



## For Teens Whose Friend has Died by Suicide

*Compiled by students from Johnston High School, Johnston, Iowa*

This was written by students from Johnston High School who had a friend die by suicide. We hope these helpful suggestions help you as you are grieving the death of your friend.

### **Some Feelings to expect:**

- Hollowness
- Everything feels surreal
- It sucks

### **General Suggestions:**

- Don't be afraid to talk about it.
- Make a point to be with friends or adults who understand.
- Understand that people grieve differently.
- I would really emphasize how good it is to hang out with friends during a time like this.
- Don't expect or assume that your friends are doing OK—keep checking in with one another.
- It's OK to show your emotions, but be prepared that they may be very unpredictable and intense.
- Listen to music or watch movies to help you relax and take your mind off things for a little bit.
- Don't over think. Try not to think deeply to find meaning or analyze why it happened—it's counterproductive.
- Some people might not understand or know what to say, so it will feel like they're avoiding what happened, and this may anger you.
- Share memories—especially the funny stories.
- Find someone you can lean on—don't try to deal with things all on your own.

- Make sure you plan things to honor your friend's life on significant days like birthdays and the anniversary of the death.
- Eventually you will get to the point where you want to reach out and help others because of your experience, this really helps.
- Even if you expect the worst, you will always be able to find good things.
  - Here are some of the positive outcomes we have experienced:*
    - We are all closer now—our entire class is more connected, more unified.
    - We have an increased appreciation of our friends and family
    - We are more involved in others' lives, not just focused on ourselves.
    - We don't take things for granted like friendship, teams, making memories
- Be there for your friends—don't just think of yourself.
- Although you think it's going to be hard to continue to live your life without your friend, moving forward and doing your best is one of the best ways to honor your friend.

#### **Thoughts regarding the Visitation and Funeral:**

- The visitation was the hardest because it made it so real; we also feel it was very important to attend to show support to the family and to honor our friend.
- We believe that attending the funeral was important for us, too. It helped us to begin the process of closure.
- Until after the funeral, time stands still. One week felt like a year.

#### **Dealing with your worried Family Members:**

- Respectfully tell your family that you need your space, but let them be supportive.
- Let your family know it's okay for you to be alone some of the time.
- Reassure your family that you are okay—unless you're not.
- Respect that your family members care about you and are worried about you.
- Remember that everyone is tired, irritable, emotions are running high.