SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE
King/ Pierce/ Thurston County Support Groups

JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER

Website: www.auburnsos.com **e-mail:** auburnsurvivorsofsuicide@gmail.com

WHAT IS S.O.S.?

S.O.S. stands for Survivors of Suicide. S.O.S. groups provide support for anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide. Based on guidelines established by the American Association of Suicidology, the groups are self-help and peer-led. The goal is to help deal with the loss and trauma and grief associated with that loss. Auburn S.O.S. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization as defined by the IRS.

LOVE GIFTS:

If you would like to remember your Loved One who has completed suicide in the form of a Love Gift it will be mentioned in the newsletter if we have your permission. There are no dues or fees at S.O.S. Donations are always welcome to help defray such costs as printing, postage, and the purchase of books and other material for our lending libraries and other costs associated with the community awareness programs we are involved in.

Donations may be mailed to the address below or made at any meeting. Please make your checks payable to Auburn or Olympia SOS.

Auburn Survivors of Suicide
28824 21st Ave. S.
Federal Way, WA 98003

Contact information for each group and its facilitator is on page three.

To all of you who left something in the donation boxes, thank you! You may not get mentioned by name – but please know that you are appreciated!

Many thanks to Stephanie Ragland & Jerry Johnson in memory of their son Michael Ragland-Johnson

Without your help we could not do what we do!

Our expenses have certainly decreased since going digital but we still want and appreciate your donations so we can continue our work!

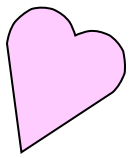
IF YOU NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE:

Please do not hesitate to pick up your phone and call another survivor from a S.O.S. group if you are having a hard time. We've all been there!

Felipa Galaviz	253-376-3198	Lost grandson	Kathy Melsness	253-446-6500	Lost daughter
Andee Nydegger	253-820-1911	Lost brother	Pam Driggers	253-921-7829	Lost husband
Heidi Smith	253-381-8717	Lost son	Kathy Sterling	206-244-8729	Lost grandson
José Martin	206-228-7413	Lost son	Kathy Crowley	253-471-9412	Lost son

Thinking of You Especially:

Jan	*1*	**Pamela Erhardt**	***Lost her husband Craig***
Jan	*1*	**Judy Robinson**	***Lost her boyfriend Philip***
Jan	*2*	**Oneal Nichols**	***Lost his son Jack***
Jan	*2*	**Laura Cordle**	***Lost her father Anthony***
Jan	*3*	**Jane Hower**	***Lost her son Wesley***
Jan	*4*	**Jim & Joann O'Neill**	***Lost their son Jim***
Jan	*8*	**Chris Patten**	***Lost his son Zachary***
Jan	*8*	**Allison Murphy**	***Lost her boyfriend Zachary***
Jan	*10*	**Cara Moser**	***Lost her Uncle Sean***
Jan	*10*	**Karen Schneider and William Stratton**	***Lost their son Benjamin***
Jan	*11*	**Hope Haynie**	***Lost her friend Jason***
Jan	*11*	**Kelsi Opland**	***Lost her fiancé Jason***
Jan	*12*	**Pat Deasy**	***Lost father Clyde Vig***
Jan	*12*	**David Fulford**	***Lost his wife Cornina***
Jan	*12*	**Ken and Lisa Corkum**	***Lost their son Chris***
Jan	*13*	**Doug Whitcomb**	***Lost his son Scott***
Jan	*13*	**John Rottle**	***Lost his wife Cindy***
Jan	*13*	**Karen Day**	***Lost her husband Gregory***
Jan	*14*	**Audrey Brockhaus**	***Lost her best friend Alex***
Jan	*14*	**Marie Payne**	***Lost her brother John***
Jan	*16*	**Laurie Carter**	***Lost her father Jack***
Jan	*16*	**Bryan Wilson**	***Lost his girlfriend Kaylan Rose***
Jan	*16*	**Glynn & Denny Waller**	***Lost their son Nick***
Jan	*17*	**Lois Kulijis**	***Lost her son Joe***
Jan	*19*	**Season Martin**	***Lost her dad William H. Martin***
Jan	*20*	**John Stumpf, Jessica & Laura Stumpf**	***Lost his daughter Keely, lost their sister Keely***
Jan	*22*	**Kevin Wildes**	***Lost his spouse Deborah***
Jan	*23*	**Joshua Simon**	***Lost his father Phil Simon***
Jan	*25*	**Patsy Murphy**	***Lost her brother Pat "Murph"***
Jan	*26*	**Joan Chapin**	***Lost her son Aaron***
Jan	*26*	**Shelby Hogarty**	***Lost her brother Aaron***
Jan	*28*	**Kim Bruce, Kellam Holdener**	***Lost their mother Debbie Holdener***
Feb	*2*	**Taren and Gabe Davis**	***Lost their mom Carrie***
Feb	*2*	**Erwin Rokstad**	***Lost his close friend/ex-wife Carrie***
Feb	*5*	**Ray and Roxanne Bulliman**	***Lost their son Sean***
Feb	*10*	**Donn and Debra Irwin**	***Lost their son Andrew***
Feb	*17*	**Crystal Retchless**	***Lost her twin brother Travis***
Feb	*17*	**Alisa German**	***Lost her husband Rick***
Feb	*17*	**Randy Simpson**	***Lost his wife JoAnn***
Feb	*18*	**Dave and Dorothy Pauli**	***Lost their son Tyler***
Feb	*19*	**Shane Cozwith**	***Lost partner Brad Dale***
Feb	*19*	**Kathy Melsness**	***Lost her daughter Marlene***
Feb	*20*	**Ann Mulvey**	***Lost her husband Jim***
Feb	*21*	**Chiane Martin**	***Lost her father Robert***
Feb	*22*	**Valaree Britton**	***Lost her father Jimmy***
Feb	*22*	**Eugene and Mellissa Burgy**	***Lost brother Paul***
Feb	*24*	**Brahim Djouider**	***Lost his daughter Hanaa***
Feb	*24*	**Pat Boggs, Shannon Collazo**	***Lost her husband Harry, lost her dad Harry***
Feb	*25*	**Kathy Cooper**	***Lost her son Brandon***
Feb	*26*	**Ann Clark**	***Lost her husband Bruce***
Feb	*26*	**Sally Sangder**	***Lost her son Matthew***
Feb	*29*	**Sherree Gause**	***Lost her best friend Jamie***
March	*1*	**Kacie Gustafson**	***Lost her brother Craig Davidson***
March	*6*	**Shannon Garrett**	***Lost her fiancé Rod***



March	***6***	**Roberta and Paul Shelton**	***Lost their son Paul IV***
March	***6***	**Lorey Tucker, Natasha Curenton**	***Lost their son and brother Holly Wayne***
March	***7***	**Dan Bosch, Norma Bosch**	***Lost their son Brian***
March	***8***	**Kate Yocum**	***Lost friend Kory***
March	***9***	**Ray Tellier**	***Lost his father Chris***
March	***9***	**Bethany Ferguson**	***Lost her brother Peter***
March	***9***	**Geno Hoff**	***Lost his brother Perry***
March	***10***	**Lyesha Francis**	***Lost her daughter Laleesha Joy***
March	***11***	**Renae Bolland**	***Lost her son Brenden***
March	***11***	**Jonnie Parker, Audrey Hornbuckle**	***Lost daughter Brenda, lost her sister Brenda***
March	***11***	**Lyn Radford**	***Lost her son Joe***
March	***12***	**Jackie Bryant**	***Lost her daughter Marisa***
March	***12***	**Andrew, Nicole, Donavan Driggers**	***Lost their father 'Chuck'***
March	***12***	**Pam Driggers**	***Lost her husband 'Chuck'***
March	***12***	**Cindy Cables**	***Lost her husband John***
March	***12***	**Kim Holmes**	***Lost her son Wesley Martin***
March	***15***	**Becky Crook**	***Lost her son Tom***
March	***16***	**Lori Halstead**	***Lost her son Brandon***
March	***16***	**Ted & Peggy Warren**	***Lost their son David***
March	***18***	**Bruce Parker**	***Lost his wife Lisa***
March	***18***	**Annette Bryan & Nancy Haack**	***Lost their son Erick Benjamin Bryan***
March	***18***	**Diane Barmore**	***Lost her best friend Lisa***
March	***19***	**Christy Jarbu-Record**	***Lost her husband Paul***
March	***19***	**Patty Jarbo**	***Lost her son-in-law Paul***
March	***19***	**David and Paul Prestin**	***Lost their mother Chris***
March	***19***	**Julie, Catherine & Jearit**	***Lost their brother John***
March	***21***	**Des McGahern**	***Lost his brother Noel***
March	***22***	**Tonya Neuhausen**	***Lost her daughter Jennifer Nichole***
March	***22***	**Bob & Sherri Ralston**	***Lost their son Brien Michael Warren***
March	***23***	**Ken Allen**	***Lost his wife Beth***
March	***23***	**Jim & Nancy Lawrence**	***Lost their son Travis***
March	***24***	**Steve, Marcia, Brett Larsen**	***Lost son and brother Eric***
March	***26***	**Andrea Hentschell**	***Lost her husband Marcus,***
March	***26***	**Brad Hentschell**	***Lost his brother Marcus***
March	***28***	**Maddy Arthur**	***Lost her dad Randy***
March	***29***	**Irene Comacho**	***Lost her boyfriend Mike***
March	***29***	**Melinda LaCour**	***Lost her son Robert***
March	***29***	**Kaela Moontree**	***Lost her twin brother Soren***
March	***31***	**Megan Murphy**	***Lost her father Lloyd***

We also remember our loved ones whose birthdays are in the following months:

January birthdays: Riley, Cherise Jonathan, James, Barry, Mandy, Tyler, Sean, Carleen, Jake, Brent, Justin, Michael, Trevor, Chris, Paul, Deborah, Rick, Thomas, Jamie, Marlene, Brian, David, Marisa, Les, Anil, Randy, Neal, Thomas, Carl, Jack, George, Stephanie and Jeff.

February birthdays: Lisa, Mary, Dmitri, Willie, Zachary, Travis, Michael, Hanaa, Shawn, Laleesha Joy, Matthew, Don, Sean, Jeff, Bradley, Natasha, Ed, Jamie, Chuck, Louis, Dolly, Phil, Emily, Benjamin and Trad.

March birthdays: Clifford, Anthony, Danny, Peter, Shawn, Lloyd, Robert, Jadon, Todd, Zachary, Clyde, John, David, Jeremiah, Tristen, Chaz, Nick, Michael, Shane, Harry, Arwen, Jonathan, Ira, Andy, Kyle, Scott, Kristin, Jake, Patrick, Holly, Ryan, Tom, and Linda.

We strive for accuracy. If we are missing the name of your loved one or if the information is incorrect or please let us know so we can correct it! Send an e-mail to auburnsurvivorsofsuicide@gmail.com

MEETINGS FOR JANUARY, FEBRUARY AND MARCH -

The **Auburn** Group meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month. Meetings are held at the Auburn Fire Station located at 1101 D Street in Auburn from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
If you have any questions or need directions please call Pam at 253-921-7829.

The **Olympia** Group meets on the third Tuesday of every month. Meetings are held at the Westwood Baptist Church in room E-14, located at 333 Kaiser Road in Olympia from 6:30 to 8:15 p.m.
For more information or directions please call Heidi at 253-381-8717.

The **Tacoma** Group meets on the second Wednesday of every month. Meetings are held at the Tahoma Indian Center, 621 Tacoma Ave S., #505 at 6:00 p.m.
For more information or directions please call Colette at 360-490-3454 or coletteaugust@gmail.com.

There is no fee to attend any of these groups. For more information send an e-mail to auburnsurvivorsofsuicide@gmail.com

Newsletter News

After writing this newsletter for over 20 years it is time for me to step away!
I've seen it grow from 4 pages to 8, from 100 recipients to almost 500. From snail mail with a roll of stamps to now email only (well, also on the website!)

My hope is that someone out there is willing to take it over. Of course, I will pass on all the files and assist in any way possible. Call or text 206-384-5114 or send an email to auburnsurvivorsofsuicide@gmail.com

I will finish out 2026 and then we will see what 2027 brings!

Donations are always appreciated and are tax deductible

YOUR DONATIONS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED, APPRECIATED AND ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.

Please mail your donations to:

28824 21st Ave. S., Federal Way, WA. 98003

In memory of: _____

_____
Name

_____
Address

_____
City, State, Zip

Grief in the New Year is never easy. I have been writing about New Year's grief for more than a decade, and every year I see the same pattern. As the calendar turns, more people reach out looking for reassurance, understanding, and a way to steady themselves.

Whether your loved one died recently or many years ago, the New Year often brings a renewed sense of longing. The passage of time can feel painfully visible. Even if your grief has softened, this transition can stir emotions you were not expecting. Strong reactions are normal. Anxiety often increases as meaningful dates approach. Many people feel torn between wanting a difficult year to end and not wanting to move further away from the person they lost.

If you are feeling this way, nothing is wrong with you. Sometimes the most helpful thing is simply naming what is happening. Grief is responding to change. The New Year is a powerful marker of change.

How to Cope with New Year's Grief

Below are six mindful ways to cope with grief in the New Year, offered with compassion and respect for where you are right now.

1. Choose Self-Compassion Over Self-Improvement

When you are grieving, traditional New Year's resolutions often increase suffering. Goals that focus on fixing yourself, pushing harder, or becoming someone new can feel overwhelming when your nervous system is already working overtime.

Instead of self-improvement, I invite you to focus on self-compassion. Self-compassion means tending to your grief the way you would care for someone you love. It might look like prioritizing rest, eating simple nourishing food, moving gently, or allowing yourself to slow down without guilt. These are not small things. They are essential supports for a grieving body and mind.

Many people still crave some sense of structure or intention at the start of a new year. Wanting that does not mean you are doing grief wrong. It simply means you may need a gentler framework.

2. Create a Kind Inner Response to "Happy New Year"

For many grieving people, hearing "Happy New Year" can sting. If happiness feels far away, forcing yourself to feel it can add another layer of pain. Instead of judging your reaction, try using these words as a cue to turn inward with kindness.

When you hear "Happy New Year," you might silently respond with something that feels more honest and supportive, such as "May I be gentle with myself this year," or "This is hard and I am doing my best."

This practice gives you a small sense of agency and helps shift your nervous system out of reactivity. Over time, it can soften the emotional impact of a phrase you cannot avoid hearing.

3. Remember You Are Not Leaving Your Loved One Behind

Crossing into a new year without your loved one can feel like a betrayal, as if moving forward means leaving them behind. This fear is deeply human. The truth is that time passing does not erase love or connection.

Take a few moments to reflect on how your loved one still lives within you. In your values, your habits, your expressions, your stories. Notice the ways they shaped who you are and how you move through the world.

Their imprint remains, regardless of what the calendar says.

4. Use Your Calendar as a Tool for Support

A new year often comes with a new calendar. Instead of filling it only with obligations, consider using it to support your grief.

Mark anniversaries, birthdays, and meaningful dates. Think gently about how you want to care for yourself on those days. Planning does not remove pain, but it can reduce anxiety by giving you a sense of containment.

Some people schedule time with supportive friends. Others plan quiet rituals or time alone. There is no right approach.

5. Steady Your Mind With Simple Mindfulness

Grief often pulls the mind in two directions at once. Part of you may want to rush forward and escape the pain, while another part longs to go back to when your loved one was still alive. Mindfulness helps bring you back to the present moment, where your body actually is.

A simple practice is often the most effective. For a few minutes, bring your attention to your breath. As you inhale, silently say "in." As you exhale, say "out." When your mind wanders, gently return to the breath.

Beginning again is not failure. It is the practice.

6. Seek Compassionate Community

Grief can feel isolating, even when you are surrounded by people who care about you. Being with others who truly understand can ease that loneliness. Shared grief does not make loss disappear, but it does help regulate the nervous system and remind you that your experience is valid.

Moving Into the New Year With Care

My hope is not that your grief disappears in the year ahead. My hope is that your suffering eases, even a little, and that you feel supported as you learn how to live alongside loss.

After many years of grief work, I have seen this again and again. People do not get over grief, but they do learn how to carry it with more steadiness, meaning, and care.

My grieving heart honors yours.

Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT

About the author, Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT, is the recipient of the 2025 Association for Death Education and Counseling Clinical Practice Award and holds a Master's Degree in Thanatology from Hood College.

What they don't tell you
About facing a New Year
Without your loved one…

Last year you were still here.
This year I have to say the
Words I never wanted to:
"I lost you last year."

This year, I'll carry your love
With me.
Not just in my heart,
But in everything I do.
Always.

Grief is proof of love.

Anger is proof of care.

Fatigue is proof of effort.

You are not broken.

You are alive.

Michelle C. Clark

INTERREGNUM

The span between life and death
Can be as quick and sudden
As a puff of wind
That blows out a candle.
But the candle does not suffer
After darkness comes.
It is the person
Left in the dark room
Who gropes and stumbles.

~~ Helen Duke Fike ~~

On October 12th many of us walked in the Seattle Out of the Darkness sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. We had a table there and many people stopped by to talk. We are very fortunate – the Seattle area has no in-person support group.

Cathy Johnson and Char Ashcraft staffed our table

Hundreds walked the grounds of the Seattle Center raising thousands of dollars for suicide prevention.

Talk about them. Be proud of them.
Losing a courageous battle doesn't make you weak.

Coping with grief on Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is a time where people celebrate their love for each other, but for those who are grieving for their partner, both the day and the lead up to it can be really hard.

In this article, we're sharing advice and tips to support you through this time, suggesting alternative ways you can spend the day and cope with your grief. Not everyone will feel the same way, and the day will bring up different feelings for different people. That's why it's important to be loving and kind to yourself. You may experience a range of emotions, but the most important thing is that you do what feels right for you.

Celebrate the love you have for your friends

Valentine's Day has evolved past just being a day for couples, and we now have "Galentine's Day" and "Palentine's Day" that help people celebrate their love for their friends and family. So, on this Valentine's Day, in the face of absence, try and celebrate the love that is all around you in your friends and family.

Reflect on what your partner's love did for you

Just because your partner is no longer with you, it doesn't mean that you can't remember how their love made you feel. It can be painful, but it can also be a way of remembering them in a different light, focusing on the good times that made you who you are today. We don't have to make feelings go away when someone has died; we have to explore them, gently and at our own pace.

Write them a card to tell them how you feel

Sometimes getting our feelings out on paper can help us process the complex emotions we are feeling. Writing to your loved one may feel strange, but it is a way of validating your emotions and feeling closer to your loved one, even though they're not there with you.

Do something that you used to do with your loved one

If you want to feel closer to your loved one, you could do something that you used to do together to remember them. That might be getting a meal from your favorite takeaway or simply a walk you liked to do together.

Ignore the day completely

If you are really struggling with the thought of Valentine's Day, you could ignore the day completely. Take the day off work if you can, delete your social media for the day and do things that make you happy - maybe that's baking, watching a Netflix show, going on a walk or simply having a lazy day.

The truth is, Valentine's Day will be full of different feelings. Bereaved people often tell us that the run up to these days is actually more exhausting than the day itself. So this year, remember to be loving and kind to yourself.

Facing your first Valentine's Day after the death of your partner or spouse

Navigating through the first year after a bereavement can be particularly painful, especially when there are so many milestones to go through. At a time when you're processing your grief and trying to understand what it means for your future, Valentine's Day and the lead up to it can be really difficult to cope with. There's no predicting how you might feel, so try not to be too hard on yourself. Take each day as it comes, and know that we're here if you need support.

No answer will quiet your pain of loss. But through the memory buried deep within your heart, they will remain with you.

Other Resources

Widowed Information and Consultation Services
The purpose of WICS is to provide a supportive environment to widowed people.
WICS operates on volunteered time and donations from the community.

When: Monday- 2:00 pm
Where: Auburn Senior Activity Center, 808 Ninth Street SE, Auburn, WA 98002
Contact: 206- 241-5650

Grief Support Group

When: 1st & 3rd Mondays of each month (excluding holidays), 10-11:30 am.
Where: Lacey Presbyterian Church, 3045 Carpenter Road SE, Lacy
Contact: 360-493-4667 or (800)869-7062 (Providence Sound Homecare & Hospice)

The Compassionate Friends, Olympia
What: Loss of Child Support Group
When: First Monday of every month, 7-8:30 p.m.
Where: Providence St. Peter Hospital (Executive Meeting Room), 413 Lily Road NE, Olympia
Contact: 360-402-6711 (Providence SoundHomeCare & Hospice)

The Compassionate Friends, Kent
When: 3rd Tuesday of each month 6:30 – 8:00 pm
Where: Saint Columba's Episcopal Church, 26715 Military Rd, South Kent, 98032
Contact: Michael 206-369-7366

BRIDGES: A Center for Grieving Children is a family-based support program where families with children ages 4-18 who have experienced the death of a parent or a sibling come together to heal. We offer support groups just for children as well as groups for adults.

When: 1st and 3rd Mondays of every month 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Where: Christ Church, 310 North K St, Tacoma, WA 98403
Who: Surviving families of suicide who have children between the ages of 4-18
Contact: Matt 253-403-1966 for more information

Griefshare – Federal Way

Faith based grief support group. Nominal fee includes workbook.
When: Wednesdays, 12-2pm
Where: St Luke's Lutheran Church, 515 S. 312th St., Federal Way, WA 98003
Who: this group is not specific to suicide loss
Contact: Alice Phillips, 253-941-3000