

I can choose
to sit in perpetual sadness,
immobilized by the gravity
of my loss,
or I can choose
to rise from the pain
and treasure the most
precious gift I have –
life itself.

Walter Anderson

The Survivors of Suicide program and this newsletter depend in part on donations from the survivor community.

We offer our sincere appreciation for recent donations in memory of Roger K., Sandy G., and Aaron S.

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE NEWSLETTER

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Gary Burnett, MA, LPC, LMSW
Agency Supervisor

Jean Larch, RSST
S.O.S. Program Coordinator

Ellen Paré, BA, LBSW
Editor

(586) 307-9100



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You are invited to attend our
Sixth Annual Survivors of Suicide Conference

Coping With Suicide Loss:
*a daylong conference for survivors of suicide
and those who care about them*

presented by
Macomb County Crisis Center

When: Saturday, April 9, 2011
10:00 am - 3:00 pm (registration begins at 9:30 am)

Where: Macomb ISD Building
44001 Garfield Road
Clinton Township, MI 48038

Highlights: Speakers
Survivor Panel
Lunch Provided

Call Now! Registration deadline: March 26, 2011

To register, or for further information, please call the
Macomb County Crisis Center at 586-307-9100.
*There is no fee for this conference (donations are
appreciated); however, registration is required by
March 26, 2011.*

Survivors Of Suicide NEWSLETTER

March/April 2011

MACOMB COUNTY CRISIS CENTER

(586) 307-9100

Grief and Mourning

Life for any of us can change suddenly, unalterably. To the survivor – the wife or husband or lover, mother or father, child or grandchild, brother or sister or close friend – life will seem to have lost its luster and the future, its promise. But there are things we can do to express our grief and to make the most of what life has left for us. The death of a loved one is always going to be painful, but when this loss occurs we are also faced with unexpected decisions about our own lives.

If you are experiencing such grief, you know that it is a volcanic eruption of emotion. It is extremely powerful. It can become a commanding presence – the centering point of our whole existence. The feelings triggered when a loved one dies often manifest themselves in ways that we least expect.

Because these feelings are so hard to control, you may find yourself wishing that you didn't have to deal with them and that you could just put them away in a closet somewhere, never to be felt again. I have been asked, "Why must I have these feelings? Why can't I just ignore them? Won't they just fade away?" Sad to say, they won't just fade away, any more than the memory of your loved one will fade away. No matter how difficult, it is best to deal with your grief and not ignore it.

We must recognize that grief is part of being human. What kind of person would not grieve the death of a loved one? When we say we would like our feelings of grief to fade away, what we really mean is that we would like to be relieved of our terrible sense of loss.

"Grief" is the deep emotion experienced after a loss. "Mourning" refers to the actions and expressions related to those feelings. Feeling sad is an example of "grief." Crying or creating a memorial are examples of "mourning." It is important to mourn and not just to grieve.

Surely more than any other of nature's creatures, human beings have the capacity not only to remember – a mixed blessing – but also to express and discharge their feelings in nondestructive ways. And that is the greatest blessing of all. Grief that is expressed is grief that we can live with; grief that is suppressed is grief that will rise up to haunt us, surprise us, and shape our lives in ways we cannot control.

Helen Fitzgerald
The Mourning Handbook
Simon and Schuster (1994)

HEART LINES

As you huddle around the torn silence,
Each by this lonely deed exiled
To a solitary confinement of soul,
May some small glow from what has been lost
Return like the kindness of candlelight.

As your eyes strain to sift
This sudden wall of dark
And no one can say why
In such a forsaken, secret way,
This death was sent for...
May one of the lovely hours
Of memory return
Like a field of ease
Among these graveled days.

May the Angel of Wisdom
Enter this ruin of absence
And guide your minds
To receive this bitter chalice
So that you do not damage yourselves
By attending only at the hungry altar
Of regret and anger and guilt.

May you be given some inkling
That there could be something else at work
And that what to you now seems
Dark, destructive, and forlorn,
Might be a destiny that looks different
From inside the eternal script.

May vision be granted to you
To see this with the eyes of providence.
May your loss become a sanctuary
Where new presence will dwell
To refine and enrich
The rest of your life
With courage and compassion.

And may your lost loved one
Enter into the beauty of eternal tranquility,
In that place where there is no more sorrow
Or separation or mourning or tears.

*John O'Donohue
To Bless the Space Between Us:
A Book of Blessings
Doubleday (2008)*

Sharing the Journey

A Promise I Can't Believe

Iris Bolton

Once the conventional remarks had been said, my friend Doctor Maholick made it clear that we might expect to be in an emotional shock for a while, which would give way presently to moments of denial or bargaining or guilt. Inevitably, we would also experience anger and depression. These stages of grief, so to speak, came with the territory. And then he added an extra dimension to his counseling that seemed at that moment to be utterly beyond belief. "I ask you to hold two things in your mind. The first thing," the doctor said, "is that this crisis can be used to bring your family closer together than ever. If you use this opportunity wisely, you can survive and be a stronger unit than before."

"But how?" I asked.

"The formula is simple. Make every decision together throughout this crisis. Hear every voice. Work for a consensus. Never exclude your children during these next few days. Call family conferences. Discuss each problem openly, treating each individual equally regardless of age or experience. Today, each of you is hurting in his own unique way. You can blame each other and destroy one another. Or you can share and be supportive. Grief of itself is a medicine when you are open about it. Only secret grief is harmful. Through mutual helping, you will all heal more rapidly, and you will all survive. The choice is yours."

I had never heard of such a doctrine but it made sense. Family integrity and unity had been the foundation stone of our lives. Jack and I nodded in agreement.

"The second thing is more difficult to grasp," he continued carefully. "You have no reason as yet to believe what I am going to tell you, but I ask you to hear me with an understanding heart. There is a gift for you in your son's death. You may not believe it at this bitter moment, but it is authentic and it can be yours if you are willing to search for it. To other eyes it may remain hidden. The gift is real and precious and you can find it if you choose."

I gasped! He was saying that my pain was a gift, that the dislocation of so many lives caused by my son's careless and selfish termination of all earthly responsibilities was a gift.

"Mitch has damaged you grievously," he continued, "but he was a good person and a thinking person and he did only what he had to do for reasons that must have appealed to him. Within those reasons there had to be some degree of awareness of the problem he felt he had become to himself, to his friends, and to this family. So he did what he felt he had to do, and in doing it, he gave you a gift." The words I was hearing were incredible. Could I believe them? I recalled Oscar Wilde's writing, "I can believe in anything so long as it is incredible."

"This gift will not jump out at you or thrust itself into your life," Maholick continued. "You must search for it. As time passes, you will be amazed at unanticipated opportunities for helping yourself and others that will come your way, all because of Mitch. Today, you probably need to condemn him. It's only natural. But I earnestly believe that one day you will be able to acknowledge his gift." My husband grimaced. "I hear your words, but they have no meaning for me."

"That's okay. Perhaps one day they will," Maholick said gently.

*excerpt from My Son...My Son...:
A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss, or Suicide
Bolton Press Atlanta (2001)*

Survivors of Suicide Support Group Meetings

(1st Wednesday and 3rd Tuesday of each month)

Wednesday, March 2

Tuesday, March 15

Wednesday, April 6

Tuesday, April 19

7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

**Fox Pointe Center, 46360 Gratiot
South of 21 Mile Road
Enter door at rear of building
Questions? Call 586-307-9100**

Upcoming Events

March 2011

Craft Nite, Monday, March 28, 6pm-9pm

April 2011

Survivors Conference "Coping With Suicide Loss"

Saturday, April 9

10 am – 3 pm

(registration begins at 9:30 am)

Macomb Intermediate School District

see back page for details

call 586-307-9100 to sign up

Craft Nite, Monday, April 25, 6pm-9pm

May 2011

Five Week Workshop

May 4, 11, 18, 25, June 1

Craft Nite, Monday, May 23, 6pm-9pm

June 2011

Balloon and Butterfly Release

Craft Nite, Monday, June 27, 6pm-9pm

July 2011

Craft Nite, Monday, July 25, 6pm-9pm

August 2011

Memory Stone Workshop

Craft Nite, Monday, August 29, 6pm-9pm

September 2011

Craft Nite, Monday, September 26, 6pm-9pm

October 2011

Craft Nite, Monday, October 24, 6pm-9pm

November 2011

Craft Nite, Monday, November 28, 6pm-9pm

December 2011

Holiday Program

*All activities take place at Fox Pointe Center,
46360 Gratiot, unless otherwise noted.*

*Please watch future newsletters for additional
information as it becomes available. Events are
subject to change.*