take one day at a time.**