



SURVIVORS ROAD2HEALING

Bringing hope and reclaiming lives
After a death by Suicide

A Word to Fellow Survivors:

How can we go on? When does it stop hurting so bad?

Well, I'll tell you something that was said to me: "the hardest thing you've ever done is not burying your son. It's learning to live without him." Oh, the truth in those words! Please allow me to share my heart with you...

** All the why's, how's, if-only's, etc. are something that every survivor has to work through in their own way. You will wrestle with it, and wrestle with it, and wrestle with it, and then slowly you'll begin to be OK with the fact that you will never really know. In time you'll learn to release it. But no one can work through these issues for you. You'll have to do it on your own, in your own time frame. Don't let others pressure you to hurry.*

** I won't tell you not to blame yourself because most survivors do. However, I will tell you that you are not to blame. In your head you may know that, but it will take a while to convince your heart of it. Please don't beat yourself up.*

** Suicide isn't about us. (How much we loved/didn't love them, what we did/said, what we didn't do/say, etc) Suicide is about the ones that died. (Their perception of life/self)*

** This is something that I remind myself all the time. My son is not dead, he has just moved to planet heaven. This is a temporary separation, not a permanent one. Thank God for that!*

** Don't be alarmed by the roller coaster of emotions and the 'one step forward, three steps back' that you go through. This is normal. Survivors often hit a real bad slump around 3 months and another slump around the 7th or 8th month. These setbacks happen to most of us, please don't be discouraged. I believe we are healing during this time even though it feels like we're going backwards. Healing comes by processing what we feel, and that's what we're doing.*

** Don't be ashamed to join a support group. Studies have proven that those that keep a stiff upper lip and "handle it on their own" will develop health issues later on. A chaplain of the USC Medical Center says there is great evidence that one forth of all patients hospitalized are there because of unresolved grief in their lives. Talking with other survivors is the best therapy there is! The one that tries to be so strong is usually the one that struggles most with it a year or two later. (Continued on page 2)*

** You'll be forever changed by your loss. Becoming a survivor instead of a victim is a choice that must be worked at, and it's hard work. But one day you WILL laugh again, and it won't be a forced laugh. It seems impossible now, but give it some time. It may not feel possible that entire first year, but you'll learn how to reclaim your life again. And it can be a good life! (New survivors will never believe this, but you'll change your mind later) Please hold on tight to this hope that the pain won't remain this intense.*

** Parents, please remember your other children need your love now more than ever. I've heard so many stories of kids that thought they weren't loved as much as the deceased one, and even felt like the parent wished it would have been them that died instead of the other child. Kids often feel as if they have lost a sibling and a parent, one to death and one to grief. Please do not distance your children or take away special times, such as traditional holiday gatherings. This may be very difficult for you, but they desperately need to know you love them enough to go on with life. And remember, they have also suffered a great loss.*

** Tears are very healing, but remember that tears and grief are not the same. Releasing your pain and working through all the issues is necessary, but don't let depression and grief get a hold on you. It's all consuming! This isn't easy, but that doesn't mean it's not do-able.*

** Don't expect those around you to understand what you're dealing with. Only another survivor will really understand, and it's not fair to expect more of non-survivors than they can give. They can be very compassionate and kind, but they will never sincerely understand. Remember, you didn't understand either until now.*

** Try to be kind to yourself, even if you don't feel like it. Eat right, pamper yourself, lie down and rest even if you can't sleep, etc. Allow yourself the time you need to heal and don't punish yourself for taking longer than you think you should need. At the same time, don't withdraw from life. This is a long road with MANY ups and downs.*

** It's not unusual for a survivor to feel such devastation that they begin to struggle with suicidal thoughts. The pain will not always remain that intense, and you need to give it time to heal. You CAN reclaim your life if you refuse to give up. Don't quit. Remember, you are a SURVIVOR!!*

Little by little hope will be restored and having a future will look like a possibility again. Memories that are agonizingly painful will become bittersweet, then precious- pain will lessen, and laughter will cease to be forced. Tomorrow will hold promise again.

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