

# Comforting Friends

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

**April 2025**



**Life becomes more peaceful  
when you truly understand**

and embody the idea that you can't keep  
stressing over what's beyond your control.  
Life will happen, and people will do and say  
what they want. All you can do is focus on  
what you can change and let the rest be.

Vex King / [tinybuddha.com](http://tinybuddha.com)

**Save the Date : Big Day of Giving is May 1**

This will be our seventh year participating in Big Day of Giving and we are excited to be a part of our region's big day.

The Sacramento Region Community Foundation's annual 24-hour giving challenge helps local nonprofits raise funds to make a difference. It's the culmination of an entire year's worth of community-building and collaboration, made possible by donors like you and community partners. Our goal this May 1st is to raise \$30,000.



How can you help? On **Thursday, May 1**, you can donate to Friends for Survival by visiting:

<https://www.bigdayofgiving.org/organization/friendsforsurvival>

and making a gift with a credit or debit card. Donations as little as \$15 make a big difference. **Starting Thursday, April 17**, you can schedule your gift in advance of Big Day of Giving.

SHARE: Let your networks know that you support our cause. A good word from a donor like you is the most meaningful way for us to spread our mission. Thank you in advance for your crucial support.



## COMPLICATED AND AMBIVALENT GRIEF

by Jaletta Desmond

It wasn't the first time I'd heard it from a suicide loss survivor: the woman who lost her son said she felt more relief than grief. I've heard mothers say they were scared of their child and their threatening and violent behavior. Another time a woman said she realized after her husband died that he was emotionally abusive and she felt he never really loved her.

Experts often call this *complicated* or *ambivalent* grief.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention facilitator training suggests facilitators speaking with group members refer to the people who died as "their person" rather than "their loved one." To some of you, that may sound unusual. To others, it may be a welcome change in language.

A grief support group can be a meaningful and powerful place to share. In a support group individuals can find a space where they feel seen and understood. Outside of the group, the suicide loss survivors may feel isolated and alone in their grief. However, those struggling with complicated or ambivalent grief may feel even more isolated and alone sitting in a support group. They may leave the group feeling unseen and misunderstood and

never return because they don't grieve the person as others do. Because they feel this confusing mixture of grief and relief. It adds another level of stigma to the stigma we suicide loss survivors may already face.

As author and grief expert David Kessler says, we deserve to grieve the person who died and the person we wish they'd been—the mother, father, sibling or child we wish we'd had. Especially in suicide loss, it can be a very complex grief—there may have been years of mental turmoil that caused severe stress in the family, multiple attempts that resulted in trauma for everyone, or struggles that simply made it difficult to express or feel love toward them. Referring to that person as a “loved one” may not feel natural or truthful.

That's normal, as all feelings in grief are. My favorite grief mantra is “no emotion is a bad emotion.” If you feel less sadness and more anger, bitterness, resentment and relief—that's OK.

We invite you to join us for a new breakout room called [Complicated & Ambivalent Grief](#) offered during the [2nd Monday Open Group](#), April 14th at 3pm PT / 4pm MT / 5pm CT / 6pm ET

This is a safe place for your grief, no matter what it looks like. You deserve to feel what you feel for as long as you feel it. And giving voice to those feelings among other grieverers may lead you to a different place in your healing.

*Jaletta Albright Desmond is a general grief support specialist and peer group facilitator for Friends for Survival and Hope After Suicide Loss, a support group offered by NAMI Charlotte and NAMI NW Piedmont. She is also a facilitator with Coping After Suicide and Alliance of Hope. Contact her at [hopeafterws@gmail.com](mailto:hopeafterws@gmail.com) or (980) 689-0136.*

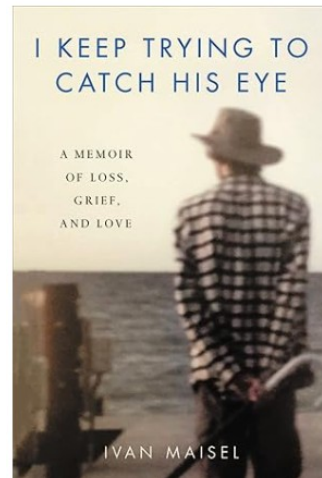
## It's just...there. It just is.

I called my mother to wish her a happy Passover. We talked about the seder, the ceremonial meal held on the first night of the eight-day holiday. We talked about the weather in Mobile. We talked about how Meg and I and the girls were holding up.

***"I want you to know," she said, "that I think about max every day."*** That sounds more simplistic than she meant it. She went on to describe how someone who is that integral a part of your life, like Max, like my dad, who had died in 2007, four weeks after their 60th anniversary, remains a constant presence. I started to choke up, which made me react, "Seriously? Again? I'm going to keep falling apart?"

We chatted a little longer. I hung up and just remained in my car for a minute. I immediately realized the idiocy of my reaction.

Of course, I'm going to keep falling apart. I needed to keep falling apart. I just needed to understand that I would keep falling apart so that I wouldn't feel ambushed when it happened. That's when it began to dawn on me:



Max's death isn't going away. Missing him isn't going away. His absence will be, as mom said, my constant companion. Everywhere I go, his absence will go with me, stand beside me. Actually, I pictured his absence, my grief, my pain, on my shoulder. Not a shadow, just a presence.

This phrase came into my head: It just is. *Is* as a verb, not as a bridge to another verb. His absence just exists. It just is.

I repeated that sentence to myself as I walked across the parking lot into the grocery. Coming to that understanding calmed me. It just is. It will always be right here, on my shoulder. Get used to it. Learn to live with it. It's not scary. It's not dangerous. It's just...there. It just is.

That thought gave me the first peace I've enjoyed since Max disappeared. This was my grief. A survivor learns to grieve, to acknowledge the loss, to understand that it is never going away. In a sense, the permanence of the loss replaces the person lost-- a poor replacement, initially alienating and painful in its omnipresence, eventually a burden you become accustomed to caring. I don't have Max anymore. I have his loss. Grieving is the vehicle for accepting that transformation. Eventually, every survivor makes the transformation. The question is, at what pace? Those who choose to stiff-arm the grief will find their arms get awfully tired after a while. The force of grief is inexorable, an inflated ball rising through water. It will emerge into open air, either when the griever desires or when the grief desires, which may not be at an opportune time.

Source: [\*I Keep Trying to Catch His Eye - A Memoir of Loss, Grief and Love\* by Ivan Maisel](#). Reprinted with permission.

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## All There Is with Anderson Cooper

When Naomi Judd died by suicide in 2022, after a long struggle with mental illness, her daughter Ashley found her. In this deeply moving, revealing, and insightful conversation Ashley Judd talks about the trauma she has worked hard to face, the grief she now feels, and how her mother's spirit is still very much alive in her life. All There Is



**Podcast:** [All There Is with Anderson Cooper](#). Grief can feel so lonely but talking about it, and listening to others share their grief experiences helps. In Season 3 of All There Is, Anderson Cooper continues his deeply personal

exploration of grief in all its complexities. In moving and honest discussions, he learns from others who've experienced life-altering losses. All There Is with Anderson Cooper is about the people we lose, the people left behind, and how we can live on – with loss and with love.

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## Support Group Meetings & Other Resources

Our Virtual & In Person  
Support Group  
Meetings

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## April Remembrances



So, it seems  
No matter what I do,  
My heart will always look for you.  
In everything I do.  
In every memory, old and new.  
My heart will always look for you.

-Liz Newman



[Click HERE to Remember](#)

We are honoring our loved ones with a new format. If you would like to add or update your loved one on our **Friends Remembrances**, click on the button below. You can also add a photo or a dedication.

[Click HERE to add or update](#)

## Become a Friends for Survival "GEM" With a Monthly Pledge

*by Kristine Cozine, Finance Director*

We are so appreciative of our **GEMS** (gives every month) members of our Friends for Survival community. There are several ways to establish sustained giving: simply set up an eCheck through your bank, or create a recurring credit card or PayPal donation through our website (just check the "Make this a monthly donation" box).

We can also send you 12 self-addressed, stamped envelopes if you prefer to mail in a monthly check. Call or email me if you have any questions or need assistance setting up your pledge.

Other Ways to Give:

There are many simple and effective ways to help our suicide loss survivors:

- Gift of stock and securities
- Donor-advised funds
- Retirement plan distributions
- Including Friends for Survival in your will or trust

Kristine Cozine

Office: 916-392-0664

Email: [kristine@friendsforsurvival.org](mailto:kristine@friendsforsurvival.org)

*Friends for Survival has provided bereavement support to suicide loss survivors since 1983. All gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

[Click HERE to Donate Now](#)



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Transparency  
2025**

**Candid.**

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