



**POSTVENTION**  
AUSTRALIA

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
FOR THE BEREAVED  
BY SUICIDE

# It's just happened

## The first few days

### Introduction

We know that this can be an overwhelming and confusing time. Although each experience of suicide loss is unique, we hope that you find some comfort and helpful suggestions in the resources from Postvention Australia.

You may be flooded with thoughts that are confusing as you try to understand how this could have happened. Initially, many people experience shock and disbelief; intense distress; a need to understand why and how; or perhaps anger, guilt or shame.

The sudden nature of a suicide death may also mean you are experiencing the effects of trauma. Grief and trauma can affect how we think, behave and how we feel in our bodies.

### Questions

You may find that you are filled with a barrage of questions: Why and how could this have happened? How could someone I love take their own life? You may find yourself going over and over events and conversations as you try and find answers to these questions.

Searching for answers can be relentless and exhausting. It is also a very understandable response to hearing the news of a loved one's suicide. At times will be difficult to stop going over things even when you want to.

In time, you may come to understand that the reasons behind a person's suicide are usually complex with a multitude of contributing factors; and may never be completely known.

### What can be helpful

At this point, some simple steps may be helpful. For anyone who is bereaved:

- Try to take care of the basics. Eating, sleeping, light exercise. These can be difficult when grieving and traumatised so eat small meals several times a day.
- Connect with others who care about you. Support from those who know and understand you is very beneficial and can be comforting.
- It can be helpful to be aware that others around you may be having difficulties as well. Being patient with yourself and others can be a good place to start.
- If there are things to do, people to speak to, and you do not feel up to it, reach out to others for help. It is better not to put too much pressure on yourself to function in your usual way.

### Practical steps

In these first few days and weeks there can be many demands and you could find yourself dealing with situations you haven't dealt with before. The police, the coroner, arranging a funeral or memorial service and legal and financial matters. You may also have questions about how to deal with social media accounts and other digital platforms. We have particular suggestions for managing these in the booklet and online versions of the care pack available on the Postvention Australia website.

It can be extremely challenging and distressing to deal with these situations especially when there are bureaucratic requirements. It can help to ask a trusted friend or family member to take on some of these tasks for you or to assist you in making arrangements.

### For more information and support

**Postvention Australia** | 1300 024 357 | [postventionaustralia.org](http://postventionaustralia.org) | [info@postventionaustralia.org](mailto:info@postventionaustralia.org)  
Information and resources

**StandBy Support After Suicide** | 1300 727 247 | [standbysupport.com.au](http://standbysupport.com.au)  
24/7 national phone response; support and resources

**National Indigenous Postvention Service** | 1800 805 801 | [thirrili.com.au](http://thirrili.com.au)  
24/7 national phone response; community support and advocacy

**Support After Suicide** | 1800 943 415 | [supportaftersuicide.org.au](http://supportaftersuicide.org.au) | [aftersuicide@jss.org.au](mailto:aftersuicide@jss.org.au)  
Counselling and group support (NSW and VIC); national online support