

## SUICIDE POSTVENTION SUPPORT:

# WHAT TO SAY AND DO TO HELP OTHERS HEAL.



When you know someone who's been impacted by suicide, it's so hard to know what to say. How can you console them when they're going through the unthinkable? That is what **postvention** is all about – it's about supporting those who are grieving a suicide. Use the following information as a guide for what to say and do during postvention.

### **“You don’t have to go through this alone.”**

- Sit with them now, even in silence. Your presence can be healing.
- Don't push for details. Let them take the lead.
- Recognize that there is no “right” way to grieve. It is a deeply personal response to a traumatic event.
- You may feel like you want to fix things – but don't rush to find an answer to why it happened.
- Avoid saying things like “They're in a better place” or “I know how you feel.”

### **“What can I do for you today?”**

- Be there to help with meals, childcare, errands or anything else they need.
- Offer to connect them with support groups or local grief counselors.
- Encourage rest and hydration. Remind them that they can step away when social situations get overwhelming.

### **“I’m worried about you.”**

- If someone shows signs of intense hopelessness, isolation, or suicidal thoughts, gently suggest talking to a mental health provider.
- Offer to help find a counselor or support group that specializes in suicide loss.

### **“I’m here for you now, and in the future.”**

- Keep reaching out in the weeks and months to come. Grief has no timeline.
- Acknowledge important dates (birthdays, anniversaries), when grief can resurface.

As you support someone who's grieving, be sure to take care of yourself, too. Postvention can be emotionally challenging. So be sure to practice self-care, or, if you're feeling overwhelmed, reach out to a professional for help.

**Postvention is prevention.**  
**It helps survivors heal and reduces the risk of further tragedy.**

Suicide loss  
**SURVIVORS**  
can make a

**DIFFERENCE**

Call or text 988 for mental health crisis support.  
Text “TALK” to 988 | Visit: [vdh.virginia.gov/suicide-postvention](https://vdh.virginia.gov/suicide-postvention)

**VDH** VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH

## SUICIDE POSTVENTION SUPPORT:

# WHAT TO SAY WHEN PEOPLE ASK, “WHAT CAN I DO?”

Your loved one has died by suicide. And chances are, your friends and family have said, “If you need anything at all, let me know.” This flyer can help you ask for support in the days, months and even years ahead. Print out a few of these lists, mark those items you can use assistance with, and share them with those who want to help.

### I would like help with:

#### My family

- ☐ Pick up my children from school or activities
- ☐ Babysit for a few hours
- ☐ Walk our dog
- ☐ Feed our pets

#### Feeding my family and visitors

- ☐ Breakfast
- ☐ Lunch
- ☐ Dinner
- ☐ Snacks
- ☐ Coffee/tea
- ☐ Paper plates, utensils, and cups

Dietary restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please use freezer-safe bags labeled with the date and contents.*

#### Home management

- ☐ Get groceries
- ☐ Help with laundry
- ☐ Clean the house
- ☐ Water plants
- ☐ Collect my mail
- ☐ Take out the trash/recycling
- ☐ Mow/rake/shovel snow

#### Managing the services

- ☐ Help me make funeral arrangements
- ☐ Help with transportation to/from airports and funeral services
- ☐ Arrange for food during visitation
- ☐ Prepare photos/slide show for services
- ☐ Help write my loved one's story for the paper

#### Making sure I'm okay

- ☐ Help me find a therapist, support group or grief counselor
- ☐ Check in on me, not just now, but in the times to come.
- ☐ Your care will help me get through this.

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

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