

# GRIEVING

## A SUICIDE LOSS



**Canadian Mental  
Health Association**  
Middlesex  
*Mental health for all*

## WHAT IS SUICIDE LOSS GRIEF?

Grief is grief (also called bereavement), but when it involves a suicide death many people react differently than with, for example, a death resulting from an illness or accident. No matter the reason for the grief, every person reacts differently; grief is a uniquely individual experience with some commonalities.

People may initially feel shock, disbelief, and numbness, which may last for some time. Gradually other emotions and feelings may arise such as; sadness, guilt, anger, abandoned sense of abandonment, confusion, fear, or anxiety. If this relates to you, you are completely “normal” given the circumstances.

This booklet is an information resource provided by the Bereavement program at CMHA Middlesex. Some content is from CMHA National who has resources including brochures available at [shop.cmha.ca](http://shop.cmha.ca).



# WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?

Grief after a suicide death may be complicated and complex. There are often many factors to consider such as; family dynamics, who to share what information with, who can be trusted to know the whole truth, your relationship to the deceased individual, the unanswered questions and the asking “WHY”.

There are many possible scenarios that may hinder and compound the grieving process. Often people feel alone or want to be alone. Isolation may be an intentional choice to get away from others, but if it goes on for too long there are other serious concerns to look at.



## WARNING SIGNS TO PAY ATTENTION TO:

- Isolating self for too long may increase the anxiety, depression, fear, crying, despair and prevent healthy healing with grief.
- Health concerns from lack of proper nutrition, exercise and sleep.
- Some may want to run away from their life as it is now.
- Some people may have thoughts of their own suicide that may stay in their mind and gradually become a plan to die by suicide (the pain of the loss is so deep and the broken heart gets tangled with intense despair) **SEEK HELP!**
- Some people may feel they do not care about life anymore (this will pass).
- Some people may be aware of others who are close to the situation who may have suicidal thoughts.

# WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

There are several options available depending on your situation.



Talk to your doctor and get advice if you are unable to cope with life shortly after the loss.



Talk with a friend, family member, spiritual advisor, or someone you know. The more you share your story and concerns with someone else the less likely your emotions get pushed down inside.



Call Reach Out at 1-866-933-2023. Reach Out is a 24/7 mental health and addictions support line. The staff answering the phone have many resources to share with you – including those specifically about grief and bereavement. They can even book an appointment for you with a mental health counsellor at CMHA Middlesex.



Contact the Bereavement Support Coordinator at CMHA Middlesex 519-434-9191 ext. 244 or [grief@cmhamiddlesex.ca](mailto:grief@cmhamiddlesex.ca). more Information can be provided such as supports with one on one grief counselling specifically for suicide loss. Closed support groups held 3 times a year and more resources that are available for your situation.



# COPING WITH GRIEF



Be prepared for triggers; events, situations or feelings that may catch you off guard. A trigger occurs when you are going about your life and when you least expect it you are caught off guard with tears and the need to catch your breath. Holidays, anniversaries, birthdays and other special occasions can be difficult. It may be helpful to plan ahead and think about new traditions or celebrations that support healing.



Reach out for help. Loved ones and others may want to give you privacy and may not feel comfortable asking you how you are doing. Do not be afraid to ask for their support.



Draw from the strength you used to get through past stresses and difficult times in your life.



Picture someone you respect and admire who influences you. Remember how they got through their difficult times. Draw from their strengths.



Consider waiting before making major life decisions. You may feel differently as your feelings of grief lose their intensity. Dramatic changes may add to the stress you are experiencing.



Offer support to others who are grieving. Reaching out to others may help your own journey.



Make a new beginning. Life will never be the same as it was before this loss, but it is important to start to re-engage in life. Over time the feelings of grief will become less intense. Return to interests and activities you may have dropped and think about trying something new.

# HOW CAN I HELP A LOVED ONE?

Many people feel they do not know what to do or say when a loved one is experiencing a loss. If the loss also affected you, you may be working through your own experiences of grief. One of the most important things you can do is to simply be there for your loved one. Grief can feel overwhelming, but support and understanding make a huge difference.

## Here are some tips for supporting a loved one:



Understand that a loved one needs to follow their own journey and express their feelings in their own way



Ask your loved one what they need and regularly remind them that you are there for support if they are not ready to talk with others yet. Remember to offer practical help, too. For example, they may need help with getting groceries or making phone calls.



Talk about the loss. It is common to avoid the topic and focus on a loved one's feelings instead, but many people find sharing thoughts, memories and stories helpful and comforting.



Remember that grief may be bigger than the loss. For example, someone who loses a partner may also experience a lot of fear or stress around financial security and other important matters.



Include your loved one in social activities. Even if they often decline, it is important to show that they are still an important member of your community.



Help your loved one connect with support services if they experience a lot of difficulty.



Take care of your own well-being and seek extra help for yourself if you need it.

# DO YOU NEED MORE HELP?

## **Reach Out (519) 433-2023 or 1-866-933-2023**

Reach Out is a 24/7 bilingual information, support and crisis service for those living in London, Middlesex, Oxford and Elgin counties. This service is for people living with mental health and addictions needs – as well as their families, caregivers and health care providers. There is also a web chat available at [www.reachout247.ca](http://www.reachout247.ca). Reach Out can also access a Crisis Mobile team who may be sent out to support a crisis. Crisis teams can support individuals 16 and older. Reach Out can support individuals 12 and over.

\*Please note – if you need crisis support for yourself or a loved one and are aged 0-18 you can access the Crisis and Intake Team at Madame Vanier by calling 519-433-0334.

## **Mental Health & Addictions Crisis Centre**

**648 Huron Street, London, ON**

The Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Centre is open 24/7 if you are at a high risk of suicide, experiencing personal distress or symptoms of mental illness or if you would benefit from talking with someone to initiate stabilizing supports. The Crisis Centre supports individuals who are 16 and older.

## **Support Line**

**519-601-8055 or 1-844-360-8055**

The Support Line provides confidential listening and support to individuals 16 and older at any time of day or night for people needing support. Whether you are anxious, depressed, lonely, overwhelmed or just need to talk something through with someone, you will find a supportive and caring person at our end of the line.

**Bereavement Services at  
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**United Way**  
London & Middlesex

**Bereavement Support Coordinator at CMHA Middlesex**  
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