

# Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2022

OCTOBER



## I DON'T WANT PEOPLE'S PITY

by Carol Staudacher

Author of "A Time to Grieve - Meditations for Healing  
After the Death of a Loved One"

*"He that pities another remembers himself." ~ George Herbert*

When we grieve, we want understanding, not pity. Well-meaning friends, relatives, co-workers, and neighbors say things that make us realize they are pitying us - but we don't really feel as if they are understanding us and connecting with us. This is both saddening and disappointing.

But sometimes others' pity can contain more understanding than we may imagine. Because it is from their own hurt that their pity arises, we should not be harsh with those who pity us. It may be

the only level at which they can enter our grief.

We need to recognize and accept that they most likely are carrying a variety of emotional issues themselves, and they may be able to cope with some but not with others.

**Reflection:** I will not be critical or angry when other people express pity. It is probably the only avenue by which they can make a connection with me. My sorrow may make them fearful of going any further than to pity me - for in pitying me they are responding to a hurt or a void in their own life experience.

**October:** I am welcoming the warmth that fall colors and cozy sweaters bring. I can feel the change of the seasons and I take a moment for quiet reflection.

I think about all of you whom I have met personally and virtually over these past 39 years. Your notes and words of appreciation help put wind under my sails (and the sails of our staff). My staff and I hope you find comfort and encouragement with our meetings, webinars and other services we offer.

We are always looking for new ways to help our suicide loss survivors. Please take a moment to share your feedback and services you think would be beneficial (take our survey on the Home Page of our website).

Would you like to write a dedication to your person for our newsletter? We love to hear (and share) stories of our loved ones.

Submit your dedication to  
info@friendsforsurvival.org



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

October 10 @ 3pm PT / 6pm ET

### Third Wednesday

October 19 @ 4pm PT / 7pm ET

### Fourth Wednesday

October 26 @ 7pm PT / 10pm ET

### Grieving Moms Groups (2)

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

#2 Thursday, Oct 27 @ 3pm PT / 6pm ET

### Grieving Spouse & Partner

Thursday, October 13 @ 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, October 11 @ 6:30pm

Faith Episcopal Church

2200 Country Club Dr., Cameron Park CA

### Carmichael, CA

Tuesday, October 18 @ 7pm

Carmichael Presbyterian Church

5645 Marconi Ave., Sacramento, CA

### Jackson, CA

Tuesday, October 4 @ 3:30pm

Sierra Wind Wellness & Recovery Center

10354 Argonaut Lane, Jackson CA

### Lincoln, CA

Thursday, October 13 @ 6pm

Lincoln Public Library

485 Twelve Bridges Drive, Lincoln, CA

### Modesto, CA

Monday, October 17 @ 7pm

The Bridge Covenant Church (Riverbank)

2201 Morrill Road, Riverbank CA

### Legacy Survivors, UT

Wednesday, October 12 @ 6pm MST

Weber State University - Ogden Campus

Merrill Allied Health Building, Room 327

## signs you may be afraid of your emotions

Suppressing your emotions because you're afraid of them can be bad for your physical and mental health. Here's what to do instead.

When a toddler feels a "big" emotion, like anger or sadness, they tend to have a big tantrum on the floor. And these tantrums can be a lot to observe, full of thrashing, screaming, and tears. But a child reacts like this because the emotion they're feeling is uncomfortable, maybe even painful.

Of course, as adults, we feel emotions too, and those feelings can be just as overwhelming, uncomfortable, or even painful as they were when we were children, even if we don't let ourselves react in such a big way.

But, sometimes, in our attempts to not give in to our emotions, we go too far: we run from them or suppress them — even if that harms us in the long run. Although there are many reasons we might suppress our emotions, one of them is that we are afraid of our emotions. Fear of emotions is called "animotophobia." It is not an official term in the DSM-5-TR (Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). Still, fearing your emotions can have a significant impact on your well-being.



## how does being afraid of your emotions impact your health?

"Individuals who fear emotions miss one of the best things of life: living," says Noelia Leite, licensed psychotherapist, doctor of integrative mental health, and certified hypnotherapist. "People who are afraid of emotions survive; they do not live. Their fear stops them from living the best of their lives."

This can impact their relationships, their mental health, and even their physical health because it can lead to bursts of rage, isolation, and trouble connecting with others. It can also lead to long-term depression and anxiety.

"It causes so much unnecessary suffering," says Kirsten Cantley, holistic psychotherapist. "I would compare it to high cholesterol and heart disease."

When we fear our emotions, we often suppress them. This can lead to long-term health complications or strains in our relationships.

"Suppressed emotions stay in the body and begin to create disease, from pains to immune disorders to IBS to name a few," she continues. "It also takes a toll on your mental health [because] emotions always come out, whether an unacceptable outburst or acting in a passive-aggressive way."

## how do you stop being afraid of your emotions?

**SPEAK WITH A THERAPIST.** Ultimately, the best way to stop being afraid of your emotions is to slowly and gradually face them.

This is why going to therapy can be very helpful. Cognitive behavioral therapy (cbt), using the technique of exposure therapy, may be particularly helpful for overcoming a fear of emotions.

"[Therapy] offers a safe space for clients to feel

safe to express their emotions," psychotherapist Ronnie Adamowicz says. "This creates what we call a 'corrective emotional experience.'" When we have a positive experience expressing our emotions in therapy, we may change our beliefs on the utility of emotions.

**FOCUS ON YOUR PHYSICAL SENSATIONS.** Because it can be difficult to talk about how an emotion feels, your therapist might also focus on having you describe your physical feelings, rather than your emotional ones.

"[We] have them describe if they notice any subtle feelings in their body as they become fearful of an emotion," Adamowicz says. "The more they can talk about how it physically feels, the more they can actually be with the emotion."

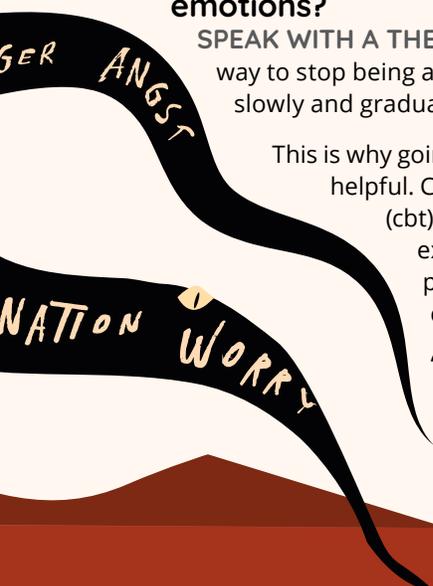
**PRACTICE MINDFULNESS.** Your therapist will also work with you to help normalize your feelings and accept them as valid, rather than suppress them, by teaching you to be gentle and non-judgmental with yourself.

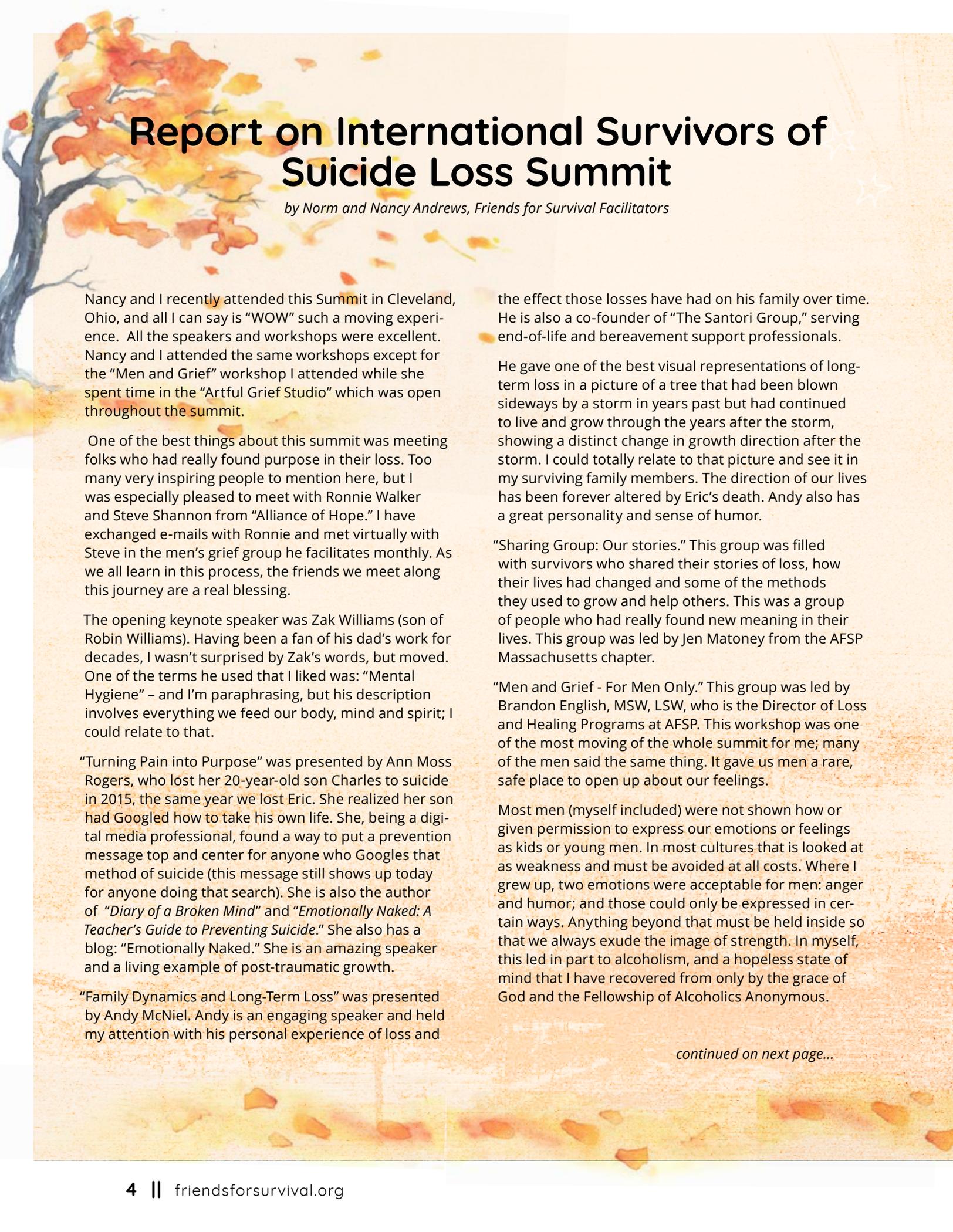
Practicing mindfulness through breathing techniques, meditation, guided imagery, and yoga can help you begin feeling more comfortable sitting with your thoughts and experiencing them without judgment.

**RECAP.** Many people fear their emotions because emotions can feel unpleasant or scary. However, in reality, our emotions are vital for understanding who we are, what we want, and where we are going. The more we understand and embrace our emotions, the less they control us.

With therapy, it's possible to become more comfortable with our emotions, rather than suppress them, and that can help reduce the chances of long-term impacts on our mental and physical wellbeing.

Source: <https://psychcentral.com/anxiety/when-youre-scared-of-feeling-your-feelings>





# Report on International Survivors of Suicide Loss Summit

by Norm and Nancy Andrews, Friends for Survival Facilitators

Nancy and I recently attended this Summit in Cleveland, Ohio, and all I can say is “WOW” such a moving experience. All the speakers and workshops were excellent. Nancy and I attended the same workshops except for the “Men and Grief” workshop I attended while she spent time in the “Artful Grief Studio” which was open throughout the summit.

One of the best things about this summit was meeting folks who had really found purpose in their loss. Too many very inspiring people to mention here, but I was especially pleased to meet with Ronnie Walker and Steve Shannon from “Alliance of Hope.” I have exchanged e-mails with Ronnie and met virtually with Steve in the men’s grief group he facilitates monthly. As we all learn in this process, the friends we meet along this journey are a real blessing.

The opening keynote speaker was Zak Williams (son of Robin Williams). Having been a fan of his dad’s work for decades, I wasn’t surprised by Zak’s words, but moved. One of the terms he used that I liked was: “Mental Hygiene” – and I’m paraphrasing, but his description involves everything we feed our body, mind and spirit; I could relate to that.

“Turning Pain into Purpose” was presented by Ann Moss Rogers, who lost her 20-year-old son Charles to suicide in 2015, the same year we lost Eric. She realized her son had Googled how to take his own life. She, being a digital media professional, found a way to put a prevention message top and center for anyone who Googles that method of suicide (this message still shows up today for anyone doing that search). She is also the author of *“Diary of a Broken Mind”* and *“Emotionally Naked: A Teacher’s Guide to Preventing Suicide.”* She also has a blog: “Emotionally Naked.” She is an amazing speaker and a living example of post-traumatic growth.

“Family Dynamics and Long-Term Loss” was presented by Andy McNeil. Andy is an engaging speaker and held my attention with his personal experience of loss and

the effect those losses have had on his family over time. He is also a co-founder of “The Santori Group,” serving end-of-life and bereavement support professionals.

He gave one of the best visual representations of long-term loss in a picture of a tree that had been blown sideways by a storm in years past but had continued to live and grow through the years after the storm, showing a distinct change in growth direction after the storm. I could totally relate to that picture and see it in my surviving family members. The direction of our lives has been forever altered by Eric’s death. Andy also has a great personality and sense of humor.

“Sharing Group: Our stories.” This group was filled with survivors who shared their stories of loss, how their lives had changed and some of the methods they used to grow and help others. This was a group of people who had really found new meaning in their lives. This group was led by Jen Matoney from the AFSP Massachusetts chapter.

“Men and Grief - For Men Only.” This group was led by Brandon English, MSW, LSW, who is the Director of Loss and Healing Programs at AFSP. This workshop was one of the most moving of the whole summit for me; many of the men said the same thing. It gave us men a rare, safe place to open up about our feelings.

Most men (myself included) were not shown how or given permission to express our emotions or feelings as kids or young men. In most cultures that is looked at as weakness and must be avoided at all costs. Where I grew up, two emotions were acceptable for men: anger and humor; and those could only be expressed in certain ways. Anything beyond that must be held inside so that we always exude the image of strength. In myself, this led in part to alcoholism, and a hopeless state of mind that I have recovered from only by the grace of God and the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

*continued on next page...*

# 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:

**"988"**

### 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)

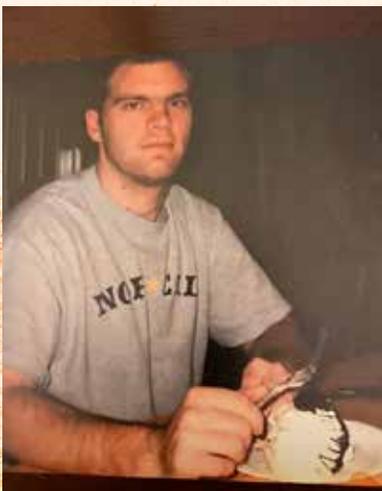


This program is funded in part by the Division of Behavioral Health Services through the voter approved Proposition 63, Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).

"Intersection of Trauma and Long-Term Suicide Loss" with Dr. Doreen Marshall: Vice-President, Mission Engagement, AFSP. In this workshop we discussed the effects of trauma on us as suicide survivors and some of the methods used in treating that trauma. Bessel van der Kolk's book "*The Body Keeps the Score*," was discussed among other resources for treating trauma.

"Working Together" with John R. Jordan, PhD, and Rebecca Ladd. John was a private-practice psychologist and Rebecca one of his patients who lost her son to suicide. John has four books published on grief and devastating losses. They spoke about the relationship between psychiatrist and patient and how best to work together. Rebecca talked about how she and her son were irreverent in religious matters until after her son passed. He contacted her after his death and explained to her that God was everywhere and that so was he. This started a discussion about after death communication. I really enjoyed this workshop and Nancy said it was her favorite of the summit. We bought the book "*Induced After-Death Communication*" by Allan L. Botkin, PsyD and Craig Hogan as a result of participating in this workshop, but I have not read it yet.

This is just a very brief overview of the workshops we attended. The summit had a spiritual aspect to it that I can't capture in words. It was wonderful. The closing ceremony is one we will try and replicate in this year's *Out of the Darkness Walk*, with representatives of all types of loss laying color beads over a unity candle.



*In honor and memory of Eric Andrews*

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