



NEWSLETTER

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JOURNEY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

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(608) 280-2435

H IS FOR HAPPINESS



By Therese Gump, LOSS (Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide)

It is sometimes difficult for survivors to allow themselves to experience happiness, joy, well-being; that “glad-to-be-alive” feeling that we once felt before suicide entered our lives. The “pursuit of happiness” is our right, says the Constitution and all the world seems to be in the race. But do I still have that right? Me – whose loved one withdrew from the human race? It’s an uncertain right for me at times. Happy feelings are so spontaneous that they burst through, and even as I am feeling a moment of joy, I have mixed emotions. If not at that moment, then reflecting later on that moment. Why am I here feeling this good and am I really entitled to laugh aloud again?

Not all survivors feel this way, but many do. Though it may sound trite or preachy, human beings cannot live without joy, happiness, and laughter. If we are entitled to cry, we are also entitled to laugh. It heals the heavy load we bear. We are surviving, living on. Bless the joyous moments and savor them as if they were the oasis of the desert traveler. The desert is still out there, but this happy feeling is the cold drink of water and shade of the palm trees, the impetus for my going on through the rest of my journey. Yes, I can feel happiness where I find it. I don’t have to push it away. I can keep it. I need to in order to survive.



IN THIS ISSUE

H Is For Happiness

Thoughts to Consider

Supporting Your Health While Grieving

Fall Season and Grief

Rituals and Remembrance –
A Way of Healing the Hurt

A Sincere Thank You To Our Donors

Connecting with Journey Mental Health and
Additional Support Resources

Online (Zoom) Survivor Support Group

No Local International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day
Event

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER:



WORDS SHARED BY SURVIVORS THAT HAVE HELPED THEM ALONG THE WAY

- Forgive yourself for not knowing. We only knew what we knew at the time.
- We did the best we could with what we knew at the time.
- Always have a Plan B for future events and plans. Perhaps even a plan C & D.
- Live the life that our loved one would wish for us.
- There will be bad days with good moments and good days with bad moments.
- Our loved one’s pain was taken away.
- Don’t need to meet all the needs of others when you are struggling to meet you own needs.
- Your “I need” statements can be helpful in clearly conveying your needs to others.

LOSS DURING THE PANDEMIC SUPPORTING YOUR HEALTH WHILE GRIEVING



Taking steps that value your physical and emotional health is crucial while working through the early days and weeks of your loss during this pandemic. Some strategies include:

- Safety – follow the recommendations of experts to slow the spread of the coronavirus and minimize your chance of contracting it
- Routine – particularly in this stressful time, establishing and maintaining a routine can help you take some control over your daily life
- Nourishment – try to eat healthy, nutrient-rich foods and drink plenty of water
- Limiting alcohol – abusing alcohol or other substances can endanger your health while also hindering your grieving process
- Exercise – engaging in physical movement, even a short walk that adheres to social distancing regulations, can be helpful to your well-being
- Sleep – maintaining stable sleep patterns right after a traumatic loss isn't always possible, but you should try to rest your mind and body even if you are experiencing sleep disturbances
- Mental health checks – “check in” with yourself and your feelings at least twice a day and more frequently whenever you are feeling particularly overwhelmed by grief
- Mood changes – traumatic loss can lead to rapid and upsetting mood changes. If you are experiencing mood changes, practice deep breathing and remove yourself from the environment (virtual or physical) in which you are experiencing them if possible
- News media – Make a pact with your family – or

with yourself – that you will obtain news at certain, limited points of the day instead of watching repeated and stressful information all day long

- Seek support – whether through a phone call to a trusted friend, a tele-meeting with a grief counselor, or a video chat with a distanced family member to reminisce about your loved one, it is important that you obtain the support you deserve.

Conclusions and Beginnings

Losing a loved one is hard under normal circumstances and experiencing the loss of your loved one during this pandemic is extraordinarily difficult. As you begin your grief journey, I encourage you to reflect on memories with your loved one and the particular gifts they brought to your life. We do not get over grief, we get through it. It is important that we honor our dead and share our grief into the future. This pandemic will end, but our love for those we have lost will not. After a death, we move forward into a world that has changed personally and permanently, but we do not leave our loved ones behind. We carry them with us, with the knowledge that our bonds cannot be broken, even by death.

About the Author: Sara Murphy, PhD, CT, is a death educator and certified Thanatologist (Association for Death Education and Counseling). Dr. Murphy teaches at the University of Rhode Island and conducts workshops and seminars on death, dying, and bereavement nationwide for professional organizations, schools, and community groups.

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FALL SEASON AND GRIEF



By Rebecca Young, Cincinnati Grief Examiner

That the weather affects our mood isn't any secret; so, too, does the fall season affect our feelings of grief. For some, our loved one passed in the fall and maybe memories are triggered. For others, the sense of loss as the air turns crisper and the days grow shorter may trigger the change in mood. Perhaps our childhood memories of school back in session or perhaps the trees shedding their leaves and earth preparing for winter is the reason. Some of us may experience depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, or restlessness during this time of year. Whatever the reason, we are

inherently sympathetic to our environment.

I listened the other day as some young girls were saying they loved the comforting feeling they had from pulling on favorite old sweaters, hats, and coats. Maybe that's what the trigger is – the familiar comfort of the season, the memories stirred by wrapping ourselves in sweaters worn in years past that cause this season to be difficult for those who grieve. I have often found myself comparing my grief to a heavy coat that I wear all the time. Perhaps the reason is

continued on page 3

continued from page 2

familiarity and, for those who are grieving, the reality sets in that we have lost someone close to us that we thought would always be there.

Fall is the time of year that I lost my daughter – right when school was starting and right when she always pulled out the hooded sweatshirts, sweaters and jeans.

RITUALS AND REMEMBRANCE – A WAY OF HEALING THE HURT

The holidays are filled with memories and traditions. For many of us these memories and traditions are warm and joy filled, but often, too, along with that special happiness there is a mixture of anxiousness, some unmet expectations, stress, and sometimes real sadness. This year especially, the holidays, whatever they were for you and your family, will not be, cannot be, the same.

Creating your own memorials may be a special way for you and your family to cope with that change and the deep sense of loss that comes with it. Rituals speak to our wounded hearts and minds at a level beyond words and sometimes, therefore, have a special quality of healing.

Here are some suggestions for the holidays to come that may be of help:

A Memorial Candle – Light a candle in honor of the person who has died. You may want to light it in the morning or evening and extinguish it before bedtime throughout the holiday season.

A Tree of Life – Perhaps this year a live tree can be purchased and decorated for the season, later to be planted as a remembrance of your loved one.

A Moment of Silence – Silence or prayer before a holiday meal or whenever you choose to observe it, is a gracious and simple way to remember.

Story Telling – Create a special time to tell favorite

So, on the first day of Fall, I will do what I feel honors her and comforts me the most. I will pull on one of her favorite hoodies and feel the familiar warmth that it brings. I hope you too wrap yourself in something that your loved one wore and experience all the love that it brings. Do not be afraid of it; embrace it.

From HOPELine, newsletter of Hope For Bereaved, Inc., Oct. 2011



stories – perhaps at the table, around the tree, or after the menorah is lit. Make it a special time of celebrating the life that touched your own.

A Gift Received – Perhaps buying a gift for your home that the deceased might have given or received might be of significance.

A Gift Given – Give a gift in the name of the deceased during the holidays – to his/her favorite charity or a symbolically important cause.

A Family Album – Spend time this holiday going through or creating a family album – a special celebration when the past is discussed, remembered and relived.

A Visit to the Cemetery – A time to gather or be alone with memories and thoughts, with tears, perhaps, and words you want spoken that day.

There are many other days you and your family may find to remember your loved one. Don't be afraid to take the risk of doing something perhaps unfamiliar to you. It may make all the difference in how you get through this time.

But, whatever you do, if you can, allow yourself and encourage others to talk about the person who died. It may seem painful but often it is so much more painful if his or her name is never mentioned and therefore, it seems, forgotten.

USING WHAT'S HELPFUL

We encourage survivors to seek out supportive people and resources. This can often be an arduous and frustrating process. Initially, feelings and reactions may change daily, by the hour or by the minute. It is difficult to think ahead and some words may seem empty.

The purpose of this newsletter is to present material that will be helpful to survivors at various points in their grief. We invite you to use what

applies. You may set some things aside for future reference. You may want to share some thoughts with others. You may want to respond or comment.

Eventually, a healthy goal would be to integrate the experience of a suicide loss into the continuation of living a satisfying life. Our hope is that the words and experiences of others that we present will support you in your journey.

A SINCERE THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



Barbara Burrows

in memory of Lisa Gabrielson

Joseph & Janice Hahn

in memory of son Joseph Peter Hahn

Susie Launder

Debra Liedahl

in memory of Lisa Gabrielson

Journey Mental Health Center

for Sponsorship

To make a tax deductible donation online by credit card, visit www.journeymhc.org/donate and designate "Survivors of Suicide (SOS) Support Group" in the pull-down menu option.

To make a tax deductible donation by check, make it payable to Journey Mental Health Center with SOS in the memo line. Mail to:

Survivors of Suicide Support Group
c/o Journey Mental Health Center
25 Kessel Court, Suite 105, Madison, WI 53711

Please Consider —

- * A donation in memory or honor of someone.
- * A donation towards our Quarterly Newsletter so that we might continue to bring it to you and others.
- * A donation toward resources that are provided to new survivors.

CONNECTING WITH JOURNEY MENTAL HEALTH



SOS Confidential Email: sos@journeymhc.org

SOS Confidential Voicemail: (608) 280-2435

24/7 Year 'Round Mental Health Crisis Line: (608) 280-2600

Journey Mental Health Center Website: www.journeymhc.org

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

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT RESOURCES

- American Association of Suicidology – AAS
www.suicidology.org
1-202-237-2280
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention – AFSP
www.afsp.org
1-888-333-AFSP (2377)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness – NAMI
www.nami.org
1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness of Dane County
www.namidaneconomy.org
608-249-7188
- Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education – SAVE
www.save.org
- Suicide: Finding Hope
www.suicidefindinghope.com
- The Compassionate Friends (TCF) —
Family Support after Loss of a Child
www.compassionatefriends.org
- The Dougy Center — Support for Grieving Children and Families
www.dougy.org
Podcasts available- <https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/grief-out-loud-podcast>
- Web Healing — Discussion Boards on Grief and Healing/Men's Grief
www.webhealing.com
- Prevent Suicide Wisconsin — Advocacy and Support
www.preventsuicidewi.org
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
24/7 Crisis Resource 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Alive Alone — Support for Families who have lost their only Child or all Children
www.alivealone.org



ONLINE (ZOOM) SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUP

In person support groups, like many other group gatherings, have been suspended at Journey Mental Health. With no definite date in sight as to when they might resume, we are going to offer online group support. We have run some trials to see if this venue would be of value to survivors and will now offer the option to survivors who would have normally desired to attend our in-person groups.

The following criteria will be needed for participation.

- Be a survivor of a suicide loss and wish to interact with other survivors
- Be over 18 years of age
- Have technology available to use ZOOM either through computer, phone or another device
- Be willing to register and speak with a Journey Mental health provider to be assured that a group experience would be appropriate and then receive an online invitation (group entry codes)
- Be able to provide your email and phone contact information

- Be aware that this is a discussion, support group and is not a “therapy” group
- Be able to provide a quiet space, without interruptions when participating, insuring confidentiality of the group
- Be available at the group starting time
- Do not invite or include others who have not been specifically invited to the session

All group discussions are led by a trained volunteer fellow survivor and supported by a Journey Mental Health professional.

Meetings, for now, will be held on our regular meeting nights, the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. The length of the meeting (usually 1½ hours) will be determined by the facilitator.

To request participation please email sos@journeymhc.org or call and leave a message for call back at SOS Confidential Voicemail (608) 280-2435.

SOS SUPPORT GROUP PURPOSE

To share experiences for living and coping beyond suicide loss

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE SUPPORT ZOOM MEETING SCHEDULE

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

For extra support please use Crisis Intervention 24/7 phone line at 608-280-2600 or leave a message at SOS voicemail 608-280-2435.

OCTOBER						
		13				
		27				

NOVEMBER						
		10				
		24				

DECEMBER						
		8				
		22				

JANUARY 2021						
			12			
			26			

NO LOCAL INTERNATIONAL SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS DAY EVENT

With the Saturday before Thanksgiving designated as an international day for survivors we have traditionally held a local gathering of Remembrance and Healing on that day. With all in -person events restricted this year due to Covid-19 we will not provide an event.

The day, Saturday, November 21, 2020, however, will still be acknowledged by AFSP

(American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) in some form. To see updates from that organization go to survivorday@afsp.org. Also, previous video presentations from programs of years past are available to view at any time.

Our thoughts will be with survivors who have joined with us before and to survivors new to their loss.

We look forward to gathering in person next year.



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- By phone message to (608) 280-2435
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