

After Suicide Loss

Grief, Hope, and First Steps for Survivors

Losing someone to suicide is a grief with extra weight — shock, questions, guilt, anger, and a loneliness that can feel different from other losses. Your love was real. Your grief is real. You do not have to walk this alone.

What Many Survivors Feel

Shock and disbelief that do not fade on a schedule.

Guilt and “if only” thoughts. These are common — they are not proof that you failed.

Anger at the person, yourself, God, systems, or silence from others.

Complicated love. You can miss someone and still feel hurt by how they died. Both can be true.

Isolation. People may not know what to say. That does not mean you should hide.

How to Care for Yourself in This Grief

Name it safely. You can say “died by suicide” without graphic detail. Honesty helps healing more than silence.

Do not carry the blame alone. Suicide is almost never one simple cause. Mental pain, illness, trauma, and despair can stack until someone cannot see a way through.

Seek support made for this loss. Counseling, a grief group for survivors of suicide loss, a trusted pastor or chaplain, and peer communities (such as AFSP and Alliance of Hope) can help.

Tend the basics. Sleep, food, water, and one safe person who will sit with you without fixing you.

Take one day at a time. You do not have to answer every question today.

What Often Does Not Help

Quick spiritual fixes (“everything happens for a reason”), pressure to “be strong,” or silence from people who are afraid of your grief. You are allowed to lament. Scripture gives room for raw sorrow (the Psalms, Job). God is near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18).

If Children Are Involved

Tell the truth in age-appropriate words. Do not use confusing phrases like “went to sleep.” Reassure them it is not their fault. Use the age-banded companion handouts in this set. Watch for distress in yourself and in them — and use 988 if anyone is in crisis.

Hope Without Easy Answers

Hope is not pretending the pain is small. Hope is knowing help exists, love still matters, and God can hold questions you cannot solve. Treatment and support save lives. Recovery and healing are possible for the living — including you.

If You Are in Crisis

Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline). Veterans and service members: call 988, then press 1, or text 838255. Text HOME to 741741. In an emergency, call 911. Help is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

You are not alone. Your person mattered. Your grief matters. Reach for help, and take the next faithful step.