

CRISIS TEXT LINE |

**Text 4hope
to 741 741**

**24-Hour Crisis Hotline
419-289-6111 or 1-888-400-8500**

We're there anytime, day or night, to help with whatever is hurting you.

For more information about this topic:
Mental Health & Recovery Board
Of Ashland County



419-281-3139

www.ashlandmhrb.org

Letter to Suicide Grievers

The affiliates of the suicide support group of Ashland County would like to convey our deepest sympathy to you at this difficult time and let you know that you are not alone. Help and support are available.

In suicide, people often are robbed of the type of peaceful closure other forms of natural deaths present to grievors. In addition, it is hard not to feel the stigma suicidal deaths often leave on the griever's heart. Because of the isolation, confusion, and complexity of this type of loss, we have enclosed some information and resources that we hope will be helpful to you. This includes information about a support group for those who have lost a loved one to suicide.

The suicide grievors support group aims to create a place for grievors to meet once a month in a safe, informal, and comfortable setting that would be open to everyone, no matter how recently or long ago this tragedy occurred in your life.

If you want more information or have any questions, please call us at (419) 281-3139.

With Deepest Sympathy,

David C. Ross,
Executive Director
Mental Health & Recovery Board

Pam Lemaster
Facilitator
Suicide Grievors Support Group

Suicide Prevention Coalition of Ashland County
Supported by the Mental Health & Recovery Board of Ashland County
(419) 281-3139



"Promise and Hope for the Future"

2024

Grievers of Suicide Support

Group of Ashland County

A support group for those aged 18 or older who have had someone they love die by suicide.

Meetings: Second Wednesday of each month
Time: 6:15pm to 8pm
Place: **Brethren Care Village**
Wellness and Community Center
2000 Center Street *Room subject to change*
Ashland, Ohio 44805

Schedule for 2024 (and remainder of 2023)

October 11, 2023	June 12, 2024
November 8, 2023	July 10, 2024
December 13, 2023	August 14, 2024
January 10, 2024	September 11, 2024
February 14, 2024	October 9, 2024
March 13, 2024	November 13, 2024
April 10, 2024	December 11, 2024
May 8, 2024	

For more information contact: Pam Lemaster
Appleseed CMHC
419-281-3716

Virtual option may be available through Zoom. Check the Ashland Mental Health and Recovery Website Calendar of Events for link information:

<https://www.ashlandmhrb.org>

Support provided by the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Ashland County, the Ashland County Suicide Prevention Coalition, Hospice of North Central Ohio, and Appleseed Community Mental Health Center.

SUICIDE GREIVER'S SUPPORT GROUP

Zero is the goal, but according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), over forty-four thousand Americans die by suicide each year. While there is no single cause, AFSP says, "It most often occurs when stressors exceed the current coping abilities of someone suffering from a mental health condition.", it is an unrelenting psychological heartache, a complex condition that surviving loved ones wish they could have better identified and successfully relieved. Ask any one of them, and they will tell you that they certainly would have-- if it were possible.

While there is no complete autopsy for the psychological aspect to suicide, we do know that individuals who end their own lives are often plagued by chronic symptoms such as sadness, anxiety, irritability, fatigue, loneliness, hopelessness, and despair so profound it then leads to a distorted sense of isolation, even in a crowd. Further, suicide prevention models tell us that most people who die by suicide tell someone either directly or indirectly in the weeks or days before the act; however, "Many people never let on what they are feeling or planning. The paradox is that the people who are most intent on [completing] suicide know that they have to keep their plans to themselves if they are to carry out the act," says Dr. Michael Miller (Harvard Medical School). This critical information may come as a surprise to those left behind with undeserving survivors' guilt.

The Suicide Grievers' Support Group is a safe place where members come together to discuss this most complicated type of grief. Members are fully tuned in and present to offer support and encouragement, ask questions, tell their stories, or listen. They find a unique understanding they only sometimes get from even the best-intentioned in the group. As we sit in the circle, some vent, cry, and hug, but overall, there is a sense that someone finally gets it. There is a deep respect and profound sacredness for life I have not seen in other settings. There is a freedom to sort through the whirlwind of unanswered questions, remember the loved ones, and say their names aloud. It is an honor for me to sit among the group, but as one member said, "the dues are far too high- the loss of a loved one."

If you or someone you know is grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide, please consider the Suicide Grievers' Group. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of every month 6:15p-8:00p. Call for meeting location, 419-281-3716. Refreshments are served and you are free to come late, leave early and pass if you are not ready to talk.

For more information contact Pam Lemaster at 419-281-3716.

If you are suffering and considering suicide, please know that we care and help is available. Call the local Crisis Hotline at 419-289-6111 or text "4HOPE" to 741-741. It's too soon to quit.

For a Mental Health Crisis, call or text:

24/7 Hotline 419-289-6111 or 1-888-400-8500
Crisis Text Line Text "4HOPE" to 741-741

Counseling Resources

Adina Fox, LISW
19 W Main St Ste 16
Ashland, Ohio 44805
419-564-9490

Appleseed CMHC
2233 Rocky Lane
Ashland, Ohio 44805
419-281-3716

Catholic Charities
34 W. 2nd St.
Ashland, Ohio 44805
419-289-1903

Cornerstone Counseling
502 Claremont Ave
Ashland, Ohio 44805
419-289-1876

Dr. John Jorden
432 Center St.
Ashland, Ohio 44805

Mental Health & Recovery Board
1605 County Rd
Ashland, OH 44805
419-281-3139

419-289-8100
Encompass
1590 Crestview Dr.
Ashland, Ohio 44805
419-289-0970

Pathways Hospice
1171 E. Main St.
Ashland, Ohio 44805
419-903-0300

Smetzer Counseling Center
Ashland Seminary
910 Center St.
Ashland, Ohio 44805
419-207-5558
(Behind Seminary off of High St.)

LifeCare Hospice
1109 Eastern Ave.
Ashland, Ohio 44805

Veteran Resources

The Landing Zone (Peer-led Support Group)

Meets: Every Wednesday 8:00-10:00 am
Location: Ashland Professional Bldg. - Community Room
34 West 2nd St. Ashland, Ohio 44805
Contact: 419-289-1903

Reboot Combat Recovery for Veterans & Family Members (Courses)

Crossroads Community Church, 1118 Park Ave West, Mansfield, Ohio 44905
Contact: Josh & Haley Sheriff: 419-631-1489 or airbornegrunt24@gmail.com
(Call or email to sign up for the next course)

Suicide Support Groups

Suicide Grievers' Group

Meets: 2nd Wednesday of every month 6:15-8:00 pm
Location: Call for meeting location
Contacts: Pam Lemaster at 419-281-3716

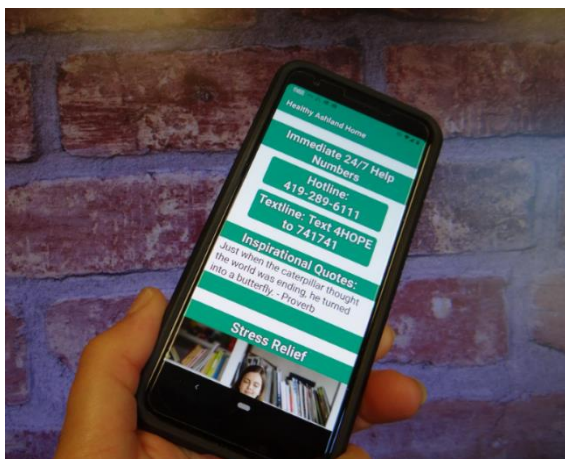
Wayne County Suicide Support Group

Meets: 4th Tuesday of each month 5:30-7:00 pm
Location: NAMI 2525 Back Orville Road, Wooster, Ohio 44691
Contact: NAMI - 330-264-1590

Richland County Support After Suicide

Meets: 3rd Monday of each month 7:00-8:15 pm
Location: Ohio Health Med Central Mansfield Hospital in the Chapel
2nd floor, 335 Glessner Ave. Mansfield, Ohio 44903
Contact: Faith Proietti BBC - 419-526-8472 or 419-526-8000

HEALTHY ASHLAND MOBILE APP - DOWNLOAD TODAY FOR ANDROID OR APPLE



HEALTHY ASHLAND APP

Healthy Ashland is a free, easy-to-use mobile app that offers quick access to mental health and stress relief resources for everyone in Ashland County, Ohio.

The app connects you to:

- simple ways to relieve stress
- local family activities and resources
- information about counseling services
- quick access to crisis intervention tools

Utilizing these tools can help guide you to having a healthier and happier life.

BEYOND SURVIVING: SUGGESTIONS FOR SURVIVORS

Iris M. Bolton

1. Know you can survive; you may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with "why" it happened until you no longer need to know "why" or until YOU are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know that you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings but that all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, and forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy; you are in mourning.
5. Be aware that you may feel appropriate anger at the person, the world, God, and yourself. It's okay to express it.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do. However, guilt can turn into regret through forgiveness.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. However, it does not mean that you will act on those thoughts.
8. Remember to take one moment or one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence on another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. If emotions return like a tidal wave, you may only be experiencing a remnant of grief, an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Permit yourself to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain in your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as Compassionate Friends or Survivors of Suicide groups. If you need help, ask a professional to start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience a physical reaction to your grief, e.g., Headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go. Letting go doesn't mean forgetting.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and even go beyond just surviving.

Adapted from *Suicide and its Aftermath* (Dunne, McIntosh, Dunne-Maxim, Norton et al., 1987).

GRIEF AFTER SUICIDE

People Grieve Differently

- Know that you can survive. Though you may feel you cannot survive, you can.
- The intense feelings of grief can be overwhelming and frightening. This is normal. You are not going crazy; you are grieving.
- You may experience guilt, confusion, anger, and even fear. These are all common responses to grief.
- You may even have thoughts of suicide. This, too, is common. It does not mean you will act on those thoughts.
- Forgetfulness is a common but temporary side effect. Grieving takes so much energy that other things will fade in importance.
- Grief also affects us physically. For example, you may find that you are more accident-prone, get sick more easily, feel fatigued, and have more pain.

Coping Strategies

- Keep asking "why" until you no longer need to ask.
- Healing takes time. Allow yourself the time you need to grieve.
- Grief has no predictable pattern or timetable. Though there are elements of commonality in grief, each person and each situation is **unique**.
- If you can delay making major decisions, do so.
- The path of grief is one of twists and turns, and you may often feel you are getting nowhere. However, remember that even setbacks are a kind of progress.
- Expect setbacks and occasional painful reminders. Some days are better than others, and if you go about life with this mentality, you will be better prepared through the grieving process.
- This is the hardest thing you will ever do. **Be patient with yourself.**
- Seek out people who are willing to listen when you need to talk and who understand you may need to be silent.
- Permit yourself to seek professional help.
- Avoid people who try to tell you what to feel and how to feel it, particularly those who think you should "be over it by now."
- Find a support group for survivors that provides a safe place for you to express your feelings or simply a place to go to be with other survivors who are experiencing some of the same things you are going through.

SURVIVING YOUR CHILD'S SUICIDE

The suicide of a child of any age presents unique circumstances that can intensify and prolong the mourning process for parents, family members, and friends. Suicide is believed to be a reaction to overwhelming feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, and depression. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in the United States among ages 10-24 and the **second** leading cause among those in the 25-34 age bracket.

While mental distress/emotional suffering often plays a role in suicide, not everyone who dies by suicide has been diagnosed with what is often called a "mental illness." Some families have experienced years of treatments, hospitalizations, and medications with their child(ren), while some experience none at all.

Sometimes, there are warning signs of the person's intentions. However, clues may be so disguised that even a trained professional or counselor may not recognize them. Occasionally, there are no discernible signs, and the child's suicide becomes a fateful decision that may never be understood.

There is a change taking place in the terminology when talking about suicide. The term "died by suicide" is being adopted. This new language reflects the changes in our understanding and compassion as we move away from the harsh statement and stigma of the words "committed suicide," which can be offensive to families whose children have taken their own lives.

After Suicide

Feelings of shock, denial, guilt, anger, and depression are a normal part of grief. However, these feelings can be significantly heightened when a child has died by suicide.

The suicide of a child can raise painful questions, doubts, and fears. You may question why your love was not enough to save your child and fear that others will judge you to be an unfit parent. Both questions may raise strong feelings of failure. Many bereaved parents wrestle with these feelings but, in time, come to a place where they understand their child chose to end their life.

Stigma Associated with Suicide

The stigma associated with suicide in our society due to cultural and religious interpretations causes some families to be reluctant to talk openly about the cause of their child's death. Keeping the cause of death a secret can deprive you of the joy of speaking about your child with family and friends and may cause isolation between you and those whose support you will need. Finding support from others who allow you to share your feelings about your child's, sibling's, or grandchild's suicide can help you focus on your healing and survival.

Anger

Anger is a common emotion experienced by parents whose child has died by suicide. Anger may be directed at your child, those you believe failed to help your child, God, or the world. You may be angry with yourself because you feel you could not save your child. Anger can be destructive, but it can also be constructive. Finding constructive ways of expressing your anger can help in the healing process.

Guilt and Regret

Parents, family, friends, classmates, and even coworkers often feel guilty and regret following a child's suicide. "If only" is a phrase many find themselves repeating repeatedly. Intellectually, you may understand that your child's decision to end their life was their own. Emotionally, however, it may take much longer for you to accept that you are not responsible. Be patient with yourself. Letting yourself fully feel emotion is often an essential part of processing and working through it.

Questioning

Often, parents ask, "Why?" Rarely are there clear answers, which may be highly frustrating. At some point, you may begin to realize that some questions about the death of your child will never be answered.

Depression

Lack of energy, sleep problems, inability to concentrate, not wanting to talk with others, and the feeling that there is nothing to live for are normal reactions to bereavement. Situational depression, as opposed to clinical depression, should eventually subside. This type of depression can be helped by integrating moderate physical activity, plenty of rest and water, and a nutritious diet into a daily routine. Try to allow family and friends to take care of you. You don't have to be strong. Try to stay connected with people you value and trust. Talking with others who have been through a similar situation may also help you cope. If the depression does not appear to lessen over time, you may want to talk with a qualified professional who can determine how best to help you.

Disillusionment

Often, parents find themselves in a spiritual crisis and question their beliefs or feel betrayed by God. Religious concerns about the hereafter may also surface. "Why did God let this happen?" is a question we may never know the answer to. Talking about spiritual and philosophical questions with other parents who have experienced suicide may be helpful. For those with concerns of a spiritual nature, it could be beneficial to find a gentle, caring, and nonjudgmental member of the same faith and open yourself to that person.

Ideas to Help You Cope

- Talk about your child's death with family members and discuss your feelings of loss and pain. Talk about the good times you had and the times that were not so good. It can be helpful and therapeutic to express feelings rather than internalize them. Giving the gift of tolerance for all family members to grieve in their own way allows each person to feel validated in their own unique grief experience. Keep in mind that everyone's grief journey is as unique as the relationship they had with the child who died. You may find it helpful to write your feelings or write a letter to your child; this can be a safe place for you to express some of the things you could not say before the death.
- Ask for help. Don't be afraid to tell your friends what you need when they ask; they want to help.
- Consider becoming involved with a self-help bereavement group like The Compassionate Friends. Through sharing with others who have walked a similar path, you may gain some understanding of your reactions and learn additional ways to cope. Seek professional support and family counseling if necessary.

Give yourself time, time, and more time. It takes months, even years, to open your heart and mind to healing. Choose to survive and then be patient with yourself. In time, your grief will soften as you begin to heal, and you will feel like investing in life again.

*This information is adapted from The Katrina Tagget Memorial
Foundation in loving memory of Katrina "Kara" Tagget,
daughter of Sara & David and brother of Blake*

Suggested Reading List for Suicide Bereavement

After Suicide by John H Hewett published by Westminster John Knox Press; 1st edition (January 1, 1980)

Bruised and Wounded by Ronald Rolheiser, 2017

Understanding Your Suicide Grief by Alan F. Wolfelt, 2009

It's okay That You're not okay by Megan Devine, 2017

After Suicide Loss: Coping with Your Grief

Bob Baugher, Ph.D., and Jack Jordan, Ph.D., 2002. Available through AFSP.

This excellent handbook is organized chronologically to follow the days, weeks, and months after a suicide loss. It includes straightforward information about psychiatric disorders, when to seek professional help, and practical strategies for coping and healing.

Healing After the Suicide of a Loved One

Ann Smolin and John Guinan, Simon and Schuster, 1993. Many survivors struggle with the questions, "why?" and "what if?" This book shares case studies and offers advice to help survivors begin to heal.

Suicide of a Child

Adina Wroblewski, Centering Corp., 2002. A basic guide for early bereavement after your child's suicide, sharing comfortable, compassionate, easy-to-read observations and personal messages.

Suicide Survivors' Handbook — Expanded Edition

Trudy Carlson, Benline Press, 2000. Providing specific suggestions and practical advice from other survivors, the author addresses the questions: Why? What about shame and guilt? How long does the pain last? What helps? How do you deal with others?

Survivors of Suicide

Rita Robinson and Phyllis Hart, New Page Books, 2001. A compilation of advice and survivor stories.

The Wilderness of Suicide Grief: Finding Your Way

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. Companion Press, 2010.

My Son...My Son: A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss or Suicide

Iris Bolton and Curtis Mitchell, The Bolton Press, 1995. A mother's account of her progression through the grief process after the suicide of her 20-year old son.

The Suicide Index: Putting My Father's Death in Order

Joan Wickersham, Harcourt Inc., 2008. Wickersham creates an index to try to make sense of her father's suicide, assembling family history, business failures, and encounters with friends and doctors into a philosophical, deeply personal, and beautifully written exploration of the mystery of her father's life and death.

Helping Children:

After a Parent's Suicide: Helping Children Heal

Margo Requarth, Healing Hearts Press, 2006.

Written by a bereavement counselor who lost her mother to suicide before she was four years old, this book offers constructive, compassionate, and clear suggestions for helping children.

Supporting Children After a Suicide Loss: A Guide For Parents and Caregivers

Sarah Montgomery, LCSW-C and Susan Coale, LCSW-C, Chesapeake Life Center, 2014.

This unique book provides parents and caregivers with helpful information to better understand and communicate with children grieving a loss to suicide with a special focus on child development and how to talk with children of various ages.

After a Suicide: A Workbook for Grieving Kids

Available through The Dougy Center.

This workbook for children includes explanations of mental illness and suicide, creative exercises, practical advice, and quotations from child survivors.

But I Didn't Say Goodbye: For Parents and Professionals Helping Child Suicide Survivors

Barbara Rubel, Griefwork Center, Inc., 2000.

Narrated by a child, this book is intended for adults to read and then share with children.

Child Survivors of Suicide: A Guidebook for Those Who Care for Them

Rebecca Parkin and Karen Dunne-Maxim, 1995.

Available through AFSP. This practical guide offers guidance for family members, educators, and others seeking to help young survivors.

For Adolescents and Teenagers:

After

Francis Chalifour, Tundra, 2005.

Nominated for the Canadian Governor General's Literary Awards in 2005, this autobiographical novel tells the story of 15-year-old Francis, whose father took his own life. It explores Francis's struggles with guilt, anger, and profound sadness, and his search for hope, during the first year after his father's suicide.

After a Suicide: Young People Speak Up

Susan Kuklin, Putnam Publishing Group, 1994.

Nine personal accounts of survivors, many of whom are teens. Each account focuses on a specific topic, such as losing a parent, losing a sibling, seeking therapy, or using support groups.

More - <https://afsp.org/find-support/ive-lost-someone/resources-loss-survivors/books-loss-survivors/>