

Coping with Holiday Grief...

At holiday time, many people are dealing with loss and are often caught in a dilemma between the need to grieve and the pressure to get into the spirit of the season. Holidays or not, it is important for the bereaved to find ways to take care of themselves. The following guidelines may be helpful:

1. Plan ahead as to where and how you will spend your time during the holidays. Let yourself scale back on activities if you want to. Redefine your holiday expectations. This can be a transition year to begin new traditions and let others go.
2. Select a candle in your loved one's favorite color and scent. Place it in a special area of your home and light it at a significant time throughout the holidays, signifying the light of the love that lives on in your heart.
3. Give yourself permission to express your feelings. If you feel an urge to cry, let the tears flow. Tears are healing. Scientists have found that certain brain chemicals in our tears are natural pain relievers.
4. Shakespeare once said, "Give sorrow words..." Write an "un-sent letter" to your loved one, expressing what you are honestly feeling toward him or her at this moment. After you compose the letter, you may decide to place it in a book, album or drawer in your home, leave it at a memorial site, throw it away, or even burn it and let the ashes rise symbolically.
5. When you are especially missing your loved one, call family members or dear friends and share your feelings. If they knew him or her, consider asking them to share some memories of times they shared with your loved one.

6. If you live within driving distance of the cemetery, decorate the memorial site with a holiday theme. This could include flowers, garlands, ribbons, bows, evergreen-branches, packages, pinecones or a miniature Christmas tree. Decorating the site yourself can be helpful in remembering and celebrating your loved one's life during the holidays, and may free you to cherish the present holiday with your remaining family.

7. Play music that is comforting and meaningful to you. Take a few moments to close your eyes and feel the music within the center of your being.

8. Give money you would have spent for gifts for your absent loved one to a charity in your family member's name. Consider donating money to the public library to buy a particular book. Have the book dedicated to your loved one's memory. Buy a present for a child who would not otherwise have a gift during the holiday season.

9. Read a book or article on grief. Some suggestions are: Don't Take My Grief Away From Me by Doug Manning; The Comfort Book For Those Who Mourn compiled by Anna Trimiew; and A Grief Observed by C. S. Lewis.

10. Remember the reality that the anticipation of the holidays without your family member is often harder than the actual holidays themselves.

Adapted from "Ten Ways to Cope with Holiday Grief" By L. B. Schultz, Carmel, Indiana. Reprinted with permission from Bereavement Magazine 5125 North Union Blvd., Suite #4, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80918-2056.

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS (SOSL) SAN DIEGO NEWSLETTER

Email—soslsd@yahoo.com

Website—www.soslsd.org

Helpline—619-482-0297

Survivors of Suicide Loss, Inc., is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, self-help support group system for those who have lost a relative or friend through suicide.

Board of Directors:

Camille Currier	Lisa Falls
Linda Hunt	Marie Hane Mays
Dan Williams	Rabbi Ben Kamin

Officers:

Chair	Paul Gagliardi
Secretary	Emerald Randolph
Treasurer	Mike Turner
Executive Director	Bonnie Bear
Administrative Assistant	Lisa Holcomb
Newsletter Designer	Cyndi Smith
Newsletter Editor	Camille Currier

Inside this issue:

When You Need to Talk	2
What to Tell Children	3
Monthly Meetings	4
Save the Date	5
A New Perspective	6
Contributors	6

The Hope & Comfort Newsletter staff is dedicated to the primary goal of publishing articles and information, which will be of assistance in the grieving and healing process of our readers.

We welcome your written contributions for inclusion in the newsletter; however, we reserve the right to publish only those articles that are considered to be of benefit to the majority of our readers.



You Are Not Alone...

Don't be afraid to ask for help from those close to you when you need it. So much hurt and pain go unheeded during grief because we don't want to bother anyone else with our problems. Wouldn't you want someone close to you to ask for help if they needed it? Some relatives and friends will not be able to handle your grief. Find someone with whom to talk. Seek out an understanding friend, survivor, or support group member.

When you need to talk to someone who has experienced a loss of....

Spouse

Marissa O. * (619) 421-6155
Maureen L. (619) 469-3110

Son

Cheryl O. (619) 593-2665
Sarah & Ray A. (619) 596-7491
Steve & Kathie P. (619) 444-8152

Daughter

Marie M. (619) 470-1932
Gen K. (619) 306-3086

Family Member/Friend

Bill Y. (Friend) (619) 286-9286
Mindy W. (Sister) (858) 278-9051
Jeanie F. (Friend)* (619) 417-2788

Parent

Paul G. (760) 751-3411

*Spanish Speaking



SUICIDE-RELATED WEB SITES

—**American Association of Suicidology**

www.suicidology.org/

—**Am. Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

www.afsp.org/

—**Crisis, Grief & Healing**

www.webhealing.com

—**Griefnet**

www.griefnet.org

—**Griefwork Center, Inc.**

www.griefworkcenter.com

—**GROWW**

www.groww.com

—**Meeting of Hearts**

www.meetingofhearts.com

—**National Hopeline Network**

www.hopeline.com

—**Yellow Ribbon**

www.yellowribbon.org

The Christmas Gift

It's time again for that holiday cheer

My only wish is that you were here

Christmas has again arrived

To remind me of the void you left in my life.

I have no gift to give you

I only have my tears

My heart that's split and broken

In search of all your fears.

The tree is lit so bright and pretty

It's beauty so hard for me to see

The gifts are neatly wrapped beneath it

The gift I ask not there for me.

There is no present that awaits you

None but my beating heart

Where yours that lays forever silent

In thought we're never far apart

I have no gift to give you

But merely a promise to make

To carry on your sweet, sweet memory

Thru all the seasons of my life.

By Suzanne Johnson-Berns

Powder Springs, Georgia

In memory of Jeremy Harden, December, 2000

Reprinted from The Journey with permission from the National Resource Center for Suicide Prevention and Aftercare

What to Tell Children

What children might feel after losing someone they love to suicide:

Abandoned - that the person who died didn't love them

Feel the death is their fault - if they would have loved the person more or behaved differently

Afraid that they will die too

Worried that someone else they love will die or worry about who will take care of them

Guilt - because they wished or thought of the person's death.

Sad, confused, lonely

Embarrassed - to see other people or to go back to school

Angry - with the person who died, at God, at everyone

Denial - pretend like nothing happened

Numb - can't feel anything

WISH IT WOULD ALL JUST GO AWAY

A children or adolescent may have a multitude of feelings or he may not feel anything at all. Whatever he's feeling, remember your role as an adult, is to help. Reassure your child whatever feelings he might experience, he has permission to let them out. If he wants to keep to himself for a while, let him. Don't tell a child how he should feel, or discourage him from expressing negative emotions like anger.

Some examples of explaining why suicide happens might be:

- "He had an illness in his brain (or mind) and he died."
- "The brain is an organ of the body just like the heart, liver and kidneys. Sometimes it can get sick, just like other organs."
- "She had an illness called depression and it caused her to die."

If someone the child knows, or the child herself, is being treated for depression, it's critical to stress that only some people die from depression, not everyone. Remind her there are many options for getting help, like medication, psychotherapy, or a combination of both.

A more detailed explanation might be:

"Our thoughts and feelings come from our brain, and sometimes a person's brain can get very sick - the sickness can cause a person to feel very badly inside. It also makes a person's thoughts get all jumbled and mixed up, so he can't think clearly. Some people can't think of any other way of stopping the hurt they feel inside. They don't understand that they don't have to feel that way, that they can get help."

It's important to note that there are people who were getting help for their depression and died anyway. Just as in other illnesses, a person can receive the best medical treatment and still not survive. This can also be the case with depression.

A child needs to understand that the deceased loved them, but that because of the illness he or she may have been unable to convey that or to think about how the child would feel after the death. The child needs to know that the suicide was not their fault, and that nothing they said or did, or didn't say or do, caused the death.

Some children might ask questions related to the morals of suicide - good/bad, right/wrong. It is best to steer clear of this, if possible. Suicide is none of these - it is something that happens when pain exceeds resources for coping with that pain. Whatever approach is taken when explaining suicide to children, they need to know they can talk about it and ask questions whenever they feel the need. They need to understand they won't always feel the way they do now, that things will get better, and that they'll be loved and taken care of no matter what.

Reprinted by permission from: www.save.org/coping/children.html

DEALING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS AND TENSION

Dr. Boadie Dunlop

- Set reasonable goals. To avoid overextending yourself during the holidays, plan ahead, avoid chaotic situations, and stick to a budget.
- Have reasonable expectations. If your holidays aren't perfect, that's OK. Prioritize what is and isn't important for you to do.
- Get enough rest. Set aside time to relax and sleep during the busy season.
- Avoid dwelling on the past. If you find yourself focusing on unpleasant thoughts, find something else to do, such as taking a walk or visiting a friend.
- Focus on the positive. Instead of worrying about what you haven't done in the past year, talk with someone about all the positive things that have happened during that time.
- Don't overindulge in alcohol or food. Enjoy holiday meals in moderation, because excessive food and drink will just make you feel worse.

MONTHLY SOSL MEETINGS - SAN DIEGO

Our meetings are held in an atmosphere that is warm and friendly. Anyone who has lost a family member or friend is invited to attend. Feelings shared are kept confidential and discussed only within the confines of the group meeting. Thus, our S.O.S.L. groups provides a comfortable, non-threatening setting to share our experiences and thoughts. Questions are encouraged to assist in coping with the different stages of the grieving process and with the feelings that are particularly intense in the aftermath of suicide - denial, shock, disbelief, sadness, anger, relief (for some), guilt and shame. We end our discussion sessions by sharing something positive that has recently taken place or something good you are anticipating.

December 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6 ABHC	7	8 GSH	9
10	11 ECC, RCG	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 SMH	19	20	21 ARCcv	22	23
24/31	25	26 CEBC	27	28	29	30

January 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3 ABHC	4	5	6
7	8 ECC, RCG	9	10	11	12 GSH	13
14	15 SMH	16	17	18 ARCcv	19	20
21	22 RCG	23 CEBC	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

February 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 ABHC	8	9 GSH	10
11	12 ECC, RCG	13	14	15 ARCcv	16	17
18	19 SMH	20	21	22	23	24
25	26 RCG	27 CEBC	28			

Aurora Behavioral Health Center (Private Dining Room) / ABHC

1st WEDNESDAY @ 7p.m. / December 6th, January 3rd, February 7th
11878 Avenue of Industry, San Diego , 92128 - NORTH COUNTY, INLAND

Encinitas Community Center /ECC

2nd MONDAY @ 7pm / December 11, January 8, February 12
1140 Oakcrest Dr. Encinitas, 92024 - NORTH COUNTY, COASTAL

Grossmont-Sharp Hospital /GSH

2nd FRIDAY @ 7:30 pm / Dec. 8, Jan. 12, Feb. 9
5555 Grossmont Center Dr, La Mesa, 91942 - EAST COUNTY
David & Donna Long Conf. Center, Room 1

Scripps Mercy Hospital /SMH

3rd MONDAY @ 7 pm / Dec. 18th, Jan. 15th, Feb. 19th
4077 5th Ave, San Diego, 92103 - HILLCREST (Dining Room 1)

American Red Cross Chula Vista / ARCcv

3rd Thursday @ 7 pm / December 21, January 18, February 15
311 Del Mar Ave., Chula Vista, 91910 - SOUTH COUNTY
Look for SOSL sign inside indicating room number.

Clairemont Emmanuel Baptist Church /CEBC

4th TUESDAY @ 7 pm / Dec. 26th, Jan. 23, Feb. 27
2610 Galveston St, San Diego, 92110 - MISSION BAY AREA

Riverside County Group/RCG

2nd and 4th Mondays @ 7 pm Dec. 11 (no mtg. 12/25), Jan. 8 & 22, Feb. 12 & 26.
First Baptist Church of Sun City; 29029 Murrieta Rd. , Sun City, 92586
Must call before attending - Kathy 951-679-2008

SAVE THE DATE

Shatter the Silence... This is Not My Fault

Mariel Hemingway speaks about suicide and more

Women's Council on Mental Health Spring Luncheon
Thursday, March 8, 2007 Manchester Grand Hyatt

Mariel is the granddaughter of Nobel prize-winning famed novelist, Ernest Hemingway. Still only in her 40s she has survived four suicides within her own family. Fighting what she calls the "Hemingway curse" Mariel has suffered from depression and her own suicidal thoughts. A successful model, actress, author, and mother, she speaks candidly about the genetic tendencies toward mental illness and a childhood plagued with pain and heartbreak. Today, her message is clear; there is a way out, there is help, and as a survivor, it is not her fault.

SOSL has **two tables reserved** for this event. Tickets are \$65 each. If you would like to reserve a place please call Linda Jones at 858-514-5153 and specify sitting at an SOSL table (indicate SOSL on your check).

If you have other questions, please call Christa Stahl at 858-755-3400 or the SOSL number 619-482-0297.

PLEASE SUPPORT SOSL !

We invite you to use the enclosed envelope to make a tax deductible contribution to SOSL. New opportunities for service to the community are developing as we seek to provide hope for survivors of suicide and also reach out to prevent suicide and save lives. Recently we have had several opportunities to work with teens in both support and prevention efforts. Thank you for your help in making this possible.

We are now able to put our newsletter into electronic format so you can receive it instantaneously. You can help us reduce our operating budget and save trees by sending your e-mail address to soslsd@yahoo.com.

HUG POWER

A Hug Means –

I share my space with you
I share my warmth and strength
and accept yours
If you ache, I comfort you
I do not reject you
I do not fear you
Nor will I harm you
You are not alone, somebody cares.

A Hug –

Builds a bridge above alienation,
suspicion, confusion
Has its own language
and needs no words
Changes You and I to We

"In the depth of winter I finally learned
there was in me invincible summer."

— Albert Camus

We would also like to know if you are still reading the newsletter. Perhaps you have been receiving it for awhile and you are now in a different place in your healing. If you would like to be taken off the mailing list, please contact us by e-mail soslsd@yahoo.com, by phone 619-482-0297 or by writing to us at: **SOSL**

P.O. Box 4325

La Mesa, CA 91944-4325

CONTRIBUTORS:



Bonnie Bear (Gordon Bear)
"Fond memories of you sustain me"

Johnny and Veronica Berg (Son)
"In memory of Eric"

Kathy Blossfield
"In memory of my sister Mary Blossfield"

Allen C. Brown
"In memory of Dorothy Godfrey"

Leopoldo and Amenda Caniya (Son)
"In loving memory of Melvin B. Caniya"

Pamela Detering

Steve and Sharon Elggren (Son)
"We love you Troy"

Carol Foster (Husband)
"In loving memory of Bill"

Frances Garza (Jesse E. Santos)
"You are always on my mind"

Kyoko Gayda

Mike and Shannon Kurtz (Son Jeremy)

Nancy Loesch

Steve Macias

Michele Madden

Bill and Marie Mays

Ann Merrill

Barbara O'Bannon

Allene Rasmusson

Ligia Rodriguez
"In memory of Margaret Fernandez"

Pamela Seago

Phyllis Stout
"In memory of my dear daughter"

Michael and Margaret Strahm
"In loving memory of our son Aaron"

United Way of Southern Nevada

Karen, Murray and Adam Westrich
(Stephanie Johanna Westrich)
"Our shining star, you will be always in our hearts"

A New Perspective on the Changing Times and Seasons

Ever since my child died, the changing seasons have been a source of sadness. It became hard to tear off the calendar pages month after passing month. It is hard to see summer turn to fall; fall to winter, etc. This is because it represents the fact that the world and everything in it goes on as normal in spite of my child's passing. It doesn't seem right for the world to be so indifferent, but it is.

A state of discord, confusion, and war is nothing new. Indeed, it has pretty much been a constant since the Civil War. However, until September 11, 2001, I didn't feel it too much. Since then there has been significant public anxiety. It has caused many subtle and not so subtle changes to society. Because of that tragedy, the state of war, and all the grief and anxiety, it seemed somewhat out of place for America to celebrate things like Thanksgiving and Christmas. It was somehow a dishonor to those lost and to the tragedy for us to celebrate a holiday. Maybe that is wrong, but please consider.

It is not a dishonor to celebrate holidays. Those who have died, have died, and are no longer concerned with the events. The celebration of and participation in holidays is a life-affirming event. They can provide comfort. Holidays mark the times and seasons. They help punctuate the rhythm of our lives. They provide needed breaks to the daily grind, even if they come packing their own stressors. The changing seasons, that can cause so much grief on a personal scale, are a great source of comfort on a macro-societal scale, even if the affect tends to be subliminal. The indifference of the world to mankind and his conflicts is comforting. In spite of all the political upheaval, all the wars, and death, the seasons blithely change. Summer turns to fall, fall to winter and winter to spring, totally indifferent to puny man and his wrangling. All the trouble and strife is as nothing. No matter how totalitarian or ruthless a regime, no matter how evil a dictator, they can't order the seasons. Somehow it punctuates the limits of man's power and limits the scope of the tragedy. The sun still rises and the rain still falls no matter the politics. Should the unthinkable happen, and all out war occur, should we lose our freedoms, the sun will still shine, the rain will still fall, the seasons will still change, and somehow that keeps the tragedy, any tragedy from being total. The indifference of the world can be a comfort.

Paul Cox

Trevoise, Utah

Reprinted from The Journey with permission from the National Resource Center for Suicide Prevention and Aftercare

<i>Survivor(s):</i>	<i>Lost Loved One:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
Ann Bryan	Daughter	November 8, 2005
Rex and Connie Kennemer	Son - Todd	November 17, 2005
Gloria Boutot	Brother - Jimmy	November 2005
Angel Mendoza	Fiancée – Jean	December 1, 2005
Heather Coons	Brother –Ryan	December 2, 2005
Amy Huie	Father – Brigham	December 9, 2005
Kathy Willich	Husband	December 11, 2005
Elaine Beaudrot	Husband – Tom	December 15, 2005
Patricia Hughes-Raber	Daughter – Teresa	December 16, 2005
Cara O'Neill	Mother – Janet	December 27, 2005
Steve Wichmann	Wife – Marisa	January 9, 2006
Mary Therrien	Best Friend	January 11, 2006
Cheryl Williams	Son- Adam	January 15, 2006
Diane Lints	Sister – Nancy	January 29, 2006
Cynthia Mendez	Husband	January 29, 2006
Gaylene Eisenach	Son	January 31, 2006
Liane Schmidt	Mother	January 2006
Elizabeth Glass	Son - Matthew	February 14, 2006
Karen Cullen	Son – Pete	February 24, 2006
Kresta Disney	Mother	February 2006
Margaret Foster	Son	February 2006

Report from Executive Director,
Bonnie Bear

As we draw close to the end of another year, we commemorate holidays including Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanza that can bring deep sadness as we reflect on our loss. It may be you just recently lost a loved one, or it may have been years ago. Regardless of the time elapsed, these major holidays can bring back both good and painful memories. It is essential to plan ahead, rather than to just let the holiday “happen”. I believe it is important to remember the one you lost in a meaningful way and to bring their name into the conversation frequently. This may bring tears and sadness, but is so much better than to pretend this person is just “away”. The first Christmas, my 3 adult children all chose to wear one of their father’s red vests/sweaters which he had worn in the past. Gordon loved holidays and joyfully anticipated the decorations, shopping, the smell of baking cookies and all the preparations that went into this special day. We were able to talk about the memories of Christmases past and though there were tears, there was also joy as we united as a family to grieve collectively. Establishing a ritual may bring the family together and allow each person to share poignant memories. This may be as simple as lighting a candle, making a toast, singing a song, offering a prayer, or reading a meaningful poem. Each family member grieves in their own way, and some may choose not to participate, but just having the ritual will keep your loved one a part of your family. We think of gifts during these holidays and one gift the loss of Gordon gave us is the gift of empathy, which we can now share with others. Unfortunately, the need for this gift will never end, but I can only hope to be here for others and to continue giving in Gordon’s memory.