

Comforting Friends

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

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IF TODAY FEELS HEAVY, CARRY IT LIGHTLY.

If it feels empty, fill it with small comforts.
A warm drink. An uplifting song.
Soft clothes. A deep breath.

You don't have to fix today.
You just have to move through it.

Vex King / tinybuddha.com

Words Matter

Using safe messaging when we talk and post about suicide makes a world of difference, reinforces hope, and ultimately, saves lives. See resources [here](#) from T.A.P.S.



Talk About Surprises

Author: Gretchen McGeeney,
Chapter Leader of [Heartbeat Grand Junction](#)

Life is full of surprises! Some good and some not. When we experience a surprise, it affects our body. Our heart rate and breathing rate may increase. We may take a sudden deep quick breath or gasp. Our blood pressure may change. Nausea or dizziness. Our body may release biological chemicals that cause other reactions.

The unexpected event may affect our emotions - shock, fear, joy, flight or fight reaction annoyance, anger, and others. It may put us in a mental state of reactive behavior as in the flight or fight mode, defensiveness, or burst of heightened alert.

There may be physical motions of reaction, as well, such as throwing up one's hands, clutching the chest or head, covering the mouth, striking out with the arms or legs, etcetera. When we experience a surprise, good or bad, it can cause us to act in certain unusual ways that we are not accustomed to towards others or within ourselves. It can affect our memory or ability to focus, temporarily or more long term, especially if the surprise was not a pleasant one.

Learning of someone's suicide is one such very unpleasant and devastating "surprise." Even after a length of time has elapsed since the loss, there can be unexpected surprises called "triggers." These can cause us to experience the above mentioned conditions, again. What are some triggers for you?

Once you become aware of the things that can cause you to re-experience the likely unpleasant emotions, thoughts, and physical reactions, you can decide how you are going to allow them to affect you. This may take some time. But it can lessen the intensity and duration of the reactions. This is not to say that one should just block those out; but to accept them as a normal grief experience.

Here are some examples of “triggers”: Questions such as, *“How many children do you have?”* Maybe the stupid things people say to try and comfort you, such as *“He/She is in a better place now.”* Or maybe it's seeing someone who looks like your loved one. Or maybe it's a place that was special in regard to your loved one. Maybe doing an activity that you once enjoyed with that person.

Learning to recognize those things that cause the feelings again can help you make decisions on how you will handle them. Identifying them may be helpful on your journey. May you grieve with awareness.

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"Things" Tell Their Own Story



Author: Heathclyff
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Lying in bed after waking early one morning and after a rather depressing and challenging night, I was looking around my room (at the books, ornaments on a cabinet, a Christmas tree on top of my wardrobe) and was thinking about how I just wanted to leave this world and join with my partner Martin who died by suicide three years back.

And then I pondered how was it that he died in a room with books around him, his Japanese Sofubi Kaiju Toys reposing on the shelf, his artwork materials laying there upon his desk and - most importantly - his Blythe doll, *Reign*, which he loved and mentions in his final note, where he asked me to "Please look after my doll for me," as if he were going on a holiday to thus return.

I was then struck with the realization that things which have meaning, have value. And yet we are often told that what we own is just "Stuff," as if this concept negates the value of what we own. However, I believe we need to shift our attitude to one that recognizes “stuff” as something that can hold real value.

As an aside, I was told from a friend that what I had lost (a secondary loss of my book collection and other things), was not important, but then this same person told me that I needed to keep "*his stuff*." I asked my friend, why should I, a living person, be expected to give up 'my stuff,' while I'm supposed to hold on to 'his stuff' even though he's no longer here? I told my friend that their comment made it even harder for me to let go of his belongings—now I felt a sense of guilt just thinking about passing them on.

If things have value (I mean in terms of meaning and not just monetary) then we start to develop a new relationship with these same things. We begin to value them for what they *mean* and for what they give back to us. Maybe too they can reach back out to us and take us into *their world* of meaning, *their world* of intrinsic value, *their world* of love for us and their own need for survival. Maybe we need to see "Stuff" as having a life of its own beyond that of merely existing for our own purpose alone. And if we value the Things which we accrue, then we will likewise value each item for what it is and maybe decrease accumulating "stuff" (with a small s) and replace it with less "Stuff" (with a big S) and make those items into Things of Value. How can we be expected to care for Things if they are seen as "stuff" to be easily discarded? For myself, I hold the Things that I have gathered over the years as precious friends for I believe they too have feelings.

"Things" are more than stuff. When we look at the things around us, many of these instantly *tell us a story*. I remember the panic of losing an old soup ladle. Some friends who saw my panic suggested that I just go and buy a new one. Not really a bad, logical idea. But that soup ladle was used almost daily by my partner and so it represented a huge loss when I could not find it. Eventually the panic passed and I did buy a new one. However, if I think about this ladle, I see my partner and I hear his voice and then I remember our conversations as we prepared our meals. And I see our little dog (now gone too) as she sat on the kitchen floor waiting for her piece of carrot. When the ladle was espied by her, we all knew carrots were a part of that particular meal.

Who would have thought an old soup ladle could tell such a beautiful story. Another time, I was in a Suicide Loss Support Group and a lady shared that she needed to sell her car and as she was cleaning it, she found an old McDonald's chip hidden under the passenger seat. As she shared this story, her face lit up as she explained this was linked to her son. He always ate chips in the car even though she always asked him not to. Now she was grateful that he did. [READ MORE...](#)



Wildling Lessons

Author: Julie Markham
Friends for Survival Writing Circle Participant

When I first met grief, I hated her, was scared of her, fought her off violently and desperately.

I didn't want grief.

I wanted my son.

For two years I writhed against grief, battling her with my rage that could obliterate mountain ranges.

And when I was too exhausted to fight her I retreated to the wild, wandering aimlessly amongst the trees, fields, and deserts, where I could scream and shout and collapse, letting the earth hold me.

It was there, on the forest floor, in the dirt and moss, where death and decay nourishes new life, coexisting, each with a purpose, that I asked myself if death was everything I was taught - funerals, black, oblivion, silence, finality. The forest told me it was a myth. Maybe death is the next stage, it is not the end, it is not final, it is not oblivion, and it's possible, even necessary to existence that death sits alongside the living. It is here.

He is here.

The forest urged me - if I allow grief to guide me, if I invite her in, she will show me how to nourish what I thought was gone forever.

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May Remembrances



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We are honoring our loved ones with a new format. If you would like to add or update your loved one on our **Friends Remembrances**, click on the button below. You can also add a photo or a dedication.

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by Kristine Cozine, Finance Director

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We can also send you 12 self-addressed, stamped envelopes if you prefer to mail in a monthly check. Call or email me if you have any questions or need assistance setting up your pledge.

Other Ways to Give:

There are many simple and effective ways to help our suicide loss survivors:

- Gift of stock and securities
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Friends for Survival has provided bereavement support to suicide loss survivors since 1983. All gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Need a respite from whatever you are doing right now?





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

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