



Nova Scotia Survivors of Suicide Loss Guide



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Dear Friend or Family,

You have received the very tragic news that your loved one has died by suicide. Right now, you probably feel very much alone with this tragedy. Please know that you are not alone; there are many of us out here who have, and still are, surviving the loss of a loved one to suicide. We hope that this guide will help you access information and resources that were not available to us when we experienced our loss.

A suicide death is not like any other, such as a death by accident or serious illness. A death by those causes, though still very tragic, can often be explained and understood; not so a suicide death. Those who are coping with the loss of a loved one by suicide experience a very complicated form of loss and grieving.

In this guide, you will find information that will assist you in accessing the supports and resources available to you now and in the future, as you go through the process of dealing with this loss. Also, remember your own support system. Friends, family, and other survivors can be helpful sources of comfort and support. Give yourself permission to do what feels right for you and whatever meets your needs. Rest when you need to, take time off from work, cry if it helps, and grieve for your loved one. We hope you will feel some peace and comfort in knowing that others care.

Sincerely,

Lorraine, surviving the loss of my son

Please keep in mind that this is not a suicide intervention guide. If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, please call 911 or the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team at 902-429-8167 or toll-free at 1-888-429-8167.

Please see the remainder of this guide for more resources.

Nova Scotia Survivors of Suicide Loss Package

1) Hope and Healing in Nova Scotia: An Emotional & Practical Guide for Survivors of Suicide Loss - A guide book dealing with the practical matters after a suicide loss, including information on the healing process and coping skills.

2) Survivors of Suicide Loss: A Resource Guide for Nova Scotia - A comprehensive list of supports/resources available to survivors of suicide loss in Nova Scotia.

This package of information is made available through Communities Addressing Suicide Together (CAST) of the Canadian Mental Health Association Nova Scotia Division. It is a creation of the Nova Scotia Suicide Postvention Subcommittee of CAST.

For further information or additional copies, contact:

Communities Addressing Suicide Together

Canadian Mental Health Association Nova Scotia Division
45 Alderney Drive Suite 200,
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B2Y 2N6

E dawn@novascotia.cmha.ca or aaron@novascotia.cmha.ca

T (902) 466 6600 Toll-Free 1-877-466-6606



Hope and Healing in Nova Scotia

An Emotional and Practical Guide for Survivors of Suicide Loss



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Hope and Healing in Nova Scotia - A practical guide for survivors of suicide loss

This is a practical guide to help you through the first few moments... then the first few hours... then the first few days then... the first few years...after the suicide of someone you love.

This guide was written to help you through the death by suicide of your loved one. It contains both practical and personal information that we hope will help you through your grief.

Different parts of this resource may be of help to you at different times. Immediately after a death by suicide, there are many practical matters that families will need to attend to, as well as questions they will face about what to do and the emotions that they are experiencing. This resource starts with addressing these immediate matters.

Read the more personal information on suicide grief in the guide when you are ready. Understanding and exploring your own thoughts and feelings might feel scary, but it is an important and necessary part of healing. You are the only one who will know when you are ready. As you read this, you may not even be aware that the process of healing has begun. The fact that you are reading this booklet and looking for resources speaks volumes. And always remember, it is never your fault that someone else has ended their life.

Those who have lost someone close to them or a loved one to suicide are often referred to as 'survivors of suicide loss.' We feel 'survivor' is an appropriate term because it showcases the strength and courage that such an experience demands. Throughout this guide, we will use 'survivors of suicide loss' and 'survivors' interchangeably.

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When Someone You Love Dies by Suicide

Although everyone's experience is unique, people who have thoughts of suicide are typically suffering tremendous emotional pain and often have overwhelming feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and despair. When people have thoughts of suicide, they often feel disconnected from others and the world around them. As surprising as it can be, a person can feel alone and hopeless even when surrounded by people who love and support them.

Many factors and circumstances can contribute to someone ending their life. Factors such as loss, addictions, trauma, depression, physical and mental illness, and major life changes can make some people feel overwhelmed and unable to cope. It is important to remember that it is how a person experiences or perceives an event that is important, not necessarily the event itself. What might seem small and unimportant to someone may seem large and unbearable to someone else.

The fact that someone died by suicide does not change our love for them, what they meant to us, their value, the contribution they made, and our right to celebrate and honour their lives. When someone dies by suicide, it does not mean that they did not love or value us. How a person dies does not have to define their life, us, or our relationship with them.

Historian Arnold Toynbee once wrote, "There are always two parties to a death: the person who dies and the survivors who are bereaved." Unfortunately, many survivors of suicide loss suffer alone and in silence. The silence that surrounds them often complicates healing, which typically comes from being encouraged to mourn. Because of the social stigma surrounding suicide, survivors feel the pain of the loss, yet may not know how, where, or if, they should express it (Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D.).

If you are new to the tragedy of a suicide, despair may be your companion. We hope you find some time to rest your burden and eventually share your grief with those of us who do not need any explanation. **You are not alone.**

What Helps in the Short Term

Any death is a painful experience, regardless of the circumstances and whether it was expected or unexpected. People respond to traumatic events in their own way, according to their individual coping skills, past experiences and supports.

Know What to Expect: Common Reactions to a Suicide Death

Grief associated with a death by suicide can be complicated, and also very different to what people experience following death by other causes.

Below are some common feelings you might experience immediately after a suicide, and further on down the road. These feelings are completely normal, given the circumstances, but it is important to remember that how you are feeling at the moment is going to change. Remember: you will begin to heal and you are not alone. There are people who want to listen and help. You only have to ask.

Also keep in mind that no two people will ever grieve exactly the same. Some people may experience all of the following reactions, or perhaps just a few of them, and in very different orders. There is no right or wrong way to mourn the loss of your loved one.

Shock and numbness

Suicide bereavement is one of the most intensely painful experiences you are likely to undergo. Initially, the pain may be so overwhelming that some of your emotions may turn off. You may feel like you are sitting in the audience watching a play about your own life, but not really taking part in it yourself. You may need time before you feel ready to examine what has happened, how it has affected you, what it means, and what you need in order to begin healing. Emotional numbness protects you from what has just happened, but at some point the numbness leaves and you will need to gradually experience the pain.

Denial

You may not fully accept the reality of the suicide. You may move in and out of denial. This is especially common in the initial phase of grief. However, just like numbness, denial will begin to fade and you will gradually (or perhaps rapidly) accept that your loved one has died.

Grief

Deep sadness or grief is a normal experience. During these times, it's important to remember that the death of someone precious is not to be resolved or fixed. Rather, it is to be expressed, experienced and eventually one may discover meaning through the grief and sorrow, a process that happens gently and over time. This does not mean there isn't peace, less pain, acceptance, accommodation, joy, and new meaning in our lives. We learn to live alongside our grief and to grow from it. Other common feelings associated with grief can include helplessness, hopelessness, failure, rejection and abandonment.

Depression

Sometimes, deep sadness or grief can turn into depression. Depression becomes an illness when the depressed feelings are continually severe (they don't wane or vary), last for a long period, and hinder one's work and social life. The feelings of deep sadness we all experience after a serious loss or disappointment may last for a short or an extensive period of time. How long depends on the person, the severity of the loss, and the support available to help the person to cope with it. It is important to pay attention to your emotions and healing process, and seek help if you feel you become stuck in your grief or if you may be developing an illness.

A suicide death is traumatic and can leave someone feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope. Sometimes, survivors think about suicide themselves. If you are having thoughts of suicide, please contact the Nova Scotia crisis line, mental health services, or someone who can help keep you safe. **Please read on for more resources**

Fear and anxiety

You may feel more anxiety or fear than you did before the death. This anxiety or fear may be free-floating (about anything and everything) or it may be about one specific thing. For example, you may fear or worry that other family members or friends might die.

Anger and blame

Anger and blame may be directed toward the person who died by suicide or toward those you perceive to be at fault. Anger and blame can even be directed specifically at oneself.

Guilt

Family and friends of those who died by suicide often feel they missed earlier warning signs of distress, or that they could have done more to help. Others may have decided to give up trying to help, or backed away because they themselves needed some distance in order to stay healthy. Hindsight almost always plays a role in our feeling guilty for what we think should or could have done, but this can be problematic. It is extremely important to remember that you are not responsible for the suicide of your loved one.

Shame

It may be difficult for you to discuss how someone died because you are afraid you will be judged. It is okay to simply let people know you are not ready to talk about the loss. Let family and friends know what you need from them. You will know when you are ready to talk about your loved one's death.

Relief

You may experience some feelings of relief after a suicide, especially when the relationship with the person who died was particularly difficult and/or you watched them suffer for a long period of time. This does not mean that you did not love that person, or that their death was not a tragedy.

"Why" questions

Asking "why" over and over in an effort to make sense of what has happened is a normal part of the healing process following a death by suicide. With suicide,

even when people think they have touched upon or know the "answer", the "why" question can continue to surface. We struggle to find answers in an effort to ease our pain, but there is seldom an answer to our asking "why" that provides the relief and comfort we seek. In fact, comfort often comes from other sources and sometimes in unexpected ways.

Spiritual or religious beliefs

Previously held spiritual beliefs and values may be challenged and you may begin to question the meaning and purpose of life. Or you might find that your religious or spiritual life may be deepened and renewed.

Changes in relationships

After a suicide, people may be very supportive and attentive to your needs. However, if people do not know what to say or do, they may say or do nothing at all. As a result, you may feel abandoned at a time when you need people the most. Some people may pull away completely, which only adds to the hurt. If you are comfortable doing so, show these people the '*How Others Can Help*' list on the next page.

Let Others Help You

The sense of confusion is so great that it can be very hard to cope at first, so let other people help you. No one should expect to do this alone. Look to your family, Elders, friends, place of worship, community and others for support. They can communicate with the people wanting information, help make some decisions, and remember what you need to know. Also, they can be there just to listen.

It can be difficult asking for help, but please do so. Coping with all of the feelings is much easier if you let other people help you and share the burden. Some people may not know how to support you and some may pull away, but even one compassionate, understanding and supportive person can make a big difference. It is important to find that person, and you may not have to look far. Support is all around you.

HOW OTHERS CAN HELP

Here are some suggestions as to what others can do to help you through your grief. You can show this list to others, or give them a copy.

- They can listen without judging you or your loved one's actions.
- They can accept the intensity of your grief and feelings, and not attempt to change what you think or feel.
- They can listen with their heart, express their feelings with compassion, cry with you or even just sit quietly with you.
- They can make direct offers to help you with practical/specifics tasks or chores, such as making meals, child care or looking after your pets.
- They can tolerate and accept your endless search for why.
- They should not assume or pretend to know your pain and should be open to learning and allowing you to teach them about your experience.
- They can make your loved one who died real by using their name, asking to see pictures, and asking questions about their life.
- They can offer and provide information when appropriate; knowing what supports are available in
 - your community.
- They can be mindful that you may be experiencing feelings of guilt and blame, and can remind you that this was not your fault.
- They can remind you that your feelings are valid and normal considering what has happened. They can go with you to make arrangements, helping you with decisions and taking notes.
- They can be sensitive to difficult days like the anniversary of your loved one's death, birthdays, and
 - holidays.
- They can respect your grieving process, and be patient and continue to offer help, even if you refuse it.
- They can be there because it makes you feel less alone, but understand that sometimes you want to
 - be alone.
- If they think you may be having thoughts of suicide, they need to ask you directly about it and get help immediately.

Telling Others: What to Say

You might find it hard to tell others how your loved one died. It is your choice how to talk about it. Acknowledging that a death was by suicide can be an important part of healing and reduce stigma; however, only you will know when that feels right for you. You may want to reach out and talk to a trusted person or professional, such as your Elder, doctor, spiritual advisor, mental health clinician, and/or another person who has gone through what you are going through now. They may help you figure out what words to use and how you want to talk about what has happened. There is no need to go into details of the passing, and it is okay to let people know what you can and cannot talk about. Employers, co-workers, schools, landlords, social groups and friends outside your community may need to be told of your loved one's passing. You can ask someone else to make these phone calls if you cannot do this yet.

Telling Children

When it comes to children, if possible, they should be told that the death was a suicide. While they do not need to know details, they should know how the person died. Children can often sense when they are being misinformed and this can create an atmosphere of mistrust, fear and loneliness. If they are not told the truth, eventually they may find out through someone else, which would be far more painful. When informing the child that the death was a suicide, try to make the explanation fit their age and keep it simple. For example, a younger child can be told, "he made himself die. He was so very sad and confused that he forgot he could get help" or simply "he ended his life."

Listen and Reassure

Children will be confused when they are told the death was a suicide. They may ask complicated questions to make sense of the news. They may say, "Didn't he love us?" or "Why was she so sad?"

Answer the questions that you can, with responses that feel right to you. Tell them that you do not have all of the answers and that is ok. Children tend to ask only what they need to know, and often you only need to answer what they ask

about. Encourage openness; for them to ask questions and talk about their feelings.

Children will need plenty of reassurance that the suicide was not their fault, that they are still loved. Emphasize that there are always other solutions to problems instead of suicide, and that help is always available to them; they just need to ask.

Seek Help

It may be too difficult to support children or reassure them when you are in the early stages of grieving. If this is the case, call on someone you trust or seek the help of a professional counsellor.

Show Your Grief

It is okay for children to see your anger, helplessness and confusion. This helps them understand that their own feelings are normal and okay. Check in with them to make sure they do not take on responsibility for your feelings. They need to know it is not their job to make things better for the family. Reassure them that you and others will still be able to take care of them, even if you are sad and grieving.

Emergency Response

The events and procedures that take place after a suicide can cause great anxiety for survivors. It lessens the distress if you know what will happen. Having supportive friends and family surround you will also help. Your mind may not be able to process all of the information you are given, so having someone who can take notes for you may be a good idea.

Response to the Emergency Call

When a 9-11 call is made regarding a suicide or attempted suicide, paramedics, law enforcement and possibly the fire department may respond. In some cases, paramedics may not enter the scene until law enforcement has ensured that the area is safe.

Emergency Health Services



The actions of the paramedics will differ with each emergency call. Once on scene, the paramedics will assess the person. Based on what they observe and the information provided to them, paramedics will decide whether to attempt resuscitation according to EHS guidelines. Paramedics may transport the person to the hospital if further care is required. If it is decided that nothing further can be done for them, resuscitation efforts may be stopped, death will be pronounced, and the person will not be transported by paramedics. Law enforcement or paramedics will notify the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner who will help to arrange transport of the body.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement will take control of the scene until the cause of death is determined. This is done for your protection and the safety of others. Law enforcement also collect identification, valuables and other items related to the investigation for safekeeping. Photographs may also be taken. The person who identified or reported the deceased may be asked to make a statement to the police. The same may be asked of those who found or spoke to the deceased. Law enforcement will attempt to notify the next of kin.

Victim Services

Law enforcement may request victim services (or you can request this) to provide support, information and referral

Fire Department

The fire department may provide emergency health care until the ambulance arrives, as well as extra help where needed.

Investigation

Medical Examiner

The Medical Examiner investigates all sudden, unexpected and unnatural deaths, including suicides. An external examination may be done, or a more thorough examination, called an autopsy. The cause and manner of death must be officially determined.

The examination of the person is typically completed within 24 hours of notification of the death. A death certificate is then prepared, as well as a report of the findings, which is shared with the nearest relative and the police. In most cases, the report is ready within a few days. Cases that require more testing take longer, up to several months. You may need the Medical Examiner's report to settle the estate of your loved one, and to claim on insurance policies.

Items Collected at the Scene

Law enforcement will take custody of items collected at the scene that are related to the death, including suicide notes. Ask law enforcement or the medical examiner about getting these items back.

The Scene after the Investigation

When a loved one dies at home, cleaning up the area where they died may be a factor. ***Ask the police or the Medical Examiner's Office about your options for doing this.*** Some cultures encourage ceremonies and gatherings to help you cleanse and settle the spiritual and emotional energy in the space where the death occurred.

Tissue and Organ Donations

The Medical Examiner must know if you wish to donate tissue before the autopsy is performed, and within the first 24 hours of the death.

Proof of Death

A Death Certificate is the official government document certifying the death and is required by most organizations as proof of death. This certificate prepared by the medical examiner includes the name of the person, date and place of death, marital status, sex and age. It does not give the cause or manner of death. Several copies may be needed. Death certificates can also be ordered at the Nova Scotia Vital Statistics Office. For more information on this process, call 902- 424-4381 or Toll Free 1-877- 848-2578, or by following the instructions at <http://www.novascotia.ca/sns/access/vitalstats/death-certificate-registration.asp>

Nova Scotia Medical Examiner

Dr. William D. Finn Centre for Forensic Medicine
51 Garland Avenue, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B3B 1J2
Phone: (902) 424-2722
Toll free: 1-888-424-4336
Fax: (902) 424-0607

Practical Matters

Arranging a Funeral

A funeral or memorial service is an important ritual that gives family and friends a chance to reflect and grieve while being supported by others who care. It allows them to say goodbye and begin accepting the reality of the loss.

Making Arrangements

Guidelines and customs of funeral services vary and different cultures and religions have special rituals to recognize a death. Friends, family, Elders, clergy or the funeral director can help you decide which arrangements to make. To choose a funeral home, ask for suggestions from family and friends or check local listings in a phone book. It may be a good idea to ask a friend or someone who was not directly involved with your loved one, to help you choose funeral details. The executor of the will has the final say on the funeral arrangements.

Children should also be allowed to take part in the funeral because it helps them as their grief unfolds. It is wise to talk with the children ahead of time about what will happen at the funeral and what behaviour is expected of them. If you are not able to tend to your child/children at the funeral, make sure that a caring person (friend or relative) is available for support. On the other hand, if a child does not want to attend the funeral, assure them that it is okay not to be there and help them grieve in their own way.

For more detailed information on funeral services than what is provided in this guide, please contact the Funeral Service Association of Nova Scotia at info.fsans@bellaliant.com, 902-783-2467, or online at <http://www.fsans.com/> for additional resources.

Funeral Service

There are a few different types of services that can be held to celebrate your loved one's life and allow people to give condolences and pay their respects.

In a *traditional service*, a ceremony is held in a place of worship or a funeral home chapel with the body present in an open or closed casket. You can decide whether the service will be public or private. Sometimes this is followed by a procession to the cemetery where the deceased is buried. This type of service is usually done within a few days following death.

A *memorial service* is similar to a funeral service, except the body of the deceased is not present. This could be because the body has been cremated, buried or that the body is irretrievable. Similar to funerals, this could be held in a church, funeral home or an individual's home. While the timing for this type of service is more flexible, it is usually arranged within a few days of the person's death.

Immediate disposition refers to the body being cremated, buried or donated to science without having a formal ceremony. If you choose not to have a service, you can ask a funeral home to care for the body of your loved one.

There are many alternative options to celebrate the death of a loved one. Some people host an informal ceremony for their loved one in a family member or friend's home. This can be more of an intimate and relaxed setting than a formal funeral. Planning how to recognize your loved one, whether through a formal or informal service or ceremony, can be highly personalized.

Obituary

Some families choose to write an obituary which is a small news article published to newspaper or other media. This offers information about the funeral details, while also recognizing the deceased's life. Choosing whether or not to write one is a highly personal decision.

Funeral Costs

The more elaborate the plans for the funeral, the more expense you will incur. Many families rely on the deceased's life insurance to help cover costs. Other possible sources of financial help include Service Canada (e.g. Death Benefit for contributors to the Canada Pension Plan). Financial assistance for people already receiving assistance or for others who are unable to pay funeral costs may be available from Nova Scotia Income Assistance. Keep all receipts, as they may be required when applying for any of these benefits. For further information, see 'Items to Apply For' starting on page #25.

The costs of a funeral can be very difficult for family and friends. If you have First Nations Status and live on a First Nations reserve, some help may possibly be available, so contact your Band for more information. Your communities and any organizations your loved one belonged to may also be able to help. If your loved one was in the Canadian Forces, they may qualify for support from the Last Post Fund of Veteran's Affairs: <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/services/financial/funeral-burial> Contact Veteran's Affairs for more information at 1-866-522-2122 or information@vac-acc.gc.ca

Talking About Suicide at the Funeral

It is okay to talk about the suicide at the funeral service. When we talk openly about suicide, without blame, and with sensitivity and compassion, we reduce the stigma of suicide. Shrouding a death by suicide with secrecy can increase feelings of guilt and shame, and impair healing in those left behind.

Nonetheless, talking about the fact that your loved one has died by suicide should be at a pace and in a way that is of your choosing.

When actually speaking about suicide, words matter, and the language we use can either support people's healing and offer comfort or further

stigmatize tragic situations while increasing shame and secrecy. The term "committed suicide" presents particular problems

because "committed" is also used in connection with criminal offences. Suicide is not a crime in Canada, and negative language can place unnecessary emphasis on how a person died, possibly linking their entire identity with suicide. In addition, the term "successful suicide" does not reflect reality - suicide is always a tragedy, never a success. "Suicide", "death by suicide" and "died by suicide" are all terms that describe what has happened while avoiding moral judgement.

Ways to Talk About Suicide at the Funeral

Some people choose to share some words regarding suicide at the funeral as a way of honouring their loved one's life and communicating the meaning of their loss. To choose to speak or not is a highly personal decision, and it can be both rewarding and challenging.

While it may feel uncomfortable to bring up the topic of suicide, it can be helpful. Talking about suicide allows the community to process such a tragedy and is an opportunity to communicate about a topic that is often silenced. However, speaking about suicide must be done with consideration in order to maintain the safety of those at the funeral who may be experiencing thoughts of suicide. It is known that certain types of messaging can be unsafe and put individuals who are struggling at further risk. The following are some general guidelines for your use that you may find helpful:

- Communicate that your loved one's death was a suicide.
- Try to use non-judgemental language, for example, say 'died by suicide' instead of 'committed suicide', which implies a criminal aspect.
- Try to ensure that any mention of suicide in the service is done without judgment or reference to blasphemy.
- Present a balanced view of your loved one that includes positive traits, as well as those things they may have struggled with (e.g. drug abuse, depression, mental illness, trauma, etc.). By talking about these things, we can fight stigma.

- Avoid presenting suicide as a viable or honourable option, as this can be harmful for those who are at risk and having thoughts of suicide.
- Try to communicate suicide's painful and permanent consequences without placing blame or guilt.
- Avoid details about the means and place of death.
- Encourage those struggling with thoughts of suicide to seek help.
- Provide mental health/crisis resources, e.g. Nova Scotia Mental Health Crisis Line at 902-429-8167 or 1-888-429-8167.
- Celebrate the life of your loved one and talk about memories. Some survivors have found it helpful to place an open notebook on a table at the funeral and encourage others to write down their memories of the deceased.

Dealing with Legal and Financial Matters

If you do not understand the banking and legal affairs of the deceased, let your family know and get help. The Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia may be able to advise you call them at (902) 455-3135, or toll free: 1 (800) 665-9779. Or if you belong to a First Nations community, you may be able to talk to your Band for advice. Local organizations and communities can also help.

Disposition of Assets

Disposing of a deceased person's assets is usually done through a will. A will is a written record prepared by the deceased that details how a person wishes their properties or estate will be divided upon death. Typically, wills are signed by the person who has died, and two witnesses. The 'executor' named in the will be responsible for following the wishes set out in that will. The will may be with their lawyer, stored at their workplace, in their safety deposit box, or at their home.

For basic information regarding wills and estates, contact Dial-A-Law of the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia at (902) 420-1888.

If there is a Will



'Probating a will' refers to the legal process of a will being proved valid by the Registrar of Probate. When a will is probated, the executor will receive the legal authority to proceed with his or her responsibilities to follow the wishes set out in the will.

When an estate is small (including just personal property) or held jointly, there may be no need for probate. A bank may require probate if there is a large amount of money that is not held jointly, or for other reasons. If real property (house, condo, land) is part of the estate, then a will must be probated, even if the estate is small. In Nova Scotia, any will that does not provide sufficiently for family may be able to be challenged. Contact a lawyer for more information.

If There is No Will or Your Situation is Complicated

If there is no will, or if no will is found, the deceased died 'intestate' and the estate will be distributed according to the Intestate Succession Act. If the person was married, the spouse (if there is one) will typically receive the greatest share of the deceased's property. The deceased's children will usually receive the next greatest share. Common law spouses may not be included in receiving property unless they were in a Registered Domestic Partnership. If your situation is complicated for other reasons, such as marital separation or common-law relationships, you may need to contact a lawyer.

Handwritten Notes

Sometimes a signed handwritten note by your loved one can be used as a will. This could include suicide notes, depending on the situation. This note must still comply with the legal requirements of making a will and must be made according to the terms of the Wills Act. Be aware that this type of note can be reviewed in court and may not be considered a legal will if it is determined that your loved one was not mentally well when it was written.

If You Need Help Finding a Lawyer

The Legal Information Society's Lawyer Referral Service can refer you to a lawyer in your area if you think you need legal help but don't know where to look: <http://www.legalinfo.org/lawyers/lawyer-referral-service.html>. The lawyer you choose will meet with you for up to 30 minutes for a nominal fee. Contact them at (902) 455-3135,

or toll free: 1 (800) 665-9779. If you cannot afford a lawyer, you can contact Legal Aid Nova Scotia at (902) 420-6583, or toll-free at 1 (877) 777-6583 for help. *Keep in mind that Legal Aid Nova Scotia does not do probate work.

Insurance

You will need to notify all insurance companies (e.g. house, car, life) of the death. In Canada, generally life insurance policies must have been held for at least 24 months to be valid if the death is by suicide.

Financial Matters

A number of financial matters need to be dealt with after a death. You may want to ask other family members or close friends to help you deal with some of these matters during this difficult time. It is strongly recommended that you seek the advice of a professional before making any major decisions that may affect your financial or personal situation.

Gather Documents

The first step in dealing with financial matters is to gather the necessary documents of the deceased. This must be done before you (or your financial advisor or the executor of the will) can take care of matters related to the estate. Set up a folder to keep all the personal documents and records of legal and financial matters. The following is a list of documents that you will/may need:

Personal Documents

Death Certificate

You must have the death certificate before you can cancel, transfer, and apply for benefits and obligations. The Medical Examiner typically will provide you with the death certificate, or you can purchase one from the Nova Scotia Vital Statistics Office. Contact them at 902-424-4381 or Toll Free 1-877-848-2578, or by following the instructions at <http://www.novascotia.ca/sns/access/vitalstats/death-certificate-registration.asp>

Last Will and Testament

Birth Certificate

First Nations Status Card

Driver's License
Marriage
Certificate
Passport
Social Insurance Number
Income Assistance
Information Permanent
Resident Card

Banking and Financial Documents

Bank Account Numbers, Passbooks, Statements (chequing and saving)
Bank and Credit Cards Investment Records (stocks, bonds,
RRSPs, GICs)
Lease and/or Rental Contracts
Loan Agreements (monies owed or
owing)
Mortgage Papers
Safety Deposit Box Number (and location of key)

Health Documents

NS Health Card (MSI)
Supplementary Health Care Plan Number

Property Documents

Land Title(s)
Personal Possessions (art work, jewelry) Vehicle
Registration(s)

Other Documents

Child Support and Alimony Agreements
Divorce Papers and Child Custody Papers
Pardons and any other Court Documents (subpoenas, tickets, settlements,
probation orders)
Unemployment Insurance Information
Employee Benefit Booklets
Insurance Policies (life, medical, home, car, business, mortgage)

Membership Cards (sport/recreation clubs, professional associations, libraries)
Pension and Veterans Information
Previous Tax Returns
Utility Account Numbers (phone, gas, water, electricity)
Firearms License or Permit

Then: Cancel, Transfer and Apply for Benefits and Obligations

Once all documents have been gathered, you will have to cancel, transfer and apply for various financial benefits or obligations. Be aware that there are fees associated with some of these matters.

To connect to any Nova Scotia Government Office, phone Service Nova Scotia at 902-424-5200 or 1-800-670-4357 (Toll-free).

Items to Cancel:

Nova Scotia Health Card (MSI)

1 (800) 563-8880

Contact MSI to cancel your loved one's Nova Scotia Health Card

Group Health Plan

If the deceased was covered under a group plan administered by a third party such as an employer, union or pension office, contact that party. If the deceased was the account holder and other family members were covered under the same account, the group plan will be able to advise whether coverage will continue for family members.

Individual Supplementary Health Plan

Contact the provider if the deceased was covered by an individual supplementary health plan.

Bank Cards

Contact the issuing bank to cancel bank cards held by the deceased.

Credit Cards

Contact the issuing bank to cancel credit cards held by the deceased.

Canada Pension Plan (CPP) & Old Age Security Pension (OAS)

1 (800) 277-9914

CPP and OAS cheques are payable in the month in which the death occurred.

Employment Insurance

1 (800) 206-7218

Contact Employment Insurance if the deceased was receiving employment insurance. When a person dies, Employment Insurance (EI) benefits payable to that person up to and including the day of the death may be paid to the legal representative, or to a person authorized to inherit property of the deceased person.

Employment Support and Income Assistance

1 (877) 424-1177

Find the nearest Department of Community Services office. Phone Department of Community Services to have employment support and income assistance benefits recalculated based on your family's needs. Extra assistance for funeral costs may be available.

Services for Persons with Disabilities Benefits

1 (877) 424-1177

Find the nearest Department of Community Services office to cancel.

Worker's Compensation Benefits

(902) 491-8999, Toll-free: 1 (800) 870-3331

Contact the Worker's Compensation Board of Nova Scotia to have work-related disability claims cancelled. Family benefits may be available if a child is involved.

Leases/Rentals

Cancel any lease or rental contracts in the name of the deceased, or transfer them to another name.



Driver's License

Contact Service Nova Scotia: (902) 424-5200, Toll Free: 1 (800) 670-4357.

Memberships (sport clubs, professional associations, libraries)

Cancel memberships, or transfer them to another name as appropriate.

Passport

1-800-567-6868

If the deceased held a valid passport at the time of death, return it to the nearest passport centre or mail it to the processing centre. Include a copy of the death certificate or a letter stating why you are returning the passport.

Veterans Affairs Canada Benefits

1-866-522-2122

If your loved one was receiving benefits from Veteran Affairs, these need to be cancelled.

Canada Post

1-866-607-6301

Redirect or cancel mail.

Doctor and Dentist

Notify the person's doctor, dentist, and any clinics they regularly attended.

Internet, Cable and Other Subscriptions

Cancel any internet, cable or phone services. Cancel any email accounts and other online social networks.

Social Insurance Number

Contact Service Canada at 1 (800) 206-7218 to cancel their social insurance number.

Items to Transfer

Joint Bank Accounts, RRSPs, GICs.



Any accounts held in common can be transferred to the survivor. You will need to contact your financial advisor or the bank holding these accounts for specific information on how to transfer the accounts.

Land Titles

Phone the Land Registration Office at 1-800-670-4357 for information on transferring land titles.

Stocks/Bonds

Ask your financial advisor or bank for information on how to transfer these assets.

Utility Accounts (phone, gas, water, and electricity)

If your household utility accounts were in the name of the deceased, transfer them to a new name. Contact each utility for information on how to do this.

Vehicle Registration

Contact Service Nova Scotia for information on transferring the registration of vehicles registered in his or her name.

Items to Apply For

Allowance for the Survivor

This benefit for senior-aged widows and widowers is based on income qualifications. Proof of marriage is required (common-law relationships will be considered). This benefit is retroactive only for a few months, so should be applied for immediately. Contact Service Canada for more information.

CPP Children's Benefit

There may be benefits available for children under the age of 18 or for children between 18 and 25 who are full-time students, if deceased contributed to CPP. If you are the caregiver of children of the deceased who are under age 18, you should apply for this benefit on their behalf. Contact Service Canada for more information.

CPP Lump Sum Death Benefit



This one-time benefit is based on the CPP contributions of the deceased. Contact Service Canada for more information.

CPP Survivor's Benefit

This benefit is a monthly pension paid to the surviving spouse or common-law partner, and is based on the CPP contributions of the deceased. Contact Service Canada for more information.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada - Decedent Estates Program

The Decedent Estates Program provides for the administration of the estates of deceased First Nation individuals who were ordinarily residents on a reserve before their death. For more information, contact AANDC toll-free at 1-800-567-9604.

Department of National Defence - Death, Disability & Injury

If your loved one worked with the Department of National Defence, they may be eligible for a benefit. Please contact 1-800-883-6094.

Quebec Pension Plan Death Benefit

If the deceased contributed sufficiently to the Quebec pension plan, they may be eligible for a death benefit of \$2500. For more information call 1-800-463-5185.

International Benefits

The International Benefits program may provide retirement, disability or survivor benefits to eligible individuals who have lived or worked in another country, or the surviving spouse, common-law partner or children of eligible individuals who have lived or worked in another country. Contact Service Canada for more information.

Last Post Fund

<http://www.lastpostfund.ca/EN/home.php>
1 (800) 465-7113 or info@lastpost.ca



If your loved one was a veteran and you need financial assistance for the funeral and burial, you may qualify for support from the Last Post Fund.

Veterans Affairs Canada

1 (866) 522-2122

If your loved one was a veteran, you may qualify for financial support.

Other Financial and Legal Matters

Life Insurance

If your loved one held any life insurance policies, you may be eligible to receive survivor benefits. This money can also help cover funeral experiences that are not covered by the estate and other sources. Life insurance can be paid through a work place insurance policy, or private companies. Review the policy or consult with the bank for specific information.

There are other types of insurance that your loved one could have held, for example Mortgage Life Insurance would cover the rest of the mortgage a home that has not been paid off. Note: mortgage life insurance is not the same as mortgage insurance, which covers mortgage in the case that the individual defaults on their payments.

Loans and Personal Debt

Loans and debts that the person had at the time of death may need to be addressed. The executor must determine if there any such loans or debts when they are dealing with the estate. The creditors will notify Probate Court of the claims. If the estate has assets, then the claims (loans and debts) will be paid. If the estate has no assets at that time, there is no means to pay any loan or debt. Some loans may be insured, in which case the loan is paid in full by the insurance company.

Income Taxes

Contact the Canada Revenue Agency for more information on income taxes. A final tax return must be filed for the year of death up until the date of death, and Canada Revenue Agency should be notified as soon as possible of the death. If the death occurred between January 1st and October 31st, the final return is

typically due by April 30th of the next year. If the death occurred between November 1st and December 31st, the final return is generally due six months after the death. You may want to get a clearance certificate before you distribute any property under your control. A clearance certificate certifies that all amounts for which the deceased is liable to Canada Revenue Agency have been paid, or that security has been accepted for the payment. If you do not get a certificate, you can be liable for any amount the deceased owes. For Canada Revenue Agency's Guide for Preparing Returns for Deceased People, please visit <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pub/tg/t4011/t4011-e.html>.

Employer

Contact the employer to collect a final pay cheque and discuss where to send the T4 slip.

GST Credit

Contact Canada Revenue Agency for information on GST credit. GST credits sent to a deceased person must be sent back to Canada Revenue Agency.

Lawsuits

Judgments either for or against the deceased may need to be settled by the estate. Contact a lawyer to help you.

Working Through the Grief

Grief is more complicated when a death is sudden. Very strong emotions arise as a result of the suicide, such as extreme sadness, anger and shame, which has a tendency to complicate your grieving. Since survivors often feel guilt, you must remember that you are not to blame for the suicide of another person.

The search to find out "why" is a painful yet important part of working through the grief. Often, there are few or even no answers. Comfort comes from a variety of sources and often in unexpected ways.

Your Grief is Unique

The grief process is different for each person. While some aspects of grief are predictable, it is important to remember that grief does not happen in neat, orderly stages but rather as a chaotic process that varies from person to person. As time passes and you begin to work through your loss, you may become more familiar with your grief and what you need in order to start healing.

Grieving Takes Time

Grieving takes time, and the amount of time is different for each person. Contrary to what others may think and want, it's not easy to "get over it". All grief journeys are unique. Do not make any assumptions about how long your grief might last and what you will experience. Instead, consider taking it "one day at a time". As Dr. Alan Wolf says, there is "no reward for speed".

As time goes on your thoughts and feelings will change. Instead of feeling pain all the time, you will feel it only some of the time. You might find there are periods where you find yourself smiling, or feeling some form of happiness.

Laughter can be very healing, so do not feel guilty about having some moments of joy during this difficult time. Some people have described their emotions as being so interconnected and close to their grief that they began laughing. Occasionally, laughter turned to tears without them even realizing the change of their emotions. Although that can be very confusing and perhaps feel like a setback, it is a common experience for those grieving and healing.

Occasionally survivors get stuck as they work through their grief. If this happens, a counsellor may be able to help. Clinical depression is different from normal grief in that it is more intense and prolonged. If you are concerned about depression, or feel stuck in your grief, please contact your doctor. If you are having thoughts of suicide, reach out, talk to your doctor, your local crisis line, or mental health services.

When Children Grieve



Children do not show their feelings in the same way adults do. Sometimes they look as though they have not been affected by the death. They may cry for a while and then return to play, not because they are not upset, but because their words and behaviour do not always reflect how they feel inside. Grief may be expressed in their play. They may talk about their feelings with other children rather than with adults.

It is common for children to grieve the loss of their loved one at a later time. They may have new feelings and new responses to the death, even years after the suicide. They often ask different questions as they go through their development and try to understand what happened from a more mature point of view. Be available to talk about it with them or have them talk to someone else they trust. If you feel they need more support outside of you to help them grieve and heal, feel no shame in reaching out to someone. If you feel the child may be developing depression, please contact your doctor or another professional.

What Helps Healing in the Long Term

It is important to know that you will heal and the pain will lessen. Below are some helpful tips or things we know about the grieving process.

It Will Get Better

Today isn't necessarily how you will feel tomorrow, or the next day. Things will get better. Healing does not mean forgetting. It means that the sadness and other feelings do not get in the way of your life as much as they did in the beginning. As you heal, you can make a promise to remember the deceased and celebrate their life.

Keep on Talking

While some survivors seek out information about suicide and grieving, others choose not to do so. Many survivors say they talked their way through their grief. As you heal, it is vital to talk about your memories of the person who died by suicide. Find a safe person, or several people, who will let you talk and are comfortable hearing about your pain. The people you choose to talk to may or

may not have experienced the suicide with you. Show them how they can help, perhaps by giving them a copy of the list provided in this guide. Crying is good and so is sharing your tears. If people do not know what to say or do, tell them that they do not have to do anything other than simply be there for you.

*When you are open about the suicide,
you give others permission to talk about it too.*

When you are open about the suicide, you give others permission to talk about it too. Keeping the suicide a secret adds to the burden of shame. A lot more people than you realize have been touched by suicide.

At times you may need to be distracted from your grieving. That is okay. Do not feel guilty about losing yourself in something else for a while.

*If you feel you need more support than family
or friends can provide, please contact your
doctor, your spiritual advisor or Elder,
a counselling agency, or your local crisis line.*

Do What Works for You

Sometimes friends and family want to help but they do not know what to do. They may feel uncomfortable talking about suicide because of the stigma attached to it. They may be worried about making people cry when they bring up the subject. They might act strangely and not mention the suicide at all. Do not let this get in the way of your talking about it when you need to. Tell people it is okay to mention the suicide and let them know they can help you by simply listening. Most people really do care. Remember to choose to do what feels right for you, not what pleases other people. It is okay to say "no" when invited to do something you do not feel ready to do.

You may have felt disappointed by some of your friends and family's attitudes and support since your loss. Not everyone can handle the depth of grief that a suicide creates. Try not to get angry, instead align yourself with relationships

that make you feel good. Grieving requires a tremendous amount of energy; don't waste yours on harmful relationships.

Hold on to Your Memories

Some survivors, both adults and children, find comfort in holding on to items that remind them of their loved one, such as furniture, clothing, jewelry or favourite objects. You might like to put together an album with photos of the deceased. If doing such things is helpful for you, keep the items close to you for comfort, but try not to become so attached to them that they keep you glued to your grief. You can also build a collection of memories by asking other people to tell you their stories of the deceased and recording them in a notebook.

Later Reactions

Some survivors feel even more pain and emptiness several months after the death. The tasks of planning the funeral and dealing with financial and legal matters are complete. Friends and family have offered their sympathy and then needed to get back to their lives. Be prepared for this and reach out for help when you need it.

Difficult Days

There will be many times through the years when coping with the loss becomes more difficult, such as the anniversary of the death, birthdays and holidays. You may feel some challenging emotions in the weeks leading up to them. It will help you to plan ahead and talk to other family members about how they want to spend the day. This gives everyone a chance to support each other and talk about their grief. Some ideas are to write a card to the deceased and place it in a significant place, or going to a place that has some connection with the deceased to remember them.

Finding the Answers

You may never know the answer to "Why?" Survivors often mistake a triggering event, such as a relationship breakup for the cause when, in most cases, the person was in extreme pain for a long time. Suicides are typically not the result of one single event or factor. As you work through your grief, you will gradually

learn to live with questions that cannot be answered and a profound amount of complexity.

Support Groups

As time goes on, you may find it helpful to talk to other survivors of suicide. The healing power of a shared experience is very strong and talking to others who have lost someone to suicide can help you work through your own grief. If you live in a First Nations community, ask your health centre, crisis unit or Elders if they have any ongoing talking or healing circles, ceremonies or a sweat lodge. Many cities have peer support or gathering groups specifically designed to help. However, if you are not comfortable or not ready to share in a group, perhaps ask for help from counsellors, clergy, nurses, clinics, elders or your doctor. If you would like more information on support groups in your area, see the Other Resources section or the document that follows this guide: *Survivors of Suicide Loss: A Resource Guide for Nova Scotia*.

Looking After Yourself

In The Short Term

In the beginning, your grief journey may take all your energy just to get through the day, especially if you have to care for others or deal with practical matters. During this time you may find it difficult to make healthy decisions and look after yourself. Grieving takes energy so forgive yourself when you simply cannot do the things you 'should' do. The more you take care of yourself, and engage in the following actions, the better you will be able to get through each day:

- Make time for you. Use your alone time to think, plan, meditate, pray, remember and mourn.
- Surround yourself with safe people and safe places to support you on this difficult journey.
- Accept help. Do not be afraid to tell people what you need. Often people may not know what to say or how to help unless they are told directly.

In The Long Term

As time passes, you will find the courage and resources to keep going and have the energy to be more purposeful about taking care of yourself. Try to do the following things as often as possible to encourage your healing:

- Manage your health. Eat a balanced diet and get physical exercise, and try to drink plenty of water and avoid or limit intake of alcohol, caffeine and tobacco. Check out www.canadian-health-network.ca for more information on all aspects of your health.
- Keep a journal. Record your thoughts and feelings, hopes and dreams, if you find this helpful.
- Talk things out. Confide in a trusted friend, family member, colleague, member of the clergy, or professional counsellor.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, music or art therapy or visualization.
- Read about grief and the ways in which people have used their spirituality to cope in times of tragedy, if this helps. Sources of information include your local library, bookstores, the internet, funeral homes, community agencies or places of worship.
- Create a list of resources. Include the people and organizations that can help you and your family when things are not going well.
- Take a break from your grief. See a movie, visit a museum or art gallery, pursue a hobby or walk with a friend.
- Re-establish a routine in your life. Survivors often find the structure and distraction of returning to work or getting a new routine helpful.
- Give back to your community. Many survivors have found a sense of peace and fulfillment in shared compassion and using their experiences to help others.
- Take small steps. Recognize each step forward and reward yourself in some way.

Whatever you do, make sure it feels right to you.

Other Resources

For a longer list of resources available across Nova Scotia, please refer to the guide that follows this document: *Survivors of Suicide Loss: A Resource Guide for Nova Scotia*.

911

Call in the case of emergency.

211 Nova Scotia

www.ns.211.ca

Available 24/7

Confidential information and referral service for community and social services available across the province.

Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team

Available 24/7

1 (888) 429-8167 (Toll Free) (902) 429-8167

Provides crisis support/intervention for children, youth, and adults experiencing an immediate mental health crisis, including thoughts of suicide.

Kids Help Phone

www.KidsHelpPhone.ca

Available 24/7

1-800-668-6868 (Toll Free)

Bilingual and anonymous phone counseling and referrals for children and youth.

Self Help Connection

www.selfhelpconnection.ca

(902) 466-2011

A self-help resource center or clearinghouse for hundreds of groups in Nova Scotia, including topics such as anxiety, stress, depression, and many others.



Victim Services

Contact your local Police or RCMP Detachment to find out if there are Victim Services in your area that respond/provide support after a suicide loss.

Communities Addressing Suicide Together (CAST)

www.communitysuicideprevention.ca

(902) 466-6600

1 (877) 466-6606

Provides public education, information and resources for Nova Scotians.

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP)

www.suicideprevention.ca

Includes information on suicide loss, as well as a list of survivor support resources in Canada.

International Association for Suicide Prevention

www.iasp.info

Includes information on suicide loss.

Suicide Prevention Resource Centre

www.sprc.org

Provides public education, information and services after suicide.

*** Please Note: The above website links are being provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only; they do not constitute an endorsement or approval by CAST or CMHA NS of any of the products, services, or opinions contained therein. CAST and CMHA NS bears no responsibility for the accuracy, legality or content of the website or that of subsequent links.**

Disclaimer

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Nothing contained in Service is intended to be or is to be used for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Nothing contained in Service is intended to be or is to be used for legal advice.

First Nations Prayer

I give you this one thought to keep -

I am with you still - I do not sleep. I am a
thousand winds that blow; I am the
diamond glints on snow;

I am the sunlight on ripened grain; I
am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning rush

I am the swift, uplifting rush of
quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not think of me as gone -

I am with you still - in each new dawn.

Author Unknown

Right now, your pain is overwhelming and your life has changed forever. Know that you will get through this. How you feel today is not necessarily how you will feel tomorrow.

Talk to friends, family, your partner or spouse, and/or use a resource(s) from this list. Reach out for the support that you need and know that you will survive.

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Survivors Of Suicide Loss:

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Supports And Services

* Although general grief support groups may be helpful, support groups specifically for survivors of suicide loss may be the most beneficial for you. Contact the support group you are interested in to discuss this concept further.

* If you are experiencing a mental health crisis outside the hours of operation for local crisis services, please call 911 or the Mobile Mental Health Crisis Team at 1 (888) 429-8167.

Provincial Supports

211 Nova Scotia

www.ns.211.ca
Available
24/7

Confidential information and referral service for community and social services available across the province.

911

Call in the case of emergency.

Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team

Available
24/7 (902)
429-8167

1 (888) 429-8167 (Toll Free)

Provides crisis support/intervention for children, youth, and adults experiencing an immediate mental health crisis, including thoughts of suicide.

Employee Family Assistance Program



Employee Family Assistance Programs (EFAPs) are employee benefit programs offered by many employers, typically in combination with a health insurance plan. EFAPs are intended to help employees deal with personal problems that might negatively impact their work performance, health, and well-being. EAPs generally include assessment, counseling and referral services for employees. Contact your employer to see if your workplace has an Employee Family Assistance Program.

Kids Help Phone

www.KidsHelpPhone.ca

Available 24/7

1 (800) 668-6868 (Toll Free)

Bilingual and anonymous phone counseling and referrals for children and youth.

Self Help Connection

www.selfhelpconnection.ca

(902) 466-2011

A self-help resource center for hundreds of groups in Nova Scotia, including topics such as anxiety, stress, loss, depression, and many others.

Victim Services

Contact your local Police or RCMP Detachment to find out if there are Victim Services in your area that respond/provide support immediately after a suicide loss.

Capital District: HRM and West Hants Supports and Services

Alex's Safe Harbour Bereaved Parent Support Group

www.alexssafeharbour.com

(902) 448-8396

Support for bereaved parents.

Community Mental Health Services

1. Bedford/Sackville - Cobequid: (902) 865-3663



2. Cole Harbour and Eastern Passage HRM: (902) 434-3263
3. Hants West: (902) 792-2042
4. Dartmouth: (902) 466 -1830
5. Bayers Road: (902) 454 -1400

Provides a variety of mental health services, including counseling.

Dartmouth General Hospital Grief Support Group

(902) 465-8472

Group support for anyone who has lost a loved one in the past year.

Family Service Association

www.fshalifax.com

(902) 420-1980

1 (888) 886-5552 (Toll Free)

Provides counselling to individuals, couples, families and groups, for a fee.

GriefShare – Hatchet Lake

(902) 852-4580

An ongoing weekly support group for people who are grieving the death of someone close to them.

GriefShare - Dartmouth

(902) 435-1456

An ongoing weekly support group for people who are grieving the death of someone close to them.

Griefshare - Upper Hammonds Plains

(902) 835-2472

An ongoing weekly support group for people who are grieving the death of someone close to them.

Halifax Survivors of Suicide Support (SOS) Group

www.sos-novascotia.com

George Tomie: (902) 445-0860



Self-help group that provides support for individuals and families who have lost a loved one to suicide.

Healthy Minds Cooperative

www.healthyminds.ca

(902) 404-3504

Provides public education and peer support regarding mental health, as well as navigation of community services.

Hospice Society of Greater Halifax - Bereavement Support Group

<http://hospicehalifax.org/index.php/programs/>

(902) 446-0929

Trained facilitators guide discussion and provide information about loss and grief.

IWK Central Referral

www.iwk.nshealth.ca/mental-health/how-do-i-get-service

Monday – Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

(902) 464-4110 or toll-free: 1-888-470-5888

Provides referrals to IWK mental health services/information for youth 19 and under. Youth can self-refer.

Contact the IWK Bereavement Coordinator Pamela Starbird-Beliveau at 902-470-8942.

Mothers of Angels - Fall River

www.mothersofangels.ca

(902) 632-2539

Mothers meet to learn more about grief, to lend support to those new to the grief experience and to learn how to enjoy life.

St. Andrews Grief Support Group – Eastern Passage

(902) 465-7873

Support group for those who have lost a loved one.

St. John Vianney Grief Group – Sackville

(902) 864-2778



Grief support for those who have lost a loved one, meets the third Wednesday of every month.

Widows in Self-Healing (WISH) Sackville

(902) 864-5591

Open discussions and support for anyone who has lost a life partner.

Widows in Self-Help (WISH) Halifax

(902) 443-1486

Open discussions and support for anyone who has lost a life partner.

Colchester East Hants Supports & Services

Colchester East Hants Mental Health Crisis Service

www.cehha.nshealth.ca/Mental%20Health/docs/onlinecrisisbrochure.pdf

Hours: Monday - Friday: 9:30a.m to 4:00 p.m.

1 (800) 460-2110, ext 42606

(Toll Free) (902) 896-2606

Provides intervention support for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

Colchester East Hants Mental Health Outpatients

www.cehha.nshealth.ca/Mental%20Health/

(902) 896-2606 or 1-800-460-2110, ext 45526 (toll free)

8:30-4:30pm Monday to Friday

Assessment, treatment and educational services offered.

Grief Support Group – Colchester East Hants Hospice Society

www.cehhospice.org/grief-bereavement

(902) 893-3265

Offers structured support groups for bereaved people. Grief counseling is also offered.

Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group - Colchester/East Hants

jackiecmha@eastlink.ca or audrey_mb@hotmail.com

Support group for those left behind after a suicide.



Annapolis Valley Supports & Services

Annapolis Valley Crisis Response Services

www.avdha.nshealth.ca/mental-health-addiction-services/get-help/im-crisis

1-855-273-7110

Offers emergency assessment and support for those in crisis.

Annapolis Valley Mental Health & Addiction Services

www.GetHelpNow.ca

1-855-273-7110

Individual and family counselling and treatment groups related to mental health, substance abuse, and gambling.

Friends in Bereavement

Kentville, Berwick Bridgetown

(902) 681-8239

Open discussions, support and education for those who have lost a loved one.

Moms of Children Passed

(902) 365-5210

Support for mothers who have lost a child.

South West Supports & Services

VON Bereavement Support Group

(902) 742-4512

Facilitated support group offered to people who have experienced a loss and are living with grief.

South West Mental Health Services

www.swndha.nshealth.ca/pages/mentalhealth.htm



Hours of Operation: Monday to Friday,
8:30-4:30pm Yarmouth: (902) 742-4222

Digby: (902) 245-4709

Shelburne: (902) 875-4200

Provides education, information, and referrals for mental health.

South Shore Supports & Services

South Shore Addiction & Mental Health Services

www.southshorehealth.ca/programs-and-services/addiction-mental-health/mental-health-home

(902) 543-5400

Hours of Operation: Monday to Friday 8:30-4:30

Chester- (902) 275-2373

Lunenburg (902) 634-8801

Bridgewater (902) 543-5400

Liverpool (902) 354-2721

Provides numerous mental health services, including counseling.

Guysborough Antigonish Strait Supports & Services

GASHA Mental Health Services

www.gasha.nshealth.ca/programs/communityhealth/mentalhealth

Adult (902) 867 4500, ext 4345, Child, Youth & Family: (902) 867-4500 ext 4760

Provides numerous mental health services, including counseling. An emergency crisis appointment can also be arranged by calling this number.

Antigonish Community Grief Support Group

Gladys MacDougall

macdougallgladys@gmail.com

(902) 863- 1375

Grief support for those who have lost a loved one.

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre

902-863-6221



Services for women and adolescent girls including crisis and ongoing problem-solving support, information, advocacy, accompaniment and referral.

Family Service of Antigonish

www.fsens.ns.ca

(902) 863-2358

Provides counselling to individuals, couples, families and groups, for a fee. However, no one is denied service due to inability to pay.

Family Service of Port Hawkesbury

(902) 625-0131

Pictou County Supports & Services

Family Service of Pictou County

www.fsens.ns.ca

(902) 752-7562

Provides counselling to individuals, couples, families and groups, for a fee. However, no one is denied service due to inability to pay.

Pictou Mental Health Outpatient Services/Crisis Response

<http://www.pcha.nshealth.ca/mentalhealthservices/crs.htm>

Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm: (902) 755-1137

After hours: (902) 752-7600 ext 2430

Responds to requests for emergency assessment of clients at risk of harm to self or others, or unable to care for themselves in the community as a result of mental illness.

Pictou County Help Line

www.pictoucountyhelpline.ca

Available from 2pm-10pm, 7 days a week

(902) 752-5952

Provides confidential and anonymous crisis intervention, information, referrals, and support to callers.



Suicide Survivor Group - New Glasgow

(902) 396-3000, and leave a message.

This is a grief support group for family members or friends who have lost someone to suicide. This is an open group that runs every year.

Cumberland County Supports & Services

Cumberland Mental Health Services

http://www.cha.nshealth.ca/mentalhealth/about_us/access.htm

(902) 667-3879

Provides mental health services, including counseling and emergency assessment.

Healing and Hope Grief Support Group

http://www.ns.211.ca/service/8598928_10546188/healing_and_hope_grief_support_group

(902) 667-5400 ext 6219

A bereavement program offered in different areas around the county.

Cape Breton Supports & Services

Bereaved Families of Cape Breton

<http://www.bfocb.ca/>

(902) 564-6795

infobf@seaside.ns.ca

Support and Share Groups: Offers general grief support and group sharing in Sydney, Sydney

Mines, Glace Bay and New Waterford.

Cape Breton Emergency Crisis Services

(902) 567-7767

Anyone whose life or well-being is at risk and who requires immediate care can receive emergency mental health services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Cape Breton Mental Health Services

www.cbdha.nshealth.ca/IC2/Intranet/includes/secure_file.cfm?ID=102&menuID=6

Glace Bay (902) 849-4413

Inverness (902) 258-1911

North Sydney (902) 794-8551

New Waterford (902) 862-7195

Sydney (902) 567-7730

Baddeck & Neils Harbour (Child and Youth):

(902) 567-7731

Provides mental health services, including counselling.

Eskasoni Crisis & Referral Centre

www.eskasoni.ca/uploads/applicationforms/EMHS_brochure.pdf

(902) 379-2099 or toll free at 1-888-379-2099

Provides crisis support and referrals for Aboriginal people across Nova Scotia 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Family Services

www.fsens.ns.ca

Glace Bay (902) 849-4772

Port Hawkesbury (902) 625-0131

Sydney (902) 539-6868

Suboffice located in Inverness

Provides counselling to individuals, couples, families and groups, for a fee. However, no one is denied service due to inability to pay.

Mothers of Angels - New Waterford

(902) 862-8460



Mothers meet to learn more about grief, to lend support to those new to the grief experience and to learn how to enjoy life.

Survivors of Suicide (SOS) Cape Breton

(902) 565-7976 after 6pm and on weekends

Self-help group for survivors of suicide loss.

***Note: The following resources are being provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only; they do not constitute an endorsement or approval by CAST or CMHA NS of any of the products, services, or opinions contained therein. CAST or CMHA NS bear no responsibility for the accuracy, legality or content of these books.**

Books on Suicide Loss

After – Francis Chalifour

After a Parent's Suicide, Helping Children Heal – Margo Requarth

After Daniel: A Suicide Survivor's Tale – Moira Farr

Aftershock: Help, Hope and Healing in the Wake of A Suicide –
Arrington Cox

After Suicide: A Ray of Hope for Those Left – Eleanora Betsy Ross

A Man you know is Grieving: 12 Ideas for Helping Him Heal from

Loss - Tom R. Golden **An Empty Chair: Living in the Wake of a**

Sibling's Suicide – Sara Swan Miller **Assembling my Father** –

Anna Cypra Oliver

A Winding Road: A Handbook for Those Supporting the Suicide Bereaved - Michelle Linn –Gust

Bathed in Blue - Rona Ross

Before Their Time: Adult Children's Experiences of Parental Suicide – Mary Stimming & Maureen Stimming

Blooms and Butterflies: Life after Loss – Faris Jean Atkinson

Breaking the Silence: a Guide to Help Children with Complicated Grief-Suicide, Homicide, AIDS, Violence, and Abuse - Linda Goldman

But I Didn't Say Goodbye: For Parents and Professionals Helping Child Suicide Survivor
Barbara Rubel

Choosing to Live – Thomas E.Ellis & Cory Newman

Coping with Teen Suicide - James Murphy

Do They Have Bad Days in Heaven? Surviving the Suicide Loss of a Sibling - Michelle Linn – Gust

Dying to Be Free: A Healing Guide for Families after a Suicide -
Beverley Cobain

Ginger's Gift: Hope and Healing Through Dog Companionship –
Michelle Linn – Gust

Grieving a Suicide: A Loved One's Search for Comfort, Answers and Hope – Albert Y. Hsu

Healing After the Suicide of a Loved One – Ann Smolin & John Guinan

Healing the Greatest Hurt – Matthew Linn

Healing the Hurt Spirit: Daily Affirmations for People Who have Lost a Loved One to Suicide - Catherine Greenleaf

Healing your Grieving Body: 101 Physical Practices for Mourners - Dr. Alan Wolfert.

How to Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies - Therese Rando

How to Survive the Loss of a Love - Harold H. Bloomfield, Melba Colgrove & Peter Williams

In a Darkness, a Story of a Young Suicide – James A. Wechsler

In the Wake of Suicide: Stories of the People Left Behind- Victoria Alexander

Living When a Young Friend Commits Suicide or Even Starts Talking About It – Earl Grollman

Living with Grief After Sudden Loss: Suicide, Homicide, Accident, Heart Attack, Stroke - Kenneth Doka

Making Meaning of the Madness: One Man's Journey Through Grief – Dan Lundine

My Son...My Son: A Guide to Healing After a Suicide in the Family – Iris Bolton & Curtis Mitchell

Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide – Kay Redfield Jamison

No Time to Say Goodbye – Carla Fine

One in Thirteen: The Silent Epidemic of Teen Suicide – Jessica Portner

Out of the Nightmare: Recovery from Depression and Suicidal Pain - David L. Conroy

Remembering Garrett – Gordon Smith

Rocky Roads: The Journeys of Families through Suicide Grief –
Michelle Linn – Gust

Seeking Hope: Stories of the Suicide Bereaved- Michelle Linn – Gust

Seven Choices: Finding Daylight after Loss Shatters Your World –
Elizabeth Harper Neeld

She Never Said Goodbye- One Man's Journey Through Loss – Robert
Dykstra

**Someone I loved Died by Suicide: A Story for Child Survivors and
Those Who Care for Them** - Doreen Cammarata

Suicide Survivors – Adina Wrobleski

Suicide: Why? – Adina Wrobleski

Surviving Grief and Learning to Live Again – Catherine Sanders/Wiley

Surviving Suicide – Heather Hays

Survivors of Suicide – Rita Robinson

Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing - Tom
Golden

**Take your Time and Go Slowly – After the Tragic and Sudden Death of
a Child with No Time to Say Goodbye** – Ronald Snyder

The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends – Helen
Fitzgerald

The Road Less Travelled – M. Scott Peck

The Wilderness of Grief: Finding Your Way - Alan Wolfert

Touched by Suicide – Hope and Healing After Loss – Michael Myers & Carla Fine

Understanding Your Suicide Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart - Alan Wolfert

When Nothing Else Matters Anymore. A Survival Guide for Depressed Teens - Beverley Cobain

Why People Die by Suicide – Thomas Joiner

Books for Community Organizations

Caregiver Response After Suicide; Supporting Families, Clinicians, Staff, Co-patients and Communities

Managing Sudden Traumatic Loss in the Schools: New Jersey Adolescent Suicide Prevention Project

Saving Lives – Saving Futures: A Youth Suicide Prevention Project - New Hampshire Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Assembly

Suicide Postvention is Prevention: A Proactive Planning Workbook for Communities Affected by Youth Suicide – Brenda Dafoe & Lynda Monk

Websites/Organizations Addressing Suicide & Grief

American Association for Suicidology

www.suicidology.org

A membership organization including information for those touched by suicide.



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.afsp.org

Contains numerous resources on surviving suicide loss.

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP)

<http://suicideprevention.ca/>

Includes a list of survivor support resources for Canada.

Centre for Suicide Prevention/Suicide Information and Education Collection (SIEC)

www.suicideinfo.ca

An extensive library and resource centre providing information on suicide and suicide loss.

Chaos of the Heart

<http://www.musicforthesoul.org/resources/chaos-of-the-heart/>

Information on a collection of memorial songs for survivors of suicide loss, and how to purchase these songs.

Compassionate Friends

<http://tcfcanada.net/>

An international self-help organization, offering grief education and hope to all families who have experienced the death of a child at any age, from any cause.

Friends for Survival

<http://www.friendsforsurvival.org/>

A national non-profit outreach organization open to those who have lost family or friends by suicide, and also to professionals who work with those who have been touched by a suicide tragedy.

Grief Net

www.griefnet.org

An internet community dealing with grief, death, and loss.

Honoring Life Network



www.honoringlife.ca

A resource site addressing Aboriginal youth suicide in English, French and Inuktituk.

International Association for Suicide Prevention

www.iasp.info

IASP is dedicated to alleviate the effects of suicide, and to providing a forum for mental health professionals, crisis workers, volunteers and suicide survivors.

Kids Help Phone

www.KidsHelpPhone.ca

Information, tips and referrals for an array of youth issues, including suicide loss.

National Center for Grieving Children and Families

www.dougy.org

The Dougy Center provides support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults, and their families grieving a death can share their experiences.

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)

www.save.org

Features information, news, and resources for survivors of suicide loss.

Suicide: Finding Hope

www.suicidefindinghope.com

Features information on surviving suicide, created by a survivor of suicide loss.

Suicide Prevention Resource Centre

www.sprc.org

Provides public education, information, and services after suicide.

Survivors of Suicide

www.survivorsofsuicide.com

An online support system, including tips on healing after a suicide.



Teen Mental Health

www.teenmentalhealth.org

Provides information on youth-specific mental health issues including suicide, for youth, families, educators, and health professionals.

Turtle Island Network

www.turtleisland.org

A First Nations gateway for information and services, including those related to issues of suicide.

Other Helpful Websites and Organizations

De-Stress

www.de-stress.ca

The Enjoy Life More website contains information on identifying signs and symptoms of stress, as well as simple, user-friendly and free methods that can be used by anyone to manage their stress and improve their lives.

Healthy Minds Cooperative

www.healthyminds.ca/

(902) 404-3504

A health care cooperative that provides a variety of peer-based services to end-users of mental health services and their families.

National Aboriginal Health Organization

www.naho.ca

Provides information and resources on First Nations, Inuit and Metis persons.

Annual Events

International Survivor of Suicide Day (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention)



On International Survivors of Suicide Day, every third Saturday in November, survivors of suicide loss gather at hundreds of simultaneous healing conferences around the world to connect with others who have survived the tragedy of suicide loss, and to express and understand the powerful emotions they experience.

For more information on Nova Scotia conferences, contact CAST at (902) 466-6600. Also visit the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention website: www.afsp.org.

World Suicide Prevention Day (International Association for Suicide Prevention)

World Suicide Prevention Day is held on September 10th each year. The purpose of this day is to raise awareness around the globe that suicide can be prevented. Spreading information, improving education and training, and decreasing stigmatization are important tasks on this day. A number of events are typically held in Nova Scotia in different communities in recognition of World Suicide Prevention Day.

Newsletters

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Survivor E-Network

www.suicidology.org

AFSP's e-Network provides email communication to the survivor of suicide loss community, mental health professionals, and interested others.

Friends for Survival – Comforting Friends Newsletter

<http://www.friendsforsurvival.org/>

Offers monthly newsletters for survivors of suicide loss.

Compassionate Friends Newsletter

<http://www.compassionatefriends.org/home.aspx>



This newsletter provides information on surviving the suicide of a child of any age.

National Alliance on Mental Illness New Hampshire - Survivor of Suicide Newsletter

<http://www.theconnectproject.org/survivor-suicide-loss-newsletters>

A newsletter providing information and resources for the survivor of suicide loss community.

Videos

The Art of Resilience

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngxV6b-49vo>

A hope-filled video production by the community of Eskasoni First Nation after a period of several youth suicide deaths in their community.

Projects

Survivor Voices Speaker's Bureau

<http://www.theconnectprogram.org/survivors/survivorvoices-sharing-story-suicide-loss>

A group of survivors of suicide loss trained by Connect professionals of the National Alliance on Mental Illness who are able to share their stories in appropriate public settings. For more information on arranging for Nova Scotia Survivor Voices speakers to speak at your organization or community, contact CAST at (902) 466 – 6600.

Collateral Damage

www.leftbehindbysuicide.org

“Collateral Damage, Images of Those Left Behind by Suicide,” is a project created by Scott Chisolm, highlighting the experiences and stories of those left behind by suicide. This project consists of a website, a travelling exhibition, as well as future plans for a book. *This interim exhibit is currently available for Nova Scotian communities/organizations to host. For more information, contact CAST at (902) 466 – 6600.

Booklets/Handouts

Child Survivors of Suicide

<http://suicideinfo.ca/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=BCvS3zQatSo%3D&tabid=538>

An informational handout on supporting child survivors of suicide created by the Centre for Suicide Prevention.

Have you lost someone to suicide?

www.teenmentalhealth.org

A quick-reference guide on coping and healing after a suicide loss, created by Carole Rolfe, a Nova Scotian survivor of suicide loss.

Right now, your pain is overwhelming and your life has changed forever. Know that you will get through this. How you feel today is not necessarily how you will feel tomorrow. Talk to friends, family, your partner or spouse, and/or use a resource(s) from this list. Reach out for the support that you need and know that you will survive.

For more information on this resource, please contact:

Communities Addressing Suicide Together

Canadian Mental Health Association Nova Scotia Division
45 Alderney Drive Suite 200
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B2Y 2N6

E dawn@novascotia.cmha.ca or aaron@novascotia.cmha.ca
T (902) 466 6600 Toll-Free 1-877-466-6606

Updated: December 2015 - If you are aware of a resource/service that should be added to this Guide or changes that should be made, please contact CAST

