After Losing a Child, Grief Becomes a Lifelong Condition
by Linda Verity DuBos

Linda lost her son, Christian, on January 18, 2010 to suicide. She hosts a blog entitled "a Journey - Death by Suicide, a Mother's Story" where she shares the story of her grief.

Today I found this poem written by my friend Shari Soklow. It is as meaningful today as the day I received it from Shari. Indeed, it is more meaningful than when I first read it. I received it during a time when my grief was still new and my emotions raw. I was still numb with shock and disbelief, and I did not fully know what losing a child meant. It was a time when my mind could not accept that my son was not only gone but gone forever and before I realized how permanent death was.

The words that Shari has written don't just apply to the first week of a loss or the first few months or even the first year. There is a lifetime worth of wisdom and experiences written here. She is right when our child dies, a part of us dies too. The hurt and pain and sorrow never end. It just goes on and on and on. It's been four years since Christian left us and truthfully I don't think about his passing as constantly as I did in the beginning. Thoughts of him are always there. It's just that my thoughts turn more to the good times we spent together, the happy times. I have to do that to survive. I have to do that to push the nightmare of that last day away. But try as I will some days the pain is as intense as it was on the day my son took his life.

Thank you for sharing your wisdom with us Shari. Thank you for stating what we as grieving parents feel and can't express as eloquently or as clearly as you have.

Web Link: ajourneydeathbysuicideamothersstory.blogspot.com

"Unless"
Shari Soklow

Unless you've lost a child......then
Don't ask us if we are over it yet. We'll never be over it.
A part of us died with our child.
Don't tell us they are in a better place.
They are not here with us, where they belong.
Don't say at least they are not suffering.
We haven't come to terms with why they suffered at all.
Don't tell us at least we have other children.
Which of your children would you have sacrificed?
Don't ask us if we feel better.
Bereavement isn't a condition that clears up.
Don't ask us if we feel better.
Not all of us have the same faith.
Don't tell us at least we had our child for so many years.
What year would you choose for your child to die?
Don't tell us God never gives us more than we can bear.
Right now we don't feel we can handle anything else.
Don't avoid us. We don't have a contagious disease, just unbearable pain.
Don't tell us you know how we feel, unless you have lost a child.
No other loss can compare to losing a child. It's not the natural order of things.
Don't take our anger personally.
We don't know who we are angry at or why and lash out at those closest to us.
Don't whisper behind us when we enter a room.
We are in pain, but not deaf.

Don't stop calling us after the initial loss.
Our grief does not stop there and we need to know others are thinking of us.
Don't be offended when we don't return calls right away.
We take each moment as it comes and some are worse than others.
Don't tell us to get on with our lives.
We each grieve differently and in our own time frame.
Grief cannot be governed by any clock or calendar.
Do say you are sorry. We're sorry, too, and you saying that you share our sorrow is far better than saying any of those tired clichés you don't really mean anyway. Just say you're sorry.
Do put your arms around us and hold us.
We need your strength to get us through each day.
Do say you remember our child, if you do.
Memories are all we have left and we cherish them.
Do let us talk about our child.
Our child lived and still lives on in our hearts, forever.
Do mention our child's name. It will not make us sad or hurt our feelings.
Do let us cry. Crying is an important part of the grief process.
Cry with us if you want to.
Do remember us on special dates.
Our child's birth date, death date and holidays are a very lonely and difficult time for us without our child.
Do send us cards on those dates saying you remember our child.
We do.
Do show our family that you care.
Sometimes we forget to do that in our own pain.
Do be thankful for children.
Nothing hurts us worse than seeing other people in pain.

“People must be given the opportunity to hurt out loud.” Lady Bird Johnson
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.

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### Spring Fundraiser for Hope, A Success!

**We Raised over $5,000**

All of us at SOSL are so thrilled to report that we surpassed our fundraising goal of $5,000 for our Spring Fundraiser for Hope.

In the months of April and May, we raised a total of $6,841, comprised mostly of donations from individuals, the proceeds from our book *Beyond Surviving*, and grants and sponsorships from our corporate supporters.

Our Spring Fundraiser for Hope not only helped us raise money; it was an opportunity to support our survivor community by putting on SOSL Day, and honor May as Mental Health Month. This serves as a time for us to open up the discussion about mental health, promote awareness, and de-stigmatize mental illness. Breaking the silence and piercing the veil of shame, allows people to step forward and ask for the help they need.

**Thank You to all of our generous supporters!**

*We could not do what we do without the generous support of your volunteerism, your commitment to our cause, and your donations.*

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### 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 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.

Please send all correspondence to:

**Survivors of Suicide Loss**

P.O. Box 3297  
La Mesa, CA 91944-3297  
**Helpline** 619-482-0297  
**Website** [www.SOSLsd.org](http://www.SOSLsd.org)  
**Email** info@www.SOSLsd.org

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“*I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it.*” — Maya Angelou
Hope & Comfort Summer 2014

7th Annual SOSL Day, A Powerful Day for Healing

Thank you to everyone who attended SOSL Day on April 26, 2014! This year was the largest SOSL Day to date, with 111 people joining us.

The day started with an address from SOSL Board Chair, Jana Bradley. She shared with us her story of losing her husband to suicide three years ago. We then held a candle lighting ceremony and poem reading led by Jenni Morel, SOSL’s Director of Development. Each person lit a candle and shared the name of their loved one lost to suicide, as well as the day they passed away, as Rascal Flatts’ song “Why” played softly in the background.

Carol LeBeau then took the stage and moved the audience with her story of personal struggle with depression and anxiety. Carol lost her mother to suicide, so she spoke to us as both a survivor of suicide loss, and as a person who has fought hard to live well in the face of recurring clinical depression. She shared a powerful message about eradicating stigma against mental health issues. Carol reminded us, that as the heart or lungs can be diseased, so too can the brain.

All attendees were invited to post a butterfly on our “Message of Hope” board. We provided large, colorful, paper butterflies to write a message on, then post on the board in remembrance of a loved one.

After lunch we all met in smaller intimate support groups led by our trained facilitators. These groups were comprised of people all sharing a similar loss, broken out by the loss of a child, spouse, sibling, other family member or friend, and a group for teen-survivors. The opportunity to share with people all having a similar loss offers an unparalleled level of camaraderie and support, and is one of the most powerful aspects of SOSL Day.

The day was concluded with a few words from Bonnie. She reminded us that while suicide loss is difficult, that finding and living a “new normal” is possible. Though we will never be the same, we can move forward and live with hope once again.

Thank you to all of our attendees, we appreciate your presence and your contribution to making our day a success. Thank you also to the many of you who made additional donations at the event or during registration, and to those who purchased a copy of our book Beyond Surviving. We raised over $2,000 thanks to your generosity! Your support is so meaningful, and allows us to continue to serve our survivor community. We hope you found the event to be a day of healing, and that you found nuggets of wisdom that you can carry with you on your healing journey.

SOSL is a nonprofit charity, and we are able to run our support programs because of our generous donors!

Thank you to our SOSL Day Sponsors!

Presenting Sponsor

Sponsors

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.

Losing my husband Phil was the hardest thing I have ever had to endure but I am so grateful for the time I had with him and the unconditional love that he showed me.

To Phil, Thank you for making me whom I am today. I hear you daily in my thoughts, as you always used to say, "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade." That is what I have done; through your words, your utter devotion, and unconditional love I am able to make lemonade. I see you nightly amongst the stars as you are the brightest one, thank you for lighting the way for me. I am so grateful for the years we had together, for our dog Newman, who is a constant reminder of you and most importantly for just being you. You were so much to so many, Phil Bear, Fix-it-Phil, Gal Pal, etc. You are never far from me, until we meet again my sweet Phil Bear, I will be forever grateful for being able to be called your wife. - Jana Bradley

It is through gratitude for the present moment that the spiritual dimension of life opens up. - Eckhart Tolle

“Love is a fabric that never fades, no matter how often it’s washed in the water of adversity and grief.” Anonymous
**SOSL Support Group 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 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.

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“The dry seasons in life do not last. The spring rains will come again.” Sarah Ban Breathnach
Support for times of grief can be found in memories. Consider that your closest connection to a lost loved one is not necessarily the most recent time, or the time of loss, but the closest and strongest connection is that of fond memories, shared memories, memories that bring you joy to recall.

It can take time to be able to enjoy fond memories of a lost loved one again, but be patient with yourself and the grieving process. Over time, you will be able to enjoy fond memories once again.

"Grieving is not a short-term process; it’s not even a long-term process; it’s a lifelong process. ‘Having a future’ now means that although your life will flow again, it will flow differently as a result of the loss. Your grief will become incorporated into your life history, become a part of your identity. And you will continue now, and forever, to redefine your relationship with your deceased loved one. Death doesn’t end the relationship, it simply forges a new type of relationship - one based not on physical presence but on memory, spirit, and love." - Ashley Davis Bush, Transcending Loss

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**MEDITATION MOMENT**

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

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"Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light.” - Helen Keller

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**TEEN SUPPORT GROUP**

for Survivors of Suicide Loss

FREE ** DROP IN

2nd & 4th Wednesdays
7:00PM—8:30PM

Herbin Acupuncture and Wellness Center
2801 Fourth Ave, San Diego 92103
@ the corner of 4th & Olive St.

*Support Group for Parents/Adults held in separate room

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**I AM LISTENING FOR YOU**

There is only color here and solitude and warmth of sunlight

A sense of waiting for a flash of wings and flights of fancy that loneliness can bring

The bright delight of flowers and butterfly wings, all the joys of memory that thoughts of you instills like a jewel reflecting pool of blue

I am listening for you

~Suzanne Delaney

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**GU LT**. Guilt comes from a mistaken belief that we could have, or should have, prevented the death from happening, or from regret over irreconciled aspects of the relationship. In truth, we all do the best we can given our human shortcomings. We cannot predict the future, nor do we have power over the events in our universe. It is human nature to subconsciously blame oneself rather than accept these truths.

- Jeffrey Jackson, from A Handbook for Survivors of Suicide
"Commit" suicide sounds like it was a crime. What's a better way to say it?

By Michelle Linn-Gust, Ph.D.

From the time my sister ended her life when I was 21 and she was two weeks from turning 18, I felt uncomfortable using the word “Commit.” It might have been my Catholic upbringing, where suicide was considered a sin at the time and I didn't believe that my sister had committed a crime.

Her pain was deep and she couldn't see beyond it. It was years later before I heard someone use “died by suicide” and I instantly felt drawn to the term. Some people will use suicide as a verb and others might say someone “completed” suicide but “died by suicide” stuck for me and it's the term I advocate people to use. It takes the sting out of the stigma around using "committed."

Remembering Our Loved Ones

Peter Shawn Stevens (son)

“Pete, I will miss you forever and wish so much that your life could have been easier and happy.”
Karen Cullen

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 2014
Fall 2014 September, October, November Request due by August 1st
Winter 2014-15 December, January, February Request due by November 1st
Spring 2015 March, April, May Request due by February 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.

“There is no grief like the grief that does not speak.” Henry Wordsworth
Anonymous (Kristen) – “I will never forget you”
Anonymous – “In memory of Michelle Drake”
Anonymous – “In memory of Jerry Hawkins”
Anonymous – “In memory of Gregory Schenk”
Anonymous – “In memory of Greg Wood”

Brian Bales
Maryanne Baumgartner
Leopoldo & Amenda Caniya (Melvin Barrera Caniya) – “In loving memory of Mel”
Danielle Carmel (sister Louise-Anne) – “I will never forget. I still have dreams about you, and it makes me feel good”
Judy Cirafesi (Michael: husband, father, grandfather) – “We love you and miss you every day”
Idalia Colvin (Vanessa Colvin) – “Love you always my sweet angel”
Elba Crowe – “In memory of Wm. E. Moxley”
Karen Cullen
Bonnie Daniels
Sheree Deneen
Margo DiBartelo (Thad DiBartelo) – “Miss and love you with all of my heart”
Diana Dibble
Caroline Dorson – “In memory of Brett Dorson”
Winnie-Lee Dotson
Steve and Sharon Eggren (Troy) – “We’re holding tight to our memories guy. Love you.”
Mary England (son Bobby Carroll) – “Happy Birthday my sweet son! I wish we were celebrating together. I miss you more than you will ever know.” Your loving Mother
Karen Faulkner
Michele Fettig (Bert C. Buckle, Jr.) – “Love and miss you daily!”
Nan Frank
Jan Gemmeil – “In memory of Susie Libby”
Linda Gildund
Donna Hagen
Patricia Hall – “In memory of Paul Schartman”
Don & Tamara Hallis – “In memory of Shaylor Hallis”
Bonnie Harms (Bob Harms) – “Always in memory”
Roxanne Hawkins
Rex & Connie Kennemer – “In memory of Todd”
Martha Keus – “In memory of Marcia Burquez”
David & Anne Klein – “In remembrance of our son Scott Klein”
Joseph & Sheila Klock – “In memory of Joey Klock” Luv Mom and Dad
Mike & Shannon Kurtz (Jeremy)
Cheryl Lewis (Eric Sorric) – “I love you and miss you Eric”
Julie Liske (Susan Smith) – “Thank you for all that SOSL does to help others. God Bless!!”
Kimberley Monari (Scott Marino) – “Sisters Kim and Steph will always love you”
Wanda Nanzer (Susanne Deon Huerta) – “You gave us such joy in the years you blessed our lives – how we miss you!” Mom and Dad
Kenneth Niemeier – “In memory of Eric Niemeier”
Cindy Pancer

Mary Ellen Reagan (Dr. Keith E. Clark) – “Your spirit is everywhere”
Debra Ridulfo – “In memory of Todd Miller”
Susan Runner Lindeburg (Ernestine Runner) – “Mom, I miss you every day!”
Shannon Ruud
Megan K. Ryan & Wesley L. Ryan
Kathy Shott
Brenda Silvers
Dr. Enid Singer (Nick Stacker) – “You are loved and remembered forever!”
Michael & Margaret Sturm – “In memory of Aaron Sturm”
Magdalena Suarez
Evelyn Tubbs (husband Sgt. Maj. James A. Tubbs) – “You are on my mind and in my heart. I miss you every day”
Pamela Van Gelder (Eric) – “You are still the ‘love of my life.’ 31 wonderful years, sorry you couldn’t hold on for 31 more. I luv you.”
Juanita Ward Collier (Kevin Collier and Rhilee Collier) – “I’ll love you forever”
Karen Westrich
JulieAnne White
Anne Wilson
Karen Zatt
Bridgepoint Education
Recovery International
Sharp Mesa Vista Hospital
Union Bank
United Way Combined Federal Campaign
Walmart

Thank you for those of you who donate through the United Way.
SOSL is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your donations are tax deductible.

Beyond Surviving: A Compilation of Stories from Survivors of Suicide Loss

NOW AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK at www.SOSLsd.org & www.Amazon.com

100% of the proceeds come directly to SOSL

“Death ends a life, not a relationship.” Morrie Schwartz