

## Take care of yourself

- You can get through this
- Take one day at a time
- Let others know what you are feeling
- Set limits on what others are asking of you
- Keep time for yourself
- Remember your own personal strengths during previous difficult times
- Be mindful of your breathing

### Let others help you

- Find supportive friends, relatives, co-workers or anyone you feel comfortable talking to
- Get professional help
- Acknowledge and share feelings with others who understand what you are going through...
- Join a support group
- It's OK to take a break from grief to experience moments of distraction and moments of peace.



Waterloo Region  
Suicide Prevention Council

Dedicated to the reduction of suicide  
and suicide behavior in our community

[www.wrspc.ca](http://www.wrspc.ca)  
519-884-1470

Note: This is not a crisis line

***Suicide is everybody's  
business***



**1 844 437 3247**  
(HERE247)

Call anytime to access  
Addictions, Mental Health  
& Crisis Services  
Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin

# Why??

*Grief after suicide.*

*First steps to healing...*

**Validating the experience for those  
who suffer in silence with grief**





## Taking first steps...

Grief is more complicated when death is sudden and unexpected. When a death by suicide occurs, people experience traumatic grief. Trauma and grief interact with each other and this can feel overwhelming. This powerful response is made even more difficult by the stigma that is often associated with suicide. The loss of a loved one challenges our ability to cope. The experience of helplessness and the questions of "Why" can be overpowering. The following first steps can serve as a guide to help you better understand the road ahead.

## Take care of your body

Traumatic Grief is a very physical experience. Sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, pain and anxiety are physical reactions to this stress. See your family doctor to discuss your way of dealing with stress.

Be kind to yourself:

- Choose nutritious foods
- Caffeine and alcohol can have negative effects on coping
- Physical activity is helpful to the body and mind
- Breath....pay attention to your breaths
- Make night time sleep a priority

***Suicide is everybody's business***

## Take care of your feelings

Your body has natural coping mechanisms which assist you in the early phases of traumatic grief. The initial experience of shock may lead you to feel detached, confused, numb, forgetful and overwhelmed. As the weeks pass, feelings begin to surface which reflect the pain of your loss. Protest, guilt, loneliness, shame and very deep sadness are just a few of the many feelings which you may experience in waves of varying intensity. These feelings are there for a reason — acknowledge your feelings and express them. You are grieving and grief is nature's way of healing a broken heart.

## The search for WHY?

Asking questions is part of working through the trauma and the confusion you may be feeling. Allow yourself time to search for answers. The function of trauma and its' intrusive nature, is to try to make sense of your loved one's death and your response to it. Learning how to manage your trauma, will help you to minimize its' impact and begin to invest in honouring your grief. Traumatic grief is not a linear experience but rather a process of ups and downs depending on the triggers. Be patient with yourself and know that over time the pain will lessen. Build a community of support—grief work cannot be done alone.

## Conquer the Stigma

For too long, our society has oversimplified this complex public health issue. Today's science informs us that suicide is the result of an illness which affects one's ability to make healthy choices and to see hope. Suicide is the result of a series of distorted thoughts and behaviours. It is set on a continuum of ideas to actions. This serious illness is now better understood but still in its infancy as we try to find ways to reduce its impact.

The lack of understanding has contributed to judgments, silence and shame which results in widespread stigma.

Did you know....

- Suicide affects both males and females regardless of their economic or social status.
- In Canada, there are more fatalities by suicide than by car crashes.
- Talking about suicide does not plant an idea but rather may start a life saving conversation.
- The term "died by suicide" has officially been adopted to replace "commit" or "completed" suicide, which perpetuates stigma.

Removing the stigma of suicide will open up the opportunity to begin a dialogue that will encourage healthy lifestyles, shared understanding and hope for those who are affected. This will impact our entire community.