



RESPONDING TO SUICIDE

A RESOURCE FROM

REBOOT RECOVERY



POSTVENTION

While REBOOT Recovery exists in part to prevent suicide, we realize that we are not immune to it. Despite our best efforts, among the many lives healed from this program are individuals who continue to struggle with mental, emotional and spiritual health. Unfortunately, suicide is a reality for the population we serve. That's why in addition to our efforts in prevention, we must also educate ourselves on postvention.

Postvention is a term that refers to **"the response and support available to affected individuals or the workgroup as a whole, designed to alleviate the negative effects of a suicide or suicidal behavior"** (Pruitt 2019). Our goal is to create a unified response and a community of support for those affected by this event. Below are some steps we'd like for you to take should an event like this occur.

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

FIRST, CONTACT OUR TEAM

Please get in touch with someone at headquarters to let them know what has happened. We are here for you and want to join your efforts in this process. Suicide is a case by case situation and together we can come up with the next best steps.

Contact Jason Horn at either jason.horn@rebootrecovery.com or 931-980-5562.

THEN REACH OUT TO THE FAMILY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

This may very well be the most difficult step. Maybe you've already picked up the phone to call but you had to hang up while it was still ringing. Or maybe you've already shown up to their house but couldn't get out of your car. Families of persons who died by suicide can become isolated for these very reasons (Harvard Health Publishing 2009). Even though it may be uncomfortable, don't let your fears of not knowing what to say or what to do keep you from reaching out. Treat this loss as you would any other kind of death and reach out to the family in need.

Here are some practical suggestions of ways to help the family. Always start by asking them,

- "What can I do to help?" (Harvard Health Publishing 2009)
- Make meals
- Assist with home maintenance tasks (e.g. watering plants)
- Offer to run errands
- Help with children (e.g. give rides, watch for a couple of hours)

NEXT, INFORM OTHERS WHO WERE IN THE SAME COURSE AS THIS INDIVIDUAL

Out of respect for the people who came to know this individual through REBOOT you should share the news of their death with them. This comes as part of your responsibility as leader and doesn't matter whether this group graduated a year ago or is actively running. Honest and truthful communication can help reduce the spread of false information and is key to being respectful of the family (Pruitt 2019).

Be prepared in case group members experience a crisis of their own in reaction to the news. Sometimes suicide can produce a ripple effect and it is critical to contain the crisis and those affected by it. In addition to using the skill set you already have with helping people in crisis, here are some additional resources.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO USE:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
- Military Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255, Press 1
- Connect them with a local mental health provider

DO'S	DONT'S	RATIONALE
DO say "died by suicide", "took their own life", or "ended their life"	DON'T say "committed suicide"	These phrases are more readily acceptable while the word "committed" implies wrongfulness like when someone commits sin or a crime (Ravitz 2018).
DO express concern and tell the family you are sorry for their loss	DON'T say generic assurances like "he/she is in a better place now" or "healing takes time"	Although you mean well, these statements can come across as empty and meaningless. Instead, be sincere and genuine (Harvard Health Publishing).
DO ask how they feel	DON'T assume their feelings	By asking them directly, this gives them the opportunity to express their feelings out loud. Everyone handles loss in their own unique way so there's no way to know how they truly feel (The University of Texas at Austin 2017).
DO Listen	DON'T try to come up with an explanation	Be prepared to sit in silence and use nonverbal gestures like nodding your head or holding their hand to validate that you are listening. Avoid coming up with your own explanation for the suicide. Suicide is complex and should be treated as such (The University of Texas at Austin 2017).
DO have patience	DON'T set a time limit	Give people their time and space that they need to process things and don't be discouraged if they do not accept your support right away. Be ready when they're ready (Jesuit Social Services n.d.).
Do say the name of the person who died	DON'T be judgemental	It is important to speak the person's name aloud to recognize them while not imposing any judgements on their action (Ravitz 2018).

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

In the midst of everything you have going on it can be easy to let your own self-care slip through the cracks. Between phone calls, making arrangements, and showing up for everyone else you may not have the time or energy to keep up your own healthy habits. It is not a selfish act to take care of yourself because it allows you to be there for others to the best of your abilities. Eat well, get sleep, exercise, spend time with those you are closest to...whatever it is that makes you a happy, healthy human being, do it.

DOWN THE ROAD

The date this person died will become a disheartened anniversary for many. Be aware that when this day comes around people may experience painful memories which could trigger emotions like anger, shock, and sadness. Be ready to answer those calls and if possible, spend time in person with the people most affected on this day.

REFERENCES

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2. Ravitz, Jessica. "The Words to Say -- and Not to Say -- about Suicide." CNN, Cable News Network, 11 June 2018, www.cnn.com/2018/06/09/health/suicide-language-words-matter/index.html.
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