



NEWSLETTER

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JOURNEY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

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(608) 280-2435

CONSIDER THIS: HOW CAN I SURVIVE?



by Jeanne Moren, Volunteer SOS Facilitator

As I meet new survivors soon after their losses or those who attend a Support Group meeting for the first time, there is a universal question that is asked. "How can I survive?" or "How did you survive?" The universal answer is an unspoken one as the very presence of those of us who have lived beyond a suicide loss demonstrates our survival. The question, however, seeks a more personal response of encouragement to someone who may be unable to see how "they" can survive within their particular circumstance.

We know that adults learn through their experiences

or the experiences of others. This offers an opportunity to share some of what survivors, over time, have concluded.

We survive because we have to.

- There are others who depend on us.
- We have additional assignments in life. Our life is not over even though it may feel fractured and unhinged.
- Life goes on and we do want to live despite our immediate despair.

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SOS SUPPORT GROUP IS VIRTUAL

With all in-person groups suspended at Journey Mental Health the Survivors of Suicide Support Group is being offered as a ZOOM format. The open-ended support group for adults who have had a suicide loss is led by trained peer survivors along with professional staff from Journey.

The meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 7– 8:30.

For information or to request an invitation link to the SOS ZOOM call (608) 280-2435 (SOS Confidential Voice mail) or email sos@journeymhc.org.

More group details are found on page 5 of this Newsletter.



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APRIL NEWSLETTER TO BE REMEMBRANCE ISSUE

There are many ways to remember the lives of those who have died by suicide. Our April issue will provide an opportunity to name those who have died and make a short statement about them. We invite new readers or those who have been long time readers of this newsletter to honor a loved one in this way.

Please return the enclosed form by Friday, March 5, 2020 in order to be included.

- We did not make the decision for the deceased. We can and must make decisions for ourselves.
- We survive because we learn to live “different.”**
- We adjust to living with a new “normal.”
 - We conclude that we must integrate our past into facing and shaping the future.
 - New experiences continue to create our life’s story.
 - There can be an acceptance of joy and meaning as we heal and go forward.
- We survive because we can.**
- We are able, often with help, to find those who

can support us.

- We work to find resources and connections that guide us through the worst of times.
- There are strengths within us that are yet to be discovered, often to our own surprise.

Although each loss is unique, there is wisdom that can be passed on from survivor to survivor. I am thankful for those who demonstrated survival to me and thankful for those who continue to share their experiences and encourage others who are new to loss. The answers are not easy and hard work is required. Again and again survivors demonstrate that they are up to the task and that they are willing guides for others.

NEW YEARS AFTER LOSING A LOVED ONE



New Years after losing a loved one to suicide can be difficult for survivors. New Years is supposed to be a time of happiness and hope. Year after year I listen to people as they talk about what they plan to do to make this year better than the last. The gym is filled with new faces, as people pour in, promising to live a healthier lifestyle. New goals are set, projects are planned, and promises are made. When I think about it, New Years truly is the time when I feel people are the most hopeful. “This is going to be my year” is often the theme. But what about those who are still grieving? The people who can’t possibly see past today. A New Year may not offer that same hope that it once did... or can it?

Hope is a funny thing. It is not tangible. It is not something that we can see, and it is certainly not something that can be given to us. Hope can be something that is often trumped by the realities of daily life. We can wake up one morning thinking, “Today is going to be a great day” only to have one thing after another go wrong before you even eat breakfast. It is amazing how quickly the hope that we feel can be diminished by the realities of life. This is especially true after losing a loved one to suicide. I remember the year following the death of my dad when hope was the last thing I had. That’s the thing about tragedy; it completely alters your world view. Suddenly the bad things you may have worried about the year before are nothing compared to the worries you have today.

I have been asked by many how I have been able to overcome such a tragedy. So, how have I been able to move forward? With a little bit of hope.

Hope for me was not an easy thing to find. After the loss of my father, the world just didn’t seem right. I was bitter, angry and sad. I did not understand why something so tragic had to happen to me and my family. I still don’t necessarily know why it had to happen, but it did. I had to come to the realization that this was my reality, and there was nothing I could do to change it. I needed to stop living in the past, and start living in the present. What I found was that hope doesn’t live in the past; it lives in the present. Like I said in the beginning, hope is not something that can be given to you. It is something that YOU need to feel. There certainly are supports that can help us feel hopeful, but it is up to us to actually BE hopeful. Being hopeful doesn’t mean that everyday needs to be perfect, or that you need to be perfect. Let yourself be human. If you feel sad and angry today, allow yourself to feel that way. Just hold on to that hope that tomorrow will be better.

Know that bad things will happen; that is life. But remember that good things will happen as well. Sometimes we just need a little hope.

Wishing you all a year filled with more HOPE than the year before.

Source: oursideofsuicide.com; Post by Jessica, January 2, 2017

“Although no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.”

— Carl Bard



by Darcie Sims, Ph.D.

Grief is there always. You don't get over it. You can't hide from it. You can't put it aside until it is convenient. In fact, the more you try to avoid it, the more it catches you. It is a bit like that mysterious gift you once got from some distant relative. The more you try and forget it, the more it stays. Grief is in all the seasons of your life.

But grief doesn't have to be a burden all the time. Like the things you have stored in the basement, it can be sifted through, reorganized and dealt with. It doesn't have to be stashed in the darkest corner of your heart. Part of grief is learning to live without the person who made your life so incredibly wonderful. But the other side of grief is remembering how wonderful life can be and getting busy with not just surviving but LIVING!

The snowflakes are still just as lively and mysterious. The spring flowers will bloom again, with their sweet message of life. Summer will bring more warm evenings and fireflies to chase. Fall will turn its leaves one more time. Winter will come and another January will be celebrated in the basement... not because it is the only place we can find solace and comfort, but because it is an important part of our process — the sifting and sorting and reorganizing. Your life with your loved one was filled with moments

“We spend January 1 walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives...not looking for flaws but for potential.”

— Ellen Goodman

of laughter. Remember them, enjoy them again and again. Don't store them in the basement of your heart.

So, won't you join me this month as I make good my one New Year's resolution? I resolve to keep my basement clean, organized, and usable. It will NOT become a repository for cast offs and the no-longer useful in my life. It will be what it really is: a part of my house, my home, my life.

I will be in the basement this month, not escaping the snow (I LOVE that!), but getting ready to heal... Let the joy your loved one's life brought to you begin to take the place of the hurt and pain of death.

The memories will always hurt, but there also will be LOVE, and you cannot discard, bury, or lose the love you shared.

WINTERSONG

Season of love and peace
Season of shadow
Season of memories
Season of warmth and joy
Season of secret tears
Give us the courage to laugh again
Give us the vision to hope again
Give us the power to love again
For all our new seasons
And all our new years

— Author unknown

“The best way out is always through.”

— Robert Frost

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



Darcy Kobinsky

Dawn Irwin & Ted McCutchin

In memory of their son Case McCutchin
and In memory of Callan Bird Bear

Mary Pautsch

In memory of her son Ryan Pautsch

Benita Walker

in memory of Joe Zieminski

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

JUST FOR TODAY

Just for today I will try to live through the next 24 hours and not expect to get over my child's death, but instead learn to live with it, just one day at a time.

Just for today I will remember my child's life, not his death, and bask in the comfort of all those treasured days and moments we shared.

Just for today I will forgive all the family and friends who didn't help or comfort me the way I needed them to. They truly did not know how.

Just for today I will smile no matter how much I hurt on the inside, for maybe if I smile a little my heart will soften and I will begin to heal.

Just for today I will free myself from my self-inflicted burden of guilt, for deep in my heart I know if there was anything in this world I could have done to save my child from death, I would have done it.

Just for today I will honor my child's memory by doing something with another child, be it my own, or someone else, because I know that would make my child proud.

Just for today I will offer my hand in friendship to another bereaved parent, for I do know how they feel.

Just for today I will allow myself to be happy and enjoy myself, for I know that I am not deserting him by living on.

Just for today I will remember that even death cannot take away the special love we shared.

Just for today I will accept that I did not die when my child did; my life did go on; and I am the only one who can make life worthwhile once more.

— Author unknown

HISTORY OF THE DANE COUNTY SOS SUPPORT GROUP



The Support Group that now exists sponsored by Journey Mental Health Center started in about 1980. With the encouragement of the Dane County Coroner it was suggested that those listed as survivors in Coroner's reports of suicide deaths be contacted by Crisis Staff and offered supportive services. Wisely, the staff saw the value of inviting these survivors to talk with each other about their losses.

Initially, several families and individuals met monthly with a Mental Health Crisis Worker. In 1982, the group started to function with a trained survivor as facilitator along with a Crisis Worker. At that time, when survivor support groups were a relatively new idea, this format had proven to be successful in several parts of the country. In fact, SOS in many ways was the first recovery-focused initiative at the then Mental Health Center of Dane County.

With no set agenda, the discussion/support group provided a safe place for the discussion of fears, anger, sadness, guilt, future plans, and challenges. The opportunity to retell the story of the suicide was helpful in working through the grief process. The

uniqueness of a suicide death could be discussed with the goal of gaining survival skills.

After using several different meeting places, the SOS support group presently is only able to meet virtually via ZOOM. Meetings are offered the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 7-8:30 p.m.

Adult survivors may attend any time the need arises. There is no fee for participation. A lending library and other resources specific to a suicide loss will be available when in person meetings are once again allowed.

Many people who come to the group with the question, "WHY?", are able to find some comfort in discussion and the support of others. It indeed has proven true that, "Grief Shared is Grief Diminished."

For information or an invitation to the SOS ZOOM call (608) 280-2435 (SOS Services Confidential Voice mail) or email sos@journeymhc.org (608) 280-2600 (Emergency Services Unit)

Submitted by Jeanne Moren, Volunteer Facilitator, SOS

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.

2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

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.

JANUARY						
	12					
	26					

FEBRUARY						
		9				
		23				

MARCH						
		9				
		23				

APRIL						
				13		
				27		

SUPPORT GROUP DATES FOR 2021

May 11 & 25
June 8 & 22

July 13 & 27
August 10 & 24

September 14 & 28
October 12 & 26

November 9 & 23
December 14 & 28

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Friday, March 5 – Remembrances due for April Issue



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- By phone message to (608) 280-2435
- By mail at the address above.