



Guide to Suicide Postvention

Death by suicide is a unique type of loss. It is often a shock, leaving people wondering why and whether they could have done something to prevent it.

It can be helpful to understand that your reactions are normal, and part of the grief process.

It can be beneficial to learn coping strategies and things to keep in mind after learning of the death by suicide of a colleague.

COMMON REACTIONS

- Shock and denial
- Anger
- Blaming
- Guilt
- Grief and sadness
- Asking "why"
- Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
- Physical reactions

THE GRIEVING PROCESS

The important thing to remember about the grieving process is that it does not happen in linear stages, as if you must experience and work through each one. It is different for everyone; as unique as a fingerprint. However, there are four tasks that most people work through during the grieving process.

- Accept that the loss has happened.
- Take time to explore and express your feelings related to the loss - this may include episodes of intense anger, guilt, sadness, etc.
- Adjust to a world without that person - mentally, emotionally, and physically.
- Form a new life and relationships, while still maintaining a connection with the one you lost.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- There are many factors that could lead to death by suicide, and there is no way to predict them all. There may not have been any clear indicators of the person's intentions. Suicide attempts are sometimes impulsive decisions.
- The person may not have shown signs of diminished well-being. Many people are very good at covering up negative emotions, especially at work.
- Although asking "what if" is a common reaction, there is no way to know if you could have done anything to prevent what happened. You cannot judge your previous actions, based on what you know now.
- Everyone grieves differently, and at different intensities. Factors that affect how people grieve include: previous experiences with death or loss, relationship to the person who died, the specifics of the death, social supports and coping strategies, religious beliefs, prior physical and mental health issues, and other life stressors.
- If you can, attend the funeral or memorial service of the deceased, as it can be helpful in processing grief.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Eat healthy and drink lots of water - your body and mind need the nutrients to recover from stress and expel the stress chemicals
- Engage in regular exercise - this helps to boost chemicals that improve mood, reduce stress, and improve sleep
- Try to maintain your usual sleep routine - if having trouble sleeping, get up and do a relaxing activity for a little while to distract your mind from worries
- Help someone else - be a support to your coworkers; donate or volunteer at a charity.
- Do some things you enjoy - part of taking care of yourself is making time to relax and have fun; this gives you a break from grieving and help to maintain balance
- Talk to someone - family, friends, coworkers, a counselor, faith mentor, or anyone else whom you feel comfortable sharing your feeling with and is helpful to you
- Return to routine - as soon as you can, engage in your normal routine, this may help you regain your sense of control and predictability of life
- Think about other times. What positive coping strategies worked for you then? Can you practice those now?

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

If you are having thoughts of suicide, self-harm, or harming others, please seek professional assistance as soon as possible, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at:

800.273.TALK (8255)



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