

# Helping the Suicide Survivor

■ by Deborah Mitchell, MS, LMFT



*Be present for them...don't avoid them.  
Listen IF they want to talk.*

It was hard to decide on a direction for this article because the suicide of someone close causes great pain in many different ways. So I decided to address one specific area that has been very hard for a close friend who grieves her brother's suicide, and for others that I've counseled.

## Perception of Judgement

There is a frequent perception of being judged and condemned by the body of Christ - with judgment on the person who committed suicide AND those close to him or her. I am extremely sad to write that this perception can be based on reality. Whether judgment really exists, the pain that is created is real.

For some, strong core beliefs about suicide create great difficulty in reaching out to those left behind.

For many others in the Body of Christ, they have no idea what to say or do for those who are grieving such a horrific loss.

Here is what the Word of God admonishes us to do:

*"...let everything you say be good and helpful,  
so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them." ~ Ephesians 4:29*

*"Always be humble and gentle...Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit,  
binding yourselves together with peace." ~ Ephesians 4:2a, 3*

*"Since God chose you to be the holy people He loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy,  
kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." ~ Colossians 3:12*

*"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony..." ~ Colossians 3:14*

Treat those grieving like people who are grieving. Be present for them...don't avoid them. Listen IF they want to talk. Look for ways to help... do they need a babysitter while shopping for something to wear to the funeral or making arrangements? Does the lawn need mowing or does the driveway need shoveling before out-of-town guests come? What about taking a friend to see a movie so they can avoid real life for a couple hours?



*Consider practical ways to help.*



**And most of all, consider if your words are kind, encouraging, and loving.** May we, as the Body of Christ, be His hands - helping bind the wounds and heal the broken-hearted through the power of His Spirit. ■

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