

Suicide Loss Rights

Experiencing a suicide loss is a disorienting and disruptive life experience. Unlike those who experience other traumatic losses, we are usually left to "get it together" on our own. We may also be made to feel that what happened was the result of there being "something wrong" with the victim, our families, or us, and we are treated accordingly. We also bear the ignorance of those whose knowledge of suicide is limited to the prevailing myths and misconceptions.

A Statement of Suicide Loss Rights

We have the right to grieve as we wish despite the unsupportive settings that we often find ourselves. Death is a normal life crisis; suicide is the ultimate abnormal life crisis. What we feel is the result of an abnormal and highly traumatic loss.

We have the right to be free of stigma. In our society suicide has a negative connotation. This afflicts us as it did those we lost.

We have the right to be angry about our loss and to be able to express it appropriately at the one we have lost or ourselves.

We have the right to feel responsible for things we did or did not do in relation to our loss. We may or may not come to feel differently.

We have the right to grieve in a manner and timeframe that works best for us. We don't have to "get over it."

We have the right to know "why." All who grieve yearn for the one lost. We also seek to understand what happened.

We have the right to regard our lost loved one as a victim. Suicide is the outcome of debilitation; it is not a choice or a decision.

We have the right to cooperation from police and the health care community if we seek information on how our loss came about.

We have the right to the truth about our loss. We should have access to information as early as possible, if we need it.

We have the right to know that we are not by definition candidates for psychotherapy or counseling, or that we must "get help."

We have the right to channel our experience to aid the suicidal or other suicide grievers, or to help others better understand either group.

We have the right to never be as we were before. Other ends to grief do not apply to us. We survive, but we do not "heal."