

Grief, Healing, and Hope

What I Learned from My Father's Suicide

By Jessica Hutchison, of www.OurSideofSuicide.com



Anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide, knows that it forever changes your life. It rocks your world in a way that no other death can. It leaves you feeling helpless, hopeless and completely lost. The emotions are overwhelming and the “whys” and “what ifs” consume you. You are overcome with anger as you question how the person you loved could have left you here, alone, completely broken. You try and put the puzzle together, only to discover that pieces are missing. Grief after suicide is complicated. It takes you to a place where you have never been before. It can make you question everything and everyone in your life. It challenges you and your abilities. It can take you to a very dark place. I know, because I experienced these overwhelming emotions in the aftermath of my father's suicide. Although it took time, my grief journey has led me to a pretty great place. I feel guilty as I write that. Why? Because I have my father to thank for my happiness. Many of you may gasp as you read that last sentence. How can you be happy about something so tragic? I am not happy that my father ended his life. Not a day goes by that I do not miss him, and wish he were here. However, I learned so much about myself in the aftermath of his death. I want to share with you all, what I learned from my father's suicide.

The ONLY person who can make you happy is YOU

I know, we have ALL heard this before. Gets a little annoying right? It usually comes from someone who is married, or in a relationship. They clearly are not alone, and have no idea what it is like to be alone. Hey, it's not our fault that we are constantly looking for someone else to bring us happi-

ness. The entertainment industry has shoved this down our throat since we were kids. Enter beautiful princess, alone, waiting to be rescued by her charming, handsome prince. Sound familiar? It remains present as we get older and watch movies with lines such as, “You complete me.” Who doesn't know this line? So it should come as no surprise that we are all looking for that person that completes us, makes us happy, pushes us to be better, takes away our pain, etc. What I learned from my father is that this person does not exist. Before you get depressed reading that last line, let me explain...

My father and mother got divorced when I was three. Sadly, he had three failed marriages after. I always believed that he left my mom because he blamed her for his unhappiness. He never admitted this to me, and sadly I will never know. Three divorces later, he found himself in the same place he was before. Sad, and alone. His last relationship prior to his death was with his high school sweetheart. I don't think you ever get over that first love, and sometimes you even marry them. I truly believe that when he started dating her again, he thought “NOW I will be happy.” He had this belief that he had never found happiness because he was meant to be with her. I wish I could say he found his happily ever after, but we all know the end to his story. The mistake he made wasn't from loving another; it was from not loving himself. So what exactly did I learn from this?

I learned that there is no such thing as a happily ever after, and guess what, THAT'S OK! Like I said at the beginning, the only person who can make you happy is YOU. I realized this in the aftermath of my father's death. It is not the responsibility of my family, friends, or husband to make me happy. Sure, they should contribute to it, but ultimately, it is up to me to be happy. Seeking happiness from others is like chasing a moving target; you will never catch it. There is nobody and let me repeat, NOBODY, who has this much power. Trying to find someone to just make you happy, is impossible. It is an unrealistic expectation, and it is a heavy weight for someone else to carry. This leads me to my next lesson:

If you aren't happy with your circumstances CHANGE them

I put this lesson second for a reason, a very important reason. Why? Because, I truly had to learn the first lesson in order for me to learn the second. Just like I learned that you cannot look for someone to bring you happiness, you cannot depend on outside circumstances to bring you happiness. Again, it is all internal. So, I need to be careful when I explain this lesson, because I do not want to give the perception that external

... Continued on Page 3

“I have had sorrow and joy in my life, I choose to remember the joy..and that is how I have survived.” Rose Kennedy

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/Partner

Marissa O.* 619-421-6155
 Maureen L. 619-469-3110
 Anne W. 619-992-9023

Son

Christa S. 858-755-3400
 Cheryl W. 619-277-0913

Daughter

Cheryl V. 760-942-7869

Parent

Paul G.* (Mother) 760-815-1482
 Kate W. (Father) 916-601-4585

Family Member/Friend

Diane L. (Brother) 619-660-0740
 Pam E. (Brother) 760-415-5604
 Cindy P. (Sister) 619-850-6225
 Jeanie F.* (Friend) 619- 417-2788
 *Bilingual: English-Spanish

Helpful Websites

American Assoc. of Suicidology
www.suicidology.org

Compassionate Friends
www.compassionatefriends.org

Fresno Survivors of Suicide Loss
www.fresnosos.org

Friends for Survival, Inc.
www.friendsforsurvival.org

GROWW Friends Helping Friends
www.groww.org/Branches/sos.htm

Suicide Prevention Resource Ctr.
www.sprc.org

Suicide is Preventable
www.suicideispreventable.org

Trevor Project
www.thetrevorproject.org

UMTR2ME You Matter To Me
www.UMTR2ME.org

Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program
www.yellowribbon.org



Last year we had a phenomenal year, and we were able to help thousands of people in our survivor community because of generous donations from people like you.

In 2014, we won three awards! SOSL is the recipient of the:

- ◆ Community Choice Award 2014 from Community Health Improvement Partners
- ◆ Outstanding Service Award 2014 from the Suicide Prevention Council
- ◆ Innovative Partnership Award from Recovery International

Other 2014 Highlights & Accomplishments include:

- ◆ Held **162** support group meetings in San Diego County – including closed groups, CAHM Forum groups, and private groups held for organizations/families.
- ◆ Participated in **37** speaking engagements, including providing **13** suicide prevention trainings (QPR – Question, Persuade, Refer trainings).
- ◆ Mailed over **120** SOSL Support Packets of information to newly bereaved survivors.
- ◆ Published the hardcopy edition of *Beyond Surviving: A Compilation of Stories from Survivors of Suicide Loss*.
- ◆ Distributed our quarterly newsletter *Hope & Comfort* to over **2000** people each quarter.
- ◆ Increased the reach of our Facebook Page from just over 400 to over 600 “Likes”!
- ◆ Continued to be a partner organization of the San Diego Suicide Prevention Council (SPC)

We invite you to help SOSL continue to support our survivor community by making a tax-deductible donation today!

Your contribution will directly impact those affected by suicide loss. You're welcome to donate online www.SOSLsd.org, or mail in a donation to: PO Box 3297, La Mesa, CA 91944.

About SOSL

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

The Hope & Comfort Newsletter staff is dedicated to the primary goal of publishing articles and information, which is assisting 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.

Please send all correspondence to:

Survivors of Suicide Loss
 PO Box 3297
 La Mesa, CA 91944-3297
 Helpline : (619) 482-0297
 Website www.SOSLsd.org Email: info@SOSLsd.org

“What I Learned from My Father’s Suicide” (Continued)

things bring you happiness, you cannot depend on outside circumstances to bring you happiness. Again, it is all internal. So, I need to be careful when I explain this lesson, because I do not want to give the perception that external “things” can bring you happiness. Similar to above, circumstances cannot MAKE you happy but they can contribute to your overall well being.

After my father died, I had this overwhelming fear that I too would end up like him. He was 64 years old, and not fulfilled. He searched the world for something to fulfill him. He retired young, and spent a summer in Italy tracing our Italian heritage. He came back significantly heavier, with long hair and an earring. He appeared happy, but I think just distracted. Italy was great, but it was only a distraction. He still had to come back to reality. Shortly after, he moved to Santa Fe, where he studied hypnotherapy and explored various religions. Although a hippy at heart, he was a teacher and an engineer.

But hey, we all have other passions! I can’t even say what happened next exactly, because there was so much. He bought land in Mexico, started flipping houses, took up yoga, and reconnected with old friends. I learned a lot from his quest to find meaning in his life, as that is what I believe he was doing. I learned to find happiness in today. So, when I say circumstances, I do not necessarily mean your house, your friends, your job, etc. Although if those are making you miserable, work to change them. What I mean by circumstances is the everyday ones. If you are sitting at home in a funk, change your circumstances. Go for a walk, call a friend, go sit in a coffee shop... change your circumstances. What I learned from my dad is that there is ALWAYS something you can do to change your mood, and to change your day. I am more grateful for the everyday things because of him.

Maybe it’s NOT your circumstances, but your way of THINKING

I am going to try and not be annoying with this one...because I always hate when other people give me the old, “you have everything you need” line. Because, let’s be honest, sometimes we don’t! It is human nature to want more, or to think you need more. We live in a country where fortune and fame is consistently in our face. We often think that if we just had (insert your comment here) we would be happy. The problem is, then we get it and we still aren’t happy. Similar to the lesson before, this one comes next. I had to first acknowledge that others are not responsible for my happiness, and that I have more power over my circumstances than I think before I could

understand this lesson. I have learned about the connection between circumstances and thinking, and I have found that we, or at least I, have given them too much power. The problem is this often drives us to make decisions that we later regret. It all comes back to looking for happiness externally rather than internally. My father did this throughout his life. Do I think this is what led to his death? No. But, I do think it contributed to the anxiety and depression he experienced. Because of my father, I now look at things differently. When I think that something is contributing to unpleasant feelings, I ask myself, “Is this something that needs to change, or do I need to change how I think about it?” Often, it is how I am thinking about it that needs to be changed.

Life isn’t fair. Accept it.

This sounds a little cold, I do realize this. But, it is true. Life isn’t fair. Bad things happen to good people and lives end before they should. What makes this even harder is that there is no explanation for why these things happen. I do not know why I had to lose my dad, while others didn’t. Do I think this is fair? Absolutely not. However, it happened and it is my reality. Life isn’t always easy and if we let it, it will make us angry, it will make us bitter, it will make us cold. After the death of my father, I became that person. I was angry, bitter and cold. I blamed everything and everybody for my unhappiness. What I have realized is that life is about managing expectations. I cannot expect life to not bring me pain and sorrow. It is an unrealistic expectation. I do not think I realized this prior to the loss of my father. I often blamed others, and became angry when something bad happened. I look at the hard times differently now. For starters, I now know my own strength. I know how strong and capable I am. I look for the meaning in situations, both bad and good, because I do believe that everything happens for a reason. Finding that meaning has helped me find my own solitude and appreciate life in a greater capacity than I ever have before.

As I stated at the beginning of this piece, it was difficult for me to put my thoughts into words without experiencing an overwhelming sense of guilt. It is still hard for me to acknowledge that my life has a greater meaning because of my dad’s suicide. Is this selfish? I do not think so. I believe that my father would be proud of the person I am today, and honored to have given me a life that he was never able to find. He searched the world for happiness, and was unable to find his peace and his purpose. Rest assured Dad, your search did have a purpose. It gave my life more meaning. Thank you Dad.

GRATITUDE SPEAKS

When we reside in a place of Gratitude, the world changes.
This is a place for survivors to share what they are grateful for.

It was our first winter in the Northeast, cold and snowy. It was also very beautiful. Our house was still pretty bare, and we sat on the floor on Christmas Eve, watching TV and eating take-out off paper plates. My brother and sister played Scrabble. The wind gusts sprayed the windows with snow, and we were grateful to be inside, all together again for the first time in six months. I don’t see everyone very often, but I remember that time before we grew up, before a lot of the ups and downs that would come.

Pretty much everything has changed, and now we live all over the country, and we don’t see each other much. I miss you, and I hope all of you are well. California is full of warmth, and there are many good people here, and we share a lot in common. I found a community that helps each other heal, with words and with tears. They show each other and the world that even when change comes unexpectedly, certain important things, don’t change. And I am grateful for the example they set every day with their strength and with their love.

- Anonymous



“Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment till it becomes a memory.” Theodor S. Geisel#

S O S L S U P P O R T G R O U P M E E T I N G S - S A N D I E G O

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 SOSL groups provide 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. No fee and no registration required.

March 2015

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

Aurora Behavioral Health Center / ABHC

1st WEDNESDAY 7-8:30 pm / March 4, April 1, May 6
 11878 Avenue of Industry, San Diego, 92128 – N. County Inland (Private Dining Rm)
 From I-15 S: Exit CAMINO DEL NORTE and TURN LEFT; turn Right at CARMEL MT. RD., turn RIGHT at INNOVATION DRIVE, turn RIGHT at AVENUE OF INDUSTRY
 From I-15 N: Exit CARMEL MT. RD. and turn RIGHT, turn LEFT at RANCHO CARMEL DR., turn RIGHT at INNOVATION DR. turn RIGHT at AVE. OF INDUSTRY

Encinitas Community Center / ECC

2nd & 4th MONDAY S 7-8:30 pm / March 9 & 23, April 13 & 27, May 11 & 25
 1140 Oakcrest Park Dr., Encinitas, 92024 – North County Coastal Room 116
 From I-5: Take the ENCINITAS BLVD. exit (EAST), turn RIGHT onto BALOUR DR., turn LEFT onto OAKCREST PARK DR.

Grossmont-Sharp Hospital / GSH

2nd FRIDAY 7-8:30 pm / March 13, April 10, May 8
 5555 Grossmont Center Dr., La Mesa, 91942 - East County (Cardiovascular Center, Room 1) Look for SOSL sign. Validated parking in structure.
 From I-8 E: Take the FLETCHER PKWY exit. Turn RIGHT onto GROSSMONT CTR DR.
 From I-8 W: Take the GROSSMONT CTR DR. Exit toward LA MESA BLVD. Turn RIGHT onto GROSSMONT CTR DR.

Scripps Mercy Hospital / SMH

3rd MONDAY 7-8:30 pm / March 16, April 20, May 18
 4077 5th Ave., San Diego, 92103 -Hillcrest Check at Information Desk for location Validated parking in structure.
 From CA-163 S: Take the WASHINGTON ST exit (WEST). Turn RIGHT onto 5th AVE.

South Bay Group / SBG

3rd THURSDAY 7-8:30 pm / March 19, April 16, May 21
 497 E St., Chula Vista, 91910 - South County (Pilgrim Lutheran Church)
 From I-5: Take E Street exit, Turn RIGHT (going North), Turn LEFT (going South). Drive beyond the Church and take the first left (Brightwood). Park in the parking lot in the middle of Brightwood. Meeting is in the classroom next to the parking lot.

April 2015

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

Clairemont Emmanuel Baptist Church / CEBC

2nd and 4th TUESDAY S 7-8:30 pm / March 10 & 24, April 14 & 28, May 12 & 26
 2610 Galveston St., San Diego, 92110 - Mission Bay Area
 From I-5: Take the CLAIREMONT DR exit, (EAST) Turn RIGHT onto GALVESTON ST. Drive down to the lower parking lot. As you leave the parking lot, walk straight ahead and the room will be in the first building on your left.

May 2015

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

Riverside County Group / RCG

2nd and 4th MONDAYS 7-8:30 p.m. / March 9 & 23, April 13 & 27, May 11 & 25
 29029 Murrieta Rd., Sun City, 92586 - First Baptist Church of Sun City
 Must call before attending: Kathy 951-679-2008

“Not everyone understands how you can spin two lassos at the same time, one of hope and one of grief.” Jodi Picoult#

INAUGURAL

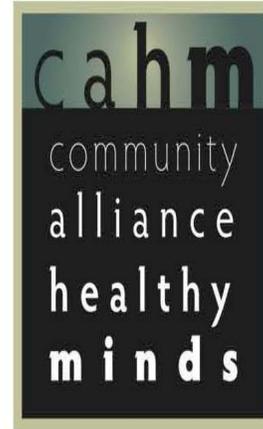
STRENGTH *for the Journey* 5K

Run/Walk



**Saturday
June 13, 2015**

More info & Online Registration:
www.RoadRunnerSports.fundly.com/STRENGTH5K



9th Annual CAHM Forum
Saturday, May 9, 2015 ~ 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
California State University, San Marcos

From Hopelessness
to Hope & Healing

Powerful Workshops
friends ~ family ~ community
education ~ resources ~ support

*"Together we can change the landscape
of mental health in our communities."*

www.CAHMsd.org

MEDITATION MOMENT

We invite you to consider this for a few quiet moments...



Know that grief, the pain, the sadness or loneliness, or the difficult thoughts or memories that make an appearance at inopportune moments, or the anxieties we feel - all of these things are part of the process of healing our broken heart. Try to be patient with yourself, and patient with the process, especially at those times when patience seems most distant. Take a breath.

~~

"Grief is nature's way of healing a broken heart." - Dr. Earl A. Grollman



"Turn your wounds into windows." Oprah Winfrey#



8th Annual SOSL Day Hope Springs: You are Not Alone

April 11, 2015, 10AM - 2:30PM

VISTA GRANDE COMMUNITY CHURCH
10881 TIERRASANTA BLVD., SAN DIEGO 92124
(ON TIERRASANTA BLVD. OFF I-15)

INCLUDING KEYNOTE SPEAKER & Question/Answer PANEL

Keynote Address, Q/A Portion, Breakout Groups according to type of loss,
Continental breakfast & catered lunch.

This is a unique opportunity for survivors of suicide loss to meet with other survivors
sharing a similar loss.

Please use the Registration form enclosed in this Newsletter or register online at
www.SOSLsd.org

Remembering Our Loved Ones

Kristen Rene Schon (daughter)
3/2/1991 – 11/23/2011

“Happy 24th birthday Princess. Love you so much, wish you were here celebrating your special day. You are my sky full of stars.”
Mom (Diane Howard)

This is a section of the Hope & Comfort newsletter where we can remember our loved ones by name with a short message. It is important to be able to see, hear and speak the name of the person we have lost. Please use the form provided below to send information to remember your loved one. We publish the newsletter four times per year. If you wish to have your request in a particular issue, please send the information one month prior to the publication date.

PLEASE NOTE THIS NEWSLETTER IS POSTED ON OUR WEBSITE AND IS PICKED UP BY GOOGLE, etc.

Schedule for 2015

Summer 2015 June, July, August

Request due by May 1st

Fall 2015 September, October, November

Request due by August 1st

Winter 2015-16 December, January, February

Request due by November 1st

If your request arrives late, we will include it in the next issue, unless you indicate otherwise. We will do our very best to place your information in the issue you request. A donation of any amount is appreciated to help cover costs of printing and mailing, but is not required and no request will be denied for financial reasons.

Please use this form to remember your loved one.

Name of your loved one _____ Relationship _____

Date of birth _____ Anniversary date _____

Issue requested Summer ____ Fall ____ Winter ____

Requested by _____ (name)

Message: Please limit to 25 words or less, if possible. Longer messages may be edited if needed to accommodate all requests.

Please mail to: SOSL, PO Box 3297, La Mesa, CA 91944-3297 OR email the above info to info@SOSLsd.org

“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.” *Maya Angelou*



CONTRIBUTORS:



Anonymous

Anonymous

"You are forever missed and loved so unconditionally."

Raymond and Sarah Arnold

Brian Bailey

"In memory of Douglas"

Bonnie Bear

"Love you so much and miss you, Gordon"

Martha Breaun

"In memory of Russell Breaun"

Cait Casey

Marlene Christenson

Idalia Colvin (Vanessa)

"Miss you and love you Angel" - Mom

Maria Contrestano (my father Luis Rodolfo)

"Merry Christmas and Happy Birthday. We love you and miss you."

Laurine DiRocco

Louise DiCarlo

Patricia DiLeva

(Joseph DiRocco)
(Brett Currier)

Leah Diebel

John and Pamela Economides

"In memory of Rodney Chin"

Steve and Sharon Elggren (Troy)

"You're deep in our thoughts and our hearts forever."

Kyoko Gayda (my son Riki Gayda)

"I love you."

Dan and Victoria Hyatt

Leslie Joseph

"In memory of Samuel Leonard Joseph"

Marcy Kaye

Margaret Klatt

Anne Klein

"In memory of our beloved son, Peter"

Joe & Shelia Klock (Joseph D. Klock Jr.)

"Love you, Joey!"

Wynter Kugel

Mike and Shannon Kurtz

Patricia Lamb

Mike and Cathy Lemieux

Bella Lindsay (Joseph Ross Lindsay)

"Forever in our hearts"

Diane Louise (Scott Spillane)

"We love you forever, dear brother, and think of you every day. We miss you."

Phillip Meares

Gualter Moura

Julia Myers

Karen Olson (Amy Olson)

"I will love and miss you forever, my precious daughter." - Mom

Elisa Parker (Brett Currier)

Emerald Randolph

Paul Rybak

Nancy Santoro

Ron and Carol Santos (Ryan Santos)

"You'll always be in our hearts."

Christopher Schon

Laurette Schwab (Philip Anthony Schwab)

"I miss you Dad xoxox" Laurette

Valentina Sharabi and kids (Tzvi Sharabi)

"We miss you! I wish you were here to watch the kids grow. May you find peace in your journey and reach the light."

Enid Singer

Evangeline Smith

Michael and Margaret Strahm

"In memory of Aaron Strahm"

Malena Suarez

"In memory of my husband"

Danielle Toledo

Peggy Wallace

Anne Wilson (Derek Wilson, my soulmate)

"I think of you every day - all day."

Marjorie S. Young (Steve Raymond Young)

"Miss you every day - think of you as you are, and thankful you were in our lives. I'll never, never forget you" - Love mother Marjorie

Gratitude for the generous support of the

Community Service Association

San Diego Unified School District



*From all of us here at SOSL,
Thank you*

to all of our generous 2014 donors!

*The massive outpouring of support
last year moved us to tears of gratitude!*

Thank you for those of you who donate through the United Way.

SOSL is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your donations are tax deductible.