



# Bereavement Café Newsletter

A safe space to talk and listen

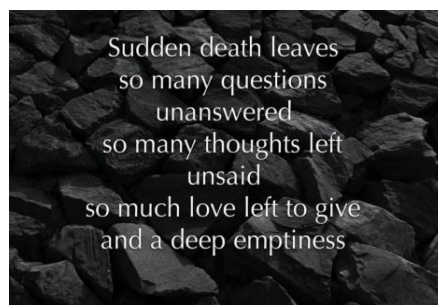
Written and compiled by  
Edna Thomas

## JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF: COPING WITH THE SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

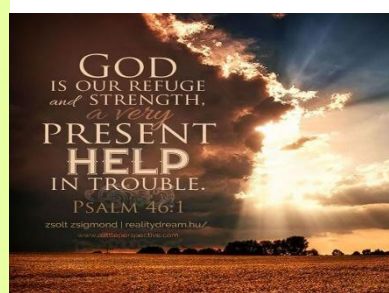
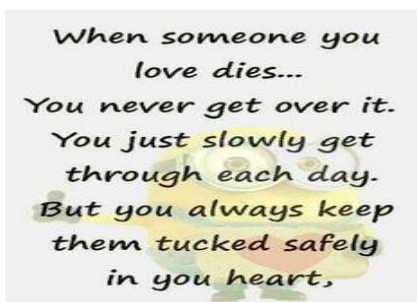
Sudden unexpected death of a loved one - No time for comforting words, no time to say goodbye, no time to resolve unfinished business, no time to forgive or to be forgiven, no time to say "I'm sorry, and no time to say... "I love you!".

- This type of loss refers to a death that is unforeseen, with little or no warning, leaving survivors unprepared and emotionally distressed.



Sudden, unexpected deaths have very different causes; however, what unites them all is that they leave survivors unprepared for the loss." Experiencing this type of loss can send loved ones into a world of confusion.

As you try to make sense of this, a thousand and one questions runs through your mind- how did this happen; how could I have missed the signs; perhaps I could have done more; what's going to happen now; how will I move forward after this? Guilt, anger, and blame takes up residence as we struggle to put the "pieces together". In despair, we sometimes channel your anger towards God, questioning how could He have allowed this to happen?



## What is Grief? - It is your Internal Emotions.

- Grief is always moving, like any journey, some portion will be harder and more demanding than others. In grief, so much is painful, sad, and frustrating. Some parts of your grief path will be more rocky, uphill, and challenging. You can only take one step at a time and live one moment at a time (Gary Roe).



## There are Different Types of Sudden and Unexpected Loss; for example:

- Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI)
- Alcohol and drug misuse
- Suicide
- Road accidents
- Homicide
- Heart attack

“When the illness is known but the loved one passes before their expected time, this is also deemed as a sudden or unexpected death. For homicides, and some accidents, a trial could greatly prolong the grieving process.

- Remember that, “hope is the one thing that can help us get through the darkest of times”.



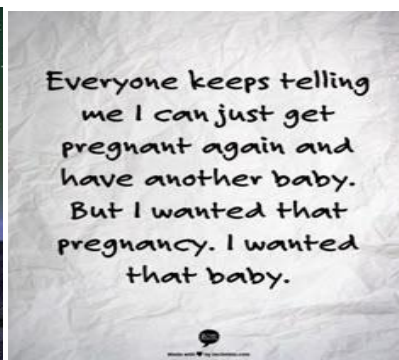
## Sudden Death in Infancy (SUDI)

- The sudden, unexpected death of a baby is usually referred to by professionals as 'sudden, unexpected death in infancy' (SUDI). It is also sometimes referred to as 'sudden infant death'.

## A Grieving Mother's Reactions to the Suddenly Loss of Her Baby

After I lost my baby through miscarriage, I felt as though my world was falling apart; my dreams, my hope of having a family suddenly shattered. I was crying all the time and although I was going down the road of depression, I couldn't pull myself together. All I could think about was what now! one minute I was pregnant and looking forward to holding my baby in my arms and the next minute I was told that my baby didn't make it. This was my worst nightmare!.

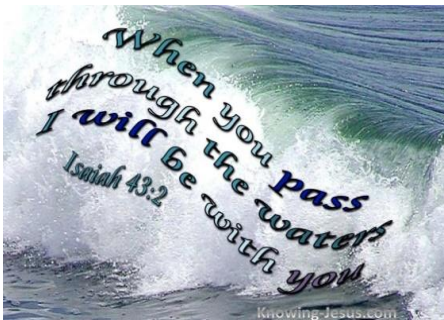
At first everyone was sympathetic and I was able to pour out my heart to them about my baby. Then after a short time, it was an expectation that I just pick myself up and get on with life. It got to the point that whenever I started talking about my baby, I was told that everything happens for a reason; that I was young enough to have another one. I found myself talking less and less about what I was feeling and grieve the loss of my baby in silence. This made the grieving process even more challenging to navigate. No one should have to go through grieving the loss of someone you love on your own.



If you're going through a similar experience, there are support groups/organisations that you can connect with for support. However, you may not find the answer you're looking for, but be encouraged that "in the midst of your grief, you don't walk this dark and despairing road of grief on your own. God is actually at the helm of your life and He walks alongside you on your grief journey.

He gives the assurance through the voice of His prophet in the book of Isaiah 43:1-3 The Good Shepherd of our lives will guide us to the springs of the living waters and He promises to wipe away every tear. God never leaves His flock to be on their own.





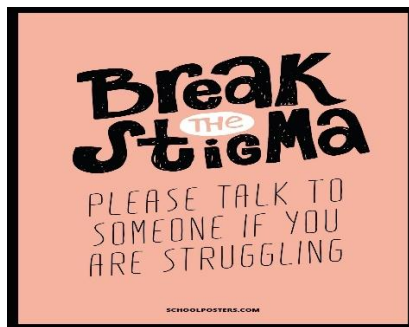
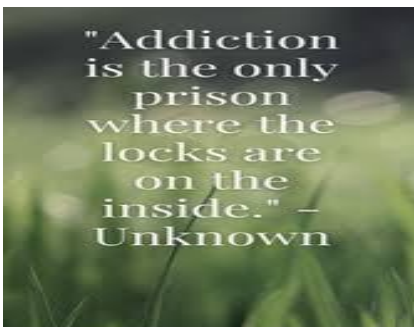
## Alcohol and

## Drug Misuse

- Sudden, unexpected death from alcohol or drugs can be more complicated than most because of the nature of the cause of death. After someone dies through drugs or alcohol, relatives and friends often feel social stigma and isolation. People often tell us they feel judged and that they are not getting the same sympathy they would if the person had died of an illness or in an accident. But you have the right to grieve just like everybody else (Cruse bereavement Support).

### People Who are Bereaved Through Drugs or Alcohol May Have to Deal with:

- The stigma around alcohol and drug use.
- A belief that the death was premature and avoidable
- Feelings of guilt.
- A challenging relationship with the person before the death

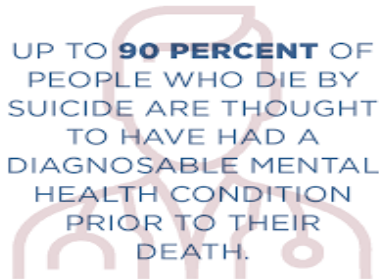


- By experiencing discrimination and negative comments, it is highly likely that those abusing drugs and alcohol will avoid any form of support.
- They will distance themselves from opening up, with the understanding that greater prejudice will be experienced.

### Grieving Sudden Unexpected Death Through Suicide

- One writer says this about suicide; you are experiencing a storm of emotions and feelings. First, you are experiencing the natural response of deep grief. Someone you know and loved has died, so you feel the emptiness and deep sorrow of loss. That alone is extremely hard. But suicide adds many other painful reactions to the

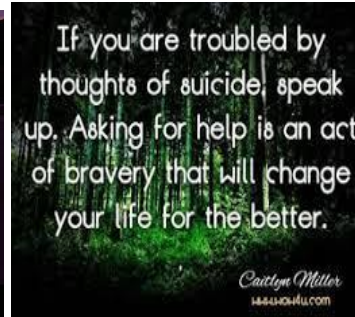
heartache that death brings (David Powlison-Grieving Suicide: Help for the After Shock).



UP TO **90 PERCENT** OF PEOPLE WHO DIE BY SUICIDE ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE HAD A DIAGNOSABLE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION PRIOR TO THEIR DEATH.



We need to change the culture of this topic and make it OK to speak about mental health and suicide.  
Luke Richardson  
BrainyQuote



If you are troubled by thoughts of suicide, speak up. Asking for help is an act of bravery that will change your life for the better.  
Caitlyn Miller  
www.shout.com

- According to another writer, stigma of suicide can prevent people from seeking help when they need it, and others from offering support when they want to. It can colour our perceptions, our thoughts and our actions – and we may not always be aware of it (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide).

### Why More Men than Women Die by Suicide?

#### Risk Factors:

One key element is communication. It's too simplistic to say women are willing to share their problems and men tend to bottle them up. But it is true that, for generations, many societies have encouraged men to be "strong" and not admit they're struggling.

#### Reasons Why People Attempt to /or Commit Suicide

- Loneliness
- Depression
- Break-up or significant loss
- Mental health issues
- Different types of abuse, including domestic, sexual, emotional, or physical abuse.

#### Christians and Mental Health

The truth is that devoted Christians are not immune to mental health challenges, and no measure of faith can provide a guaranteed shield against depression. Many well-known Christian leaders have dealt with depression and thoughts of suicide. Even the Bible's King David, who was called a man after God's own heart, struggled with deep despair.

Mental illnesses of any kind are not an indication that a person isn't following God, and it doesn't mean that He can't use them for His glory (<https://wellcommunity.org/four-ways-churches-can-help-prevent-suicide>).

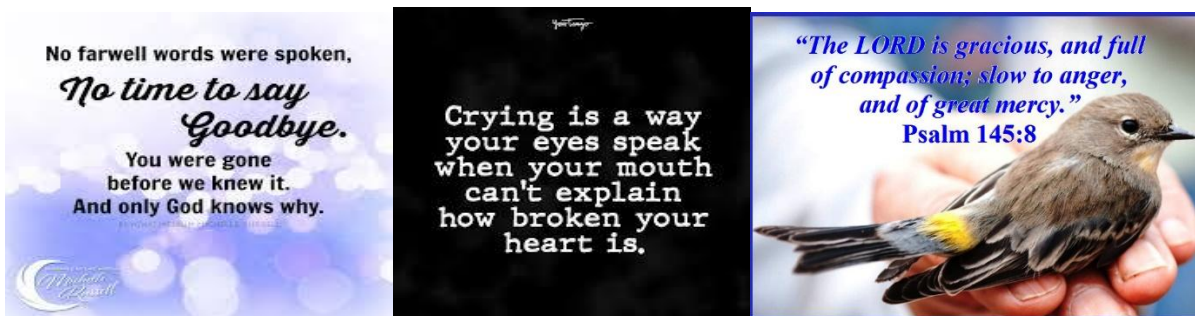
## Stages of Grief (Elizabeth Kübler-Ross')

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

### A Griever's Reflection on Grief (Denial and Anger)

"When I heard of the sudden unexpected death of my loved one, I immediately went into the denial stage of grief ( numbness, shock and disbelief). How can this be"? this can't be happening! What was suppose to a joyful time, turned into despair and deep sadness. Denial was followed by anger at the unfairness of the loss. In searching for answers, I questioned God- " How can this be? I don't understand why this has happened? Please let it not be true. In almost the same breath, I was asking God to comfort our hearts, to give us the strength to cope.

We can sometimes find ourselves being angry at God for the sudden unexpected death of a loved one. When this happens, it can cause us to feel guilty and unable to share this with anyone for fear of being judged. If you find yourself in this situation, don't allow this to take you from the presence of the Lord. The Bible says, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love" (Psalm 145:8).



### Things You Can Do to Help Yourself Cope:

- Be Kind to Yourself: Give yourself grace and patience, recognizing you're in a state of trauma and might feel overwhelmed.
- Allow Feelings: Don't try to hide or suppress your emotions; crying and expressing sadness are normal and healthy.
- Accept rather than deny your feelings, even unpleasant ones such as anger.
- Seek help/support
- Give yourself permission to grieve.
- Mourn at Your Own Pace

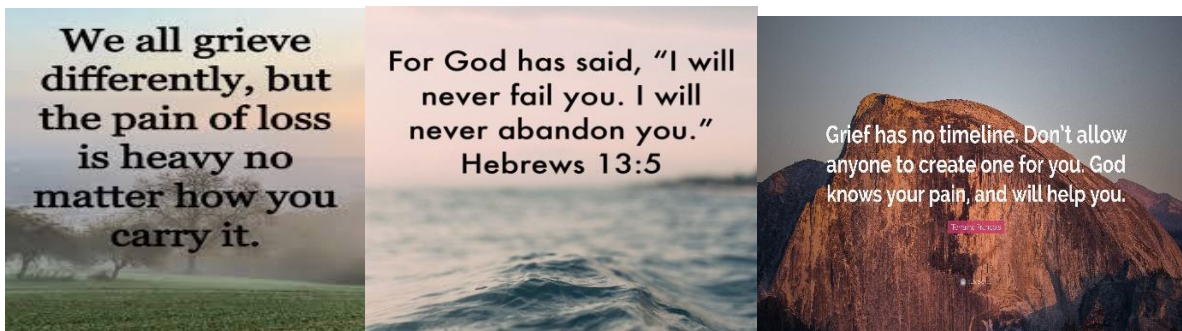


### Common Reactions to Sudden Unexpected Death include:

- **Emotional:** Confusion, fear, sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety helplessness.
- **Physical:** Tightness and heaviness in the chest or throat, nausea or stomach upset, headaches, muscle weakness, tension, or fatigue.
- **Behaviours:** Difficulty in sleeping, loss of interest in daily activities, and becoming more aggressive or irritable.
- **Spiritual:** Some may turn to God as a source of strength and consolation at the time of a loved one's death and find their faith has deepened;

Others may question the religious teachings they've practiced all their lives and find the very foundations of their beliefs shaken to the core.

Not everyone will respond to loss in the same way, and not everyone shares the same cultural, religious or spiritual beliefs about death and the afterlife (Hospice of the Valley).



### Please Seek Professional Support

- If you feel like life isn't worth living.
- Having suicidal thoughts
- Wish you had died with your loved one
- Blame yourself for the loss or for failing to prevent it.
- Feel numb and disconnected from others for more than a few weeks.
- Having difficulty trusting others since your loss.

### Practice Self-Compassion

- Remember that it takes times to heal on your grief journey. Healing is your primary job now! It is important to exercise self-compassion. This is simply the process of turning compassion inward.



## Take Care of Yourself

- Nourish your body with healthy foods
- Keep connected with family and friends and talk about how you're doing.
- Use exercise to combat negative emotions
- Write down your thoughts and feelings in your journal
- Learn to forgive and be kind to yourself

## The Bereavement Support Group

As a bereavement support group, we aim to provide a safe environment for those who are living with grief either through the loss of a loved one or any other significant loss in your life. We believe that sharing can help you feel connected with others who are going through a similar experience, and in turn, helps those who are new to the experience of grief to feel understood.

As a Support Group, we thrive to cultivate an attitude of acceptance, empathy and listening in a non-judgemental manner.

✚ Our prayer is that you will find this Newsletter helpful.

## Please Note!

✚ \*The resources used in this Newsletter were taken from various books on grief, information and images from the Internet websites; therefore, no extract should be taken from this newsletter and used for any other purpose than to help you navigate your way through your grief journey.

**Blessings - The Bereavement Support Team.**