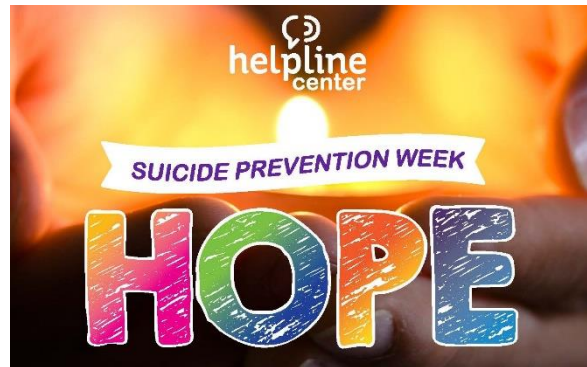




# Surviving After Suicide

## Fall Newsletter

August, 2019



- September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month
- National Suicide Prevention Awareness Week is Sunday, September 8 – Saturday, September 14
- World Suicide Prevention Day is Tuesday, September 10

**Friday, September 6**  
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

**Helpline Hope & Healing Art Show**  
Rehfeld's Art & Framing  
210 S. Phillips Ave., Sioux Falls, SD

**Sunday, September 8**  
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Sidewalk Chalking**  
Downtown Sioux Falls, Phillips Ave. from 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. – 13<sup>th</sup> Ave.

**Sunday, September 8**  
7:30 p.m.

**Shine a Light for Prevention**  
Remembrance Ceremony at Falls' Overlook Café and  
Candlelight Walk to the Falls ending with Lighting of the Falls.

**Tuesday, September 10**

**World Suicide Prevention Day** – please consider displaying a candle in a window visible to the street at 8 p.m. that evening to increase awareness of the suicide prevention effort.

**Wednesday, September 11**  
6:30 p.m.  
O'Gorman Performing  
Arts Center (Evening)

**Speaker Kevin Briggs** will present his inspirational message of suicide prevention.



**Helpline's Hope & Healing Art Show** • There is still time to submit your artwork to the Helpline's 2<sup>nd</sup> Hope & Healing Art Show! Anyone who has been touched by suicide, whether by the loss of a loved one or having a lived experience, may submit their artwork in any visual medium. Artists must include an artist statement to accompany their work which details how suicide has touched their life. Please register at <http://bit.ly/hhartshow> to submit your art. Submissions must be received by Monday, August 19, 2019 to Sheri at the Helpline Center. You may contact Sheri at (605) 274-1406 or [sheri@helplinecenter.org](mailto:sheri@helplinecenter.org) for more information.



Once again, Rehfeld's Art & Framing at 210 S. Phillips Ave. in Sioux Falls has graciously offered to host the show in their gallery on Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. The show will be open to the public at no cost.

**Sidewalk Chalking** • Helpline's Suicide Prevention Awareness Week messages of hope and healing will be chucked onto the sidewalks in downtown Sioux Falls. The centerpiece of the chalk art will be in Federal Courthouse Plaza located in downtown Sioux Falls at Phillips Ave. and W. 12<sup>th</sup> St. The sidewalks from 11<sup>th</sup> Ave W. to 13<sup>th</sup> Ave. W. will be chucked by volunteers and we welcome all to come down and join in spreading the message. The chalking will take place from 1:00-3:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 8<sup>th</sup>. Helpline will provide chalk and stencils to complete the project.



**Shine a Light for Prevention** • Please join us for a reverent and breathtaking event as survivors of suicide gather at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 8<sup>th</sup> in the Falls Overlook Café in Falls Park. for a ceremony commemorating Suicide Prevention Awareness Week. Survivors are invited to submit their loved one's name to be read during a remembrance ceremony. Following the ceremonies, we will hold a candlelight walk near the Falls, culminating in the Falls being lit purple, a color symbolizing suicide prevention efforts



worldwide.

**Featured Speaker Kevin Briggs** • "The collateral damage of suicide affects so many people." That simple yet resounding statement is from Kevin Briggs, a retired Sergeant with the California Highway Patrol. Most of his 23-year career was spent patrolling the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, a site of over 1,600 suicides since it was built in 1937. Kevin has responded to hundreds of suicide calls, and has had many interactions with the families of those people who have been on the bridge in the darkest of moments. Briggs' story and experiences have been featured in The New Yorker magazine, Men's Health magazine, NPR's Bob Edwards show, The Steve Harvey Show, People magazine, the Yahoo! Viewfinder documentary entitled, "Guardian of the Golden Gate," and has presented a TED Talk at the TED conference in Vancouver, B.C.

The Helpline Center is bringing Mr. Briggs to Sioux Falls to speak for National Suicide Prevention Awareness Week. He will be addressing law enforcement personnel on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 11<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. On Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m., his presentation will be open to the public in the O'Gorman Performing Arts Center.



## Navigating the Terrain of Grief

A recent Surviving After Suicide Class participant remarked that some of her friends ask if she is “over” it (the suicide death of her son) now and that they miss their friend and want her to “get back to normal.” Those that have been impacted by suicide grief quickly understand just how unrealistic those kinds of statements and expectations can be. And how hurtful.

We discussed this in class and decided that a much more accurate and supportive way of looking at this is “getting through it” rather than “getting over it.” Grief is a wilderness through which the navigation is arduous and



difficult. This passage must be undertaken by a survivor in order to find peace and a life worth living for themselves after their loved one's suicide. We know that this journey is one that can be eased by the company of a supportive and empathetic companion who acts as a guide, knowing that the path cannot be jumped “over” but must be gone “through.” Once through the wilderness – however long it takes – the survivor is forever changed and may even be stronger. They will, however, remember every step of the hard and broken path of a journey upon which they never wanted to embark in the first place. They will carry those memories and others with them for the rest of their lives.

“Getting over it” compartmentalizes the experience of losing a loved one to suicide and suggests that it is but a small period in

our lives which we must deal with and then completely forget. I would suggest that those that hold this belief mean well but have never experienced a profound loss of their own, let alone a suicide. Or maybe their family has had a long-standing tradition of avoiding emotion and values stoicism as a commendable character trait. Current thinking on suicide grief, fortunately, is to accept and acknowledge, feel and experience, and finally reconcile and integrate. You never “get over” that kind of pain, nor should you try to get completely over it.

We also hear people talk about moving on, as



in, “The past is the past. It's time to move on.” The phrase implies not only moving past something, but leaving something behind. We know that we can never leave our loved ones behind. Neither can we leave behind the memories of them, their spirit, our love for them, and not even the pain of losing them in such a traumatic way. It's certainly a realistic expectation for the pain to ease over time to a dull ache rather than the harsh pain of a new loss. That's exactly what we attempt to do by taking part in a supportive group of caring people who share similar experiences. We try to ease the pain by educating ourselves about suicide and sorting out all the confusing information and thoughts we might have. We participate in events that honor our loved ones and we work for suicide prevention for those that are struggling. All of these things can help us integrate our losses into our lives and help us not to move on, or leave behind, but instead move *forward*. It's possible to work on building a new normal for ourselves and our families that includes the memory of



our loved one, always cradled in our hearts and memories. Survivors need to give themselves permission to find things to look forward to. It's ok to have new experiences and adventures, to learn and grow as individuals and to relish all that life has for us, even if our lost one can no longer participate in such activities and experiences. Understandably, that may cause guilt for some survivors. The truth is that the memory of the person lost to suicide will not be

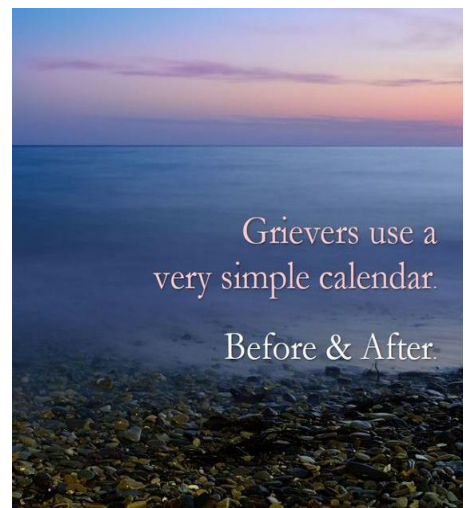
diminished when their survivors live fully and embrace good things for themselves. When well-meaning but unwitting people in our lives use these expressions, it might be better to gently challenge those statements rather than simply accept them as truth. "I know you'd like me to return to who I was before I lost my loved one," we can say, "but to be my friend means to wait patiently for me and accept that such a loss leaves me forever changed in many ways."

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Registration is now open for the fall **Surviving After Suicide Class**, which begins on **Tuesday, September 17th**,

### **Surviving After Suicide 10-Week Class**

**2019.** The class is held for 10 consecutive Tuesdays at the Helpline Center from 7:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. There is no charge for the class or the materials, but **registration is required** and space may be limited in order to facilitate a group size that encourages mutual support. We ask that you commit to attending all of the 10 sessions. The supportive mourning process is guided by participant needs and a handbook that addresses important topics and issues after a suicide loss. It includes straightforward information and practical strategies for coping and healing. To register, visit <http://bit.ly/SASClass> or call the Helpline Center at 605-339-4357 or 211 and ask for Jennie or you may email [griefsupport@helplinecenter.org](mailto:griefsupport@helplinecenter.org).



Stay in the know about upcoming survivor events and news by texting "mysupport" to 898211. You may opt out at any time simply by texting "STOP" to 898211.



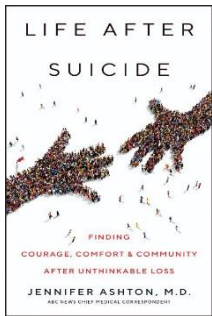


The following reviews are for two books that have recently been purchased by Helpline. Members of our survivor community recently recommended Dr. Jennifer Ashton's "Life After Suicide." We also recently purchased the children's book "Why Would Someone Want to Die?" These titles and many others are available to borrow at no charge from Helpline's grief support library. Please contact Jennie Marks via email at [griefsupport@helplinecenter.org](mailto:griefsupport@helplinecenter.org) or by calling (605) 274-1416.

### ***Life After Suicide: Finding Courage, Comfort, & Community After Unthinkable Loss***

Jennifer Ashton, M.D.

May, 2019 by Harper Collins



From the publisher:

"From the chief medical correspondent of ABC News, an eloquent, heartbreaking, yet hopeful memoir of surviving the suicide of a loved one, examining this dangerous epidemic and offering first-hand knowledge and advice to help family and friends find peace."

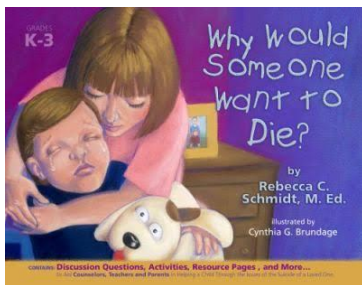
Despite the difficult topic, I found the book to be an easy read. Ashton's exploration of topics was interesting and will resonate with most survivors. One topic she addresses is the responses and interactions she has from other people in her life – those that have cut her out of their lives, to those that

wanted to befriend her only to gain details and "bragging rights" by being "in the know." The relationships she found most helpful, naturally, were the people who had suffered a suicide loss themselves. "Twenty years earlier, to the best of my knowledge, I didn't know a single person who was struggling with a loved one's suicide. Now here sat four of us, together, in the same room. It was a tragic realization, and a comforting one. I didn't have to explain anything to them, or defend, or justify, or atone, or edit myself. They'd been where I was. They knew. And they'd survived it. I'd survive it too."

### ***Why Would Someone Want to Die?***

Rebecca C. Schmidt, M.Ed.

2007



This book is written for children in grades K-3 who have been impacted by a suicide loss in their lives. It is honest, yet approaches the topic in an age-appropriate, caring manner and helps adults explain suicide to young children in a way that helps the child feel safe and cared for. The book includes discussion prompts for talking with a child. It has suggested activities to express feelings and remember their loved one and also includes resources for parents or caregivers.

## **Surviving After Suicide Monthly Support Group**



The **Surviving After Suicide Support Group** is held at the Helpline Center in an atmosphere that is warm, friendly, and nonjudgmental. Anyone who has lost a family member or friend is invited to attend. We are here to support you whether your loss is recent or even years ago.

Feelings shared are kept confidential and discussed only within the confines of the group meeting. Thus, our SAS support groups provide a comfortable, non-threatening setting to share our experiences and thoughts. Questions are encouraged to help in coping with the grieving process and with the feelings that are particularly intense in the aftermath of suicide. As there is a different group dynamic each month, we encourage you to attend more than one meeting to determine if support group is helpful to you. There is no fee and no registration is required. Monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month from 7:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.



It's okay.  
 It's okay to miss them.  
 It's okay to say their name.  
 It's okay to cry.  
 It's okay to laugh.  
 It's okay to breathe deeply.  
 It's okay to smile when you think of them.  
 It's okay to function.  
 It's okay to have days where you can't function.  
 It's okay to be angry.  
 It's okay to be thankful.  
 It's okay to love again.  
 It's okay to remember.  
 It's okay to hope.  
 It's okay to be honest.  
 It's okay to trust again.  
 It's okay.  
 It's okay.  
 It's okay.

