

In Memory of all of Those who have Died by Suicide

We are saddened to hear about the death of Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain. We wish their family and friends, as well as their fans, much strength, wellness, and support during this time. Death by suicide is indiscriminating. Losing someone to suicide is an overwhelming and complex experience. Different from many other types of deaths, suicide leaves us questioning what caused our loved one to take one's life. As we try to answer this question, we cannot help but to internalize the blame, feeling guilty, and thinking about what we could have done differently. This guilt usually comes in the form of "what ifs" or "if only." Unfortunately, this is a part of the suicide grief experience to many individuals; it was definitely part of my suicide grief and of the many Survivors of Suicide whom I work with, so here are some things that may help.

1. Whenever you find yourself thinking about what you believe you could have done differently had you known then what you know now, remember that you did not have this information then, and that you can only act upon what you know at the time you know it and not a second before (Erik Erickson).
2. If you find your mind listing things you believe you could have done differently or did not do, make sure to also list the things that you did do.
3. When negative memories come to mind, and you find yourself fixating over the days leading to the suicide, redirect your mind to positive memories you've shared with that person. This will help create a mental balance.
4. Know that you are not alone. In the US there are about 270,000 people surviving the suicide of a loved one. Find a group for Survivors of Suicide Loss near you. Here are some resources where you can find support: American Foundation of Suicide Prevention (www.AFSP.org); American Association of Suicidology (www.Suicidology.org); or Florida Initiative for Suicide Prevention (www.FISPOne.com)
5. You do not have to face this challenging and drastic change in your life alone; find a therapist you can speak with to help guide you through this journey.
6. Losing someone we love hurt, and it hurts because we love.

If you are a friend or family member of someone surviving the suicide of a loved one, here are a few things you can do to help:

1. At this point, those who are grieving are essentially surviving each day. They are not thinking about what they need. So instead of asking what they need from you, think about what are the essentials, like food and cleaning, that you can provide to them.
2. If you are not sure what to say, that's okay, you can say nothing at all. Just be there for them.
3. Do not be afraid to say the name of the person who died. Saying the person's name will remind us of the fact that he/she lived.

I hope the information above is helpful. Here are a few books I recommend to help you through this journey:

- After Suicide Loss: Coping with Your Grief by Bob Baugher and Jack Jordan
- Grieving a Suicide: A Loved One's Search for Comfort, Answers, and Hope By Albert Y. Hsu
- Turned Upside Down by Tiana Tache (book to help children through their grief, not specific to suicide)

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at patricia@advocate2create.com or reach out to us by going to www.advocate2create.com.

