

After a Suicide: Do's and Don'ts For Family Members and Friends

DO'S

DO let your genuine concern and caring show.

DO be available...to listen, to help with the other bereaved persons, or whatever else seems needed at the time.

DO say you are sorry about what has happened to their loved one and about their pain.

DO encourage them to be patient with themselves, not to expect too much of themselves and not to impose any "Shoulds" on themselves.

DO allow them to talk about the special, endearing qualities of the loved one they've lost.

DO give special attention to the loved one's relatives and friends at the funeral and in the months to come (They are hurt and confused and in need of attention).

DO reassure them that they did everything that they could, and whatever else you know to be True and Positive.

DON'TS

DON'T let your own sense of helplessness keep you from reaching out to a bereaved person.

DON'T avoid them because you are uncomfortable (Being avoided by friends adds pain to an already intolerable painful experience).

DON'T say you know how they feel.

DON'T say "You ought to be feeling better by now" or anything else which implies a judgment about their feelings.

DON'T tell them what they should feel or do.

DON'T change the subject when they mention their dead loved one.

DON'T avoid mentioning the loved one's name out of fear or reminding them of their pain. (They haven't forgotten it).

DON'T try to find something positive i.e. a moral lesson, close family ties, etc. about the loved one's death.

DON'T make any comments which in any way suggest that the care at home, in the emergency room, hospital, or wherever was inadequate. (bereaved persons are plagued by feelings of doubt and guilt without any help from their family and friends).