

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 and can be found through agencies like the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, which can be accessed online at www.afsp.org.
- **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** in to making major, life-changing decisions.

How to help others cope with suicide grief

- **What to say:** Simple, heartfelt and direct things like "I'm so sorry for your loss" or "What can I do to help?"

- **What not to say:** Hollow, uncomfortable things like “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 like 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.

If someone is showing signs of being suicidal themselves (or even actually mentioning thoughts of suicide) here is what the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention recommends you do.



Have an honest conversation

1. Talk to them in private.
2. Listen to their story.
3. Tell them 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, minimizing 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.
- Call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by dialing 988.
- Text 988 to text with a trained crisis counselor from the Crisis Text Line for free, 24/7.
- Escort them to mental health services or an emergency room. As mentioned earlier, the process of grief after suicide is complex.

If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or others — or you know someone having those thoughts — seek help right away. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call **911** — or go to the closest emergency room. To reach a trained crisis counselor, call the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** (previously known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) at **988** or **1-800-273-TALK** (1-800-273-8255). You may also text **988** or chat at 988lifeline.org. The lifeline provides 24/7 free and confidential support.*



Critical support when you need it

Visit optumwellbeing.com/criticalsupportcenter for additional critical support resources and information.



If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or others — or you know someone having those thoughts — seek help right away. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911 — or go to the closest emergency room. To reach a trained crisis counselor, call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (previously known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) at 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). You may also text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. The lifeline provides 24/7 free and confidential support.*

*The Lifeline provides live crisis center phone services in English and Spanish and uses Language Line Solutions to provide translation services in over 250 additional languages for people who call 988.

This program should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. This program is not a substitute for a doctor's or professional's care. Consult with your clinician for specific health care needs, treatment or medication. Due to the potential for a conflict of interest, legal consultation will not be provided on issues that may involve legal action against Optum or its affiliates, or any entity through which the caller is receiving these services directly or indirectly (e.g., employer or health plan). This program and its components may not be available in all states or for all group sizes and is subject to change. Coverage exclusions and limitations may apply.