

If you are in crisis, call or text 988.



NAVIGATING GRIEF AND FINDING HEALING

Suicide Loss Support

Digital copy available, scan the QR code:



@SaveVoicesofEdu

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 okay, 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.

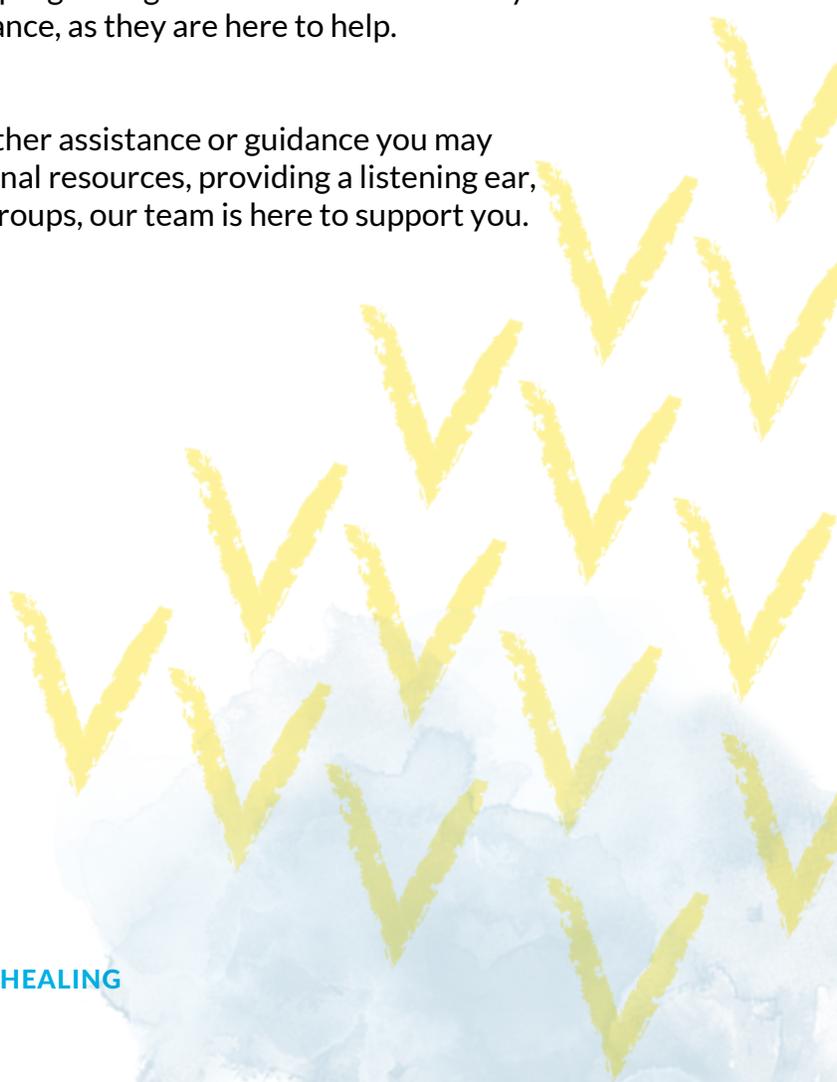
Please explore the information attached, which includes helpful resources in addition to SAVE and a list of agencies dedicated to people grieving a suicide loss. Contact any of these agencies for additional support or assistance, as they are here to help.

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



SUICIDE CRISIS RESOURCES

If you have been taking suicidal actions, have tried to hurt yourself, or made a suicide attempt – get help immediately by calling 911.

Suicide crisis resources are services designed to provide immediate help to individuals experiencing a mental health, substance use, or suicide crisis and offer emotional support during moments of acute distress, such as intense sadness, anxiety, or feelings of isolation. They de-escalate suicidal thoughts and ensure the person in crisis is guided to safety. They also assist with resource connection, offering referrals to local professionals and support networks that provide ongoing help.

While crisis lines and similar services can be life-saving in urgent situations, they are not a substitute for professional medical care. If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, substance abuse, or suicide crisis, it is important to seek professional help.

Organization	Contact	Description
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	Call or text 988 or visit 988lifeline.org	Provides 24/7/365, 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.
Español	Llame a 988 y marca numero 2 o texto envía "AYUDA" al 988	Lifeline está disponible para todos, es gratuito y confidencial.
Veterans Crisis Line (U.S.)	24/7 Call 988, then press 1	Provides specialized support for veterans, active service members, and their families.
The Trevor Project	24/7 1-866-488-7386, text "START" to 678678, or visit thetrevorproject.org	LGBTQ+ youth-focused crisis line.
Suicide Prevention Resource Center	SPRC.org	Offers consultation, training and resources for suicide prevention.
211	Call 211 or text your local ZIP code to 898-211 211.org	The most comprehensive source of information about local resources and services in the country.

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 perceived abandonment and anger

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.

Source: Tal Young I, Iglewicz A, Glorioso D, Lanouette N, Seay K, Ilapakurti M, Zisook S. Suicide bereavement and complicated grief. *Dialogues Clin Neurosci*. 2012 Jun;14(2):177-86. doi: 10.31887/DCNS.2012.14.2/iyoung. PMID: 22754290; PMCID: PMC3384446.

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. People want to show up and support you during this time. Think about the ways they can show up for you. Consider asking if they can go for a walk with you, pick up groceries, bring some dinner over, or help with bringing the kids to activities. Support groups and helplines are available ([see page 14 for resources](#)).

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. Consider looking up the "ball in a box" metaphor for grief as a visual for your grief journey, or read the poem "The Stone" by Jessica Watson.

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. Consider getting a journal and writing down how you are feeling, or sign up for a grief newsletter that can share helpful tips, such as [End in Mind](#).

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 contentment. 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 the loss that work for you. Seeking professional help is another good option to help work through complex grief.

Source: Mayo Staff. (2022, August 5). *Suicide Grief*. Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/complicated-grief/in-depth/suicide/art-20044900>

Mental health professionals and therapy finder tools

SAMHSA Treatment Locator

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers a comprehensive and confidential resource to help individuals locate mental health and substance use disorder treatment services across the United States.



What it does

The SAMHSA Treatment Locator allows users to search for a wide range of behavioral health services, including:

- Outpatient and inpatient treatment programs
- Residential and detoxification services
- Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)
- Counseling and therapy services
- Support groups and recovery programs
- Programs for specific populations (youth, veterans, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with co-occurring disorders)

How to use it

1. **Visit the locator:** [SAMHSA.gov/find-help/locators](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/locators)
2. **Enter your location:** Input your city, state, or ZIP code to find nearby treatment options.
3. **Apply filters:** Use filters to narrow your search based on specific needs, such as type of service, payment options, or population served.
4. **Review results:** Browse the list of facilities, view their profiles, and contact them directly for more information or to schedule an appointment.

For immediate assistance, SAMHSA also operates a 24/7 National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357), which offers free, confidential support and can help you navigate the treatment locator.

Psychology Today

Psychology Today is a widely used online directory and resource that helps individuals find mental health professionals – including therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and counselors— based on specific needs and preferences. It also offers educational articles on mental health topics written by licensed professionals.



How to use it

- **Visit the website:** [PsychologyToday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com)
- **Click “Find a Therapist.”**
- **Enter your ZIP code, city, or state.**
- **Use filters to specify:**
 - Insurance coverage
 - Mental health issues you want help with
 - Preferred therapy type (e.g., CBT, DBT, trauma-focused)
- Gender or cultural background of the therapist, if desired
- Whether you want in-person or virtual sessions
- Browse therapist profiles, availability, and contact providers directly via phone or email.

Inclusive Therapists

Find mental health professionals who honor your whole identity.

How to use it:

- **Visit the website:** [InclusiveTherapists.com](https://www.inclusivetherapists.com)
- **Search:** Select your priority, refine your search, and select your location.



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. A survivor of suicide loss may feel isolated and afraid to reach out, but 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. 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 ([Go to page 13 to learn more about support group resources](#)).

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

Safe Language

Here are some resources that will help you share your story in a safe manner.

- AFSP - Safe Messaging Guidelines: afsp.org/how-to-talk-safely-about-suicide
- Samaritans - How to talk about suicide safely online: samaritans.org/about-samaritans/research-policy/internet-suicide/online-safety-resources/how-talk-about-suicide-safely-online
- 988 - Suicide-safe language: 988.ca/understanding-suicide/suicide-safe-language

Source: *Reporting on Suicide, SAVE 2020*

How to support children after suicide loss (page 1 of 2)

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 that 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. (More resources like the Dougy Center on page 11).

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. Play therapy may be a good option to consider. Reach out to the school or daycare to ask what resources or support they can provide.

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 (page 2 of 2)

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.
- The Dougy Center has great resources for all ages.

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.

Source: Dougy Center: *The National Grief Center. Supporting Children and Teens after a death from suicide.* <https://www.dougy.org/assets/uploads/Supporting-Children-Teens-After-a-Suicide.pdf>

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.

How to handle birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays

Celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays after a suicide loss is challenging and requires a balance between honoring the loved one and protecting one's own mental health. Below are a few things to consider when thinking about honoring your loved one. The important thing to keep in mind is that everyone grieves differently, and you get to decide what is right for you.

- Think about your family's holiday traditions; consider whether you want to continue them or create some new ones
- Remember that family members may feel differently about continuing to do things the way they've been done in the past; try to talk openly with each other about your expectations
- Consider whether you want to be with your family and friends for the holiday, or whether it would be more healing for you to be by yourself or go away (this year)
- Keep in mind that sometimes the anticipation of an event can be more difficult than the event itself
- If you find it comforting to talk about your loved one, let your family and friends know that; tell them not to be afraid to mention your loved one's name
- Some survivors find it comforting to acknowledge the birthday of their loved one by gathering with his/her friend and family; others prefer to spend it privately
- Some survivors have found the following ritual helpful for a variety of occasions:
 - Light two candles, and then blow one out; explain that the extinguished candle represents those we've lost, while the one that continues to burn represents those of us who go on despite our loss and pain
 - Simply leave the one candle burning (you can put it off to one side) for the duration of the holiday meal or event; the glowing flame acts as a quiet reminder of those who are missing

Survivors of Suicide Loss Day Memorial Event

The Survivors of Suicide Loss Day Memorial is an annual gathering dedicated to honoring the lives of those lost to suicide. This meaningful event offers a safe and compassionate space for survivors to come together, share their journeys, and find comfort in the presence of others who understand. Through remembrance, reflection, and connection, participants are supported in their healing while paying tribute to their loved ones.

SAVE hosts an in-person and live stream option on international suicide loss day, which is the Saturday before Thanksgiving in November.

Learn more about this year's event here: [save.org/event/suicide-awareness-memorial/](https://www.save.org/event/suicide-awareness-memorial/)

Source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. *Surviving a Suicide Loss: Resource and Healing Guide*. 14257_AFSP_Surviving_Suicide_Loss_Resource_Healing_Guide_m1_v10_flipbook. <https://aws-fetch.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/flipbooks/survivingASuicideLoss/index.html?page=1>

Financial support

Help Me Bounce Program

SAVE and Spare Key are proud to announce a new collaboration that will provide community-based fundraising to suicide loss survivors. Individuals and families who have lost a loved one to suicide can share their story on [HelpMeBounce.org](https://www.helpmebounce.org).

This platform gives families a compassionate and supportive outlet to connect with donors who want to help them avoid adding a financial crisis on top of the loss they are already facing. Donors are able to provide direct financial assistance towards the bills these families desperately need help paying.

If you have any questions before completing the registration process, please call Spare Key at (952) 406-8872 or email support@helpmebounce.org.

To learn more about the program and sign up, visit: [save.org/financial-support-for-suicide-loss-survivors-on-helpmebounce-org](https://www.save.org/financial-support-for-suicide-loss-survivors-on-helpmebounce-org)

AFSP's Surviving a Suicide Loss: A Financial Guide

This 2004 guide covers how to take a financial inventory, 12 months of financial milestones, working with financial and legal advisors, settling the estate and taking control of your financial future.

To access the guide, visit: sites.pfw.edu/education/hsrv/bhfsi/afsp-financial-guide.pdf

Memorial Fund

A Memorial Fund is a fund established to honor, celebrate, and/or remember a loved one lost to suicide. In addition to supporting SAVE's suicide prevention programs, creating a Memorial Fund allows you and others to continue to remember a loved one on holidays, birthdays, and other meaningful dates for years to come.

To learn more, visit: [save.org/donate](https://www.save.org/donate)

Community Partnerships

SAVE has created strong partnerships with these two organizations that have other opportunities for survivors to engage with them if they choose to do so.

Black Box Project: Turning loss into legacy, and helping save lives

The Black Box Project is a secure research initiative that partners with suicide-loss survivors to learn from digital devices left behind after a suicide. Families who choose to participate temporarily loan smartphones, tablets, or other personal devices so the data they hold can be analyzed with care and respect.

Families do this because these devices can hold insight into moments of struggle and crisis that are often lost. When many families' experiences are brought together, they help identify shared patterns that were not visible before. These collective insights are supported through a carefully designed platform that allows learning to be shared responsibly across the suicide prevention field—informing research, care, and prevention efforts aimed at saving lives.

For many families, participation is a way to honor their loved one's life by helping protect others in the future.

If you'd like to learn more about the Black Box Project and whether participation may be right for you, the first step is an exploratory phone call or Zoom conversation. We'll share details, answer questions, and give you space to decide what feels right.

To learn more about this project, visit: bbxproject.org

To schedule an introductory conversation, visit: stopsoldiersuicide-org.zoom.us/j/kim-bartlett-msw

LOSS Team

LOSS – Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors – is an active suicide postvention model. This model involves two or more trained volunteers, called a LOSS Team, who proactively go to the scene, or shortly after, of a suicide to provide immediate support to those left behind. At least one of these two trained volunteers is a survivor of a suicide loss. LOSS Team volunteers are present to those left behind in a non-intrusive manner. They provide support, resources, and understanding.

While each LOSS Team has its own unique characteristics based on the needs of its community, there are three commonalities that they all share:

- They proactively reach out to the newly bereaved by suicide.
- At least one of the volunteers who responds is a suicide loss survivor (peer model).
- LOSS Teams exist for the same purpose: To be an instillation of hope.

To see if there is a LOSS team near you, visit: <https://www.lossteam.com/copy-of-history-locate>

National Suicide Loss Support Groups and Support Services

Organization	Contact	Description
AFSP (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) Support Group Database	afsp.org/find-a-support-group	A database of virtual and in-person grief support groups.
The Helpline Center	loss.helplinecenter.org/suicide-survivor-support-services	Provides a variety of different support services for survivors of suicide loss including classes, support groups, individual support, and a resource library.
Alliance of Hope	allianceofhope.org	Online Information, blog, and a community forum for suicide loss survivors to share stories and offer mutual support.
Friends for Survival	friendsforsurvival.org Helpline: (916) 392-0664 Toll Free: (800) 646-7322	A newsletter, support group, and helpline for suicide loss survivors
For LGBTQAI+: Virtual SafePlace suicide grief support group for the LGBTQ+ community	samaritanshope.org/our-services/grief-support/#lgbtq	A peer-led support group, facilitated by fellow LGBTQ+ suicide loss survivors to share their experiences and find support.
For Veterans: Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)	taps.org	Specific support and resources for military suicide loss survivors, offering a community of support for grieving families and friends.

National General Grief Support Services

Organization	Contact	Description
Dougy Center	dougy.org	Support for grieving children, teens, young adults, and their families. Services include peer support programs, training for professionals, and resources.
For Children: National Alliance for Children's Grief (NACG)	nacg.org	Professional training, resources, and a national database of grief support centers.
AFSP Youth Resource	shorturl.at/6gXZr	Children, teens and suicide loss resource.
For Widows: National Widowers' Organization	nationalwidowers.org	Peer support, awareness campaigns, and directories.

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. 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

