

## Why Suicide?

The death of someone close to you is one of life's most stressful events, but a loss of suicide is confusing and intense. The healing process will be painful, and often will seem unnaturally slow. Understanding your emotions, as well as learning about suicide in general, may ease your grief.

Approximately one out of four people know someone whom has died by suicide. People of all ages, races and genders die by suicide. No one is immune to this tragedy.

Mental health professionals have been searching for years to find the answer as to why someone would take their own life, and they generally agree that people who take their lives feel trapped by what they perceive as a hopeless situation.



## Looking Ahead

Your grief and sadness will eventually subside, and you *will* be able to pick up the pieces of your life again and rebuild. There will be times, however, when your feelings will surface very strongly. Holidays, or other special times, may renew your sadness, especially that first year.

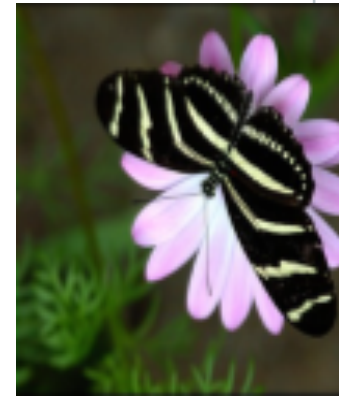
You do not have to grieve alone. Reach out and find a local support group to share these feelings with. Feeling understood and supported is invaluable in your path to looking ahead.



For a listing of SOS support groups in the Phoenix area:

[www.empact-spc.com](http://www.empact-spc.com)

## Grief After Suicide



## Making Sense of How To Survive

Survivors of Suicide

A program of



EMPACT-Suicide Prevention Center  
Tempe, AZ  
480-784-1514, ext. 1108

*Adapted from, "Grief After Suicide", published by  
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# Support

*You don't have to grieve alone.*

## Grief After Suicide

Whatever the reality, whatever the emotional support, our loved ones felt isolated and cut off from life, and the people around them. Even if no physical illness was present, suicide victims feel intense pain, anguish, and hopelessness. There can be a host of reasons for turning to suicide, and sometimes there are no apparent causes at all. No matter how long and hard you search for the reason, you won't be able to answer the "WHY?" that haunts you.

Each suicide is different, regardless of the generalizations and speculations from others, and there may be no way you will completely understand your loved one's thought process. Suicide is often irrational and impulsive. Suicide victims often cannot see the love and support that surrounds them from friends and family, but are only able to focus on ending their relentless pain. Therefore, suicide is most commonly not about us, but instead about bringing an end to what feels like a hopeless situation.

Shock, anger and guilt are normal reactions to grief from suicide. You may feel numb for a while, perhaps unable to follow normal daily routines. This shock is healthy and protects you

in the few days and weeks after your loss. Take time to be alone during this time if needed, but be mindful not to isolate yourself.

As a relative or loved one coping with a suicide death, you may experience anger, often directed at the deceased – "How could he do this to me?" If the deceased was receiving medical care you may ask, "Why didn't THEY prevent it?" You may be mad at God. The anger may be self-directed - "What could I have done?" Don't try to deny this anger. It is a natural consequence of the hurt and rejection that you feel. If you deny this anger it could come out in other ways that are unhealthy to you, and those around you.

This anger is closely linked with the feelings of guilt. If the suicide victim is someone you had regular close contact, your guilt will possibly be intense. It is normal to think, "I wish I would have," or "Maybe I should have..." However, try not to criticize yourself too harshly for your behavior towards your loved one. We all like to think that we can help our troubled friends and family, and we do try. But, a person determined to die by suicide often hides their intent from others, and is likely to accomplish their goal.

## Q&A

**How do I talk to children about suicide?** Every child will be aware of death of someone in their lives, and they need an opportunity to ask questions and get truthful answers. If you're reluctant to talk about suicide – what it means and how it happened- remember that the children are likely to hear about it from *other* sources, and their confusion will be intensified. You will need to let them know that the deceased had many problems, and was sick, without giving them reason to suspect that they were the cause in any way. They also need assurance that YOU will be with them for a long time to come.

### **Stigma – What do I tell people?**

Stigma and shame are a big part of this grief. Your friends may be uncomfortable talking about the death. Generally friends are well meaning but they may not want to overwhelm you, or pry. Regardless of the reaction that this suicide gets from those around you, it is important to confront the word. Practice thinking, hearing and saying "suicide." Find a small number of people to surround you and support you, and lean on them for emotional support. You are NOT burdening them. They feel helpful helping you.