

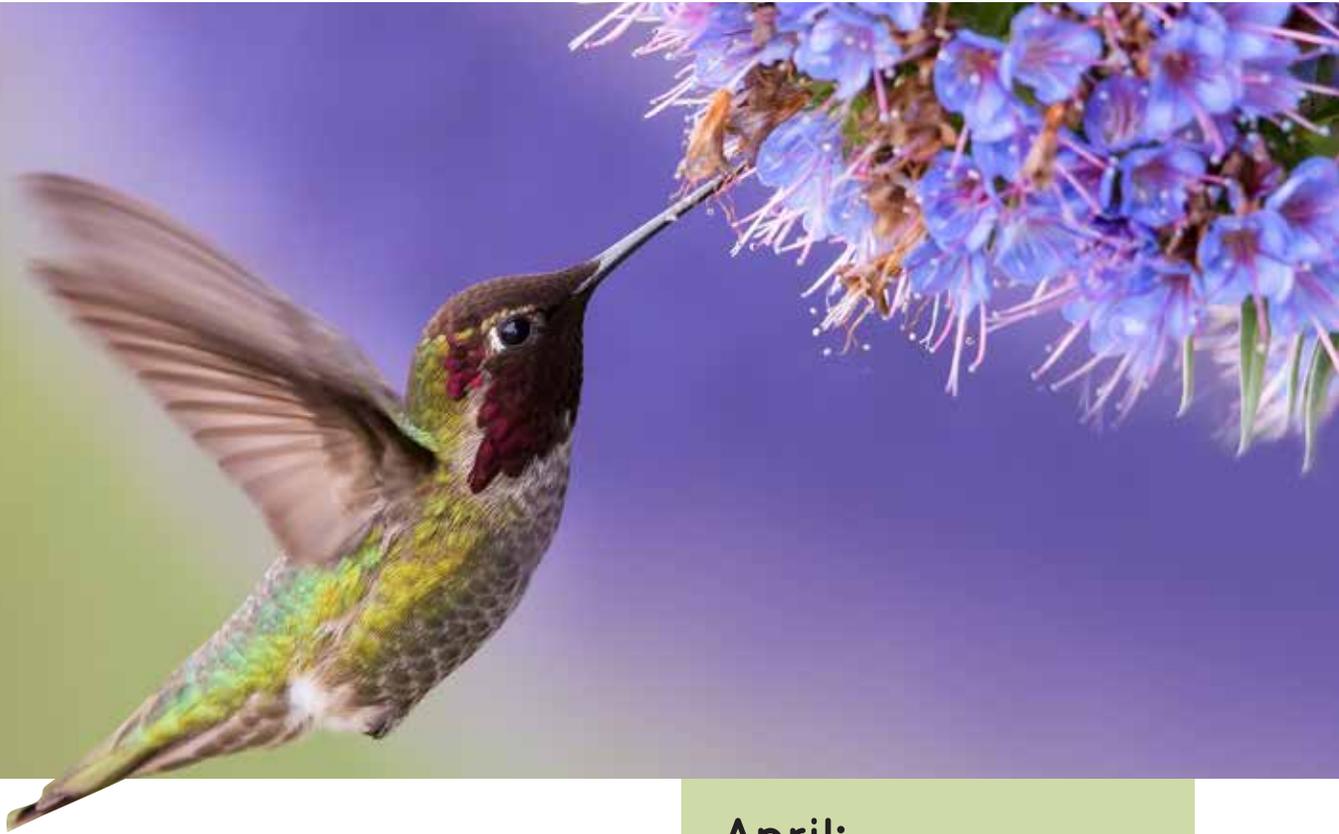
Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2020

APRIL



SOME THINGS I LOST AND ONE I DIDN'T

by Clair Hopley

When my son died, I lost many things. I lost the pleasure of his company, the joy of watching him grow up, and the hope of enjoying his companionship in the future. I lost heart for awhile, but I did not lose my son. He died.

I don't like to hear or read sentences such as "She lost her child," when what is meant is that the child has died. Someone who loses things is careless and no parent is so careless as to lose a child.

To be told that we "lost" our children makes us sound as if we were in some way

responsible, just as we are responsible when we lose our glasses, our pocketbooks, or even our tempers. I suspect that when we hear that we "lost" our children and when we say "I lost my child," we might feel a little guilty, as if we did something or failed to do something, to cause the loss.

We don't need to feel guilty. I know that I have lost a lot, but I always say that my son died, because that is, in fact, what happened.

Source: TCF, Amherst, MA

April: Our lives always have ups and downs; sometimes it seems that it is more than we can handle. After a suicide death our world changes into one with a strange, mysterious landscape. We don't fit in; we don't like it. It seems like a nightmare. How could this have happened?

At our April meetings we will be discussing the reaction of others as we navigate this unfamiliar grief. Our extended family and friends are also confused yet wanting to help. Some may avoid us because they don't know what to say. Others may say awkward things like: "I know how you feel." Though trying to offer comfort, they are not in our shoes. We hope they never will have to experience a suicide death. This journey of grief takes a long time. We travel with you. At our meetings you will meet people who do share a similar experience, and therefore understanding of, this particular grief. We are privileged to share this journey with you as long as it takes.



Gratefully,
Marilyn Koenig
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Support

NO. CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUPS

Carmichael (Sacto)

Tuesday, 4/21 @ 7pm – 8:30pm
Carmichael Presbyterian Church
5645 Marconi Avenue
Carmichael, CA 95608

Cameron Park

Tuesday, 4/14 @ 7pm – 8:30pm
Faith Episcopal Church
2200 Country Club Drive
Cameron Park, CA 95682

Chico

Monday, 4/13 @ 4:30pm – 6pm
Butte County Library
Conference Room
1108 Sherman Avenue
Chico, CA 95926

Elk Grove

Wednesday, 4/8 @ 7pm - 8:30 pm
Rescate Coffee
2475 Elk Grove Blvd., #160
Elk Grove, CA 95758

Modesto

Monday, 4/20 @ 7pm – 8:30pm
Sutter Health Education &
Conference Center
1700 McHenry Ave., #60B
Modesto, CA 95350

Rohnert Park

Wednesday, 4/15 @ 7pm-8:30pm
St. John's United Methodist Church
5150 Snyder Lane
Rohnert Park, CA 94928

Roseville/Rocklin

Thursday, 4/16 @ 7pm – 8:30 pm
Valley Springs Presbyterian Church
2401 Olympus Drive
Roseville, CA 95661

Yuba City

Tuesday, 4/28 @ 6:30pm – 8pm
The Ministry Center
715 King Avenue
Yuba City, CA 95991

Webinars:

4/14 and every second Tuesday of
the month. More info and register at
friendsforsurvival.org/meetings

loss

by Beth Lorber

I am here among friends, smiling at their humor
And making plans for tomorrow.
But there is another person, lying curled in the corner,
Crying out in unbelievable pain.
That, too, is me.



I am doing my household chores,
And the routine is familiar and satisfying,
A gesture toward a need for living.
But there is another person, lying in bed,
Willing her mind a blank, not wanting to think or be...
That, too, is me.

I look at a lovely spring day,
A view of a world of growth and change,
A world only God could make.
But that other person stares through tears
With unseen eyes, knowing there is no God.
That, too, is me.

I am surrounded by my family,
A gathering of love and joy and tenderness,
Of cherished moments and warm hugs.
But another person is there, whose arms and heart
Ache for one she can never hold and comfort.
That, too, is me.

Very slowly, I am learning there is room
For joy and fun and cherished moments with friends.
In this hurry-up world, with no space or patience
For grieving, there may always be two of me,
And I'm doing the best I can for both.
That, too, is me.

Source: Bereavement Publications, Inc., Colorado Springs, CO

h is for happiness

by Therese Gump, *LOSS (Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide)*

It is sometimes difficult for survivors to allow themselves to experience happiness, joy, well-being; that “glad-to-be-alive” feeling that we once felt before suicide entered our lives. The “pursuit of happiness” is our right, says the Constitution and all the world seems to be in the race. But do I still have that right? Me - whose loved one withdrew from the human race? It’s an uncertain right for me at times. Happy feelings are so spontaneous that they burst through, and even as I am feeling a moment of joy, I have mixed emotions. If not at that moment, then reflecting later on that moment. Why am I here feeling this good and am I really entitled to laugh aloud again?

Not all survivors feel this way, but many do. Though it may sound trite or preachy, human beings cannot live without joy, happiness and laughter. If we are entitled to cry, we are also entitled to laugh. It heals the heavy load we bear. We are surviving, living on. Bless the joyous moments and savour them as if they were the oasis of the desert traveler. The desert is still out there, but this happy feeling is the cold drink of water and shape of the palm trees, the impetus for my going on through the rest of my journey. Yes, I can feel happiness where I find it. I don’t have to push it away. I can keep it. I need to in order to survive.



Lavender

LAVENDER HAS BEEN VALUED FOR CENTURIES FOR ITS PHYSICAL BEAUTY, SOOTHING FRAGRANCE AND HEALING PROPERTIES. LAVENDER FLOWERS ARE KNOWN TO REPRESENT PURITY, SILENCE, DEVOTION, SERENITY, GRACE AND CALMNESS. ITS PURPLE COLOR ALSO COMES WITH GREAT SYMBOLISM. PURPLE IS THE COLOR OF ROYALTY AND SPEAKS OF ELEGANCE, REFINEMENT AND LUXURY. THE COLOR PURPLE IS ALSO ASSOCIATED WITH THE CROWN CHAKRA, WHICH IS THE ENERGY CENTER ASSOCIATED WITH HIGHER PURPOSE AND SPIRITUAL CONNECTIVITY. TREAT YOURSELF WITH DRIED LAVENDER TEA, LAVENDER ESSENTIAL OILS, CANDLES, OR MAKE YOURSELF A SMALL SACHET WITH DRIED LAVENDER LEAVES.

25 Years of Healing

by Kimberly Shaw

When news of my brother's suicide came, I was a newlywed, having just moved across the country. I had few friends or outlets for support locally. Back in my hometown, I attended the funeral and watched the outpouring of love and support that week. I soaked up as much as I could. For my family in the Midwest, the hugs and "how are you's" would continue. Constant reminders, his room, his workplace, his friends, would prove both difficult and comforting.

Living away from my hometown, I didn't have this. There was no internet; no rich Facebook history or memories to reminisce by. There were phone calls with my parents. But, frankly, they were too crushed and in pain to have anything left to give. I leaned heavily on my husband. My mom's best friend had tucked a "Compassionate Friends" flyer into my purse after the funeral and urged me to get support. They referred me to Friends for Survival.

John and I were close. Despite our age difference, we liked the same music, good food, and both had the same naughty sense of humor, teasing, playing practical jokes. John went to culinary art school and cooked at some of the finest Chicagoland restaurants. We liked to have young adult dinner parties. He struggled with alcoholism. He had a heart condition, was sober, but things began to change suddenly. And, like that...he was gone, a shining star with so much promise, so loving, so loved.

My first Friends for Survival meeting was shocking. As each suicide survivor introduced themselves and mentioned the loved one who died by suicide, I was barely able to keep it together. But, their words gave me hope. If people could do this... speak it out loud, again and again, would it eventually hurt less? And, what a revelation it was to be able to talk openly about John and his suicide choice with people who didn't act as if they wanted to flee while I spoke. Nor did they spew those clichés about suicide. I attended faithfully that first year. I learned a lot about the grief process. I did the reading.

Each year, on the anniversary of John's death and his birthday, I tried to find some way I could be out giving in the community to A) take my mind off it, and B) do something positive in his memory, even if it wasn't spoken. It forced me to remember the best version of John, and celebrate the best in myself. I was art docent in my daughter's classroom. I went to speak to a group of Job Corps kids, and eventually did a life coaching course with them. Sometimes, it was simply buying a stranger a cup of coffee and pastry. It helped me to create ways to turn the landmark into something more positive for myself.

But there were a few years, especially those milestones like 10 and 20, where I might have had a hard time. I would cry, talk to a friend, then bundle up and watch comedies all day. And, last year, I held a Facebook fundraiser for Friends for Survival that went quite well!

I also suffer from chronic migraines. I wanted to work on myself, to define myself as someone who is thriving, not just surviving. I didn't want to be "Kim, whose brother killed himself," or "Kim, the Migraineur," so I worked on living the life my soul intended. I took two life coaching credentialing courses. I quit my white collar job and started painting murals and faux finishing walls. I taught myself elaborate crochet techniques. I poured myself into becoming authentically "me."

Now, I'm Kim, the Wife, Mom, Artist who happens to suffer from migraines and lost her only brother to suicide. I joined a local art gallery, adopted my twin grandsons. Life has been busy. And, I've learned something else. I'm not afraid to ask the question, "Do you feel suicidal?" I know for a fact my strength has allowed me to ask that question of several friends in a crucial moment in their life. Strength and healing has meant I can speak as confidently as Marilyn Koenig (Executive Director of Friends for Survival) does about suicide now.

The majority of the time, I can remember with less pain. I can speak about John with ease now. We can laugh about old family stories, look at pictures. I sure miss him. And, I think he'd be proud and honored to know that I submitted and had a show accepted to the Elk Grove Fine Arts Center for July 2020 entitled, "The Culinary Art Show!" in his honor. It's the first culinary-focused art show of its type. I'm proud to incorporate the love of my brother with my love of good art! I have found ways to keep my love for John alive.

What's been my secret to survival? Movement -- not allowing myself to become "stuck" no matter how heavy and difficult it felt to get moving. Making conscious choices about how I wanted to handle difficult days. As my life coaching mentor Rhonda Britten said, "Honor your feelings, but act on your commitments." This has served me well. And, finally, self-compassion and care has helped. An Epsom salt bath, a pedicure, a soul-satisfying meal, miles and miles of nature walks. It's hard for me to stay down when I'm surrounded by beauty, and I seek it out constantly. I am here, I am whole, and I am surviving. I wish you peace in your journey.

John B. Shaw 02/12/1968 - 02/13/1994

BIG DAY OF GIVING

By: Marilyn Koenig

On May 7, please help us reach our fundraising goal of \$20,000 this year!



We are excited to again be one of the 600 non-profits selected this year to participate. The Sacramento Region Community Foundation's Big Day of Giving is an annual 24-hr giving challenge to help local non-profits raise funds to make a difference in the Sacramento region. It's the culmination of an entire year's worth of community-building and collaboration, made possible by donors like you and community partners, like Western Health Advantage.

During the 2019 Big Day of Giving campaign, non-profits in the Sacramento region raised nearly \$8.4 million, exceeding the \$7.4 million raised in 2018. Since 2013, the giving day has generated nearly \$40 million for local non-profits.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

DONATE: On Thursday, **May 7**, you can donate to Friends for Survival by visiting www.bigdayofgiving.org and making a gift with a credit or debit card. Donations as little as \$15 make a big difference, and your gifts can help us win some of the \$100,000 in prizes that are up for grabs!

Starting Monday, **April 20**, you can schedule your gift in advance of Big Day of Giving, just so you don't forget!

SHARE: Let your networks know that you support our cause by sharing our posts on your social media accounts, or by creating and sharing a fundraising campaign. A good word from a donor like you is the most meaningful way for us to spread our mission!

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

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education- 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 - 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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**Big
Day of
Giving**
MAY 7

Save the date! See Marilyn's article
on Page 5.

