

WHAT MAKES A DEATH BY SUICIDE SO DIFFERENT??

Losing a loved one by suicide is totally different than other kinds of death for many reasons, and has a longer healing process. Being a 'death by choice,' it leaves loved ones with a wide range of feelings that seem to run in a continuous cycle at first.

Besides the usual pain of loss, most have a multitude of unanswered questions, an enormous guilt, feelings of failure, anger, and rejection. These feelings usually are knotted together in a mass of confusion, and are very overwhelming! The trauma of a suicide is so deeply devastating that it shuts down the survivors normal coping mechanisms, causing added (often scary) feelings of, "What's wrong with me?"

The rejection of friends and family is a very common aftermath of a loss by suicide. People usually don't know what to say so they completely avoid the grieving one. It's not unusual for friends to blame the survivor, sometimes openly and sometimes in subtle accusing remarks or actions. This adds to the guilt and loss that is already overwhelming them. Many people still feel that suicide is 'dirty' and won't allow the grieving one to talk about the loss.

The stigma of the word suicide creates barriers in finding the help they need for support and understanding. It is very common for people to react to the word suicide in ways that insinuate the survivor must be dirty, contagious, or from an undesirable family. Because of this reaction some survivors never talk about it or seek the help they desperately need. Unresolved grief will later surface in health issues.

If the survivor was there when the death occurred, or the one to find the body, graphic issues must be dealt with also. It is very traumatic and most have nightmares for years. Sleep is hard to find, yet the daytime hours are also difficult because "that movie" plays over and over in their minds, day and night. Lack of sleep, coupled with a feeling of hopelessness, makes it seem impossible to overcome. (Not to mention popular terms, heard daily, that are devastating to a survivor, such as 'hang in there' or 'that blows me away.')

Most survivors with graphic issues will also become suicidal.

Many survivors have issues to work through concerning God. The stronger their faith is, the harder it is to seek counsel in the Christian community. Again, it's the stigma. It is very common for a survivor to change churches or stop going to church altogether. I have found that Christians often pat them on the back with a quick prayer, and have no clue how to minister to them. (That's how Christians were with me also)

Many long-term friendships are severed also. It's not uncommon for many other losses to follow a suicide death. Another painful and sad aftermath of a death by suicide is that immediate family members sometimes turn on each other and blame one another. So rather than having one loss (the suicide) their whole family structure changes, and often is never reconciled.

It's also very common for a survivor to feel so overwhelmed by guilt and so desperate for some relief from the pain that they begin to battle suicidal thoughts. This happens even in strong Christian families where prayer is prevalent. Dealing with grief and depression isn't taught enough in our churches, so people don't know what to do with it all. A good support group is often life saving! According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the level of stress resulting from the suicide of a loved one is rated as catastrophic.

At **SURVIVORS ROAD2HEALING** we believe we'll see a noticeable decrease in the number of suicides among survivors by providing our services to them. If **SURVIVORS ROAD2HEALING** has been a help to you, please consider a donation to help us continue to grow nationwide. Survivors need more available help!

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