

32 PILLS

MY SISTER'S SUICIDE

Screening Guide

PREMIERES

December 7th, 2017 at 8p/7c on HBO

Also available on HBO NOWSM | HBO GO[®] | HBO ON-DEMAND[®]

For more information, go to

www.HBO.com/documentaries/32-pills-my-sisters-suicide and
www.32pillsmovie.com

You may want to invite your friends, family and colleagues to watch the film together, and then have a post-screening discussion.

If you're in crisis, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for help.

WHAT'S THE FILM ABOUT?

After struggling with mental illness for most of her life, New York artist Ruth Litoff killed herself at age 42 in 2008 by overdosing on prescription pills. Six years later, her younger sister, Hope Litoff, decides to film herself while she empties a packed-to-the-brim storage unit filled with Ruth's belongings. Driven by the need to understand Ruth's illness and why it made her want to end her life, as Hope pores through the items her sister left behind, she must exorcise the demons that threaten her sobriety. Intimate, riveting and brutally honest, 32 PILLS: MY SISTER'S SUICIDE takes a searing look at one woman's struggle to cope with her sister's suicide and her grief.

HOW DO YOU HOST A SCREENING?

Invite your guests to watch the film together. Here are some tips for hosting an effective and helpful screening.

1. Gather your friends and colleagues. Use a site like Evite to send out invitations and collect RSVPs. Here's a sample of what your invitation can say. A **note** of caution: this film contains content and images that some may find disturbing. Please be mindful of your audience as you reach out with invitations. This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17.

<HOST NAME> cordially invites you and a guest to a screening and discussion of

32 PILLS: MY SISTER'S SUICIDE

After struggling with mental illness for most of her life, New York artist Ruth Litoff killed herself at age 42 in 2008 by overdosing on prescription pills. Six years later, her younger sister, Hope Litoff, decides to film herself while she empties a packed-to-the-brim storage unit filled with Ruth's belongings. Driven by the need to understand Ruth's illness and why it made her want to end her life, as **Hope** pores through the items her sister left behind, she must exorcise the demons that threaten her sobriety. Intimate, riveting and brutally honest, **32 PILLS: MY SISTER'S SUICIDE**, takes a searing look at one woman's struggle to cope with her sister's suicide and her grief.

32 PILLS: MY SISTER'S SUICIDE contains content and images that some may find disturbing.

<TIME> WELCOME

<TIME> SCREENING (length 85 minutes)

Please RSVP to <EMAIL address> by <DATE>.

Create a Facebook event as well. Then, promote your screening to potential guests. Tag your tweets with [#32Pills](#) and [@HBODocs](#) and share both the poster (see the end of the guide) and link to the film's website. Send the link to the trailer as well - itsh.bo/2AfumJI

2. Introduce the film. Welcome everyone and make introductions. Ask everyone, **"If you knew someone who was at risk for suicide, what would you do?"** Give everyone a chance to write or at least consider their responses before the film.

Take a moment to remind your group that this film contains images that some may find disturbing, and if anyone needs to leave the room they should feel comfortable doing so. This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17.

Remind viewers about the purpose of the screenings. It is the filmmaker's hope that the film and corresponding resource guide will help to enhance safety while bringing hope and meaning to those at risk for suicide and their loved ones. The film tells the story of suicide loss and grief and offers a unique opportunity for viewers to think about how they are currently supporting both those at risk for suicide and those left behind following the death of a loved one.

3. Watch the film. Check the **schedule** and watch on **HBO** or watch whenever you want on **HBO On-Demand, HBO Now, or HBO GO.**

4. Talk about what you saw in the film. Go over responses, and talk about what surprised people the most. What have they learned? Have their perceptions changed? See below for sample discussion questions.

5. Think about what you or your group can do to get involved. Urge people to tell their personal networks about the film and the issues it raises, and share the URL to the website for those who are interested in finding out more – www.HBO.com/documentaries/32-pills-my-sisters-suicide and www.32pillsmovie.com

6. Thank your guests and invite them to continue the discussion. Send a thank you email the next day, and include follow up with others after the film to underscore the resources that are available for someone who might be in crisis or struggling (such as the Lifeline – **1-800-273-TALK**). Consider including links to the groups listed in the resources below.

HOW DO YOU GET THE DISCUSSION GOING?

After the credits roll, turn up the lights and give your group time for silent reflection. Some viewers may want to leave. Some may want to share their story. Some may want to just listen. Once you're ready to begin, encourage everyone to listen respectfully to each other as the conversation gets under way.

Here is some information and discussion prompts to start you off.

QUESTIONS, PROMPTS AND RESOURCES

"There is something unique about losing someone to suicide. It's not really something you're ever gonna get over. It's a daily battle. It's like you always have a splinter in your hand. Sometimes you notice it and sometimes you don't, but the splinter's always there." – Hope Litoff

1. Prevalence of suicide

QUESTION: Without identifying an individual by name, do you know someone who has been affected by suicide?

PROMPT: **Research** indicates that every suicide affects the lives of at least six other people. Would you agree, or consider it to be more or less?

RESOURCE: Take a look at **Know The Warning Signs** from National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

2. Risk Factors and Warning Signs

Some warning signs may help you determine if a loved one is at risk for suicide, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event, loss, or change. If you or someone you know exhibits any of these, seek help by calling the Lifeline.

RESOURCES: Take a look at [How We Can All Prevent Suicide](#) from National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

What leads to suicide?

SOURCE: afsp.org/about-suicide/risk-factors-and-warning-signs/

There's no single cause for suicide. Suicide most often occurs when stressors exceed current coping abilities of someone suffering from a mental health condition. Depression is the most common condition associated with suicide, and it is often undiagnosed or untreated. Conditions like depression, anxiety and substance problems, especially when unaddressed, increase risk for suicide. When individuals also have substance use problems or access to a lethal means to end their lives, the risk escalates significantly. Yet it's important to note that most people who actively manage their mental health conditions lead fulfilling lives.

Suicide Warning Signs

SOURCE: afsp.org/about-suicide/risk-factors-and-warning-signs/

Something to look out for when concerned that a person may be suicidal is a change in behavior or the presence of entirely new behaviors. This is of sharpest concern if the new or changed behavior is related to a painful event, loss, or change. Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do.

Talk

If a person talks about:

- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Experiencing unbearable pain
- Having no reason to live
- Killing themselves

Behavior

Specific things to look out for include:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online for materials or means

- Acting recklessly
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Aggression

Mood

People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:

- Depression
- Loss of interest
- Rage
- Irritability
- Humiliation
- Anxiety

Suicide Risk Factors

SOURCE: afsp.org/about-suicide/risk-factors-and-warning-signs/

Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take their life.

Health Factors

- Mental health conditions
 - Depression
 - Bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder
 - Schizophrenia
 - Borderline or antisocial personality disorder
 - Conduct disorder
 - Psychotic disorders, or psychotic symptoms in the context of any disorder
 - Anxiety disorders
- Substance abuse disorders
- Serious or chronic health condition and/or pain

Environmental Factors

- Stressful life events which may include a death, divorce, or job loss
- Prolonged stress factors which may include harassment, bullying, relationship problems, and unemployment
- Access to lethal means including firearms and drugs
- Exposure to another person's suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide

Historical Factors

- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide attempts

QUESTION: What would you do if a family member or loved one showed warning signs for suicide? Allow your group a brief moment to discuss.

PROMPTS: What should you NOT do? What practical support can you give? Who should get involved? Take a look at the resources below.

RESOURCES: Consider the recommendations from Suicide Prevention Lifeline on [Helping Someone Else](#) and the [five actions steps](#) from [BeThe1To](#).

3. Support for Suicide Loss Survivors:

Driven by the need to better understand Ruth's mental illness and suicide, Hope opens her sister's storage space, reads her journals, finds her last emails, and eventually organizes "Ruth's Dream" – the realization of Ruth's final photography exhibit at Bellevue Hospital.

Without identifying an individual by name, do you know someone who is dealing with the loss of a loved one who died by suicide? How are they coping?

How can you support someone who is a suicide loss survivor? Is it any different than how you would support someone who lost a loved one to another cause of death?

How can your community and our society better support suicide loss survivors? What is the role of the healthcare, workplaces, schools, faith community?

Hope has faced challenges managing her own self-care as she has tried to address ongoing questions she has had since Ruth's death. "When someone you love attempts to take their life," notes the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, "it can evoke a range of strong emotions. You may feel angry, sad, or afraid. You may be anxious about your loved one's future. You may feel as though you, yourself, have experienced a trauma. It is important that you seek support and take steps to care for yourself."¹

What are some steps you can take to maintain positive mental health while grieving or helping someone who is? See resources below for help.

Use The Do's and Don'ts

SOURCE: suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/# "Use The Do's and Don'ts"

Talking with and finding help for someone that may be suicidal can be difficult. Here are some tips that may help.

¹ <https://afsp.org/find-support/my-loved-one-made-attempt/loved-one-made-attempt/#section0>

- Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Don't dare him or her to do it.
- Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- Take action. Remove means, like weapons or pills.
- Get help from people or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

SEE ALSO: Information from [Mental Health America](#) about suicide

SUMMARY: Highlight the importance of always seeking professional help and/or calling the Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

4. Supporting a loved one who has made an attempt

Ruth liftoff was gifted artist whose bursts of genius lived alongside severe mental illness. Discussing why Ruth saved so much of her art, Hope observes: "I have two theories. I think she wanted to make an art project out of them, but I also think she just wanted proof as to how hard she had been trying to get well."

QUESTION: Many people feel uncomfortable talking about suicide, especially with someone who has made an attempt. What are some ways you can support a loved who has made a suicide attempt?

PROMPTS: Why are people uncomfortable talking about suicide? Do you have to support them by yourself? Do you have to be an expert?

Discuss briefly with your group, and then introduce the resources below.

RESOURCE: Take a look at [When a Loved One Has Made an Attempt: How you can help](#) from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

SUMMARY: The burden of a loved-one's suicide attempt should not be borne by one person. Involve professional support wherever possible.

5. Care for the grieving

Hope has faced challenges managing her own self-care as she has tried to address ongoing questions she has had since Ruth's death. "When someone you love attempts to take their life," notes the American Foundation for Suicide

Prevention, “it can evoke a range of strong emotions. You may feel angry, sad, or afraid. You may be anxious about your loved one’s future. You may feel as though you, yourself, have experienced a trauma. It is important that you seek support and take steps to care for yourself.”²

QUESTION: It’s important that those who have lost a loved one to suicide also consider their own mental health and the impact the grief is having on them. What are some ways they can take care of themselves while going through a grief process?

PROMPTS: Why is this so important? How could other people who have experienced similar grief be of help?

RESOURCE: Check out the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s information on [Taking Care of Yourself](#).

Taking Care of Oneself

If you have lost a loved one to suicide, be kind and patient with yourself, and find support—from other suicide loss survivors through AFSP’s [Survivor Outreach Program](#), find a [support group](#), see a [therapist or counselor](#), or attend an [International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day event](#).

SEE ALSO: Information from the American Association of Suicidology [for survivors of suicide loss](#).

SUMMARY: Some have suggested that suicides can [occur in clusters](#) so the mental health of loss survivors is paramount. Grieving does not have a timeframe and some people will need more support than others.

6. Reaching out to someone affected by suicide

QUESTION: If you know someone is suffering from the loss of a loved one and you want reach out or help what are some ways you could offer your support?

PROMPTS: How could you express empathy? What are some clichés to avoid saying? Is silence ok?

RESOURCE: The Suicide Prevention Program at the University of Texas offers advice for [Helping a Friend Who Has Lost a Loved One to Suicide](#).

SEE ALSO: Here are [seven things](#) to remember when trying to help someone who has lost someone to suicide from Lloyd Sederer, M.D.

² <https://afsp.org/find-support/my-loved-one-made-attempt/loved-one-made-attempt/#section0>

SUMMARY: Just being there for someone and listening to them can be a big help. Offer compassion and be non-judgmental. Recognition and validation of their experience is essential.

SUPPORT & HELP

Help is available 24/7 nationwide. If you are in crisis or know someone who is, reach out immediately to the following for help:

1-800-273-8255 | National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

suicidepreventionlifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now/

The Lifeline is FREE, confidential, and always available. HELP a loved one, a friend, or yourself. 24/7 Access to trained crisis counselor via phone and chat.

1-866-488-7386 | The Trevor Project

www.thetrevorproject.org/

The Trevor Project provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services for LGBTQ youth.

National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org

[Managers Guidebook to Suicide Postvention](#) (guidance for the workplace)

[Framework for Successful Messaging](#) (guidance for safe and effective messaging)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: Find Support

afsp.org/find-support/

[Resources for attempt survivors](#)

[Resources for those grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide.](#)

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

www.sprc.org/

[After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools](#)

[Resources for Survivors of Suicide Loss](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Find Help & Treatment

www.samhsa.gov/find-help

American Association of Suicidology

www.suicidology.org

U.S. Food and Drug Administration | Safe Disposal of Drugs

www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm

American Association of Poison Control Centers

www.aapcc.org/

Poison centers offer free, confidential, expert medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222

Mental Health Association of NYC

mhaofnyc.org/

ThriveNYC

thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/

32 PILLS

MY SISTER'S SUICIDE

HBO DOCUMENTARY FILMS PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH IMPACT PARTNERS CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES CHICAGO MEDIA PROJECT AND DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL
A LITTLE DARKROOM FILMS PRODUCTION "32 PILLS-MY SISTER'S SUICIDE" DIRECTED BY DAN COGAN AND REGINA K. SCULLY PRODUCED BY STEVE COHEN PAULA FROEHLER AND JENNY RASKIN
CASTING BY BLUE SPILL EDITOR JOY E. REED AND JUDD BLAISE COMPOSER T. GRUFIN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DANIEL D. GOLD AND TOBY SHAMIN PRODUCED BY BETH LEVISON WRITTEN BY HOPE LYOFF
FOR HBO DOCUMENTARY FILMS PRODUCED BY CARA BERNSTEIN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER SHEILA NEVINS

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