

# Recovery

Suicide has a powerful and destructive impact on people, families and organizations.

After a suicide, there are many unanswered questions. People hurt for months, sometimes years. For some, the loss will start a lifelong search for an answer to the question, "Why?" Worst of all, suicide shakes the confidence and security of those who loved the person the most and, in some cases, it becomes a model for their own self-destruction in the future.

## **Possible reactions to the suicide of a family member, friend or colleague:**

- Shock
- Denial
- Numbness
- Grief
- Depression
- Feelings of loss
- Feelings of responsibility
- Anger
- Resentment
- Withdrawal from others
- Mistrustfulness
- Overprotectiveness of others
- Blaming the person or others
- Rejection of the person
- Embarrassment
- Shame
- Isolation and vulnerability
- Guilt

## Helping Family, Friends and Colleagues

- Early intervention makes a difference.
- Express your sympathy for their loss.
- Encourage people to talk, and listen to them.
- Expect repetition. It is part of the healing process.

- Offer emotional support and encourage people to accept their feelings.
- Let people know that they're not alone.
- Offer practical help (e.g., child care, cleaning, cooking).
- Don't tell people that they should be "over it" by now.
- Express concern if someone starts abusing substances.
- Don't make moral judgments. Remain objective.
- Encourage positive and negative memories.
- Discourage people from taking on new responsibilities until they are feeling better.
- Don't rush grief or remind people of their other blessings.
- Invite people for visits or social events when they are feeling a little better.
- Encourage counseling or support groups, and read about grief processes.

## If You Tried to Help

If you were unable to prevent a suicide:

- Keep in mind that the deceased person bears the ultimate responsibility. That person made the choice of death over life, as unfortunate as the choice was.
- Talk to someone (a colleague, friend, family member).
- Let your family know you've suffered a loss and are grieving.
- Don't make life choices when you are stressed (e.g., leaving your job).
- Ask yourself if there are any lessons to be learned from the experience.