Grief is Very Individual
Individuals react to grief in different ways and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Some people react immediately, while others experience delayed grief.

Understand the Stages of Grief
Denial. This emotion can help protect us from feeling overwhelmed by shock, anger or anguish. Thoughts such as, “This can’t be happening” are common first reactions. Denial can help us to come to terms with grief, but if it lingers too long, it can inhibit the healing process.

Anger. You may find yourself blaming others for not preventing the suicide. It’s also common to blame your loved one for leaving you. Here are some ways to manage your anger:

- Know it’s OK to be angry. Talking about it with friends and family can be calming.
- Exercise. Physical activity can calm racing thoughts, and help ease muscle tension, headaches and other physical effects of grief.
- Be careful not to direct anger at others. It may be a common urge, but it will not help.
- Find outlets for expressing your feelings. Journal writing, painting, music or poetry can help you better understand what is happening to you.

Guilt and Second-Guessing. Grief can cloud thinking and it’s common to focus on “what if” scenarios and think you could have stopped the suicide. You may think: “What if I’d gone downstairs and checked on him that night?”, for example. Consider turning the guilt you feel into positive action by volunteering for an important cause. Sometimes, taking action to support others can help relieve guilt.

Depression. Here are some common symptoms:
- A noticeable change in appetite, sleep and/or weight
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- Loss of pleasure
- Difficulty concentrating; agitation
- Feeling tired and without energy
- Bodily aches and pains
- Feeling that you can’t go on

If these symptoms persist, contact your healthcare provider or your confidential Health Advocate EAP (Employee Assistance Program) and Work/Life program. An EAP Licensed Professional counselor can help you work through the grief process and/or find a local grief support group.

Surviving the suicide of a loved one is a terribly painful event. You may experience a lot of emotions all at once—shock, confusion, anger or even guilt. These are all normal thoughts and emotions, and although it will take time, with support you can continue with your life.
Acceptance. Although acceptance is considered the final stage of the grief process, you may still find it helpful to seek support and allow your grieving to unfold. Remember, grief can’t be rushed or ignored. It’s also important to take care of yourself. Trying to get back to a partial routine can help you feel better.

Creating Closure
Talking with others one-on-one who knew the person well, or holding a special gathering for this purpose, can help you come to a sense of closure about the death. Remember, laughing and enjoying life again doesn’t mean you’ve forgotten your loved one. In fact, going on with your life is a wonderful way of honoring their memory.

A Word about Breaking the News
Breaking the news of suicide can be one of the hardest things you will ever do. Loved ones of the suicide victim need to be reassured that they couldn’t have prevented it. Make sure they are in a safe place with others around for support before you tell them. It’s best to be gentle, but direct. Expect a range of reactions including sadness, self-blame, abandonment, fear of dying themselves, guilt, confusion, anger, loneliness, numbness, denial and wishing it would all go away.

Talking to Children about Suicide
Keeping the truth from children sends the message that it’s not okay to talk about sadness and pain. Tell them as much as you know, using simple and direct words. You might say, “He was in a great deal of pain and did not know where to get help.” Tailor your words to their maturity level and help younger children put words to their emotions, like “angry” and “sad.”

- Talk truthfully about the loss. Otherwise, they may hear it from someone else, which might be worse.
- Talk about your own feelings. It’s okay to cry and acknowledge your own sadness. This helps your child come to terms with their feelings.
- Be patient. Children often ask the same questions over and over to come to terms with confusion about death.

Remember... In a crisis, EAP+Work/Life support is available 24/7.