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Mail: P.O. Box 334

Springwood Qld 4127

Caring, Support, Awareness, Education

Telephone Help Line 24/7: 1300 767 022

Issue No. 2

March / April 2012

Children and Grief

-- Kerrie Noonan & Alana Douglas (Children Bereaved By Suicide Project)

Children express their feelings differently to adults! Don't be surprised if your child appears as though everything is OK. Children may want to go out and play with their friends as usual or they may appear to be unaffected. It's important for children to know that they don't have to feel sad all the time. Unlike adults, children grieve in "bits and pieces", they can't maintain the same emotional intensity for long periods like adults. They need to make sense of the loss and all the changes that will accompany it.

Children express much of their grief through their behaviour - they may be clingy, irritable, have problems concentrating, play games involving death and violence, play out funerals, wet the bed or you may notice them wanting more of your attention than usual.

Children may become more clingy and anxious, and not want to leave your side. This is a normal reaction for children who have lost someone close to them, as often they worry that someone else they love might die. It's important to reassure children by giving them clear information about the times you will be away from them and when you will return.

Maintaining your old routine as much as possible is important for children, as it helps them to feel secure and settled. For example, children need to go to bed at the same time, and go to their regular sporting or other activities if you feel they are up to it. Enlisting the help of a relative or friend may be helpful in assisting you to do this.

It's OK to cry and express your feelings in front of your children. Children are very sensitive to their parents' emotional state and can be very aware that their parents are "upset". Often children say that seeing their parents showing emotion makes them feel like it's OK for them to talk about their feelings and cry too! Parents are important role models for children, if you are showing your child that it's OK to talk about and show feelings then they will take your lead.

Like adults, all children express their grief differently. There is no right or wrong way to grieve but if you are worried about your child, it may be helpful to speak to a grief counsellor or health professional.

Talking to children about suicide...

Often the first question that arises for parents is "What should I tell my children about suicide?" Many parents have had little experience talking with children about death let alone suicide, and are worried about how their children will react and how the news will affect their child in the long-term.

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Photo by David Castillo Dominici

2012 Meeting Dates for the Annerley Support Group (Brisbane)

Friday fortnightly at 7:30pm

| | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| March 2, 16, 30 | June 8, 22 |
| April 13, 27 | July 6, 20 |
| May 11, 25 | August 3, 17, 31 |



Management Committee



President: Cherrie Cran
Vice President: Donna Cumming
Treasurer: Darrin Larney
Secretary: Jennifer McMahon
Fundraising Coordinator: Lauren Leslie
Members: Elna Rongonui & Mark Williams

S.O.S.B.S.A. Support Group Meetings

Brisbane Support Group

Australian College of Community Services
 473 Annerley Road, Annerley (Cnr Fanny St)

Fortnightly from Friday 2nd March 7:30 pm

Contact 1300 767 022

Cairns Support Group

Red Cross House
 247 Lake Street, Cairns

2nd Tuesday of every month at 7:30pm.

Contact Fran on 4045 2955
 or 0407 695 891

Bundaberg Support Group

Neighbourhood Centre
 111 Targo Street, Bundaberg

2nd Wednesday of every month at 10:30 am

Contact Peter on 4155 1015

Mackay Support After Suicide Group

**NEW
BRANCH!**

Gordon White Library, Mackay
 54 Phillip St, Mount Pleasant

2nd Saturday of every month.
 Starting Sat. 10th March at 2pm.

Contact Renee Martin 0412 448805

Disclaimer: Unless expressly stated, the views expressed in articles, poetry etc in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of SOSBSA. Any articles, poems, quotes that are stated as 'author unknown' within this newsletter are reproduced in good faith and do not intentionally contravene copyright laws.

Renew your SOSBSA membership for 2012!

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Pensioner / Student | \$20 |
| Adult member | \$30 |
| Family | \$50 |
| Not-For-Profit Org. | \$50 |
| Affiliate Business | \$100 |

Visit www.sosbsa.org.au or contact secretary@sosbsa.org.au for membership form or to renew.

"Love is a fabric that never fades, no matter how often it is washed in the waters of adversity and grief."

Author Unknown

President's Report

Welcome everyone to our newsletter and to SOS Survivors of Suicide Bereavement Support Association.

2012 has begun and we are off to a running start. This year has seen a new committee welcomed.

I'd like to thank Marcia for her efforts and support in the position of Vice-President.

I'd like to welcome the new management committee for 2012:



SOSBSA President Cherrie Cran

- Donna to the position of Vice-President
- Jen is back as Secretary
- Darrin is back as Treasurer
- Lauren is our new Fund-raising Co-ordinator
- Mark and Elna are new Committee Members

This is a fantastic way to start 2012, with a full committee. I'd like to say a very very special thank you to Jen and Darrin for continuing to support our association and for all of their help in making things tick over every day. We have developed a great working relationship and I am thrilled that we will continue working together.

To our brand new committee members I'd like to give a very special and warm welcome, your preparedness to get involved and give of your time will provide the association with a wealth of ideas and keep us moving forward. We look forward to a great year in 2012.

If anyone has any ideas for fund-raising or for workshops / seminars that you would like to see run – please don't hesitate to let us know, either by emailing Jen at secretary@sosbsa.org.au; by phoning 1300 767 022; in writing or by visiting our facebook page.

Our facebook community has grown to almost 900 members as at the end of February.

If you haven't visited our facebook community please drop by and chat with us.

In February we met for the first social function of the year – a picnic in the park. Keep an eye out for our next one – there will be at least one function advertised in each newsletter.

You might remember in the last newsletter, and if you haven't read it, I'll remind you, we are committed to reducing the cost of running SOSBSA so that we will have more money available to do things that will directly support those who have suffered the loss of a loved one to suicide.

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President's Report cont.

One of the things we are doing is reducing the number of printed newsletters that get sent out. This will save us both printing and postage costs, and it will also save some time for our volunteers who do this.

Our policy is to provide newsletters free to anyone who calls our help line or comes to our support group for up to 12 months. Following that 12 months, if you wish to receive a hard copy newsletter we require you to be a financial member. Membership isn't a high cost and your membership will not only assist us with funding the association but will enable us to improve the services we provide. You do not have to receive the hard copy newsletter as a financial member, you can opt to receive the newsletter by email to save us some money. You might note that in 2012 there are benefits that have been negotiated for our members and you will receive a membership card to enable you to take advantage of these discounts / services that are being provided especially for you.

You will note that with this newsletter, you have been provided with a notice to send back to us if you are not a paid member but have reason to require a hard copy of our newsletter to be sent to you.

You can also let us know by email or by phone.

Thank you for your support and I know that you will work with us in achieving our goal of reducing the costs around the production and distribution of the newsletter.

Hopefully we'll see you at our next social function in April.

Take care of yourself

Love and peace to all of you

Cherrie



*What the caterpillar
calls the end of the
world, the master calls
a butterfly.*

Richard Bach



SOSBSA Get-Together

Glindemann Park, Logan Rd, Holland Park

Sunday 22nd April 1:00pm

BYO plate to share, picnic blanket, chairs,

Contact Cherrie on 0423 567 055 for any details.





Take time out for yourself on the beautiful Sunshine Coast at a Recovery Weekend designed to provide you with skills to help you cope better during times of stress.

The weekends offer:

- * gentle daily exercise that you can do at home
- * cooking class focusing on simple, nutritious meals
- * techniques to quieten a busy mind
- * Recovery Planning session 1-1
- * massage (optional)
- * caring, supportive environment

Upcoming weekends:

Feb 17-19, May 18-20, July 20-22, Sept 14-16

For more information, contact Bronwen on 0410640803 or visit www.rosesintheocean.com.au

GRIEF'S LITTLE EMERGENCY KITS

Gentle reminders to keep us strong while grieving.

Fits perfectly into a handbag or drawer.

\$4 each (+ \$3 postage)



Please submit any orders & cheques by mail to:

SOSBSA
P.O. Box 334
Springwood Qld 4127

Call for Stamp Donations.

Thank you to those kind people who have sent in a few unused stamps for us to use. It all helps to keep our costs down so we can use our valuable funds in other ways to support the bereaved.



If you have a few stamps you could send our way, please post to:

**P.O. Box 334
Springwood Qld 4127**

Mourning Dove Pin



Purchase one of our beautiful pewter Mourning Dove pins to honour and remember your loved one.

Price: \$8 each (+ \$3 postage)

Please submit any orders & cheques either by mail to:
P.O. Box 334
Springwood Qld 4127

or by email to secretary@sosbsa.org.au

Strength and Courage

Author: Sylvia Kelly

It takes strength to be certain,
It takes courage to have doubts.

It takes strength to fit in,
It takes courage to stand out.

It takes strength to share a friend's pain,
It takes courage to feel your own pain.
It takes strength to hide your own pain,
It takes courage to show it and deal with it.

It takes strength to stand guard,
It takes courage to let down your guard.

It takes strength to conquer,
It takes courage to surrender.

It takes strength to endure abuse,
It takes courage to stop it.

It takes strength to stand alone,
It takes courage to lean on a friend.

It takes strength to love,
It takes courage to be loved.

It takes strength to survive,
It takes courage to live.

Children and Grief continued...

-- Kerrie Noonan & Alana Douglas (Children Bereaved By Suicide Project)

Continued from Page 1...

You may be feeling anxious about how much to tell your children and about the language to use when talking to children about suicide. You will no doubt be given lots of welcome and unwelcome advice about what you should and shouldn't tell your child. You're the person who knows your child best, so trust your own instincts - use language that your child understands and that you find most comfortable.

Sometimes parents express the dilemma of wanting to tell their child the truth about suicide, but don't know if it is the right thing to do or how to go about it. This is a common experience, and often parents describe being fearful that the child knowing their loved one died as a result of suicide may make the situation worse.

One child who was not told until much later about his brother's suicide, said the following:

"Come straight out and tell them... 'cause I didn't really like it being told at different times. I'd rather just accept it the way it was."

There are a number of reasons why telling children about suicide is important.

- Children are very sensitive to change and will pick up that something is happening in their family that they don't know about.
- Children have a rich fantasy life and may make up stories to fill up the gaps in their knowledge about the death.
- Children may overhear, be told half-truths or gory stories by their friends and neighbours. This removes control from a caring parent or other adult, who ordinarily would ensure that they are told in a sensitive and appropriate way.
- An important part of the grief process is knowing how the person died. Not knowing this information can interfere with a child's grieving and long-term adjustment.
- Children rely on factual information about the world in which they live from their parents and other adult caregivers. Trust is an important family value, keeping significant information like suicide from children can affect a child's developing trust.



Photo by David Castillo Dominici

One parent commented on her situation:

"I don't think my son knows anything, but I am lying to him every time I tell him how his dad died and I feel terrible about that... I don't know how to tell him. I don't know where to start. I don't want to hurt him."

Parents often express great relief that they have spoken to their children about suicide. Often the secret of suicide and trying to cover up the facts adds further stress to the family coping. Many of the fears that caregivers have about causing greater distress for the children are not realised, as most children, even very young children, take the news in a very matter of fact way.

Parents often comment that it's hard to know what words to use when explaining suicide.

The following tips have been useful for other parents:

- Explain death as being when the body stops working. For example, it can be helpful to say "when someone dies their heart stops beating, they can no longer move and play."
- It's important to ask your child what they understand about what "being dead" means. It may be helpful to talk about a family pet that has died, as this is a way of explaining the permanency of death to children.
- It is not helpful to say that a person has gone away or they are just sleeping. These explanations

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Children and Grief continued...

-- Kerrie Noonan & Alana Douglas (Children Bereaved By Suicide Project)

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- are confusing and sometimes frightening for children.
- One way to define suicide is to describe it as "when someone makes their body stop working."
- Often children say that the word suicide is confusing, so its important to check what they have understood and perhaps even what they have heard about suicide in the past.

One child suggested the following:

"... instead of saying they committed suicide, you could say he killed himself... young people, they won't quite understand what you are talking about."

One parent suggested:

"I explained to my sons that their brother was very unhappy and reached a point in his life where it was a split second that he could no longer see any hope or light or know that people loved him, so he took his own life. Had he waited a second longer, he may have been able to realise he was loved and could get help. I gave both my boys the numbers for Lifeline and all those numbers and told them it was really important to talk to someone even if it wasn't me."



Photo by David Castillo Dominici

Taken from "Supporting Children After Suicide..." booklet courtesy of NSW Health Department. Copies are available from Better Health Centre, Locked Mail Bag 5003, Gladesville NSW 2111.

Book Reviews

This column is for book reviews that are submitted by readers or that are found to be of relevance to any area of suicide bereavement, grief recovery, self-healing, suicide or mental illness, or any other topic that you think is worth sharing.

Please submit any book reviews either by mail or by email to secretary@sosbsa.org.au

Leaving The Hall Light On By Madeline Sharples



A touching real story of Madeline's life that explores her son Paul's mental illness and subsequent suicide in 1999. 'Leaving The Hall Light On' shows how Madeline and her family coped after Paul's suicide, and shows both the positive and negative aspects and thought processes involved with surviving. It also follows Madeline's poems written contemporaneously which are dotted throughout the book and explore her feelings and state of mind along her journey of healing.

Review from by J. McMahon

Leaving The Hall Light On is available through bookstores and online booksellers. Madeline Sharples is on Facebook and Twitter, and is a member of our SOSBSA Facebook page.

Introducing Support After Suicide: SOSBSA Mackay Branch

-- Renee Martin & Kim Brett

Hi, my name is Renee Martin and I am one of the facilitators for the new SOSBSA Support group in the Mackay / Whitsunday area.

My husband suicided 2 years ago and I am just now feeling I can grieve. I was lucky enough to meet my husband Mervyn Johnson on a cruise sailing from Brisbane in 2007. Merv was traveling with his 14yr old son Rory (from a previous marriage) and I was with friends celebrating my 35th birthday.

Merv and I continued seeing each other after the cruise. He would come to Airlie Beach and continually try and miss his flight back to the Gold Coast and I would visit him and Rory on the Gold Coast hitting all the theme parks and having a hoot of a time.

I had my own hairdressing business in Airlie Beach, so after 6 months Merv decided to move to the Whitsundays. He had trouble getting work to start with, he was a welder by trade and did an apprenticeship with Swagman Motorhomes. He tried a variety of jobs- Building / Food Service deliveries & Labouring.

He joined me in our local Outrigger club and we would enjoy week ends away competing in races and getting a few medals for our efforts. He was also a member of Proserpine Lions club and always had a story to tell from their boys meetings.

Merv and I married in Airlie Beach 17th August, 2008. We had a fantastic day and even jumped into the pool with our wedding gear on. Merv really wanted to buy a house with a backyard, so we bought our 1st (and only) home together in 2009.

WHAT HAPPENED?? Yes, there were signs along the way- drinking / violence / he would go missing for days / lost his jobs / lost his license, but deep down I really know he was fighting his demons and sadly they won- and I lost him on Monday 8th Feb, 2010.

I'm not sure if this was the journey and experience I was meant to have in life, but I have fantastic memories of our time together traveling UK; Scotland (where Merv skinny dipped in Loch Ness!!); Cyprus and a flight to the Pyramids and our honeymoon in NZ skiing (where I fell off the chair lift, not funny, but Merv had tears rolling down his face with laughter).

His big smile was infectious. RIP- MERVYN :)) you are truly missed.

I live in Airlie Beach, Whitsundays and after Merv's death, I could not find the support I needed locally. After attending SOSBSA Brisbane for a few meetings in 2011, I felt there was a need to have a support group in the Nth Qld area.

Kim Brett who lost her son 3 years ago to suicide is also a facilitator for the Mackay branch. Kim said, "*When I lost my beautiful 26yr old son Todd I was in shock for weeks, as I actually saw my son jump over his balcony. Even though I was not close enough to grab Todd I tried, but of course the guilt will always be there that I failed my son. Todd had been at the Mental Health unit at Royal Bne Hosp. on the previous day with his fiance (I found out months later he had locked himself in the hospital toilets threatening suicide) but the psychologist sent him home even though he was having chronic anxiety attacks. When I returned to Mackay I did not know who to talk to. There are so many "why's and what if's" I needed to talk to someone who knew how I was feeling. After 3 yrs I felt I could help others that need those same answers even though we can't give them, we can be there to comfort and hold on to one another.*"

We have found a venue to hold our monthly meetings and are now trying to get as much publicity as possible through local papers; magazines; radio and we appeared on Channel 7 local news.

The experience of forming the support group has helped us personally in dealing with our grief. Having to re-tell your personal loss has helped us to release some of the pain.

We're looking forward to 2012, with the Mackay branch set to commence support meetings on Saturday 10th March and then every 2nd Saturday of the month.

Thank you to the SOSBSA committee for your support.

Renee :)) & Kim :



Kim Brett & Renee Martin

Other Suicide Support Groups

If you would like to add your suicide support group to this page, please email secretary@sosbsa.org.au.

Sunshine Coast



Head High Young People Living Beyond Suicide Support Group

Maroochy Neighbourhood
Centre
Fifth Avenue, Maroochydore
Linda —5479 0394

Meetings are held last
Thursday of the
month at 4:30 —6:30pm.

Caloundra Living Beyond Suicide Support Group

42 Croydon Avenue
Currimundi

Jeanine and Ron —5491 7452

Meetings are held every 1st
Monday of the month at
10:00am-12 noon.

Chermside



Lifeline Brisbane North

766 Gympie Road
Chermside
Monthly: First Tuesday of each
month
Time: 6:00pm—8:00pm
Contact: Lyndall Stafford
Email:
enquiries@uccommunity.org.au
Phone: 07 3624 2400

Also

Lifeline facilitates an 8-week
closed therapeutic group for the
bereaved by suicide (daytime at
Chermside and night time at
Fortitude Valley).

Contact: Lyndall Stafford at
above phone number or email
address.

Gold Coast



Lifeline

2791 Gold Coast Road
Broadbeach
Monthly: 1st Friday of the
month
Time: 6:30-8:30pm
Phone: 5579 6000

NSW

Lifeline Harbour To Hawkesbury
4 Park Ave, Gordon, NSW
Monthly: 2nd Thursday of the
month 7-9pm.

Phone: 02 9498 8805

Email: admin@lifelineh2h.com

If you wish to receive this newsletter via email, please contact us on
secretary@sosbsa.org.au.

In Memoriam

If you would like an 'in memoriam', please send an anniversary record to SOSBSA, P.O. Box 334, Springwood 4127 or email to secretary@sosbsa.org.au.



Loved one lost to suicide: Nico

Date of Birth: 17 May 1994

Message: Our lives will remain forever changed...We love you Nico today, tomorrow and forever....

Your Name: Tulsa McCormick

Date of Death: 6 April 2011

Loved one lost to suicide: Joseph Rangihuna

Date of Birth: 29 January 1992

Message: We love and miss you so much, not a day goes by we don't think of you, forever in our hearts.

Your Name: Kushla Rangihuna

Date of Death: 15 March 2010

Loved one lost to suicide: Clint Griswold

Date of Birth: 24 May 1991

Message: To our baby brother Clint, Words cannot express how much we wish you were here. You were too young, and too full of life to leave this world. Please watch over Mom and Dad, they miss you so much. Not a day goes by we don't cry for you and re-live this awful nightmare. I hope to see you in Heaven someday. Love your big sisters.

Your Name: Jessica and Jennifer Griswold

Date of Death: 14 March 2011

Loved one lost to suicide: Mick Vetma

Date of Birth:

Message: I cry every day still. I miss him so much as well does his four children.

Your Name: Janet Vetma

Date of Death: 29 March 2010

Loved one lost to suicide: Brock Joseph Nicholson

Date of Birth: 18 June 1986

Message: Two years have passed since you went away, we think of you a million times a day, our lives will never be the same without you here with us. We love you and miss you so much. Mum, Harley, Kodie, Roxy, Slater and Matt. xoxox

Your Name: Narelle Schonhardt

Date of Death: 28 March 2010

Loved one lost to suicide: Bede John McMullan

Date of Birth: 20 September 1990

Message: A thousand times we needed you, a thousand times we cried, if love alone could have saved you, you never would have died. Forever loved and cherished. Love Mum and Sinead xoxo

Your Name: Cherrie Cran

Date of Death: 10 April 2010

Loved one lost to suicide: Christopher Paul Curtis

Date of Birth: 29 June 1966

Message: Ten years on, you are very often in our thoughts and so many things remind us of you. We miss you so much but remember you with both laughter and tears as we think of all your funny ways, our family jokes and the good times we shared with you while you were here. So grateful to have known you and trusting you to be safe and secure in the Everlasting Arms til we meet again.

Your Name: The Curtis family

Date of Death: 7 March 2002

For everyone whose anniversary of their loved one is in March / April. On this anniversary of your loved one's death, may you remember the best experiences you shared, the most meaningful words that were spoken, the happiest moments you had together and the comfort that has given you the courage to go on.

National Helplines

LifeLine: 13 11 14 (24 hour)

Mensline: 1300 789 978 (24 hour)

Suicide Callback Line: 1300 659 467 (24 hour)

National Hope Line: 1300 467 354 (24 hour bereavement support)

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800 (24 hour)

SANE Helpline: 1800 18 SANE (M-F 9am-5pm)

QLD

Standby Response Service 07 3250 1856 / 0438 150 180
(24 hour mobile crisis response to suicide bereavement.)

Sunshine and Cooloola Coasts 0407 766 961

Photo by Ian Britton