

# COMPLICATIONS WITH SUICIDE

**You may experience the following complicating reactions related to your loss by suicide.**

## **Limited opportunity to express your grief**

The stigma of suicide in our culture today may likely keep you from feeling the freedom to reveal the cause of your loved one's death, much less talk about how it happened. Your emotions may be all over the map and you know you need to get them to the surface, but opportunities to share your grief with others can be limited by an unwillingness to discuss the subject publicly.

In the We Grieve community you will find a connection with people who understand the pressures to bury painful thoughts and feelings, and an openness to surface them with care and compassion.



## **Tortured by traumatic thoughts and images**

Witnessing a suicide or being the first person on the scene will embed the traumatic experience in your thoughts and the brain's familiar neural paths will lead you to these highly emotional images on a regular basis. Even if you were not present at the scene of the completed suicide, your brain may attempt to recreate the scene and imagine what was happening.

It would serve you well to stop these thoughts as soon as you realize they are present. You will need to begin training your mind to choose a different neural path, one that is filled with positive and happy images of the person you lost. This is not a denial of reality, but instead an intentional choice of the specific images and thoughts upon which you want to focus.

## **The inability to connect with family, friends and loved ones**

Being away from those who share your loss may cause you to feel isolated in your pain. You may be unable to attend a service held for your loved one, or there may not even be a service. You will want to find a way to pay your respects and honor your loved one's memory. Consider utilizing the virtual platforms of We Grieve to gather your friends and family online and care and comfort each other.

## **A shift in focus from the person to the method**

Often the nature of suicide takes the spotlight off the person who has died and places it on the circumstances of their death. This can lead to disagreement, arguing, and heightened rhetoric around



the loss, and increase the levels of pain. While you may be angry with the person who took their life, do your best initially to keep the focus on the best memories of your loved one. There will be time to process your anger in a healthy way.

### **The controversial public nature of suicide**

While most suicides are only known to a few people, the controversial public nature of suicide may move the story of the loss to local or national news media because of the method or public stature of the victim. The media can at times be insensitive to the deep emotional pain of the grieving family and their questions may be hurtful. Limiting your access to media stories will be helpful. Similarly, the involvement of police, EMTs, and the coroner are part of every suicide because of the unnatural nature of the death. Their questions are necessary but may be painful in the moment.

