

Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2019
FEBRUARY



THE HEART WON'T FORGET

By Doris Sodaro

"In memory of my husband,
Gerald Sodaro, a brave and cou-
rageous man, who fought a long
and hard battle, until he could
fight no more."

The heart won't forget
Neither the love nor the pain
It always keeps track

Of that which matters
Nothing can ever erase
The ones we have loved

It's written inside
With an indelible seal
And can't be wiped out

Now and forever
Within each pulse and each beat
It brings them along

They're always a part
Wherever life takes us
They walk at our side

Our love shall remain
Unto ages of ages
Two souls intertwined

Now and forever
Belonging to each other
Until time stands still.

"May God comfort and heal all
those who have lost a loved
one in such a tragic way. It is an
unfathomable, crushing blow to
bear that words can't describe, a
cataclysmic event that casts long
shadows, which only another
survivor of suicide can truly un-
derstand. My heart goes out to
all of you in your sorrow and pain.
Namaste, Doris Sodaro"

Source: *The Obelisk, Loving Outreach to
Survivors of Suicide, Catholic Charities
of the Archdiocese of Chicago*

February: One of my
passion projects for this organization
- our Legacy Endowment Fund - was
created in 2016. The goal of the crea-
tion of this endowment fund is to invest
and grow principle to provide income
for future support services. In 2018,
we received a little over \$23,000 in
specific donations. With your contin-
ued donations over the past two years,
our endowment fund has grown to
\$60,000. Please consider our endow-
ment fund for your future charitable
giving. Kristine will be reporting on the
fund throughout the year so you can
see the direct impact of *your* donation.

Gratefully,

Marilyn Koenig,
Executive
Director





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:

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
Extensive lists of available meeting support www.afsp.org/find-support

American Association of Suicidology (AAS)
www.suicidology.org

New York Life Foundation
Bereavement resources:
www.newyorklife.com/foundation/bereavement

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 National Center for Grieving Children & Families

The Dougy Center
www.dougy.org/grief-resources

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Resources to help veterans:
bit.ly/vetgriefconnection



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

MEET THE WIDOW WARRIORS

by Stephanie Chandler

In December of 2013, I arrived at my first *Friends for Survival* meeting looking and feeling like I'd walked through the eye of a storm. It was just five weeks after my husband had died by suicide, and something inside me yearned to find others who'd walked in my shoes to help me navigate the road ahead.



Someone at the meeting said, "You need to meet Chopi. She's a widow too." Chopi greeted me warmly and handed me a piece of paper with her phone number on it, along with an invitation to meet for coffee whenever I was ready. It took a couple of weeks to summon the courage to reach out to her, but I was glad when I finally did. It was a great relief to no longer feel so alone, and to learn that many of my feelings were a normal part of the grieving process.

A few of us gathered in my backyard on a sunny October afternoon in 2014, went around the table and each shared our stories over boxes of tissues. It had been five years for Chopi, four for Michele, three for Kelly, and less than a year for Maria and for me. As hard as it was to get through those stories, there was something incredibly healing about sharing our experiences with others who didn't just empathize - they actually understood the pain.

That lunch kicked off many more gatherings, including dinner parties, nights out dancing, Tahoe trips, tropical vacations, and an annual holiday party with all of our kids. That's another amazing gift of this group; our children get to grow up together with other kids who know what it's like to have lost their dads the same way. The kids don't have to talk about it; they just know they have it in common and it has quietly created a beautiful bond between them.

We call ourselves the Widow Warriors and we aren't a formal support group. We're a group of friends-turned-sisters who have supported each other as we've walked through some of our darkest days. We've helped each other feel less alone on this journey. I can't imagine how I could have come this far without them.

The Power of a Group

We're not alone in appreciating the power of a group. According to an article from the American Psychological Association, Sally H. Barlow, PhD, professor of psychology at Brigham Young University said, "In cases of abuse or trauma, groups provide social support, they improve social networks and they can reduce stigma, isolation and feelings of alienation among members." She added, "Members can be agents of change for each other. Seeing others' progress can help group members realize they, too, can cope and feel better."

This is the power we can all experience when we attend *Friends for Survival* meetings. I also encourage you to come to meetings and find your people. If you're a parent, reach out to other parents. If you're a sibling, reach out to other siblings. The amount of healing you can experience could be life-changing, as it certainly has been for us. My wish is that you can find the peace, camaraderie, hope, and joy that we've found in walking this road together.

Stephanie Chandler is a writer and mom who lives in the Sacramento area.



His Memory

by Barbara Rubel, author of "But I Didn't Say Goodbye"

HIS MEMORY RAISES MY VOICE AND SILENCES IT AT THE SAME TIME. HIS MEMORY IS THE SMILE ON MY LIPS. HIS MEMORY ROLLS DOWN MY CHEEK. HIS MEMORY QUICKENS MY HEARTBEAT AS IT ACHES TO FIND THE ANSWERS THAT ONCE BEAT WITHIN HIS CHEST. FOREVER SILENCED. HIS MEMORY RAISES MY VOICE AND SILENCES IT AT THE SAME TIME.



Grief, Healing and Time

by Deb Kosmer

Today someone I loved died. I can't believe it. I don't believe it. I won't believe it. Family comes. Friends come. The phone keeps ringing. The doorbell rings again and again. The ringing seems far away. I hear it, but I seem unable to answer. My legs won't move. My feet won't move. I am glued to the chair. Others answer for me. They seem to know I don't remember how.

Tomorrow comes. I didn't want it to ever come. I wanted to go back to the time before you died. There, I said it. You died. Does that make it true? There must be some mistake, I tell myself. Maybe this is just a bad dream I need to wake up from. If only someone would wake me up. When people ask me what they can do for me, I try to tell them the only thing I want is you. They look sad, they gently shake their heads, they hug me, and still you're not there.

Your funeral is over. Everyone says I did so well. I hardly cried. Don't they see I can't cry? Not yet. I am in shock. I hear someone else say, "Give her time, that's all she needs." I wonder: Can it really be that simple? If it is, I just want to run through time, however much it takes to get to the place where I don't hurt so bad, don't miss you so much. But no, I can't do that. Even if I could, I would only be farther from you. My heart cannot bear that.

Days pass. Tomorrow will be one month since you died. I wonder how I can just skip that day. I am afraid of it; of reliving every single detail of your death, knowing that one month ago you were here with me, and my world was okay. Now I have no world. Everyone keeps telling me I just need to make a new world. But I liked my old one. I never asked to have it taken from me. Even if I wanted to, I don't know how to start over. I don't know where the beginning of that world is, or how to get there. Everything is so hard and makes me so tired. I just want to stay in bed.

Days pass, and turn into weeks. I am stuck in a world foreign to me, wondering where it is that you are and how you could have left me.

I force myself to go through the motions of living and caring for others. They don't seem to notice it's just pretend, and I am starring in the hardest role of my life. If only they had just an inkling of the place that I am in, of my fractured and broken heart.

I never used to read the obituaries. Now I feel compelled to do so. I feel like a kindred spirit to others who must also travel the road I am on. I still feel so alone. Now they will feel alone, too. I feel like I should say something to them, but I do not know them; I only know their pain.

Months continue to pass. I am back at work, back in church, getting my hair done. It all still seems strange, different, and doesn't matter like it used to. Friends call. Sometimes I say, "Yes, I will go to dinner." Other times I say, "Thanks for calling, but not today." Many days it is still easier to just be alone where I don't have to hide my tears when they come, where I can talk to you and not feel strange, where I can just be however I am that day and not try to fit into the place others have carved out for me.

Finally one day I surprise myself. I am humming a tune. For a little while, I feel lighter. I almost smile. I begin to judge myself. What's the matter with me? How can I be even a little happy when you're not here? But then I hear your voice in my head – or is it my heart, the place where you live – saying you are glad that I am humming, glad I can smile, encouraging me to live again. I don't know whether to laugh or cry, so I do both. But later that day I find myself humming again, and I smile and I know that I am going to be okay.

Source: *The Compassionate Friends of Los Angeles*

“Wounds do not heal without time and attention. Yet, too many of us feel that we don't have the right to take the time to heal from emotional and physical wounds.”

—From Judy Tatelbaum's *Courage to Grieve*

FINANCIAL FACTS

with Kristine Cozine, Friends for Survival Finance Director

This is the first of my periodic financial reports you will see in our newsletter this year. Over the past few years, we have had a \$40,000 yearly contract with Sacramento County in which we receive this set amount through the voter approved Proposition 63, Mental Health Services Act. Part of this money is allocated to our payroll expenses, and the remainder is applied to our general operations budget. We will receive an increase of \$2,300 yearly starting at the County's new fiscal year (July 1, 2019).



Our second fundraiser was a huge success and again we would like to thank all of our friends, family and community for coming together and helping us raise over \$14,000 (an increase of \$4,000 from last year). Please save the date for our third annual Rock'N Ribs event: October 12, 2019.

For the first time ever, we participating in Giving Tuesday on November 27th. Thanks to a generous donor match, we raised \$2,000 toward our goal of \$3,600 to fund our 1-800 phone number for families to reach us from all over the nation.

We made two significant additions to our technology this year: We migrated our antiquated accounting system to QuickBooks Online (through TechSoup for Non-Profits, a one year subscription is \$50). This gives me and the Board Treasurer the ability to see our banking numbers in real time, streamlining tasks, budget tracking and detailed reports on donations received. We have also updated our database into a new contact management system, Constant Contact (annual subscription of \$500/year). Constant Contact gives us the ability to better communicate with you and also offer an electronic newsletter.

Our Comforting Friends newsletters is our biggest yearly expense, and one thing everyone loves. We have been producing two different newsletters (local and national) for many years, but starting January 1, we have combined the two. Our newly formatted newsletter can now be processed more quickly, is more economical, not to mention much more striking. In January, we mailed out 4,399 paper copies of our newsletter (that is down from over 4,700 per month when we just offered paper). Our email subscribers number 287 and growing (saving us printing costs and postage).

Questions or comments? Email me at ffskristine@gmail.com

Support

N. CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUPS

Our meetings are peer support, not therapy sessions. They are free and you are invited to attend for as long as you need. All locations are drop-in meetings, no RSVP required.

**Please call our office
for specific meeting
locations: 916-392-0664
or 1-800-646-7322**

Carmichael (Sacto)
Tuesday, 2/19 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

Cameron Park
Tuesday, 2/12 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

Chico
Monday, 2/11 @ 4:30pm - 6pm

Elk Grove
Wednesday, 2/13 @ 7pm - 8:30 pm

Modesto
Monday, 2/18 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

Roseville/Rocklin
Thursday, 2/21 @ 7pm - 8:30 pm

Yuba City
Tuesday, 2/26 @ 6:30pm - 8pm