



# THE ROAD AHEAD

....A guide to dealing with the impact of suicide



ACCEPTANCE  
UNDERSTAND  
SEARCH FAITH  
HEAL  
HELP  
HOPE  
LOVE  
TEARS  
STORY  
IMPACT  
TIME  
RESPECT  
MISSING  
SAD  
HOPE  
ANNIVERSARY  
LEARN  
CRISIS  
HARD  
LOVE  
BELIEVE  
ALONE  
PAIN  
JOURNEY  
LEARN  
LONGING  
ANGRY  
DAY BY DAY  
HOPE  
SHOCK  
LOSS  
FEAR  
CONFUSED  
BEREAVEMENT  
COMFORT  
GUILT  
REMORSE  
GRIEF

This booklet is dedicated to all the loved ones who left too soon and is written in memory of our beautiful young son, Daniel James O'Hare, who took his own life on March 28th 2005, aged 19.

We never got the chance to say goodbye. We miss and love you so very much Daniel. Until we meet again, goodnight, God bless, love you... Shirls, Pops, Wor Kid, n Benji, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

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# THE ROAD AHEAD...

## FOREWORD.

“Suicide was a word that had never come into our lives. Perhaps in a crossword, but it was something that happened to other people. It didn’t happen to a family like ours! Not that we consider ourselves special, just a normal family. We don’t look any different to anyone else. We wouldn’t stand out in a crowd and you wouldn’t look twice if you passed us in the street. I now know suicide knows no social boundaries. It affects anyone; regardless of age, gender, status, religion, race or culture.

It was a bolt out of the blue when our 19-year-old son Daniel, our beautiful, funny, intelligent and popular son, took his own life on what seemed a day like any other – Bank Holiday Easter Monday 2005.

It felt like our whole world crumbled and that life would never be the same again. Every emotion was intensified. Your body aches and the deep, deep feeling of despair can be hard to endure. You may not sleep and when you do close your eyes, maybe haunted by flashbacks. When you do eventually sleep, the respite from grief maybe brief, as when you open your eyes you are hit by the reality that this is not a dream, it is for real.

When you are trying to rebuild your life, you may have to try and learn to live life another way. It helped to take each day as it came rather than thinking too far into the future. I call it a road and some of us are further on in our journeys and have travelled a long way. For some, they are just beginning their journey.

The road maybe bumpy one with uphill struggles and we sometimes find ourselves back at the start of our journey on our “bad days”, but the road does become easier. I won’t use clichés like ‘time is a great healer’ - it’s not. Time allows us to learn to live another way. Time gives you the strength to try to create another way. A way where we never stop missing our loved ones, but we learn to live without them.

The If U Care Share Foundation was set up by our family to prevent suicide and to provide practical and emotional support to people affected by a death by suicide. Drawing on its years of experience it has developed and produced this second edition of the Road Ahead, in the hope that it gives understanding to those that read it.

Whether you meet other travellers on the same road or not, know that you don't have to travel this journey on your own. There are thousands of us travelling this road that have experienced the impact of losing someone we loved or cared for to suicide."

*Shirley Smith, Mother of Daniel O'Hare. If U Care Share Foundation*

## **INTRODUCTION.**

Death is a part of life. Losing your loved one to suicide is particularly hard, and bereavement by suicide is undoubtedly different and unique. Those bereaved do not "get over it", but with support and understanding they can reconcile themselves to its reality.

Suicide is a very personal act therefore those affected will experience a personal form of bereavement, depending upon the relationship they had with the person who died. This booklet is not like a recipe book telling you what to expect from suicidal bereavement; regrettably it is not that easy. The impact of a suicidal death affects everyone differently.

Frequently suicide statistics are quoted flippantly without the realization of the harsh reality for those bereaved by suicide. The thousands of people that have lost their loved ones will have their lives changed forever. The legacy of suicide can be a heavy burden without support and we recommend that people seek help, if they have not already done so.

The primary aim of the booklet "The Road Ahead" is to provide information and support. Peppered throughout each section are quotes highlighting individual lived experiences.

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

The first section begins with grieving. This is followed by a second section covering practical issues and a third part that explains the investigation of a death by suicide. The fourth contains pieces of poetry and readings that have helped on some of the journeys undertaken. To conclude there are useful contacts for support.

## **LANGUAGE.**

Throughout the booklet we have refrained from using the terminology “committed suicide”. The phrase “committed suicide” can be unhelpful and in some cases people may find it offensive for the bereaved and can suggest their loved one has committed a crime.

This phrase, which is used frequently and flippantly by the media slices through those affected and helps perpetuate the social stigma associated with suicide. The following are appropriate phrases to use when talking or reporting on a death by suicide, ‘lost to suicide’, ‘died by suicide’, and ‘died through suicide’.

## WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

In the past, people were often reluctant to mention the word 'suicide'. It was avoided, or talked about in hushed tones, or the focus of conversation was the judgement of the bereaved and their families.

Individuals often do not know how to approach those affected and may avoid any contact with the bereaved.

The following are guidelines from Sr. Sheila O'Kelly of Bray Suicide Bereavement Support on what to say to those who have been bereaved to suicide:

- **Do say you are sorry about what has happened.**
- **Do allow the bereaved to express their pain.**
- **Do let genuine care and concerns show and be felt.**
- **Do reassure them that what they are feeling is normal.**
- **Do show respect no matter what their story.**
- **Do allow the person to be where they're at in their grief, not where you want them to be.**
- **Do support their search for meaning.**
- **Don't say you know how they feel.**
- **Don't push your religious or value beliefs on someone vulnerable.**
- **Don't minimise their pain.**
- **Don't let your discomfort with their tears come across to them.**
- **Don't deny their guilt or encourage blame.**
- **Don't avoid mentioning the deceased's name.**

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

Losing someone to suicide is particularly difficult and different people may respond in various ways. Circumstances surrounding a death vary greatly and some people cope better than others. The following is an attempt to outline some natural reactions individuals may experience when a suicide occurs:

Immediate responses.....

“I felt like my whole world fell apart when I heard he died”

“We always thought that this sort of thing happened to other people, not us”

“Hearing that I had lost a brother to suicide unleashed a plethora of mixed emotions”

Nothing can prepare you for the news that someone you love has ended their lives. Your perception of your entire world disintegrates. The nature of the death maybe beyond your comprehension. Whether the news of the death has been broken to you by someone else, or whether you have had the uniquely traumatic experience of discovering the body, disbelief and shock are frequently the immediate reactions to suicide.



## **SHOCK.**

“As a family we were literally plunged into unexplainable shock”

“No, this cannot be happening to me”

“I could not equate his name with suicide in the same sentence. In my mind it was incomprehensible and my heart was wounded forever. I did not believe that I could ever get over the shock; he died by suicide”

The initial shock, denial, disbelief can be intense and shock helps protect us until we are able to deal with the reality of our loss. You may feel that this death has come from nowhere, or there were no outward signs. Even if someone had previous suicide attempts, their death still comes as a shock. Initially it may be very difficult to believe that this has really happened. Sometimes it may take weeks even months for what has happened to seem real. The inability to accept the reality is a natural response and can be a built in mechanism to protect us from the impact of the shock.

The manner of death may be particularly difficult and you may not want to believe your loved one has taken their own life and search for other explanations. You may feel as though this is happening to someone else.

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS.**

Some people who are suffering as a result of a personal tragedy may turn to alcohol or drugs to help relieve their pain. Although this may offer short-term relief, use of either also impact on how you feel and cope. Alcohol and drugs can encourage risky behaviour, which can put you or another person at risk. If you are using alcohol or drugs in this manner, you may find it helpful to speak with your GP.

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

## WHY?

“Why did she not ask for help?”

“Why was there no help?”

“Why did God allow this to happen?”

“Why did they do this to their family and friends?”

“Why... why... why... why...?”

“Why did they do it?”

It's one of the first questions you might ask yourself and others may ask you....Why? It maybe hard to accept that you may never know the answer to this question. There maybe a frantic search for a note that will give an explanation, but even if a note is found, it rarely answers all the questions. Notes may not properly express how your loved one was feeling at that moment in time.

You may begin an extensive search for answers to many questions. Most people will reach a point where they realise they may never know all the answers. Sometimes in the search for a reason, families and friends will have different opinions. This may cause conflict and attributing blame can be a negative consequence when searching for the reason “why?”

“Why?” can also involve repeatedly going over and over the last hours, days and weeks of their lives. We search in hindsight for some clues or signs as to their intent.

This type of questioning and persistent searching may lead to the other questions “what if?” or “if only?”. This may lead to additional emotional answers until the realisation and acceptance arrives we may never know why.

Attempting to understand “why?” and the reasons for the death is complicated and incomprehensible.

## **STIGMA AND SHAME.**

“Stigma is not just a matter of using the wrong word or action. Stigma is about disrespect”

“The stigma I expected after the death of our daughter prevented me from seeking help”

“Sometimes my neighbours, friends and work colleagues intentionally or unintentionally added to my grief by engaging in an avoidance approach. They added to the burden of my loss and bought into the stereotypical assumptions of the stigma associated with suicide”

Sadly, there is still an element of stigma, which surrounds suicide. It can be further complicated by the perception that the loss of a loved one to suicide is a failure by the person or their family to deal with some emotional issues. Regardless of whether the stigmas are individual or societal, it may cause added distress to those affected. Although there has been some progress in addressing societal stigma, we still have a long way to go.

## **MIXED EMOTIONS.**

Experiencing the personal tragedy of suicide means you may deal with a wide range of feelings and emotions. Sometimes conflicting emotions may make you feel you cannot cope with your loss whilst the impact of losing a loved one to suicide is so terribly difficult to deal with. If you do feel that you are struggling to cope it is vitally important to speak with a GP. Emotions do vary from day to day, even hour to hour. Getting through the day and facing each one as it comes may be helpful. There are no quick-fix solutions, but we hope the information in this booklet helps

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## **GUILT.**

“I should have seen this coming”

“I should have been able to prevent his death”

“Why didn't I listen?”

“Why did I not give her more of my time?”

Guilt is a powerful emotion during bereavement through suicide and we may blame ourselves or others. There may be an overwhelming sense of regret and you may feel you somehow could have prevented it, or that something you said or did was partly to blame. It's a deep feeling within, blaming yourself for something you or someone else could have done.

It is often impossible to know your loved one was planning a suicide. You cannot take responsibility for anyone's life nor can you know exactly how someone is thinking or feeling.

People speak of feeling guilty when they may laugh. Crying can be a release of feelings, and so can laughter. We need laughter as much as we need tears.

## **LOSS.**

“I lost my youngest son to suicide nine years ago”

“I am a mother who lost my son to suicide six years ago”

“I lost a daughter to suicide - she was too gentle for this world”

“Our lives changed forever the day our loved one died”

“We live with the loss every day of our lives. The quietness within our home is a constant reminder of our loss. A loss of a life with so much promise”

When someone you loved has died by suicide you may feel an overwhelming sense of loss. A huge part of your life may be missing and your life may never be the same. The only way to heal is to mourn your loss; you may need to talk, to cry, sometimes to scream, in order to heal. The loss may impact on every aspect of your life, however, the intensity of loss and its impact will change over time. It maybe helpful to just take one day at a time, taking every day as it comes.

## **ANGER.**

“Why should this happen to me?”

“We are angry. The whole system failed her; it was as if she was invisible”

“I am so angry with my son how could he do this to us?”

Anger is an extremely physical emotion that grinds away at whatever strength you may be holding onto. Anger may make you tense and at times feelings of rage are directed at God, yourself, the person who has died, family and friends, or services they may have had contact with. Anger can be a natural reaction to grief, coping with anger can be very difficult and you may need the help of others to work through it. Different people find different ways to deal with anger. Some people find sport helpful for others just shouting out loud and releasing the feeling maybe helpful. Be mindful that anger can have an impact on the very people that are supporting you so please consult with your GP.

## **DESPAIR AND FEAR.**

“The hardest part of it all, is missing him”

“I have to live everyday missing him”

“I have despaired for my own life, should I just follow her”

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The feeling of despair and fear at times can be overwhelming and the realisation that your life as you know it has changed. Some talk of feeling a sense of helplessness and that they don't know how to help others who are also grieving.

You may be fearful for other members of the family and how they will cope with the loss. Fear and despair at this time are again natural reactions to a situation that was beyond your control. Alleviating and talking about your fears and how you are feeling maybe helpful. Whilst talking may not change circumstances it can make a difference.

## **CONFUSION.**

You may feel very confused and unable to concentrate. It may be extremely difficult to make decisions. You may find that your ability to remember information and making decisions maybe difficult. This will ease in time. Give consideration when making any big decisions.

## **GRIEF.**

“Grief is much more than sadness”

“Grief is exhausting”

“There is no panacea to resolve grief”

“Grief has no timetable”

Sometimes when you least expect it, you may be weighed down by feelings of grief. You may struggle with mixed emotions of guilt, fear, shame, anger - your grief is personal. Grief is not an illness; it's an emotion.

Grief is something we cannot ignore. It can be exhausting and can take a huge toll on your physical and mental health. Everybody grieves differently and you are entitled to your space and time, as are your family and friends.

The fact that your loved one died by suicide doesn't change with time, however, time may allow you to learn to cope differently.

## **SADNESS AND DEPRESSION.**

“The sadness I felt at times was overwhelming, I had never experienced feelings like this before and did not know how to cope with them at first. I was re-assured talking to another person who had gone through a similar loss, that they had felt the same”

We all experience severe emotional distress at the time of our bereavement but be aware of prolonged symptoms of grief which can indicate towards depression. You may feel especially low at times. Changes in eating habits, sleeping patterns, social activities and motivation may all become severely affected. You may even have suicidal thoughts yourself; this may simply be your normal reaction to your loss. Whilst having suicidal thoughts may be a normal reaction to a loss by suicide, you must seek medical advice.

You may hear clichés like “time is a great healer” or “in time you will move on” or “over time the intensity of pain will lessen” and initially you may not find these helpful. There is a societal assumption that suicidal grief is something that makes you sad for a few weeks or months - they have no concept of the devastating impact a suicidal death has upon the bereaved. People can be at a loss to offer any words that can offer comfort and may not know what to do or say.

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

## **PRACTICAL ISSUES.**

There will inevitably be practical issues to deal with when any death occurs. If a death is sudden or unexpected, a doctor must attend to confirm the death and will inform the Police or Coroner. Depending on the circumstances, the Coroner will then decide if a post mortem examination is necessary.

This list details the process after a death by suicide:

- 1 Discovery of body.**
- 2 Police/ambulance/doctor contacted.**
- 3 Family informed and Coroner contacted.**
- 4 Funeral director contacted.**
- 5 Body removed to the mortuary.**
- 6 Formal identification of the body (this may take place prior to removal to mortuary).**
- 7 Post mortem carried out.**
- 8 Inquest opened and adjourned pending Coroner's investigation.**
- 9 Body returned for funeral to be held.**
- 10 On conclusion of Coroner's investigation, full inquest held.**
- 11 Issue of death certificate.**

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A DEATH OCCURS AT HOME?**

“Nobody told me exactly what had happened; this made it worse in the long run”

When someone dies at home, the police, which may include CID, will attend and establish if there are any suspicious circumstances. The Coroner will be informed and it may also be necessary for a



police photographer to attend and take photographs. On conclusion of this initial investigation, the body will then be removed from the house and taken to the mortuary. This will usually be carried out by a funeral director. It may be a funeral director chosen by the family, or one acting under the Coroner's removal system.

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A DEATH OCCURS OUTSIDE OF THE HOME?**

“Initially I felt the family were involved in a crime not bereavement. I realise now that all sudden deaths are treated the same. I thought it was just our family”

“The police would not let me near her body”

When a body has been discovered, a doctor will be contacted by the police to confirm the death and they will commence an investigation - again this is to establish if there are any suspicious circumstances. If the identity of the deceased is known to the police they will call to their home and arrange for someone to attend the mortuary to confirm identity. Sometimes they may ask for a photograph or a description of jewellery or clothing worn by the deceased, as a means of identification.

## **DEALING WITH THE MEDIA.**

A suicide can attract unwanted media attention, which can be very stressful for bereaved families and friends. You do not have to talk to the media, however, if you want to, at a later date you could simply issue a brief statement. Media guidelines have been created to help report responsibly. Examples can be found via our website [www.ifucareshare.com](http://www.ifucareshare.com) or Samaritans website, [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org), Papyrus website, [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

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## **POST MORTEM.**

A post mortem or autopsy is carried out to establish the cause of death. If the pathologist has retained organs for further analysis, they are returned as soon as possible or otherwise dealt with according to the family's instructions. Toxicology tests determine the presence of any alcohol or drugs. The outcomes from the tests become available prior to Inquest.

## **THE CORONER AND THE INQUEST.**

"I had to prepare myself for the inquest.... the fact that it is a public thing was very hard to bear but the Coroner was very sensitive and afterwards spoke to my mother and myself ..... that helped to make it more personal"

It should be noted that the family will be kept informed by the Coroner's office throughout this period. It may well be sometime before the full inquest can be heard.

The preparation of post mortem reports and police evidence takes several months to complete. The purpose of the inquest is to establish the facts surrounding the death.

An inquest is conducted by a Coroner. The length of time it may take to get to inquest may vary dependent on circumstances and location. Your Coroner's Officer will advise a general guideline of time to inquest. Inquests take place in a Court and are open to the public, including the Press (see page 15, dealing with the media) which means anyone has a right to attend. The Coroner's officer will contact you to inform you of the date and where the inquest will take place. The purpose of an inquest is to determine 4 things: who died, where, when and how the person died.

In some cases the Coroner will accept statements using rule 23, where people submit their evidence via writing and are not present at the inquest. This depends on the nature of the inquest and

complexity to the proceedings. This may mean that in some cases evidence is given without a person having to attend. Speak with your Coroner's Officer to find out more information.

A Coroner had previously delivered "verdicts" of how a person died however under new reforms the Coroner will give a "Conclusion" to determine how a person died.

At the end of the Inquest you will be told how to access the final death certificate. It would be worth noting that you may need additional copies so asking for these at this point may save time and cost later on. Please see page 44 of possible organisations who may need notification of the death.

Often people may feel that the Inquest will answer the biggest question most people have – WHY? It is difficult to accept that most never ever find out why. For those that may, they feel nothing was worth the person taking their own life.

## **REGISTRATION OF A DEATH.**

A death must be registered in person and not by letter or telephone. The death will be registered in the council area where the person died. After the inquest the Coroner will have registered the death within five days of the hearing and you will simply need to ask for a copy of the death certificate from the Registrar's Office.

If the deceased was a married woman, her maiden name and husband's full name and occupation will also be required.

Once this information has been provided the death certificate will be given to you.

On receipt of the full death certificate you may consider the option of preventing unwanted mail. For further details please contact the Bereavement Register on tel: 0800 082 1230 or visit [www.thebereavementregister.org.uk](http://www.thebereavementregister.org.uk)

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## **FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITIES.**

Family and friends can be very important during bereavement. They can help take the pressures off the immediate family by dealing with the practical issues. While some people may actually find it helpful to focus on dealing with the practical issues, others may find this extremely difficult and might really benefit if family and friends could assist and support them with the practicalities involved. It can also be very important for the immediate family to have time alone as a family.

People can often underestimate the impact on a community when a person takes their own life. The ripples reach beyond families and can affect many, many people, particularly if the person was well known within their home community. For some people the need for support is even greater after the funeral, when others return to their own level of “normality”, and the impact of their loss is felt.

## **WHAT DO YOU SAY TO CHILDREN?**

“Why could you not stay with us Dad?”

“Dad you broke all our hearts and mummy cannot stop crying”

“Part of me died the day my brother did that awful thing”

The death of a sibling or parent is a very confusing experience for a child and often parents feel the need to cover up or communicate only part of the truth to protect the child. Parents worry that children will be unable to cope with the reality of a suicidal death and some adults struggle trying to understand the complexity of a death by suicide how then to explain to a child may prove even more difficult.

Children need to know that it is all right to show their grief in their own way. Each child is an individual and they should be given as much information as you feel they can understand and handle. Difficult as it may be, we should try and answer their questions as

openly and honestly as we can. It may help the child to see how upset their family and friends are it may allow them to experience their own grief without feeling guilty or wrong. Maintaining some kind of routine in the home or at school allows a child to feel safe and sure of the future. Winstons Wish is a child bereavement charity that have excellent resources and guidance around supporting children after a bereavement. Their details are listed in the back under resources with others that maybe helpful.

## **LETTING OTHERS KNOW.**

In addition to family and friends, there are probably others who have to be informed about the death. A solicitor can contact banks, building societies and creditors. Employers, work colleagues, university, doctor and statutory agencies involved with the person need to be contacted after the death. If the person that has died was in receipt of benefits or pensions then you will need to notify these agencies. Most will ask for copies of the death certificate however as the final death certificate is not issued until after the inquest an interim may suffice. Please see page 44 of possible organisations who may need notification of the death.

## **THE FUNERAL AND FUNERAL DIRECTORS.**

Funeral arrangements or services vary according to personal choice. Funeral directors can offer useful advice about choices available and an estimation of cost.

Families in receipt of income support or other benefits may be entitled to a grant to help with the expenses. Contact your local social security office or consult the Government website for information on eligibility and criteria [www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/bereavement](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/bereavement).

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The funeral director will obtain documentation from the Coroner to allow the burial or cremation to take place.

## **AFTER THE FUNERAL.**

It is often when others have returned to their “normal” routine that the reality of the situation is felt. You may be left trying to understand and cope with the enormity of what has happened and the wave of emotions that you are left with. It may help at this time to accept offers of help with practical day to day issues from friends or family who want to try ease your burden. Little things can make a difference and we all need help sometime. Don’t be afraid to ask for it.

## **RELATIONSHIPS.**

“I remember my husband found relief in listening to music – I couldn’t stand hearing it. For a long time I couldn’t listen to anything, not just my son’s favourites. My husband found comfort in compiling music and giving family and friends’ compilations of his dedications to our son – it helped him. I didn’t want to listen – my husband did”

Any death can be a strain on a relationship; when coping with suicide, this is intensified. Each of us is different and how we cope with the loss of a loved one by suicide differs with every individual. Relationships, with family or friends, can come under immense strain, as you struggle through the emotional rollercoaster of loss. Take time for one another and talk to each other; let the other person know how you are feeling. There may be days when the road travelled together is harder for one of you and you hold back sharing this for the fear of impacting on the other person - especially if you believe they are having a better day than you. It is easy to believe that no one feels like you do, but they do; we just all have our own ways of coping with loss.

There is no wrong or right way, try being honest with each other. Try to understand that you will have different needs and cope with things in your own way. Each day may vary from one to another however just getting through.

## **SLEEPING AND EATING.**

“We forgot to eat, and if it had not been for a lovely neighbour who baked and made food for us all, it would not have entered my mind to eat. I felt sick when I thought of making food.”

Dealing with a loss by suicide affects all aspects of our lives. Sleeping and eating and looking after ourselves will often not be something we think about. People have spoke of the ability to have no strength to look after oneself the way they had previously. Sleep and lack of it will have a massive impact on our ability to cope with loss. It is no secret that sleep deprivation is used as torture method in warfare as it has massive impact on our ability to function.

Sleep can affect the way we cope. Too little sleep affects every part of your body and the actions you take. Sleep doesn't take away the pain but it may allow you to cope better throughout the day and deal with the challenges you face. To rest is not a sign of weakness, your body and mind needs time to recharge. Take the opportunity to sleep when you can.

Please seek medical advice and guidance if you are unable to sleep. Simple measures such as restricting caffeine, alcohol, nicotine i.e. cigarettes or any stimulants should be avoided before you try to sleep if possible. Preparing your body to sleep, having a hot bath instead of a shower, a hot drink (not caffeine based) to try and allow the body and mind to wind down if possible. If U Care Share Foundation have found that most people that experience regular aromatherapy find it can be helpful to aid sleep.

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

## **ANNIVERSARIES, BIRTHDAYS AND CHRISTMAS.**

These days are tough, but sometimes the build up and anticipation may be tough. Worrying and counting of the days to THE date that can be equally as distressing. Dealing with things one day at a time rather than focusing on how you may feel when the day comes may be beneficial. Some families are able to gather family and friends together to remember and celebrate their loved one's life. It is important that you remember these days the way that you want to. Do whatever you feel is right for you.

## **FIRSTS.**

“The firsts can be tough times. The first time you leave the house. the first time you hear their favourite song, the first time you see the same model of their car, the first birthday. Christmas, the first time you revisit a place..... Eventually it does get easier.... five years on and I still face firsts in everyday life”

These are the times that you do something, or see someone or something for the first time after your loss that reminds you of your loved one. In time and with strength, it may be that the more you do them the less harrowing they may become.



## **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO JOURNEY ALONE.**

It is essential that you do not feel that you have to cope alone. Every individual's journey is different, each day may vary and you may find some are tougher than others. On the tough days try to focus on getting through the day.

It maybe difficult to think of hope when we lose a person we cared and loved. Whether it is hope that we get through another day, or hope that one day we will learn to smile again.

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

The poems listed over the last pages are dedicated and in most cases written by people who have been affected by suicide.

## **What is a big brother?**

*Written by Sarah O'Hare and Matthew Smith*

A big brother is someone who comforts you when you are down,  
He makes you happy, pretends he is a clown.  
Even though you might fight,  
He's always there from morning till night.

He might be a lot older than you,  
But he will love you even if you're two.  
You might get wrong if you sleep in his bed,  
But he is always there right in your head.

There might be things you love,  
But mine you cannot see – he is above.  
People might say things they do not mean,  
But they should think they are lucky after what I have seen.

So next time you say a prayer  
Look up to the sky and think there's Dan O'Hare,

The best big Brother in the world.

## **Why?**

*Written by Dean Smith*

Why when you left did you not say bye,  
No final words, no reason why.  
Why would you not let us ease your pain,  
A chance to help or start again.

What hurt so much that you had to leave,  
Leaving us to mourn and grieve.  
What made you think we did not care,  
Would not listen, would not share.  
When did your heart begin to break,  
To come to this to stop the ache.  
When did you decide you'd had enough,  
That life had turned out too tough.  
Were there words we could have said  
To change the thoughts inside your head.  
Was there a time if we'd been there,  
That may have moved you from despair.  
Why oh why did you have to go,  
I love you Daniel – I wish I'd told you so.

## **Wish**

*Written by Dean Smith*

My greatest wish I know can never come true,  
So I'll have to hold on to the memories of you.  
All of our moments I'll keep in my thoughts,  
The times that we loved, the times that we fought.  
Each time I come home I wish you were there  
To hear the music playing or a sound on the stairs.  
But there are no more laughs or no more tears,  
No more celebrating extra years.  
This hole in my heart I feel will never go,  
But the memories of you will continue to grow.  
I now know things will never be the same,  
But I'll learn to smile when I hear your name.  
Not to cry or feel any fear,  
But remember the good times from when you were here.

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

One day I might understand why you wanted things to end,  
But I'll never stop missing you, my life's true friend.

## **xxxx Miss You xxxx**

*Written by Vicki Poole*

Sometimes it seems like only yesterday  
When you accidentally took yourself away.  
And sometimes it feels such a long time ago,  
The pain and heartache doesn't go away you know.

I still have dreams of you at night,  
Sometimes in the dreams we argue and fight.  
And sometimes I dream you're back and it was all a big mistake,  
Then I wake up and find you're still gone and all over again my  
heart breaks.

We've shared times that were good and bad,  
I try to only remember the good or I feel too sad.  
I miss our talks and laughs and I miss your face,  
But I know we'll talk and laugh again in another place.

I know you didn't mean to go,  
Three times now you have told me so.  
It was another cry for help that went too far,  
You went to sleep and woke up where you now are.

I know you asked for help but it fell on deaf ears.  
If you'd only been with us, you would probably still be here.  
It hurts so much to know that you were left in that way,  
I often blame myself for not asking you to stay.

It's still hard to think you've gone and will never return,  
But I know we'll meet again when it's my turn.  
Till that day, I thought I'd let you know in my own way,  
I love and miss you more than words can say.

Rest in peace Daniel  
The years pass by, but you will always be my big brother.

## **Waves**

*Written by Dean Smith*

As I stood on the beach one day,  
With my feet I felt the sand,  
I looked for you on the horizon,  
As I could no longer feel your hand.

So I ventured in to find you,  
But then the water lost its calm,  
So I tried to fight through all the waves,  
Just to know you're safe from harm.

But as I awoke there was no beach,  
And the waves were in my head,  
So now I know I can't fight them all,  
I'll learn to surf those waves instead.

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

## **A poem**

*Written by Phyllis McDowell*

When I am sad and lonely,  
And I feel I can't go on,  
My mind takes me to a special place,  
To talk to my precious Son.  
He says, "Mum I know your heart is broken,  
And life will never be the same,  
But I couldn't face the future, my mind was full of pain.  
Think of me at peace now, in a place where there's no hate,  
And when the time comes for you to join me  
I'll be waiting at the gate."

## **You are**

*Written by Marti Mulvain*

To Michael.

You are the leaves that fall from the tree,  
They turn golden brown into the earth ready for the next.  
You are the grass that flows in the breeze, the seed is blown  
scattered amongst my plain.  
You are the clouds I see making shapes, wishing I could see your  
face again.  
You are the colour in my heart that beats away the dark.  
You are the sound of a storm that swallows up my world.  
You are time that strips away my shame, even if I am to blame.  
You are the candle not the flame, you burn, you melt, you fade.  
You are an ocean, your waves lap my soul.

## **For Jess**

*Written by Maureen Grace.*

(In memory of Jessica Jane Mitchell Robinson)

I know that in the days to come,  
I'll yearn for you like I've never done.  
I'll see your smile and hope you'll know,  
That my love is with you and will never go.

I'll look to the skies and see a star,  
And know that my angel looks down from afar.  
For I know in my heart you will always remain,  
My life, my being, my devotion, my pain.

And when the days get hard to bear,  
I'll stand up strong and picture you there.  
By my side, my beautiful one,  
Walking with me, like you've always done.

Because I know this much is true,  
You will never leave me, you could never do.  
You are the reason my sun will shine,  
Your smell, your laugh, you are ever mine.

The rain may come, the wind may blow,  
But Jess you are with me where ever I go.  
You're in the smile of a passer by,  
In a baby's laughter and a child's cry.

So when the days and years seem long,  
I'll remember you were a gift and try to stay strong.  
I'll hold you in my arms and kiss goodnight,  
My angel, my child, my daughter, my life.

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

## **'Angel'**

*Written by Vicki Poole*

Many years have passed  
Since we saw you last,  
Still can't believe you've gone.  
Watch over us with love  
Like an angel from above,  
My Brother, a Father, a Son.

## **To My Angel – A Christmas Poem**

*Written by Dean Smith*

Today I'll place an angel  
Upon my Christmas tree,  
And like every year, I'll spend some time,  
To remember how life used to be.  
The times when life was different,  
Lots of good sometimes tough.  
A life of all those ups and downs,  
But with love it was still enough.  
And just like different seasons,  
Life can also change its path.  
But some changes can make it feel,  
Like it's never forwards always back.  
But I'll also try and remember,  
That such a path I never did foresee.  
And despite another year without you,  
That my special angel is always there with me.



## **MY PRINCESS:**

### **Just For Today...**

*Written by Vicki Tushingham*

Just for today I will try to live through the next 24 hours  
and not expect to get over my child's death,  
but instead learn to live with it, just one day at a time.  
Just for today I will remember Jessica's life, not just her death,  
and bask in the comfort of all those treasured days  
and moments we shared.  
Just for today I will forgive all the family and friends  
who didn't help or comfort me the way I needed them to.  
They truly did not know how.  
Just for today I will smile no matter how much I hurt on the inside,  
for maybe if I smile a little,  
my heart will soften and I will begin to heal.  
Just for today I will reach out to comfort a relative or friend of my  
child,  
for they are hurting too,  
and perhaps we can help each other.  
Just for today I will free myself from my self-inflicted burden of  
guilt,  
for deep in my heart I know if there was anything in this world  
I could have done to save my child from death,  
I would have done it.  
Just for today I will honour my child's memory  
by doing something with another child  
because I know that would make my own child proud.  
Just for today I will offer my hand in friendship  
to another bereaved parent  
for I do know how they feel.  
Just for today when my heart feels like breaking,  
I will stop and remember that grief is the price we pay for loving  
and the only reason I hurt is because

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

I had the privilege of loving so much  
Just for today I will not compare myself with others.  
I am fortunate to be who I am  
and have had my child for as long as I did.  
Just for today I will allow myself to be happy,  
for I know that I am not deserting her by living on.  
Just for today I will accept that I did not die when Jessica did,  
my life did go on,  
and I am the only one who can make that life worthwhile once more.

## **Christmas Wish from Heaven**

*By Nikita Cadman*

A Christmas wish from heaven  
I'm sending it to you,  
I know it's no consolation  
But I hope it helps you through.  
If at Christmas you think of me  
Remember the times we have had,  
But try to keep on smiling  
I don't want you to feel sad.  
May the tears you shed be of happiness,  
May your Christmas dreams all come true.  
May you smile and celebrate this magical time  
In the way that we used to.  
I'll still be watching when you wake,  
I'll watch when you go to see  
If Santa has been good to you  
And what has been left under the tree.  
The only gift I want this Christmas  
Is to see you enjoy your day,  
So send a smile up to me  
In your kind cheerful way.

## **Christmas Without You**

*By Nikita Cadman*

My heart strings are pulled  
As the Christmas bells they ring,  
The tears stream down my cheek  
As the choirs begin to sing.  
My heart sinks a little more  
Each time I hear your name,  
As our lives and especially Christmas  
Will never be the same.  
Christmas is about families  
Togetherness and love,  
It hard to see the happiness  
As I think of you up above.  
The pantomimes are showing  
The excitement is in the air,  
The parties are in full swing  
But you will not be there.  
I look into your picture,  
I pray to lord above  
That he passes on this message,  
So your Christmas is filled with love.  
As I look into the Christmas lights  
And think of the years gone by,  
I can only be thankful for them  
So I smile, look up and sigh,  
I hope you're looking down on us,  
I hope you are still near,  
As Christmas will never be the same  
When you're no longer here.

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

## **I'll be thinking of you this Christmas**

*By Nikita Cadman*

I'll be thinking of you this Christmas  
As I do everyday,  
I'll remember all the years we shared  
The things you used to say.  
I'll be thinking of you this Christmas  
As my heart breaks a little more,  
What I would give to see your face  
To see you walk through the door.  
I'll be thinking of you this Christmas  
As someone speaks your name,  
My heart just sinks a little more  
Our Christmases aren't the same.  
I'll be thinking of you this Christmas  
As the days they draw in cold,  
As the nights get dark and lonely  
As you are no longer here to hold.  
I'll be thinking of you this Christmas  
As my tears begin to fall,  
I find that during Christmas  
It is the hardest time of all.  
I'll be thinking of you this Christmas  
As my heart melts like the snow,  
But my heart is still my gift to you  
Don't ever let it go.  
I'll be thinking of you this Christmas  
As our family will join together,  
In our minds and hearts this Christmas,  
Now and forever.

## **Here this Christmas**

*By Nikita Cadman*

I know you're here this Christmas,  
I see you everywhere,  
I see you in the candlelight,  
Is that you, over there?  
I see you in the Christmas lights,  
I see you in the snow,  
I see you in the tinsel,  
I can feel your presence grow.  
You really are my Christmas gift,  
You are my angel on the tree,  
You shine and glow this Christmas,  
You're the brightest star I see.  
I hear you in the laughter  
And in the bells that ring,  
I hear you in every hohoho  
And in the choir when they sing.  
Stay close to me this Christmas  
As the festivities are underway,  
That's the one thing that I wish for  
This Christmas I hope and pray.

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.**

If U Care Share Foundation would like to thank everyone who supported the compilation of this booklet. In particular, to all of the families and friends of loved and lost ones who have provided personal contributions. A special thank you goes to both Suicide Awareness and Support Group, Belfast, for their friendship, guidance and kind permission to reproduce excerpts from their support booklet and to Neville Dixon, Coroner's Officer, Sunderland for his support and guidance in our work. We would like to thank MHM (Mental Health Matters) for all the support and guidance they showed in the setting up of If U Care Share Foundation.

## **USEFUL WEBSITES.**

### **British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy**

[www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)

Tel: 01455 883300

### **CALM**

Suicide prevention service for men

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

Telephone helpline 0800 585858 free call available daily from 1700 till midnight.

### **Citizens Advice**

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

Tel: 08444 772020

### **Childline**

Private confidential service for young people up to 19 years

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Tel: 0800111- free call

### **Child bereavement UK**

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

Tel: Support & Information – 0800 02 888 40 (freephone number from landlines); Alternatively - 01494 568900

Email: [support@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavementuk.org)

### **Compassionate Friends**

Support for bereaved parents, siblings & grandparents.

[www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)

Tel: 0845 123 2304

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## **Console Counselling**

Provision of counselling and support services for people bereaved by suicide.

[www.consolecounselling.co.uk](http://www.consolecounselling.co.uk)

Tel: 0207 6300824

## **Cruse Bereavement Care**

Support after a death.

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

Tel: 08444779400

## **International Association Suicide Prevention**

[www.IASP.info](http://www.IASP.info)

## **If U Care Share Foundation**

Suicide prevention training and support of people touched by suicide.

[www.ifucareshare.com](http://www.ifucareshare.com)

Tel: 0191 3875661

## **Inquest**

Charity providing free advice to people facing an inquest focus on deaths in custody.

[www.inquest.org.uk](http://www.inquest.org.uk)

Tel: 0207 2631111

## **Lesbian & Gay Bereavement**

[www.londonfriend.org.uk](http://www.londonfriend.org.uk)

Tel: 0207 8331674



**Maytree**

Charity supporting people in suicidal crisis in non medical environment (London)

[www.maytree.org.uk](http://www.maytree.org.uk)

Tel:0207 2637070

**Mental Health Matters**

Provision of support services around mental health

[www.mentalhealthmatters.com](http://www.mentalhealthmatters.com)

See Helpline numbers below

**MIND**

National Mental Health charity.

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Tel: 0300 1233393

**National Suicide Prevention Alliance (NSPA)**

Cross sector coalition working together to prevent suicide and support for people bereaved by suicide.

**PAPYRUS**

Support for young people at risk of suicide.

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

HOPELINE tel: 0800 0684141

**Rethink**

Providing services for people with mental health illness.

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

Tel:0300 5000927

**Samaritans**

24 hour confidential listening service.

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

Tel: 0845 79090

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

## **SANE**

Improving services for people with mental health illness.  
Mental health support line Tel: 0845 767 8000  
[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)

## **Suicide Bereavement Support Partnership (SBSP)**

A number of charities working in partnership to improve services for people bereaved by suicide. If U Care Share Foundation are involved in SBSP. [www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk](http://www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk)

## **Suicide Liaison Service Cornwall**

Available in Cornwall providing support to people bereaved by suicide.  
Tel: 01208 871905

## **Survivors Of Bereaved by Suicide (SOBS)**

Providing safe confidential services to people touched by suicide.  
[www.uk-sobs.org.uk](http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk)  
Tel: 0844 5616855

## **TASC**

The Alliance of Suicide prevention Charities are a group of leading charities dealing with suicide prevention and mental health. If U Care Share Foundation are proud to be members of TASC.  
[www.tasc.org.uk](http://www.tasc.org.uk)  
email: [tascuk@gmail.com](mailto:tascuk@gmail.com)

## **Winston's Wish**

Children's bereavement charity providing support for children and young people up to age of 18 years full stop. Interactive website  
[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)  
Helpline: 0845 2030405

## **World Health Organization**

[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

## **Young Minds**

Charity aims to improve emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Tel: 0207 0895050

## **Mental Health Matters Helpline Numbers:**

Coventry & Warwickshire 0800 616171

24/7 (For SMS Texting, for signposting and information, please use: 07786202242)

Gateshead 0800 085 1718

5pm-9am 24 hours weekends & Bank Holidays

Hartlepool 0845 045 7110

5pm-9am 24 hours weekends & Bank Holidays

Kent & Medway 0800 107 0160

24/7

MHM Tenants 0800 085 1720

24/7

Middleborough 0800 052 7350

6pm-6am 7 days a week

Newcastle 0845 601 2457

6pm-6am 7 days a week

North Tyneside 0845 601 2458

6pm-6am 7 days a week

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Plymouth	0300 330 5476
5pm – 9am weekdays and 24 hours weekends & bank holidays (For SMS Texting, for signposting and information: please use: 07786202242)	
Redcar & Cleveland	0800 052 0658
6pm-6am 7 days a week	
Stockton	0800 052 7349
6pm-6am 7 days a week	
Sunderland	0800 013 0626
5pm-9am 24 hours weekends & Bank Holidays	

## **USEFUL PUBLICATIONS:**

**Help is at hand** (Dept of Health)

Download from [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

**The Inquest handbook**

[www.inquest.org.uk](http://www.inquest.org.uk)

Email: [inquest@inquest.org.uk](mailto:inquest@inquest.org.uk)

Tel: 0207 5610799

**Guide to Coroner Services**

**Ministry of Justice**

[www.gov.uk/moj](http://www.gov.uk/moj)

# THE ROAD AHEAD...

## WHO TO NOTIFY.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Contact Details</b>	<b>Date Contacted</b>	<b>Notified</b>
Executor of will, solicitor			
Pensions schemes			
Insurance company			
Bank/Building society			
Mortgage provider, housing association, council housing office			
HM Revenue and Customs tax office			
School, college, workplace, trade union			
Utility providers: gas, electricity, water board, TV/internet supplier			
Post office			
Car insurance			
DVLA (return driver's licence)			
Passport office (return passport)			

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Contact Details</b>	<b>Date Contacted</b>	<b>Notified</b>
Social Services, Jobcentre Plus			
Hire purchase companies			
Library			
Doctor, dentist, etc.			
Any hospital the person was attending			
Charities			
Sporting, social clubs			
Financial advisor			
Others			









## **If U Care Share Foundation**

If U Care Share Foundation was created by three young people, Matthew, Ben and Sarah, after losing Daniel, their brother and cousin to suicide. These young people were 10, 5 and 13 years of age at the time of their loss, which makes their actions even more admirable. Having experienced first-hand the devastation that the death of a loved one to suicide causes, they wanted to try and prevent another family going through that pain. They believed that their loved one's death was preventable. Had Daniel spoke of his thoughts and problems, had he asked for help instead of hiding things, maybe things could have been different.

Sometimes, speaking to someone who can relate to your feelings may make a difference. Although no one can ease the pain, we can offer practical support and guidance which can help, particularly when the practicalities can seem insurmountable at the time of your loss.

The message we want to share with anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide is that **THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY**. Time may not be a great healer, however in time we learn to cope with our loss. Often storm clouds can break and a ray of sun can make it through to the darkest place.



If U Care Share Foundation  
registered charity 1142001.

[www.ifucareshare.com](http://www.ifucareshare.com)  
Email: [share@ifucareshare.co.uk](mailto:share@ifucareshare.co.uk)  
Tel: 0191 387 5661



No. 514829.

