

I AM ALIVE

“I may have lost my brother, my sister, my parent, my child, my friend, my spouse, my partner ... but I am alive.

I am a survivor of the dark night of unspeakable loss, of my own darkness ... and I am alive.

I am unwilling to stand idly by and allow shame to defeat love or silence to defeat action. I stand for the enlightenment of a society that would hide from suicide ... and I am alive.

I am unwilling for my perseverance to be in vain. Unwilling for the passing of my loved one to be in shame. I loved them more than I loved myself and their life will have meaning in my action. I am alive.

In a world blinded by the pursuit of pleasure, I am here to say that people are in pain. In a world rushing to get ahead, I am here to say that people are being left behind. In a world obsessed with the value of the market, I am here to speak for the value of life ... and I'm alive.

This will be no quiet fight.

I am the voice of audacity in the face of apathy.

I am the spirit of bravery in a world of caution.

I am a commitment of action in the face of neutrality.

I am into the light and I am alive.”

*Presented by Dan Pallotta at the
Out of the Darkness Suicide Awareness Walk
in Washington, DC, 2002*

SURVIVAL

When my grief was new, my pain felt interminable. My mind had no power to help me, because I was filled with or surrounded by the most desperate, confused feelings – which I know now are the nature of grief and are an appropriate reaction to great loss. I surrendered to grief, when I sensed that I did not have the mental and physical ammunition for fighting the battle against what seemed to be this ultimate enemy.

The extremes of my grief, by coincidence, served to enforce two insights:
I HURT and I was ALIVE.

Very gradually I began to realize that in the process of healing, even small successes are rewarding. And since I did not have any big successes, I climbed back into life on a ladder of small successes. How about YOU?

Poem from “For You from Sascha”

Proactive grieving is living the loss and becoming an intentional survivor. We learn to become intentional survivors...not collateral victims. Accept the challenge to be alive.

Mitch Carmody, author, artist and nationally known speaker on bereavement

I Am Alive
Survival
Consider This:
The Legacy of Sameness

Reflective Thoughts
Remembering Our
Loved Ones



SOS
IN THIS ISSUE

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to Our Donors
Meditation Moment

Conversations:
Clueless, Nosy, or Attempts
to be Helpful?
No More Secrets

CONSIDER THIS: THE LEGACY OF SAMENESS



by Jeanne Moren, Volunteer SOS Facilitator

Usually when a person has the traits or the similar looks of a relative it can be a delightful topic of discussion. They may be told that they look remarkably like their parent, sibling or some other relative who is living or is part of the family history. The comparison could also involve similarities in emotions or behaviors. When the resemblance is to someone who has taken their life by suicide, the discussion can take a different path. While having characteristics of a family member may have been a charming asset, the feelings around the legacy may change after a suicide. This subject arises when survivors apply new meaning to comments such as, "You look just like your mother," "You act so much like your brother," or "I see your grandfather's eyes when I look at you."

Indeed, a resemblance may take on a new meaning when a legacy of suicide is involved. If the person is to be compared to their family member, will they now be thought of as being a potential suicide themselves as part of that comparison? Compared physical traits and compared emotional traits are two different things, yet both might feel puzzling to the person who is receiving the comments. They may already identify these things in themselves or only be the recipient of someone else's opinion.

Likenesses are a piece of our history to be aware of. Most survivors know that family members are at greater risk for suicide when depression runs in a family just as risks for other illnesses and diseases can be passed on through families. Certainly all depression does not result in suicide. Being knowledgeable about our family medical history allows us to take any steps that are within our power to avoid illnesses. It is a challenge to determine what is inherited and recognize ways we might control our own life and health. There is a need to pay attention to the life that is ours alone and how we have the opportunity to live it wisely. No matter how close the relationship (even identical twins), we are each individuals with our own thoughts and actions.

"Nothing we do can change the past.
Everything we do changes the future."

—Ashleigh Brilliant

When people share their loss stories and have felt close to the one who died, they often, in hindsight, question the relationship. Family members who were raised in the same environment or exposed to the same experiences question why this death occurred. They may struggle to find what part their actions or lack of actions played in the suicide. "He shared everything with me," "Why didn't/couldn't he come to me?", "What could I have missed?", "I would have done anything to prevent this death," "I know he loved all of us," are commonly heard heartfelt statements by survivors trying to make sense of a loss. Most survivors know that the one who died had no intention of leaving a legacy of suffering.

When a suicide occurs, our assumptive world is turned upside down as things we had hoped and planned for seem to disappear. Survivors state, "Part of me died," "I am no longer whole," "I'll never be the same," or "Living each day is hard." We are called to accept the fact that the death was by suicide in addition to accepting the deep feeling of loss. This raises the question: What are those who also feel the legacy of sameness to do?

When sorting out the legacy it is important to remember the power of our individuality. We are living our own life and we have the opportunity to control and shape our own actions and reactions including our reactions to our loss. CONSIDER THIS: Resemblances are just that, we may be like someone in a particular way, however we are still our own person. Perhaps we can take the BEST of our loved one's traits or physical likeness and honor that as a legacy as we continue to live our own unique lives.

CHANGES

Be aware that new grief changes all of your emotions for a time.

But grief does not change all of your emotions forever!
Some of your old feelings will return to you.

Please be patient.

Poem from "For You from Sascha"

REFLECTIVE THOUGHTS



My little boy at age 5 had to have two cataract surgeries. Kids would comment on his thick glasses. I held his hand when he was little so he wouldn't run into things and get hurt.

He always struggled with his eyes - even with contacts and glasses. A couple of weeks before he passed he asked the Ophthalmologist if he could have lens transplant.

KC was 24. The doctor stated he'd have to wait until age 30 so the lens would last until he was age 60. He wanted to see better NOW. Truly things were not going in his favor, plus a troubled relationship. Apparently it felt to him like the end of the world. He couldn't cope anymore.

He always told me at bedtime when he lived at my

house, "Mom, I love you." I still miss hearing those sweet words from my son. My heart goes out to little boys with glasses.

*By Darlene Abrahamson,
remembering her son Casey Abrahamson*

Every survivor has a story. In looking back, when assembling pieces and memories we all have reflective thoughts. We invite short writings as to where your experience has led you and how you reflect on your loss and your loved one. Writings can be anonymous.

Please submit to sos@journeymhc.org or SOS, 25 Kessel Ct., Suite 105, Madison, WI 53711

REMEMBERING OUR LOVED ONES CONTINUED



These Remembrances arrived too late to be included in our April issue.



Gary Ihm

10/19/65 – 2/6/93

Scott Ihm

5/28/70 – 1/17/95

We love and miss you always. You are forever in our hearts.

Uncle Marlin & Aunt Sharon Lehmann



Jonah Solkoff Eskin

12/15/78 – 6/30/94

Remembered by his loving family.

Time lets you heal,
Love lets you remember.
Give thanks for love and time.

– Unknown

A SINCERE THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



Lois Gilbert Anderson

Teri & Kurt Ellefson
in memory of their son Jacob

Marcia Solkoff Eskin
in memory of Jonah Solkoff Eskin

Jeanne Griffith
in memory of her son Steven

Catherine Knapp
in memory of her sister
Anne Rakos

Marlin & Sharon Lehmann
in memory of Gary & Scott Ihm

Tina Neupert
in memory of her cousin
Dean Blatterman

Kathy Saunders
in memory of Case McCutcheon

Valerie Weihman-Rock

Tax deductible donations can be made:

By mail to **Survivor Services, JMHC, 25 Kessel Court, Ste. 105, Madison WI 53711**

Online at **www.journeymhc.org**

Select Programs & Services, Community-Based Services, Survivors of Suicide, then click on Donate

CONVERSATIONS: CLUELESS, NOSY, OR ATTEMPTS TO BE HELPFUL?



Survivors report that conversations after their loss can feel awkward at best. Others often may be curious but don't know what to say, and survivors may not know how to respond. Having some possible answers available to inquiries can create or restore a comfort level to interactions.

What one could hear:

I didn't know he was sick (struggling)
Did you have any hints?
Was he on drugs/alcohol?
Do you think he had planned this for a long time?
Had he tried to kill himself before?
Did he leave a note?
Does this run in your family?
How did he do it? Where did he do it?
Why do you suppose he chose that method?
How is your dad, sister, son, grandma, doing? (Asking about others rather than a direct ask about you.)
I know how you feel — my third cousin/dog died recently.
I don't know how you ever recover from a thing like this.
He was the last person I would have thought would commit suicide.
The guilt must be awful.
I had a clue that things weren't going well when he

Something must have just snapped.
Call me if you need anything.
We will get together soon to (connect with an activity)

How one might respond:

It's been very hard for us, we are doing the best we can.
We are shocked (in shock) and struggling to make sense of it all.
This is not the way we ever thought his life would end.
I am not wanting to discuss details.
We plan to focus right now on his life rather than his death.
We plan to reach out for some help getting through this.
We are trying to support each other and appreciate your support.
I know you will respond if I reach out to you.
Thank you for being here to remember him.

For those who are finding out cause of death for the first time:

Sadly he took his own life.
He died by suicide.

Journey Mental Health Center, Survivors of Suicide, Jeanne Moren, 2017

MEDITATION MOMENT



There exists power and importance in getting out of your head for a moment, and focusing on your body, on your breathing.

A focus on drawing the breath into the body, and releasing it, allows us a moment of peace, a break from the struggles of daily life, and from any feelings of anger, sadness, or guilt we might be carrying.

Sit quietly for a moment and notice your breath. Breathe deeply into your belly. Let your thoughts go, focus only on this breath, this moment.

The more often we intentionally focus on our breath, the better we will become at using this tool in moments of great struggle. Develop this skill as a place to go for reprieve, as a tool to give yourself a break from life's difficulties, if even just for a moment.

"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." — Jon Kabat-Zin

Reprinted from SOSL, Survivors of Suicide Loss. San Diego County, La Mesa, CA., Spring, 2014 (March, April, May)

"It is what it is, but it will become what you make it."

—Unknown



NO MORE SECRETS

After quite a number of years living with the grief of suicide loss, I took the chance of talking about it with selected individuals. These were people I thought I could trust. Up to that point, I was convinced that it was a horrible secret I would just have to carry for the rest of my life. Instead what I heard surprised me. Many of the people I spoke to were either wrestling with their own grief over suicide loss or knew

someone who was. They ended up asking me for advice! I knew then that I was not alone in my dilemma. So many people are hurting from suicide loss. And secrets just compound the pain.

Today, I know that trusting people and reaching out to people is my lifeline to healing from suicide loss.

Reprinted from Healing the Hurt Spirit, Daily Affirmations for People Who Have Lost a Loved One to Suicide, by Catherine Greenleaf



LIBRARY AVAILABLE AT SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE SERVICES

An extensive lending library is available to those seeking resources on depression, suicide loss and grief which includes books, videos and printed information. This can be accessed at all SOS Support Meetings or by contacting Survivor Services by

email, sos@journeymhc.org or leaving a message at (608)280-2435. Your message will be returned by someone who can direct you to specific resources or arrange for you to borrow materials.

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE SUPPORT GROUP SCHEDULE

A self-help group for adults who are grieving the death of a loved one by suicide.

2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Journey Mental Health Center, Kessel Ct., Building 49, Madison WI 53711

There is free parking in front of the building. To gain entry, press the call button and indicate that you are attending the SOS meeting. You will be greeted by one of the SOS team. Please arrive by 6:50 as group starts promptly at 7:00. **The building locks at 7:00 PM.** If necessary follow call directions posted on the door by using a cell phone to alert the group if you need late entry.

JULY						
		10				
		24				

AUGUST						
		14				
		28				

SEPTEMBER						
		11				
		25				

OCTOBER						
		9				
		23				

SOS SUPPORT GROUP PURPOSE

To share experiences for living and coping beyond suicide loss

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Saturday, November 17 – International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

Local Morning Conference at Journey Mental Health Center

SOS Confidential Email: sos@journeymhc.org for correspondence & information requests

SOS Confidential Voicemail: to leave message **608/280-2435**

For an urgent or immediate need 24/7: Call Emergency Services **608/280-2600**

Journey Mental Health Center Website: <http://www.journeymhc.org>

Select Programs & Services, Community-Based Services, Survivors of Suicide



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MADISON, WI 53711

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- By phone message to (608) 280-2435
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