

# SUICIDE LOSS

Navigating grief and finding healing

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# Table of contents

<b>Letter to the reader</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What does it mean to be a survivor of suicide loss?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Common difficulties survivors may face</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The complexity of suicide loss</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Prioritizing your mental health in times of grief</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Supporting someone after a suicide loss</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>How to support children after suicide loss</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Life after suicide loss</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Talking about suicide after a loss</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Risk factors that contribute to suicide</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Suicide and substance use disorder (SUD)</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Suicide loss survivor resources</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Suicide prevention resources</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Storytelling for survivors of suicide loss</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Closing</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>About SAVE</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Engage with SAVE</b>	<b>22</b>

# Letter to the reader

Dear reader,

We want to extend our deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences for the profound loss you have experienced. Losing a loved one, whether a family member or friend, is an incredibly painful and challenging ordeal. The grief that comes with the suddenness and complexity of suicide loss can feel overwhelming, and no words can truly ease the heartache you are enduring. Our thoughts are with you, and SAVE is here to help you find support, comfort, and strength in the days ahead.

The healing journey may be long, and it's important to honor your unique experience. Grief has no timeline, and it's OK to feel a wide range of emotions and take as much time as you need to process your loss. It's normal to experience grief in unexpected ways, and there is no right or wrong way to process it. Remember that seeking help is not only OK, but can be a vital part of the healing process. We encourage you to learn about resources including counselors, support groups, and hotlines dedicated to suicide loss survivors, and lean on people who care about you as you navigate this loss.

Please explore the information attached, which includes helpful resources in addition to SAVE and a list of agencies dedicated to people grieving a suicide loss. Contact any of these agencies for additional support or assistance, as they are here to help.

We know this is a challenging time, and want to ensure that this grief support packet offers the help you need. If you have any suggestions or thoughts, we'd be grateful for your feedback. If you so choose, please scan the QR code below or visit [save.org/griefpacketfeedback](https://save.org/griefpacketfeedback) for a brief survey on your thoughts.

Please get in touch with us at SAVE for any further assistance or guidance you may need. Whether it's connecting you to professional resources, providing a listening ear, or simply offering information about support groups, our team is here to support you.

With hope,



Erich Mische, SAVE CEO



# What does it mean to be a survivor of suicide loss?

In the context of suicide loss, a "survivor" refers to someone who has lost a loved one to suicide. The grief experienced by loss survivors is profound and unique, often described as a loss like no other. It is a journey marked by intense emotional pain, shock, and guilt, and frequently comes with significant mental and physical tolls. Survivors may face ongoing struggles such as anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and physical exhaustion as their bodies and minds process the trauma.

For many survivors, the path to healing is long and complex, and the emotional, mental, and physical weight of the loss can feel overwhelming. Though the journey is difficult, with time, support, and compassion, survivors can learn to cope, find meaning in their experiences, and rebuild their lives. Healing does not mean forgetting, but instead, learning to live with the loss in a way that honors both the survivor's grief and resilience. Through it all, it's important to remember that hope, recovery, and healing are possible.

Each year, millions of people are impacted by suicide globally. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 800,000 people die by suicide annually, which equates to one person every 40 seconds. Estimates indicate that for every person who dies by suicide, at least 135 people are directly impacted, including family members, friends, and colleagues. The ripple effect of suicide touches the lives of tens of millions of people worldwide each year.

However you find yourself impacted by suicide loss, know that you are not alone.



# Common difficulties survivors may face

Suicide loss survivors often face additional challenges when compared to other types of grief due to the unique emotional, social, and psychological complexities surrounding suicide. During the grief process, survivors may struggle with:

## **Seeking understanding**

After a suicide, there's a strong desire to understand why it happened. People often seek a clear answer to make sense of the tragedy and find meaning in a loss that feels sudden and incomprehensible.

## **Feeling guilt or responsibility**

After a suicide, it's common to feel guilt and wonder if it could have been prevented. People often replay past interactions and question if they missed signs. While there may be no clear answers, it's important to remember that suicide is complex and, in most cases, no one is to be blamed when a relative, friend, romantic partner, colleague, or acquaintance dies by suicide.

## **Experiencing emotional pain and shock**

Suicide causes unique grief, as it's not only the loss of a loved one, but also the loss of a future with them. People often feel sadness, anger, confusion, and disbelief, which can drive them to search for answers to ease the pain.

## **Desiring closure**

People often seek answers to find closure and healing, hoping that understanding the "why" will help them process their grief. However, because suicide is a complex combination of individual, relationship, community, and societal risk factors, finding a clear answer is often difficult.

## **Feeling uncertain**

After the shock settles, those left behind may feel overwhelmed by the question, "What do I do now?" This uncertainty is common after a suicide loss, and it can create feelings of anxiety or helplessness. Know that healing takes time, and support from loved ones, therapists, or peer support groups can help guide the way forward.

## **Processing cultural and societal beliefs**

Cultural and societal views on suicide can affect how people react to a suicide loss. In some cultures, moral or religious beliefs shape the search for answers, often leading to more questions.

It is completely normal for suicide loss survivors to experience extra struggles compared to other types of loss. Healing often involves acknowledging the difficulty of suicide loss without feeling pressured to find all the answers and seeking support along the way.

# The complexity of suicide loss

Suicide grief is often described as more complex, intense, and prolonged because it comes with layers of emotions and unanswered questions that other losses may not.

## Challenges of suicide loss

Suicide loss is uniquely complex due to the emotional, psychological, and social challenges it brings. Unlike deaths from illness, which often allow for some level of preparation, suicide is often sudden and unexpected, leaving survivors in shock and confusion. This abruptness can create a sense of unresolved grief, with survivors wondering if there were signs they missed that might have prevented the loss.

## Potential feelings of guilt and responsibility

Often, one of the most difficult aspects of suicide grief is the mix of guilt and perceived responsibility survivors feel. Survivors frequently wonder if they could have done more to prevent the death — whether they missed warning signs or failed to intervene in time — which can trigger feelings of guilt, often intensified by unanswered questions about the person's mental state or reasoning. Survivors should be reassured that they are not obligated to have prevented the loss. The guilt they feel is a natural, but ultimately unfair, part of the grieving process.

## Potential feelings of anger and betrayal

Suicide can feel like an act of abandonment. For those who loved the person, there may be intense feelings of anger or betrayal, which can be difficult to reconcile with the grief they're experiencing. In some cases, people may feel that the person who died by suicide chose to escape pain in a way that left the loved ones behind to deal with it. This creates a complex emotional landscape where grief is layered with anger, confusion, and sometimes even resentment.

## Social stigma and isolation

The social stigma surrounding suicide can contribute to the complexity of the grieving process. Although suicide stigma is decreasing, many people are uncomfortable discussing suicide due to cultural or religious taboos, which can leave survivors feeling isolated and misunderstood. When others don't know how to talk about the loss or what to say, survivors can feel further alienated or unsupported in their grief. Isolation often magnifies a person's pain.

## Unanswered questions in grief

Lastly, suicide leaves survivors with many "what if" scenarios they may not consider with other types of death. Lacking understanding about the complex factors at play before their death often leads to these unresolved questions, further complicating the grieving process. A suicide death can feel incomplete—when there is no full understanding of why it happened, uncertainty can make it harder to find peace with the loss.

# Prioritizing your mental health in times of grief

Grief can be overwhelming, and it's important to take care of yourself during this difficult time. Here are some suggestions to help you cope in a healthy way:

## **Seek support from others**

You do not have to carry the burden alone. Reach out to friends, family, or professionals for help with tasks or emotional support. Support groups and helplines are available if you need extra guidance.

## **Give yourself time to heal**

Grief is a personal journey, and there's no set timeline for it. Be patient with yourself and recognize that it's OK to take your time as you process your emotions.

## **Take care of your body**

Grief can take a physical toll, so it's important to maintain your health. Focus on eating nutritious foods, working movement into your routine, and practicing good hygiene. Avoid using alcohol or drugs to cope, as they can hinder your healing.

## **Express your emotions**

Venting your feelings is key to healing. Talk to people you trust or express yourself through creative outlets like writing, art, or music. Suppressing your emotions can make grief harder to manage.

## **Create structure in your day**

Getting back to a routine can help provide stability. While life has changed, having a sense of normalcy can bring comfort and hope as you move forward. You can consider practicing mindfulness and staying present in the moment. Take things one day at a time. Practices like journaling, meditation, or yoga can help you stay grounded and manage the unpredictable nature of grief.

## **Respect your boundaries**

Recognize that some things may be too painful to do right now. It's OK to avoid certain situations or places until you're ready. Honor your limits and proceed at your own pace. Amidst the sorrow, allow yourself to experience and acknowledge happiness or contentedness. It's OK to laugh, smile, and engage in activities that bring you comfort. Your loved one would want you to find peace.

By taking small steps to care for yourself, connecting with others, and reaching out for help, you can begin the process of healing and finding ways to cope with your loss that work for you.

# Supporting someone after a suicide loss

When someone experiences the devastating loss of a loved one to suicide, knowing what to say or do can be challenging. It's important to approach a grieving person with empathy, sensitivity, and understanding while acknowledging the complex emotions they may be facing.

## Communicating in the immediate aftermath

When approaching someone grieving a suicide loss, sensitivity is key. The most important approach is offering genuine, non-judgmental support while respecting their grief. Simple phrases like “I’m so sorry for your loss” and “I’m here to listen” show empathy and let them know you’re there. Here are some examples of how you can offer support effectively:

### Acknowledge their pain by simply being there

Use phrases like *“I’m so sorry for your loss,”* or *“I can’t imagine how hard this must be.”*

### Offer specific help

Instead of *“Let me know if you need anything,”* say *“I can bring dinner,”* or *“I will help with errands.”*

### Check in regularly

After the funeral, continue to check in with *“I’m thinking of you,”* or *“I’m here if you need to talk.”*

### Encourage professional help

Suggest professional therapy, counseling, or peer support groups.

### Honor their loved one’s memory

Ask, *“What are your favorite memories of [loved one]?”*

### Avoid blame or judgment

Never say the deceased was “selfish.” Offer compassion, like, *“I know this is incredibly hard.”*

### Be patient and respect silence

Give them space and offer *“I’m here if you want to talk or just need quiet company.”*

### Recognize grief is nonlinear

Let them know it’s ok to feel a range of emotions, saying, *“I’m here for you wherever you are in this journey.”*

### Offer long-term support

Regularly check in with *“I’m still thinking of you,”* or *“If you need someone to talk to, I’m here.”*

# Supporting someone after a suicide loss

## Avoiding harmful phrases

Although well-meaning, some comments can cause more harm than good. Consider avoiding the following statements when supporting someone after a suicide loss:

### **“Everything happens for a reason,” or “It’s all part of the bigger picture.”**

These phrases can feel dismissive or like the speaker is rationalizing a profoundly painful event. They can be hard for someone in pain to hear, as they fail to acknowledge the unfairness of the loss or fail to provide comfort or understanding.

### **“They’re in a better place,” or “It was their choice.”**

These can feel like the speaker is finding a positive or silver lining in the trauma of suicide loss. Saying suicide is someone’s choice ignores the complexity of suicide.

### **“You’re strong enough to handle this,” or “You’re so strong.”**

While meant to reassure or compliment, these statements can feel isolating or pressuring, implying that the person should constantly appear strong or handle their hardship better, even when they are struggling deeply.

### **“At least you have [family, health, etc.].”**

This can minimize the person's pain by suggesting that there are things they should be grateful for, even when they’re experiencing immense suffering.

### **“I know how you feel.”**

Even if someone has gone through something similar, this statement can feel invalidating to the person suffering. Everyone’s pain is unique, and assuming you know exactly what someone is going through can feel dismissive.

### **“Time heals all wounds.”**

While time can bring healing, this phrase can be dismissive of the real, ongoing pain someone might be feeling. It also suggests there’s a standard timeline for healing, which does not exist.

### **“[Name] committed suicide.”**

The word “committed” is stigmatizing and implies a crime. Use person-centered, sensitive language and say “(Name) died by suicide.”

## Acknowledging holidays and special dates

Holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays can be hard for people grieving a suicide loss and can bring painful memories. Extra support during these times is crucial. Sharing positive memories of the loved one can offer healing. Added self-care and reflection can also help manage complex feelings.

# How to support children after suicide loss

It can be hard to know how to support children after the death of someone they know and love, especially when that loss is by suicide. The complex emotions and unanswered questions surrounding suicide can make it even harder for children to process and cope. Understanding their needs and providing compassionate, age-appropriate support is key. Here are some tips to help guide you in supporting children during this challenging time:

## **Choose a safe and quiet space**

Find a quiet environment where the child feels safe and is able to speak freely without interruptions.

## **Use empathy**

Acknowledge and validate the child's emotions. Let them know it's OK to feel sad, confused, or angry, and encourage them to express their feelings openly.

## **Offer reassurance**

Assure the child they are not responsible for the death and couldn't have prevented it. Reinforce your love, support, and the availability of help whenever they need it.

## **Encourage open dialogue**

Let the child know it's OK to ask questions and that you'll answer them honestly, offering clarity without overwhelming them.

## **Maintain normalcy**

Stick to regular routines to provide stability. This can help the child feel secure during a time of emotional upheaval.

## **Seek professional support**

Consider counseling or therapy for ongoing emotional support, especially from professionals experienced in grief and trauma. It's important to connect with someone who can help the child process their feelings.

## **Keep monitoring their emotional health**

Stay attuned to the child's emotional well-being and be ready to revisit the conversation or provide extra support as needed. Ensure they know it's OK to ask for help anytime.

## **Encourage mental health resources**

If you or the child is struggling with grief or suicidal thoughts, reach out to mental health professionals immediately. Call 988 for crisis support.

Grief and trauma are unique to each person, so professional guidance can be critical in ensuring children receive the support most appropriate for them.



# How to support children after suicide loss

## How to talk to children after suicide loss

After the suicide of a loved one, parents often wonder, "What should I tell my kids?" The answer is the truth, regardless of how difficult it may be. Discussing a suicide death with children can be a delicate matter. Approach the conversation with sensitivity, honesty, and age-appropriate language. Here are some general guidelines you may follow:

### Be honest, yet age-appropriate.

- Use simple, clear language that fits the child's age and developmental level so they can think about death in a way that makes sense to them. Children of different ages have varying cognitive and emotional abilities, so tailoring the language helps avoid confusion or unnecessary fear.
- Be honest, but avoid graphic details.
- Stick to the facts and provide reassurance.

### Using empathy can sound like the following:

- **Child:** *"I'm sad because I don't get why Grandma is gone. I miss her and I don't know why this had to happen."*
- **Adult:** *"I'm sorry you're feeling this way. It's so hard when someone we love isn't here anymore, and it's completely OK to feel sad and confused about it."*
- Empathy allows adults to acknowledge and validate the child's feelings of confusion, sadness, or fear, which helps them feel understood and less alone in their grief. It creates a safe, non-judgmental space where children feel comfortable expressing their emotions and asking questions. Empathy fosters trust, showing the child that their emotional experience is respected, and that it's OK to feel upset or angry.

### Offering reassurance can sound like this:

- **Child:** *"Maybe if I had been nicer or did things differently, [person] wouldn't have left. I feel like it's my fault."*
- **Adult:** *"I'm so sorry you're feeling that way, but I want you to know that this is not your fault at all."*
- Children may feel confused, guilty, or scared, and reassurance helps alleviate these feelings by affirming that the death was not their fault. Offering reassurance to children after a suicide death is crucial because it helps them process the trauma in a safe and supportive way. Assure them of your love and support, and encourage them to share their feelings.

### Open dialogue can sound like this:

- **Adult:** *"I know this is a tough time, and you might have a lot of questions about [person] dying. If you want to talk about or ask anything, I'm here to listen and try to answer as best I can."*
- **Child:** *"Will they ever come back?"*
- **Adult:** *"I know you wish that could happen, but unfortunately, they won't. It's OK to feel sad or confused about that. What else are you wondering?"*
- Open dialogue about death is important for children as it reduces fear and anxiety. Having open dialogue strengthens trust between caregivers and children and corrects any misconceptions.

# Life after suicide loss

Below are some strategies that may help you navigate through a suicide loss and rebuild your life after tragedy. Healing does not have to involve making sense of the loss—it's simply about allowing space for feelings, honoring the experience, and moving forward at one's own pace.

## Seek professional help

Consider working with a mental health professional, such as a therapist or counselor, who specializes in grief and loss. They can provide guidance and support tailored to your needs.

## Connect with support groups

Joining a support group for survivors of suicide loss can be immensely beneficial. These groups offer a safe space to share experiences, emotions, and coping strategies with others who have gone through similar experiences.

## Educate yourself

Learning about suicide, mental health, and the factors that may have contributed to your loved one's struggles can help you gain a better understanding of their experience and reduce stigma.

## Remember your loved one

Create a meaningful way to remember and honor your loved one's life. This could include setting up a memorial, planting a tree, or participating in an event or charity in their memory.

## Express your emotions

Allow yourself to feel and express the range of emotions that accompany grief—sadness, anger, guilt, confusion, and more. It's essential to acknowledge and process these feelings rather than bottling them up.

## Write or journal

Consider keeping a journal or writing letters to your loved one to express your thoughts and feelings. This can be a therapeutic private outlet for your emotions.

## Practice self-care

Caring for your physical and emotional well-being is crucial during the grieving process. Eat well, move your body, and get enough rest.

## Find meaning in helping others

Some people use their experience to help others struggling with mental health issues or who have experienced a similar loss. Volunteering for a mental health organization or suicide prevention program can be a way to give back and find purpose.

## Rituals and traditions

Consider creating rituals or traditions that help you commemorate your loved one on special occasions, anniversaries, or holidays. These rituals can provide a sense of connection and continuity.

## Accept that healing takes time

Grief is unique and non-linear. Be patient with yourself and allow time for healing. There is no set timeline for when you should feel better.

## Seek spiritual or faith-based support

If you have faith or are part of a religious community, you may find solace and support through your faith and spiritual practices.

Seek the support and resources that resonate with you. Making meaning out of your loss can be a long and difficult process, but with time and support, it is possible to find ways to remember and honor your loved one while moving toward healing and acceptance.



# Talking about suicide after a loss

Research strongly supports that talking about suicide after a suicide loss is beneficial for survivors. A few reasons why are listed below:

## Breaking the stigma

Suicide is often surrounded by silence and shame, making it difficult for those affected to speak out.

- **Example:** A survivor of suicide loss may feel isolated and afraid to reach out due to societal taboos. Opening up about a loss can help normalize the conversation and encourage others to share their experiences.

## Promoting healing and grieving

Talking about suicide helps those left behind process their emotions and begin healing.

- **Example:** A person grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide might benefit from support groups where they can talk to others who understand their pain, rather than feeling alone with their grief.

## Providing support to others

Open conversations can help others who are struggling with thoughts of suicide feel less alone and more likely to seek help.

- **Example:** By sharing personal stories or acknowledging the challenges of coping with suicide loss, people can create a more open and supportive environment for others going through similar situations.

## Raising awareness and prevention

Public conversations can help educate others about the signs of mental health struggles and the importance of seeking help before reaching crisis points.

- **Example:** After a high-profile suicide, speaking openly about warning signs and mental health can encourage proactive support and intervention within communities, potentially preventing other suicides.

## Empowering change in mental health conversations

Continuing to discuss suicide loss helps shift societal attitudes, making mental health a priority and encouraging proactive care.

- **Example:** A family that discusses their experience with suicide loss can inspire local organizations to increase mental health resources or create better crisis intervention programs.

## Key takeaway:

Talking about suicide loss is not only vital for healing, but also for creating a more supportive, informed, and compassionate society.

# Risk factors that contribute to suicide

People may contemplate suicide for a variety of complex and interconnected reasons, and it's important to recognize that each person's situation is unique. While there's no single cause for suicide, many factors are commonly linked to suicidal thoughts and behaviors. In recent years, we've learned that social determinants of health—such as socioeconomic status, education, and access to resources—play a significant role in suicide risk. These factors can influence mental health, stress, and the ability to access support, making some people more vulnerable.

## Key factors include:

### **Mental health conditions**

Depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and other disorders can create feelings of hopelessness and emotional pain.

### **Psychological distress**

Overwhelming emotional pain or distress may make suicide seem like an escape.

### **Life stressors**

Financial struggles, relationship problems, loss, or major life changes can increase feelings of despair.

### **Social isolation**

Lack of support and feelings of loneliness can heighten suicide risk.

### **Previous suicide attempts**

A history of suicide attempts increases the likelihood of future attempts.

### **Access to lethal means**

Easy access to firearms, medications, tall structures, or other methods increases the risk of suicide.

### **Lack of mental health care**

Limited access to mental health services or stigma around seeking help can prevent people from getting the support they need.

### **Family history of suicide**

Family history of suicide can increase risk via genetic, environmental, or learned factors.

### **Substance abuse**

Substance abuse can impair judgment and increase impulsivity, making people more vulnerable to suicide.

### **Perceived burden on others**

Feeling like a burden can lend to the belief that suicide would benefit others.

### **Cultural and societal factors**

Cultural beliefs and societal attitudes about mental health and suicide can affect whether someone seeks help.

### **Social determinants of health**

Factors like income, education, nutrition, and access to healthcare can impact mental health and increase suicide risk.

To learn more about risk factors, protective factors, or the warning signs of suicide, please visit [save.org](https://www.save.org).

# Suicide and substance use disorder (SUD), 1 of 2

When a loved one dies by suicide after years of struggling with substance use disorder (SUD), the grief that follows is uniquely complex. Survivors often mourn not just the person they lost, but the many small losses that came before—trust, stability, safety, and connection. This grief is layered with stigma, guilt, trauma, and isolation, making healing especially challenging.

## The Complexity of the Loss

Suicide connected to addiction is rarely sudden. It often follows years of emotional, financial, and legal turmoil—overdoses, arrests, hospitalizations, and the pain of watching someone battle a disease. Loved ones may experience ambiguous grief.

## Layered stigma & disenfranchised grief

Many survivors are met with silence.....or worse, blame. Society often stigmatizes both addiction and suicide, with harmful judgments suggesting the person "brought it on themselves." This can lead to disenfranchised grief, a type of grief that is not openly acknowledged or supported, leaving survivors to grieve in isolation.

## Trauma, anticipatory grief, & complication

Years of crisis—waiting for the phone to ring, navigating disappearances or medical emergencies—leave survivors in a constant state of fear. This anticipatory grief can evolve into complicated grief, marked by prolonged guilt ("I should have done more") or even relief ("at least the suffering is over")—feelings that often bring shame if not compassionately addressed.

## Reframing the narrative

Healing begins with truth. Addiction is a disease, not a moral failure. The person who died had a life that mattered, beyond their struggles. Understanding the role of systemic failures, such as inadequate mental health care or punitive legal responses, helps shift blame away from the individual and toward broader change.

## The Overlap: What you should know

- **6 to 14 times more likely:** People with SUD are significantly more likely to die by suicide. (SAMHSA)
- **75% higher risk:** Opioid use increases suicide risk, especially with co-occurring mental illness. (NIDA)
- **1 in 4:** Over 25% of those who die by suicide have alcohol in their system. (CDC)

# Suicide and substance use disorder (SUD), 2 of 2

## What survivors need

- **Recognition:** Their grief is valid, complex, and deserves support.
- **Trauma-Informed Care:** Grief resources should understand and honor the dual impact of SUD and suicide.
- **Peer Support:** Spaces where survivors can share openly, without shame, are critical for healing.
- **Systemic Change:** Advocacy efforts must address how mental health, addiction, and suicide prevention intersect.

This kind of grief doesn't fit neatly into categories. It's not just about death—it's about mourning a long journey of pain, love, and hope. Naming the connection between substance use and suicide isn't just an act of awareness, it's an act of compassion, advocacy, and healing for everyone left behind.

## Definitions to know

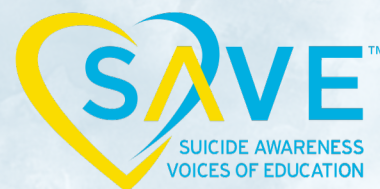
**Ambiguous grief** is a type of grief experienced when a loved one is physically present but psychologically or emotionally absent or vice versa. It often arises in situations where there is no clear sense of closure or resolution, making the grieving process complex and prolonged.

**Disenfranchised grief** is grief that is not acknowledged, validated, or supported by society. It occurs when the loss is stigmatized, the relationship is not recognized, or the mourner is not seen as entitled to grieve.

**Anticipatory grief** is the emotional pain and mourning that begins before a loss actually occurs. It often happens when a loved one is facing a chronic illness, addiction, or ongoing crisis, and their death feels likely or inevitable.

**Complicated grief**, also called prolonged grief disorder, is a persistent, intense form of grief that interferes with daily life and doesn't ease with time. It may include overwhelming sadness, guilt, anger, or longing that lasts significantly longer than what is considered typical in the grieving process.

## SUICIDE LOSS SURVIVOR RESOURCES



This page outlines specialized resources for suicide loss survivors including grief support groups, helplines, online communities, and more. We hope to provide assistance, understanding, and connection for people navigating the complexities of grief and loss.

### DOCUMENTARIES

- [\*The S Word\*](#) (2017)
- [\*Suicide: The Ripple Effect\*](#) (2018)

### BOOKS

- [\*Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief\*](#)
- [\*Suicide Survivor's Handbook: The Truth About Suicide and Grief\*](#)
- [\*Aftermath: Picking Up the Pieces After a Suicide\*](#)
- [\*It's OK that You are Not OK\*](#)
- [\*The Unthinkable: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes - and Why?\*](#)
- [\*Dying to Be Free: Healing Guide to Families After Suicide\*](#)
- [\*Saving Ourselves from Suicide - Before and After\*](#)

### SUPPORT GROUPS

- AFSP database at [AFSP.org](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center Guide](#) at [SPRC.org](#)

### HELPLINE CENTER

- [loss.helplinecenter.org](#)
- Resources, information, and support for suicide loss survivors, including a helpline and grief support services.

### AFSP - I'VE LOST SOMEONE

- [afsp.org/ive-lost-someone](#)
- Resources, information, and support for those grieving the loss of someone to suicide.

### 988 SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE

- [Dial 988 | 988lifeline.org](#)
- 24/7 free confidential crisis support. Immediate access to trained counselors for people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

### CRISIS TEXT LINE

- [Text "SAVE" to 741-741 | crisistextline.org](#)
- 24/7 confidential crisis support and resources.

### VETERANS CRISIS LINE

- [Dial 988, Press 1 | veteranscrisisline.net](#)
- 24/7 confidential crisis support for military veterans, service members, and their families.

### ALLIANCE OF HOPE

- [allianceofhope.org](#)
- Information sheets, a blog, and a community forum for loss survivors to share their stories and offer mutual support.

### FRIENDS FOR SURVIVAL

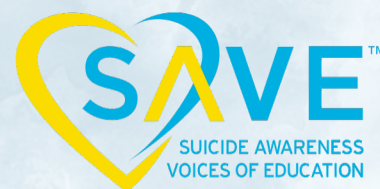
- [Toll-free helpline: 1-800-646-7322](#)  
[friendsforsurvival.org](#)
- Newsletter, support group, and helpline for suicide loss survivors

### TAPS - YOU ARE NOT ALONE

- [taps.org/suicide](#)
- Specific support and resources for military suicide loss survivors, offering a community of support for grieving families and friends.



## RESOURCES



### 988 SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE

Provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the US  
**Call or text 988 | [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)**  
**Para acceder al apoyo en español, marque 988 y presione 2.**

### VETERANS CRISIS LINE

Find veteran-specific care, learn about treatment and benefits and find resources for caregivers  
**Dial 988 and press 1 or text 838255 [veteranscrisisline.net](https://veteranscrisisline.net)**

### ESPAÑOL

Lifeline está disponible para todos, es gratuito y confidencial.  
**Llame a 988 y marca numero 2 o texto envía "AYUDA" al 988**

### LGBTQIA+ YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

LGBTQIA+ people under 25 can access 24/7 LGBTQIA+ support via the 988 Lifeline.  
**Dial 988 and press 3 or text PRIDE to 988.**

### FIND LOCAL SUPPORT

#### 211

The most comprehensive source of information about local resources and services in the country | **Call 211 or text your local ZIP code to 898-211 | [211.org](https://211.org)**

#### SAMHSA TREATMENT LOCATOR

Confidential and anonymous resource for people seeking treatment for mental and substance use disorders in the US and its territories  
**Call 1-833-888-1553 | [findtreatment.gov](https://findtreatment.gov)**



## INFORMATION + PROGRAMS

### SAVE

Suicide prevention educational programs, training, grief support, advocacy, resources and opportunities to raise awareness of suicide | **[save.org](https://save.org)**

### THE TREVOR PROJECT

Offers 24/7 crisis counseling and a variety of resources to support LGBTQIA+ people and their loved ones | **Text 678-678 [thetrevorproject.org](https://thetrevorproject.org)**

### SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCE CENTER

Offers consultation, training and resources for suicide prevention | **[SPRC.org](https://SPRC.org)**

# Storytelling for survivors of suicide loss

Many people find storytelling to be helpful in processing their grief, and find it helpful to hear others' experiences to relate to what they've gone through. Stories matter, and there's strength in sharing.

## Safe messaging

If you choose to share your story, especially in a public context, it's important to follow safe messaging guidelines. The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's [Framework for Successful Messaging](#) is a useful guide that focuses on avoiding potentially harmful messaging about suicide.

## Prompts

Though the theme of your story is completely up to you, here are some prompts that may be helpful in formulating your story:

- What is your loved one's name? What are their birth and death dates?
- What is your name? What do you want an audience to know about you?
- Who was your loved one? What is their story? What do they mean to you? What do you want others to know about them? (Please follow safe messaging guidelines and avoid including specific details about their suicide).
- What was next for your family/community after the loss of your loved one? What challenges and sources of strength did you encounter?
- What do you wish colleagues, friends, family, and others understood about coping after an experience like this?
- What were your needs/your community's needs following your experience?
- Did you encounter stigma (internal or external) in your experience with suicide?
- What would you say to someone else who is grieving a loved one to suicide?
- What would you say to someone afraid of losing a loved one to suicide?
- How have things changed since your loss? How have you or your community grown or struggled after your experience?
- How did losing your loved one to suicide impact your family and your life?
- What steps would you like to see taken to better protect people and prevent suicides?
- How can communities, public officials, local governments, and individuals come together to prevent suicide?
- How can others in the community support loss survivors and those struggling with suicidal ideation?
- What would you like people to do after hearing your story? How can they get involved in raising awareness or supporting suicide prevention efforts?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience?

SAVE offers space for suicide loss survivors to share their stories. Survivor stories may be shared on [save.org](https://save.org) or included in resource materials, our newsletter, social posts, and more. Visit [save.org](https://save.org) or scan the QR code on this page to learn more.



# Closing

Grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide is painful and complex. There is no right way to grieve, healing is not linear, and grief can take many forms. Permit yourself to feel what you're feeling. Some days may feel more manageable than others, and that's OK.

Connecting with others, whether supportive friends, family, or professional help, will help you to cope. Reach out when needed, and don't be afraid to ask for the support you deserve.

Thank you for reading our Suicide Loss Grief Support Packet. We hope it provides you some comfort and guidance during this challenging time. If there's anything that could make this resource more helpful to you, please don't hesitate to let us know. As you are able, please share with us any thoughts, suggestions, or personal experiences that could help make this packet more supportive and effective by scanning the QR code below or visiting [save.org/griefpacketfeedback](https://save.org/griefpacketfeedback). Your perspective is important to us.

Even in the darkest times, hold onto hope — healing is possible, and you are not alone on this journey. Your grief is valid, and you deserve compassion as you navigate through it. SAVE is here to help, offering community, support and additional resources to guide you through this difficult time. Take care, and please remember: You do not have to face this alone.

With hope,



Erich Mische, SAVE CEO





*Educate. Protect. Advocate. Support.*



## Dedicated to Preventing Suicide

SAVE - Suicide Awareness Voices of Education is a national nonprofit working to end the tragedy of suicide through education and training programs, lethal means safety initiatives, advocacy at state and national levels, and providing support to those affected by suicide loss.

### What We Do

*Educate and Train* community members and stakeholders to identify those who may be at risk

- Distribute free educational materials
- Deliver suicide prevention awareness presentations to communities
- Develop help-seeking behaviors among students through The Green Bandana Project
- Offer free gatekeeper training to identify and support people at risk of suicide
- Train employees in high-risk occupations like the construction industry

*Lethal Means Safety* initiatives to keep people, families, and communities safe

- Promote secure storage of firearms, medications, sharps, and other small lethal household items through distributing free gun locks and educational materials

*Advocate* for people impacted by suicide at state and federal levels

- Advocate for public and private resources to support suicide prevention programs
- Partner with and organize coalitions of advocates to pass suicide prevention policies
- Advocate for the installation of barriers on high risk locations

*Support* individuals, families, and communities after suicide loss

- Honor the lives of those lost to suicide through the Named Memorial Program
- Provide grief support information and resources by distributing grief packets
- Provide hope and healing through the annual Suicide Awareness Memorial event and other engagement opportunities



# ENGAGE WITH SAVE



Donate at  
[save.org/donate](https://save.org/donate).



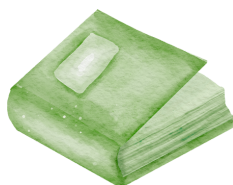
Take our 40-minute  
One Step Ahead training at  
[save.org/one-step-ahead](https://save.org/one-step-ahead).



Learn more about advocacy  
and policies to prevent  
suicide at [save.org/advocacy](https://save.org/advocacy).



Get the newsletter at  
[save.org/newsletter](https://save.org/newsletter).



Learn about our peer-to-peer  
student support program  
The Green Bandana Project at  
[thegreenbandanaproject.org](https://thegreenbandanaproject.org).



Start a Named Memorial  
page for your loved one  
at [save.org/named-memorial-program](https://save.org/named-memorial-program).



Host or attend a suicide  
prevention event. Find our  
calendar at [save.org/events](https://save.org/events).



Email [bsenser@save.org](mailto:bsenser@save.org) to assist  
SAVE's LOSS (Local Outreach  
to Suicide Survivors) Teams  
as an advisor or volunteer.



Follow SAVE on [YouTube](#), [X](#),  
[Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and  
[LinkedIn](#) and share our posts  
with your network.

