



# When a Friend Has Died of Suicide

*Helping Teens Cope with Loss*

## **Could I have done something to stop it?**

It is natural to wonder if there is something you could have done to prevent your friend's tragedy. No one can truly know what another person is thinking, but it is common to look back after the death and find things that may have been warning signs. It is much harder to predict beforehand. What you can do is to continue to support all of your friends in tough times and make sure to share any concerns you have with a teacher, counselor, or parent.

## **I feel guilty about what happened.**

Sometimes teens have a feeling of guilt even though they know they did nothing wrong. If that is how you feel, it will help if you can find someone you trust who will really listen and hear what you have to say. Then say all these things that are troubling you it will help to unburden yourself of these heavy thoughts. As you recite these things, you will begin to realize that most of them are simply regrets--nothing to be guilty about at all. Finally, you might write a letter to your friend, telling them how you feel and then sharing it with their family, holding on to it, or destroying it.

## **Who's fault is it?**

As our brains search for answers, it is common to try to find blame for such a tragic death. But suicide is complicated and not caused by a single event such as a bad grade, an argument with parents or the breakup of a relationship. Often there are underlying mental disorders and other factors that get in the way of the person thinking clearly. Even if the person left a note that blames others, there is always more to the story. If you find yourself angry or irritable, try to unload the anger by talking and spending time with friends instead of taking it out on yourself or others.

## **I can't stop thinking about how it happened.**

Sometimes it is hard to stop thinking about the way it happened. A lot of teens who have lost a friend to suicide say that they can't help thinking about how their friend died, with gruesome images repeating in their minds. If you are tormented by such thoughts, it might be that your imagination is depicting a scene far worse than what really happened. Rumors among classmates and friends sometimes get badly distorted. In any case, these images should fade in a few weeks. If they don't, you should talk to your parent and/or a counselor who can help you address them.

## **Is it okay to be angry at him/her?**

If you are feeling mad at your friend, you should know that this doesn't diminish your love or care for them. Anger is a normal response to a rash decision that causes such pain and suffering to people. Suicide always causes a ripple effect of sadness and loss that goes far beyond the close circle of family and friends.

## **Can I talk to the family?**

You might want to reach out to your friend's family after this difficult loss. Before you call or stop by their house, talk to your parent or counselor about what is appropriate. Many families want privacy for a while after such a difficult event. The school staff will also stay in contact with the family about opportunities for students to visit or help out somehow. Supportive activities like making food for the family or sending cards are usually a great way to show your concern without being too intrusive.

### **What if I need to talk more about this?**

If you continue to be troubled by your loss, keep talking. Talk to your friends, talk to a parent, a school counselor, or anyone you trust. There are other supports that you can access such as grief groups and individual counseling that can help you work through your lasting feelings about the suicide. Needing to talk does not mean there is something wrong with you. When you experience a sudden loss, it can bring up other emotional issues in your life. Don't be afraid to ask for help to deal with your feelings. You can also use crisis hotlines that are open 24 hours a day.

### **I'm concerned about someone else.**

If you are worried about how someone else is reacting to this event, be a good friend and get help for them. Sometimes teens identify so much with the person that died, they even talk about wanting to do the same thing. If you hear these or other concerning comments or if you are worried about the emotional state of someone, share this with a trusted adult.

### **What can I do to help prevent suicide?**

There are many ways to get involved in suicide prevention. This might include joining a leadership group or club, getting trained on how to help potentially suicidal peers, or participating in social media campaigns. More than anything, you can just care about others, be a good friend, and take care of your own emotional wellness.



[www.coloradocrisisservices.org](http://www.coloradocrisisservices.org)

#### **24 Hour Crisis Hotline**

1-844-493-8255 or Text "TALK" to 38255

#### **24 Hour Walk-in Center**

6509 S. Santa Fe Drive, Littleton, CO 80120