



NEWSLETTER

SPONSORED BY
JOURNEY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

October 2025, VOL. 31, ISSUE 4
(608) 280-2435

2025 DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

For many years, Survivors of Suicide support team has offered a public gathering for survivors and those who care about them sponsored by Journey Mental Health. There was a pause during COVID restrictions. We appreciate those who have participated and supported this November event in the past. This year there will be a combined community survivor event:

“A Day of Remembrance”

Saturday, November 22, 10:00 AM – 2:00PM

Sponsored by AFSP (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) Wisconsin Chapter, Safe Communities, NAMI Dane Co, (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and Journey Mental Health

Black Business Hub, 2352 South Park St. 4th floor. Lunch Provided, Free to register.

Activities included: Documentary, Guided group discussion, Group art project; Resources.

Look for more information at journeymhc.org.

SOME THOUGHTS ARE TIMELESS



This was shared in “Dear Friends,” a booklet published by the Brooklyn Heights Survivor Group, Brooklyn, New York, 1990.

Loss changes people. We are not now the same people we were before our loved one died and we will never be the same again. This is very hard for us and for those around us to understand, and if we keep waiting for the old self to come back, we could get stuck in our recovery. Instead, we are becoming new creatures with new thoughts, dreams, aspirations, values and beliefs. We have to try and get comfortable with our new selves.

At this time, we desperately need the support of those around us — other family members, friends, co-workers, etc. But we often find that that support is not forthcoming, that these people shy away from us at the very times we need them the most. Solutions to this are hard to come by, and it is often a main reason we seek out support groups, so we can have sympathetic people to talk with. At the same time, we can encourage supportive actions from others by helping them learn what is helpful to us. Keep in mind that they have good intentions and want to do what is right, but just don't know what to do with us. Be frank, but in a kind way. Tell them, for example, not to worry if you cry,

that it's good for you. Tell them it's OK to talk about your loved one. Thank them for whatever thoughtful things they do, and let them know if they do something unintentional that also helps. It may well be that seeing your gratitude, they will repeat their kindnesses and perhaps your wish to have more understanding friends and relatives will come true.



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WHY JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP?



Many suicide loss survivors are confused about the grief they are feeling after losing someone to suicide. It is difficult to speak with family and friends about how intense the feelings are. It is common to think that there is no one who would possibly understand how you feel and that you would never discuss your feelings in public.

A suicide loss support group is where people who have all lost someone to suicide gather and discuss those exact feelings you have about suicide

loss. It is a compassionate group who are seeking healing. There is no right and no wrong in a support group. Everyone is entitled to their own feelings. Many people's eyes open up and they realize that they are not alone. There is healing in conversation with others.

Source: Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group, Madison, NJ

"One often calms one's grief by recounting it."

Pierre Corneille

Sharing in a support group takes courage. For many it is a "risk." It has often proven to be of value to those who join in.



THE RISK

I've never been so blue before,
So full of sad and sigh,
I've never had to close the door
In such a last goodbye,
Still wondering why.

Can someone find, for me, the map
To walk this shadow road?
I've never gone this way before
Nor has my back been bowed
With such a load.

For we're all stumbling in the night,
Through private hells we've grown.
Yet in together find a light,
And seeds of hope are sown
We're not alone.

I've never felt so old before,
So angry, numb and lost,
Although we knew when love began,
That this would be the cost,
One Jordan crossed.

What's that, you say, a healing place?
To rest and learn to see
There, mirrored in a stranger's face,
The ache inside of me,
The ache in "we"?

Can anybody read this heart?
Does anybody know
How deep's the well of tears I've dug
In trying to say no
To letting go?

And so, I dare to sit me down
Within that ring of chairs.
I listen, weep, remember
And, in the stories shared,
Find comfort there.

"Deep grief sometimes is almost like a specific location, a coordinate on a map of time. When you are standing in that forest of sorrow, you cannot imagine that you could ever find your way to a better place. But if someone can assure you that they themselves have stood in that same place, and now have moved on, sometimes this will bring hope."

by Elizabeth Gilbert

THE VALUE OF SUPPORT

"...A group enables a survivor to gather the strengths needed to survive. The experience of being in the physical presence of other survivors has, in itself a therapeutic value which cannot be duplicated by any other methods of resolving grief. A veteran survivor can instill a subtle message of hope with his or her very existence. Bringing survivors together provides a forum for nearly every facet of their "unbearable" sorrow. Eventually the pain becomes ordinary; it never completely goes away but it's effectively integrated so that the survivor can return to a constructive life in spite of the tragedy of suicide."

Quote by Rev. Charles T. Rubey, Catholic Charities, Chicago.

The nice thing about HOPE is that you can give it to someone who needs it even more than you do, and you will find you have not given yours away at all.

Maya Angelou

AUTUMN AND THE SEASON OF GRIEF



by James McMillan, MA, LCPC, NCC

Autumn is one of my favorite times of the year. The air is getting cooler, the leaves are changing colors, and there are so many activities that bring my family together. There have been many writings about Spring and starting new, rebirth and a fresh start. But if Spring is all about newness, then where does that leave Fall? It seems that Autumn is about coming to a close. We are leaving the summer behind and preparing for the cold Winter months. Animals prepare for hibernation, the days get shorter, and the leaves, which are so pretty early on, eventually turn brown and fall to the ground. In Chinese medicine, Autumn is considered the season of Grief and I think that is very fitting.

Seasons of life: I believe that the seasons are a good analogy for life and death. They are out of our control and through the seasons one sees a pattern of birth, growth, closure, and death, only to repeat the cycle over again. “A thing isn’t beautiful because it lasts.” I found this to be a surprisingly profound and touching quote to come from a Marvel movie, of all places (Avengers: Age of Ultron). This quote touches on the beauty of the cycle of life. Without Autumn we wouldn’t have the newness of Spring or the continual growth of generations.

Waves of grief: Many people talk about the stages of grief, as if it is a set number of items to check off and once completed you have graduated from the grief stage, never to return. This is not only

inaccurate, but hurtful to those whose experience may be different. Many clients whom I’ve worked with as a grief counselor express it more in waves. In the beginning the waves are strong and constant, breathing down on you, making you feel like you will drown at any moment. As time goes on the waves get less powerful and are spread farther apart. But the grief never fully goes away, and small waves of sadness may always be lapping at the shore. We get to a point where it is no longer preventing us from living our lives. But the memory is still there, as is the occasional sadness of what was lost. What people find as they progress through grief is that the emotions become more diverse. Where early on the memory might bring only sadness, later the memory can bring smiles and laughter. But just as seasons come and go, there are times that we can slip back into the sadness of grief, and that isn’t a bad thing. It is a reminder of how important this person or thing was in our lives, and the impact it made in our lives.

Autumn as a reminder: Take this opportunity to appreciate the wonder of Fall and to remember the seasons that have come and gone in your life. Appreciate the newness that came from loss, while remembering fully the things that made the life you have now possible.

*Resolve – Counseling and Wellness Center
www.kcresolve.com*

A SINCERE THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



**Dena Burke / Lloyd & Lorna Smith
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Journey Mental Health
for sponsorship

To make a tax deductible donation online by credit card, visit www.journeymhc.org, click on “Donate” and select “Survivors of Suicide (SOS) Support Group” in the pull-down menu option.

To make a tax deductible donation by check, make it payable to Journey Mental Health Center with SOS in the memo line. Mail to: Survivors of Suicide Support Group, c/o Journey Mental Health Center, 25 Kessel Court, Suite 105, Madison, WI 53711.

Please Consider —

- * A donation in memory or honor of someone.
- * A donation towards our Quarterly Newsletter so that we might continue to bring it to you and others.
- * A donation toward resources that are provided to new survivors.

HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL DAYS



Much has been written about dealing with holidays and other special days of the year after there has been a death among family or close friends. Here are some ideas for preparing for the special days of the year.

Because holidays are usually hectic, emotional, tied to tradition and times for togetherness, the absence of a loved one can seem an enormous part of the day or season. How to cope with this hole in the holiday? How to muddle through when others are being festive?

For some, doing the traditional tasks and meals and togetherness brings a sense of reassurance and comfort. For others, the idea of doing everything as it's been done for years is impossible in the aftermath of tragedy. Any of these reactions are normal — and it's best if family and friends can talk and plan what to do — or not to do — this year. It may be tempting to think that the holidays will “just go away” this year, since little about life may seem celebratory. But life is going on despite grief and mourning, and it's best to plan something, rather than allow well-meaning family and friends to decide for you.

Some families include the deceased loved one by lighting a candle or displaying a cherished item that belonged to the person. Some may intentionally leave an empty place at the table — if it's not intentional,

however, the empty chair can be a horrible reminder of the loss.

You may wish to be with family and friends during holidays and special days or you might be better off going away, if a different environment is needed. It's also helpful to know that the day and weeks of anticipation leading up to a special day or holiday are often worse than the day itself.

Communicate what you and your family need to extended family and friends. Do you need to talk about your dead loved one? Then let others around you know that even though you may cry, to not mention the person's name at all seems like another death.

What to do about already purchased gifts or with the money set aside for a gift? Perhaps donating the gift or money in memory of the person will help to make some meaning from the loss.

Take one day at a time, be realistic, know and discuss your limitations, and plan what you can for days that bring back memories that may seem painful in the aftermath of a death.

From The Link Counseling Center, www.thelink.org

The greatest healing therapy is friendship and love.

Unknown

These thoughts were first offered to our Newsletter in 2003 by Dennis Gates, long time dedicated Volunteer Facilitator for SOS and active advocate for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. Dennis died in 2018 of natural causes.



“MANAGEABLE” HOLIDAYS

Following my loss by suicide, the holidays were more manageable when I gave myself permission to set my own expectations. I think the hardest thing about the holidays is the imposition of expectations on all of us. The worst is the expectation that we be happy. It helped me to recognize this.

One further need, though, is to share your new expectations with those around you. Those close to you will have similar feelings. Those close and not

quite as close need to understand it is not their job to “cheer” you up.

After a while, I was able to derive some measure of the former joy from the holidays. They are now a time to remember the good things that were. Looking back, what I was trying to do was to accept that dealing with the holidays was part of my grief process.

Loss: Son, Justin on March 16, 1992

Just because it didn't last forever doesn't mean it wasn't worth your while.

Unknown

SOS SUPPORT GROUP PURPOSE

To share experiences for living and coping beyond suicide loss

NEW SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING SCHEDULE

All meetings 7–8:30 pm, 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month

2nd Tuesday of the month — in-person only;
49 Kessel Ct., Madison

4th Tuesday of the month — zoom only (see guidelines)

The following criteria are needed for participation.

- Be a survivor of a suicide loss and wish to interact with other survivors.
- Be over 18 years of age
- Have technology available to use ZOOM either through a computer, phone or another device.
- Be willing to register and speak with a Journey Mental health provider to be assured that a group experience would be appropriate and then receive an online invitation (Group entry codes).

• Be able to provide your email and phone contact information.

• Be aware that this is a discussion support group and is not a “therapy” group.

• Be able to provide a quiet space without interruptions when participating, insuring confidentiality of the group.

• Be available at the group starting time.

• Do not invite or include others who have not been specifically invited to the session.

All group discussions are led by a trained volunteer fellow survivor and supported by a Journey Mental Health professional.

To request participation in either group please email sos@journeymhc.org or call and leave a message for call back at SOS confidential voicemail (608) 280-2435.

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE CURRENT MEETING SCHEDULE

A self-help group for adults who are grieving the death of a loved one by suicide.

2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

For extra support please use Crisis Intervention 24/7 phone line at (608) 280-2600 or leave a message at SOS voicemail (608) 280-2435.

OCTOBER						
		14	In person			
		28	Zoom			

NOVEMBER						
		11	In person			
		25	Zoom			

DECEMBER						
		9	In person			
		23	Zoom			

JANUARY 2026						
		13	In person			
		27	Zoom			

Will weather cause cancellation of an in-person support group meeting?

If weather is dangerous, the determination if a scheduled in-person group will meet will be made by 3:00 p.m. the day of the meeting.

You may call Journey Mental Health Center main reception (608) 280-2700 to see if the Center is closed or Emergency Services 24/7 line (608) 280-2600.

CONNECTING WITH JOURNEY MENTAL HEALTH

SOS Confidential Email: sos@journeymhc.org

SOS Confidential Voicemail: (608) 280–2435

24/7 Year 'Round Mental Health Crisis Line: (608) 280–2600

Journey Mental Health Center Website: www.journeymhc.org

Select Consumer Resources, then Survivors of Suicide (SOS) Support Group



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