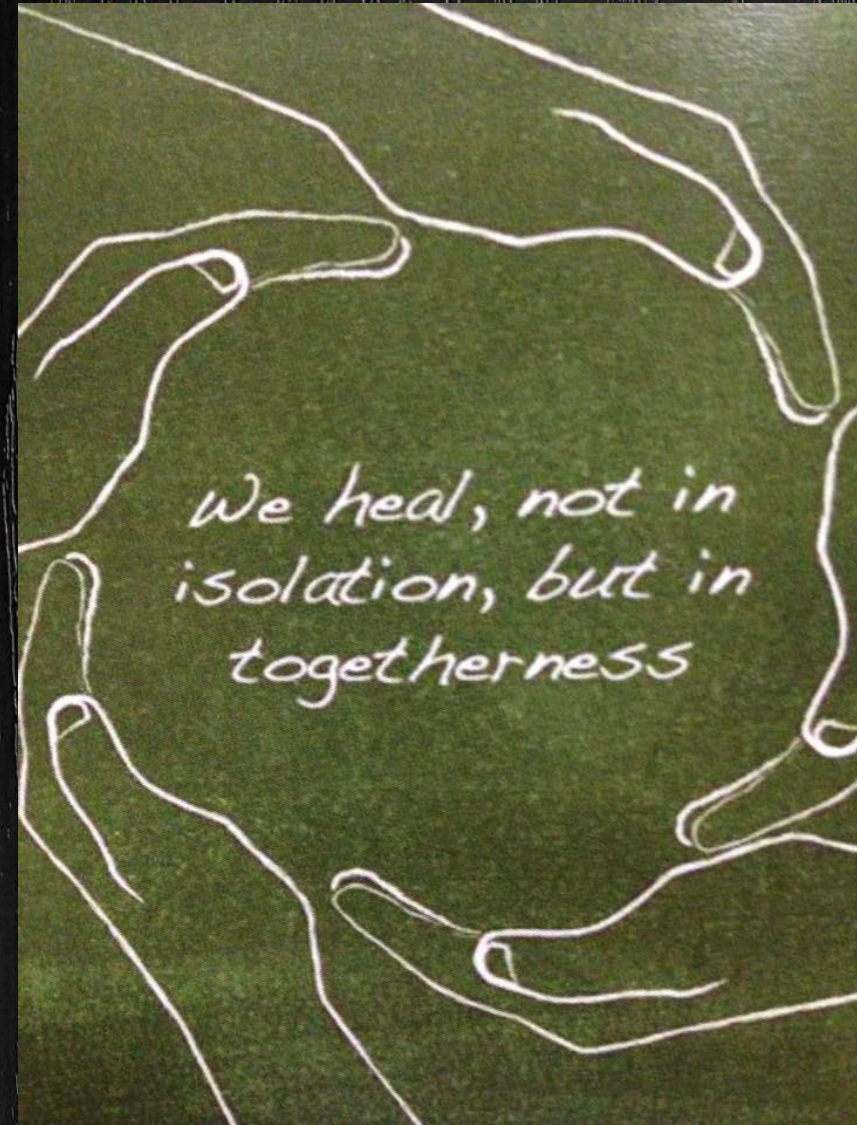


# What It Is Like To Lose Someone To Suicide

Presentation By: Rebecca Prather, MSW, LISW-S

Phone: (330) 256-4414

Email: [rebeccaprather93@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccaprather93@gmail.com)



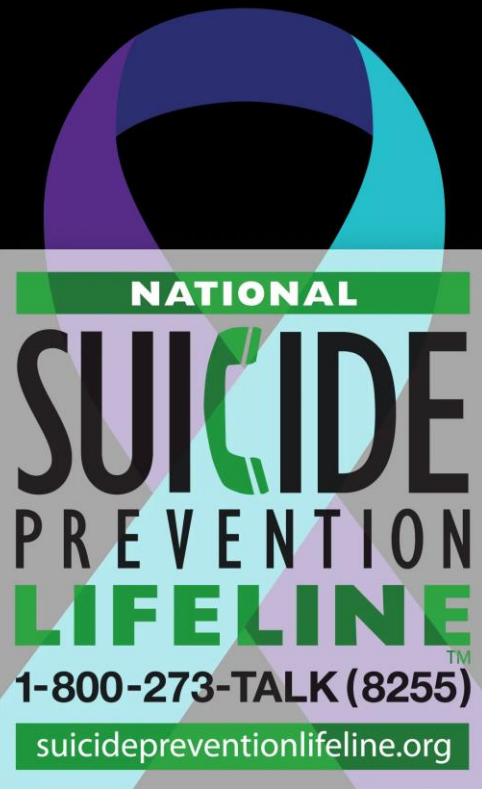
# Disclaimers and Disclosures

# Objectives

1. Gain knowledge on how losing someone to suicide impacts loved ones
2. Define "normal" reactions to suicide
3. Define Post-traumatic Growth
4. Identify the "R" Process" and the "Canyon of Why"
5. Determine how to assist suicide loss survivors



What is the first word in your  
mind when someone says  
“Suicide?”





Hopeless

death

Tragedy

Tragic

Loss

Desperate

What?

Devastating

Confusion

SADNESS

Sadness

sadness

D.

How?

As in "I wonder how they did it")

Heart Broken

Tragedy

Hopelessness

broken

Hopeless

Empty

Fear

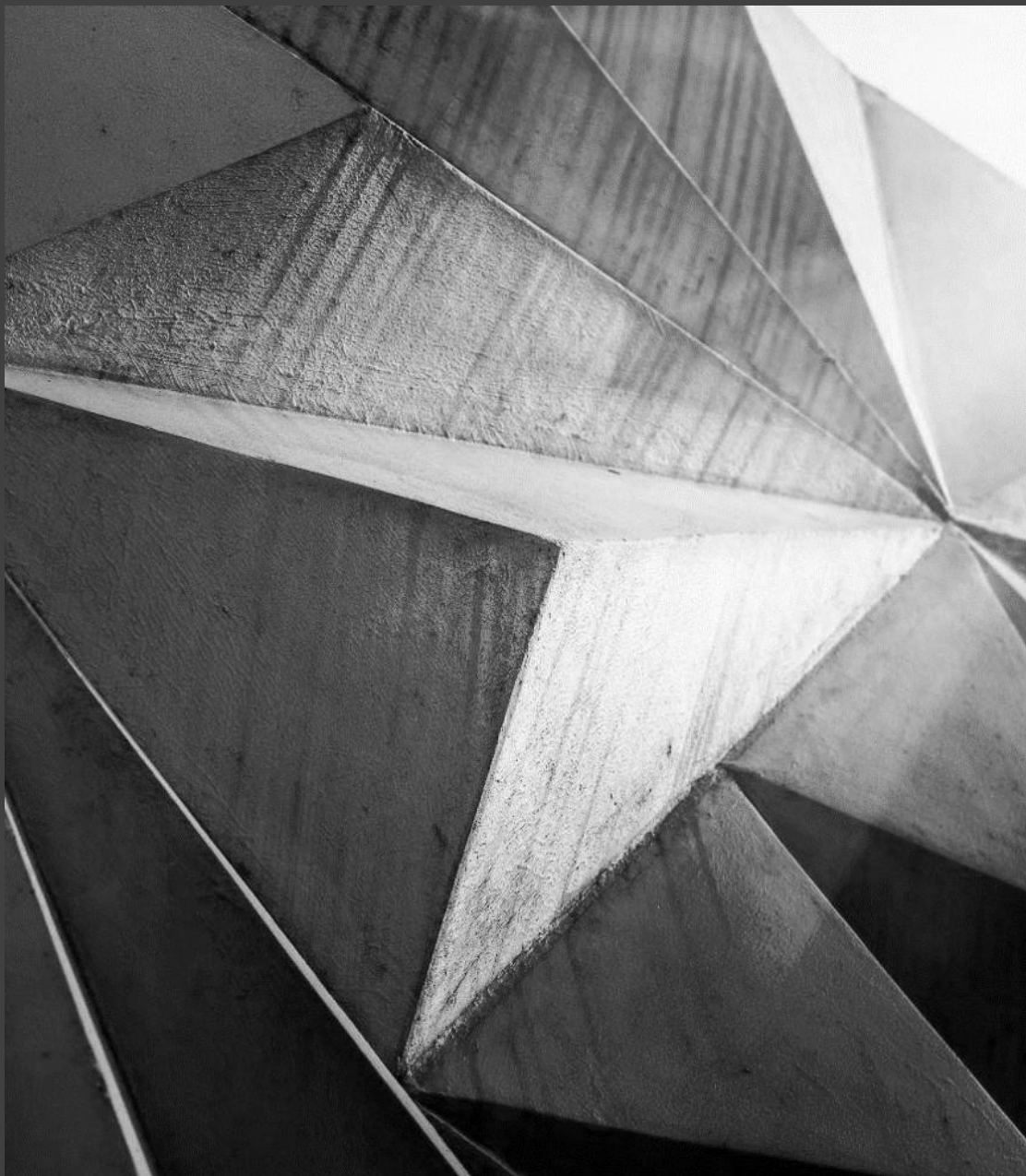
Gone

Da



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jjh1W\\_TbUNY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jjh1W_TbUNY)

# Video: What It's Like to Lost Someone to Suicide



- What are your thoughts after viewing this video?
- What do you think a client/patient could ask someone they lost to suicide if they could?

# Suicide Impact

- Suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States as of 2010 across all age groups
- Individuals between 15-19 years old are six times more likely to die as a result of homicide or suicide than die from cancer (leading natural cause of death in age group)
- A study found that 4-7 years after a traumatic death, 40% of participants still sometimes felt that the death was not real, that they would wake up and it would not be true
- Populations with special considerations:
  - Appalachian
  - African Americans
  - African American males
  - White, middle-aged males
- Suicide Survivor: Someone who experiences a high level of self-perceived psychological, physical, and/or social distress for a considerable length of time after the suicide of another person. (Oulanova, Moodley, & Segiun, 2014)



The fact a young adult is attending college may be a protective factor against suicide. College students (7.5/100,000) were less likely to die by suicide than their nonstudent peers (15/100,000) (Silverman et al., 1997; Drum et al., 2009)

# LGBTQ and Youth Considerations/Statistics

- LGBT youth 3-7x more at risk for suicide than other youth
- LGBTQ youth are 3x more likely to attempt suicide at some point in their lives



THE **TREVOR** PROJECT  
Saving Young LGBTQ Lives



“WE RUN FROM GRIEF  
BECAUSE LOSS SCARES US,  
YET OUR HEARTS REACH  
TOWARD GRIEF BECAUSE THE  
BROKEN PARTS WANT TO  
MEND.”

– BRENÉ BROWN,  
*RISING STRONG*

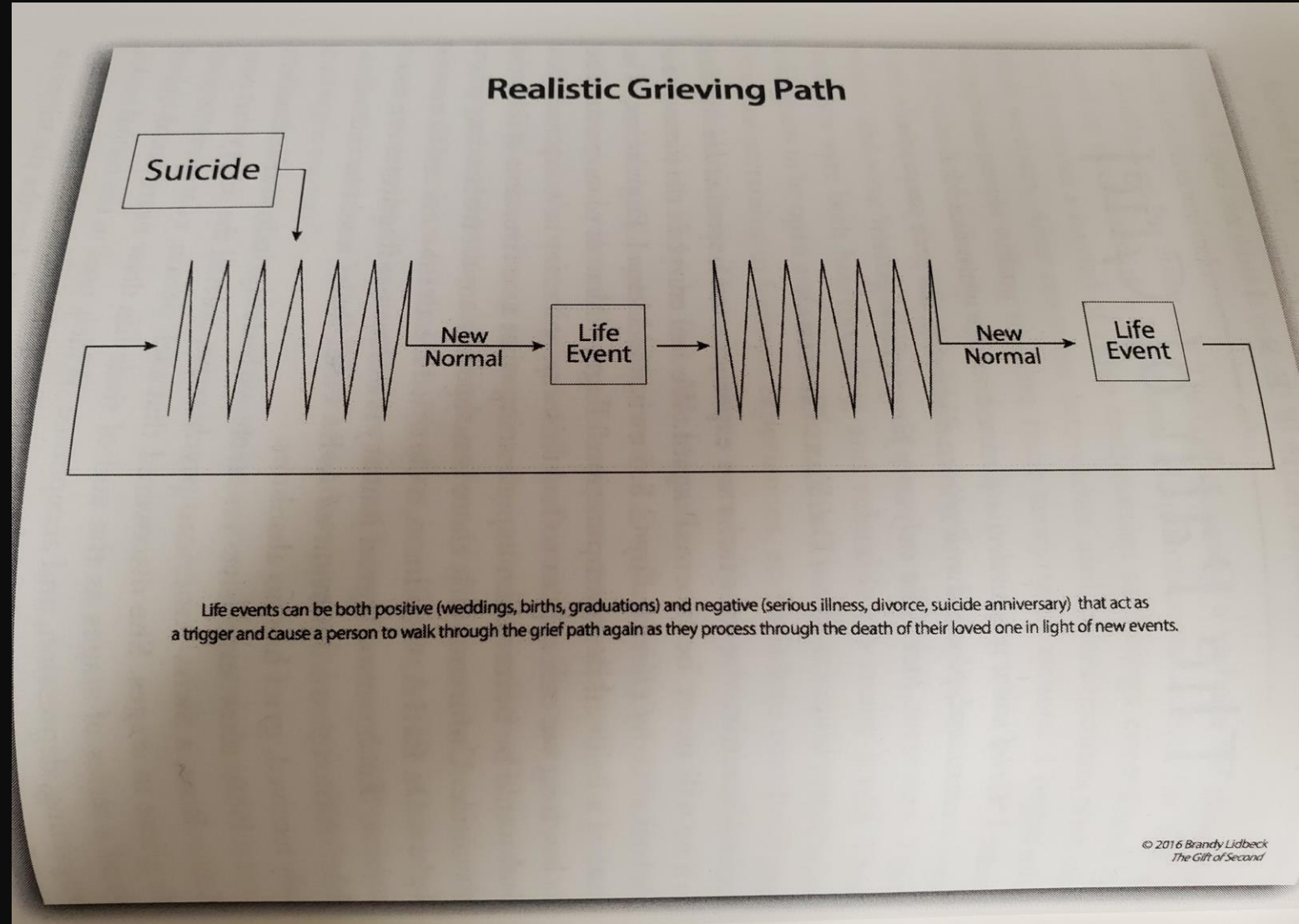
# What is a normal reaction to suicide?

There is no such thing!

# The “New Normal”

Described in *The Gift of Second* Pg 186: Don't be surprised if you can't get as much done as you used to. Don't beat yourself up. You have a new normal. Give yourself permission to be lazy and have breaks.

Pg 189: Normal feeling in the second year: One step forward two steps back





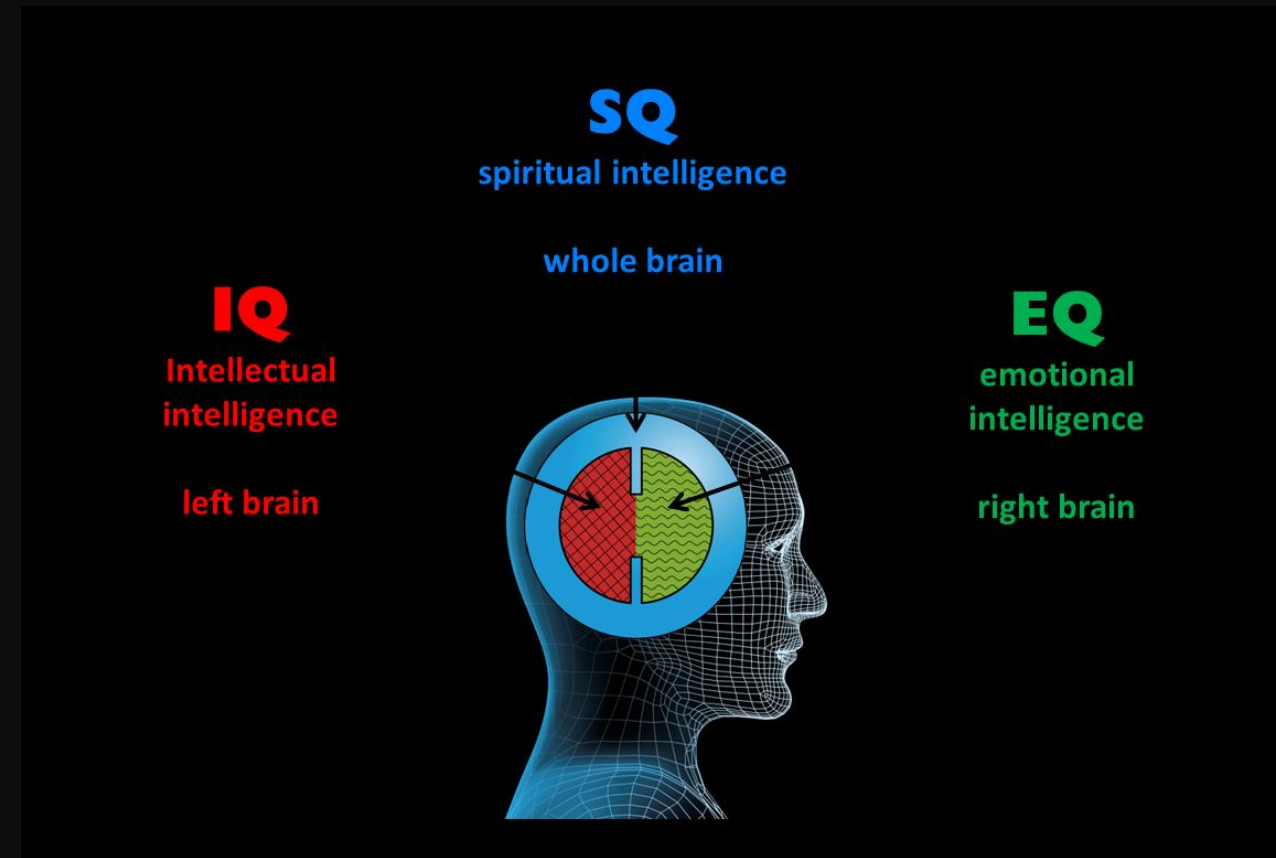
# Grief, Anger, Shame, and Suicide Contagion

Suicide Contagion: There is an increase likelihood that suicide survivors will have suicidal thoughts and/or attempt suicide due to longing to be with their loved ones.

# The Stigma and Aftermath of Suicide



Knowing it intellectually and accepting it emotionally are two entirely different things



# The Scarlet Letter Effect

Prepare yourself as best as possible for “The Scarlet Letter” on your chest while still accepting breakdowns will happen





Find the one thing that does not make you feel numb

“The element of routine is vastly important to people who are dealing with profound shock and grief, to remind them that their whole lives haven’t been blown apart.” pg 53

Ease back into the schedule/routine



# Support from Others

- Never forget the kindness a friend offers. Also will never forget the distance a friend offers.
- Social media
- Becoming an only child
- There is no right way to grieve: some will say you are moving on too quick some will say you are taking too long to move on pg 224



- [Safe Messaging Guidelines PDF](#)
- [Memorial Special Considerations](#)
- **Schools/Universities/Higher Education Special Considerations:**
  - -Develop a Mobile Crisis Team
  - -Make the Crisis hotline call and text lines readily available and shared throughout the school, through emails, and other communications
  - -Anniversary of the death
  - -Ensuring a part in the county coalition (or create if not already existing)
  - -Develop uniform policies and procedures for student notification of the death including what will be shared and what not shared
  - -Do not glorify the death or share messages of hopelessness
  - -Social media
  - -Graduation and Yearbooks
  - -Monitor for suicide contagion



## One Year Anniversary of The Death

Just being  
together and  
making sure  
not to be  
alone

*better  
together*

# Complicated Bereavement

- Symptoms of grief intensify after the first six months (The Gift of Second)
- Grief may be perceived by the griever as frightful, shameful, and strange. Might believe their own life is over OR they may feel that ending the longing would be ending the only part of the relationship they have left with their loved one.
- Grieving process gets worse before it gets better (Life After Suicide)
- The year of firsts- memories, traditions, etc (Life After Suicide)
- Second year is harder than the first- creating new traditions, milestones after the loss, people stop reaching out (Life After Suicide)

An aerial photograph of a river winding through a lush, green forested canyon. The river is a vibrant turquoise color, contrasting with the deep greens of the surrounding trees. The canyon walls are steep and covered in dense vegetation. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Canyon of Why and Posttraumatic Growth



# Change in Perspective



just be in the moment...

- There will be gifts in this
- What matters and what does not?
- “Rather than wasting time rehashing a past we can't change, and worrying about the future, which hasn't happened yet, we found we'd each started living in the moment, for the moment, and making the most of now because now is really all we've got.” pg 232
- How to give back?

## The “R” Processes

1. Recognize the loss
2. React to the separation
3. Recollect and reexperience the deceased
4. Relinquish old attachments to the deceased
5. Readjust
6. Reinvest

**WE REMEMBER, WE  
REBUILD, WE COME  
BACK STRONGER**

BARACK OBAMA  
PICTURE QUOTES . com



# Best Intervention

Support/group therapy and individual  
therapy simultaneously





# Broken Plate Metaphor



# Case Vignette

Sara is a 23 year old female and student at the local university. She is the daughter to a County Clerk of Courts Judge and local coffee shop owner. Her parents are married, living with Sara and her siblings. Sara plays on the university's lacrosse team. Sara is the sibling of a 15 year old sister who identifies as transgender and 8 year old brother. Sara died by suicide at home while the rest of the family was at work and school. Sara stayed home today reporting an upset stomach. Her parent came home for a typical break during lunch and found Sara unresponsive. Unable to process exactly what happened, the parent called 911.

- Who do you think arrived at their home due to the 911 call? What support did they provide?
- Who all would be considered suicide survivors in this case vignette? How should they be informed of Sara's death? What supports are available for these survivors?
- Who should inform Sara's children? How should Sara's children be told about the loss of their sister?
- What special considerations should be given in this specific case vignette based upon information learned during this presentation?

Rebecca Prather, MSW, LISW-S

Phone: (330) 256-4414

Email: [rebeccaprather93@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccaprather93@gmail.com)

**THANK YOU!**

