

Suicide Resources *from The Dougy Center*

Our Mission

The Dougy Center provides support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults, and their families grieving a death can share their experiences.

We provide support and training locally, nationally and internationally to individuals and organizations seeking to assist children in grief. We are supported solely through private support from individuals, foundations and companies. The Dougy Center does not charge a fee for its services.

About these Resources

The Dougy Center has been helping children, teens, young adults and their parents cope with death since 1982. Our practical, easy-to-use materials are based on what we have learned from more than 30,000 Dougy Center participants over the past three decades.

How to order

To place an order, contact The Dougy Center online or by phone, mail, or fax. Let us know if you have a rush order, and we will be happy to help.

Online: www.dougy.org

Phone: 503.775.5683

Fax: 503.777.3097

Mail: The Dougy Center
P.O. Box 86852
Portland, OR 97286



The Dougy Center

The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

After a Suicide Death: *Ten Tips for Helping Children & Teens**

1. Tell the truth.

It's important to be honest with children and teens. They don't necessarily need to know every single fact about a death, but they do need to hear truthful answers and information. Start with a short explanation of what has happened, and let their questions guide how much detail you provide.

2. Expect and allow for different emotions and feelings.

Feelings and grief reactions are influenced by many factors, including the age, personality and developmental level of the child. You may see a broad spectrum of emotions in children and teens, including anger, frustration, guilt, numbness, shock, sadness, relief, confusion, shame, fear, loneliness and embarrassment.

3. Talk openly about suicide.

Our society continues to stigmatize suicide, as well as the families of those left behind. It is often an uncomfortable and shocking topic that can leave people unsure of what to say. In light of this challenge, it is critical that kids have safe places where they can talk openly about the death without judgement and awkwardness.

4. Hold a memorial service.

No matter how difficult or painful the deceased person's life or death may have been, grieving children and teens deserve the opportunity to say goodbye and to honor the person's life.

5. Talk about and remember the person who died.

Don't be afraid to talk about and remember the person who died. Remembering is part of grieving.

6. Share information about depression and mental illness.

Suicide is not usually a random act - it occurs in a context. Although no one knows what *causes* suicide, most people who die of suicide have experienced some form of depression or mental illness. It helps children to know that the person who died was in fact suffering from a kind of illness in his or her thinking.

7. Be prepared for fears.

After a suicide death, children have many fears. During these times, it is helpful for trusted adults to stay connected and listen to their questions and concerns. Offer reassurance without making promises such as, "This will never happen again."

8. Inform the child's school about the death.

Children spend a lot of time in school and a death affects not only family life but school life. That is why it's important to inform a child's teacher, counselor, coaches, and any adult support person in the school setting about the death. Talk with your child about what they would like in terms of sharing the news with their classmates and others in the school.

9. Provide outlets for grieving: Play, physical activity, art...

Play is a natural outlet of expression for children. While adults tend to talk out (or hold in) their grief, children are more likely to express it through play. This is one way you can validate their experiences and help them regain a sense of balance and control.

10. Respect differences in grieving styles.

Children's grieving styles - even in the same family - can be very different. Some kids want to talk about the death, while others want to be left alone. Recognizing and respecting that each person grieves in his or her own way is essential.

**Excerpts from the "After a Suicide Death: Ten Tips for Helping Children & Teens" brochure.
Full version available for purchase at www.dougy.org or by calling 503.775.5683.*