

CONCERN: EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
About Suicide

The death of anyone we care about causes intense feelings of loss and grief. Loss through suicide, however, is particularly devastating to those close to the individual. Suicide is the deliberate ending of one's own life and, as such, it contradicts all of our assumptions about the human will to survive.

The first question normally asked is "Why did this person do it?" Generally, people commit suicide because their problems and pain seem overwhelming. They may feel that there is no solution or change in sight. Sometimes attempts to deal with problems have failed or backfired.

Leading causes of suicide include:

- **Depression.** This may be brought on by personal loss, heredity, or body chemistry. Life seems unbearable; the person may lose interest in all activities and withdraw.
- **Crisis/Impulse.** Major life changes such as loss of an important person, job, etc. can cause a severe crisis; or the decision may be made in the heat of anger and frustration.
- **Old Age/Disease.** The prospect of increasing pain and suffering, as well as loss of independence, income and dignity is frightening. Suicide may seem to be the only alternative.
- **Drugs/Alcohol.** Drug or alcohol abuse can weaken a person's self-control and lead to suicide attempts and self-destructive behavior.

Any combination of these situations is particularly dangerous.

An especially difficult question for those associated with a suicide victim is "Could I or anyone else have done anything to help avoid this?" Feelings of guilt and helplessness around this issue are common. And the response is, unfortunately, one of the hardest things to accept: *"We will never really know."*

We do know that victims have usually thought about the event and sometimes even rehearsed it for a long period of time. Crisis counselors who work with suicidal clients report that while in many cases they are able to provide the necessary supports to help the person through a suicidal episode, in other situations the client will succeed in the attempt in spite of the fact that every conceivable support was in place.

It is important to remember when these questions repeat themselves in your thoughts to be very gentle with yourself. The person who dies by suicide leaves many victims behind. We need to stay in the present, honor our feelings, and begin the journey through the grief process.

Survivors of the suicide victim commonly share feelings such as the following:

- Shock and dismay
- Guilt
- Fear related to a sense of loss of control, abandonment or inability to relate to the event
- Anger at feeling rejected/abandoned

These are normal and healthy reactions. They can be best dealt with by:

- Talking openly and honestly about them with others in a supportive environment.
- Crying, which relieves emotional and physical tension. (This applies to both men and women.)
- Reading literature to more thoroughly understand loss and the grief process.

Unresolved feelings and grief can be stored in the body and the psyche and emerge later in detrimental ways. Therefore, it is important to stay with feelings and obtain support.

The length of time it will take to recover from this loss will vary with the degree of involvement with the person. It may take from a few weeks to several years. Trust your healing process. Know that you will emerge from this experience a changed person. Eventually, memories will bring feelings of appreciation. Seek professional assistance as you feel necessary.

**To get more information or schedule an appointment, please call CONCERN
Monday through Friday, 6:30 AM – 5:00 PM (Pacific Time)
For immediate access to a counselor, call anytime.
1-800-344-4222**

**You may also check out our web site at www.concern-eap.com
for related articles and information about our services.**