

25 Suggestions for Survivors

By Iris Bolton

1. Know you can survive; you may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with “why” it happened until you no longer need to know “why” or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings but that all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, and forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy; you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself. It’s O.K. to express it.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do. Guilt can turn into regret, through forgiveness.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will act on those thoughts.
8. Remember to take one moment or one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don’t be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence on another’s life.
13. Expect setbacks. If emotions return like a tidal wave, you may only be experiencing a remnant of grief, an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain in your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as Compassionate Friends or Survivors of Suicide groups. If there is not a group near you, ask a professional to help you start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, such as headaches, loss of appetite, or inability to sleep.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go. Letting go doesn’t mean forgetting.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and even go beyond just surviving.

*Iris Bolton is a pioneer in the field of helping survivors after the suicide of a loved one. Her list of suggestions for “Beyond Surviving” is a classic resource used by suicide loss survivors everywhere. Iris is the author of [*My Son, A Guide to Healing after Death, Loss, or Suicide*](#) and *Voices of Healing and Hope: Conversations on Grief**

after Suicide. Her books and tapes are available from Bolton Press: 770-645-1886, boltonpress.com, or contactus@boltonpress.com