Survivor Guides

*After Suicide Loss: Coping with Your Grief*
Bob Baugher, Ph.D., and Jack Jordan, Ph.D., 2002. Available through AFSP. This excellent handbook is organized chronologically, around the first days, weeks, and months of a suicide loss. It includes straightforward information about psychiatric disorders, and when to seek professional help, as well as practical strategies for coping and healing. To order, [click here](#).

*Black Suicide: The Tragic Reality of America’s Deadliest Secret*

*Dying to Be Free: A Healing Guide for Families after a Suicide*
Beverly Cobain and Jean Larch, Hazelden Foundation, 2006. Co-authored by the cousin of Kurt Cobain, the lead singer of the band Nirvana who took his own life in 1994, and a crisis intervention specialist, this book combines personal accounts from survivors with practical guidance for coping with suicide loss.

*Healing After the Suicide of a Loved One*

*Lay My Burden Down: Unraveling Suicide and the Mental Health Crisis Among African-Americans*

*Reaching Out After Suicide: What’s Helpful and What’s Not*
Linda H. Kilburn, M.S.W. Available from KP Associates, LLC ([KPAMASS@aol.com](#)), 2008. The author, a clinical hospice social worker and survivor of her daughter’s suicide, offers practical advice for well-meaning friends and family who want to reach out and be supportive after a suicide, but aren’t sure what to do or say.

*Rocky Roads: The Journeys of Families Through Suicide Grief*
Michelle Linn-Gust, Ph.D, Chellehead Works, 2010. This guide, written by a survivor who lost a sibling, explores the effects of suicide and grief on family relationships. “Why is it,” she asks, “that some families can work through their suicide loss and be stronger than before while others get stuck and cannot come back together as a family unit?”

*Silent Grief: Living in the Wake of Suicide*
Christopher Lukas and Henry Seiden, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007. Co-authored by a psychologist and a survivor of multiple suicide losses, this book is written with sensitivity and understanding, and offers simple, constructive suggestions for healing along with straightforward information and a message of hope.
Suicide Survivors' Handbook -- Expanded Edition
Trudy Carlson, Benline Press, 2000. Providing specific suggestions and practical advice from other survivors, the author addresses the questions: Why? What about shame and guilt? How long does the pain last? What helps? How do you deal with others?

Suicide of a Child

Survivors of Suicide

The Wilderness of Suicide Grief: Finding Your Way
Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. Companion Press, 2010. Using the metaphor of grief as wilderness, this guidebook, written by a grief counselor, offers ten succinct “wisdom teachings”, including: open to the presence of loss, misconceptions about suicide and grief, and reaching out for help. An expanded version is available under the title, “Understanding Your Grief: Ten Touchstones of Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart” which can be used in conjunction with “The Understanding Your Suicide Grief Journal”, all by the same author.

Touched by Suicide: Hope and Healing After Loss

Survivor Stories

A Force Unfamiliar To Me: A Cautionary Tale
Jane Butler, Hamlet Books, 1998. A mother's personal account of her son's depression and suicide. Explores some of the familiar challenges many survivor families face, such as how to handle the holidays and the struggles of grief between the parents of a child who dies by suicide.

An Empty Chair: Living In The Wake of a Sibling's Suicide
Sara Swan Miller, iUniverse, Inc, 2000. These varied accounts of sibling survivors are based on interviews with more than 30 people from all over the U.S., as well as the author’s own experience of losing a sister to suicide.

A Special Scar: The Experience of People Bereaved by Suicide
Alison Wertheimer, Routledge, 2001. The author (who lost her sister to suicide) presents interviews with 50 survivors, and covers a wide range of issues, including the press, stigma, guilt, anger and rejection.
**Before Their Time: Adult Children's Experiences of Parental Suicide**  
Mary and Maureen Stimming, Temple University Press, 1999. Presents adult children survivors' accounts of their loss, grief, and resolution following a parent's suicide. Separate sections offer perspectives on the deaths of mothers and fathers. Also includes the reflections of four siblings on the shared loss of their mother.

**Blue Genes: A Memoir of Loss and Survival**  
Christopher Lukas, Doubleday, 2008. Christopher (Kit) Lukas, co-author of *Silent Grief: Living in the Wake of Suicide*, survived the suicide of his mother when he was a young boy. Neither he nor his brother were told how she’d died, and both went on to confront their own struggles with depression, a disease that ran throughout their family. In 1997, Kit’s brother Tony, a Pulitzer-prize winning author, took his own life. *Blue Genes* is Kit’s exploration of his family history, his personal journey and his determination to find strength and hope.

**History of a Suicide: My Sister's Unfinished Life**  
Jill Bialosky, Atria Books, 2011. Writer Jill Bialosky was pregnant with her first child in 1990, when her 21-year-old half-sister, Kim, died by suicide. Her grief was compounded by the loss of her baby within just a few months. This memoir, written nearly 20 years later, is a detailed personal investigation of her family’s complicated history and of Kim’s struggles with depression and addiction. (This book is recommended for survivors who are further along in their grief. Newly-bereaved survivors may find it overwhelming.)

**In Her Wake: A Child Psychiatrist Explores the Mystery of Her Mother’s Suicide**  
Nancy Rappaport. Basic Books, 2009. Dr. Nancy Rappaport, a child psychiatrist, lost her mother to suicide at the age of four. Encouraged by her own children’s curiosity about their grandmother, and fortified by her professional training in psychiatry, she began to look into her mother’s life and death. Drawing on court papers, newspaper clippings, her mother’s unpublished novel, and interviews with family and friends, she explores the impact of her mother’s suicide from the perspective of a daughter, psychiatrist, wife, and mother herself, in this deeply personal memoir.

**My Son...My Son: A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss or Suicide**  

**Never Regret the Pain: Loving and Losing a Bipolar Spouse**  
Sel Erder Yackley, Helm Publishing, 2008. In her memoir, Sel Erder Yackley, mother of three, provides the reader an intimate glimpse into her family’s struggle to understand, cope with, and grieve the bipolar disorder and ultimate suicide of her husband, a well-respected judge.

**No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One**  
Carla Fine, Doubleday, 1996. Following the suicide of her husband, the author interviewed over 100 suicide survivors. She weaves their experiences into her book, creating a story of loss, grief and survival.
**Remembering Garrett: One Family's Battle with a Child's Depression**
United States Senator Gordon H. Smith, Caroll & Graf, 2006. A personal account by the U.S. Senator from Oregon, whose 21 year-old son took his own life, and whose speech on the Senate floor led to overwhelming bipartisan support for the passage of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, which increased federal funding to prevent youth suicide.

**Sanity & Grace: A Journey of Suicide, Survival, and Strength**
Judy Collins, Tarcher/Penguin, 2003. A grieving mother and celebrity shares her own story about the loss of her son to suicide and her own struggle with mental illness.

**The Empty Chair: The Journey of Grief After Suicide**
Beryl Glover, In Sight Books, 2000. The grief process as experienced by a variety of people dealing with different emotions following the suicide of a family member.

**The Suicide Index: Putting My Father’s Death in Order**
Joan Wickersham, Harcourt Inc., 2008. Wickersham uses an index -- that most orderly of structures -- to try to make sense of her father’s suicide. The family history, business failures and encounters with friends and doctors are assembled into a philosophical, deeply personal and beautifully-written exploration of the mystery of her father’s life and death.

**Helping Children**

**After a Parent's Suicide: Helping Children Heal**
Margo Requarth, Healing Hearts Press, 2006. Written by a bereavement counselor who lost her own mother to suicide when she was just under four years old, this book offers constructive, compassionate and clear suggestions for helping children.

**After a Suicide: A Workbook for Grieving Kids**
Available through The Dougy Center (see Organizations, above). Developed for use with children, this workbook combines explanations of mental illness and suicide, creative exercises, practical advice, and quotations from child survivors.

**But I Didn't Say Goodbye: For Parents and Professionals Helping Child Suicide Survivors**
Barbara Rubel, Griefwork Center, Inc., 2000. Told from the point of view of a child, this book is intended for adults to read and then share with children.

**Child Survivors of Suicide: A Guidebook for Those Who Care for Them**
Rebecca Parkin and Karen Dunne-Maxim, 1995. Available through AFSP. This practical guide offers guidance for family members, educators, and others who deal with young survivors. To order, [click here](#).
My Uncle Keith Died
Carol Ann Loehr, Trafford Publishing, 2006. Written in clear simple language easily understood by children, this book offers hope and practical ways to explain suicide to children. It explains the difference between sadness and depression, and describes how chemical imbalances in the brain cause illnesses that can result in suicide.

Someone I Love Died By Suicide: A Story for Child Survivors and Those Who Care for Them

For Adolescents and Teenagers

After
Francis Chalifour, Tundra, 2005. Nominated for the Canadian Governor General's Literary Awards 2005, this autobiographical novel tells the story of 15-year-old Francis, whose father took his own life. It explores Francis’s struggles with guilt, anger, profound sadness and search for hope, during the first year after his father’s suicide.

After a Suicide: Young People Speak Up
Susan Kuklin, Putnam Publishing Group, 1994. Nine personal accounts of survivors, many of whom are teens. Each account focuses on a specific topic, such as losing a parent, losing a sibling, seeking therapy, support groups.

For Men

Men Don’t Cry . . . Women Do: Transcending Gender Stereotypes of Grief
Terry L. Martin & Kenneth J. Doka, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group 2000. Part of Robert Neimeyer’s Death, Dying, and Bereavement Series, this book is best suited for mental health professionals and others interested in an exploration of theoretical and clinical aspects of gender-typical grief. While not specific to suicide loss, the book addresses the impact of socialization and culture on how individuals experience loss.

Men & Grief: A Guide for Men Surviving the Death of a Loved One and a Resource for Caregivers and Mental Health Professionals
Carol Staudacher, New Harbinger Publications, Inc. 1991. Of particular interest are separate chapters addressing bereavement experienced during boyhood, adolescence, and adulthood, as well as a chapter on the effect of alcohol abuse on grief. While the book does include some discussion of bereavement after suicide, the focus is on the male experience of bereavement generally.

Real Men Do Cry: A Quarterback’s Inspiring Story of Tackling Depression and Surviving Suicide Loss
Eric Hipple, with Dr. Gloria Horsley and Dr. Heidi Horsley. Quality of Life Publishing Co., 2008. Hipple, former NFL quarterback for the Detroit Lions and survivor of his 15 year-old
son’s suicide, candidly shares his own lifelong struggle with depression, including his bankruptcy, imprisonment for drunk driving, and ultimate decision to seek treatment. A practical guide for men and the women who care about them.

**Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing**
Thomas R. Golden, Golden Healing Publishing, 1996. This book by a licensed clinical social worker explores the stereotypically “masculine” experience of grief. In the author’s words, “[a] man reading these pages will find a book that honors the uniqueness of a man’s path toward healing. A woman reading this book will benefit not only from gaining a deeper understanding of the men in her life, she will find herself in these pages.”

**When a Man Faces Grief/A Man You Know is Grieving: 12 Practical Ideas to Help You Heal From Loss**
Thomas Golden and James Miller. Willowgreen Publishing 1998. This book focuses on grief in general (not grief after suicide per se), exploring the authors’ view of the “masculine side” of healing. The book’s format is unique: the first half of the book provides guidance to the grieving man himself; turned upside down, the book then offers his family and friends advice on how best to help him. The twelve suggestions in each half of the book are practical and straightforward.

**When Suicide Comes Home: A Father’s Diary and Comments**
Paul Cox, Bolton Press 2002. A father’s perspective on the first year following his son’s suicide, this book is written in a simple, straightforward way – an easy read for early grief. While written from a father’s perspective, female readers (especially spouses) have said that it helped them better understand the male experience of grief.

### For Clinicians

**Dead Reckoning: A Therapist Confronts His Own Grief**
David C. Treadway, BasicBooks, 1996. The author, now a successful family therapist, was just twenty when his mother, a longtime alcoholic, took her own life. Even as he counsels his clients on how to deal with death, loss and grief, he finds himself increasingly unable to manage his own. Turning to his own therapist for help, Treadway includes the reader on his journey of healing as he finally comes to terms with his mother’s death.

**Grief After Suicide: Understanding the Consequences and Caring for the Survivors**

**Suicide and its Aftermath: Understanding and Counseling the Survivors**
Edward Dunne, John McIntosh, and Karen Dunne-Maxim (Eds.), W.W. Norton and Company, 1987. This compilation of articles and essays captures various dimensions of the many different aspects of the experience of surviving after a suicide loss. Although written by and for professional counselors, it's very readable for the general public.

*Therapeutic and Legal Issues for Therapists Who Have Survived a Client Suicide: Breaking the Silence*
Kayla Miriyam Weiner, The Haworth Press, Inc. 2005. This unique volume explores the firsthand experiences of “clinician-survivors” -- mental health professionals who have lost clients and patients to suicide.

**Poetry/Inspirational**

*A Long-Shadowed Grief: Suicide and its Aftermath*
Harold Ivan Smith, Cowley Publications 2006. Written from a Christian perspective, this book by a survivor of his cousin’s suicide and former funeral director explores the aftermath of suicide through the lenses of spirituality and theology.

*Finding Your Way After the Suicide of Someone You Love*

*From the Ashes Flies the Phoenix: Creating a Powerful Life After a Suicide*
Gretta Krane, Inspiring Enterprises 2006. The survivor of her husband’s suicide, Gretta Krane shares her own journey, with the hope that it will inspire others to find self-discovery, growth, and hope in the aftermath of suicide loss.

*Healing the Hurt Spirit: Daily Affirmations for People Who Have Lost a Loved One to Suicide*
Catherine Greenleaf, St. Dymphna Press, 2006. Written by a longtime survivor of multiple suicide losses, this non-denominational book encourages survivors to explore their grief through a series of simple readings and daily affirmations.

*Incomplete Knowledge*
Jeffrey Harrison, Four Way Books, 2006. The second half of this book of poetry (in particular the moving sequence titled “The Undertaking” ) speaks eloquently of the loss of the writer's brother to suicide, delving into isolated moments in the immediate aftermath and extended process of grief.

*Passing Reflections, Volume I: Meditations on Grief and Volume II: The Journey Through Grief*
Kristen Spexarth, Big Think Media 2010. A two volume set of poetry written during the two years immediately following the suicide of the author’s eldest son. Organized by date, these poems record, in vivid language and imagery, Spexarth’s intense grief and her eventual journey towards healing and reconnection.
"Take the Dimness of My Soul Away: Healing After a Loved One's Suicide"
William A. Ritter, Morehouse Publishing 2004. Reverend Bill Ritter, a survivor of his son's suicide, presents this moving collection of sermons and notes that he wrote following his son's death. Throughout this God-centered journey, Ritter's poignant words explore how spiritual healing is possible after the loss of a loved one to suicide.

Suicide and Mental Illness

"An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness"
Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D., Alfred A. Knopf, 1995. In this memoir, the author, an international authority on bipolar disorder, describes her own struggle since adolescence with the disorder, and how it has shaped her life.

"Darkness Visible"

"Demystifying Psychiatry: A Resource for Patients and Families"
Charles Zorumski and Eugene Rubin. Oxford University Press, 2010. The authors, both psychiatrists, explain modern day psychiatry – including the mental illnesses most closely associated with suicide risk -- in this straightforward primer developed for a lay audience.

"Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide"
Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D., Alfred A. Knopf, 1999. Weaving together an in-depth psychological and scientific exploration of the subject, this book traces the network of reasons underlying suicide, including the factors that interact to cause suicide, and the evolving treatments available from modern medicine. Includes a particular focus on suicide by adolescents and young adults.

"No One Saw My Pain: Why Teens Kill Themselves"
Andrew Slaby and Lili Frank Garfinkle, W.W. Norton and Company, 1995. Written by an expert on suicide in young adults, this book looks at many examples of adolescent suicide and explores the complex factors that may contribute to it.

"The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression"
Andrew Solomon, Scribner, 2001. Winner of the National Book award. A sufferer of chronic depression, Solomon shares his own story, while presenting the problem of depression in a broader social context.
November of the Soul: The Enigma of Suicide
George Howe Colt, Scribner 2006. From National Book Award Finalist George Howe Colt comes this comprehensive (500+ page) and scholarly exploration of suicide. Based on in-depth reporting and case studies, and extensively footnoted, Colt considers suicide from a wide range of perspectives, including cultural, historical, biological, and psychological. (While an excellent treatise on the topic of suicide, this book is probably best for survivors who are further along in their healing (newly-bereaved survivors may find it a bit overwhelming.)

Understanding Depression: What We Know and What You Can Do About It

Why Suicide? Questions and Answers about Suicide, Suicide Prevention, and Coping with the Suicide of Someone You Know (2nd ed.)
Eric Marcus, HarperOne (a division of HarperCollinsPublishers), 2010. Eric Marcus was 12 years old when he lost his father, Irwin, to suicide in 1970. More recently, his sister-in-law also took her life, prompting him to reconsider his own experience and revise his original, and well-received, Why Suicide? Author of several notable books on a variety of topics (including the New York Times bestselling autobiography of Olympic diving champion Greg Louganis), Marcus integrates his personal experience and journalistic skills in this comprehensive yet accessible primer on all aspects of suicide, its prevention, and aftermath. For more information visit www.whysuicidebook.com.

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