



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

SOUTH SHORE CHAPTER HINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

LOSS OF A CHILD WHO DIED BY SUICIDE ISSUE

This newsletter is a special newsletter in that it is only sent out to bereaved parents who have experienced the loss of their child through suicide. The intent of this newsletter is to get information to parents and siblings that will help them cope with these new and profound feelings that are very hard to understand upon the death of a child or sibling through suicide.

The Compassionate Friends are here for you.

MEETINGS: at St. Paul's Parish House
20 Fearing Rd. Hingham MA. At 7:30 P.M. on the First and Third Monday's of the month (including holidays). Also, occasionally, there is a meeting when a month has a 5th Monday.

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WHO ARE WE?

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, nonsectarian, mutual assistance, self-help organization to bereaved parents and siblings.

Our primary purpose is to assist the bereaved in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings for those who wish to understand. Our objective is to help members of the community, including family, friends, employers, co-workers, and professionals to be supportive.

Meetings are open to all bereaved parents and siblings. No dues or fees are required to belong to the South Shore Chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS *Our Credo*

We need not walk alone.
We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.
Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us.
Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope.
We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.
We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds.
We are young, and we are old.
Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope.
Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers.
Some of us are angry, filled with guilt, or in deep depression; others radiate an inner peace.
But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we share just as we share with each other our love for our children.
We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.
We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends.



THE GRIEF AND MOURNING PROCESS

After a death by suicide, there is a need to understand why. You need to ask that question, but you may never know the answer. A combination of significant and contradictory factors seems to be present. One result is that a survivor often seems to be hapless, helpless and hopeless.

HAPLESS! Some people who have self-destructive tendencies also appear to have a helpless quality about their lives. One thing after another goes wrong. Such persons may over-react in a negative way and, as a result, start to feel...

HELPLESS!! He or she doesn't know how to get back on track. If one's helplessness continues to deepen, that person may become...

HOPELESS!!! And so the will to live diminishes and disappears.

Iris Bolton

from her book, *My Son...My Son...*



This newsletter is sponsored by the family in loving memory of Aimee Bullard who passed away at the age of 30, of a drug induced heart attack.

I miss you so,
do you know

Your family and friends love and miss you so,
do you know

Special occasions and holidays are not the same,
do you know

We look towards the sky and blow kisses to you
wishing you were here with us,
do you know.

Till we see you again
We'll tell you then
how much we love and miss you...

*Deb Bullard to her daughter Aimee
South Shore Chapter, Hingham, MA*

SURVIVOR BILL OF RIGHTS:

- I have the right to be free of guilt.
- I have the right to not feel responsible for the suicide death.
- I have the right to express my feelings and emotions, even if they do not seem acceptable, as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others.
- I have the right to have my questions answered honestly by authorities and family members.
- I have the right not to be deceived because others feel they can spare me further grief.
- I have the right to maintain a sense of hopelessness.
- I have the right to peace and dignity.
- I have the right to positive feelings about the one I lost through suicide, regardless of events prior to or at the time of the untimely death.
- I have the right to retain my individuality and not to be judged because of the suicide death.
- I have the right to seek counseling and support groups to enable me to explore my feelings honestly to further the acceptance process.
- I have the right to reach acceptance.
- I have the right to a new beginning.
- I have the right to be.

By JoAnn Mecca

Reprinted from the TCF National website



Unspeakable Loss: Helping Parents Cope with a Child Suicide

By Nancy Rappaport

With every suicide there are brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, and countless others left behind, devastated by the challenge of how to move forward after such a tragedy. In the aftermath of a suicide, mourning families often struggle to find a way to hold on to treasured memories, and to construct a bond that transcends death and ultimately leads to healing. I share insight from a unique perspective as a daughter who lost my mother to suicide when I was four years old.

My recent memoir, *In Her Wake*, explores my mother's life as well and my own journey, which includes a career devoted to preventing teen suicides and to fortifying children in hope that no family should suffer a loss as enormous as suicide.

The strength and resiliency of any family are unquestionably tested when a parent loses their child by suicide. Parents may torment themselves with guilt, feeling that they failed to protect their child, and second-guessing the decisions they made in raising them. In addition, suicide can undermine pride in who the family is, as parents struggle with their anger and a sense of betrayal— "How could my child do this to us?" Although we all have different ways of grieving, tolerating this multitude of feelings as a parent is, ironically, critical to developing a way to let go of the agonizing discomfort that these feelings can generate.

Parents may mistakenly assume that they are protecting the rest of the family if they obscure the truth ("car accident" versus "driving into a tree"; "died in sleep" versus "fatal intentional overdose," etc.). But this can be very damaging to the family compared to providing honest, developmentally appropriate information. During this type of family crisis, it's essential that family members know they can trust each other. Deception, even if well-intentioned, can be destabilizing when exposed. Telling the truth, even revisiting prior explanations, frees the family to understand the myths and facts about suicide and find words for the devastating loss and overcome corrosive and divisive secrecy.

Dealing with suicide is often called "silent grief", because the feelings are so confusing and because of the stigma attached to suicide. Family members may grieve differently, so there may be a tacit rule that it's better or easier not to talk about the suicide or even to recall memories of the person. Suicide-specific support groups can be helpful; there is strength in community and members can find comfort in being together. Family dynamics shift after a suicide, and a family's load maybe lessened if they find ways to communicate about how to persevere through holidays or other special times in the absence of a family member, and find meaningful rituals to preserve the memory of that person (it may be lighting a candle, hanging an ornament on the tree, preparing a favorite dinner). This may sound very orderly, but the reality is that parents are asked to provide leadership at a time they may feel most vulnerable and question their own competency.

Suicide demands an explanation from the living because the very act defies logic and family members may blame one another and ruminate on the 'what-if's.' What if I hadn't had that fight with my son at Thanksgiving? Or, If I had noticed how desperate she felt after the breakup with her husband? Why didn't she let me help? Blaming one's self for an inexplicable act like suicide derails the vital cohesion necessary for family members to comfort one another about their loss and heal. Parents may worry whether it's possible that anyone else in their family could possibly die by suicide, and feel genetically responsible if their child had a mental illness such as bipolar disorder or depression, and may even worry that they might kill themselves because without their child, life is not worth living.

Suicide's lethal combination is untreated mental illness, substance abuse and impulsivity, and access to weapons. Parents can safeguard their family by both identifying and recognizing symptoms of mental illness, mobilizing quickly to get treatment, limiting alcohol consumption, and keeping weapons out of the home. But barriers to receiving adequate mental health treatment can be daunting. Sometimes parents are distrustful of interventions because their child is in treatment and it hasn't been enough. Yet treatment is often lifesaving. Persevering and finding therapeutic support when necessary, as well as recognizing that a vulnerability to suicide is not a prophetic death sentence, but rather an impetus for vigilant self-care and a viable safety plan when there are signs of trouble, is critical.

Friends and family can provide enormous relief by helping out in small comforting ways: making a meal, taking the other children for special time, finding ways to console. Other people feel awkward, asking intrusive questions that focus too much on the details of how the suicide happened, or providing false assurance (this too shall pass; God gives only what you can handle), or suggesting that the suicide was inevitable. These kinds of responses can feel insensitive and may be exasperating. It's important to anticipate how to respond in a way that conserves your resources and allows you to be in control of when and whom and how you choose to share, and expect others to respect your own process of coping.

No family should ever endure the brutal loss of a loved one to suicide. It's hard to reconcile holding a baby in your arms, the pride of first steps, and the anticipated growth with self-destruction and jettisoned future. Each of us may find unexpected pathways to learn and grow from a loss we would never choose, finding faith in the grace that comes from the conviction that love does indeed last longer than death.

Nancy Rappaport is the author of In Her Wake.

A SIBLING DIES

By © L. Nicole Dean

For Don

It is January first. My heart twinkles once again because the holidays are over.

How can a season of light bring so much dark? Thirty years ago, on Christmas morning, my brother died in our home by suicide in a very violent manner. He was 23; my other brother as 24; and I was 19 years old. Our family of five was irretrievably shattered.

Don, my brother who died, was so much a part of us. He brought so much joy in his living and then so much pain in his dying. Who am I to grieve him still? The memories well up every December like a deep dark night unbidden. Anger, sadness, rejection, guilt become my Christmas ornaments. “Give me back my family—give me back my Christmas you creep, Give me back your laughter,” I want to shout at him. Who am I to miss him? Who am I to rage when he was the one in the grips of a pain so untenable that he could not speak of it, but only act upon it? Who am I to cry?

Well, I’m entitled. I’m a survivor after all. One doesn’t get there on a water slide, if you know what I mean.

When Christmas rolls around, I do my dance with grief once again. Some years, it’s a waltz; other years a tango. It doesn’t seem to matter if it’s two, twenty or thirty years since my brother died, I get out my dancing shoes. I don’t go looking for pain like some wacky masochist. It finds me.

Some years I announce—around November 25th, “I’m over this.” I act accordingly. I shop for Christmas cards and don’t go near my dancing shoes. It doesn’t matter. They find me.

It’s not like I didn’t have therapy. I’ve had dance therapy, art therapy, regular therapy, travel therapy, friendship therapy, biofeedback/hypnosis therapy, cream puff therapy, swimming therapy, forgiveness therapy, spiritual community therapy, law school therapy...Law School therapy? The fun had to end somewhere.

Seriously, losing a sibling is heart wrenching and no laughing matter. It took me ten or fifteen years to truly laugh again, let alone make light of myself. That just happened this year. No doubt, because I am writing of it, rather than speaking of it, which I rarely do. It feels safer to write. Other than to therapists, I’ve spoken of his death to three people in thirty years. Who could understand, I felt, and why diminish his being or expose myself?

I adored my brother Don—he made me laugh like a monkey. I adore both my brothers; as a child they were my world. Not very healthy perhaps, but it worked for me. Home life was chaotic and quite frightening because my father was more than a little nuts. My mother’s energy was spent containing his insanity and keeping our bodies and souls together. She was part steel, part angora.

We never spoke of Don after his death. The community ostracized us; my father took a trip down devil’s lane, and my mother mourned by brother until the day she died. I’m sad to say that we never had Don’s picture in our home again, because the pain was too severe. It seems we could not get past it. We went to our separate corners and quietly mourned. It was different years ago; so much remained hidden. Self-healing groups were non-existent, shrinks were stigmas, and the Catholic Church unforgiving.

I couldn’t save him. I was the last person he talked with on Christmas Eve. For months, I barely spoke and relived the shock daily. I ate a lot. Death by mashed potatoes. That was sure to bring him back. I retreated into a private world for several years where if I wasn’t dead, I’d sure like to be. This is grief. And it does soften over time. It softens like water softens rock, in it’s flowing, gentle, rushing, mysterious way. It softens like a sweet whisper of a memory that lulls you to sleep, knowing that love knits the bones of despair together, tighter, stronger, more curious, more delicious than ever before. Knowing that the fires of your being burn the dross of despair. Knowing that the chamber of the heart is strong beyond measure and can take it and transform the pain into joy.

Joy for having known this person, for a day or ten years or two months. Joy for having the courage to be. For knowing yourself in many garments. For taking a risk to love anyone again; a neighbor, a friend, a cat, a lover, a stranger, yourself. The broken heart opens and mends itself. In the middle of the night, when no one is there but many are listening. Joy seeps into me. After all, I’m entitled. I’m a survivor.

TCF/MARIN COUNTY & San Francisco Chapters-Special Newsletter on Suicide



The Aftermath of Suicide

(A Sibling's Viewpoint)

I had never experienced the death of a close loved one before my brother died. When David died, my world came crashing down around me, shattering me into a million pieces. My brother and I were close, but I had no suspicion that he was contemplating suicide and had been for a long time. The night my sister called to tell me he was dead is etched into my memory forever. If I shut my eyes, I can go back to that time and place almost three years ago and still hear her voice. It is a very painful memory and one that I don't call up, but it is there, nonetheless. The overwhelming feelings of shock, disbelief, numbness, despair and sadness are very vivid. At the same time, I was outraged at what he had done to us, to me. How dare he do this? I couldn't even begin to guess how many times I said, I can't believe this is happening. The first six months was a confusing and emotionally draining period for me. I was obsessed with wanting to have answers, especially from him. I read many books on suicide and finally, after reading Iris Bolton's book, "My Son, My Son", I came to realize that what she said was true; You can ask why a million times, but you finally have to let it go, because the person you need the answers from is not here to give them to you. If only for the sake of your own sanity, you have to stop asking, "Why?". Our family drew closer together from this tragedy, and it made me more aware of how much I value and love them. I also had the support of a good friend who was willing to spend hours talking and crying with me. I still get very angry at my brother for changing our lives so irrevocably. That anger inevitably turns to sadness. I cannot see his smiling face, or hear his laughter, or watch him grow into adulthood. Yes, I had dreams of him too. He was an intelligent, warm, sensitive and caring young man, and I was eager to see what direction his life would take. I can't help but wonder what he would be like today. I miss him very much. I will never agree with his solution, but it was his choice to make and I have to learn to live with it. I am absolutely certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that I will be with him again. Only then will I get answers to my questions. I have no choice but to wait until that time.

By Nicki Wright, TCF, MO-DAN, KS



You're Here Now You're Gone

You're here,
Now you're gone.
It went just that fast.
Where'd it begin? Where'd it end?
Like a flash of lightning in the sky.
So bright and full of life.
Now gone and full of emptiness.
How'd it start? Why didn't it stop?
No one knows, but everyone cares.
Your spirit is flowing in the air.
You're not here, but you'll never be gone.
You will always rise with the morning dawn
You hold my heart.
It will never be torn apart.

by Catherine Ludlow, in memory of her sister,
Cynthia, who died by suicide on June 24, 1993

The Seven Stages of Grief

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. All your feelings are normal. It is helpful, however, to know that human grief is a process that often follows a healing pattern.

Shock is the first stage. It is accompanied by disbelief and numbness.

Denial follows quickly, crying "I don't believe it," or "It can't be".

Bargaining is your promise that "I'll be so very good that maybe I can wake up and find that it isn't so. I'll do all the right things if only..."

Guilt is painful and hard to deal with. This is when one says-over and over, "If only I had..or If only I had not.." This is a normal feeling and ultimately it may be solved by stating, "I'm a human being and I gave the best and worst of me to my friend and what he or she does with that is his or her responsibility.

Anger is another big factor which seems to be necessary in order to face the reality of life and then to get beyond it. We must all heal in our own ways. Anger is a natural stage through which we must pass. Your anger at your deceased loved one may even make you feel guilty, or it may be because your own life continues where as your loved one's life is over.

Depression is a stage of grief that comes and goes. Knowing this, be prepared to give yourself time to heal. Resignation is a late state. It comes when finally you accept the truth.

Acceptance and Hope! Understand that you will never be the same but your life can go on to find meaning and purpose.

LIFE CAN BE GOOD AGAIN

By Don Hackett, TCF, Hingham, MA

For nearly sixteen years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the sounds that marked his presence. Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of ever finding life once more.

He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong.

Life still has meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the year, before his coming. Indeed even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give its purpose and resolved.

Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process but I know that this is much easier to write than it was to experience.

I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unremitting pain that engulfed me in those early years. Working through them was the most demanding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long-term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me, and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years. Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing. Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual. These points included:

- Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.
- Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem, unable to help us in our time or deep trouble and need.
- The accepting, at last, of the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.

Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends, surviving siblings, our love for whom seem shrouded behind the totality of our grief. Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through writing a book, planting trees, sustaining scholarships, or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention. A time comes from many to find new homes, jobs and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives. Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us tomorrow with hope.

No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.

Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy, and his shortcomings live on in me. No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life.

Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt-producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.

Is this not our goal, to heal, to find the strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

"Olin is with me still, but now of the heart and memory. No matter what my span of days, each moment will yield it's love for him. He will stand waiting on the other shore. When the day is over, and life gives up the mortal for the eternal, there will I find him, with laughter in the air, joy in the moment, and with love in the heart.

by Don Hackett, writing of his son Olin in his book, *Saying Olin, To Say Goodbye*. Olin died by suicide on July 6, 1982.





Suicide: How Do We Say It?

From the moment we learned of our daughter's death, I knew that the word "suicide" had the power to erase her life while emblazoning her death in neon letters in the minds of her friends and colleagues. During the unremitting misery of those early days, I even toyed with the idea of telling no one she was gone, willing her to stay alive in the thoughts of those who knew her, forgetting that I'd already notified our family and closest friends. It was a fairy tale wish I contrived as a way of allowing myself a momentary escape from the unthinkable reality of her death. If her death were never acknowledged, would she still be here?

My fantasy vanished in the cold light of the days that followed. I knew that we could never dishonor Rhonda's memory by concealing her suicide. I wrote a letter to friends and relatives, informing them of the events leading up to her death. I hoped my letter would quell the inevitable whispers by openly acknowledging her depression and her decision to end her own life. I implored them to speak often and openly about her to us; to do otherwise would deny her existence.

I never intended to embark on a campaign to confront, let alone eradicate, the stigma of suicide. What mattered most was that we who loved Rhonda must not let the circumstances of her death diminish her memory or her accomplishments. I explained that she had "taken her own life" or that "she died of suicide". An expression I refused to use then and refuse to use to this day, is the despicable "committed suicide," with its implications of criminality. Historically, that term was an instrument of retaliation against the survivors, and it has no place in today's enlightened society.

Many people prefer to say, "completed suicide", but as a parent who witnessed my child's 20-year struggle against the demons of clinical depression, I don't care much for that, either. "Died of suicide" or "died by suicide" are accurate, emotionally-neutral ways to explain my child's death.

My first encounter with suicide occurred many years ago when my dentist, a gentle family man in his mid 30's, took his own life. Since that time, I have known neighbors, relatives, friends and other hardworking, highly respected individuals who died this way. I've facilitated meetings in which grieving parents declined to speak about their children because they couldn't handle the group's reactions to the dreaded "s" word. I've known parents who never returned to a chapter meeting because of negative comments about the way that their child died.

Rhonda was a gifted scholar, writer and archaeologist who, like my mother, suffered from adult-onset manic depression (also called bipolar disorder). She made a lasting contribution in her field, and a wonderful tribute to her life and her work appeared in *American Antiquity, Journal of the Society for American Archaeology* (October, 1994).

Both my daughter and my mother suffered tremendously in their struggles to conquer and conceal their illness. Neither of them won that battle, but my mother responded to medications that minimized the highs and lows, and she died of cancer at 87. Sadly, doctors never discovered a magic formula that could offer Rhonda the same relief. She ended her own life at age 36, after a year of severe depression that was triggered by life stresses beyond her control. I saw her battle firsthand, and I witnessed her valiant struggle to survive. She wanted desperately to live; she died because she thought she had no alternative.

In his revealing book, *Telling Secrets*, the great theologian Frederick Buechner describes his father's suicide, which occurred when Buechner was just a boy. The conspiracy of silence that was imposed on Buechner and his brother had a profound effect on their development and their relationships with other family members. "We are as sick as our secrets," he concludes.

We whose children have taken their own lives must do all that we can to help eradicate the secrecy and stigma that surround their deaths. If we allow these to persist, we allow their lives to be diminished. We owe our children more than that.

By Joyce Andrews TCF,
Sugarland, TX

The Golden Gate Bridge: Still Beautiful

On May 23rd, 1995 my son jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge (in San Francisco). Tempting as it is to believe he'd still be alive had there been a barrier, I think it would be naïve. In my despair I wanted to blame the psychiatrist who refused to see him because he'd missed some appointments, the girlfriend who'd ended their relationship just two days prior to his jump, the crisis center at the hospital where he'd gone for help and who could have kept him had they read the signs right, but didn't; myself, (especially myself), for flawed parenting. But never did I blame the bridge! In the end it was his decision. In his farewell note, he said he was going to electrocute himself. What made him change his mind? I don't know, but I believe it was the deed, not the method, that he was determined to execute. People who really want to die find a way. So while a barrier would deter suicides on the bridge, it would hardly deter suicides. Should we eliminate tall buildings, parking structures, automobile exhaust pipes, ropes?

In spite of very sad memories, I still appreciate the beauty of the bridge. People from all over the world enjoy the vistas from this compelling structure. Is it fair to impair the visibility in a futile effort to control deaths from the bridge? The bridge is for the living, too.

Carol Sheldon
CF, Marin County, California

When Someone Takes His Own Life By Norman Vincent Peale

In many ways, this seems the most tragic form of death. Certainly it can entail more shock and grief for those who are left behind than any other. And often the stigma of suicide is what rests most heavily on those left behind.

And my heart goes out to those who are left behind, because I know that they suffer terribly. Children in particular are left under a cloud of differentness all the more terrifying because it can never be fully explained or lifted. The immediate family of the victim is left wide open to tidal waves of guilt. "What did I fail to do that I should have done? What did I do that was wrong?" To such grieving persons I can only say, "Lift up your heads and your hearts. Surely you did your best. And surely the loved one who is gone did his best, for as long as he could. Remember, now, that his battles and torments are over. Do not judge him, and do not presume to fathom the mind of God where this one of His child is concerned."

A few years ago, when a young man died by his own hand, a service for him was conducted by his pastor, the Rev. Weston Stevens. What he said that day expresses far more eloquently than I can, the message that I'm trying to convey. Here are some of his words:

"Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage and his strength. At last these adversaries overwhelmed him. And it appeared that he had lost the war. But did he? I see a host of victories that he had won!"

"For one thing, he has won our admiration, because even if he lost the war, we give him credit for his bravery on the battlefield. And we gave him credit for the courage and pride and hope that he used as his weapons as long as he could. We shall remember not his death, but his daily victories gained through his kindnesses and thoughtfulness, through his love for family and friends, for animals and books and music, for all things beautiful, lovely and honorable. We shall remember not his last day of defeat, but we shall remember the many days that he was victorious over overwhelming odds. We shall remember not the years we thought he had left, but the intensity with which he lived the years that he had. Only God knows what this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul. But our consolation is that God does know, and understands."

As Long As I Can

**As long as I can, I will look at the world for both of us.
As long as I can, I will laugh with the bird, I will sing
with flowers, I will play to the stars, for both of us.
As long as I can, I will remember how many things on
this earth were your joy. And I will live as well as you
would want me to live, as long as I can.**

... by Sascha. (Sascha's son Nino drowned at age 3; years later, her daughter Eve died by suicide at age 21.)

River Reflections

I just got back from a river rafting trip, where I found myself thinking about my brother a lot. He died 16 months ago of an overdose of morphine. I don't know why it happened; it happened. I didn't see the beginning of his life—he was three years older, but I saw the end. I can look at it now and see it in its entirety—his 33 years of living that I so much counted on and expected to last another 70 or 80 years. I thought I would always have him to talk to—about life, about family, and about ourselves. The river was a meditative place for me. The rhythm of the oars, the gentle motion of the raft, the shore gliding by, the gurgle of the water as it seeped into and back out of our raft—all of this provided just enough stimulation and was hypnotic enough that I didn't want to do anything but sit and think. For a few days on the river, I floated without any of my day-to-day concerns, without the usual level of tension standing behind me. What rose to the surface, visible in the clear water of my mind after the silt of all my worries sank to the bottom, were thoughts of my brother. Nat would have liked this trip. The rough beauty of the terrain and the quiet power of the water would not have been lost on him. He would have noticed the beauty of the full moon and the light on the canyon walls as the sun rose and set. I have felt a lot of anger at him for dying, for taking his own life, for engaging in an activity so dangerous, for playing Russian roulette, for committing suicide. He left no note, he didn't say good-bye; he left a wife and two sons whom he loved very much but who, like me, were not enough to keep him alive. It wasn't the anger, though, that I felt on the river. I just remembered him. Grief is at its sharpest when, after a death, he all of a sudden flashes into focus so real and so present that I can hear his voice as if he has just spoken to me. I can imagine the scent of his hair, remember the texture of his face as I touch it, and I can see him walking and talking as if he were only there a moment ago. At these times, the grief flares up; the wound feels fresh and sharp with memories of the love, the charm, and the grace. I realize both with gratitude and with anguish for the wound this reality carries, that he is not someone I can let go. These memories will come to me for the rest of my life. He is truly a part of me. He is mixed up in my blood and my bones and the electrical impulses of my brain. And in whatever way all of these things go together to form a soul, he is a part of that too. There is no escaping him. This is the gift and the price of love—it doesn't end. My brother was there in the river's sand and mud, in the full moon, the constantly flowing cold water, the clear dry air, the red canyon walls and the blue sky. And he was there in me. And I was there, alive and more appreciative than I would have been before he died. I was more aware of my connection to my surroundings—that one day my body will be river mud, water and bones like driftwood. What form my love will take then, I don't know. Maybe if there is a river and desert light offering delight to someone's senses, that will be enough. I don't know.

Emily Moore, TCF/Los Angeles, California

When Someone Takes His Own Life
By Norman Vincent Peale

HELPFUL ORGANIZATIONS and BOOKS
Organizations

Good Samaritans

<http://www.samaritansofboston.org>

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

<http://www.nami.org>
800-950-NAMI (6264)

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

800-273-8255

(Veterans Suicide Hotline and Online Chat press 1 to be routed to their Suicide Hotline or Live Chat line)

Books
On Depression and Suicide

1. *My Son My Son* by Iris Bolton
2. *One The Edge of Darkness*, by Kathy Cronkite (Doubleday, 1994)
3. *You Mean I Don't Have To Feel This Way?*, by Collette Dowling (Scribner's, 1991; Bantam, 1993)
4. *Mood Swing*, by Ronald Fieve, M.D. (Bantam, 1989)
5. *An Unquiet Mind*, by Kay Redfield Jamison (Alfred Knopf, 1995)
6. *Night Falls Fast; Understanding Suicide*, by Kay Redfield Jamison (Alfred Knopf, 1999)
7. *Touched by Fire*, by Kay Redfield Jamison (Simon & Schuster, 1993)
8. *Why Suicide?*, by Eric Marcus (HarperCollins), 1996)
9. *The Noonday Demon; An Atlas of Depression*, by Andrew Solomon (Scribner), 2001)
10. *Darkness Visible*, by William Styron (Random House, 1990)
11. *Suicide Why?: 85 Questions and Answers About Suicide*, by Adina Wroblewski (SAVE, 1994)
12. **In Her Wake**, by Nancy Rappaport

Surviving the Suicide Death of a Loved One

1. *Telling Secrets*, by Frederick Buechner (Harper, 1992)
2. *Stronger Than Death*, by Sue Chance, M.D. (Avon Books, 1994; Replica Books, 1997)
3. *Saying Olin to Say Goodbye*, by Donald Hackett (Old Cedar Publications, 1986)
4. *After A Suicide; Young People Speak Up*, by Susan Kuklin (Putnam Publishing Group, (1994)
5. *Knowing Why Changes Nothing*, by Eva Lager with Sascha Wagner (Options Publishing, Perth, Australia, 1997)
6. *Suicide of a Child*, by Adina Wroblewski (Centering Corporation, 1993)
7. *Suicide Survivors: A Guide for Those Left Behind*, by Adina Wroblewski (SAVE, 1994)

Grief That Include Deaths by Suicide

8. *After the Death of a Child: Living with Loss Through the Years*, by Ann K. Finkbeiner (John Hopkins University Press, 1996)
8. *A Broken Heart Still Beats: After Your Child Dies*, by Anne McCracken and Mary Semel (Hazeldon, 1998; paperback, 2000)
10. *In the Midst of Winter*, by Mary Jane Moffat (Vintage Books, 1982)
11. *The Worst Loss: How Families Heal from the Death of a Child*, by Barbara Rosof (Henry Holt, 1994)



**SOUTH SHORE CHAPTER
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TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether it will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you will find just the right person - or just the right words said that will help you in your grief.



TO OUR OLD MEMBERS

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK. What it would have been like for you if there had been no “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief, and encourage you? It was from them that you heard “your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer”.