

# You're Not Alone

*A mental health and suicide prevention blog for the construction industry*



## The Impact of Suicide on Loss Survivors

December 2018

*by Bob Swanson*

During the first few moments of most of my presentations, I ask the members of the audience to reflect on if and how have they been impacted by the suicide death of a family member, friend, neighbor, fellow employee, etc. Without exception, nearly 100 percent of the audience will acknowledge that they have been impacted by a suicide death. Many of us are suicide loss survivors.

During the past month, I have had three telephone conversations with members of our industry who are having difficulty coping with the suicide death of a friend or family member. Each of these instances highlight that the grieving process of a suicide death is unique. In addition to the normal stages of grieving which include denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, a suicide death often includes strong feelings of guilt. These feelings often are long term, and they may become a barrier to the normal grieving process.

I can use my own experience as an example of the effect suicide has on the grieving process. I have not experienced any guilt from my parents' deaths. In each case, medical benchmarks indicated life could not be sustained. However, with my oldest son, I still face periodic uncertainty as to what else could have been done. My faith in a loving God has allowed me to move on, but even after nearly ten years, feelings of guilt occasionally occur.

As we consider mental health and the impacts of suicide deaths, it is paramount that we also remember how a suicide affects those around the individual that was lost. It's important to remember that the effects on loss survivors, whether they are family, a friend or a coworker, can be devastating and long lasting. The pain and guilt is not easy to get past, but we can help by offering our understanding and a friendly ear.



### About the Author - Bob Swanson

Bob Swanson is the past president of Swanson & Youngdale and the first Chairman of FCA International. He tragically lost his son Michael to suicide on March 13, 2009 at the age of 33. Bob now focuses his efforts on creating awareness of the impact of mental health and suicide in the construction industry.