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*When you saw only one set of footprints in the sand, that is when I carried you....*



## Calendar of events

### **Wednesday 16th June - BTS Support Meeting**

7-9pm, will be held in the Uniting Community building "UCity" 43 Franklin St (cnr Pitt St). Please register at reception and they will direct you to the 3rd floor meeting room. 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.

**Should you wish to attend call or text the BTS Support line on 0468 440 287 as numbers are restricted due to Covid-19 restrictions.**

### **Wednesday 18th 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 new committee members. We have a number of committee members retiring this year and without new members joining the committee BTS may struggle into the future. Please consider standing. Our Chair, Tim Porter is more than happy to discuss the role of a committee person. Call on the BTS support line 0468 440 287.**

### **Wednesday 18th August - BTS Support Meeting**

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

**Should you wish to attend call or text the BTS Support line on 0468 440 287 as numbers are restricted due to Covid-19 restrictions.**

## A Welcome from the Chair

### Welcome to the second quarter edition of the BTS Newsletter for 2021.

Since Covid restrictions have been eased earlier in the year we have seen strong numbers of people attending our support meetings and coffee get-togethers. Whilst we have seen an increase in government services for mental health it seems that the need for a suicide bereavement group like Bereaved Through Suicide has also increased.

The nature of how best to support those bereaved through suicide into the future has been a major discussion for the committee throughout 2020 and into 2021. The committee strongly feels that to take BTS into the future we need new committee members with new ideas and a continued commitment to support those bereaved by suicide.

After 9 years on the committee (8 years as Chair) it is time to step aside and let others take a role in the future of BTS. As well a couple of long serving committee members including our treasurer will retire, so at the August AGM BTS will be seeking to fill a number of vacant committee positions. A refreshed committee can look at how best BTS can provide the services to support the bereaved community in a post-Covid world. We have already found a new treasurer but need more committee members.

Please consider joining the BTS committee. As always should you like to discuss the committee roles give our phone line a call/text or email to [support@bts.org.au](mailto:support@bts.org.au).

We are also seeking new support workers who can provide support at our meetings. We have a small dedicated group who run our meetings but they need people to help with the setting/packing up of meetings and providing support when necessary during the meeting. Should you like to discuss the support roles give our phone line a call/text or email to [support@bts.org.au](mailto:support@bts.org.au).

From a personal perspective being Chair has been a privilege and has made me a more insightful, caring person. Whilst death by suicide is such a difficult subject to know that you have been there to support those bereaved through difficult times has been incredibly gratifying. I have met so many people searching for answers, just wanting to meet others bereaved by suicide, to realise that how they feel, their actions and their questions are normal in a post-suicide world. To everyone I have met I hope you have found some solace, understanding and support in your interactions with BTS.

May we all travel safely through 2021 and take care of ourselves and those around us.

With the kindest of thoughts,

**Tim Porter**

(on behalf of BTS volunteers and committee)





## A Letter from a Mother who Lost Her Son

Dear Mourning Mum:

I know you. I was you in the first year or two and sometimes still in bursts of remorse today. I hear your cries of all you should-have, could-have done for your lost child. This is how we often feel as survivors, especially parent survivors

We think we failed our child, and we need to shout out our unworthiness, beat our breast. On top of the general stigma of suicide, we may be afflicted by the special shame of being a bad mother—one who couldn't foresee or prevent her child's self-destruction. Instinctively, we reject assurances that we did everything we could because, of course, there's always more we could have done. Even when people add "you did everything you could—given what you knew at the time," we just can't accept that we were unable to save our child. That the momentum of our mothering only goes so far with our kids once they reach a certain age. And that, unlike other parents, we don't get a second chance.

Having missed that chance, we cling desperately to remorse as a last parental act. It keeps us connected to our dead children. It shows our love and loyalty and belated understanding of what they needed and what we failed to provide. It's a desperate plea for their forgiveness. Except that now, only we can forgive ourselves. And that could be a long time coming.

You have a total right to feel whatever you're feeling. By all means, let it out! At the same time, please feed your battered soul. Treat yourself with the same compassion you would offer a dear friend in your position. Make a list of all the great things you did for and with your child over the years. Remember that no one is a perfect parent; no one is all seeing or all powerful.

"Just as no one can erase the grief that you feel right now, there were limits to what anyone could have done to fix your loved one's pain," according to Jordan and Baugher in *After the Suicide: Coping with your Grief*. "Living through the suicide of a loved one confronts all survivors with a profound sense of their own limitations." You may feel like putting yourself on trial for failing your child, they write, but at least let someone like a therapist ensure that it's a "fair trial" that reviews all the evidence!

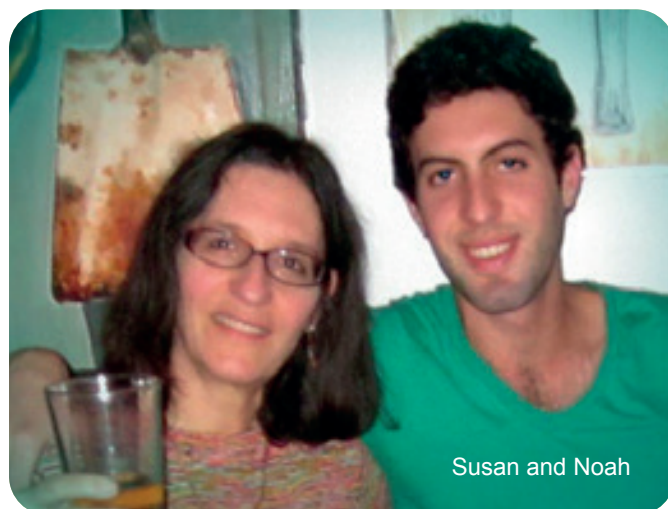
I know you can't fully take in what I'm saying right now. Please tuck it away in the back of your mind to ease some future moment, along with these words from psychotherapist Stacey Freedenthal's blog, *Speaking of Suicide* (2014):

"Feelings of self-blame can distract you from grieving and, in the process, from healing. . . What lies beneath your self-blame are the terrible facts that you cannot control: Suicidal forces overtook your loved one. You have suffered an unfathomable loss. You cannot turn back time, do it over, do it differently. Each of these is a loss. Mourning these losses is the essence of grief. Your grief deserves your compassion."

Author: Susan Auerbach



Susan Auerbach



Susan and Noah

# NOT A SELFISH ACT

## Suicide Is Not A Selfish Act.

### **‘ONLY NOW DO I REALISE HOW MUCH HE MUST HAVE BEEN SUFFERING’**

Today, for the first time since Steve died by his own hand in 2015, someone said directly to me: “Suicide is a selfish act.” I was not angry or insulted, but rather very sad that people still believe this to be true. If anything, in the mind of the one who takes their own life, it’s a selfless act. In Steve’s case, his writings and the discussions he had with me before he died, he indicated that he felt he was a burden to those who loved him. In his suffering mind, Steve felt we would all be better off without him.

Based on my experience with Steve, I believe his mind was so tortured and he was in so much mental pain, he was not thinking rationally when he took his own life. That is not what I would call selfish. Steve was the kindest, most giving and thoughtful man I have ever known, and he would never do anything to intentionally hurt anyone.

As human beings, it is difficult for us to relate to mental pain and empathize with what someone so afflicted is feeling. I believe this is one of the reasons suicide is so stigmatized and misunderstood. Most of us can easily understand physical pain since at some point or another in our lives we have experienced some form of it.

I suffered situational depression in the months after Steve died and believe it was in no way even close to what Steve must have felt suffering from clinical depression. The despair and hopelessness I felt were so tortuous I can’t even imagine what Steve was going through in his final days. A few weeks before he died, Steve told me he was so afraid. He could not (or would not) share with me what he was afraid of. Only now do I realise how much he must have been suffering.

I believe there are two possible reasons why some say suicide is a selfish act. The first may be an attempt to comfort the suicide loss survivor(s) in an effort to help shift the guilt burden (blame) to the one who died. The second reason may be that it is easier for them to say “suicide is a selfish act” rather than really try to process why someone would take their own life. Being a suicide loss survivor gives one much more perspective—I hope to use this perspective to educate others.

Hearing these words today was a good thing as it has strengthened my resolve to continue to inspire conversation about mental illness and suicide with the hopes of dispelling myths like “Suicide is selfish.”

When Steve, my soul mate of 33 years, took his own life on March 15, 2015, my world changed dramatically, and my life was turned upside down. I began to take solace in writing about Steve and found purpose in trying to bring more awareness to mental health by telling Steve’s story.

Reproduced from the NAMI  
(National Alliance on Mental Illness) website





# 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.

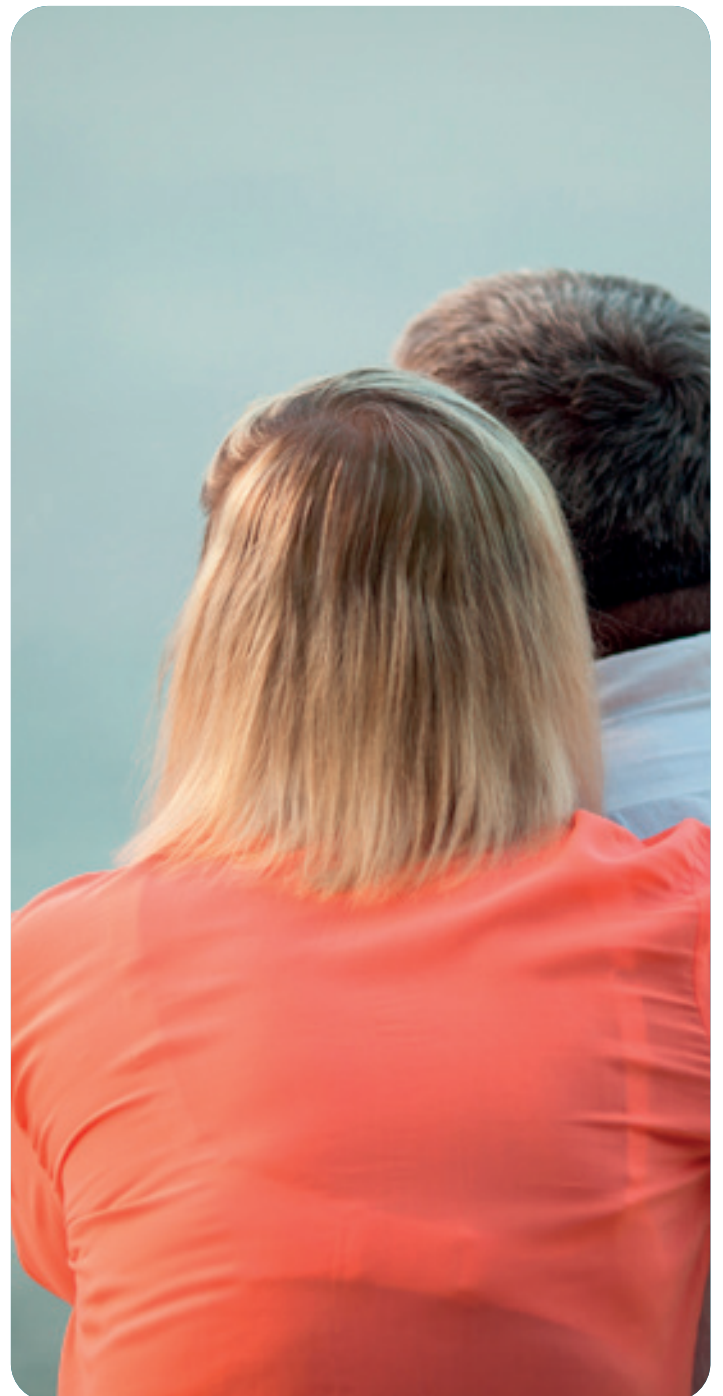
My husband and I also learned to talk to each other, listen to each other, and do what we needed to do. We learned how to say no to events and outings when we knew it would be too much and then sometimes we felt able to do things, but maybe we'd only go for a few hours. I guess we learned how to look 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>



# LOVE OUTLASTS PAIN

## Losing a Spouse/partner: Love Outlasts Pain.

I can only tell you what I have experienced. I have seen the darkness of great loss and heard the agonies of others who lost precious loved ones to suicide. I have touched and been touched by the changes sorrow makes to the human heart. I have tasted the difference between tears of joy and tears of grief. And I have re-awakened to the scents of life in a way I never knew before my husband died.

Now, almost seven years from the greatest loss I've ever known, I still feel the love we shared. I've found a new way to keep my husband in my heart and to make his life continue to count. For a time, though, the love that had lasted a lifetime was invisible to me. At some point, I realized the terrible pain of losing Ron had covered up that love, had covered everything. I thought I had lost it all.

Those were dark days. Survivors who share that kind of darkness understand. I struggled forward, struggled to live, just to survive. And I thought my life was over.

It was. And I did not want the new life that was suggested.

I would not be able to hold onto the old life. Realistically, I knew that, but I was not ready for a long time to accept it. The struggle this situation caused in my heart increased the pain. I felt anger each time someone well-meaning tried to draw me into the present. I did not want to leave the past behind, but the hands on the clock kept turning.

Have you ever watched a clock, measured the seconds as they pass? They seem to fly so quickly and, what's worse, they are unstoppable.

After life-changing loss, there is a period when we are trying to stay with our lost loved ones, a place between death – where they have gone – and life, where we are supposed to be. Somehow, we must find our way back to life, if only for the simple reason that we are, technically, living.

We find reasons to carry on. Practical reasons such as crying babies who need to be fed and changed and loved. Bills must be paid. Jobs don't wait forever. Then other reasons motivate us. People in our lives need us. We feel the instinctive pull of life. We need to do something with the new compassion and wisdom we've found.

The visual that came to my mind back then was a virtual house. There was a hole in the floor, a huge hole. All I could see was the hole in my life, the absence of the one I loved, the one who meant so much to me, whose life mine centered around.

The first step, I believe, is connecting with other survivors. In your darkness, watch for the tiny lights they offer. Grab onto the hope and help you find, no matter how small."

Gradually, I began to see parts of the floor in my visual aid that had not been torn away. The jagged edges of the flooring around the hole. I liken this visual and the progression I'm describing to what was happening in my life. At first, I could see nothing but my loss, feel nothing but pain.

As time went on, and as I interacted with other survivors and emptied myself of some of the pain by telling my story and responding to the stories of others in pain, I began to see more

and more of the room my life was in. Slowly, piece by piece, I became aware of the entire "house" that represented my present life. I began to see things other than the pain.

The hole was still there, but it seemed smaller as my world vision grew. I saw blessings I had left in my life. Miraculously, I began to see and feel my husband's love again. It came first in dreams and then in my waking moments. I grew stronger.

As I recalled more and more of the good memories I had of my husband and family, I realized those were not gone forever, as I had thought. They had only been covered by the pain. Surprised that the love was still there, I felt joy again. I did not have to let my life with Ron go.

My life still has a hole in it. So does my heart. But there is much more there, too. I am surviving and even thriving. I made my way to that new life and found it a haven instead of the hell I had expected. I never thought I would feel joy or happiness again, but I did. And you can too. Maybe not today or next week. The first step, I believe, is connecting with other survivors. In your darkness, watch for the tiny lights they offer. Grab onto the hope and help you find, no matter how small. Build your new life. Try.

Yes, you have lost so much. But the love you shared is still there. It is a forever kind of love. Use it to rebuild. Treasure it. Thrive.

<https://allianceofhope.org/the-survivor-experience/survivor-stories/losing-a-spouse-love-outlasts-pain/>





# A WASTED LIFE?

## Creating purpose – turning loss into gain.

Many people feel their loved one's life has been wasted. But:

**‘A person's value does not die with them.**

**Their influences and memories remain’**

Remember the times you had together. Get out the photos to remind you. Sometimes the memories become hidden by the pain you feel but they will return. You now become their guardian. Write them down and keep them safe. These memories can never be taken from you.

### What was special about your loved one?

Remember what they meant to you. Remember how their life affected you. How would you like that to continue? What values, aspirations, attributes and joys they created would you like to see survive? It helps also to imagine what they would have wished to continue. These are the treasures that now become yours. Remember them with pride and gratitude. It is up to you now, to nurture them and encourage them to grow. The future influence of your loved one becomes the responsibility of those who were close to them in life.

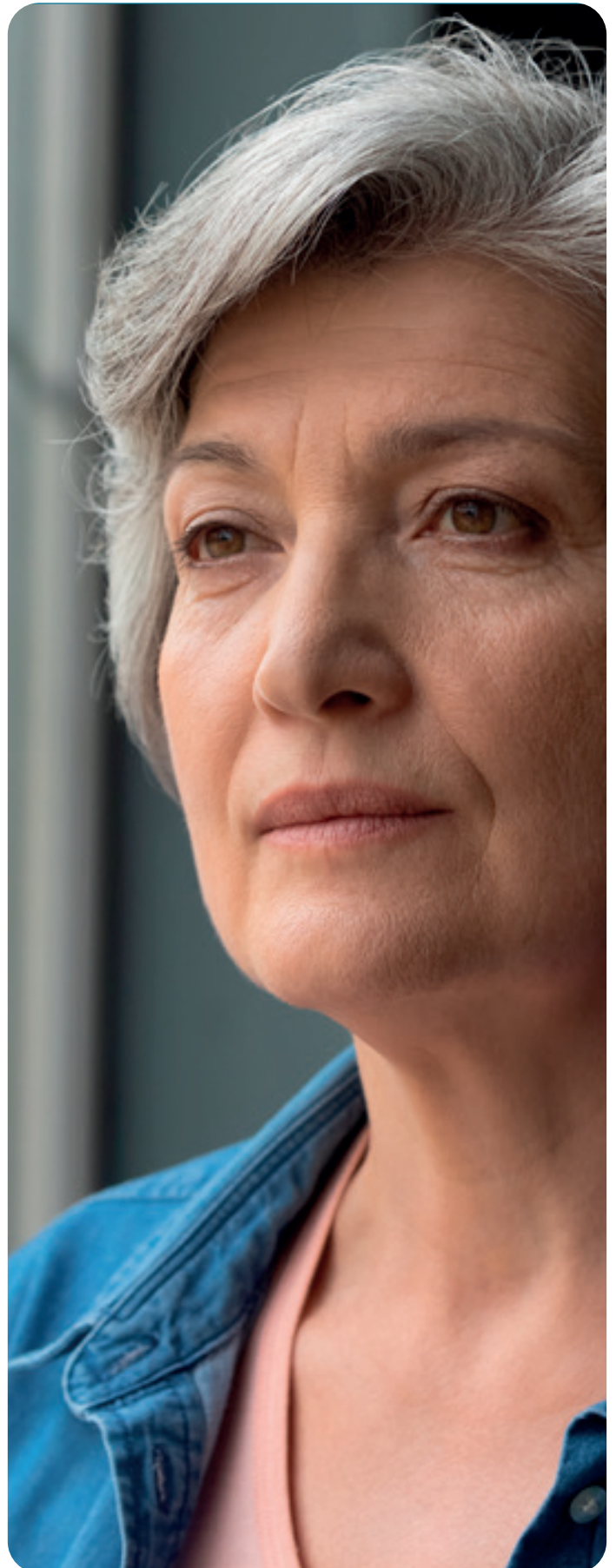
The process of grieving does not mean moving away from the person who has died but towards a new relationship with them in terms of the meaning they will have for you.

When someone we love dies or when we are faced with a major loss situation we are confronted with one of the greatest challenges of life. The experiences of life and death which we tap during our grief open up a whole world of new possibilities to us. These will include our decisions about finding meaning from the disaster and the pathways which our future life will take. This presents us with the opportunity to grow beyond ourselves.

Because we are human we are not driven by instincts but by your own choices. We have the freedom to choose how to face this challenge. This includes the attitudes we adopt in the effort to create meaning and find a new purpose out of the life and out of the death of our loved one.

You can choose to integrate this experience into your life to make something very special to come out of this situation.

Reproduced from “After Suicide – Help For The Bereaved” by permission of Dr Sheila Clark.



# THE CUP ANALOGY

## There is a cup of water sitting on a table. It is so full, it is rounded at the top.

One of two drops of water are added to the cup and it spills over. What caused the water to spill? We want to blame the last one or two drops, but in an empty cup it would not spill.

It was not the water in the cup prior to the drops being added, because if left alone, it would not have spilled. It was a combination of all the drops of water in the cup that came before and the last one or two drops that caused the water to spill.

In a person's life, the water in the cup is symbolic of all the hurt, pain, shame, humiliation, and loss not dealt with along the way. The last couple of drops symbolize the "trigger events", "the last straw", the event or situation that preceded the final act of taking one's own life. Often we want to blame the trigger event, but this does not make sense to us.

Like the water, these events all by themselves would not cause someone to end their life. It is the combination of everything in that person's life not dealt with and the last one or two things that caused our loved ones to lose hope.

For us, we must find a way to pour out the water along the way. This may be through talking it out, writing it out, sometimes yelling it out, whatever works for you. We must learn to deal with our pain in a way our loved ones could not.

This analogy does not give us the concrete answer many of us are looking for but I know it makes sense for me and has been helpful for many survivors. It allowed me to let go of the search for "why", and to find a different way of dealing with my pain."

*\*\*\*This explanation came from Iris Bolton, the Executive Director of The Link Counseling Center in Atlanta, GA, and a survivor of her son's suicide. Iris went to Emory University and received a Masters in Suicidology in an attempt to answer this question for herself. She did not find it. Later, Iris found as close to an answer as she will have. It did not come from a Doctor, Professor, or a Therapist.*

It came from another mother who had lost her son by suicide.







I am a survivor of suicide loss, a zebra among horses; distinct from those who have lost a loved one by other means. I feel separated from the herd, corralled by such loss.

I do not grieve the same as you. My challenges are very different. I cannot respond to things as you do, and nothing anyone can do or say can remove this pain from my heart or the questions from my mind. My grieving process is complicated, it has added stripes.

I am a zebra among horses. I may appear to be like you, but inside the differences are as marked as the stripes that distinguish a zebra from a horse. This knowledge that I am different wears on me like a heavy, ill-fitting saddle.

I am a zebra among horses; I am like you, yet not like you.

## I'VE LOST A CHILD

I've lost a child I hear myself say  
And the person I'm talking to just turns away  
Now why did I tell them, I don't understand  
It wasn't for sympathy or a helping hand.

I just want them to know that I have lost something dear  
I want them to know that my child was here.  
My child left something behind that no one can see  
My child made just one person into a family

So if I've upset you I am as sorry as can be  
You'll have to forgive me, I could not resist  
I just want you to know, that my child did exist.

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF BEREAVEMENT

We are bereaved by suicide  
"How awful" people say  
"I lost my Mum to cancer" or  
"My Granddad passed away"  
"My darling son went off to war  
A bullet took his life"  
"A motorcyclist killed my girl  
The shock near killed my wife"  
So why is our grief different?  
Why can't we just pull through?  
We mourn our loved ones just as much  
But we have burdens too  
Your loved one didn't want to go  
In that they had a voice  
But we are haunted by the thought  
Our loved one had a choice  
You can't imagine what it's like  
To be where we have been  
For many of us had the shock  
Of first upon the scene  
That picture's burned into our minds  
And it can't be erased  
It haunts us still, at any time  
Unbidden, any place

We all would like to change the past  
And most did what they could  
But we are wrecked with heavy guilt  
O'er things we think "we should"

We should have been there earlier  
We should have known their mind  
We should have sought  
professional help  
We should have been more kind

We should have 'phoned more often  
We should have understood  
We should have seen it coming  
But we all did what we could

So that is how we're different  
We're coping, best we can  
We're rarely given peace of mind  
Please try to understand

M Maxwell



## QUOTES

**“You will lose someone you can’t live without and your heart will be badly broken, and the bad news is that you never completely get over the loss of your beloved. But this is also the good news. They live forever in your broken heart that doesn’t seal back up. And you come through. It’s like having a broken leg that never heals perfectly - that still hurts when the weather gets cold, but you learn to dance with the limp.”**

Anne Lamott

**“Only people who are capable of loving strongly can also suffer great sorrow, but this same necessity of loving serves to counteract their grief and heals them.”**

Leo Tolstoy

**“The whole world can become the enemy when you lose what you love.”**

Kristina McMorris,  
Bridge of Scarlet Leaves

**“Deep grief sometimes is almost like a specific location, a coordinate on a map of time. When you are standing in that forest of sorrow, you cannot imagine that you could ever find your way to a better place. But if someone can assure you that they themselves have stood in that same place, and now have moved on, sometimes this will bring hope”**

Elizabeth Gilbert, Eat, Pray, Love

**“Everyone grieves in different ways. For some, it could take longer or shorter. I do know it never disappears. An ember still smoulders inside me. Most days, I don’t notice it, but, out of the blue, it’ll flare to life.”**

Maria V. Snyder, Storm Glass



## 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 Ipsum Creative for their ongoing support with the newsletter and to Uniting Communities "Ucity" for providing the facilities to hold our support meetings.