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*Lived Experience of suicide
bereavement and the role of*



**Survivors of
Bereavement
by Suicide**

John Whitebrook



(Content reflects my own
experiences and not the
views of UWL)

Suicide Loss Survivor

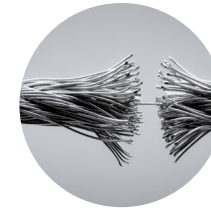
A suicide survivor is typically considered to have lost a family member/friend, with whom they had a significant relationship, and where their life is permanently shifted by the bereavement¹

Postvention

Postvention refers to the support and care offered to people who have been impacted by a suicide death²

'Postvention' activities are

"...to facilitate recovery after suicide and to prevent adverse outcomes including suicidal behaviour"²



Prone to stress, self-blame, anxiety, depression, increased risk of suicide³; 'Prolonged Grief Disorder'⁴

Sharing...

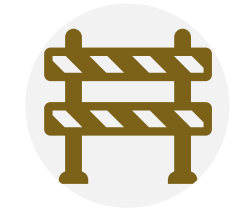
...experience with others has been shown to be a major alleviant of such conditions⁵



Survivors are often unaware of the frequency of their situation, and support available, and therefore do not seek help⁶

Men

Attempt control, put others' first; ⇨ depression, insomnia, substance abuse, ailments, & ↓ work⁷



Admitting need for help, self-medicating, over-work, esp. by men, are barriers to accepting support⁸

1. Schneider et al., 2011
2. Andriessen, 2009, p. 43
3. Testoni et al., 2019
4. Lenferink et al., 2022

5. Levi-Belz & Lev-Ari, 2019
6. Feigelman et al., 2018
7. Grad et al., 2017
8. Andriessen & Kryszynska, 2012

How is Suicide Bereavement Unique?

(If you agree that it is...)

- Trauma
 - Disbelief and Shock
- Guilt:
 - How did I not know?
 - I should have done more!
- Anger / Blame
- Stigma / Taboo

1. “The death is a life-changing experience,
2. The death differentiates you from your peers,
3. The death impacts on the family system.”

“Suicide-loss-survivors are at a higher risk of developing multi-morbidities in the form of physical and mental health disorders like anxiety, post-traumatic-stress-disorder, an elevated risk of psychiatric treatment admission and suicide.” (10. Ali & Rehna, 2022)

Article

Behind Closed Doors: The Stigma of Suicide Loss Survivors

“There is profound fear of stigma and associative concerns which leads to outright suicide-denial.” (12. Ohayi, 2019)



International Journal of
Environmental Research
and Public Health



Article

“It Changes Your Orbit”: The Impact of Suicide and Traumatic Death on Adolescents as Experienced by Adolescents and Parents

Karl Andriessen ^{1,*}, Karolina Kryszynska ¹, Debra Rickwood ² and Jane Pirkis ¹

(9. Andriessen et al., 2020)

“Bereaved families were viewed as contributing to their loved one's death through abuse, neglect, denial, or failure to provide adequate help. Bereaved families were seen as emotionally strong, victims of the suicide, or as contaminated by their association.” (11. Sheehan et al., 2018)

Ohayi Egyptian Journal of Forensic Sciences (2019) 9:48
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s41935-019-0153-3>

Egyptian Journal of
Forensic Sciences

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Open Access

“Doctor, please don't say he died by suicide”: exploring the burden of suicide survivorship in a developing country



What are the needs of those bereaved by suicide?

- Family & friends
- Workplace
- Healthcare system
- Legal system
- Society incl. the media
- Peer support

Effective postvention support can be viewed as contributing toward suicide prevention among those people who are bereaved by suicide.

(2. Andriessen, 2009).

Can Postvention Be Prevention?

Karl Andriessen

Suicide Prevention Project of the Flemish Mental Health Centers, Gent, Belgium

“It’s a battle for eyeballs and suicide is clickbait”: The media experience of suicide reporting in India

Gregory Armstrong^{1*}, Lakshmi Vijayakumar^{2,3}, Anish V. Cherian⁴, Kannan Krishnaswamy⁵

‘Werther effect’.

(13. Niederkrotenthaler et al., 2020).

Socio-cultural factors played a major role in determining the newsworthiness of a particular incident. (14. Armstrong et al., 2020)

A recent Australian study indicated that, although mutually desired among all parties, efforts at incorporating lived experience into co-creation are not having the desired outcome (15. Pearce et al., 2022).

1/5 survivors in Europe attend a support group (8. Andriessen & Kryszinska, 2012)

Despite a growing need, most support comes from the voluntary sector.

(16. Pitman, 2018).

There are many misconceptions surrounding suicide and suicide bereavement. SoBS / Papyrus / Rethink ‘Myth Busting’ Campaign – QR code:



Summary

Suicides have a devastating impact upon whole families

The effects are far-reaching, radically, and permanently changing the lives of those left behind

- Public considers suicide as something that happens to 'other people' rather than it being a very real risk to everyone.
- Often, there is no immediate assistance available, and survivors' trauma is often exacerbated by encounters with officialdom and some unsympathetic individuals within.
- Coping does appear to get better over time, but the adjustment is far from linear.
- For core, long-term, meaningful support, survivors rely to the very greatest extent on charities.

The only UK-based organisation offering peer-led support to adults impacted by suicide loss. We help individuals support each other, at the time of their loss and in the months and years that follow. We aim to provide safe, confidential environments where people can share their experiences and feelings, giving and gaining support from each other. <https://uksobs.org/>

Vision

To be the leading advocate for those bereaved or impacted by suicide, ensuring no one has to face their loss alone.

Mission

Offer timely and ongoing peer support , to adults bereaved or impacted by suicide loss, providing hope, healing, and a voice to those left behind.

Questions?

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