



Beyond Surviving: What Every Survivor Should Knowⁱ

Survivors are those friends and family left behind following the death of a loved one by suicide. Being a survivor isn't easy, but it can help to keep these suggestions and strategies in mind:

COPING

- It may not feel like it, but survival is possible.
- Take one day at a time, or even one moment.
- Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence on another's life.
- Be aware of the difficulties others may be having.
- Be patient with yourself and others who may not understand.
- Try to put off major decisions if possible, for at least several months.

FINDING SUPPORT

- Support groups can be helpful. Ask a professional to help you find one or to start one if there aren't any in your area.
- Personal faith can be an important part of coping.
- Find a good listener, and call someone if you need to talk.
- Seek professional help if you want or need it.

DEALING WITH INTENSE EMOTIONS

- It's okay to struggle with "why" it happened.
- Give yourself permission to cry.
- Intense feelings are normal, and they may come and go.
- Anger, guilt, confusion, and forgetfulness are common experiences related to mourning.
- It's okay to express appropriate anger – at the person, at yourself, at the situation.
- Suicidal thoughts are common, but it is important to remind yourself that having them doesn't mean you will act on them.
- Physical reactions to grief, such as headaches, loss of appetite, or difficulty sleeping, are common.
- Work through your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go.
- When you're able, allow yourself to laugh and experience positive emotions.

ⁱ Adapted from "Beyond Surviving: Suggestions for Survivors" by Iris M. Bolton, as prepared by Dr. Mary Bartlett.