

Suicide and Bereavement

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE ON SUICIDE



Background

Experiencing the suicide of a close person is one of the most devastating life events. Grief is a natural reaction to the loss of a loved person. Although there are some similarities in grief reactions across modes of death, the quality of the grief process after suicide is often specific.

People bereaved by suicide, also referred to as suicide loss survivors, often face a complex mix of feelings such as sadness, guilt, anger, and regret. They are often struggling with trying to understand “why” the person has died by suicide and they are ruminating about potentially missed possibilities of recognising signs and preventing the suicide. They have also increased risks of mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, and increased risk of suicidal behaviour and dying by suicide. Unfortunately, suicide loss survivors often feel misunderstood and lonely, and they find it hard to find support in their grief, which is, at least in part, related to the stigma and shame around the topic of suicide in many societies.

How to support people bereaved by suicide



Listen and try to understand the bereaved person's reactions from their point of view.



Offer support in everyday activities, even regarding the basic needs.



Accept their grief reactions, even if these may change from one day to another.



Acknowledge that they are dealing with a complex process, rather than providing simplistic advice on how to change their feelings.



Here and there, gently initiate the conversation about the deceased person, if the bereaved person is having difficulties in doing that.



Be persistent and active in how you show your support even if the bereaved person withdraws a bit.

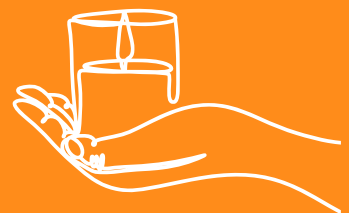


Try to do something pleasant for yourself and with the bereaved person.

Key Points



International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day is a time when we reach out to each other around the world creating a warm and supportive global embrace. We are not alone, we are together and we will always remember and mourn our loved ones lost to suicide.



On 10 September each year, IASP invites everyone around the world to light a candle to show support for suicide prevention efforts, to reflect, to remember those lost to suicide and acknowledge survivors of suicide loss.



**International Association
for Suicide Prevention**

Written in collaboration with the IASP Suicide Bereavement and Postvention Special Interest Group.
www.iasp.info/wspd

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Take action if you are bereaved by suicide

- ▶ Make small gestures of taking care of yourself everyday.
- ▶ Engage in meaningful rituals (such as lighting a candle) to remember your loved one.
- ▶ Share your feelings with people you trust. If you feel there is no one, try writing your thoughts down.
- ▶ Find local (suicide related) bereavement support groups. There are online groups too that operate on a global level.
- ▶ Do meaningful things that temporarily distract you from your ruminations.
- ▶ Try to engage in something pleasant or start a new activity to change habits.



Resources

An online search for 'suicide bereavement', or 'postvention services' will provide further resources

[Australia – StandBy Support After Suicide](#)

[Belgium – Working Group Further after Suicide](#)

[Canada – Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention](#)

[Denmark – Landsforeningen for efterladte efter selvmord](#)

[Finland – Surunauha](#)

[Germany – AGUS – Angehörige um Suizid](#)

[Hong Kong – Samaritans](#)

[Italy – De Leo Fund](#)

[Norway – Leve](#)

[UK – SOBS](#)

[Singapore – Samaritans of Singapore](#)

[Sweden – SPES](#)

[USA – Alliance of Hope](#)

[WHO – Preventing suicide: how to start a suicide bereavement support group](#)

