

Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2021

APRIL



I CAN THINK BEYOND MY PRESENT REALITY

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

At times during my grief journey, my present reality may be really, really tough. All kinds of difficult circumstances can converge, and I might find myself in despair.

If this happens, I can reach out for lifelines, including the support of others, spiritual mentorship, professional counseling, and more. But I can also work to recognize that my present reality is temporary.

Visualizing the future I desire is one tool. Remembering that I've been in difficult circumstances before but have

gotten through them is another. Fostering hope by grabbing hold of any people and activities that help me know there is good to come is another.

Reflection: I live in the present. If the present is really hard, I live in this one moment, second by second.

Source: *365 Days of Understanding Your Grief - Daily Readings for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart.*

<https://www.centerforloss.com/bookstore/365-days-of-uyg/>

April: The dog is running in the rain, but is prepared with an umbrella in case the storm worsens. April has arrived, flowers are blooming and the air is fresh.

Nature can beckon us to partake in the solitude and stillness, the beauty of living plants and trees, and the soothing sound of flowing water. Time spent in nature can be physically healing and give our brains a much-needed retreat.

I love this short poem by James W. Whilt, "*When sun begins to melt the snow And the birds commence to sing, And the days are getting longer, Then we know 'tis surely spring.*"

John Muir wrote, "*Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.*" I encourage you to take a stroll in nature to create some healing moments...even if you may need an umbrella (or a snow shovel!)



Gratefully,

Marilyn Koenig
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Support

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

April 12 @ 3pm PST

Third Tuesday

April 20 @ 7pm PST

Fourth Wednesday

April 28 @ 7pm PST

Grieving Moms Group

April 1 @ 6:30pm PST

PRIVATE CHAPTER MEETINGS:

Legacy Survivors Utah

Wednesday, April 14 @ 6pm MST

Modesto

Monday, April 19 @ 7pm PST

WEBINARS:

More information and register at: 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."

coping with trauma and loss

by Friends for Survival Members

Corrina Draper, Friends for Survival member, shares...

"Thank you so much for your monthly newsletters. It helps a lot to know I'm not alone, even though I don't wish this on anyone. It's been a little over two years since my boyfriend took his own life in front of me. Sometimes it seems like forever ago, but other times it feels like it just happened.

"It really helped me to stay busy. Even though it was a crazy year, I had places to work and keep my mind busy. And I feel blessed for that. I've been taking care of my friend's mom, which gave me a lot of joy and put things in perspective for me. She's not well and just knowing that I have given her some joy in her life makes me feel good.

"I still think about my boyfriend all the time, but it's getting easier. It's the hardest thing I have ever had to go through. The guilt almost killed me. But I'm still standing and proud of myself that I didn't give up."

Sue Grau, Friends for Survival member, shares...

"In response to coping with 2020, my earliest awareness was to surrender to the reality of C19. This 'skill' of strategic surrender was *not* giving in. I learned from early grief recovery to not waste precious life energy resisting what could not be changed. Surrender to the moment allowed me to find creative ways of coping and adjusting. I was ordering masks in February when some were calling it a hoax.

"I am fortunate to have a creative outlet in my photography, which is a solo endeavor. I miss spontaneity in being with others, but have found ways to plan car meetings, park meetings, etc.

"I miss being with my family. I allow myself to cry every day and find something to laugh about."

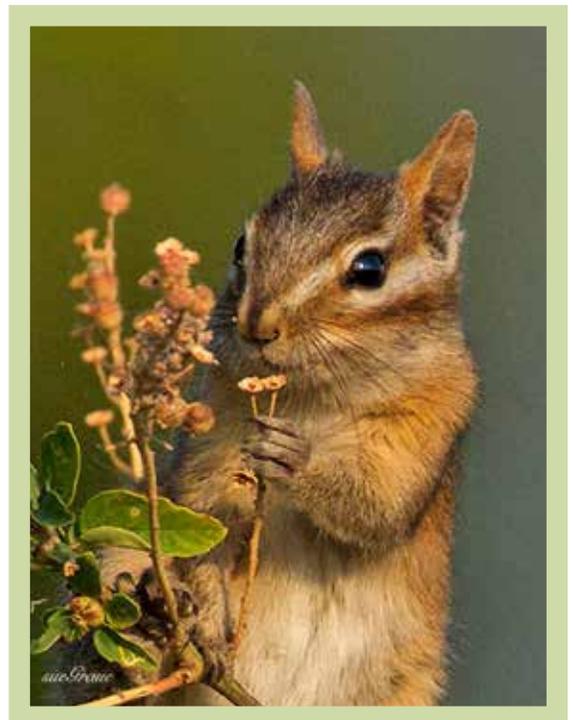


Photo courtesy of Sue Grau

the right to cry

by Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis

I remember visiting a young woman whose husband had died about a year after their son's bar-mitzvah. She was surrounded by her family and friends, all of whom were desperately trying to make her feel better.

I took her into the kitchen and said, "This must be a terrible thing for you." She cried with great relief and said, "These people who are my family and friends are telling me... 'It could have been worse - at least he saw the bar-mitzvah.' Each time they try to comfort me like that, it is like salt in an open wound. At least you are allowing me to grieve."

She wanted confirmation of her tragedy, the right to cry.

Source: *The Compassion Friends of Los Angeles*



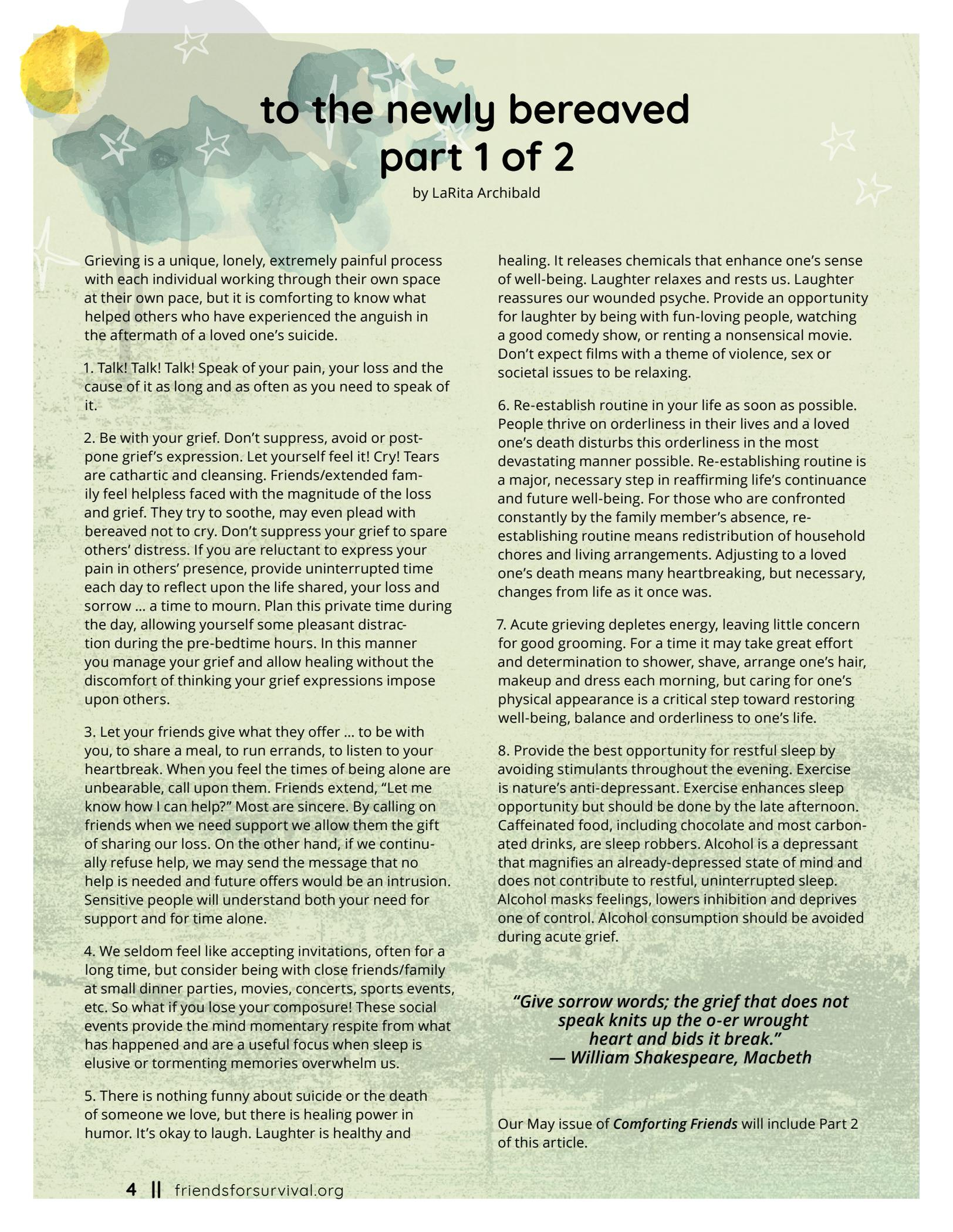
Self-Care Practice

Allowing Grace. The practice that I've been heavily relying on is giving myself some grace. Which means, cutting myself slack when needed, forgiving myself, being gentle with myself, and really listening to my own needs and desires. We tend to hold ourselves to such high standards and add unnecessary pressure to our already challenging existence. In allowing grace, I release myself from my own high expectations, I remind myself that I do not need to be perfect to be worthy, and I am compassionate with myself in my mistakes and missteps. Grace for me looks like breaking free from rigidity and allowing flow, and trusting that in any given moment, I am doing the best that I can. What does this look like for you?

Source: Michelle Maros, Author.

<https://peacefulmindpeacefullife.org/two-self-care-practices-to-try-right-now/>





to the newly bereaved part 1 of 2

by LaRita Archibald

Grieving is a unique, lonely, extremely painful process with each individual working through their own space at their own pace, but it is comforting to know what helped others who have experienced the anguish in the aftermath of a loved one's suicide.

1. Talk! Talk! Talk! Speak of your pain, your loss and the cause of it as long and as often as you need to speak of it.

2. Be with your grief. Don't suppress, avoid or postpone grief's expression. Let yourself feel it! Cry! Tears are cathartic and cleansing. Friends/extended family feel helpless faced with the magnitude of the loss and grief. They try to soothe, may even plead with bereaved not to cry. Don't suppress your grief to spare others' distress. If you are reluctant to express your pain in others' presence, provide uninterrupted time each day to reflect upon the life shared, your loss and sorrow ... a time to mourn. Plan this private time during the day, allowing yourself some pleasant distraction during the pre-bedtime hours. In this manner you manage your grief and allow healing without the discomfort of thinking your grief expressions impose upon others.

3. Let your friends give what they offer ... to be with you, to share a meal, to run errands, to listen to your heartbreak. When you feel the times of being alone are unbearable, call upon them. Friends extend, "Let me know how I can help?" Most are sincere. By calling on friends when we need support we allow them the gift of sharing our loss. On the other hand, if we continually refuse help, we may send the message that no help is needed and future offers would be an intrusion. Sensitive people will understand both your need for support and for time alone.

4. We seldom feel like accepting invitations, often for a long time, but consider being with close friends/family at small dinner parties, movies, concerts, sports events, etc. So what if you lose your composure! These social events provide the mind momentary respite from what has happened and are a useful focus when sleep is elusive or tormenting memories overwhelm us.

5. There is nothing funny about suicide or the death of someone we love, but there is healing power in humor. It's okay to laugh. Laughter is healthy and

healing. It releases chemicals that enhance one's sense of well-being. Laughter relaxes and rests us. Laughter reassures our wounded psyche. Provide an opportunity for laughter by being with fun-loving people, watching a good comedy show, or renting a nonsensical movie. Don't expect films with a theme of violence, sex or societal issues to be relaxing.

6. Re-establish routine in your life as soon as possible. People thrive on orderliness in their lives and a loved one's death disturbs this orderliness in the most devastating manner possible. Re-establishing routine is a major, necessary step in reaffirming life's continuance and future well-being. For those who are confronted constantly by the family member's absence, re-establishing routine means redistribution of household chores and living arrangements. Adjusting to a loved one's death means many heartbreaking, but necessary, changes from life as it once was.

7. Acute grieving depletes energy, leaving little concern for good grooming. For a time it may take great effort and determination to shower, shave, arrange one's hair, makeup and dress each morning, but caring for one's physical appearance is a critical step toward restoring well-being, balance and orderliness to one's life.

8. Provide the best opportunity for restful sleep by avoiding stimulants throughout the evening. Exercise is nature's anti-depressant. Exercise enhances sleep opportunity but should be done by the late afternoon. Caffeinated food, including chocolate and most carbonated drinks, are sleep robbers. Alcohol is a depressant that magnifies an already-depressed state of mind and does not contribute to restful, uninterrupted sleep. Alcohol masks feelings, lowers inhibition and deprives one of control. Alcohol consumption should be avoided during acute grief.

***"Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak knits up the o-er wrought heart and bids it break."
— William Shakespeare, Macbeth***

Our May issue of *Comforting Friends* will include Part 2 of this article.

big day of giving

By: Marilyn Koenig

On May 6, please help us reach our fundraising goal of \$20,000 this year!



This will be our third year participating and we are excited to be a part of our region's big day. The Sacramento Region Community Foundation's Big Day of Giving is an annual 24-hr giving challenge to help local non-profits raise funds to make a difference in the Sacramento region. It's the culmination of an entire year's worth of community-building and collaboration, made possible by donors like you and community partners.

In 2020, with the support of the SRCF's capacity-building programming, over 600 organizations generated a record \$12 million in a single day. This community-wide effort fortified collaborations with nonprofit colleagues, deepened engagements with donors, and strengthened impact in our community. For the past few years, the giving day has united our community, raising \$52 million for local nonprofits from over 50,000 donors from all over the region, the state, the country, and the world.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

DONATE: On Thursday, **May 6**, you can donate to **Friends for Survival** by visiting www.bigdayofgiving.org and making a gift with a credit or debit card. Donations as little as \$15 make a big difference, and your gifts can help us win some of the \$100,000 in prizes available.

Starting Monday, **April 22**, you can schedule your gift in advance of Big Day of Giving, just so you don't forget!

SHARE: Let your networks know that you support our cause by sharing our posts on your social media accounts, or by creating and sharing a fundraising campaign. A good word from a donor like you is the most meaningful way for us to spread our mission...thank you in advance for your crucial support.

Support

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

American Association of Suicidology (AAS)

www.suicidology.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



This program is funded in part by the Division of Behavioral Health Services through the voter approved Proposition 63, Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).



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