

Be Kind to Yourself

Self-Care After Suicide Loss



The loss of someone you know to suicide can be an overwhelming and difficult experience. It is the start of a journey of grief that you never planned to take and for which you may feel unequipped. Here you'll find some resources and supports to help you begin to navigate this challenging time.

It's important to understand that grief is a highly individual and personal process. Everyone grieves in their own way, and you can't put a timeframe on it – grief takes as long as it takes.

It's also important to take care of yourself during this time of emotional upheaval. Self-care can take many forms, because many parts of life are important factors in our wellbeing. These include our physical health, mental and emotional states, social connections, work life and spirituality.

Just as there's no one way to grieve, there's no one recipe for self-care. But a good place to start is with an intention to be kind to yourself and acknowledging that things might feel confusing, messy or painful right now – and that's a normal human response to grief.

How You Might Be Feeling

Losing someone to suicide can bring on intense and complex thoughts and feelings. Below are some common responses to suicide grief.

- Shock
- Loneliness
- Numbness
- Anger
- Irritability
- Despair
- Sadness
- Distress
- Shame
- Guilt

Not everyone experiences all of these. You may experience some of them or even a mixture of feelings. Your emotions may also change from day to day or week to week. Strong feelings are a natural response to the loss of someone you loved and valued. Practising self-care won't make these feelings disappear overnight, but it will help you work through grief in ways that support healing and wellness.





Taking Care of Your Body

Grieving can be exhausting. It's important to look after your physical health at this time through exercise, sleep and a healthy diet. Here are some acts of physical self-care that will support your wellbeing.



Physical Self-Care Checklist

Am I...

- Drinking enough water?
- Eating regular meals?
- Eating nutritious foods?
- Sleeping enough?
- Stepping out for some fresh air throughout the day?
- Getting some exercise? (Even a gentle walk can help.)
- Taking care of my personal hygiene?

Dealing with Difficult Emotions

The emotions of grieving the loss of someone by suicide can be intense and complex. It's important to try to be kind to yourself as you move through them, and to find ways to practise mental and emotional self-care.

Reach Out and Connect

Losing someone to suicide leaves many people feeling lonely, isolated or even shamed. These feelings can relate to the physical loss of a person from our life and feeling that nobody understands the pain that comes with it. They can also relate to the death being a suicide, because of social stigma around suicide or others making hurtful or misinformed comments about it. It's important to be able to talk through these reactions and feelings, and to have social support and connection. You could talk to a friend or counsellor. Ask for help with chores or everyday activities if you need it. Spending time with nurturing people is a good idea too.

Keep a Journal

Writing about your thoughts and feelings can reduce stress, alleviate intense emotions and help you gain clarity about your experiences. It can also help you track your moods, patterns of behaviour and physical symptoms to identify triggers or areas of concern. Even if you only spend a few minutes jotting down key details, it can be a powerful wellness tool. At the end of this document you'll find a printable journal page to get you started.



Ground Yourself (5-4-3-2-1)

If you feel overwhelmed, here's a simple grounding exercise you can try. It might sound like a strange activity at first, but these simple steps can help bring you into the present moment and give you a sense of relief from unpleasant feelings.

- Look around you and name **FIVE** things you can see. It could be a picture frame or a spot on the wall.
- Name **FOUR** things you can touch right now. Perhaps it's your hair, a cushion, or a coffee cup.
- Listen and name **THREE** things you can hear. It could be a car driving by, a bird chirping or your tummy rumbling.
- Name **TWO** things you can smell. If needed you can walk outside and take in the smells of nature or head to the bathroom and notice the smell of soap. If you can't smell anything or go anywhere right now, then name two of your favourite smells.
- Notice the inside of your mouth and name **ONE** thing you can taste. It could be toothpaste or what you ate for lunch. If you can't taste anything then name your favourite taste.



Honour Your Loved One

The way a person died does not define the way they lived or the special place they had in your life. One way of remembering your loved one and the connection you shared is to create a memory box filled with small mementos, photos or notes that belonged to them or represent your relationship.

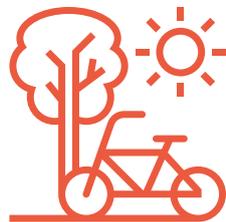


Creating such an opportunity for reflection can help process your grief. You could choose to do this with family members and share memories together, and it can be a good way to encourage children to reflect on their emotions and express

their grief too. Of course, this is not the only way to remember your loved one; you may prefer to visit their favourite place, light a candle or find another way that is personal and meaningful to you.

Recognise Triggers

Significant events such as anniversaries, birthdays, Christmas or other holidays can stir up intense feelings and memories. So can triggers such as specific smells or objects. It may be helpful to recognise these and think in advance about what self-care practices you can use to manage your feelings.



Take a Mindful Moment

Mindfulness is a technique to focus your awareness on the present moment without judgement. This can include awareness of our thoughts and feelings, physical sensations, or focusing on our senses. The benefits of practising mindfulness include better sleep, improved concentration and memory, and importantly reducing stress and being less overwhelmed by difficult thoughts and feelings. A mindful moment can be as simple as focusing your attention on your breath, while letting any thoughts or feelings come and go. If you'd like to try a guided mindfulness practice, you could download a free app such as Insight Timer or Smiling Mind or contact LifeConnect on **1300 052 590** or lifecconnect@neaminational.org.au for information about our mindfulness workshops.

Take a Break

Grief can be exhausting and at times it feels endless. It's ok to take breaks. It's even a good idea to make time to do things you enjoy, when you feel up to it. Here are some ideas to give yourself a self-care break, or you can think of something that's meaningful to you.

- Take a walk
- Go to a park
- Read a book
- Enjoy a coffee break
- Write a letter to a friend
- Read or write a poem
- Take a bath
- Take a nap
- Dance to your favourite song
- Watch the sunset

Further Reading & Resources

Follow these links for more information about suicide grief and how you can care for yourself during this time.

LifeConnect also offer wellbeing workshops that cover strategies for developing resilience and dealing with stress and challenge. Contact LifeConnect on **1300 052 590** or lifecconnect@neaminational.org.au for more information.

If you need immediate help, please contact:

Lifeline

13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service

1300 659 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Kids Help Line

1800 55 1800 www.kidshelpline.com.au

- [Alliance of Hope: The Survivor Experience](#)
- [Beyond Blue: Experiencing Trauma After a Suicide Loss](#)
- [Beyond Blue: Suicide and Grief](#)
- [Beyond Blue: Talking to Children About a Suicide Loss](#)
- [Lifeline: Bereaved by Suicide](#)
- [SANE Australia: Has Someone Close to You Died by Suicide?](#)
- [Standby Support: Resources](#) (includes downloadable activity books to support children and teens after suicide.)
- [Suicide Call Back Service: Lost Someone to Suicide](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Collaborative: Support After Suicide](#)

My Wellness Journal



Thoughts and inspiration

What's on your mind today?
Here's a chance to reflect and clarify
your thoughts.

Nutrition

Glasses of water (Are you staying hydrated? Your
body will thank you for it):

Fruits & vegetables (Are you supporting your
physical wellbeing with nutritious choices?):

Hours of sleep (Rest is important too!):

Date:

Today I feel

Check in with your emotions and keep track of
how you're feeling from day to day.

Things I accomplished

e.g. Today I did my laundry.
Today I remembered to hug my loved ones.

Exercise (Time/activity/notes)

Did you take a walk or do something to get your
body moving today?