

Comforting Friends

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

2020

JUNE



MISSING YOU

by Tom Murphy, In memory of my son, Brennan Murphy

I sometimes talk to your pictures, when no one else is around. They listen patiently to my ramblings. They smile and never make a sound.

There's one picture in particular. Your eyes right in my line of sight. The smile on your face reflects the joy, on one of the happiest days of your life.

That picture has been my whipping post. Many heavy conversations in the past six years. It's witnessed the gamut of my emotions. It's seen me laugh, it's seen countless tears.

There have even been some times when that picture almost seemed to smirk, after I sincerely apologized for all the times I was a jerk.

Of all the pictures that we have of you, it would be impossible to pick just one. There's just something about your smile. I didn't see it until you were gone.

So many things you never got to do. Your time ran out before your dreams came true. I'll look into your eyes and talk to that picture. I'll see you again someday. I miss you.

Source: TCF-Greater Cincinnati, OH

June: Writing this at April's end, I'm reflecting on the correlation between the virus and suicide deaths. There is a lack of knowledge about the virus. People look for answers and the information is complicated. The basic response: testing, good health habits, prevent exposure and hope for a better tomorrow.

Researchers study suicide and it is complicated. We stress suicide awareness and the need for physical and mental health care. It can be difficult to find hope for a better tomorrow when numbers are growing; about 4 out of 5 suicide deaths are males.

Our June meetings will explore how men grieve.

Clearly we all grieve differently, but there are some commonalities. We remain privileged to help people in their darkest moments to move through the darkness towards a better tomorrow.



Gratefully,
Marilyn Koenig
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NO. CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUPS

All in-person support group meetings for the month of June 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, 6/16 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Cameron Park

Tuesday, 6/9 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Chico

Monday, 6/8 @ 4:30pm – 6pm

Elk Grove

Wednesday, 6/10 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

Modesto

Monday, 6/15 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Rohnert Park

Tuesday, 6/16 @ 7pm -8:30pm

Roseville/Rocklin

Thursday, 6/18 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Yuba City

Tuesday, 6/23 @ 6:30pm – 8pm

Webinars:

Join us June 2 @ 7pm. More information 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.

managing grief during a pandemic

by Doreen Marshall, Ph.D.

Many of us are grieving right now. We are grieving people we have lost, in many instances not having had the opportunity to say goodbye or to be with them in their final moments. We are grieving not being able to have our in-person presence to support one another right now. We are grieving our rituals, our routines and the familiarity of our day-to-day assumptions. For those of us who have a history with grief (especially the unexpected kind), we may be having grief of those former losses stirred and awakened.



Grief can be messy. It's not linear, as in, "when I get through this particular feeling, I'm done with that." It is cyclical and lingers around important events, words not said, certain songs, and moments captured like photographs in our minds. It is a place we can choose to visit or ignore, though it resides in the background as if waiting for us to notice. If you are experiencing grief right now, here are some things you might remind yourself:

1. There are different ways to say goodbye. Unexpected endings tend to bring strong emotions, often anchored in both the present and the past, when we may have felt abandoned or left behind. Write a letter to your loved one, even if you end up being the only one who sees it. If your loved one has died or is in a place you can't visit, hold an intention for them in your mind, and say it aloud as you think of them throughout the day. One of my favorites is, "May you feel my love for you and be surrounded by peace."
2. "The last sentence of the book doesn't rewrite the entire story." Years ago, following the loss of someone dear to me, a wise person shared these words with me. It reminded me that even though I was unable to be with my loved one when he died, I had a book full of lines to draw upon that were the story of our life together and of our relationship. Many of those lines were expressions of our love, moments we shared together, conversations and memories. Remembering these feelings and these moments is how we get a sense of who the individual was; who we were with them; and what the relationship was—all of which surpasses their final moments. Right now is a good time to reflect on those earlier, better memories as best as you can, to remind yourself of the full picture of their lives and your connection.

To see Dr. Marshall's complete article, visit our Blog at www.friendsforsurvival.org.

how to celebrate father's day when you're grieving the loss of your dad

by Allison Micco, Anxiety Expert and Podcast Host

Just like there is no guidebook to becoming a parent, there is no guidebook to losing a parent. This week I was served a gutting reminder of what it's like to live without a father as I checked my iPhone calendar only to see that this Sunday I would be celebrating Father's Day; my first without my beloved dad here on earth.

I refuse to let this day be one of loss and grief. I realized that, for those of us without a father, by changing how we approach this day we can feel a deeper sense of connection to our loved ones rather than the overwhelming loss we may otherwise feel on Father's Day. One of the most healing actions we can take as we approach this day is to be willing to release the reality in which our dominant story is one of loss. Yes, my father is no longer here in the physical form, but if I attach myself to that reality it seems almost impossible to find any sense of joy in the day. Instead, I choose to rewrite this story. . .

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Through the Good

by Kay Lokoff

WE SURVIVE THE UNTHINKABLE. WE SURVIVE FOR OTHERS. AND THEN, VERY SLOWLY, WE SURVIVE FOR OURSELVES. BECAUSE ONLY THROUGH THE GOOD WE DO FOR OTHERS IN HER NAME WILL THE BEAUTY OF SPIRIT, MIND AND BODY THAT WAS OUR DAUGHTER LIVE FOREVER.

SOURCE: THE
COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS,
SOUTH SHORE CHAPTER,
HINGHAM, MA



ten years

by Jon Meltzer

Ten years ago, our 39-year old son Robert took his life. Ten years since our hearts were smashed into pieces, our world ripped apart, and we joined an exclusive club no one ever asks to join. The shock and pain that followed I do not need to describe. You who are reading this already know those emotions all too well.

Ten years later, the tidal wave of grief that ripped loose the footings of our lives has receded. The pain is still there but manageable, and the fog of fresh grief has been lightened by the clarity of time. For those of you whose grief is fresher I write this – hopefully to offer something that resonates and makes traveling the grief highway just a bit easier.

That first year was absolute hell. The pain was so acute at times I literally could not breathe. I managed to get through the first couple of weeks by focusing on making the funeral arrangements, cleaning out Robert's apartment, settling his affairs. Afterwards, back in our new reality, was a different story. The warm cocoon of caring relatives and friends went back to their lives, the world moved on. We cried every day, every night and when we finished crying, we cried some more.

Finding a skilled grief counselor and Friends for Survival was a godsend. I needed to pour out my heart; my friends from "before" cared but could not understand what I was going through. Being with people who knew firsthand what it really is all about made all the difference. I learned that with suicide, too many of us tend to chomp down on our feelings, to squeeze off the tears. We try to bravely soldier on and tell everyone we're fine. Don't. Ignore your emotions, and your grief will just fester until the inevitable day of reckoning.

When things got overwhelming, which was pretty much every day, I climbed on my exercise bike, determined to ride till the pedals or I fell off, whichever came first. If that did not unbottle things enough, I would listen to the most tear-jerking music, rip-my-guts out music I could find. I also started journaling like crazy when I was awake and whenever I woke in the night – which was often.

By the second year, the grief was duller but just as painful, maybe even more so as the numbness wore off. It would have been all too easy to shut down and just go through the motions, to just shout "I'm not here anymore and I'm not returning!" And like many of us, I kept trying to find out why, to recreate Robert's life in the months leading up to his suicide. I talked with his friends, read his text messages, scoured his bills. Did it help? Perhaps, but it did not change the reality that my son was dead. And it

opened way too many futile 'what ifs and if only's.'

Birthdays and holidays were a challenge, particularly the first ones. Holidays can be grim sentinels bearing harsh witness to all we have lost. So, we found new ways to commemorate, if not celebrate, those days.

Somewhere around the seven-year mark, I had pretty much forgiven everyone else, except for one person – me. Robert and I were good friends as adults, but I was not the father I should have been when he was growing up. I wondered if God was punishing me for when I had been insensitive to others, too self-centered to notice that someone I loved was hurting. I truly believe, though, that God does not hurt others to punish us for our own misdeeds, and that the first heart to be broken when my son killed himself was God's. If I was really going to heal, I needed to forgive myself – a work still in progress. In the interim, I've managed to negotiate a truce with myself.

This is what I have learned ten years later: My grief was not only for my lost son, but also for what I lost of myself as well. A loved one's suicide is not something we get over, nor even get through, rather it is something we come to terms with over time. By accepting our grief and loss as part of who we now are, we gradually heal. Our 'new normal' does not mean that we are doomed to a lifetime of just going through the motions; we can re-engage in living fully. We discover that the hole in our heart can hold both joy and sadness, laughter and tears at the same time.

There are no shortcuts – the only way to come to terms with grief is to grieve. Be patient with yourself – let time do the heavy lifting of healing. There is no timetable; every person's grief is unique, so do not let anyone else tell you when grieving should be over.

This Father's Day, when we visit Robert's grave, there will still be tears, our hearts will still ache. But there will be smiles and laughter as we remember our Robert and the light he brought into our lives. The sadness of his absence will be joined by a calm acceptance holding us tight.

Remember to be gentle on yourself, my fellow traveler, as you walk this road. Your family needs you; you need you. Sometimes it will seem you are not making any progress, just going in circles or even backwards. Be patient and stay the course. It will be the hardest work you will ever do, but I promise you with all my heart there will come a time when the road levels off, when the dark gives way to light, when laughter and joy returns, and you realize within yourself is a strength you never knew you possessed.

...father's day

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"THE LOVE WE FEEL IN OUR HEARTS FOR OUR FATHERS IS JUST AS REAL AS THE LOVE WE FELT WHEN THEY WERE HERE WITH US IN THE PHYSICAL FORM."

To own as truth that my father is gone forever is to completely neglect all of the wonderful things he left behind -- his stories, the people he loved, his art, the home he created with my mother and our family -- the things which are the essence of what his time on earth was all about.

Rather than owning a story of loss as our truth, we can choose to focus instead on all of the incredible experiences, people and things we have gained as a result of their existence in this world. By tuning into the joy that we created with this amazing presence in our life, we can again experience the guidance and wisdom that they will always have to offer us.

The beautiful part about this process is that by discovering the symbols that help us tap into their eternally-existing presence of joy, we begin a journey of remembering all of the wisdom our fathers left behind. This allows us to carry their presence forward each day that we choose to consciously connect with their spirits.

For those of you celebrating Father's Day in the spirit of his legacy I encourage you to start your day off by dedicating an hour of your morning to connecting with his memory in whatever way that turns out to show up; it may be writing him a letter, talking to him, going for a walk or looking at old pictures.

At the end of the day, what is truly healing is that you beautifully keep alive the tradition of your father as you hold him deep in your heart.

The ones we love will never truly leave us. Our fathers did not really die, they simply changed forms. Their soul released the physical in order to join the limitless field of love that surrounds us always, guiding us and making us stronger with every loving thought we choose to hold.

They have become a part of all of the other limitless souls that inspire us and teach us how to make our time on earth more meaningful.

When we really look at it, Father's Day is an important reminder of the power and beauty of keeping the ones we love alive in our hearts forever.

*Source: Excerpted from www.HuffPost.com, *Common Grief, Healthy Living**

Support

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

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





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