



Survivors

after suicide A Program of Didi Hirsch CMHC, Suicide Prevention Center of Los Angeles

DIDI HIRSCH
COMMUNITY
MENTAL
HEALTH
CENTER

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SAS exists to help people resolve their grief and pain in their own personal way, and to help them move forward in their lives, positively and productively.

A Sister's Message

By Michelle Linn

Dear Denise:

It was two weeks ago that I came home to cover the men's basketball team in the NCAA Tournament.

I only spent the night before the game at home because Mom and Dad live 45 minutes from Rosemont Horizon. But I had no idea that when I knocked on your door the morning of the game, to see if you were awake, that it would be the last time I would talk to you.

And to think I couldn't understand what you said to me.

I still can't believe that as I was searching for my seat on press row for the Ball State-Kansas game, you were walking in front of a train — just two weeks before your 18th birthday.

I'll never understand why you did what you did. We can only speculate about what was going on in your head.

Everyone thought you were getting better, but apparently you thought the bulimia had gotten the best of you and you

would never get control of yourself again.

Everything I watched you go through in your high school years was nothing out of the ordinary. It took me to this year to really be happy with myself but I couldn't tell you that because you wouldn't listen.

You were so close to graduation and college — starting all over.

Instead you chose to end your life and leave the mess for the five of us to clean up. I was angry when the high school principal called the weekend after your death to tell us how the school would be open for students needing someone to talk to. A number of the faculty were going into the school on the weekend because of you.

And then I watched so many students walk by your casket to pay their last respects. I wonder if you built a wall around yourself and couldn't feel that so many people cared about

Please see "Sister" on Page 2

Please see Page 10 for a list of dates for an SAS Monthly Meeting near you.

An Unsent Letter from a Bereaved Mom to Her Daughter's Psychologist

By Barbara Cole, Mother of Laura

I am the mother of Laura whom you saw on Monday and Wednesday of the week that she took her life. She had attempted suicide the day before first seeing you.

Laura had been content and happy when she returned seven months earlier from a one-year Southeast Asia backpacking trip with her boyfriend, but her mood rapidly declined. Her daily practice of meditation and yoga no longer gave her inner peace. Nothing did. She had seen and lived a much simpler life. She wanted out of L.A. or even the U.S. We just wanted her to be happy wherever she lived. She became very confused and didn't know what she wanted to do. This confusion turned to depression. She tried going back to Seattle. She had lived there for one year before leaving on the Southeast Asia trip, but Seattle was no longer for her. She was searching for answers, but they were not com-

ing. She became agitated and had to keep moving, running, dancing. We thought that she was just adjusting to being back in the U.S.

I made an appointment with you after Laura's suicide attempt on Sunday. I was so glad that she was going to be able to see you the next day. I knew nothing about suicide, and I thought that you as a "learned" person would guide us all on the right path. How wrong I was. You said to Laura, "We're not going to do that again, are we?" You told her to treat herself as if she had two broken legs. You suggested that she read some books and go to the movies. Laura was so agitated that she could no more read or watch a movie than I could fly to the moon. You referred us to a psychiatrist whom we saw the same afternoon. He gave Laura a sample of a new antidepressant. Laura was hesitant to take it. She believed in Eastern approaches. As you well know, antidepressants often don't take effect for weeks. My daughter was drowning. Laura also complained that her brain hurt. Why couldn't you have offered her a number to

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"Sister," continued from Page 1

you. Mom let those who came to the house after the funeral up in your room. They stood in a bunch in the middle of it staring, unsure what to say or do.

Remember Mrs. Martin, the high school journalism adviser? She came to the wake and asked me to stop by the school the next day. The newspaper staff was having a hard time deciding what to print. She thought with my being a journalism major and because you were my sister, I might be able to help them out.

When I got there, I saw how uncomfortable they seemed in talking about your death. Some didn't want to print anything about your death because they knew how unhappy you were at the school.

But that would have been denial that you ever died! You shocked them and everyone else because your smiles and laughter hid so much pain. We knew how you had been depressed for so long and how you tried to kill yourself last fall, but we also thought you had put that behind you.

The night before you died, you were telling me what a great time you had at the spring dance the weekend before.

I'm glad you did get to go to one dance, because there are so many things you'll never get to do, and that bothers me. You only made it halfway up to the "M" on the mountainside at the University of Montana last summer.

But then, you thought you'd return and have the chance to climb the whole way up. You never got the chance to use the towels I bought you for Christmas to take to college. Your life was just beginning.

Mom and Dad just wanted to get you out of high school because they knew things would get better after that, but you couldn't do it. When we went to find a cemetery plot for you, I watched them sit in the first pew in the chapel. They are probably hurting more than you could ever imagine.

Instead of four of us kids, there are now three. My name will come after the "and" in all of the Christmas cards. I hate that. I don't want to be after the "and" — that's your spot.

I wanted to come back to school right after the funeral but I felt strange going back to my classes and the newspaper. My life has changed so much and everyone else's is the same. I'll never see you again. Who will trim my hair?

You taught me the game of baseball when I was in high school and now who will go to Kane County Cougars games with me?

I find comfort in the thought that you are out of pain now. I know there is a reason for everything that happens. Your death is no exception, but it bothers me that you had to be everyone else's lesson.

Always,
Michelle

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Reprinted from *Ball State Daily News*, April 2, 1993 — Note: Michelle was the Assistant Sports Editor when she wrote this article. Editor's Note: Recently I met Michelle Linn-Gust, M.S. at the American Association of Suicidology Conference in Atlanta, GA. Michelle, a lovely young woman, handed me the above article and a flier announcing Michelle's soon-to-be-released book, "Do They Have Bad Days in Heaven? Surviving the Suicide Loss of a Sibling." Her book is the first comprehensive book for the forgotten mourners, siblings. The flier says her book "takes us through the loss of her sister Denise to a journey of hope and healing... (it) weaves Michelle's story with research on sibling suicide loss and practical information for sibling suicide survivors and those who care about them." For more information visit www.siblingsurvivors.com \$14.95. Bolton Press Atlanta, 1090 Crest Brook Lane, Roswell, GA 30075-3403; phone: 770-645-1886; e-mail: www.boltonpress.com; boltonpress@aol.com □

Congratulations to Jay Nagdimon, Ph.D.,

Director of Crisis Services, DHCMHC,

on his election as Division Director

for Crisis Centers for the

American Association of Suicidology.

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A Special Thanks from Carole Chasin, SAS Coordinator

Since the inception of my position as SAS Coordinator, January 2000,

quite a lot has been accomplished to enhance this valuable program. I would like to list some of the accomplishments, since I am very proud of them.

The number of support groups offered has just about doubled from previous years.

Discovery Health Channel and HBO filmed documentaries on our support program. Discovery Health Channel, "Fires of the Mind — Episode 2, Flight From Despair: Depression, Mania and Suicide," is scheduled for showing May 26th. With HBO, we were unfortunately edited out.

Community outreach presentations have been made to numerous private and government agencies, thus increasing public awareness. More are being planned.

Education and debriefing sessions offered to parents and students following a suicide by a local student.

Our newsletter continues to offer excellent articles and information with a distribution of 1200 copies.

The SAS Advisory Committee meets regularly to discuss new ideas and enhance the clinical skills of group leaders and telephone support counselors.

The Telephone Support Network is providing additional support to survivors while waiting to get into a group.

Our biannual Potluck dinners continue to provide a lovely evening of great food, socialization and education.

Through the responses collected from our pre-questionnaire, the waiting period to receive our services has been considerably shortened.

These accomplishments could not have been as successful without the fine, passionate, dedication of our volunteers and staff. I would like to start by thanking Lois Bloom for her hard work in producing an outstanding newsletter. Molly Babcock for her well-written, in-depth telephone intakes and, along with Mary Kate Ziesmer, Janet Parker and Laurie Bloom assigning telephone counselors to those interested. Thank you Laurie Houlihan for your expert and speedy administrative assistance.

A very special thanks to the following volunteer co-facilitators for your constant, dependable and passionate leadership to new survivors: Sam Bloom, Lois Bloom, Jim Barrett, Lori Boone, David Davis, Mariette Hartley, Stan Lelewer and Barbara Ravitz. You have made my work easier.

My sincere appreciation to the following newer co-facilitators for your willingness to give to others a sense

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of hopefulness and become part of our family: Jack Allen, Beverly Bernstein, Ester Bryant, Carol Dail, Mary Quadros, Yvonne Rice, Virginia Solares, Janet Parker, Richard Ross, Jeanne Jacoves, Becky Jordan and Regina Rosa. Let me add that Virginia Solares has been wonderful in translating some of our materials into Spanish.

A million thanks to our gifted, dedicated and knowledgeable licensed therapist's who bring excellent leadership to their groups: Norman Farberow, Dale Rose, Emma Lee, Susan Celentano, Jay Nagdimon, John Sexton and Sam Heilig.

What a wonderful job all of the volunteer telephone support counselors are doing to provide initial support to survivors who may not have anyone to talk with prior to starting a group. Some of you are co-facilitating groups also. Those who are primarily providing phone counseling are Molly Babcock, Laurie Bloom, Ron Cote, Corky Davis, Krista Fleischner, Becky Jordan, Janet Parker, Emilia Parrish, Maureen Patterson, Rissa Potter, Toni Sargent and Mary Kate Ziesmer. You are great!

Finally, I'd like to say that I could not have been as productive without the very patient guidance and ongoing encouragement from our director, Jay Nagdimon. As you can see, I don't do this alone. It really takes all of you to help make the Survivors After Suicide program, at Didi Hirsch, as respected and successful as it is.

My goals for the future are to reach more survivors and to start two new support groups in areas currently under-served.

My apologies to anyone I have forgotten to mention. If I have over looked anyone, please let me know and I'll be sure to mention your name in the next newsletter.

The year 2000 was very productive. I look forward to this year being even better. Thanks again to everyone. I couldn't do it without you! □

"Letter," continued from Page 1

call, instead of saying to her, "You're not going crazy. Many of my patients think that they are going crazy." She spoke softly and apparently did not fit your idea of a suicidal person. She certainly had you fooled.

When she saw you again Wednesday she said that she was going back to Seattle. You said that was fine and advised her to see a psychotherapist. What happened to the broken legs? Laura took her life three days later.

Why am I now so angry? I have been seeing a psychologist since Laura took her life. I also started attending a Survivors After Suicide group. If I only knew then what I now know, maybe Laura would still be here. How could you have acted so nonchalantly? We came to you for help. If you were too busy or cared too little to offer your own emergency number, you should have given Laura the number of the Suicide Prevention Hotline. My daughter was drowning; you did not throw her a rope. I know so much more now. But, you were supposed to know.

You will probably rationalize this letter in a way that will make it easy to justify your actions. But Laura is dead. She was a wonderful daughter. I miss her, yearn for her, and cry for her every day. The thought of never seeing her again is unbearable. I can hardly breathe. What a waste of

Contributions

**January 13 - May 1, 2001
A million thanks for your generosity**

Dolores & Anthony Arellano in memory of Michael John Arellano
Judith Armario in memory of Aaron Amaro
Irene Blum in memory of Randy Blum
Anne & Steve Bosma in memory of Michael Bosma
Nina & James Brown in memory of Jennifer Ann Brown
Jean & Fred Calhoun in memory of Fred Calhoun, Jr.
Linda Carson in memory of Daniel Gallin
Connie Chein, M.D. in memory of Mary Kay Bergman
Ronald Joseph Cote in memory of Marjorie M. Cote
Michael R. Daymude in memory of Manuel Rivera
Hedy R. Fleischmann in memory of Michael L. Fleischmann

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a wonderful, kind, loving girl. She only wanted to help people, and in the end she could not help herself. What horrible pain she was in to do what she did to herself.

You knew Laura a very short time. I knew and loved her all her life. My job was to protect her. Why didn't you help me to help Laura? I would have done anything for her. These questions will haunt me forever.

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Editor's Note: Unfortunately we have heard other survivors express similar experiences at SAS meetings throughout the years. Barbara Cole did something about her anger. she wrote a letter to her daughter's psychologist and released some of her anger by writing about it. Furthermore, even though Barbara's letter was not mailed, it was published in a publication reaching many psychologists, thereby communicating her message not just to one psychologist but to many. Barbara, we congratulate you for your courage in sharing your experience with other psychologists and with the readers of "Survivors." We very much appreciate your sharing your heartfelt letter with all of us. Barbara is a member of our SAS program. □

Phyllis & George Richardson in memory of Sammy Bloom
Mary Ellen Satterfield in memory of Jimmy Satterfield
Ann N. Smith in memory of her son Bruce
Katherine Von Juengst in memory of Lisa Cantwell
Nancy Walsh in memory of Beth Gallamore
Josh Zuboff in memory of Danielle Efron
Lina Zurbrugg in memory of Chris
Anonymous Donor in honor of Peggy & Neil
Florence & Gerald Cohen in honor of Mr. & Mrs. Jim Wickline
Roxie S. Goodman in honor of Bonnie Greenspahn
Phyllis & George Richardson in honor of Lois & Sam Bloom
Jackie Watson in honor of Mariette Hartley

Please use the enclosed envelope for your contributions. If you have given a contribution recently and it is not acknowledged in this issue, please call Carole Chasin at 310.751.5370. We apologize for any oversights. □

Against Judgmentalism, For Common Ground

By Franklin Cook

That to have a loved one kill himself is a nightmare from which you awaken only slowly? That the horror of it changes you soul-deep?

That the self-inflicted death of someone you are intimate with makes you starkly aware of the weight and depth of being human? That how you viewed life and death and God and your fellow man before the awful fact was visited upon you is altered by it far beyond anything you could have ever imagined?

My journey as a survivor began in 1978 outside McKay-Dee Hospital in Ogden, Utah. I was crossing the parking lot on my way to visit my father and, unexpectedly, my mother emerged from the hospital. As she cleared the entryway, 100 paces distant from me, she stopped and — stock-still with her head thrown back — cried, “Come to me, Frank! Come to me!” That’s when I learned that Joseph Hickman Cook, aged 49 years, had stood alone in the wee hours in the bathroom of his room and, with a razor blade, ended his life in an unimaginably violent blur that his doctor later called a “psychotic frenzy.” My own life, in the instant of my mother’s distressful cry, was forever divided between the time before my father killed himself and the time since. It has now been 22 years “since,” and I could now begin to recount the story of those years.

Allow me, then, to focus on the present and to advance several opinions based on my experience. I am a member of the Black Hills Area Survivors of Suicide support group in Rapid City, S.D., I recently attended the Survivor Support Team training at the Link Counseling Center in Atlanta, and I was the local coordinator for AFSP’s National Survivors of Suicide Day teleconference on November 18, all of which is to say that I recently became immersed in associating with people grieving over a loss to suicide. My involvement at that level began a little more than a year ago, and the most important observation I have made since I started to speak out about suicide and the stigma surrounding it is, quite disturbingly, that we survivors are everywhere.

Here is a statistic so frequently stated that we are numb to it: On an average of once every 17 minutes in the United States, someone dies of suicide.

That seems like an epidemic to those of us who are affected by suicide and who work with survivors. In addition, we often get the feeling that suicide victims — so starkly tangible to each of us survivors — appear to be

either elusive or transparent to society at large. It sometimes seems to us as if, unendingly, one person after another has been stepping to the front of an infinitely long line and, by every lethal method conceivable, taking his or her life-and then automatically having the reality and goodness inherent in their being at least partially negated by some decree imposed by their cause of death.

And behind those tens of thousands of suicides each year is a host of fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters (not to mention grandparents, grandchildren, cousins, neighbors, co-workers, and caregivers) who profoundly loved (or at least cared about) the fallen ones and who now confront a grief that society is largely unable to understand or to embrace.

I believe this: If suicide is to be abated — and if survivors are to find a resolution to their grief — we must look deeply into that dread act of self-destruction and find in it, first, our true relationship to the victims and, second, the common threads of the mental processes that lead to their demise. Furthermore, we must truly look beyond the terrible fact of death by suicide and see each lost life in the light of its complete context, not merely in reference to the shadow cast upon it by how that life ended.

We have erred these many millennia in our narrow assessment both of mental illness and of suicide, much to the detriment of those who (like my father) literally reached the end of their wits and of those who (like me, my family, and hundreds of thousands of others) must go to their grief denied many of the comforts that “normally” come in the wake of a loved one’s death.

Whether we like it or not — and whether we try to avoid it or not — the notion of suicide occupies the human mind (and heart and soul), and until we as a society sincerely explore every aspect of it, suicide will rampantly and mercilessly continue to take the lives of our fellows. Society’s error has been a failure to fully consider the idea that suicide is a part of human consciousness, one of the innumerable mysteries — albeit a terrible one — that goes hand-in-hand with our nature as sentient beings. Accepting mental illness and suicide as the human quandaries that they are (not as conditions resulting from spiritual or behavioral inferiority) would go a long way toward making it possible for suicide prevention efforts now taking root in this country to find fertile ground.

Understanding suicide as a shared human problem would allow us to look into the eyes of a suicidal person and see ourselves (not ourselves mutated by evil or aberrancy, but ourselves in the full dress of our humanness)

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and it would allow us to look at each suicide victim’s life in the round, from its beginning to its end, and to judge that life (if we must) on its totality.

There was a time when I could not look at the picture of my father that accompanies this article without seeing only the craziness of his final months and the trauma of his final moments. Now when I look into his eyes, I see mainly a man plagued by an illness that overwhelmed him before he could get the help he needed either to overcome it or to live with it. I see just my dad, a guy who had his faults but who also coached my baseball team and took me fishing — a parent who cared about my well-being and worked hard to make my life better than his was. He lived and laughed and loved as others do, and it is always going to be terribly sad to me that suicide prematurely ended his days with us.

But my mom and my three brothers and I are not the only people who should be capable of honoring his entire personhood. Whoever looks into his eyes and into those of any of his fellows who have fallen) should see not merely a suicide victim but also a complete, complex, and beautiful human being who embodies something

Special Days

From Fox Valley, IL,

the Compassionate Newsletter

Spring comes and with it the uneasy awareness of difficult days ahead.

For those who are still going through all of the “first” without their loved

one, we want to share with you some of the ways we have coped and managed. Mother’s Day... Father’s Day... Memorial Day... graduation... vacation — these are special family times which often catch us unaware and bring unexpected tears and painful memories... You can make these special days easier with some planning and with encouragement for those who have already been there.

Whichever day lies ahead for your family, try to focus on doing something meaningful and tangible in remembrance of your loved one. Share thoughts and suggestions about the possibilities: planting a tree, starting a garden, donating a book, lighting a candle, putting flowers on the altar, or taking that long talked of vacation. Remember tears and moments of sadness are expressions of love.

Also remember: 1) Take one day at a time. 2) Keep things simple. 3) Change your routine from past years. 4) Make plans to keep busy. 5) Give your surviving children some space — they not only feel your sadness, but they also have their own feelings to deal with. 6) Remember that the anticipation is often worse than the day itself. ☐

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Joseph Hickman Cook

intrinsic in all of us, that which “makes us tick,” and, tragic though it may be, that which sometimes makes us stop when we think we’ve reached the end.

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Joe

By Anthony Loniero

written for his son Joe

Joe

We love you Joe

Why oh why did you have to go

A father, husband, brother, uncle and son

You could never find a better one

Your bright smile, your handsome face

But most of all we’ll miss your warm embrace

There were so many things that you could do

And so many times you helped us too

Our family Joe, will never be the same

But we will forever honor your name

Now it’s time to say good-bye

For you have been selected to go on high

We-love-you-Joe

Editor’s Note: Our thanks to Anthony Loniero for sharing his poem about his loving son.

Supporting Suicide Survivors – Part I

despair and grief experienced by surviving families and friends. Using a modest estimate of six survivors for each suicidal death, researcher John McIntosh estimates that one out of every 68 Americans is a survivor of suicide.

Stigma

Survivors may find that their social network, perhaps even their clergy or caregivers, have judgmental or condemning attitudes or beliefs about suicide.

Cultural and religious taboos combine with our tendency to avoid death and bereavement issues and can serve to isolate and stigmatize suicide survivors.

A lack of social support can increase a survivor’s risk of complicated grieving, depression, and suicide.

Some Common Survivor Responses

- a struggle to make sense of the suicide anger
- guilt over failed responsibilities, real or imagined
- isolation caused by a sense of self-imposes shame
- aloneness when others keep their distance
- blame towards those perceived to have contributed to the suicide
- awkwardness when others don’t know how to respond
- having to face the traumatic and sometimes unexpected nature of the death
- difficulty accepting that the death was by suicide
- fear that powerful grief reactions may not be normal
- remorse over lost opportunity

Helping Others Help You... Ten Rules for Self-Healing

By Ruth Jean Loewinsolin,
The Compassionate Friends,
Mt. Vernon, OH

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date with you; none of this ‘we must get together for lunch.’ Remind them that you’re bound to have ‘down’ times and their patience with you will be appreciated. 3. Tell them to please feel free to talk about the person that has died and don’t avoid that person’s name. 4. It’s important for friends to understand that you may appear to be ‘doing so well,’ but on the inside you still hurt. Grief is painful, it’s tricky, and it’s exhausting.

What Helps & Heals Us as Survivors?

- acknowledge that the death is a suicide
- learn more about suicide and grief
- acknowledge our feelings & our loss
- find formal & informal rituals to honour loved one’s life
- call upon our personal strengths & ways of coping from other difficult times
- read, write, express our grief in a way & at a time and place that is comfortable for us
- find other suicide survivors, share our stories & build mutual support

Understanding & Thoughtful Offers of Support from Others:

- “I’m here if you need someone to talk to”

What Hinders Our Healing as Survivors

- hide or deny that the cause of death is suicide
- blame others, or ourselves
- internal & external pressure to “finish” or “stop” grieving
- self-destructive behaviours, e.g. drug or substance abuse.

Thoughtless and Cliché Comments from Others:

“It was so sudden”

“You can’t live in the past”

“Didn’t you know this was going to happen?”

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Important Phone Numbers and Resources

HELP LINES

Suicide Prevention Center Crisis Line, <http://www.suicidecrisisline.org>

Suicide Prevention Center Crisis Line, Toll free in LA County 1.877.727.4747

Suicide Prevention Center Crisis Line, outside LA County 1.310.391.1253

Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center 1.310.390.6612

Trevor Helpline (Suicide Hotline for gay, lesbian, bisexual and questioning youth) 1.800.850.8078

<http://www.trevorproject.com>

National Suicide Prevention Crisis Line 1.800.SUICIDE (800.784.2433) 24-hrs. connects with local certified help

RESOURCES

AAS, Amer. Assoc. Suicidology (professional training/education/research/prevent/survivors) 1.202.237.2280, www.suicidology.org

AFSP, Amer. Foundation/Suicide Prevention (research & education) www.afsp.org, 1.888..333.2377

Compassionate Friends/South Bay, LA 1.310.368.6845

Compassionate Friends, Inc.(parents grief) 1.630.990.0010 www.compassionatefriends.org- chat room 10am-11:00 pm

NAMI, National Alliance for Mentally Ill , www.namicalifornia.org 1.800.950.6264

NAMI-California, www.namicalifornia.org , 1.916.567.0163

NOPCAS, National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide, Dr. Barnsi 1.512.245.8453

SPAN-USA, Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network , www.spanusa.org 1.888.649.1366

SPAN-California 1.310.377.8857

SA/VE, Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education, www.save.org depression and suicide info

The Surgeon General’s Call to Action 1999 download from, www.spanusa.org

Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Project, Light for Life International, www.yellowribbon.org 1.303.429.3530

INTERNET SUPPORT

www.suicidecrisisline.org — OUR WEBSITE, Survivors After Suicide Newsletter, current issue.

www.friendsforsurvival.org — Friends for Survival, Inc., Sacramento, CA

www.sosd.org — Survivors of Suicide, San Diego

www.webhealing.com — Articles of interest.

www.griefnet.org — Grief support & a system that can connect you with various resources

www.opn.com/willowgreen.com — Grief, faith & hope site

www.1000deaths.com — SOLOS Survivor support & suicide prevention

www.onelist.com/subscribe/parentssof suicides — Support for parents of suicides

www.survivingsuicide.com — Survivor help (Linda Flatt lost son to suicide)

www.sascha@aol.com — L.A.R.G.O., Life After Repeated Grief: Options (Sascha Wagner)

www.lib.ox.ac.uk/internet/news/faq/archive/suicide.info/htm — Survivor inf., books, etc.

www.bothsidesofsuicide.com — A survivor support site founded by a survivor Mom

www.twotoomany.com — Deborah Pikul’s website, she lost two brothers to suicide

www.depression.com — dedicated to providing recent information about depression

www.suicid@Rochford.org — a site with info about suicide & suicide prevention

www.spanusa.org/www.spanusa.org — helplines, prevention info & resources for mental health, etc.

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Editor’s Note: Want to add to this page? Please contact Carole Chasin at 310-751-5370. Thank you.

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“My Son...My Son...A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss or Suicide”

By Iris Bolton, Executive Director,
The Link Counseling Center

the world. It scuttles the will to live. It parades a stream of bitter memories across the screen of your mind. Guilt often comes from the sorrow of not being able to keep a loved one from pain or from suicide. Expect to feel guilt. Expect it to be hard to handle, I continued writing. You will ask — what did I fail to do? What did I do wrong? Ultimately, you must save yourself by fixing in your mind the

“Guilt is another paralyzing emotion that often envelops survivors. It batters the ego as nothing else in

truth that you gave to your child your very best. You gave the gift of yourself and your humanness. So ask also: What did she/he do with your gifts? His/Her actions were totally his/her responsibility. So what did she/he do? Understand this and one day you can let go of your guilty feeling. When that happens, you are one step closer to acceptance and peace of mind. On the other hand some persons feel no guilt at all, being reassured by their consciousness of having done all they could.”

I’ve turned guilt into appropriate, well-directed regret.”

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Mentally Ill) Torrance Marriott, 3635 Fashion Way, Torrance, CA, call 916.567.0163, or check web site: www.namicalifornia.org.

September 16

Alive & Running 5/10 K Walk/Run & Kiddies K. Volunteers to serve on committee critically needed, call Laurie Houlihan, 310.751.5444. Save the date.

November 17, Saturday

National Survivors of Suicide Day. One-day conference 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. held at Cedars Sinai Medical Center & Sofitel Hotel, all survivors are invited, sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Features 90-minute live teleconference with Mariette Hartley, survivor, author, and actress emceeing from Los Angeles and 20 other cities. Call 800.344.0500 for info. Save the date.

Annual Spring SAS Potluck, June 9th

SAS will be having it’s Annual Spring Potluck Dinner on June 9th at 6:30–9 p.m. All survivors and their family are invited, we hope to see you. Please bring a main course, salad or dessert to serve 6–8. Drinks, utensils and plates will be provided. The program will be an emotionally vacillating 30-minute one-man show entitled, “Give Me Five, Little Bro,” written and performed by Brenden Hanrahan, a survivor and SPC crisis line volunteer. The show is based upon Brenden’s experience with his older brother’s suicide.

Reprint Policy

You are welcome to reprint material from our newsletter if you are a non-profit support organization that produces periodicals. We do require the item include the author’s name and title and the following:

“Reprinted with permission from the *Survivors After Suicide Newsletter*, a Program of the Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center: Suicide Prevention Center, 4760 S. Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City, CA 90230”

and also include the issue date and year the article appeared. Kindly send us a copy of any reprints for our authors to the attention of Lois A. Bloom, Editor.
Thank you.

Didi Hirsch CMHC
SAS-SPC
4760 S. Sepulveda Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90230

Address Correction Requested

Mailing list changes cannot be made unless corrected or duplicate labels are mailed to SAS at the address above.

SAS Monthly Meetings

Everyone who has completed an eight-week Survivors After Suicide Support Group is invited to attend monthly meetings at the location listed below. There is no charge. We suggest you put this page on your refrigerator for easy reference.

San Fernando Valley

Kaiser Permanente Hospital, 13652 Cantara (at Woodman), Panorama City.

2nd Saturday 11:30 am – 1:00 pm. Meeting dates
June 9 July 14 Aug 11 Sept 8 Oct 13
Nov 10 Dec 8

South Bay (Torrance)

Little Company of Mary Hospital, Center for Health Education Building, Earl Street, Torrance. Please check the bulletin board inside door for meeting room. **3rd Monday 7:30 – 9:00 pm.** Meeting dates

June 18 July 16 Aug 30 Sept 17 Oct 15
Nov 19 Dec 17

West LA – NOTE CHANGE OF MEETING PLACE AND TIME!

Now held at Didi Hirsch Culver/Palms Center, 11133 Washington Blvd., Culver City, 1 block east of Sepulveda on the north side of the street. The parking lot is in the building. Drive up to the gate and it will open outward.

3rd Wednesday 7:00 – 8:30 pm. Meeting dates
June 20 July 18 Aug 15 Sept 19 Oct 17
Nov 21 Dec 19

Survivors After Suicide Newsletter
A quarterly publication of Survivors after Suicide (a support group for those who have lost a loved one to suicide), a Program of the Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health: Suicide Prevention Center, 4760 S. Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City, CA 90230, (310) 751-5324. Crisis Line Number (310) 391-1253. Editor: Lois A. Bloom. Editorial Board: Samuel C. Bloom; David Davis; Norman Farberow, Ph.D.; Ollie LaPlant; Rissa Potter; and Jay Nagdimon, Ph.D. Thanks to Cecilia Urwin for layout, Johnny Lowe for design; and to Jay Nagdimon, Ph.D., Carole Chasin for proofreading, and the staff at SPC for—mailing the <i>SAS Newsletter</i> .

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

May 2, 2001

The Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher announced “The National Suicide Prevention Strategy” (NSPS), check website: www.surgeongeneral.gov — click on “Suicide Prevention,” fill out order form, scroll down and click on “SMA01-3517 & 3518,” scroll down to bottom, click on “order.” Note: SMA01-3517 is 150 pages, SMA01-3518 is a summary of the report. There is no charge.

May 6-12

National Suicide Prevention Week, and in California, “Suicide Awareness Week.”

May 10-12

SPAN-USA Annual Awareness Event – Advocacy letters delivered on Capitol Hill, web site: www.spanusa.org

May 26, Sunday 6 or 9 p.m.

Don’t miss “Flight from Despair: Depression and Mania” narrated by Mariette Hartley and featuring SAS members airing on The Discovery Health Channel.

June 9, Saturday

Annual Spring SAS Pot Luck at Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Association, 6:30–9 p.m. **Save the date.** See notice in this newsletter for more information.

July 6, 7, 8

National Conference of The Compassionate Friends, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Crystal City, Arlington, Virginia, call 800.923.7301, web site: www.compassionatefriends.org.

September 7-8

NAMI California Conference 2001 (Alliance for the