

teensuicidegrief.org

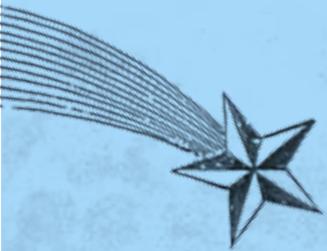
ENGLISH VERSION

you are not alone

HAVE YOU LOST
A FAMILY MEMBER
OR A FRIEND TO
SUICIDE?

**A RESOURCE FOR ADOLESCENTS
WHO HAVE LOST SOMEONE TO SUICIDE**

**“ I had died
with my mother
and I was just watching
someone cry who
used to be me**



I was thirteen when my mother died.
The police took my mother away.
My father, brother and I just sat in the dining
room and cried and cried.
My little brother was also there crying,
only he didn't know why.
I felt that I wasn't really there with them.
That I had died with my mother and I was
just watching someone cry
who used to be me.
I left the house to take a walk.
It was a beautiful day.
I stopped by all the neighbours to tell them
what happened. I would repeat all the details
of the story, then keep on walking.
We moved out of the house that night
and I never slept there again.

Laurie

STORIES

When I was ten,
my mother died suddenly in our house.
The rest of the family never
talked to us about it.
They fought between themselves bitterly
with all sorts of accusations.
We didn't hug or kiss
or talk about our real feelings at all.

Martin

When my brother died,
my parents didn't want us to talk about it
My father said Sam's death was,
“God's way of punishing us”
because he was into drugs.
I had looked up to my brother,
so I felt abandoned and unloved
when he died.

Tiffany

Heaven can change your life

in the blink of an eye

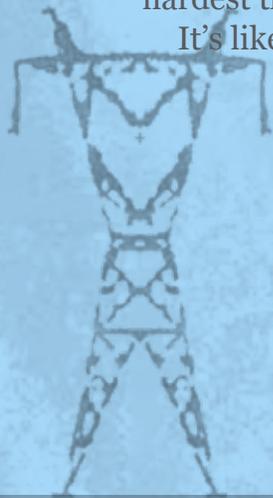
Anon

*Experts believe that suicide is a
desperate attempt to get away
from what feels like unbearable
pain. Because suicidal depression
distorts thinking, suicidal people
can believe that death is the only
way out of suffering. In this state
of mind communication is so
difficult that even people who
are close may have no idea how
bad things are*

*It is an illness of the brain that is
every bit as harmful as a serious
physical illness.*

*In time you will accept that you
can never understand everything.
Part of your healing is an
acceptance of this mystery.*





SHOCK

“ It has to be the hardest thing to go through
It’s like my own personal
holocaust
Greg

The reality may be hard to take in. Even if you feared and expected it, it is still a shock. People react very differently: Some freeze and withdraw, others get busy or angry. The shock can be severe enough to cause physical symptoms such as nausea, shaking, faintness, breathlessness and pain. Strong images of what you saw are sometimes severe enough to be called “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.”

It is a reaction caused by witnessing a shocking event, and is usually helped by special counselling. Even if you didn’t see anything, your imagination may be running wild. You’re certain that you hear their voice or see them in the street. You are not going crazy: These fantasies are normal after such a shock

EMOTIONS

“I am still afraid to go out with a girl
I get this cold-sweat feeling in my stomach and I can’t
even ask someone out. I just feel like something bad is going
to happen again.

Luc

DISBELIEF

You may have a problem believing the reality of it all. It’s as though the person you lost is away, and will soon return. You may expect their voice when you pick up the phone. It seems like a bad dream that you will wake up from. Taking in the reality can sometimes make the grief harder than in the beginning.

ANGER

Anger may be an unexpected emotion. You feel angry at the devastation that has come into your life, the pain and the stigma. You might feel angry at the rejection. Anger can be an important part of the healing process. It helps to relieve the guilt and sadness.



Katherine Hepburn, actress, who lost her brother.

.....
• “In a state of numb shock
• I laid him on the bed.
• What should I do?
• A doctor. Get a doctor.
• I went to the door
• and rang the bell.
• It was about eight in the morning.
• The door was opened a crack
• by a woman peering out.
• “My brother’s dead.”
• A moment’s pause. “What?”
• “My brother - he’s dead.”
• “Then the doctor can’t help him, can he?”
• *Bang.*
• She closed the door.”



“My mother’s dentist suggested
we should leave town
because my father committed suicide

Ryan

GUILT

“I couldn’t see her suicide coming
the night before it happened
So how am I going to know
with an outsider

Emilie

You may feel guilty for not being able to save them, especially if you were sometimes angry or frustrated with them. Families and friends may feel guilty at feelings of relief, if there have been repeated suicide attempts. You may feel “survivor’s guilt” especially if you think that people blame you. Healing these feelings is often easier if you share them with someone you trust.

FEAR

The shock of what has happened can make people fear another suicide. You may become nervous and over-protective around other people you care about. You may feel deserted, as though you were not good enough to stop them from leaving. Remember this is a normal reaction, and will fade in time. Get help if you need it.

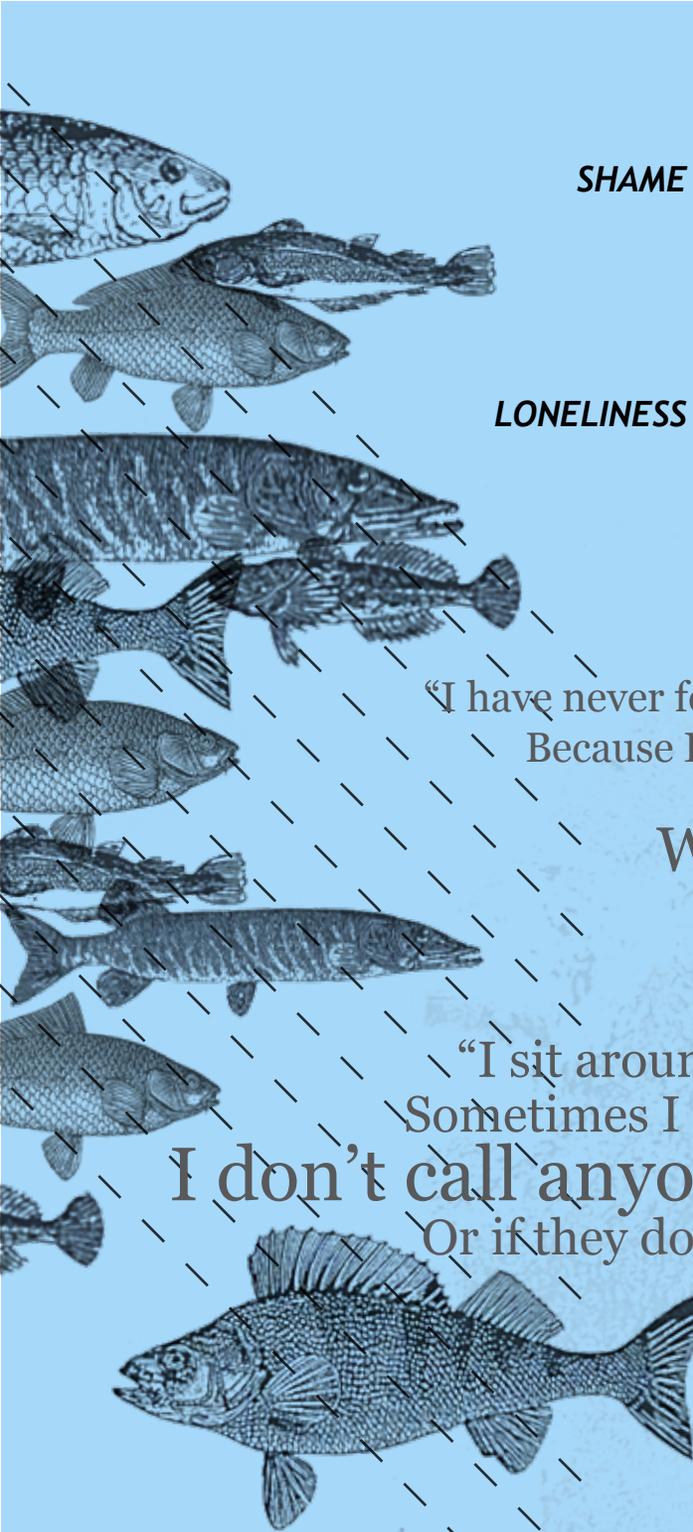
“ Before, I had the feeling
that I could control what happened to me
After Angela died
it was strange
because it could not be undone
I never felt in control of anything again

Mark



• **SIX MYTHS ABOUT GRIEF**

- Myth: Only family members grieve.
- Fact: Everyone who was affected grieves.
- Myth: Grief is an emotional reaction.
- Fact: Grief can show itself in many different ways.
- Myth: Grief is an even and predictable process.
- Fact: We move in and out of our grief in an unpredictable way, gradually healing.
- Myth: People should do their grieving in private.
- Fact: We can’t control where we grieve.
- Myth: Our grief ends once we detach.
- Fact: We never fully detach. We do learn to live with what we have lost.
- Myth: People grieving are best left alone.
- Fact: We need opportunities to share our sadness, memories and stories.



SHAME

Because there is still a lot of misunderstanding about suicide, survivors often struggle with how other people will think of them. You might be tempted to withdraw from other people if you think that they are judging you.

LONELINESS

For some time you may find it almost impossible to return to a normal routine, and may even resent those who appear to be having fun. You may feel empty, lost, totally disconnected, or become obsessed with keeping the memory of the person you lost alive.

“I have never felt this angry in my entire life
Because I always had at least my brother
I keep thinking
Why did you do this to me
Anne-Marie

“I sit around the house all day
Sometimes I sleep twelve hours at a time
I don't call anyone and nobody calls me
Or if they do, I find I don't have anything to say to them
Thomas

THREE TASKS OF GRIEVING

Task 1.

Accept the reality of the loss. Move out of shock, disbelief or denial. Talk about the person and the fact of their death.

Task 2.

Experience the pain of grief. Everyone will experience it differently, but there's no way of avoiding it if you are to heal.

Task 3.

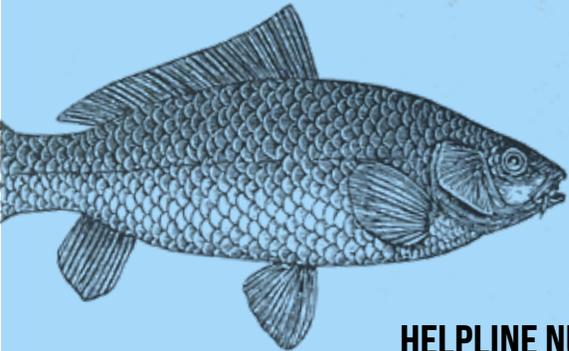
Realize that you are not hurting the person you loved by being happy, or when you begin new relationships. Remember your times with them with as much happiness as you can.

Dealing with what has happened can be very hard. The grief process is different for everyone, and always changing. It is very important to have someone to talk to when you have difficult emotions to deal with.

STRATEGIES

“I guess I would tell survivors to find the people who will listen to them and not blame those who can’t

Evan



HELPLINE NUMBERS



People I can always call

Things that are important for me to remember

Activities that usually help me to feel better

Quotations or affirmations to help me through the bad times

Here are some practical things that may help

Collect memories of happy times from friends and family, and record them to look at when you need to.

Write letters to the person you have lost.

Put together a photo album or scrap book of the person you lost, maybe with other friends.

Write in a journal.

Talk to a counsellor or therapist.

If there is an adult support group in your area, get in touch, and see if there are younger family members that you could talk to.

Read helpful books.

Watch helpful videos about grieving.

When you are in a more upbeat mood, make a list of things that you know will help you - when you are feeling down.

When my nineteen-year old brother died, healing was impossible. On the night he died, I not only stopped talking about him, I even stopped using his name. After that, my only consolation came from writing poems about him.

A SISTER'S STORY

“On the night he died
I not only stopped talking about him
I even stopped using his name

It took me many years to go to a therapist who told me that if I truly wanted to heal I would have to go back to when the grief process stopped - seventeen years before, and learn to talk about my brother. He stressed that the more I could talk about a painful subject, the less power it would have over me. And so, after nearly two decades I took a deep breath and finally began to talk... Talking in a warm and secure environment was healing. And so despite the pain, the backsliding and the tears, I kept going, month after month.

From listening to other siblings I've learned that my inability to talk is not uncommon. Many admit that they feel like forgotten mourners. They sense that people consider their grief less valid than their parents. They've been asked "How are your parents doing?"...while their parents worry because they're not talking or sharing...

This has been the longest and hardest journey of my life, giving and teaching me more than I had ever thought possible. Best of all, I've learned the most important truth; no matter when you start down the path of healing, it's never too late. *Naomi*

I stand on the shore

And wait for your return.

The waves breathe promises,

but the sails are black.

Pat Payne



Gratitude is not a form of passive acceptance...

*It is the capacity to stare doubt, loss, chaos and
despair right in the eye, and say, "I'm still here"*

Diana Butler Bass

BOOKS *When Bad Things Happen To Good People* by Harold Kushner

Man's Search For Meaning by Victor Frankl

Silent Grief by Christopher Lukas and Henry M. Seidon

ONLINE OR BY PHONE Kids Help Phone / Jeunesse J'écoute

1-800-668-6868 (English and French)
Text 686868 to talk to a volunteer crisis responder.
Help is available for those who identify as indigenous.

suicide.ca/en/im-grieving-a-loss-by-suicide



RESOURCES

OTHER SOURCES Your parents may be able to help you find a therapist with experience with suicide grief

Your guidance counselor at school or college might be able to help, or refer you to someone who can. Ask for advice on how to talk about your loss to the people in your life.

There may be online groups that you can find through the contacts above.

“My best friend came over
and spent time with me
We talked about my father’s death
over and over
Eventually
when I was willing to let go
I began to heal
Amanda

God give me the courage

to change the things I can change

to accept the things I cannot

and the wisdom to know the difference.

Thomas C. Hart

BIO



Marjorie Griffin is a mother, teacher, and artist. The loss of her son to suicide led eventually to the creation of this document - for that "small army" of people who have suffered grief and loss complicated by the emotions that accompany suicide.



Sky 1, 2002

I have lost two people I loved to suicide. In the photos of my son's funeral, I look happy. It was wonderful to be with people who shared my grief, but two days later I could not get out of bed. I did nothing but play sad music over and over, and wonder how I was going to get through the hours, weeks, years of the rest of my life. Almost nothing else helped. Except the understanding of a few people closest to me. And then the friends I made instantly at a support group, where I could tell my story freely, and listen to other peoples stories. Without having to worry about their reactions. Without protecting them, or feeling that I had to try to explain the unexplainable. Then books became possible, and with them deeper understanding that I was not alone. And then the possibility of using my art to explore the mysteries of this world...

This website is for young people who may feel that same isolation on their journey:
I hope that you know: "You are not alone."

Dedicated to my admirable daughter, Anna.
Gratitude, always, to Bill.
Thank you to Johnny and Santiago,
and all those who offered help and
encouragement along the way.



Blue treeline, Spring, 2010

Pain is real,

Suffering is chosen

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