

Supporting Adults After Suicide Loss

Losing someone to suicide can feel like an earthquake in your life. There's shock, unanswered questions, and sometimes shame or guilt. This handout offers kind, practical suggestions for adults navigating the early weeks and months of suicide bereavement.

1. The Shock Response

Many adults describe the first days after a suicide loss as surreal. Your body may react with numbness, difficulty concentrating, disrupted sleep, or physical pain. These are natural responses to trauma, not signs of weakness.

Helpful strategies:

- Keep daily basics simple: eat small meals, hydrate, rest when you can.
- Lean on others for practical support (shopping, childcare, phone calls).
- Avoid major decisions in the early weeks if possible.

2. Common Feelings

Adults may feel guilt ("What did I miss?"), anger ("How could they?"), or shame ("What will people think?"). These emotions are common. None of them mean you are to blame.

Ways to cope:

- Write feelings in a journal without censoring yourself.
- Join a suicide bereavement group for validation and shared experience.
- Remind yourself: responsibility lies with the illness or distress, not with you.

3. Talking About the Death

It can feel impossible to explain suicide to others. Use phrases you're comfortable with, such as "They died by suicide" rather than stigmatising terms. Choose who, when, and how much to share.

4. Grieving in Waves

Grief after suicide is often not linear. You may feel fine one day and overwhelmed the next. Give yourself permission to grieve in your own rhythm.

5. Helpful Supports

- Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (UK charity with local groups).
- Cruse Bereavement Support (helpline and counselling).
- Samaritans – 116 123 (24/7 free listening service).
- NHS Scotland Bereavement Support services and local GPs.

Important: You don't have to go through this alone. Professional and peer support can ease the weight over time.