

When suicide occurs, the effect is immediate and traumatic.

You might not know what to say or do.

Everyone is different and will grieve differently.

You might think it is best to stay away for fear of saying the wrong thing or making the situation worse.

The silence of others can reinforce the stigma and shame the person may already be feeling.

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You may be thinking...

"I feel so sorry for them"

"I will give them some space"

"I don't want to make it worse"

"I feel awkward, useless, unprepared"

They may be thinking...

"They are avoiding me"
"No one understands"
"They think I am to blame"
"I feel numb, lost, guilty, sad, angry,
alone..."



It can be hard for family and friends to reach out, but the silence of others can reinforce stigma and shame.

Show concern and explain that you don't know what to say rather than avoiding the person altogether.

"I can't imagine what you're going through. I don't really know what to say, but I'm here for you if you need someone to listen".

"Just wanted you to know that I'm thinking about you and am here for you if you need anything or want to talk".

It is usually best to make contact in person – but even sending a message can be enough.

Be careful about contacting the person in a public forum (e.g. a post on their Facebook page).



- The person may be experiencing shock, numbness, disbelief, isolation or anger.
- Some people may deal with their grief by focussing on practical matters.
- Others may be more likely to share their feelings.

People's beliefs, their gender, age or culture may influence what they say and how they say it.

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Regardless of how the person responds to you, it is likely that they are experiencing intense grief.

People bereaved by suicide may experience:

- Emotional distress
- Physical health problems
- Thoughts of guilt, shame or anger
- Difficulty in family relationships
- Loneliness and isolation
- Fear of social stigma
- A need to make sense of the death
- Difficulty talking about their experience





Accept that the person may not say much at all, or may respond in a way that does not make sense.

Remember that non-verbal communication can be really important in making the person feel at ease.

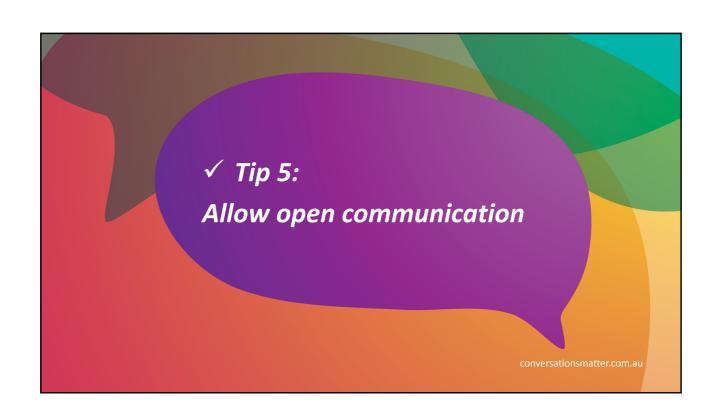
- ✓ Make yourself comfortable but ensure you look interested
- √ Maintain eye contact or sit alongside them
- √ Show you are listening e.g. by nodding



A person bereaved by suicide may experience feelings of confusion, guilt, blame and anger.

- Do not stop them from talking about their feelings but avoid trying to give reasons why it happened.
- Do not reinforce feelings of guilt by asking too many questions about the person's behaviour prior to their death.

Suicide is usually a very complex and complicated response to a range of issues.

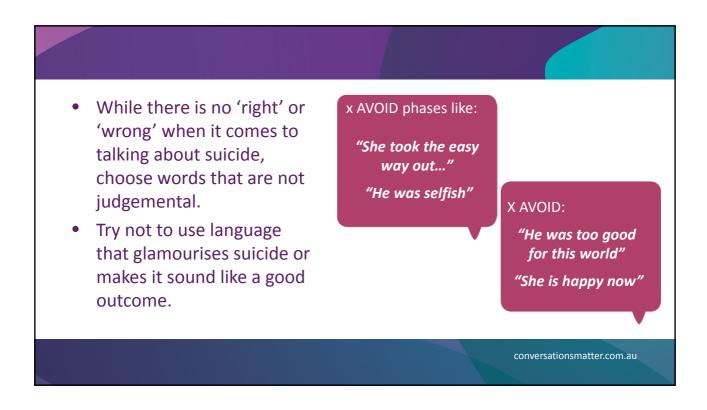


Be open to talking freely about the person who died.

- Feel free to share stories about the person and what they meant to you and others.
- Do not change the subject when they talk about the person and respond honestly to questions.

While suicide should not be kept secret, it is up to the family and friends to decide what they want to tell people and when to do so.







Encourage the person to seek help from others close to them, support services or health professionals.

- Sometimes specialist bereavement services will be available to people affected by suicide.
- Seeing a doctor or accessing a telephone or online counselling service can be a good start.

A list of services are provided with this resource in case you need to pass them on.



Offer to be someone they can talk to when they need it, or ask if they have someone else they can talk to.

- Give them time to come to terms with the death. Do not expect they will be 'over it' in a set timeframe.
- People who have lost someone to suicide will need access to ongoing support.

Anniversaries, birthdays and other special days may be difficult so the person may need support well in to the future.



Do not be afraid of showing your own emotions.

 Be kind to yourself. Sharing another person's loss can be draining. You may be affected by it and need to speak with someone or access support.

Make sure you monitor your own response and get help if you need it.



Things to remember

- ✓ It is better to reach out than avoid the person
- ✓ Be prepared for different responses
- ✓ Listen without judgement
- ✓ Let them explore their feelings

- ✓ Allow open communication
- ✓ Avoid judgemental language
- ✓ Encourage them to seek help
- ✓ Keep in touch
- √ Look after yourself
- ✓ Learn about other services

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