

Grief & Crisis Resources

Practical Guides for Coping with a Suicide Loss

After Suicide Loss: Coping with Your Grief. Bob Baugher, Ph.D., and Jack Jordan, Ph.D., 2002. Available through AFSP.

This excellent handbook is organized chronologically to follow the days, weeks, and months after a suicide loss. It includes straightforward information about psychiatric disorders, when to seek professional help, and practical strategies for coping and healing.

Black Suicide: The Tragic Reality of America's Deadliest Secret. Alton R. Kirk, Ph.D., Beckham Publications Group, Inc. 2009.

A brief exploration of suicide in the African-American community, including a chapter dedicated to first-person accounts of black survivors of suicide loss.

Dying to Be Free: A Healing Guide for Families after a Suicide. Beverly Cobain and Jean Larch, Hazelden Foundation, 2006.

Co-authored by the cousin of Kurt Cobain and a crisis intervention specialist, this book combines personal accounts from survivors with practical guidance for coping with suicide loss. The lead singer of the band Nirvana, Cobain took his life in 1994.

Healing After the Suicide of a Loved One. Ann Smolin and John Guinan, Simon and Schuster, 1993.

Many survivors struggle with the questions, "why?" and "what if?". This book shares case studies and offers advice to help survivors begin to heal.

Lay My Burden Down: Unraveling Suicide and the Mental Health Crisis Among African-Americans. Alvin F. Poussaint, M.D., and Amy Alexander, Beacon Press, 2001.

One of only a few books addressing suicide and mental health problems within the African-American community.

Reaching Out After Suicide: What's Helpful and What's Not. Linda H. Kilburn, M.S.W. Available from KP Associates, LLC (KPAMASS@aol.com), 2008.

A clinical hospice social worker and survivor of her daughter's suicide, Kilburn offers practical advice for well-meaning friends and family who want to reach out and be supportive after a suicide, but aren't sure what to do or say.

Rocky Roads: The Journeys of Families Through Suicide Grief. Michelle Linn-Gust, Ph.D, Chellehead Works, 2010.

Written by a survivor who lost a sibling, this guide explores the effects of suicide and grief on family relationships. Linn-Gust addresses the reasons some families work through their suicide loss and become stronger than before, while others struggle with coming back together as a family unit.

Silent Grief: Living in the Wake of Suicide. Christopher Lukas and Henry Seiden, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007.

Co-authored by a psychologist and a survivor of multiple suicide losses, this book is written with sensitivity and understanding. The authors offer simple, constructive suggestions for healing, along with straightforward information and a message of hope.

Why Suicide? Questions and Answers about Suicide, Suicide Prevention, and Coping with the Suicide of Someone You Know (2nd ed.). Eric Marcus, HarperOne (a division of HarperCollins), 2010.

Eric Marcus was 12 years old in 1970, when he lost his father to suicide. More recently, his sister-in-law also took her life, prompting him to reconsider his own experience and revise his original and well-received, *Why Suicide?* Author of several notable books—including the New York Times bestselling autobiography of Olympic diving champion Greg Louganis—Marcus integrates his personal experience and journalistic skills in this comprehensive yet accessible primer on all aspects of suicide, its prevention, and aftermath. For more information visit www.whysuicidebook.com.

Suicide of a Child. Adina Wroblewski, Centering Corp., 2002.

A basic guide for early bereavement after your child's suicide, sharing comfortable, compassionate, easy-to-read observations and personal messages.

Suicide Survivors' Handbook—Expanded Edition. Trudy Carlson, Benline Press, 2000.

Providing specific suggestions and practical advice from other survivors, the author addresses the questions: Why? What about shame and guilt? How long does the pain last? What helps? How do you deal with others?

Survivors of Suicide. Rita Robinson and Phyllis Hart, New Page Books, 2001.

A compilation of advice and survivor stories.

The Wilderness of Suicide Grief: Finding Your Way. Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. Companion Press, 2010.

Using the metaphor of grief as a wilderness, this guidebook, written by a grief counselor, offers 10 wisdom teachings, including: open to the presence of loss, misconceptions about suicide and grief, and reaching out for help. The author also offers an expanded version titled, *Understanding Your Grief: Ten Touchstones of Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart*, and the companion workbook, *The Understanding Your Suicide Grief Journal*.

Touched by Suicide: Hope and Healing After Loss. Michael F. Myers, M.D., and Carla Fine, Gotham Books, 2006.

Co-authored by a psychiatrist and a survivor, this book offers detailed steps, practical suggestions, and compassionate advice on coping with all aspects of suicide.

Unfinished Conversation: Healing From Suicide and Loss - A Guided Journey. Robert E. Lesoine and Marilynne Chopel, Parallax Press, 2013.

A journal kept as the author works to transform his grief following the loss of his best friend. The story is combined with tools and techniques which offer survivors effective new means to face their own experience. After each brief chapter of the author's story revealing a particular stage or action in the aftermath of suicide, the survivor is invited through a series of related questions, to reflect on their own experiences and memories in order to facilitate a transformative healing process.

Survivor Stories

A Force Unfamiliar To Me: A Cautionary Tale. Jane Butler, Hamlet Books, 1998.

A mother's personal account of her son's depression and suicide. Explores some of the familiar challenges survivor families face, such as how to handle the holidays, and the struggles of grief between the parents of a child who dies by suicide.

An Empty Chair: Living In The Wake of a Sibling's Suicide. Sara Swan Miller, iUniverse, Inc, 2000.

Interviews with more than 30 sibling survivors all over the U.S., as well as the author's own account of losing a sister to suicide.

A Special Scar: The Experience of People Bereaved by Suicide. Alison Wertheimer, Routledge, 2001.

The author, who lost her sister to suicide, presents interviews with 50 survivors covering a wide range of issues, including the press, stigma, guilt, anger, and rejection.

Before Their Time: Adult Children's Experiences of Parental Suicide. Mary and Maureen Stimming, Temple University Press, 1999.

Adult child survivor accounts of their loss, grief, and resolution following a parent's suicide. Separate sections offer perspectives on the deaths of mothers and fathers. Includes the reflections of four siblings on the shared loss of their mother.

Blue Genes: A Memoir of Loss and Survival. Christopher Lukas, Doubleday, 2008.

As a young boy, Christopher (Kit) Lukas, co-author of *Silent Grief: Living in the Wake of Suicide*, survived the suicide of his mother. Neither he nor his brother were told how she died, and both went on to confront their own struggles with depression, a disease that ran in their family. In 1997, Kit's brother Tony, a Pulitzer-prize winning author, took his own life. *Blue Genes* is Kit's exploration of his family history, his personal journey, and his determination to find strength and hope.

History of a Suicide: My Sister's Unfinished Life. Jill Bialosky, Atria Books, 2011.

Writer Jill Bialosky was pregnant with her first child in 1990 when her 21-year-old half-sister, Kim, took her life. Jill's grief was compounded by the loss of her baby within just a few months. This memoir, written nearly 20 years later, shares a detailed personal investigation of her family's complicated history, and of Kim's struggle with depression and addiction. (This book is recommended for survivors who are further along in their grief. Newly-bereaved survivors may find it overwhelming.)

In Her Wake: A Child Psychiatrist Explores the Mystery of Her Mother's Suicide. Nancy Rappaport. Basic Books, 2009.

Now a child psychiatrist, at the age of four Dr. Nancy Rappaport lost her mother to suicide. Encouraged by her own children's curiosity about their grandmother, and fortified by her professional training in psychiatry, she began to look into her mother's life and death. Drawing on court papers, newspaper clippings, her mother's unpublished novel, and interviews with family and friends, Rappaport explores the impact of her mother's suicide from the perspective of a daughter, psychiatrist, wife, and mother herself, in this deeply personal memoir.

My Son...My Son: A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss or Suicide. Iris Bolton and Curtis Mitchell, The Bolton Press, 1995.

A mother's account of her progression through the grief process after the suicide of her 20-year old son.

Never Regret the Pain: Loving and Losing a Bipolar Spouse. Sel Erder Yackley, Helm Publishing, 2008.

In this memoir, a mother of three provides an intimate glimpse into her family's struggle to understand, cope with, and grieve the bipolar disorder and ultimate suicide of her husband, a well-respected judge.

The Invisible Front: Love and Loss in an Era of Endless War. Yochi Dreazen, Crown Publishing, 2014.

Major General Mark Graham was a decorated two-star officer whose integrity and patriotism inspired his sons, Jeff and Kevin, to pursue military careers of their own. His wife Carol was a teacher who held the family together while Mark's career took them to bases around the world. When Kevin and Jeff die within nine months of each other—Kevin commits suicide and Jeff is killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq—Mark and Carol are astonished by the drastically different responses their sons' deaths receive from the Army. While Jeff is lauded as a hero, Kevin's death is met with silence, evidence of the terrible stigma that surrounds suicide and mental illness in the military. Convinced that their sons died fighting different battles, Mark and Carol commit themselves to transforming the institution that is the cornerstone of their lives.

Hope After Suicide: One Woman's Journey from Darkness to Light Wendy Parmley, Cedarfort Publishing, 2014.

After losing her mother to suicide when she was twelve years old, Wendy Parmley learned firsthand the anguish, despair, and loneliness of survivors of suicide. Wendy shares her story of both sorrow and healing, and how she learned to open her once-shattered heart years after her mother's suicide, giving hope and comfort to those affected by such tragedy.

No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One. Carla Fine, Doubleday, 1996.

Following the suicide of her husband, the author interviewed over 100 suicide survivors. In this book, she weaves their experiences into a story of loss, grief, and survival.

Remembering Garrett: One Family's Battle with a Child's Depression. United States Senator Gordon H. Smith, Carroll & Graf, 2006.

A personal account by the U.S. Senator from Oregon, whose 21-year-old son took his own life, and whose speech on the Senate floor led to overwhelming bipartisan support for the passage of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, which increased federal funding to prevent youth suicide.

Sanity & Grace: A Journey of Suicide, Survival, and Strength. Judy Collins, Tarcher/Penguin, 2003.

A celebrity and grieving mother shares her story about the loss of her son to suicide, and her own struggle with mental illness.

Surviving Suicide: Searching for "Normal" with Heartache & Humor. Deena Baxter, Mascot Books, 2014.

This is the story of how a stepmother—an unusual perspective in loss memoirs—deals with the suicide death of her stepson while trying to maintain some sense of normalcy. Deena Baxter combines humor with serious self-reflection to create a beautifully written book about the impact mental illness has on a person, and about the ways in which the author coped shortly after her loss. The memoir is emotional, yet also very matter-of-fact on the subjects of suicide and mental illness. Recommended for people who are several years removed from their loss.

The Empty Chair: The Journey of Grief After Suicide. Beryl Glover, In Sight Books, 2000.

The grief process, as experienced by people dealing with varying emotions following the suicide of a family member.

The Suicide Index: Putting My Father's Death in Order. Joan Wickersham, Harcourt Inc., 2008.

Wickersham creates an index to try to make sense of her father's suicide, assembling family history, business failures, and encounters with friends and doctors into a philosophical, deeply personal, and beautifully written exploration of the mystery of her father's life and death.

The Gospel According to Josh: A 28-Year Gentile Bar Mitzvah. Josh Rivedal

A memoir. The story of actor and playwright, Josh Rivedal as he copes with his father's and grandfather's suicides, his own clinical depression and suicidal thoughts, and his recovery. The Gospel According to Josh is based in part on his acclaimed one-man show.

Helping Children

After a Parent's Suicide: Helping Children Heal. Margo Requarth, Healing Hearts Press, 2006.

Written by a bereavement counselor who lost her mother to suicide before she was four years old, this book offers constructive, compassionate, and clear suggestions for helping children.

Supporting Children After a Suicide Loss: A Guide For Parents and Caregivers. Sarah Montgomery, LCSW-C and Susan Coale, LCSW-C , Chesapeake Life Center, 2014.

This unique book provides parents and caregivers with helpful information to better understand and communicate with children grieving a loss to suicide with a special focus on child development and how to talk with children of various ages.

After a Suicide: A Workbook for Grieving Kids. Available through The Dougy Center

This workbook for children includes explanations of mental illness and suicide, creative exercises, practical advice, and quotations from child survivors.

But I Didn't Say Goodbye: For Parents and Professionals Helping Child Suicide Survivors. Barbara Rubel, Griefwork Center, Inc., 2000.

Narrated by a child, this book is intended for adults to read and then share with children.

Child Survivors of Suicide: A Guidebook for Those Who Care for Them. Rebecca Parkin and Karen Dunne-Maxim, 1995.

Available through AFSP. This practical guide offers guidance for family members, educators, and others seeking to help young survivors. To order, [click here](#).

My Uncle Keith Died. Carol Ann Loehr, Trafford Publishing, 2006.

Written in clear, simple language easily understood by children, this book offers hope and practical methods to explain suicide to children. It explains the difference between sadness and depression, and describes how chemical imbalances in the brain cause illnesses that can result in suicide.

Someone I Love Died By Suicide: A Story for Child Survivors and Those Who Care for Them. Doreen Cammarata, Grief Guidance, Inc., 2000.

An illustrated book explaining depression and suicide in child-friendly language.

Understanding Suicide, Supporting Children. The Dougy Center.

This is a 24-minute film which provides insight on the emotions and experiences that children, teens and families affected by a suicide death often go through, and offers ways to help. The DVD and guide are a resource for training purposes, or for general viewing by parents, therapists, counselors, and others. [Find more information on The Dougy Center website.](#)

For Adolescents and Teenagers

After. Francis Chalifour, Tundra, 2005.

Nominated for the Canadian Governor General's Literary Awards in 2005, this autobiographical novel tells the story of 15-year-old Francis, whose father took his own life. It explores Francis's struggles with guilt, anger, and profound sadness, and his search for hope, during the first year after his father's suicide.

After a Suicide: Young People Speak Up. Susan Kuklin, Putnam Publishing Group, 1994.

Nine personal accounts of survivors, many of whom are teens. Each account focuses on a specific topic, such as losing a parent, losing a sibling, seeking therapy, or using support groups.

For Men

Men & Grief: A Guide for Men Surviving the Death of a Loved One and a Resource for Caregivers and Mental Health Professionals. Carol Staudacher, New Harbinger Publications, Inc. 1991.

Separate chapters address bereavement experienced during boyhood, adolescence, and adulthood, as well as a chapter on the effect of alcohol abuse on grief. While the book does include some discussion of bereavement after suicide, the focus is on the male experience of bereavement more generally.

Men Don't Cry...Women Do: Transcending Gender Stereotypes of Grief. Terry L. Martin & Kenneth J. Doka, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group 2000.

Part of Robert Neimeyer's Death, Dying, and Bereavement Series, this book is best suited for mental health professionals and others interested in exploring the theoretical and clinical aspects of gender-typical grief. While not specific to suicide loss, the book addresses the impact of socialization and culture on how individuals experience loss.

Real Men Do Cry: A Quarterback's Inspiring Story of Tackling Depression and Surviving Suicide Loss. Eric Hipple, with Dr. Gloria Horsley and Dr. Heidi Horsley. Quality of Life Publishing Co., 2008.

A former NFL quarterback for the Detroit Lions, Hipple candidly shares his experience surviving his 15-year-old son's suicide, including his own lifelong struggle with depression, bankruptcy, imprisonment for drunk driving, and ultimate decision to seek treatment. A practical guide for men and the women who care about them.

Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing. Thomas R. Golden, Golden Healing Publishing, 1996.

Written by a licensed clinical social worker, this book explores the stereotypically masculine experience of grief. In the author's words, "[a] man reading these pages will find a book that honors the uniqueness of a man's path toward healing. A woman reading this book will benefit not only from gaining a deeper understanding of the men in her life, she will [also] find herself in these pages."

When a Man Faces Grief/A Man You Know is Grieving: 12 Practical Ideas to Help You Heal From Loss. Thomas Golden and James Miller, Willowgreen Publishing, 1998.

This book focuses on grief in general rather than specifically following suicide. The authors share their view of the "masculine side" of healing. The book's format is unique: the first half provides guidance to the grieving man himself; turned upside down, the second side advises his family and friends on how best to help him. The twelve suggestions in each half of the book are practical and straightforward.

When Suicide Comes Home: A Father's Diary and Comments. Paul Cox, Bolton Press 2002.

A father's perspective on the first year following his son's suicide, this book is written in a simple, straightforward style, making it easy reading for early grief. Though written from a father's perspective, female readers (especially spouses) have said that the book helped them to better understand the male experience of grief.

For Clinicians

Dead Reckoning: A Therapist Confronts His Own Grief. David C. Treadway, BasicBooks, 1996.

Now a successful family therapist, the author was just 20 when his mother, a longtime alcoholic, took her own life. Even as he counsels his clients on how to deal with death, loss, and grief, he finds himself increasingly unable to manage his own. Turning to his own therapist for help, Treadway brings the reader along on his journey of healing as he finally comes to terms with his mother's death.

Grief After Suicide: Understanding the Consequences and Caring for the Survivors. John R. Jordan, Ph.D. and John McIntosh, Ph.D., editors, Routledge, 2011.

Combining research literature, clinical theory, and extensive practical experience working with survivors of suicide loss, two of the field's leading experts offer a comprehensive, professionally-oriented exploration of bereavement after suicide. Topics include interventions to provide bereavement care for survivors and the development of research, clinical, and programmatic agendas for future efforts. Available at www.bereavementarena.com/grief-after-suicide-9780415993555.

Suicide and its Aftermath: Understanding and Counseling the Survivors. Edward Dunne, John McIntosh, and Karen Dunne-Maxim (Eds.), W.W. Norton and Company, 1987.

This compilation of articles and essays captures many aspects of the experience of surviving a suicide loss. Although written by and for professional counselors, its readable style makes the book appropriate for the general public, as well.

Therapeutic and Legal Issues for Therapists Who Have Survived a Client Suicide: Breaking the Silence. Kayla Miriyam Weiner, The Haworth Press, Inc., 2005.

This unique volume explores the firsthand experiences of "clinician-survivors"—mental health professionals who have lost clients and patients to suicide.

Poetry

Healing the Hurt Spirit: Daily Affirmations for People Who Have Lost a Loved One to Suicide. Catherine Greenleaf, St. Dymphna Press, 2006.

Written by a longtime survivor of multiple suicide losses, this non-denominational book encourages survivors to explore their grief through a series of simple readings and daily affirmations.

Incomplete Knowledge. Jeffrey Harrison, Four Way Books, 2006.

In the second half of this book of poetry, the author writes eloquently about the loss of his brother to suicide, delving into isolated moments in the immediate aftermath and the extended process of grief. A particularly moving sequence is titled, "The Undertaking."

Passing Reflections, Volume I: Meditations on Grief, and Volume II: The Journey Through Grief. Kristen Spexarth, Big Think Media, 2010.

This two-volume set of poetry reflects on the two years immediately following the suicide of the author's eldest son. Organized by date, the poems record, in vivid language and imagery, Spexarth's intense grief, and her eventual journey towards healing and reconnection.

Complicated Grief: A Collection of Poems. Deborah Golden Alecson, Finishing Line Press, 2014.

In these straightforward, beautifully written poems, Alecson describes her anguish after losing her mother to suicide and the difficulty of moving past the initial stages of grief. Please note that some of Alecson's poems have an emotional rawness that may make them difficult reading for the recently bereaved.

Understanding Suicide and Mental Illness

An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness. Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D., Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.

In this memoir, an international authority on bipolar disorder describes her own struggle since adolescence with the disorder, and how it has shaped her life.

Darkness Visible. William Styron, Random House, 1990.

A powerful and moving first-hand account of what depression feels like to the sufferer.

Demystifying Psychiatry: A Resource for Patients and Families. Charles Zorumski and Eugene Rubin, Oxford University Press, 2010.

Two psychiatrists explain modern day psychiatry, including the mental illnesses most closely associated with suicide risk, in this straightforward primer intended for a lay audience.

Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide. Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D., Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

Weaving together an in-depth psychological and scientific exploration of the subject, this book traces the network of reasons underlying suicide, including the factors that interact to cause suicide, and the evolving treatments available through modern medicine. Includes a particular focus on suicide by adolescents and young adults.

No One Saw My Pain: Why Teens Kill Themselves. Andrew Slaby and Lili Frank Garfinkle, W.W. Norton and Company, 1995.

This book looks at many examples of adolescent suicide and explores the complex factors that may contribute to it.

The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression. Andrew Solomon, Scribner, 2001.

Winner of the National Book award, this book shares the author's story of chronic depression, and places depression in a broader social context.

November of the Soul: The Enigma of Suicide. George Howe Colt, Scribner 2006.

From National Book Award Finalist George Howe Colt comes this comprehensive, 500+ page scholarly exploration of suicide. Based on in-depth reporting and case studies, and extensively footnoted, the book considers suicide from cultural, historical, biological, and psychological perspectives. (This book is recommended for survivors who are further along in their grief. Newly-bereaved survivors may find it overwhelming.)

Understanding Depression: What We Know and What You Can Do About It. J. Raymond DePaulo Jr., M.D., John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002.

The Psychiatrist-in-Chief of John Hopkins Hospital presents a comprehensive, user-friendly guide to depression, including the latest research in brain chemistry, psychology, and pharmacology.

Inspiration

A Long-Shadowed Grief: Suicide and its Aftermath. Harold Ivan Smith, Cowley Publications 2006.

Written from a Christian perspective, this book by a former funeral director who survived his cousin's suicide explores the aftermath of suicide through the lenses of spirituality and theology.

Finding Your Way After the Suicide of Someone You Love. David B. Biebel, D.Min., & Suzanne L. Foster, M.A., Zondervan, 2005.

Co-authored by a survivor and a minister, this book looks at the experience of suicide bereavement from a Christian perspective.

From the Ashes Flies the Phoenix: Creating a Powerful Life After a Suicide. Gretta Krane, Inspiring Enterprises, 2006.

The survivor of her husband's suicide, Krane shares her journey with the hope that it will inspire others to find self-discovery, growth, and hope in the aftermath of suicide loss.

Take the Dimness of My Soul Away: Healing After a Loved One's Suicide. William A. Ritter, Morehouse Publishing, 2004.

Reverend Ritter shares a moving collection of his sermons and notes following his son's death by suicide. Throughout this God-centered journey, Ritter's poignant words explore how spiritual healing is possible after the loss of a loved one to suicide.

