

Surviving After Suicide

Reaching Out To Help Others

Group Offers Support, Hope After Tragedy

Carolyn Rayman only remembers bits and pieces from the day her mother died by suicide. Looking back, she sees that as a blessing in disguise.

“I think it’s best. The shock would kill you. We had no idea. I never in a million years thought my mother was capable of something like that,” Carolyn says of the hours following the phone call from her father telling her of the loss. “I just remember falling to the floor.”

With the death of her mother, Carolyn and her family joined the estimated 180,000 plus people across the United States who became Survivors of Suicide last year. Survivors of Suicide are the friends, family and loved ones left behind to grieve when a person completes suicide.

It’s not a group Carolyn ever thought she would join. Growing up in Sioux Falls, she and her sister lived what she calls a “Clever family” existence. While Carolyn’s father worked, her mom, Kathy, stayed home to cook, clean, sew and care for her children. As a mom, Kathy led her daughters in craft projects, served on the PTA and baked elaborate cakes for special occasions. When Carolyn got married and later had a son, Kathy became a hands-on grandmother, reveling in the hours she spent with her grandchild.

But through the veil of normalcy, Carolyn said cracks appeared in her mother’s personality. “She had no ability to deal with problems or anything bad. We never yelled in our house, we never expressed anger. She was very controlling. She had very high expectations of myself and my sister,” Carolyn said.

When her parents decided to buy a retirement home in Minnesota, Carolyn recalls her mother’s behavior becoming more erratic.



Carl Thompson, with his late wife, Kathy.

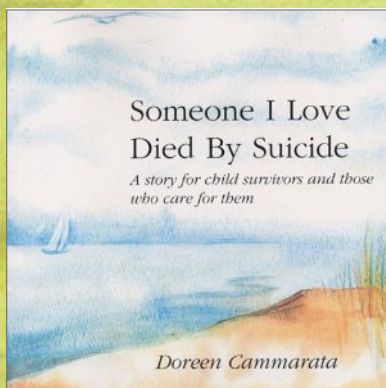
Kathy became highly agitated, unable to relax and enjoy life. She stopped spending time with friends and became excessively negative. Her weight plummeted to 85 pounds and she quit driving because it scared her.

In 1995, Kathy was admitted to Avera Behavioral Health where doctors diagnosed her with schizoaffective disorder. Medical and ECT treatments helped, and after some time she seemed to improve.

“The years went by and she was who she was. In the last three years before her death, she seemed to start enjoying life again,” Carolyn recalls. “In our own minds, we just wanted to put it in the past.”

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The ***Surviving After Suicide Support Group*** helps those who lost someone to suicide. The group is facilitated by a social worker who is also a survivor. The focus is on connecting survivors and supporting one another. Any survivor over 16 is welcome to attend. The group meets from 7 to 8:30 pm on the first Thursday of each month in Sioux Falls at the HELP!Line Center at 1000 N. West Avenue.



This book is one of many available to survivors of suicide through the HELP!Line Center. Dial 211 or 605-339-4357 for more information.

The ***Surviving After Suicide Class***, taught by a survivor and a mental health professional, is a nine-week series of educational and support sessions for survivors of suicide offered in Sioux Falls three times a year at no charge. The class is structured with specific topics discussed each week. Any survivor is welcome, but pre-registration is required. For more information or to register for the next session which begins, Tuesday, Sept. 6, please call 211 or (605) 339-4357.

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In 2010, Carolyn's uncle died unexpectedly in an accident. Kathy appeared agitated and sad, but it seemed normal given the circumstances. Just fourteen days later, she took her own life.

After the funeral, Carolyn knew she needed to take action and make sense of her loss. A friend gave her a packet of information from the HELP!Line Center, which led her to the HELP!Line Center's survivor aftercare services including a nine-week course for survivors of suicide and a support group.

"I had a lot of shame. I thought this [death] made my family trashy. I don't know why I thought that, but I did. When I got to the class, I realized that wasn't true. There were people there from all walks of life," Carolyn said of her first sessions. "The classes were like I had come home. I felt welcome and normal. When you talked, you could see others nodding their heads. It was ok to share your deepest shames and worries. They understood."

After completing the survivor class, Carolyn maintained a strong bond with the other women in her group and continues to talk with them on a regular basis. She also reads everything she can about suicide, borrowing books from the HELP!Line Center.

"I just want to tell people to give the group just one chance. Then, sign up for the nine-week class. I got so much more out of it than I ever expected. I don't know where I would be without it. You will definitely find a freedom in speaking to others who understand."

For more information on HELP!Line Center survivor support services, please visit www.helplinecenter.org or call either 211 or 605-339-4357. Free services include informational packets for survivors of suicide, a lending library with books for people dealing with the loss of a loved one by suicide, listening & support, support groups and classes for suicide survivors.



*24 million people suffer from depression each year.
It is one of the most treatable psychiatric diseases.*



*May the love hidden deep inside
your heart find the love waiting in
your dreams. May the laughter
that you find in your tomorrow
wipe away the pain you find in
your yesterdays.*

Suicide Prevention HELP!Line

Trends show increasing need for services

While thousands of Americans die by suicide each year, organizations like the HELP!Line Center work to reach those who are hurting to prevent such tragedies from occurring.

HELP!Line Center suicide prevention specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can be reached by calling 1-800-273-TALK.

Last year, HELP!Line call specialists took over 900 calls related to suicide. While many callers expressed suicidal ideology, other callers wanted help for a loved one, co-worker or friend. Suicide survivors also called, seeking aftercare services and support. There were 128 completed suicides in South Dakota in 2009, up for 123 deaths in 2009. In addition, 211 calls from people seeking mental health referrals grew by close to 3% last year.

HELP!Line Center Executive Director Janet Kittams-Lalley said the trends in South Dakota last year make prevention outreach more important than ever.

“We are always here to listen and provide support. We never close. We can help connect people who are struggling with options for counseling, support groups, financial assistance with medication and much more. Help is just a call away,” Kittams-Lalley said.

The HELP!Line Center also offers classes to community members, preparing them to assist people having suicidal thoughts. Last year, the HELP!Line Center trained 904 people in suicide intervention and prevention and more classes are already schedule for the upcoming year.

A wide-variety of printed materials are available to the public concerning suicide prevention, including wallet cards listing suicide risk warning signs, posters, magnets and brochures on caring for something who has made a suicide attempt.

Information about suicide prevention is also available at www.helplinecenter.org. The site features resources provided by the HELP!Line Center, plus links to such websites as the VA’s Suicide Prevention Program and youth suicide prevention trainings.

For more information on suicide prevention, dial 211 or call 605-339-4357.

Beyond The Call For Help

Grant Allows For Ongoing Support

As part of a groundbreaking study, the HELPLINE Center gets the chance to save lives by reaching out to suicidal callers and assisting them in overcoming barriers to getting longer-term help.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) awarded the HELPLINE Center a three-year grant that provides staffing to offer follow-up calls to adults who call on the National Suicide Prevention Line in South Dakota and express thoughts of suicide.

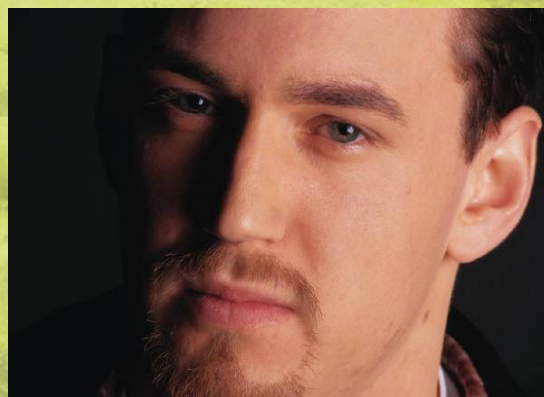
The goal of the grant is to provide continued support past the initial call for help for those at-risk of suicide by connecting them with longer-term behavioral healthcare and supporting them through their time of crisis. Over the past several years, the HELPLINE Center has conducted a single follow-up call with people who are in suicidal crisis. The SAMHSA grant allows Suicide Prevention Specialist Lori Montis to conduct multiple follow-up calls over a six-week period to help callers further address the issues they face.

The HELPLINE Center is one of only six suicide crisis centers nationwide initially approved to participate in this study. When the study is complete, the information will be used to assess the value of follow-up calls to callers at-risk of suicide and to develop best-practice standards for crisis centers.

“We are lucky to be pioneers in this follow-up program. As follow-up continues to grow and be a priority nationally, providing a piece of the continuum of care needed by those persons at-risk is critical,” Montis said. “One young man that we reached indicated being at the verge of attempting suicide when he received a follow-up call. He indicated the follow-up call saved his life.”

The SAMSHA grant program ends in 2011, but the HELPLINE Center plans to stay active in the follow-up process. “Most callers have indicated they feel very appreciative of the fact that someone cares enough to call them back to check in with them. We look forward, past the end of the grant cycle, to continuing with follow-up calls to those people who are at-risk of suicide,” Montis said.

Give yourself the gift of understanding this summer by attending The Compassionate Friend's 34th National Conference July 15-17 in Minneapolis. Find out more by visiting www.compassionatefriends.org today!



Approximately 5 million Americans have become survivors of suicide in the last 25 years.

Arrange A Prevention Training

The HELPLINE Center can provide three different suicide prevention trainings to the community. ASIST training is a two-day class designed for caregivers, and teaches suicide intervention skills. suicideTALK takes just over an hour and is an exploration of suicide awareness for all community members, encouraging every person to find a part they can play in preventing suicide. QPR is a short training that teaches three simple steps to help save a life from suicide. Trainings may be arranged by contacting the HELPLINE Center at 605-339-4357 or e-mail help@helplinecenter.org.

Support Survivor Services

The HELP!Line Center is here 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to help those impacted by the loss of a loved one to suicide. Please consider making a donation to the HELP!Line Center, and helps us continue to offer services to those who are hurting. We also welcome you to make a donation in memory of a loved one.

<http://www.helplinecenter.org/Contribute.aspx>



Dear Survivor,

Welcome to the newly designed *Surviving After Suicide* newsletter. The HELP!Line Center strives to help all survivors of suicide through the recovery process. We hope the contents of this newsletter bring you comfort, hope and help, no matter where you are in your healing journey. Starting in June of 2011, you will receive this newsletter quarterly by email. If you know of someone who would benefit from this newsletter, please have them contact our office, and we will make sure they get added to the distribution list. Should you need support between newsletters, we welcome you to call us 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We are here to help.

The HELP!Line Center