

SUICIDE SURVIVORS

DEFINING NEEDS AND INTERVENTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

- My Background
 - The Family Loss Project
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- Overview
 - Prominent themes for survivors
 - Risk factors for developing complicated grief
 - Elements of effective interventions

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Qualifiers

- Adult survivors
- Not applicable to all survivors, & not limited to just survivors
- Based on both empirical research and clinical observation

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PROMINANT THEMES FOR SURVIVORS

- WHY? - Making Sense
- RESPONSIBILITY - Guilt & Blame
- SHAME - Stigma
- ANGER - Rejection & Abandonment

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PROMINANT THEMES FOR SURVIVORS

- TRAUMA - Shock & Horror
- RELIEF - The End Of Suffering
- SUICIDALITY – Why Go On?
- SORROW – Grief & Yearning

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RISK FACTORS FOR COMPLICATED GRIEF

Before the Death

- Pre-existing Psychiatric Disorder
- Quality Of The Relationship
 - Dependency
 - Conflictual

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**RISK FACTORS FOR
COMPLICATED GRIEF**
At the Time of Death

- Forewarning
- Method / Witnessing
 - Dissociation & flashback symptoms
- Encounters with Police/Rescue/ME
- Location
- Immediate Social Network Response

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**RISK FACTORS FOR
COMPLICATED GRIEF**
After the Death

- Longer Term Social Support
 - Blame from others
 - Self – stigmatization
 - Isolation
- Family Disruption
 - Blame
 - Secrecy
 - Communication shut-down

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**RISK FACTORS FOR
COMPLICATED GRIEF**
After the Death

- High Risk Grievers
 - High risk categories
 - Isolated elderly males
 - Mothers
 - Siblings, esp. sisters
 - High distress responses

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INTERVENTIONS

Postvention Is Prevention

- Identify “At-risk” Survivors & Direct Into Services
- Reduce Risk Factors
- Reduce Isolation & Assist With Social Disruption
- Psychoeducation
- Provide A Safe Context For Doing “Griefwork”
- Family Guidance

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INTERVENTIONS

Options

- Organizational Postvention
- Survivor To Survivor Outreach
 - On scene
 - Stabilization, risk assessment, facilitating later involvement (Frank’s data)
 - Later follow-up
- Groups
 - Open, peer led
 - Structured, usually professionally led
 - Advantages/disadvantages

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INTERVENTIONS

Options

- Individual Counseling
 - Better monitoring of response
 - Tailored to the particular needs of the survivor
 - In depth working though with neutral, safe person
- Family Counseling
 - Psychoeducation
 - Reduce blame, guilt
 - Improve communication

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INTERVENTIONS

Options

- Bibliotherapy & Internet
 - Group therapy "lite"
 - Private and "dosed"
 - .afsp.org; suicidology.org; griefnet.org
- Survivor conferences
 - Psychoeducation
 - Create community
- Network interventions
- Activism

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- AFSP/NIMH Conference
- Areas for Future Research
 1. Defining and identifying survivors of suicide
 2. Individual vulnerability to distress after suicide
 3. Impact of suicide on family functioning and suicide risk

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Areas for Future Research
 4. Interventions for survivors of suicide
 5. Special populations
 6. Research strategies

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WRAP-UP

- Questions?
- Comments?

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