

Healing After a Loved One's Suicide

by Andrea Denton

When someone loses a loved one to suicide, friends are often at a loss for what to say or how to help, because suicide is a cause of death that most of us have not experienced. Add to that the stigma that surrounds suicide and we find ourselves immobilized.

Remember that the person who has lost someone is grieving, regardless of the cause of death. They are on the same roller coaster ride as anyone else, but are also facing an investigation, dealing with the shock of the whole situation and

wondering what they could have done to have changed things.

Knowing that, there are some things we can do to help. First of all, be there for the person. Listen to them tell their story repeatedly until they don't need to tell it anymore. We can't fix the situation but we can listen. Second, let the person grieve as they need to, not in the way that we feel that they should. "Should" is a word that people who have lost someone really have trouble with because they just need to feel their feelings in their own way. They are doing their best in managing a

difficult life right now. Third, instead of asking what we can do to help, just do something. Provide a dinner or transportation or a hug; relieve them of childcare responsibilities; clean the house; plant some flowers; or do something to recognize that you understand that life feels overwhelming to the survivor. They may not even know what they need, but they need to know you care.

Direct the person toward some professional help. Often a counselor is needed for a while to assist the person in moving on. A support group of others

who have lost someone to suicide can also be valuable. Call 330-762-3500 to find out information about the Survivors support group in Summit County or to find out about groups in other areas. Remember too that calling 330-434-9144 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255) can be helpful for either the survivor or their friends.



Portage Path Behavioral Health's SUPPORT Hotline

Call 330-434-9144 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
for 24-hour assistance.

**The Summit County Suicide
Prevention Coalition**
preventsuicide@admboard.org