The numbers are staggering. More than 90 percent of those who die by suicide have a diagnosable psychiatric illness such as bipolar disorder, major depression, or some other depressive illness. Those who additionally suffer from alcoholism, drug dependency, or who have genetic predispositions are at even greater risk.

Falling into the abyss of grief.

Grief for suicide survivors is a nebulous period of intense emotional, mental and physical upheaval. Initially you may experience an numbing sense of shock and denial. Aching sadness and despair may fill your days, along with anger, guilt, shame, anxiety and confusion. It is common to tumble into periods of depression, loneliness and isolation. You may become forgetful or feel physically and mentally incapacitated and overwhelmed. You may become enraged with your loved one for thrusting you into such a painful situation, or feel intense anger at the social stigma some perceive is attached to suicide. These responses are normal. They are road signs along the path to eventual acceptance which comes slowly as you recognize, embrace, and work through your emotions.

This journey is not linear, it is filled with painful hurdles, set-backs and detours. But if you ignore the opportunity to experience the depths of your grief and find your much-needed support, your emotional wounds may not heal. The incidence of severe depression, symptoms resembling post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide are higher among those facing this difficult loss.

You are a suicide survivor.

A survivor of suicide is a family member or friend of someone who died by suicide. Reaching out to other suicide survivors provides tremendous help. You can express yourself safely in an atmosphere of empathy and support, finding strength among peers who know firsthand what you are going through. You can't reclaim the life you lived before this loss, but as a survivor you can discover a new version of normal — one that honors your loss and allows you to move on in healthy and productive ways. NAMI can help you achieve this.

You are not alone.

NAMI (the National Alliance for Mental Illness), offers an array of peer education and training programs, as well as initiatives and services for individuals, family members, health care providers and the general public. NAMI's education and support programs provide relevant information, valuable insight and the opportunity to engage in support networks.

Your grief is safe with us.

We are suicide survivors. We are your peers. We share your pain of loss and hope for understanding. Let us help.