



THE SIBLING PRAYER

by Laura Carpenter

Beneath the amber glow
Of the newly rising sun,
Or standing on the hillside
When the day is nearly done,
Riding down the highway
When my workday is at an end,
Or sitting on a park bench
Talking to a friend -

No matter where I am in life,
No matter what my task,
Please give me peace of
mind, dear Lord,
That is all I ask.

And when those haunting
memories
Of the night he passed away
Come rushing in my broken
heart,
Please do not delay.

Remind me that he is in
A far, far better place,
And grant me a glimpse of
his hazel eyes
And sweet angelic face.
Please grant me reassurance
That we'll someday meet again
In heaven's bright tomorrow.
In your name I pray, Amen.

Source: *The Compassionate Friends of Los Angeles*

August: Siblings, cousins and friends often receive little attention in the aftermath of a suicide death. Few books and articles are written about their experience. They seem to be the forgotten survivors, and even more so decades ago when resources were totally absent. It is our hope that the articles in this newsletter will fill part of that void and help all of us to acknowledge the painful feelings that each of us experience. We are indebted to the contributors who share their talents with all of us. They give a powerful narrative to our experience when we are unable to find the words.

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

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).



river reflections

by Emily Moore

I just got back from a river rafting trip, where I found myself thinking about my brother a lot. He died 16 months ago of an overdose of morphine. I don't know why it happened; it happened. I didn't see the beginning of his life – he was three years older – but I saw the end. I can look at it now and see it in its entirety – his 33 years of living that I so much counted on and expected to last another 70 or 80 years. I thought I would always have him to talk to – about life, about family, and about ourselves.



The river was a meditative place for me. The rhythm of the oars, the gentle motion of the raft, the shore gliding by, the gurgle of the water as it seeped into and back out of our raft – all of this provided just enough stimulation and was hypnotic enough that I didn't want to do anything but sit and think. For a few days on the river, I floated without any of my day-to-day concerns, without the usual level of tension standing behind me.

What rose to the surface, visible in the clear water of my mind after the silt of all my worries sank to the bottom, were thoughts of my brother. Nat would have liked this trip. The rough beauty of the terrain and the quiet power of the water would not have been lost on him. He would have noticed the beauty of the full moon and the light on the canyon walls as the sun rose and set.

I have felt a lot of anger at him for dying, for taking his own life, for engaging in an activity so dangerous, for playing Russian roulette, for committing suicide. He left no note, he didn't say good-bye; he left a wife and two sons whom he loved very much but who, like me, were not enough to keep him alive. It wasn't the anger, though, that I felt on the river. I just remembered him.

Grief is at its sharpest when, after a death, he all of a sudden flashes into focus so real and so present that I can hear his voice as if he has just spoken to me. I can imagine the scent of his hair, remember the texture of his face as I touch it, and I can see him walking and talking as if he were there a moment ago.

River Reflections continued...

At these times, the grief flares up; the wound feels fresh and sharp with memories of the love, the charm, and the grace. I realize both with gratitude and with anguish for the wound this reality carries, that he is not someone I can let go. These memories will come to me for the rest of my life. He is truly a part of me. He is mixed up in my blood and my bones and the electrical impulses of my brain. And in whatever way all of these things go together to form a soul, he is a part of that too. There is no escaping him.

This is the gift and the price of love – it doesn't end. My brother was there in the river's sand and mud, in the full moon, the constantly flowing cold water, the clear dry air, the red canyon walls, and the blue sky. And he was there in me. And I was there, alive and more appreciative than I would have been before he died. I was more aware of my connection to my surroundings – that one day my body will be river mud, water, and bones like driftwood.

What form my love will take then, I don't know. Maybe if there is a river and desert light offering delight to someone's senses, that will be enough. I don't know.

Source: The Compassionate Friends, Los Angeles



Observance

"FOR IT IS TRUE WE CAN SELDOM HELP THOSE CLOSEST TO US. EITHER WE DON'T KNOW WHAT PART OF OURSELVES TO GIVE OR, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, THE PART WE HAVE TO GIVE IS NOT WANTED. AND SO IT IS THOSE WE LIVE WITH AND SHOULD KNOW WHO ELUDE US. BUT WE CAN STILL LOVE THEM – WE CAN LOVE COMPLETELY WITHOUT COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING."

SOURCE: NORMAN MACLEAN – A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT



book suggestion: “sons of suicide: a memoir of friendship”

by Marilyn Koenig, Executive Director of Friends for Survival, Inc.

I had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know Richard and David at the 52nd annual American Association of Suicidology Conference this past April. These two best friends just published a book, *“Sons of Suicide, A Memoir of Friendship,”* recalling the death of their mothers over fifty years ago. Authors Richard J. Knapp and J. David Pincus met as seniors in high school after their mothers died by suicide when they were 13 and 14 years old.

This compelling book is a moving memoir that weaves together themes of life-shattering tragedy and life-affirming friendship. Feeling lost and abandoned, Richard and David bonded instantly.

Decades later, they learned that two other close friends had also lost their parents to suicide. Each of the four sons open up about how his parent’s decision changed him and the course of his life. They soon discover that they are more than friends. They are brothers.

I found these to be memorable excerpts:

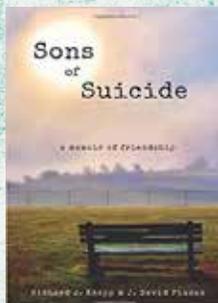
“Our friendship, which salvaged two teenagers struggling to make sense of death and life, has endured and flourished these many decades.”

“Expressing the emotional relief we each feel after discovering that we’re both struggling to come to terms with our mothers’ suicides is near impossible.”

“As hard as this is, it’s easier with close friends who lived through the same hell.”

“Though the passage of time is supposed to heal all wounds, it hasn’t for any of us. The wounds cut too deep and too close to the heart to ever fully heal.”

“Forgiving is hard, but possible...eventually. Forgetting is impossible...always”



“...wouldn’t it be the ultimate irony if our mothers, who couldn’t save themselves, somehow in death passed on to their sons the prescription for overcoming life’s inevitable disappointments?”

After reading this book, I feel that this “memoir of friendship” truly reinforces the inestimable value for each of us to have a circle of caring friends.

Chatting at the conclusion of a breakout session that they facilitated at the conference, Richard and David shared with me that it took six years to write this memoir.

They are generous with their compassion for others and bold to share their story. The book speaks to the life-long impact a suicide death has on each of us. Richard and David’s hope is that this book will be of help to others.

All net proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to non-profits focused on suicide prevention, grief counselling and mental illness.

MY SISTER, MY FRIEND

WITHIN OUR HEARTS

YOU WILL ALWAYS BE.

OUR MINDS WILL BE FULFILLED

WITH SWEET MEMORIES.

YOUR SPIRIT AND LOVE

WILL NEVER BE GONE.

FOR EACH LIFE YOU TOUCHED

WILL CARRY ON.

Source: *The Compassionate Friends*,
Author: Catherine Hall

our cousins

by Susan J. Reynolds

"COUSINS ARE USUALLY THE FIRST FRIENDS WE HAVE AS CHILDREN. THEY ARE THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS BECAUSE THEY ARE FAMILY AND FRIENDS AT THE SAME TIME. NO ONE WILL UNDERSTAND YOUR CRAZY FAMILY LIKE YOUR COUSINS DO!" – AUTHOR UNKNOWN



I have known Finance Director Kristine Cozine for one year now, and I am proud to call her a friend. We share a common bond in losing a loved one to suicide - our cousins.

For Kristine, it's been 14 years since cousin David passed. Kristine is an only child and David was that big brother to her. Growing up together, family gatherings, marriage and kids – always in touch. Kristine shared with me that when the news of David's death came, it was a very busy time in her life: working full-time, married with two young children. She pushed her grief aside and focused on the busyness in their lives.

A few years passed and Kristine reached out to one of David's sisters. They talked for many hours and this is when her grief journey began. These conversations helped Kristine reconcile the emotions she had pushed aside for so long. What emerged was not sadness, but celebration of the life that David lived while he was here.

Kristine shared with me that she made a copy of a cherished photograph that she has hanging in her home. It is a picture of David, at his sister Elissa's wedding reception, fixing his daughter's ponytail, smiling and joyful. She had it framed and gave it to his daughter when she turned 17. You can feel the love, joy and happiness in this moment the picture was taken. This is what Kristine encouraged me to see and remember.

Two years after my own cousin's passing, I am following Kristine's advice and looking at pictures of my cousin Wes. Growing up, family gatherings, marriages and kids. I cannot help but feel sadness, but remembering Kristine's advice, I also recall celebration, love, respect and fun. I would like to encourage you to do the same – see the love, feel the respect, remember the fun. Share your stories and celebrate the life of the one you love.

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, 8/20 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Cameron Park
Tuesday, 8/13 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Chico
Monday, 8/12 @ 4:30pm – 6pm

Elk Grove
Wednesday, 8/14 @ 7pm - 8:30 pm

Modesto
Monday, 8/19 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Roseville/Rocklin
Thursday, 8/15 @ 7pm – 8:30 pm

Yuba City
Tuesday, 8/27 @ 6:30pm – 8pm

