



Sample Grief Letter written by a loss survivor to her closest friends and co-workers:

I've been reading a lot about suicide, suffering, and the grieving process. I wanted to share with you some of what I've learned. My hope is it will help you understand a little more about my journey. I'm sending this just to those I'm closest to - those who have been around often these first three months.

First, I want you to know you have all been true caregivers who love me. I don't know if I would've made it through three months without my boy without you guys loving and praying for me. I know you aren't comfortable & aren't certain with how to help me given the depth of this tragedy. I don't always know what I need either.

Please take this "grief letter" in the spirit in which it is intended... to be helpful and not hurtful...

When XXX first died I was numb, confused and just plain sick. I also felt God's presence in a deeper way than I ever had. He is so good to us.

But now it's been just over 3 months. Now the numbness has worn off. Now I don't "feel" God with me as much even though I know he's here. Now I am facing the holidays. Now I've completed Grief Share. Now everyone's gone back to their day to day routines.

What I have learned so far is that grief is complicated. I have learned it will take far, far, longer than I ever imagined to "process" this. I don't know what "process" even means. There is no putting this behind me - I am changed forever. I am learning where I am with my emotions, my confusion, and my physical and spiritual state are all normal. My baby isn't just dead - he took his own life. There are layers to this that must be dealt with. I can't walk around it - I have to walk through it.

Here are some things that are helpful right now in this stage of grief:

- Listen compassionately.
- Please don't correct me if I repeat myself. I know some of you may be irritated by hearing the same stories or how I'm feeling. Please just listen.
- Laugh with me when I'm able. But please don't try to "cheer me up." If I'm down let me be down but if I'm ornery please go with it :)
- Please don't try to "teach" or "make it better" in some way. You don't need to "fix" me.

- Tell me I was a good Mom if you were around me & XXX. Give me specific examples or reasons why you believe that. I need this very much.
- I have felt especially loved by people who have read books about suicide. Thank you. Thank you. I know you are in this with me for the long haul and by doing a little research you have learned it's just that - a LONG haul. This has helped me feel that the pressure is off to "get better."
- Please don't say things like "I can imagine if it were me I'd need..." You can't imagine. And while I know NONE of you are trying to be hurtful it nonetheless minimizes my suffering when you say, "I know" in response to how I am feeling. Just listen.
- Food. This has been so wonderful! Thank you for cooking extras and for surprising us with take-out :)
- Prayer is so appreciated. And I've been very comforted when you tell me specific bible verses you may be praying for me.
- I can't talk casually about XXX's death - so quick conversations at work aren't possible. When I talk about XXX I go ALL the way or NONE of the way. So please don't be offended if I'm short with you if you ask how I am while I'm at work. And don't be offended that I don't take lunch. I really just want to concentrate when I can - because those days are still not happening every day so I need to make the most of them when they do. Thank you so much for understanding.
- Be willing to wade into my grossness and ask questions - even if they offend me. Trust me, I'll tell you when you offend me as some of you know oh too well! I am grateful for your willingness to risk me snapping back at you. Thank You.
- Please be patient with me. What I've listed above is where I am now. It is not possible to know where I'll be emotionally in a month or in a year. Like I said in the beginning of this email - grief is more complicated than I ever imagined.

I love you guys. Thank you for standing by me on this gross, unexpected, unwanted journey.