

Health And Well-Being

Surviving Suicide: Recovery Steps And Resources For Survivors

(NAPSA)—It's estimated that 1 million people in the U.S. attempt suicide each year. If you've survived a suicide attempt, know that you are not alone. While moving forward may seem nearly impossible, many survivors will tell you that they're glad they held on and worked for a better life.

It can be difficult for survivors to go back to their normal routines, homes, schools and workplaces after their attempt. It's normal to feel embarrassed by what happened and find it difficult to talk to others. This may make you feel isolated, not knowing where it's safe to turn, who you can talk to or who will possibly understand your pain. Fortunately, there are many things you can do to help yourself on your road to recovery.

Read on to learn coping techniques that have helped survivors, as well as free resources and support services available to you.

How Did It Get to This Point?

Terry's Story

The time right after your suicide attempt can be the most confusing and emotional part of your entire life. In some ways, it may be even more difficult than the time preceding your attempt, since it may take time for negative thoughts and feelings to subside. The important thing is you're still here, which means you have time to find healthier and more effective ways to cope with your pain. Consider the recovery story of Terry Wise, survivor of a suicide attempt.

"Suicide doesn't stand alone. It doesn't just happen as the result of nothing out of nowhere; it's the result of something," explains Terry.

On the morning of December 25, 2000, Terry tried to kill herself. She awoke two days later in the intensive care unit. The death of Terry's husband from Lou Gehrig's disease was a trigger for her suicide attempt. But also, the attempt was the culmination of years of depression and other problems that started in her childhood. Terry was overwhelmed by an intense emotional pain that had been building for years, and when her husband died, the pain became unbearable. For Terry, suicide felt like a way to end the pain.

Terry says, "My husband's illness and death really became the catalysts that brought a lot of other things to the fore-



By providing support and directing help to those who need it, we can prevent suicides.

front that I had been grappling with my whole life. If you've gone through your life and you've had traumas, or you've had difficulties or you've had things that you think you have buried and then you have a significant loss or a significant trauma occur later in your life as I did with my husband dying, all the things that have been on simmer in your life come to a full boil."

Right after Terry tried to kill herself, she felt lost. She didn't know what to do. Terry decided to try therapy, and ultimately it changed her life. By working with a counselor, Terry realized that the trauma she experienced when she was younger still affected her emotions as an adult.

Terry's recovery was a process. It took time and hard work. Now, Terry is a writer and public speaker whose mission is to educate others about suicide prevention. She finds fulfillment in traveling the country to share her story and help others who are struggling with suicide. Your path will be different from Terry's but you can learn ways to cope with negative emotions and enjoy life again.

The Road to Recovery

As with Terry's story, recovery of any type takes time and is never easy. It's important to move forward at your own pace and be patient with your recovery. You may also consider doing a few of the following strategies to help you heal and ease your transition back to everyday life.

To reduce stress, decide in advance how to deal with others' questions about your suicide attempt. The people around you may be surprised by your suicide attempt and have questions or comments about what happened. Thinking about what you might say in advance can help you prepare for their reactions.

Re-establishing connections may help you feel better. Often, the stress or depres-

sion that leads to a suicide attempt can cause you to disconnect from those who care about you or the things you once enjoyed. Reconnecting with the people and activities you love or loved can provide hope and help you feel better.

Because suicidal thoughts might return, you'll want to be prepared with a plan to stay safe. Development of a plan should identify triggers—like events or experiences—that lead to suicidal thoughts and ways to cope if the pain that led to your suicide attempt returns.

Finding and working with a counselor can help you start to recover. Unlike friends or family, a counselor is an unbiased listener who is trained to help you sort through your feelings and find ways to feel better. One place you can look to find recommended counselors in your area is through a locator tool offered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at findtreatment.samhsa.gov.

If you would like someone to talk with or help guide you to a local counselor, you may call SAMHSA's free National Helpline 24/7 at (800) 662-HELP (4357). The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is another call center that is open 24 hours a day, every day. It provides free and confidential support by caring, trained and trusted professionals. To access the service, call (800) 273-TALK (8255) or go to suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

In addition, there are several free online resources available to help. For starters, SAMHSA's handbook, "A Journey Toward Health & Hope," contains tools and stories shared from the recovery of others. For additional information on suicide, visit www.samhsa.gov/suicide-prevention. Read more personal stories from survivors by visiting the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's Stories of Hope and Recovery: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/stories/>.

As you go through your recovery process, know that you are not alone, you matter, and life can get better. There are people who care and resources available to help guide you. Life may be difficult now, but the effort you invest in your recovery will be worth it. Says Terry of her own journey, "If I were to sum up my life today, the word that I would use to describe it is 'fulfilling.' I live a very enriched life."