



Interventions with Bereavements after Suicide

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The suicide of a loved one can have a profound and sometimes devastating impact on those left behind, called suicide loss survivors. Bereavement after suicide may entail high levels of disorientation, guilt, regret, anger, shame, and trauma. Survivors sometimes also find their relationships with other people changed, as they struggle with the social stigma often placed on suicide, and the altered family relationships that have been changed by the feelings of guilt, blame, and failure that suicide may engender. Survivors may also be at risk for elevated rates of complicated grief and future suicidality themselves. All of this makes surviving the suicide of a loved one a potentially life-transforming ordeal that requires a level of support that goes beyond traditional grief counseling. Yet very few mental health training programs devote any time to training clinicians about the challenging work of suicide postvention – helping survivors cope with the tragic loss.

This workshop is designed specifically for mental health professionals who provide grief therapy for suicide loss survivors. It will provide a focused overview of the impact of suicide on survivors, and the clinical and support responses that are needed after a suicide occurs. The workshop will include didactic presentation, group discussion, case examples from the presenter's practice, and video clips from grief therapy sessions.



Abstracts

© 3rd International Conference on Loss, Bereavement & Human Resilience in Israel and the World: Facts, Insights & Implications, Eilat, Israel, January 14-17, 2019

Topics to be covered will include:

1. Research about who is a survivor and the risks to their own mental health and well-being that survivors may face
2. The psychological impact of suicide on survivors and common themes in the bereavement of survivors
3. What research with survivors tells us is needed to help with healing
4. The tasks of loss integration and recovery for survivors
5. Postvention options for survivors
6. Principles of postvention after client suicide
7. Principles of longer term clinical work with survivors
8. Examples of specific clinical techniques that can be of use in grief therapy with survivors

Educational Goals:

At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Offer a working definition of a suicide survivor
2. Identify at least five common themes in the impact of suicide on survivors
3. List tasks of psychological re-integration after suicide
4. Describe several options for intervention with survivors
5. Describe three categories of clinical technique with survivors.