If you are reading this, then you and/or your community may have experienced the traumatic loss of someone by suicide.

After a suicide loss, it is not uncommon for people to experience a range of emotional and physical responses. These can be thought of as quite natural reactions to un-natural events.

This pamphlet shares typical reactions people may experience after such a traumatic loss, information on when to seek professional support, and tips on how to cope and begin the healing process.

- Counseling during the first weeks after a suicide may be beneficial and advisable. Mental health professionals can help you manage your feelings and find healthy coping tools.
- Seek out supportive friends, family, or members of your faith-based community. Inviting help is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Consider joining a support group for survivors of suicide loss: talking with people who are experiencing similar feelings can decrease isolation and promotes healing.
- Grief often comes in waves, ebbing and flowing: there is no right or wrong way to grieve nor a standard timeline for grieving.
- Use social media mindfully. Social media can be useful for reaching out to others for support, but can also attract insensitive messages and images.
- Grief is hard work: do your best to care for your physical self. Try to get enough sleep, eat well, exercise, and avoid drugs and alcohol.
- Sometimes stress reactions appear immediately after the loss. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And, in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.
- The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, a few months, or longer, depending on a variety of circumstances. Most individuals will be able to cope with the reassurance, access to resources and information, and the support of loved ones.
- If you experience intense or unrelenting anguish or physical problems, ask your doctor or mental health provider for help. This is especially important if you think you might be depressed or if you have recurring thoughts of suicide.

RESOURCES

Suicide Prevention Center of NY -
After a Suicide Death: Postvention
https://www.preventsuicideny.org/communities/after-a-suicide-death-postvention/

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention -
Find a Support Group
https://afsp.org/find-a-support-group/

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

Need to talk?
WE'VE GOT TIME TO LISTEN
TEXT "GOT5" TO 741-741 TO START A CONVERSATION
CRISIS TEXT LINE
FREE, 24/7, CONFIDENTIAL CRISIS SUPPORT BY TEXT

THE TREVOR PROJECT
For Young LGBTQ Lives
Text 'START' to 678-678
Call us at 1-866-488-7386

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Mental Health | SPC NY Suicide Prevention Center of New York State

Survivors of Suicide Loss

Individuals & Communities

Cognitive Signs

- Blaming someone
- Confusion
- Poor attention
- Poor decisions
- Heightened or lowered alertness
- Poor concentration
- Memory problems
- Hyper vigilance
- Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people
- Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings
- Poor problem solving
- Poor abstract thinking
- Loss of time, place, or person orientation
- Inability to remember recent events
- Disturbed thinking
- Nightmares
- Intrusive images
- Seeing the event over & over
- Difficulty making decisions
- Minimizing the experience
- Concern over burdening others with problems

Spiritual Signs

- Asking “Why would God…?”
- Challenging strong held beliefs
- Questioning one’s significance, self value
- Increased dependence on religious beliefs
- Good vs. evil debates
- Searching for new forms of comfort
- Anger at God/higher power
- Loss of Faith
- Spiritual isolation

Emotional Signs

- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Grief
- Denial
- Severe panic (rare)
- Emotional shock
- Fear (drives “fleeing” instinct)
- Uncertainty
- Loss of emotional control
- Depression
- Inappropriate emotional response
- Apprehension
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Intense anger (drives “fighting” instinct)
- Increased need to control everyday experiences
- Irritability
- Agitation

Behavioral Signs

- Change in activity
- Change in speech patterns
- Withdrawal / isolation
- Emotional outbursts
- Suspiciousness
- Change in usual communications
- Loss or increase of appetite
- Alcohol & other drug consumption
- Inability to rest
- Antisocial acts
- Nonspecific bodily complaints
- Hyper alert to environment; hypersensitivity to sudden or rapidly changing stimuli
- Startle reflex intensified
- Pacing
- Erratic movements
- Change in sexual functioning

Physical Signs

- Fatigue
- Nausea/Upset Stomach
- Muscle Tremors
- Diarrhea **
- Twitches
- Chest Pain *
- Difficulty Breathing *
- Elevated Blood Pressure
- Rapid Heart Rate
- Thirst
- Visual Difficulties
- Vomiting **
- Grinding of Teeth
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Profuse Sweating **
- Chills
- Shock Symptoms *
- Fainting
- Headaches
- Muscle Aches
- Rapid Breathing
- Hyperventilation
- Ringing in the Ears
- Urinary or fecal incontinence **
- More susceptible to colds and illnesses

* May require medical evaluation

** The elimination of all excess bodily materials