

BEYOND SURVIVING: SUGGESTIONS FOR SURVIVORS*

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.**

* By Iris Bolton, author of *My Son, My Son: A Guide to Healing after Death, Loss, or Suicide*. Iris is a pioneer in the field of helping survivors after the suicide of a loved one. Her "Beyond Surviving" is a classic resource used by suicide survivors everywhere. Iris's books and tapes are available from Bolton Press: 770-645-1886, www.boltonpress.com, or contactus@boltonpress.com.