

WHEN A LOVED ONE IS LOST TO SUICIDE

RESOURCES

ONLINE

For more information, or to obtain additional help, please refer to the resources below.

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
afsp.org
- Bereaved Parents of the USA
bereavedparentsusa.org
- Ganley Foundation
ganleyfoundation.org
- The Gift of Keith
thegiftofkeith.org
- Friends for Survival, Inc.
friendsforsurvival.org
- LOSS Program
catholiccharities.net/loss

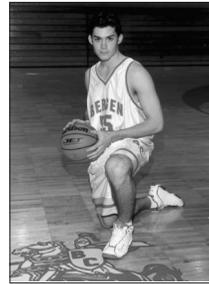
NATIONAL HOTLINES

Help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling:

- Suicide Prevention Hotline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Psychiatric Emergency Response Network
1-866-FOR-PERN (367-7376)
- Kristen Brooks Hope Center
1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

OUR MISSION

The Ganley Foundation was created in memory of our son Jimmy who died by suicide due to undiagnosed depression. The Ganley Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, educates communities about depression and challenges the stigmas that prevent proper intervention and treatment. The **Crusade for Awareness** was created to promote mental health by educating youth and their parents about the signs of depression. Through education, young people will be able to recognize the signs of depression in themselves and their peers. Our vision is to save lives through mental health awareness.



We appreciate you joining us on our **Crusade for Awareness**. Our organization could not continue its mission without the support of the community it serves.

**In memory of our beloved son,
Jim and Ann Ganley**

For additional copies of this pamphlet, or to make a donation, please visit ganleyfoundation.org

Disclaimer:

The information in this brochure is provided by the Ganley Foundation for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical care. If needed, please seek assistance from a qualified healthcare practitioner.

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INTRODUCTION

The loss of a loved one is always difficult. However, when a loved one dies by suicide, it may feel even more challenging to receive the support one deserves. Surviving the suicide of a loved one is an unfathomable challenge. Normal feelings following a suicide may include shock, guilt, anger, sadness, fear, and shame. Many people become affected and need time to express feelings and lend support to each other. Survivors may feel a need to talk about the details of the suicide, find reasons for the death, and explore complex feelings about the loss. Issues of faith or personal beliefs are commonly challenged during such times of grief. While the process of healing is unique to each individual, finding appropriate support is of utmost importance at this time.

In the United States...

- Approximately 92 people die by suicide each day.
- Approximately 12 youth under the age of 25 die by suicide each day.
- For college students, suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death.
- For high school students, suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death.
- Over 90% of those who die by suicide have a mental illness at time of death, oftentimes undiagnosed or untreated.
- Depression is the leading cause of suicide.
- An estimated 26% of individuals ages 18 and older suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year.



GAIN SUPPORT

What do I do if I have lost a loved one to suicide?

People are here to support you in this unfathomable loss. Make sure to gain support from one or all of the many support systems available to you:

- Talk to supportive family members and close friends. Finding a support group for survivors, a spiritual counselor, or a therapist for yourself are also helpful options. Ask your funeral home, faith-community, local hospital, or community center what support services exist in your area.
- You have the right to judge what support systems are right for you. What one person finds helpful may not be for someone else.
- Everyone mourns in their own way, but every mourner must prioritize taking care of his/her own health.
- Holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays may be especially difficult. Unexpected periods of sadness may occur as well.
- The loss may feel even greater after a few months, or even years, when everyone else has gone back to their normal activities. Grief is not an orderly process. There will be many ups and downs.
- Education can increase awareness about suicide and help in the healing process.
- Continue to give yourself time to grieve. Persevere in looking for the support you need.
- No one can replace your lost loved one. When you begin to heal, you will begin to enjoy your life again.



SUPPORT OTHERS

What do I do if someone I know has lost a loved one to suicide?

Knowing how to support a friend, family member, or acquaintance in their loss can be intimidating, especially when dealing with a death by suicide. The following tips may help you provide support:

- Just as with any loss, it is helpful to acknowledge the extent of their loss and that no one can replace that person.
- Do not be afraid to use the name of the deceased person. They are not forgotten and it can be helpful to talk about them.
- Everyone grieves differently and grief is often a complex process. Remember that it is not helpful to tell them how they should feel or what they should do.
- Extend your support; listen to the mourner, accept where they are in the grieving process, talk about the loss, offer seeds of hope, write letters of support, and remember special days like birthdays or anniversaries.
- Know that some people hold stigmas about suicide because they do not understand it. Judgments passed out of ignorance may cause those left behind to feel further isolated.
- Educate yourself about suicide. Share this awareness with others.
- It may be difficult for the grieving person to identify what they need. Keep reaching out, even if help is refused.

How do I talk to a child about suicide?

When a person known to a child dies by suicide, it is helpful to provide honest information. Sharing grief allows children to both learn and talk about their feelings:

- Allow the child to lead the conversation. Use their words and simple language.
- Ask if they have any questions or feelings to share. This is a key moment to teach the importance of not keeping secrets and getting help.



- State the facts without providing detailed or graphic information. Explain to younger children that death means that the person is no longer alive because their body has stopped working. Draw on the child's life experiences, like the death of a pet or a previous loved one.
- Share spiritual views on heaven or the afterlife.
- Explain that the person died by suicide and that most who die this way had an illness of the brain called "depression", which causes a person to feel a lot of mental and emotional pain.
- Explain that it is not a person's fault if they have a mental illness. Sometimes people do not realize that they have an illness or that effective treatment can help them.
- Validate their feelings by sharing some of your own sadness or confusion. Children often watch our responses to measure and judge their own.
- Children may have delayed reactions to great loss. Explain that loss feels different to each person and that their emotions are normal. Loss is hard, but it will get better with time.
- Let them know they have you and other trusted adults (help the child name them) if they want to talk more or feel very sad.
- Notice how they respond to daily situations and continue to extend your support. If this death is a significant loss and/or they had traumatic experiences around this death, they may benefit from therapy.