

Older grief is about
aching in gentler ways,
rarer longing,
less engulfing fire.
Older grief is about
searing pain
wrought into tenderness.

Linda Zelenka

The Survivors of Suicide program and this newsletter depend in part on donations from the survivor community.

We offer our sincere appreciation for recent donations in memory of Daniel B and Kevin S.

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE NEWSLETTER

is published bi-monthly by the
Macomb Crisis Center

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Holiday Remembrance Program

**SOS extends a special invitation to you
to join us to honor and remember
the life of your loved one during this holiday season**

Tuesday, December 13, 2011
7 pm - 9 pm

Riverhouse Banquet Center
5 Amvet Drive
Mt. Clemens

Note the new location!

The loss of a loved one can hurt even more as the holiday season approaches. We invite you to take time for yourself (and your family) to remember those we have lost with a beautiful evening of hors d'oeuvres, music, survivor speakers and a candle lighting ceremony in a quaint and private setting on the Clinton River.

The program is free and we hope to see you there.

You are encouraged to bring a photo of your loved one to display as we honor their memory.

No charge (donations accepted). Dress casual.

Kindly RSVP to the Crisis Center (586-307-9100) by 12/1/11 to register the number of persons who will attend.

November/December 2011

Survivors Of Suicide NEWSLETTER

MACOMB COUNTY CRISIS CENTER

(586) 307-9100

Grieving During the Holidays

Grief at the loss of a loved one is an emotionally painful and debilitating condition at any time of the year. Time may eventually help heal our wounds, but meanwhile, life goes on as usual for the rest of the world, and that includes holidays. Holidays can be challenging to endure, let alone enjoy.

Decide what you want to participate in this holiday season. Grief has a unique way of giving us permission to really evaluate what parts of the holidays we enjoy and what parts we don't.

If you find yourself just going through the motions and feeling nothing, perhaps you can take a year off. The same holidays will come around again. For others, staying involved with the holidays is a symbol of continuing life. Times of crisis can often serve

to bring the true message of holiday home to everyone.

Have a Plan A and Plan B – Plan A might be to go to a family dinner. Then, if it doesn't feel right, have your Plan B ready: maybe watch a movie or look through a photo album or go for a quiet walk alone. Many people find that when they have a Plan B in place, just knowing it is there is enough.

Create a ritual to externalize your grief. You may want to share favorite stories, remember your loved one in spiritual activities, create an online tribute to their memory, light a candle, or leave an empty chair at the table.

Allow time for feelings to express themselves. Don't keep feelings or tears bottled up. If you have 500 tears to cry, don't stop at 250.

There is no right or wrong way to handle the holidays in grief. You have to decide what is right for you and do it. You have every right to change your mind, even more than once.

It is very natural to feel like you may never enjoy the holidays again. It is true that they will never be the same as they were, but in time, most people are able to find meaning again in holiday traditions.

Holidays are a normal part of the journey of life, but are some of the roughest terrain we can navigate after a loss. The ways we deal with them are as individual as we are. Holidays can be sad, but we may catch ourselves doing alright.

*David Kessler
Natural Awakenings
December 2010*

HEART LINES

In Blackwater Woods

Look, the trees
are turning
their own bodies
into pillars

of light,
are giving off the rich
fragrance of cinnamon
and fulfillment,

the long tapers
of cattails
are bursting and floating away over
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,
and every pond,
no matter what its
name is, is

nameless now.
Every year
everything
I have ever learned

in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side

is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
that your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

Mary Oliver (1983)

Sharing the Journey Finding Comfort and Support Bettye R. Callison-Palermo

A beautiful poem reads in part: "Do not stand at my grave and cry, I am not there; I did not die. My spirit is still alive. I am a thousand winds that blow. I am the diamond glints on snow. I am the sunlight on the ripened grain. I am the gentle autumn's rain."

I, too, believe my son's spirit is still alive. I feel him next to me when I jog in the early morning, especially when the stars twinkle overhead. I feel him in the boughs of the solitary fir tree that stands in the middle of our pasture. I now call it Drew's tree. He loved our pasture so - and reading, building things, photographing, riding his bike, being silly, and us.

When I feel him now, his spirit is at peace and he is full of self-love. But this was not so when my tender 19-year-old son took his own life two days before Christmas almost five years ago. Major depression had robbed him of his inner peace and self-love. We did not know he had this illness and did not have the opportunity to try to save him.

Not knowing another soul who had experienced a suicide loss, and not knowing anything about the disorders that cause suicide, my family and I were left floundering at the brink of despair. But we held on to each other and pulled ourselves through. We saw counselors and sought help from our local survivors group. Then we set to find out why.

We have since learned that most of those who die by suicide were suffering the pain of a mental health crisis. We also learned that mental health issues such as depression or anxiety are treatable, just as physical health issues such as diabetes or heart disease are treatable.

Also, research shows that more than 60 percent of us will lose someone we know to suicide; more than 20 percent of us will lose a family member.

Drew's spirit is now, through our efforts, seeking to save others who suffered as he did. If we had been able to save him, we know he would want

to tell everyone there is no need to suffer from mental or emotional pain in silence. Please do not let the outdated stigma against treatment for depression or anxiety keep you from seeking help for yourself or for someone you love.

We took a huge step toward overcoming our grief when we attended the International Survivors of Suicide Day event as the first anniversary of losing our son approached. This was also just before the holiday season, and we were not at all sure how we would get through that winter.

To this day, I do not know who sent us an invitation to attend that event (I was often in a mental and emotional fog that first year), but I will be forever grateful that they did.

This conference is held annually the Saturday before Thanksgiving, and there are more than 150 sites nationwide. We discovered a community of survivors of suicide loss, which led to more understanding and more healing.

For information on International Survivors of Suicide Day activities, including the opportunity to watch them live from your home computer, go to www.afsp.org and click on the Surviving Suicide Loss tab.

Survivors of Suicide Support Group Meetings

(1st Wednesday and 3rd Tuesday of each month)

Wednesday, November 2
Tuesday, November 15
Wednesday, December 7
Tuesday, December 20
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Fox Pointe Center, 46360 Gratiot
South of 21 Mile Road
Enter door at rear of building
Questions? Call 586-307-9100

Upcoming Events

November 2011

Craft Nite
Monday, November 28, 6pm-9pm

December 2011

Holiday Remembrance Program
Riverhouse Banquet Center
Tuesday, December 13, 7pm
*see back page for details
please call 586-307-9100 to sign up*

No Craft Nite in December

January 2012

Craft Nite
Monday, January 30, 6pm-9pm

February 2012

Craft Nite
Monday, February 27, 6pm-9pm

*All activities take place at Fox Pointe Center,
46360 Gratiot, unless otherwise noted.*

*Please watch future newsletters for additional
information as it becomes available. Events
are subject to change.*