

# Comforting Friends

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

2020

SEPTEMBER



## THE QUIET ONE

by Amanda Cox

The Quiet One he stands alone,  
With friends so near and family close.  
Alone in pain he cannot show.  
Did he have love he did not know?

So helpful, kind and sweet to all,  
With honesty and faith stood tall,  
Before his own came others' needs.  
His actions sure, his goal to please.

Just as the rose, sweet joy he shared,  
Of family pets he really cared.  
If want was shown, he was the first,  
If urgent need, help was dispersed.

With sports and such not much  
was done,  
Through trains and planes he had  
his fun.

He hit the books with such great force.  
So "A" was won in every course.

Though rarely laughed, his smile  
was there,  
His made up jokes he liked to share.  
He found great joy in one small clip,  
For "Dogbert" was his comic strip.

The Quiet One he stood alone,  
Though gone from us, he is now home.  
Alone in pain he could not show,  
The love he has he now can know.

*Amanda Cox, sister to Heber Cox,  
wrote this lovely poem in honor  
and memory of her brother. "When  
Suicide Comes Home-A Father's  
Diary and Comments" by Paul Cox.*

## September:

As the pandemic stretches from weeks into months, I want to urge you to stay connected in any way you can. I dearly miss hugging my family members, singing in my choir at church and my aqua aerobics class. There is no substitute for meeting in person, but we must do what we can for the foreseeable future.

If you have been hesitant to try anything virtual, let me tell you that if I can do it, you can do it! I am 82 years old and pride myself on learning new things. Being virtually connected has helped me stay positive and hopeful.

We are changed persons, but with time those changes can be a benefit to ourselves and others.

Each one of you plays an important part in this connection with one another. May September be a renewed season of encouragement and hope.



Gratefully,  
*Marilyn Koenig*  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## NO. CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUPS

Until further notice, all support group meetings are virtual.

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

### PUBLIC MEETINGS:

**Second Monday**

September 14 @ 7pm

**Third Tuesday**

September 15 @ 7pm

**Fourth Wednesday**

September 23 @ 7pm

### PRIVATE CHAPTER MEETINGS:

**Legacy Survivors Utah**

Tuesday, 9/9 @ 6pm MST (5pm PST)

**Modesto**

Monday, 9/21 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

### WEBINARS:

More information and register at: [friendsforsurvival.org/our-webinars](http://friendsforsurvival.org/our-webinars)



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## the suicide survivor's affirmation

by Jeffrey Jackson

Someone I loved very much has ended their own life. I will never truly know all that was happening in their mind that brought them to that tragic choice. However, there are things of which I can be reasonably certain...



Source: "SOS, A Handbook for Survivors of Suicide." Copies of the full booklet in PDF format can be downloaded free of charge at [suicidology.org](http://suicidology.org)

- \* If they were here, even they could not fully explain their mindset or answer all of my questions.
- \* In their state of mind, they could not have fully comprehended the reality of their own death.
- \* They could not have fully appreciated the devastating impact their suicide would have on the people in their life.

As such, by their last act, they made their most tragic mistake, unknowingly creating unparalleled pain in the hearts of those whom they most loved.

The person I lost is beyond my help now in every way but one: I can help them by working to ease the pain they have caused and by not allowing their most enduring legacy to be one of tragedy. They benefit from this help whether or not I perceive them as welcoming it, in the same way that we help the aggressor whenever we nurse his victim—by minimizing the damage he has caused.

As a result, each and every day, I can help the person I lost by...

Enjoying life ~ Smiling and laughing ~  
 Not dwelling in feelings of sadness or remorse ~  
 Loving others ~ Taking new steps in life toward  
 positive new horizons ~ Helping those who feel  
 their loss to do the same and, in short, not letting  
 their mistake continue to create sorrow, neither in  
 the world around me, nor in myself.

I will try to picture my lost loved one asking me to do this every day—to please help undo the damage they caused in whatever little ways possible. And I promise that I will.

# dispelling the misconceptions about suicide and grief and mourning

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. - [www.centerforloss.com](http://www.centerforloss.com)

**Misconception 2: Grief following a suicide death always results in “complicated” or “pathological” mourning.** Actually, there is research that indicates that survivors of suicide integrate grief at about the same pace as those who experience any kind of unanticipated death.

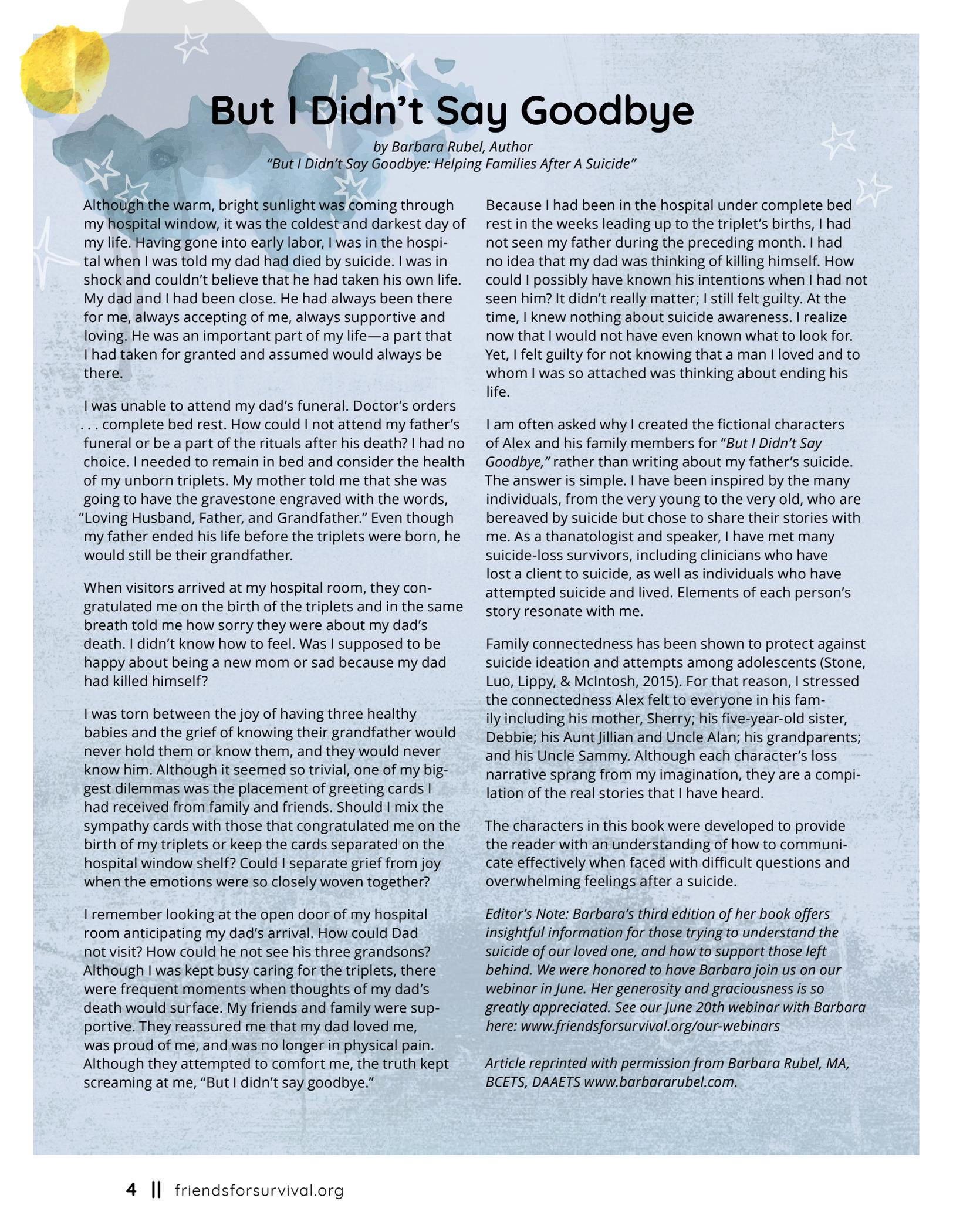
This misconception could have you believing that you should suffer longer. This does not mean that a suicide death won't be viewed differently. Obviously, there can be some natural challenges, such as the combination of sudden shock, the natural question of “why?”, the trauma of witnessing or discovering the suicide, the lack of support from family and friends, and the potential of “secondary victimization” that results from cruel, judgmental, or insensitive comments. Yes, you will have griefbursts (and naturally do some “catch-up” mourning as you continue with your life), but do not let this misconception become a self-fulfilling prophecy. **Do your work of mourning, and you will come out of the dark and into the light.** [Second in a series.]



## Survivors

by Carol Helmlinger

GIVE ME YOUR HAND AND I WILL GIVE YOU MINE,  
I'VE BEEN WHERE YOU ARE, I'VE JUST HAD MORE TIME.  
I'VE WALKED THROUGH THAT VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH  
AND SOMEHOW I'VE MADE IT, I LIVED THROUGH THE TEST.  
SO NOW I WILL HELP YOU, BECAUSE YOUR LOVED ONE HAS DIED  
AND WE'LL HELP ONE ANOTHER, WE'RE SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE.



# But I Didn't Say Goodbye

by Barbara Rubel, Author

*"But I Didn't Say Goodbye: Helping Families After A Suicide"*

Although the warm, bright sunlight was coming through my hospital window, it was the coldest and darkest day of my life. Having gone into early labor, I was in the hospital when I was told my dad had died by suicide. I was in shock and couldn't believe that he had taken his own life. My dad and I had been close. He had always been there for me, always accepting of me, always supportive and loving. He was an important part of my life—a part that I had taken for granted and assumed would always be there.

I was unable to attend my dad's funeral. Doctor's orders . . . complete bed rest. How could I not attend my father's funeral or be a part of the rituals after his death? I had no choice. I needed to remain in bed and consider the health of my unborn triplets. My mother told me that she was going to have the gravestone engraved with the words, "Loving Husband, Father, and Grandfather." Even though my father ended his life before the triplets were born, he would still be their grandfather.

When visitors arrived at my hospital room, they congratulated me on the birth of the triplets and in the same breath told me how sorry they were about my dad's death. I didn't know how to feel. Was I supposed to be happy about being a new mom or sad because my dad had killed himself?

I was torn between the joy of having three healthy babies and the grief of knowing their grandfather would never hold them or know them, and they would never know him. Although it seemed so trivial, one of my biggest dilemmas was the placement of greeting cards I had received from family and friends. Should I mix the sympathy cards with those that congratulated me on the birth of my triplets or keep the cards separated on the hospital window shelf? Could I separate grief from joy when the emotions were so closely woven together?

I remember looking at the open door of my hospital room anticipating my dad's arrival. How could Dad not visit? How could he not see his three grandsons? Although I was kept busy caring for the triplets, there were frequent moments when thoughts of my dad's death would surface. My friends and family were supportive. They reassured me that my dad loved me, was proud of me, and was no longer in physical pain. Although they attempted to comfort me, the truth kept screaming at me, "But I didn't say goodbye."

Because I had been in the hospital under complete bed rest in the weeks leading up to the triplet's births, I had not seen my father during the preceding month. I had no idea that my dad was thinking of killing himself. How could I possibly have known his intentions when I had not seen him? It didn't really matter; I still felt guilty. At the time, I knew nothing about suicide awareness. I realize now that I would not have even known what to look for. Yet, I felt guilty for not knowing that a man I loved and to whom I was so attached was thinking about ending his life.

I am often asked why I created the fictional characters of Alex and his family members for *"But I Didn't Say Goodbye,"* rather than writing about my father's suicide. The answer is simple. I have been inspired by the many individuals, from the very young to the very old, who are bereaved by suicide but chose to share their stories with me. As a thanatologist and speaker, I have met many suicide-loss survivors, including clinicians who have lost a client to suicide, as well as individuals who have attempted suicide and lived. Elements of each person's story resonate with me.

Family connectedness has been shown to protect against suicide ideation and attempts among adolescents (Stone, Luo, Lippy, & McIntosh, 2015). For that reason, I stressed the connectedness Alex felt to everyone in his family including his mother, Sherry; his five-year-old sister, Debbie; his Aunt Jillian and Uncle Alan; his grandparents; and his Uncle Sammy. Although each character's loss narrative sprang from my imagination, they are a compilation of the real stories that I have heard.

The characters in this book were developed to provide the reader with an understanding of how to communicate effectively when faced with difficult questions and overwhelming feelings after a suicide.

*Editor's Note: Barbara's third edition of her book offers insightful information for those trying to understand the suicide of our loved one, and how to support those left behind. We were honored to have Barbara join us on our webinar in June. Her generosity and graciousness is so greatly appreciated. See our June 20th webinar with Barbara here: [www.friendsforsurvival.org/our-webinars](http://www.friendsforsurvival.org/our-webinars)*

*Article reprinted with permission from Barbara Rubel, MA, BCETS, DAAETS [www.barbararubel.com](http://www.barbararubel.com).*

# Grieving the Death of a Brother or Sister

by Kathlyn Miller



Somehow we take for granted that our brothers and sisters will always be there as companions and friends. When a sibling dies, it feels wrong, out of sync, confusing. This may help you to begin to explore and resolve some of the unique aspects of your grief.

**Honor your own grief.** Grief is different for each person, depending on your coping skills, age and sex, mental and physical health, the circumstances of the death, your past experiences with loss, and (perhaps most significantly) the nature of your relationship with the deceased person. Only you truly know how deeply you feel the loss of this person who shared your history and knew you so well.

**Respect your feelings.** You might have to resume your normal daily routine soon after the funeral. But inside you may be feeling anything but normal. Talk about such feelings to a grief support group, write a letter to the deceased person, or to God, so that you can express your feelings safely.

**Find healthy ways to keep your sibling's memory alive.** One of the most important steps in the healing process. Sometimes passing on special mementoes, such as a piece of jewelry or other personal belongings, can help people feel connected to the deceased person.

Saying goodbye to a loved one is never easy. But these thoughts from playwright Robert Anderson may help:

***"Death ends a life, not a relationship. Let go of the pain, and allow the memories to remain."***

Source: *The Compassionate Friends of Los Angeles*

# Support

## 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)

### American Association of Suicidology (AAS)

[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.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 National Center for Grieving Children & Families

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





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