

# Someone Close To You Ends Their Life by Suicide



The death of someone close you is one of the most painful experiences that you may have to endure. Of all causes of death, suicide is commonly the one that brings about the most heartbreak and the most difficult to accept. When there is a suicide, family, friends and colleagues often experience a wide range of reactions and emotions.

They may feel sad for having lost someone close, frustrated for not having been able to help or prevent the incident, and possible anger towards the person who ended their life by suicide leaving them with all the upheaval following the death. We often feel completely powerless towards something that we can't understand.

## **Why does someone end their life by suicide?**

Most people who end their life by suicide were suffering a great deal in some capacity and saw death as a means to stop their pain. It is not necessarily death they are seeking, but rather an end to their hurt and distress. Difficulties arise and are compounded to a point where the individual does not feel capable of overcoming their situation and emotions. Often, after repeated failure at attempting to change their position, the person concludes that they are hopeless to find a solution.

This despair leads to a life crisis that seems so intense that the only seemingly feasible way to avoid it, is to end their life by suicide.

Added to these complexities is the impact of COVID-19 to our personal and professional lives. The pandemic has brought isolation, loneliness, fear, grief and financial upheaval to many families in varying capacities. The unexpected loss of family or friends coupled with financial strain and the potential loss of

employment may serve to intensify the challenges being experienced by persons in need of support. If you are experiencing thoughts of self harm, confide in someone close to you, speak to your primary care physician or seek professional support, including your employee and family assistance program. These are difficult times and you're not alone, help is available.

## **Is suicide an act of courage or madness?**

Suicide is not a courageous act, nor an act of madness. Rather it is the consequence of despair, of the perceived inability to resolve the matter any other way. Suicide is the outcome of a more or less lengthy process, but it is still a decision that is made by the individual.

## **Do you feel that it is somehow your fault?**

It is normal for close friends and relations of the person who ended their life by suicide to feel partly responsible and guilty about the person's death. Now that you are confronted with the inevitable, you feel like there might have been signs, or that you could have done or said something else, something different.

This reaction is absolutely natural. However, you should know that any suicidal indications were probably disguised, indirect, or even non-existent. Furthermore, even if you were aware of their despair, your help may not have been accepted.

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Remember that suicide is a decision that a person makes. Other solutions might have been available, but suicide was the only way that seemed conceivable at the time.

### What should you expect?

As with any other loss, it is normal that you learn to live with this death by moving through and experiencing the different stages of the mourning process. While it is presented here in a static and linear fashion, keep in mind that we normally progress by taking forward and backward steps. Also, it is only natural that this will take a certain amount of time, which varies from one person to the next.

***At first, it is normal to feel numb and disbelief. You are in a state of shock. You don't understand what is going on and may not want to admit what has happened. You may feel divided: you understand what has happened in your mind, but can't accept what has happened on an emotional level.***

Afterwards, and often simultaneously with the first stage, it is common to feel anger towards the person who has ended their life and left you with this painful experience. It is also possible that you feel angry with yourself for actions that you did or did not do for the deceased, angry for not knowing how to help, or even angry for experiencing these feelings.

Sadness may soon follow as you enter another stage of loss and mourning. This is because you are becoming increasingly aware of the loss. Some people will experience loss of appetite, sleep disturbances and other physical reactions.

Others will experience feelings of guilt and remorse. In fact, you may still be tempted to make sense out of something that doesn't make sense.

Reorganization is the final stage. In consciously accepting your feelings and every disruption that this death brought about in your life, you will begin to feel more at ease with this loss and learn to live with the situation rather than in spite of it.

### What can you do?

Different strategies can help you adapt to this experience.

1. While feeling guilty is a normal reaction, where possible try not to blame yourself for the person's decision to end their life.
2. Do not blame others.
3. Do not try to speed up your mourning process or those of others around you. It is normal to need some time to accept the loss.
4. Do not hesitate to talk about your feelings and reactions to people who are close to you. Ask them for help. If you talk about your feelings, chances are you will recover faster from the loss. While isolation and withdrawal are natural reactions to confusion and despair, they should be avoided most of the time.
5. As much as possible, be attentive to other persons who are experiencing the same loss. In this scenario, both parties receive mutual support and understanding.

Once again, the amount of time that it will take someone to overcome this tragedy, will vary from person to person. Following the steps above is important to ensure that you have the support needed. You may be facing challenges with the new realities that COVID-19 has brought about; such as social isolation, depression and exaggerated feelings of loneliness. As mentioned, these factors layered on top of what you are already going through, may make your scenarios seemingly more complicated – but remember that you are never alone. If you need someone to talk to, visit the **Wellness Together Canada** online portal. Free to all Canadians, Homewood Health is a proud partner in **Wellness Together Canada**. This online portal offers free resources, tools and support services available in both English and French. It can be accessed at [wellnesstogether.ca](https://wellnesstogether.ca) or by phone by calling 1-866-585-0445.

We're here for you.

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**Need more information or assistance? All calls are completely confidential.**

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