

## *Next Steps*

Find those who can guide you through your grief.  
Use resources available to help you cope with your loss.  
There are ways to put your grief into action.

## *Local Resources*

Mental Health Center of Dane County  
[www.mhcdc.org](http://www.mhcdc.org) - choose "Resources"

24/7 Crisis Line 608-280-2600

Support Group for Adult Survivors of Suicide  
*2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month, 7-9pm*

National Alliance on Mental Illness of Dane County  
608-249-7188 • [www.namidanecounty.org](http://www.namidanecounty.org)

## *Additional Resources*

Loss of a child	<a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a>
Healing, including men's grief	<a href="http://www.webhealing.com">www.webhealing.com</a>
Site for kids	<a href="http://www.griefnet.org">www.griefnet.org</a>
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA	<a href="http://www.spanusa.org">www.spanusa.org</a>
American Association of Suicidology	<a href="http://www.suicidology.org">www.suicidology.org</a> 1-202-237-2280
Survivors of Suicide	<a href="http://www.1000deaths.com">www.1000deaths.com</a>
American Foundation of Suicide Prevention	<a href="http://www.afsp.org">www.afsp.org</a> 1-888-333-AFSP (2377)
Suicide Awareness/ Voices of Education	<a href="http://www.save.org">www.save.org</a> 1-888-511-SA/VA (7283)
Helping Others Prevent & Educate about Suicide (HOPES)	<a href="http://www.hopes-wi.org">www.hopes-wi.org</a>
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
National Mental Health Association – Resource Center	1-800-969-NMHA (6642)

*Survivors of Suicide Services*  
Mental Health of Dane County  
625 West Washington Avenue  
Madison, Wisconsin, 53703

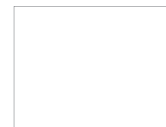
# Help After Suicide



*Survivors of Suicide Services*

*Mental Health Center  
of Dane County*

*Madison, Wisconsin*



# Survivors of Suicide

*A sudden death can be a traumatic experience for survivors. A death by suicide adds a unique set of challenges for those who are left behind. This information is meant to help you understand what happens after a suicide.*

## Reactions

*People report some or all of these normal reactions which are not the same for everyone. They may come and go like waves or they may feel constant and overwhelming.*

- Physical symptoms in response to trauma.
- Feeling shock and numbness.
- A sense of disbelief because the events seem unreal.
- Loss of concentration and inability to focus.
- Guilt for having been unable to prevent the death.
- Anger at the person, others, self, or God.
- Relief if following a difficult struggle with illness or behavior.
- Anxiety and worry about yourself or others.
- Questioning what you or others did or did not do.
- Deep and profound sadness.

## Understanding Why

*A suicide can bring about questioning and searching for an answer to, "Why would this person end their own life?"*

- Suicide involves complex factors and is not the result of a single event.
- Those who die are usually seeking to end unbearable psychological pain that may have been apparent or hidden and not shared.
- A point was reached where the pain was greater than the person's resources to tolerate it or to see other solutions.
- Some questions may remain unanswered as to why.

# Support and Resources For Those Left Behind

## A Different Grief

*There are reasons that a death by suicide may feel different than other losses you have experienced. These can complicate the grieving process.*

The methods of suicide are not "natural" and they are often violent.

There always must be a discoverer who may be someone close or a stranger.

Police and other authorities need to be involved in the death investigation.

When suicide is ruled as the cause of death, the reasons may remain a mystery.

There may be a final note or communication involved. The message or lack of a message can raise questions for survivors.

Religious conflicts may arise concerning your own beliefs or the beliefs of others who are reacting to the suicide death.

People and places acquire new unwanted identities. There may be a reference such as "the woman whose husband shot himself" or the place where "it" happened.

## Talking To Children About Suicide

*Discussing suicide can be difficult for adults when there are many unanswered questions, and explaining the death to children is challenging but important.*

Children may not talk about the death or they may repeatedly ask about it.

Children need to hear age-appropriate information about death and suicide from a trusted person.

Telling the truth is essential.

Expect a variety of reactions including fear that others may die.

Anxiety is likely to arise around being separated from caregivers, even for short periods of time.

Talk with school staff or others involved in the child's life about what has happened.

Provide opportunities for questions and reactions through activities and other creative outlets.

Talk about and remember the person who died.

Separate who the person was, from his or her final actions.

Share your own feelings of grief with your child.

Reassure the child that they will be cared for and you will be there for them. Tell them that even though you may be sad right now, you will not always feel that way.

## What Helps

*Those who have experienced a suicide loss have shared what has helped them.*

Work at understanding that you have experienced a traumatic loss.

Be patient in allowing yourself the reactions and feelings of grief.

Seek out those who give you comfort like family, friends, clergy, or counselors.

Avoid or limit contact with those who complicate your grief.

Practice self care along with caring for others.

Gain information and skills through reading and using available resources.

Discuss your loss with other survivors such as in a support group.

Take comfort in any progress you make in surviving your loss.