

Comforting Friends

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

2020

JULY



IT'S OKAY

by Florence Strauss of Brooklyn, NY

It's okay to be sad and let the sadness show.

It's okay to be sad and allow the tears to flow.

It's okay to be sad and let other people know that

This is what you're feeling, and your life is at a low.

It's okay to be mad and want to shout and scream.

It's okay to be mad; you're allowed to let off steam.

It's okay to be mad; this is not an empty dream,

And the rage that burns inside you can come out and be seen.

It's okay to be scared of life without your mate.

It's okay to be scared when you ponder your own fate.

It's okay to be scared if you feel that there's a weight

That's pulling you down around your heart as you contemplate.

It's okay to be glad and remember the good times past.

It's okay to be glad and hope those memories last.

It's okay to be glad and forget that life goes so fast.

And hold on to each moment though your flag is at half-mast.

Source: HopeLine Newsletter

July: These last few months have been full of changes. All of us can attest to the shifts in our own lives because we have had the previous experience of trying to adapt to a different life without our loved one. We have spent time being sad, mad, and scared, and finally finding some peace and meaning to our lives. Coping with our feelings of GUILT will be our focus for our July meetings. We hope you will register and join us for our virtual meetings. You can attend regardless of where you live.

Someone shared with me recently:
"Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be bent out of shape."

Due to the pandemic, we have been flexible offering virtual meetings. When appropriate, we will be back to in-person meetings. Your patience and support are invaluable.



Gratefully,

Marilyn Koenig
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NO. CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUPS

All in-person support group meetings for the month of July 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, 7/21 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Cameron Park

Tuesday, 7/14 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Chico

Monday, 7/13 @ 4:30pm – 6pm

Elk Grove

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

Modesto

Monday, 7/20 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Rohnert Park

Tuesday, 7/21 @ 7pm -8:30pm

Roseville/Rocklin

Thursday, 7/16 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Yuba City

Tuesday, 7/28 @ 6:30pm – 8pm

Webinars:

Join us July 7 @ 7pm. More information and register at: 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.

golf: a game for life and a blessing in bereavement

by Barry Ward - www.barrywardauthor.com

Unknowing non-believers tend to ridicule golf as a male-only game for elderly snobs wearing outlandish sweaters and plus fours. If only they knew how wrong they are and, more importantly, what they're missing. Unlike most outdoor games or sports where active participation declines as mobility and stamina decrease, golf can be played by people well into their eighties, when a regular five mile walk that the average round entails brings a sense of good



health and fitness that few non-golfers will recognize. There's more, as I discovered recently: it brings a therapy of inestimable comfort for those mourning the death of a loved one.

When my dear Christine died tragically in the hospital in 2015, I learned the true meaning of grief and bereavement. After 43 years together I was traumatised by her death, in shock for several weeks, incapable of all but the most menial tasks connected with self-preservation.

In time I recovered sufficiently to resume a form of life and decided to write a book: "Remembering Christine", which included passages offering advice on countering grief and how to reach the vital state of acceptance of the loss, where the trauma becomes a gentle mourning. The key here was forming a new lifestyle, a manner of dissipating grief, albeit temporarily, with various distractions, mental and physical. Most of these involved group activities of a social nature: art classes, book clubs, yoga classes and the like, where meeting new-found friends on a regular basis was a necessary adjunct to forming a new routine.

The list included golf. I recounted the benefits and how to become involved; explaining how the game that has been central to my existence became a life saver. That's not an exaggeration: the group therapy of meeting and playing with good friends pulled me through my darkest days. So in addition to the sense of physical well-being, the wonderful old game proved a beacon, a light at the end of the tunnel on an otherwise lonely journey. It gave a meaning to life when all seemed lost. We golfers are lucky old souls.

To see Barry Ward's complete article, visit our Blog at www.friendsforsurvival.org.

dispelling the misconceptions about suicide and grief and mourning

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. - www.centerforloss.com

Misconception 1: Grief and mourning are the same thing. Perhaps you have noticed that people tend to use the words "grieving" and "mourning" interchangeably. There is an important distinction, however. We as humans move toward integrating loss into our lives not just by grieving, but by mourning. You will move toward reconciliation not just by grieving, but through active and intentional mourning. Grief is the constellation of internal thoughts and feelings we have when someone we love dies. Think of grief as the container. It holds all of your thoughts, feelings, and images of your experience when you are bereaved. In other words, grief is the internal meaning given to the experience of loss. Mourning is when you take the grief you have on the inside and express it outside of yourself. Another way of defining mourning is "grief gone public" or "the outward expression of grief." Talking about the person who died, crying, expressing your thoughts and feelings through art or music, and celebrating special anniversary dates that held meaning for the person who died are just a few examples of mourning. Warning: After someone you love has completed suicide, your friends may encourage you to keep your grief to yourself. If you were to take this message to heart, the disastrous result would be that all of your thoughts and feelings would stay neatly bottled up inside you. A catalyst for healing, however, can only be created when you develop the courage to mourn publicly, in the presence of understanding, compassionate people who will not judge you. At times, of course, you will grieve alone, but expressing your grief outside of yourself is necessary if you are to slowly and gently move forward in your grief journey. *[First in a series.]*



Attitudes of Mind

YOU HAVE THE POWER TO CHOOSE THE WAY YOU THINK - WHETHER YOU DWELL ON POSITIVE THOUGHTS OR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS IS UP TO YOU. OF COURSE, IT MAKES SENSE TO CHOOSE THE POSITIVE; WHY DO OTHERWISE? IF YOU HAVE BEEN IN THE HABIT OF NEGATIVE THINKING, STOP RIGHT NOW.

THE NEXT TIME A NEGATIVE THOUGHT DARES TO ENTER YOUR MIND, BANISH IT BY TURNING IT ON ITS HEAD - THINK OF THE BENEFITS OF THE SITUATION AND WHAT CAN BE LEARNED, RATHER THAN DWELLING ON DISAPPOINTMENT.

SOURCE: THE LITTLE BOOK OF AFFIRMATIONS BY GILLY PICKUP

A Breath of Summertime-Anytime

by Darcie D. Sims, PhD, CHT, CT, GMS

Summer, that wonderful reprieve from winter's despair, was the season of innocence. We ran through the meadows, without caring about tomorrow. We picked berries and made lemonade and sugar cookies. Life was good and simple and gentle in the summertime.

Why isn't it now? Why now, does light hurt my eyes and the sun sear my soul? Why does the storm cloud come and stay and where did the rainbows go? Has my vision grown cloudy? Has grief permeated even the summertime place in my memory? Did I forget the light because all I can remember is the darkness? Has grief stolen even the sunlight, leaving only shadows of sorrow?

A storm gathers across the sky. The smell of rain comes on the wind and I know I must seek shelter, both from the rain and from the grief that washes across me, day after day. It cannot hurt this much forever! I cannot keep running away. I want to find summer again!

And so, I must find a way back to the joy. As I dash to the porch to seek safety from the rain, I know I must also find some way to embrace the pain of this grief in order to release it whenever I am ready. Perhaps I can start by learning to breathe. When we are hurting or in a hurry or under great stress, we grab at the air, pulling it in as fast as we can. We swallow great gulps of air, inhaling and exhaling as quickly as possible. We never really quite fill our lungs because we are gasping at the air. We are almost desperate in our attempt to breathe.

But here in the slowness of a summer's rain, perhaps we can learn to grow gentle in our breathing and in our despair, as well. Breathing isn't a big step in the grief process, but it is the most important one! Without breathing, nothing else works. And since we are breathing, we might as well enjoy its healing capabilities.

So, as you sit on the step, or lie down in the grass, begin to become aware of your breathing. Notice how and when you take in air and how and when you release it. Do you grasp at the air, grabbing at the air, trying to fill your lungs to capacity? Or do you merely "sip" at the air, allowing small amounts to slip past your lips? Perhaps breathing deeply hurts in some way, causing muscle spasms or memories to flood across your mind...

Become aware of your breathing and try to orchestrate your breath. Bring air in through your nose, holding it for a count of 1-2-3 and then let it escape past your lips. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Feel your breath and follow it as it flows through

your body. Breathe in through your nose, imagining the oxygen flowing through every cell in your body, bringing its healing energy to every corner of your self. Exhale through your lips, letting the used-up air rise all the way up from your toes; and send it out of your body, letting it escape through your mouth.

You may find tears coming as you practice this breathing technique. Let them come as well as any feelings that rise to your awareness. Healing begins when feelings are recognized, acknowledged, and released. As you continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, you might wish to close your eyes and let your mind begin to drift. Grow quiet and find the rhythm of your body, breathing in a way that feels comfortable to you.

As you begin to feel more at peace, let your imagination create a "safe place" for you. Find a summertime memory that brings feelings of warmth, safety, and pleasure to you. You might find yourself on the beach, feeling, seeing, hearing the waves wash across the sand.

Breathe in peace. Exhale tension. Let it flow out of you, imagining our summertime sun warming each part of your body. Breathe in joy. Exhale sadness. Blow out the grief, if only for a single moment. Feel your heart becoming lighter, your pain growing less. Breathe in love. Exhale grief. Let the light of your loved one's life fill you with memories, not just of summertime, but of every time you laughed and sang and danced and dreamed and loved.

Make the commitment to grow quiet within and listen to the music of yourself. Take one small footstep each day. Make one small change each day. It only takes a moment to find the magic within. So, here in the warmth of summertime, find the peace that is deep within you and let it bring comfort to yourself and others. Be gentle in your despair and trust the wisdom within.

Find a new wholeness for yourself this summer. Find the balance of heart and mind that allows the memories to heal rather than hurt. Come out of hiding in the summertime and let the breath of summer begin to heal the hurts. Breathe in love and find the memories and the magic of those who have loved us. Love is the magic that heals us all.

Source: Excerpted from "A Breath of Summertime-Anytime" by Darci Sims, PhD, CHT, CT, GMS published in T.A.P.S. (www.taps.org)

Happy Birthday Justin!

by Paulette Forest © copyright 2019

Today, my precious son, you would have been 39 years old. This is your third birthday since you left this earth. All I can do is let you know how very much I love you and how proud I have been to be your Mom. I give thanks for every second that I got to spend with you and care for you.



This picture is one of my favorites of you. From the time you were very little, you loved animals. You were kind to even those bullies who tried to scare you. The deep compassion you held for them and for anyone having a hard time was so vast. You touched so many souls during your short time here.

I wish you could have held yourself with that same compassion and embraced your humanness in your darkest moments. Sometimes I think you were just too bright for this world. Other times, I think you forgot how much you were needed.

Today I celebrate you rather than mourn you.
I honor your precious soul that lives on.
I feel your freedom that soars now - high above the mountain tops like a bird with no limits.

I imagine you sitting on the grass with all the pets we have ever loved and with many new animal friends lying beside you. You are glowing, smiling and so happy.

I see you taking off the cloak of pain you carried like an old wool coat that has become shabby and torn. Tenderly, you set it on a large stone and pause for a moment as you silently give thanks for all it taught you.

Then you walk into the silence of deep peace that holds you in the most radiant love you have ever known. A pure joy washes over you.

You are still smiling and your eyes sparkle with love.

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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