

Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2022

MAY



SCARS

by Alla Renee Bozarth, Ph.D.

Grieving is an art
like surgery or verse,
essentially the art of healing
loss or losses unaccounted for.

Losses cut the soul
in twos and threes
a wide green gash
like the wound of a tree
cut down suddenly.

So much more time
than expected
so slowly heals
the severed pieces
of the self shock-shattered
by guilt and rage
and the simple loneliness
of something missing,
the hug.

The casual telephone talk,
the good occasional fight
lost forever to the harsh
nonphysical world of death.

Grief lived faithfully heals itself
in time not fully.
Where once an open wound
burned unbearably
now a thin transparent scar.

May: We recently received feedback from one of our meetings: *"Everyone is in different stages of grief, but no matter where you are, you can give and receive comfort, information, ideas, etc."*

This statement is so true. Being open to giving and receiving comfort will help us mend our broken hearts. Grief means something different to each one of us at different stages and times. Whether you lost your person yesterday or many years ago, the grieving process is something that we learn to live with, learn to cope with.

Please give comfort and share with our readers some things you have found helpful: poetry, podcasts or self-care practices, websites, books, or words of wisdom. You can fill out our survey on the home page of our website.

Wishing you
comfort this
month of May.



Gratefully,

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

May 9 @ 3pm PST / 6pm EST

Third Wednesday

May 18 @ 4pm PST / 7pm EST

Fourth Wednesday

May 25 @ 7pm PST / 10pm EST

Grieving Moms Groups (2)

#1 May 5 @ 6:30pm PST / 9:30pm EST

#2 May 26 @ 3pm PST / 6pm EST

Grieving Spouse & Partner

May 12 @ 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, May 10 @ 6:30pm

Faith Episcopal Church

2200 Country Club Dr., Cameron Park CA

Carmichael, CA

Tuesday, May 17 @ 7pm

Carmichael Presbyterian Church

5645 Marconi Ave., Sacramento, CA

Jackson, CA

Tuesday, May 3 @ 3:30pm

Sierra Wind Wellness & Recovery Center

10354 Argonaut Lane, Jackson CA

Lincoln, CA

Thursday, May 12 @ 6pm

Lincoln Public Library

485 Twelve Bridges Drive, Lincoln, CA

Modesto, CA

Monday, May 16 @ 7pm

The Bridge Covenant Church (Riverbank)

2201 Morrill Road, Riverbank CA

Legacy Survivors, UT

Wednesday, May 11 @ 6pm MST

Location TBD

road of life



How do we know where the road of life will lead? How can we be sure what's down the unpredictable path of existence, beyond the veils of light and darkness? How can we see around the corner of uncertainty? We can't.

Do we continue to venture into the unknown when the known has hurt us terribly? Do we keep going forward when our past is paved with pain? We must.

We can't stop in our tracks and hurt forever. We must allow the detours, wrong turns and back roads of our past to serve as guideposts into the future...and we do have a future. We can't stop being mobile. We can't stand still. To stop is to give up on the promise of life; the love, the laughter that might also be down the road. Can we throw up our hands, rather than reach out for help? We can't.

We can't because others have shown us that we can feel differently than we do today. We can heal. The tears can dry and the comfort of caring can once again replace the emptiness inside. The smiles can become real, the love sincere. We can once again travel with confidence and reassurance, if we discard the baggage of bitterness, self-pity and self-destruction, if we travel on with only love for ourselves and others, and not dwell on the pain in our past or worry about what adversity might lay ahead.

The road of life may be very rough at times but if we don't travel it at all, we chance missing some breathtaking scenery, some moving moments...people and places, sentiments and times to be remembered. Sometimes beyond the roughest road, or the most perplexing crossroad, lays the smooth surface of understanding. We must not stop or turn back when there is a breakdown, a misfortune, or no clear route. Sometimes we must travel blindly until our direction becomes clear to us and others.

There are many weary travelers on the road of life. Many temporarily lost in the grief of passing. The road to recovery is never easy.

But it can lead to insight, understanding and love.

Source: "From A Healing Heart" by Susan White-Bowden, author of "Everything to Live For."

moving from whys to whats

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

What else has shaped your unique grief journey? There are probably other factors, large and small, that are influencing your grief right now. What are they?

What is even more fundamental for you to be attuned to is what your thoughts and feelings are. What are your feelings today?

What have you been thinking about for the last day or two?

A big part of healing in grief is learning to listen and attend to your inner voice and to let those thoughts and feelings play as you experience them.



Self Care Tip For Today...

Relaxation: manicure, pedicure, massage, hot bath, take a nap, meditate, sit outside and enjoy nature, take a day trip.

Read: novels, daily inspirations, comic strips, affirming statements of your choice that are posted around your house.

Movement: walk, run, ride a bike, skate. Do range-of-motion exercises like jumping jacks, dance in place, do the twist.

Reflect: reflect on your positive qualities: "I am..." Practice positive affirmations. "I am resilient. I am hopeful. I am loved."

Visit: a local park, a beautiful garden, river, lake or ocean; an art gallery or museum.





journey through the unknown

by Marilyn Koenig, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Friends for Survival

In the early part of 1977, I was a busy mother with seven active children, ranging in age from 2 to 19. It seemed that I was always on the run, organizing carpools, attending football games, score-keeping for Little League, baking cupcakes for the hot lunch program at school, Girl Scout troop leader, Cub Scout den mother and more. Overall, it was a normal life, the life I had always wanted. It was a life filled with God, family, and friends. I was a housewife and mother, fulfilling my life's goal. I felt truly blessed.

On April 3, our oldest son, Steven, age 18, did not come home from his part-time job at a local ice cream parlor. I waited and waited, wondering why the child I never worried about did not come home. Of my seven kids, Steven was the most serious child, always getting excellent grades, attending college classes during his senior year of high school, always dependable and always doing more than what was asked of him. He considered smoking and drinking foolishness. Steven was going to be a criminologist and had already registered for the fall semester at college. He had a car he had paid for by himself. He was probably considered a bit of a nerd because he did not play competitive sports, but his classmates did enjoy his wit. He did not have close buddies, but my husband said that not everybody could be as outgoing as I was, so I put my concerns aside and continued with the busyness of life with my large family.

I was still up when my 17 year old son Miles came home at midnight from his part-time job. We talked about my concern that Steven had not yet come home. Miles went into the bedroom he shared with his brother and immediately came out with a note that Steven had placed on the center of his desk. In the note, Steven wrote that he planned to end his life and that it was not anyone's fault. He just did not think he had a future.

We immediately called the police and frantically started searching for him, but without success. About 3:00 in the morning, the hospital called saying that Steven had been admitted to the intensive care unit. "Please come immediately."

Upon our arrival, we were met by the police, the hospital chaplain, and other medical staff. We were told that Steven had shot himself; he was still alive, but there was nothing that they could do. In a state of shock, we were taken to his bedside. We talked to him, called his name, but he did not respond. We held his hands in ours and prayed for him and we told

him good-bye. Our priest, other family members and friends arrived to comfort and pray with us. By 10:30 a.m., Steven passed away.

The next hours, days, weeks and months were a nightmare. People remarked that I "was doing so well," but underneath I was in constant torment. All I could do was to think "my child killed himself" and sob. I would cry whenever I was alone, but if people were around, I would manage to dry my tears and muster a smile. When I did cry, it seemed that God always provided a shoulder to lean on. I had six children to nurture and care for; these kids needed me to put one foot in front of the other and be strong for them.

Some of my friends expressed concern about their own children who seemed withdrawn. Suicide...that act that seemed so foreign to us, was now a reality. It did not just happen to others, to people we did not know. Over and over, I asked God WHY He had not jammed the gun? WHY could we not have known Steven's plan and been able to get him some help? Mostly, I just prayed, "HELP!"

Sometime in 1982, I met other grieving parents at a Compassionate Friends support group meeting. Chris Moon, whose son had also died by suicide, was active in this support group. We started talking about having a separate meeting just for families who were coping with a suicide death. We struck up a friendship and together, we co-founded *Friends for Survival*.

On February 3, 1983, eight people attended our first meeting and shared their grieving hearts. Since then, I have talked with thousands of families and others who have been devastated by a suicide death. These loved ones are searching for other people who can understand the intensity of their loss.

The death of my son Steven permanently changed the direction of my life. My own experience and the shared experience of so many others have given me a compassion I never could have realized. My skills in organizing a large family have been translated into organizing a national grief support program. Every person who contacts Friends for Survival brings enrichment to my life and to the lives of our staff. Grieving people everywhere have found support, strength, and hope through our organization. In the early days of *Friends for Survival*, I was continually asked: "Does it ever get better?" "Will the sun ever shine again?" "Will I ever be able to stop crying?" The simple answer is yes, with time and patience. Come join us, there is comfort and support here; you are among friends.

mothers & fathers day

Mother's and Father's Day may take on new meaning after the death of a parent or your child. Anticipating the changes and considering ways to make meaning can be helpful as the days approach. Whether it was your mother, father or child who died, both days will be transformed.



Losing a Parent:

- It can be comforting to write out a Mother's or Father's Day card or poem, and then keep it in a special place.
- Wearing something of theirs, eating the foods they relished, putting their favorite flowers in a vase, or going somewhere they enjoyed can help you feel closer to your parent.
- Your mom is still your mom; your dad is still your dad. Honor them in any way that feels right to you.

Losing a Child:

- Pamper yourself - this is a special day in your life. You are a parent forever and your child is your child forever.
- Include your child in the day - through prayer, lighting a candle, telling stories about them, looking through pictures, planting flowers or a garden, doing a good deed, writing about them, making their favorite recipe.
- Write a poem or article in memory of your child, sharing memories or whatever has helped you.
- Write a letter to your child, telling what's in your heart (perhaps some unfinished business or some new blessing that has enriched your life).

A few additional suggestions: Be gentle with yourself. Listening to music can help to heal your heart. Be with those who surround you with love, not demands or advice. Start new rituals to make new memories. Plan ahead: do things that make you feel good or give you a moment's peace. Share your thoughts with family members; decide together what the day should include. (If you are alone, find a good friend.) Set aside some special time to grieve, unloading all the frustration and sadness that can envelop you on such a day giving you time to meditate alone. Allow the tears to flow - crying is healing and allows a release for your feelings. **Wherever you are in grief, may you know that we are journeying with you along this difficult path.**

Sources: www.OurHouse-Grief.org and [The Compassionate Friends](http://TheCompassionateFriends.org). Download the full handout here: <https://friendsforsurvival.org/helpful-handouts>

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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