

Lost a loved one to suicide? Here's what you need to know

(1) *It's okay to feel several emotions all at once*

You might be in denial, shocked, angry, sad, confused or guilty. It's natural to feel this way and you need to be able to accept these feelings. You may be going through a sea of different emotions, possibly all at the same time, but all your feelings are valid.

(2) *You need to look after yourself*

Make sure you're taking care of your basic needs: eating well, getting enough sleep and maintaining hygiene.

(3) *It's not your fault*

You may feel as if you failed them - you could've done more to help them and prevent this from happening. This isn't true. *"We are only responsible to do what we know to do at the time it needs doing, not for the things that we will learn to do later."*

(4) *Healing is not linear*

Grief does not happen in stages. It's highly probable that you'll go back and forth. The same feelings you thought you had resolved can easily appear again. This may make you feel as if you're not making progress, however, this is natural in the grieving process. The main goal is for the intensity and frequency of these feelings to decrease over time.

(5) *Keep your support system close*

Spend time with and accept help from those who have supported you in the past and have your best interests at heart - family, friends and your community.

(6) *You yourself may feel suicidal - prepare for this*

It's not uncommon to have suicidal thoughts while grieving the loss of someone who completed suicide. At this time, you need to make sure you're drawing in on factors that protect you: healthy coping skills, social connectedness, a reason for living, sobriety and access to mental health support.

(7) *You may need professional help*

Sometimes the pain caused by the suicide of a loved one may be too much to handle on your own. It's okay to admit you need help and reach out. A therapist can help you navigate your grieving process, make sense of the death, develop new coping strategies and feel supported.

(8) *You can move forward*

The grief you feel may not ever fully go away, however, you can learn to manage it better. This can happen through a change in perspective (you may see the world in a new light and develop better emotional awareness and empathy for those around you), a newfound appreciation of life or a new purpose (perhaps to help others that have dealt with similar circumstances).