







How survivors contact us

- National helpline available 12 hours a day, Monday to Friday. 7667 calls were received during 2018
- Support is offered through an email service. approximately 2000 emails answered during 2018
- Many people find our website when they search the internet. 165,965 visitors in 2018
- Local groups have their own contact number which allows direct contact for those seeking support. Some groups also offer support through other means such as emails and Facebook.
On average each group takes 10 calls per month 60 groups equates to 7,200 calls per year in addition to the national helpline.

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Why we exist

- Each year in the UK more than 6,000 people take their own life. Each suicide has a devastating and lasting impact on their families, friends and communities.
- Faced with a sudden often unexpected and sometimes violent death, the bereaved experience complex grief which typically include strong feeling of guilt, self-reproach and questioning (why?).
- Discomfort, shame and stigma associated with suicide can make it difficult to talk about. There may be further complexities not common to normal bereavements e.g. inquests, media coverage, trauma reactions and difficult family relationships.

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RE: Why we exist

- Those bereaved by suicide often feel isolated at a time when they are hurting, suffering mental anguish and are vulnerable themselves to thoughts of suicide.
- Even those fortunate enough to have strong support networks can still feel alone, unable to share their true feelings for fear of their impact on others.
- Hundreds of thousands of people in the UK have been deeply affected by suicide. The emotional quality of life and financial impacts are long lasting and wide reaching.
- This is a major public health issue and our Charity strives to improve public awareness.

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Why self-help support groups

- Something that helps many survivors is being able to listen and talk to those that have been bereaved in a similar way.
- Our user led Support groups are currently run on a monthly basis and groups are open to anyone aged 18 plus.
- Group leaders and facilitators are survivors of suicide bereavement themselves.
- we provide a safe environment where survivors can express their feelings and experiences as well as seeking support from others.
- There are currently 57 groups nationwide with new groups pending.

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How suicide bereavement is different

Bereavement by suicide shares many characteristics with other forms of bereavement, however, it also has some unique features. Understanding how and why it differs is helpful when you are supporting people who have been bereaved.

There is no single or correct way to experience bereavement but there are many common reactions and factors in bereavements by suicide.

Aspects that make it different can include – circumstances of the loss, emotional and physical reactions, post traumatic stress, the questions of why and what could I have done, stigma and isolation, relationship tensions, other prejudices, lack of privacy, investigations, practical concerns.

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“Suicide changes your life forever”

“Life will never be normal, you have to look for a new normal”

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Circumstances of the loss

A death by suicide is usually sudden, often unexpected and maybe violent. This increases the degree of shock and trauma experienced compared to many other types of bereavement. Survivors struggle to make sense of what has happened and fundamental beliefs may be challenged.

Emotional and physical Reactions

Emotional reactions are often complex, they may experience a bewildering range of feelings including guilt, anger, shame, rejection, sadness and fear. People who have been bereaved by suicide may become vulnerable to thoughts of suicide themselves.

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Post Traumatic Stress

If the person witnessed the death or found the body they may suffer from flashbacks or nightmares. Even if the person did not see the incident, they may not be able to stop imagining what happened and imagination may be worse than the reality. Those bereaved by suicide may have symptoms of post traumatic stress.

Survivors Questions

Most people bereaved by suicide are haunted by two questions – why did the person take their life and could I have somehow prevented it. These are impossible questions to answer and can lead to the survivor experiencing low self esteem, loss of confidence.

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Stigma and Isolation

Death by suicide, even more than other types of bereavement, make many people uncomfortable and unsure how to react. There is still a stigma attached to suicide. This can prevent people from seeking help and others from offering support. Survivors find they feel isolated as others avoid them. The bereaved themselves avoid contact as they themselves are fearful of what they are experiencing and worry about how to answer questions connected to the suicide.

Practical Concerns

There are practical concerns such as finances, funerals, returning home and returning to work which the bereaved will need to face.

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Family and community tensions

Sometimes families struggle to communicate as they are worried about causing more pain or having a different view to others. Some people cope with their pain by blaming another person for the death. This can lead to huge rifts and a huge sense of hurt and isolation being added to the death.

Other Prejudices

There may be other factors which create additional stigma. These can include the death happening whilst in custody or the sexuality of the person who died.

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Lack of privacy

When someone dies by suicide it can be difficult to maintain privacy. There may be emergency services at the scene and visits from police. There may be media attention at the time of death and following the inquest. The inquest is held in a public court and anyone can attend.

Investigations

The investigations by the coroner is a source of considerable concern for those bereaved by suicide. The process can be lengthy, the proceedings are unfamiliar and the language is legal and technical. In addition investigations may reveal information about the bereaved person which was unknown to their family and friends.

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The way forward

At first, and perhaps for some time after the death, survivors cannot think about the way forward because all their efforts go into surviving the event and dealing with the many practical problems it brings. Losing someone dear takes a long time to come to terms with but bereavement by suicide is known to involve a particularly difficult time of grieving.

People may expect survivors to recover within months but the truth is that those who have lost someone to suicide rarely recover completely, rather they adapt to a changed life. For some people the second year may be worse than the first and the third may also not be much better. With the support from our charity Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide those who have lost a loved one to suicide do find a way to live a new life.

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Contact Details

National Head Office: 0115 944 1117

National Helpline: 0300 111 5065 (9am-9pm)

Email support: email.support@uksobs.org

Email: Head Office: admin@uksobs.org

Website: www.uksobs.org

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