You are invited to attend our
Sixth Annual Survivors of Suicide Conference

Coping With Suicide Loss:
a daylong conference for survivors of suicide and those who care about them

presented by
Macomb County Crisis Center

When: Saturday, April 9, 2011
10:00 am - 3:00 pm (registration begins at 9:30 am)

Where: Macomb ISD Building
44001 Garfield Road
Clinton Township, MI 48038

Highlights: Speakers
Survivor Panel
Lunch Provided

Call Now! Registration deadline: March 26, 2011
To register, or for further information, please call the Macomb County Crisis Center at 586-307-9100.

Survivors of Suicide Newsletter

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Grief and Mourning

Life for any of us can change suddenly, unalterably. To the survivor—the wife or husband or lover, mother or father, child or grandchild, brother or sister or close friend—life will seem to have lost its luster and the future, its promise. But there are things we can do to express our grief and to make the most of what life has left for us. The death of a loved one is always going to be painful, but when this loss occurs we are also faced with unexpected decisions about our own lives.

If you are experiencing such grief, you know that it is a volcanic eruption of emotion. It is extremely powerful. It can become a commanding presence—the centering point of our whole existence. The feelings triggered when a loved one dies often manifest themselves in ways that we least expect.

Because these feelings are so hard to control, you may find yourself wishing that you didn’t have to deal with them and that you could just put them away in a closet somewhere, never to be felt again. I have been asked, “Why must I have these feelings? Why can’t I just ignore them? Won’t they just fade away?” Sad to say, they won’t just fade away, any more than the memory of your loved one will fade away. No matter how difficult, it is best to deal with your grief and not ignore it.

We must recognize that grief is part of being human. What kind of person would not grieve the death of a loved one? When we say we would like our feelings of grief to fade away, what we really mean is that we would like to be relieved of our terrible sense of loss.

Surely more than any other of nature’s creatures, human beings have the capacity not only to remember—a mixed blessing—but also to express and discharge their feelings in nondestructive ways. And that is the greatest blessing of all. Grief that is expressed is grief that we can live with; grief that is suppressed is grief that will rise up to haunt us, surprise us, and shape our lives in ways we cannot control.

Helen Fitzgerald
The Mourning Handbook
Simon and Schuster (1994)

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I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have—life itself.

Walter Anderson
Once the conventional remarks had been said, my friend Doctor Maholick made it clear that we might expect to be in an emotional shock for a while, which would give way presently to moments of denial or bargaining or guilt. Inevitably, we would also experience anger and depression. These stages of grief, so to speak, came with the territory. And then he added an extra dimension to his counseling that seemed at that moment to be utterly beyond belief. "I ask you to hold two things in your mind. The first thing," the doctor said, "is that this crisis can be used to bring your family closer together than ever. If you use this opportunity wisely, you can survive and be a stronger family than before."

"But how?" I asked.

"The formula is simple. Make every decision together throughout this crisis. Hear every voice. Work for a consensus. Never exclude your children during these next few days. Call family conferences. Discuss each problem rapidly, and you will all survive. The choice is yours."

"But how?" I asked again.

"The second thing is more difficult to grasp," he continued with apparent agreement. "The foundation stone of our lives. Jack and I nodded in agreement. "Family integrity and unity had been the sense. Family integrity and unity had been the family. So he did what he felt he had to do, and in doing it, he gave you a gift." The words I was hearing were incredible. Could I believe them? I recalled Oscar Wilde’s writing, "I can believe in anything so long as it is incredible."

"This gift will not jump out at you or thrust itself into your life," Maholick continued. "You must search for it. As time passes, you will be amazed at unanticipated opportunities for helping yourself and others that will come your way, all because of Mitch. Today, you probably need to condemn him. It’s only natural. But I earnestly believe that one day you will be able to acknowledge his gift."

"My husband grimaced. "I hear your words, but one day you will be able to acknowledge his gift.""

"That’s okay. Perhaps one day they will," Maholick said gently.

excerpt from My Son…My Son…: A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss, or Suicide Bolton Press Atlanta (2001)