

# Here are our top tips for healing as a family after a death by suicide.



**Use clear and concrete language**, such as “dead” and “died.” Avoid phrases such as “passed away” or “she is gone.”



**Share age-appropriate details with your children**, so they understand what they hear.



**Respect each person's way of grieving**. This allows for honest expression and healing.



Gather for a **ceremony in memory of the person who died**. This gives an opportunity for friends and family to heal by mourning together.



**Model healthy grieving** by sharing how you feel with your child and invite your child to share their feelings with you.



**Support from family and friends** can positively impact you and your child's grief experience.

## Take CARE as you heal

**C**are for your body with healthy food, water and movement like stretching or walks outdoors.

**A**ccept support in the ways you find most helpful.

**R**est often and keep normal routines as much as possible.

**E**xpress your emotions with others as they arise.



**Jessica's House** offers free peer support groups for children, teens, young adults and their adult caregivers grieving a death. Each group combines therapeutic talk, play and creative expression to promote healing and hope for the future.

*For additional support and resources:*

[jessicashouse.org](http://jessicashouse.org)

[info@jessicashouse.org](mailto:info@jessicashouse.org)

or we welcome your call at **(209) 250-5395**

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## Healing as a Family after a death by suicide



**Jessica's  
House**

Grief Support for Children, Teens,  
Young Adults and Their Families

**The death of your loved one by suicide can leave you feeling overwhelmed, isolated and alone.** You are now left as a survivor, mourning a complicated loss alongside supporting your family. You may wonder if you have the energy to rebuild your life. This guide provides ways to help you move toward your healing.

### Talking to your children about the death

You may find it difficult to know what to say to your children following a death by suicide, but it's important to be honest about how your loved one died. When your child hears the truth from their trusted adult, it helps them begin their healing process. When telling your child about the death, you can:

- Reassure them that nothing they did or said caused their person to die.
- Explain in simple terms that just like bodies, sometimes brains get sick.
- Provide age-appropriate information like, *"I have sad news. Daddy died last night. He made his own body stop working with a gun. This is called suicide."* Simple explanations prevent your child from filling in the blanks with their imagination.
- Children may ask questions they are ready to hear answered. Their questions can guide you in how much to tell them. Be honest if you don't know the answer, and continue to provide reassurance that they can come to you anytime with their thoughts or questions.



### It's not your fault

You might wonder if you could have done something to prevent your loved one's death. A suicide death often results from a person living with an illness that affected their brain, and nothing you said or did caused their death.

### Everyone grieves differently

Each person's way of mourning is as unique as their fingerprint. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. One person may want to talk about the death while another is naturally quieter. Respecting each other's way of grieving allows for honest expression and healing.

### Memorial services

When a person dies by suicide, how they died might overshadow how they lived. A ceremony helps put the focus on the life the person lived. Memorial services help you carry your loss with a community that supports you.

### Physical, emotional and mental health

Loss takes a toll on your physical, emotional and mental health. You may notice that your thoughts feel muddled and that it is difficult to make decisions.

Your energy level and capacity for family and friends may be low. When you feel tired, rest.

Eat healthy meals, drink water and walk outdoors to help you to your next moment. Breathe. Don't expect to have the strength to do the daily activities you once did. You are experiencing a profound time of loss, and you are surviving.

### How do we heal as a family?

Remember that grief is a process, and you won't always feel like you do now. Create routines in your home to foster predictability for your child. Consistency with mealtimes, before and after school routines, bedtimes and chores will help foster stability.



### Loss as a spiritual wound

If faith is part of your life, losing your loved one to suicide may feel like a wound to your soul. Your physical bonds with them have been severed, and you may question your belief structure. Anger at God or "why" questions are expected in the grief process. You may wonder where God was when they died or why your prayers for their safety weren't answered. Or you may find your faith stronger than ever and lean into your beliefs in deeper and more meaningful ways. Even if you believe you will see your loved one again someday, it is still vital for your healing to honor and express your grief.

### Finding support

Extended family and friends may bring comfort and support during this time. Accepting support and surrounding yourself with those who are good listeners and help in practical ways can bring relief. Connecting with others going through a similar loss through support groups like the Hope after Suicide Group at Jessica's House can help you move toward your healing.