

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families

MARCH 2009

Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month at 7:45PM (ending at 9:30PM). We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall at Valley Forge and Henderson RDs, King of Prussia, PA. Phone on meeting evenings only is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Ann or Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule

Please Mark Your Calendar

Mar 5 General Sharing & Loss by Suicide

Apr 2 General Sharing

**Aug 7-9 National Conference , Portland OR
(see page 3 and 4)**

We encourage newsletter writings from our members. You may also submit articles written by others, please include the author of all articles submitted. **The cut-off date for newsletter entries is the 15th of the preceding month.**

ARTICLES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE NEWSLETTER EDITORS.

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends, or to receive our newsletter. Your tax deductible donations given in memory of your loved one enables us to defray the cost of chapter expenses, particularly the newsletter, meetings, and our outreach to the newly bereaved. **Please include any special tribute you wish printed in the newsletter along with your gift.**

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: RECORD KEEPER, FRANK GOMEZ
PLEASE SEND ALL OTHER CHAPTER MAIL
TO CHAPTER CO-LEADERS
ANN RAPOPORT or RHONDA GOMEZ**



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NEW FRIENDS

Lisa Bellopede - son *Johnny* (9)
Nina Ansel - daughter *Jenny* (26)
Bonnie Russo - son *Matthew* (24)
Juan & Casey Terrero - son *Jalen* (7 months)
Paul & Jackie Mimless - daughter *Stephanie* (23)
Theresa Wigand - daughter *Dawn* (39)
Abigail Figueroa - son *Jose C.* (21)
Mike & Beverly Smith - son *Ryan* (19)
Shirley & Herb Denker - daughter *Heidi* (50)

We welcome our newly bereaved friends. We are sorry for the cause that brings you. We have all been in the depths of despair, and know that it is difficult to share our pain and personal feelings. We hope you will attend three or four meetings before evaluating the benefit of our group to you. We offer confidentiality, unconditional love, compassion and understanding to all of you.

JANUARY Refreshments

Donna Deasey — daughter *Michelle's* birthday 1/21
Connie Nolan — son *Christopher's* birthday 2/9

FEBRUARY Refreshments

Nina Bernstein — son *Andrew Voluck's* anniversary 2/9
Juan & Casey Terrero — son *Jalen's* birthday 1/29

Anyone wishing to donate refreshments (cheese & crackers, fruit, cakes, cookies, etc.) in memory of loved ones, please call **Ann Rapoport or Rhonda Gomez (484)919-0820**, or you may sign **the refreshment chart** located on the refreshment table. Beverages are provided by the chapter.

LOVE GIFTS

Charlotte & William Bodulich, in loving memory of our son, *William W. Bodulich*
Benjamin Cohen, in loving memory of my daughter, *Donna Lynne Cohen*
Jack & Freda Gross, in memory of our precious daughter *Linda Joy Gross*
Nancy & Gerald Hall, in memory of our beloved son, *Douglas Hall*
Audrey Morasco, in loving memory of my son, *Christopher Morasco*
Elise Rice, in loving memory of my son, *Raymond* and my husband, *James*
Carol Sannella, in loving memory of my son, *David* and my husband, *Robert*
Arthur & Nancy Singer, in loving memory of our son, *Jeffrey Vincent Singer*

2009 National Conference in Portland

Candy Lightner, the dynamic founder of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) has agreed to be a keynote speaker at the 2009 TCF National Conference in Portland, Oregon August 7-9.

Candy's 13 year-old daughter Cari was struck by a vehicle from behind and killed May 3, 1980, as she walked down a quiet street. The hit-and-run driver had four previous drunk driving convictions and had served virtually no time in jail. Candy went from being a divorced mother selling real estate to a "crusader with a cause," testifying before legislatures. Obsessed with her crusade, Candy, with friends, started MADD, which has grown to more than 600 chapters and three million members throughout the United States and at least four other countries. Among the many accomplishments of MADD was the successful lobbying to raise the legal drinking age to 21 in 1984, which is estimated to save approximately 800 lives annually. TCF is pleased to have Candy Lightner joining with our featured keynote speakers in Portland, Oregon.

Besides Candy Lightner, the conference will feature keynoters Reg and Maggie Green and Michele Longo Eder. Reg and Maggie are the parents of Nicholas Green, the seven-year-old American boy who was shot and killed by highway bandits in Italy in 1994. Their decision to donate his organs to seven Italians became a major news story around the world, spawning thousands of organ donations in Italy (a country where organ donations were virtually unheard of before Nicholas' death) and around the world. This remarkable story was made into a CBS movie of the week called *The Nicholas Effect*.

Michele Longo Eder is author of *Salt in our Blood—The memoir of a Fisherman's Wife*. Michele, an accomplished lawyer, started journaling what daily life was like for her while her husband and sons were commercial fishing off the coasts of Oregon, Washington, and northern California. Never did she dream that her journaling would include the account of a personal tragedy that struck just before Christmas 2001.

The fourth conference speaker has not yet been announced.

Reservations for those attending TCF's national conference are being accepted by the Doubletree Hotel Portland where the conference will be held. TCF has negotiated for a large block of rooms at a special price for those attending the conference. Rate is \$129 per room per night in several different configurations. As always, we suggest that you make reservations early to avoid disappointment. To reserve online, visit [reservations](#). You may also call the Doubletree Hotel at 1-503-281-6111 and receive the negotiated price, but you must identify yourself as attending The Compassionate Friends National Conference. The rooms are available at this special rate for those staying the nights of August 5-August 9. Last day for reservations, if rooms are still available, will be July 4.

TCF National Conference attendee, Portland Oregon

A national conference of The Compassionate Friends is unlike any other conference you may ever attend. It is a place where you can go and know that you truly are not alone as you travel your grief journey. Every person comes for the same reason—a child has died. It is a place where “friendship, understanding, and hope” are more than just words.

For over three decades The Compassionate Friends has held national conferences. They’ve been held all over the country. Today it’s normal to have 1100-1400 bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents attend. Of that number, it usually is the first conference for nearly 40 percent. Those new to TCF conferences wear a special butterfly sticker so that others may notice and give them special hugs. Everyone feels welcome. We often say that these are friends you simply have not yet met.

At each conference, there are many activities, but you decide what is right for you. There are more than 100 workshops (but don’t think these are work—they’re really a time for learning and sharing). Many areas of grief are covered by the workshops. There are workshops for bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. And there will be many workshops for those who have no surviving children. You’ll find a hospitality room, a reflection room, the Butterfly Boutique, and a complete bookstore. There are very interesting and well-known speakers who address the Opening Session, the Friday afternoon banquet, the Saturday evening banquet, and the Sunday closing. You’ll marvel at the quality of entertainment geared for those attending. There’s also a special candle lighting ceremony to conclude the Saturday evening banquet. If you like a more intimate time with others, join in the evening sharing sessions of your choice.

But don’t miss the Walk to Remember Sunday at 8 a.m. prior to the closing. As many as 1400-1500 carry the names of more than 10,000 children from across the country who will always be remembered.

Watch the national e-newsletter (www.compassionatefriends.org), or *We Need Not Walk Alone* for updated information on the next TCF National Conference.

for a while the wind only "whispered"
and the rain never appeared in the sky
and the sun rose and never set
and the waves went gently upon the beach
then one day I lost my way
and the wind blew hard
and it rained for days
and the sun never rose, never set
and the waves cried on the beach.

Bobby Smith, Valley Forge, PA
Written 5/14/90, took his own life 5/15/90

REMINDERS OF JOY

I'm learning to live without her,
but with many fears and tears.
She is but a memory away,
in our minds of many mirrors.
There's not a day goes by,
that something isn't a reminder.
Of the joyful thoughts of yesterday,
that seemed always to surround her.

Carolynn Sula, TCF, Joliet, IL

OUR CHILDREN & SIBLINGS LOVED, SADLY MISSED AND REMEMBERED

Each month some of us must face those special, but difficult days of birthdays and anniversaries. This Month we ask your thoughts and prayers for the parents/siblings/relatives of the following children: **Additions or corrections to this list should be given to the editors, Marie & Ken Hofmockel.**

We will no longer list the birth and death years of deceased persons in our newsletter. We have concerns this information could be misused, and result in an adversity for the families.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Kathy Castner, son *Matthew* 3/29
Cynthia Chester, son *Christian* 3/29
Denise & Dennis Cramsy, daughter *Elli Cramsy* 3/2
Catherine Dardozzi, son *James Dardozzi* 3/7
Louis Dardozzi, son *James* 3/7-
Mary Dion, daughter *Theresa* 3/24
Janie & Joseph Dougherty, son *Brendan K. Dougherty* 3/29
Richard & Martha Fenoglio, daughter *Judith Fenoglio Daw* 3/30
Nick & Fran Fioravanti, son *Nicholas J. Fioravanti, Jr.* 3/24
Sarah Fishel, daughter *Allyson* 3/26
Lisa Foos, son *Curtis* 3/14
Kenneth Frantz, son *Kenneth Frantz, Jr.* 3/20
Mary B. Frederick, son *Michael W. Frederick* 3/31
friend *Michael Puglisi* 3/5
Marco & Patricia Giubilato, daughter *Robin Giubilato Zarelli* 3/18
Elizabeth Haney, son *Christian* 3/6
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Kathleen Heiss McCaughan* 3/25
Margaret C Jones, son *Christopher* 3/17
Gloria and Jerry Koval, son *Steven* 3/11
Joe & Barbara Ladd, son *William "Bill" F. Ladd* 3/18
William & Margaret Lang, son *Michael J. Leib* 3/15
Donna Leathers, son *Brandon M* 3/16
Fred & Kay Lokoff, daughter *Terry Lokoff* 3/17
Vivian & Kenneth Maahs, daughter *Kirsten* 3/22
Lorelei Malandra, brother *Jeff Singer* 3/9
Tom & Charmaine Malik, son *Danny Malik* 3/3
Jeff and Kathy McCarron, daughter *Sarah* 3/30
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan* 3/11
Paul & Jackie Mimless, daughter *Stephanie* 3/20
Beth Mohr, brother *Matthew Bock* 3/18
John Mscisz, grandson *Liam John Willamson* 3/8
Danielle Murtha, brother *Jake* 3/27
Terri O'Brien, father *John Hoban* 3/25
Angela Perachio, daughter *Melanie McAllister* 3/1
Raymond & Marguerite Posluszny, son *Alex Posluszny* 3/22
Lyla T. Poulson, daughter *Kimberly Poulson* 3/4

MARCH BIRTHDAYS continued

Rusty & Anthony Puglisi, son *Michael Puglisi* 3/5
Grace & Michael Rello, daughter *Michelle Clare Rello* 3/8
Thelma & Ike Rosen, nephew *Charles Carswell* 3/26
Bonnie Russo, son *Matthew* 3/29
Susan & John Rutland, son *Justin Rutland* 3/28
Carol Sannella, son *David Sannella* 3/18
Michelle & Bill Schmidt, brother *James Dardozi* 3/7
Janet & Jonathan Schultz, friend *Christopher Harvey* 3/5
Abigail Schwartz, brother *Jake* 3/27
Arthur & Nancy Singer, son *Jeffrey Vincent Singer* 3/9
Peter & Suzanne Smith, daughter *Tracy Smith* 3/30
Jill Smith, son *Andrew Jensen* 3/21
Mary Ellen Swider, daughter *Kelly Swider* 3/25
Greg Swider, sister *Kelly Swider* 3/25
Allan Thomas, son *Vernon Odins* 3/5
Jerry & Ann Timinski, daughter *Janelle Ann Timinski* 3/9
Peggy Tweed, son *Matthew Bock* 3/18
Maria Villano, son *Rocco Villano* 3/18
Dorothy Washington, daughter *Michele Washington* 3/2
Christine & Raymond Welker, nephew *Mark Ayer* 3/20
Peggy West, daughter *Kelly Ann West* 3/8
Theresa Wigand, daughter *Dawn* 3/7

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

Jovanna & Joseph Bevilacqua, son *Donato "Danny" Bevilacqua* 3/27
Lois Bishop, daughter *Kaitlyn Bishop* 3/15
Marvin & Wilma Bordetsky, daughter *Noreen Bordetsky Cook* 3/24
Anita Burns, daughter *Suzanne Burns* 3/19
Rose Marie Cote, son *Mark J. Cote* 3/26
Jamie (Germaine) Cote Weaver, brother *Mark Cote* 3/26
Robert Dilbeck, son *Daniel Dilbeck* 3/25
Ginny Ebert, son *Jason* 3/25
Tom & Irene Edmunds, son *Kyle Derek Edmunds* 3/17
Rita & Thomas Gibbons, son *Paul Gibbons* 3/20
Ronald J. & Margaret Halas, daughter *Desiree A. Halas* 3/11
Beatrice Hallermeier, son *Robert George Hallermaeir, Jr.* 3/1
Othell & William Heaney, son *Kevin* 3/10/87
Michael & Betsy Jarrett, son *Michael Jarrett* 3/10
Suellen & Stephen King, daughter *Danelle Rossi* 3/12
Marcia Kling, son *CJ* 3/13

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES continued

Elaine & James Madden, son *Andrew Madden* 3/6
Lorelei Malandra, brother *Jeff Singer* 3/9
Gerrie Matchus, son *Michael* 3/7
Anne McClenachan, brother *Andy McClenachan* 3/30
Sue McClenachan, son *Andy McClenachan* 3/30
Barbara Meisenhelder, daughter *Renee Meisenhelder* 3/2
Bob & Janet Milnazik, daughter *Kim* 3/3
Beth Mohr, brother *Matthew Bock* 3/16
George W. Nase, son *Brian D. Nase* 3/19
George & Estelle Null, daughter *Kathleen "Kathy" Null* 3/7
Betty & Richard Owens, Sr., son *Richard H. Owens, Jr.* 3/26
Michele Paul, sister *Desiree Halas* 3/11
Thomas & Mary Jane Poore, son *Bradley Poore* 3/19
Mike & Cheryl Raniszewski, daughter *Amanda Nicole Raniszewski* 3/5
Ann Rapoport, son *Brian Rapoport* 3/9
Grace & Michael Rello, daughter *Michelle Clare Rello* 3/9
John & Marie Sanders, son *Matthew Sanders* 3/28
Judy & Lin Schleicher, daughter *Quinna Marie Schleicher* 3/10
Susan Schofield, daughter *Kim* 3/24
Arthur & Nancy Singer, son *Jeffrey Vincent Singer* 3/9
Nancy Sullivan, daughter *Kathleen Sullivan-Purcell* 3/18
James & Betty Treichler, son *James Treichler Jr.* 3/13
Peggy Tweed, son *Matthew Bock* 3/16
Emma Valenteen, daughter *Marianne Valenteen* 3/19
Maria Villano, son *Rocco Villano* 3/9
Linda Weaver, son *Damon Weaver* 3/18
Christine & Raymond Welker, son *Zachary Graham* 3/18
Laurie Wyche, son *Jameson Wyche* 3/1

ON "PICKING UP THE PIECES"

Had someone say to me not too long ago that she was glad to see that I was "picking up the pieces and going on." Well, I am picking up the pieces all right -- but what she doesn't know is that they're almost a whole set of new pieces! I haven't been able to go on as though nothing about me has changed since my child died. I'm a different me, and I am still learning about how the new me reacts to old situations.

I am finding that this new set of pieces doesn't exactly fit together all nice and neat like a jigsaw puzzle. Some of the old pieces are still hanging in there, but they don't quite mesh with some of the new pieces. I am in the process of grinding off the rough edges now, hoping eventually for a better fit, one that I can live with more comfortably. Time, patience and hard work are helping me accomplish this.

How are the rough edges on your new pieces coming along? *Mary Cleckly, TCF, Decatur, GA*

SHARED THOUGHTS ON SPRING

Our Douglas had died in February, so we moved into springtime almost immediately. This caused resentment, to see renewal of the earth's life. Yet, the life that we desperately wanted renewed, did not occur, it just didn't seem fair. Man, who had so much dominance in the world, had no control as to what would return to life in the springtime.

As much as all these changes saddened me, I felt drawn to daily look for all the new growth. It was as though I was greeting each plant by saying, "you survived, you made it". It was as though they offered hope that things could get better. At this point the most I could expect was it **could** get better, I wasn't ready to say it **would**. I began to realize I was using the wrong analogy by liking the death to nature's return of spring. Spring had returned to say, "I'm here in all my beauty for you to enjoy me as much as you can, or as little as you may, and that things in the world can bring beauty again even though they have had a traumatic experience", and with nurturing can even blossom again. If dirt and repulsive smelling fertilizer can bring new growth, perhaps the poignant grief could heal pain and someday cause new growth.

Fresh grief certainly is not ready for any new growth, when you are in the pit so deep, and not even sure you are going to survive the situation. Many times when you feel it is as bad as it can get, the next day will prove you wrong. It takes all the courage you can muster just to face each new day.

As we got further into springtime, I found the right analogy for me is when the caterpillar left his cocoon to become a beautiful butterfly. This had to be the perfect analogy. I feel our children & siblings do not die, they have gone to a higher stage of development which is more than earth can offer. This is paramount in easing my pain about death.

The pain of knowing we can not share our daily living with our child or sibling can still be very intense. It helps to come to the realization that they can be part of our daily lives, if we direct our love and thoughts to them. If they are in a higher stage of development, then they certainly are capable of receiving love. The open line of communication of expressing our love and feelings to them can bring much healing. Frequently the healing has to come through tears, don't chase them away, let them wash your heart and mind, so you can see the love and memories more clearly.

Those who have never lost a loved one can easily say "Don't cry, in time you will be better". They don't realize it takes time and tears to be better. We must remember they have only walked the rim of the pit as an onlooker. They have never been in the pit grappling for a way out.

We at The Compassionate Friends don't have any magic maps or recipes for getting to the other side of grief. **We do know where a few of the stepping stones are, and are always willing to extend a hand to help stable you, a shoulder to cry on (or a heart to cry with you), and a record to prove "together we can do it".**

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

**Good memories are the perennials
That bloom again after the hard
Winter of grief begins to yield to hope
Sascha**

ONE SWEET DAY

I can't wait till that ONE SWEET DAY,
When I see her again.
In the streets of gold and the heavens so, so bright,
I just can't wait till that ONE SWEET DAY.
When I was young, she would take me everywhere,
She would always be there.
Till one day she was there no more,
I just can't wait till that ONE SWEET DAY,
When I see her again.

by *Lynn M. Fischer*, age 10
for her sister: Lisa M. Fischer, age 23
Valley Forge, PA

When I was two years old, my sister Katie got cancer. She had it until she was eleven and past away. But the one thing I'll always remember her by, is a doll. She made it when she was six. It is a rag doll. I named it Maggie.

by *Frances Santoleri*, age 11
for her sister, Katie Santoleri, age 11
Valley Forge, PA

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DEALING WITH RAGE

One of the most important ways of dealing with rage is trying to **forgive** yourself and others. Note: **forgive** contains the word **give**.

You **give** yourself the opportunity to place behind you those past agonies that diminish your strength and vigor.

You **give** yourself new energies to move on and meet new challenges.

You **give** yourself permission to live in an unfair, disappointing world.

Forgiveness offers a very powerful way to pull yourself out of the negative spiral of bitterness and hard feelings.

From "Straight Talk for Teenagers"

by *Earl A. Grollman*

PEOPLE THINK

People think we're fine,
you know,
they say, "Oh, siblings
Heal so fast."

But they don't know
the empty feelings
or our longing
for the past.

People think we're fine,
you know,
"Look, how they've resumed
their lives,"
they say.

But, they don't know
of our troubled hearts
or the loneliness
from day to day.

People think we're fine,
you know,
"See how they're getting over it?"
they surmise.

But, they don't know that we've
learned to laugh and smile
only to complete
our broken heart's disguise.

Mary Mathews
TCF Broward County
Fort Lauderdale, FL

**You may forget with whom you
laughed, but you will never forget
with whom you wept.**

Arab proverb

A SEARCH FOR A CURE

There is an old Chinese tale about the woman whose only son died. In her grief she went to the holyman and said, "What prayers, what magical incantations do you have to bring my son back to life?" Instead of sending her away or reasoning with her, he said to her, "Fetch me a mustard seed from a home that has never known sorrow. We will use it to drive the sorrow out of your life." The woman set off at once in search of the magical mustard seed. She came first to a splendid mansion, knocked at the door, and said. "I am looking for a home that has never known sorrow. Is this such a place? It is very important to me." They told her, "you've certainly come to the wrong place" and began to describe all the tragic things that had recently befallen them. The woman said to herself, "Who is better able to help these poor unfortunate people than I, who have had misfortune of my own? She stayed to comfort them, then went on in her search for a home that had never known sorrow. But wherever she turned, in hovels and in palaces, she found one tale after another of sadness and misfortune. Ultimately, she became so involved in ministering to other people's grief that she forgot about her quest for the magical mustard seed, never realizing that it had in fact driven the sorrow out of her life.

Author Unknown

A MESSAGE TO MY DAUGHTER

Although I never combed your hair -
For 9 short months I felt you there.
Although I never heard your cries -
A kiss I gave hello - goodbyes.
Although a diaper I never did change -
My love for you knew no range.
Although I never pushed you on a swing -
A song to you I did sing.
Although your brothers you did not meet -
They knew you by your dancing feet.
There will not be a childhood voice -
In your destiny I had no choice.
There will not be any Barbie doll clothes -
Or pink, yellow, green fancy bows.
There will not be a young woman's face -
Just a tear on my heart
No one can erase.

Love and miss you, Mom
Cheryl TerBush

ON BETTER DAYS
I FILL MY LIFE WITH LAUGHTER,
ENJOY THE CHARM
OF OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN
AND THINK ABOUT
NEW FLOWERS FOR MY GARDEN.

ON BETTER DAYS
I START THE MORNING PROUDLY.
I DISREGARD
THE FORECAST OF BAD WEATHER
AND LOOK AHEAD
TO POSSIBLE ADVENTURES.

ON BETTER DAYS
I LOOK AT FADED PICTURES,
RECALL VACATIONS
IN THE RAINY SEASON,
REMEMBER KISSING
BABY-POWDERED FEET -

ON BETTER DAYS
I HARDLY CRY AT ALL

SASCHA

STRONGER THAN DEATH: SURVIVING A LOVED ONE'S SUICIDE

When a person loses a loved one to suicide, the survivor may be unable to take in information about how others have survived the self-inflicted death of someone close to them. Some persons are so emotionally overwhelmed for a while that they don't want information.

Complaints that they "can't think straight" are practically universal. This reaction occurs even when the one who committed suicide was a friend, co-worker, fellow student, or patient.

But the increasing availability of survivor groups and a growing body of literature about suicide and its aftermath are changing the secretiveness and shame that used to overwhelm survivors. When someone else expresses what we have felt (but thought "too terrible" to say), it diminishes our fear of being "crazy" or "wicked." Repeatedly hearing, "That's normal. We've all felt like that," reassures us. And hearing it from someone who is a bit further along in the healing process gives us hope.

Since hope is the very thing our loved one abandoned, it is all the more precious to us. Long-term survivors who are doing well express a certain pride in that fact. They have endured. They have held on their hope. They have been stronger than the desire to end their own suffering.

The sooner we are honest about the mode of death, the sooner we can begin to heal. For many years, the cultural taboo against suicide and the blame focused on survivors caused many of them to deny or rationalize the way their loved one died. Even when it was admitted, it might quickly be dismissed as inexplicable or as having nothing to do with current problems. Individuals who are reluctant to talk about it may be trying to keep their distance from others in a misguided effort to ward off future tragedy. (Of course, in reality, such persons are warding off love.)

It's often helpful for survivors to know that three common reactions are likely to plague them. Fortunately, medical and mental health professionals know how to look for and treat these reactions -depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and pain.

DEPRESSION. Feeling down is normal and everyone expects it at first. But when it goes on for a long time or hampers the survivor's ability to function, antidepressant medication may be called for.

POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER. This reaction encompasses a set of symptoms that involve reexperiencing the trauma, decreased responsiveness to others, and at least two other symptoms (being easily startled, sleeping poorly, feeling guilt about surviving, having trouble concentrating or remembering, avoiding activities that are a reminder of the suicide). In survivors of suicide, reexperiencing the trauma often occurs as recurrent recollections or dreams. The most common kind of "flashback" involves imagining the moment of death or feeling as though it's happening right then. But survivors can use a "**thought stopping**" technique to deal with flashbacks. The idea is to command oneself to "Stop!" when starting to relive the death. This command can be reinforced with a cue such as popping the wrist with a rubber band. For this technique to work, though, survivors must recognize that dwelling on the moment of death does the deceased no good and only punishes the survivors. They need to decide that they have been punished enough by these flashbacks and are ready to let go of them.

PAIN. All survivors suffer physically. The immune system doesn't function as well during the grieving process; Survivors with a preexisting medical condition (even something nonspecific like a tendency to have tension headaches) will no doubt get worse, or they may develop other physical illnesses. If they don't have one, they may suddenly develop one. These people hurt, and pain is both a metaphor and a pathway for expressing that hurt. The mind and the body are really one.

Finally, survivors need help in dealing with their feelings of guilt and anger. Both are ultimately dealt with the same way - by placing the responsibility for the suicide squarely where it belongs, namely, on the person who committed it.

It goes without saying that all of us have regrets when it comes to those we love. None of us is perfect. None of us does everything right.

But the other people we have loved have not committed suicide. So something else must have entered the picture at some point to lead the person who died to make such a drastic decision. Since that something was not under our control, we do not realistically bear responsibility for it.

For years, though, we may, indeed, feel that we do. We may tell ourselves we do. We may act as though we do. But in the final analysis, we must realize that each individual decides to live or die for personal and unique reasons that we may never understand.

Sue Chance, M.D., adapted from her book "Stronger Than Death: When Suicide Touches Your Life"