

Affirmations for Survivors of Suicide Loss

NOTE: This reading may be considered for use with communities of support for the suicidally-bereaved, perhaps at holiday gatherings, walks or other fundraisers, ceremonies of support with allies, at religious events or in faith-based community events where deemed appropriate, in conjunction with SOS Survivors of Loss bereavement groups, etc. Photographs of loved ones, bereavement quilts, or candles or other meaningful artifacts are recommended for inclusion. The affirmations are meant to be interactive and read in responsorial format. It is designed to be neutral, or appropriate for any faith orientation. The origins of this was that it was written for the annual Memory Tree of Lights Survivors of Suicide Loss “holiday” ceremonies in November at the Crisis Center in Birmingham, AL. Many thanks and gratitude to the members and families and their loved ones of the group who inspired these affirmations. (Harrington, 2017).

To be led by a designated reader or leader followed by the responsorial “This I can do” by all present.

We pledge to . . .

To always remember and to use the name of our loved one out loud whenever possible... (Survivors of loss now say out loud the name of their loved one until all are finished.) _____

(Silence before proceeding.)

Response: This I can do.

To respect the mysteries and power of mental health, depression, hopelessness, and mental health disorders.

Response: This I can do.

To patiently lean into unspeakable grief, acknowledging its moments of confusion, loneliness, sadness, anger, its seeming relentlessness, and even, at times, humor.

Response: This I can do.

To be help-seeking and to reach out to suicide-informed friends and allies, especially in times of seeming bottomless despair.

Response: This I can do.

To work towards responsible public information and education that would prevent suicide or make easier the adjustment for survivors from such bereavement.

Response: This I can do.

To lend our thoughts, prayers, skills, support, and resources to anyone right now who may be feeling suicidal.

Response: This I can do.

To comfort and respond to others in grief who are help-seeking and in despair.

Response: This I can do.

To become a long-term survivor of suicide loss, who knows in maturity and distance from tragedy, that time cannot return a loved one, but time can stabilize disorienting and overwhelming grief.

Response: This I can do.

To embrace the newly bereaved with hearty support and empathy with our thoughts, our stories, and actions.

Response: This I can do.

To remember the past, acknowledging the wonderful memories and reverence for the challenges of life for both our loved one and our self in the complexities of family life and community life.

Response: This I can do.

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To be conscious in the present, to feel the curious and conflicting feelings of “it will never be the same,” and to allow feelings of any kind as normal. *Response: This I can do.*

To emancipate from the damaging effects of guilt, acknowledging that any internal sensations of “If ‘onlies’,” and “I would-a _____, should-a _____, could-a _____ are likely or in part associated with the effects of suicidal-related trauma. *Response: This I can do.*

To honor one’s own or another’s feelings as normal, while protecting for safety.

Response: This I can do.

To find hope in the future, to reclaim one’s own personal life with a deep appreciation of our own losses and vulnerabilities, acknowledging one’s “new-normal” priorities in response to painful adjustments learned through adversity. *Response: This I can do.*