

Coping with suicide loss

September 8 2014, by Mallory Powell

If you're grieving after a loved one died by suicide or attempted suicide, you don't have to suffer alone.

Many of us personally know someone who has died by or attempted suicide, but we don't really talk about it - suicide is scary, confusing, and stigmatized. The recent death of Robin Williams is a tragic reminder that [mental illness](#) and suicide don't discriminate, and that the grief associated with suicide loss is both sadly common and uniquely difficult to process.

Each year, approximately 39,000 Americans die by suicide. To put this into perspective, this is about the same number of Americans who die from [breast cancer](#) (about 40,000) and more than double the number are murdered (about 16,000).

In Kentucky, more than 650 lives are lost every year to suicide, which is the second leading cause of death for 15-24 years olds. A recent survey showed almost half of Kentuckians knew someone who had died by suicide.

Talking about your loss and your emotions can help you process what you're experiencing and can also help prevent future deaths by reducing stigma and offering hope and healing to the countless others who are affected by suicide.

Here are some things to keep in mind about coping with suicide loss:

- You don't have to suffer alone! More people than you know have experienced personal loss from suicide, and virtually everyone is exposed to celebrity deaths by suicide.
- If you're exposed to suicide - either personally or distantly—you can feel a range of emotions including shock, confusion, anger, sadness, guilt, and even relief. You can also experience psychological problems from the trauma, including sleeplessness, anxiety, and depression. These reactions usually go away with time, but if your problems continue for more than a few weeks, talk to a trusted health care professional.
- Exposure to suicide increases the likelihood of someone attempting or dying by suicide himself or herself. It's important to take care of yourself.
- Only about 20 percent of people who die by suicide leave notes. Just because there isn't a note, doesn't mean it wasn't suicide.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline offers support for anyone affected by [suicide](#) at any time. You can call (1-800-273-Talk) or chat online at www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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