



NEWSLETTER

SPONSORED BY
JOURNEY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

October 2022, VOL. 28, ISSUE 4
(608) 280-2435

COPING WITH SUICIDE LOSS HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS



Do what you think will be comfortable for you. Remember, you can always choose to do things differently next time.

- Think about your family's holiday traditions. Consider whether you want to continue them or create some new ones.
- Remember that family members may feel differently about continuing to do things the way they've been done in the past. Try to talk openly with each other about your expectations.
- Consider whether you want to be with your family and friends for the holiday, or whether it would be more healing for you to be by yourself or go away (this year).
- Keep in mind that sometimes the anticipation of an event can be more difficult than the event itself.
- If you find it comforting to talk about your loved one, let your family and friends know that; tell them not to be afraid to mention your loved one's name.
- Some survivors find it comforting to acknowledge the birthday of their loved ones by gathering with his/her friends and family; others prefer to spend it privately.

- Some survivors have found the following ritual helpful for a variety of occasions: Light two candles, and then blow one out. Explain that the extinguished candle represents those we've lost, while the one that continues to burn represents those of us who go on despite our loss and pain. Simply leave the one candle burning (you can put it off to one side) for the duration of the holiday meal or event. The glowing flame acts as a quiet reminder of those who are missing.

- Above all, bear in mind that there is no "right" way to handle holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays.

You and your family may decide to try several different approaches before finding one that feels best for you.

*Excerpted from Surviving Suicide Loss:
A Resource and Healing Guide.*



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“And once the storm is over you won't remember you how made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in.

That's what the storm's all about.”

— Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*

RECONCILING YOUR GRIEF



by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

You may have heard—indeed you may believe—that your grief journey’s end will come when you resolve, or recover from, your grief. But your journey will never end. People do not “get over” grief.

Reconciliation is a term I find more appropriate for what occurs as the mourner works to integrate the new reality of moving forward in life without the physical presence of the person who died. With reconciliation comes a renewed sense of energy and confidence, an ability to fully acknowledge the reality of death and a capacity to become reinvolved in the

activities of living.

In reconciliation, the sharp, every present pain of grief gives rise to a renewed sense of meaning and purpose. Your feelings of loss will not completely disappear, yet they will soften, and the intense pangs of grief will become less frequent. Hope for a continued life will emerge as you are able to make commitments to the future, realizing that the person who died will never be forgotten, yet knowing that your life can and will move forward.

WORDEN’S FOUR TASKS OF MOURNING



Psychologist J. William Worden provides a framework of four tasks that help us understand how people journey through grief. Healing happens gradually as grievers address these tasks, in no specific order, going back and forth from one to another over time.

• Task 1: To Accept the Reality of the Loss

Although you know intellectually that the person has died, you may experience a sense of disbelief. Integrating the reality of their death means “taking it in” with your whole being. For example, the reality may begin to set in immediately after the death, when you must call the mortuary, attend the memorial, or pick up the ashes. Many weeks, months or years later when an occasion arises that they would have been part of the reality again hits you as you realize that your dear one has died and they aren’t here to share these moments with you.

• Task 2: To Process the Pain of Grief

Grief is experienced emotionally, cognitively, physically, and spiritually. People may be telling you:

“Get over it; move on; be strong.” In contrast, one of the aims of grief support groups is to encourage and facilitate the safe expression of all the natural grief reactions.

• Task 3: To Adjust to a World Without the Deceased

External adjustments include taking on responsibilities and learning new skills. Internal adjustments are made as you adapt to your new identity. Spiritual adjustments occur as you grapple with questions about your belief system and the purpose and meaning of life.

• Task 4: To Find an Enduring Connection with the Deceased in the Midst of Embarking on a New Life

Gradually you create a balance between remembering the person who died and living a full and meaningful life.

Based on Worden, J. W. (2009). Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner, Fourth Edition, Springer, N.Y.

INVITING YOUR WORDS AND COMMENTS

*You are invited to submit thoughts or ideas concerning this Newsletter or the SOS program at any time.

*Would you perhaps review a book that you have read that would be of interest to survivors?

* Consider a brief writing about your initial reactions after your loss compared with your feelings as time has passed.

* Write of your support group experience. What was

your first visit like or share a longer term involvement .

Contributed writings will be collected for possible publication with your permission. Writings could be credited to the author or anonymous. Please include contact information.

Submit to: sos@journeymhc.org or by mail to JMHC/ Survivor Services, 25 Kessel Ct. Suite 105, Madison, WI 53711



RESOLVE & ACCEPTANCE

by Chris Moon, Co-Founder, Friends for Survival

Until I honestly explored and accepted each aspect of what I considered to be my responsibility, I was not able to begin resolving guilt or anger. I cannot speak for others, but for me, this acceptance was the real turning point whereby I was finally able to stop punishing myself with tremendous, self-defeating guilt. I began to be a survivor in a different sense in that I

regained a measure of self-esteem and desire to take charge of my life again. I felt a determination to work toward building more meaningful relationships with other survivors in my family as well as to assume new purpose and direction in my life.

from friendsforsurvival.org



ANGER

by Joannetta Hendel

Don't tell me that you understand,
Don't tell me that you know.
Don't tell me that I will survive,
How I will surely grow.

Don't stand in pious judgement
Of the bonds I must untie,
Don't tell me how to suffer,
And don't tell me how to cry.

Don't tell me this is just a test,
That I am truly blessed,
That I am chosen for this task,
Apart from all the rest.

My life is filled with selfishness,
My pain is all I see,
But I need you, I love your love,
Unconditionally.

Don't come at me with answers
That can only come from me,
Don't tell me how my grief will pass
That I will soon be free.

Accept me in my ups and downs,
I need someone to share,
Just hold my hand and let me cry,
And say, "My friend, I care."

"If you have found yourself holding on to the shame and guilt after the suicide, I encourage you to ask yourself what you gain by continually blaming or hating yourself. We cannot change what took place, and by releasing the guilt and shame, we are allowing life to enter into our own bodies again. No longer in the bondage of self-blame, we are able to see fully the suicide for what it was: their attempt to end their pain. Unfortunately, accepting responsibility does not alter the outcome of their life, it only destroys ours."

—Unknown

NEW NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION AND CRISIS HOTLINE 988 HAS LAUNCHED

As of July 2022, a new three-digit number is now available nationwide. The number is available 24/7 for free access to trained crisis counselors via call, text or chat. This number is meant to respond to mental health issues including thoughts of suicide, substance abuse crisis, emotional distress. Those who are worried about a loved one who may be experiencing a need for crisis support can also dial 988.

Connections will be made to a community-based call center near the caller's home or area where the crisis exists. The previous 10-digit number for LIFELINE (1-800-273-8255) will remain available. This new system is designed to improve response time and provide important essential services to those in crisis.

JOURNEYS INTO THE PAST



Our world is full of things that will take us back into the past, remind us of our loved one and what we have lost by his or her passing. Old songs. Fragrances. Seasonal changes of weather. Holidays. Birthdays. The list goes on.

Well, let them come, these reminders. Sometimes they bear with them a poignant sweetness. Sometimes we think they will break our hearts, so devastating is our sense of loss, brought into sharp focus again.

As time passes, these sieges will be more short lived, easier to move through and come out on the other side.

It is well not to fight these images of a lost world, to let them pass through us—savoring their sweetness if it is there, bearing the pain while it lasts—knowing that in a little while we can lay claim to ourselves again.

The journeys into the past always include a way back into the present, which is where I live.

Source: Healing After Loss – Daily Meditations for Working through Grief (May 6), Author Martha Whitmore Hickman

“If you can’t tell your story to another human, find another way: journal, paint, make your grief into a graphic novel with a very dark storyline. Or go out to the woods and tell the trees. It is an immense relief to be able to tell your story without someone trying to fix it. The trees will not ask, “How are you really?” and the wind doesn’t care if you cry.”

— Megan Devine

A SINCERE THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish

Robert & Julie Schoepp

in memory of their son Anthony Schoepp

Heather Bowers

in honor of Savannah & Anukush Wedding

Journey Mental Health

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.

“What was once enjoyed and deeply loved, we can never lose.
For all that we love deeply becomes part of us.”

— Helen Keller, Author

ONLINE (ZOOM) SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUP CONTINUES FOR NOW

With no definite date set as to when in-person meetings might resume, we continue to offer **online group support**. We offer this option to survivors who would have normally desired to attend our in-person groups.

The following criteria are 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.

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.

OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY 2023
	8		10
11		13	
	22		24
25		27	

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

Along with survivor support from Journey Mental Health many other resources are listed in our “Help After Suicide” brochure which is posted on our website, journeymhc.org.

General groups along with specific loss groups for Moms, Spouse & Partner are available online throughout the U.S.



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