

## First Steps After Losing Someone to Suicide.



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*“You probably are finding yourself in a situation you never thought you would encounter. Suicide can feel to come out of nowhere, being unexpected and painful. To help you navigate the first few weeks we have created this simple guideline for you”.*

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1. **Be patient with yourself.** It takes time to process such a loss. One day at a time, step by step. For now, your only goal is to make it through this day.
2. **Meeting your basic needs.** Grieving takes much emotional energy from our daily lives. Sometimes just doing the basics seems like an extraordinary task. Looking after your basic needs is important, meaning eating, sleeping and hygiene. If you have a hard time ingesting food, stick to small portions of foods that nourish you. If sleeping is a problem, try first with natural remedies, warm showers and avoiding stimulants such as coffee, sugar etc. It is ok to ask for medical help if sleeping becomes impossible, as sleeping is what allows us to recharge. Keeping up with your needed hygiene can make you feel a little better.
3. **Little things that can make a big difference** are being out in nature and taking easy walks. Connecting with nature allows our minds to rest from rumination (common after such a loss). Focusing on the sounds, the views and smells helps our mind shift from the inner experience. Walking calms our bodies and helps us move in perspective.
4. **Finding resources.** This experience is like no other and learning about its challenges can help you navigate through them. Look for serious and well documented information. Educating yourself is key.  
<https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/suicide-loss>

5. **Finding support.** You might soon realize that people who have not experienced suicide loss have a hard time relating to your experience. There are many different layers to suicide: the shock, the violence of the experience, the many questions that arise, the trauma, the guilt as well as the social stigma and taboo that it still carries.

Finding professional help is important. Starting with **one on one support** is ideal as it allows any trauma reactions to be explored in a safe space. When losing someone to suicide, you might feel raw and vulnerable. Safety is fundamental in these early stages. One on one support comes in many different forms, ideally it is a space where a professional, who has experience in loss, suicide and trauma, can meet with you.

<https://bcacc.ca/counsellors>

**Join a suicide grief support group** in time if you can. Meeting others who have experienced something similar as you, can help give you insights and perspective as you find sameness and belonging. In terms of the right time to join a support group it is different for everyone, but experience tells us a couple of months after the loss is best. Too early you might feel too raw and vulnerable. Listening to others' stories might feel overwhelming at first and sharing your experience might feel difficult. The purpose of joining a support group is not to go into the details of what happened ( as this might be triggering to many and to you too) but to explore and learn from the challenges of grief itself as you feel supported by others.

<https://www.bcbh.ca>

<https://www.crisiscentre.bc.ca/suicide-grief-group>

6. **Grief is a process to be integrated** as part of life. There are no strict paths or rules to follow. Most important is to be aware and respectful of your needs as grief progresses.

7. **Suicide loss can be a traumatic experience**, meaning it leaves a blue print in the body. Many trauma related responses have to do with the body trying to process and digest the experience. Intrusive thoughts and rumination are adaptive responses to trauma. It is normal yet uncomfortable and painful and something you might need help with to regulate. Looking for **trauma-informed care** can help.

<https://suicideprevention.ca/resource/trauma-informed-care-and-suicide-fact-sheet>

8. **Sadly, suicide is still quite misunderstood and stigmatized** in many environments. Although people around you might have the best intentions, sometimes approaching the subject can be challenging. Allow yourself to set boundaries, connect with people who you find are supportive and respectful of your process.

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*“Losing someone to suicide is an experience anyone can face in a lifetime. Suicide is painful for those who stay. You are not alone and support is at hand”.*

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