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**A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF
THE COPING STRATEGIES AND NEEDS
OF ADULTS BEREAVED BY SUICIDE**

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fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of Master of Arts
in Psychology at
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LINDA GRACE KELLY

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ABSTRACT

The aftermath of suicide can have devastating effects on family and friends. Research has shown that the complexities of suicide bereavement can lead to physical and mental health problems, increased risk of suicide, pathological grief, and non-specific stress disorders. How the bereaved cope with the loss of a loved one by suicide was the focus of this study. It explored factors that were helpful or unhelpful, as well as the specific needs of this group. Fifteen volunteers over the age of 18, bereaved for more than two, and less than five years, told their stories in 45-60 minute semi-structured interviews. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, results revealed a variety of coping strategies, and highlighted a number of factors that helped or hindered the individual's ability to cope. Results also highlighted a need for training for personnel dealing with the bereaved, suggested improvements in procedures following a suicidal death, and indicated a need for professional help and support immediately following the death. The findings of this study could be beneficial to policymakers at many levels, and to medical and associated professionals. Understanding the factors that can help or hinder the bereaved's ability to cope will help in the assessment of risk, and consequently be useful in the development of early intervention strategies to minimize the risk of physical and psychological problems that can result from such a traumatic event.

Abandonment

Abandoned to the vagaries of
misconception
misunderstanding
swept along by life's strong currents
eddy
always around

your legacy for years of
trust
was abandonment

we are not angry
just tired
tired of having to rebuild
re-explain
re-fashion our lives
to accommodate
your abandonment

we are tired of the tears
and the fears you left us with
we are tired of facing each new day not knowing how—
to accommodate
your abandonment

children
banish the fears
and start anew
bathe in the waters of life and
enjoy the sparkling droplets of
trust and love

(Jenny, 2003)

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