



S.O.S.  
SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE  
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT  
ASSOCIATION INC.

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*Caring, Support, Awareness, Education*  
**Telephone: 1300 767 022**

Issue No. 18/3

July - September 2018

# One Year On

- Peter Michael

It has been almost a year since I lost my mother to suicide. It has not been an easy year. In fact, it has been a rollercoaster full of grief, emotion, doubt and the unknown.

Like many who suicide, my Mum was mentally ill. While she never had a concrete diagnosis while alive, it was clear there was some combination of severe depression, anxiety and PTSD. Loving someone who is constantly sick in this way is no easy feat. She was very tumultuous and draining. Trying to help her was a lifelong journey; one with little appreciation and success. When I lost her, part of me felt like I had failed. I didn't help her. I didn't cure her. What had happened was partially on me. But the truth is so much more complicated than that.

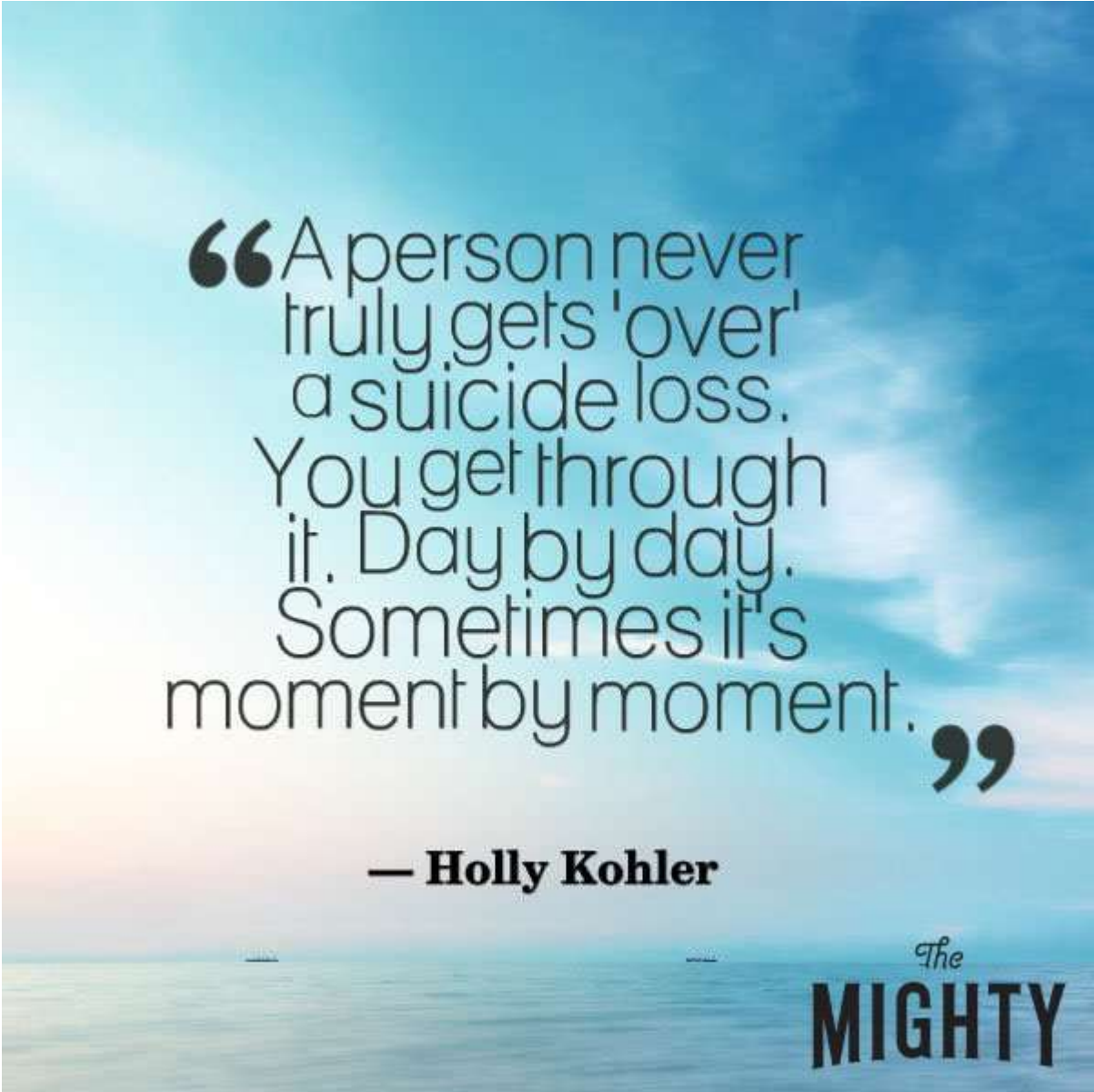
Suicide for her, was the end result of a long, hard and painful illness. It wasn't something that just happened. There was an intense and complex history that led to that moment. It wasn't one thing, it was a never ending list of things. Something that had gotten to a point of such darkness and hopelessness that this seemed to be the solution. The *only* solution. I wish it wasn't. I wish that the many visits to the hospital, many visits to psychologists and psychiatrists, the many medications and other therapies had worked for her. It is excruciatingly hard to admit, but she was dealing with something unfathomable and unbearable. I want her back, but I want a version of her that's happy. I don't want the dark, unhappy and desperate version of her that she became.



Despite suicide still being quite taboo, it is not uncommon. For those of us unfortunate enough to have lost someone to suicide, we know the pain never goes away. We never stop missing them. We wish that no other person had to go through this painful and unimaginable experience.

I hope my Mum has found a peace now that she never had in life. Regardless, I still miss her every day. I still want to hug her and tell her about my life. I want to hear her laugh and do the things we used to do together. Having lost both my parents by the age of twenty-four is very difficult. Feeling alone in the world is very difficult. Despite being an adult with an independent life, there is still a part of me that is the scared little boy that needs his Mum.

My Mum made a choice. A choice that most of us will never be able to understand. But still, I respect that she, as a person, had that choice to make. While this is now forever part of who I am, I can't let it hinder me, or the man I will become. I want to laugh, and learn, and grow. I want to live. I think despite the fact my Mum chose to die, she wanted me to live my life to the fullest. I can't help her now in death, but I can honour that wish. I can live. And I will.



“A person never truly gets 'over' a suicide loss. You get through it. Day by day. Sometimes it's moment by moment.”

— **Holly Kohler**

*The*  
**MIGHTY**

# Presidents Report

- Cherrie Cran

Hi everyone and welcome to the third newsletter for 2018.

If any of you would like to share your own story of life after your loss, please write to us at [secretary@sosbsa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sosbsa.org.au). We would love to hear from you, and share your story, so please make sure you include your permission to publish your story if that's what you want.

## **This newsletter**

These represent a collection of articles that we hope you will find something to help you as you deal with the ongoing impact of your loss.

## **Newsletters**

If anyone has anything they would like us to publish in this newsletter please send them through to [secretary@sosbsa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sosbsa.org.au) as we are always looking for newsletter content.

## **Membership**

If you aren't yet a financial member I'd like to encourage you to join us. Our association is run completely by volunteers and we don't receive any on-going funding. We rely completely on our membership fees and donations to operate and provide support to those who need us. To vote or stand office you must be a financial member.

## **Fundraising**

We are always looking for ways to raise funds, so if anyone has any ideas for fundraising please let us know. If you wish to make a donation or become a member, you can do so on our website at [www.sosbsa.org.au](http://www.sosbsa.org.au) under 'about us'. All donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.

## **Memorial Night**

This year is our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we will be holding an evening memorial. We normally do this as a Candlelight Memorial. However, new rules for groups meeting in New Farm Park mean we can't light candles. So, this year it will be a little bit different.

If you would like to submit a song, poem or prose to be shared on the night please send it to [secretary@sosbsa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sosbsa.org.au).

Details are outlined on page 9. We look forward to seeing you all there.

Take care and be kind to yourself

*Cherrie xoxo*



**Brisbane Support Group**  
(473 Annerley Road Annerley)

Friday fortnightly at 7:30pm

July – 13, 27

August – 10, 24

September – 7, 21

Contact: Cherrie 0423 567 055



**Management Committee**



President: Cherrie Cran  
Vice President: Donna Cumming  
Treasurer: Darrin Larney  
Secretary: Peter Wakeling  
Members: Chris Scott

## *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

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.

### **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](http://www.sosbsa.org.au) (About us tab/Membership)

or contact [secretary@sosbsa.org.au](mailto: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](mailto:secretary@sosbsa.org.au)  
or 1300 767 022 for more information.

### **Newsletter Contributions**

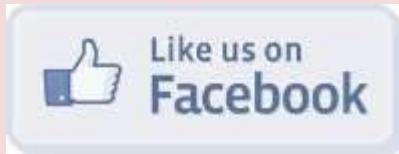
We are always looking for articles to run in our newsletter. If you would like to share something or found something you think might benefit others please email me at [secretary@sosbsa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sosbsa.org.au).

## SOSBSA Facebook

We now have more than **20,300** people who follow us on facebook.

Join in our online support group.

Search **SOSBSA**



## Other Suicide Support Groups

*If our support groups don't meet your needs – please check our website for a list of other support groups across Australia*

Go to [www.sosbsa.org.au](http://www.sosbsa.org.au)

*Hover over 'Support Groups' in the top bar  
Choose the appropriate sub-section.*

*Please note – this information is only as good as the information we are provided – if you see errors please let us know at [secretary@sosbsa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sosbsa.org.au)*

## Mourning Dove Pins

You can now purchase from us online with payments through paypal  
[www.sosbsa.org.au](http://www.sosbsa.org.au) ('Items for Sale' tab)

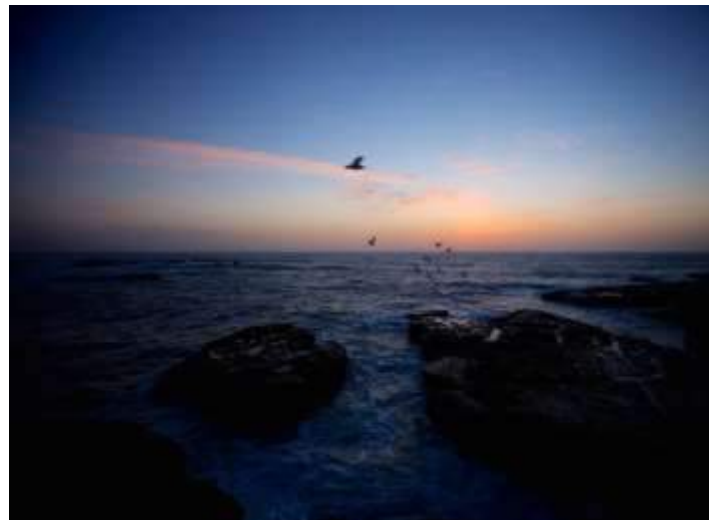
### Mourning Dove Pin

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

\$8.00 each (+\$3 postage)



or email us at [secretary@sosbsa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sosbsa.org.au)



## Do Not Stand At My Grave and Weep

Do not stand at my grave and weep  
I am not there.  
I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints on snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry;  
I am not there. I did not die.

By Mary Elizabeth Frye

# Understanding Survivors of Suicide Loss

- Deborah Serani Psy.D (psychologytoday.com)

Grief is a universal experience all human beings encounter. Though death inevitably touches our lives, research shows that many people grieve in varying and different ways. From the textures of emotions, to length of time in mourning, to even the kinds of rituals and remembrances that help heal the irreplaceable loss. Grieving the death of a loved one is never, ever easy.

Suicide, however, has been described as a *death like no other* ... and it truly is. Death by suicide stuns with soul-crushing surprise, leaving family and friends not only grieving the unexpected death, but confused and lost by this haunting loss.

## Who is a Survivor of Suicide Loss?

Despite science supporting a neurobiological basis for mental illness, suicide is still shrouded by stigma. Much of the general public believes that death by suicide is shameful and sinful. Others consider it a “choice that was made” and blame family members for its outcome. And then there are people who are unsure how to reach out and support those who have lost a loved one to suicide, and simply avoid the situation out of ignorance. Whatever the reason, it is important to note that the underlying structure of grief for survivors of suicide loss is intricately complicated.

When someone dies by suicide, research shows that at least 6 people are intimately traumatized by the death. Those who are directly affected include immediate family members, relatives, neighbours, friends, fellow students and/or co-workers. And because 90% of people who die by suicide have a psychological disorder, mental health clinicians are also included as a survivor of suicide loss.

From the nearly 800,000 suicides reported from 1986 through 2010 and using the 6 survivors per suicide estimate, it is believed that the number of survivors of suicide loss in the U.S. reaches 5 million people.

## Understanding Suicide

Based on the accounts of those who have attempted suicide and lived to tell about it, we know that *the primary goal of a suicide is not to end life, but to end pain*. People in the grips of a suicidal depression are battling an emotional agony where living becomes objectionable. Most people who die by suicide have a significant depression narrowing their problem solving skills. Corrosive thinking reduces optimism, the hope of possibility and increases feelings of helplessness. The depressive illness itself makes it virtually impossible to hold onto any semblance of pain

going away. While some may argue that a person who dies by suicide has done so by their own choice, I argue that serious mental illness, in fact, limits choice. Studies of those who have survived their suicide attempt and healed from their depression report being astonished that they ever considered suicide.



## Why Grieving is Different

Research has long known that suicide survivors move through very distinctive bereavement issues. Family and friends are prone to feeling significant bewilderment about the suicide. *Why did this happen? How did I not see this coming?* Overwhelming guilt about *what they should have done more of or less of*—become daily, haunting thoughts. Survivors of suicide loss often feel self-blame as if somehow they were responsible for their loved one's suicide. Many also experience anger and rage against their loved one for abandoning or rejecting them—or disappointment that somehow they were not powerful enough, loved enough or special enough to prevent the suicide.

These mistaken assumptions plague survivors of suicide loss for a very long time. Many struggle for years trying to make sense of their loved one's death—and even longer making peace—if at all—with the unanswerable questions that linger.

Society still attaches a stigma to suicide. And as such, survivors of suicide loss may encounter blame, judgment or social exclusion - while mourners of loved ones who have died from terminal illness, accident, old age or other kinds of deaths usually receive sympathy and compassion. It's strange how we would never blame a family member for a loved one's cancer or Alzheimer's, but society continues to cast a shadow on a loved one's suicide.

What also makes grieving different is that when we lose a loved one to illness, old age or an accident, we retain happy memories. We can think back on our loved one and replay fond memories, share stories with joyful nostalgia. This is not so for the suicide survivor. They question the memories, *"Where they really good?" "Maybe he wasn't really happy in this picture?" "Why didn't I see her emotional pain when we were on vacation?"* Sometimes it becomes agonizing to connect to a memory or to share stories from the past—so survivors often divorce themselves from their loved one's legacy.

Survivors of suicide loss not only experience these aspects of complicated grief, they are also prone to developing symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder—a direct result from their loved one's suicide. The unspeakable sadness about the suicide becomes a circle of never ending bewilderment, pain, flashbacks and a need to numb the anguish.

## Ways to Help Yourself if You're a Survivor of Suicide Loss

1. **Ground yourself:** It may be very painful, but you must learn to hold tightly to the truth that you are not responsible for your loved one's suicide in any way, shape, or form.
2. **Don't put a limit of your grief.** Grieve in your own way, on your own time frame. It will take time to find a place for your sadness and loss. It may take even more time for you to feel hope again and envision possibilities.
3. **Plan ahead.** When you feel ready, assist your family in finding ways to mark your loved one's birthday, family holidays or other milestones. Understand that new moments, experiences or events will be met with sadness, even with emotional setbacks. Preparing for how you will move through these calendar dates will help minimize traumatic reactions.
4. **Make connections.** Consider joining a support group specifically designed for survivors of suicide loss. The environment can provide a mutually supportive, reassuring healing environment unlike anywhere else.
5. **Give yourself permission.** To cry. To laugh. To seek professional help if you need it. Remember that you are moving through the most difficult of losses—and you can take control of the path to healing.

# Grief and Loss: Self Care

## - UC San Diego

Learn how to care for yourself after a loss.

The following suggestions were written to help you take care of yourself following a death, but apply to any kind of loss you might be experiencing.

- **Listen to your body:** If you need to cry, then cry. If you need to sleep, then do so. If you need to talk to someone, seek out someone who will listen. If you need to reminisce, then take the time. It is important for the grieving process that you go with the flow.
- **Lower expectations for yourself:** You can't expect yourself to run at full capacity for some time. Give yourself a break and don't expect yourself to perform as well as you did prior to your loss. Educate others that it will take some time before your performance is back to normal.
- **Let others know what you need from them:** Don't expect others to know what you need. Communicate to family and friends how they can support you.
- **If you need counselling, do get it:** Get all the support you need. There are many bereavement support groups as well as counsellors or spiritual advisors who specialize in bereavement counselling. Don't hesitate to contact a medical and or mental health specialist if you have feelings of hopelessness or suicidal thoughts.
- **Take the time to do the things you need to do for yourself:** When you feel up to it, engage in activities to which you feel drawn. It could be visiting a place you haven't been to in a while, walks in nature, reading, etc.
- **Pamper yourself:** Treat yourself well. Without breaking your budget, do things for yourself that are helpful like walks, being with people who are nurturing to you, and inexpensive activities.
- **Keep a journal:** Writing down your thoughts and feelings can help you to validate and work through your grief.
- **Get physical exercise:** If you exercised prior to your loss, try to maintain the same routine. If you did not exercise prior to your loss visit your doctor before embarking on a physical exercise routine. Physical exercise can improve the way you feel.
- **Obtain a proper diet and sleep:** Maintaining a healthy diet and getting proper sleep is essential for functioning as well as you can. If you are having difficulty with either, visit your doctor.
- **Be aware of others' reactions:** Many people do not know how to react appropriately to your grief. Some are more comfortable than others in responding to your situation. Be aware that people have different ideas not only about death, but also about how bereaved individuals should react. Be true to yourself and let others know if they say something inappropriate.





# 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial

Please join us in remembering our loved ones lost to suicide



## New Farm Park, Rotunda

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at 7pm**

Contact [secretary@sosbsa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sosbsa.org.au) or message Facebook for details

**Note:** *If you are attending and wish to include Songs / Poems and Pictures please make sure we have received them before Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October*

# In Memoriam



If you would like an 'in memoriam', please send an anniversary record to us at [secretary@sosbsa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sosbsa.org.au).

**For everyone whose anniversary of their loved one is during July to September:** 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: **Beverley Anne Wakeling**

Date of Birth: 26<sup>th</sup> February, 1951

Message: *I wish you were still here with me. But I hope that at least now you are free from the suffering you had in this world. Love, Peter.*

Your Name: *Peter Michael*

Date of Death: 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2017



## 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)**