

# Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2019  
JULY



## ENCOURAGEMENT

by Susan J. Reynolds

I recently posted this wonderful quote on the *Friends for Survival* Facebook page:

***"Your journey is not the same as mine, and my journey is not yours, but if you meet me on a certain path, may we encourage each other."***

This quote really resonated with me because I have met many of you on a certain path...the path of a survivor of a suicide death.

Two years ago, my cousin took his own life. Walking that "certain path," in a fog, feeling very uncertain, I remember that clear strong voice encouraging me over the phone - Marilyn Koenig's. I remember going to my first *Friends for Survival* meeting with my aunt and being welcomed with a smile

and a big hug from Ellen O'Neil. I remember Karen Eggen who conducted our small break-out session sitting next to me and patting me on the leg, telling me it was going to be okay.

I began healing thanks to the support and encouragement I received.

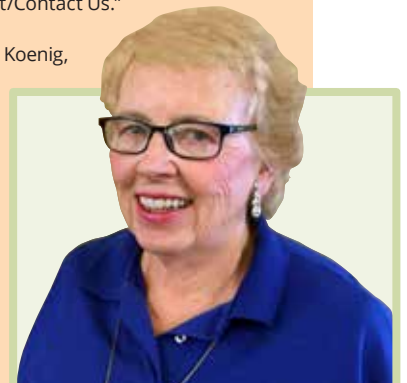
I now am honored to encourage and support you anytime you need it. That is what *Friends for Survival* is all about. Helping each other. Not just for today, but for always.

Think about the people you have met on that certain path, offer encouragement, be grateful for the compassion they possess, and let them know how you feel.

**July:** Warm weather, fresh fruit and cold treats, picnics, and connecting with family and friends on summer evenings are a few of my favorite things about this time of year. Spending some time in nature can also add to our healing. The scent of plants, the sight of trees swaying in the breeze, the sounds of birds, streams and rustling leaves may soothe our heavy hearts. Walking, running and perhaps just sitting on that park bench can refresh our bodies. Let's take good care of yourselves.

This is issue 7 of our reformatted newsletter. How are we doing? Please give us your feedback by taking a short 10 question survey. The survey is located on our website: [friendsforsurvival.org](http://friendsforsurvival.org). Look under "About/Contact Us."

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)**

**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

**Suicide Awareness Voices of Education**  
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 National 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).*



## when I'm gone

*by Mrs. Lyman Hancock*

WHEN I COME TO THE END OF MY JOURNEY  
AND I TRAVEL MY LAST WEARY MILE  
JUST FORGET IF YOU CAN, THAT I EVER FROWNED  
AND REMEMBER ONLY THE SMILE.



FORGET UNKIND WORDS I HAVE SPOKEN;  
REMEMBER SOME GOOD I HAVE DONE.  
FORGET THAT I EVER HAD HEARTACHE  
AND REMEMBER I'VE HAD LOADS OF FUN.

FORGET THAT I'VE STUMBLERED AND BLUNDERED  
AND SOMETIMES FELL BY THE WAY.  
REMEMBER I HAVE FOUGHT SOME HARD BATTLES  
AND WON, ERE THE CLOSE OF THE DAY.

THEN FORGET TO GRIEVE FOR MY GOING,  
I WOULD NOT HAVE YOU SAD FOR A DAY,  
BUT IN SUMMER JUST GATHER SOME FLOWERS  
AND REMEMBER THE PLACE WHERE I LAY,  
AND COME IN THE SHADE OF EVENING  
WHEN THE SUN PAINTS THE SKY IN THE WEST.

STAND FOR A FEW MOMENTS BESIDE ME  
AND REMEMBER ONLY MY BEST.



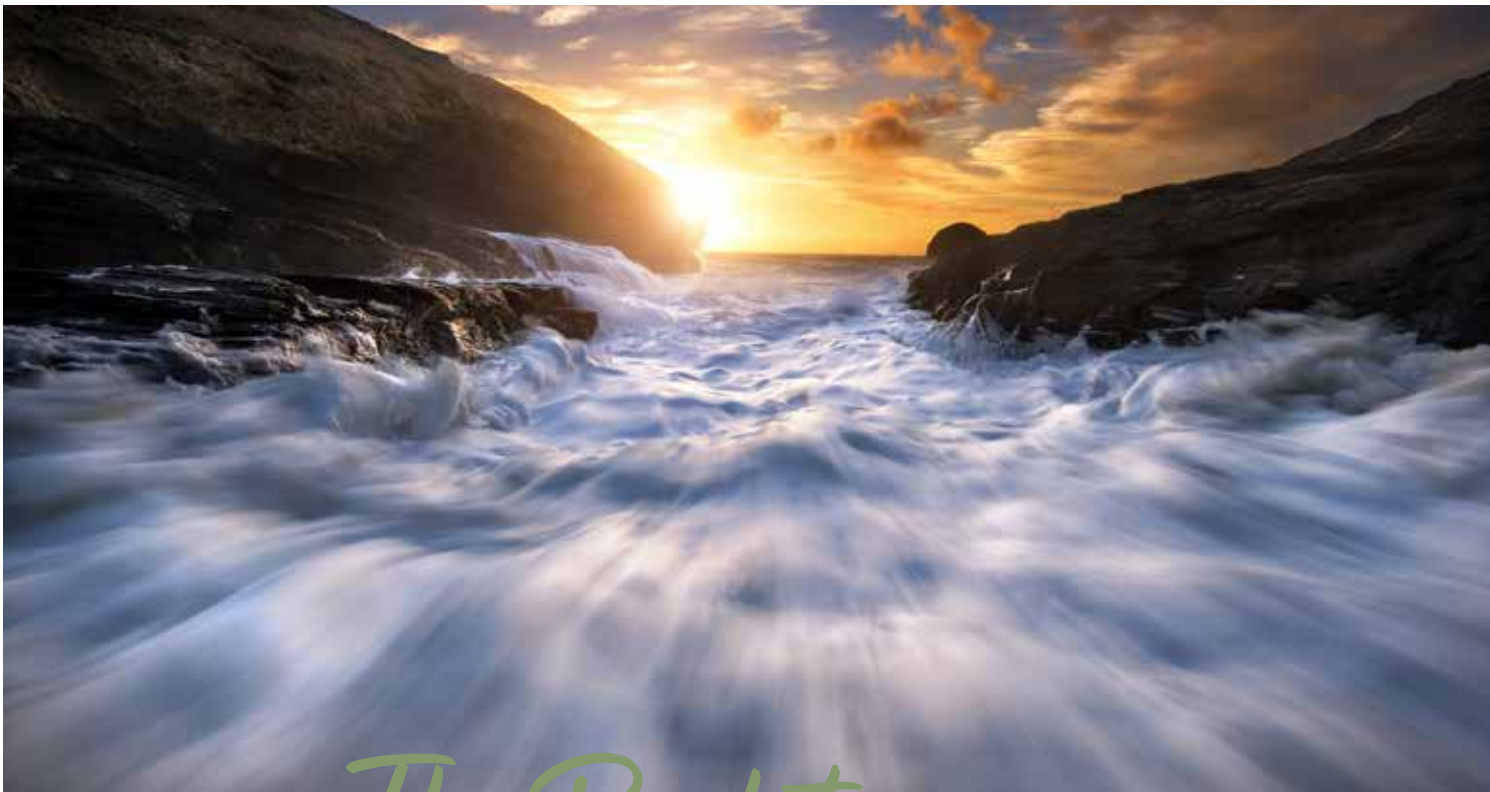
# what are social media companies doing about suicidal posts?

Social media companies have taken a variety of steps to help address suicide risk among users of their platforms. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram all have mechanisms for identifying and assisting users who may be at risk.

For example, Twitter has a team that reviews self-harm reports and contacts reported users, providing them with crisis resources and encouraging them to seek help. Facebook uses artificial intelligence to identify signs of suicide risk in posts, comments, and videos. Facebook staff review content that suggests immediate or serious risk, and contact first responders in exceptional cases. Instagram also has employees who review and respond to reports of suicide risk, and connects users to a support page if they search for hashtags related to self-harm.

Social media users should reach out to fellow users they are concerned about, recommended Daniel J. Reidenberg, Executive Director of Suicide Awareness Voices of Education. Reidenberg advised users to then report the concern so that the social media company can offer resources and support.

Source: *SPRC, The Weekly Spark, Feb 2019*



## *The Reality*

*by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and John Kessler*

**"THE REALITY IS THAT YOU WILL GRIEVE FOREVER. YOU WILL NOT 'GET OVER' THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE; YOU WILL LEARN TO LIVE WITH IT. YOU WILL HEAL AND YOU WILL REBUILD YOURSELF AROUND THE LOSS YOU HAVE SUFFERED. YOU WILL BE WHOLE AGAIN, BUT YOU WILL NEVER BE THE SAME. NOR SHOULD YOU BE THE SAME, NOR WOULD YOU WANT TO."**

**SOURCE: SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE AUBURN SOS**



# Powerful Conference and Connections

by Marilyn Koenig, Co-Founder & Executive Director of Friends for Survival

I recently attended the 52nd annual American Association of Suicidology Conference in Denver, CO. There were a lot of workshops regarding suicide prevention and intervention. During the many years of attending this conference, I have had the privilege of meeting some extraordinary people who have made a difference in the field of suicide. Paul Quinnett has developed a program, **QPR**. This training consists of three life-saving skills: **Question** a person about suicide, **Persuade** someone to get help and, **Refer** someone to the appropriate resource.

There were some sessions on the aftermath of a suicide death such as "Support Loss Survivors Through Effective Outreach" and "Beyond Words: the Restorative Power of the Arts in Healing after Suicide Loss."

I also had the privilege of meeting and thanking David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D. In the 1990's as Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Satcher championed our national effort to develop a national-wide strategy for suicide prevention. I was personally involved with Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network (SPAN) at that time and his endorsement and involvement was critical. It became a historical change in the national attitude regarding the stigma and understanding of suicide. Dr. Satcher was escorted by another supporter of our efforts in those days, Jerry Reed, Ph.D., who had been the legislative aide to Senator Harry Reed at that time. At the conference together, they both shared the story of the journey and progress made to advance suicide prevention.

On Saturday, I attended the 31st Annual Healing After Suicide Loss Conference with various presentations and workshops for grieving hearts.

Another one of my dear friends I was able to see is LaRita Archibald. She is the founder of *HEARTBEAT*, a peer support program for griever's of a suicide death that she started in Colorado after the suicide death of her son, Roger, in 1978. LaRita was a panelist on Saturday and she held a workshop entitled, "A Search For

Answers Comes Full Circle." She also moderated the healing ceremony, "Lessons From The Butterfly," at the end of the day. LaRita is the author of *"Finding Peace Without All the Pieces: After a Loved One's Suicide."* We have known each other for over 30 years and it was so wonderful to visit in person and give her a big hug.

I also met ABC Chief Medical Correspondent, Jennifer Ashton, M.D., who has authored a recent book, *"Life After Suicide: Finding Courage, Comfort & Community After Unthinkable Loss."* Her husband, Dr. Robert Ashton, took his own life on Feb. 11, 2017. Dr. Ashton's book also includes stories of other survivors. The end result is an eloquent look into suicide and a hopeful expression of what it means—and ultimately, what it takes—to heal, in a way that honors the spirit of those who have died, without allowing blame, anger and resentment to take over.

The AAS Conference also included over 40 exhibitors who provided us with a wide variety of materials that pertained to suicide and mental health.

One of the exhibitors was my long-time friend and collaborator Ronnie Walker. Ronnie is the founder of *Alliance of Hope for Suicide Loss Survivors*, which has a comprehensive website. They provide healing, compassionate support that helps people survive devastating loss, and to go beyond "just surviving," to leading productive lives fill with meaning and joy. Their clinically-moderated, online forum operates like a 24/7 support group for thousands of people. The *Alliance of Hope* website contains support resources, a bookstore, blog, and information on the survivor experience. They also provide low-cost Skype and phone consultations with a trained trauma and loss counselor, for those who cannot find local support.

The next annual AAS conference will be held in Portland, Oregon, April 22-25, 2020.

# RONNIE WALKER AND ALLIANCE OF HOPE



Marilyn Koenig and Ronnie Walker, Alliance of Hope booth.

Alliance of Hope was founded as a labor of love in 2008 by Ronnie Walker, a seasoned mental health counselor who lived through the traumatic loss of her stepson to suicide in 1995.

During her own grief journey, Ronnie recognized there was a void in resources for people bereaved by suicide. She intuitively understood what researchers have validated in recent years: suicide loss survivors are a high-risk population for suicide themselves if they don't receive healing support in the aftermath. She also knew firsthand that in-person support groups were few and far between, but that many suicide loss survivors needed support 24/7.

When she took a class at a local high school to learn how to build a website, her goal was simply to extend friendship, healing, and compassionate support to other survivors.

She launched [allianceofhope.org](http://allianceofhope.org) not having any idea of what was to come. She added a community forum, where survivors could come to share their stories and connect with others who understood.

Much like the movie "A Field of Dreams," bereaved souls from across the globe made their way to this healing, online space. The first member joined, then the 50th, and then the 15,000th. In the first few years, Ronnie personally responded to each new survivor. Eventually other loss survivors began to volunteer under Ronnie's guidance.

Ronnie shares: "Today, more than 100 suicide loss survivors have volunteered as moderators and stewards of our online forum, which operates like a 24/7 group for thousands of people. They ensure it remains a healing culture for all who seek support. Many more talented, caring souls have provided pro bono support on our board of directors and advisory council. We would not be here without them."

# 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, 7/16 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

**Cameron Park**  
Tuesday, 7/9 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

**Chico**  
Monday, 7/8 @ 4:30pm - 6pm

**Elk Grove**  
Wednesday, 7/10 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

**Modesto**  
Monday, 7/15 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

**Roseville/Rocklin**  
Thursday, 7/18 @ 7pm - 8:30pm

**Yuba City**  
Tuesday, 7/23 @ 6:30pm - 8pm

