



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

December 2009

Volume VIII

\*\*\*\*\*

*For this month's newsletter I would first like to wish everyone a Happy Holiday! I know that this time of year may be especially difficult for those of us who have suffered a loss of a loved one. I have included in this newsletter some helpful hints to cope with the holidays, I know that we all deal with grief differently, but we all share the same pain. I hope together we can help one and another heal, by coming together, Have a Safe and Happy New Year! Peace on Earth!*

**S.O.L.O.S Support Meetings**  
Date: The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Wednesday of every month  
Time: 7:00 to 8:30pm  
Location: Ecumenical Center  
8310 Ewing Halsell  
San Antonio, TX

**COURAGE, DOESN'T  
ALWAYS ROAR  
SOMETIMES COURAGE IS  
THE QUIET VOICE AT THE  
END OF THE DAY SAYING:  
"I WILL TRY AGAIN  
TOMORROW."**



**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

**A Letter to My Family & Friends**

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season. It will be our first Christmas without our child and I have all I can do coping with the "spirit" of the holidays on the radio, TV, in the newspapers, and stores. We do not feel joyous, and trying to pretend this Christmas is going to be like the last one will be impossible because we are missing one.

Please allow me to talk about my child if I feel a need. Don't be uncomfortable with my tears. My heart is breaking and the tears are a way of letting out my sadness.

I plan to do something special in memory of my child. Please recognize my need to do this in order to keep our memories alive. My fear is not that I'll forget, but that you will.

Please don't criticize me if I do something that you don't think is normal. I'm a different person now and it may take a long time before this different person reaches an acceptance of my child's death.

As I survive the stages of grief, I will need your patience and support, especially during these holiday times and the "special" days throughout the year.

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season.

Love,  
A Bereaved Parent, TCF, Madison, Wisconsin

*Reprinted from TCF, Sacramento Valley Chapter Newsletter, CA  
December 1994*

## ***Handling The Holidays***

**Do what you think will be comfortable for you. Remember, you can always choose to do things differently next time.**

**Think about your family's holiday traditions. Consider whether you want to continue them or create some new ones.**

**Remember that family members may feel differently about continuing to do things the way they've been done in the past. Try to talk openly with each other about your expectations.**

**Consider whether you want to be with your family and friends for the holiday, or whether it would be more healing for you to be by yourself or go away (this year).**

**Keep in mind that sometimes the anticipation of an event can be more difficult than the event itself.**

**Give yourself permission to grieve. Take time out when the waves of grief come over you.**

**If you find it comforting to talk about your loved one, let your family and friends know that; tell them not to be afraid to mention your loved one's name.**

**If the thought of sending holiday cards is too painful, give yourself permission not to send them.**

**If you feel uncomfortable about one Christmas stocking being missing, don't hang any or substitute something else to fill.**

**Many have found comfort in doing something for others; give a gift in memory of your loved one to your favorite charity, invite a senior citizen, foreign student or guest to share your festivities, etc.**

**Some survivors have found the following ritual helpful for a variety of occasions:**

**Light two candles, and then blow one out. Explain that the extinguished candle represents those we've lost, while the one that continues to burn represents those of us who go on despite our loss and pain.**

**Simply leave the one candle burning (you can put it off to one side) for the duration of the holiday meal or event. The glowing flame acts as a quiet reminder of those who are missing. Always bear in mind that there is no "right" way to handle holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays. You and your family may decide to try several different approaches before finding one that feels best for you.**





## A Different Kind of Gift

By Diane Zankoff, TCF, Simi Valley, CA

One lady, whose husband had passed away in the last year, came up with this wonderful idea as a substitute. A few weeks before Christmas, she went out and bought an entire outfit that would have fit her husband; something he would have liked. Because he was a “country western” guy, she bought a new pair of jeans, belt, plaid, shirt ... right down to the socks and underwear. She carefully folded up each item in a large box and tucked into the corners containers of his favorite chocolate chip cookies she had just made. Driving down to the local mission, she left off the box with this written on top: “Enclosed will fit a man, size 34... complete outfit.” The staff took down her name as they gave her a receipt and she went home feeling so good.

But the best part came after Christmas, and it was like a bonus to this new idea of giving. When the manager of the mission called to thank her for the box, the lady asked if they had found someone who could use it. When the manager replied, “Oh, yes! A fellow named Larry came though here, and that box had just what he needed, “our widow started to cry. Unbeknownst to the manager, the husband’s name had been Larry, too!

A Larry’s widow told us this story to some of us, she said this “coincidence” had confirmed to her that this was the perfect way to constructively deal with the holiday blues!

I was amazed with her story and also with its implications. All of us who have lost a special person could try this. Those who have lost a baby, or young child, could go pick out an outfit and include a toy or two, taking it to a family shelter or neighborhood center.

Bereaved parents of teenagers could pick out the latest fashion statement in clothes or sportswear or jogging outfit and box them up to share with a church youth group or home for displaced families.

Many cities have good drives and Toys For Tots campaigns during the holidays that are designed to help the less privileged. As new survivors, we are in a unique position. We are not longing for Christmas gifts this year. The only gift we want is unobtainable: the return of our loved one. Even though helping with these other drives is admirable, we often feel a special need to do something in honor of the one we love. Doesn’t this idea then fit just perfectly?

*Reprinted by permission from Bereavement Publishing, Inc. Nov./Dec. 1993*

## Myths and Facts About Grief

**MYTH:** *The pain will go away faster if you ignore it.*

**Fact:** Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

**MYTH:** *It's important to be "be strong" in the face of loss.*

**Fact:** Feeling sad, frightened, or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to "protect" your family or friends by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

**MYTH:** *If you don't cry, it means you aren't sorry about the loss.*

**Fact:** Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.

**MYTH:** *Grief should last about a year.*

**Fact:** There is no right or wrong time frame for grieving. How long it takes can differ from person to person.

*Source: Center for Grief and Healing*

