

## HELPING YOURSELF FOLLOWING A SUICIDE

- As soon as you can, start dealing with the facts of the suicide. The longer they are avoided or denied, the harder the recovery will be. Get the Facts straight: it will relieve your doubts and let you face the truth. It is important to be honest with yourself and face the fact that the death was a suicide.
- Don't be afraid to say the word suicide. It may take time, but keep trying.
- It may be helpful to make reference to the suicide at the funeral.
- Don't assume that everyone is blaming you or thinking ill thoughts of you. They undoubtedly feel your pain and grief, but are uncomfortable about what to say and how to say it.
- Be prepared for seemingly cruel and thoughtless words from relatives and friends. They are experiencing their own anger, pain and frustration and may not vent their feelings and suggestions for coping.
- Read recommended literature on suicide and grief. The readings will offer understanding and suggestions for coping.
- Put a picture of the deceased on an empty chair. Verbalize all your feelings about the suicide, about the good memories you have, or about your guilt feelings. Articulating these confused thoughts and feelings will help to end unfinished business.
- You may want to forget about the suicide and not talk about it. Studies show this is the least effective and usually the most damaging approach to dealing with your feelings and questions. You need to express them so they can be faced and dealt with.
- It is best to be honest with your friends about suicide. If you're not, you'll always wonder if, and how much, they know. It'll become harder to confide in them and isolation and loneliness may follow.
- Don't become discouraged that you are alone in your grief. Sometimes it is helpful to contact another survivor of a suicide. Support groups bring together people who have lived through what you are experiencing.

- Work on guilt. Something beyond your control has happened. Blaming yourself for the actions of another is illogical and dangerously self-damaging.
- If there is a suicide note, discuss, as a family, what should be done with it. If you all agree it will only cause more pain, have a private burning and commit its contents to the Universe.
- Keep remembering that usually a suicide victim didn't want to die, but his/her problems became too overwhelming and in the confusion gave way to suicide.