



SUICIDE LOSS

Helping Yourself

"Death by suicide is not a gentle deathbed gathering; it rips apart lives and beliefs, and it sets its survivors on a prolonged and devastating journey."

~ Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison

- Get help. It's common to feel like you are alone in your grief. Support groups—especially for suicide loss survivors--bring together people who have lived through what you are experiencing. Individual support/counseling can also be very helpful.
- The wide range of difficult emotions and possible trauma you may feel is very common: guilt, deep sorrow, fear, a crisis of faith, blame, anger, rage, recurring thoughts about the death, abandonment and helplessness.
- In your own time, deal with the facts of the suicide. The longer they are avoided or denied, the harder the recovery will be. Get the facts straight; it is important to be honest with yourself and face the fact that the death was a suicide.
- Don't be afraid to say the word suicide. It may take time, but keep trying.
- Read recommended literature on suicide and grief. The reading will offer understanding and suggestions for coping.
- Your grieving process will not be linear and acceptance of this loss is likely to be a more complex process than it would be if your loved one had died of something else.
- Don't assume that everyone is blaming you or thinking ill thoughts of you. They may see your pain and grief, but are uncomfortable about what to say or how to say it.
- Be prepared for seemingly cruel and thoughtless words from relatives and friends. They are experiencing their own anger, pain and frustration and may not vent their feelings in gentle ways.
- You may want to "forget" about the suicide and not talk about it. Studies show this is the least effective and usually most damaging approach to dealing with your feelings and questions. You need to express them so they can be faced and dealt with.
- Suicide carries a stigma in our culture. It is often the result of untreated mental illness, and/or his/her problems became too overwhelming to be able to sort out other possible options.
 - People may be afraid to talk with you about your loved one's death.
- Learn to think of your loved one *by the way they lived* rather than the way they died.
- It's OK for you to live again. It is what your loved one would want for you.

"When my son committed suicide, I experienced the same things that all other suicide families experience—friends avoiding us, people judging us, little 'pep talks' from clueless coworkers about 'moving on' and maintaining a 'professional attitude' at work (which, I found, means never cry, never appear to be having a bad day, at least not after six months)..."

~Mother interviewed by Hollander, Journal of Loss and Trauma (1999)

WinterSpring is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit with a mission to help children, teens and adults, who are experiencing the pain of loss, to embrace life again.

Call us at 541-552-0620 or visit our website: www.winterspring.org