

SUPPORTING

PACIFIC COMMUNITIES BEREAVED BY SUICIDE

This resource is based on the voices of families and communities involved in the "Suicide Postvention: Support for Pacific Communities" Waka Hourua funded project.



This resource is for anyone looking to provide better support for our Pacific families and communities who have lost a loved one to suicide.

This may be useful for Church leaders, fellow students, health and social service providers, sports teams, work colleagues and so forth.

WHAT IS SUICIDE POSTVENTION?

Suicide postvention is supporting and caring for those who have lost someone to suicide.

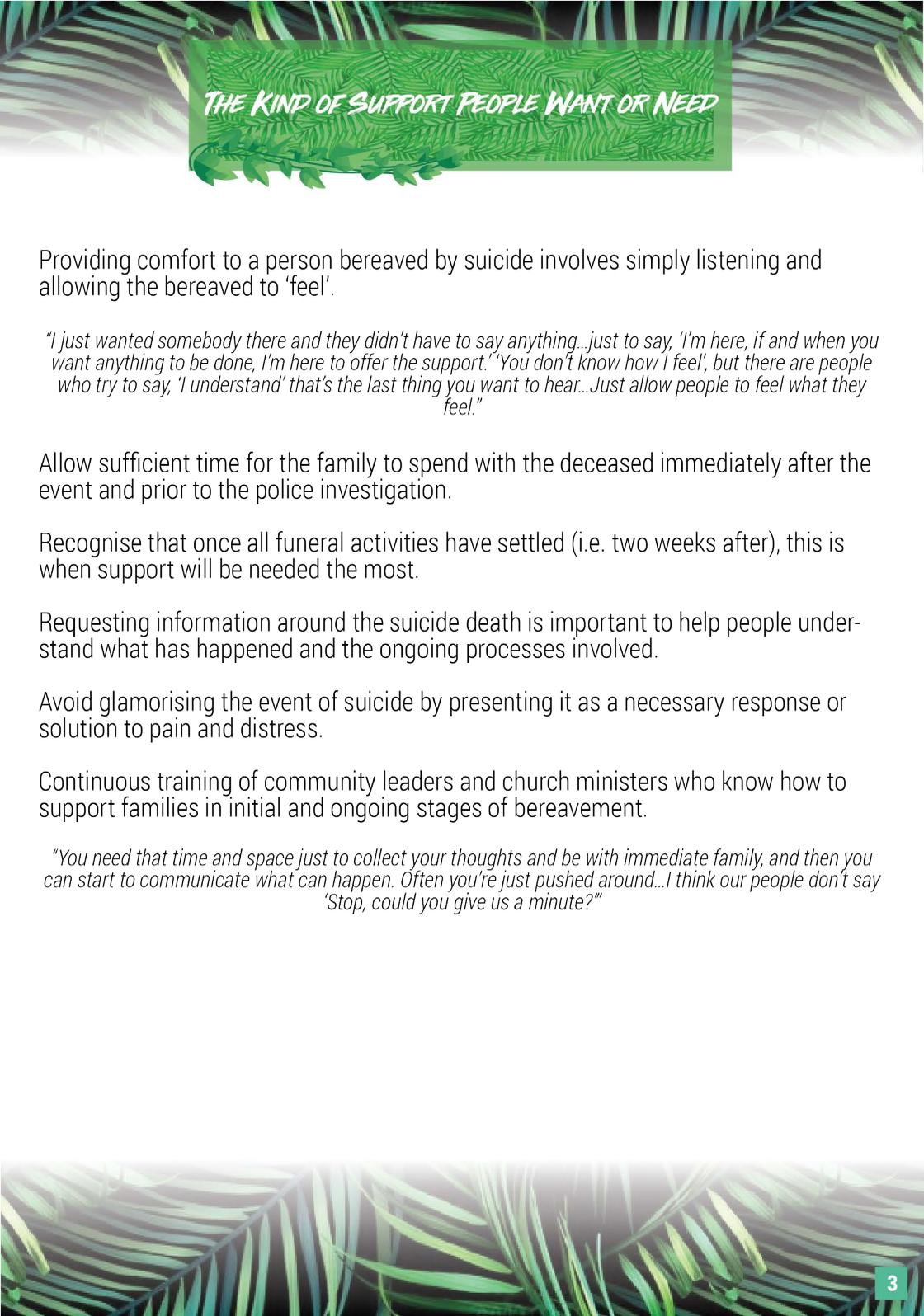
For every suicide death, an average of 60 people (i.e. family, friends, colleagues, school peers) are directly affected by the loss.

The impact of a suicide death may be felt more strongly by those loved ones left behind.

Supporting loved ones who are bereaved by suicide is an important step towards reducing the risk of further suicides. This may be achieved by understanding how to support the needs of those affected by a suicide death.



Photo Credit: Jasmine Tuitasi



THE KIND OF SUPPORT PEOPLE WANT OR NEED

Providing comfort to a person bereaved by suicide involves simply listening and allowing the bereaved to 'feel'.

"I just wanted somebody there and they didn't have to say anything...just to say, 'I'm here, if and when you want anything to be done, I'm here to offer the support.' 'You don't know how I feel', but there are people who try to say, 'I understand' that's the last thing you want to hear...Just allow people to feel what they feel."

Allow sufficient time for the family to spend with the deceased immediately after the event and prior to the police investigation.

Recognise that once all funeral activities have settled (i.e. two weeks after), this is when support will be needed the most.

Requesting information around the suicide death is important to help people understand what has happened and the ongoing processes involved.

Avoid glamorising the event of suicide by presenting it as a necessary response or solution to pain and distress.

Continuous training of community leaders and church ministers who know how to support families in initial and ongoing stages of bereavement.

"You need that time and space just to collect your thoughts and be with immediate family, and then you can start to communicate what can happen. Often you're just pushed around...I think our people don't say 'Stop, could you give us a minute?'"

SELF-CARE INFORMATION FOR THE BEREAVED

Part of taking care of others is also looking after ones-self. There are a number of things that you can do:

- Be kind to yourself, take regular time out or breaks when you need to.
- It is okay to feel whatever you want to feel. Being in this situation can be hard and you cannot always do everything. For further information about dealing with grief you can refer to the following Le Va resource and website: www.leva.co.nz/uploads/files/resources/LeVa%20GriefFactsheet_v2.pdf or www.survivingthestorm.co.nz
- Get enough sleep, eat well and stay physically active.
- Learn tips on how to stay mentally well.



SUPPORT SERVICES AND LINKS

Information about counselling and support groups should be shared to ensure that people who may be vulnerable know how and where to access help.

Support Groups

Skylight

0800 299 100

www.skylight.org.nz/Waves

Waves bereaved by suicide support groups

Mental Health Foundation

09 623 4812

www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/a-z/resource/52/suicide-bereavement

Peer support groups for suicide loss

Counselling and Support

0508 Tautoko Suicide Crisis Helpline

0508 828 865

www.lifeline.org.nz/suicide-crisis-helpline

Free, confidential 24-hour telephone counselling service

Lifeline

0800 543 354

For counselling and support

Need to talk?

Free call or text 1737 any time

For support from a trained counsellor

Samaritans

0800 726 666

Confidential support for anyone who is lonely or in emotional distress



For Children and Young People

Youthline

0800 376 633, free text 234, email: talk@youthline.co.nz
www.youthline.co.nz

What's Up

0800 942 8787 (5 - 18 years of age)
www.whatsup.co.nz

Kidsline

0800 54 37 54 (up to 14 years of age)
www.kidsline.org.nz

Postvention Resources

Clinical Advisory Services Aotearoa (CASA)

www.casa.org.nz/resources

Le Va

www.leva.co.nz/our-work/suicide-prevention

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand

www.aftersuicide.nz

Skylight resource pack service

Request a free information pack specific to your situation.

0800 299 100

www.skylight.org.nz/Request+a+Support+Information+Pack



THE IMPORTANCE OF PACIFIC WAYS OF KNOWING TO SUPPORT OUR BEREAVED

- Adequate Pacific cultural competency training is needed for those who provide immediate support (i.e. Victim Support, NZ Police, bereavement support-type groups, ambulance staff, coroner's office and non-Pacific peoples in supporting roles).

"I think a more cultural response rather than a service response will be effective."

- Pacific-specific suicide postvention training should draw upon Pacific understandings and models. These can include, but are not limited to: Nga Vaka, Sei Tapu, Niu, Paopao, Taro model, Fonofale etc.
- Use cultural reference points that remind Pacific peoples of their historical, community and cultural resilience.
- The training of support people must also include being aware of Pacific protocols (i.e. wearing appropriate attire when visiting the family, appropriate greetings, and knowing family dynamics).
 - Know family structures and the importance placed on family and communal relationships. This is essential in providing effective support for suicide bereaved families.

"[The grief counsellor] has to have a village mentality, in terms of how do you address the young people. You come to talk, not just to the family represented by aunty, uncle, etc., but you talk to the family, as a family."

- Identify who to see first and the right person to speak to before meeting the whole family.

"Maybe they [support services], should learn who to greet first. If you were coming into my house, you'd greet my grandmother before greeting me or my mother. In other families, that is very important that you greet the right person."

- Identify if the family are faith-based before involving spiritual leaders. Not all Pacific peoples are affiliated with a church or other spiritual organisation.

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- Maintain ongoing face-to-face meetings and support with the family. Generally, older family members and adults prefer face-to-face contact and learning. It is important to involve Pacific *mātua* in the trainings and to use their first language.
 - Support the family to ensure effective ongoing communication is maintained between a coroner and the family concerned.

“Don’t be shy to contribute, your words matter and are important.” [coroners’ process]

- Promote help seeking including counselling and support for children and family.
- Support groups for suicide loss may be helpful. To learn more about different types of support groups, go to the Skylight website: <https://skylight.org.nz/waves> or the Mental Health Foundation website: www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/a-z/resource/52/suicide-bereavement
- Offer separate support groups for adults, older peoples and youth.
- Youth and students find websites, texting and other means an effective way of engaging in, and providing postvention support. They need improved access to information and resources in order to provide safe support for friends affected by suicide.
- Consider specific support of the person(s) who discovered their loved one. This is because a suicide death may be discovered by a loved one, someone with a more distant relationship, or someone who does not know them at all (for example a death that occurs in a public or work environment). Regardless of whether the deceased was a loved one, anyone discovering and viewing a suicide related death scene experiences a level of trauma that requires support (sometimes ongoing).
- Focus on solutions that address the root issues rather than focussing solely on the issue.
- Ensure that the support person is well connected or has established networks with translators, legal advisors, financial advisors, NZ Police, mental health services, and child and youth services.

COMMON PACIFIC CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

Including each Pacific groups' cultural protocols and processes can be challenging. However, there are some values that apply to most Pacific groups and should be incorporated in the training.

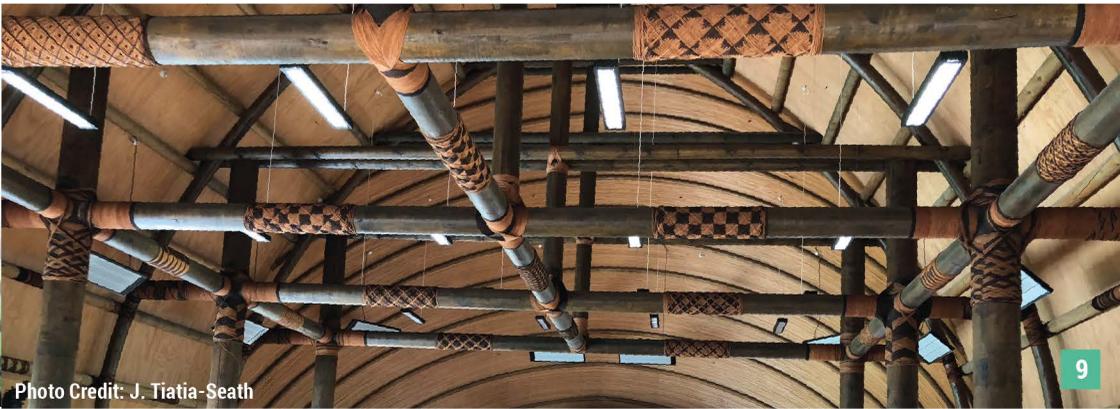
Before engaging:

- Identify if family are faith based
- Know the Pacific ethnic background of the family before engaging with them
- Be familiar with cultural protocols surrounding death (i.e. not standing directly over the person lying in state, etc.)
- Know family structures
- Understand importance of face-to-face meeting with family.

"Even if we might not have the words to help them – just being there as a listening friend. Listening can actually do a lot to help people, and being there to comfort them."

During engagement:

- Wear appropriate attire (i.e. avoid shorts, singlets etc.)
- Remove shoes before entering the family's house
- Avoid or refrain from asking too many questions or telling the family what to do or not do
- Do not speak about the suicide event, unless they do so first
- Create and ensure safe ways of talking through the grief
- Introduce and provide Pacific friendly suicide postvention and bereavement support group contacts and information.



WORKPLACE SUPPORT

It is important that employers are aware of the impact of suicide bereavement upon their employees.

"Tell your bosses that the time you need to go have a tangi [cry] somewhere that you can – if you disappear, they can understand where you've gone, and that they may need to seek help for you."

Support in the workplace should include:

- Sympathetic employers
- Promotion of workplace mental health
- An awareness of counselling services available
- Sufficient time off work
- Safe areas or spaces to escape for quiet time.

You can also refer to the Mental Health Foundation 'Workplace wellbeing' resource for further information at:

www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/our-work/category/27/workplace-wellbeing



Hibiscus Research humbly acknowledges with *alofa* the participants who gave themselves, their time and their voices to this study and also for the professional experiences and support shared by those working with Pacific families bereaved by suicide. *Fakafetai, Fakaau lahi, Vinaka vakalevu, Fakafetai lasi, Malo 'aupito, Meitaki ma'ata, Fa'afetai tele lava.*

Organisation and Community Support

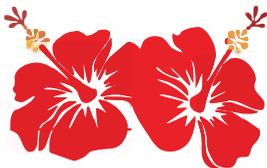
Community Postvention Response Service (CPRS)/Clinical Advisory Services Aotearoa (CASA), Kim Holt (K'aute Pasifika - Hamilton), Kristina Sofele (Vaka Tautua - Auckland), Le Va, Les Atoni (Vaka Tautua - Wellington), Maria Pasene (Pegasus Health - Christchurch), Peta Karalus (K'aute Pasifika - Hamilton), Professor Annette Beauvais, Rev. Iki Pope (Tongan Youth Trust - Auckland), Rev. Makesi Alatimu (St Paul's Trinity Pacific Presbyterian Church - Christchurch), Rev. Perema Leasi (Pacific Islanders Church of Christ the King, Wellington), Rev. Veitomonu Suifanga (Trinity College - Hamilton), Sam Tuaoi, Kaiongo Tupou (Vaka Tautua - Christchurch), Tagaloa Taima Fagaloo (Capital Coast DHB), Teina Powell (Vaka Tautua - Wellington), Vui Mark Goshe (Vaka Tautua - Auckland), Waka Hourua, Willie Iosia.

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REFERENCES

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Tiatia-Seath, J. (2016). *Suicide Postvention: Support for Pacific Communities: Report for Waka Hourua - National Suicide Prevention Programme for Māori and Pasifika Communities*. Auckland: Hibiscus Research Ltd. Related URL. URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/32391>



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