

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

A NEWSLETTER FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE GRIEVING
FOR SOMEONE LOST TO SUICIDE

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. Try not 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. If each of us is unique and different, how can there be perfect understanding?
5. When a good day comes, relish it. Don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last.
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, take vitamins, rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body to heal, as well as your mind.
7. Share your feelings with other compassionate friends, and let them share with you. You will find that as you begin caring about the pain of others, you will start to come out of your shell—a very healthy sign.

I know that following these resolutions won't be easy, but what has been? It is worth a try. There is nothing to lose, and perhaps much to gain.

by Mary Ehmann

"Love Never Dies" Memorial Quilts

The "Love Never Dies" quilt project personalizes the phenomenon of suicide, demonstrating that suicide is not some abstract social phenomenon, but a legitimate public health crisis that affects many people within a given community. These quilts are routinely displayed at TSPN educational and awareness events all over Tennessee.

Anyone is welcome to contribute a quilt square, at no charge, no matter how long ago you lost someone.

More information is available at <http://tspn.org/quilt>. Any additional questions may be directed to Karyl Chastain Beal, chair of our Quilt Committee, at arlynsmom@bellsouth.net or (931) 388-9289.

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I Had To Tell the Truth

Eleni Pinnow is an Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. The obituary she submitted for her sister to the Duluth News -Tribune, which acknowledged her sister's death by suicide and mental health struggles, made national headlines.

The Washington Post subsequently reached out to Eleni for an interview, which ran in its March 23, 2016 edition, and is reprinted below in its entirety.

The most alone I have ever felt was standing on my front porch on a chilly February evening. My sister had taped a note to the front door that said "Eleni, if you're the first one here don't go in the basement. Just call 911. I don't want you to see me like this. I love you! Love, Aletha." She put an identical sign on the back door. Even in the midst of consuming depression, Aletha tried to protect me from the full horror of her suicide.

I stood on the porch shivering from cold and sheer terror. I didn't just feel alone. I felt like I was in a vacuum in the middle of space with everything I knew being pulled away from me. The universe was suddenly a very vast place and I was very, very, very alone.

After what seemed like an eternity, the police officers told me plainly, "Aletha is dead." What followed that stark statement was a sudden moment of lucidity in which only one thing mattered: the truth.

I had to be honest. I had to tell the truth.

By the time I sat down to write my sister's obituary I knew that the opening line could only be one thing: "Aletha Meyer Pinnow, 31, of Duluth (formerly of Oswego and Chicago, IL) died from depression and suicide on February 20, 2016."

I went on to share with everyone—friends, family, students, and work colleagues—the cause of my sister's death: depression and suicide. I told them that my hilarious, kind, generous, helpful, silly, and loving sister couldn't see any of that in herself and it killed her. I told them that her depression created an impenetrable fortress that blocked the light, preventing the love of her friends, her family, and any sense of comfort and confidence from reaching her.

My loneliness and terror on the front porch was nothing compared to the absolute isolation that depression had imposed on my sister. I had to tell the truth.

Depression lied to my sister, told her that she was worthless. A burden. Unlovable. Undeserving of life. I imagine these lies were like a kind of permanent white noise in her life—a running narration of how unworthy she was. After years of the lies and the torment, my sister believed that depression told her the truth. In the notes she left for my parents and me Aletha wrote, "don't feel sad, I'm not worth it."



Photo courtesy of Dr. Pinnow courtesy of the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

"People are forever changed by the experience of grief in their lives. We, as humans, do not 'get over' our grief, but work to reconcile ourselves to living with it. Anyone who attempts to prescribe a specific time-frame for the experience only creates another barrier to the healing process."

Alan Wolfelt
Author, educator, and grief counselor

She was so wrong. Depression lies. I have to tell the truth.

Here is the truth: My sister was amazing. She exuded life and made my life millions of times better just by existing. Any time I needed help, any time I was struggling, any time depression and anxiety overwhelmed me, Aletha was there. Any time I had a good day, I needed to share it with her. She was my anchor. Aletha and I had a relationship and a closeness that I will never have again.

Depression stole decades of our lives together. Depression lies. I have to tell the truth.

I Had To Tell the Truth (continued)



Time Saving Truth from Falsehood and Envy

François Lemoyne
(1688–1737)

This painting was one of the artist's last works prior to his death by suicide.

My sister's depression fed on her desire to keep it secret and hidden from everyone. I could not save my sister. I could not reach my sister through her depression. Aletha slipped from my grasp and I cannot bring her back. I can only urge others to distrust the voice of depression. I can plead for people to seek help and treatment. I can talk about depression and invite others to the conversation. I can tell everyone that will listen that depression lies. I can tell the truth.

The lies of depression can only exist in isolation. Brought out into the open, lies, like all lies, are revealed for what they are.

Here is the truth: You have value. You have worth. You are loved. Trust the voices of those that love you. Trust the enormous chorus of voices that say only one thing: you matter. Depression lies. We must tell the truth.

There is a thick black line that separates the before and the after of my life: I'm still new to the after territory. It feels uncertain, disorienting- like walking through a carnival funhouse where the floor is uneven, rotating, slanted, curved.

I only know two things for sure: Depression lies. I will tell the truth. Join me.

Unexpected Feeling

There are seasons in life, sometimes very long seasons, that we don't always understand where we are walking. Emptiness & loneliness can grip us in these seasons like ice covering winter's sleepy branches. During these moments we may feel useless, fragile, forgotten, frozen in time. The questions come, the doubt kicks in, fear invades, hopelessness looms. **WITH ALL THE STRENGTH WE CAN MUSTER; WE MUST REMIND OURSELVES that WE ARE NEVER WALKING ALONE.** There may be parts of the road that the sole our shoes touch, and an imprint is formed in our soul and spirit, but **WE ARE NEVER ON THE JOURNEY ALONE.** This imprint often changes us, challenges us, frustrates & overwhelms us, depletes us, baffles us...; but it can sometimes unite us. We can find strength in a stranger, laughter in a child-who can help us smile, we can find someone on the road that we link arms with- and **STAND.** As we watch and listen we can find unexpected renewal. As we watch and listen **LOVE** accompanies us on the journey. **LOVE** (in many forms, many faces & resources) gently, tenderly helps refill our reservoir of hope, trust, mental & emotional fortitude. In time we began to feel less fragile, more steady, surprisingly calm-**REPLENISHED.**

We are inclined to look for others in those hard places-dark places; and we shine a light of possibility.

We've walked through the unimaginable, and **WE ARE STILL STANDING.**

WE REMEMBER, WE HONOR, WE LOVE, WE HELP, WE STAND.

by Pamela Hagens



Healing... doesn't mean
the damage never existed... It
means that the damage no
longer control our lives.

Sharing my Personal Experience with Suicide at the White House

Jessica Caudle submitted the following essay to "Lifesaver News", the official blog of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, following her selection to participate in the "Making Health Care Better Series on Suicide Prevention" at the White House on September 29, which featured insights from national leaders in the field of mental health and suicide prevention. The panel in which Jessica participated is available on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/m2Q2jf3vOMg>).

If you had told me 13 years ago that I would one day be sitting in the White House talking openly to a room full of people about my lived experience of suicide attempts while being live-streamed to an audience across the globe, I would have suggested you get a PET scan as soon as possible.

After losing my father to suicide in 1990 when I was just seven years old, I hid behind a cloak of silence. My loved ones no doubt felt the same pain, but we simply didn't have the language to talk about it. Somehow it was easier to tell people that my father had died in a horrible accident than it was to say, "His death was ruled a suicide".

What I took away from that experience was that it wasn't okay to talk about difficult experiences or pain. The problem with that is that it doesn't just go away. "Silence like a cancer grows" Simon and Garfunkel wisely sang in *The Sound of Silence*.

For a while, I internalized everything. I internalized my father's death. I internalized my struggle to understand and embrace my sexuality once I realized I was gay. I internalized my struggles with drug and alcohol addiction. I internalized the severity of my depression and my own thoughts of suicide.

Eventually, though, I ran out of space, like a tea kettle sitting on a hot stove, finally boiling over to release pressure. I released my own pressure through drugs and alcohol, self-harm and risky behavior. When those things no longer worked I attempted to end my own life.

It took years before I could find a way to talk about it. In 2013 I attended an Out of the Darkness Community Walk through the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. A friend had given me a flyer and the words "suicide prevention" hit me hard. I had no idea organizations like AFSP existed. It gave me hope. After attending the walk I went on to organize a campus walk at the community college I was attending, having learned that there were three students in one of my classes who had been impacted by suicide as well. AFSP helped me realize I wasn't alone.

I now serve on the Board of Directors for the AFSP's North Texas Chapter, which is something I never dreamed I would or could do. This entire journey has been such a gift to my life and has helped me heal tremendously. When I was asked if I would be interested in participating in a "Making Healthcare Better Series on Suicide Prevention" panel at the White House, my immediate reaction was, "Me?! Surely they can find someone else more qualified." The same negative self-talk that had kept me isolated all those years was rearing its ugly head again. So I said, "Yes." I have found tremendous growth in learning how to step out of my comfort zone.

I flew to Washington DC on September 28. My heart was filled with gratitude as my cab drove by the national monument. There is so much history woven into the fabric of that city, and there I was, getting to be a small part of it.

I met Trevor Summerfield, AFSP's Manager of Federal Policy, in the front lobby the next morning and walked to the AFSP Washington D.C. office where we met other AFSP staff members including AFSP's Chief Medical Officer Christine Moutier, and several other panelists: each of them incredible, inspiring individuals who represented a variety of different fields and organizations. I joked with Christine about being the only panelist there without some sort of acronym behind my name. But my self-doubts melted away as the presentation began. I realized I did belong.



We were all there because we share a passion for saving lives. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S., and for every suicide there are 25 attempts. We reduce the stigma surrounding mental health by speaking out and showing the world that it is possible not just to survive but to thrive after losing someone you love to suicide; receiving the diagnosis of a mental health condition yourself; your own suicide attempt and/or hospitalizations; and a lack of understanding from those around you. I am grateful to those who were brave enough to start the conversation, and it is through their bravery that I have learned to find my own.

A photo from the panel Jessica (seated at middle) participated in during the "Making Health Care Better Series" event.

Suicide Loss Survivors Needed for Academic Survey



The University of Kentucky is seeking suicide loss survivors for a online survey.

This survey asks questions about the participant, the person who died, and the participant's experiences and perceptions of his or her contact with physicians after the loss.

The researchers intend to use the results to inform recommendations for physicians as they respond to bereaved individuals following a death.

The University of Kentucky study is available at <http://bit.ly/1X38CVN>.

The Turning Point

The Rev. Ken Kulp originally submitted this reflection to the October 2012 newsletter of the Compassionate Friends of Los Angeles.

Some months after my son died, I found myself wondering if I could ever find purpose and meaning in my loss. Would my turning point ever come? Oh, how I missed him. Then it came. I believe there is a turning point for every bereaved parent, if you desire for there to be one. It comes in different ways for each of us, if we are to be "survivors" in the fullest sense of the word. It may come in a sunrise; it may come through another child who needs you; it may come at an altar in prayer. There are thousands of ways it may come—BUT IT MUST COME. MINE CAME IN A DREAM.

There he was! Walking toward me as if coming out of a mist. There he was—that lanky 17-year-old whose life I loved better than my own. He looked deeply into my eyes with a grin on his face, the way he used to do when he was "buttering me up." Not a word was spoken, but everything was said that needed to be said for my turning point to come.

It was time to resume life. I would not be bitter, but in loving memory I would be better. I would live again because I knew that my boy lived again. My own Christian faith was to be retrofitted. It offered meaning and purpose within the shadow of my loss. It asserted that though God does not intend my sufferings, He involves Himself in them. My pain and loss were not to be the end of life. Rather, it was to be a beginning, a beginning to a more compassionate life of quality and caring.

His bear-hug told me, "It's okay. Go ahead and live life in its fullness as a tribute to me." Thank you, David; that's the greatest gift a son could ever give to his dad.

If you would like to remember your loved one in "Out of the Shadows", please send your loved one's name, birth date, death date, your name, and your email address to tspn@tspn.org with the subject line "Remembrance."

"Out of the Shadows" wants your articles, poetry, prose, and artwork for the next issue and the ones to come. We'll also need suggestions and recommendations on how we can make it better.

If there's a piece you want to submit to the newsletter, send it to tspn@tspn.org with the subject line "OOS Submission".

Feedback and suggestions can also be sent to this address with the subject line "OOS Feedback".

Remembrances

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Robert Nolan "Robby" Patterson 2/20/1973-1/1/1992 | Ashley Marie Rogers 1/17/1982-12/30/2006 | Jesse Hal Epstein 2/14/1957-12/14/2004 |
| Jacob Ryan Bowers 9/20/1983-1/1/2011 | Eileen Joy Lamont Forte 10/17/1944-12/31/2009 | Travis Williams 9/14/1979-2/15/2005 |
| Isaac Moises "Moses" Francisco 1/2/1994-2/15/2013 | Steven H. Honeycutt 3/1/1975-1/18/2012 | Matthew Lawrence Cook 3/25/1972-2/15/2012 |
| Cody Scallorn 6/15/1993-1/2/2012 | Matthew Joseph Bates 1/20/1993-9/23/2012 | Marietta Yolanda Gray 9/13/1962-2/16/2009 |
| Raymond Paul Houston 1/3/1949-9/14/1979 | Rickey Joe Ridley 1/23/1957-5/12/2006 | Joshua Beau Peerson 2/17/1982-3/2/2013 |
| Michael W. Payne 1/4/1992-9/2/2014 | Lonnie Russell Small 6/11/1929/1/24/1959 | Alyssa Renee Buford 6/27/1998-2/18/2014 |
| Michael Moore Beckwith 3/5/1952-1/4/2000 | Joseph James "Joe" Costal 1/24/1981-4/23/2013 | Margaret Emma Finlayson Walton 2/20/1881-7/2/1921 |
| Melissa Leigh Moore 1/8/1970-1/13/2009 | Arlyn Maria Beal 1/25/1978-8/7/2006 | David Edward Irwin 2/20/1950-7/12/2006 |
| David James Butler 10/8/1962-11/18/2011 | Matthew Austin Seabolt 1/28/1981-8/13/2009 | Early Lee White 2/20/1950-4/15/2007 |
| Allen Wayne Ferguson 1/10/1981-10/28/2007 | Bradley Hayes Fowlkes 1/28/1987-12/30/2005 | Daniel Owen Hepburn 3/9/1973-2/20/2010 |
| Eric William Stroh 9/13/1977-1/10/1994 | Joshua Venable 1/29/1976-7/2/2008 | Nicholas James Aanderud 2/21/1986-3/13/2011 |
| Garrett Landon Edwards 1/11/2002-8/3/2015 | Shannon Dale Biggs 1/30/1983-7/28/2008 | Morgan Annette Prentice 2/22/1995-8/28/2013 |
| David Phillip Hamlett 1/12/1979-8/9/1999 | Terence Lake 5/28/1984-1/31/2002 | Terry Shannon Sexton 2/23/1973-10/29/2014 |
| Leon Ratcliff 1/13/1926-8/9/1977 | Vickie Diane Kelley 2/1/1954-7/24/2005 | Roman Scott Moore 5/7/1985-2/23/2010 |
| Jennifer Shea Atnip 1/14/1975-4/21/2002 | John Steven Trehwella 2/1/1955-4/3/2014 | Holly Ruth Bosson 2/24/1964-9/6/2012 |
| Austin David Somers 5/8/1985-1/14/2007 | Shannon Elizabeth Godsey 2/5/1977-5/1/2002 | Adrian Ira Mintz 7/12/1975-2/26/2007 |
| Mary Margaret Finlayson Stocksdales 3/28/1906-1/15/1951 | Samuel Paul Loveday 9/5/1927-2/5/1981 | Jimmy Dewayne Mayes 2/28/1943-10/20/1977 |
| Ryan Allen Daugherty 1/15/1977-6/12/2008 | Timothy Arnold Roden 2/13/1989-10/18/2010 | Michael Wayne Tibbs 7/21/1961-2/27/1991 |
| Caleb Daniel Hall 1/16/1986-8/23/2011 | Kimberly Kay Edens 11/3/1985-2/13/2007 | Marla Irwin Byrd 3/11/1967-2/28/1991 |

*Note:
David Edward Irwin and
Marla Irwin Byrd were siblings.*

Grief Support & Survivors' Meetings

West Tennessee

Jackson

Survivors of Suicide Loss
Paula Terry (pcterry64@yahoo.com)
(731) 609-8897

Memphis

Healing Hearts Suicide Grief Support Group
Kerry Mitchell
momofjamaie@yahoo.com
(901) 743-4701

Middle Tennessee

Clarksville

Survivors of Suicide Loss
Veronica R. Conley
veronica.conley@centerstone.org
Debbie Mashburn
debbie.h.mashburn@gmail.com
(478) 320-7973

Columbia

GRief After SuicideS (GRASS)
Karyl Chastain Beal
karyl@columbia@cs.com
(931) 388-9289
grief-after-suicide.com

Cookeville

"Journey" grief support groups
(931) 525-2600
info@heartofthecumberland.org

Franklin/ Murfreesboro/ Nashville

Survivors of Suicide Loss
(615) 244-7444 (24/7)

Spring Hill

Left Behind By Suicide
Douglas Johnson
tennesseedj@bellsouth.net
(615) 435-9621

East Tennessee

Chattanooga

SITE (Suicide Isn't the End)
Tonia Shadwick
wckdstepmom@comcast.net
(423) 834-1709

Survivors of Suicide Loss

Hilda Bevans
zueslittlebear@aol.com
(423) 697-9432
www.suicideperspective.com

Jefferson City

ComPaSS (Communicating the Pain as Suicide Survivors)
Dr. Cynthia Lynn
clynn3118@gmail.com
(865) 680-3256

Johnson City/Gray

Tri-Cities Survivors of Suicide Loss
Linda Harold
lindaphipps1973@gmail.com
(423) 245-5608

Knoxville

Suicide Grievers Support Group
Paula J. Alexander, LCSW, CGC
pj4031@tds.net

Morristown

ComPASS
Dr. Cynthia Lynn
clynn3118@gmail.com
(865) 680-3256

Sevierville

ComPASS
Dr. Cynthia Lynn or Jack and Robin Maples
clynn3118@gmail.com
(865) 654-8247 or 680-3256

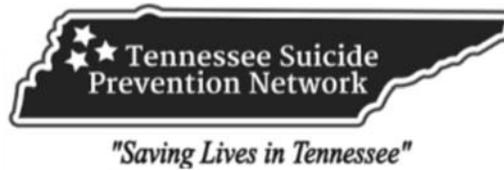
For more information on survivors' groups and groups outside Tennessee proper which have members from Tennessee (in other words, far eastern Tennessee and the Memphis area), please visit
<http://tspn.org/for-survivors-of-suicide>.

Need Help Right Now?

Losing a loved one to suicide is emotionally overwhelming. Survivors of suicide are at risk for attempting suicide because of the emotional upheaval they are experiencing. Feelings of hopelessness, feeling trapped, feeling like a burden to others, increased alcohol or drug consumption, sleeping too little or too much, and withdrawing or feeling isolated from others are signs that you or a loved one may need help now.

If you or a loved one are feeling suicidal, please seek help immediately. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.





TSPN works across the state to eliminate the stigma of suicide and educate communities about the warning signs of suicide, with the ultimate goal of reducing suicide rates in the state of Tennessee. TSPN's continued success is due in large part to volunteers willing to donate their time and energy. If you would like to volunteer with TSPN, please call (615) 297-1077 or e-mail tspn@tspn.org.

TSPN Regional Meetings

East Tennessee Region

monthly, 3rd Thursday, 12:15 PM
Third Floor Conference Room, Cherokee Health Systems, 2018 Western Avenue, Knoxville, 37921

Memphis/Shelby County Region

monthly, 3rd Tuesday, 11:30 AM
Memphis Crisis Centers Training Facility, 70 North Pauline, Memphis, 38105

Mid-Cumberland Region

monthly, 2nd Thursday, 9:30 AM
TSPN central office, 446 Metroplex Drive, Suite A-224, Nashville, 37211

Northeast Region

monthly, 4th Thursday, 9:00 AM
Accounting Conference Room, Frontier Health, 1167 Spratlin Park Drive, Gray, 37615

Rural West

monthly, 3rd Wednesday, 10:30 AM
Fifth Floor, West Tennessee Healthcare Building, 1804 Highway 45 Bypass, Jackson, 38305

South Central

monthly, 1st Wednesday, 11:00 AM
Conference Room A, South Central Regional Health Office, 1216 Trotwood Avenue, Columbia, 38401

Southeast Region

monthly, first Thursday, 11:30 AM
Omni Community Health, 1635 Chestnut Street, Chattanooga, 37408

Upper Cumberland Region

monthly, 4th Thursday, 9:00 AM
Volunteer Behavioral Health, 1200 Willow Avenue, Cookeville, 38502

Blount County Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention Alliance

monthly, 1st Friday, 12:00 PM
Boys and Girls Club Meeting Room, Fort Craig Elementary School, 520 South Washington Street, Maryville, 37804

Bradley-McMinn-Meigs-Polk Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force

monthly, 2nd Wednesday, 11:30 AM
United Way of the Ocoee Region, 85 Ocoee Street Southeast, Cleveland, 37211

Davidson County Suicide Prevention Task Force

monthly, 2nd Thursday, 10:30 AM
TSPN central office, 446 Metroplex Drive, Suite A-224, Nashville, 37211

Giles County Suicide Prevention Task Force

quarterly, 3rd Monday, 10:30 AM
Giles County Career Center, 125 South Cedar Lane, Pulaski, 38478

Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention for Hickman-Perry Counties

monthly, 4th Friday, 12:00 PM (lunch served at 11:30 AM)
Conference Room, St. Thomas Hickman Hospital, 135 East Swan Street, Centerville, 37033

Montgomery-Houston-Humphreys-Stewart Suicide Prevention Task Force

monthly, 3rd Friday, 9 AM
Youth Villages, 651 Stowe Court, Clarksville, 37040

Rutherford County Suicide Prevention Coalition

monthly, 1st Tuesday, 5:15 PM
TrustPoint Hospital, 1009 North Thompson Lane, Murfreesboro, 37129