

Grief after a suicide loss is among the most complex forms of bereavement a person can carry. When the healing process stalls, it does not mean healing is impossible. It often means the support in place is not the right kind, or that the work inside has not yet begun, or that a specific clinical condition called prolonged grief disorder has taken hold. This handout helps survivors ask honest questions about where they are and what they might need next. If you are in crisis right now, please call or text 988 before anything else.

Why Grief After a Suicide Loss Stalls

- A suicide loss carries layers that other losses do not: trauma from an unanticipated death, guilt, unanswered questions, shame, and the ordinary heartbreak of loss, all arriving at once.
- The nervous system's first response is often trauma rather than grief. Intrusive images, hyperarousal, and the physical inability to settle are signs of a trauma response that may need its own attention before deeper grief work can begin.
- Research on suicide bereavement documents higher rates of depression, PTSD, and prolonged grief among suicide loss survivors than among those who lost someone to other causes. For more, see [Understanding Grief After Suicide Loss](#).

A Tool for Measuring Progress

- Then-Vice President Biden shared a simple tool at a speech to military families: every night, mark the day on a scale of one to ten. After two months, graph it. The worst days may not get easier, but they get further apart. That spacing is how you know you are moving.
- This tool is useful because it measures grief without demanding it be resolved. If your graph is not moving after months of work, that is information worth bringing to your clinician or to a new one.
- Progress after a suicide loss is not linear. The second year often hits harder than the first. But over time, the distance between the hardest moments lengthens. That is what forward movement looks like.

When the Clinical Fit Is the Issue

- Not all therapists have the training to address the specific layers of suicide bereavement. A clinician who specializes in trauma-informed grief work and understands this particular loss is worth seeking out.
- Many survivors work with two or three clinicians before finding the right fit. Six months of genuine effort without any sense of movement is a reasonable signal that something may need to change.
- Adding a peer support group alongside clinical care can also help when therapy alone has stalled. The healing power of support groups is something no clinical relationship fully replicates.

When the Work Itself Has Not Yet Begun

- Teri's clinician once said it is okay to stay in bed one day when the weight is simply too much. Rest is real. But when you do it a second day in a row, you are no longer resting. Something is settling in. That is not a judgment. It is a quiet signal worth noticing.
- Grief work asks you to look at things that are genuinely painful: the guilt, the unanswered questions, the idea of a future without the person you lost. Many survivors carry an unconscious belief that healing is a betrayal. It is not.
- If any of this resonates, it is worth bringing into your next session. Sometimes a post like this can open a door that has been hard to open on your own. The continuing bonds framework reminds us that healing is not leaving the person behind but finding a new way to carry them forward.

Prolonged Grief Disorder and What Comes Next

- Prolonged grief disorder is a recognized clinical condition where grief does not soften over time. It affects roughly 7 to 10 percent of bereaved people, with higher rates among suicide loss survivors. It is not weakness and it is not loving too much.
 - It has an evidence-based treatment developed at Columbia University with approximately a 70 percent response rate in clinical trials. You are not unhealable.
 - The [Columbia Center for Prolonged Grief](#) offers a self-assessment tool and a therapist finder. The [AFSP survivor hub](#) is another good starting point when you are not sure which direction to turn.
-

Source

<https://sunflowersaftersuicide.com/when-grief-stalls-after-suicide-loss/>