

# Coping with suicide grief

When a loved one dies by suicide, it is common to feel shocked, confused, angry, sad or any combination of emotions. Those left behind can often struggle to cope with not only the loss of someone close to them, but also the challenge of coming to terms with how and why it happened.

## Suicide can impact all

Suicide can impact all genders, ages, ethnicities and communities. Certain groups may be at higher risk than others, but suicide does not discriminate. The process of grief after suicide is a complex one. At times, it may seem that it's a process that has no end, and that no progress is being made. There may be setbacks and difficult days, but if you or someone you know is experiencing suicide grief, take comfort in the knowledge that there are steps you can take that may help ease that burden.

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## How to help yourself cope with suicide grief

- **Find a support group.** There are many resources available.
- **Express your feelings** when you need to, stay silent when you want to.
- **Seek professional help.** It's okay to reach out.
- **Take all the time you need to grieve.** Be patient. Don't be too hard on yourself.
- **Your grief is unique to you** – nobody can tell you how you should feel or how long the grief process will take.
- **Don't rush** into making major, life-changing decisions.

## How to help others cope with suicide grief

- **What to say:** Simple, heartfelt and direct things such as “I’m so sorry for your loss” or “What can I do to help?”
- **What not to say:** Hollow, uncomfortable things such as “I know exactly how you feel”, “At least he’s not suffering anymore” or “Don’t worry, you’ll find someone else”.
- **Offer to help** with mundane daily chores and obligations, such as running errands, feeding or walking pets, mowing the lawn etc.
- **Be aware that their grief may seem to have passed**, but they may still need your help and support for an extended period of time.
- **Understand** that they may be experiencing a multitude of complicated emotions all at once.
- **Stay in contact.** Even if you don’t quite know what to say or do, just be present and be in regular contact.


## Have an honest conversation

1. Talk to them in private.
2. Listen to their story.
3. Tell them that you care about them.
4. Ask directly if they are thinking about suicide.
5. Encourage them to seek treatment or contact their doctor or therapist.
6. Avoid debating the value of life, minimising their problems or giving advice.

## If a person says they are considering suicide

- Take the person seriously.
- Stay with them.
- Help them remove lethal means.
- Escort them to mental health services or an emergency room. As mentioned earlier, the process of grief after suicide is complex.

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 **Critical support when you need it**  
Visit [optumwellbeing.com/criticalsupportcenter](https://optumwellbeing.com/criticalsupportcenter) for additional critical support resources and information.

# Optum

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