



S.O.L.O.S



Survivors of Loved Ones Suicide
A Support Group for Survivors of Suicide Loss
8310 Ewing Halsell Dr. San Antonio, TX 78229

May 2009

Volume I

In loving memory of Joanne Chavez, who past away on March 31, 2009, of cancer. In 1985, Joanne and her husband Gary lost their son, Chris, to suicide. In 1987, Joanne and Pat O'Brien, founded the support group S.O.L.O.S. All those who were fortunate to enough to have known Joanne will miss her, but know that she is united with her son Chris. The group will go on in hopes of helping others deal with the aftermath of suicide, and to continue on with the legacy that Joanne created.

S.O.L.O.S Support Meetings

Date: The 1st and 3rd

Wednesday of every month

Time: 7:00 to 8:30pm

Location: Ecumenical Center
8310 Ewing Halsell
San Antonio, TX 78229

In remembrance of Mother's Day....

This newsletter is dedicated to all the Mothers who have lost a child to suicide, it is also in dedication to all the daughters and sons who have lost their Mother to suicide.....



Help Lines

National Suicide Hotline: 800-SUICIDE

Teen Line: 800-TLC-TEEN

Trevor Helpline: 800-850-8078

Hotline for gays, lesbian, bisexual, trans-gender or questioning youth

Mother's Day

By Judy A. Sittner

Another Mother's Day!

But a different one this year.

For you see, I am a mother,
but my child isn't here.

I am a mother who is hurting
for this child who was so dear,
as I face this and other occasions,
each and every year.

I am a mother who feels an emptiness
over and over again,
because I miss this child
and all that could have been.

I am a mother who cared
as I watched my child grow,
and truly loved her more
than anyone will ever know.

I am a mother who has memories
and many tears to cry,
over regrets I'll have to live with
until the day I die.

I am a mother who is thankful
for the miracle of birth,
and all my child has taught me
about life and my own self-worth.

I just can't stop being a mother
just because my child isn't here,
because the love we had for each other
will continue for years and years.

And so

On this special "Mother's Day",
I will feel within my heart
all the pride, love, and joy
which are the parts,
That makes me who I am,
and what I'll always be –

A Mother

just remember that, please.

reprinted from The HopeLine Syracuse, NY May 1997

Dear Mr. DeGuzman

By Jean Walton Wolff, Aptos, CA

Last month, you had the difficult job of being the one who found my mother, Alice Broadbent Wolff, after she took her own life. Thank you for the small but important job you played in her life. I can imagine how difficult that must have been for you.

When you found her she was bruised and broken in body and in spirit. She had become a very sick woman and had suffered greatly her last months, especially. The woman you found is not who she always was. I want to tell you how else I remember her.

She was a beautiful and brilliant woman with a wonderful sense of humor. Her college yearbook described her as looking as if she had just stepped out of Vogue. She was the smartest woman I ever met. She could whip through crossword puzzles that left me winded. People loved parties where she had lasagna was on the buffet - she would create these meals out of nowhere and could easily amuse a roomful of guests. She loved being so brown, the cello, Bach, gardening, string beans and rice. She was comfortable reciting the "Jabberwocky" as she was explaining tort law.

Sometimes, it was hard to be her daughter. She was a reserved woman who did not take easily to hugs or touching. People who did not know her might have called her cold, but sometimes she preferred plants or animals to people because they could not hurt her as much. I remember she showed her affection for my brother and me in two ways - occasionally stroking our foreheads (a rare and special treat) and reading out loud to us. I can remember sulking as I was sent to my room for some misbehavior and having to miss the next chapter of *Treasure Island* on the couch - a serious deprivation. I can see her today in my own love of the written word.

I remember another time when I was in the fourth grade and for Mother's Day, I brought home the tiny gift of a tiny seedling that had been a class project. The sprout had tipped over on the bus ride home, and I arrived weeping in the kitchen with a bucketful of dirt. Mom knelt down and dried my tears with a tenderness that surprised us both. Her seeming indifference was also because she did not want to spoil her children. She was the product of some Victorian morals, and her distance was a sign of great affection for us - she did not want to spoil what she loved best. Occasionally she let her guard down, like the time she said I was so beautiful I lit up a room by walking into it.

Two things which caused pain in her life were going to boarding school when she was twelve, and being denied the chance to attend law school after college. When she graduated from Vassar (where she learned to drink and smoke and had changed her name from Alice to Lee), Professor Post told Grandpa that she was recommending Mom for law school. She later said that Grandpa's only reply was "Do you know where I can get my shirts done?" What a painful thing that must have been for such a brilliant woman to hear.

She told other stories about herself and her childhood. It was not uncommon to feel that sometimes she was her favorite topic of conversation. But her stories were colorful as she was described growing up in Puuene, Hawaii. Her background colored my life. When I was a child growing up in Guatemala City, even our dog, Gordie, learned some Hawaiian. He would happily come to running to dinner when he heard Tina, the Cakchiquel Indian maid, imitate mom by calling, "Gordie, Kau Kau!" Tina didn't speak any English, and sure didn't realize that she was speaking Hawaiian.

Mom had a wonderful sense of humor. She once walked into a room where a friend of hers was in a partial body cast. Her first words were, "Please don't get up." Even Chip Connelly, the highschool baseball star I had a crush on, heard this comment and thought my mom was cool. She enjoyed black humor as well, "Other than that Mrs. Lincoln, how did you enjoy the play?"

She struggled with her alcoholism the last years of her life, never being able to forgive herself for it. My own sobriety was in part her doing. That, and my birth, are two of my greatest gifts. They were both from her.

Her distance became a source of freedom for me. She was never a mother who insisted that I build my life around collecting recipes, or that I become a champion babysitter at thirteen. She would steer me away from a sink of dirty dishes saying, "You'll learn this in good time." From her I learned what it is to be strong, intelligent, and creative woman.

If she were here with us today (and I know that she is) I would tell her, as I was able to do before she died, how much I loved her, and how deeply I feel my loss. I would also tell her that I have compassion for her suffering, and I am relieved she is out of her pain. I am grateful that I knew and loved such a remarkable woman, but I am angry at her irrevocable action, which took her from me and ripped a huge hole in my life. During the holidays, I sometimes think of a card for her, and then I remember that there will never again be any mail between us – the way that we communicated the best. I loved getting her letters with her definite, graceful writing. Sometimes my writing looks like hers, and it startles me.

She will continue to live on for me in the many other ways. In her last days she was never really alone; and nothing, not even her death, will take away my love for her.

So, Mr. DeGuzman, I want to thank you for the role you played in my mother's life. To you I say "Mahalo." But to her I say, "I love you, and aloha. I will always remember you, but the time has come to let you go."

*Bereavement Magazine, Nov./Dec. 1995, Reprinted with permission from Bereavement Publishing
May 1996*

In Remembrance of Memorial Day, *May 25, 2009*

Tribute to Ty

By Diane J Neely-Esch

On May 10, my son, Ty would have been 34 years of age. Because of his suicide on February 6, 1992 this will not happen. Ty is our oldest child and third one to lose due to death. The other two were infant baby girls, Jeannette Suzanne, one month and a day and Michelle Cherie was a five month stillborn. My mother had lost babies and when our first one died she told me I would probably never completely get over it. She never did and I don't think I have either. Ty has been gone now for seven years. I don't know why this has been such a difficult year, maybe because our daughter had a baby boy February 20. We will never have grandchildren from Ty. None of his babies to hold, cuddle and love. I miss my son all that could have been.

Even after seven years I still get triggered when I see a Marine, especially if he is in his dress blues. If I hear the Marine anthem, hear a gun salute for a military funeral, hear a gun shot from a high powered gun or hear the words Desert Storm! I even get triggered when the song "I Just Called To Say I Love You" comes on the radio. Ty sang the first line to me over the telephone when he was stationed in Hawaii. Then Desert Storm changed him. He suffered from severe chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He couldn't live with survivor guilt and the flashbacks from war.

There are five stages of grief, but for those of us who survivors of suicide, I believe those stages keep coming back in waves because something triggers us and it is like the whole suicide incident just happened all over again.

I believe it is a good idea to seek help when you are not coping very well with the suicide. This could be professional grief/suicide therapy with a grief counselor or joining a suicide support group where you can talk about your pain. I just try to understand that my son was ill and hurting and he couldn't cope with the pain. The psychology student part of me can, the mother can't. To help myself, I could journal, write letters to Ty, sometimes I even talk out loud to him. My religious faith also helps me cope, but when nothing is working, that's when I get on the phone and talk to someone who understands what I'm going through.

Reprinted from Suicide Bereavement Support Newsletter, Portland OR

**Did you
Know that...**



San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge has been the sight of more than 1300 suicides, since it's opening in 1937. Here are some frightening statistics from a 10 year study by Marin County Coroner, Ken Holmes:

- 2 confirmed deaths per month has been the avg. suicide rate from the G.G. Bridge for more than 40 years
- The youngest person to jump was a 14 year old girl, the oldest person was an 84 year old man
- Over the study period, commuters or tourists witnessed & reported 76% of all jumps
- Northern California residents account for more than 92% of suicide jumps

For more info: www.bridgerail.org

**The Soaring Spirits Loss Foundation
2009 National Conference on Widowhood
July 17-19, 2009 San Diego, CA
For more information
www.sslf.org**

Performing Your Emotional CPR

- Talk it out. Find a friend who will listen
- Take a break. Find a peaceful place to which you can escape
- Work off your anger. Physical activity & exercise help.
- Give into your feelings. It is OK to cry!
- Help someone else. It will get you out of your pain.
- Take things one day at a time. Don't get to far ahead in your thinking.
- Schedule your time & keep lists of things that need to be done.
- Be gentle with yourself & those around you.
- Avoid the urge to be a critic
- Laugh, humor is healing.

June

1994

A Tear Fell

By Carolyn Bryan
TCF Orange Park – Jacksonville, FL

(In loving memory of her son)

I rode by your school by chance today
And I just happened to look that way
The boys all had their ball caps on
Then I remembered my son was gone
Just when I thought I was doing well
Before I knew it - a tear fell
Then on Sunday as I sat in church
I looked around and missed you so much
I saw other boys in their Sunday suit
And I remembered you were just as cute

People all think I'm doing so well
They don't know today – a tear fell
When I'm reminded of what might have been
It gets too hard to hold it in
When life will catch me off guard
That's when it seemed to hit me so hard
It seems all roads lead back to you
As I take each day and try to get through
They say time makes it better,
But I cannot tell
I only know today – a tear fell.

August 1993



Reaching out ...

Please email any comments, questions, corrections, or ideas. Feedback is greatly appreciated!

**Thank you,
Diana Martinez
dianam1977@gmail.com**

Toward Healing after My Child's Suicide

By LaRita Archibald, Colorado Springs, CO

*“What the caterpillar sees as the end of life.
The butterfly knows as the beginning.” – Author Unknown*

When our child deliberately ends their life our grief is compounded. We grieve the death and loss of a most beloved part of our self, of our own life and future. But we grieve as well, and often foremost, the fact of suicide and all suicide means.....and all society perceives suicide as meaning.

After suicide every emotional response familiar in grief is intensified and complicated to almost intolerable dimensions by dread of punitive societal attitudes, by religious biases, by fear for our surviving children, by obsessive guilts and unrealistic acceptance of responsibility, by tremendous sense of rejection, inadequacy and failure and by our anger...our anger at God, at ourselves, perhaps most painful of all, at our dead child.

I was thrust into this overpowering morass of emotional agony by the suicide of Kent, my bright handsome twenty-four year old son. I would not be distracted from the horror of what he had done to his body, to his life and to the lives of those who loved him. How could this unspeakable, seemingly senseless act have occurred within my family? We should have known! Somehow we should have been able to foresee and prevent his death! I found small comfort in the blessing of having his heartbroken father and our four surviving grief – stricken children to share the pain of this tragedy with. I saw my family as irretrievably broken...for one of us was to be forever absent. I was inconsolable. I believed my life was over.

Oh, I never doubted that my existence would and must continue. But I saw this continuance as pain filled days stretching endlessly into years, to be endured without peace of mind or hope for happiness, I was bereft of understanding for why this unthinkable choice had been made. Inexhaustible, I searched for answers, for reasons, for justification I was never to find. I was desolate in my need that the magnitude of my wounding be understood and comforted. I felt assaulted, exposed, embarrassed and estranged from society. I was fearful, feeling disconnected, without bearing or direction for healing my brokenness, without reassurance for my sanity. I was convinced the shock of finding my gunshot son had left me mentally unbalanced. The intensity of what I was feeling surely could not be normal or sane!

In the following days and weeks I forced myself to go through the motions of living. My physical self performed mundane household tasks. I even extended comfort and caring to others. But it was a façade; a shallow veneer around a vast, cold “nothingness”. I was wretched in my self loathing, tormented by the belief something I had done or failed to do had so robbed my son of self-love, he could not live with the pain of it. I thought I would explode from the embroiling force of rage, guilt and frustrated helplessness. Many times I struggled with a particular feeling and found relief from having “finished” with that part of the great complexity of my emotions: only to have it erupt again, confusing and nagging in its persistence to be reprocessed.

For months I remained entrapped, inert, impotent. I was obsessed by my son's suicide and with finding the cause. It was my first and last thought of every day. Every heartbeat accentuated his death and my loss. Every moment was consumed by hurting..... hurting.....hurting. I grew so very weary of hurting!

Perhaps it was the suffocating, disabling weariness that stirred within me a fluttering resistance against remaining within the torturous confine of grief. Fragile and unsure, a new being labored to emerge; a being that wanted, needed and yes! Even deserved, to be freed. This metamorphosis was not achieved quickly, painlessly or without reluctance for I feared the glimpse of myself and my life forever changed. I feared a future alien and distant from the uncomplicated, joyous past; a future without the gentle teasing and dimpled laughter of my son. But I also glimpsed love and kinder times waiting to be shared with my living family. I glimpsed the comforting promise of healing and growth. I glimpsed a future offering more than just survival.

With the slow disintegration of the sheltering cocoon of grief I saw the compassionate Ever-Presence of the God I had raged against. His love encompassed me, radiating warmth into my pain-frozen soul. I was reassured of His acceptance and the worth of both my being and that of my son was restored. I knew the meaning of Grace.

I recognized a deeper, richer appreciation of my strengths and found renewed confidence. I sought those wounded like me and, as our tears mingled, felt the soothing balm of genuine understanding. I saw the isolated, untended anguish of others and in extending comfort found meaning and purpose for my own loss and pain.

I learned something of suicide dynamics, gained insight into the intensity of grief my son had been experiencing and found peace of mind in forgiving the way he chose to resolve it. Finally, I relinquished to him responsibility for his act and allowed him the dignity and consequence of his own personhood.

I grew to accept the short time and great love shared with this child as an unconditional gift. I grew to accept that his death, my loss and grief are, and will always be, a part of my life. Most importantly, I grew to understand and accept that they are not, nor have ever been, the whole of it.

I will always sorrow for the death of my son but my healing is no longer hindered by the consuming obsession with the cause of the death. At last, after my cruel, exhausting months, I am free to take back into myself, to treasure throughout the remainder of my days, cherished memories of life with him; memories of his mischief, of his laughter and the sweetness of his less-than-perfect person. I am free to look toward the future with hope.

I am free.... to live again.

May 1997

A Mother's Thoughts

By Carol Cichella, TCF, Rockford IL

Yesterday...

We dreamed of how our future would be,
Of times we'd share, my child and me.
Whether joy or pain, laughter or tears,
We'd stand together throughout the years.
A promise of what life should always be,
Of a child so dear, ever loving me.

Today.....

My heart sobs with uncontrollable grief.
I search for answers, but find no relief.
The skies have darkened, no longer bright,
The dreams we shared can never be,
They're left to linger in my memory.

Tomorrow...

My heart will push aside this cloud
That darkens my life like a heavy shroud.
Once again I'll see the dawning light
And know my child's love still burns bright.
I'll remember the moments we both shared;
I'll remember our love and how we cared.
I'll remember my child now lives in me,
And his yesterdays shall always be.

*Reprinted from Orange Coast Chapter, TCF Irvine CA July 1984
May 1996*



