

Loss | *Tip sheet*

# Coping with a Death by Suicide of a Relative, Friend or Co-worker

Whatever your relationship, when someone you know dies as a result of suicide, it's common to experience intense grief, confusion and possibly guilt. Suicide is a tragic and unexpected event that leaves many people struggling with unanswered questions, difficult emotions and unique challenges when it comes to emotional healing.

**After the loss of someone close, it's normal to wonder:**

Why did they do it?

Why didn't they ask for help?

What could I have done to prevent this? Is it my fault?

Didn't they know how much I would miss them?

It's a natural part of the grieving process to question death. When the death is the result of a suicide, the questions are unique and the feelings are intense.

You may question your relationship with the individual, and the professionals who may have been treating the person. You may feel conflicted about your faith and may seek answers from every imaginable source. In the end, you may find that no one really has all of the answers except the person that died.

Gradually, as part of healing, you'll likely begin to accept that not all questions can be answered. You may also come to realize that any knowledge you gain won't change what happened. Sometimes, it can be helpful to simply accept that, "I don't know why and maybe I'll never know."

As time passes, you may find it helpful to ask new questions... ones you can answer that can help you move forward and heal. Instead of asking "Why?" ask yourself, "What will I do now?" and "How am I going to cope with this loss?"

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### What are some of the common grief reactions?

**Emotional swings** – You'll likely feel a jumble of emotions like shock, denial, anger, sadness, confusion, shame and guilt.

**Blaming yourself** – Survivors can feel they failed their loved one and resort to self-blame and more guilt.

**Lack of concentration** – With your mind preoccupied, you may become less focused and more forgetful.

**Tearfulness** – You may be prone to bouts of crying or tearing up unexpectedly.

**Sadness that manifests as other emotions** – Intense sadness can exhibit as irritability, fear and anxiety.

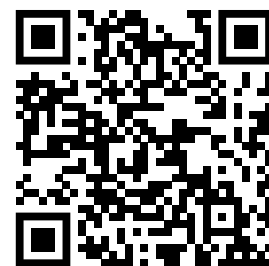
**Empty feelings** – Loss from suicide can leave survivors feeling empty inside, abandoned and lonely.

A death of a relative, friend or co-worker is difficult enough to cope with for those left behind. A death by suicide can be unbearable and deeply confusing. Don't keep your feelings bottled up or think that it's best to "go it alone." If emotional support is offered, accept it. If you need it, ask for it. It's absolutely okay and normal to need comforting or seek help from a professional.

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