

SUICIDE: A LETTER TO PARENTS WHOSE CHILD HAS TAKEN THEIR LIFE

Dear Parent,

My daughter, Lynn, killed herself in 1979. I have been where you are now. I know how badly it hurts. I know that you feel the most terrible aloneness of your life. It is normal for you to feel desperately unhappy, angry, guilty, frightened, and out of control. You wouldn't feel this terrible if you hadn't loved your child so much.

Most people, who take their own lives suffered from depression – usually unrecognized and undiagnosed. People who suffer from deep depression have an illness. Chemicals are out of balance in their brains, which regulate how they think, feel, and behave. No amount of love and caring, or trying to build up their self-esteem could have altered their misperception that their situation was hopeless.

Please don't let anyone tell you how you should feel. People will say that the death of a child by suicide is the 'worst' thing that can happen, that you will 'never' get over it. Don't believe them; these are the voices of the taboo and stigma on suicide. This is part of the extra burden you will have as a suicide survivor. Others don't hear gasps of shock as we do when we tell how our child died. Others don't hear gross jokes and ridicule about the manner of their child's death. That's extra for us.

You may feel bewildered and stunned; go over and over the events leading up to the death; feeling that somehow – if you had done one last thing – you might have saved your child; you may be fearful and anxious about yourself and the rest of your family. These things, and more, are normal reactions after a suicide death.

You will survive the suicide death of your child because you have to ~ but ~ you have the choice about how you will survive. You have gotten through the days since your child died, the worst that can happen already has happened. It can't get any worse. You have been through the worst, and you have survived.

The next several months will gradually get easier, but it probably won't feel that way day by day. It will be up and down. It helps to look back over a week or month and compare. Recognize your small victories. Death leaves a scar that we always have, and we will feel pain from it throughout our lives, but the intense pain you feel now will gradually get better; the pain won't be there forever. Ultimately for suicide survivors, it is not so much 'how' our children died, as that they 'did' die.

Keep in mind that you are a good person, and you deserve to be happy again. You are going to be alright, but it will not be easy, especially at first. I still miss Lynn, but I know she went as far as she could, and that she would have stayed with us if she could have. Some people, like your child and my Lynn, have to leave before the play is over. Be good to yourself.

- Adina Wrobleski

This letter is reproduced from the book: Dear Parents – Letters to Bereaved Parents, published by the Centering Corporation, P.O. Box 3367, Omaha, N.E. 68103-0367 Adina Wrobleski is a professional speaker who specializes in public education about suicide and suicide grief.