

S.O.S. - Survivors of Suicide

Why Support Groups are Helpful...

Verbalizing thoughts and emotions help connect people with their feelings.

A forum is provided for airing grief and seeking direction and support.

Grieving persons learn that all of us have resources within for helping ourselves and others.

Members have the opportunity to become friends with people who have suffered similar losses. This reverses the tendency towards isolation and provides a sense of belonging and community.

*"To heal a child is to heal a family;
to heal a family is to heal a community;
to heal a community is to heal a nation. "*
*"There are always two parties to a death;
the person who dies and the survivors who
are bereaved."*

Grief

A word that tears at your heart and soul. Mourning the death of a loved one is a process all of us will go through at one time or another. However, if you are grieving the loss of a loved one who has died from suicide you are among a very unique and brave group of people. The person you have lost seems to have chosen death, and that simple fact makes a world of difference for those left to grieve. The suicide survivor faces all the same emotions as anyone who mourns a death, but they also face a somewhat unique set of painful feelings on top of their grief. There is no right or wrong way to grieve; each person's response to loss will be different. It may help you to know that the wild emotions, guilt, anger, your driving need for answers and other feelings you are struggling with are common to survivors. No, you are not losing your mind! There are many of us that can relate to those things you are feeling.

The Journey

The grieving process is a journey, but one you need not take completely on your own. Join a group of others who are grieving. Unfortunately, many survivors of suicide suffer alone and in silence. The silence that surrounds them often complicates the healing that comes from being encouraged to mourn. Because of the social stigma surrounding suicide, survivors feel the pain of the loss, yet may not know how, or where, or if, they should express it. Yet, the only way to heal is to mourn, just like other bereaved persons grieving the loss of someone loved, suicide survivors need to talk, to cry, sometimes to scream, in order to heal.

Reaching Out

SOS – A Grief Support Group for Survivors of Suicide will meet at Mental Health America, 429 North Main Street, Suite 2, Greenville, SC 29601 for eight weeks.

We learn to uncover our feelings as we talk about them, instead of holding them in, and this is a great release. Thus, talking with others who have a similar experience, who can understand and listen in a special way, is a gift we can give to one another that we might not receive elsewhere. There is a caring and sensitivity to one another's needs and feelings that many times is not found outside this group. No one understands like someone who has experienced this tragedy themselves.

We also offer a unique group for children and teens. This group works through feelings and uses art, music storytelling and writing that are incorporated into the group sessions to facilitate each child's unique process of grieving and healing. The people who facilitate these groups are Becky Kay, Michelle Morton and Jennifer Piver. All facilitators have undergone extensive training locally and under Iris Bolton at The Link's National Resource Center, Atlanta, Georgia. We are dedicated to reaching out to those whose lives have been impacted by suicide and connecting them to available resources. Families who have experienced a loss through suicide receive unparalleled support while they grieve in both of these groups.

We offer two groups – an open group which meets the first Tuesday of each month from 7:00 – 8:30 PM at St. Michael Lutheran Church, facilitated by Jim and Faye Bagwell and Mary Reeves. The other group is closed and meets weekly for eight weeks at Mental Health America of Greenville County, 429 North Main Street, Suite 2, Greenville, South Carolina 29601. For directions please go to www.mhagc.org.

We also offer in-home visits when families are too fragile to come to a support group. If the family requests a visit, please get in touch with us and we will then contact the family and make the visit. A call can be made to Mental Health America of Greenville County or to Becky Kay at 616-9413. The call will be returned immediately to arrange the visit.

It is never too early to start healing. Find a support group or a qualified therapist as soon as possible. Even the longest journey begins with a single step, and you are taking that step now by simply getting up each morning and choosing life! If you are grieving, please call for information about the support groups at 864-271-8888. We will return your call as soon as possible. For more information please see Becky Kay or Mary Reeves.