

Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2022
SEPTEMBER



ANGER

by Joannetta Hendel

Don't tell me that you
understand,
Don't tell me that you know.
Don't tell me that I will survive,
How I will surely grow.

Don't tell me this is just a test,
That I am truly blessed.
That I am chosen for this task,
Apart from all the rest.

Don't come at me with answers
That can only come from me,
Don't tell me how my grief
will pass
That I will soon be free.

Don't stand in pious judgement
Of the bonds I must unite.
Don't tell me how to suffer,
And don't tell me how to cry.

My life is filled with selfishness,
My pain is all I see.
But I need you, and I need
your love...
Unconditionally.

Accept me in my ups and downs,
I need someone to share.
Just hold my hand and let me cry,
And say, "My friend, I care."

September: We face many different challenges today. With awful things happening nationally and globally, it can get to be a bit much at times. How do I handle (cope) with all of this, you ask? Here's what I do:

Stand still for a bit and evaluate your day-to-day life. Prioritize, simplify, identify what you need (vs. what you want). Reach out to others (I cannot stress how important this is). Find out what your options are, then put a plan in place. Make self-care appointments. Keep it simple. I have loved Wheel of Fortune for years. This is one of my weekly self-care appointments. Pat and Vanna feel like family, and the program is predictable, safe and fun to watch.

My advice to you today is to invest time in yourself. Simplify your life as much as possible and watch Wheel of Fortune.

I love Vanna's outfit today.



Gratefully,

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

September 12 @ 3pm PT / 6pm ET

Third Wednesday

September 21 @ 4pm PT / 7pm ET

Fourth Wednesday

September 28 @ 7pm PT / 10pm ET

Grieving Moms Groups (2)

#1 Thursday, Sept. 1 @ 6:30pm PT / 9:30pm ET

#2 Thursday, Sept. 22 @ 3pm PT / 6pm ET

Grieving Spouse & Partner

Thursday, September 8 @ 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, September 13 @ 6:30pm
Faith Episcopal Church
2200 Country Club Dr., Cameron Park CA

Carmichael, CA

Tuesday, September 20 @ 7pm
Carmichael Presbyterian Church
5645 Marconi Ave., Sacramento, CA

Jackson, CA

Tuesday, September 6 @ 3:30pm
Sierra Wind Wellness & Recovery Center
10354 Argonaut Lane, Jackson CA

Lincoln, CA

Thursday, September 8 @ 6pm
Lincoln Public Library
485 Twelve Bridges Drive, Lincoln, CA

Modesto, CA

Monday, September 19 @ 7pm
The Bridge Covenant Church (Riverbank)
2201 Morrill Road, Riverbank CA

Legacy Survivors, UT

Wednesday, September 14 @ 6pm MST
Weber State University - Ogden Campus
Merrill Allied Health Building, Room 327

guilt

by Iris Bolton

Of the many emotions of grief, guilt is perhaps the most punishing. I remember that first day, sitting on my bed saying over and over, "What did I do wrong? If only I had done more." My senses told me that I had failed as a parent, a professional, and a person. Guilt hits hard and flits in and out of other moods.



Guilt is a paralyzing emotion that often envelops survivors. It batters the ego as nothing else in the world. It scuttles the will to live. It parades a stream of bitter memories across the screen of your mind. Guilt often comes from the sorrow of not being able to keep a loved one from pain or from suicide. Expect to feel guilt. Expect it to be hard to handle. You will ask -- what did I fail to do? Ultimately, you must save yourself by fixing in your mind the truth that you gave to your child your very best. You gave the gift of yourself and your humanness. So ask also: What did he or she do with your gifts? Their actions were totally their responsibility. So what did they do? Understand this and one day you can let go of your guilty feeling. When that happens, you are one step closer to acceptance and peace of mind. On the other hand some persons feel no guilt at all, being reassured by their consciousness of having done all they could.

During my own pain, a friend had warned me about sorrow's other face, the one that is ugly and vindictive. Its lips snarl and attack one's "cool." It is called anger.

One of these days, you will almost certainly feel a kind of rage. Most people do. Impossible, you think. How can a parent be angry with her dearest possession? It happens. Many experts say it *should* happen. They feel that it flushes and purges and sweetens the mind. It allows the tie to be broken. In my case, it struck me belatedly, but when it hit, it was horrid.

I went to my son's grave one afternoon and demanded of the air and the sky and God himself that they tell me what right my son had to leave me in such great pain, to defile my life, to have refused my efforts to help. Finally, my anger burned itself out. It was over, like a plunge across an icy pool. If you do not feel anger, know that it may not be necessary for you. There is no absolute formula for healing.

Source: My Son...My Son...A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss, or Suicide by Iris Bolton.

reconciling your grief

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

You may have heard - indeed you may believe - that your grief journey's end will come when you resolve, or recover from, your grief. But your journey will never end. People do not "get over" grief.

Reconciliation is a term I find more appropriate for what occurs as the mourner works to integrate the new reality of moving forward in life without the physical presence of the person who died. With reconciliation comes a renewed sense of energy and confidence, an ability to fully acknowledge the reality of death and a capacity to become reinvolved in the activities of living.

In reconciliation, the sharp, ever present pain of grief gives rise to a renewed sense of meaning and purpose. Your feelings of loss will not completely disappear, yet they will soften, and the intense pangs of grief will become less frequent. Hope for a continued life will emerge as you are able to make commitments to the future, realizing that the person who died will never be forgotten, yet knowing that your life can and will move forward.



Resolve & Acceptance

by Chris Moon, Co-Founder, Friends for Survival

UNTIL I HONESTLY EXPLORED AND ACCEPTED EACH ASPECT OF WHAT I CONSIDERED TO BE MY RESPONSIBILITY, I WAS NOT ABLE TO BEGIN RESOLVING GUILT OR ANGER. I CANNOT SPEAK FOR OTHERS, BUT FOR ME, THIS ACCEPTANCE WAS THE REAL TURNING POINT WHEREBY I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO STOP PUNISHING MYSELF WITH TREMENDOUS, SELF-DEFEATING GUILT. I BEGAN TO BE A SURVIVOR IN A DIFFERENT SENSE IN THAT I REGAINED A MEASURE OF SELF-ESTEEM AND DESIRE TO TAKE CHARGE OF MY LIFE AGAIN. I FELT A DETERMINATION TO WORK TOWARD BUILDING MORE MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER SURVIVORS IN MY FAMILY AS WELL AS TO ASSUME NEW PURPOSE AND DIRECTION IN MY LIFE.



how far we have come

by Jerry Reed, Ph.D., MSW

I entered the field of suicide prevention in 1996 when, as a staffer in the U.S. Senate, I attended a U.S. Senate Aging Committee hearing with my then boss Senator Harry Reid (D-NV). The topic of the hearing was mental health and the elderly. While preparing for the hearing I called the Nevada State Aging Director and asked, "What were some of the mental health issues facing the elderly?" To my surprise, I learned that suicide among older adults was a key concern in the state. I set to the task of preparing a briefing for the Senator and I included key information on suicide and the elderly.

On the day of the hearing, while listening to powerful testimony from famed reporter Mr. Mike Wallace on his own battle with clinical depression, Senator Reid shared that if Mr. Wallace was brave enough to share his own personal struggle with depression that he felt he should share his own personal story that his dad had taken his own life many years earlier. It was a powerful moment and, from my perspective, a significant day for suicide prevention in the public policy arena.

This was the day that my professional and personal commitment to suicide prevention, response, and postvention began.

It was clear to me from my research that there was far too little being done on the national, state and local level about this leading cause of death and I had been given the opportunity and privilege of working for a man who was willing to bring attention to this issue from the position he occupied. Senator Reid's leadership and personal story contributed to changes that have influenced my professional life and influenced our nation's response ever since. Not only was my commitment firmly established, Senator Reid's leadership backed up by demonstrable activity from the voice of loss and attempt survivors from across the nation, came together to finally alter the efforts of suicide prevention. On that day, survivors from the Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network (SPAN) launched their efforts to support Senator Reid and others to advance suicide prevention in our nation. Leaders like Jerry and Elsie Weyrauch, Sandy Martin, Marilyn Koenig, Iris Bolton, and far too many amazing and dedicated loss survivors from the SPAN community to name, embraced this opportunity and launched the effort that changed our field forever.

Several outcomes from the hearing that day were Senator Reid's request to hold a hearing on senior suicide in a subsequent U.S. Senate Aging Committee hearing. Another outcome was that after the meeting

Senator Harry Reid and Representative John Lewis held with SPAN advocates, there was the introduction and passage of Senate Resolution 84 and House Resolution 212, which simply stated that suicide was a national problem, warranted a national solution, and called for the development of a National Strategy for Suicide Prevention. These resolutions when introduced had the support of the American Association of Suicidology, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and NAMI. This organizational support was essential. To my amazement, Senate Resolution 84 passed unanimously the day introduced, and House Resolution 212, passed several months later in the U.S. House of Representatives. Political will was building and suicide prevention and response had found its way to the national policy agenda.

This accomplishment would not have occurred without the involvement and investment of many loss and attempt survivors. I remember how proud I was back then, and still am to this very day, to see such a strong policy response by our national leaders in the U.S. Congress for an issue that, for far too long sat idle with no attention. I learned that day that change is possible, advocacy does work, and as Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Now fast forward to September 4-10, 2022. This is the week when we will recognize National Suicide Prevention Week and on September 10, 2022, we will recognize World Suicide Prevention Day. I remember so vividly in 1996, when the current effort to advance public policy support for suicide prevention began, how few references there were on suicide prevention in the Congressional Record and how little as a nation, we were talking about the prevention of suicide.

This year when we recognize Suicide Prevention Week, let us take time to reflect upon the journey of 26 years. We now have Congressional Resolutions calling for action on suicide prevention and response; and we have a National Suicide Prevention Resource Center (www.sprc.org). In July, we saw the launch of 988, the national line to provide crisis response established. In 2005, we saw the passage of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act providing federal grants to colleges and states to address youth suicide prevention and we have national, state and local strategies to guide our work in advancing suicide prevention and response. We have these and countless other advancements to support our efforts to address suicide in our nation.

As we reflect upon the many advances made, we should honor the many pioneers who came before us to chart a path to guide our efforts.

We should also be grateful to the countless dedicated individuals who, through their own loss and lived experience, dedicated their lives to reducing the burden of suicidal behavior to prevent another family from experiencing such a loss.

While we have far to go, we have traveled far and should pause to reflect on our many advancements in honor of those we have lost. Our advances came about through the actions of survivors and those with lived experience.

The theme of World Suicide Prevention Day 2022 is "Hope through Action." It is fair to say that the actions of loss and attempts survivors, professionals in the field, government leaders at national, state and local levels and non-profit suicide prevention and mental health organizations have provided hope through their countless actions over the years. While we cannot change the past, we can change the future and by listening to the voices of all, we can and will make a difference!

Sincerely,

Jerry Reed, Ph.D., M.S.W.
Senior Vice President for Practice Leadership & Director
Suicide, Violence & Injury Prevention Portfolio (retired)
Education Development Center

BIO: Dr. Reed served as Senior Vice President for Practice Leadership at Education Development Center until his retirement in October 2021. In this capacity, he directed the Suicide, Violence and Injury Prevention Portfolio. He oversaw the work on multiple projects such as the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, the Zero Suicide Institute, the Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, the Children's Safety Network, and several violence prevention initiatives and also served as Co-Director of the Injury Control Research Center for Suicide Prevention with partners at the University of Rochester Medical Center. His interests include geriatrics, mental health, suicide prevention, global violence prevention and public policy. Dr. Reed co-led the committee that updated the U.S. National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and he served as an Executive Committee member of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. Dr. Reed is currently an Advisor/Consultant to the Department of Defense Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee and a Scientific Advisor for Stop Soldier Suicide. Dr. Reed received a Ph.D. in Health Related Sciences with an emphasis in Gerontology from the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond in 2007 and his MSW degree from University of Maryland at Baltimore in 1982 with an emphasis in Aging Administration. He served in the United States Navy during the period 1974-1978.

WEBINAR: Watch our latest webinar with Marilyn Koenig in conversation with Jerry Reed on our website. Click on Upcoming > Webinars.

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:

"988"

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

This program is funded in part by the Division of Behavioral Health Services through the voter approved Proposition 63, Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).

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