



Grieving the Future They Never Had After a Suicide Loss

Suicide loss survivors often carry two griefs at once, missing the person who died and mourning the future that person never got to have. This handout names the missed milestones, the differences across relationship types, and the harder, less discussed feelings of fear and relief that can sit underneath the grief. It draws on peer facilitation experience and suicide bereavement research to help survivors and the clinicians supporting them recognize this as a normal, common part of suicide loss.

The Future They Never Had Is a Grief of Its Own

- Suicide loss survivors often mourn two things at once, the person who died and the future that person never got to have.
- This future focused grief is separate from missing someone's voice, presence, or daily companionship, and it carries its own weight.
- Research on [suicide bereavement and prolonged grief](#) shows this grief can affect up to 43 percent of survivors, compared to 10 to 20 percent after other kinds of death.

The Milestones That Get Taken

- Prom, graduation, college, a first job, a wedding, and children or grandchildren are common milestones survivors grieve on their person's behalf.
- A specific milestone many parents encounter is the day the years without their child outnumber the years they actually had them.
- Weddings often carry a particular weight for suicide loss survivors, and [this post looks at that specifically](#).

Every Relationship Grieves a Different Future

- A spouse loses the future of growing old together, and this loss touches an entire shared future at once.
- A child who loses a parent loses the parent who was supposed to be there for future milestones, and this grief is often minimized.
- Friends carry a future focused grief for decades of shared life that will not happen, even when others do not recognize it as real grief.

The Fear and the Relief Underneath

- Many survivors privately wonder whether their person's mental health struggles would have continued, which is a reasonable question grounded in how mental illness actually works, not a betrayal of memory.
- Some survivors feel a complicated relief that their person is no longer suffering, and research recognizes this as a common, legitimate emotion.
- Guilt often follows relief within seconds, and working through that guilt is its own process, separate from this grief.

Carrying the Future They Never Had Forward

- Continuing bonds theory suggests survivors do not have to let go of a relationship to heal, and What's Your Grief explains how this works.
- Saying a person's name out loud on a hard milestone day is a small, concrete way to keep them present in the life you are actually living.
- For in-person peer support, SOS Madison meets twice a month, and AFSP offers resources for anyone who has lost someone to suicide.

Source

<https://sunflowersaftersuicide.com/grieving-the-future-they-never-had-after-a-suicide-loss/>