

# LOSS

...is an informal "open" support group. LOSS offers the opportunity for sharing, support and encouragement for anyone who has experienced the unique and profound grief of losing a loved one to suicide.



You are not alone...

Meetings are held monthly at the MHA office in South Greensburg:

1st Tuesday of every month from  
6:30PM - 8:30PM

*For more information, call:*



409 Coulter Avenue - Suite 4  
Greensburg PA 15601  
724.834.6351  
fax 724.834.6352  
[www.mhaswpa.org](http://www.mhaswpa.org)



LOSS  
SUPPORT  
GROUP

Loved Ones  
Stolen by Suicide



## To the Newly Bereaved Suicide Survivor

Someone you loved has ended their own life – and yours is forever changed. You are a “suicide survivor,” and as that unwelcome designation implies, your survival – your emotional survival – will depend on how well you learn to cope with your tragedy. The bad news: Surviving this will be the second worst experience of your life. The good news: The worst is already over. What you’re enduring is one of the most horrific ordeals possible in human experience. In the weeks and months after a suicide, survivors ride a roller coaster of emotions unlike any other. Suicide is different. On top of all the grief that people experience after a “conventional” death, you must walk a gauntlet of guilt, confusion and emotional turmoil that is in many ways unique to survivors of suicide.

“How long will it take to get over this,” you may ask yourself. The truth is that you will never “get over” it, but don’t let that thought discourage you. After all, what kind of people would we be if we truly got over it, as if it were something as trivial as a virus? Your hope lies in getting through it, putting your loss in its proper perspective, and accepting your life as it now lies before you, forever changed. If you can do that, the peace you seek will follow.

Death touches all of our lives sooner or later. Sometimes it is expected, as with the passing of an elderly relative; sometimes it comes suddenly in the form of a tragic accident. But suicide is different. The person you have lost seems to have chosen death,

and that simple fact makes a world of difference for those left to grieve. The suicide survivor faces all the same emotions as anyone who mourns a death, but they also face a somewhat unique set of painful feelings on top of their grief. . .

**Guilt.** Rarely in other deaths do we encounter any feelings of responsibility. Disease, accidents, old age... we know instinctively that we cannot cause or control these things. But the suicide survivor – even if they were only on the periphery of the deceased’s life – invariably feels that they might have, could have, or should have done something to prevent the suicide. This mistaken assumption is the suicide survivor’s greatest enemy.

**Stigma.** Society still attaches a stigma to suicide, and it is largely misunderstood. While mourners usually receive sympathy and compassion, the suicide survivor may encounter blame, judgment, or exclusion.

**Anger.** It’s not uncommon to feel some form of anger toward a lost loved one, but it’s intensified for survivors of suicide. For us, the person we lost is also the murderer of the person we lost, bringing new meaning to the term “love-hate” relationship.

**Disconnection.** When we lose a loved one to disease or an accident, it is easier to retain happy memories of them. We know that, if they could choose, they would still be here with us. But it’s not as easy for the suicide survivor. Because our loved one seems to have made a choice that is abhorrent to us, we feel disconnected and “divorced” from their memory. We are in a state of conflict with them, and we are left to resolve that conflict alone.

The challenge of coping with a loved one’s suicide is one of the most trying ordeals anyone ever has to face, but make no mistake – you must confront it. If you attempt to ignore it – sweep it under the carpet of your life – you may only be delaying an even deeper pain. There are people who have suffered breakdowns decades after a suicide, because they refused or were forbidden to ever talk about it. Time heals, but time alone cannot heal the suicide survivor. You must use that time to heal yourself and lean on the help and support of others. It might take years to truly restore your emotional well-being, but you can be assured one thing: it will get better.



*By Jeffrey Jackson, ©2004, reprinted from A Handbook for Survivors of Suicide, published by the American Association of Suicidology.*

## National Resources

### [American Foundation of Suicide Prevention](http://www.afsp.org)

1-888-333-AFSP [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

### [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

1-800-273-TALK

### [Survivors of Suicide](http://www.survivorsofsuicide.com)

[www.survivorsofsuicide.com](http://www.survivorsofsuicide.com)