



# If you have been bereaved by suicide



## About this leaflet

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This leaflet offers advice and guidance to help you understand the range of emotions and physical reactions you will probably be experiencing when you first discover that someone close to you has died by suicide.

It has three parts:

1. The grieving process

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2. What is different about suicide?

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3. The need to understand

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# 1. The grieving process

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The process of grieving can be overwhelming. It is an experience that can turn your world upside down.

Everyone expresses grief in their own unique way. It is a normal and natural reaction to loss.

Grief does not happen in a set way. It is a process and takes time and you will need support in ways that work for you.

When someone close to you dies it can affect you on many levels:

- **Physically** - tiredness, low energy, feeling empty
- **Mentally** - shock, disbelief, wondering what you could have done, anguish, experiencing disturbing images
- **Emotionally** - sadness, anger, anxiety, fear, loneliness, abandonment, relief, despair, rejection
- **Spiritually** - trying to make sense of what has happened, searching for answers

## 2. What is different about suicide?

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Although the effects of suicide are similar to other forms of death, you may experience some emotions more intensely.

You may experience guilt, shame and self-blame, and find yourself struggling with thoughts of ***'what if?'***, and the need to understand ***'why?'***

It is normal to experience shock, disbelief, or even denial.

If this is your experience, it is really important to be gentle with yourself. Seek out help in the form of close friends, family members or colleagues, who can support you in gradually coming to terms with what has happened.

Grieving is a slow process and it will take time for you to find your way.

After a death by suicide, the following usually happens:

- Gardaí will come and talk to the family
- The Coroner will be called
- The Coroner may ask for a post-mortem or inquest
- Some time later, the death is registered and a death certificate is issued

### 3. The need to understand

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The need to understand why the person who has died ended their own life may persist for some time.

Exploring and trying to find a reason for the suicide can be an important part of the grieving process but it is not always possible to discover the answer to *'why?'*

The grieving process is characterised by questioning and a search for an explanation.

This process can be difficult and many people go on to live with many unanswered questions. The support of close friends, family members and colleagues is important at times like this.

It's important to find somewhere safe to ask the questions that you need to ask. Meeting others who have lost someone to suicide, for example, at a support group, or attending counselling can further aid this process, especially if it has become quite intense or upsetting.



## **When to seek support**

Each person is unique, and how you cope with your grief will be different to someone else. Some people like to talk to others about what has happened while others prefer to turn their grief in to actions.

Whatever way you cope, it is really important to have good support in the form of people with whom you can just be yourself, whatever way that is.

Most of the time, friends, family and colleagues can provide this support but sometimes, particularly with suicide, you may need some extra help.

If you find that you are feeling overwhelmed, experiencing nightmares or flashbacks, unable to eat or sleep, feeling isolated, having suicidal thoughts or finding yourself unable to cope, then seeking out extra support can be helpful.

In this instance, contact your GP or one of the suicide support organisations listed on **[www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie)**

## Self-care

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Grief is painful so give yourself space and time and be gentle with yourself.

Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health.

Different days may bring different needs. It is important to recognise your needs and look after them.

## Who to contact if you need urgent help

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Contact your GP, or an 'out-of-hours' GP  
see [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

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Contact Samaritans 24/7 on freephone  
116 123 or email: [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie)

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Contact Pieta House 24/7 on freephone  
1800 247 247 or text HELP to 51444  
(standard message rates apply)

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Contact Text50808, a free 24/7 crisis  
text service, by texting HELLO to 50808  
see [www.text50808.ie](http://www.text50808.ie)

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Go to, or contact, the Emergency  
Department of your nearest hospital  
see [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

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Call the emergency services on 112  
or 999

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*If you are being supported by a mental  
health team, or have been in the past,  
contact the service for support in  
a crisis.*

To download **You are not alone**,  
the National Suicide Bereavement  
Support Guide visit

[www.connectingforlifeireland.ie](http://www.connectingforlifeireland.ie)

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The **Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service** is a free, confidential service that provides assistance and support to families and individuals after the loss of a loved one to suicide

[www.pieta.ie](http://www.pieta.ie)

[www.vitahouse.org](http://www.vitahouse.org)

[www.thefamilycentre.com](http://www.thefamilycentre.com)

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For information, resources and tools to help and support someone who is bereaved, the grieving process and how to cope, contact

**The Irish Hospice Foundation**

[www.hospicefoundation.ie](http://www.hospicefoundation.ie)

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# your mental health.ie

Information | Support | Services

**1800 111 888**

Visit **[www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie)** for information and support services for your mental health and wellbeing.

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This leaflet is available to order on **[www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)** and has been produced by;

**The HSE National Office for  
Suicide Prevention (NOSP)**

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Seirbhís Sláinte  
Níos Fearr  
á Forbairt

Building a  
Better Health  
Service