

Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2022

MARCH



EARTH TEACH ME TO REMEMBER

by Chief John Yellow Lark

Earth teach me stillness
as the grasses are stilled with light.

Earth teach me suffering
as old stones suffer with memory.

Earth teach me humility
as blossoms are humble with
beginning.

Earth Teach me caring
as the mother who secures her
young.

Earth teach me courage
as the tree which stands alone.

Earth teach me limitation
as the ant which crawls on the
ground.

Earth teach me freedom
as the eagle which soars in
the sky.

Earth teach me resignation
as the leaves which die in
the fall.

Earth teach me regeneration
as the seed which rises in the
spring.

Earth teach me to forget myself
as melted snow forgets its life.

Earth teach me to remember
kindness as dry fields weep
in the rain.

*Chief Yellow Lark was a Sioux Indian
Chief in the late 19th century. He
translated several Sioux prayers
into English.*

March: I have a garden at my home and I miss toiling over my plants during the winter months. March brings the gradual changes in our seasons, the arrival of spring and the opportunity for me to once again do my "garden therapy." Quietly working in my garden and planting new flower pots with seeds is one way that I like to remember my son Steven, and all other loved ones that are no longer here.

If you don't have room for a garden, consider smaller pots in a sunny window, or treat yourself to fresh cut flowers. Listen outside to all the nature around you; as new life begins to emerge, the days are getting a little longer and the warm sun greets us every morning with new possibilities.

May all of you find hope and comfort with the arrival of Spring.



Marilyn Koenig
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GROUP MEETINGS

Go to our website, click on **Upcoming > Meetings**. Find your virtual meeting date and time, click on **"Register."** On this same page, you can also check for updates regarding in-person meetings.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS:

Second Monday

March 14 @ 3pm PST / 6pm EST

Fourth Wednesday (holiday date change)

March 23 @ 7pm PST / 10pm EST

Grieving Moms Groups (2)

#1 March 3 @ 6:30pm PST / 9:30pm EST

#2 March 24 @ 3pm PST / 6pm EST

Grieving Spouse & Partner

March 10 @ 6pm PST / 9pm EST

IN-PERSON MEETINGS:

Due to health protocol, please call to confirm meetings. 916-392-0664 or 800-646-7322

Cameron Park, CA

Tuesday, March 8 @ 6:30pm

Carmichael, CA

Tuesday, March 15 @ 7pm

Jackson, CA

Tuesday, March 1 @ 3:30pm

Lincoln, CA

Thursday, March 10 @ 6pm

Modesto, CA

Monday, March 21 @ 7pm

Legacy Survivors, UT

Wednesday, March 9 @ 6pm MST

WEBINARS: Available to watch anytime: FriendsForSurvival.org > Upcoming > Webinars

memorials & rituals to help us heal

Author Unknown

When a loved one dies, memorials, rituals and traditions can help us mark a significant event, spend time remembering and find healing.



The process of preserving our memories is in itself a part of our grieving. Reviewing, recollecting, sorting, organizing, ensuring preservation - all these activities help us to relive and reexperience our time with our loved one. This process may take a long time, and you may find yourself adding to your memory journal or photo album for months, perhaps even years. Some ideas:

Keep a journal.

Plant a tree. Planting trees is a meaningful way to memorialize your loved one. You can plant a tree at home, near a special place, or elsewhere in your community. Some towns and cities have programs where you can plant a tree in memory of a person, and the town places a plaque beside it bearing the name and birth/death dates. You may choose to dedicate a bench in a park.

Do an act of kindness. In honor of your loved one's birthday every year, donate a selection of books to your library, pay for an ordered birthday cake at your grocery store, buy coffee for the person behind you in line.

Bring your loved one's interests and pleasures to others. If your loved one enjoyed sports, create a fund at a local high school to purchase much needed equipment, and dedicate the donation in honor of your loved one.

Light a candle. Set a place at the table or set up a memorial display area in your home and light a candle when you want to honor the memory of a loved one. Lighting a candle symbolizes the light that your loved one brought to you and the memory of the person who lives on in your heart.

Carry a remembrance item. Sometimes a small keepsake, like a handkerchief, a watch, a piece of jewelry, or a small heirloom can serve as a reminder of a lost loved one. Keepsakes also serve as a daily reminder that often brings comfort to those who mourn.

Read the rest of this article on our website under Support Resources, Helpful Handouts.

grief one day at a time - march 18

Not everyone is cut out to be a good friend in grief. You've probably learned this already. People you would have expected to support you fall out of touch, while others you never imagined would support you do.

One way to respond in the face of faltering friendships is to be proactive and honest. Even though we're the ones who are grieving, we may need to be the ones to phone our friends and keep in touch. When we do speak, let's be honest. Let's tell our friends how we're really and truly feeling and that we appreciate their support. When we find that certain friends can't handle our "grief talk," we can stick to lighter topics with them and lean more heavily on the friends who can support us in our grief.

Some friends will fall away permanently, others will step away for a time then return. That is life. We are all fluid beings who never stop becoming. Knowing this, we can respond with grace. No matter how others respond to my grief, I can offer them my Namaste: The divine in me honors the divine in you.

Source: Grief One Day at a Time - 365 meditations to help you heal after loss by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. See all of Dr. Wolfelt's books here: www.centerforloss.com/bookstore/



Five Minute Meditation

When we engage with everyday objects, we can choose to look deeper to appreciate the incredible world behind the object. Every product, service, or experience that makes up our lives - from the food we eat, to the products we purchase, to the streets we walk upon - exists because of the work, commitment, and love of hundreds, sometimes even thousands of people. This is the true internet, the network of human beings who either directly or indirectly have made life as we know it possible. Pick an object today that you've never considered closely and take a moment to reflect on all the energy that went into its existence. May the appreciation flow.

Source: Mindfulness Cards - Simple Practices for Everyday Life (www.chroniclebooks.com)

remembering Cole

by Joan Schwartz, Friends for Survival member

How I decided to erect a bench for Cole

Before my son Cole died, when Covid shut down my piano tuning business, I got panicky and tried to think of ways to earn a few bucks. I applied to a food delivery company, but had to wait for approval. I also applied for unemployment (which took nine weeks to get approved). In the meantime, I took my guitar to the boardwalk at Sunken Meadow State Park, put out a donation jar and sang.



I would get panicky before I went, but my otherwise grumpy seventeen-year-old son would say, "Mom, you should go. You make people happy. Plus, rent!" Singing on the boardwalk at the beginning of the pandemic was one of the most fulfilling things I've ever done. Kids would dance when I'd play *Wheels on the Bus*, joggers would give me a thumbs up, women would hold their hands on their heart and say, "Thank you," and Cole would insist on counting my loot when I got home.

It took four months after Cole took his life to be able to go back to the boardwalk to try to sing. One day, a woman on the next bench was crying and told me she didn't bring her wallet to give me money to put in my donation jar. I told her that it was okay. That I didn't need the money anymore, but was glad she enjoyed my singing.

I asked, "Who are you visiting on that (memorial) bench?" She said, "My son." I told her, "I lost my son too." She asked, "How old?" I said, "Seventeen." She said, "Eighteen. Can I ask how he died?" I made a gesture.

She said, "Mine too. Do you know whose bench you're singing at?" I shook my head and moved my backpack so I could see the plaque. It was the name of another eighteen-year-old boy from my town who, the woman told me, also took his life. I recognized this young man's name and realized it was that of a somewhat anonymous family who sent me a check from my son's high school alumni association for \$1,000 soon after Cole had died. I immediately sent a text to the family and thanked them. I walked with the other mother to my car and we hugged and exchanged numbers.

The next time I sang, an older man chatted me up then came back again and said, "Next time, sing at that dark bench over there." I put down my guitar and walked with him. The words to the song, "As Time Goes By" were printed on the plaque for Dorothy, his wife of fifty years. I told him I'd sing that song for Dorothy the next time I was there. As he waved and shuffled away, he turned his head and said, "The cost for that bench was \$3,000, but it was worth it." And I started to wonder...

Cole's voice in my head was grumbling, "Mom, why would you want a bench with my name on it?" I ordered it anyway (sorry Cole. If you were here...).



The bench dedication was on a rainy day this past January and it went really well. Over 60 people came, customers, friends of Cole and their parents and a couple from the hospital. People told me it was beautiful.

I imagined two teenage girls, friends of Cole, crying and laughing and placing a small weed flower between the slats on the bench, looking at the beach and the sky and the seagulls and thinking of my son, Cole Zachary Schwartz.

stuck points

by Eleanor Haley

In 1992, researchers Resick and Schnicke first described the term “stuck points” in their work exploring PTSD. Stuck points refer to thoughts that repeatedly bubble up in a person’s inner (and outer) dialogue that make it difficult for a person to process, cope with, or reconcile their experiences.

To me, stuck points are like mean old trolls living under a bridge. Whenever a person tries to gain some momentum in working through their experiences, the troll comes up and says “Nope, you can’t pass. Now go back and think about what’s happened.”

Stuck points aren’t emotions, rather they’re thoughts that result in distressing emotion. For example, a person might have the thought, “I should have done more to save my loved one,” and as a result, they feel guilt.

Many grieving people struggle with memories and/or thoughts that have distressing emotional consequences, but when everything is so intertwined it’s common to interpret distressing thoughts and emotions as one and the same. This can complicate matters because (1) it can create a downward spiral of negative thoughts and emotions and (2) some people get so distracted by their emotions that they fail to address the underlying thought.

Resick and Schnicke specifically assert that stuck points may negatively impact sense of safety, trust, power, esteem, and intimacy. Especially, when these beliefs are fixed and rigid (i.e. inflexible).

How do I cope with stuck points?

Working through individual stuck points takes patience, perseverance, the courage to examine one’s thoughts and emotions, and the cognitive flexibility to change them. Stuck points are unique to the individual and their experiences, so we encourage you to spend some time reflecting on any stuck points possibly impacting you in your grief and coping.

Also, try and notice the relationship between your thoughts and emotions. A simple way to do this is to find a piece of paper and divide it down the middle. On the top of the left-hand side write “When I have the thought that...” and on the top of the right-hand side write “I feel...”. Then reflect back on the last week or so and try to identify some of the thoughts you’ve been having and their emotional consequences. If it’s easier for you, you can also start by identifying the feelings you’ve been having and then trace them back to the thoughts or situations that preceded them.

At the very least, you’re likely to identify some of the thoughts and emotions that have been most challenging to you in your grief. Perhaps these are areas where you will want to focus your coping – whether it’s through reading articles like this one, journaling, support groups, or one-on-one counseling.

Read more of this article here: <https://whatsyourgrief.com/what-are-stuck-points-in-grief>

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:

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

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 Nat’l Center for Grieving Children & Families

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

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

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