

## INSIDE

Welcome from the Chair 2

Grief and bereavement during covid-19 3

Article - Anxiety is more than... 4

Book review - The wilderness of suicide grief - Finding your way 6

About BTS and additional support services 8



## Calendar of events

### **Wednesday 17th June - BTS Support Meeting - Cancelled**

Due to the current regulations surrounding Coronavirus leading to the unavailability of our meeting room at UCity, Uniting Communities, this support meeting is **CANCELLED**.

Should you require support please call or text our support phone line or email. On our resources page you will find links to other support services from local to worldwide. May you all travel safely and take good care of yourselves and those around you.

### **Coffee Sunday 5th July - BTS Coffee Morning 10am - 12:30pm Botanic Gardens**

Botanic Gardens Café (by the lake). 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.

Should you be thinking of attending please call or text the BTS Support line on 0468 440 287.

### **Wednesday 19th August - BTS Annual General Meeting**

6pm-6:45pm, will be held in the Uniting Community building "UCity" 43 Franklin St (cnr Pitt St) on Level 1. Parking is available on street or in Franklin St or Pitt St car parks.

BTS invites all its members to attend the AGM which will be followed by light refreshments. The monthly support meeting will follow. BTS needs your support. We have a couple of retirements and need new faces to fill committee vacancies.

### **Wednesday 19th August - BTS Support Meeting**

7-9pm, will be held in the new Uniting Community building "UCity" 43 Franklin St (cnr Pitt St) on Level 1. Parking is available on street or in Franklin St or Pitt St car parks.

The meeting is for those bereaved through suicide and is facilitated by trained support workers who have themselves been bereaved through suicide. The meeting offers the opportunity to express one's feelings in an environment that is caring and safe. Besides providing the opportunity to share experiences, the meeting presents information about the process of loss and grief, and strategies to heal.

Please call or text the BTS Support line on 0468 440 287 if you wish to attend or require further information.

## A Welcome from the Chair

### Welcome to the second edition of the BTS Newsletter for 2020.

It is a very strange world that we now live in and adjusting to the new regulations put in place with the outbreak of Covid-19. Our first meeting in February this year had a large number of bereaved members attend and hopefully we provided them with the support they required at the time. Since then we have been unable to hold support meetings and a coffee morning. Unfortunately we have just been advised that we are unable to hold our June meeting, meaning the next meeting will be on 19th August, a full 6 months since our first meeting.

Prior to the support meeting we will be holding our AGM and I encourage people to consider joining the committee. Without a committee BTS would not be a viable organisation. The work-load of a committee member is not onerous.

With the isolation of spending more time at home, not being able to see family and friends, not being able to eat out or travel it seems that we are more alone, distant and yearning for company. Services such as Lifeline and beyond Blue have seen a big increase in the number of calls. Fortunately, as a society, we have heeded the regulations of our legislators and can now see a way out of Covid-19, even if very cautiously.

I know for myself and family that these times have been very difficult, especially over recent weeks. Some family members took the worry of catching Covid -19 so seriously that they stopped seeing anyone and very rarely ventured out except to get necessary groceries. Their anxiety was heightened to worrying levels.

This newsletter has articles relevant to the effect of Covid-19 on peoples' lives and dealing with anxiety. You will find articles written by Terella Rosen, our support meeting facilitator and from Beyond Blue.

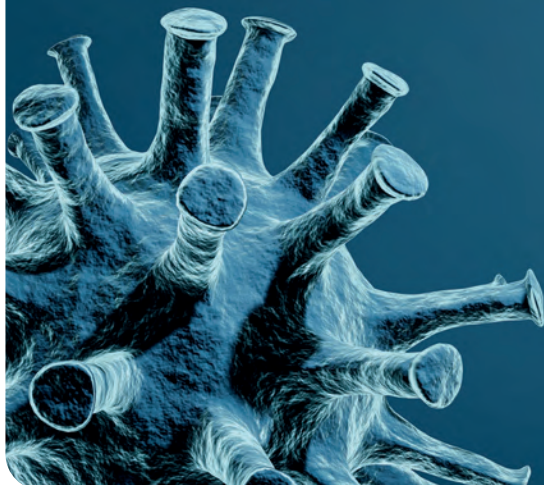
We also have a book review sent to us by one of our members. The review is of a book written by Alan D. Wolfelt, who is well known for his work in suicide bereavement.

The updated website **bts.org.au** is receiving good reviews. Please let us know if you have any articles that you feel may be suitable or any comments for improvement. You will find on the events page dates for support meetings and coffee mornings.

May we all travel safely and take care of ourselves and those around us.

**Tim Porter**

(on behalf of BTS volunteers and committee)



## COVID-19 IMPORTANT UPDATE



# GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT DURING COVID-19

**The issues facing us all due to COVID-19 are varied and challenging. Most of us share inconveniences related to the availability of products and business closures, and the sadness of missing family and friends, but many people are experiencing additional challenges.**

I attended a webinar recently about how COVID-19 is changing the way we experience grief, loss and bereavement. With restrictions around attendance at funerals, many families have been faced with planning a tribute to their loved one in non-traditional ways and possibly conflict and feelings of frustration as decisions need to be made about who is, and who is not, involved. Technology may need to be navigated as funerals need to be shared online for those not able to be present. We may not be able to share hugs at a time when we need them more than ever. Our hearts are with you if you have experienced the loss of a loved one during this time.

It is not only the bereaved facing loss at this time. Many people may be experiencing a combination of losses – work, income, identity, social contact, physical touch, and navigating our way through a changed world. The loss of routine, security and predictability is challenging, particularly for children. Changes to relationships and the way we spend time with our friends and family may cause a multitude of losses as we spend less (or, in some cases more) time with each other and miss out on all the little things we rely on to keep connected. All of these losses together can create confusion, fear and sadness and may take time to heal.

What can we do in light of these losses and the grief that may follow?

## Be gentle with yourself

It is natural if you are finding this time difficult. Try not to place unrealistic expectations on yourself. Everyone is coping in their own unique way.

## Connect with others

Spend time with friends and family within physical distancing guidelines, give someone a call for a chat, email or video call, enjoy sending and receiving hand-written letters with loved ones. Let people know if you are struggling and allow them to support you.

## Do things you enjoy

Take time to nurture yourself – you don't have to use this time to be productive, you can do things for fun and relaxation too.

## Notice the good

Even through our hardest times there is good to be found. Has your perspective on what is really important changed? Are you more connected to others? Have you been more thoughtful or considerate than before? Do you recognize your own strength?

## Remember this will pass

Already we are seeing changes in restrictions and some aspects of life getting back to normal. Reassure yourself that it will get better.

Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing  
Support Service  
**1800 512 348**

Lifeline  
**13 11 14**

By Terella Rosen



# ANXIETY IS MORE THAN.....

## Anxiety is more than just feeling stressed or worried.

**While stress and anxious feelings are a common response to a situation where we feel under pressure, they usually pass once the stressful situation has passed, or 'stressor' is removed.**

Everyone feels anxious from time to time. When anxious feelings don't go away, happen without any particular reason or make it hard to cope with daily life it may be the sign of an anxiety condition.

Anxiety is the most common mental health condition in Australia. On average, one in four people – one in three women and one in five men – will experience anxiety at some stage in their life. In a 12-month period, over two million Australians experience anxiety.

There are many ways to help manage anxiety and the sooner people with anxiety get support, the more likely they are to recover. There are a range of strategies you can try to manage your anxiety. What works is different for everyone, and it can take time to find the strategies that work best for you. But remember, if your anxiety is proving difficult to manage seek support from a professional.

## Treatments for anxiety

A range of health professionals and services offer information, treatment and support for anxiety conditions, as well as a number of things you can do to help yourself.

Effective treatment helps you learn how to control your anxiety so it doesn't control you. The type of treatment will depend on the type of anxiety you're experiencing.

For mild symptoms your health professional might suggest lifestyle changes, such as regular physical exercise and reducing your stress levels. You might also like to try online e-therapies, many of which are free, anonymous and easily accessible for anyone with internet access. Where symptoms of anxiety are moderate to severe, psychological and/or medical treatments are likely to be required.

The important thing is finding the right treatment and the right health professional for your needs.

## 10 Strategies to try

1. Slow breathing. When you're anxious, your breathing becomes faster and shallower. Try deliberately slowing down your breathing. Count to three as you breathe in slowly – then count to three as you breathe out slowly.
2. Progressive muscle relaxation. Find a quiet location. Close your eyes and slowly tense and then relax each of your muscle groups from your toes to your head. Hold the tension for three seconds and then release quickly. This can help reduce the feelings of muscle tension that often comes with anxiety.
3. Stay in the present moment. Anxiety can make your thoughts live in a terrible future that hasn't happened yet. Try to bring yourself back to where you are. Practising meditation can help.

4. Healthy lifestyle. Keeping active, eating well, going out into nature, spending time with family and friends, reducing stress and doing the activities you enjoy are all effective in reducing anxiety and improving your wellbeing.
5. Take small acts of bravery. Avoiding what makes you anxious provides some relief in the short term, but can make you more anxious in the long term. Try approaching something that makes you anxious – even in a small way. The way through anxiety is by learning that what you fear isn't likely to happen – and if it does, you'll be able to cope with it.
6. Challenge your self-talk. How you think affects how you feel. Anxiety can make you overestimate the danger in a situation and underestimate your ability to handle it. Try to think of different interpretations to a situation that's making you anxious, rather than jumping to the worst-case scenario. Look at the facts for and against your thought being true.
7. Plan worry time. It's hard to stop worrying entirely so set aside some time to indulge your worries. Even 10 minutes each evening to write them down or go over them in your head can help stop your worries from taking over at other times.
8. Get to know your anxiety. Keep a diary of when it's at its best – and worst. Find the patterns and plan your week – or day – to proactively manage your anxiety.
9. Learn from others. Talking with others who also experience anxiety – or are going through something similar – can help you feel less alone. Visit our Online Forums to connect with others.
10. Be kind to yourself. Remember that you are not your anxiety. You are not weak. You are not inferior. You have a mental health condition. **It's called anxiety.**

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety>





# WHAT ANXIETY FEELS AND LOOKS LIKE





## **The Wilderness of Suicide Grief. Finding Your Way, by Alan D. Wolfelt, 2010.**

In my local library, I recently came across the book "The Wilderness of Suicide Grief. Finding Your way". Published in 2010, it is written by Alan D. Wolfelt who is known in North America as a grief counsellor using a philosophy of "companioning" to comfort and support people who are experiencing the painful loss of someone precious to them. Wolfelt states that "...the only way to eventually heal is to mourn". He asks the reader to think of our grief as a journey through a vast wilderness that is unfamiliar and brutal. I believe that this book attracted my interest and attention in the first few pages as I could relate to the terror and harshness of being in a wilderness, completely unprepared for suddenly being thrust into the life changing, painful nightmare of grief that enveloped me after the suicide death of my son, Ben.

The author uses "ten Touchstones as trail markers" to help us journey through the wilderness. He acknowledges that "complete mastery of the wilderness is not possible" but if we try to make use of these ten Touchstones we may be enabled to renew a level of meaning and purpose in our lives, even as we travel through the vast wilderness of our grief.

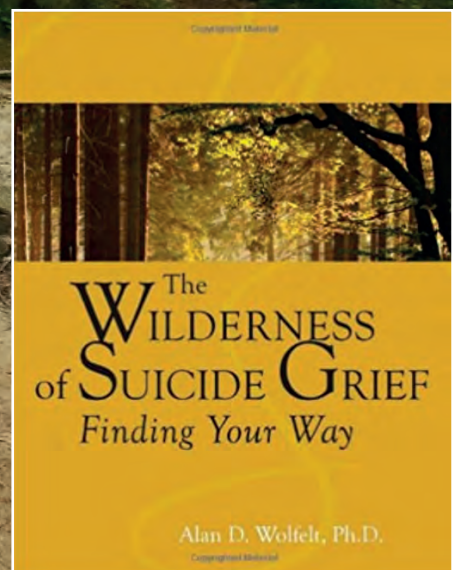
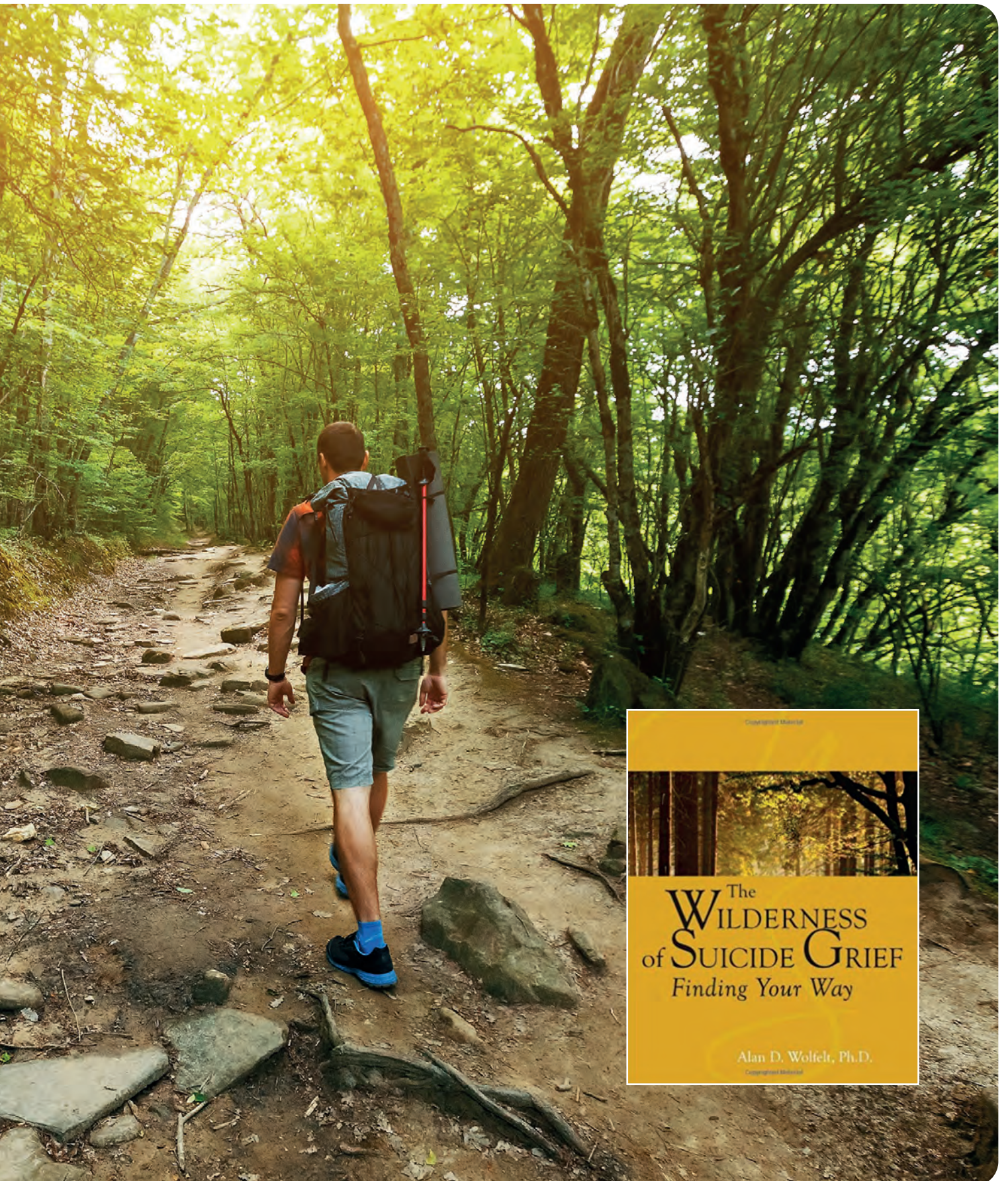
I read this book as our profound loss of Ben approached 4 years, on December 21st 2019. The ten Touchstones do not necessarily suggest or refer to anything new or different to what I have read or heard in one way or another over the past four years. Essentially, much of the content sounded familiar, but I felt that the book strives to acknowledge, support and guide those of us struggling through the wilderness. Whilst I found that many parts of the book helped to inform and reassure me about many aspects of my grief I also thought about the timing of reading different books and being ready and open minded to receive or act on well-meaning or helpful information. A survivor's grief following suicide is complex and overwhelming, with many possible similarities but there will also be many differences as relationships, circumstances and experiences will vary amongst individual suicide survivors and our loved ones who are lost to suicide. So too, we may find different literature helpful or we may disregard it at different stages during our unique grief.

In Touchstone Nine Wolfelt reminds us that "people do not get over grief" and the "wilderness will always live inside you and be a part of who you are". I found this assertion comforting to validate my own ongoing grief as I have found that many people not touched by suicide or grief from a death like to put time lines on our journey. The term "reconciliation" is introduced to offer us a way forward but importantly it is pointed out that it takes longer and involves hard work to become reconciled to our grief, whilst never resolving it. Furthermore, there may be "subtle changes and small advancements" made throughout our wilderness journey and we are encouraged to search for new meaning in our lives. Wolfelt quotes C.S. Lewis from his book, A Grief Observed; "Like the warming of a room or the coming of daylight, when you first notice them they have already been going on for some time".

Overall I found this book to be a well worth reading, with a sense of hope pervading throughout. M.T.









## 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: 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)**

BTS holds a support meeting facilitated by trained Support Workers, themselves having lost someone to suicide, it is a place for people to find compassion, support and understanding. Thoughts of attending a meeting can be incredibly daunting. Many of us want to be alone. But knowing and talking to others that know, and have an understanding of, how you feel can provide some help and solace in this incredibly difficult journey.

## Donations

Without donations, BTS would not be able to continue supporting the Bereaved Through Suicide community.

100% of all donations received are used to continue supporting people bereaved through suicide. BTS receives no government funding and all work is undertaken by volunteers, however we incur costs by providing the support services above.

Should you wish to make a tax deductible donation to BTS you can directly EFT to: **BTS Support Group BSB: 633-000 A/C: 148312366** Tax deductible receipts will be issued.

Thank you in advance for supporting our very worthy organisation.



## Additional Support Services

### NATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

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

### OTHER SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT SERVICES

Living Beyond Suicide (LBS)	between 10am–10pm any day.	1300 76 11 93
Minimisation Of Suicide Harm (MOSH)		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.