

# Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2021  
FEBRUARY



## TODAY

by Author Unknown

There are two days in every week about which you should not worry: two days which should be kept free from fear and apprehension.

One of these days is **Yesterday** with its mistakes and cares, its faults and blunders, its aches and pains. Yesterday has passed forever beyond our control. All the money in the world cannot bring back yesterday. We cannot undo a single act we performed, we cannot erase a single word said. Yesterday is gone!

The other day we should not worry about is **Tomorrow**, with its possible burden, its

large promise and poor performance. Tomorrow is also beyond our immediate control. Tomorrow's sun will rise, either in splendor or behind a mask of clouds, but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in tomorrow, for it is yet unborn.

This leaves only one day: **Today!** We must focus our energies on today, the present.

It is not the experience of today that drives one mad, it is the remorse or bitterness about something which happened yesterday and the dread of what tomorrow will bring. Let us therefore live but one day at a time.

**February:** We will be seeing a lot of pictures of hearts and talk of love this month. Author of *Healing the Hurt Spirit*, Catherine Greenleaf, writes: *"It could be that the suicide has made us feel unlovable, unworthy of love."* Our grief is complicated because we loved them so much. Can we look back on our memories and remember the good times? Can we write about the endearing times in our journals? Can we share those precious stories with family and friends?

Author of *A Long-Shadowed Grief*, Harold Ivan Smith, writes: *"I want to remember to remember to be charitable and to offer the good memories hospitality so that they will become permanent residents in my heart."*

It is my hope that some of what I share creates a healing place in your broken heart.



Gratefully,

Marilyn Koenig  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## SUPPORT GROUPS

Until further notice, all support group meetings are virtual.

Go to our website, click on **Upcoming, Meetings**. Find your meeting date and time, click on **Register**.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS:

### Second Monday

February 8 @ 3pm PST

### Third Tuesday

February 16 @ 7pm PST

### Fourth Wednesday

February 24 @ 7pm PST

## PRIVATE CHAPTER MEETINGS:

### Legacy Survivors Utah

Wednesday, February 13 @ 6pm MST (5pm PST)

### Modesto

Monday, February 15 @ 7pm PST

## WEBINARS:

More information and register at: [friendsforsurvival.org/our-webinars](https://friendsforsurvival.org/our-webinars)

## Are you interested in starting a grief support program in your area?

For 2021, we have updated our publication: *Pathways to Purpose and Hope: A Guide for Creating A Sustainable Grief Support Organization for Families and Friends After A Suicide Death.*

This is a free, 100-page spiral bound book with all the steps you need to put together your group. Call 916-392-0664, or order on our website under "Shop."

# a widow's perspective on moving forward

by Stephanie Chandler-Tonstand,  
Friends for Survival Board Member



It has been seven years since my husband Chris died and three years since I began a relationship with Stuart, who I affectionately call my Chapter Two. It is not easy to begin a new relationship after such a traumatic loss. Widows face our own internal struggles with navigating through grief and accepting reality, while also worrying about how our late partner's family members will feel.

What will they think? Will they resent me for being in a new relationship? Will they understand my choice to move forward?

I am fortunate because my late husband's family has been incredibly supportive of my Chapter Two. In fact, after sharing several holidays together, Chris' dad and Stuart's dad became friends—a special kind of modern family.

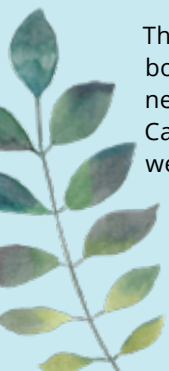
If you lost a son or daughter or loved one who left behind a partner or spouse, here is what I want you to know: Beginning a Chapter Two does not erase, minimize, replace, or alter the memories of Chapter One.

It is impossible to ever get OVER the loss of someone we love. Our only choice is to move FORWARD. For widows, this means carrying the memories of Chapter One close in our hearts. We do this while learning to craft a different story with Chapter Two.

No two loves are the same. Chapters One and Two cannot and should not be compared. Thankfully, the heart expands and makes room for both. It is the same way the heart expands and allows you to love more than one child, friend, or pet. You don't love one more than the other. You love each differently.

Welcoming in a new chapter doesn't erase grief. It doesn't change the past. It doesn't replace the previous chapter. It simply invites in some much-needed happiness, something we all deserve.

So, if you lost a loved one who left behind a partner or spouse, please understand that moving forward isn't the same thing as moving on. It simply allows the future to be a little brighter, something your loved one would surely wish for all of you.





# being your own valentine

by Catherine Greenleaf

February 14th. Valentine's Day can be a difficult holiday to go through alone, but it's a wonderful opportunity for you to reaffirm your enduring love for yourself.

Alone or not, today you can be comforted that you have yourself. Today is a good day to appreciate yourself because you are strong and you have survived all that life has thrown at you. Today is a good day to show yourself some love, and to appreciate the love given to you by others.

Love can be shown in so many ways: a cuddly cat purring on your lap, a chirpy hello from a neighbor, receiving a cheerful greeting card.

Today is a good day to practice unconditional love for yourself. That means loving yourself no matter what.

Source: *Healing the Hurt Spirit - Daily Affirmations for People Who Have Lost a Loved One to Suicide*, by Author Catherine Greenleaf.



**Start where you are,  
use what you have,  
do what you can.**

~ Arthur Ashe





# silence speaks

by Margo Fowkes, Founder  
*Salt Water - Find Your Harbor*

More and more, I am silenced by loss. Finding it harder and harder to know what to say. Grasping for words that heal, comfort or soothe and coming up empty. Acknowledging that there is no repairing the damage, fixing the loneliness, touching up the despair. The suffering is too deep and too wide. To speak is to offer simple solutions that don't come close to suturing the wound.

I have spent much of my life fighting to be heard, only to discover during these pandemic days that I sometimes have little to say. Or more accurately, nothing worth saying. But the less I speak, the more I hear and the more I remember. Without the worry of making a wise, witty comment, I can drop fully into the conversation and focus instead on listening. To what's being said and more importantly, to what's not. To hear the muffled sob, see the head drop or shoulders shake, to feel the anguish radiating outward. To hold the pain in my hands, create space for the departed to be present and acknowledge all that has been lost.

Sometimes silence is the best answer. Sometimes silence is the only answer. Sometimes there are no words necessary, and sometimes there just are no words. Sometimes listening is the only way to honor a devastating loss that words would only diminish.


I think back to when Jimmy died. The cards, the emails, the texts. How little I remember about what people said and how well I remember the way they showed up, leaned in, grabbed onto me. Their presence said, "We are here, we have you and we are not going anywhere." It wasn't their words; it was the love and intent behind them. Their courage to sit in silence when there was nothing more to say.

I am learning to pause, draw breath and wait. To see what appears instead of filling the void. To remain curious about what isn't being said. To wait patiently for the words to come. To understand that my silence can be a gift, perhaps the most powerful way to honor another person's pain. To search for the peace and the possibility. To follow instead of lead. To witness the pain, wait for the wisdom and walk silently into the unknown.

*Reprinted with permission. Friends for Survival thanks our collaborator and grief partner Margo for her love and dedication in providing this wonderful resource.*

*Salt Water is for those who have lost someone that they can't live without - a child, a sibling, a spouse, a parent, a close friend - and the people who love them. They provide a safe harbor where you can find comfort, support and tools to survive your loss and rebuild your life.*

[www.findyourharbor.com](http://www.findyourharbor.com)



The stillness has room to hold the grief. As I sit with another shattered soul, I remind myself: this is not mine to fix. I am here to bear witness, hold space, companion a grieving heart. To breathe in the sorrow and exhale prayers for healing. To silently communicate to the other person...you are not alone. I may not be able to make this right. But I will not turn away. There is more to your life than this pain, this moment, this loss. But until you are ready to walk back into the light, I will sit here quietly with you.



# head vs. heart

by Therese Gump



Heads and hearts are two essentials in a human being but sometimes they don't jibe and the conflict is on. When my loved one died, I felt in my heart like it was something I did (or didn't do) that caused his/her suicide, something I missed, or ignored that would have saved him/her. On the other hand, my head tells me (logically) that I did everything I could have done. I was supportive and loving, and yet made human errors like any other imperfect creature.

My head tells me I am a good person when I can listen to it, but in my heart I feel tainted, marked, even bad because of what happened. Is it logical that I could have turned into this pariah of evil with one act over which I had no control? Certainly not in the rational world. As I try to make sense of this irrational act, my heart sets me up for unreasonable conclusions. I go back over every conversation I had with the deceased to find a clue I should have picked up. What was it that I said that could have pushed the button to their action? Would one more or one less phone call have made the difference? Did I say too little or did I say too much? The emotions of the heart are unyielding and override my ability to think clearly.

When I have done all the "heart" stuff over and over, there is a clearing of the confusion surrounding my dilemma. A small voice in my head is finally heard above these heartfelt issues and it speaks to me.

"I am not a bad person. I did not cause this.  
I did the best I could. He/she didn't ask my permission. He/she made a terribly wrong decision. I have a right to my own peace of mind."

Finally, my head and my heart resolve the conflict. I'm together again. I realize I deserve to and I WILL survive.

Source: Obelisk Newsletter

# Support

## Friends for Survival

[www.friendsforsurvival.org](http://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:

**1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

## Alliance of Hope

Survivor services including a 24/7 on-line community forum  
[www.allianceofhope.org](http://www.allianceofhope.org)

## American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

Extensive lists of available meeting support [www.afsp.org/find-support](http://www.afsp.org/find-support)

## American Association of Suicidology (AAS)

[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

## Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

[www.save.org](http://www.save.org)

## Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

For service members, veterans, and their families: [www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org)

## The Compassionate Friends

For bereaved parents of a deceased child: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

## The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

The Dougy Center  
[www.dougy.org/grief-resources](http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources)

**SACRAMENTO COUNTY**

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*Comforting*  
Friends