Connecting with a Suicide Loss Survivor: What You Can Do to Help

**Listen**
- Be ready, open, and willing to have tough conversations
  - + Know that it may take time – keep checking in
- Offer your full attention
  - + Focus on listening by asking open-ended questions
- Understand the loss survivor’s choices and emotions from their point of view rather than your own

**Validate**
- Resist the desire to fix, reframe, or advise
  - + Try paraphrasing what you have heard in your own words
- There is no timeline on grief
  - + Avoid the pull to say that “things will get better”
- Everyone experiences suicide loss differently - what is helpful to you, may not be the same for someone else
Support

- Ask what the loss survivor needs help with and assist with tangible, supportive tasks
  - Bring prepared meals
  - Grocery shop for them
  - Walk their dogs
- Relieve some pressure by helping the loss survivor navigate the support resources available to them
  - Provide suicide loss resources
  - Help schedule appointments
- Keep checking in months and years after the loss
  - Holidays
  - Life events (e.g., wedding, new baby, promotion)
  - Birthday of the person who died
  - Loss anniversaries

Honor

- Show the loss survivor that you remember the person who died
  - Reach out
  - Share memories
  - Proactively remember important dates
- Suggest ways to honor the memory of the person who died
  - Regularly meet at their favorite place
  - Create a memorial in their honor
  - Participate in a memorial walk
- Remind the loss survivor you continue to value the life of the person who has died and that they will never be forgotten

Acknowledgments:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs & Rocky Mountain MIRECC
https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/postvention

USPV would like to thank the suicide loss survivors who shared their lived experiences with us and whose input was instrumental in developing this resource.