



# Journey to Healing

*A Newsletter for Survivors of Suicide*

*Fourth Quarter 2014*

## ***Suggestions for Helping Yourself Survive***

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In addition to the help of relatives, friends, and possibly a counselor, the survivor must make efforts to help him/her self. You are the one who sets the pace and limits of your grief. To some extent, you can shorten or lengthen the process of grief depending on your willingness to work through the grief.

1. Lean into the grief. You can't go around it, over it, or under it. You have to go through it to survive. It is important to face the full force of the pain. Be careful not to get stuck at some phase. Keep working on your grief.

2. As soon as you are able, begin to deal with the facts of suicide. The longer that the facts are avoided or denied, the more difficult the recovery could be. Get the facts straight about the suicide - - what's, why's, and how's. To know the facts relieves the survivor's doubts and allows them to face the truth. It is important to be honest with oneself and face the reality that the death was a suicide.

3. It may be helpful to make reference to the suicide at the funeral

4. The emotions of a survivor are often raw. It is important to let these feelings out. If you don't let your feelings out now, they will come out some other time, some other way. That is certain. You won't suffer nearly as much from "getting too upset" as you will from being brave and keeping your honest emotions all locked up inside. Share your "falling to pieces" with supportive loved ones, as often as you

### ***Responsibility***

I have a responsibility to those I love . . .  
to be loving, patient, considerate, and kind;  
to be loyal, respectful, and honest;  
to be appreciative, encouraging, and comforting;  
to share myself and care for myself;  
to be the best possible "Me."

### ***However***

I am not responsible for them . . .  
not for their achievements, successes, or triumphs;  
not for their joy, gratification, or fulfillment;  
not for their defeats, failures, or disappointments;  
not for their thoughts, choices, or mistakes.  
And not for their suicide.  
For had I been responsible  
this death would not have occurred.

--Author unknown

From Survivors Road2Healing, [www.road2healing.com](http://www.road2healing.com)

feel the need.

5. You may have psychosomatic complaints which are physical problems brought on by an emotional reaction. The physical problems are real. Take steps to remedy them.

6. 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.
7. Most survivors feel it is important to see their dead loved one at the time of the death and funeral. Otherwise there can always be that nagging doubt "Is my loved one really dead?" Grief may take longer because the reality of the death isn't faced. Survivors often stay longer in denial when they have not seen with their own eyes.
  8. Keep a daily diary of your thoughts and feelings.
  9. Don't be afraid to say the word suicide. It may take months to be able to say it, but keep trying.
  10. For some survivors there is a tendency to withdraw to their room, isolate themselves from friends and family, and constantly dwell on their feelings. This may be helpful initially, but not when carried to an extreme.
  11. Some survivors throw themselves into their work or take flight in activity. This prevents the person from dealing with the grief. Save time to face your grief.
  12. Thinking that you are going crazy is very normal. Most grieving people experience this. Remind yourself that you are not losing your mind but are reacting to a devastating blow.
  13. Don't assume that everyone is blaming you or thinking ill of you. They probably are hurt for you but don't know what to say or how to say it.
  14. Be prepared that relatives may say seemingly cruel or thoughtless things because of their own pain, frustration, or anger.
  15. Do not be afraid to tell those around you exactly how you feel. You may need to remind another that you are not quite yourself. Tell them how much you appreciate their patience and understanding.
  16. Some feel that the less said the better and that everyone should try to forget. Studies show this to be the least effective and usually the most damaging approach. Survivors need to release their feelings and resolve their questions, not lock their troubles deep inside.
  17. Work on guilt. Something beyond your control has happened. Blaming oneself for the actions of another is illogical and dangerously self-damaging.
  18. Read recommended literature on suicide and grief. The reading will not solve all of your pain and questions, but it does offer understanding and suggestions for coping.
  19. If grief is intense and prolonged, it may harm your physical and mental well-being. If it is necessary, seek out a competent counselor. Check to see if your health insurance covers the charges. It is important to take care of yourself. Then you can be of help to your family also.
  20. In a time of severe grief be extremely careful in the use of either alcohol or prescription drugs. Tranquilizers don't end the pain; they only mask it. This may lead to further withdrawal, loneliness, and even addiction. Grief work is best done when you are awake, not drugged into sleepiness.
  21. It helps to admit our mistakes. We are human. There is so much that we tried to do. There are things we did not do. Accepting our imperfections aids us in working out our grief.
  22. If you feel guilt, ask yourself what things specifically are bothering you the most. Talk over your feelings of guilt with a trusted friend or professional. Telling the truth about why you feel guilty will help. Forgive yourself and that of your loved one. Then try to realize what happened is past. There is nothing that you can do about it now. Become determined to live life to the best of your ability now.
  23. You can learn from your guilt and adopt a new lifestyle for the future. From past mistakes you may be able to change for the better.
  24. Depression is common to those in grief. Be aware of withdrawing from others and isolating yourself. You may even consider suicide yourself. Be sure to get counseling help if you feel this way.
  25. Some survivors find it helpful to give the clothes to the needy and to rearrange furniture. Be cautious about moving. Later, after the pain subsides, you may regret moving from the happy memories.
  26. It may be beneficial to concentrate on helping other family members and friends, but don't ignore problems that may be building inside you.
  27. Take an empty chair and put a picture of your loved one in it. Tell all your feelings about what happened, remember the good times, and tell of your guilt. It is a way of articulating those confusing thoughts and finishing unfinished business.
  28. It is easy and understandable to feel sorry for yourself, but, unchecked, self-pity can lead to anger, bitterness, and depression.

29. Some survivors build a wall around themselves because they are afraid of being hurt again. They miss so much of life this way. It is important to love and enjoy the people in your life instead of distancing from them.
30. Become involved in the needs of other people. Doing things for others builds one's self confidence and self-worth.
31. Join a self-help support group. Such groups offer understanding, friendship, and hope.
32. Don't become discouraged that you are alone in your grief. Sometimes it is helpful to contact other survivors of a suicide. When you read about a suicide in the paper you may want to write a short note to the survivors and give your phone number.
33. If appropriate, encourage community education on what it is like to survive the suicide of a loved one. Many people truly care but they don't know what to do or say.
34. Your anger may be directed at the deceased, yourself, others, God, or you may just feel angry. It is extremely important to get the anger out. This may be done by going to a remote spot and screaming, chopping wood, hitting a punching bag, playing tennis, swimming, pounding a pillow, etc. Anger that is not recognized and directed outward may turn back on you. Such anger unleashed at ourselves is very harmful.
35. It is best to be honest with your close friends about the suicide. If you aren't honest with them, then you will always wonder if and how much they know. You won't be able to lean on your friends, and this leads to isolation and loneliness.
36. It is helpful to consider that usually the victim wanted to stay and to live. Yet, at the same time, he or she couldn't live, so, in confusion, gave in to suicide.
37. At the anniversary of the suicide, birthday, and special holidays get together with a few understanding friends or relatives, or somehow find a way to escape the full brunt of the occasion. It is important to plan the day. It won't be great, but it can be less painful if you don't expect too much of yourself or others.
38. It is not helpful to compare yourself to another survivor of suicide. It may not seem that you are adjusting as well as they are. Remember, no two people go through grief alike.

*Nothing can make up for the absence of someone whom we love, and it would be wrong to try to find a substitute; we must simply hold out and see it through. That sounds very hard at first, but at the same time it is a great consolation, for the gap, as long as it remains unfilled, preserves the bonds between us. It is nonsense to say that God fills the gap; God doesn't fill it, but on the contrary, keeps it empty and so helps us to keep alive our former communion with each other, even at the cost of pain.*

~~Dietrich Bonhoeffer~~

39. If you are troubled and don't know where to turn, call a 24-hour Suicide Prevention Hot Line.
40. Remember the commandment "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself." Of all the times in your life this is one where you need to take gentle care of yourself as you would care for someone else trying to survive.
41. The best remedy for heartache is to lead as happy a life as possible. You and your genuine friends understand that you have done your best to work through your grief and now you are trying to reinvest in life. If others don't understand, don't worry about them. Surviving and rebuilding your life is what is important.
42. When you are ready, aim at regaining a healthy, balanced life by broadening your interests. As a survivor, you should take time to think through which activities can bring you some degree of purpose. Remember to start slowly and move carefully in this direction - with friends who are supportive and understanding. Think about taking up something you've always wanted to do: going back to school; volunteering; joining church groups; community projects; or hobby clubs.

43. Practice taking one moment - one day - at a time. Say to yourself, "I have decided to live!" Recognize that you have been hit with a terrible tragedy and yet you have still survived.
44. You had no choice and no control over the suicide but you do have a choice to survive and live through it. It may be the hardest task that you will ever have to perform, but you will survive!





Times of tragedy can be a crucible in which friendships are tested. You may feel abandoned by certain friends who vanished even before the funeral, or after a token condolence call.

Those friends may feel unequipped to help you through your grief. They may mistakenly think you want to be alone. They, too, are frightened by death,

Try to forgive them. After all, during these turbulent days, there are many times you don't understand yourself. ~ Rabbi Earl A. Grollman

Who would believe that a person  
I hardly knew  
would be more helpful  
than my family and friend?  
*A bereaved teenaged*

Losing a loved one through suicide is an especially devastating loss. The loved ones left behind (survivors) have a difficult array of emotions to overcome on their journey of grief. There are many reasons for this.

First of all, the death is usually unexpected and sudden, even if the person had been talking about suicide in the past. The method is often violent and it is difficult for survivors to think about their loved one inflicting this violence on themselves. Unfortunately, suicide carries a stigma in our society, friends and family members are at a loss for knowing what to say.

For many people, losing a loved one to suicide causes a feeling of abandonment thinking, "My loved one chose to leave me!" All of these issues are difficult to deal with during the grieving process.

Fortunately, the Greenville area has a self-help/support group called "Survivors of Suicide" for family members and friends of persons who have completed suicide. This free and confidential group is sponsored by Mental Health America of Greenville County.

**Groups meet on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 – 8:30 PM at St. Michael Lutheran Church, 2619 Augusta Street, Greenville, SC 29605. Additionally, CRISISline is available 24/7 at 864-271-8888. *Incident Weather Policy: If the weather is severe, your well-being is our main concern. Please watch for e-mails, call CRISISline at 864-271-8888 or check the website of Mental Health America at MHAGC.org for cancellations. Please stay alert with these notices and take care of yourself.***



## *Inspirational*

An aspect of life after a suicide are the new friends that survivors meet at support groups for people who are also grieving the loss of a loved one from suicide. It is often said people meet some of the nicest people that they never wanted to meet when they meet these new friends at a support group. The bond that is formed results from the commonality of losing a loved one from suicide. As time goes on the fact of the suicide that initially bonded these new friends fades as the friendship grows. There is a comfort level with survivors that they do not have to pretend anything because these new friends know exactly what the feelings are that result from losing a loved one from suicide. There is a certain comfort level resulting from the fact that someone else knows the feelings of grief from a completed suicide. The social interaction that began by meeting someone else who knows the feelings that go along with losing a loved one to suicide moves on to other levels and other topics of interest. With these new friends there is a renewed interest in life. This renewed interest in life can become a very satisfying experience. There is always a risk to be taken as a survivor moves into another phase of life. There is fear as survivors move on to other new ventures in life. The hurt that results from losing a loved one to suicide leaves a lasting impact on the life of the survivor and this can cause fear of venturing forth to new and different life experiences. It is important for survivors to realize that this fear is normal and to give in to the fear can result in survivors never venturing forth to create a new life for themselves. It would be tragic to be paralyzed for the remainder of one's life and not attempt to venture forth to new and different experiences that can enrich one's life. The potential is there waiting to be discovered and enjoyed. There is a new and different life for the survivor who is willing to take the risk and experience a life beyond the suicide. The suicide ended a life of pain for these loved ones but it did not end the life

of the survivor. There is and can be a life of joy and fulfillment for survivors who are willing to take a risk and discover new opportunities for themselves. It takes courage and determination to want to discover new and different experiences that can enhance and enrich the lives of survivors of suicide. These new experiences are waiting to be discovered. The potential is there.

One of the fears that survivors have as they traverse the journey of grief is the fear of losing contact with their loved one. As time marches on survivors fear remembering this important person in their life. Sometimes survivors erroneously are under the impression that if they hold onto the pain resulting from the suicide that will be a guarantee that they will not lose contact with this loved one. Nothing could be further from the truth. Granted the pain is a connection to the loved one and it is the last connection with the loved one but it is not the only connection. There are myriads of connection with those people who have gone before us. There are countless memories of these loved ones. There are countless stories that recount when these people were alive and the antics that made survivors laugh and memories that bring tears to survivors. While the pain is the last connection that survivors have with these loved ones the pain can also be a way that survivors torture themselves because they feel that they failed their loved ones and were not there when these tortured souls were at the nadir of their lives. Survivors failed to see how desperate these loved ones were. Survivors replay the final hours or days or weeks that their loved ones were still alive and missed the signals that these loved ones gave. In most instances these signals were either not there or were so very subtle that no one could comprehend the meaning of the signal. It is only when survivors look back do these signal make any sense at all. The point is that experiencing the excruciating pain that

accompanies the loss of this loved one from suicide for years after the suicide is not helpful in the grieving process. Certainly in the immediate aftermath of the suicide there is going to be horrendous pain that all survivors experience. That is a very normal reaction and a very normal step that survivors need to experience as they journey the path of grief. There does come a point in the grief process when survivors are able to relinquish the excruciating pain and allow the pain to become ordinary. That is a very important step in the grief process. The pain has been incorporated into the psychic part of the survivor. The pain becomes an ordinary part of the life of the survivor. It is there but it is not all consuming and so distracting that the pain impedes the future life of the survivor. The survivor is able to go about the other activities of their lives. To reach that point is no easy task. Survivors need to make a decision that the initial pain that is experienced is not going to interfere with the rest of the life of the survivor. There are other aspects of life for the survivor and these other aspects will eventually distract the survivor and put other meaning in their lives. Does this mean that this loved one who died is going to be forgotten? Absolutely not. These loved ones who found life too painful to continue will always be a part of the life of survivors.

Getting to the point where the pain from a suicide becomes ordinary is not easy. It results from a survivor making a very calculated decision that this pain is not going to be the cause of ruining the life of those left behind. It is all part of the grief journey. Reaching this point will not come about automatically but will come about by a decision that all survivors need to make. None of the steps in the grief journey come about automatically. Like all of the other steps on this journey there is work involved and decisions that need to be made. It all flows from making a resolution that this tragic event that has become a part of the life of the survivor is not going to unravel the life. Certainly there is going to be a detour in life but it is only a temporary detour. The life of the survivor is going to continue to be lived but it is going to be lived in a different way. There is

always going to be a missing person in the life of the survivor. That person who was so loved is no longer part of this life and the life of the survivor as the survivor knew it. Does that mean that that loved one is no longer a part of a family or part of the family makeup? Absolutely not. That would be a tragic result of a tragic death. I have often said that a tragedy worse than losing a loved one to suicide is that if this loved one were to be forgotten. There are many other ways to remain connected to the loved ones in our lives who have gone to the hereafter. Survivors do not necessarily need to experience the pain resulting from the suicide in order to keep connected to these loved ones. There are pictures and favorite songs and a myriad of stories that keep these loved ones a part of a family. In time there will be laughter and survivors will look forward to hearing about their loved ones. This will come about only if there is a comfort level about losing this loved one from suicide. Again, this is not going to come about automatically or with the passage of time. This will come about as a result of a lot of hard work. Taking part in this journey is not for the weak-hearted. Survivors of a completed suicide are among the hardest working people in creation and all survivors merit a deep appreciation from those of us who are not survivors. All survivors should be given a merit badge with the title of "Job Well Done." This work is not easy but with any task the rewards are tremendous and certainly the efforts will be worthwhile in that a life that was thought to be destroyed has risen out of the ashes. Survivors will live again and will enjoy life again –albeit a different type of life.

As always, I want to assure each and every one of the members of the LOSS family of my thoughts and prayers on a regular basis during my quiet time. I encourage you to do the same for each other – especially for those members who have recently joined our family. Our family continues to grow constantly. It is an unfortunate aspect of the LOSS program that our services are in constant need but it is also fortunate that LOSS is here to help survivors in their time of need. Keep On Keepin' On

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Reprinted from the LOSS website (Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide)



## *R*eflections by Becky,

### *Alice and Angie – Your Facilitators*

'Tis the Season – first Thanksgiving, then Christmas and then a New Year. This is a time when America gears up for feasting, festival, joy and parties throughout the season.

The holiday times are supposed to be wonderful, which is probably why we get more calls from desperate and despairing people at this time of the year than in any other. When everything around us focuses on joy, home and relationships, those of us in pain feel it more acutely. The year my two sons died suddenly – one in a horrific car crash and the other from a completion of suicide, I wished the holiday rush would rush just a bit faster and bring me safely into the dullness of mid-January. Don't make me look at the empty chairs while you flash lovely Norman Rockwell scenes on the TV screen. Don't sing about families hanging stockings while I sit here alone and confused. Don't show me all the joy of people opening Christmas gifts, when I don't want even to send Christmas cards. The holidays, for many of us, are not all they're cracked up to be.

Yet the holidays come, and those of us looking at the empty chairs of loved ones past — those of us with hurting lives — need to find a way through. In my experiences of holiday loss, there are two things that have gotten me through.

The first of them is doing something different. We've tried several different celebrations and dinners over the course of the years, and finally have come upon one that works with our family.

The second, and for me the more important coping mechanism, has been listening to what I think is the best Christmas sermon ever preached: *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, by Dr. Seuss. Although it's not overtly religious, I find it conveys the truth better than just about anything else out there at this time of year. You see, when I am hurting, I want very much to be the Grinch. I want to take Christmas and all the trappings and dump it over the edge of a cliff. I don't want the fruitcake (and as funny as that is – I love fruitcake), the toys, the songs, the feast—none of it—and I don't want it going on all around me either. I want to make it all go away, so my hurt will not be quite so raw.

But then, as I'm pulling my sleigh full of the joys of others up to the top of Paris Mountain to dump, I pause and look back for a moment. And in that moment I see past the glitz and feasting, I look past my own heartache to really see what is going on. It isn't what I expected! All those things that made my own pain so acute are, in fact, shadows. They aren't what the holidays are really all about. Christmas and the coming New Year are not about me. They are about the higher power we believe in and what has been done for the world, not about what the world has done to my life.

“And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store? What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.”

The story of the Grinch never fails to remind me that the real celebration is not about who is absent from the table, but Who is present, and the One who is present with me in and through all things keeps me connected to all those I love, both present and past.

Maybe this year you will hear the song, as distant as it may be, “*Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me*”....and just maybe the Grinch ornaments will stay on the tree and not in our hearts. *Peace to you this Christmastime! Becky Kay, Facilitator*

## ***Anticipation***

Anticipation is one of the hallmark delights of the Christmas season. Children excitedly anticipate their presents. Families anticipate holiday gatherings, often with joyful preparations, though sometimes with dread. Christians anticipate the birth of the Savior in the quiet season of Advent.

It took me a while to realize that the depression and sense of anxiety that seemed to settle over my spirit at the beginning of each summer was due to anticipation. My son Adam committed suicide on August 27, 2008, his birthday on October 29 seemed to follow quickly on the heels of this dread anniversary, and then there would be the who-needs-them-anyway holidays. I would experience a persistent gnawing in my gut, a lethargy of will, and a sense of disorientation that pervaded the second half of the year. I anticipated all these markers with formless anxiety.

I have found that the first thing to do when this anticipation rears its head is to recognize it. “Oh, *you* again,” was my response this sixth year after Adam’s death. Once I recognize it for what it is, I can make plans. I use this time before the dreaded day to consider how I will spend it. Will I need to go somewhere to avoid spending the anniversary within the familiar confines of my grief? A day at the beach or the lake or the mountains could bring with the change of scenery a sense of peace. A day with a good friend might be even more healing. Will I need to change my familiar holiday traditions to avoid being faced with an empty chair at the Thanksgiving table? Should I go back to therapy to exorcise this recurrent grief? What if I wrote him a letter or a poem to tell him how I feel? Maybe I could plan a meal of steak and potatoes and chocolate cake, all Adam’s favorites, to commemorate his birthday. At this stage I try to focus on what I will *do* so as not to be slammed when the dreaded day arrives. Just having an action plan is in itself my defense against depression.

Inevitably, I have found that the anticipation is far worse than the day itself. The birthdays and anniversaries and holidays come and go, and we learn somehow to allow some joy into those days while we continue to mourn our loved ones with grace. In the time of anticipation it will seem inexplicable, but it will happen. Expect tears, but do not expect to drown in them.

In Carly Simon’s song, “Anticipation,” she resolves the tension of a different kind of waiting by deciding to live fully in the present. This is no easy thing when faced with the anticipation of birthdays, anniversaries, or other markers of the lives we have lost to death, and most especially to suicide. But we can promise ourselves that we will pause for the song of a bird, marvel at the color of the autumn leaves, embrace our grandchildren with joy, savor a special meal, and enjoy a football game with the passion of a true fan. This is no betrayal of our loved ones; it is a sign to them that we have come to that imperfect peace which is the best we can hope for. It is a sign that we continue to honor their memory.

And it is a sign to us that we need not live in that unmitigated hell of grief forever. *Peace, Alice Baird, your Facilitator*



## ***I Wish...***

Christmas is a time for rejoicing. Rejoicing is a challenge every day after a suicide, especially at Christmas.

Although I am 8 years away from that day, when someone I loved lost their battle with depression, I can recall that day, and all the emotions as if it were yesterday.

I wish I could "run away" at Christmas. However, it's not an option for me. If it's an option for you, I would recommend a vacation in the sun.

I am quoting a poem, which includes an ornament, I found the year Meredith died. I have been giving them as gifts ever since. It brought me, and others, comfort and gave me a reason to rejoice. I hope you find it comforting as well:

Merry Christmas from Heaven

*I still hear the songs,  
I still see the lights  
I still feel your love on cold wintery nights  
I still share your hopes and all of your cares  
I'll even remind you to please say your prayers  
I just want to tell you, you still make me proud  
You stand head and shoulders above all the crowd  
Keep trying each moment, to stay In His grace  
I came here before you to help set your place  
You don't have to be perfect all of the time  
He forgives you the slip, if you continue the climb  
To my family and friends,  
Please be thankful today  
I'm still close beside you,  
In a new special way  
I love you all dearly,  
Now don't shed a tear  
Cause I'm spending my  
Christmas with Jesus this year.*

~ John Wm. Mooney, Jr.

And for Jesus birthday, for His comfort that He gives me, and knowing Meredith is safe with Him, my heart rejoices. With deep devotion, Angie Cook, your Facilitator





## Handling the Holidays

Do what you think will be comfortable for you. Remember, you can always choose to do things differently next time.

- Think about your family's holiday traditions. Consider whether you want to continue them or create some new ones.
- Remember that family members may feel differently about continuing to do things the way they've been done in the past. Try to talk openly with each other about your expectations.
- Consider whether you want to be with your family and friends for the holiday, or whether it would be more healing for you to be by yourself or go away (this year).
- Keep in mind that sometimes the anticipation of an event can be more difficult than the event itself.
- If you find it comforting to talk about your loved one, let your family and friends know that; tell them not to be afraid to mention your loved one's name.
- Some survivors find it comforting to acknowledge the birthday of their loved one by gathering with his/her friends and family; others prefer to spend it privately.
- Some survivors have found the following ritual helpful for a variety of occasions: Light two candles, and then blow one out. Explain that the extinguished candle represents those we've lost, while the one that continues to burn represents those of us who go on despite our loss and pain. Simply leave the one candle burning (you can put it off to one side) for the duration of the holiday meal or event. The glowing flame acts as a quiet reminder of those who are missing.
- Above all, bear in mind that there is no "right" way to handle holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays. You and your family may decide to try several different approaches before finding one that feels best for you.



## Hopeless No More

*Contributed by Krystal*

November 15, 2011---a day I will forever remember but want to forget. “He’s dead.—He killed himself” Those are words that kept ringing in my head as the blue lights and caution tape surrounded our house. An out pour of cry from family members, friends, and neighbors flooded our front and back yard. Was this really happening to me? To my family? What did we do that would cause my father to kill himself. No note, no warning—nothing. Just a random act of selfishness—or was it? Were we not worthy of being loved anymore? Did we not love him enough? Was life becoming too overwhelming due to the fact that he was a disabled 50 something man? He had a great life, I would like to think. A supportive and hardworking wife, accomplished and loving daughters, and 2 grandchildren that adored him—looked up to him as a hero. But a hero is supposed to save lives, not end their own. What went so terribly wrong that my father thought death was his only way out? So many questions—questions I will never have the answers to.

For a while I felt as though there was something I missed, something I was overlooking. Being in the Human Service Profession and previously in the mental health profession, I should have noticed something. This was my job, my career, my livelihood. I helped people for a living but I failed at helping my own father. Was this my fault? What did I miss? These questions filled my head for weeks, months, and almost 3 years later they sometimes still cloud my thoughts. That fatal night my father was not the only person who died. A piece of me died as well. The only man who has ever made me feel protected from this dreadful, scary world is no longer here to protect me from all the things in the world a father does not want his daughter to experience. I question myself sometimes and wonder have I really come to terms with my father’s death? Have I forgiven him for turning my family’s life upside down and abandoning us? It’s hard to carry on as if a huge part of my life is not missing. It’s hard to smile sometimes. It’s hard to be happy sometimes. It’s hard to want to pursue my dreams anymore. My father was my biggest supporter and now I feel as though I have no motivation. I always wanted to make my dad proud but now what’s the point; he’s no longer alive to witness my success. Negativity consumes me sometimes. Doubt consumes me. Fear consumes me. Guilt consumes. Sadness consumes me. Why can’t I be happy anymore? Why can’t I live my life? I wasn’t the one who made the decision to kill myself. My father’s choice to commit suicide is affecting the people he so selfishly left behind. Some days I cry constantly other days I push this tragic event so far from my memory as I possibly can. Other days, I talk. I talk to my father.

As I was browsing the internet I saw this organization and my heart began to beat a little faster. Finally I discovered people who have endured the same lose I have. Survivors of Suicide—and then I began to think about, I am a survivor. Although the road has been long and rough, I know I can and will get through this.

*The most useful lesson  
that a griever can learn about the holidays  
is this:  
Sometimes  
there's no way around,  
no way under,  
no way over,  
Sometimes  
the only way is  
through!*

*~ Harold Ivan Smith*

Mental Health America of Greenville County  
429 North Main Street, Suite 2  
Greenville, SC 29601

*Bringing wellness home.....*

Journey to Healing is a newsletter for survivors of suicide. Survivors are those of us whose lives have been changed by the completion of suicide by someone we knew. Journey to Healing is intended to let survivors know that you are not alone. If you would like to contribute an article or story for this newsletter, please send it to: Becky Kay, c/o Mental Health America of Greenville County 429 North Main Street, Suite 2, Greenville, SC 29601.

**Survivors of Suicide Support Group** – this group meets the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of each month from 7:00 – 8:30 PM at St. Michael Lutheran Church, 2619 Augusta Street, Greenville, SC 29605. There is also a closed program for eight weeks designed to help adults, teens and children.

As we grow and recover, it is important to remember that the most powerful aid that SOS can provide new survivors is the companionship of others who have endured the same type of pain. For SOS to work at its best, we must continue going to meetings to help others after we no longer need to go to be helped.

**SOS Support Team**

This team of survivors who volunteer their time to reach out to survivors in need is available to anyone who feels the need to share with another survivor by phone or personal visit in between meetings. Please call CRISISline at 864 271-8888 to arrange a call or visit from a team member.