

Comforting Friends

Published by Friends for Survival, Inc.

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

January 2025

Updates and Announcements at Friends for Survival

Comforting Friends Newsletter:

Beginning this month, our monthly newsletters will be available by email only. Don't miss any issue and make sure you are subscribed here: <https://friendsforsurvival.org/get-our-free-newsletter>

Support group meeting updates:

Please be sure to check our website for updates here:

<https://friendsforsurvival.org/meetings>

We Need Local Volunteers:

We are looking for local volunteers in the greater Sacramento area to help us with local events. Interested? Email us at info@friendsforsurvival.org or call our office at 916-392-0664.

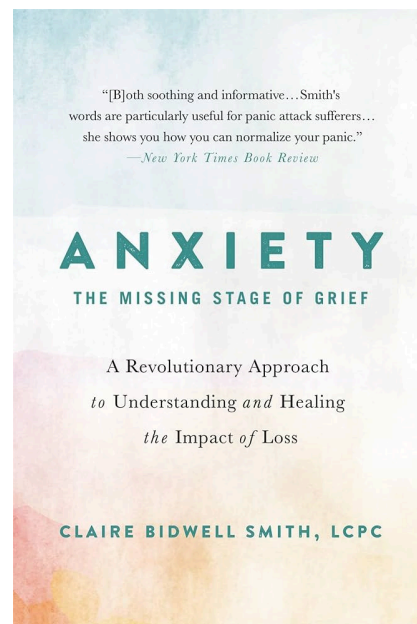
Thank you again for your support and donations in 2024. Would you like a year-end tax receipt? Please email admin@friendsforsurvival.org to request one.

The Power of Writing

I strongly feel that grief is a living, breathing thing inside of us. We must find ways to let it out in order to alleviate our suffering and anxiety.

Writing out your grief can be a powerful tool. Writing through our grief is instrumental to clearing out all the weight we carry with us in the aftermath of a significant loss, six months or even 16 years later. Your anxiety can definitely stem from not having an outlet for all that you're holding within you.

There are different ways that you can utilize writing in order to alleviate your grief anxiety, from journaling and letter writing to more specific storytelling.



Please try to set aside any insecurities or resistance and remember that this kind of writing isn't for the purpose of publishing (though of course can be considered later), but instead for the purpose of healing.

I'm going to share with you the writing assignments that have proved most effective from my clients. Read through them, and decide which ones resonate with you. If you have a strong emotional response to one—for instance, if you tear up at the thought of writing a letter to your loved one—this is often a strong indication that you need to do this, even if it seems that it might be a very emotional experience.

Effective Writing Exercises for Moving Through Grief.

- Daily Journaling: one of the best practices you can cultivate during your grief process is to do this kind of free writing every day. Go to the bookstore or an art store and buy a beautiful journal. Then decide on a consistent time each day. I know that this can be difficult for some people who have hectic lives, so if it's not the exact same time or place every day, that's OK too. The main goal is to be writing every day.
- Letter Writing: when we lose someone significant in our lives, we lose a person with whom we are used to communicating on a regular basis. You still have many things you wish to share with them. It might be big life events, memories. Let whatever comes out flow naturally. Be gentle and compassionate with yourself as you do so. And allow space for any emotions to arise. These feelings are coming up because they need to.
- Remembrance and memory writing: another great writing technique during the great process is to devote time to writing down all your memories about your loved one period this can feel cathartic and also extremely comforting, especially for those who feel anxious at the thought of potentially forgetting anything about this important person. You can choose to write about your loved one informally, you could even go so far as to take a memoir or biography class at a local writing center. Either way, you should find this a healing experience.

Things to know about grief writing.

As you move through these three different kinds of exercises, take time to really get to know yourself as a writer. You may find it difficult to let the words flow in the beginning, but as with anything, practice helps. Do not feel that you have to be a great writer or write the perfect sentences every time you sit down. This writing is just for you.

This work will be emotional, but that is part of it. Do your best to create a safe space and time in which to write. Revisiting old memories or writing through feelings can cause powerful emotions to surface, but writing through it is what will help to release and soothe those emotions.

Know that there is no perfect time to begin this work. You may find yourself writing through your grief very early on in the process of loss, but this is also beneficial to those who are decades from a loss. Working through old grief and how it's impacted your life can be equally cathartic and healing. Wherever you are in your grief, I urge you to take out a pen and begin to let the thoughts and emotions flow onto the page.

Source: Excerpted from [Anxiety: The Missing Stage of Grief](#) by Claire B. Smith. Copyright ©2018. Reprinted by permission of De Capo Lifelong

Making a Difference: Emotional Healing After Loss by Ronnie Walker, MS, LCPC



Last week, one of our forum members posed a question that we've all asked at one time or another:

"How the heck do I get through this and come out the other side? How will I ever heal?"

The member had lost both her parents to suicide and my heart went out to her for that terrible loss.

One of the things I've learned as a survivor, and from working with thousands of loss survivors, is that there no simple answer to that question. Someone once said after losing a loved one to suicide, "everything helps a little, but nothing helps a lot." This may be true. We do know however, from research as well as subjective survivor reports, that some things seem to help a little more than others.

One of the unique things about suicide grief is that it is a traumatic grief. It contains components of post-traumatic stress disorder. Because of this, counseling and treatments geared to helping people with PTSD symptoms are generally very useful.

The loving, non-judgmental support of friends, family, and community is also very important, particularly when grief is new. Many survivors have told me that, in the beginning, they were not sure they wanted to continue. They found themselves faced with a choice: to go on living – or to join their loved one. Many have said that they went on for the sake of those around them, still living, whom they held near and dear.

Over time, I've noticed that there is one more very important thing that makes a difference. It is our ability to make a commitment – or take a stand – about how we want to live our lives. When survivors of suicide loss resolve to make a positive or meaningful difference as a result of their loss, their paths begin to alter.

In the immediate aftermath of loss, and in the months and early years that follow, most survivors are consumed with debilitating emotions as well as very real-world challenges resulting from the death of their loved one. That takes tremendous energy and some survivors say it is an accomplishment just to get their head off the pillow in the morning.

Yet, as months turn into years, survivors do move forward. They grow visibly stronger and wiser about the nature of life. And I believe that most become more compassionate as well. It is at this point – usually several years out – that so many survivors turn their attention to contribution – to making a difference – each in their unique way. For some, it may mean supporting other survivors. For others, it might mean building playgrounds or baking

bread. Our ways of contributing are as varied as the handprints on our hearts.

Source: Ronnie Walker MS, LCPC, Founder and Executive Director of Alliance of Hope for Suicide Loss Survivors. Reprinted with permission.
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