

Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

2020

OCTOBER



A TIME TO MOURN, A TIME TO COMFORT

Grieving is the way we mend broken hearts.

When we sustain a bad wound, the body heals in stages. Initially, we feel shock and numbness, then the sharp pain of the injury, and slowly the hurt subsides. Even so, we are often left with a scar, reminding us of the seriousness of the trauma. "Grief-work," the process of mourning, is the way the psyche, bruised and battered by the pain of loss, heals itself.

Responses to loss cannot be accurately predicted nor explained in neatly defined phases. Just as in the process of dying, bereavement involves a number of responses that come in and out of the mind and body at different times. In

unexpected moments, just when you think the acute pain is over, a wave of sorrow or a deep ache of loss can overcome us.

Moreover, there is no timeline for the healing of grief. For some, the intensity of pain subsides within months; for others, it is years before the adjustment to the loss is in place. It is critically important for mourners to realize that there is no "right" way to grieve, nor is there any limit on how long the "phases" of grief will last.

Each of us will experience bereavement in a unique way.

Excerpted from "A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort" by Ron Wolfson, Ph.D.

October: After a suicide death, we seek help hoping to understand and cope with the tragedy that we are experiencing. *Friends for Survival* provides that comfort, support and hope that our families are searching for.

Our new outreach service, "Caring Friends," is underway. This focused phone-support program is available to grieving persons who may benefit by receiving additional encouragement and other support on a regular basis.

We are now accepting applications for training our next group of volunteers. Would you help us extend our friendship and the soothing warmth of a cup of coffee by phone, with members of our community?

Please call our office anytime 916-392-0664 or 1-800-646-7322, to ask for an application form.



Gratefully,

Marilyn Koenig
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Support

NO. CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUPS

Until further notice, all support group meetings are virtual.

Go to our website, click on **Support Resources, Meetings.** Find your meeting date and time, click on **"Register."**

PUBLIC MEETINGS:

Second Monday

October 12 @ 3pm PST

Third Tuesday

October 20 @ 7pm PST

Fourth Wednesday

October 28 @ 7pm PST

PRIVATE CHAPTER MEETINGS:

Legacy Survivors Utah

Wednes. 10/14 @ 6pm MST (5pm PST)

Modesto

Monday, 10/19 @ 7pm PST

WEBINARS:

More information and register at:
friendsforsurvival.org/our-webinars



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it wasn't you

by Mandy Bryant, Friends for Survival Member

I finally saw my brother's headstone last month and sang to him this song I wrote. After four years, it really helped.



"I see you in every face, in every laugh, in our old places.
I find you gifts you'll never wear, you'd like this shirt, that flannel there.

I keep forgetting that you're gone, I wake up mad you haven't called me. Each moment before I remember: wish I could stay there forever. I don't want to know. Wanted to watch you grow.

But I wake from this reverie, Band-Aids torn off: reality.
Because I know, you had to go.

Facebook thinks we should be friends, that I should call to make amends. Your texts are still here on my phone. No one answers. I'm alone. Can't press delete. Your absence would be complete.

I can feel our final hug: I smell your shirt and desperation. I knew that you could pull the plug, but I only prayed for your salvation. Because I knew, talking could make it true.

When I saw you swaddled there, laid out with a shave and makeup, I felt confused because I knew it wasn't you. It couldn't ever be you, leavin' a partner and babies too. Your life's not just your own; I'll write that on your headstone.

I chose me over you, I had to. My babies need their mama, yours need their dad, too. Couldn't go down with your ship; you had to choose to stay. My banging on all your windows didn't make it go away.

I saw you in the mall today, I didn't look to see your face, because I knew...

It wasn't you."

In memory of my brother Nathan Bryant - 02/06/80 - 04/02/15



to honor you

by Connie F. Kiefer Byrd

In Loving Memory of Jordan Alexander Kiefer -- 8/24/88 - 12/13/05

To honor you, I get up everyday and take breath. And start another day without you in it.

To honor you, I laugh and love with those who knew your smile and the way your eyes twinkled with mischief and secret knowledge.

To honor you, I take the time to appreciate everyone I love, I know now there is no guarantee of days or hours spent in their presence.

To honor you, I listen to music you would have liked, and sing at the top of my lungs, with the windows rolled down.

To honor you, I take chances, say what I feel, hold nothing back, risk making a fool of myself, dance every dance. You were my light, my heart, my gift of love, from the very highest source.

So every day, I vow to make a difference, share a smile, live, laugh and love. Now I live for us both, so all I do, I do to honor you.

Source: www.bereavedparentsusa.org



Trying to Fill Shoes

by Catherine Greenleaf - "Healing the Hurt Spirit"

Sometimes when we lose a family member to suicide, we try to fill the person's shoes so the loss will not be so obvious and painful to ourselves and others. But this puts us in the unenviable position of overextending ourselves -- something a survivor should not be doing immediately after a suicide loss. If our loved one was the scholar or athlete of the family, we make attempts to over-achieve in the same or similar fields to delay or stop the ache of our loss and that of other family members. But these attempts merely exacerbate our pain. There is no way to replace those we have lost. We need to be ourselves more now than at any other time in our lives. We need to cherish ourselves and love ourselves. **Today, I will gladly fill my own shoes.**



John Robert Lewis

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

When John Lewis died recently, we heard and read about his efforts to end racism, but he was also one of us. He fought beside us for suicide awareness. I had the privilege of meeting John Lewis in 1997 as hundreds of us from SPAN gathered in Washington DC to advocate for suicide prevention.

The Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network (SPAN) was created by Jerry & Elsie Weyrauch of Atlanta, Georgia, and I had the honor of being a founding board member.

SPAN had mobilized hundreds of persons across America to join our efforts to educate and influence Congress to the tragedy of suicide. Most of us were families that had been affected by a suicide death. We were passionate and determined that America needed to create legislation to address this public health crisis. We visited the offices of every Congressperson with literature and discussed our concerns for the lack of mental health resources and funds to provide suicide prevention services.

During those several days, we conducted a press conference and meetings near the White House and Capitol. On one of those afternoons, John Lewis met with us outside the Capitol, expressed his support, and encouraged us: "Don't give up, don't give in...". We were inspired by his leadership of love and passion for our mission.

I want to share an article written this past July for The Sophie Fund by my friend, Paul Quinnett, Founder and CEO of the QPR Institute and author of "Suicide: The Forever Decision":

Celebrating John R. Lewis, Suicide Prevention Champion

While we all celebrate the great contributions to America by civil rights leader John R. Lewis, the suicide prevention community remembers him also as the first person in our House of Representatives to publicly step into the fear-some and taboo subject of suicide and call on this country to recognize that the prevention of death by suicide is a "national priority."

Congressman Lewis of Georgia, who died last week at age 80, was the first in the House to speak out and speak up. Senator Harry Reid of Nevada introduced a similar resolution in the Senate at nearly the same time in the same year. Reid had lost his father to suicide and chose to speak openly about his loss to the world.

Motivating John Lewis were Elsie and Jerry Weyrauch, who had lost their daughter to suicide—a promising young doctor. John Lewis was their congressman. He took their cause to Congress and sparked the fire that led to national action—or, in his words, some "necessary trouble."

Thus three loss survivors (Elsie, Jerry, and Harry), together with John Lewis, launched those key "first movements" that began only in 1997. These bold actions not only broke through the barriers of shame and stigma, they fueled the first ever national movement to prevent suicide.

House Resolution 212 of the 105th Congress introduced by Lewis with 92 co-sponsors on July 31, 1997 and adopted by the House, declared that "the House of Representatives recognizes suicide as a national problem and declares suicide prevention a national priority, acknowledges that no single prevention program will be appropriate for all populations or communities, and encourages certain initiatives, including the development (and the promotion of accessibility and affordability) of mental health services to enable all persons at risk for suicide to obtain services without fear of stigma."

HR 212 and Reid's resolution in the Senate were followed by the National Suicide Prevention Conference in Reno in 1998, viewed by many as the founding event of the modern suicide prevention movement.

Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." These brave few prove her case.

We may be running a little low on heroes just now, but we in suicide prevention will always have our John R. Lewis.

autumn and the season of grief

by James McMillian, MA, LCPC, NCC
Resolve - Counseling and Wellness Center
www.kcresolve.com

Autumn is one of my favorite times of the year. The air is getting cooler, the leaves are changing colors, and there are so many activities that bring my family together. There have been many writings about Spring and starting new, rebirth, and a fresh start. But if Spring is all about newness, then where does that leave Fall? It seems that Autumn is about coming to a close. We are leaving the summer behind and preparing for the cold Winter months. Animals prepare for hibernation, the days get shorter, and the leaves, which are so pretty early on, eventually turn brown and fall to the ground. In Chinese Medicine, Autumn is considered the season of Grief and I think that is very fitting.

Seasons of life: I believe that the seasons are a very good analogy for life and death. They are out of our control and through the seasons one sees a pattern of birth, growth, closure, and death, only to repeat the cycle over again. "A thing isn't beautiful because it lasts." I found this to be a surprisingly profound and touching quote to come from a Marvel movie of all places (*Avengers: Age of Ultron*). This quote touches on the beauty of the cycle of life. Without Autumn we wouldn't have the newness of Spring or the continual growth of generations.

Waves of grief: Many people talk about the stages of grief, as if it is a set number of items to check off and once completed you have graduated from the grief stage, never to return. This is not only inaccurate, but hurtful to those whose experience may be different. Many clients whom I've worked with as a grief counselor express it more as waves. In the beginning the waves are strong and constant, beating down on you, making you feel like you will drown at any moment. As time goes on the waves get less powerful and are spread farther apart. But the grief never fully goes away and small waves of sadness may always be lapping at the shore. We get to a point where it is no longer preventing us from living our lives. But the memory is still there, as is the occasional sadness of what was lost. What people find as they progress through grief, is that the emotions become more diverse. Where early on the memory might bring only sadness, later the memory can bring smiles and laughter. But just as seasons come and go, there are times that we can slip back into the sadness of grief, and that isn't a bad thing. It is a reminder of how important this person or thing was in our lives, and the impact it made in our lives.

Autumn as a reminder: Take this opportunity to appreciate the wonder of Fall and to remember the seasons that have come and gone in your life. Appreciate the newness that came from loss, while remembering fully the things that made the life you have now possible.

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

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





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