

Helping Children Grieve at Christmas

Holidays are times of sharing and togetherness. But after a death in the family, the Christmas season can be difficult to endure for everyone- including the children.

Traditions that bring about memories of a deceased parent or grandparent may bring about a flood of emotions for a child. According to Dr. Alan Wolfelt, author of *Helping Children Cope With Grief*, some families mistakenly try to deny these feelings by avoiding certain holiday customs- like putting up a tree or exchanging gifts. "Such avoidance is an impossible task in an environment that constantly reminds us of the holidays. The important question is 'Will the children struggle alone through the holidays, or work through problems in the loving presence of adults?'"

Recognizing a child's grieving symptoms enable a parent and other adults to react in a loving way. Wolfelt recommends watching for the following behaviors:

- Inability of the child to obtain happiness from anything
- Prolonged withdrawal
- Aggressive, hostile actions
- Physical complaints without justification
- Suicidal behavior
- Re-emerging disbelief that a family member has died
- Guilt, or the belief that the child caused the death or could have prevented it
- Loss, emptiness, or sadness

Adults should encourage children to discuss feelings openly and honestly, according to Wolfelt. Talking about good and bad memories of the deceased family member gives the child permission to be sincere with emotions. Families also might consider withdrawing from excessive holiday activities. Christmas time is very stressful, and the combined emotional weight of grieving may drain children.

While there is no easy formula, Wolfelt offers these suggestions for adults to consider:

1. Be aware that your behavior influences a grieving child. The child's ability to cope with a problem depends on the ability of important adults to express their grief and convey to the child that it's okay to express a full range of



feelings. Adults must let children know that tears do not signal rejection but, rather, sadness. If a parent says "I feel sad because I miss ****," the child will understand that emotions are an acceptable demonstration of grief.

2. Provide children with special amounts of attention and emotional support. Take an active role in helping children cope with grief. Children don't always show sadness as openly as adults.
3. Pay attention to the child's cues. Recognize that children need to talk and express their emotions, rather than just be talked to by an adult.
4. Create a special time during the holidays to talk about the deceased family member. Younger children might find it helpful to look at family photographs when they discuss their memories.
5. Don't avoid all family traditions during the holidays. Children might find comfort in such customs as decorating the tree or baking holiday cookies. "Traditions provide a structure for the expression of a child's thoughts and feelings."

While helping children cope with the pain of their grief during the holidays is difficult, slow, and wearing, the process can also be enriching and fulfilling for loving adults.

Reprinted from The Compassionate Friends of Los Angeles, Vol. 25, No. 12 - December, 2009

Source Comforting Friends November/December 2015 newsletter

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

Anne W. 619-992-9023
Bonnie B. 619-818-3363
Allison L. 760-670-7158

Son

Christa S. 858-755-3400
Cheryl W. 619-277-0913
Thomas D. dalton52@icloud

Daughter

Cheryl V. 760-942-7869
Anne W. 619-992-9023

Parent

Paul G.* (Mother) 760-815-1482
Kate W. (Father) 916-601-4585
Nick G. (Father) 317-775-1274

Family Member/Friend

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: Finding Hope

www.suicidefindinghope.com

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

Choosing Hope

By Annete Mennen Baldwin

Robert Frost once wrote, "You have freedom when you're easy in your harness." I believe I read that in junior high school. It had no real meaning to me at that time. But many years and many tears later, I have come to realize what Frost was referencing.

Soon I will be marking the 7th anniversary of the death of my own child, Todd Mennen. Seven years seems, perhaps to some, a milestone. But it's not really. There are no "milestones" on this journey of grief after the death of our children. But we do change. We have no choice.

We weep, we evolve, we change, we grow, we learn, we share, we ask for help, we give help, we reach out, and finally we become someone different than we once were. That is the reality of this grief.

Becoming easy in my harness was no small task. Nor did it happen in magical stages with epiphanies proclaiming: "Here is a milestone, a moment you can remember for the wisdom you found." Wisdom doesn't arrive with fanfare; wisdom seeps slowly into one's mind, forming an ever-changing perspective until at last, we have come to accept our "harness". Our harness is the death of our child. Once we accept this fact, we move forward into the light of hope, and we begin to feel hope and a different type of freedom.

Am I "easy in my harness"? Finally I can say that I probably am most of the time. There are days when I find it chokingly restrictive, and cruel in its pain. But these days are fewer as time passes. I have found a new kind of "freedom in my harness." It isn't the joyful freedom from the days before my child died, but it is a freedom nonetheless. My freedom is the light of hope that shines from deep within my soul as I now hold my child in my mind and heart. My child is with me in my harness as I continue on the balance of my life's journey.

For this mother, hope is knowing that death does not restrict me from my child's life. Death changes only the plane of our relationship, for I am his mother and he is my son. We will love our children for all eternity. That is the freedom in our harness that comes with consciously choosing hope.

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"He that conceals his grief finds no remedy for it." Turkish Proverb

The Griever's Holiday Bill of Rights

1. You have a right to say TIME OUT! Any time you need it. Time to let up, blow a little steam, step away from the holidays, have a "huddle," and start over.

2. You have a right to TELL IT LIKE IT IS. When people ask, "How are you...?" you have the right to tell them how you really feel, not just what they want to hear. (P.S., you also have the right to smile and say you're fine because telling them how you really feel isn't worth your time—some people will never understand anyway.)

3. You have the right to SOME "BAH HUMBUG" DAYS. You don't have to be "Jolly Old St. Nicholas" all the time. You are not a bad person just because you don't feel like singing Christmas carols all day.

4. You have the right to DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY. There is no law that says you must always do the Holidays the same way. You can do 10 cards instead of 100—or no cards at all! You can open presents at somebody else's house. You can do without a tree. You can have a pizza instead of turkey! The list is endless...

5. You have the right to BE WHERE YOU WANT TO BE. Be at home or with the relatives. Be in any city, any state you choose! (So what if you don't have snow during the holidays!). There's no law that says you must stay home.

6. You have a right to SOME FUN! When you have a day that isn't so bad and you feel like doing something just for fun, then do it! Don't be afraid of what someone else will say if they see you laughing and having a good time. Laughter is every bit as important as tears!

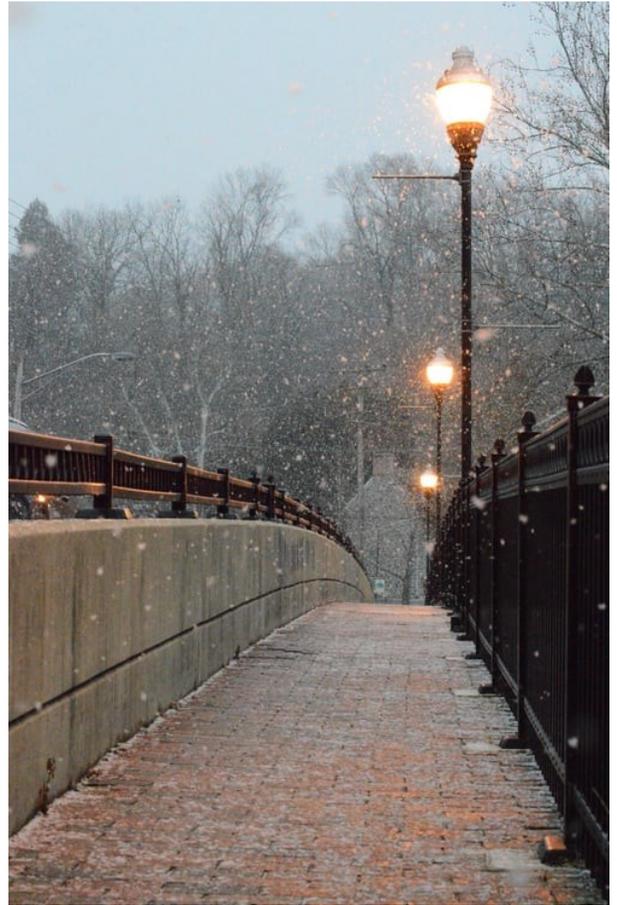
7. You have a right to CHANGE DIRECTION IN MIDSTREAM. Holiday grief is unpredictable. You may be all ready to go somewhere or do something and suddenly be overwhelmed. When that happens, it's okay to change your mind. There's plenty of time in life to be predictable. Exercise your right to change when you need to.

8. You have a right to DO THINGS AT DIFFERENT TIMES. Go to church at a different time. Open presents at a different time. Serve your meal at a different time. Give up and go to bed at a different time! Don't be a slave to the holiday clock.

9. You have a right to REST, PEACE, and SOLITUDE. You don't have to be busy all the time. Take a nap whenever you need one. Take time to pray and to mediate, to recharge your spirit.

10. You have the right to DO IT ALL DIFFERENTLY AGAIN NEXT YEAR. Just because you change things one year—you know, try something different—does not mean you have written it in stone. Next year you can always change it back or do it yet another new way.

Adapted from ©1992 Bruce H. Conley



Follow SOSL on Social Media!

Keep in touch with SOSL on social media! We are on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Use them to connect with the SOSL community and keep up to date with news and events!

www.facebook.com/soslsd



www.instagram.com/sosl_sd



www.linkedin.com/company/soslsd



"Grief can't be shared. Everyone carries it alone, his own burden his own way." Anne Morrow Lindbergh

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

*****Due to the COVID 19 Restrictions*****
 SOSL support groups are meeting online via ZOOM.
 For more information, email Michele@SOSLsd.org
 or call the Warmline (619) 482-0297

December 2021

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

January 2022

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

February 2022

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

4S Ranch—West Coast Martial Arts Academy / 4S

3rd TUESDAY 7-15-8:45 pm / December 21, January 18, February 15
 10890 Thornmint Rd., San Diego 92127

Aurora Behavioral Health Center / ABHC

1st WEDNESDAY 7-8:30 pm / December 1, January 5, February 2
 11878 Avenue of Industry, San Diego 92128 — North County Inland (Cafeteria)
 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 1-15 N: Exit CARMEL MT. RD. and turn RIGHT, turn LEFT at RANCHO CARMEL DR., turn LEFT at INNOVATION DR. turn RIGHT at AVE. OF INDUSTRY

Encinitas Community Center / ECC

2nd & 4th MONDAY S 7-8:30 pm / Dec. 3 & 27, Jan. 10 & 24, Feb. 14 & 28
 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 / December 10, January 14, February 11
 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.

Otay Mesa—Bilingual Group / OM

3rd THURSDAY 7-8:30 pm / December 16, January 20, February 17
 Border View Family YMCA—Conference Room
 3601 Arey Dr., San Diego 92154

Oceanside Group Tri City Medical Center / TCMC

1st and 3rd WEDNESDAYS 7-8:30 pm / Dec. 1 & 15, Jan. 5 & 19, Feb. 2 & 16
 Tri City Medical Center—4002 Vista Way, Oceanside 92056
 Enter through the main lobby. Take elevators down to Lower Level LL—Classroom 6

Scripps Mercy Hospital / SMH

1st & 3rd MONDAYS 7-8:30 pm / Dec. 6 & 20, Jan. 3 & 17, Feb. 7 & 21
 4077 5th Ave., San Diego 92103 — Hillcrest
 Enter thru main lobby and take elevator to Lower Level. Follow SOSL signs to Classrooms 5A & 5B. 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 / December 16, January 20, February 17
 First United Methodist Church - 1200 East H St., Chula Vista 91910
 Discovery Room - located by the Sanctuary. Drive to the back of the property to park - room to the right.

Clairemont Emmanuel Baptist Church / CEBC

2nd and 4th TUESDAY S 7-8:30 pm / Dec. 14 & 28, Jan. 11 & 25, Feb. 8 & 22
 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.

Riverside County Group / RCG

2nd and 4th MONDAYS 7-8:30 pm / Dec. 3 & 27, Jan. 10 & 24, Feb. 14 & 28
 29029 Murrieta Rd., Sun City 92586 — Valley Christian Fellowship
 Must call before attending: Kathy 951-679-2008

“Sorrow makes us all children again.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

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.

By Lauren Cook and Michele Madden

On Sunday, September 12, SOSL's 15th Annual Walk in Remembrance with Hope came back from a "virtual" 2020 event and gathered Survivors and loved ones in Balboa Park.

Over 400 people showed up to remember loved ones and support those experiencing loss. It was a perfect way to support Suicide Prevention Week in San Diego. Wearing walk "bibs" with our slogan, the crowd took to the streets in a unified block and enjoyed the lovely weather and being together again for the first time in over a year!

This annual walk takes place annually to raise awareness around mental health and break the cycle of stigma associated around suicide. The funds raised help ensure that SOSL will continue to provide a large array of services to survivors of suicide loss in San Diego. A 20-table resource fair was supported by local organizations and the event also hosted a Remembrance Tent, yoga and healing activities for children and parents.



Every step taken is one more step toward hope and eradicating suicide! Please put Sunday, September 11, 2022, on your calendar and plan to join us!

Our top three fundraising teams were:

SOSL Encinitas – Captains Meg Adams-Kraidman, Yolanda Harley and Duke Carrao

Grief Mates – Captain Robyn Wasserman

Team Invictus – Captain Angela Thomasson

A special thanks to our title sponsors OPTUM Health and City Wide Group of Companies. We could not do it without the amazing support of our community!

During COVID, we have learned to think outside of the box. A few people in our community have thought outside of the box to bring people together and raise some funds for SOSL. Local Comic Andrew Norelli approached Will the 4S facilitator, about doing a comedy night. Will decided to open up his Dojo to a small crowd of people to be entertained by Andrew and 2 other comics Jake Rush and Daniel Eachus for a night of laughter. Those who attended had the opportunity to donate to SOSL. Andrew has been a big supporter of SOSL and wants to do bigger events to help raise money for SOSL and bring awareness to suicide. Frankly Swingin' is a local band. They have been holding monthly community concerts in their neighborhood for the past year or so. Not only are they inviting people out for an afternoon of fun, but they are also bringing awareness to suicide prevention and suicide loss. For the past two months, they have donated their tips to SOSL.

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

"Adversity introduces a man to himself." Anonymous

First Chanukah

By Nan Katz, TCF, Omaha, Nebraska

I remember my first Chanukah after our daughter Vickie died. It came about three weeks after her death. One afternoon when I felt strong, I went to a department store. I remember thinking that I would buy a gift for everyone in my family while I was there, and that would have to do: I wouldn't be able to handle anything else this year.

I believe now, even though I didn't think about it at the time, that I was giving myself the freedom to do only what I was able - that it was not necessary for me to come up with the well thought-out gifts, dinner, and fuss that I had enjoyed in the past.

I think that "freedom" is a word that may apply in a number of ways to those of us who are grieving. What about the freedom to grieve in our own ways without the "you shoulds" that are sometimes offered by well-meaning friends and family? What about the freedom to let go of our guilt and anger without feel-



ing guilty? Or the freedom to admit to ourselves that we are healing, despite our protestations that we never would?

Try to give yourself a Chanukah gift this year: the gift of Freedom, and the candle shine of Memory.

Reprinted from TCF of Los Angeles newsletter, December 2003

MEDITATION MOMENT

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

Listening, refraining from fixing or fighting, is a powerful way of being with: quiet, stillness. Draw in a breath, allow it to flood into your heart. Feel the depths of despair, elated joy, dwelling darkness, shining light. Embrace the feelings that reside. Give yourself permission to feel, with acceptance, without fight.

The depth of our sorrow; the depth our sorrow gives us... Sadness gives depth. Happiness gives height. Sadness gives roots. Happiness gives branches. Happiness is like a tree going into the sky, and sadness is like the roots going down into the womb of the earth. Both are needed, and the higher a tree goes, the deeper it goes, simultaneously. The bigger the tree, the bigger will be its roots. In fact, it is always in proportion. That's its balance.

- Osho, Everyday Osho: 365 Daily Meditations for the Here and Now

SOSL is Seeking Office Space!

Do you have space that could be donated to SOSL? We are looking for a space, donated to us in-kind or at a nominal cost in the San Diego and/or North County area. SOSL would like to have a place in the evenings or on the weekends for our volunteers and/or groups to meet. A room that could accommodate 20 or more people would be great. As our community grows, we would like to create opportunities to come together, connect, and serve. We need a place to meet to make that happen! If you are in a position to make such a generous gift, or if you know someone who is, please contact us at 619) 482-0297 or lauren@SOSLsd.org right away to discuss!

Are you a federal employee? Join the Combined Federal Campaign!!

Make an automatic donation to Survivors of Suicide Loss! SOSL is a proud member of the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). When you join, simply select SOSL as your beneficiary, and donations will be deducted from your paycheck and sent to us each spring! CFC is the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign! **SOSL's CFC number is 62343** Not a federal employee? Ask your employer if they offer sponsorships or grants for nonprofit charities, or if they offer employee donation matching! Give us a ring, and let us know! **Thank you for your support!**



"When it is dark enough you can see the stars." Charles A. Beard



CONTRIBUTORS:



Lauren Andrews

Matthew we miss you.
Always in our hearts.

Pauly De Bartolo

Michael Bennington

Caroline Blain

(Janet Mary Cooper)
In our hearts forever. When I see a red
bird I know you are near.

Joyce Bruggeman

Shannon Clark

In Honor of Trever Clark

Bonnie Daniels

Kathy Dawson

(Kristy and Keith)

Our thoughts and prayers have been and
are going to be with you in the days and
months ahead. Lots of love ,Kathy and
Jay ,Ken and Marianne

Will Deutschendorf

Leigh Diebel

Merrill Gill

Scott Gray

In Loving Memory of Jan Erickson, who
lost her brother John to suicide.

Christine Hartman

In honor of Trevor Clark

Kimberly King

In memory of my son Austin Phillip Thorp.
We miss you so much.
Love Mom, Sisters & Family

Sandy King

Thank you to Michele and all other volun-
teers who run online support groups for
those of us far and wide.
~Sandy in Canada

Evelyn Mettenleiter-Le

Papa, you are forever in my thoughts.
Thank you for being such a gift in my life.
This is in memory of you.

Andrew Norelli

Debra Ridulfo

In memory of Todd Miller.
To share your weakness is to make your-
self vulnerable. To make yourself vulner-
able is to show your strength.

Steve & Diane Ron

In honor of Joshua David Gill

Andrew Schnee

In memory of Joshua Gill. May his
memory be a blessing.
Love Andrew and Stephanie Schnee

Doug Sjoberg

In memory of Joshua David Gill

Judy Sommer

In dear remembrance of a classmate and
Rainbow sister, Janice Ushelbeck Erick-
son who passed Aug. 19th, 2021.
Prayers for you family

Michaela Trujillo

(Berne Mettenleiter)

The best dad, friend, handyman, hiker
and beer connoisseur. This is my dad,
whom I lost to suicide on October 19,
2020. I am donating in his honor and to
help other SOSL. He is missed every day.

Vanessa Villasenor

Cheryl Williams

Remembering Ian

YOUR DONATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

We exist because of donors, so we want to take this opportunity to thank you
for your generous support!

Our Survivor Support Program and Suicide Awareness & Prevention
programs exist because of you.

SOSL is reaching more people than ever before.

Please continue to support our growth by donating today.

Donate online at www.soslsd.org

From all of us here at SOSL, we thank you for your continued support of our
organization and our Mission.

“Pain pushes you, sometimes gently, sometimes forcefully, but always in the direction of healing and growth.” Amy Dean