

SUICIDE IS NOT INHERITED.

Suicide may occur more than once within a family but it is not something that is inherited. In a family, or even among friends, suicide may establish a destructive model or a behavior to imitate. Thoughts of your own suicide are not an uncommon reaction to the suicide of someone you love and may surface immediately, or years later. A fleeting thought now and then shouldn't cause alarm. But extended depression and continuing suicidal thoughts need immediate attention. Don't hesitate to seek out professional help if problems seem more than you can handle alone.

LOOKING AHEAD

Your grief and sadness will eventually subside and you will be able to pick up the pieces of your life and rebuild.

There will be times however when these feelings will surface very strongly. Holidays or other special times may renew your sadness. Especially for the first year you'll need to decide if you want to maintain traditions you shared with the deceased or if you want new settings and activities to ease painful memories

You may not be able to avoid these periods of sadness, but whenever possible try to plan ahead so that they won't be overwhelming.

Sometimes your loneliness and sadness may come back for no special reason. Be prepared to face this also.

HOW COMMON IS SUICIDE?

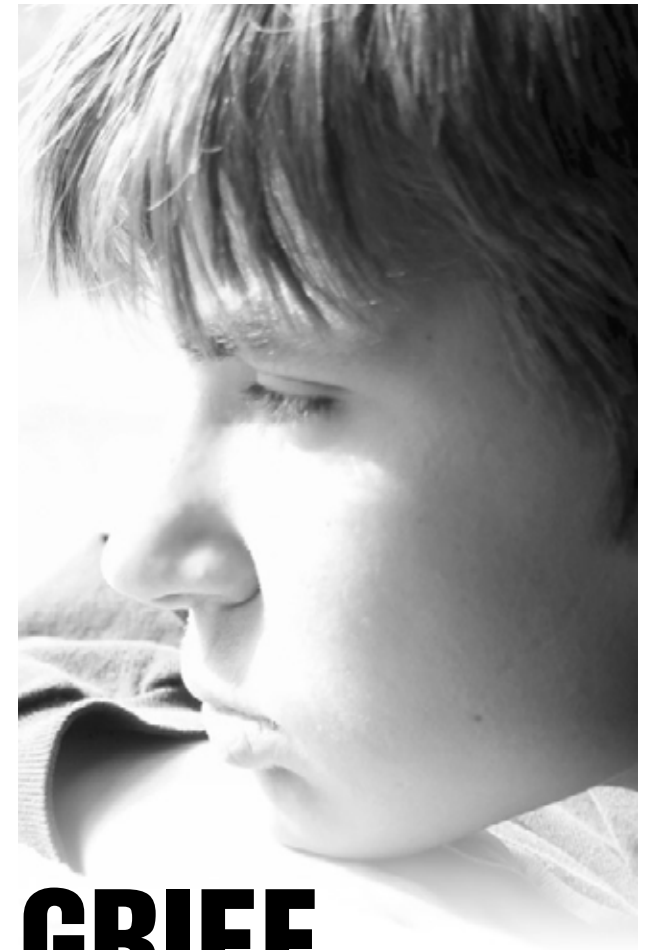
At least one out of four people knows someone who has committed suicide. The deceased leaves behind a network of family and close friends who must cope with the same inner turmoil that you are probably trying to understand and cope with now.

YOU CAN'T EXPECT TO FORGET,
BUT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO
COPE.

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GRIEF AFTER SUICIDE



WHY SUICIDE?

People of all ages complete suicide, men and women as well as young children, the rich as well as the poor. No one is immune to this tragedy.

Why would anyone willingly hasten or cause their own death? They may have felt trapped by what they thought of as a hopeless situation. Whatever the reality, whatever the emotional support provided, they felt isolated and cut off from life, friendships, etc. Even if no physical illness was present, suicide victims felt intense pain, anguish and hopelessness.

No matter how long and hard you search for a reason, you may never answer the "WHY" that haunts you. Each suicide is individual regardless of the generalizations about the "whys", and there may be no way you will completely understand the suicide victim's thought process.

INITIAL SHOCK

Shock is the first reaction to death. You may feel numb for a while, perhaps unable to follow a normal daily routine. This shock is healthy, protecting you from the initial pain of loss, and it may help you get through funeral arrangements and services. It may last a few days or go on for several weeks.

ANGER

You may experience anger, often directed at the deceased. Don't try to deny or hide this anger. It is a natural consequence of the hurt and rejection you feel. If you deny your anger, it could come out in other possibly more destructive ways and prolong the healing process.

Your anger with the deceased is normal when the manner of death is suicide. The deceased has thrown your emotions into turmoil, and caused pain for you and others you care about.

Anger with the medical or mental health profession can occur if the suicide victim was receiving treatment or therapy. These professionals will be the first to recognize that your anger is a valid emotion. Don't deny your anger. Talk about it, think about it, and constructively deal with it.

GUILT

Perhaps you were aware of the deceased's suicidal feelings and you did try to help. You may have noticed they seemed to be feeling a lot better. It's not uncommon for a suicidal person to feel better once the decision to die has been made. The problem has not been resolved, but the victim has found an answer - suicide.

RELIEF

If you were closely involved with the deceased, perhaps their pain and suffering had become an emotional drain on you. You may have felt burdened or just exhausted from being involved with an intense situation. Now you may be feeling a sense of relief that you won't have to worry any more. This feeling is normal. Even when the 'end' is an unhappy one, the relief can still be there, but now it is colored with guilt. Accept your relief and don't let it grow to inappropriate guilt.



STIGMA: (WHAT DO I TELL PEOPLE?)

If your friends seem uncomfortable talking about the death or even being with you, it's most likely the type of discomfort felt when facing death of any kind.

If you're not comfortable talking about the circumstances to others, don't. Your close friends will already know; let others simply respond to the death of your loved one. You don't need to share the complete story.

It is however very important that you do confront the word "suicide". The healing and coping process requires that you talk about your feelings that you are carrying around inside of you. Let friends and relatives help you. You may be blaming yourself in some way but there are people who will share your sorrow and help you see things more clearly.

TALKING TO CHILDREN

Even young children will be aware of the death of someone in their lives and they need an opportunity to ask questions and to get truthful answers. The children are likely to hear about it from 'other sources' and their confusion will be intensified if they have not had some communication from you. You will need to let them know that the suicide victim was unhappy without giving the impression that death is the answer to unhappiness. They need assurance that you will be with them for a long time.

Children may need some time, perhaps a few days or more, to think about the death. Children, like adults, need to talk about their feelings about the suicide. Just as you need emotional, nonjudgmental support from someone, your children need your support at this time.
