

# AM I NORMAL?

## Reactions to Suicide or Other Traumatic Loss



Most people have powerful reactions to traumatic events or other overwhelming situations which may affect your ability to function and take care of yourself. Everyone reacts differently based on many factors including personal experiences. Some reactions are universal, such as the Fight, Flight, Freeze, or Protect response. Some may react right away, while others may have delayed or limited reactions.

### Common reactions to a death, near death, or overwhelming event are:



#### Thoughts / Cognitive Reactions

- Re-enacting the event over and over in your mind
- Confusion
- Trouble processing, concentrating, or remembering
- Flashbacks or nightmares



#### Emotional Reactions

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Overwhelm
- Numbness
- On high alert
- Intense sadness
- Anger or irritability
- Apprehension



#### Physical Reactions

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Muscle weakness
- Tightness in throat



#### Behavioral Reactions/Changes

- Increased risk-taking
- Change in appetite
- Sleep problems
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Avoiding reminders of the event



#### Spiritual Reactions

- Hostility toward or questioning God/higher power
- Basic beliefs are challenged or shattered

**To talk with someone** who will listen and help connect you to support: Contact [griefsupport@namimaine.org](mailto:griefsupport@namimaine.org) or 1-800-464-5767, ext. 2317

**For more information,** visit NAMI Maine  
*After Suicide or Traumatic Loss*





### What can I do to feel better?

- Set small goals for yourself, pick activities you can start and finish in one day
- Create a routine and get enough sleep
- Eat healthy foods, drink plenty of water, and stay active - try a short walk or stretching
- Talk openly about your feelings with a person you trust
- Spend time doing things you enjoy, even if it is hard
- Support a friend – this is remarkably healing
- Listen to music you find calming or that helps you
- Find a safe space breathe slowly and mindfully



### When do I need to get help?

- If you continue to have trouble with normal functioning weeks or months after the events
- If you have a friend who has these reactions and is not getting better
- If you have thoughts of harming or killing yourself or someone else
- If you are feeling overwhelmed or out of control



### Where can I get help?

- Parent, friend, or relative (who is not overwhelmed)
- Counselor, therapist, or nurse
- Pastor or another responsible adult you trust
- NAMI Maine's Suicide Loss and Grief Support Convener at 1-800-464-5767 ext. 2317
- Maine Crisis Line. Call or text 988. Free. Confidential. Available 24/7.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & SUPPORT

**What's Your Grief** Resources for those who are grieving and supporting the bereaved. [whatsyourgrief.com/i-am-grieving](https://whatsyourgrief.com/i-am-grieving)

**Alliance of Hope for Suicide Loss Survivors** Find resources, support, articles, and tips for yourself or someone who is affected by suicide. [allianceofhope.org](https://allianceofhope.org)