



TOBIN BROTHERS FUNERALS

Celebrating Lives SINCE 1934



Surviving Suicide...
Beginning to work through your grief

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the devastating loss of a loved one to suicide, the pain can be profound and the journey ahead may seem insurmountable. This brochure aims to offer guidance, support, and understanding for those left behind, providing steps towards healing and resilience in the face of this tragedy.

The first step towards healing is understanding that suicide is a complex, multi-faceted issue influenced by various factors. It's essential to realise that the act itself is not a sign of personal failure, but often a result of internal struggles and mental health challenges.

Grief following a suicide can be particularly intense and complicated. It's important to acknowledge and embrace the various stages of grief; allow yourself the time and space to grieve in your way and at your pace. Remember, it's okay not to be okay. You're not alone in this journey and seeking support can be crucial to healing.

For 24 hour service and enquiries, contact us at info@tobinbrothers.com.au or phone : 13 19 34

Mixed emotions that come with grief:

You are experiencing one of the most devastating events that can occur – the death of a significant person in your life through suicide. You, as a survivor of suicide, have not only the huge grief of losing someone you love but also the violence of suicide, the unanswered questions and many conflicting feelings to come to terms with.

This can be a confusing time and a range of emotions may be felt one by one, or all at once, you may feel some of these emotions from the start, or they may take you by surprise along your grief journey. There is no right or wrong way to feel or to grieve, our hope is that this helps you to process and move through your emotions in this difficult time.

Shock and Denial: You may be in shock and feel numb. You may not be able to believe what has happened: “this is just a bad dream”. Shock is nature’s way of protecting us from the full impact of such tragic news. In time, when you (not others), are ready, and you can manage it, you will find a way to accept it.

Guilt and Blame: You may believe you were responsible for the suicide. You may think that if you had picked up on the warning signs you could have prevented the suicide. Or you may be looking at others to blame. These are normal responses in trying to understand why and wishing it could be different. Common to everyone who commits suicide is mental illness and psychological pain that they can see no other way out of. There are many factors over time which contribute to a person committing the act. There is not one event, one moment, one person or any particular people at fault.

Suicidal thoughts: It is normal to have suicidal thoughts yourself following the suicide of a close relative or friend. The desire to escape the pain and be with the person you have lost may seem like a reasonable solution to meet your need to be close to them again.

Anger and betrayal: You may feel betrayed by yourself or others. Anger may be self-directed: “why wasn’t I there that night?”. It may be directed at others, doctors, counsellors, teachers or friends: “Why didn’t they stop him?” It may also be directed at the person who suicided: “How could they do this to me?” This is also a natural response.

Stigma and Shame: Shame, whether real or imagined, may cause you to feel alienated and like you need to withdraw from the outside world. You may feel as though you’re a failure and your self-esteem may be low. You may attempt to lie about the circumstances surrounding the death. It is important to realise that talking realistically about what has happened and sharing your feelings with trusted friends and family will best assist you in your grief resolution. It is also important to share the truth in a simple and appropriate way with children.

Behavioural Changes: Tiredness, sleep disturbances, mood swings, anxiety, and difficulty in concentrating and changes in appetite are all normal reactions to traumatic loss. Replaying the incident over and over to try to comprehend what has happened is common.

Remember:

All these issues are normal for short periods of time. However if they continue to impact your life and those around you for over 6 months, or if at anytime you feel stuck or have long term problems with sleep or returning to normal activities, it is helpful to seek further support.

TEN TOOLS FOR GRIEVING:

Make time: Grief is a healing process for a wound caused by a loss. It is the process that is supported by some of the following: reflection, withdrawal, rest, crying, self nurturing and productive actions that reconstruct or maintain our lives.

Accept your feelings: Be patient and accept the feelings and questions that will arise.

Remind yourself that these feelings and questions are normal: They are there to help you reconstruct a new life and understand the loss.

Look after your health: Rest, exercise, eat nourishing meals and drink plenty of water.

Emotions are energy in motion: Let emotions flow by talking or writing about your experience. Act in constructive ways on your feelings. For example: hug, draw, build, dance, sing, finish things or change something for the better in the name of the person you have lost.

Spend time with your memories: Find a safe place to remember your loved one. Take time to reflect upon dreams, questions, thoughts and feelings.

Remember you are not to blame: The act was theirs, not yours.

Allow friends, family and professionals to help: Sitting alone with shame, guilt, anger and regret can slow or stop the healing of grief. If you don't know what to do with these feelings seek help from someone you trust or see a professional therapist.

Accept: Accept that you can never fully discover all the reasons 'why' suicide was chosen.

Practice rituals: On anniversaries, remember the good times, keep your connection to them alive and let go of the trauma and pain e.g. light a candle, put on special music, walk in a beautiful place.

CONVERSATIONS WITH SURVIVING CHILDREN

This is by no means a one size fits all script, but rather, some phrases that may assist in breaking the news and opening up a conversation with surviving children.

- Prepare the child with "I have something very important to tell you"
- Keep it simple and to the point e.g. "He died from suicide which means he killed himself"
- Explain what that means. this happens when someone has a disease of the brain called depression or anxiety. He was very sick and there was nothing you or anyone could do to help.
- Make sure the child knows the person loved them very much by remembering good times together.
- Let them ask questions and if you don't know what to say or the answer, just say that. There are some things in life we can't know. It is okay for you to cry just not so much that the child needs to worry if you are alright.
- Give them an opportunity to be involved in the funeral, at anniversaries and at celebrations, so they can talk about them if they would like to. It is important that the person never becomes a taboo topic and is instead remembered for the important role they played in the child's life.

THE FUNERAL

Often the first reaction is to arrange for the funeral to take place as quickly and quietly as possible. There may be feelings of shame and so a private family service may be planned. It is important not to overlook the value of a full funeral service. It gives others the opportunity to show their love and support, the chance for everyone to say goodbye and it can remind us that the person is not defined by their death but by their life.

Consider having a viewing as it can assist the grieving process by creating a space to say or give things that you may not have had the chance to say or give before they died.

SURVIVOR GROUPS

Many survivors of suicide benefit from joining a support group. No one knows what you are going through as well as another survivor. It gives the opportunity to share common problems and reactions, to form strong bonds, and break down isolation. It gives survivors a chance to learn more about suicide, share information and bust the “myths” surrounding suicide. Many people report a renewed reason for living that supporting and helping others gives.

FURTHER READING

Why suicide? – Eric Marcus

Silent Grief, Living in the Wake of Suicide - Christopher Lukas (Editor), Henry Seiden

Healing After the Suicide of a Loved One - Ann Smolin, John Guinan

After Suicide: Help for the Bereaved - Dr Sheila Clark

Coping with Grief - Mal McKissock

The Grief Book - Strategies for young people

Good Grief Rituals - Elaine Childs Gowell

For Children:

What's Dead Mean? - Doris Zagdanski

Red Chocolate Elephants - Diana C. Sands

FURTHER SUPPORT

BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF SUPPORT SERVICES

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement – www.grief.org.au | 1300 664 786

Compassionate friends – www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au | (03) 9888 4944 or 1800 641 091

Mercy Western Grief Services – (03) 9364 9838

Road Trauma Support Team – 1300 367 797

Sid and Kids Victoria – 1800 240 400

Victims Support Agency – 1800 819 817

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Griefline – (03) 9935 7400

Mensline – 1300 78 99 78

Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800

Reach Out – www.reachout.com.au (for adolescents)

Amber Community: Road Trauma Support Team – 1300 367 797

Gather My Crew – www.gathermycrew.org.au

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

General Practitioner

Grief Counselling

Art Therapy

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Hypnotherapy

Emotional Freedom Technique

Kinesiology

E.M.D.R.

Mindfulness Meditation

Yoga

Abbey
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Frances Tobin
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For 24 Hour Service & Enquiries please telephone
our Funeral Advice Line: **13 19 34**

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