

# Suicide

The circumstances of a death affect the course of bereavement. In addition, to those who feel that they have little control over their lives, an unexpected loss will result in higher levels of depression and somatic complaints.

Families bereaved through suicide appear to be vulnerable to a disproportionate number of additional problems. Shock and disbelief will be heightened. Grief following suicide is likely to be particularly difficult because of the exaggerated feelings of guilt, embarrassment, rejection, self-reproach and social stigma.

The anger and ambivalent feelings toward the person who has died add to an overwhelming sense of failure and of having nothing of any value left to give. Consequently families may feel incapable of talking through feelings surrounding the death, never mind working beyond it to more relaxed memories of their earlier lives together. Finding a meaning through which to contextualise the death may be virtually impossible.

Research has shown that those bereaved through suicide:

- Experience greater guilt, connected to self-blame
- May blame others, scapegoat, or both
- Enjoy less social support
- Experience a crisis of personal values

- Feel more need to understand why the death has occurred and so experience a prolonged search for motives and answers as to why the person took their own life
- Often deny the cause of the death
- Have to deal with feelings of rejection
- Experience loss of trust, and a shattering of basic assumptions about the world
- May raise questions concerning the afterlife of the deceased
- May conceal the death from others
- May experience a heightened fear of being susceptible to suicide