

# Grief after Suicide

## What is Grief?

Grief changes your life  
Grief is an emotion, not a disease  
Grief is a natural reaction to death and loss  
Grief can help us better understand who we are  
Grief is a personal experience; no two people grieve the same way

## The Grief due to a Death by Suicide is Difficult Because...

Suicide is generally not culturally acceptable and carries with it a stigma;  
The question 'why' someone died by suicide often may be difficult to answer;  
Feelings of guilt and shame are often most often associated with a loss from suicide.

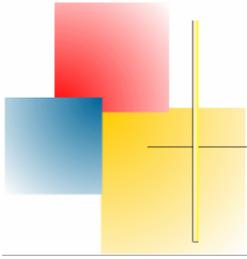
## Normal Grief Feelings due to a Death by Suicide

You will feel many emotions after your loss. Freely give yourself permission to experience those emotions. You may have feelings that are not listed here. Like the waves of an ocean, your grief will sometimes be very powerful and overwhelming. At other times, your grief will seem gentler and even comforting.

- ✚ It is **okay** to feel **confused** and in **shock**.  
"Everything is so unreal."  
"This can't be happening to me."
- ✚ It is **okay** to have feelings of **denial**.  
"Nothing has happened so I am going to act as if nothing has happened."  
"He/she is not dead so everything is going to be okay."
- ✚ It is **okay** to have feelings of **shame**.  
"Everybody thinks I should have been able to prevent the suicide."  
"Maybe I would be better off dead too!"
- ✚ It is **okay** to feel **guilty**.  
"I should have seen the signs and stopped the suicide."  
"If only I had ..."
- ✚ It is **okay** to feel the **physical effects** of grief.  
"I can't sleep and I'm not hungry."  
"I have a headache, maybe I have a brain tumor."
- ✚ It is **okay** to feel **angry**.  
**Self-directed:** "Why wasn't I able to prevent it?"  
**Community-directed:** "Why couldn't they (doctors, counsellors) have done something?"  
**Directed toward the person who took their own life:** "You have ruined my life!"

**The Suicide Awareness Council Wellington-Dufferin is dedicated to helping reduce suicide and its impact on individuals, families, and communities.**

If you find this fact sheet useful, please feel free to make copies and pass it along to others.  
For more information about the Council, go to [www.suicideawarenesscouncil.wordpress.com](http://www.suicideawarenesscouncil.wordpress.com)



# Grief after Suicide Continued. . .

## Signs that You Need Some Help with your Grief

 Ask yourself the following questions. Answer them honestly. It's okay to ask for help.

1. Are you becoming dependent on illegal or prescription drugs or alcohol since your loss?  
Drugs and alcohol numb the pain rather than helping you deal with your grief and move forward with your life. **Yes** \_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_
2. Are you experiencing signs of depression over long periods of time? Signs of depression can include: constant crying, loss of interest in activities, family and friends, tendency to isolate yourself, preoccupation with suicidal thoughts, hopelessness and despair.  
**Yes** \_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_
3. Are you becoming overly involved with activities, family and friends as compared to before the suicide? Excessive busyness can be a way of avoiding the pain of grief.  
**Yes** \_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_
4. Are you preoccupied with the deceased or with the idea of death? **Yes** \_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_
5. Are you unable to carry out the simple day-to-day tasks of living? **Yes** \_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_
6. Are you becoming violent or acting out your feelings inappropriately? **Yes** \_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_

 If you answered yes to any of these questions it is important to reach out for help.

## Reaching Out for Help

- **Talk, Talk, Talk.** Talk to someone that you trust. This person could be a family member, friend, teacher, person of faith, counsellor or physician. Join a grief support group. Share your story over and over again – if that brings you some relief.
- **Ask for Support.** This is not a sign of weakness but a sign of courage.
- **Keep a Journal or create a Scrapbook.** Write, draw or scribble your thoughts and feelings. There is no right or wrong way to journal or make a scrapbook.
- **Get creative or physically active:** Swim, go hiking, learn a new sport, paint, play an instrument, cook, write a poem or story.
- **Be yourself and take one day at a time.**