

Supporting Those Grieving Suicide

ACKNOWLEDGE THE SITUATION

The bereaved may not want to talk but they are often comforted simply by the presence of a friend or family member. **Be willing to sit in silence.**

"I heard your father died."

BE PATIENT & BE GENUINE IN YOUR COMMUNICATION

People who are grieving may need to tell their story repeatedly to help process the loss of their loved one. **Listening is more important than talking.**

"I'm not sure what to say, but I want you to know I care."

ACCEPT THE PERSON'S FEELINGS

The bereaved need to know they may express their feelings without fear of judgment, argument, or criticism.

"It's OK to cry or feel angry."

OFFER YOUR SUPPORT & MAKE CONNECTIONS

Offer to support through prayer, but only if you mean it. Remain attentive over time with phone calls, emails, texts or cards. A note, gift, meal or phone call on holidays, birthdays, and the anniversary date of the loved one who died can bring great comfort to the surviving family. Offer to connect the bereaved to a support group or people who have experienced similar loss.

TALK ABOUT MEMORIES

The bereaved need to feel that their loss is acknowledged and the person who did won't be forgotten. Touching or funny stories about the person who died bring comfort to the family.

IF YOU'RE UNSURE, ASK

Some people may not be able to articulate their own needs, others might surprise you.

"How can I help support you?"

OTHER RESOURCES

NAMI Howard County

www.namihowardcounty.org

Phone 410-410-772-9300

Fax 410-772-9300

Grassroots Crisis Intervention

Business Line:
410-531-6006

24-hour Crisis Hotline:
410-531-6677

Ways that are NOT Supportive

DON'T ASSUME PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THEIR LOSS

Give them the freedom to decide yes or no. If they decline, keep the door open by extending an invitation to talk at another time.

"I don't know what you are going through. I am here to listen when you are ready."

DON'T BE AFRAID

Reach out and be honest.

"I don't know what to say."

DON'T PUSH YOUR FAITH

If the person doesn't share your faith – Always ask first.

"Is it OK if I pray for you?"

DON'T PROVIDE SIMPLISTIC SOLUTIONS; PLATTITUDES ARE NOT HELPFUL.

DON'T SAY:

"She's in a better place."

"Time heals all wounds"

"Look at what you have to be grateful for."

DON'T COMPARE THEIR LOSS TO YOUR EXPERIENCE UNLESS IT IS A FITTING COMPARISON

Grief is intensely personal, so do not claim to "know" what the person is feeling.

DON'T SAY:

"I know how you feel."

DON'T AVOID

Surviving family members and friends of those who have died by suicide often experience guilt and shame along with their grief. Avoidance can intensify those feelings and add a sense of being isolated and alone.

DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS BASED ON OUTWARD APPEARANCES

Avoid saying things like "you are so strong" or "you look so well". This puts pressure on the person to keep up appearances and to hide their true feelings.

Don't expect people who have lost a loved one to suicide to "get back to normal" – they won't. They will be forever changed and those changes will become the new normal.