

Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2020

MAY



A LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE

by Rabbis Sylvan Kamens & Jack Riemer

In the rising of the sun and in its going down, we remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember them.

In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring, we remember them.

In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer, we remember them.

In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn, we remember them.

In the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them.

So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them.

When we have joys we yearn to share, we remember them.

So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

Source: *Gates of Prayer, Central Conference of American Rabbis*

May: As I write this column, it is still March and already our lives are dramatically different. Our April and (upcoming) May meetings went virtual for the first time, with topics for discussion. I hope you will join us online. See details on page 2.

In the next two months we want to share insights on possible gender differences in how we grieve. We will focus on some common aspects of male grief in June. In honor of Mother's Day in May we will highlight grieving women, who are more likely to share their feelings with others. Women are also more inclined to seek support and generally tend to be more emotional than men. Ultimately, grief is a very personal and individual experience with everyone navigating through this journey in his or her own way.

Please attend our meetings online and we pray that you are safe and healthy.



Gratefully,
Marilyn Koenig
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Support

NO. CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUPS

All in-person support group meetings for the month of May are cancelled. Join us for a virtual meeting instead.

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

Doors open 15 minutes prior to the start time.

Carmichael (Sacto)

Tuesday, 5/19 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Cameron Park

Tuesday, 5/12 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Chico

Monday, 5/11 @ 4:30pm – 6pm

Elk Grove

Wednesday, 5/13 @ 7pm - 8:30 pm

Modesto

Monday, 5/18 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Rohnert Park

Wednesday, 5/20 @ 7pm-8:30pm

Roseville/Rocklin

Thursday, 5/21 @ 7pm – 8:30 pm

Yuba City

Tuesday, 5/26 @ 6:30pm – 8pm

Webinars:

5/12 this month and the second Tuesday of every month. More info and register at: [friendsforsurvival.org/meetings](https://www.friendsforsurvival.org/meetings)

In our meetings and webinars, we share our struggles with grief after a suicide death. We share our frustrations and questions. We take this journey together as we help each other cope. Our meetings are peer support, not therapy sessions.

Our handout for each month will be posted on our website under Support Resources, Meetings.

you can't direct the wind

by Marge Frankenberg

I saw this quote on a poster in our church...

"We can't direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails."



It occurred to me that "grief work" is just that -- adjusting your sails. When a child dies, our lives are changed forever -- the wind changes direction. When the direction of our life is so tragically changed, we have two choices. We can deal with our grief and adjust our sails, or we can deny our grief and drift helplessly and hopelessly out to sea.

In the beginning stages of grief, we merely "reef our sails" and go with the tide. That is not a bad idea. At that time, we are in a state of shock and not capable of sound decisions. We need quite a bit of time to ride out the storm. But when the initial storm of intense pain begins to subside, we need to adjust our sails for our own survival.

You, and only you, can make the decisions regarding the rest of your life. You may find fulfilment in reaching out to help others or becoming more active in your church or temple. Maybe you will want to take as big a step as getting a job or returning to school. Perhaps you will make only subtle changes in your priorities. But if you have made the decision to have a direction instead of drifting, get started now!

You may have several false starts before you are really on course again. That's okay. Don't give up! The healing is in the trying.

Eventually, you will once again have "smooth sailing."

Source: TCF, Arlington Heights, IL

rocks, pebbles, sand

by Jim Johnston

A philosophy professor stood before his class. When class began, he picked up a large empty jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks right to the top, rocks about two inches in diameter. He then asked his students if the jar was full? They agreed that it was. So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He asked his students again if the jar was full? They agreed that yes, it was. The professor then picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. "Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognize that this is your life. The rocks are the important things - your family, your partner, your health, your children. Anything that is so important to you that if it were lost, you would be nearly destroyed."

The pebbles are the other things in life that matter, but on a smaller scale. Your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else -- the small stuff. If you put sand or pebbles into the jar first, there is no room for the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your energy and time on the small stuff, material things, you will never have room for the things that are truly most important. Pay attention to the things that are critical in your life. Take care of the rocks first. Set your priorities. The rest is just pebbles and sand.



This Moment

by Ida Scott Taylor

**ONE DAY AT A TIME --THIS IS ENOUGH.
DO NOT LOOK BACK AND GRIEVE OVER THE PAST FOR IT IS GONE.
AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED ABOUT THE FUTURE, FOR IT HAS YET TO COME.
LIVE IN THE PRESENT, AND MAKE IT SO BEAUTIFUL IT WILL BE WORTH REMEMBERING.
HAPPINESS IS A JOURNEY, JUST AS LIFE IS.**

ENJOY THE RIDE.



Full Circle

by Brandy Lidbeck

My son is nine years old and still so young and innocent. He struggles to spread the peanut butter on his bread, doesn't really know how to clean up a spill, and manages to "brush" his teeth in less than seven seconds. He's not prepared for much more than the 4th grade.

It is surreal to look at him and think back to myself as a 4th grader, the last year I had with my mom. She took her own life just two weeks after my 10th birthday and on the morning of her funeral, I told my aunt I didn't know how to curl or braid my own hair because my mom had styled it for me every single day. But here I was, all dressed up, and unable to work the curling iron on my own.

My mom's funeral was the first one I ever attended and still, to this day, each time I hear Bette Midler's "Wind Beneath my Wings," I am immediately brought back to that crowded church sanctuary. I wore my favorite purple and black dress that day and then never again.

The year was 1991 and suicide was a topic we didn't understand or discuss. There were no support groups for survivors and no internet to find resources. Instead, there were ruminating thoughts in the mind of a little girl traumatized by finding her mom's lifeless body. We moved houses immediately and I started at a new school. Nobody knew about my mom's suicide and, too ashamed to mention it, I never told anyone.

Many survivors disclose feeling an overwhelming sense of guilt for somehow not preventing their loved one's death. They blame themselves for not seeing the signs, not picking up the phone that day when their loved one called, and for not better protecting the one they loved. I, on the other hand, never once felt a bit of guilt. Instead, I carried a lot of shame.

I internalized my mom's suicide as a personal act against me. The rest of my family was out of town that day and I would be the only one home to find her lifeless body. She knew this. In fact, she coaxed me out of the house that afternoon and told me I could return from playing at 3:30 pm. She was intentional enough to get me out of the house and thorough enough to know she would already be dead upon my return. Her meticulous planning felt like I was specifically targeted, abandoned, and betrayed.

Was I not valuable enough to protect from such a traumatic scene? Did she not love me? How could her note goodbye be so brief? How was she okay with knowing I would find her? These questions ran wild in my mind for decades. As an adult, I can answer some of them with

logic and empathy. A ten-year-old girl is not afforded such luxury. These questions could only fester internally. When left unspoken, festering turns into resentment and resentment grows into hate. Hate towards the one who caused the pain. Hate towards the weak one who feels hurt. I was mad for allowing myself to be so impacted. If she didn't care, then why should I?

Those defenses worked...but only for so long. At some point, in my 30's, I was forced to look at her suicide for what it really was. A woman, "Hopeless and in pain. Too scared and anxious to go on living, too ashamed to ask for help." Those were her written words goodbye, not my interpretation. It was not a personal attack on me as I had believed for decades; she was a broken and wounded woman, desperate for relief. When I allowed myself to look at the pain she was in, it reduced the boiling anger within.

As life often works, I find myself, today, a licensed therapist who works specifically with suicide-loss survivors. I meet with family members immediately after a suicide loss, facilitate support groups, offer individual therapy, and host events. I am afforded the unique opportunity of walking new survivors through their darkest days. In my meetings with them, I get to hear their most sincere and raw feelings of guilt, blame, and shame in addition to the debilitating grief they are experiencing. A gift to every surviving soul is to learn that you are not alone in your thoughts and regrets. Being able to normalize their feelings and reactions is to allow them to feel known and validated. It is healing for them, albeit a long and slow process.

It is also healing for me. It has been 28 years since my mom passed and to provide for new survivors what I never had is a gift. A gift to them and to myself. To them, I represent hope. Hope that they will make it through this incredible pain and loss. Hope that they, too, will smile and laugh again someday. These individuals give to me as well. They remind me how difficult those early days were and I get to see how much healing and growth I have had.

There's a profound healing that occurs when people can support one another in similar pain. Brene Brown writes, "The two most powerful words when we're in struggle: Me too." I couldn't agree more.

Brandy Lidbeck is the author of "The Gift of Second - Healing from the Impact of Suicide." Watch our webinar with Brandy on our website: friendsforsurvival.org/meetings.

Beatitudes For Those That Comfort

by Jackie Deems



Blessed are those who do not use tears to measure the true feelings of the bereaved.

Blessed are those who do not expect the bereaved to put in the past someone who is still fresh in their hearts.

Blessed are those who do not have a quick "comforting" answer, preach a sermon, or continually quote scripture after scripture verse to the bereaved in an effort to make them "better."

Blessed are those who do not make judgments on the bereaved's closeness to God by their reaction to the loss of their loved one.

Blessed are those who listen with their hearts, not with their minds.

Blessed are those who allow the bereaved enough time to heal.

Blessed are those who put their uncomfortableness aside to walk with the bereaved.

Blessed are those who do not give unwanted advice.

Blessed are those who understand the worth of each person as a unique individual and do not suggest they can be replaced or forgotten.

Blessed are those who continue to call, visit, and reach out when the crowd has dwindled and the wounded are left standing alone.

Blessed are those who realize the fragility of bereavement and offer the bereaved a loving shoulder to cry on and a compassionate heart.

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

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

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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During the last year's Big Day of Giving campaign, your generous donations gave us the ability to develop new resources for survivors. Help us reach our goal this year - www.bigdayofgiving.org/friendsforsurvival



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Friends