



The best thing you can do is to be there, to listen without judgment.



FELDMAN
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1673 York Street
Denver, Colorado 80206
303.322.7764
www.FeldmanMortuary.com

Grieving after Suicide

Suicide is among the most emotionally devastating things that can happen to the family and friends of the deceased. Beyond the initial shock and loss, survivors must navigate the emotional whirlwind of confusion, anger and grief, searching for answers that may not be easy to identify. For those closest to the deceased, it's natural to feel a sense of guilt. Could we have done something differently...said something...anything... that would change the terrible outcome? In some cases, the family may face a certain stigma, typically from those ignorant of the conditions that often drive suicide.

These feelings of confusion and grief may manifest themselves in many ways, including:

- Blaming oneself or others for failure to recognize the “signs” of suicide—even when none existed
- Anger at the deceased, and increased irritability or emotional responses to ordinary events
- Sleep disorders, including insomnia and nightmares
- Feelings of unreality and “numbness” that make it hard to function
- Worry over social stigma and the shame of not preventing the suicide
- Sadness over the loss of companionship, and the lost potential for who the deceased might have become, or what they might have achieved
- Relief, for those whose loved one may have struggled for years with mental health

Supporting survivors

Those looking to support the family and friends of the deceased must recognize the special circumstances around a suicide. Suicide is not like other causes of death. Studies show that up to 90% of those who kill themselves suffer from some form of psychiatric disorder, although these disorders may not be immediately obvious to those outside the deceased's closest circle. And because the decision to take one's life is often made very quickly, even on the spur of the moment or with little formal planning, it makes it even more difficult to recognize or prevent.

The best thing you can do is to be there, to listen without judgment. Just be present, listen as the family and closest friends talk about their need to understand the event. Avoid the usual platitudes, instead focusing on the life that was lived and the impact the person had on your own life and those around you.

We're here for you.

Denver is not immune to the crisis of suicide. When suicide occurs, the family may be unsure where to turn for help. The people of Feldman Mortuary are here whenever you need us, any time, day or night. We'll help you navigate through this most tragic of times with the deep compassion and understanding that comes from personal experience dealing with suicide. In addition, our Resources page has links to several support groups for survivors of suicide throughout the Denver metro area. These can be a wonderful source of comfort and vital understanding, providing a safe place to mourn and heal. ■