Grieving a Suicide: A Ritual or Funeral
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This ritual can be used as a funeral for a person who has committed suicide, or it can be used simply as a ritual. In a traditional funeral, for various reasons, it is often not possible or acceptable to have a strong focus on the suicide and people feel they need something more at a later date. This ritual was first created for grieving the death of James. He will always remain in my memory as the beautiful, gentle child I knew in him.

## You will need

* A large bowl of water to be placed on a central table or on a cloth flowing from a table.
* Loose flowers in a basket.

## Let us grieve and celebrate

**Dear friends,**we have come together because we loved *[name]*as (a son, brother, friend).
Here we will mourn him/her leaving us,
honour his/her life,
reverently farewell his/her body (if it is a funeral)
and comfort each other.
We come believing that all human life is valuable,
no matter how it is begun
or how it is ended.
We come to claim the truth and integrity
which lived and died in this life
and which lives on in us.
We come believing that *[name]*’slife, which we remember today
and for which we now experience great loss,
is joined with all life,
stretching into the past and into the future.
His/her life was lived in its uniqueness with us
and has now passed into the ultimate community of human existence
with all its embracing diversity.

## Reflection

At this moment,
as we come face to face with death,
especially this tragic death,
we have many feelings alongside our grief.
This is a harsher moment than we expected.
Around this death are more questions than answers.
In the face of that let us open our hearts to each other
in mutual comfort and reassurance.
*[Name]*chose the manner and the time of his/her dying
and this is hard for us to face.
In our grief we ask ourselves whether if had we been different people
or done something more for him/her,
he/she would have stayed longer with us and chosen a gentler death.
There will never be enough tears to express our pain
as we recognise his/her pain at the ending of his/her life.
We are facing the truth
that in *[name]*there were needs that could not be met by any of us
 and probably questions that will not be answered in this lifetime.
We are facing the truth that sometimes,
in our humanness,
we will never have enough to offer
for the unlocking of life and the sustaining of life in another,
even though we may give all that we have to give.

We place this bowl of water, the sign of our weeping, at the centre of our life today.

*(The bowl is placed on the table.)*

We may live with the questions forever,
but the affirmation for us at this moment is that all that is ever required of us is to do our best in loving each other
and in responding to each other’s needs.
That is all we can ever do,
all we can ever offer.
This we have done in all integrity,
as ordinary, fallible human beings,
as family and as friends of *[name]*.
We are therefore, at this moment,
invited to forgive ourselves and to forgive each other,
if we believe this is needed,
and to comfort and reassure each other.
We are called to go on and to live our lives in peace
and to trust in the kindest experiences of *[name]*himself/herself.
Let us now begin a new journey of life,
carrying this death among us lovingly,
but laying down the struggles of the past.

*(A silence is kept)*

The gifts and graces which *[name]*offered
must never be lost to us in the pain of his/her dying.
We claim the creativity
which he/she brought to us in his/her life and relationships,
far beyond that which he/she may have realised.
We cherish that good life
and carry it within our own lives into the future.
Our lives were changed
because we lived with him/her
and that will never lose its significance
with the manner of his/her dying.

## Reading or music

*(Any favourite poem or piece of literature or music.)*

## Facing death

None of us knows the whole truth about what lies beyond death.
All we know is that the life of this one whom we have loved
lives on in us in a multitude of ways.

If the life of *[name]*exists in any form in the universe, we hope that it connects with the greater healing power of universal life and a renewed wisdom which engages strongly with our love and all love.

## Remembering a life

*(The people share their memories of the person who died. After each person speaks, they place a flower in the bowl of water with the words:)*

The water of our tears will become refreshing water for ongoing life.

Let us reflect in silence on this life and what it has meant to us.

(A silence reflection)

We give thanks for the gifts we have received in *[name]*.

## The Committal

*For a funeral. The person presiding moves to the casket and, placing a hand on it, says:*

*[Name]*, we will always wish you stayed much longer with us
and that you had not chosen to die in this way, b
ut we will now set you free as you travel on into a new day.
We will always remember you
and all that you have given to us in your shortened life
and we will value who you were for us.

To love someone is to risk the pain of parting.
Not to love is never to have lived.
The grief which we now experience is the honouring of our love.

Let us now, in a quiet moment,
make our farewell to *[name]*.

*(A silence is kept)*

And now let us commit *[name]*’sbody to the elements
which are gentle to us at the time of our death.
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.
In the cycle of life and death the earth is replenished
 and life is eternally renewed.

We send you out now, *[name]*,
to go safely into the next part of your journey.
May a greater wholeness and fullness of life be waiting for you.
Our love goes with you.
May you now find peace.

*OR For a ritual which is not a funeral.*

If we could now speak to *[name]*,
this is what we would want to say,
so we speak it into the universe:
*[name]*, we will always wish you stayed much longer with us
and that you had not chosen to die in this way,
but we set you free as you travel on into a new day.
We will always remember you
and all that you have given to us in your shortened life
and we will value who you were for us.

Go safely into the next part of your journey.
May a greater wholeness and fullness of life be waiting for you.
Our love goes with you.
May you now find peace.

Let us now, in a quiet moment,
make our special farewell to *[name]*.

*(A silence is kept)*

## Let us go

And now let us go into the world,
glad that we have loved,
free to weep for the one we have lost,
free to hold each other in our human frailty,
empowered to live life to the full
and to affirm the hope of human existence.

(It is good to eat and drink together after such a ritual.)