Intimate Partners and Suicide:
Finding Hope When the Unthinkable Happens

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Learning Objectives → Isolating Factors → Common Emotions → Layers of Impact → How to Help

Learning Objectives

Isolating Factors

Common Emotions

Layers of Impact

How to Help
Two Core Learning Objectives

1. Describe two factors that can create a uniquely isolating experience for current and prior service military spouses who have lost a partner to suicide.

2. Identify at least two very practical ways to support those in close relationships who have lost a spouse or partner to suicide.

Whose Pain Are We Addressing?

Anyone who has lost a close relationship partner to suicide: whether female, male, married, engaged, or partnered
A Uniquely Challenging Grief Journey

Learning Objectives
Isolating Factors
Common Emotions
Layers of Impact
How to Help
Isolating Factors

Following the suicide of a spouse or partner, there are 3 factors (or “splits”) that often isolate survivors.
Intimate Partners of All Kinds

Attachment Trauma

Is often directly related to the suicide

Often pre-dates the suicide

Learning Objectives

Isolating Factors

Common Emotions

Layers of Impact

How to Help
Breaking the Code of Silence

The exercise...
Layers of Impact

Future Challenges

*The exercise...*
**TAPS Postvention Model**

- Provides a shared model for healing
- Helps us identify where survivors “get stuck”
- Extends our understanding of the grief journey

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**TAPS 3-phase Postvention Model**

1. **Stabilization**
2. **Grief Work**
3. **Post-traumatic Growth**
Eight Ways to Help

1) Move in close and listen well
2) Normalize the full range of emotions
3) Connect survivors with others who can help
4) Assess risk and trauma
5) Help survivors understand why people die by suicide
6) Help survivors approach and feel grief
7) Help them reconnect (if desired)
8) Help them rebuild confidence in their inner voice

1. Move in Close and Listen Well
2. Normalize a Range of Emotions

3. Connect Them with People Who Can Help
4. Trauma Often Prevents Healthy Grieving

Examples of Questions to Ask*

* If trauma is indicated, refer for treatment or, if appropriate to your role, consider following up with formal symptom assessments like the PCL-5 and CAPS-5

When was the last time you saw your spouse or partner?

When you lay your head down in bed, what thoughts run through your head?

When you think of your spouse or partner, what kinds of images come to mind?

What story are you telling yourself about his or her death?
5. Help Them Understand Why People Die by Suicide

6. Help Survivors with Their Grief

   Approaching grief

   Holding on to the connection (if desired)

   Leaning in to grief bursts

   Learning to move through grief
7. Help Survivors Reconnect (if desired)

8. Help Survivors Rebuild Their Inner Voice
Take-Aways

1) Spouses and partners who lose their loved one to suicide often have complicated emotions and unique challenges

2) There are many ways that we can help spouse and partner survivors in very practical ways (as summarized on the handout that pairs with this training)

Additional TAPS Resources

- TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline— Phone number: 1-800-959-8277
- Survivor Care Team— https://www.taps.org/survivorcareteam
- Grief Counseling— https://www.taps.org/griefcounseling
- Casework— https://www.taps.org/casework
- Education Assistance— https://www.taps.org/edu
- Suicide Loss— https://www.taps.org/suicide
- TAPS Magazine— https://www.taps.org/magazine
- TAPS Publications— https://www.taps.org/publications
- Grief and Loss Education— https://www.taps.org/institute
- For Grief Professionals— https://www.taps.org/professionals
- Additional Resources— https://www.taps.org/additionalresources
Additional Supportive Resources

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255)
- Give an Hour (giveanhour.org)
- VA Coaching into Care line (www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/)
- Vets4Warriors [peer support for active duty and veterans of military service] (www.vets4warriors.com)
- DoD/Be there (www.militaryonesource.mil/be-there)
- Headstrong (getheadstrong.org)
- Alliance of Hope [online support program for suicide loss survivors] (allianceofhope.org)
- Connections [peer support for attempt survivors and those with suicidal thoughts] (save.org/peersupport)
- American Association for Suicidology (suicidology.org)
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (afsp.org)
- The Lighthouse Project/Columbia Scale (http://cssrs.columbia.edu/)
- QPR Institute (https://qprinstitute.com/)
- ASIST (https://www.livingworks.net/)

Questions and Discussion

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About the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®

Launched in March 2018 through an alliance with HFA, the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® serves as a resource and training center, providing programs for both professionals working in the field of grief and loss and the public.

Presented by Boeing

Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs

• August 13 — Building Your Circle of Support After a Loss
  o Presenter: Denise Rollins, PhD, Executive Director, Whole Heart Grief & Life Resource Center

• August 27 — Grieving as They Grow
  o Presenter: Vicky Jay, CEO, National Alliance for Grieving Children

• September 10 — The 411 on Professional Grief and Trauma Counseling
  o Presenter: Jon Reid, PhD, LPC, FT, TAPS Advisory Board Member

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CE Code: SSFH