



*Have You Lost Someone to Suicide?*  
***Support after Suicide***

*In memory of all those who left us early*

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*Mental health for all*

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## Have you lost someone to suicide?

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If you recently lost someone to suicide, you may be experiencing indescribable pain and/or confusion.

*It is not your fault*

*You are not alone*

Let others help you. It can be difficult to ask for help, but please do it. Coping with the feelings is much easier if you let other people help you. It can be friends, family members, elders or a professional.

HELP is available if and when you want it.<sup>1</sup>

*Helpline 1-800-667-5005 (24 hours / 7 days a week)*

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## What Now ?

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*Surround yourself with family and friends for support*

*Do not be afraid to ask for help*

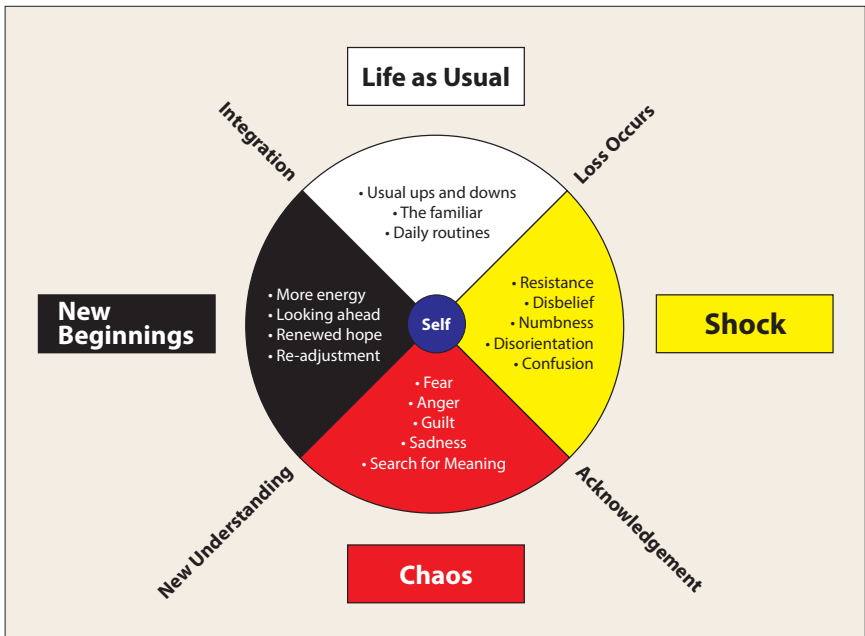
*For every death by suicide, seven to 10 people are profoundly affected. This means that, each year in Canada, up to 40,000 people are newly bereaved to suicide loss.<sup>5</sup>*

# Working through the grief

Mourning the death of someone who died by suicide usually requires the support of others. No one should expect to do it alone. Grief is more complicated when a death is sudden. There is no chance to say good-bye. Surround yourself with loved ones for support.

Everyone is different, and everyone reacts differently.

Over time, grief will become less intense. Take your time to grieve.<sup>2</sup>



Grieving Wheel: [http://www.hospiceyukon.net/L\\_G\\_Wheel.html](http://www.hospiceyukon.net/L_G_Wheel.html)

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## Start the healing process<sup>1</sup>

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Do not isolate yourself. Although you may feel the need to be alone, prolonged isolation may contribute to increased feelings of loneliness and separation.

Survivors of suicide loss often identify that connecting and sharing with another survivor of suicide loss is one of the most helpful connections in the aftermath of a suicide.

Grieving takes energy, so forgive yourself when you can't do all the things you think "you should" do.

Take time for yourself. Each person is unique. Use your alone time to think, plan, meditate, pray or write a daily journal.

Feel free to share openly with others, and don't be afraid of your thoughts and feelings.

There may be days throughout the years when coping with the loss of your loved one is especially difficult. These instances may include the anniversary of the death, birthdays and holidays.

Plan ahead and talk to people who are supporting you. If you are feeling overwhelmed at times, it is ok to ask for help from family and friends.

Sometimes it helps to talk with a professional. Counselling may be available through your family doctor, work place, school or, religious group. It may also be available through your local Addition and Mental Health Services clinic.

Remember to take one moment or one day at a time.

*Don't be afraid to cry*

*Tears are healing*

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## Long term healing<sup>1</sup>

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Although the pain of losing a loved one to suicide will never go away completely, you can learn to cope. With time, life will become easier as you find your new normal. Following are some hints that you may find helpful:

- **Share memories.** It helps to share memories, especially when you talk to someone else who also knew him or her.
- **Try to keep your daily routine.** Slowly resume your regular routine.
- **Take part in activities that make you feel good and provide you with meaningful experiences.**
- **Exercise.** This will help reduce the tension and stress you may be feeling.
- **Keep a journal.** Writing is an excellent way to express yourself and help you with your thoughts.
- **Rest and eat to maintain good health.**
- **Consider faith.** For some people, faith and spirituality support are needed and offer relief.
- **Consider taking up a hobby.** Interest in a hobby and/or sport may help you find a “new normal.”

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## Dealing with the stigma of suicide<sup>3</sup>

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- STIGMA is one of the biggest barriers in the grief process for survivors of suicide.
- STIGMA is a form of prejudice that spreads fear and misinformation.
- SUICIDE STIGMA is an important issue for anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide.

Social stigma and prejudice create misconceptions. Some people are taught from childhood that suicidal people are shameful, sinful, weak, selfish, and manipulative or even dangerous. We know that this is not true, but some people still have this belief.

- Sometimes friends and family want to help you but do not know what to say or do.
- They may feel uncomfortable talking about suicide because of the stigma attached to it.
- Tell people it is okay to talk about it.



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## Helping children cope with suicide loss<sup>4, 5</sup>

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One of the most difficult decisions that adults face is what to tell the children about a suicide. Finding an age appropriate response to the truth of the cause of death is the direction that most experts will advocate.

- There is no need to go into the details of the death but speaking in broad terms in child friendly language is important.
- Children thrive when they are raised in an environment where they can trust the adults with whom they interact. Protecting children from the truth can undermine trust and create a legacy of secrecy and shame that persists for generations.
- Children may not want to talk much about the suicide. They may worry that the suicide is somehow their fault. Reassure them that they are not responsible and that nothing they said or did caused the suicide.
- Be prepared to talk about the suicide many times during the next few days and weeks and indeed throughout your child's life.
- As children move through the developmental levels, they will come to understand the death differently and will cycle back and appear to grieve all over as the impact of the loss hits them at deeper and broader levels.
- Let your children know they can choose to talk with you now or later about how they are feeling.
- That they can also choose to talk to someone they trust.

***Kids Help Phone***  
***1-800-668-6868***

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## Supporting a survivor<sup>1</sup>

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Sometimes it is difficult for someone who is grieving to reach out to other people for support.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind while being supportive:

- Be patient and respect the need to grieve.
- Let them know you are there for them and ready to listen if and when they are ready to talk.
- Educate yourself about suicide to overcome preconceptions you may have about suicide or any discomfort you may feel.
- Avoid saying “I know how you feel.”
- Offer to attend survivor support groups with him or her.
- Run errands and/or cook a meal for them. Small acts go a long way.
- Realize that when someone loses someone close to them to suicide, they may grieve for some time. We all grieve at a different pace.
- Keep an open mind and be there for them.

*Thank you for being there for them*

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## Suicide survivor's bill of rights

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*JoAnn C. Mecca*

I have the right to be free of guilt.

I have the right not to feel responsible for the suicide death.

I have the right to express my feelings and emotions, even if they do not seem acceptable, as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others.

I have the right to have my questions answered honestly by authorities and family members.

I have the right not to be deceived because others feel they can spare me further grief.

I have the right to maintain a sense of hopefulness.

I have the right to peace and dignity.

I have the right to positive feelings about the one I lost through suicide, regardless of the events prior to or at the time of the untimely death.

I have the right to retain my individuality and not be judged because of the suicide death.

I have the right to seek counselling and a support group to enable me to honestly explore my feelings to further the acceptance process.

I have the right to reach acceptance.

I have the right to a new beginning.

I have the right to be.<sup>6</sup>

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## References

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1. Booklet: Have you lost someone to suicide? Support After Youth Suicide. In loving memory of Adam Cashen. Printed in Halifax, Nova Scotia; 2009. <http://teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/lost-someone-suicide/>
2. Grieving Wheel  
[http://www.hospiceyukon.net/L\\_G\\_Wheel.html](http://www.hospiceyukon.net/L_G_Wheel.html)
3. Stigma of Suicide  
<http://www.suicide.org/stigma-and-suicide.html>  
[http://suicideinfo.ca/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=\\_\\_sUYZSykYs%3D&tabid=478](http://suicideinfo.ca/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=__sUYZSykYs%3D&tabid=478)
4. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
<http://www.afsp.org/coping-with-suicide-loss/where-do-i-begin/helping-children-understand>
5. Canadian Association of Suicide Prevention  
<http://suicideprevention.ca/>  
<http://suicideprevention.ca/grieving/suicide-grief-in-children/>
6. Suicide Survivor's Bill of Rights  
[http://www.suicidefindinghope.com/content/suicide\\_survivors\\_bill\\_of\\_rights](http://www.suicidefindinghope.com/content/suicide_survivors_bill_of_rights)

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## Helpful resources

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### *Local Addiction and Mental Health Services:*

Bathurst.....	547-2110	Perth-Andover.....	273-4701
Campbellton.....	789-2440	Richibucto.....	523-7620
Caraquet.....	726-2030	Sackville.....	856-2444
Edmundston.....	735-2070	Saint John.....	658-3737
Fredericton.....	453-2132	Shediac.....	523-7620
Grand Falls.....	475-2440	Shippagan.....	336-3367
Grand Manan.....	662-7023	St. Stephen.....	466-7380
Kedgwick.....	284-3431	St. George.....	755-4044
Miramichi.....	778-6111	Sussex.....	432-2090
Moncton - (Horizon).....	856-2444	Tracadie-Sheila.....	394-3760
Moncton - (Vitalité).....	862-4144	Woodstock.....	325-4419

<http://leftbehindbysuicide.org/>

<http://www.nb.cmha.ca>

<http://www.casp-acps.ca>

**CASP: 1-204-784-4073**

**CHIMO helpline: 1-800-667-5005**

**Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868**

**Tele-Care: 811**