

Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2019
MARCH



DECADES OF DEDICATION

By Lucy & Kent Smith, Elk Grove, CA

I met Marilyn 24 years ago. I cannot remember where I got her name, but had called her for some help for me and my family after a suicide. My family wasn't ready for support group meetings, but I thought we needed some kind of support and closure.

Marilyn helped me by suggesting a few things, including and perhaps to visit their newsletter group. I had visited and helped with the newsletters once, and then decided to give it another try. Well it's been 24 years and my husband Kent and I are still "giving it another try." We host the newsletter group at our home each month. We have gotten so much in return by volunteering

our time. We hope it makes a difference to all of the survivors that we communicate with, and lets them know they are not alone. We cherish all of the new friendships that we have made over the years.



March: This month we feature a few of our volunteers and how they have found that helping others has helped themselves.

During this past year of 2018: we responded to 380 first-time callers, held 72 support meetings attended by 813 persons, and published 10 editions of our newsletter for a total annual distribution of 48,000. Our amazing volunteers? They donated 4,835 hours. We are most grateful to each and every one of these volunteers who contributed to the amazing services of Friends for Survival.

Gratefully,
*Marilyn Koenig,
Executive
Director*



Support

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)

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

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



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

a guide through grief

Becky Reimers lost her son to suicide three years ago. She copes by helping others cope.

Reimers, 71, of Marysville, CA, started a *Friends for Survival* support group in the Yuba/Sutter/Colusa area about two years ago and serves as a facilitator.

"My son, Ray Carey, died by suicide three years ago at the age of 39, and facilitating this group locally is my humble attempt to bless others," she said. "I'm so glad that I was chosen to be his mother and I'm so glad that he's no longer in pain."



"When I tell people my son died of suicide, multiple people have shared with me that they have lost a loved one by suicide," she said. "People don't have a lot of people to talk to about their feelings because it's a complicated kind of grief."

Reimers said group meetings aren't always a comfortable place for people in the early stages of grieving, and she recommends people seek out as much help as they can from as many different resources as possible. "Often people don't seek out support groups right away because they have their families, but a couple of months down the road it can get difficult," she said. "When Ray died three years ago, I knew I couldn't do it alone and I looked to different groups for help." She said the *Sutter Care at Home* Grief and Bereavement Support program, where she went for the first year and a half after her son's death, was a great benefit to helping her heal.

"A support group is one of many vehicles for processing your grief, because not everyone is going to want to be in a group environment. But to know that it's available for anyone is important. Also, I'm available to talk one-on-one if someone wants," she said. "After the loss of my son, I had to repurpose my life because he was my everything."

Reimers said there are many coping skills people can adopt following a loss and that's one of the things they discuss at the meetings – what works for one person might not work for another. She said focusing on the positive memories and shared experiences with a lost loved one is good to do, especially in difficult times. "Ray was hilarious – he had a dry sense of humor, he was a lifelong learner and he loved to travel," she said.

a self revolution through love, intention and service

If you have not been served personally by caring hands in your own life, do not be bitter, but instead, ask yourself who you can now serve.

To be of value to us all, our highest ideals need to be made real in the world. We should speak to protect the ideals of goodness, and act to make them real in the world. The first proves a consummate mind, the second a valorous heart. True progress for humanity is anything that takes us closer to supporting one another. Small acts of kindness between you and the individuals around you are the germination that springs into being something as mysterious as life itself, and what may in fact be humanity's greatest accomplishment — compassion for others. Let us all strive to cultivate a deeper and more meaningful desire to ease the burdens of others. Every person is a precious gift, and we are all like little children who yearn for acceptance, safety, and unconditional love. Let us all reach out with a hope that we could each bring some degree of happiness to other human beings. Let each of us lead a revolution of support in the lives of others.

Excerpt Source: Bryant McGill - McGill Media - www.gomcgill.com



Five Minute Meditation

THE NEXT TIME YOU WANT TO BE INSTANTLY TRANSPORTED TO CALM, PICTURE YOURSELF SITTING ON A PARK BENCH. SMELL THE RICH SOIL AND CLEAN AIR. LISTEN TO THE WIND RUSTLING THROUGH THE LEAVES AND NOTICE IF YOU HEAR ANY BIRDS OR ANIMALS STIRRING WITHIN. THE WARM SUN IS BEAMING DOWN AND AS YOU SOAK UP THE LIGHT, YOU FEEL YOUR WHOLE BODY FILL UP WITH A RENEWED ENERGY AND CALM. WHEN YOU'RE READY, OPEN YOUR EYES AND TAKE THIS RESTORATIVE ENERGY AND CALM WITH YOU INTO YOUR DAY. SOURCE: BLOG.CALM.COM



Survivorship

by Stephanie Weber

It was a busy, busy week for me last week. The Friday before SOS [Survivors of Suicide support group], I gave a 90-minute workshop to teachers, social workers, principals, and counselors at a local high school.

The next Monday evening was SOS, followed by a week of work, a Thursday evening funding request to a local funding board, and a three-hour workshop I was giving on Saturday.

My work is as varied as the colors of the yarn with which I knit. During that week, a day apart, I had two men come to Stone Manor, the home of Suicide Prevention Services, to give me bids on window replacements.

Upon his arrival at our building, I asked each man if he'd ever been touched by suicide.

"Yes, my 22-year-old daughter in 2002," one answered.

"Yes", said the other, "My wife in 2007, and my youth pastor in 2012."

These two men who shared their losses with me both teared up. Each one wanted to tell me a bit about their loved one and, as we walked through the building looking at windows, they would tell me a bit more.

Every day, in every situation I enter, someone has been touched by suicide: workshops, funding bodies, teaching situations ... and so it goes. This country cannot be experiencing 45,000 deaths by suicide a year without each one of us being touched, in some way, by those deaths. There are so many attempt survivors in this country as well.

The suffering of loss survivors is clear and palpable at our monthly meetings. I have the distinct advantage of having been a part of this group since 1982 so I am able to see and feel not only the suffering but the healing as well. We come together to mourn our loss, to try to "make sense out of the senseless", to learn, anew, patience. We come together to share our pain in an open way. In the beginning, each and every one of us is so fragile; we may vow to "toughen up so this can never happen to us again."

At the three-hour workshop this past Saturday, a man asked the following question:

"I know a man I admire a great deal. I know that his son died by suicide. I want to say something to him the

next time I see him, but I don't know what to say or if it would upset him."

We survivors, too, face this. People tell us that they don't want to mention our loved ones to us because they don't want us to think about them or they don't want to make us sad. I was so happy that he'd asked that question. I said the following: "Can you simply tell him what you told me? Tell him that you've admired him and that you felt so sad when you heard of his son's death. Tell him that you just want him to know that he's in your thoughts (and prayers, if you pray)."

Once a loved one dies from suicide, our journey through life takes a sudden and swift change. We quickly learn that what was, is never more, and what is, is now.

At the closing of our SOS meeting, we include words from Iris Bolton: "I don't like it. I don't have to like it. What I DO have to do is make a choice about my living. 'They' made a choice about 'their' living, forcing us to make a choice about ours."

As you move through your grief process and on through the rest of your life, don't be afraid to ask others, "Have you been directly touched by suicide?"

We recover at our own pace; our recovery process differs from that of others just as our loved one differed from others.

You carry the spirit of your loved ones with you. Your story is unique. Your story is YOUR story. Everyone has a story. Everyone wants to tell his story.

Carry the spirit of survivorship that we share to those in that outside world. Recovery is never-ending. Love is never-ending. Kindness, compassion, love ... offer it and display it.

Excerpts source: MayDay, Survivors of Suicide, Batavia, IL

I do not believe that sheer suffering teaches. If suffering alone taught, all the world would be wise, since everyone suffers. To suffering must be added mourning, understanding, patience, love, openness, and the willingness to remain vulnerable.

by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

I HEARD YOUR VOICE IN THE WIND TODAY

Author Unknown

I HEARD YOUR VOICE IN THE WIND TODAY
AND I TURNED TO SEE YOUR FACE;
THE WARMTH OF THE WIND CARESSED ME
AS I STOOD SILENTLY IN PLACE.

I FELT YOUR TOUCH IN THE SUN TODAY
AS ITS WARMTH FILLED THE SKY;
I CLOSED MY EYES FOR YOUR EMBRACE
AND MY SPIRIT SOARED HIGH.



I SAW YOUR EYES IN THE WINDOW PANE
AS I WATCHED THE FALLING RAIN;
IT SEEMED AS EACH RAINDROP FELL
IT QUIETLY SAID YOUR NAME.

I HELD YOU CLOSE IN MY HEART TODAY
IT MADE ME FEEL COMPLETE;
YOU MAY HAVE DIED...BUT YOU ARE NOT GONE
YOU WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF ME.

AS LONG AS THE SUN SHINES..
THE WIND BLOWS...
THE RAIN FALLS...
YOU WILL LIVE ON THE INSIDE OF ME FOREVER
FOR THAT IS ALL MY HEART KNOWS.

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, 3/19 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

Cameron Park

Tuesday, 3/12 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

Chico

Monday, 3/11 @ 4:30pm - 6pm

Elk Grove

Wednesday, 3/13 @ 7pm - 8:30 pm

Modesto

Monday, 3/18 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

Roseville/Rocklin

Thursday, 3/21 @ 7pm - 8:30 pm

Yuba City

Tuesday, 3/26 @ 6:30pm - 8pm