



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Suicide Loss Survivor Groups

These groups are for people bereaved by someone else's suicide, not for people who have survived an attempt. Suicide grief carries features that set it apart: a prolonged search for why, consuming guilt, stigma that makes the loss hard to speak about, and an elevated risk of complicated grief. They come in two forms. Peer support groups offer community with others who share the same loss, through organizations like AFSP and the Alliance of Hope. Clinician-led therapy groups apply structured grief treatment, most often Complicated Grief Treatment, for grief that has become prolonged or impairing.

WHO IT'S FOR, AND WHO IT'S NOT

- A fit for those wanting connection with others who share this specific loss.
- Survivors carry elevated suicide risk. Safety comes first, with group support as a complement.
- Active suicidal thoughts need crisis support first. Call or text 988.

What it's for

Anyone bereaved by suicide: family, partners, friends, colleagues, and others affected.

Peer groups suit any stage of bereavement and any intensity of grief.

Therapy groups suit prolonged, impairing grief, or Prolonged Grief Disorder.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 Peer groups meet monthly or biweekly for 90 minutes, open sharing format.

2 Ground rules on safe language are explicit. New members aren't required to share.

3 Therapy groups are more structured, often a 16-session closed cohort with homework.

Both formats have support in the research.

- A systematic review of 14 controlled studies found group and peer support for suicide loss **improved grief, depression, and social functioning**, while noting limited evidence.¹
- Complicated Grief Treatment outperformed interpersonal psychotherapy in a landmark trial, with **51% responding versus 28%**.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

You don't have to explain. No one here needs the death softened or justified.

The hard questions belong. Guilt, warning signs, not knowing: this is the normal substance.

Tell someone about your own risk. Facilitators are trained to help if grief turns dangerous.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1** Is this peer support or a clinician-led therapy group?
- 2** What are the ground rules around safe language and confidentiality?
- 3** Is it open and ongoing, or a closed cohort with a set number of sessions?

Ready to find a group?

Browse 2,000+ therapy and support groups in all 50 states.

Free to browse · No account needed · thegroupguide.com



If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact. Sources on page 2.



Sources

Suicide Loss Survivor Groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Andriessen, K., Krynska, K., Hill, N. T. M., Reifels, L., Robinson, J., Reavley, N., & Pirkis, J. Effectiveness of interventions for people bereaved through suicide: a systematic review of controlled studies. *BMC Psychiatry* (2019), 19(1), Article 49.
- 2 Shear, K., Frank, E., Houck, P. R., & Reynolds, C. F. Treatment of complicated grief. *JAMA* (2005), 293(21), 2601–2608.

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