

# Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.  
A NATIONAL OUTREACH & SUPPORT ORGANIZATION  
FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY A SUICIDE DEATH

2022  
AUGUST



## SOLACE

by Martha Whitmore Hickman

Grief is one of the great common experiences of human beings, and yet sometime we feel so alone in our sadness. Even when family members share the same loss, the grief is different for each one. Our history with the person is different. Our place in the family constellation is different. We are of different temperaments. Sometimes our very closeness to one another makes the differences in the way we express grief hard to understand. Yet we long for common understanding.

Or do we? Our grief may be in common, but it is private as well. Our loss is unique, our

own turf. No one can feel just as we feel.

Well, is there some other force - some "pity sitting in the clouds"? Some god? Some force of nature? Again, it is our longing to be known, to be accepted, to be comforted.

In time, we will find solace, as we walk around and around this grief, walk through the middle of it, look at it from every angle. But we can do that only if we know that beyond our fingertips, our friends and loved ones are loving us, wishing us well. As we do for them.

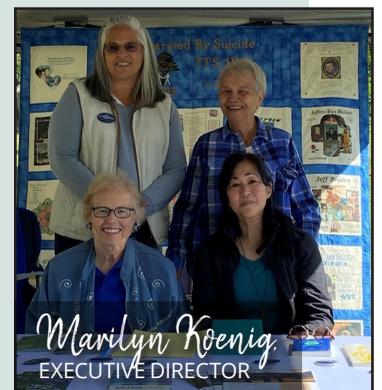
*Source: Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief (August 3)*

**August:** This past May, we were able to be out in the community at our local NAMI Walks, the first in-person event since the pandemic started. One of our members, Sara Owen, stopped by and shared how much she appreciates the services we provide. Read more about Sara and her daughter Hana on Page 6.

Support from our leaders and community members was abundant and it warmed my heart to be able to see those of you who stopped by our table. Special thanks to my volunteers Susan, Kahala and Lisa.

Wherever you are in your journey, please consider getting out and involved in your community by participating in fun, life-affirming events.

Wishing you a pleasant August.



Marilyn Koenig  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# Support

## 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

August 8 @ 3pm PT / 6pm ET

### Third Wednesday

August 17 @ 4pm PT / 7pm ET

### Fourth Wednesday

August 24 @ 7pm PT / 10pm ET

### Grieving Moms Groups (2)

#1 Thursday, Aug 4 @ 6:30pm PT / 9:30pm ET

#2 Thursday, Aug 25 @ 3pm PT / 6pm ET

### Grieving Spouse & Partner

Thursday, August 11 @ 6pm PT / 9pm ET

## IN-PERSON MEETINGS:

**Due to health protocol, please call to confirm meetings. 916-392-0664 or 800-646-7322**

### Cameron Park, CA

Tuesday, August 9 @ 6:30pm

Faith Episcopal Church

2200 Country Club Dr., Cameron Park CA

### Carmichael, CA

Tuesday, August 16 @ 7pm

Carmichael Presbyterian Church

5645 Marconi Ave., Sacramento, CA

### Jackson, CA

Tuesday, August 2 @ 3:30pm

Sierra Wind Wellness & Recovery Center

10354 Argonaut Lane, Jackson CA

### Lincoln, CA

Thursday, August 11 @ 6pm

Lincoln Public Library

485 Twelve Bridges Drive, Lincoln, CA

### Modesto, CA

Monday, August 15 @ 7pm

The Bridge Covenant Church (Riverbank)

2201 Morrill Road, Riverbank CA

### Legacy Survivors, UT

Wednesday, August 10 @ 6pm MST

Weber State University - Ogden Campus

Merrill Allied Health Building, Room 327

## ten years

*by Friends for Survival Member*

I've debated all day about creating a post marking the ten years since Randy died. Because I truly believe in education regarding grief support and the long lasting impact of trauma and grief, I decided to share today.

Leading up to this day, I've been okay. I always dread May, filled with trauma and days I wish I didn't remember. But I was okay this year, I know what to expect plus the emotional callus is there.

What I wasn't ready for was the deep sadness and hard grief my son Jake is experiencing. Something fell into place this year with my son being 10, and realizing it's been 10 years since his dad died. Since his birthday in February up through today, he has just been hit by it all. He is heartbroken that he never got to know his dad. That he can't remember him at all. That there are no pictures with all of us as a family. That his dad isn't here to play catch with him, or coach his soccer team.

This year I am experiencing grief at year ten, after working through lots of steps to be okay. My baby is having it hit him like it's the first year and it is gut-wrenching.

And for that, I am really pissed.

Brianna, Cindy and Jake should've had a good dad to grow up with. Life has been really unfair to them, so with all of me and everything I have, I will work to give them the best family possible, stability, safety and surround them with people who love them. I will coach soccer and this year I took a moment and told Jake that his dad wasn't a very good soccer coach. He was a yeller and I always hated how he treated the referees. I realized this year that even though I choose to keep Randy's good memories alive, I may be doing a disservice to Jake by letting him assume his dad was perfect.

If you are impacted by a suicide death, or if someone close to you has been, please remember that everyone grieves differently and at different times. Do whatever you can to support and help them acknowledge and work through their grief. Sometimes kids are doing great, and don't need to always talk or have it be center in their life. Sometimes they just need a hug. Sometimes they need a therapist, or a mental health day, or a person who lets them know it is okay to be sad and acknowledge that feeling.

And sometimes they need to have a hug, realize they got through a really tough day, and have hope and intention that tomorrow will be lighter and easier to deal with.

# congratulate yourself, you're coping with grief

by Eleanor Haley - [whatsyourgrief.com/congratulations-coping-with-grief/](https://whatsyourgrief.com/congratulations-coping-with-grief/)

Congratulations! No seriously, congratulations.

You are doing it. You are surviving. You are breathing in and out, and you are putting one foot in front of the other. In the past, you probably wouldn't have considered these things accomplishments, but that was before you began walking around in the darkness of grief with a broken heart.

Over time, I've come to believe that coping with grief is about doing small things and taking tiny steps that shift your wellness gauge towards 'okay' bit-by-bit-by-bit. The downside of this is that grief can feel like ongoing and long-lasting work, but the upside is that the work can be done in manageable doses and, most likely, you're already doing it. So congratulations. You're doing it. You're coping with grief.

I know many of you will want to reject my praise because grief has been known to cause false modesty. Many people feel not-good-enough because they compare themselves to their before-grief selves or some other ideal. So if you're comparing yourself to your before-grief self, **stop right now**. When you compare yourself to the before-grief you (or a more-perfect-future-you), you run the risk of overlooking your everyday wins and accomplishments and never noticing how far you've come. Too often, grieving people beat themselves up for not being able to do things like get over it, get it together, keep it together, go back to normal, be strong, be inspiring, grow, grieve the 'right' way, and so on... when, in reality, a) some of these things are unattainable (i.e., getting over it, going back to normal, grieving the 'right' way) and b) the rest I'm willing to bet you're already doing in small ways each and every day.

So, at the risk of sounding cheesy, here's what I want you to do - Take some time to congratulate yourself on the steps you've taken in your grief. No matter how bad you feel or how much you think you're struggling, I guarantee there's at least one thing you can congratulate yourself for in this moment.

Congratulate yourself for getting out of bed today. I don't care what time it was when you got up or how long you waited before getting back in bed. You did it. Congratulate yourself on getting dressed. I don't care if the only clean thing in your closet today was an old velour tracksuit from the early 2000s. Still counts. Congratulate yourself on doing your school-work, work-work, or housework. So you don't do windows anymore? Smudged windows have character! Congratulate yourself for seeking grief support. I don't care if all you could bring yourself to do was read this bonkers grief post. It's the first step. Congratulate yourself for finding ways to grow, even though I know you'd trade all your growth to have your loved one back. You get the picture.



# The Change in Family Dynamics

by Magdaline Halous DeSousa aka John's Sister, Author  
*The Forgotten Mourners: Sibling Survivors of Suicide*

Following the death of an immediate family member to suicide, whether it is a brother, sister, mother or father, the dynamics of your family relationship will likely change. After all, a large portion of the life you have known for years is now gone. Once the funeral is over and friends and family have returned home, what can you expect when the dust starts to settle?

Sibling survivors of suicide will face different challenges than other survivors of suicide. This section provides suggestions for siblings who still live at home and for those who do not to address situations in both circumstances. They are based on experiences I have had throughout the years and hope you can learn from.

## Taking the Role of Your Parent

There is a period of time after your sibling's death where you may find yourself taking on the role of your parent. For me, this was definitely more prevalent immediately after my brother passed away. My parent's grief was so intense, so overwhelming they had to run away from it. In fact, they left the country and went to Greece for two months. I understood what they needed to do, but it left me alone to handle the pieces of my brother's life, ideally something my parents should have done.

I took control of all of his affairs not only because I had to, but also because I wanted to make sure everything was in order. It was my way of staying connected with John. I closed his bank account, disconnected his cell and house phones, paid his speeding ticket, filed his taxes, and handled his car accident and the lawsuit pending against him.

At only eighteen, he did not leave a will, so I had some difficulty as his sister making certain arrangements. It was quite painful at times because it felt like as his sister, our relationship was not significant enough to allow

me access to his life – even though I was closest to him. I was told I had no rights. No rights? He was my brother; how dare you!

Fortunately, I was able to work around everything, but the stress of it impacted me, as mentioned before. If you end up in this situation, you may find yourself resentful at having to do what you feel your parents should be doing. Where are they to support you through this?

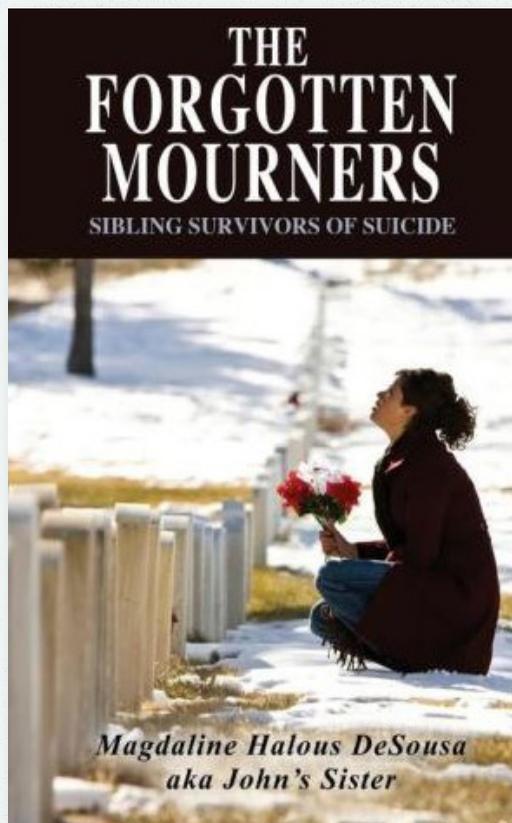
Another parental role you may have to take over is domestic. For those siblings who live with your par-

ents, you could come home to find dinner is not made. Laundry, cleaning, and other basic household chores are incomplete. Your typically responsible, supportive, and loving parents have become comatose – walking zombies in the face of this tragedy. They may stop going to work, paying the bills, even wanting to live.

In these situations, it is imperative you get help for both yourself and your parents. Reach out to friends and family who can be there for you and take on some of the responsibilities while you and your parents work through your grief.

You may feel embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help. You figure you can easily take on the chores, make dinner, and pay the bills. Maybe you consider dropping out of school to get a job for 'just a little while' until your parents are better. Don't let yourself fall

into this trap. Your guilt or embarrassment will turn into anger and resentment over time, hurting not only you but also your family. Your parents need help. You need help. And fortunately (or unfortunately), we are not alone in this battle. Find resources that will work for you, depending on your situation. Trying to deny it or cover it up will only make things worse for everyone



involved. This is not what your sibling would want for your family.

Some of you may find your parents take the opposite approach. They might throw themselves into work and other activities, denying their pain. They may also make seemingly drastic life changes. I went through this situation as well. After my parents came back from Greece, they moved out of our family home, got rid of all of my brother's belongings except for a few boxes, and moved into a one-bedroom apartment.

When my parents first moved, I was concerned they were in denial and not moving through the stages of grief. I was also angry this change was not discussed with me, especially since I wasn't ready to let go of our family home yet. I wanted to be able to come back and visit my brother's old room. Lay in his bed. Watch his television. See his dresser with his clothes in it – his Calvin Klein cologne sitting on top, waiting to be put on before he went to work. How could they take this away from me?

In time, I was able to understand that this was their way of dealing with my brother's death. I think moving to the new apartment made it easier for them to manage their grief. It was too difficult for them to have a daily reminder of this void in their lives. At least now, there was no empty room to come home to – no shrine to be faced with each day. Just like I have my own ways of grieving, such as writing this book, I must respect their methods too.

In this situation, you may be tempted to take on the role of parent and make sure your mom and dad are grieving a certain way - that they are dealing with their pain and acknowledging the loss. However, as long as they are not experiencing any of the warning signs from Chapter II or other chronic depressions, it is important for you to let them heal in their own way.

As siblings, we face certain challenges that our parents cannot understand and the same holds true for them. We cannot know what it is like to lose a child, so how can we tell them what to do in the face of this tragedy? There is no right or wrong way to grieve a loss to suicide. Give them the time and space they need, providing support as you are able to and feel comfortable doing so. But remember - you are moving through the stages of grief at the same time as your parents. During this process, your focus and energy should be on yourself and your individual path to healing.

*The Forgotten Mourners: Sibling Survivors of Suicide* excerpt printed with permission by author, Magdaline Halous DeSousa. You can find Magdaline's book on Amazon and other major book retailers.

# Support

## RESOURCES

### **Friends for Survival**

[www.friendsforsurvival.org](http://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](http://www.allianceofhope.org)

### **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)**

Extensive lists of available meeting support [www.afsp.org/find-support](http://www.afsp.org/find-support)

### **Bereaved Parents of the USA**

[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)

### **Suicide Awareness Voices of Education**

[www.save.org](http://www.save.org)

### **Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)**

For service members, veterans, and their families: [www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org)

### **The Compassionate Friends**

For bereaved parents of a deceased child: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### **The Nat'l Center for Grieving Children & Families**

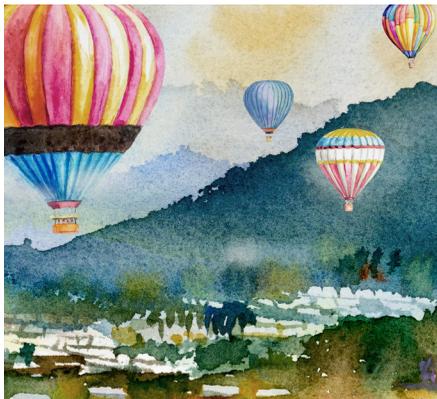
The Dougy Center  
[www.dougy.org/grief-resources](http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources)



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