



NEWSLETTER

SPONSORED BY
JOURNEY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

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(608) 280-2435

FACING THE NEW YEAR WHEN YOU ARE BEREAVED



ACCEPTING THE NEW YEAR

When we are grieving, it is hard enough to live each day as it comes. It can be daunting to face a whole new year stretching out in front of us. We may be afraid of what the new year might bring. We may worry whether or not we can handle any more challenges. Our current experience of emptiness and loneliness may make us reluctant to face a new year.

We might say to ourselves, "I used to be so busy. I used to feel so needed, so useful. Now it seems there's nothing but empty space and empty time." It's bad enough to wake in the morning not sure what we'll do with the day; what will we do with a whole year?

Longing to recover the past can sometimes make us resistant to accepting the new year. The past was where we were comfortable, where we felt safe, felt good. Grief burdens us today and we fear the new year won't hold

anything different for us. We pine for the person we miss and the precious past we shared. We think about how it was, and wish we were back there.

Approach of a new year may mean different things for different mourners. Whether we welcome, dread, or ignore a new year probably depends on where we are in our grief process. The question is not whether, but how grief will show up, and how we'll work with it.

A LEARNING PROCESS

If your loss was recent, sudden, or unexpected, you might experience it as a shock, as if you're living a bad dream or someone else's life, trying desperately to get back to your "old" life. The last thing on your mind might be the challenge of a new year. Writing or talking repeatedly about the death of your loved one might make you feel numb or detached. Eventually, you might realize that your life is not what you thought it would be, that your world has changed.

Therese Rando, a noted grief therapist and author, describes grieving as a learning process. Each minute

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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 3, 2023** in order to be included.

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with a loved one created patterns of how to operate and what to expect. Each new challenge, like doing the taxes, fixing things, and going into a new year, becomes a fresh occasion to accept the absence of your loved one and find new ways to cope, even if new challenges bring fresh pain.

As you courageously work through your grief over time, you eventually will find the strength to look to the new year with interest and wonder about what it might hold. Maybe you'll feel eager to welcome change now that your grief has started to ease.

You might find comfort and joy in knowing that you did all that you could and loved well. Enriched by the love you once enjoyed, you can now show deeper compassion for all who suffer. You eventually will recognize life as a gift to enjoy with whomever crosses your path. In time, you might want to do on your own what you both once hoped to accomplish together.

Even if you're scared and lonely, and even if you long for the past, you can still open the door a crack to this new year.

TIPS TO FACE THE NEW YEAR:

- Begin by getting needed rest. If you're still exhausted from caregiving or from acute grieving, focus on physical recovery. Considering talking with your doctor about how to rebuild yourself physically.
- Give yourself a mental rest. Replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations about yourself, and soothe yourself with music, prayer, uplifting literature, tears, and laughter.
- Pay attention to hope and desire. Find small practical ways to give yourself new pleasure.
- Attend a support group or talk with friends and family members who can list and share memories.
- Seek spiritual support from a local minister, rabbi, priest, imam.
- Find courage to live into the future by living in the present, one day at a time. Do the best you can to care for yourself and others today.

From www.vitas.com

WISHES FOR THE BEREAVED FOR THE NEW YEAR



by Joe Rousseau

To the newly bereaved, we wish you patience – patience with yourself in the painful weeks, months, even years ahead.

To bereaved siblings, we wish you and your parents and other siblings a new understanding of each other's needs and the beginning (or continuation) of good communication.

To longer bereaved, who wonder how long this goes on, we wish you the patience to continue to work through your grief and the knowledge that and time will ease your pain.

To bereaved grandparents, we wish you strength to help your child and the knowledge that your grief is real and also must be worked on.

To widows and widowers, we wish you the inner resources you will need to cope, often alone, with your loss and the ability to reach out for help from those who can help you.

To those who suffered multiple losses, we wish you extra endurance to work your way through your grief.

To those of you who are depressed, we wish you the first steps out of your darkness.

To those experiencing marital difficulties after the death of your loved one, we wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.

To all men, we wish you the ability to express your grief and not to be afraid to cry.

To those who suffered a miscarriage, a still birth or infant death, and have little or no mementos of your child, we wish you the real knowledge that your child is a person, and your grief is real.

To those unable to cry, we wish you healing tears.

To those who are tired, exhausted from grieving, we wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.

To all others with special needs that we have not mentioned here, we wish you the understanding you need and the assurance that you are loved.

Look at what you have left, not what you have lost.

Reprinted from HopeLine for the Bereaved, Inc., Syracuse, NY, January 2005

DEALING WITH SPECIAL DAYS AND HOLIDAYS



By Dr. Bill Webster

You probably heard the expression “Some days are diamonds; some days are stones.”

When you are grieving, there is no question that some days are more difficult than others. Many people don’t realize that grief comes and goes. Let me illustrate. If you get a sore throat, it is painful for a few days; then the discomfort diminishes till it gradually disappears.

Grief does not work in a similar way, though many people seem to think it will. When someone dies, people expect that your “pain level” will be very high in the first few days, over the funeral, or at worst for a few weeks. But often at first, we feel quite numb. People confuse numbness with strength and expect the pain of grief to ease and diminish soon after, just as in the case of a sore throat.

Not so! Sometimes a few weeks after the event, the pain is more intense. When the numbness wears off, we often feel worse rather than better.

Grief is a like a roller coaster... one day can be a good day, and the very next day a rotten day, followed by a better day, and then ... well you get the picture. We feel better for a while, and then find ourselves back in the depths of despair. Just when we think we are getting over it, we are hit by another wave of grief, and we suffer what seems a devastating setback.

Certain days are more significant than others inasmuch as they remind us more specifically of the person who died. These can be especially difficult. Sundays often represent family days, anniversaries; holidays such as Christmas and others when the person’s absence is felt. The person’s birthday for example can be a hard day, as you think back on special parties that were held, gifts you gave them ... a birthday after someone’s death is usually not a happy one. But it can also be difficult on YOUR birthday, as you realize that they are not there to participate in your celebration.

You will be able to identify many occasions on which you miss your loved one, for the list is long. Think of all the days in particular throughout the year that could be hard because you miss the person: Valentine’s Day, Mother’s day, Father’s day, Easter, the first day of spring, or the opening of the football or sport season; the first weekend at the cottage or trailer; the summer holidays; Christmas. Then add all the special occasions like weddings, family get-

togethers, weekends. These can be difficult because they remind us of better days when the person was here, as compared to THIS day where they are not.

When you don’t seem to be “getting over it” or when it feels like you are getting worse than better, it can be discouraging to those who do not understand the process. But may I remind you, grief comes and goes. Some people call these experiences “Grief Attacks.” I call them TUG’s, for they are Temporary Upsurges in Grief.

There are so many triggers, usually simple everyday things: being in a familiar restaurant you frequented with your loved one; the scent of an aftershave or perfume; hearing a song on the radio that was special. So many things that remind us of the person who has died and each one has the potential to suddenly compel us to miss them again.

Coping with Difficult Days

What can we do about such difficult days? First, it is important not to regard them as “set-backs” for as tough as they may be, they are actually an invitation to come to terms with our loss a little more. It gives us some measure of control to ask ourselves, “As much as I will miss the person, what can I do on that noteworthy day to commemorate their death and celebrate their life? How can I make that day meaningful though difficult?”

So, what can we do? May I make several suggestions? Most importantly, I think we need to remember. Grief invites us to remember, not to forget. To try to ignore the occasion or pretend that it is just like any other day is unnatural, and actually increases the tension. It takes more energy to avoid the situation than it does to confront it.

Observe these holidays and special occasions in ways which are comfortable for you. Feel free to make some changes if they feel comfortable for you. Remember, there is no right or wrong way of handling these times. Once you have decided how to observe the time and what you can handle comfortably, let family and friends know.

Allow yourself to feel and to express your feelings. Those special days often magnify feelings of loss. Share your concerns, apprehensions, and feelings

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with a friend or in a support group. Recognize that the need for support is often greater during holidays. Try to get enough rest because those occasions can be emotionally and physically draining.

Acknowledge your loved one's presence in the family. Consider lighting a memorial candle at the dinner table or in the house to quietly include your loved one. Listen to music especially liked by the deceased or look at photographs or videos if it is not too difficult to do so.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO HAVE FUN. It is natural to feel sadness, of course, but it doesn't have to be all sorrowful. Laughter and joy are not disrespectful. Give yourself and your family members permission to celebrate and take pleasure in one another. Can you get together with family and friends and take some time to share special memories or tell stories about the person. What made them special and what do you miss about them? Humorous incidents recalled can have a special healing quality to them.

Your loved one died, it is true, but they also **LIVED**. Make their birthday a celebration of their life. What could you do to honor their life on that day? Make that wedding or other anniversary a time to be thankful for what you had, as well as an opportunity to grieve what you have lost. Take time on that day to remember and be thankful for the person, even though their absence will be keenly felt.

Try to remember the good memories that you shared with the person. You know, a birthday is a celebration of **LIFE**. So, what could you do that would celebrate the person's life, even as you remember their death. What would you have done if they had still been here ... could you do something similar, as if they were saying, make the most of the day.

Be proactive, not reactive. In other words, do

something to take charge of the day. See it as another opportunity to grieve, to miss the person, to peel back another layer of sorrow. To pretend that nothing has happened is so unnatural and actually increases the tension. Do something to remember and to grieve.

Try to balance sorrow for their death with celebration for their life, and it will make those difficult days more meaningful.

Can you be thankful for **SOMETHING**? Of course, you are sad because someone you care about is absent, and that is natural, and it is right. But can you be thankful for the years you did have and the memories you still share? I believe we can be thankful for what we **HAD** as well as grieving what we have lost. And are there people who **WILL** be there this year for whom you can be thankful?

Don't allow looking back at the past to spoil what you have in the present. Yes, you miss the person who will not be there, but are there children, relatives and friends you can enjoy today? It may not cancel out your sadness, but it certainly makes it easier.

You only have one of two choices when it comes to grief at difficult times. Do you let the day control you, or do you control the day? Either we allow the grief to dominate us, or we try to control it. By doing something ... anything ... to acknowledge our sadness that they are no longer here while at the same time celebrating the fact that they **WERE** here, will make a difference.

Remember, the choice is that you can shed tears that they have gone, or you can smile because they have lived. Or maybe you can do both at the same time. Be prepared for difficult days, anticipate them, and prepare for them, and then do what you can to make it a fitting day to remember.

Additional resources at GriefJourney.com.

WHAT IS POSTVENTION?

by Barbara Rubel, MA, BCETS, DAAETS

Postvention refers to the act of helping those affected by a suicide. Whereas the goal of prevention is to stop people from becoming suicidal, and the goal of intervention is to reduce the likelihood of suicide by individuals who are deemed suicidal, postvention mitigates the harmful effects of suicide.

The goal of postvention is to assist suicide loss survivors in recovering and avoiding harmful

outcomes after a death by suicide. Postvention brings suicide prevention and intervention full circle by including all those who need support. Postvention for families, school systems, and communities helps individuals bereaved by suicide process their grief and decrease the likelihood of "imitative suicidal behavior." (World Health Organization, 2014)

Source: Excerpt from But I Didn't Say Goodbye, Helping Families After A Suicide by Barbara Rubel



A DIFFICULT JOURNEY CALLED SUICIDE



by Judy Killian

Death. We all experience it; wish we didn't have to go through it and sometimes happens when we least expect it. In 2010 my husband died of diabetes. My son and I were dealing with a lot of change, it wasn't easy. Three years later, a Coroner showed up at my door and told me my son was dead, a bullet to the head. There were two other suicides within six months, a very caring friend lost her brother and a relative her husband. When it is a suicide, it is impossible to wrap your mind around the "Why." And there is no answer. The hole in your heart is as big as the ocean and something has died in us. For me, my only child, it was worse. I wrote the word down. Pages of words. These are some of them.

- S — Shock, Scream
- U — Unending nightmare, Unreal
- I — Impossible, Inconceivable
- C — Crying, can't stop
- I — Insight – Why?
- D — Denial, Depression, Death
- E — Ending, Earthshattering

Over the next several years I would come to know what depression was. As my son grew up, I saw what I thought was normal growing pains. I went through a lot of guilt and regret for not being able to recognize possible warning signs. The "What If's" were horrible. Will it hurt forever?

Though numb the first year, friends and coworkers guided my days. The second year was worse when reality set in. There was SOS/Journey where you find you are not the only one going through this. At times it was overwhelming the new people who kept showing up for meetings. I also went to grief counseling through the church, and they also assigned a counselor that spent over three years listening and spending time with me.

As I look back now, my life has forever changed. So many things I thought were important don't matter as they once did. The big change for me was my faith. I was surprised how much stronger it has gotten. Even now, something will remind me of that beautiful gift, that beautiful son God gave me and the tears flow. He tells me it is going to be ok; healing takes time. And there are times of joy and good memories, they will surface. He has also put people in my path that need comfort and hope from this type of loss. I am more than glad to help if I can, and it is healing at the same time.

For me I would never have gotten through these last years without my faith and forgiveness. We all have to find our way, make it through the rivers of grief and move forward with hope and love. No matter which path you take, you will find plenty of help, you do not have to walk alone.

WHY?

Why?

That's what we ask.

The truth is,
we may never be able
to know for sure why.

But we do know
that there is no single
"should have done" or
"could have done"
or "did" or "didn't do"

that would have changed that why.

All that love could do was done.

Author Unknown

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

LIKE A TREE IN WINTER



Like a tree in winter which had lost its leaves, we look ahead to spring for new growth and the warmth of the sun to heal the pain in our hearts. Let us make January a time to reach out to each other and give the warmth from our hearts, and in return we will all show new growth.

— Source: *The Compassionate Friends, Sacramento*

A SINCERE THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



Anonymous

Judy Killian

in memory of her son
Anthony “Tony” Killian

Peg Maginnis

in memory of her son
Patrick Maginnis

Linda Pederson

Mark Schmidt

In honor of Volunteer Amy Schulz’s retirement from VA Hospital
and in memory of her brother
Rob Schulz

Susan Dinaurer

David & Katie Karr

Jeanne Moren

Pamela Olson & Jeffrey Wong

Marc Schnipper

Cathy Seasholes

Patricia Shackelton

Mark & Joan Subach

Vicki Westrich

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 the New Year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the New Year.”

— Vern McLellan

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.

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.

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.

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
10			
	14	14	11
24			
	28	28	25

OTHER 2023 MEETING DATES

May 9 & 23

July 11 & 25

September 12 & 26

November 14 & 28

June 13 & 27

August 8 & 22

October 10 & 24

December 12 & 26

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



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- By email at sos@journeymhc.org
- By phone message to (608) 280-2435
- By mail at the address above.

~REMEMBRANCE ISSUE~

Survivors of Suicide - April 2023 Newsletter

There are many ways to remember the lives of loved ones 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 long time readers of this newsletter to honor a loved one.

Memorial donations to **SOS** to support the newsletter, resources and outreach are appreciated but not required.

Please return the following form by **Friday, March 3, 2023** to:

SOS, % Journey Mental Health Center, 25 Kessel Ct. Suite 105, Madison, WI 53711

(may use return envelope)

Person to be remembered -

Birth Date/Death Date -

Optional Short Message (25 words or less) -

Remembered by-

Address/Phone Number/Email -

Memorial Donation to **Journey Mental Health Center**, SOS included? Yes No

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