WHY DID YOU GO, JIM?
by Sue Chance, MD
Author of “Stronger Than Death”

Like liquid sunshine, you slipped through my fingers
And left me with my guilt and anger and love
Why this choice and not a million others?

It is so like you somehow
To leave no margin for error
A hunter who finally stalked himself
And, sighting his wounded quarry, decided to end its suffering.

You were always, always a person
And told me so at the age of three
Yes, you were, as long as I live you shall be

For I liked the person you were
Almost as much as I loved you

You are gone
And you are with me
I carried and I carry you inside me
Even though you aborted my future
With your precious, beloved self

I will always feel I failed you
But I am grateful anyway
For I know that love can outlast pain
And I will turn to others to endure what I cannot endure alone
I love you, Jim, my son
I love you

October: We provide bereavement support after a suicide death through peer support. Peer support occurs when people provide knowledge, experience, emotional, social or practical help to each other. Over the 39 years that I have been a part of this wonderful organization, I have shared what has personally helped me, and I appreciate you sharing with me what has helped you. We always strive to find appropriate articles and suggestions and then pass them on to continue the support, education and love. I invite you to share your experiences of what you have found (or find) helpful - books, podcasts, websites, etc. Please take our quick survey on our website’s home page.

It is my wish that where you are in this world, you are taking a moment for yourself to stop and observe our seasons changing. Summer leaving us and cooler days of Fall ahead.
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
October 11 @ 3pm PST / 6pm EST
Third Tuesday
October 19 @ 7pm PST / 10pm EST
Fourth Wednesday
October 27 @ 7pm PST / 10pm EST
Grieving Moms Groups (2)
#1 October 7 @ 6:30pm PST / 9:30pm EST
#2 October 28 @ 3pm PST / 6pm EST
Grieving Spouse & Partner
October 14 @ 6pm PST / 9pm EST

IN-PERSON MEETINGS:
Due to quickly-changing health and safety protocol, please call our office to confirm in-person meetings. 916-392-0664 or 800-646-7322

Cameron Park* (call office to confirm)
Tuesday, October 12 @ 6:30pm
Faith Episcopcal Church
2200 Country Club Dr., Cameron Park, CA

Carmichael* (call office to confirm)
Tuesday, October 19 @ 7pm
Carmichael Presbyterian Church
5645 Marconi Ave., Sacramento, CA 95608

Grass Valley
October meeting cancelled (check our website)
Hospice of the Foothills
11270 Rough & Ready Hwy., Grass Valley, CA

Modesto* (call office to confirm)
Monday, October 18 @ 7pm
The Bridge Covenant Church (Riverbank)
2201 Morrill Road, Riverbank CA 95367

Legacy Survivors* (call office to confirm)
Wednesday, October 13 @ 6pm MST
Warehouse 22 - 1068 W 350 S
Syracuse, UT 84075

WEBINARS: Available to watch anytime:
FriendsForSurvival.org > Upcoming > Webinars

Sometimes, when I meet someone new and they find out about the work I do with survivors of suicide, they will ask: “How can you do that work day after day? It must be extremely taxing. It is so very sad.” I always answer “No, I feel honored as well as inspired by the work I do.”

I can do what I do because I witness more than just the debilitating pain of survivors. I see their courage and compassion and commitment to make a difference. And I see the healing that occurs over time. When I talk with a new survivor, this is one of the most important things I want them to know.

When grief is new - when one's world has been shattered by the loss of a loved one to suicide, it's hard to envision anything beyond debilitating grief. Sometimes, in the beginning, it is hard to find a reason to go on. Emotions are so debilitating. New survivors are anxious and have difficulty concentrating. They may be weighed down by guilt or possessed by anger. Many cannot sleep, eat, and have difficulty performing routine functions. Sometimes there are additional financial and physical challenges resulting from the death. Some must grieve while caring for children who have also been traumatized. And almost all survivors experience secondary wounds.

In the beginning, it is hard for new survivors to see beyond the debilitating grief, but those who have traveled further down the survivors’ path, will be quick to say that the pain does diminish, and emotions transform. I always let the newly bereaved know what I witness: As survivors endure and survive and meet the challenges, they grown wiser and stronger and become able to contribute in ways they never envisioned they could. Again and again I find that this hope, the promise that something meaningful will result out of all the pain, touches people. There is something that awakens in them in these conversations. An inner flame is rekindled. Their pain does not vanish. The need to endure is still there, but there is hope - and that can make all the difference in the world.

Visit www.AllianceofHope.org. Their online Community Forum operates like a 24/7 support group. Insightful blog articles and other loss survivor resources are available.
friends for survival members share...

Cathy Boomhower of Cambridge, VT shares:

"Thank you so much for the newsletter. I look for it every month. It always gives me some peace. It has been 22 years since my daughter passed. She was my only child. Not a day goes by when I don’t think about her and miss her. The huge hole she left in my heart and life does not ever go away.

“You learn how to survive with it. Some days or months are harder then others. Two years ago, we had to put down my daughter's horse that I had. It felt like a big piece of her passed again. I wanted to let people know animals help enormously with the emptiness you feel at times. They have been a lifesaver for me.

“We have horses, cows, cats, a dog and bird. The cats, dog and one of my horses are all rescues.”

Sue Graue of Yuba City, CA shares:

"August 12, 2021 on the 23rd anniversary date, and I wonder ... is it enough to have survived to see this day? Don’t look back, some of them are a blur, without wanting to be clear, lost in survival, flight was the only distraction. There would be no winning. A fight to change what is today gives me courage to keep going. There is a shared openness amongst loved ones that we experience on this anniversary date, our emotions our bodies, we all report similar stories of days preceding August 12 and the challenges of living this day.

“We look forward to tomorrow to begin anew. This is the fabric of our love and its enduring gift. We have mellowed our attention by sharing our responses with one another. We don't feel so alone and can acknowledge our accomplishments, and we can go beyond surviving this day, loving Daniel, loving one another.”

Lidia Harms of North Hollywood, CA shares:

“How to describe this exact sadness, thankfully not known by many. The strength to produce genuine smiles through difficult times is a trait I suppose I can thank you for, but really, how could you!?

"I'm still in disbelief, not because I'm not faced with your absence everyday and I know I'll never be able to feel a kiss from your lips again. But, disbelief because I don't want to, disbelief because how could you leave us like this, leave me? Disbelief that I was so in the dark about the severity of your mental health and didn't take note of the signs. Disbelief that our daughter will never be. That we won't be able to celebrate our first anniversary as husband and wife, or our second Thanksgiving and Christmas together. Disbelief that this is life now, that I'll have to maneuver my way through this place without you beside me. I just miss you, and I get mad at myself everyday for being angry with you. It's your life, ultimately your choice. I'm just hurt. I miss you. I'm sorry."
Grief is often reawakened as the year nears its end. This article emerged from my journal as I reflected upon the death of my father.

Rambling thoughts...

Brown grass, dried remnants of vegetable vines, and a lonely shriveled tomato hanging on a broken stem remind us the summer has gone.

It is a difficult time for people prone to depression, or those grieving the death of a loved one.

Colder days and the early evening darkness bring lonely quiet times causing us painful awareness of the absence of those we have loved and lost.

The shorter days announce winter will come and the dreaded days of holiday cheer. This realization brings a feeling of pain and panic.

What will I do? How will it be? How will I be? Can I survive?

Change and holidays are catalysts that propel the roller coaster of grief, turning calm days into sleepless nights and reopening wounds that have just begun to heal.

Emotional triggers include Halloween with its festive and fun spirit evoking memories of early childhood, wide-eyed and innocent, exploring and participating in a world of make believe. I can be a pirate, or a princess or Dorothy of Kansas. Now I know the world includes grief and all that comes with it. I know about suicide, and disease, and being scared.

Painful memories abound, reflections not of our loved one but on how we coped, what we did instead, how we held it together. Questions everywhere.

Should I have done more? Did I care enough?

I am alone ... and I am missing you.

At times it seems new memories will never happen, at least authentic peaceful ones.

I watch the happiness of others quietly resenting the healthy intact families finding joy at their holiday table. A tinge of jealousy sneaks its way to the surface. The holidays present another level of grief.

Fortunately nature is compassionate, the season of dying is also the season of preparation.

Age and a traveled path help me to appreciate the paradox of autumn. Nature is both cruel in its presentation of emotional triggers and yet loving and supportive in its message to prepare and to have gratitude.

I feel forewarned and I know what to expect. Awareness reduces the number of surprises and adds predictability. Like a squirrel I gather good books and movies to occupy and nurture the wanderings of my mind. My journal lies ready at the bedside. Maybe I will change holiday rituals and side step the pain of the old ones.

Brisk walks and crisp air help to awaken the lethargy. The cold which chills me to the bone encourages comfort food and rich soup, lovely soft flannels and colorful plaids. I can fill my empty home with the smells of freshly baked bread, cinnamon and raisins.

The lonely early night, although dark, reveals diamonds in the sky and the silence for reflecting on what once was. Warm memories unfold and I am at peace. I know where to find you. You live within the stars. Grief has quieted its roar.

Nature sends the brown bear to hibernate, the geese migrate and I am reminded to seek solace. The quiet safe place inside where I can care for myself, where my heart can be still. Where I can experience connection to those I miss, and where I can remember who I am.

Autumn has forewarned me and I have a suspicion of what to expect. I will nurture myself. I will say “yes” to the friends who understand and “no” to those who dont.

I will get up, I will keep going and I will cry when I cry.

I am alone ... and I am missing you.
Here is what’s happening at Friends for Survival. Our mission continues to provide the best bereavement support possible to our loss survivor community. Your donations and support help make this all possible.

**Support group meetings.** In March of 2020, when we were not able to meet in person, we quickly transitioned our support groups to virtual meetings. We are returning to in-person meetings in a few locations, but our six monthly virtual meetings will remain on our schedule. 695 people from the United States and abroad attended our virtual meetings in 2020. So far this year, 777 people have attended.

**Newsletter.** Distribution continues to grow: in 2019 we mailed/ emailed 52,533 newsletters. In 2020, we distributed 55,334 newsletters. Through August of this year, we have distributed 44,122.

**Grief After Suicide booklets.** We call these our “blue booklets” and they are enclosed in our new family packet. In January of 2020, we started offering our blue booklets on our website under “Shop.” So far in 2021, we have distributed 1,071 blue booklets. The booklets are free of charge, but we encourage a donation.

**When Someone You Love Dies by Suicide.** We call these our “green booklets” and our Board Member Stephanie Chandler authored this resource. We started offering these green booklets in January of 2020, distributing 393 during 2020. So far this year, we have distributed 1,524. They are available to order on our website under “Shop.” The booklets are free of charge, but we encourage a donation.

**“When Suicide Comes Home – A Father’s Diary and Comments”** by Paul Cox. Paul has been a friend and supporter since 2003, when he met Executive Director Marilyn Koenig in Santa Fe at an AAS conference. Paul has graciously donated his book to Friends for Survival. Paul’s book is available to order on our website under “Shop.” The book is free of charge, but we encourage a donation.

**“Pathways to Purpose & Hope: A Guide for Creating a Sustainable Grief Support Organization for Families and Friends After a Suicide Death.”** Originally written in 2013 and funded by Calif. Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63), Pathways was the joint effort of many writers and support group practitioners. In 2021, Friends for Survival updated this guide, is offering it free of charge and available to order on our website under “Shop.” The book is free of charge, but we encourage a donation.

**Webinars.** Watch our recorded webinars any time, covering a variety of topics from members of our loss community.

**Caring Friends Program.** Caring Friends offers an intermediate level of peer support delivered by persons with similar experiences. Our trained volunteers will regularly communicate with you via phone, email or text. The goal is to offer comfort and encouragement to those without a steady support system.
Listen: Podcasts are another method to educate and entertain. They are all sound and come in the form of series and then are broken down into episodes. There are millions of podcasts to choose from; here are a few to check out:

Grief Out Loud, A Podcast by The Dougy Center https://www.dougy.org/news-media/podcasts

What’s Your Grief Podcast https://whatsyourgrief.com/grief-podcast/

The Kindness Podcast - NPR https://www.npr.org/podcasts/557154160/the-kindness-podcast

Ten Percent Happier Podcast with Dan Harris https://www.tenpercent.com/podcast

Watch: TEDx Talk with David Pincus & Richard Knapp, authors of “Sons of Suicide: The Healing Power of Friendship.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ur97gIESDiE&t=121s

Enclosed is my donation of: $  

Please use it as follows: 

Where Most Needed  
Legacy Friends  

In memory of: ____________________________________________  
__________________________________________  
From: ____________________________________________  
__________________________________________  

Name and relationship: ____________________________________________________________________

Please include my loved one in Remembrances. My loved one's name is: ____________________________  
DOB: ____________________________________________________________________  
DOD: ____________________________________________________________________  

My name and relationship: ____________________________________________________________________  

Please send me this newsletter via email instead. My email address is: ____________________________________________________________________  

Please detach and mail to:  
Friends for Survival  
P.O. Box 214463  
Sacramento, CA 95821-4463  

Gifts of Love  
8/01 - 8/31  

Becca Morganti  
in memory of son, Taylor Summers  
Carole Mann  
in memory of Lawrence Mann, from Mom, Amy, Ingrid, Catherine, & Warren Jr.  
Carolyn Morrissey  
in memory of husband, George  
Chris & Dave Beeby  
in memory of daughter, Maureen “Mo” Beeby  
Christine Weston  
in memory of father, Thomas Weston, Jr.  
Cindy Iseley  
in memory of husband and father, Craig  
David & Tracy Dannenbrink  
in memory of daughter, Avery  
Gary & Brenda Souza  
in memory of daughter, Stephanie  
Glenda Novinger  
in memory of T. Chris Alderton  
Gwen Moran  
in memory of son, Dana Moran  
Ian Howard  
in memory of father, Charles "Chris" Howard, from Ian & Stefan  
Iva Lou Woodring  
in memory of husband, Jim  
James & Nancy Price  
in memory of son, Austin Martin Price  
Jeanne (Karen) Reinoft  
in memory of son, Ben  
Jeanne Moren  
in memory of my husband  
Jeanne Tickle  
in memory of brother, John Rumler  
Jo Macaluso  
in memory of sons, David Joseph & John Bernard  
John & Kathleen Burke  
in memory of son, Andrew Burke  
Josie Pisula  
in memory of son, William Bond Pisula, on the one year anniversary  
Linda Spies  
in memory of son, Jake Spies  
Lory Savage  
in memory of Michael Savage  
M. Kelly Guerrero  
in memory of son, Josh  
Maria Sales Sabate  
in memory of son, Marino  
Mary Tilton  
in memory of my son  
Nancy Finlay  
in memory of nephew, Michael Chesnut Milano  
Nancy Greenough  
in memory of daughter, Bianca Greenough  
Nancy Hiestand  
in memory of brother, Rob Hiestand  
Patricia Sholberg  
in memory of husband, Dee  
Paul Cox  
in memory of son, Heber  
Philip & Chris Hansen  
in memory of son, Nick  
Phillip Cypret  
in memory of wife, Georgette Snell  
Roger & Carol Louthan  
in memory of son, Doug  
Ronnie Stoll  
in memory of son, Robert  
Sandra Denbrook  
in memory of sister, Tami Meridith  
Skye Smith  
in memory of my brother  
Stephanie Chandler-Tonstad  
in memory of Chris Tonstad  
Stephen & Pamela Trask  
in memory of sons, Bradley & Cameron  
Toni Martin  
in memory of daughter, Briana  
Walt & Leona Narr  
in memory of sons, Walter & Paul  
Wendi Bond-Berg  
in memory of husband, Todd Berg  

Donations have also been received from:  
Dixie Laws, Patti Smith, Alexandrea Frey, Deborah Debechevet, Katherine Remhof, Kim Johnson, LCSW, Melinda Marmer PHD, Rebecca Browning, Tami Cisneros  

Thanks to our Facebook birthday fundraiser, Lisa Burleson
No longer reading our newsletter? Would you like our eNewsletter instead? Please let us know: info@friendsforsurvival.org or 916-392-0664