

LOSING A LOVED ONE TO SUICIDE DURING COVID-19

AROHA FROM AFAR – HE AROHA MAU ROA

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This resource was developed by people with lived experience of suicide loss. Everyone's loss is unique, we hope this resource is helpful for you. We'd also like to acknowledge cultural differences in grieving. Please feel free to adapt the information in this resource for your own situation.

The death of a loved one is one of life's most difficult experiences. If you're here because you've lost someone you care about to suicide, we'd like to acknowledge your loss and the emotions you may be feeling.

Suicide loss is a traumatic event. The grief that comes with it may differ from other forms of grief in its intensity and duration. Feelings of guilt may occur along with 'why' questions. It's normal to wish we could have done more to prevent a suicide.

It's important to know, a suicide death is no-one's fault. Suicide is never the result of one thing only. Suicide is complex, an outcome influenced by many factors coming together at one time.



REMEMBER: IN GRIEF YOU CAN ONLY DO THE BEST YOU CAN, BE KIND TO YOURSELF

GRIEF AND LOSS – CHALLENGES DURING COVID-19

Grief is our natural response to losing a loved one. This can present in many ways. In addition to experiencing grief you may also be concerned about preventing the spread of COVID-19.

- A death by suicide is particularly difficult to comprehend. You may be experiencing intense shock, confusion and grief, this is normal.
- If the person who died was in your mirumiru/bubble, there will be practical things to deal with, on top of trauma, shock and grief. Ask for the support you need.
- If the person who died of suicide was not in your mirumiru/bubble, you may feel intense sadness, concern or guilt that you could not be with them before they died.
- Being in noho rāhui/lockdown may intensify emotional reactions.
- With so much happening in the world right now, you may feel overwhelmed or numb. It's actually ok to be numb for a time, to focus on surviving in the immediate now. Your grief is still there, underneath it all.
- Suicide loss can feel isolating. You may feel disconnected from the rest of the world. Know it's not just you, and you are not alone.



FUNERAL, TANGIHANGA AND HONOURING A PERSON'S LIFE

Requirements around social distancing mean the traditions we associate with public funerals and tangihanga have paused. Funerals and tangihanga can go ahead under Alert Level 2 but are restricted to no more than 100 people. The Ministry of Health says when holding a gathering, play it safe — maintain hygiene standards and meet existing record-keeping requirements for contact tracing.

You may choose to delay some of the ways you would like to farewell the person who has died until the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

We cannot delay grief however and having a service or activities and rituals to engage in within the first few weeks of a death can help with adapting to loss.

For more information please see the Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand [website](#).

PRACTICAL TIPS

- You might like to keep a notebook handy. Lots can be going on and it may be hard to focus and remember things. Write all important and helpful information down, anything you might need to remember.
- You may have many 'why' questions around suicide and what was going on for the person who died. You may feel like you're on a detective trail, searching for answers. This is normal after a suicide. Just take your time and look after yourself. It's important to remember, suicide is a 'multi-factorial' issue, meaning many factors are involved. Suicide is never the result of one thing only. Some factors may be known, while others are unknown.
- Give yourself time to grieve. Be kind to yourself, something big has happened and it may take some time for you to find a way forward.

GETTING THROUGH TOGETHER – WHĀIA E TĀTOU TE PAE TAWHITI

- Communicate with key people in the life of the person who has died. Phones and social media platforms offer us ways to keep in touch, to share memories, photos and stories. Even if we can't be together in person, we can reach out online to feel less alone.
- Talking about how you are feeling is important. Perhaps ask a friend to check in with you every few days via text, FaceTime or other video apps.
- If it feels too hard to talk about the person who died, or you feel you might not know what to say, it might be helpful to plan to watch something with a friend over the phone or on a device, or to talk about a common interest.
- If there are tamariki/children in your family, check-in with them often. Answer their questions honestly. Tamariki may appear sad and happy in the space of minutes. Let them set their own pace.
- Try to limit how much news and social media you consume – when we are experiencing sadness and trauma, regular news can be distressing.
- It's ok to alternate grieving with other activities. Doing this can help us adjust to loss while managing everyday life.



GENTLY REMIND PEOPLE GRIEF IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE, TRY NOT TO JUDGE YOURSELF OR OTHERS. LET GO OF EXPECTATIONS RIGHT NOW.

HELPLINES AND SUPPORT DURING COVID-19

GPs are offering remote services by phone or online. If your GP is not available, find one that is. If you do not find your GP helpful at this time, it's ok to contact another GP.

Counsellors and grief counselling are available online and by phone. For more information and to find a counsellor please see:

[The New Zealand Association of Counsellors](#)

[Talkingworks](#)

[New Zealand Psychological Society](#)

[New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists](#)

[Skylight Trust](#)

[The Grief Centre \(Auckland\)](#)

[Grief Support Services \(Tauranga\)](#)

[Loss and Grief Centre \(Invercargill\)](#)

FREE 24/7 PHONE HELPLINES ARE OPEN DURING COVID-19

Free call or text 1737 anytime to talk to a trained counsellor.

Lifeline – 0800 543 354 or free text 4357 (HELP)

Youthline – 0800 376 633 or free text 234

Samaritans – 0800 726 666

See the Mental Health Foundation website for more [helplines](#)

A LIST OF RESOURCES TO SUPPORT AT THIS TIME

[After a Suicide NZ, website developed by Mental Health Foundation for the Ministry of Health](#)

[Tangihanga Guidelines and COVID-19 Kua noho rāhui te motu](#)

[COVID-19, when no funerals, tangi or farewell gatherings can be held](#)

[Te Pūtahitanga – #Manaaki20, Tangihanga](#)

[Te Rōpu Whakaupapa Urutā - Level 4 Tikanga and Tangihanga advice](#)

[Te Puni Kokiri, Protect our whakapapa](#)

[Le Va resource, When you're grieving](#)

[Le Va COVID-19 resource #CatchYourself Respect your bubble](#)

[Mental Health Foundation, Looking after mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19](#)

[Mental Health Foundation, suicide bereavement information](#)

FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION, UPDATES AND ADVICE ON COVID-19

Please see the New Zealand Ministry of Health, [Manatū Hauora website](#)

**GETTING
THROUGH
TOGETHER**

WHĀIA E TĀTOU TE PAE TAWHITI

ALL RIGHT?

 **Mental Health Foundation**
mauri tū, mauri ora OF NEW ZEALAND