Suicide Bereavement Resource Manual

In the weeks, months and years after the suicide of a loved one, family and friends often ride a rollercoaster of emotions including intense grief, guilt, confusion, anger, disbelief and despair. The grieving process is not as simple as a list of ‘stages,’ as you might feel a mixture of emotions at any one time. It may feel as though the suicide of a loved one is too much to bear. There is stigma (inaccurate and unhelpful attitudes and beliefs) attached to suicide in our society and you will probably find that many people don’t know what to say. This can sometimes result in you not receiving the help and support that you need. However there is support available for people bereaved by suicide.

Initial Grief Counselling

Many people feel shock or numbness after a suicide. This is the body’s natural way of managing this overwhelming news; you may feel disbelief, great distress or very little at all as the news sinks in. In the early stages, a family member may also be required to formally identify the body of the person who has died by suicide. This process will usually be done at a morgue or hospital.

The Department of Forensic Medicine in Glebe provide grief counsellors to anyone affected by a death being investigated by the Coroner. The grief counsellors can assist and support you during this process and they may also be able to provide longer-term counselling and support groups.

- The Department of Forensic Medicine Counselling (Glebe), Tel (02) 8584 7800

If the person’s body is at a different NSW morgue or a hospital, ask the person assisting you if they have any counsellors available to help you through this time.

Grief Counselling in the Longer Term

Grief counselling allows you to talk about the person who has died, the suicide itself, what it means for you, and how you will cope in the future. You can explore the feelings you have and come to understand, accept or change them.

During the first few weeks or months after a suicide, you may find that your family and friends are all that you need. However, many people find that support falls away after a while, leaving them to deal with the longer-term grieving process alone. You may find that family members and friends cannot cope with talking about the suicide over and over again, even though it is perfectly normal and common for those who were close to the person to want to do so. This is when counselling can be helpful.
The National Association for Loss and Grief (NALAG)  
Provides telephone grief support, awareness and education in the area of grief, trauma, loss and bereavement. Also can refer you to a grief counsellor in your area: 
Tel (02) 9489 6644 (NSW) weekdays 9am-2pm and 6pm-11pm, or www.nalag.org.au

The Bereavement Care Centre (Eastwood)  
Offers counselling for adults and children experiencing grief: 
Tel 1300 654 556, or www.bereavementcare.com.au

Bereaved by Suicide Centre for Intensive Grief Therapy (North Shore)  
Provides counselling and group programs (Heartbeat of Hope) regarding bereavement by suicide. Also has resources for sale including “Red Chocolate Elephants”—a resource book for children bereaved by suicide. 
Tel 0414 721 653, or www.bereavedbysuicide.com.au

CatholicCare (Sydney)  
Offers low cost or free counselling in many areas of NSW. 
Contact the head office to find out about services in your area: 
Tel (02) 9390 5377, or www.catholiccare.org

Calvary Bereavement Counselling Service Kogarah  
Provides grief counselling for children and adults in the St George/Sutherland area who have experienced a death of a significant other. Occasional support groups held. 
Tel (02) 9553 3025

The Cottage Counselling Centre  
Offers grief counselling in the Narrabeen area. Charges apply according to income. 
Tel (02) 9972 0141

Anglican Counselling Service  
Provides grief counselling in the New England and North West Areas of NSW: 
Tel (02) 6701 8200, or www.acsdarm.org.au

The Wesley Mission Counselling Service  
Offers grief counselling for children & adults in the Wyong area. 
Tel (02) 4351 0116, or http://www.wesleymission.org.au/homepage.asp

Support Groups

Support groups enable people who have been affected by suicide to get together on a regular basis to offer each other support and companionship. They can be excellent sources of understanding and coping strategies.

Club SPERANZA (Australian Mental Health Suicide Consumer Alliance Inc)  
Runs support groups in Sydney for anyone concerned with suicide. It also provides information, education and referral and conducts special events for young people. 
Tel (02) 9908 1233, or www.clubsperanza.org
Support After Suicide Group (Department of Forensic Medicine) Burwood
Suicide bereavement support groups.
Tel (02) 8584 7800

Western Sydney Suicide Prevention and Support Network
Suicide prevention network and bereavement support groups in the Penrith and Richmond areas.
Tel 0402 627 696

Sutherland Shire Support After Suicide Group
Support group for adults following the loss after a suicide. Group is led by professionals.
Tel (02) 9545 0299, 0412 522 140
www.southerncommunitywelfare.org.au

Bereaved by Suicide Support Group Gordon
Support for people who are dealing with the loss of a loved one through suicide. Part of Lifeline Gordon.
Tel (02) 9498 8805

Bereaved by Suicide Support Group (BBS) Narellan
Support for people who are dealing with the loss of a loved one through suicide.
Tel (02) 4645 7200

Newcastle Support Group
For people seeking support following the loss after a suicide. For meeting, counselling or resources.
Tel (02) 4940 2000 or 0419 993 195
Email: sos_newcastle@hotmail.com

Support After Suicide Support Group Wagga Wagga
Tel (02) 9879 2600, 02 6922 4438 (A/H)
www.sfnsw.org.au

Solace Australia
Provide support for people who are hurting over the death of a partner and the management of their grief. Moving On groups focus on friendship.
Tel (02) 9519 2820

Compassionate Friends
General grief support groups for parents, grandparents and siblings grieving over the loss of a child.
Tel (02) 9290 2355, or www.thecompassionatefriends.org.au

Telephone Support
Grief can be more difficult to cope with at night or at weekends and holidays when it is easy to feel alone. It is a good idea to have some telephone counselling services handy, so you can call and get some support at any time of the day or night.
Grief Support Inc. (NALAG)
24-hour grief telephone counselling line.
Tel (02) 9489 6644 (NSW) weekdays 9am-2pm and 6pm-11pm

Hope for Life Line (Salvation Army Bereavement Support)
24 hour bereavement support for anyone grieving or a friend or loved one’s suicide.
Tel 1300 467 354

Suicide Call Back Service
24 hour telephone counselling for those bereaved by suicide, for family & friends of those at risk of suicide and for those at risk of suicide. Offers 6 free sessions with the same qualified health professional.
Tel 1300 659 467

Salvo Care Line
24 hour telephone counselling, information and referral service.
Tel 1300 363 622

Salvo Crisis Line
Telephone counselling and crisis intervention over the phone.
Tel (02) 8736 3295 (Sydney), 07 3831 9016 (Brisbane)

Lifeline
24-hour telephone counselling, information and referral service:
Tel 13 11 14, or www.lifeline.org.au

Mensline
24 hour telephone counselling for men or for women concerned about their male partner.
Tel 1300 789 978

Veteran’s Line
24 hour telephone counselling for veterans and their families
Tel 1800 011 046

Kids Help Line
24 hour telephone counselling for young people aged 5-25 years of age
Tel 1800 551 800, or www.kidshelp.com.au

Children and Young People

When the survivor of suicide is a child, it can be difficult to know what to do – whether or when to tell them how the person died; what to tell them about suicide; how to explain to them something that you probably do not understand yourself. Children need support and reassurance from adults when they are grieving. However, this need comes at a sad and stressful time when you may be less able to respond to their needs.

The following organisations may be able to help, or you could try talking to your local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to get advice in specific cases.
Contact details for these services can be obtained from the Mental Health Information Service on 1300 794 991. You can also contact these through your local Community Health service. These are listed in the White Pages under ‘Community Health Centres’.

ReachOut!
Internet based service to help young people through tough times, provides support, information and referral for a wide range of issues: www.reachout.com.au

The National Centre for Childhood Loss and Grief
Offers individual and group counselling for children:
Tel 1300 654 556, or www.bereavementcare.com.au/

Seasons for Growth Program
An education program for both children and adults about the effects of loss, grief and change. Not a therapeutic or counselling program.
Tel (02) 8912 2700

Kids Help Line
24 hour telephone counselling for young people aged 5-25 years of age
Tel 1800 551 800, or www.kidshelp.com.au

School Counsellors
Every school should have access to a counsellor at least for part of the week. Ask if they can help to support your child at school and help you make decisions about what to tell your child’s teachers.

Early Childhood Centres
Babies and very young children can also be affected by the death of a family member by suicide and may become clingy or fearful, attention seeking or restless. They may show signs of grief or stress through behaviour as they do not have the words to express their experiences verbally. If you are concerned about a young child or the suicide’s effects on family functioning, contact your nearest Early Childhood Centre for help. Their contact details can be found in the White Pages under ‘Early Childhood Health Centres’.

Other

White Wreath Foundation—Action Against Suicide
Provides advocacy and support for those bereaved by suicide.
Tel 1300 766 177
www.whitewreath.com

Open to Hope website
Website which provides a voice and support after a loss.
www.opentohope.com
Grief Link website
Website which provides information about grief, helping the bereaved and finding support in the community.
www.grieflink.asn.au

Pillars of Strength
Provides support and respite for men who have faced a significant family trauma including after the loss of a child.
Tel 0423 028 751, or www.pillarsofstrength.com.au

Dads in Distress
Peer support to men to prevent the trend of male suicide due to family traumas of divorce and separation. Has a help line with resources and information.
Tel 1300 853 437, or www.dadsindistress.asn.au

Relationship Help Online
Website which provides online counselling through Relationships Australia.
Tel (02) 9418 8800, 1300 364 277, or www.relationshiphelponline.com.au

Living is for Everyone (LIFE)
Suicide and self-harm prevention website.
www.livingisforeveryone.com.au

Research and/or Training Organisations

Suicide Prevention Australia
Facilitates public education, awareness and training on issues of suicide prevention:
Tel (02) 9223 3333, or www.suicidepreventionaust.org

Wesley Lifeforce Suicide Prevention Program
Provides community education on suicide intervention and prevention strategies:
Tel 1800 100 024, or www.wesleylifeforce.org

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (Melbourne)
Provides grief and bereavement education, policy development and community awareness. No counselling for NSW.
Tel (03) 9265 2100, 1800 642 066 or www.grief.org.au

Suicide Prevention Foundation (Melbourne)
Provides medical information on suicide prevention including resources.
Tel 1800 465 366
www.suicideprevention.com.au
References

American Association of Suicidology – SOS Handbook for survivors of suicide

Telephone Interpreter
Service 131 450

If English is not your first language please call the Mental Health Information Service through the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS). This service is free to non-English speaking Australian citizens or permanent residents. TIS have access to interpreters speaking more than 120 languages and dialects.

Medicare Rebates and Accessing Private Practitioners

What is the difference between psychiatrists and psychologists?
Psychiatrists are medically trained doctors who specialise in the treatment of mental illness. Like GPs they can prescribe, administer and monitor medication. Psychiatrists do not advertise so it is up to your GP to refer you to someone appropriate.

Psychologists are trained in human behaviour and use a range of therapies to treat patients. They provide services including assessment, psychological testing, and various types of psychotherapy and counselling.

Medicare rebate for psychologists
A Medicare rebate is now available for a number of sessions per calendar year with a registered psychologist* with a Medicare Provider Number. To obtain the rebate you must be referred by an appropriate medical practitioner, i.e. a GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician. The practitioner will ensure that you meet the eligibility requirements and develop a management plan for your condition.

The cost and rebate from Medicare can vary depending on the consultation length and fee charged. If the psychologist bulk bills there will be no extra cost.
For further information about the rebate or to locate a psychologist in your area contact the Australian Psychological Society on 1800 333 497 http://www.psychology.org.au

* Similar Medicare rebates also exist for mental health accredited social workers and occupational therapists.

Mental Health Resource Centre

The Resource Centre contains material that promotes a better understanding of mental health issues. New books and DVDs are purchased on a regular basis and visitors are welcome to come in and browse.

Members of MHA, CAG and ARAFMI may check-out resources on loan. The length of the loan is 3 weeks. Membership costs between $10 - $30 per individual per annum. Please note that most of the reference books are not available for loan.
You will find the Resource Centre Booklist on our website: www.mentalhealth.asn.au for further information contact 1300 794 991.

Disclaimer

This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed. The listed websites provide additional information, but should not be taken as an endorsement or recommendation.

This information may be reproduced with an acknowledgement to the Mental Health Association NSW. This and other fact sheets are available for download from www.mentalhealth.asn.au. The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.

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