

# Comforting Friends

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

2021

MARCH



## SPRING'S ORCHESTRA

by Lenore Hetrick

March is such a blustery month-  
And yet I think I hear,  
Beneath the clamor a little voice,  
Crying, "Oh, be of Cheer!"  
This medley of terrific sounds,  
This banging, far and near,  
Is just the orchestra of spring,  
Announcing she is here!

It is the overture that heralds  
A sweeter melody,  
You know how it is with a piece of music,  
A march or a symphony.  
The opening notes are very loud,  
Triumphant as can be,  
The orchestra blares forth with might,  
And shouts its mounting glee.

But in a moment there is heard  
A sweeter, softer tune,  
A melody that hints of birds,  
And of an April moon,  
A melody that whispers sweetly  
Flowers are coming soon,  
Apple blossoms, buds and daisies  
Mingle with this tune.

So when I hear the banging sounds  
With which March comes and goes,  
I only smile for now, you see,  
I know why this wind blows.  
He is the orchestra of spring  
That heralds the bud and rose.  
When he has finished his overture,  
Then March packs up and goes.

**March:** I enjoy all kinds of music, which was especially important when struggling with the pain of my grief after my son Steven died. I believe we always remember our loved ones. Perhaps we don't think of them every day, but our loss is not lost in time. I just finished reading *The Wilderness of Grief: Finding Your Way* by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. He writes with such wisdom, always recognizing the real world of grief. Dr. Wolfelt writes, "I can release the pain that touches my memories, but only if I remember them. I can release my grief, but only if I express it. Memories and grief must have a heart to hold them." He also writes: "The essence of finding meaning in the future is not to forget my past, as I have been told, but instead to embrace my past. For it is in the listening to the music of the past that I can sing in the present and dance into the future."

May all of you find  
hope in the midst of  
your pain.



Gratefully,

Marilyn Koenig  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## SUPPORT GROUPS

Until further notice, all support group meetings are virtual via Zoom.

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

### MEETINGS:

#### Second Monday

March 8 @ 3pm PST

#### Third Tuesday

March 16 @ 7pm PST

#### Fourth Wednesday

March 24 @ 7pm PST

#### Grieving Moms Group

March 4 @ 6:30pm PST

### PRIVATE CHAPTER MEETINGS:

#### Legacy Survivors Utah

Wednesday, March 10 @ 6pm MST

#### Modesto

Monday, March 15 @ 7pm PST

### WEBINARS:

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

# reflections about time and change

by Dennis Klass, Ph.D.  
Webster University, St. Louis, MO



I often wonder what people are thinking when they say, "You'll get over it." Sometimes it sounds to me as if they are talking about a case of mumps or my despair at income tax time.

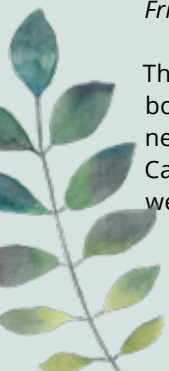
But what can they mean when they say it about grief? Maybe they mean that grief is just an interruption in life. Their theory seems to be that life is basically happy -- buying stuff, working, watching TV -- but that a time of death and grief is an unnatural and sad time in that happy life. I can't agree with that view.

Time can lessen the hurt; the empty place we have can seem smaller as other things and experiences fill our life; we can forget for periods and feel as if our loved one didn't die; we can learn to remember the good and hold on to that.

But we cannot "get over it," because to get over it would mean we were not changed by the experience. It would mean we did not grow by the experience. It would mean that the death made no difference in our life.

No, we don't get over it. We change and grow. Our life has a difference which is ours alone. Perhaps we can help each other make that difference, the kind of difference that increases the world's supply of compassion, love and healing.

Source: *Surviving Suicide*





# five minute meditation

Meditation may be an ancient tradition, but it's still practiced in cultures all over the world to create a sense of calm and inner harmony. Although the practice has ties to many different religious teachings, meditation is less about faith and more about altering consciousness, finding awareness, and achieving peace. Although there isn't a right or wrong way to meditate, it's important to find a practice that meets your needs and complements your personality. "Mindfulness" meditation originates from Buddhist teachings and is the most popular meditation technique in the West. This practice combines concentration with awareness. This type of meditation is good for people who don't have a teacher to guide them, as it can be easily practiced alone.

**For five minutes today, sit in a quiet space. Pay attention to your thoughts as they pass through your mind. Don't judge the thoughts or become involved with them. Simply observe and take note of any patterns. Focus on an object or your breath while you observe any bodily sensations, thoughts, or feelings.**

Source: <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/types-of-meditation>



Grief is like a leaky faucet. Just when you think it's fixed, it comes back again, more bothersome than ever.

Perhaps we should not expect an end to the dripping of the faucet or of our tears: there will always be more where they came from. Instead, we can accept the comfort of a rhythmic letting go, knowing each droplet of grief has the potential to cleanse, to soothe, indeed to nourish new life.

Allow your woundedness to send you into the world rather than withdraw from it. Allow the wisdom of your solemn experience to inform your heart and send you racing to the side of the suffering.

Source ~ Molly Fumia, Author. *Safe Passage: Words to Help the Grieving (Healing Meditations, Meditations for Grief, and Healing After Loss)*



# the brain, grief and music

by Litsa Williams, MA, LCSW-C, Program Director and Co-Founder  
[www.WhatsYourGrief.com](http://www.WhatsYourGrief.com)

Listening to music may not sound like much of a coping skill, but music is a wondrous thing when applied properly. We wrote a post, way back when, about creating music playlists, inspired by the book *Love is a Mixtape*. We have a volume one and volume two on songs about grief. But what we haven't really explained is just WHY music can be so helpful. So today we're tackling the connections between the brain, grief, and music.

We have a pleasure center in our brain where all sorts of feel-good neurotransmitters make us feel really good when we do certain things. Sometimes we resort to negative coping to stimulate that pleasure center – things like sugary and fattening foods, drinking alcohol, comfort shopping, and gambling (Las Vegas pretty much relies on our brain's pleasure center to stay in business).

But it turns out music is connected to the pleasure center of our brain too. This is why music can be such a great coping tool; it allows us to release feel-good neurotransmitters without resorting to wine and Ben and Jerry's ice cream.

In addition to music causing pleasure and improving mood, there is research that shows certain types of music can even help with memory and concentration, something that feels almost impossible while we're grieving. It can help us work more efficiently, make better decisions, boost energy and reduce stress. Don't believe me? Researchers at Stanford University, University of Miami, Mayo Clinic, and Harvard University all agree. When our mood is improved it has a cascade effect in our brains that improves many other areas and there is a slew of research that backs that up.

In one study, researchers found that after listening to happy music, people who were shown a neutral face would interpret it as happy (the reverse was true too – sad music resulted in people interpreting a neutral face as sad). You may wonder why people would want to listen to sad music if it makes us feel sad or see the world as a sad place. But it is clear from the hundreds of sad songs out there that people don't always listen to happy music. This study determined that when we listen to music we can actually perceive the emotions in a song, but then derive pleasure from appreciating the music itself. In this way, we can actually enjoy sad songs. Not to mention that I believe sad songs make us feel less alone. I have no research to back that up but, come on, it just makes sense.

Though it involves a lot more motivation and sweat than music, another way to boost mood is exercise. For those of us who prefer the couch, music can actually be a great motivator for exercise and help us work out longer and harder. An additional research study demonstrates that music can increase stamina and help people push through exhaustion when exercising. And this study showed that we actually exercise more efficiently when we exercise to the tempo of the music.

When it comes to music, my skills end at pressing play on my iPod. But for those who are more musically inclined, the value of music is not just in listening to music, but also in creating music. This small study\* demonstrated that songwriting as part of grief therapy improved grief processing scores in 12-18-year-olds. Playing music has its own benefits for the brain, including significant impact on the developing brain.

Though most things that trigger our pleasure center in the brain have a clear evolutionary purpose (we love sugary, fattening foods because they helped us survive, we love sex because it is important to procreate as a species), music is less obvious. There is still debate as to just why we evolved to have such a connection to music. Human beings are the only primates that can move to the beat of the music, and some speculate that evolutionarily music became pleasurable to bring humans together through a shared enjoyable experience. And though we are the one primate that can rock out to a beat, we are not the only animal that can.

When it comes to stress, anxiety, and relaxation there have been multiple studies showing that music can reduce people's subjective experiences of stress and anxiety, as well as reduce physical symptoms like high blood pressure, heart rate, and cortisol rates. One study showed a significant decrease in anxiety and hypertension among patients going into surgery who listened to music. Another study found a similar reduction in cortisol levels among surgical patients exposed to relaxing music.

So get going on some playlists – one to boost your mood, one to reduce stress, one to pump you up when you work out, and one for the days that you just want to listen to sad music and enjoy it.

*Used with permission. The full article with links is here:*  
<https://whatsyourgrief.com/brain-grief-and-music>

*\*Thomas, Dalton & Krout, Robert. (2005). Development of the Grief Process Scale through music therapy songwriting with bereaved adolescents. The Arts in Psychotherapy. 32. 131-143. 10.1016/j.aip.2005.02.002.*

# we recommend...

by Friends for Survival Members



Check out subscription-based streaming music services such as Pandora, Spotify, Amazon Music or Apple Music. It has never been easier to find a particular artist or genre of music to discover or fall in love with again.

On Pandora, my favorite stations are "Yoga Radio," "Meditation Radio" and "Instrumentals for Studying Radio."

Jimmy Buffet is always there for me with changes in latitude, changes in attitude.

Ludovico Einaudi: An Italian pianist and composer.

Peder B. Helland: An independent Norwegian composer making relaxing instrumental music in various genres.

Anonymous 4: An American female a cappella quartet.

Hildegard von Bingen: Her music is monophonic, that is, consisting of exactly one melodic line. Its style has been said to be characterized by soaring melodies that can push the boundaries of traditional Gregorian chant, and to stand outside the normal practices of monophonic monastic chant.

Coyote Oldmann or James Edmund Greeley, playing the native american flute. The music is so soothing to me.

Yo-Yo Ma and pianist Kathryn Stott's new album: Songs of Comfort and Hope.

Israel Kamakawiwo'ole or The Brothers Cazimero: Beautiful music of Hawaii.

Enya: Celtic, classical, church, and folk music.

Brian Eno: Some of his music is ethereal and ambient, like you are floating in the clouds.

# 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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