

Hope after Suicide

There are always two parties to a death; the person who dies and the survivors who are bereaved.

Sometimes we are Reluctant Survivors.

We don't want to be Survivors. We didn't choose to be survivors.

How Can We Help?

Grief following a suicide is always complex. Survivors don't "get over it." Instead, with support and understanding, we can come to reconcile ourselves to its reality. Don't be surprised by the intensity of your feelings. Sometimes, when we least suspect it, we may be overwhelmed by feelings of grief. Survivors may be struggling with explosive emotions, guilt, fear and shame-all well beyond the limits experienced in other types of death. Be patient, compassionate and understanding.

Helping begins with your ability to be an active listener. Your physical presence and desire to listen without judgment are critical helping tools. Willingness to listen is the best way to offer help to someone who needs to talk. Thoughts and feelings inside the survivor may be frightening and difficult to acknowledge.

Don't worry so much about what you will say. Just concentrate on the words that are being shared with you. Your friend may relate the same story about the death over and over again. Listen attentively each time. Realize this repetition is part of your friend's healing process. Simply listen and understand. And, remember, you don't have to have the answers to his or her questions.

Simply listening is enough.

Be Compassionate

Give your friend permission to express his or her feelings without fear of criticism. Learn from your friend. Don't instruct or set explanations about how he or she should respond. Avoid saying, "I know just how you feel." You don't. We don't. Think about your helping role as someone who "walks with," not "behind" or "in front of" the one who is bereaved.

Respect the Need to Grieve

As a caring friend, you may be the only one willing to be with the survivors. Your physical presence and permissive listening create a foundation for the healing process. Allow the survivors to talk, but don't push them. Let them know you are ready to listen if, and when, they want to share their thoughts and feelings.

Use the name of the person who has died when talking to survivors. Hearing the name can be comforting and it confirms that you have not forgotten this important person who was so much a part of their lives.

Be aware of Support Groups like SOSAD

Work Together as Helpers

Friends and family who experience the death of someone to suicide must no longer suffer alone and in silence. As helpers, we all need to join with other caring persons to provide support and acceptance for survivors who need to grieve in healthy ways.

To experience grief is the result of having loved.

After Suicide we begin a journey of which we have no experience.

Is there Hope after Suicide? **Absolutely.**

Just look around this church today.

Look at all the people.

We are all here together today.

We give each other Hope.

And as long as we have each other – We have Hope.

Thank you

References

<http://suicideandmentalhealthassociationinternational.org>

Shane Kelly – Professional Services Manager - IACP