

Comforting Friends

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

2020
FEBRUARY



REMEMBRANCE

Author Unknown

You can shed tears that he
is gone.

Or you can smile because he
has lived.

You can close your eyes and
pray that he'll come back.

Or you can open your eyes and
see all he has left.

Your heart can be empty be-
cause you cannot see him.

Or you can be full of the love
you shared.

You can turn your back on to-
morrow and live yesterday.

Or you can be happy for tomor-
row because of yesterday.

You can remember him and
only that he's gone.

Or you can cherish his memory
and let it live on.

You can cry and close your
mind, be empty and turn
your back.

Or you can do what he
would want:

**Smile, Open Your Eyes, Love
and Go On.**

*Source: MayDay SOS, Survivors
of Suicide, Batavia, IL*

February: February is the anniversary month when we held our very first meeting. The year was 1983, and we have held support group meetings every month since then. At our February meetings each year, it is our tradition to focus on the good memories of our loved ones. We encourage our families to bring pictures and mementoes to share.

I remember my son, Steven, who was artistic and loved to cook. He always enjoyed helping others who crossed his path. Perhaps he was more like me than I realized when he was growing up. I do have fond memories of him.

Please contact us for information on how to start or expand support services for families who are trying to cope with the aftermath of a suicide death. We are here to help.



Gratefully,
Marilyn Koenig
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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, 2/18 @ 7pm – 8:30p

Cameron Park

Tuesday, 2/11 @ 7pm – 8:30pm

Chico

Monday, 2/10 @ 4:30pm – 6pm

Elk Grove

Wednesday, 2/12 @ 7pm - 8:30 pm

Modesto

Monday, 2/17 @ 7pm – 8:30p

Rohnert Park

Wednesday, 2/19 @ 7pm-8:30pm

Roseville/Rocklin

Thursday, 2/20 @ 7pm – 8:30 pm

Yuba City

Tuesday, 2/25 @ 6:30pm – 8pm

Happy Valentine's Day, Babe

by Rita Clark

Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries are hard,
But Valentine's Day seems the hardest of all.

Christmas I celebrate with all I hold dear,
Though your absence is felt through all of the cheer.

Your birthday, our anniversary is still a celebration for me.
These dates confirm that there was you and that we were we,
But on Valentine's Day I grieve all alone.
Not that I'm not getting flowers or cologne,



I miss more than anything the things taken for granted.
A love so sweet, it seemed almost enchanted,
Memories of Valentine's Days past in my heart,
Of times when we believed that we'd never part.

So now, as I sit all alone and reminisce,
I find that I am so grateful for all that I miss,
For few EVER have the kind of love that we shared.
A love like ours cannot be compared.

I cherish each moment, each memory we made,
Memories of a love that will never fade.

We had quite a life together, you and me.
We had two great kids, a wonderful family.

My heart remains full till we meet again,
And I'll not dwell on what might have been.

I'll pick up my chin and smile as I say,
"I'll always love you, Babe. Happy Valentine's Day."

strength

Author Unknown

We don't always have to be strong to be strong. Sometimes our strength is expressed in being vulnerable. Sometimes we need to fall apart to regroup and stay on track. We all have days when we cannot push any harder, cannot hold back self-doubt, cannot stop focusing on fear, cannot be strong. There are days when we cannot focus on being responsible. Occasionally, we don't want to get out of our pajamas. Sometimes we cry in front of people. We expose our tiredness, irritability or anger. Those days are okay. They are just okay. Part of taking care of ourselves means we give ourselves permission to "fall apart" when we need to. We do not need to be perpetual towers of strength. We ARE strong. We have proven that. Our strength will continue if we allow ourselves the courage to feel scared, weak and vulnerable when we need to experience those feelings. Today, help me know that it is okay to allow myself to be human. Help me not to feel guilty or punish myself when I need to "fall apart."

Source: After Suicide - A Ray of Hope for Those Left Behind by Eleanora Betsy Ross



You Are Not Alone

WE KNOW THE HEARTACHE THAT YOU BEAR.
WE'VE FELT THE PAIN 'CAUSE WE'VE BEEN THERE.
WE SHARE A BOND OF INFINITE SORROW.
A HOPE FOR PEACE – STRENGTH FOR TOMORROW.
A TIME WILL COME WHEN YOU'LL SEEK RELIEF.
SOLACE AND COMFORT TO EASE YOUR GRIEF.
WE WELCOME YOU – WE SHALL BE THERE.
WE UNDERSTAND – WE'VE MUCH TO SHARE.

SOURCE: SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE, "MAYDAY", VOLUME 26



The Invisible Cloak

by Linda Tippett

I didn't expect it. Not now. Not when I had rationally and intellectually told myself over and over that my real grieving had taken place when I knew he would not get better. Wasn't that when my actual journey of widowhood had begun – before death, when I began losing my companion little by little? And hadn't God answered my prayers and taken him gently and quickly, surrounded by family love?

So why, after rather proudly keeping my emotional equilibrium for several months, did I suddenly burst into tears upon entering the hospital where he and I had spent so much time? I was going to visit a friend, but I never even made it to the elevators. I stumbled back to the car to sit in shaken wonder that such emotion had suddenly bubbled out.

Apparently grief can sometimes be like an invisible cloak that you may unwittingly wear. It can cover from head to toe, keeping emotion hidden in its folds. Nor can anyone else see it. I heard over and over again, "My, you seem to be doing so well!" And I began to believe it as my unconscious act of normalcy fooled everyone, even me.

Then that day my cloak fell open. Its lurking emotions finally burst through to envelop me with feelings so intense that I literally felt raw inside. My outpouring of tears lasted well beyond the meager supply of tissues I had in my purse. More than one passerby looked my way, but left me to my obvious grief.

Finally my sobs subsided into hiccups, and I began the process of practicality...starting the car, finding my way out of the parking garage, paying the tickets, and then driving home through rainy streets to my empty house.

Strangely the house had never seemed emptier, starting the cycle of tears again, until all I could do was lie down on my much-too-big bed and soak the pillowcase through.

Underlying all this outburst was still the element of surprise. I was sure I hadn't cloaked my grief. Because concerned family and friends thought I should, I had read booklets on the grief process and had even attended a grief support group several times. But all the time I thought..." I don't need this. I'm fine. Sure, I'm lonely, but I'm handling it."

I suspect now that any grief counselor would recognize this as a classic case of unwitting grief denial and wouldn't have been at all surprised at my experience.

Afterwards, when I was calmer, I returned to the literature I had shoved back on a shelf, and read again the wise words that now held a great deal more meaning for me.

"Grief is painful. Grief is unpredictable. Grief involves surprises. The way out of grief is through it."

All this advice I had first skimmed over with a "yeah, yeah" attitude. Convinced that I had absorbed my loss in a dignified and admirable way, I had dismissed the wisdom of experts.

But with the sudden lifting of my invisible cloak, I had finally experienced the gritty pain of grief, but thought I must find a way around it. However, to get to the other side of it, I had to walk through the door that opens on acceptance of a new path. I had hidden grief from myself, wrapping the pain so tightly as to squeeze the life from it, trying to bypass that door.

Yes, it was unpredictable and surprising, but now I know it's inevitable. It's just a matter of when. Sooner or later I will have to gird myself for the roller coaster ride that often characterizes the healthy grief process.

I didn't understand that it is normal to fall apart even months after the funeral, or find Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries, or just "a year ago today" passages difficult. I was convinced that keeping it all cloaked was the "brave" thing to do. It was certainly easier on family and friends.

But I learned that this is MY grief and how I handle it has nothing to do with anyone else. Many people do not give others the freedom to grieve in a way that is right for them, but I am unique. My situation and lost relationship are unique, and I must surrender to the process in my own way.

There's an ancient "Warrior Song" that says, "There is meaning only in the struggle. Triumph or defeat is in the hands of God. So let us continue the struggle". It's a mandate, indeed, as I now know what battles need to be fought to light up my forward path and throw off the invisible cloak.

Source: HOPELINE, HOPE for Bereaved

Legacy Endowment Fund

by Marilyn Koenig, Co-Founder & Executive Director



In April 2016 we launched our *Legacy Endowment Fund*. In the nine months that followed, 44 families became founding members, contributing a total of \$26,713.

The goal of the fund is to invest and grow principle to provide income for future support services. The fund is conservatively invested with Edward Jones. Thanks to your continued donations, the balance in our fund has now reached a little over \$100,000. Our 2020 goal is to add an additional \$40,000. Due to increased efficiency and fundraising efforts in 2019, we have been able to leave our *Legacy Endowment Fund* untouched so it may continue to grow at a steady pace.

You too can create a lasting memorial to honor the life of your loved one by specifying a gift to our *Legacy Endowment Fund*. Your gift can include:

A cash donation	Bequest in your will
Gift of life insurance	Gift of an IRA or pension funds
Gift of an asset	Charitable gift annuity

Consult with your professional advisers to determine which method of giving is best for you. Contact us at 916-392-0664 or info@friendsforsurvival.org for more information.

We are all very familiar with the necessity of providing support services for an extended time as we all cope with the suicide death of our loved ones. We have been providing bereavement services for 37 years to thousands of families. Your *Legacy Endowment Fund* gift helps us secure support for future generations.

We appreciate your consideration and gift of legacy.

Support

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

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

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



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New! Join us for our free monthly webinars
on the second Tuesday of every month.
More info and to register:
www.friendsforsurvival.org/meetings



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