



## INSIDE

Welcome from the Chair  
and BTS Support meeting 2

The Weight of Guilt after a  
Loss by Suicide 3

Lisa's story 4

9 Ways to Describe Your Loss  
Through Poetry 5-6

Poems 7

About BTS and Additional  
support services 8

## Calendar of events

### **Wednesday 20 February - BTS Support Meeting**

7-9pm, Uniting Communities, Lvl 3, 10 Pitt St, Adelaide. Parking, Care Park, 15 Pitt St (directly opposite).  
Please call or text the BTS support line on 0468 440 287 for time of meeting or if you require further information.

This year the meetings will be in two parts, the first hour will be a presentation by a guest speaker with question time at the end, a break for refreshment then, for those who wish to stay, the support meeting for the second hour.

#### **Talk - Terella Rosen - Benefits of being in Nature for Health and Healing**

Please call or text the BTS support line on 0468 440 287 to advise if you will be attending for catering purposes or if you require further information.

The meetings are for those bereaved through suicide and are facilitated by trained support workers who have themselves been bereaved through suicide. They offer the opportunity to express your loss in an environment that is caring and safe. Everything shared is treated as strictly confidential. These meetings not only provide the opportunity to share experiences, they present information about the process of loss and grief, and strategies to heal.

### **Sunday 31 March - BTS Coffee Morning**

10am -12.30pm Botanic Garden Cafe - located by the lake (next to the restaurant). This is an opportunity to catch up with others who have lost someone to suicide, in a less formal setting than our regular monthly meetings. Join us for coffee and cake while chatting and listening to others and then take a stroll through the beautiful surroundings of the Botanic Gardens. BTS volunteers will be on hand.

### **Wednesday 15 May - BTS Support Meeting**

7-9pm, Uniting Communities, Lvl 3, 10 Pitt St, Adelaide. Parking, Care Park, 15 Pitt St (directly opposite).  
Please call or text the BTS support line on 0468 440 287 for time of meeting or if you require further information.

#### **Talk - Dr Sheila Clark - Stories of survival and life after the suicide of someone close**

Please call or text the BTS support line on 0468 440 287 to advise if you will be attending for catering purposes or if you require further information.

## A Welcome from the Chair

### Welcome to the first newsletter of 2019

The committee and support workers of BTS have been discussing how BTS can best operate through 2019 into the future. Communication has changed since the inception of the BTS in 1987, especially in the last 10 years. The introduction of the world-wide web, the internet and social media have given individuals the ability to almost instantaneously gain information 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world.

Much discussion has been held with some of our bereaved members as to what they would like to see in the future, how they would like to receive information and what that information should be. Based on these discussions we have decided to change the nature of our support meetings. The support meetings will now be held quarterly and a guest speaker will be invited to present a relevant topic. This will be held in the first hour of the meeting breaking for refreshments and then a support meeting in the second hour.

Accompanying the change to the support meetings we are implementing a more informal catch-up visit on an individual basis. Should you consider that you would like a catch-up you need to call our support line or email.

A support volunteer will contact you to schedule a catch-up to be held at a comfortable location. This service is only available in Adelaide metro.

We have also reviewed our content in the newsletter. Members expressed a need for more personal information by way of letters from other bereaved persons, stories and poems. You will find in this edition those changes. We hope that you find this change helpful and comforting. We are always looking for articles and stories and would welcome any from our readership. You will also find an article on page 2 in regards to the biennial Postvention Australia to be held in June in Sydney. More information will be provided in our next newsletter.

Finally thanks to all those who volunteered at our Bunnings sausage sizzle in early January. It amazes me as to the generosity of the general community, how many sausages they can eat and how willing they are to donate.

May you all travel safely and take care of yourself and those around you.

**Tim Porter**  
Chair

(on behalf of BTS volunteers and committee)

## BUILDING HOPE TOGETHER

### *The Journey After Suicide*

Sydney Masonic Centre, 66 Goulburn Street, Sydney  
Thursday 13th, Friday 14th and Saturday 15th June 2019



## Building Hope Together: The Journey After Suicide

It is with great pleasure on behalf of the Board and Conference Organising Committee, to invite your participation to the "Building Hope Together: The Journey After Suicide" Conference. The 2019 Conference focuses on building hope together through the three main conference themes – encouraging resilience, incorporating lived experience and facilitating collaboration between stakeholders.

The conference encourages the sharing and discussion of ideas, stories and research to bring positive outcomes for the postvention sector. This conference brings together those bereaved by suicide, trauma victims and survivors, Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders, defence force services, emergency services and individuals/organisations working the field of suicide bereavement, trauma and loss.

We are privileged to have international guests and invited Australian speakers who are well known in Australia and internationally for their research and expertise in trauma and bereavement.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Building Hope Together: The Journey After Suicide Conference in Sydney at the Sydney Masonic Hall on Thursday 13th, Friday 14th and Saturday 15th June 2019.



# THE WEIGHT OF GUILT AFTER A LOSS BY SUICIDE

## One question that I have been asked by many bereaved is, “When will the guilt end?”

I see the desperation in their eyes, and remember the overwhelming weight that I carried on my own shoulders following the loss of my father. We question what we could have done differently to prevent the tragic outcome that has become our reality.

I have spent a great deal of time thinking about the element of guilt. I have written many posts on the topic, because I believe the magnitude of our guilt often prevents us from grieving the loss of the loved one we lost to suicide. While I cannot speak for others, I can share my own thoughts in hopes that it resonates with someone else that may be struggling to release their own guilt. I have learned a lot about guilt in the years following the loss of my father.

I think the biggest lesson and the one that brought me my own peace is acknowledging that guilt cannot be taken away from us. It must be RELEASED by us. It is up to us to let go, and forgive not only our loved one, but ourselves.

Why do we hold on to our guilt? I held on tightly to my own guilt, not allowing anyone's words of encouragement to break through. “There is nothing you could have done,” I was told. “It was his choice, not yours.” I heard it, but I didn't believe it. This is difficult for those who have not experienced a loss by suicide to understand. To others it seems so clear; it was their actions, not yours.

Others do not understand why we can't just “let it go.” Here is why. Because, letting go of our guilt often feels like we are letting go of the person we lost. How can you let go of someone whose life ended so tragically? It just doesn't seem right. How can you move forward knowing that your loved one was in so much pain, that death appeared to be the only option.

This belief is what impacted my own ability to release the guilt. I truly believe that we have to release our own guilt. Nobody could convince me that nothing I could have done would have prevented his death. I had to convince myself. That is how I released my own guilt. I had to acknowledge that letting go of the guilt did not mean that I was letting go of my dad.

While I have let go of the guilt, I still continue to hold on tightly to my dad. I always will. I have forgiven myself for not preventing his death, by acknowledging that more “I love yous,” more phone calls, more visits; etc. would not have prevented his death. Why? Because just like nobody else could take away my guilt, I could not have taken away his pain. I like to think that I have redirected my guilt. I am open and honest when someone asks how my dad died.

Unfortunately suicide carries a stigma. What others do not understand is that we, the survivors, are the ones that feel the weight of that stigma. The stigma often prevents us from releasing our guilt. I talk to help end the stigma. I know that my father did not choose to die that day. He chose the only option that he felt would take away his pain. I know this now. As I do not want anyone else to suffer a loss like mine, I continue to talk about the signs of suicide.

Did my Dad elicit anyone of these warning signs? Yes, he did. Do I feel guilty that I did not pick up on them? No. I did the best I could with the information I had at the time. The true signs of his unhappiness evolved many years prior to his death. I am more aware of the emotions and behaviours as a result of my father's death. While it won't bring my father back, it may save the life of another.

By Jessica Hutchison, of [www.OurSideofSuicide.com](http://www.OurSideofSuicide.com)

# YOUR STORY, OUR STORY, MY STORY

## Lisa's Story

Our son, Jason, died a little over three years ago. I still remember when we got the phone call - I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

I just thought, this can't be true, it felt like a bad dream; I'd spoken to him that morning and he seemed fine. He'd been a bit down and maybe a bit stressed about how things were going at uni, but we had no idea he was feeling that bad. So many times I've thought, what did we miss? How could I not have seen that he was going to do this? I just didn't think he was having such trouble with things. Sometimes I miss him so much it's hard to bear. The pain can even make me feel sick at times. I used to think a lot about how a mother should be able to protect her children and that I must have failed him in some way. I kept going over little things - what he was like as a baby, how he managed at school, his teenage years - did we miss something, should we have done more? I just didn't understand it, and mostly I still don't.

We loved him - how could that not be enough? Also I worried about my husband and the other kids. I thought to myself, if I didn't see it was going to happen to him, what good am I to the others, how can I protect them? It was a blow to my confidence and even when I went back to work, I felt less confident for a while. I found too that I was less interested in nearly everything for a long time. I had trouble caring for the family, cooking meals, all those things. I felt emptied out, unmotivated, shattered. I couldn't concentrate and I didn't think I'd ever feel joy or laugh again.

His father and I were distant from each other for a long time too. He didn't seem to feel as strongly about it as I did. He didn't want to talk and I needed to talk a lot about it. He'd get impatient with me and want me to stop crying and I just couldn't. I'd go into our son's room and just hug his clothes and cry. But this was hard for my husband. I think he wanted to help me but it upset him so much.

He needed to be quiet and think and remember so we couldn't

seem to reach each other for a while.

Eventually I understood that he was hurting as much as I was but that he needed to do different things to me when he was hurt. Our friends were great initially, most of them anyway. But others didn't seem to know what to do or say. They stayed away and would avoid us if we saw them up the street or at school. I felt so lonely for a long time. I also felt that everyone must be thinking what a bad mother or bad family we were - this sort of thing didn't happen to a family like us, so there must be something wrong with us. It's the stigma I guess. It's still hard now - I have some bad days still. His birthday, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day; they're especially hard days. Those days, I want him back. I want to be able to take back what he did.

But we have more good days now. We eventually went to counselling and also to a group for people like us - who'd lost someone to suicide. Sometimes I think it saved my life. Hearing others who were going through the same thing and being understood by others meant I didn't feel so mad and out of control with grief. My husband and I also learned to talk to each other, listen to each other, and do what we needed to do. We learned how to say no to events and outings when we knew it would be too much and then sometimes we felt able to do things, but maybe we'd only go for a few hours.

I guess we learned how to look after ourselves and we had to do this otherwise we couldn't cope. I learned what to say when someone asks how many kids do you have. I say something like, we have three and one of them died. People tend to ask what happened and sometimes I tell them and sometimes I don't - depends how I feel and if I want to talk about it or not. It's a hard road but we're learning all the time what to do and how to manage. My son will always be part of me and our family but we're learning how to live again and sometimes I can laugh now and not feel guilty and sad.

<http://www.supportaftersuicide.org.au/other-peoples-stories/lisas-story>



# 9 WAYS TO DESCRIBE YOUR LOSS THROUGH POETRY

**Losing a loved one can make you feel searing grief and remind you of the fragility of life. When you're feeling raw with emotion, it helps to express it through poetry.**

For centuries, poets have been writing poems about loss – from William Shakespeare to contemporary poets. Writing a poem helps you to process your feelings and pay tribute to the one you lost. “I’m not a poet.” Perhaps you were told by a teacher that a poem you wrote at school when you poured out your heart was full of clichés. You don’t have to feel intimidated. The world is full of different types of poetry that uniquely express feelings of loss. No words can do justice to your grief but using poetry as a tool can be a coping mechanism when you’re in mourning.

## 1. Collect your thoughts

Write down whatever comes into your mind without filtering out any thoughts. Think about what you would like to say to your loved one. Gathering your thoughts in this way helps you to start processing your loss.

## 2. Withhold nothing

At this stage, you’re not trying to write a poem but to freely express what you’re feeling and thinking. Be as honest as possible, even if some of your thoughts are those of anger and despair. Don’t be afraid of your emotions, good or bad.

Your poem will be yours, and you don’t need validation from anyone else. Read five poems of loss written by various famous poets who fearlessly express their conflicting emotions and see what they make you feel. Sue Maartens, poet and writer for AssignmentGeek, says “reading the grief poems written by others helps me to connect with my own grief and gives me an understanding of how others have expressed their feelings in words.”

## 3. Select favourite words or phrases

When you read through what you have written, you will find that certain words or phrases stand out. Circle or highlight these words because they will form the foundation of your poem. You may find that you’re already starting to see a poem taking shape.

## 4. Identify your purpose

What is the purpose of your poem? Do you want to share a story or some specific characteristic of the person you’ve lost? Do you want to write the poem as a last goodbye?

<http://mindfulnessandgrief.com/describe-your-loss-through-poetry/>





# 9 WAYS TO DESCRIBE YOUR LOSS THROUGH POETRY

You may want to focus on a conversation you had with the deceased. Writing a descriptive poem about your loss will help others to picture that person as you picture them. A reflective poem will be more about the state of your mind and how you're feeling about your loss.

## 5. Find visual images

Take the words or phrases you circled and concentrate on each one. What images do you see in your head? Does it bring to mind any physical sensations? Perhaps one of the phrases evokes an image of the way a lost one walked. Maybe you will see your mother's hands holding a teacup. Try to write down a concrete image you associate with the words.

## 6. Choose the right length

What makes poetry different is the style of writing and how the words are arranged. A poem consists of rhythmically arranged sentences. They can be short or long. Some of the shortest poems are the most effective. They manage to contain a weight of emotion in just a few lines, like a haiku. An elegy is a longer poem of mourning. Read *Elegy, Father's Day* by Kevin Young for inspiration. An epitaph is a short poem that may appear on a gravestone as a tribute.

## 7. Decide on the right form

A lyric poem is rather like a song, describing a single feeling or mood. A sonnet consists of 14 lines and is written with a rhyme scheme of a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g. Poems come in so many different forms. The point is that you are not limited in the way you choose to write your poem.

## 8. Identify your strongest image

What is the image that is most important to you? Identify your strongest image by thinking about which one comes to mind first. Starting with a strong image sets the tone for what's to follow and makes people want to read further. The poem *Making a Fist* by Naomi Shihab Nye has as its central image the picture of a clenched fist. Read the poem to find out how a mother's answer to her daughter when she asked her about death had such an impact on her.

## 9. Don't be afraid to share

You may want to keep your poem to yourself as it can be an intensely private expression of grief but you may find it therapeutic to share it with others. Your words may even inspire others. Emily Dickinson wrote many poems about grief and death. *I Measure Every Grief I Meet* is one where she compares her grief to that of others around her. In thinking about different forms of grief, she finds a 'piercing comfort' that grief is shared by many and some experience it in the same way as her.

## Concluding thoughts

Whatever you decide to do with your poem, you will find that writing it helps you to work through what you're feeling. Writing about pain and loss is not easy. A deep and honest exploration of your memories and emotions associated with your loss can help you to take the first tentative steps towards recovery and healing.

<http://mindfulnessandgrief.com/describe-your-loss-through-poetry/>

## MENTAL ILLNESS IS NOT...

A choice...  
Attention seeking...  
An insult or an adjective...  
Something you can 'snap out of'...  
A crime...  
A flaw in character...  
Laziness...  
An excuse...  
Funny or a joke...  
Trendy or cool...  
Just a phase...  
Discriminative (it can affect anyone)...  
The same for everyone...  
Less important than other illnesses...  
And never ever a weakness

Anon

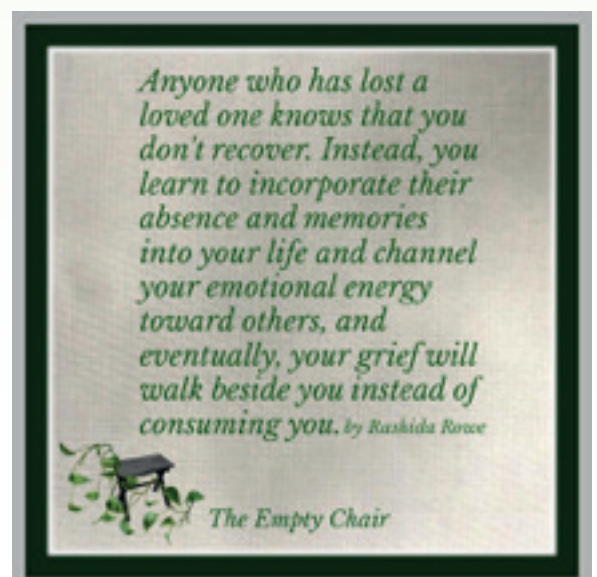
## THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN THEIR OWN LIVES

are not weak, selfish or cowards.

They are fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, wives, husbands, brothers, sisters, cousins, children and friends who were in pain and are missed and loved everyday.

Choose your words carefully and please do not judge what you cannot possibly understand. And never ever a weakness.

Anon



There's a reason  
you can't get  
as much done  
as you used to.

**GRIEF**

**IS**

**EXHAUSTING**



Let's say you have 100 units of brain power  
for each day.

Right now, the enormity of grief,  
trauma, sadness, missing, loneliness,  
takes up 99 of those energy units.

The remaining 1 unit is what you have  
for the mundane and ordinary skills of life.

Of course you're exhausted.

Your mind,  
like the rest of you,  
is doing the best it can  
to function and survive  
under very severe circumstances.

Please try not to judge  
your current accomplishments  
based on what you used to be able to do.

You are not that person right now.

~Megan Devine  
refugeingrief.com

Small things can trigger a  
fresh wave of grief...  
a smell, a look or perhaps  
a song....within seconds  
you are flung into a  
time machine and are  
transported back to that  
'moment' when time stood  
still, and the world had  
crashed at your feet.

Zoe Clark-Coates

sayinggoodbye.org

**GRIEF**, after the initial shock  
of loss, comes in waves...  
When you're driving alone  
in your car, while you're  
doing the dishes, while  
you're getting ready for  
work...and all of a sudden  
it hits you - how so very  
much you miss someone,  
and your breath catches,  
and your tears flow, and  
the sadness is so great  
that it's physically painful.

~Nicole Gabert

Always be kind.  
If you see someone falling  
behind, walk beside them.  
If someone is being ignored,  
find a way to include them.  
If someone has been  
knocked down, lift them up.  
Always remind people  
of their worth.  
Be who you needed  
when you were going  
through hard times.  
Just one small act of  
kindness could mean the  
world to someone.



## The Bereaved through Suicide Support Group

Run by people who themselves have been bereaved through suicide, BTS supports those in the community who have been close to someone who has taken their own life – partner, child, relative, friend or close acquaintance.

**Telephone support service: (08) 8332 8240  
or 0468 440 287 from 8am - 8pm**

**Email support service: [support@bts.org.au](mailto:support@bts.org.au)  
Suicide bereavement resources: [www.bts.org.au](http://www.bts.org.au)**



## Donations

Without donations, BTS would not be able to continue supporting the Bereaved Through Suicide community. We are an incorporated group and have our own bank account.

100% of all donations received are used to continue supporting people bereaved through suicide. Should you wish to make a tax deductible donation to BTS you can EFT to:

**BTS Support Group BSB: 633-000 A/C: 148312366**

or donations can be sent to: PO Box 15, Hindmarsh SA 5007.

Tax deductible receipts will be issued.

Thank you in advance for supporting our very worthy organisation.



## Additional Support Services

### NATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Kids Helpline	1800 55 1800
Lifeline Phone	13 11 14
Beyondblue Phone	1300 22 4636
Mensline Phone	1300 789 978
Suicide Call Back Service Phone	1300 659 467

### OTHER SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT SERVICES

Living Beyond Suicide (LBS) Phone	between 10am–10pm any day.	1300 76 11 93
Minimisation Of Suicide Harm (MOSH) Phone		8443 8369
Country SA – Standby Response	North	0438 728 644
Country SA – Standby Response	South	0437 752 458
Silent Ripples	Murray Bridge	0417 741 888

*Thank you*

A big thank you to Mandy Porter Photography and Monsigneur Creative for their ongoing support.