



Suicide Is Not The Only Answer

Suicides are growing in our country, especially among young people and senior men. While it is important to know the signs when someone is considering suicide it is equally important to understand what we all need when we experience a trauma and loss so we can heal and find new purpose in our lives. Then suicide does not become the only option.

Trauma and loss can bring with it a deep sense of despair and hopelessness for which suicide can seem to be the only solution. Each of us can help those we love and serve when they experience trauma and loss by supporting their grieving and healing process. To support ourselves and others who are grieving a loss we need to understand the grieving process and provide consistent and ongoing support often for several years. This being there for the “long haul” is vital for both ours and others healing.

We offer these recommendations to understand and support ourselves and others who are experiencing a trauma and loss while they navigate the process of grieving and healing so that suicide does not seem to be the only viable path to take.

- 1) Learn about the components of trauma and loss. We use this definition of loss:
“A separations from a significant person, place, item or event”
There are several types of trauma which will have a different impact on each person.
- 2) Know the various stages (Kubler-Ross) and styles (Doka and Martin) of grieving so that you will understand each person needs and behavior in relation to their grief process.
- 3) Understand that anger is both a normal grief stage and a secondary emotion so that you can help yourself or others understand the primary emotions and safe ways to express anger.
- 4) Learn the difference between “deep sadness” and clinical depression. Sadness does not need medication. It will never go away but does not have to dominate a person’s life.
- 5) Realize that the grief process takes a long time, often many years before healing occurs. This allows for the development of realistic expectations for yourself and other. Dictating timelines and behaviors only prolongs the process.
- 6) Offer compassion, understanding and companionship. When we are grieving isolation becomes detrimental to our healing. We all need people and activities to help us heal and find a “new normal” which brings with it meaning and purpose.
- 7) Support joyful interactions and valued memories. They are part of the healing process.

Suicide does not need to be the only option when love, understanding, knowledge, consistent, appropriate support and companionship prevail from the beginning of the trauma and loss.