



The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is a 24-hour resource that many suicide loss survivors don't know is available to them for grief, not just for suicidal crisis. According to SAMHSA, as many as 77 percent of people who contact 988 are not suicidal at the time they call. This handout draws on peer experience and research to help survivors understand what 988 offers and how it fits alongside other supports.

988 Is for Grief, Not Just Crisis

- The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by call, text, or live chat. You do not need to be in suicidal crisis to reach out.
- According to SAMHSA, as many as 77 percent of Lifeline contacts come from people who are not suicidal at the time they call. Grief, anxiety, and emotional overwhelm are all valid reasons to connect.
- If you have been telling yourself 988 is only for people in active danger, set that belief down. It is not accurate, and it is keeping you from a resource that exists for moments exactly like yours.

What to Expect When You Connect

- 988 is confidential, and active rescue is intended to apply only when a counselor believes someone is in imminent danger, not simply because a caller is grieving. Grief and emotional distress on their own generally do not meet that bar.
- You do not need an opening line prepared. Something as simple as "I lost someone to suicide and I am having a really hard night" is enough. The counselor will take it from there.
- Crisis counselors at 988 are trained in trauma-informed care, active listening, suicide risk assessment, and supporting callers through grief, depression, anxiety, and a wide range of emotional situations.

Grief vs. Suicidal Crisis: Understanding the Difference

- Grief, even devastating grief, is a response to real loss. It comes in waves and does not mean your life has no value or future. A suicidal crisis involves thoughts of one's own death as a way to escape pain and a narrowing of perspective that can feel fixed.
- Grief after suicide loss often carries guilt, unanswered questions, and trauma responses that set it apart from other bereavement. Research from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center notes survivors face elevated risk for prolonged grief and, in some cases, suicidal thinking themselves.
- If a counselor hears signals of real danger, they are trained to shift their approach and help connect you to local safety resources. Knowing this should not prevent you from calling before things reach that point.

988 as One Tool Among Several

- 988 fills a gap that other resources cannot: it is available at 2am when your therapist's office is closed, the support group does not meet for another nine days, and your friends are asleep.
- Counselors vary in their familiarity with suicide bereavement specifically. If a call does not land the way you hoped, that reflects the individual counselor, not a verdict on whether 988 can help. Try again another night.
- There is no limit on how many times you can reach out. Calling on Wednesday night and again the following Sunday is not a burden. Use the line as many times as you need it.

Source

<https://sunflowersaftersuicide.com/988-for-suicide-loss-survivors/>