

What Do I Tell Others?

Some people find it difficult to tell others about the cause of death and choose not to do so. Initially this may be easier. However, it may result in experiencing a sense of unease and distance in your relationships with others. This may lead to a lack of support and a sense of isolation. Being as open and honest as possible is recommended.

Some things which may help

It is important not to expect too much of yourself in the early stages. You may not have the energy or motivation to live your life in the same way as before. Remind yourself that you are reacting to a devastating blow.

Some people find it helpful to realize and acknowledge that their lives will never be the same again. It has been described this way by one: "You will never be the same again, you will never get over it, but you will have a life again, you will wake up in the morning and feel good. You will start to make plans for the future. At some point, life will feel normal again; not the old normal, the new normal."

Many people who are bereaved through suicide have feelings of guilt and regret. They may feel they should have seen the suicide coming. 'If only ...' or 'I wish ...' are common thoughts. Parents may feel there was something wrong with their parenting. Brothers, sisters and partners may feel responsible particularly when there has been family stress or conflict. It is important for bereaved people to remember that they acted with the information they had at the time. With hindsight it is often easy to see signs of the person's distress and to criticize what was or was not done.

Some may feel there were many things they would have liked to have said to the person but were unable to because of the suddenness of the death. They may yearn to tell them they were loved, or to settle misunderstandings. It is common to feel sadness about the unfinished, un-lived life, but it may help to recognize the person's contributions and influences during their life and to remember the time spent together.

Don't be afraid to ask for assistance. Some people will not be able to handle your grief, so find those who can. Seek out an understanding friend, family member or support group. Some bereaved people suggest it is best to do this sooner rather than later as it can make a real difference to you and your family and friends.

For some people there may be an experience of relief, particularly if there has been a period of difficulty leading up to the death.

In a family, it is important to communicate with one another while at the same time having respect for each other's way of handling the experience.

Jesuit Social Service