

Social Media After a Suicide Loss: Tips for Parents (Information provided by Riverside Trauma Center and Samaritans)

Losing someone to suicide is a terribly painful event. Your son or daughter may experience a lot of emotions all at once. There is no one way of grieving the loss of a loved one. Grief is a process of healing that takes different courses for different people. Grief may never be entirely finished, but it can become more and more manageable in your child's daily life. Try not to set time limits on your child's grief, or compare his/her feelings to anyone else's. Many young people use social media in a way to stay connected to the person who has died and to others who share this loss. Here are some tips to guide you if your child uses social networking as a way to express his/her feelings:

1. To the extent you can, monitor the site. Teens in despair and crisis might post messages that should be brought to the attention of parents, school administrators, or other professionals.
2. Remind your child that as with all social media, other people can see what he/she posts.
3. Check in with your child regularly. Ask how he/she is feeling and do not be afraid to bring up the loss. From day to day, reactions may change. It is important that your child knows you are there and available to listen and support what he/she is experiencing and feeling.
4. If your child is grieving, consider other ways in conjunction with social media sites for him/her to express his/her feelings. This may include music, art, small social gatherings with friends supervised by an adult, talking to a professional, or joining a support group. Teens can also call the Samaritans TEEN LINE at 1-800-252-TEEN (8336).
5. Be aware of the time your child is spending on media sites. Make sure your child is not isolating himself/herself and that he/she continues to be involved with activities and friends.
6. Using a social networking site can be a very healthy way to grieve, but remind your child that there are multiple ways to express feelings. Encourage your child to talk in person with other people and to let others know how he/she is doing.
7. You may need support yourself. If you do, find someone who you can talk to and who can give you support. You can always call the Samaritan 24-Hour Helpline at 1-877-870-HOPE (4673) with any questions, concerns, or if you just need someone to listen.