



# *OHIO SUICIDE LOSS SURVIVORS*

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A RESOURCE GUIDE

**OSPF**

Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation

# *OHIO SUICIDE LOSS SURVIVORS*

A RESOURCE GUIDE

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Providing comfort and support to Ohio Suicide Loss Survivors

**If you have lost a loved one to suicide, you are not alone.  
There is HELP and there is HOPE.**



OhioSPF.org

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# *INTRODUCTION*

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

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***LOSING A LOVED ONE  
TO SUICIDE TRANSCENDS  
WORDS. IT IS LIFE  
CHANGING. IT LIKELY  
IS ONE OF THE MOST  
DIFFICULT LOSSES  
THAT YOU WILL  
EVER EXPERIENCE.***

Feelings of grief, shock, and confusion feel extremely intense. You may feel completely overwhelmed and lost. There are so many unanswered questions.

You may not believe that you can survive this – but you will. You will survive this loss. And, in time, you will begin to realize that you are not alone. There are many of us who've experienced what you're going through. We are survivors of suicide loss, too.

You are not alone.

There are resources that can help you. There are survivors of suicide who will journey with you.

There are steps you can take that will help. Here are some helpful resources you can use right now:

**Start Here:** Initial Steps to Take

**1. Facts About Emotions and Grieving**

**2. How to Care for Yourself**

**3. Finding Support**

**4. Suicide Survivor Resources**

This booklet is offered to provide you with information that we hope you'll find both beneficial and healing.

## *WHAT TO DO*

Losing a loved one to suicide is without question, life altering.

This loss may be one of the most difficult losses that you will ever encounter in life. You may feel completely overwhelmed with everything right now. Please know that you will survive this. You are not alone. Many of us have experienced what you're experiencing. We, too, are survivors of suicide. We are here to help you and to offer hope. Please hear us when we say, "You are not alone."

In the U.S., suicide is the 10th leading cause of death among adults. Each year, nearly 50,000 individuals die from suicide. In the state of Ohio, suicide is the 11th leading cause of death. In fact, 1 person dies every 5 hours by suicide in our state.



Since 2000, the suicide rate in this country has continued to increase. There have also been increases in the percentage of individuals who have:

- **Seriously considered attempting suicide**
- **Made a suicide plan**
- **Attempted suicide**

Suicide affects many individuals and families each and every day. It is a major public health issue. As a survivor, it's not unusual to experience a range of emotions, including grief, sadness, anger, abandonment, guilt, shame, fear, shock, and confusion, as well as many others.

You may feel inundated with questions. This is common, too. Others who have lost loved ones to suicide also have felt a vast range of emotions – emotions that often change quickly.

There are some steps you can take; steps that can really help you. So, consider doing (or at least trying) these things:

**What to do:** Steps you can take to help

**1. Share Your Feelings with Another Person**

**2. Allow Yourself to Grieve**

**3. Recognize that You Are Not Alone – There Are Others Who Have Survived Suicide Loss**

**4. Take Care of Yourself**

**5. Reach Out to Other Survivors of Suicide Loss**

**6. Attend a Survivor Support Group**

**7. Talk to a Mental Health Professional**

**8. Ask For Help In Managing Logistical Issues**



SHARE  
YOUR FEELINGS



## ***SHARE YOUR FEELINGS WITH ANOTHER PERSON***

Surviving a suicide loss is accompanied by an array of feelings and emotions. When feeling distressed, you may want to isolate yourself. You may even try to hide from what you're feeling. Hiding tends to worsen feelings of distress and aloneness.

Instead, tell a loved one or friend exactly how you feel. Be open and authentic, even if it's confusing, overwhelming, or unclear. Talk honestly about your feelings. Opening up to a trusted individual and bringing them into your inner circle can help you feel less alone and less frightened. This individual may be able to help support you in ways you can't imagine right now.

Sometimes just having another person listen to you can help. It may provide at least a little comfort and connection.

Openly talking about your feeling can help ease the pain and distress you may be experiencing. Remember: You are not alone.

## *ALLOW YOURSELF TO GRIEVE*

The loss of a loved one is one of the most difficult losses you will ever experience. When it happens, it's common to feel a wide range of emotions. Some of the emotions you may feel and the reactions you may have include:

**Ambivalence • Agitation • Anger • Blaming • Confusion  
Crying • Depression • Disbelief • Denial • Despair  
Fear • Guilt • Helplessness • Humiliation • Irritability  
Jealousy • Loneliness • Loss of Interest • Moodiness  
Mood Swings • Numbness • Sadness • Shame • Shock**

This list does not include every possible emotion, of course. And you may experience many others. There are, however, some emotions that are common reactions to loss. Please understand that you may experience several emotions all at the same time. This is normal and to be expected.

The intensity and duration of your emotions may have a tendency to change with time. Your mood also can change rapidly. Because of these changes, you also may feel completely overwhelmed. You may even start to question your overall resiliency. Please remember that these emotions are appropriate and can even help you as you grieve.

Understand that it will take time to fully comprehend the intense and extensive impact of your loss. Allowing yourself to grieve can help you in acknowledging your feelings. It can also help you start to cope with the feelings you have because of your loss.

Grieving is a necessary process. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Because there are a vast array of emotions and thoughts you need to work through, it will take time.



ALLOW  
YOURSELF  
TO GRIEVE



YOU ARE NOT ALONE

## ***RECOGNIZE THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE, THERE ARE OTHERS WHO HAVE SURVIVED SUICIDE LOSS***

In losing a loved one to suicide, you may feel that you are completely alone and that no one can truly understand the depth of your pain and loss. In so doing, you may feel compelled to isolate yourself from others and avoid any contact or interaction outside of your home. The feelings of grief and loss can be so overwhelming that you may feel emotionally paralyzed and completely distraught. Your inner thoughts can seem endless. You may believe that there is absolutely no way that someone else can even begin to fathom how you feel.

The truth of the matter is that there are many people who've experienced the loss of a loved one to suicide. There are many who are suicide loss survivors just like

you. And there are many who have felt how you are feeling right now. You are not alone.

Recognizing the fact that you are not alone can help you. There are individuals who understand your feelings and who can help you. First, recognize that you are not alone. Second, reach out and talk to an individual who understands your distress and the emotions you're experiencing.

For now, please know that there is a community of suicide loss survivors that you can reach out to for love and support. When you're ready and when you feel comfortable, contact these individuals and allow them to share in your journey towards healing.

There are many suicide survivor support groups that also can be quite helpful. Even when it's hard, continue moving forward knowing these two things: **1.** You are not alone. **2.** You will not always feel the way you feel right now.

# *TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF*

The grieving process can be quite grueling, and it can take its toll on your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. In order to heal and to manage your daily activities, you need to take care of own health, even when it feels really hard to or you don't want to. Make sure to prioritize taking care of the various dimensions of your personal health. Eating healthy, moving or participating in some type of physical activity, getting quality sleep, and tending to your emotional health can help in your healing process. Here are some activities to help you take care of yourself:

- 1. Develop a Daily Schedule and Routine**
- 2. Do Something Physically Active Each Day**
- 3. Eat Healthy**
- 4. Try to Get a Quality Night's Sleep**
- 5. Slow Down and Breathe**
- 6. Focus on the Present Moment**
- 7. Go Outside and Enjoy Nature**
- 8. Do Things You Enjoy**
- 9. Do Not Use Alcohol or Drugs**
- 10. Connect with a Pet**
- 11. Open Up and Connect with Others**



TAKE CARE  
OF YOURSELF



REACH OUT



## ***REACH OUT TO OTHER SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS***

There is a community of suicide loss survivors who you can reach out to for love and support. When you're ready and when you feel comfortable, contact these individuals and allow them to share in your journey towards healing.

## ***ATTEND A SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUP***

There are others who have survived the loss of suicide. You are not alone. Attending a support group can provide you with support from others who've gone through what you're going through. It can be especially healing to hear the stories of how others have traveled along their grief journey. Continue moving forward, knowing that you are not alone. Remember, you will not always feel the way you feel right now.

## ***TALK TO A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL***

A mental health professional can help you express and process your feelings of grief and your intense emotions. If you feel that your grief is overwhelming or unmanageable, please reach out to a mental health professional. There are mental health professionals located throughout your community who can help. You'll most likely find them within community mental health facilities, hospitals, and private settings. Reach out to one for assistance. Sharing your feelings with a mental health professional can help you process your grief and move towards a place of healing.

## ***ASK FOR HELP IN MANAGING LOGISTICAL ISSUES***

Accompanying the loss of your loved one will be a variety of logistical issues – each of which needs to be managed. Addressing these issues in an effective and timely manner can help reduce anxiety and help you begin the grieving process. It's important to realize that you are not expected to take charge of everything that needs to be done nor do you need to direct everyone in the things they must do. Ask for help, instead of trying to do everything yourself.

Delegate a friend or family member to serve as a support person for you. Ask this individual to help you tell family and friends about what's happened. You may also want to ask this person to manage any offers of help from your family and friends.

People will want to know what they can do to help. Let them. Here are some tasks that others can take care of for you:

**Meals • Childcare • Pet Care • Grocery shopping  
Bills & Mail • Laundry • Cleaning • Home Maintenance  
Yardwork • Transportation**

Another thing that needs to be managed is the funeral and memorial. Allow family members and the funeral director to assist you in making these arrangements. Legal matters also will need to be addressed. Contact an attorney to help you in handling these legal issues.



# ASK FOR HELP

*EMOTIONS  
& GRIEVING*

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***GRIEVING IS A NATURAL  
EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO  
LOSS. GRIEVING FOR THE  
LOSS OF A LOVED ONE CAN  
BE AN EXTREMELY INTENSE,  
EMOTIONAL, AND, QUITE  
FRANKLY, EXHAUSTING  
EXPERIENCE.***

The act of grieving can be quite taxing mentally, emotionally, and physically. It's not unusual for the grief experience, and the pain associated with the loss, to feel overwhelming and never-ending.



EVERYONE GRIEVES  
DIFFERENTLY

# *GRIEF IS PERSONAL*

During the grief process, there are often several conflicting and unexpected emotions that arise. Moods and feelings can quickly shift from anger to sadness, from shock to guilt, from questioning to complete and utter numbness. Keep in mind that grief is a highly individual experience and each person has the right to grieve in their own way.

The way in which people grieve is specific and unique to themselves. How you grieve depends on lots of different factors, including your usual coping mechanisms, overall personality, belief system, support network, etc.

**There is no right or wrong way to grieve.**

**There is no set timeline for grieving.**

**Grief is a process that, much like a journey, will take time.**

Learning more about emotions and the grieving process can help you through your own grieving journey.

Remember: everyone grieves differently, so how you grieve is how you grieve. Keep reading for information and ideas to help in your healing.

## *ALLOW YOURSELF TO FEEL & TO GRIEVE*

Because people experience grief and loss in their own way, recognize that the feelings you have are your own personal feelings. You may be experiencing a whole bunch of different feelings, some of which may conflict with one another.

Please understand that this is okay. These are your feelings and this is your grief journey.

Here are some things you can do to help cope with your feelings:

- 1. Try to open yourself up and truly feel your feelings.**
- 2. Accept your feelings and understand that they are fine just the way they are.**
- 3. Remind yourself of this truth: You will survive this.**
- 4. Know that grieving takes time and that this is the journey you are now on.**
- 5. Give yourself time to process the loss of your loved one.**

Throughout this journey, please know that it is okay for you to take breaks and deep breaths along the way. Grieving is a process. Be gentle with yourself. Be nurturing. This will take time.





# THIS IS YOUR GRIEF JOURNEY

## *RANGE OF EMOTIONS*

The loss of a loved one is one of, if not the most difficult losses you will ever experience. When this happens, it is very common to feel a wide range of emotions. Some of the emotions you may feel include:

**Ambivalence • Agitation • Anger • Blaming • Confusion  
• Crying • Depression • Disbelief • Denial • Despair •  
Fear • Guilt • Helplessness • Humiliation • Irritability •  
Jealousy • Loneliness • Loss of interest • Moodiness •  
Mood swings • Numbness • Sadness • Shame • Shock**

Since this isn't a list of all possible emotions, it can help to know that you may experience many other emotions. There are many, many different emotions that are a common reaction to loss. It's also quite common to experience several different emotions at the same time.





WHAT YOU'RE FEELING AND  
EXPERIENCING IS HEALTHY  
AND NECESSARY.



## *MOOD SHIFTS & CHANGES*

You can expect the intensity and duration of your emotions to change with time. Moods also may change rapidly. These changes may have you feeling completely overwhelmed. You may even begin to question your ability to make it through; what we call “overall resiliency.”

Hear us when we say, you are resilient. You will survive this. Please know that these wide, varying, and changing emotions are not only normal and appropriate, they’re actually helpful to you.

It will take time to fully comprehend the intense and extensive impact of your loss. Allowing yourself to begin to grieve will help you in acknowledging your feelings. It also will help with beginning to cope with the feelings you have about your loss.

Grieving is a necessary process. There are a vast array of emotions and thoughts for you to work through. It will take time.

While you're grieving, don't be surprised if you experience rapid shifts and changes in your moods. These changes are frequently experienced reactions to loss.

Remember that you are trying to process all that happened as well as everything that you are feeling. It is a lot. The intensity and depth of your emotions can be overwhelming and crushing. As a way of dealing with it, your mind and your body may shift from one thought or feeling to another. Because of these shifts, you may start to have some concern about your mental sanity and overall resilience. Be patient with yourself. You will survive this. You are healing.

What you're feeling and experiencing is healthy and necessary to help you in processing your loss.

This will take time. Everything associated with your grieving is aimed at helping you to heal.

**1. Be comforting to yourself.**

**2. Take deep breaths.**

**3. Allow yourself to feel and grieve.**

**4. Share what you are feeling with others you trust.**

## *STAGES OF GRIEF*

As we've said, everyone grieves in their own, personal, and unique way. There also are some things common to just about everyone who grieves.

With these two things in mind, Swiss psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross came up with what's known as The 5 Stages of Grief™:

### **1. Denial**

### **2. Anger**

### **3. Bargaining**

### **4. Depression**

### **5. Acceptance**

Again, it is extremely important to remember that everyone grieves differently. Some individuals may

not experience all or any of these stages. Others may experience all or a few of these stages. Grief and its stages are completely individual and unique.

### **1. DENIAL**

The early grief stage of denial can help you survive your loss. During this stage, you may feel completely overwhelmed with denial about what has happened. You may feel in shock. There is no meaning. Things do not make sense. You may feel numb. You may cling to the hope that the news of your loved one is wrong.

Denial can help you withstand the initial moments of disbelief and shock. In general, our minds only allow us to process as much as we can manage. Denial is a helper because it paces your feelings of grief. So, rather than becoming fully overwhelmed and debilitated with grief, you may deny its occurrence, thereby delaying its complete impact on you.

As you begin to ask questions and accept the reality of your loss, you begin to heal. When this happens, you begin to experience the feelings you initially suppressed.

## **2. ANGER**

Anger is a stage of grief that allows for continued healing. By feeling anger, you begin to get to the underlying emotions of pain and hurt. You may be in so much pain that anger helps to insulate you from feeling all of it at once.

You may lash out at life, at others, at God. Your anger may have no limits. During this stage, many questions may arise. Most notably, you might scream out, “Why?! Why did this happen?” and “This just does not make sense!” and “Why did God allow this to happen?”

You may be filled with so much fury that you simply don’t know what to do with it. Your anger is covering your pain. And instead of unveiling your true feelings of helplessness, vulnerability, and inconsolable hurt, you

demonstrate strength in anger.

You have been wronged and abandoned and everyone will know about it. So, instead of focusing on the hurt associated with the loss, you focus on the anger. This anger is a bridge to healing. It is an indication of the depth of love that you have for the person you lost. To get to your deeper feelings of hurt, however, you must cross the bridge of anger. Again, it is a process that takes time.

## **3. BARGAINING**

During grief, you may find yourself bargaining with God to bring your loved one back. It’s normal to continuously ruminate in a state of bargaining like this: “I will do anything if I can have them back.” “Please God – I will always treat everyone with love and kindness if You bring them back.” “I will do anything. Just please, please bring them back. Please!”

Like many people, you, too, may get caught up in “if/then” statements, pleading to God for change: “God, if you bring them back then I will ...” If you do this, it’s because you so deeply want to go back in time and change the events.

You also can find yourself immersed in bargaining thoughts and pleas. Oftentimes, the bargaining statements and thoughts are joined with feelings of guilt and self-blame. You blame yourself and feel guilty for what’s happened. So, you continue to put the past on repeat, going over and over it in your mind, continuously thinking about how you could have acted, behaved, or done something differently. You may even find fault in yourself, which leads to self-anger, which tends to cover the hurt and pain. This type of thinking also is a natural part of the grieving process.

#### **4. DEPRESSION**

Another stage of grief happens when you shift your focus into the present moment. You find that your grief is deeply entrenched in intense sadness and depression. You become consumed with the emotional hurt associated with this loss.

The depression is all-consuming, and you may feel like it will never end. The intense sadness is joined by a desire to withdraw and isolate from everything and everyone.

It’s important to understand that this is a natural and appropriate response to experiencing loss. It does not mean that you have a mental illness or dysfunction. It simply means that you are actively grieving.

Depression is a natural reaction to losing a loved one and it is an essential step along the grieving journey. With it, you are struggling to process what has happened and to understand how you will survive this loss.



Grieving takes time and you may find yourself moving from one stage of grief to another on a minute-to-minute or hour-to-hour basis. Again, it is a process so give yourself the time you need.

## **5. ACCEPTANCE**

This stage is a little confusing and tricky for most people. You may think that acceptance refers to becoming “okay” with the loss of your loved one. This is not the case.

You, like most people, may never feel “all right” about what has happened. Instead, the stage of acceptance is about accepting reality as reality. Your loved one is no longer physically present with you. You may never fully like this reality, but eventually learn to accept this new reality as it is. This is a new norm in which you learn to live.

At the beginning of acceptance, you may try to maintain life as it was before the loss of your loved one. However, over time, you begin to readjust, restructure, and reorganize your life.

As you slowly change, you begin to live again. You start to enjoy life and the people around you. When this happens, however, you may feel guilty and conflicted about experiencing joy. You may feel as if you are betraying your loved one. This is common.

Remember, you are in a process of understanding that even though you’ve lost someone you love, you can still grow, change, and begin living once again. You can reach out, form new relationships, develop new bonds, and connect with important others in your lives. You have accepted what has happened. You have accepted where you are and how you feel. And you have allowed the grieving process to take place.

# *HOW TO COPE WITH GRIEF*

Coping with your loss and your grief is important to your overall mental and emotional well-being. Here are some strategies you can use to help yourself effectively cope with the pain and grief you are feeling.

## **Accept Your Feelings**

Individuals experience grief and loss in different ways. The feelings you are experiencing are unique to you. They are your own individual feelings. It is common to experience a wide range of feelings. Many of these feelings are painful, uncomfortable, and may even contradict one another. All of these feelings are appropriate to your grief journey.

## **Share Your Feelings**

Discuss how you feel and what you are experiencing

with a loved one or friend. Be open and honest. Share all of your feelings, even those that are confusing or appear to make no logical sense. Oftentimes, people want to isolate when confronted with loss. This only leads to more distress and delays the healing process. Sharing your feelings can help to ease your pain and distress.

## **Take Care of Yourself**

The grieving process can be quite grueling, taking its toll on your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. In order to heal and manage daily activities, be sure to make it a priority to take care of the various dimensions of your personal health. Eating healthy, doing some type of physical activity, getting quality sleep, and tending to your emotional health really can be beneficial to your healing process.



### **Spend Time with Your Loved Ones**

Spending time with loved ones helps you to process and cope with what has happened. Sharing stories and cherished memories aids in the healing process, and also serves to build positive and intimate connections with others. Also, just being with each other can lend itself to feelings of support, cohesion, and togetherness. It is important to realize that you are not alone in this loss. Others are also grieving. Spending time with each other allows you and your loved ones to collectively grieve and rely upon one another.

### **Attend a Survivorship Support Group**

You are not alone. There are others who have survived the loss of suicide. Attending a support group can help to provide you with support from individuals who have gone through what you are going through. It can be especially healing to hear the stories of how others have traveled along their grief journey.



SLOW EVERYTHING  
DOWN & FOCUS

### **Allow Yourself the Time to Grieve**

Grieving the loss of a loved one takes time. You will experience many thoughts and feelings and have many questions. There will be shifts in moods and changes in emotions. Sometimes things may seem very overwhelming. This is common and appropriate to grieving. Be patient with yourself. Be gentle and kind to yourself. Be nurturing. This will take time. Allow yourself the time to process and feel.

### **Focus on the Present Moment**

You may feel inundated with questions and uncertainties. Avoid thinking way off into the future. Try to slow everything down and just focus on the present moment. Focus on the current moment and what is happening in front of you. Try staying in each moment and addressing the needs of that moment. Remember that there are many other survivors who have endured and grown through what you are experiencing. The feelings of emotional distress and depression will not

remain forever. Stick to the present moment. This will help to make things more manageable for you.

### **Contact a Mental Health Professional**

Mental health professionals are experts at helping people process and express feelings of grief and intense emotion. If you feel that your grief is overbearing and unmanageable, then please contact a mental health professional. There are mental health professionals located throughout communities who are willing and able to help. Help yourself by reaching out to one for assistance. Sharing your feelings with a mental health professional is another way to help you process your grief and move towards healing.

*CARING  
FOR YOURSELF*

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***GRIEVING FOR A LOVED ONE IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT, EMOTIONAL, AND EXHAUSTING. THE ACTUAL ACT OF GRIEVING CAN BE QUITE TAXING AND TAKE A TOLL ON YOUR MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH.***

Everyone grieves differently and uniquely. The intense feelings associated with the loss of your loved one may persist for quite a while.

Therefore, taking care of yourself during this time of grieving is extremely important. While you may not be interested or invested in caring for yourself right now, please know that this can be one of the most helpful things you can do for yourself. Here are some things you can do each day to help care for yourself mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually:

- 1. Develop a Daily Schedule and Routine**
- 2. Do Something Physically Active Each Day**
- 3. Eat Healthy**
- 4. Try to Get a Quality Night's Sleep**
- 5. Slow Down and Breathe**
- 6. Focus on the Present Moment**
- 7. Go Outside and Enjoy Nature**
- 8. Do Things You Enjoy**
- 9. Do Not Use Alcohol or Drugs**
- 10. Connect with a Pet**
- 11. Open Up and Connect with Others**

## *DEVELOP A DAILY SCHEDULE & ROUTINE*

Following a daily schedule and routine can help you by giving each day some much needed consistency. It can help build an overall sense of stability and solidness. Establishing a daily schedule lets you know what to expect. Simply following a regular schedule can promote feelings of ease and manageability. You are resilient and you will quickly get used to having a set schedule. Routines can help reduce any anxiety and uncertainty you may feel about daily event. It also can help you feel more confident in accomplishing daily tasks and activities.

## *ALLOW YOURSELF TO FEEL & GRIEVE*

Individuals experience grief and loss in unique ways. The feelings you have are your own. You may experience

many different feelings, some of which seem to conflict with one another. That is completely fine. These are your feelings and this is your grief journey.

If you can, try to open yourself up to truly feeling your feelings. Accept your feelings as they are, knowing that they are just fine. You will survive this. Remind yourself of this fact.

Remember that grieving takes time. Grief is a journey you are now on, and you will need time to accept and process the loss of your loved one.

As you move along the journey, know that it's okay for you to take breaks and deep breaths along the way. Grieving is a process. Be gentle with yourself. Be nurturing to yourself. This will take time.





## *EAT HEALTHY*

Often when we are grieving, depressed, or distraught, we succumb to eating high-fat foods and snacks. Some people may do just the opposite and not eat at all. Changes in appetite, eating habits, and diet are extremely common in times of grief. However, it is essential to eat high-quality food. Instead of eating high-fat, high-calorie foods or not eating at all, try eating a variety of foods that are nutritious and lower in fat. Eat regular meals of good food will help you feel more resilient, more energetic, and more capable of managing your days. A diet that's low in fat and high in healthy foods can help improve your mood and allow for clarity of thought. This, of course, can be really beneficial for your mental health and emotional well-being.

## *DO SOMETHING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE EACH DAY*

Exercising helps reduce feelings of depression, frustration, and anxiety. It's an excellent way to boost your mood, enhance clarity of thought, and increase your energy. You, like many people who are grieving, may feel tired, lethargic, and completely devoid of energy. Adding even just a little physical activity into your day can help boost your energy levels.

Physical activity does not have to be “exercise” either. It can be anything that gets you moving or that requires physical exertion. Try going for a walk, bicycling, gardening, doing yardwork, hiking a trail, playing sports, going shopping, taking a run, using a treadmill, walking on the elliptical, or anything else that you enjoy – as long as it gets you moving.





Incorporating physical activity into your day will greatly help your emotional health, as well as boost your energy levels and clarity of thought.

## ***TRY TO GET A QUALITY NIGHT'S SLEEP***

Being able to get to sleep, stay asleep, and wake up fully rested can be extremely challenging in times of grief and sadness. You may even experience different types of insomnia following the loss of your loved one. You may have difficulty falling asleep (early insomnia), staying asleep (middle insomnia), or waking up extremely early (tertiary insomnia).

Sleep difficulties are quite common when grieving. Be gentle and comforting to yourself. Remind yourself that grieving takes time. Reassure yourself that getting a quality night's sleep is important because it can help you think more clearly and handle the many emotions

and challenges that come throughout the day. Make getting a quality night's sleep a top priority in your self-care regimen.

Here are some things you can do to get a good night's sleep:

- 1. Go to bed at the same time each night.**
- 2. Establish a regular bedtime/sleep routine.**
- 3. Keep your bedroom dark and cool.**
- 4. Listen to soft, relaxing music before you drift off.**
- 5. Disconnect from social media.**
- 6. Meditate.**
- 7. Slow down your breathing.**
- 8. Use aromatherapy.**

**9. Read a calming book.**

**10. Limit daytime naps, if possible.**

**11. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, especially at night.**

Remember that quality sleep each and every night is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Adding a good night's sleep to a lifestyle that also includes healthy foods and physical activity

## ***FOCUS ON THE PRESENT MOMENT***

Try to slow everything down and just focus on the present moment. Even though you currently may be feeling emotionally distressed and depressed, it does not mean that your feelings will be with you forever. Focus on the current moment instead of thinking way off into the future. Know that others have felt, managed, endured, and progressed through many of the same

feelings you're experiencing right now. There is hope. Allow yourself the time you need to get through this moment before worrying about the next. Sharing your feelings with someone you trust can also help you stay in the present moment.

## ***SLOW DOWN & BREATHE***

When feeling distressed or in crisis, you might feel like your mind is racing and that everything is simply going too fast. If this is you, try slowing down your breathing. The act of focusing on your breathing can boost emotional health and help you feel more centered, more aware, and more resilient. Mindfully breathing can help reduce depression, anxiety, and feelings of overwhelm. Breathing slowly and focusing on each inhaled breath has been shown to help slow down the central nervous system. It can also give you clarity in how to handle the challenges of our day.

Try this: Inhale slowly, taking a big, deep breath. Focus on your breath while you are inhaling. Tell yourself, "I am slowly breathing in, 1, 2, 3." Exhale slowly and tell yourself, "I am slowly breathing out, 1, 2, 3." Do this slow inhale/exhale for 1 minute. Slowing down your breathing and focusing on your breath can help you decompress. It can help relieve some of the pressure you may be feeling. It also can help you in making the decision to talk to someone about how you feel. This breathing exercise can be practiced anywhere, anytime, and will be helpful for your overall mental health.

## ***GO OUTSIDE & ENJOY NATURE***

Go outside and enjoy nature. Look at the sunshine. Feel its warmth. Breathe in clean, crisp air and acknowledge the beauty that surrounds you. Pay attention to the trees, the leaves, the grass, and the wind.



SPRING WILL  
COME IN TIME

Feel the awesomeness of nature all around you. Take time to walk and enjoy everything that nature provides. This is great anytime but is especially important in times of grief. You may feel overwhelmed by everything that is happening around you or by anyone who's asking something of you. In contrast, nature asks for and demands nothing. It is simply there. It accepts us as we are. It allows us to appreciate its wonder and beauty.

When you're grieving, you need time to think and to process. This can be difficult sometimes. Getting out into nature can give you the time and solitude you need to process your feelings and emotions. Going outside and being with nature also can shed some light on the natural cycle of life and death. Nature's seasons remind us that life begins in spring, continues through summer, fades in autumn, and dies in winter.

To a great extent, our own lives parallel the seasons. You may feel that the loss you've experienced has thrown

you into the deepest grief of winter that you have ever experienced. You may feel that you will never be able to experience joy or happiness again. However, we can promise you that, like the seasons, spring will come in time if you let it.

## ***DO THINGS YOU ENJOY***

It's important to take care of yourself, especially when grieving. So, make a list of things you truly enjoy doing. Then start doing at least one of those things each day. The things you enjoy could be all kinds of different activities, such as reading, playing a musical instrument, listening to music, drawing, cooking, playing with a pet, writing, talking with friends, shopping, participating or watching sports. No matter what's on your list, be sure to do something you enjoy each and every day.

## ***DO NOT USE ALCOHOL OR DRUGS***

Alcohol and drugs can worsen feelings of grief, sadness, and emotional distress. Alcohol and drugs do not solve problems. Avoid such substances whenever you're feeling sad or depressed. Instead, talk to someone and share how you're feeling.

## *CONNECT WITH A PET*

Pets can be great emotional healers. Pet parents often report higher levels of happiness and emotional health. Many say how helpful pets are in elevating their mood and bringing them a sense of joy. Having a pet can help keep you from becoming overly consumed with thoughts of depression, pessimism, frustration, or hopelessness. Instead, pets can help you put your focus on other things – like their wants and needs. Pets are really good at giving and receiving affection, too, making them truly therapeutic. They're so therapeutic that many counselors use pet therapy in their practices.

## *OPEN UP & CONNECT WITH OTHERS*

One of the most important psychological needs we all have is the need to build positive connections with others. Research shows that people who feel positively connected with others are significantly less likely to experience sustained depression and more likely to demonstrate resilience. Building positive connections greatly contributes to a feeling of overall life meaning, purpose, and satisfaction. People who are connected with others are more likely to open up and authentically share their feelings of grief and hurt. With this in mind, you can begin to connect with others by opening up and allowing yourself to interact with them. Talk, listen, and spend time with other people. It doesn't matter what you say. What counts is that you're talking, listening, and interacting – and you are not alone.





# EMOTIONAL HEALERS

# *FINDING SUPPORT*

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***REACHING OUT TO OTHERS  
AND ATTENDING A SUPPORT  
GROUP CAN PROVIDE YOU  
WITH SUPPORT FROM  
INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE  
GONE THROUGH WHAT YOU  
ARE GOING THROUGH.***

It can be especially healing to hear the stories of how others have traveled along their grief journey. These individuals can relate to your feelings because they have personally felt them. They can offer you help, support and guidance as you move along your journey of healing.

## ***SUPPORT GROUPS***

Listed below are links to SUPPORT GROUPS  
which can help you.

**Alliance of Hope Community Forum** provides healing support for people coping with the loss of a loved one to suicide. Thousands of loss survivors come together in this online forum to exchange information, understanding, and hope. This healing space, available 24/7, is moderated by a mental health counselor and trained volunteers.

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[forum.allianceofhope.org](http://forum.allianceofhope.org)

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**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)** lists U.S. and international suicide bereavement support groups as a public service to loss survivors.

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[afsp.org/find-a-support-group](http://afsp.org/find-a-support-group)

**Suicide Awareness Voices Education (SAVE)** keeps an updated list of support groups across the country. Click the following link to go to the interactive map to find support groups near you.

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[save.org/what-we-do/grief-support/find-a-support-group](https://www.save.org/what-we-do/grief-support/find-a-support-group)

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**Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)** has supported thousands of survivors of military suicide loss by offering them hope, healing, and renewed opportunities for personal growth. TAPS provides resources and programming to all survivors of military suicide loss.

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[taps.org/suicide](https://www.taps.org/suicide)

## ***MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS***

Mental health professionals can help individuals to process and express feelings of grief and intense emotion. If you feel that your grief is overbearing and unmanageable, then contact a mental health professional. There are mental health professionals located throughout communities to assist you. Reach out to one for assistance.

Sharing your feelings with a mental health professional can help you to process your grief and move towards healing. Mental health professionals can be found in a variety of locations, including community mental health facilities, private practices, hospitals, and health agencies.

**Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation** is aimed at ensuring that all Ohio communities have the resources and capacity to reduce the risk of suicide among their residents, lessen the effects of suicide on families and communities, and improve mental health statewide. The following link provides information for each Ohio County regarding coalitions, LOSS teams, crisis numbers, and local health provider information.

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[ohiospf.org](http://ohiospf.org)

## ***SUICIDE SURVIVOR RESOURCES***

Listed below are links to SUICIDE SURVIVIOR and SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES which can help you.

### **American Association of Suicidology**

The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) provides resources regarding suicide prevention for professionals, researchers, crisis intervention centers, schools, and lay persons. AAS operates The National Center for the Prevention of Youth Suicide and offers an array of suicide prevention resources, including: Facts and statistics, training and accreditation, the Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior Journal, Resources for Attempt Survivors, and a list of accredited crisis centers. The American Association of Suicidology also offers an array of suicide prevention materials including suicide survivor resources

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[suicidology.org](http://suicidology.org)

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[suicidology.org/suicide-survivors/suicide-loss-survivors](http://suicidology.org/suicide-survivors/suicide-loss-survivors)

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### **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is a voluntary health organization that is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. AFSP is committed to helping those affected by suicide through research, education, advocacy and support.

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[afsp.org](http://afsp.org)

### **Suicide Prevention Resource Center**

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) provides helpful resources for survivors of suicide loss.

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[sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/Help-and-Hope-For-Survivors-of-Suicide-Loss.pdf](https://sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/Help-and-Hope-For-Survivors-of-Suicide-Loss.pdf)

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### **The Jason Foundation**

This organization is dedicated to youth suicide prevention.

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[jasonfoundation.com](https://jasonfoundation.com)

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### **The Trevor Project**

The Trevor Project provides suicide prevention and crisis intervention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) young people. It offers free, 24/7, confidential counseling through the following:

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Trevor Lifeline - toll-free phone line at 1-866-488-7386  
-  
TrevorText - text START to 678-678  
-  
TrevorChat - instant messaging at [TheTrevorProject.org/Help](https://TheTrevorProject.org/Help)  
-  
TrevorSpace - an affirming social networking site for LGBTQ youth at [TrevorSpace.org](https://TrevorSpace.org)  
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[thetrevorproject.org/](https://thetrevorproject.org/)



**Jed Foundation**

The Jed Foundation provides suicide prevention information and resources.

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[jedfoundation.org](http://jedfoundation.org)

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**Crisis Text Line**

The Crisis Text Line provides free emotional support and information to teens in any type of crisis, including suicide. If you are currently suicidal or in any crisis, you can text a trained specialist 24 hours a day. Text "4HOPE" to 741-741.

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[crisistextline.org/](http://crisistextline.org/)

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**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-Talk (8255)**

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to individuals in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 180 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices.

If you are currently suicidal, call this Lifeline to get the help you need.

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[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

**National Alliance on Mental Illness**

NAMI provides educational materials regarding mental health.

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[nami.org](http://nami.org)

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1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

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**National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health**

This federation offers information regarding youth mental health.

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[ffcmh.org](http://ffcmh.org)

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**National Institute of Mental Health**

The NIMH provides an array of materials on mental health and suicide prevention.

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[nimh.nih.gov](http://nimh.nih.gov)

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**Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation**

The Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation provides information concerning suicide prevention and its relationship to mental illness, substance abuse, and other issues. The focus of this organization is to act as a catalyst for suicide prevention activities across the state.

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[ohiospf.org](http://ohiospf.org)

### **Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide**

This website contains a teen section which provides information to help teens who are thinking about suicide. Information is also offered on how to help a friend and how to cope if a friend dies by suicide.

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[sptsusa.org/teens](https://sptsusa.org/teens)

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### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

SAMHSA provides educational materials and resources regarding suicide and substance abuse prevention.

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[samhsa.gov/prevention/suicide.aspx](https://samhsa.gov/prevention/suicide.aspx)

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### **Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)**

SAVE offers information aimed at enhancing suicide prevention awareness and education.

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[save.org](https://save.org)

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### **Suicide Prevention Action Network USA**

This network provides suicide prevention information and resources.

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[spanusa.org](https://spanusa.org)



Provided free of cost through generous funding from the  
Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

[OhioSPF.org](http://OhioSPF.org)