

72-Hour Guide - Support After Suicide (Immediate steps & resources)

If someone you love has died by suicide (or an apparent suicide), the first 72 hours are often a mix of shock, practical tasks and intense emotions. This guide offers calm, immediate steps you can take, self-care suggestions, and trusted helplines.

If someone is in immediate danger

If anyone is in immediate danger or at risk right now, call emergency services: 999 (UK).

Immediate practical checklist (first 24-72 hours)

- If the death is recent and unexpected, emergency services and coroner procedures may be involved. Follow police or medical advice and ask a trusted family member or friend to stay with you if possible.
- Contact a close family member or friend to let them know; you do not have to do everything alone.
- If the person left evidence or notes, preserve the scene and any items until authorities advise. Do not remove items until instructed.
- If children are involved, keep explanations age-appropriate and seek immediate support from GP, school or child bereavement services.
- You may need to register the death later (register offices handle this) - ask police or hospital staff about next steps.
- If you are concerned for your own safety or having thoughts of harming yourself, contact Samaritans or NHS services immediately (numbers below).

Looking after yourself (practical and emotional)

- Allow yourself to feel: shock, anger, guilt and numbness are normal reactions.
- Try basic routines: drink water, eat small meals, rest when you can; grief is exhausting.
- Ask for help with immediate tasks (pet care, childcare, notifying employer) so you can focus on coping.
- Limit social media if posts or comments increase distress; ask a trusted person to manage messages if needed.
- If you are struggling to cope or having suicidal thoughts, seek help now (see helplines).

What to expect and what helps

Grief after suicide can feel different - intense guilt, unanswered questions, isolation and stigma are common. Many people find the following helpful:

- Talking to someone who will listen (friends, family, helplines, trained volunteers).
- Practical support from charities experienced in suicide bereavement (see contacts).
- Professional support (GP referral to bereavement counselling or local specialist services).
- Peer support or specialist bereavement groups - shared experience can reduce isolation.

Key helplines & resources (UK & Scotland)

| Service | Who they help / Hours | Contact |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Samaritans | 24/7, confidential listening support | Call: 116 123 (free) www.samaritans.org |
| Breathing Space (Scotland) | Free confidential service for people in Scotland | Call: 0800 83 85 87 Textphone: 18001 0800 22 44 88 www.breathingspace.scot |

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| PAPYRUS HOPELINE247 | Support for young people under 35, and anyone concerned for them | Call: 0800 068 4141 Text: HOPE to 88247 www.papyrus-uk.org |
| Cruse Bereavement Care | Bereavement support and national helpline | Call: 0808 808 1677 www.cruse.org.uk |
| Help is at Hand | Free NHS booklet for those bereaved by suicide | Download: www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk |

Immediate safety & next steps

- If you or someone else is at immediate risk: call 999.
- Contact your GP and explain you have been bereaved by suicide - they can offer support and referrals.
- Keep a note of questions to ask police, coroner or funeral director; ask a trusted person to assist if you are finding it hard.
- Consider speaking to a bereavement charity (Cruse) for practical support about funerals, paperwork and coping.

Further reading and online resources

Help is at Hand (NHS / Support After Suicide) - a practical booklet for those bereaved by suicide. Cruse Bereavement Care - national helpline and local services. PAPYRUS - support for young people. Breathing Space - Scotland specific helpline. Samaritans - 24/7 listening service.

Disclaimer: This guide is for information and immediate support only. It is not a substitute for professional medical or legal advice. If you are in crisis, call emergency services or the helplines listed above.