

Personal Story

Paul, workmate of Bill



about grief

Bill had worked with our team for 13 years. We're in IT. For the past few months, he'd been a bit quiet, we just thought there were some troubles at home. He'd had those before so we weren't worried; we just thought it would blow over as usual and he'd get back to himself.

It's a close-knit team, we'd work together on the same project sometimes for months at a time. It was hard in the first few days. It was pretty shocking actually, because we couldn't believe it. We'd been out for drinks the night before, we'd just got a new contract and he seemed in good shape. But then one of the guys arrived early the next day and found him in his car; he'd taken his own life.

It doesn't make any sense. Things must have been much worse than we knew; I don't know. And I sat across from him nearly every day. So, it does make me think how I didn't notice how bad it was for him or that I didn't see this coming. I go over things and wonder if there's something I should have done or said to help him. He never let on.

The guy who found him called 000, the police and ambulance came and it was terrible coming to work and seeing all that. We didn't know what to do to look after everyone. We did our best, got in some professional help.

Then it was hard to know what to say to his wife, Jan, and the kids. We wanted to do something to help but couldn't think what. We organised for people to go the funeral. We sent a card and flowers and one of the managers spoke at the funeral. We asked for ideas and the team wanted to put in some money to give to the family. We did this; it felt good.

We don't have any real contact with his family now but we still wonder how they're

going. The youngest was 4 years old. He had everything to live for. We heard that he had depression. Sometimes when we thought things were bad at home it turns out that he was battling the depression.

It's been six months now and I still think about him. A new person sits at his desk now and this was hard. I didn't really want anyone else there at his desk. At least they waited a while and didn't put someone in straight away. Something like this makes you wonder about things, about people and how they're doing. We've had some information about depression and mental illness brought into work and we wish we'd known it before, but at least we do now.

Counselling and Support Services

Support After Suicide (03) 9427 9899 Richmond, Lalor, Ferntree Gully, Dandenong and Lt Collins St, City

Bereavement Counselling and Support Service (03) 9265 2111

The Compassionate Friends (03) 9888 4944

Mercy Western Grief Services (03) 9364 9838

Telephone counselling

Suicide Helpline 24 hours 1300 651 251

Griefline—12pm-3am—9596 7799

Lifeline—24 hours—13 11 14

Parent Help Line 1300 30 1300

Kids Helpline—1800 55 1800

Suggested reading

After Suicide: Help for the Bereaved, Sheila Clark, Hill of Content, 1998.

Healing After the Suicide of a Loved One, Simolin and Quinan, 1993.

After Suicide: a ray of hope for those left behind, Eleanora Ross, 2001.

No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the suicide of a loved one, Carla Fine, 2000.

Care and Support Pack: Coping with Grief After Suicide, NSW Health Dept (02) 9816 0452

Support After Suicide

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