

Comforting Friends

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A NATIONAL OUTREACH & SUPPORT ORGANIZATION
FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY A SUICIDE DEATH

2023
SEPTEMBER



PARDON MY EYES

By Jazzmine Magloire, Friends for Survival Member, in loving memory of my son, David

Pardon my eyes, I know they are dark.
The night rubbed off on them. 2am replay,
my mind is on repeat.

Like leftovers you reheat and toddlers re-
fuse to eat. Screams, ambulance, hospital,
police, neighbors, friends, children, baby,
hugs, absence, help, move, money, mar-
riage, God, prayer, hope, despair, drive,
papers, waiting, hugs, tears, cold, health,
children, survive, night, silence. Ceilings
stare at me so I stare back...

Pardon my eyes, for they are sleepless. My
heart is a suitcase, my thoughts water-en-
cased, I pour out their silent messages on
a pillow case. Red and puffy from palms
and tissues rubbing.

No make up disguises their wear and tear.
At times I want to hide it. Other times I
don't care. Unalluring for a magazine cover,
yet there's beauty in these weary eyes.
These eyes have met eyes. Saw eyes for the
last time.

Eyes that saw life come. Eyes that saw
life go.

Pardon my eyes, for they do not see a
full night's rest and have not for many
years. Nights of nursing, listening to
coughs, sneezes, and nightmares sitting
on the edge of the bed poised at the
ready. Might tonight I get to bury my
head in a dream to escape but for a mo-
ment the burden life has given me. To
visit a place where my insides are not so
tied, my thoughts are not so wounded
and my spirit not so bound. Till I wake
and sob again...

Pardon my eyes, for they do not sparkle
or entice, but rather invite fellow suf-
ferers. Every circle, a ring of refinement.
Stripes with stories, heavy and sunken.

No memory foam eliminates the
memories formed. Rest is not
assured in a blanket or pillow, but
as the days go and my own light
grows dim one day I'll sleep
forever. Till then...

Pardon my eyes.

**A CHANGE OF THE
SEASON IS UPON
US. I HOPE THAT
YOU HAVE HAD A
NICE SUMMER.**

**CONTINUE TO BE
KIND AND GENTLE
WITH YOURSELF.**



**MARILYN
KOENIG,**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BURYING THE FIG TREE

by Molly Senecal, Friends for Survival Member

DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF MY DAUGHTER, EVE

Last summer I read *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Shafak, and was captivated by the story of a fig tree that was transported from its warm island home to the cold, inhospitable (for fig trees) climate of England. In order to survive the long, cold winters, the fig tree is pushed into the ground and buried every winter. (Yes, I googled this - burying fig trees in cold climates is a real thing.)

Each fall, the fig tree's roots are severed on one side and the trunk of the tree is incrementally pushed towards a hole in the ground on the opposite side of the cut roots. Once in the ground, the tree is covered with soil, even the leaves. Sheets of plywood are laid over the buried tree and then weighed down with stones.

After the last frost, the stones are rolled back, and the fig tree is coaxed, gently, back into an upright position. The severed roots are returned to the earth; softly covered in fresh, dark soil. The leaves are shaken free of the heaviness that weighed them down.

What a vision of resurrection.

If I close my eyes, I can imagine her pale face gasping at the emerging, early spring light. Her branches tentatively

reaching for the sun, after days - no, months - of indeterminate darkness. And I imagine she whispers to herself, *okay, maybe I can do this one more time.*

I had such a visceral reaction to reading this and felt the tree speaking the language of our grief. The cycles and waves of drowning and resurfacing. Maybe there is wisdom in these cycles - for without spells of darkness, the fig tree would not survive her new life in this distant, cold landscape. And maybe our tender hearts also need these periods of darkness to survive our new landscape of loss as well.

Like the fig tree, my new life is punctuated by these seasons of being weighed down in darkness, not knowing when, or if I will resurface. Only with time (and often unexpectedly), does the weight of sadness shift.

And when the sadness shifts, as it always does, as it always has, I turn towards the early light. Holding my hands up to shield my eyes as the stones are rolled back, as the sunlight seeps into the space between the broken pieces, I whisper, *okay, maybe I can do this one more time.*

FOR FURTHER READING...

I Look To The Mourning Sky: A Book of Poems and Writing Prompts for the Grieving Heart is a collection of poems for anyone who has experienced the immensity of loss. Its poems are written through the first year of grief and they seek to acknowledge the pain and complexity of this journey, which can be so isolating and overwhelming. While grief is a lifelong experience, it is something that is constantly changing and evolving. *I Look to the Mourning Sky* is a collection that seeks to meet people in the storms of their sadness and remind them that they aren't alone. Also included are twelve writing prompts centered around grief and processing. Whether your grief is fresh or you can't imagine a time you weren't carrying it, these poems and prompts are written with the goal of giving you a safe space to feel the ups and downs of loss and to heal in your own way at your own pace. Available on Amazon.com

I
Look to
the
Mourning
Sky

A Book of Poems and Writing Prompts
for the Grieving Heart



Mindful Coloring

Coloring is good for your health. What used to be known as a simple, fun activity for kids now is a tool for practicing good mental health. While children's coloring books feature cartoon characters and simple designs, adult coloring books have intricate patterns of flowers, artwork, mandalas or animals. Books are available for purchase, and you can print free coloring pages online. For people who prefer a digital version, many coloring apps are available for mobile devices. But what makes adult coloring so popular? Coloring can improve your health by promoting mindfulness. Mindfulness is the ability to focus and stay in the moment. For example, because you're focusing on color choice and staying inside the lines, you're only thinking about the present moment. You can shut off the noise around you, and give your mind the gift of focusing on the movements, sensations and emotions of your present moment. Practice being nonjudgmental as you go through the task with no expectations — just being in the moment. If your mind wanders, which is normal, gently return to what you are experiencing right now. While coloring, you use the parts of your brain that enhance focus and concentration. It gives you the opportunity to disconnect from stressful thoughts.

Coloring is a healthy way to relieve stress. It calms the brain and helps your body relax. This can improve sleep and fatigue while decreasing body aches, heart rate, respiration, and feelings of depression and anxiety. Although coloring isn't the ultimate cure for stress and anxiety, sitting down for a long coloring session holds great value. As you color, pay attention to your breathing rhythm, ensuring steady, full breaths from your diaphragm, and tune into your heart rate periodically if you can. Try to let go of judgments or expectations and enjoy the simple beauty of coloring. It doesn't matter if your picture is neat or messy. The only thing that matters is if you found enjoyment and relaxation while coloring.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/coloring-is-good-for-your-health>

Invitation to Participate in a Study

I am conducting a study interviewing parents as part of my PhD dissertation. Under the supervision of senior faculty researchers affiliated with Simmons, Harvard, and Johns Hopkins Universities, I will be interviewing parents of children who have died by suicide to learn about their families' access to supports, resources and information. I have been working for over 20 years with children, adults, and families impacted by suicide as a clinical social worker.

If you agree to be interviewed, we will have a confidential conversation via Zoom at a time that is convenient for you. Your identity and the identity of your loved one will not be shared with anyone.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are a parent who has lost a child to suicide when they were ages 5-24. Because most people need time before they can even talk about it, I hope to speak with parents at least a year after having lost their child. Participation is completely voluntary. Please contact me at michelle.oliver@simmons.edu if you are interested in participating in this study or have any questions. Deadline: October 2023

Michelle McCarthy Oliver, LICSW (MA) # 119729
PhD Candidate - PI - Exploring the Antecedent Behaviors of Children Who Die by Suicide. School of Social Work, College of Social Sciences, Policy.

Friends for Survival Outreach Events

- * AFSP Out of the Darkness Walk in Sacramento at Sutter Health Park on September 9th. Find more information about these Community Walks and others at www.AFSP.org
- * AFSP Out of the Darkness Walk in Modesto at Graceada Park on September 30th. Find more information about these Community Walks and others at www.AFSP.org
- * Lantern of Light at the Mother Lode Fairgrounds in Sonora, September 9. <https://lanternoflight.org/upcoming-events/>

The enormity of grief and loss can be overwhelming. I did not respect mourning doves in the past, thought they were more like pigeons. However, when I hear their cooing amidst songbirds etc., I am reminded about how grief is also present amidst the songs, every day, all day and all night. I get solace from that.

~Submitted by Joanne Muir, Friends for Survival member. In honor of Daniel, Love Mom

Support

RESOURCES

Friends for Survival

www.friendsforsurvival.org

Phone: (916) 392-0664

Toll Free: (800) 646-7322

If you are in crisis and need immediate help, call the 24-hour National Crisis Line:

“988”

Alliance of Hope

Survivor services including a 24/7 on-line community forum
www.allianceofhope.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

Extensive lists of available meeting support www.afsp.org/find-support

Bereaved Parents of the USA

www.bereavedparentsusa.org

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

www.save.org

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

For service members, veterans, and their families: www.taps.org

The Compassionate Friends

For bereaved parents of a deceased child: www.compassionatefriends.org

The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

The Dougy Center
www.dougy.org/grief-resources



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