By Brandy Lidbeck, of TheGiftofSecond.com

So many people, including ourselves, often expect our grief to be finished by the one-year anniversary of the death. People expect us to move on, and their words shame us for still being impacted. Often, we, ourselves, shame ourselves for not getting “over it” quicker, and we beat ourselves up. The path of grief, though, is not confined to just one year. It is a life-long journey that manifests itself time and time again.

The following is an excerpt from Brandy Lidbeck’s book, The Gift of Second: Healing from the Impact of Suicide.

In 1969, after extensive research with dying individuals, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a Swiss-American psychiatrist, created the theory that people grieve in stages. She discovered that each person, near death, experienced a series of stages as the end of their life drew near: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Widely used in the mental health profession and accepted in the general population as well, this concept has since been commonly adopted by the world to describe the stages an individual goes through after losing a loved one.

Although the theory created by Kubler-Ross is strong and has merit, it gives the illusion that, at some point, grief is complete. We, as survivors, know the grief is never finished. The intensity lessens over time, and the consuming emotions become more stable, but grief is never fully complete. When folks expect their grief to end and their pain to be erased, they are, oftentimes, focused on an imaginary timeline, waiting for that magical day to wipe away their hurt and allow their life to resume as it was before this great tragedy. When we expect the impossible, we are always disappointed.

Grief is neither linear nor does it adhere to a particular path. I created this image to depict the manner in which grief really affects us. The Realistic Grieving Path begins with a suicide, causing a surviving individual to begin the grief process. The feelings one experiences are overwhelming, chaotic, erratic, and all-encompassing. I liken this feeling to the destruction of an earthquake. Not only does it rock our worlds and bring devastation to our lives, but it also creates cracks in our foundation, causing us to doubt all that was.

The picture depicts waves of grief similar to an earthquake’s seismic waves. One moment we can feel intense heart-ache and sadness, and then next moment we are full of anger and rage. Always unpredictable and never convenient, walking through grief can be unbearable much of the time.

As survivors work through their grief, they will eventually arrive at a phase titled ‘New Normal.’ New normal is labeled as such because we will never return to the person we were before the suicide. How could we? This phase becomes our new status quo, the phase in which we go about our days, no longer so consumed with grief. Life begins to carry on in this new normal stage until a ‘life event’ occurs. A life event can be positive, such as a wedding, the birth of a baby, or a graduation, or negative like the anniversary of the suicide, a serious illness, or a job loss. Regardless of the event, this scenario acts as a trigger and causes the survivor to walk through the grief path again as they process the death of their loved one once more in light of the new events.

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As I prepared for my wedding, I thought very little of the absence of my mom for the ceremony. Nor did I think of her at all during the honeymoon. Upon returning from the honeymoon; however, while setting up house with my husband, something out of the blue, it seemed, occurred. Two days after returning, my husband and I sat down to make our first grocery list as a married couple. Every idea he had for meals seemed horrible, and I began to snap at him for each suggestion. Eventually, my wise husband asked, “What is the matter? Why are you so frustrated?”

Continued on page 5

“The soul would have no rainbow had the eyes no tears.”
- John Vance Cheney
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.

Save the Date: SOSL 11th Annual Walk

We are pleased to announce the new name of our annual walk:

*Walk in Remembrance with Hope*

When: Sunday, November 12th  
Where: Balboa Park

While the name has changed, our commitment to our community has not. We are revamping this commemorative event to make it even more meaningful to you and every member of our survivor community. *Walk in Remembrance with Hope* will bring an even greater public awareness to mental health issues and suicide.

SOSL is proud to be partnered with Directing Change to put on the *Walk in Remembrance with Hope*. Directing Change is a non-profit organization that works specifically with high school and university students. The Annual *Directing Change Film Contest* is a youth suicide prevention program. Its mission is to promote mental health and prevent suicide by educating young people about the warning signs for suicide and how to help a friend who is experiencing suicide ideation. Hundreds of students across California participate each year by creating short films dedicated to suicide prevention and mental health awareness.

The *Directing Change* program aims to change conversations about suicide in schools and communities through education, trainings, and film viewings. Researching these topics, applying knowledge to the making of the film, and thinking deeply about impacting their peers requires a level of involvement that has been independently evaluated to have lasting impact on youth.

Come walk alongside us on Sunday, November 12th at the Annual *Walk in Remembrance with Hope*!

Save the Date & visit SOSLsd.org for registration, opening July 1st!

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

“There is no pain so great as the memory of joy in present grief.” Aeschylus
SOSL is proud to introduce our newest support program - Beyond Surviving Workshops!

We continue to expand our support services to educate and bring greater healing to our community. Our newest program is a series of workshops designed to provide psychological and educational support, and greater understanding as we continue on our healing journey.

Currently our Beyond Surviving Workshops include:

**Relationships after Suicide** — Relationships among family members, friends, and other people we interact with are impacted by a suicide. Some relationships become stronger, while others may fracture or even be destroyed. SOSL is offering a workshop on how to navigate through the challenges of changed or strained relationships.

**Surviving the Trauma of Suicide** - We hear the words trauma and PTSD - but what exactly is trauma? Together we will explore why it is important for survivors of suicide loss to understand what trauma is, and how it has impacted their lives and their own recovery.

**Helping Children Heal After Suicide** - This workshop is designed for parents and children. After a time sharing a light meal, the children will attend their own breakout session based on age. Mental health professionals experienced in treating children will lead the children's groups. Children from elementary through high school are welcome – ages 5 through 17. The parents will meet with other parents to learn age appropriate support for their children.

**Putting Healing into Action** – The participants will explore how to make meaning out of their loss and give back to the survivor community to offer hope and support – or to explore ways to reach out into the community in suicide prevention and awareness.

*Workshops have a nominal fee of $5 to $10 to attend, which covers the cost of a light meal. Scholarships available.*

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**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.

Today, I am grateful for the lessons I have learned through the devastation of suicide. I love others in their greatest time of pain because I remember what it was like when others moved on and forgot my daily grief. I make a big deal out of my kids' birthdays and decorate their cakes so they know how incredibly valued and treasured they are.

Something I, myself, questioned when my mom took her own life. Today, I realize I have the power to ensure my kids know the value of speaking about their thoughts and feelings and never fearing they will appear weak if they need to ask for help. Something I wish my military cousin knew before he took his own life. I am thankful I recognize my own self-care is as important to me as it is to my family. They all benefit when I choose to take care of myself. These are all lessons I learned through the devastation of suicide. I experienced tremendous grief but I am a better friend, mom, and wife because I choose to love others and myself fully!

I cannot change the past. I can however, make certain my kids and husband know their value. I will take care of myself because my life matters to those who love me most. Today I am grateful for the love and wisdom I have gained from the pain and devastation of suicide. I would change the past if I could, but I cannot. Instead, I will change the next generation in my home and ensure that we love ourselves and others well and intentionally.

- Brandy Lidbeck, of TheGiftofSecond.com

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**Grief can be the garden of compassion. If you keep your heart open through everything, your pain can become your greatest ally in your life’s search for love and wisdom.**

- Rumi

"You never need to apologize for how you chose to survive.”  
*Clementine von Radics*
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 many 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.

### June 2017

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“\textit{You will be with me, like a handprint on my heart...}” \textit{For Good, Wicked}
Continued “The Path of Grief”

Without pause and without thinking, I began to sob. The only thing I could get out between deep crying breaths was, “My mom should have been at my wedding and she wasn’t.” To me, at the time, (and I am sure my husband as well) this seemed so odd and unexpected. In reality, it is a perfect example of a ‘life event’ as described above in the Realistic Grieving Path.

The wedding took place seventeen years after my mom’s suicide and, leading up to the wedding, I had been relatively unaffected by her death as it pertained to wedding preparations. The major life event, though, rocked my world and caused me to walk through the process again as I mourned my mom missing my wedding.

The events do not need to be big; they can be small, such as running into an old friend you haven’t seen in years who reminds you of your loved one or even simply hearing a song your loved one enjoyed. The idea is that events happen our entire lives, and many can trigger different parts within us to feel the loss of our loved one more fully. It is then that we must work through the death again.

Walking through the grief path again by no means negates any grief work we have done before; instead, it brings to light different aspects that need more healing or attention. Grief is both cyclical and never-ending. We will never fully ‘get over’ the suicide of a loved one, and I believe this model best depicts the reality of grief. When discussing his son’s suicide, Tony Dungy, former NFL Coach of the Indianapolis Colts, wrote in his book, Quiet Strength: A Memoir, “First, there is no typical grief cycle, and second, it’s not something I went through. I’m still grieving.”

When an individual has experienced such a tremendous loss as suicide, the entire body feels it. Symptoms of grief typically manifest as follows: difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, loss of appetite, headaches, crying, aches and pains, anxiety, aches and pains, isolation, anger, guilt, sadness, fatigue, shock, and depression.

Each of these symptoms feels ever-present in the beginning, and the survivor may fear these feelings will consume them always. In time, though, these feelings will lessen in intensity and come in waves instead, often arising without warning. Eventually, feelings will surface with only a life trigger or memory of the loved one. Getting through will not always be so overwhelming. The grief path is normal and one to fully expect as you traverse life after suicide. We will never be ‘over’ the pain and devastation completely, but it won’t always dictate our lives.

Meditation Moment

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

Grief, like other injuries, brings two kinds of pain. There is the injury itself and also our responses to the injury. When we can look at the first, we see it is merely bodily sensations. It is like childhood memories. When we run from the monster, it gets bigger and more scary.

When we are ready, if we muster the courage to turn toward the monster – we'll see it is like the children's story, There's A Nightmare in My Closet. Like the boy who comforted the nightmare, we can reassure our first pain, befriending it. "Just hold on."

The first can be our friend. It can lead us to see the gifts our deceased loved one brings us. Death does not end a relationship; it changes it. Death ends a life, but it does not end a relationship. (Robert Anderson)

The pain, once comforted like the nightmare in the children's story, can help us create and define the new relationship. It can help us become the person we need to be to move forward, perhaps empathetic, creative, or emboldened. Perhaps others on a similar grief journey begin to recognize and welcome us. Together then we may create meaningful ways to greet and assist others in this new land. We did not ask for this, we did not want this... while born from tragedy, these can be meaningful gifts.

Perhaps then we look directly at the second kind of pain, and find that our responses to our deep injury, our pain beyond words, shifts into meaningful gifts we can offer to help others.

“Someone I love once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this, too, was a gift.” Mary Oliver, Thirst
Our 10th Annual SOSL Day
A Powerful Day of Hope and Healing

On April 8th, many in the SOSL community came together for our 10th Annual SOSL Day!

As we share our stories of loss and memories of joy, we were reminded that one step at a time, one day at a time, in community, healing happens. It warmed our hearts to witness how the participants connected with one another, and even to see smiles on their faces and hope in so many hearts as the day concluded.

Our closing ceremony included writing down our hopes and wishes for the upcoming year. Research shows that if we write these dreams down, they are more likely to become a reality. We send our hopes out, and as a community we look forward to seeing them come true this year.

All of us at SOSL want to extend a huge thank you to our inspiring panel of speakers: April Barnett, Patty Hathaway, Michele Madden, and Ross Jones. We were all touched as each of you shared your stories of loss, grief, and eventually hope and healing, with us. Your moving words were delivered with great heart and authenticity. We are grateful to Linda Hunt for leading our Candle Lighting Ceremony. We appreciate all that Mike Kurtz has done for SOSL over the years, for emceeing the event and for serving as panel moderator.

Once again many were generous with an outpouring of support that came prior to the event, as well as the day of the event. This is so important to SOSL, as we are able to continue with our support programs because of our donors.

Thank you to our SOSL Day Sponsors, who continue to support our event year after year:

A photo of the hopes and wishes of some of those who attended SOSL Day.

We are blessed to have a strong survivor community of mutual support where hope springs in our community of healing.

“Just Hold On”
By Jessica Hutchison of OurSideofSuicide.com

“Just hold on.” I love this phrase. It is somewhat perfect after experiencing a loss by suicide. In the early days, it seems nearly impossible to have anything that resembles a wonderful day. The pain is on the surface; it is strong, overpowering, and consuming.

People will offer words of encouragement such as, “this too will pass” or “give it time.” While they mean well, phrases such as these almost feel insulting in the aftermath of a tragedy like suicide. Because, it won’t pass, and time doesn’t change the reality. But, we can hold on.

Hold on to the hope that the pain will become less present. Hold on to the hope that you will feel happiness and joy. Hold on to the memories that remain. Will it ever be the same? No, it won’t. BUT, it can be good again.

I know you feel broken, so I won’t tell you to have a wonderful day. Instead I whisper these words to you 'just hold on'. As the darkest days of grief start to get less, the sun will rise again for you.
Zoe Clark-Coates
— sayinggoodbye.org

“More than most, I know the pain of surviving.” Ann Aguirre
CONTRIBUTORS:

Bonnie Bear
Barbara Bendekgey
“In Memory of my dear and special daughter Kimberly”
Ryan Bosworth
Joyce Bruggeman
Bob and Mary Lu Colbourn
“In Memory of Lucy DiRocco with remembrance of Brett Currier”
Cheryl Collier
Idalia Colvin (Vanessa Colvin)
“Love you forever my sweet daughter”
Peggy Crane
Sheree J. Deneen
John DiCarlo
“In Memory of my aunt Lucy DiRocco”
Louise DiCarlo
“In Memory of Lucy DiRocco”
Leah Diebel
Bobbie Eisenbarth
Steve and Sharon Elggren (Troy)
“Now and forever we will love you and miss you. We can’t wait to see your smiling face again.”
Heather Feeley
Michele Fettig
“In Memory of Bert C. Buckle, Jr.”
Dustin Grettenberger
Laurie Jewell
“In Memory of Johnny Jewell”
Richard Jordan
Donay Kauhi-Thompson
Mike and Shannon Kurtz (Jeremy)
Rosemarie Lauro and James Trudnich
“In Memory of Lucy R. DiRocco”
Diane Louise
Lawrence Loza
Combined Federal Campaign
Combined Federal Campaign Overseas
Network for Good
iGive.com
The Patty Roe Robbins Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation
PayPal Giving Fund
Sharp Healthcare
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Verenice Miranda
Ana Munoz
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Sharp Healthcare
YourCause
Julie Myers
Joanne Ordinario and friends at Davenport Engineering
“In Honor of Lucy DiCarlo DiRocco”
Grace Park
D Ridulfo
Dr. and Mrs. Anthony Rubino
“In Memory of Lucy DiRocco”
Kathy Shott
Jackie Stein (Gregory Paul Dubin)
“Loved by all his siblings”
Michael and Margaret Strahm
“In Memory of Aaron”
Kim Thorp (Austin Phillip Thorp)
“Fly high sweet Austin.” Love Mom, Nicole, Allison, Brenna and Danya
Mike Turner
Cheryl Wagner (beautiful son Paul and handsome brother Ken)
“The pain of suicide is something that just never goes away. It stays and stays with you forever.”

SAVE THE DATE
SOSL’s 2nd Annual Ride For Life & Comedy Showcase
Saturday, September 2, 2017

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

“There are all these moments you think you won’t survive. And then you survive.” David Levithan