

January to March 2025

Suicide and Cultural Issues

Kam Thandi

My name is Kam Thandi and I'm a 39-year-old British Asian woman, born and currently living in the UK. My late husband hanged himself on 21st August 2010 leaving behind my two boys Joshua and Ryan who are now aged 16 and 9. It's a familiar story for all those reading this, but what you will also see in my story is how the cultural pressures drove me to a point of total isolation, but with a handful of genuine people in my life who walked with me every step of the way, I'm now focusing purely on the future and trying to show my boys a different way to live.

I got married to my husband in 1994, it was an arranged marriage especially as it was the trend in that time. However, my instincts at the time were screaming to me that something with my late husband and his family wasn't right. I wasn't able to put that in any words at the time or fight against the culture and my family, so I agreed to get married, thinking it was the best thing for everyone.

Once stepping foot in that family I realised that all they were looking for was someone to run around after them as a slave. I used to live with my father-in-law, brother in law, and my husband at the time. I was working full time in the financial industry as well as spending my time outside of work, cooking, cleaning and practically doing everything humanely possible to look after three men that didn't lift a finger. There was no respect in that family for



me as a woman or a human being and it was constant verbal and emotional abuse when I overlooked something or failed to do something such as cook the dinner by a certain time. Anyway, I let this carry on for 15 years or so and during that point the emotional and verbal abuse also turned into physical violence by my late husband. He would go through periods of being completely fine and happy and then completely turn into a monster and threaten to kill me or my family if I didn't do as he said. About a year before his suicide, he had completely alienated me from my friends

and family - even though I didn't have much of a life outside of work and home anyway. Anything I said to his family about his behaviour was disregarded and when I asked him to see a Dr, he would say there was nothing wrong with him. In fact, they all said it was me and that it was in my head. He was arrested twice for being violent towards me, when I found myself calling the police because I had nowhere to go or not even a soul to turn to. But despite his promises to change, he always reverted back.

Initially he tried to commit suicide in our garage at home around April 2010. He was removed from our garage by a van full of policemen and taser guns. He hadn't succeeded, but his cousin and his wife who witnessed the entire episode still failed to support me in getting the police to section my husband because of his mental state. In fact, to this day that couple never told the truth to his family as to what had occurred.

I left my husband in May to go and live with my parents because of how he was. Again, he would find a way to cause some trouble over the phone and threaten to end his life. I was living 100 miles away from him and would frantically be on the end of the phone to the police to look out for his safety. He finally came to see the boys in August but stayed in a hotel and refused to stay at my parents. On the night of 20th August 2010, he argued with me as to why I had let the boys go and stay at my sister's house, because he didn't like her. After that argument he switched off his phone and I couldn't get through or leave a message. I didn't go and see him because I thought he is going to do what he usually does, taking it out on me and then he will be ok once he's calmed down. That night I didn't sleep, and each time I rang him, it still went to voicemail.

The following morning, I contacted the hotel as I drove towards that way. I asked them to check up on him and call me back, but they never

called me.....then as I pulled into the car park, I saw the ambulance and police. That's when I knew he had done something.....I knew before they even told me. I always knew he had it in him, but no one believed me. Even as I called my mum from the hotel, she didn't believe me.....

When I look back at it that was when everything changed. He did something that was so selfish and so selfless in the same breath. I felt the relief that there would be no more violence for me and the grief at the same time. I was in total shock, couldn't really cry and didn't tell the boys what really happened.

When my in-laws were told, the first thing I got was abuse because in their eyes I was responsible for this and I spent many years afterwards thinking maybe I was. I then had another battle on my hands, his family wanted him so that they could conduct the funeral, but I wasn't going to let them have their way, not this time. I was going to do the funeral and be in control and have some closure especially for my two beautiful boys. His family sent people to my house making death threats that they would kill me if I went ahead and sent people from the temple to intimidate me. I don't know how, but I found the strength to stick up for myself against everyone because even my own father was telling me to give up and give the body to his family. Anyway, I did the funeral and invited his family, but with their history of violence and threats it was under a police escort. To this day, I maintain in my heart I did the right thing because his family did not even find it in their hearts to give any love or well wishes to the boys.

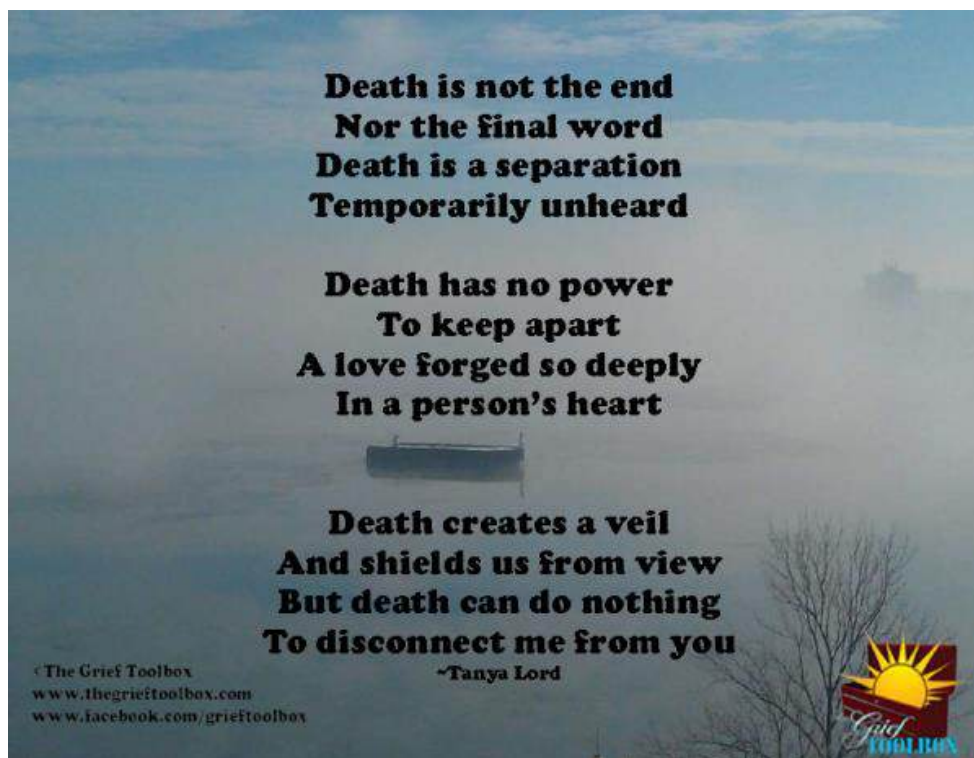
To be fair the grief didn't really hit me until afterwards because up until the funeral I was surviving on adrenaline. However, no one in my family understands the grief and in fact women in the Indian culture treat widows as though they have a contagious terminal disease. I noticed how I never saw my brother and his wife after

the day of the funeral, they lived literally ten minutes away and didn't let their children come and play with the boys. People stopped hugging me just in case it happened to them and certain family members made sure they just wanted to stay away. I stopped going to functions because Indian widowed females have to dress differently, actually not even dress up at all. So everything that I used to love, just stopped.....! I had a handful of cousins who would always make sure their home was welcoming for me, no matter what the other gossips said. That helped, in actual fact that helped a lot to be around people who didn't think traditionally.

Today, I can say that I have stepped outside my culture and live the way I want to. I never really attended any bereavement groups but found a lot of grounding through meditation and spirituality, something that has now given me a new lease of life. I can look back and be grateful that my career in the financial industry has given me something to fall back on & in the sense it

has created a door for me to look at going to live anywhere in the world. In actual fact I visited Sydney all on my own two years ago and that's created my next goal.....it's a place I would like to live and work and to show my children we can do things differently. To be honest, if I didn't have my career and my very small group of loyal and loving friends, I would have been swallowed up by the cultural traditions of getting remarried again or by being told to hide in the background, something, which I completely refuse to do.

I have learnt so much through this experience, it's been so tough but yet on some level it has made me tougher. I plan to climb Kilimanjaro in 2015 to raise money for mental health and over the course of this year would like to actively support other survivors. It's taken me three and a half years, but now I want to live without any feelings of guilt. I know you all agree, the guilt's the hardest part to free ourselves from.



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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



TOO LATE TO SAVE YOU

by Brian Foster

*For how long you kept secret your inner torment
 We can only but guess, we knew not the extent
 Of the darkness that must have entered your life
 The depression that brought you such mental strife
 We were too late to save you, we were blind to your plight
 From your shoulders your burden we could not make light
 When you left you took with you a part of us too
 That special place in our heart reserved only for you
 If billions of raindrops fell like tears every day
 They still could not wash all our heartbreak away
 Now it's our turn to battle our anger and grief
 To replace dark despair with hope and belief
 As each day's setting sun sinks low in the west
 We'll remember you always at your very best
 Though you may be gone your memory remains
 Sleep peacefully, beloved ... now at rest from your pain.*

Presidents Report

(Cherrie Cran)

Hi everyone and welcome to our first newsletter for 2025.



Membership

If you aren't yet a financial member We rely completely on our membership fees and donations to operate and provide support to those who need us. Please join or renew your membership at <http://sosbsa.org.au/membership>.

Newsletters

We are always looking for content and would love to hear from you. If any of you would like to share anything with our readers about your experiences or life after your loss, please write to us at secretary@sosbsa.org.au.

Facebook

Our Facebook page now has over 152,000 followers from around the globe – if you haven't yet found us – please join us there. Our page is a public page and will remain so, just be aware that if you post / share on our page that your friends will be able to see your posts.

Take care

Cherrie xoxo

!!2025 AGM!!

Tuesday 18th February 2025 at 7.30pm - ONLINE

An email notification will be sent closer to the date and you will need to RSVP to be included in the online meeting.

Note: you must be a paid financial member to vote at the AGM and to hold office

ALL WELCOME

If you are unable to attend and wish to vote – please send your proxy by **15th Feb.**

At the 2025 AGM we will cover the following:

- a) the receiving of the statement of income and expenditure, assets and liabilities and of mortgages, charges and securities affecting the property of the association for the last financial year;
- b) the receiving of the auditor's report on the financial affairs of the association for the last financial year;
- c) the presenting of the audited statement to the meeting for adoption;
- d) the election of members of the management committee;
- e) the appointment of an auditor.

Smiling Depression: When Things Aren't Quite What They Seem

(Amy Morin, LCSW)

Why Some People With Depression Look Happy on the Outside

Although “smiling depression” isn’t a clinical diagnosis, for many people, it's a real problem. Typically, smiling depression occurs when individuals who are experiencing depression mask their symptoms. They hide behind a smile to convince other people that they are happy.

Consequently, this type of depression often goes undetected because when most people imagine a depressed individual, they think of someone who looks really sad or cries a lot. And while it's true that sadness and unexplained bouts of crying are common characteristics of depression, not everyone looks sad when they’re depressed.

Signs and Symptoms

Whether you’re the one who works hard to pretend you’re happy when you’re not, or you have a loved one that you suspect might be hiding their pain, understanding smiling depression can help you take positive action. Here's an overview of the signs and symptoms of smiling depression.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that almost 265 million people around the world have depression. Individuals with smiling depression may experience many classic symptoms of depression, including profound sadness, low self-esteem, and changes in their everyday lives. Some of these symptoms may be observable to others, while other symptoms may be kept private.

It's not uncommon for people with smiling depression to work really hard to disguise their symptoms. For this reason, it's important to look for other less-obvious signs that something is wrong, like changes in their habits, fatigue, and a loss of interest in things they once enjoyed.

Here's a list of possible signs to look for:

- **Changes in appetite:** While some people overeat when they’re depressed, others lose their appetite. Weight changes are common with any type of depression.
- **Changes in sleep:** Some people struggle to get out of bed when they’re depressed because they want to sleep all the time. Others can’t sleep and they may report insomnia or exhibit major changes in their sleep habits, such as staying awake at night and sleeping during the day.
- **Feelings of hopelessness:** Guilt, worthlessness, and feelings of hopelessness are common.
- **Loss of interest in activities:** Individuals with smiling depression may not be interested in the activities they usually enjoy.

Despite these signs and symptoms, individuals with smiling depression are still likely to appear high-functioning. They may hold down a steady job and continue to maintain an active social life.

They may even appear cheerful and optimistic. For this reason, it's important to talk about mental health issues in an open way. Doing so may give them the courage to open up about their feelings.



Why People Smile When They're Depressed

It's not uncommon for people to keep their depression private. From wanting to protect their privacy to fearing judgment by others, there are many personal and professional reasons why people hide their symptoms of depression and may mask it with a smile. Here's a closer look at why people keep depression a secret.

Fear of Burdening Others

Depression and guilt tend to go hand-in-hand. Consequently, many individuals don't want to burden anyone else with their struggles. This fact may be especially true for people who are used to taking care of others rather than having others take care of them. They simply do not know how to ask for help, so they keep their struggles to themselves.

Embarrassment

Some people believe depression is a character flaw or a sign of weakness. They may even believe the lie that they should be able to "snap out of it." When they cannot, they think there's something wrong with them. Consequently, they may feel embarrassed about having depression because they think they should be able to handle it themselves.

Denial

Smiling depression may stem from a person's denial that they feel depressed. They may think that as long as they're smiling, they must not have depression. Many people cannot admit that there might be something wrong with them. It's easier for them to pretend like they're fine than it is to open up about how they truly feel.

Fear of Backlash

Sometimes people worry about the personal and professional ramifications of having depression. For example, a comedian or lawyer may be concerned that their employer will doubt their ability to do their job or, someone may worry that a partner will leave them if they reveal that they have depression. So, rather than risk being judged or punished for being depressed, they hide behind a smile.

Concern About Appearing Weak

People with smiling depression often fear that others will take advantage of them if they reveal they have depression. Not only do they worry that others will see them as weak and vulnerable, but they are concerned that others will use their depression as leverage against them. They would rather put on a tough exterior than admit that they need help.

Guilt

Because guilt tends to accompany depression, sometimes people don't feel as though they should be depressed. They might think they have a good life and shouldn't feel bad.

They also feel like they must be doing something wrong or that they're somehow to blame for being depressed. Consequently, they feel guilty and sometimes even ashamed of their depression so they keep it hidden behind a smile.

Unrealistic Views of Happiness

Social media portrays happiness in an unrealistic way. Many people scroll through social media and see pictures of happy people. Consequently, they grow to believe that they're the only ones struggling with mental health issues. They may feel more isolated than ever and it could cause them to hide their struggles.

Perfectionism

Perfectionists have often mastered the art of looking perfect. And, for many, that means disguising any pain or problems they are experiencing. As a result, admitting to depression would mean that their lives are less than perfect and they just cannot bring themselves to do that.

Risk of Suicide

Depression often causes thoughts of death and suicide. But sometimes, people with clinical depression lack the energy to create a plan and follow through on completing suicide. While anyone with depression is at risk of suicide, individuals with smiling depression may be at especially high risk because they are high-functioning.

Individuals with smiling depression often have enough energy to follow through on their suicidal thoughts. What's more, individuals with smiling depression often go untreated as well. And untreated depression may get worse over time and increase the likelihood of suicide.

Treatment for Smiling Depression

Someone with smiling depression might officially be diagnosed with depression with atypical features. For instance, looking happy isn't typical of someone who feels depressed.

But just like other types of depression, smiling depression is treatable. Treatment may include medication, talk therapy, and lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise.

If you think you may be depressed, talk to your doctor. Explain that you haven't been feeling yourself lately and describe some of the symptoms that you're experiencing.

Your physician can rule out physical health issues that may be contributing to your symptoms and can assist with referrals to other treatment providers, such as a psychotherapist or psychiatrist.

How to Help Someone With Smiling Depression

If you think someone you know has smiling depression, share your concerns. Normalize mental health issues and talk to them about how they can get help. Offer emotional support as well as practical support.

For example, you might offer a ride to a medical appointment, or depending on the nature of your relationship, you might even offer to attend an appointment with them. Direct them to community resources as well. Tell them about mental health services that may be available to them.

If a loved one refuses to get help, you might consider talking to a therapist yourself. Talking to someone can help you manage your own stress while also reinforcing strategies you can use to help someone you care about.

Summary

People with smiling depression often mask their sadness with a smile and an external facade, which are designed to hide their inner turmoil and suffering. If you or a loved one is experiencing symptoms of depression, but are hiding it from everyone else, you need to know that there is help and there is hope for the condition.

Take the first step and reach out for help. With the right treatment and support, the smile you have on the outside will soon match how you feel on the inside.



Brisbane Support Group (Lvl 1, 493 Ipswich Road Annerley)

Friday fortnightly at 7:30pm

January – 17, 31

February – 14, 28

March – 14, 28

RSVP through sosbsa.org.au/brisbane

Management Committee

President:	Cherrie Cran
Vice President:	Donna Lang
Treasurer:	Darrin Larney
Secretary:	Sue Dignan
Committee:	Ray O'Brien Julie Ferguson

Other SOSBSA Support Group Meetings

Support Groups Update

Please see the update on our Support Groups in the Presidents Report, and check the website at <https://sosbsa.org.au/support-groups>. The information on the website will always be up-to-date. Alternatively please email us or reach out on Facebook.

Townsville Support Group

Selectability House

59A Cambridge St, Vincent, Qld 4814

1st Monday of every month at **7:00pm**

Coffee Catch up: 10.00am 3rd Saturday of each month

Contact Ray : 0407 490 965

or Geoff & Lowell: 0438 604 744

Support Group dates:

January – 6

February 3

March 3

Coffee Catch up Dates:

January 18

February 15

March 15

Details: sosbsa.org.au/townsville

Online Support Group

This group is for those living in regional Queensland and who don't have access to a face-to-face group.

3rd Monday of every month at **6:30pm**

Please register through the website :

Online - sosbsa.org.au

Support Group dates:

January – 20

February 17

March 17

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In Memoriam



For everyone whose anniversary of their loved one is during January to March.

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.

*If you would like an 'in memoriam' included on this page,
please send an anniversary record to us at secretary@sosbsa.org.au.*

Loved one lost to suicide: **Neville Graham Dykes**

Date of Birth: 28th January 1950

Message: *You live on in my heart forever & will always be remembered with love. Donna*

Your Name: **Donna Lang**

Date of Death: 31st January 2011

Helplines

QLD Helplines

Standby Response Service **1300 727 247**

Sunshine and Cooloola Coasts 0407 766 961

National Helplines

Suicide Callback Line: 1300 659 467 (24 hour)

LifeLine: 13 11 14 (24 hour)

Mensline: 1300 789 978 (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)

