



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

July 2009

Volume III

This month's newsletter is all about summer, another season we must face without our loved ones. Many of us are taking summer vacations at this time and things are different without our loved ones, here to enjoy it with us. For some this may be the first summer without our loved ones. This article includes some helpful tips that hopefully will help, enjoy!

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

S.O.L.O.S

Annual Summer Potluck

July 15, 2009

7pm @ Ecumenical Center



New book: Voices of Strength: Sons and Daughters of Suicide Speak Out

by Judy Zoints Fox

Help Lines

National Suicide Hotline: 800-SUICIDE

Teen Line: 800-TLC-TEEN

Trevor Helpline: 800-850-8078

Hotline for gays, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth



Please be kind recycle & pass this to a friend

On Vacation

By Penny linehan, TCF, Morris Area, New Jersey

I sat and watched the waves come in and out.
I looked for you there, but you weren't about.

I saw a young child about your size,
And I thought it was you, till I looked in his eyes.

I heard a strange voice call your name,
And I thought for a second you were home again.

I went to the jetty where you used to fish:
I gazed at the stars and made a wish.

Then I closed my eyes and heard you say,
"I love you, Mommy,

But it can't be that way:
I can't come back to earth as you know.

But I will live within you
wherever you go;

For I am with God in a
place so divine

Where there is no pain,
no space and no time."

Then I opened my eyes and I walked away
And I've known where you are since that day.

*reprinted from TCF Orange Coast Chapter
Newsletter June 2001*

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The question is whether suicide is the way
out, or the way in. – *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

.....
Keep your face to the sunshine and you
cannot see the shadows – *Helen Keller*
.....

Reaching out ...

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

Thank you,
Diana Martinez
dianam1977@gmail.com

Grief and Vacation Time

By Elizabeth B Estes, TCF, Augusta, GA

Vacation time, life holidays, can be especially painful for bereaved parents. Caught up with normal demands of making a living or keeping a household going, we have less time than we do on vacations, especially the “take it easy” kind at a hideaway somewhere.

In the summers following Tricia’s death, I found vacations could bring a special kind of pain. We avoided going to locales where we had vacationed with her. At one time, I thought Williamsburg might be off my list forever since we had an especially happy holiday there with her and her younger sister. I tried it one summer three years later and found that she walked the cobbled streets with me. Now that nine years have elapsed and the searing pain has eased, maybe I can let the happy memories we share in Williamsburg heighten the pleasure of another visit there.

For the first few years after Tricia’s death, we found fast-paced vacations to be best at places we had never been before. The sheer stimulation of new experiences in new places with new people refreshed us and sent us home more ready to pick up our grief work. That is not to say when we did something or saw something, that Tricia would have particularly enjoyed, we didn’t mention her. We did, but it seemed less painful than at home. One caution: do allow enough time for sleep. Otherwise, an exhausted body will depress you.

Charles and I found that an occasional separate vacation or weekend is helpful. This too, is an opportunity to change our stride, to experience the world a little differently. One experimentation with this may have stemmed from a re-evaluation of priorities. Life is too short to miss a trip associated with a special interest. A writer’s workshop that might bore Charles is no longer off limits to me, anymore than his going alone to a postal convention. Allow yourself space since you are not grieving at the same rate. When I go by myself, I take only my memories, not his and mine, and my response to them is different. I have often found this helps straighten out my thinking.

We’ve said it a hundred times: you have to find your own way, your own peace. Let vacation time be another try at that, but do give yourself a break in choosing the time and locale where that can be accomplished. Don’t be afraid of change; it helps with your re-evaluation of life.

Reprinted from Orange Coast Chapter newsletter, TCF, July 1994



Did you know...

That Vincent Van Gogh, one of the greatest painters of all time suffered from major depression. In December fo 1888, while living in Arles, France with fellow painter Paul Gauguin, Van Gogh cut his lower left ear lobe, in a heated argument. Later he committed himself to a mental hospital. Van Gogh was suffering from hallucinations and paranoia; he feared that he was being poisoned. While at St. Remy, Van Gogh created some of his best known masterpieces such as Starry Night, but mental problems continued to afflict Van Gogh, especially in the last few years of his life. And in July 27, 1890 Van Gogh set out to the wheat fields where he shot himself in the chest, two days later he died. Since then psychiatrists have attempted to label his illness, some believe he suffered from schizophrenia to bipolar disorder.

Taboos and Stigmas

Stigmas and taboos cause us all a lot of unnecessary heartache. They start from a base of ignorance and fester like an ulcer in society. Left untreated, they bore deep beneath the surface, causing terrible pain, until they cut away with education and understanding. The stigmas and taboos of suicide are the reason I felt such a sense of shame about the death of my son. I didn't understand this until I began to study the history of suicide.

Being a history buff, I already knew most ancient societies had no fear of suicide. In fact, they saw it as an acceptable way to die. In the Greek and Roman Empires, it was not uncommon for the government to supply a poison, hemlock, if one had a good reason and wished death by suicide.

What I didn't know is that in the early Christian era there was an epidemic of suicides. Life was difficult and many believers were eager to enter heaven. The church wanted to put a stop to it. So in the fourth century A.D., Saint Augustine persuaded the church to proclaim a suicide a sin on the basis of its being self-murder. This pathetic attempt at suicide prevention didn't do much good.

In the 13th century A.D., Thomas Aquinas convinced the church to declare suicide a mortal sin with eternal damnation as the punishment. This helped a little, but was still not enough, so the church said a victim of suicide couldn't have religious rites or be buried in religious cemeteries.

The laws were put into effect which ordered harsh punishment to anyone who attempted suicide and to the families of the completed suicide. All property belonging to the victim was taken by the government. The body was violated, and often the head would be placed on a pole outside the city gate for all to see. Burial was often at a crossroad where the traffic would pass over the grave. The families were ridiculed with whispers of contempt, disgust, and scorn. They were the butt of cruel jokes. More often than not, they would have to move away from the town which had been their home. The stigma of suicide was a disgrace, dishonor, humiliation, and shame. This set up a taboo against talking about suicide, and if one could not talk about it, one could not learn about it.

These attitudes did not start to change until the 18th century. The laws were slowly changed. Even though there isn't any legal punishment in

today's society, the stigmas and taboos are a punishment of their own. People have no idea how much pain they can inflict with some of their own ignorant remarks.

One woman told me that my son would burn in hell for his action. Thank goodness most people are not so cruel, but often they did not have to say it – I could see it in their face and eyes. I could hear it in their voice. This woman was devoutly religious sincerely believed what she was saying.

Many churches and synagogues are working to help change these attitudes. The change is slow because the taboo is so deeply ingrained in us that even most professionals, like our religious leaders, teachers, nurses, doctors, and counselors, have not received the necessary education about suicide or the grieving process of the family.

When I first saw the statistics on suicide from The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the National Institute of Mental Health, I found it hard to believe these rates could be so high. The reports state that suicide is the second major cause of death among high school and college students, the fourth major cause of death among adults age 24-34, and that the highest adult suicide rates are found among men over the age of 50.

This information was alarming, but then I learned that these rates are based only on the reported deaths and that one half to three times that many are covered up and never reported.

Many people take their own life in such a manner as to have the death appear to be an accident. An automobile is driven over a cliff or head – on into a tree, an accidental gunshot wound or a hanging that appears to have been an accident proves fatal, or someone steps in front of an oncoming train.

Sometimes the person who finds the body will remove evidence and make the death appear to have been an accident or homicide. Some people will go to all kinds of extremes in an attempt to have the word "suicide" removed from the death certificate. Stigmas and taboos are often the reasons for these cover ups. How sad it is to face the death of someone we love and then find it necessary to fight the demons of ignorance. After studying the history, I had a better understanding of my feelings and attitudes of other people. The

sting of ignorant remarks became less hurtful.

Reprinted by permission from Patricia Harness Overlay from her book, *A Message of Hope*, published by Bradley Press, 1513 Red Hill North Drive, Upland, CA 91786

How Long Will It Take To Get Over It?

How long will it take to get over the feeling of sorrow?
A lifetime.

How long will I continue to feel guilty?
As long as it takes you to realize you did nothing wrong.

How long will it take to get over my anger?
As long as it will take you to stop blaming yourself and others and realize it was the combination of unpredictable happenings that occur in one's lifetime.

Why do friends give such horrid advice?
To cover up their own inability to handle the situation.

Will I ever be happy again, and be able to laugh?
An emphatic yes.

How long is long?
As long as it takes for you to go through the process.
Each individual has his or her own timetable.

TCF, Fort Lauderdale, FL, reprinted from TCF newsletter, Sacramento, Jan. 1996



Sleep Sleep

At the best of times, it can be difficult to get a good night's rest, but when you are mourning the death of a loved one, it can seem impossible. Without the proper rest, we get up feeling tired and irritable. This can cause difficulty in coping with our emotions.

When the body is tired and we still can't sleep, it's because our minds are working overtime. They replay old conversations and bring up worries about the future. Things always seem worse at night, when we feel powerless to do anything about them. Fortunately there are ways of slowing the mind down so that we can get our much needed rest.

The first thing to do is avoid all stimulants for at least six hours prior to bedtime. This includes no reading of the newspaper, or watching the news on television, no coffee, tea, or hot chocolate, and no sugar.

Second, do some kind of mild exercise about one hour before bedtime. If possible, go for a short walk or try running in place.

Third, write out the things you are thinking about. Make a list of things you plan to do the next day. Write about anything that is on your mind.

Fourth, drink warm milk or take two calcium tablets. Calcium soothes the nerves. Then take a warm-not hot bath.

Fifth, do the deep-breathing and/or the deep relaxation exercise, and tell yourself that you will have a good night's rest.

If you still can't go to sleep or have gone to sleep and then awake in the night, don't stay in bed. Get up – and don't go back to bed until you feel tired. Write about things you are thinking and feeling. Your writing doesn't have to make sense or be written in a proper way. This is just a way to dump the thoughts that are keeping you from sleeping.

There are some very good environment audiotapes available with such sounds as: the ocean, a thunderstorm, a country stream, the wind in the trees, a gentle rain in the forest, and many other pleasant, restful sounds. I've found these tapes to be relaxing and helpful when played at night as I drift off to sleep. They can be found at most record stores.

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