

# SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE

## King/ Pierce/ Thurston County Support Groups

JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2021

NEWSLETTER



Website: [www.auburnsos.com](http://www.auburnsos.com)

e-mail: [support@auburnsos.com](mailto:support@auburnsos.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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 Gary Woempner for a love gift in memory of his son Asa.*

*Many thanks to Cliff Whipple for a love gift in memory of his son Lance Alan and his long time friend Jim Bell.*

*Thanks also to The Lacey Lamplighters Lions Club for a donation (at the suggestion of Cliff Whipple!)*

### **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
Janis Fesenmaier	360-866-2509	Lost brother	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	<i>Lost her husband Craig</i>
Jan	1	Judy Robinson	<i>Lost her boyfriend Philip</i>
Jan	2	Oneal Nichols	<i>Lost his son Jack</i>
Jan	3	Jane Hower	<i>Lost her son Wesley</i>
Jan	4	Jim & Joann O'Neill	<i>Lost their son Jim</i>
Jan	8	Chris Patten	<i>Lost his son Zachary</i>
Jan	8	Allison Murphy	<i>Lost her boyfriend Zachary</i>
Jan	10	Karen Schneider and William Stratton	<i>Lost their son Benjamin</i>
Jan	10	Cara Moser	<i>Lost her Uncle Sean</i>
Jan	10	Timothy Fisher	<i>Lost his brother-in-law Garrett</i>
Jan	11	Hope Haynie	<i>Lost her friend Jason</i>
Jan	11	Kelsi Opland	<i>Lost her fiancé Jason</i>
Jan	12	Pat Deasy	<i>Lost father Clyde Vig</i>
Jan	12	David Fulford	<i>Lost his wife Cornina</i>
Jan	12	Ken and Lisa Corkum	<i>Lost their son Chris</i>
Jan	13	Doug Whitcomb	<i>Lost his son Scott</i>
Jan	13	John Rottle	<i>Lost his wife Cindy</i>
Jan	13	Karen Day	<i>Lost her husband Gregory</i>
Jan	14	Audrey Brockhaus	<i>Lost her best friend Alex</i>
Jan	14	Marie Payne	<i>Lost her brother John</i>
Jan	15	David and Kelli Flores	<i>Lost their son Austin</i>
Jan	16	Laurie Carter	<i>Lost her father Jack</i>
Jan	16	Bryan Wilson	<i>Lost his girlfriend Kaylan Rose</i>
Jan	16	Glynn & Denny Waller	<i>Lost their son Nick</i>
Jan	17	Lois Kulijis	<i>Lost her son Joe</i>
Jan	19	Season Martin	<i>Lost her dad William H. Martin</i>
Jan	20	John Stumpf, Jessica & Laura Stumpf	<i>Lost his daughter Keely, lost their sister Keely</i>
Jan	21	Wendy Henricks	<i>Lost her husband Jerry</i>
Jan	22	Kevin Wildes	<i>Lost his spouse Deborah</i>
Jan	23	Joshua Simon	<i>Lost his father Phil Simon</i>
Jan	25	Patsy Murphy	<i>Lost her brother Pat "Murph"</i>
Jan	26	Joan Chapin	<i>Lost her son Aaron</i>
Jan	26	Shelby Hogarty	<i>Lost her brother Aaron</i>
Jan	28	Sona Etter	<i>Lost her husband John</i>
Jan	28	Kim Bruce, Kellam Holdener	<i>Lost their mother Debbie Holdener</i>
Feb	1	Christine Treece	<i>Lost her daughter Taylor</i>
Feb	2	Taren and Gabe Davis	<i>Lost their mom Carrie</i>
Feb	2	Erwin Rokstad	<i>Lost his close friend/ex-wife Carrie</i>
Feb	5	Ray and Roxanne Bulliman	<i>Lost their son Sean</i>
Feb	10	Donn and Debra Irwin	<i>Lost their son Andrew</i>
Feb	12	Rich DeGarmo	<i>Lost his wife Sandi</i>
Feb	17	Crystal Retchless	<i>Lost her twin brother Travis</i>
Feb	17	Alisa German	<i>Lost her husband Rick</i>
Feb	17	Randy Simpson	<i>Lost his wife JoAnn</i>
Feb	18	Dave and Dorothy Pauli	<i>Lost their son Tyler</i>
Feb	19	Shane Cozwith	<i>Lost partner Brad Dale</i>
Feb	19	Kathy Melsness	<i>Lost her daughter Marlene</i>
Feb	20	Ann Mulvey	<i>Lost her husband Jim</i>
Feb	21	David Harris	<i>Lost his brother Noel</i>
Feb	22	Valaree Britton	<i>Lost her father Jimmy</i>
Feb	22	Eugene and Mellissa Burgy	<i>Lost brother Paul</i>
Feb	24	Brahim Djouider	<i>Lost his daughter Hanaa</i>
Feb	24	Pat Boggs, Shannon Collazo	<i>Lost her husband Harry, lost her dad Harry</i>
Feb	26	Ann Clark	<i>Lost her husband Bruce</i>

Feb 26 Sally Sangder  
Feb 29 Sherree Gause

*Lost her son Matthew*  
*Lost her best friend Jamie*

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

**January birthdays:** Jonathan, Barry, Brandon, Mandy, Tyler, Thomas, Carleen, Jake, Justin, Trevor, Chris, Paul, Deborah, Jamie, Marlene, Brian, Marisa, Les, Anil, Neal, Carl, Jack, George, Stephanie, Steve, Jeff, and Joleen.

**February birthdays:** Lisa, Mary, Dmitri, Willie, Travis, Michael, Carol, Hanaa, Shawn, Matthew, Don, Werner, Sean, Jeff, Bradley, Ed, Chuck, Louis, Phil, Shon, Benjamin, Trad and Sally.

We strive for accuracy. If we are missing the name of your loved one or if the information is incorrect please let us know so we can correct it! Send an e-mail to [newsletter@auburnsos.com](mailto:newsletter@auburnsos.com)

 *Hugs to all of our fellow survivors out there during this challenging time. Take care of yourselves and those close to you – and be safe!*   
 

We all miss being able to meet together, the sharing after the meetings ~ the hugs! We will meet together again as soon as it is safe and we are allowed to do so. Until then we will keep on having three zoom meetings every month. We encourage you to try one – you may find you actually like it! Remember, SOS are there for you!

**MEETINGS FOR JANUARY AND FEBRUARY - please note the changes!**

### ***Zoom Meetings! –***

Until the pandemic and the lockdowns are over we all need to stay safe! Since we cannot meet in person we will be hosting Zoom meetings at the regular meetings times:

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday at 6 pm for the Tacoma Group

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday at 7 pm for the Olympia Group and

4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday at 7 pm for the Auburn Group

Go to our Facebook page to find the meeting, the **password is ‘Auburn’**.

Don’t have Zoom? Download it for free at [Zoom.com](https://zoom.com). If you are not familiar with Zoom, it is a way to meet with many people on the computer (or phone). The link to the meeting is on our Facebook page – or ask and we can email it to you if you aren’t on Facebook.

Please join us!

### **When things are back to ‘normal’ – this is when and where we meet:**

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-10, located at 333 Kaiser Road in Olympia from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.

For more information or directions please call Janis at 360-866-2509.

The **Tacoma** Group meets on the second Wednesday of every month. Meetings are held at the TACID Building, Room 2, the address is 6315 S. 19<sup>th</sup>, Tacoma 98466, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

For more information or directions please call Colette at 360-490-3454 or [coletteaugust@gmail.com](mailto:coletteaugust@gmail.com).

There is no fee to attend any of these groups. For more information send an e-mail to [support@auburnsos.com](mailto:support@auburnsos.com)

# What is Smiling Depression?

By Laura Coward

“How are you? *Really?*” This is my mom’s standard line of questioning any time I dye my hair darker. In her mind, darker hair is equivalent to a darker mood. She’s on to something, but in my case, she has it backwards. I’m best at hiding my depression when I’m blonde. When I’m brunette, I feel authentic. I literally let a little more of my darker side show. When I’m blonde, I’m bubbly, social and easy to get along with. When I’m blonde, I’m the face of smiling depression.

## What is Smiling Depression?

Smiling depression involves appearing happy to others and smiling through the pain, keeping the inner turmoil hidden. It’s a major depressive disorder with atypical symptoms, and as a result, many don’t know they’re depressed or don’t seek help. People with smiling depression are often partnered or married, employed and are quite accomplished and educated. Their public, professional and social lives are not struggling. Their façade is *put together* and *accomplished*.

But behind the mask and behind closed doors, their minds are filled with thoughts of worthlessness, inadequacy and despair. They’ve usually struggled with depression and/or debilitating anxiety for years and have had some experience with therapy or medication. Many don’t disclose their depression due to fear of discrimination from loved ones or employers. “Oftentimes, I am the only person in this individual’s immediate circle who is aware of how he or she is feeling on the inside,” said Dina Goldstein Silverman, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist and assistant professor of psychiatry.

## Why is it dangerous?

According to Silverman, there’s a troubling connection between smiling depression and suicide. In contrast with a patient who has little energy to even get out of bed, chronically depressed patients who report a surge of energy might be more likely to initiate a suicide attempt. Significant traumatic life changes—such as a recent job loss or divorce—are often predictors of suicide attempts, particularly in men. In some cases, having young children or being devoutly religious may serve as protective factors. But many of us know exceptions to that.

One of the deaths that shocked my community the most was the suicide of a Sunday school teacher and youth counselor. Active in our church and several nonprofits, he mentored many and loved connecting people. Was he disheveled, withdrawn and a downer to be around? Absolutely not. He was encouraging, thoughtful and went out of his way to attend and organize events. Often in a suit and always put together, he was who we aspired to be when we grew up. Did we ever ask him how he was doing, if he was hurting or if he needed someone to listen to him for once? No. We bought in to the façade and couldn’t see the pain hiding under the surface.

His life was one-of-a-kind, but unfortunately his story is not. Many who have felt the impact of a friend’s suicide say the same thing: “I had no idea he was suffering. He was the last person I would have expected to do this.”

## How can we help?

### Create awareness to de-stigmatize mental illness

Many people struggling with smiling depression are perfectionists, or they don’t want to appear weak or out of control. The more we can shift the conversation to show positive role models living with depression—those who advocate for the mix of therapy, exercise, medication, sleep, diet—the less shame and stigma will be associated with it.

### Pay more attention to your loved ones (especially the warning signs)

If you have a friend who suddenly stops responding to phone calls or texts or cancels plans, don’t hesitate to ask them what’s going on and if they’re feeling okay. Let them know that they are heard and are not alone. Also, it’s vital to notice if a loved one begins giving away possessions (often a symptom that someone is considering suicide), or begins to isolate and withdraw.

“As a therapist, I try to encourage [my patients] to develop authentic social relationships, so he or she can experience the relief of being heard, understood and validated by friends and loved ones, and build genuine connections,” Silverman said.

### **If you think you might be depressed:**

On the days when your brain seems to be fighting you for your life, remember that *you are enough, you are worthy, you are loved and you are not alone.*

Find activities and pursuits that are meaningful to you and make you feel productive and accomplished. Try your best to be present in these activities. Silverman says that “mindfulness is the opposite of perfectionism in that it focuses on a balance without judgment, and it’s an important set of skills that someone can learn in therapy.”

Reach out to someone you trust and consider contacting a therapist. Let these influential roles in your life help you to create a more positive state of mind. Rather than become “submerged in a vortex of negative, self-defeating thoughts,” Silverman encourages her patients to learn self-compassion. Above all, please don’t give up. Please don’t let depression win. **You are not alone.**

*\*\* A variation of this blog previously appeared on The Mighty <http://themighty.com/2016/05/smiling-depression-what-you-need-to-know/> Laura is a writer and non-profit fundraiser who lives in Dallas.*

## FOR THE NEW YEAR

Instead of the old kind of New Year’s resolutions we used to make and break, let’s make some this year and really try to keep them.

1. Let’s not try to imagine the future – take one day at a time.
2. Allow yourself time to cry, both alone, and with your loved ones.
3. Don’t shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
4. Try to be realistic about your expectations – of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. Each of us is an entity, therefore different. So how can there be perfect understanding?
5. When a good day comes, relish it – don’t feel guilty and don’t be discouraged when it doesn’t last. It WILL come again and multiply.
6. Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles. Drink lots of water and take stress-type multiple vitamins, rest (even if you don’t sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body heal, as well as your mind.
7. Share your feelings with other Compassionate Friends (or other groups you may choose) and let them share with you.

As you find you are caring about the pain of others, you are starting to come out of your shell – a very healthy sign. I know following these suggestions won’t be easy. But it’s worth a try, don’t you think? Nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

*Mary Ehmann, TCF, Valley Forge, PA*

*That pain in your gut? That will go away.  
That pain in your heart? It will remain- but it will ease."*

A survivor

## **Losing a Loved One to Suicide During Covid-19**

This resource was developed by people with lived experience of suicide loss. Everyone's loss is unique, we hope this resource is helpful for you. We'd also like to acknowledge cultural differences in grieving. Please feel free to adapt the information in this resource for your own situation.

The death of a loved one is one of life's most difficult experiences. If you're here because you've lost someone you care about to suicide, we'd like to acknowledge your loss and the emotions you may be feeling.

Suicide loss is a traumatic event. The grief that comes with it may differ from other forms of grief in its intensity and duration. Feelings of guilt may occur along with 'why' questions. It's normal to wish we could have done more to prevent a suicide.

It's important to know, a suicide death is no one's fault. Suicide is never the result of one thing only. Suicide is complex, an outcome influenced by many factors coming together at one time.

### **Grief and Loss – Challenges During Covid-19**

Grief is our natural response to losing a loved one. This can present in many ways. In addition to experiencing grief you may also be concerned about preventing the spread of COVID-19.

- A death by suicide is particularly difficult to comprehend. You may be experiencing intense shock, confusion and grief, this is normal.
- There will be practical things to deal with, on top of trauma, shock and grief. Ask for the support you need.
- Requirements around physical distancing may intensify emotional reactions.
- With so much happening in the world right now, you may feel overwhelmed or numb. It's actually ok to be numb for a time, to focus on surviving in the immediate now. Your grief is still there, underneath it all.
- Suicide loss can feel isolating. When the whole population is restricted from being together, this may feel worse. You may feel disconnected from the rest of the world. Know it's not just you, and you are not alone.

### **One Family's Tribute Survivor's Story**

I could never have imagined that one event would abruptly change the course of my life and the lives of my family. That's the impact suicide has – it alters your entire life. You try to live through the incredible pain, sorrow, and confusion that his irreversible act creates. You ponder the "what ifs", and how your loved one cheated himself and you of the wonderful gift of life.

How does one become a 'survivor'? Simply, but extremely arduously, by just surviving. Survive by seeking professional therapy, guidance and support. Most importantly, exercise your emotions: cry, scream, talk, write etc., and use any and all coping mechanisms that will benefit you. Be certain to verbalize your feelings, positive or negative. Take one day at a time.

Life is different for me since the death of my brother five years ago. The things that helped me cope may not necessarily benefit you, but you will ultimately find something that helps you through your grief. Promise to love your family and friends, and most importantly, yourself.

By The Farrell Family

*Our sorrows and wounds are healed only when we touch them with compassion.*

~ Buddha

**Remembrance**

*You can shed tears that he is gone  
Or you can smile because he has lived.  
You can close your eyes and pray that he'll come back,  
Or you can open your eyes and see all that he has left.  
Your heart can be empty because you can't see him  
Or you can be full of the love that you shared.*

*You can turn your back on tomorrow and live  
yesterday,  
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of  
yesterday.*

*You can remember him and only that he's gone,  
Or you can cherish his memory and let it live on.*

*You can cry and close your mind,  
Be empty and turn your back,  
Or you can do what he would want:  
Smile, open your eyes, love,  
And go on!*

*Reprinted from The Compassionate Friends  
newsletter,  
South Shore Chapter, Hingham, MA, Fall 2005*

**One Little Candle**

*I lit a candle tonight in honor of you,  
Remembering your life, and all the times  
We'd been through.  
Such a small little light the candle made  
Until I realized how much in darkness it lit the way.  
All the tears I've cried in all my grief and pain,  
What a garden they grew, watered  
With human rain.*

*I sometimes can't see beyond the moment, in hopeless  
despair,  
But then your memory sustains me,  
In heartaches repair.  
I can wait for the tomorrow,  
When my sorrows ease  
Until then, I'll light this candle  
And let my memories run free.*



*By Sheila Simmons  
Heartbeat, Survivors After Suicide Newsletter 2002*

*Donations are always appreciated and are tax deductible*



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

Please mail your donations to:

28824 21<sup>st</sup> Ave. S., Federal Way, WA. 98003

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
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## **There is a Light**

*There is a light in this world – a healing spirit  
more powerful than any darkness we may encounter.*

*We sometimes lose sight of this force  
when there is suffering, and too much pain.*

*Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge  
through the lives of ordinary people  
who hear a call*

*and answer in extraordinary ways.*

By Mother Teresa

