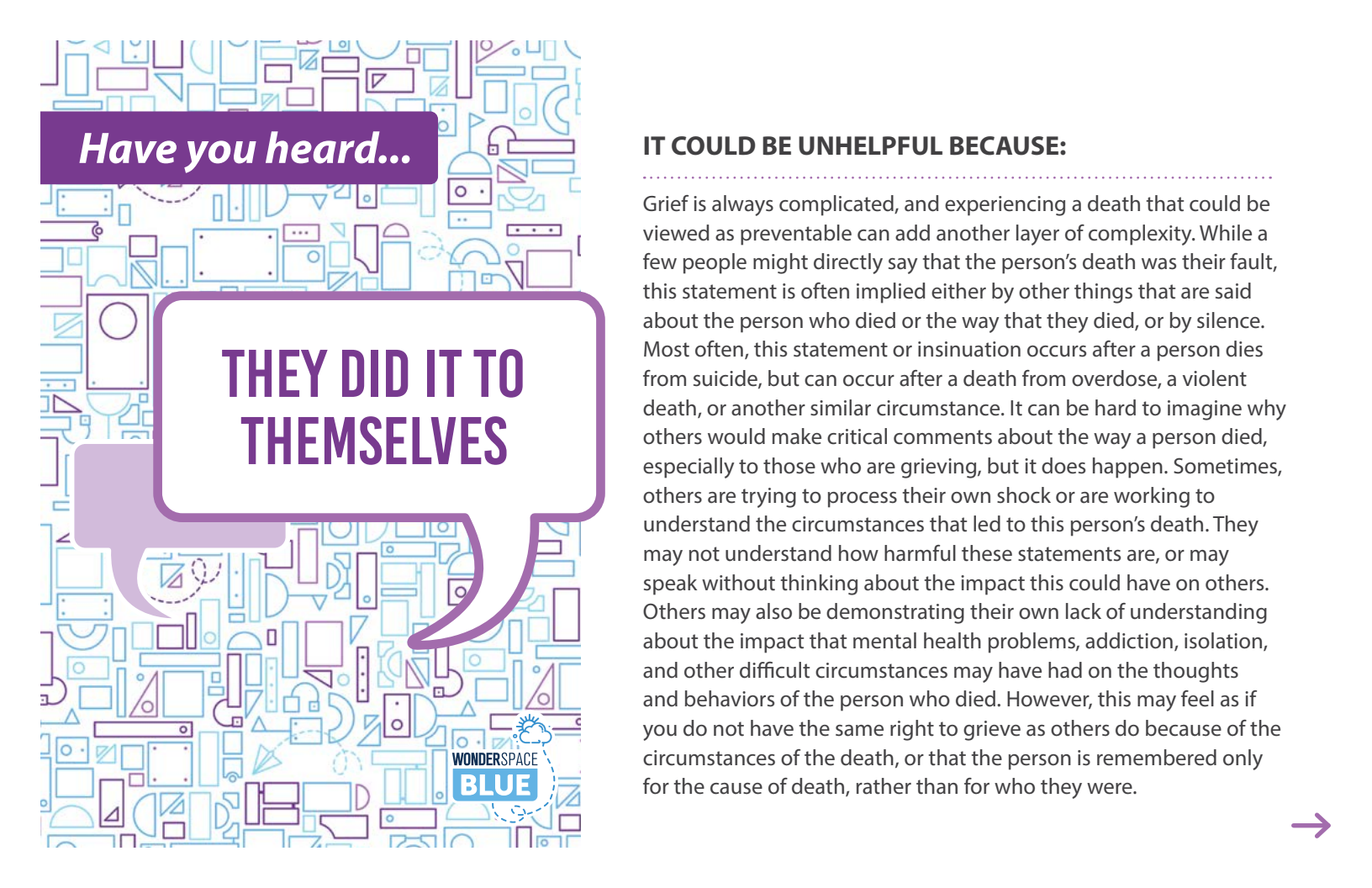




Have you heard...

**THEY DID IT TO
THEMSELVES**

WONDERSPACE
BLUE

IT COULD BE UNHELPFUL BECAUSE:

Grief is always complicated, and experiencing a death that could be viewed as preventable can add another layer of complexity. While a few people might directly say that the person's death was their fault, this statement is often implied either by other things that are said about the person who died or the way that they died, or by silence. Most often, this statement or insinuation occurs after a person dies from suicide, but can occur after a death from overdose, a violent death, or another similar circumstance. It can be hard to imagine why others would make critical comments about the way a person died, especially to those who are grieving, but it does happen. Sometimes, others are trying to process their own shock or are working to understand the circumstances that led to this person's death. They may not understand how harmful these statements are, or may speak without thinking about the impact this could have on others. Others may also be demonstrating their own lack of understanding about the impact that mental health problems, addiction, isolation, and other difficult circumstances may have had on the thoughts and behaviors of the person who died. However, this may feel as if you do not have the same right to grieve as others do because of the circumstances of the death, or that the person is remembered only for the cause of death, rather than for who they were.





The circumstances around a death or causes of a death have no impact on the validity of your grief. A more complex manner of death may increase the need for support, but never decreases this need, and does not make you or your family less deserving of love and care. You may notice mixed feelings toward your person as you process the way that they died, including the more normalized grief responses of shock and sadness, as well as typical but less discussed emotions such as anger toward the person, or relief that they are no longer struggling emotionally or contributing to chaotic or unpredictable circumstances. You may also feel protective of the person who died, your memories of them, or the way that they are remembered and spoken about by others. As you process your grief, your reactions are likely to shift over time and encompass a wide variety of emotions.

It may be helpful to talk with others or seek out resources that are specific to the type of death that you experienced, as well as general support around grief. You may also want to consider what language around the death is helpful or harmful to you and others. You can explore ways to talk about and memorialize them in ways that feel comfortable and genuine.

You could say:

- **“Your feelings matter, even if our person died in a way that is hard to talk about or feels different from others.”** Many people feel isolated or think that no one else has similar circumstances or emotions while they are grieving, and when others make negative comments about how a person died, this can feel even worse. You lost an important person, and you probably feel a lot of different things at different times about the fact that they are dead as well as how they died. What are some of the emotions you’ve noticed so far? Which ones are easier or harder to talk about?
- **“We can remember easy and hard things about our person.”** Everyone has good and bad parts, and everyone makes helpful and hurtful choices in their lives. It can be hard when other people focus only on what happened to our person, or when they don’t talk about how our person died at all. What are you remembering about our person today? How do you want to remember them? How would you like other people to remember? How would you like to talk about our person?