



SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE



King/ Pierce/ Thurston County Support Groups JULY/AUGUST, 2021 NEWSLETTER

Website: www.auburnsos.com

e-mail: 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 21st Ave. S.
Federal Way, WA 98003

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

Many thanks to Cliff Whipple for a love gift in memory of his son Lance Alan

Thanks to Cliff Whipple for a love gift in memory of his long-time friend Jim Bell

We also received a donation from the Combined Fund Campaign and the Network for Good.

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			

Thinking of You Especially:

July	2	Angel Shell-Klein	Lost her sister Jamey
July	2	Beth Atchison	Lost he daughter Cherise Lynn
July	5	Michelle Corder	Lost her mother Mary
July	6	Bonnie Benson	Lost her partner Chris
July	6	Joann Deuel	Lost her son Steve
July	6	Fred / Sue Miller	Lost their son Terry
July	7	Michelle Gietka	Lost her brother Garrett
July	7	Curtis Costner	Lost his girlfriend Arwen
July	8	Andee Church	Lost her brother Abel Church
July	9	Zenko Zulu	Lost her husband Kwame
July	10	Jessica Giles	Lost her mother Debbie Reames
July	10	Liz St. Louis	Lost her husband Tom
July	11	Jeanette Mack	Lost her daughter Angela
July	11	Jonathan & Leigh Manheim	Lost their son Garth
July	12	Katie Wilkinson	Lost her best friend Raul Villanueva
July	13	Patsy Kenoway	Lost her son Carl Edward Thompson II
July	17	Roy / Karen Petschauer	Lost their son Roice
July	18	Holly Hobbs	Lost her daughter Stacy Hobbs
July	18	Jason Calland	Lost his sister Stacy
July	18	James Lyles	Lost his girlfriend Stacy
July	18	Karen Shane	Lost her son Robby
July	19	Cheryl Shane	Lost her step-son Robby
July	19	Gabe Behm	Lost his wife Elena
July	20	Cherie Katana	Lost her son Samuel
July	20	Janet Paulson	Lost her step-son Nate
July	20	Julie Wunderlich	Lost her sister Jennifer
July	20	Patti Mossberger	Lost her son Mark Daniel
July	23	Jessica Giles	Lost her sister Angie Reames
July	24	Jessie Stark	Lost her mom Carol Stark
July	25	Troy Williams	Lost his wife MaryJo
July	26	Tom & Julie Amos	Lost their son/stepson Cameron
July	27	Arlie Petersen	Lost her son Jon
July	27	Rosie Breen	Lost her son Sonny Petra
July	27	Susan Zweigler	Lost her brother Randy
July	28	Connie & Beau McTighe	Lost their son Alan McTighe
July	28	Bob Sheaffer	Lost his friend Alan McTighe
July	30	David and Colleen Rocca	Lost their son Nick
July	30	Barb Clough	Lost her son Jonathan
July	31	Chris / Gary Davis	Lost their son Jeff Robertson
July	31	Sandra Wise	Lost her son's father Kevin
August	1	Samantha Miller	Lost her mother Tammy
August	1	Debra Schreck	Lost her brother Richard
August	1	Bradley Thompson	Lost his partner Dean
August	4	David Gerry	Lost his brother James
August	6	Cristal Villarereal	Lost her former boyfriend Devyn
August	6	Karen Gardner	Lost her son Shawn
August	6	Pam Williams	Lost her son Josh
August	7	Amy	Lost her brother Scott
August	7	Denise Simpson	Lost her son Phillip
August	9	Karalee Rae	Lost her son Jerry
August	9	Maxine Johnston	Lost her son-in-law Dmitri
August	10	Ben and Diana Roller	Lost their daughter Jessica
August	10	Danielle Roller	Lost her sister Jessica
August	14	Greg Wallace	Lost his mother and father, John and Sandy
August	14	Jim Scott	Lost his brother Bob
August	14	Patricia VanDragt	Lost her son Jonathan
August	17	Debbie West	Lost her son Christopher
August	17	Rhonda Lundquist	Lost her son Jon
August	20	Troy Louvrak	Lost his son Joshua
August	24	Laurie Sypole	Lost her son Garrett

August	25	Rashanna Smith	Lost her daughter April
August	26	Beth Rivera	Lost her son Tyler
August	26	Linda Jacobson	Lost her husband Randy
August	26	Robert and Judy Knoyle	Lost their daughter Robin
August	27	Danielle Goodwin	Lost her daughter Cassandra
August	28	Heidi Smith	Lost her son Tristan
August	29	Benita Gjurasic	Lost her brother Jeffrey
August	29	Kimberly and Kenn Rivers	Lost their twin brother Chris
August	31	Becky Connors	Lost her daughter Brigitte

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

July birthdays: Garrett, JoAnn, Mark, Christopher, Kevin, Sandy, Stacy, Joshua, John, Jackson, Antonio, Devyn, Joe, Bob, Bryan, David, Don, Nate, Angie, Jeffrey, Louie, Larry, Walker, Jim, Wesley, Palmer, Carly, Alexandria, Roy, Kellen and Kaylan.

August birthdays: Marie, Greg, MaryJo, John, Nita, Allison, Wesley, David, Debbie, John, Paul, Richard, Jon, Benjamin, Jennifer, Mark, Lana, Steve, Jerry, Derek, Justin, Gregory, Michael, James, Jimmy, Randy, James, David, Lance, Gary, Abel, Jonathan, James and Randee.

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

MEETINGS FOR JULY AND AUGUST - 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:

2nd Wednesday at 6 pm for the Tacoma Group

3rd Tuesday at 7 pm for the Olympia Group and

4th 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. 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. 19th, 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.

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



We hope to start meeting in person again by late summer/early fall!

This Is What Suicide Survivors Want You to Know

It was a late January afternoon in 2018, just two days after I had major surgery. Drifting in and out of a painkiller haze, I leaned over to check my phone. That marked the beginning of my endless free fall through grief. That night, my gorgeous friend, whose laughter could light up the darkest room, died in a hospital bed after attempting to take their own life. And as loved ones struggled to understand what had happened, everyone around me kept asking the question: *How could something like this happen?*

That was a question I didn't need to ask, though. Because nearly a decade ago, I, too, had attempted suicide.

It didn't make the grief any less painful, of course. I still had countless moments of self-blame, confusion, and despair. But it wasn't as incomprehensible as it was to everyone else, because it was a struggle I knew too well. But my experience on "both sides" became a blessing in disguise. When my loved ones asked me how a suicide attempt could happen, I was able to answer. And as I fielded their questions, I saw something beautiful happen: We both could heal and empathize with our friend just a little bit more.

While I can't speak for every person who has struggled with suicidal thoughts, I've spoken to enough survivors to know there are commonalities in how we've felt about the experience. I want to share what those commonalities are in the hopes that if you've survived a loss like this, you might be able to find some comfort in hearing from someone who's been there. I'd like to think that, if your loved one could reach you now, these are some of the things they would want you to know.

1. Suicide is more complex than a 'decision'

People who attempt suicide aren't always convinced it's the only option. It's more often that they have exhausted their emotional reserves to continue pursuing those options. It is, in many ways, the ultimate state of burnout. That state of burnout doesn't happen overnight, either. In order to attempt suicide, a person has to be in the neurological state where they can override their own survival instincts. At that point, it's an acute state — not totally unlike a heart attack or other medical crisis. A person has to have reached a point when they feel their capacity for emotional pain has outweighed the amount of time they're able to wait for relief, at the same moment when they have access to the means to end their life.

2. We're often very, very conflicted

A lot of loss survivors look at their loved one's suicide and ask me, "What if they didn't want this?" But it's rarely that simple. It's much more likely that they were conflicted, which is why being suicidal is such a confusing state to be in. **Imagine a scale being tipped back and forth until one side is finally outweighed by the other — a trigger, a moment of impulsivity, a window of opportunity that disrupts the precarious balance that allowed us to survive.** That back-and-forth is exhausting, and it muddles our judgment.

It's not that we aren't conflicted, so much as the suicidal thoughts are so incredibly loud. This is also why some of us (often unconsciously) sabotage our own attempts. We might choose a time or place when it's possible that we'll be discovered. We might drop hints about our mental state that are nearly undetectable to others. We might choose a method that isn't reliable. Even for those who meticulously planned and appeared very committed to killing themselves, they are — in a way — sabotaging themselves. The longer we take to plan, the more we leave open the possibility of an intervention or slipup. We desperately want peace and ease, which is really the only thing we are sure of.

3. We didn't want to hurt you

Personal disclosure: When I attempted suicide, there absolutely were moments when all I could think about were the people I loved. I even staged my attempt to look like an accident, because I didn't want the people I loved to believe I had done it on purpose. I didn't want them to blame themselves, and by staging it, I did what little I could — in my mind — to lessen their suffering. I did know, on some level, that my death would be painful for the people I loved. I can't articulate how heavily that weighed on my heart.

But after a certain point, when you feel like you're burning alive, all you can think of is how to put the fire out as quickly as possible. When I did finally attempt, I was so dissociated and had such severe tunnel vision that much of that evening is entirely blacked out in my mind. Suicide attempts are often as much an emotional event as they are a neurological one. When I speak to other attempt survivors, many of us share the same feeling: We didn't want to hurt our loved ones, but that tunnel vision and state of acute pain — along with the sense that we're a burden on those we care about — can override our judgment.

4. We knew we were loved

A suicide attempt doesn't necessarily mean someone didn't believe they were loved. **I wish that love alone could be enough to keep someone here with us.** But I can tell you what your love *did* do, if that helps: It made their time here on earth so much more meaningful. I can also promise you it sustained them in many, *many* dark moments that they never told you about.

If we truly felt that we were capable of staying for you, we would have. Before my attempt, I wanted nothing more than to get better and be strong enough to stay. But as the walls closed in on me, I stopped believing I could. Your loved one's suicide attempt says nothing about how much you loved them, nor how much they loved you. But your grief does — because the pain that you're experiencing in their absence speaks volumes of how deeply you cherished them (and still do). And if your feelings are *that* powerful? The odds are good that the love between you was, too — mutual, cherished, understood. And the way they died can never change that. I promise you this.

5. It's not your fault

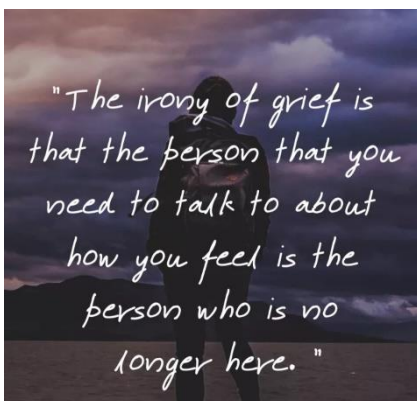
I'm not going to pretend I haven't blamed myself for my friend's suicide. I'm also not going to pretend I didn't do that as recently as yesterday. It's easy to fall down the rabbit hole of rumination, wondering what we could've done differently. It's gut-wrenching but also, in some ways, comforting, because it deludes us into thinking that we had some kind of control over the outcome.

Wouldn't the world feel so much safer if it were possible to save everyone we loved? To spare them from their suffering with the right words, the right decisions? That, through sheer force of will, we could save everyone. Or at the very least, the people we can't imagine our lives without. It's still an ongoing process for me to fully surrender to the fact that no one — no matter how smart, how loving, how determined they might be — can keep someone alive. Did you make mistakes? I don't know, maybe. You might've said the wrong thing. You might've turned them away one night without realizing there would be consequences. You might've underestimated how much pain they were in. But when a pot of water is on the stove, even if you turn up the flame, you aren't responsible for when the water boils. If left on the burner long enough, it was always going to come to a boil. You loved them the best way you knew how. I wish so desperately it had been enough, for both our sakes. I know how painful it is to accept it wasn't.

I've learned to live alongside my grief, to let it transform me as radically as possible. I won't pretend to have a good answer for why your loved one is gone. I've looked for the answer for myself, and I'm not any closer to finding it than I was a year ago. **But I can tell you, both as a survivor of loss and of an attempt, that life is unquestionably precious — and I believe that more fiercely than I ever have before.** You're still here. And whatever the reason might be, you still have the chance to do something extraordinary with this life. My greatest wish for you, and for anyone who's grieving, is to know that your pain doesn't have to consume you. Let it be your compass that leads you to new and exciting places. Let it bring you closer to your purpose. Let it remind you of how precious your own being is.

You're part of the legacy your loved one left behind. And every moment you choose to live fully and love deeply, you bring a beautiful part of them back to life. Fight for your own life the way you so desperately wish you could've fought for theirs. You are just as worthy; I promise you.

Written by [Sam Dylan Finch](#) —



*I have not heard your voice in years
But my heart has conversations with you*

*Grief is the last act of love we have to give to those we loved.
Where there is deep grief there was great love.*

Save Lives and Bring Hope

Many people's introduction to AFSP comes through the Out of the Darkness Walks, taking place in cities nationwide. In our Community, Campus and Overnight Walks, those affected by suicide – and those who support them – raise awareness and much-needed funds, strongly sending the message that suicide is preventable, and that no one is alone.

The Community Walks, held in hundreds of cities across the country, are the core of the Out of the Darkness movement, which began in 2004. These events give people the courage to open up about their own connections to the cause, and a platform to create a culture that's smarter about mental health. Friends, family members, neighbors and coworkers walk side-by-side, supporting each other and in memory of those we've lost.

We're moving forward with plans to host our Out of the Darkness Community Walks in person beginning fall 2021. The health and safety of our participants, staff and volunteers will be our top priorities as we make decisions about event details in your community, and we'll continue to offer options to participate online and in your neighborhood.

Now, more than ever, it's important to be there for one another and take steps to safeguard our mental health and prevent suicide.

OOTD Community Walks, locally

09/18/2021	Eastern Washington Walk, Venue TBD - Spokane, WA
09/25/2021	Kitsap County Walk, Venue TBD - Bremerton, WA
09/26/2021	Snohomish County Walk, Venue TBD - Everett, WA
10/02/2021	Whatcom County Walk, Venue TBD - Bellingham, WA
10/02/2021	Greater Thurston County Walk, Venue TBD - Olympia, WA
10/03/2021	Southwest Washington Walk, Venue TBD - Aberdeen, WA
10/24/2021	Seattle Walk, Venue TBD - Seattle, WA

Stay tuned for more information as we get it. Typically, we play a part in most of the walks here in Western Washington.

From Wild Grief, a resource for youth

Wild Grief is a small non-profit based in Olympia. We were founded in 2015 and started offering programs in 2017. Our programs combine peer support and nature connection to help young people who have lost a loved one build community, normalize the grief experience, and draw upon nature as a source of resilience and healing.

All of our programs are 100% free of charge. We have specific programs for teens, for young adults, and for families with kids under 13, as well as a monthly drop in Hike Habit for all ages.

Solo Together is a four day intensive where teens meet on zoom in the morning and evening and spend time outside participating in activities on their own in between. We send everyone a big box of supplies, including a Washington State Discover Pass. We have two of these virtual hybrid Solo Together programs this summer, and are trying to reach more teens because our numbers are too low to run the June trip at the moment.

Family Journey is similar but over the course of 6 weeks with a weekly meeting on zoom and hikes and activities together as a family on the weekends.

If you are curious and want to get a taste of what we offer, we host a drop in virtual Hike Habit on the second Saturday of every month from 11-1 PST. Or, come down to Thurston or Pierce County on the fourth Sunday of the month to participate in one of our in-person hikes!



FAMILY JOURNEY

Join us for a six week journey!

- Weekly hikes as a family.
- Creative activities to help process your loss.
- Virtual connection with other grieving families.
- Support from skilled guides.
- A box full of fun gear and goodies in the mail!

July 20-August 31

Free for families who have had someone close to them die.



Read more & apply at wildgrief.org/family-journey

"Never. We never lose our loved ones. They accompany us; they don't disappear from our lives. We are merely in different rooms." – [Paulo Coelho](#)

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

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

Return Service Requested



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*Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.*

*When you awaken in the morning's
hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.*

Mary Elizabeth Frye