

Surviving After Suicide

A supportive and informational newsletter for
those impacted by the suicide of a loved one.

November, 2021 Edition



Taking Care of YOU

a Special Event for
Survivors of Suicide Loss



National Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

Saturday, November 20, 2021

12pm – 3pm

Tea Community Hall - 200 W. Maple St., Tea, SD

On Saturday, November 20, 2021, the Helpline will sponsor a unique event to commemorate National Survivors of Suicide Loss Day. In 1999, Senator Harry Reid introduced a resolution designating a day in November as National Survivors of Suicide Loss Day. The creation of a day recognizing survivors of suicide loss was the first national recognition of the role that loss survivors play in informing our understanding of suicide, its consequences, and its prevention.

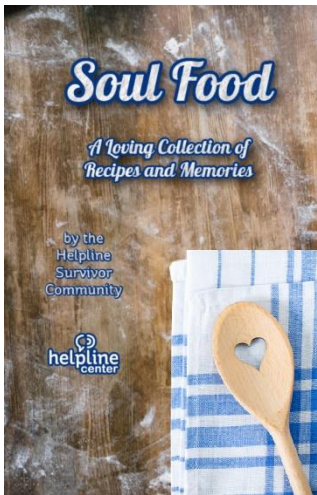
Events for this special event will include:

- A potluck luncheon at 12pm. All families are asked to bring a dish to pass. ***If this recipe is a special memory of your loved one, we ask that you bring the recipe to be included in the upcoming survivor's cookbook, "Soul Food." (More information below.)***
- A special program featuring a message of hope and healing by inspirational speaker, singer, and songwriter Jill Miller at 1pm
- Family games and healing activities for all ages

Register at <https://bit.ly/SurvivorsDayEvent>

Contact Jennie Marks 605-274-1416 or griefsupport@helplinecenter.org for more information





Time to Send in Your Recipes!

Stop procrastinating and dig into that recipe box! We still need recipes for “**Soul Food: A Loving Collection of Food and Memories.**” Anyone within our survivor community may contribute a recipe to the cookbook. Here’s what we’re looking for:

- A recipe of something that was a special favorite of your loved one.
- A photo of your loved one to accompany the recipe.
- A brief description of your memory of your loved one enjoying or making this food.

This is a creative opportunity to remember your loved one and to share both their memory and their favorite food with those who purchase the cookbook.

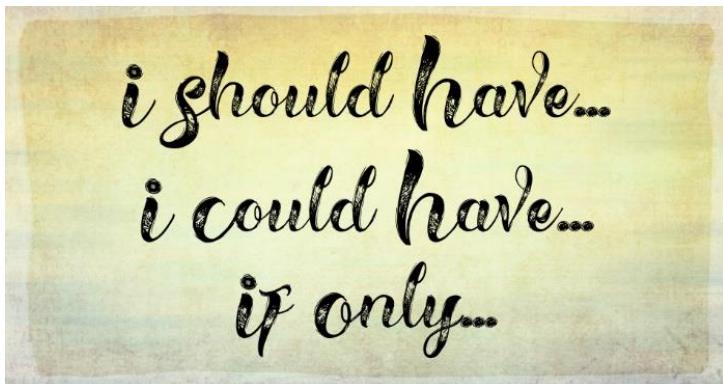
At this time, we do not have an exact price for each book, but we estimate this will be in the \$12-\$15 range, plus shipping. Even though this is categorized as a fundraising project, we have decided to forego any profit in order to keep costs as low as possible. The cookbooks can be pre-ordered, paid for (when the final price is determined), and recipes can be submitted at the publisher’s portal at

<https://www.createmycookbook.com/groups/DJb9cY5Hc>

There are also links on the cookbook website that make it easy to share our project on social media!

Recipes can be from any category – main dishes, soups, desserts, side dishes, baked goods, etc. We will begin the printing and shipping process once we have 100 orders for the book. **Anyone can purchase the cookbooks, but only survivors of suicide loss may submit a recipe and photo.**

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Jennie Marks by [email](#) or by phone at (605) 274-1416.



Understanding and Coping with Feelings of Guilt Following a Suicide Loss by Jennie Marks

Guilt can almost seem to be built-in after a suicide loss. There are subtle differences between the different guilt-related feelings of grief. Remorse, regret, and self-blame are all natural aspects of grieving your loved one’s death. Let’s think about the different ways that we feel guilt and its cause and consequences for us as survivors of suicide loss.

The most common form is thinking about all of the things that, presumably, you might have done to prevent them from taking their own lives. What we need to take into account is that hindsight is always 20/20. Once you lose someone to suicide, you inspect and examine every moment leading up to their death like someone starting a fire with a magnifying glass. Your thoughts and attention are laser-focused on every detail. That often leads to thinking that you should have seen every sign, known every intention, been with them every moment. The truth is that we simply do not live our lives shadowing every step someone takes. Daily mundane actions seem like important signs of suicidality in our minds once that person has completed suicide. After their death, you have all the time in the world to dissect every sign, symptom, and response and take responsibility for all of them. Maybe too much time.



Survivors may also feel guilt almost as an absolution for the deceased. If you take the blame for their death, that means they can't be blamed for taking their own life. We might be in a place following their death where we are hard-pressed to place any negative thoughts or actions on them at all. It might feel easier instead to take on the mantle of responsibility for them.

In addition to our own negative thoughts of regret and remorse, sometimes people in our families or social circle weigh in with their attitudes and assumptions regarding how we must feel. *"I bet you feel really guilty that your loved one killed themselves, don't you?"* or *"Since you lost someone to suicide, you must be feeling guilty about their death, right?"* It's important to maintain strong boundaries with people in that they are not allowed to apply their assumptions to what you are actually feeling.

There's also the rush by well-meaning people to assuage your guilt and try to convince you that *"It wasn't your fault!"* While our friends and co-workers may be logically correct in thinking that the suicide of your loved one is not your fault, they are also able to think about the situation in more of an intellectual context rather than the emotional arena in which you are living. You cannot erase guilt by simply willing it to go away or telling yourself that there was nothing more you could have done. While that is true, the intellectual ideas about self-blame and responsibility are no match for the emotional ones. Each person must work through those feelings over time and have every right to feel whatever they feel without a debate over whether those feelings are justified.

Sometimes, there's even an absence of guilt that causes us to feel guilty *about not feeling guilty*. What if we are confident that we took every possible course of action that we knew of to help our struggling loved one? If you don't feel any culpability in their death, please don't "borrow guilt" by feeling badly that you don't suffer from that burdensome emotion.

Another type of misplaced guilt might come at the moment in your healing where you have a moment of joy or true happiness. Close on the heels of that joy might be the crushing realization that you just had a happy experience when your loved one is no longer with you. It may seem like you are a bad person or that you've forgotten them. *"How can I be laughing when I've lost someone so dear to me!"* you might be thinking. It's a natural and expected part of the process, yet it's important that you not stifle any positive emotions.

Your loved one did not take their own life because of anything you did or didn't do. It wasn't your fault and it doesn't mean that they wanted to leave you. They were overwhelmed with pain and saw no other option to escape that pain. As noted grief expert Dr. Alan Wolfelt often says, *"You are responsible to people, not for people."* As hard as it may be to accept, the bottom line with suicide is that the decision to take their life was a decision they made for themselves. If there had been anything you could have done, rest assured, you would have done it.

Tips for Coping with Feelings of Self-Blame

- Recognize that you are human. Nobody is perfect, and we all make mistakes and have regrets. No one is exempt from this.
- The more you make your feelings of guilt 'wrong' the longer they will stay. Try to accept that it is natural to have feelings of self-blame following a suicide loss.
- Think about what your loved one would say to you about how you are feeling if they were still here.
- Treat yourself as if you are someone you've been placed in charge of caring for. What would you say to a person in a situation just like yours?
- Try to remember the good memories, not just the painful ones. That may be difficult at first, but it gets easier over time.
- Ask your loved one for forgiveness - either out loud, in your mind, or on paper. You won't receive an answer, but the process of asking can be healing and help you to gain clarity over your thoughts.
- Saying things out loud and talking them through can go a long way to helping us process and work through our emotions. Talk to a close friend, family member or a counselor about how you are feeling. Consider attending the Surviving After Suicide support group at the Helpline Center and talk to other survivors about your feelings. You'll be amazed how many people can relate to the feelings that you express!



Speaking of Resources...



Totally Got Out Of Bed

TGOOB: Toni Plante & Dr. Nora Flom

"I don't mean to brag, but I totally got out of bed today."
The real life truth of losing a loved one to suicide.

Totally Got Out of Bed (TGOOB) is a podcast recommendation from a survivor from our Helpline survivor's community. Others to whom I have recommended it have told me that they have really gotten a lot of value from it. The podcast chronicles the

experiences of two mothers who became survivors after the suicide deaths of their children, a teen and a young adult. The first season is now complete and includes 15 episodes. They include such topics as surviving the first few days, continuing to live in the face of profound loss, getting through the 'firsts', dealing with others, explaining how you feel, and many others.

Toni Plante and Nora Flom are touching and heartbreaking, but also use humor as a coping mechanism when the absurdities of life's situations leave them scratching their heads. The podcast, however, comes with a warning: *TGOOB occasionally contains some pretty rough language*. You may want to consider if you're ok with that prior to listening. The hosts discuss and explain their coarse language in the first episode. It's not everywhere, but it's there.

TGOOB is available free of charge on their website: totallygotoutofbed.com.

"Remember with More Love Than Pain" is the motto of David Kessler, an expert on loss and author of many books about grief. Two of his works were the product of a collaboration with world-renown grief researcher and author, Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. In 1995, they published their first book together, *Life Lessons: Two Experts on Death and Dying Teach Us About the Mysteries of Life and Living*. Kübler-Ross died in 2004 and her last book, co-written with David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*, was completed one month before her death. David Kessler worked closely with Elisabeth for ten years and was with her as she died.

On his website, many courses are offered for a fee and it is also a platform on which his books are offered for sale. He has, however, developed an online series to support people who have lost a loved one to suicide that is completely free of charge. This 3-part series (4, if you include his Introduction) covers the topics of the loss itself, your response to the loss, and your life after your suicide loss. Each video is followed by a Healing Exercise for individuals to complete on their own. You must register to have access to the series, but again, it is free of charge. Each section of the series will be available one week after completing the one prior. The series is available at: <https://www.davidkesslertraining.com/suicide-loss-support>.



Helpline's Programs and Services for Survivors

- **Support Groups**

The Surviving After Suicide Monthly Support Group is held both in-person and online. Our **virtual support group** meets **the first Thursday of each month** from 7:00-8:30 p.m. online via Zoom. The **in-person support group** meets the **third Thursday of each month** from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at the Helpline Center, 1000 N. West Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD.

Our SAS meetings are held in an atmosphere that is warm, friendly, and nonjudgmental. Anyone who has lost a family member or friend is invited to attend, whether it is a recent loss or a loss that occurred many years ago. Feelings shared are kept confidential and discussed only within the confines of the group meeting. Thus, our SAS support groups provide a comfortable and non-threatening setting to share experiences and thoughts. There is no cost to attend, and no registration is required. You are welcome to attend at any time. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84063017302>.

- **Support Classes**

Our next (SAS) Surviving After Suicide Support Class begins on Tuesday, January 11, 2022. This class is held for 10 consecutive Tuesdays from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. and offers both education and support for adults who have lost a loved one to suicide. The class is designed to help survivors express and understand the powerful and unique grief they experience in a safe place with others who have also lost a loved one to suicide. The class is appropriate for those whose loss is recent and those who have been struggling with their grief for an extended period of time without support. There is no cost for the class or the materials, but registration is required. The venue of the class (in-person or online via Zoom) will be decided depending upon the preference of the participants.

- **Caring Cards**

Caring cards are sent out, with permission and by request, to survivors on the anniversary of their suicide loss. These cards are also included in the “Survivor’s Packet” that is given to new survivors. Each special notecard is handmade by a fellow survivor and contains a handwritten message of support and remembrance of their loved one. If you do not currently receive a card on your loss anniversary and would like to, you may sign up on our website.

- **LOSS Program**

Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors works with local law enforcement, clergy, and funeral homes in the Sioux Empire area to provide a support visit, phone calls, or any other type of support that they can give to aid friends and family members in the wake of a recent suicide loss. The team is comprised exclusively of trained staff from the Helpline Center.

To register or learn more about these and other services, visit :

<https://www.helplinecenter.org/suicide-and-crisis-support/survivor-services>

