

Suggested Questions for Discussion

Life History, Background, and Past Experience

- What emotions did you observe in Dhorea?
- What do you think were Dhoria's expectations for her life?
- It appears this may be her first major contact with loss; how might it differ depending on other life experiences-cultures?
- What had been her previous experience with loss? How did her family handle and communicate-teach about dealing with loss?
- What do you think her support system might have been like before the suicide? Did she communicate her deeper feelings to others? whom? (ie: "I always had friends around me")
- What made her feel unable to turn to a support system? How do you think Dhorea went from "surrounded by friends" to "lonely and scared"?
- How do you think her age impacts upon the experience of dealing with loss? (ie: "Kevin was the man of my dreams. He was beautiful, spontaneous, romantic, fun, eloquent, wealthy, everything")
- Do you think she may have had a premonition of something that was awry?
- What do you think about Kevin's actions - killing himself so violently in front of Dhorea? It seems strange that over a slight disagreement, he would then shoot himself: what else could have been occurring in his life: financial stresses, work stresses, drug-use, secrets?
- Do you think their relationship had a shadow side?
- What was it that led her to attempt suicide? Do you think it was planned or spontaneous?

Dealing with suicide: grief, loss and guilt

- Suicide is an extreme response to a desperate situation. What kinds of problems lead to a person getting into such a situation?
- How does one deal with the stigma of suicide?
- How does one deal with the sense of meaningless that can arise when coming close to death? With the need for a new frame from which to view the world?
- What are ways we cope with shock? (cleaning house, illogical thinking, etc.)
- What's the effect of suicide and attempted suicide on the family and friends?
- What role do you think communication skills (both sender and receiver) play in instances that lead to a suicide attempt?
- What are ways of dealing with the natural and common reaction of guilt, and questioning: "Where did I go wrong? How could I have stopped it?" At what point is this part of the process of mourning and at what point does it become obsessional and unhelpful? What are ways to deal with the obsessional characteristics that can accompany this type of questioning? How best to deal and process these questions?
- In her first year of grief, what could she have done to work with and deal with her grief having witnessed a suicide?

- What are the natural systems of denial? How can they work to help in the grieving process? How can they hinder the grieving process?
- When is psychiatric intervention needed? What are other ways of debriefing that can help people deal with the trauma of witnessing or receiving news of suicide?
- How common are suicide attempts on the part of the survivor?
- What is the profile of a high risk survivor?
- What are the healthy “steps” one can take to process the trauma of suicide?
- What are routes that aid dealing with guilt, shame and the need to make amends?

Offering and getting help and support

- What kinds of things would keep someone from talking about the pain they feel?
- How do people jump from feeling there is no one there to accessing resources and relationships for help?
- What can friends and family do to help?
- What local resources are available to help?
- What are constructive ways to deal with the pain? (vs. destructive ways)
- How can family and friends really let those in turmoil know they are present? How can they still be of support when they are emotionally unable to hold the feelings that come up in them around hearing and holding pain?
- What are the steps one takes when one hears that a friend-family member is contemplating taking their lives? Guidelines for intervention?
- What are routes to process the intensity of feeling while not overwhelming ones natural support system? What are layers of support that can work in this situation?
- While Dhorea suggests “make them feel they have a reason to go on” for many people who are suicidal this doesn’t work, that’s why they think of taking their lives. What is helpful “reasoning” during this time period when one doesn’t have a reason for going on?
- How does one work with the internal and societal message that it is shameful, or weak to get help?

General Questions

- What lessons can you apply to your own life from the experiences of Dhorea?
- What do you think are the missing pieces in this story? Of Kevin killing himself?
- What’s the difference between a “cry for help” and “a cry for attention?”