

## What I have Learned about Grief and Myself in the Year Since Our Son's Suicide

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Just as it is necessary for a parent to keep changing the relationship with his child as the child grows and matures, so at a child's death it is also necessary (though painful) to begin to structure a final, realistic, enduring relationship that will provide a comfortable substitute for the love and hope a parent enjoys with a living child.

When we lose a loved one, the loss leaves within us a hole that he or she once occupied. The greater the love, the bigger and deeper the hole. Time will heal the wound, but it is what we put into the hole (in the form of love and compassion, caring and sharing with others) that determines whether we will ever become whole again, or if we will for the rest of our lives be emotionally handicapped and deformed.

While others may find this controversial, I have come to realise that suicide is just another way to die and quite a formal way for the emotionally handicapped. The problem many times is the impossibility of recognising a terminal emotional handicap.

As simple and self-evident as the following statements seem to be, I believe that in their true meaning is a real hope for recovery.

There are only two ways to handle grief: suppress it, or deal with it. I am sure we all know which way is best and why.

The only way to get over grief is TO GO THROUGH IT! We must WORK to overcome grief. Recognised for what it is, The Compassionate Friends meetings are a form of GRIEF WORK.

There is a choice involved in how long one grieves. In the end we must ourselves choose to recover. The Compassionate Friends can play an important role in grief recovery.

The emotional massage and therapy we experience while talking and sharing with other bereaved parents is without reasonable alternative for our emotional recovery and continued well-being.

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