



# COMPASSIONATE CONVERSATIONS

*—with People Widowed by Suicide—*



Avoid asking "why" someone died by suicide. This question may be confusing or confrontational. There is never only one reason for suicide and people widowed by suicide will never know everything that their person was feeling or thinking. **Suicide is the result of a multitude of factors including mental health, trauma, stress, loss, and access to lethal means.**



Say "died by suicide." "Committed" assigns judgement and was originally used because suicide was a crime. "Completed" implies a goodness that comes with finishing a project. **Inclusive language is important: died from cancer, died in a car accident, died by suicide.**



Try coming up with alternative ways of expressing yourself regarding frustrations or embarrassment. **Suicide references and jokes (including saying, 'I could just kill myself') or mimicry (like pantomiming hanging or shooting yourself in the head) might alienate people widowed by suicide.**



**Never** ask about the method of someone's suicide. Although some widowed people will offer these details in personal discussions, many would prefer to never share them with anyone. Furthermore, hearing the details of how someone died by suicide is a known risk factor for anyone else who may be feeling suicidal. **This line of questioning is very inappropriate.**

## WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY?

"How are you feeling about your partner's death?"

"Would you like to talk more?"

"Let me introduce you to someone with a similar experience."

"Thank you for sharing your experience with me."

