



Resources for Suicide Survivors

There are so many questions surrounding a death by suicide, and some of the questions are likely to remain unanswered, yet there can be healing even when questions remain.

In many ways the bereavement process is like that following any death, but because of the complications suicide brings, it is helpful for the survivors of suicide to seek support.

We hope you will take the time to reach out to find the help you need.

If you have immediate counseling needs, Riverbend Community Mental Health, Inc. offers 24 hour Emergency Services (603) 226-0817 or visit www.riverbendcmhc.org

Books

- *Healing After the Suicide of a Loved One*, Ann Smolin and John Guinan
- *Retelling Violent Death*, Edward Rynearson, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Washington and the Medical Director of the Homicide Support Project in Seattle
- *Standing in the Shadow: Help and Encouragement for Suicide Survivors*, June Cerza Kolf
- *After Suicide Loss Coping With Your Grief*, Bob Baugher and Jack London
- *Finding Your Way After the Suicide of Someone You Love*, David Biebel and Suzanne Foster
- *After a Parents Suicide: Helping Children Heal*, Margo Requarth

Other Resources

The [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](http://www.afsp.org) is a valuable resource with information that will help you cope with this loss.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Eastern Division Office

PO Box 129, Hudson MA

Kimberly Gleason, Eastern Division Director: (978) 568-0818 (no fax)

Boston Chapter: (617) 439-0940 (no fax)

www.afsp.org

(Go to the website and select “Surviving Suicide Loss” on the left hand column to find resources.)

In addition, these organizations offer resources for suicide survivors.

American Association of Suicidology

Wisconsin Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20015

Phone: (202) 237-2280

www.suicidology.org/

(Select “Suicide Loss Survivors.”)

National Alliance on Mental Illness— New Hampshire

15 Green Street, Concord, NH 03301

(603) 225-5359 or (800) 242-6264

www.naminh.org/

(Select “Resources” and then scroll down to “Suicide.”)

Grief following a suicide is always complicated. Don't expect to "get over it." But know that with support and help you can do more than survive. You can grow and thrive.

From the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention website:

Survivors often experience a wide range of grief reactions, including some or all of the following:

- Shock is a common immediate reaction. You may feel numb or disoriented, and may have trouble concentrating.
- Symptoms of depression, including disturbed sleep, loss of appetite, intense sadness, and lack of energy.
- Anger toward the deceased, another family member, a therapist, or yourself.
- Relief, particularly if the suicide followed a long and difficult mental illness.
- Guilt, including thinking, "If only I had...."
- These feelings usually diminish over time, as you develop your ability to cope and begin to heal.

Many people say they found great comfort and help from talking with others at various stages of healing from similar losses.

You are not alone!

There are roughly **32,000** suicides annually in the U.S. It is estimated that for every suicide there are 6 survivors. So, approximately **5 million** Americans became survivors of suicide in the last 25 years! (From the American Association of Suicidology website.)

Because of the complicated feelings surrounding death by suicide, survivors find it especially helpful to talk to others who have navigated the journey toward healing after suicide. We encourage you to reach out for help so you aren't trying to make this journey alone.

From the American Association of Suicidology website.

The loss of a loved one by suicide is often shocking, painful, and unexpected. The grief that ensues can be intense, complex, and long term. Grief work is an extremely individual and unique process; each person will experience it in their own way and at their own pace.

Grief does not follow a linear path. Furthermore, grief doesn't always move in a forward direction.

There is no time frame for grief. Survivors should not expect that their lives will return to their prior state. Survivors aim to adjust to life without their loved one.

Common emotions experienced in grief are shock, denial, pain, guilt, anger, shame, despair, disbelief, hopelessness, stress, sadness, numbness, rejection, loneliness, abandonment, confusion, self-blame, anxiety, helplessness, and depression.

These feelings are normal reactions and the expression of them is a natural part of grieving. At first, and periodically during the following days/months of grieving, survivors may feel overwhelmed by their emotions. It is important to take things one day at a time.

Crying is the expression of sadness; it is therefore a natural reaction after the loss of a loved one.

Many have walked this road before you. There are resources to help. There are people to help - people who have been through similar experiences and want to help others heal.