



## How Can I Help a Friend Through the Suicide of a Loved One?

### I Feel So Lost, What Do I Do Or Say?

*I'll write this from the perspective of a mother/son loss because that's my story.*

The one thing she needs most is someone to let her talk. Sit down by her and say things like, "Tell me how you feel" or "Do you need to talk about it?" Don't be pushy or hover, but be there. (Most men prefer *not* to talk about it. Just let them know you're there if they want to talk.)

\* Don't ask her to let you know if you can help, she won't ask you. She's not thinking well enough to know what needs to be done. Instead ask her. "Can I clean up your kitchen or mow your lawn for you?" Little things, such as running to the grocery store, are very difficult in the first few months, so you might ask to do something like that, also.

\* Like most survivors, she'll probably blame herself. That's an issue only she can work through. In her head she may know she isn't to blame, but it will take time to convince her heart. Allow her time to work through it in her own way.

\* Please, **NEVER** say to a survivor, "it's time to get over it" or "you have to go on with your life now." It will only distance you. This isn't something to "get over". They have to learn how to live with it, and learning that is a process. It takes time. Also, please don't say things like "He's in a better place now." That sounds so cliché and mechanical, and it usually only makes us mad.

\* This isn't something you can "fix", so please don't try to. Sometimes just sitting beside her and letting her cry will do wonders. As much as you hate to see her hurt, it's something she will have work through herself. Just be there for her. Silence is OK sometimes.

\* At this point survival is not a sure thing to her, but she's in too much shock to make a decision about it all. Let her know you're there, but don't pressure her. I had a buddy that came over and took me out to dinner a couple times. I was feeling very quiet because he didn't understand, and I knew that. We just sat there watching people, me wiping tears off my cheek, and not saying a word. Then he'd take me home and leave. I really needed that. I wasn't expected to *do or be* anything; I was just allowed to be whatever I needed to be. *That's a real friend!*

\* Somewhere around the third month the shock wears completely off, the "fog" will lift, and she will be zapped back to the very beginning of this grieving process. That's normal. People that tell her to "get over it" and "go on with life" will only build walls. Trust me, she would if she could!!! Suicide is a lot to work through and healing is a long process.

\*After the third month there will be many ups and downs. Birthdays (hers and his) will be very hard, as well as holidays and the death date anniversary. Please be mindful of that. Sudden little reminders that sneak up on her may cause an unexplained set-back. It will take eighteen months to two years for her to begin feeling that it's even possible to "regain a normal life."

\* If you mention her son it will not *cause* her pain. The loudest cry from a survivor is "they won't let me talk about him!" or "they change the subject" or "no one mentions him except me. How can he just be forgotten?" Please understand that he's on her mind at all times. She won't have a single thought that isn't connected to him for months. If you mention his name and she cries, it's *not* because you said something that hurt her. The tears are ALWAYS there, she just released some of them. This is important for a survivor, so please don't make it more painful by denying her the times she needs to talk about him.

\* It's not at all unusual for a survivor to become suicidal in the first year or so. Strongly urge her to get into a support group for survivors. I have some great online support groups; survivors talking through the issues connected with a loved ones suicide, things no one can understand except those that have lived it. (*I also hold online seminars, small group coaching ~ [Coach with Louise](#) ~ and I wrote a [book](#) that reads just like you're sitting in a support group. See below*)

As compassionate as you may be, no matter how much you love her, you still can't *really* understand the issues. Most survivors will only discuss their deep feelings with other survivors. I have people in my groups that were in therapy for months (some even years), getting nowhere. After just a few weeks in our group they already noticed a big change. Not all support groups lead to healing!

Thanks for being a friend that cares. Sometimes a simple thing like a card, a hug, a phone call or even just a smile can make all the difference in the world!!

This story sums it up better than anything else I can say:



### **The Most Caring Child**

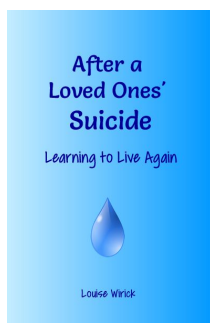
Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once told about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child. The winner was a four-year-old child whose next-door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife.

Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, "Nothing ... I just helped him cry."

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[After a Loved Ones Suicide - Learning to Live Again](#) (formerly titled *A Survivors Road To Healing*)



Reaching out for support is a very difficult step for many survivors. If you really want to help your friend, I suggest you get them my book and encourage them to read it. (I also have an audio version)

I had so many survivors ask me to write this book that I finally decided to do it. When they read it, I got a lot of email saying, "I wish I'd had this book when I was a new survivor." It's a support group, in book form. It's a great way to help them see and understand things that make no sense to them at all right now.

If they have graphic issues (*they saw it happen or found the body*), they feel overwhelmed with guilt or they're struggling with any part of the aftermath of a suicide, this book will help them. It's helped hundreds of survivors over the years!