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Amy Bleuel loses her battle at 31yrs

- *The Star.com*



Amy Bleuel, a mental health advocate and founder of Project Semicolon, has died. She was 31 years old.

While Bleuel was not a household name, her 2013 campaign had worldwide engagement and resulted in “real awareness” for those affected by mental illness, and the resulting stigma of mental health challenges.

“Amy’s life was a testament that one person can truly make a difference,” said a statement from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Bleuel came up with the idea for the project in April 2013 when she urged those affected by mental illness to draw a semicolon on their wrist and post a photo on social media. The punctuation symbolizes a story that is not finished.

“A semicolon is used when an author could’ve chosen to end their sentence, but chose not to,” Bleuel said on her website. “The author is you and the sentence is your life.”

Since its inception, it is estimated that the project touched millions all over the world.

Bleuel’s project was featured in a July 20, 2015 *Star* article about people who had chosen to get the semicolon as a tattoo.

Former host of TSN’s *Off The Record* and mental health activist Michael Landsberg took to his personal vlog to commemorate Bleuel.

“She won (her battle) because she saved others. She changed lives,” he said. “What could (you) possibly do that was better than that?”

In the video Landsberg recapped what Project Semicolon was about, pausing for a split second to restrain himself from crying. The battle Bleuel fought was of utmost significance, he said.

“The whole idea of the semicolon is about hope,” Landsberg said in a phone interview on Saturday. “Those of us that suffer from depression particularly, every one of us feels a sense of loneliness and a sense of hopelessness. She made me feel less lonely and she made me feel less hopeless.”

Bleuel, who lived with her husband, David, in Green Bay, Wis., struggled with depression most of her life. Her father died by suicide when she was 18. Her death notice does not state a cause of death, but says that she is “at peace in Heaven with her father.”

Bleuel had three semicolon tattoos: One on her left arm for her dad, one on the back of her right leg for her best friend who was going through a difficult time when she was founding Project Semicolon, and one for herself on her left arm above her elbow, she said.

As news of her death spread across social media Thursday, fellow advocates and the people whose lives she touched offered their gratitude and remembrance.

In an interview with the *Washington Post* in June 2016, Bleuel said being the face of the project was healing but also difficult because of the expectations people had of her and some of the negativity that she endured from trolls on social media.

Still, Bleuel felt strongly that she was making a difference in giving hope to people with mental illness, while also educating society on the impact the illness has on so many lives.

“People want to know they’re not suffering in silence, you feel alone like no one cares, to know someone is there, that is what these people go forth with, they take this energy to better themselves,” Bleuel said. “I think it’s just opening the minds of society. I would hope through my stories and platforms that they would see these are everyday people, just like you, and they’re attempting to make their lives better, but here is what they struggle with.”

“I wanted to start a conversation that can’t be stopped,” she said, “and I believe I’ve done that.”

Landsberg agreed.

“This is an illness that can be fatal,” Landsberg said. “We don’t give up on treating patients with cancer. If 10 per cent of them die, the other 90 per cent survive. We celebrate that. I would celebrate the lives that she changed and the lives that she saved.”

This article can be found at:

<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2017/04/01/mental-health-advocate-amy-bleuel-founder-of-the-semicolon-project-dies.html>

Our deepest sympathy goes to Amy’s family, friends and everyone whose life she touched.

President's Report

- *Cherrie Cran*

Hi everyone and welcome to the April – June 2017 newsletter. As I sit here writing this report to you, the 7th anniversary of my son's passing approaches. Some days it seems like only yesterday and others it seems forever. I still miss him every minute of every day, but I know that he is now at peace and he remains with me always and I will one day see him again.

I know I've told you this before, but it bears saying again. For those of you who lost loved ones recently, please hang in there, you will learn to carry your grief over time. There's no short cut or quick answer, you must go through this, you can't get around it. And know that whenever you need someone who 'gets it' that we are here for you – just pop onto our Facebook page, and there's survivors from all over the world who are going through or have been through what you are dealing with.

2017 Committee

During February we had our AGM and I would like to say a HUGE thank you to our committed committee members for continuing to keep us going and their undying support.

This issue of the newsletter

It is with great sadness that I read about the passing of Amy Bleuel, the brave young woman who started the semi-colon project to raise awareness of mental health issues, with the slogan "Your story is not over". Amy founded the project in 2013, as a tribute to her father, who died by suicide in 2003.

Sadly Amy too lost her battle with mental illness and left us on 24th March 2017.

The article I have included here is just one of many that have been written to honour her and all of the things that she achieved. May she never be forgotten, and may we all know that her story is not over.

2017 Postvention Conference

Darrin and I attended the 2017 Postvention Conference in Sydney last month and I have to say that it was an awesome event as always. There was a lot of things that we both learned, and it's always so beneficial to catch up with so many others who have lost loved ones to suicide, and those who work tirelessly to support them.

We got to meet and spend time with the amazing facilitators of support groups in our local area. We have decided that we will endeavour to run some joint social functions to include all of the support groups in South East Queensland.

Fundraising

We would like to say a HUGE thank you to Linda and Rose for raising funds for us at the Shut the Gate Comedy event held in Brisbane. We aren't sure yet how much was raised, but it was a great day and we are grateful for their support.

If anyone has any ideas for fundraising please let us know – our membership has dropped off, and we need to raised funds to allow us to continue to operate. If you wish to make a donation or become a member, you can do so on our website at www.sosbsa.org.au Under the 'about us' tab you will see Membership and Donations if you hover over the 'about us' tab. All donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.

Take care and be kind to yourself

Cherrie xoxo



Brisbane Support Group
(473 Annerley Road Annerley)

Friday fortnightly at 7:30pm

January – 13, 27

February – 10, 24(8pm start for AGM)

March – 10, 24

Contact: Cherrie 0423 567 055



Management Committee



President: Cherrie Cran

Vice President: Donna Cumming

Treasurer: Darrin Larney

Secretary: Sinead McMullan

Members: Vacant

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

Cairns Support Group

Cairns Red Cross Wellbeing Centre Cnr Grove and Lake Street, Cairns
Entrance off Grove Street.
2nd Tuesday of every month at 7:30pm.

Contact Fran: 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: 07 4155 1015

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Membership

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

You are now able to do this all online:
www.sosbsa.org.au (About us tab/Membership)
or contact secretary@sosbsa.org.au

Memberships help pay for printing, copying, mailing
and our telephone help line.

SOSBSA Phone

Volunteers WANTED

We are looking for expressions of interest
regarding volunteering for our
1300 help line.

Training will be provided.

Contact secretary@sosbsa.org.au
or 1300 767 022 for more information.

Newsletter Contributions

We are always looking for articles to run in our newsletter. If you would like to share something or found something you think might benefit others please email me at secretary@sosbsa.org.au.

SOSBSA Facebook

We now have more than **15,800** people who follow us on facebook.

Join in our online support group.

Search **SOSBSA**



It Is Over

Hush.

It is quiet,

So very quiet.

I am left alone now.

No longer to hear your voice

It is so...so very quiet.

Snippets of memories flash before me,
Like a kaleidoscope with multi-dimensional,
brilliant colors.

No rhyme or reason in their placement, yet
when they fall into place,
They form a beautiful pattern of colorful hues.

I am transfixed.

There are no answers as to why you are gone,
But like the kaleidoscope, your brilliance left
patterns on this earth
For those of us left behind.

It is what we do with your brilliance that
matters - because you matter.

And as the randomness of the colorful images
takes shape,

The transformation of the images becomes
something beautiful.

I can reflect in the quiet of the moment -
nothing left to say,
For I believe in my heart there is only peace.

Hush.

It is so quiet,

So very...very quiet.

By Cheryl L. Johnson

Call for Stamp Donations.

You can help us by donating 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.

It all helps

Please post to:

P.O. Box 334
Springwood Qld 4127



Items for Sale

You can now purchase items from us online with
payments through paypal
www.sosbsa.org.au ('Items for Sale' tab)

Mourning Dove Pin

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

\$8.00 each (+\$3 postage)



Grief's Little Emergency Kit

Gentle reminders to keep us strong.
Fits perfectly into a handbag or drawer.
A small gift to give someone who grieves
when you feel lost for words

\$4.00 each (+\$3 postage)



or email us at secretary@sosbsa.org.au

Has Grief Made You Lose Your Mind?

- *Megan Devine*

Because we don't talk about the reality of grief in our culture, lots of grieving people think they're crazy.

When my partner first died, I lost my mind - and not in the ways you might think.

I used to be a person who could read books. I used to have a really great memory. I used to be a person who could keep everything straight without notes or a calendar.

I used to be a person who could do all of these things and suddenly I was putting my keys in the freezer and forgetting my dog's name and couldn't remember what day it was or if I had eaten breakfast. I couldn't read more than a few sentences at a time, and usually had to go back and reread those same lines many times.

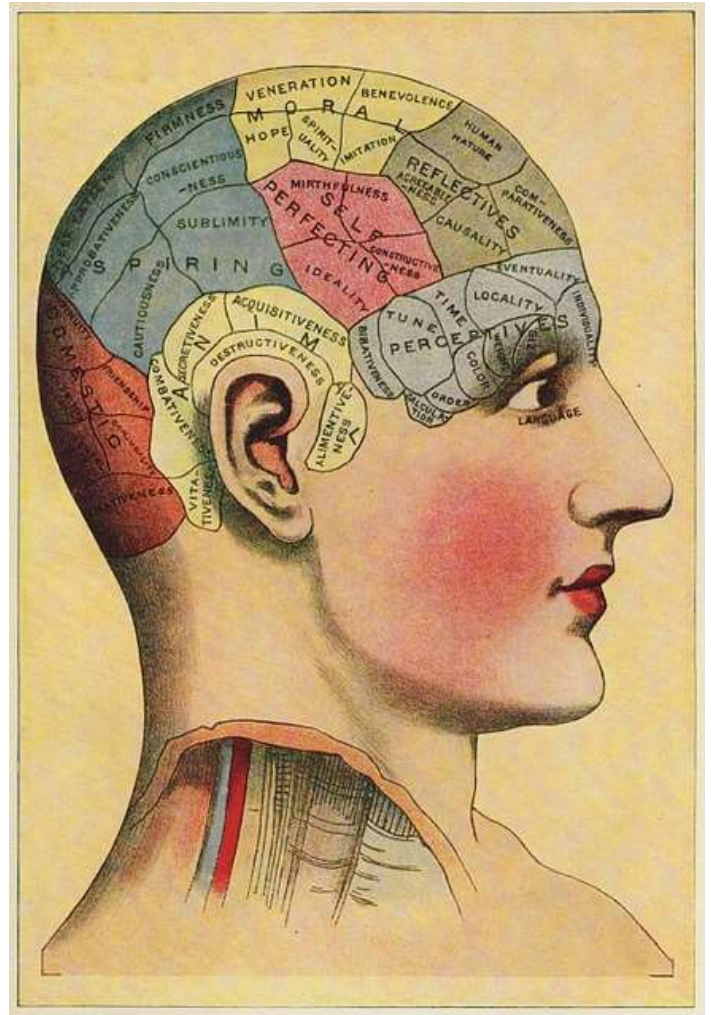
My mind simply stopped functioning. Has that happened for you? Has grief made you lose your mind?

There's no resource, no check list, for grief that says "these things are normal." I mean, we have the stages of grief model, but that is entirely unhelpful. ([see why at this link](#)) Many grieving people simply suffer alone in the weirdness of grief, wondering if they've lost their minds on top of everything else.

When I talk with people, one of the things that brings the most relief is letting them know they're normal; they're not crazy. You feel crazy because you're inside a crazy experience. Grief, especially early grief, is not a normal time. It makes perfect sense that you're disoriented: everything has changed.

Memory loss, confusion, an inability to concentrate or focus - these things are all normal inside grief. They do tend to be temporary, but they last a lot longer than you would think.

For a lot of people, it's a few years before their entire cognitive capacity comes back to any recognizable form. There are losses in that too. Some of those losses are temporary and some of them mean your mind is just different as you move forward. The thing to remember is that physiologically, your body has experienced a trauma. Your brain is working hard to make sense of something that can't ever make sense. All of those mental circuits that used to fire so clearly are trying their best to relate to this entirely changed world.



Your mind is working so hard, there's very little brain power left over to track more than a paragraph in a book, or remember that your car keys go on the hook, not in the freezer. It's hard to think in an orderly, concise fashion when you're reeling from loss.

While I can't magically fix your mind, I can tell you this: you are not going crazy. Your mind is doing the best it can to keep a bead on reality when reality is crazy. Be patient with yourself. Make a lot of lists. Set reminders. Whatever you need to do.

Remember that this is a normal response to a stressful situation, it's not a flaw in you. You're not crazy. You're grieving. Those are very different things.

Having your experience validated is powerful, isn't it. It's why I speak about my own early grief so often - it's important to hear these stories. One of the most powerful parts of the Writing Your Grief course is seeing how many people are experiencing the same crazy-making things you are. Being able to say what's true for you, and have other people say, "me too!" - somehow, it makes grief easier to bear.

If you'd like to be part of a community like that, please join the next session of the [Writing Your Grief course](#). There's always room for you.

Megan Devine is the author of the audio book, [When Everything is Not Okay: Practices to Help You Stay in Your Heart & Not Lose Your Mind](#). She writes, speaks, and teaches on out-of-order death and how we withstand suffering that cannot be fixed. You can find her at [refugeingrief.com](#), where you can also join the upcoming session of her popular [Writing Your Grief 30 day course](#). As one student wrote, "In a world of Kardashians and cat videos, the Writing Your Grief course kind of redeems the internet."

Please google her to find out more, or if you are reading this online I have left the links intact.

That Girl

Forever feeling her life is dying
But the doctors keep on lying.
"Your daughter will be fine,
Just give her some time."

But she wasn't okay
Because your baby girl took her life today.
She couldn't keep running
And she wouldn't stand living.

Her silent plea's for love
Left her heart on black doves.
"I'm in pain"
Her innocence cut, her pride slain.

Her cries fell on deaf ears
So no one realized her fears.
No one saw her fatal change
Until her heart was out of range.

She wrote out letters
Saying her life would be better.
She laid the pistol on her heart
And blew her body apart.

Her parents cry themselves to sleep
And all her friends weep.
They loved that girl well
And left her alone in Hell.

Maybe her soul can be free
And everyone will see
The lost life of one teen
And the love there could have been.

- Amber 2008

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

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.



Gold Coast

Lifeline

2791 Gold Coast Road
Broadbeach

Monthly: 1st Friday of the
month

Time: 6:30-8:30pm
Phone: 5579 6000

Chermside

Lifeline Brisbane North

766 Gympie Road
Chermside

Monthly: 1st Thursday of each
month at 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.

VIC

Survivors of Suicide Inc.

515 Chilsolm St
Ballarat

Monthly: 1st Tuesday the month
at 7:00-9:00pm.

Contact: Pauline: 0438 535 799
or Kristy 0427 762 92

www.survivorsofsuicide.com.au

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

Lifeline MidCoast NSW

Sherwood Road Port Macquarie.



Meetings held on the 4th

Wednesday of the month.

Contact Lee-Ann 02 6581 2800

or email

lifematters@lifelinemidcoast

.org.au

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

In Memory Of..

- *Karen Toler*

This week we lost a warrior a fellow survivor. I know that I am not the only one who woke up today feeling a tremendous feeling of loss and vulnerability. This week everyone who has ever been touched by mental illness or suicide lost a voice. Amy was a voice for all of us, she was a person who inspired so many of us to tell our stories and take a stand. She took a stand for us, the survivors, and made us feel like we weren't alone in our fight to overcome the trauma that we have suffered. Today we lost a friend.

I have been as sad today as I would have been losing a family member and I know the reason. Amy was our person, she was the light at the end of the tunnel for so many of us. She taught so many of us that we weren't alone, that there are others who share our feelings of loss, guilt, and sadness. Amy showed us that we don't have to be silent, that we can talk about mental illness and suicide. In fact, she showed us that we have to talk about it! It doesn't matter how she passed away, it matters that we, as survivors, continue her legacy. It matters that we keep on moving forward and telling our stories because without those, people won't know. People won't realize that this is a problem! Suicide and mental illness are such taboo subjects and Amy brought light to a subject that needs to be talked about.

She was my inspiration for writing my first ever blog post and she continues to inspire me to overcome my tragedy and share my story. It is hard, it always will be no doubt be that. The most important thing that can be learned from her tragic death is this. We must continue! We have to continue reaching out to others to let them know they aren't alone. We must keep talking about suicide and mental illness – not just in the sanctity of our homes but out in public! In restaurants, parks, grocery stores! Amy's legacy is more important now than it ever was! It is time that we all take a stand and make people aware, make people see that it is an epidemic!

The reality of all of our situations is that we get sad, we feel like we can't go on, we have days where getting up is the hardest thing we will do that day but we do it! Somehow, someway we make the choice to get up and shower and tackle the day! No matter what we have to go on! We are vulnerable, afraid, and completely overwhelmed by the news that we have all received but for Amy, we must go on! The only way that her legacy and name will live on is through us, the survivors! We are the people that were so important to her and now it is time for us to show her how important she is to all of us! Rest in Peace Amy Bleuel, and fly easy my friend! You and your amazing work will live on through all of the lives that you touched!

I would like to thank Karen Toler for this blog post and her permission to share it with you. Karen has lost 2 family members to suicide and has a blog that is definitely worth reading. I will share more of Karen's blog with you over time.

To view her blog please go to : <https://karensnyder220.wordpress.com/> or I'm or google "Surviving Suicide.. My Journey blog"

In Memoriam



If you would like an 'in memoriam', please send an anniversary record to us at

For everyone whose anniversary of their loved one is during April to June : 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.

Loved one lost to suicide: **Bede John McMullan**

Date of Birth: 20 September 1990

Message: *I miss you every day. I know you found the peace that you couldn't find here in this world. Your love continues to be my strength until we are able to be together again. Love you forever Mum xoxo*

Your Name: *Cherrie Cran*

Date of Death: 10 April 2010

Loved one lost to suicide: **Tony Barlow**

Date of Birth: 2 Aug 1976

Message: *We miss you so much Tony. We wish you were still here, so many memories that are never forgotten. Your daughter is so beautiful, inside and out. She looks so much like you, a constant reminder, a truly special gift. We love you so much xxoo*

Your Name: *Eva, Téa, Bob and Alison (Tony's parents)*

Date of Death: 24 June 2013

QLD Helplines

Standby Brisbane 07 3250 1856

Standby Response Service 0438 150 180

(24 hour mobile crisis response to suicide bereavement.)

Sunshine and Cooloola Coasts 0407 766 961

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)