



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

September 2009

Volume V

For this month's newsletter I would first like to mention that Tony Mata has recently undergone bypass surgery. He is recovering and doing well! He is in good spirits and will be recovering for the next 6-8 weeks. So our thoughts and prayers are with you, Tony, and your family. Would like to also extend a Happy Birthday to Erik who celebrates a birthday this month! Happy Birthday Erik from all of us!!!

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**

Out of the DARKNESS

COMMUNITY WALKS

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Eisenhower Park

October 24, 2009

Registration starts at 9am

Walk begins at 10am

You may also register online

www.outofthedarkness.org

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

Steve

By Debbie Gibson, Vacaville, CA

**I don't feel any guilt,
I know your actions were your own.
But, I still hear your voice on the phone.
Believe me you weren't alone
Feeling your pain as if it were my own.
I knew the date and I knew the time.
Over and over again like a nursery
rhyme.
You said you loved me and goodbye,
And with a sigh began to cry.
And yes so did I.
Because then I knew,
What I kept trying to tell everyone was
true.
If they only knew,
The pain I felt was for you.
The suicide threats would soon be true.
Now they all listen,
But it's too late.
I knew the time,
I knew the date.
You planned so well your escape.
I'll ask no why's or what if's.
I'll just seal this with a simple kiss.
Goodbye to my husband,
You will be missed.
I must go on,
As they say in a song.
Lord help me,
To just keep going on,
And try to stay strong.
Love, Debbie**

Reprinted from Bay Area Survivors of Suicide,
Newsletter, Jan. 1993



Involvement Therapy

Involvement therapy is a technique for coping with life after suicide. Its basic components are getting involved in the memory of the person lost to suicide and in suicide prevention.

This therapy supports the concept that it is better to talk about suicide and learn about it than to try and escape it. It is not based on scientific research, however it can be explained through knowledge we have acquired about the brain.

Our thought process is made up by the combining of recorded life in the billions of neurons in our brain. Each of these neurons may connect to as many as 10,000 other neurons. So, for example, if we were to look at a survivor's brain at the time of the suicide, part of it could look something like this: there would be many centers of neurons related to the person lost to suicide. One related to the family and others to relationships, future plans, security and the millions of other things affecting the life of the survivor. If you suddenly take the person lost to suicide out of the picture, all the signals running through the brain get short circuited. All the neurons in the brain are connected by chemicals known as neurotransmitters. The neurotransmitters that cause depression fill the gaps when short circuiting occurs. It's like when the wiring in your house overheats due to a short circuit and a fuse blows to keep the house from burning down. In the same manner your mind protects itself from overloading by depressing you.

Involvement therapy attempts to provide new circuits for those neurons that relate to the person lost to suicide. It is an effort to reprogram so those neurons won't dead end or short circuit causing depression but instead will follow new circuits to other neurons.

Providing new circuits requires activities. Everyone has to handle grief in his or her own way. However, for suicide survivors there are three basic activities that can help with involvement therapy.

They are:

- Involvement in memories of the person lost to suicide
- Attending and working with suicide survivor groups
- Working toward suicide prevention

Involvement with memories of the person lost to suicide starts with the funeral. However, from that time on opportunities to talk about memories of your loved one seem to dwindle. People seem very reluctant to bring up their

name or contribute to a conversation initiated by you.

Some of the things people can do to get involved in memories are:

- Write memories in any form: book, memory book, short story, notebook or just a file collection of memories. Ask friends and relatives for their memories and combine them with yours.
- Create a memorial, preferably something you can work on and something anyone who grieves from the loss can help with.
- Establish a special place to go for memories and remembering.
- Start new traditions or acquire new memories to help with the special family times like Christmas or Thanksgiving.

Attending and working with a suicide survivor group is getting involved with recovery. It is an opportunity to talk about your memories and better understand your own grief. It makes you realize you are a different person now but you can still carry on. Survivor groups also give you the opportunity to help others by listening and sharing.

Involvement Therapy ----- continued

Working toward suicide prevention is something that may be unique to this time in history. It wasn't many years ago that the stigmas and taboos related to suicide prevented us from talking about suicide let alone working on prevention. However, in the future, we may have the knowledge to prevent suicide. At present we know suicide is preventable and yet because of the existing stigmas and taboos. The more survivors of suicide willing to break the silence and speak out, the more public awareness and education will follow.

Being involved in suicide prevention helps with your reprogramming. It creates new avenues for your memories. If you can reprogram your neurons in a positive way then your memories will start to include some positive feelings which will aid in your recovery.

Involvement therapy is not for everyone but those who get involved can give and gain a lot.

Thanks Erik!,

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Specific Ways to Work on Your Grief

- **Recognize that all the feelings associated with the death of your loved one, such as anger, guilt, sadness, remorse, and relief, are normal.** Grieving people are often embarrassed to openly express their feelings because they fear others will think they are "losing it." If you are grieving, you might even think that you're going crazy. Be assured that any feeling is okay unless you are feeling actively suicidal; that is, if you have a plan and intend to act on it. If that is the case, you need to contact your doctor or grief therapist, or go to the emergency room to get immediate help.

- **Be "real" rather than trying to cover up your feelings.** Don't pretend. Expressing emotions is a healthy thing to do. Find a supportive person who is a caring listener. Emotions and tears are a normal part of grieving, so don't worry about what other people will think or may want from you. When asked, for example, "How are you doing?" have the courage to say something like, "It is such a struggle for me to live without [name]" or "I'm feeling sad so much of the time." By doing this you are being congruent; working in harmony with your feelings.

- **Purchase a journal and write in it on a regular basis to record your thoughts and feelings in one place.** Write down what you think and feel about what is happening. Write something like "I feel [name of feeling] about [whatever it is] because [the reason, if you know what it is]." Remember, your writing doesn't have to be grammatically correct. No one else will read it. But journaling helps you validate your feelings, identify and sort through what you think and feel, guide some of your necessary grief work, recall what you have already worked through so you can see your progress when you read earlier entries, and do some important problem solving. Journaling will also help you understand that all your feelings are legitimate—not right or wrong—and that they will probably decrease or change over time and will eventually become only a memory.

• Letter writing is another form of journaling that provides an excellent emotional outlet whether

you intend to send the letter or not. You can write directly to the deceased or to others who were involved with the deceased, such as medical personnel, a spiritual caregiver, the funeral director, or your relatives, to express your thoughts and feelings to them. You will gain more self-awareness by doing this, and you will deepen your understanding of your grief. This activity can help dissipate and neutralize your negative feelings. We recommend you write a letter to your deceased loved one on all the significant days (such as holidays, the deceased's birthday, the anniversary of the death, and so on). Then go to the cemetery or a special location to read it out loud.

• Put yourself in situations that may trigger grief even though this may be painful. This is "doing the tough stuff." Grieving people are often afraid of doing things that might make them cry, particularly around other people. Yet, if you do not eventually face these things, you will prolong your grief. Giving power to a situation, place, or activity because you are afraid to face it allows that thing to have a degree of control over your life. Remember, being easy on yourself is a form of avoidance. Give yourself permission to back off at times, but not for the long term. When you have a spurt of energy, grasp the opportunity to face something that will be emotionally challenging. Plan specific times to do something related to your loved one that will make you cry. Crying will help you get out feelings and feel better.

Excerpt from "Traveling Through Grief"