



COPING AFTER SUICIDE

Information for Young People

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

It hurts when someone you love or someone who was important to you dies. The loss and the hurt leave you grieving, which can be painful and frightening, and it may seem like everything is out of control. There are many reactions to grief. Some of these can include:

- Emotions, such as anger, guilt, depression, fear, confusion, sadness, fear, feeling unloved and loneliness.
- Changes in your behaviour, including difficulty concentrating, not wanting to go out, crying, withdrawing from people and not being bothered with schoolwork or chores; and
- Physical changes, such as headaches, problems sleeping, exhaustion, a dry mouth and stomach aches.

You may feel some of these, or you may not, you may not know what you are experiencing – It might be a time of “nothingness” or emptiness. It’s okay to feel this way. Everyone’s grief will be different, and how they express it will be different. There is no right way or wrong way to grieve. Suicide presents us with additional challenges in understanding or accepting death. When someone takes their own life you may have intense thoughts about:

- Searching for “why”; trying to make sense of it all. This can sometimes lead to blaming others or blaming one thing that happened.
- Regrets and guilt – “If only I’d done something different”. “Couldn’t someone have stopped it?”
- Anger and rejection – “How could he/she do this to me?”
- Feeling suicidal. If you feel like this it is important to talk to someone who can help. Often people who consider suicide see no other way to solve their problems.
- Remember there is always someone to talk to and other ways to deal with your distress.

THINGS THAT MIGHT HELP WHEN YOU ARE GRIEVING

Just as there is a range of ways to express your grief, there is a range of ways to cope with it. Some of these include talking, being with friends, listening to music, laughing, talking with a counsellor, hugging, writing down your thoughts, praying, getting involved with school activities and exercising. One of the most important things to do is talk to someone you can trust. Tell your friends what you need from them. They care about you, but they might not know what to say or do. Sharing the pain with others can also help. Make a list of people you can talk to. This might include your parents, a friend, teacher, neighbour, a close friend’s parents, doctor, guidance officer, school nurse or a counsellor.



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When things are feeling overwhelming or you just need to share your thoughts, contact someone. Drugs and alcohol do not help. Many people take them hoping to ease the pain, but they can actually make your grief worse both now and in the long run. Try to find healthier ways of coping with your loss. It takes time to heal. The intense pain does not go on forever – it does soften. Gradually there will be more good days than bad days. This does not mean that you will forget and stop loving the person who died. You might find that significant dates such as anniversaries of the person’s death or their birthday are harder for you to deal with. This is all a normal part of grieving.

THE VIEWING AND FUNERAL

The viewing and the funeral are important opportunities to remember the person who has died, express grief and to say goodbye. You might like to be involved in a range of ways, such as drawing pictures, writing letters or poems, playing a special song, or taking a special item to the funeral and placing it on the coffin. You may also wish to commemorate the life of your loved one after the funeral using some of the ways listed above. It is important to try and remember them in a positive way.

Different cultures may express their loss in ways unfamiliar to you. It is important to respect the need of family members to express their grief in ways appropriate to their culture and background of these people, even if it is not the way you would do so.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Kids Help Line

Free call 1800 551 800
24 hour crisis line for young people

Parentline (Qld Only)

Freecall 1300 301 300
10 – 12pm (7 days)

If you experience ongoing mood swings or difficulties coping, you can access a Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CYMHS). For your local clinics, look under Health in the White Pages.

Books & Other Resources

Teenagers Talk about Suicide M Crook, 1988. Available for free borrowing from the Library of Metropolitan Funerals, Aspley Branch. Ph (07) 3263 5044
Coping With Grief Mal and Di McKissock. ABC Bookstores
It was Suicide! The questions it raises for those left behind Lifeline Ph 131114

Websites

ReachOut! www.reachout.asn.au
Kids Help Line www.kidshelp.com.au
Grieflink www.grieflink.asn.au

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