

Cruse Bereavement Care



Death by Suicide

“There was a time after my big, happy-go-lucky, rugby-playing son Robert took his own life when I felt I was up against a brick wall. It was so important to be able to come to Cruse and have my bereavement volunteer really listen to me. Today I feel I am moving gradually forward and would encourage anyone coping with a bereavement to seek help.”

When someone we love dies by suicide, the grieving process can be more complex and even more difficult to resolve.

Some natural responses to bereavement by suicide include:

Confusion We constantly ask ourselves “Why?”. Even if we do find a suicide note, it will rarely answer this question. The note may tell us how our loved one felt at a time of great distress, but will probably not tell us the full story.

Guilt The “if only” scenarios are numerous. These need to be shared with a friend or counsellor as guilt can be the most destructive of emotions. No one person can take responsibility for another person’s suicide. Suicide is rarely the result of a sudden impulse; what may be seen as the source is often just another contributing factor and the core cause is much deeper.

Shame and isolation Due to the social stigma attached to suicide, people bereaved in this way feel isolated, unsupported by society, and unable to grieve because of other people’s unease with the nature of the death. However, while it is important to acknowledge the cause of death, it is more important to deal with the death of the person than get caught up with any shame of the stigma surrounding it. We feel totally overwhelmed by our grief.

Anger A loss through suicide can lead to intense feelings of anger. We feel the death could have been prevented. Family members may blame each other. Anger may be directed towards the person who took their own life: “How could they do this to me?” If not dealt with in a healthy manner, anger can lead to relationships being irreversibly damaged. It is important not to bottle up anger.

Suicide can greatly affect family relationships. Family members may feel there is a conspiracy of secrecy and silence, causing fragmentation of family support. Concealing the truth from children or other members of the family can have serious repercussions. Children may overhear adult conversations or reach their own inaccurate conclusions.

What can help?

- Remember, the choice was not yours; no one is the sole influence in another’s life
- Wear out your questions, anger, guilt or other feelings until you can let them go; letting go does not mean forgetting.
- Know that you will never be the same again, but can survive and even go beyond just surviving.