

## After a Suicide Attempt

This guide will discuss some of the thoughts and feelings a person who survives a suicide attempt might have. It also offers some ways family members and friends can help.

### What do people feel or think after surviving a suicide attempt?

The person may have mixed emotions. Some people are relieved to still be alive. Others may feel a sense of failure for not succeeding. Other feelings might include:

- Shame
- Guilt
- Thankfulness
- Embarrassment
- Regret
- Depression
- Lack of memory
- Sinfulness
- Sense of being saved by divine intervention
- Ambivalence
- Confusion
- Anger

### What can friends and family members do to help?

At first, you can...

- Let them know you love them.
- Let them know you're glad they are alive.
- Let them know you'll be there for support.
- Be there for them. While the person who has tried to commit suicide may not want to talk, your presence is needed.
- Offer to help them make connections to spiritual and cultural supports.
- Get support for yourself.

Later, you might want to...

- Give the person chances to talk freely about the attempt. Allow the person to talk about the events leading up to the attempt.
- Let the person know it's OK to tell someone if they feel suicidal in the future.
- Give him the phone number of the local crisis line and emergency room.
- Ask the person if meeting with a therapist or counselor would be helpful.
- If they are not already seeing a counselor, suggest an evaluation by a doctor for depression or other illnesses.
- Help the person get back in touch with mental health workers and support people.
- Get support for yourself.

## **What does not seem to help the survivor?**

- Staying away from the person or their family.
- Expressing blame or anger toward the person, yourself, or others.
- Telling the person they should not talk about it.
- Telling the person they should talk about it before they are ready.
- Telling the person they should not feel as they do.

These are very common feelings. If you are struggling with any of them, it is important for you to get support for yourself. Therapists, counselors and support groups can all help. They can help you to better understand how to support someone after a suicide attempt.

## **For more information**

See **Suicide: Why?** By Adina Wroblewski (1995, Minneapolis: Afterwords)

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)

Dane County (608) 249-7188

Wisconsin (608) 268-6000

National Suicide Prevention line

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

1-800-799-4TTY (4889) TTY

Resource people at UWHC: social workers, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, chaplains, and doctors.

Community resources:

If you have health insurance, you might have access to counseling. Call your insurance or speak to your health care provider for more information.

If you do not have health insurance, call your local county Department of Human Services. The Mental Health Coordinator can provide information on resources specific to your area.

Connect with the local Survivors of Suicide support group. For Dane County call 280-2700

You may wish to check out their website: [www.survivorsofsuicide.com](http://www.survivorsofsuicide.com)

If you are concerned that your friend or family member is at this time having suicidal thoughts or feelings, call your local 24-hour crisis line (in Dane County at **608-280-2600**).

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©8/2014. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5410.