

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

TAPPS[®]

Comfort and Support Since 1994

MAGAZINE

FOR THE LOVED ONES OF THOSE WHO SERVED & DIED



VOLUME 18 • ISSUE 3

TAPS Magazine is dedicated to the brave men and women who died while serving in the Armed Forces, and to their survivors. The magazine is written by surviving family members, friends, and care-giving professionals. We hope you will find comfort, support, information, inspiration, and a sense of connection within its pages.

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★ **About TAPS Magazine** ★

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is a national nonprofit 501(c)3 Veterans Service Organization which publishes *TAPS Magazine* in furtherance of its mission to provide support services to the survivors of service members who have died while serving.

TAPS Magazine is published quarterly and sent free of charge to survivors, their friends and family, service members, and professionals who work with U.S. military survivors.



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TAPS®

Comfort and Support Since 1994

TAPS offers immediate and long-term emotional help, hope, and healing to anyone grieving the death of a loved one in military service to America, regardless of their relationship to the deceased or the circumstances of the death.

TAPS is here for you
24 hours a day
7 days a week

Call us at 800-959-TAPS
Or visit us at www.taps.org

TAPS

SUPPORTS the bereaved survivor through a network of peer mentors. Mentors are trained volunteers who have also lost a loved one in the Armed Forces and are now standing ready to reach out and support others.

PROVIDES a national toll-free help and information line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 800-959-TAPS (8277). Support is available from leading experts in the field of grief and trauma.

HOSTS the TAPS Online Community of survivors, providing secure chat rooms, message boards, blogs, peer group discussion sites, and an extensive website at www.taps.org.

SPONSORS Military Survivor Seminars for adults and Good Grief Camps for young survivors in locations across America, giving survivors the opportunity to share, grow, and help each other heal.

CONNECTS families to resources in their local communities and provides grief and trauma resources and information.

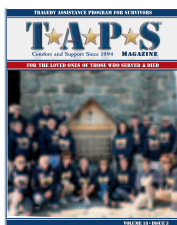


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COVER PHOTO BY
Kyle Harper

Lake Placid Parent Retreat participants pause at the memorial "Dedicated to all Veterans who served in defense of our country."



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Let Us Hear From You



We want to know your thoughts, perspectives, and opinions on TAPS programs and publications. Tell us what you think, send ideas for future topics, or submit an article. Submission guidelines can be found online at www.taps.org. Your TAPS family is waiting to hear from you. ☆

Good Grief Camp-Out

Thanks for the wonderful job you all did with the children this past weekend. Jada had a great time and talked about all of you and the experience she had at camp. She did not want to leave when I came to pick her up, and that made me smile. I am grateful to all of you for a job well done and for allowing her to share her experience of losing a loved one. Even though she was only five months old when her father passed, she still experienced a loss.

Delvea Releford, North Carolina
Surviving spouse of
SGT Rodney Releford

Counselor Connections

Thank you for all you have done for me. This last year and a half has been a real struggle. I now have two TAPS seminars in DC under my belt, and I am so grateful for the reinforcement that this gives me to keep going. I was a mess and wanted to go see a counselor but could not make the call. The call was made for me, the counselor called and set up an appointment, and truly my life was saved. I could not do this on my own, and you reached out and took my hand and walked me to the help I needed. He gave me tools to work with, and I was able to face life a little better.

Deb Lafon, Oklahoma
Surviving mother of
SSG Zachary A. Darras

Fort Hood Regional Seminar

Today, July 28, 2012, marks the first year since I lost my oldest son Jonathon Gilbert. The entire week has been weighing heavy on my heart. Today has been extremely difficult; however, I attended my first TAPS seminar last weekend at Fort Hood. Being there was very hard for me, but I met some amazing people who know exactly what I'm going through, know exactly how horrible I feel, how lost I am. Attending TAPS last weekend helped make today a little more bearable.

Karrie Champion, Texas
Surviving mother of
SPC Jonathon Gilbert

TAPS Widow Retreat

I was so happy to be able to have you all out to the set [CSI New York] and wish I had a bit more time to spend with everyone. Please let them all know that I love them and appreciate them and never, for one second, take what they have gone through for granted. They have given so much. If knowing that this grateful American knows, understands, and never forgets the sacrifices our Gold Star families make in the defense of freedom will help them through a bit, then please pass that message on for me. I am so privileged to be able to support you in your mission. ☆

Your pal,
Gary Sinise

National Seminar

All of us found the TAPS conference to be an experience we want to repeat. It was helpful, encouraging, and honestly, a welcome refuge. It's a terrible reason to be thrown together but in the fellowship of our shared pain, I truly felt anchored and safe knowing that the people around us understood. To look into eyes that have shared the same struggle and to be able to describe who Sean was and see how so many others seemed to raise the same child, had the same brother, knew the same spouse...by no means does it take the pain and acute separation away, but it does make the journey on the road a little easier.

Patrick Callahan, Virginia
Surviving father of
SGT Sean T. Callahan

TAPS Widow Retreat

Thank you all! This was definitely an amazing experience. I enjoyed hearing everyone's journeys and admire the strength, diversity, and love that has brought us all together. Even for just a few words spoken or an exchange of a simple smile, I am grateful.

Ashley Hagemann, Washington
Surviving spouse of
SSG Jared Hagemann



editor@taps.org





Survivor Care Team

Dear TAPS Family, ☆☆☆

As a child, I loved summer. Summer brought the promise of days spent boating on the Mississippi River and late nights playing softball and riding bikes. I never wanted the summer to end. As I grew older, I began to look forward to the arrival of autumn with all the changes it brought. And now I welcome the season with its crisp days and cold nights, autumn leaves turning beautiful shades of orange, red, and yellow, slowly falling to the ground and gathering at my feet. Even though this means that the warmer days are over and the nights are getting longer, the knowledge that the seasons will always come and go is reassuring.

It is also reassuring to know TAPS will be here regardless of the season. Part of the TAPS mission is to help you through the changing seasons of your grief by making the connections to people and programs that will assist you, both in the immediate aftermath of death and throughout your grief journey.

Regardless of how long it has been since the death of your loved one, if you are in need of extra support or would like to know more about TAPS programs and services, the Survivor Care Team is here for you. We are ready to listen to your challenges, explain the programs that can help meet your needs, and get you connected to others who share your experience.

There are two ways to contact our Survivor Care Team: by telephone or by website. You can call the toll free Help and Information Line at 800-959-TAPS(8277). The help line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Or you can reach us on the website. From our home page at www.taps.org, click on the "Join" button in the gold "Survivors Helping Survivors Heal" section near the top and then select "I am a Survivor" from the drop down menu. You will be able to fill out the secure form and check "Get a phone call from TAPS." A Survivor Care Team staff member will call you within 72 hours.

When you receive a call from the Survivor Care Team, we will introduce you to programs and services that are available to TAPS survivors. Then we will connect you to the support you feel will be the most helpful to you. Our programs and services include the Peer Mentor Program, TAPS Casework Assistance, TAPS Online Community, National and Regional Survivor Seminars and Good Grief Camps, TAPS/USO Good Grief Camp-Outs, TAPS Retreats, counseling services, support groups, and other local resources.

Many of our Survivor Care Team members are survivors themselves, so we understand how difficult the grief journey can be. We are here to listen and support you in any way that we can. We want you to know that you are not alone and that TAPS is committed to standing by you.



As the seasons of your grief change, your interests and needs will change as well. The Survivor Care Team will always be available to facilitate your access to new programs and resources, both now and further along on your journey.

As you watch the falling leaves this year, give yourself permission to work through this and every other season of your grief. Realize that although there are very few constants in life, TAPS will continue to be here for you, season after season and year after year. ☆

Sheri Beck

☆ Manager, Survivor Care Team ☆





The Critical Importance of Seeking Support:

Learning from the Geese ☆ By Alan Wolfelt, PhD

If there is ever a time in life when we need others to support and nurture us, it's when someone we love dies. In many ways, grief work is the most difficult work we will ever do. And hard work is less burdensome when others lend a hand.

Sharing the devastation that results from the death of someone precious won't make the hurt go away, but it does make it more bearable. In reflecting on this need to support each other during times of grief, we might be well-served to observe the five natural instincts for support and companionship demonstrated by wild geese.

OBSERVATION ONE

When the flock is on a journey, the flapping of the wings of each individual goose results in an uplift for the bird that follows. By flying in a "V" formation, the entire flock achieves 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

IMPLICATION

When we are grieving the death of someone loved, we too are on a journey. Others who

are grieving are on a similar journey, and we can all be uplifted by journeying together. No, you need not travel alone, nor should you try!

OBSERVATION TWO

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it experiences the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone. The goose then realizes it needs to get back into formation to take advantage of the collective lifting power of the flock.

IMPLICATION

Just as geese are well served to stay in formation with those on a similar journey, we as humans are better off if we accept the lifting power of those who go before us. We are grace-filled when we open ourselves to the support of our fellow travelers.

OBSERVATION THREE

If any one goose has a problem, two other geese will always drop out of formation and follow the wayward goose to help support and protect it. They stay present to the

goose that has special needs until it is able to continue the journey on its own.

IMPLICATION

If we humans can learn from the wisdom of geese, we will always companion each other in difficult times. Receiving help from others strengthens the bonds of compassion and love that help us survive when we are devastated by loss.

OBSERVATION FOUR

When the goose leading the flock gets tired and overwhelmed, it rotates back into the formation, and another goose flies at the point position.

IMPLICATION

No one person on a grief journey can lead the way all the time. At times it is wise to acknowledge that you are tired and need others to care for you and protect you from the headwinds.

OBSERVATION FIVE

While flying in formation, the geese honk to each other as a form of encouragement and mutual support.

IMPLICATION

There are times in life when we all need encouragement from those around us to remind us of our interconnectedness.



I encourage you to make room for those you trust the most. Carefully chosen friends and family members with whom you feel safe can often be at the center of your support system.

We must allow ourselves to rely on each other, otherwise when we are in grief we end up feeling totally alone and completely isolated.

WHERE TO TURN FOR HELP

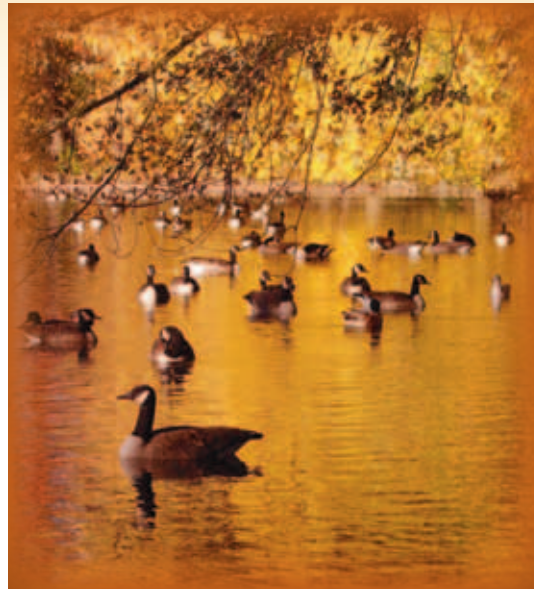
“There is strength in numbers,” one saying goes. Another echoes, “United we stand; divided we fall.” This is a time in your life when you need to let other people in. You needn’t let everyone in all the time, but I encourage you to make room for those you trust the most. Carefully chosen friends and family members with whom you feel safe can often be at the center of your support system.

Seek out people who encourage you to be yourself and who acknowledge your many thoughts and feelings. Open your broken heart a little at a time to those people in your life who are compassionate and loving listeners. In an ideal world, this is your family and friends. If this is not true for you, my hope is that you will seek out other sources of support.

The darkness that grief brings into your life is a place from which you might be tempted to judge others, particularly their motivations. True, they cannot feel your profound loss the way you do, so don’t expect them to be able to do so. Except in cases in which there is evidence that you can’t trust someone’s intentions, try to be open to letting others be of support to you. Remember, you are doing the best you can, from moment to moment, from day to day.

You may also find comfort in talking to a minister or other religious leader. When someone loved dies, it is natural for you to feel ambivalent about your faith and question the very meaning of life. A clergy member who responds with empathy to all of your feelings can be a valuable resource. Just be certain the clergy person you look to for support is a good match for your unique needs.

A professional grief counselor may also be a very helpful addition to your support system. In fact, a good counselor can be



Remember, help comes in different forms for different people. The trick is to find the combination that works best for you and then make use of it.

something friends and family members can’t be: an objective listener. A counselor’s office can be a place of sanctuary where you can give voice to those feelings you may be afraid to express elsewhere. As with everything else in this overwhelming grief journey, counseling is an intensely personal choice. However, when you find the right counselor, you may well have found a safe haven in which to experience the terrifying jumble of feelings impacting you.

Many mourners discover that grief support groups are one of the best helping resources. In a group, you can connect with others who have experienced similar thoughts and feelings. You will be allowed and gently encouraged to talk about the person who died as much and as often as you like. In these groups, each person can share his or her unique grief experience in a nonthreatening, safe atmosphere. Fellow group members are usually very patient with each other and understand your need for compassionate support with no set time limits.

As a grief counselor, I have been privileged to have thousands of grieving people reach out to me for help. Among the lessons they have taught me is that sharing their grief with others is an integral part of the healing process. Perhaps it is helpful to remember that by definition, mourning means “the shared response to loss.”

Remember, help comes in different forms for different people. The trick is to find the combination that works best for you and then make use of it. I hope this article has helped you understand the importance of reaching out for help during this time in your life. Please don’t try to confront your grief alone. Wrap your arms around yourself, but also open your arms to the loving support that wants to embrace you. You need and deserve companions—friends, relatives, counselors, and others who have experienced similar losses—who will walk with you as you make the difficult journey through grief. *

About the Author



Dr. Alan Wolfelt is a respected author and educator on the topic of healing in grief. He serves as Director of the Center for loss and Life Transition and is on the faculty at the University of Colorado Medical School’s Department of Family Medicine. Dr. Wolfelt has written many compassionate, bestselling books designed to help people mourn well, so they can continue to love and live well. For a complete listing and to learn more about the natural and necessary process of grief and mourning, visit www.centerforloss.com.



Beyond the Sea, Scaling Grief Mountain

By Cindy Hooks Morrison ☆ Wife of LCDR Andrew Morrison, USN;
Surviving Spouse of Captain Franklin R. Hooks II, USMC

I have filled the ocean deep with tears and scaled a rugged mountain of grief, yelling and wrestling with my faith the whole way. With an aching heart and a broken soul, I climbed and I cried. I crawled and I yelled. I fell. Armed only with the strength of love left behind, I stood up, dusted off, and climbed again. When I got to the top, I saw that the world was waiting for me to emerge on the other side. I let a silent prayer slip off my lips to Heaven, held my breath, and stepped back into life. And to my surprise, love and laughter found my heart again.

On June 27th of 2004, the earth both shattered and stood still all at once. Two Marines in dress uniforms knocked on my door in the middle of the night with news that turned me into the military urban legend that I had only heard about in hushed whispers in the background of my life as an officer's spouse.

I opened the door to hear a reluctant Marine say, "Mrs. Hooks, I am so sorry to report that your husband has been in an accident and his jet is missing. Search and rescue efforts are in effect."

I don't remember very much of the hours or days that followed. I do remember that at that moment, I fell straight to my knees, hitting a cold hard floor where I remained in constant prayer—begging, bargaining, and pleading with God to bring my husband home to me.

I held on as tightly as I could to the smallest glimmer of hope in my heart; they had said he was missing and not that he was dead. But hours later, that hope was extinguished as they declared my husband—my college sweetheart, my sunshine-filled days, and my giggles at night—lost at sea.

Captain Franklin Hooks never came home to me. He never came home at all. At the

funeral, I stood beside an empty coffin, and I felt just as hollow and empty inside. I know the feeling of being empty and I know what it feels like when you can literally feel pain roll over your body and penetrate each and every single cell.

Losing a husband was unimaginable until I was standing within it. And while my new world changed fast and furious, it was hard to fathom why that was happening. Without my loving husband's presence in the world, I felt like the whole world should just stop. Nothing seemed as important as it was before. Not one material possession was wanted. Every relationship around me was changed. Instantaneously.

Weeks later, Frank's belongings arrived at my front door along with a government death certificate. The state, however, would not issue a death certificate without proof of death. Pieces of a shattered F-18



Cindy and Andrew Morrison with their son Benjamin

do not count. Without a body, there was no proof in the eyes of the state. Still, the federal death certification trumped all; and I carried on without choice and without proof.

In the beginning I did not want to hear from TAPS widows. I felt it made my loss more real. But I was comforted that they were there at a distance and grateful for their around-the-clock availability on a few particularly hard nights.

I allowed myself to grieve full time for a long time. I was in no rush to move forward. Many people, including both of our families, gave me lots of unwanted advice like “take anti-depressants” or “move on.” But I felt that it was okay for the world to see me cry over the death of my husband. He was worth missing. I did not want to simply mask or hide my pain. I wanted to actually heal my heart. If I didn’t, how could I ever consider giving it away again?

There is no blueprint for grieving. It is as different for each person as the snowflakes that fall from the sky. It isn’t easy right away. It’s work. In the beginning, I prayed very hard for God to just take me so that we could be together again. And after a while, I realized that it didn’t matter how much I begged or pleaded, He wasn’t going to let me die.

And so I had to start living a new life.

To force myself to take breaks from my grief, I trained to run the Marine Corps Marathon and went back to graduate school to become a pediatric feeding specialist. Before long my clinical internships began, and that was a huge turning point for me. I was surrounded by tiny patients clinging to their lives. God taught me that if I focused more on helping to ease the pain of others, He would ease mine. And that is exactly what He did. He slowly healed my broken heart. I started making plans again, laughing again, smiling, giggling, and dreaming of a future, of a family. I came back to life.

In time, when the running shoes were wrapped in a few medals and the degree was conferred, I found that memories

of love and photos of the past were no longer enough to fill my world. I missed sharing my days with a best friend here on earth. (Insert lots of guilt and lots of prayer here.) Feeling this way was new and frightening, for I wanted to move forward without leaving Frank behind. I prayed for the right person to come my way.

And then one day it happened. The second that I laid eyes on Andrew, the most amazing feeling of peace swept over me. I knew within seconds that he was my answered prayer. He was patient, kind, and had a solid, unwavering foundation that was strong enough to build new love upon. He made me smile, he made me laugh, he gave me butterflies, and I fell completely in love with him.

I am thankful that I took my time to heal, because Andrew is absolutely worth giving a whole heart to. I have found a man with a heart big enough to embrace my past and my present...and to make all of my dreams come true in the future.

Moving forward takes strength in new ways and has some challenges. For me, one challenge was that I had to lose more of the past to gain a future. Some friends thought that I should spend the rest of my lifetime being a living monument for Frank, but others cheered me on and gave me support and encouragement. I can tell you that I have gained far more than the friends that I lost in moving forward.

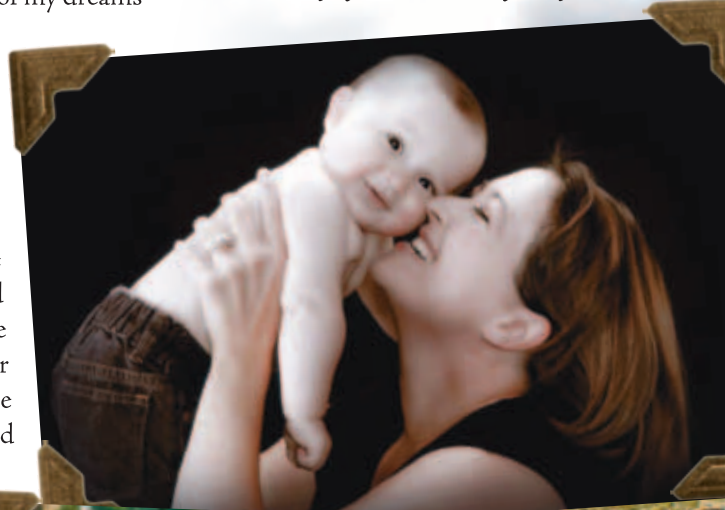
Another challenge was making sure that my new husband did not feel that he had shoes to fill. I made it clear to our families and friends that he did not and could not possibly fill anyone’s shoes, because he has his

own big shoes, incredible heart, and beautiful soul to be loved and cherished.

For me, moving forward was not about replacing love. It was about starting a new life. A completely different one. The gift in this new love is that there is not one single moment taken for granted. I feel that I honor Frank best by continuing to live my life in the way that he most inspired—a life of working hard, loving hard, helping others— and (most importantly) living a life filled with smiles and laughter every single day.

For those who are walking a lonely path right now, I want to encourage you...your heart will feel lighter in time. Take your time; hold on to your faith. The love that finds you will stretch your heart and make it even bigger than you imagined possible. Joy can fill your home again, and all the sunshine and giggles will follow, too. *

Photos courtesy of the Morrison family



Mending the Family Circle:

Coping with the Death of a Loved One

Darcie D. Sims, PhD, CHT, CT, GMS

Once I lived the American Dream. We were a happy family, military by career and parents by choice. And with the birth of our son, our family was to have been complete...whole...two kids so no one would have to fight over a window in the back seat, two kids because I had a lot of recipes that served four. We called him Big A and he had a big sister named Allie. We were the American Dream, at least for a little while.

And then, as it has happened to countless other families, we learned you couldn't paint a rainbow on a wall and expect it to stay. Big A died after a long battle with a malignant brain tumor. The dream came to pieces and we were shattered. No longer the American Dream, we became the American Nightmare. We were bereaved.

We entered a world we knew nothing about. We were strangers in a strange world. We needed help. We needed support. We

needed someone who could speak our language, the language of grief. We stumbled into a darkness that seemed endless and we became lost in despair. We were grieving, but we didn't know how.

Others thought they knew what we should do, but no one really wanted to talk with us. So we stumbled along in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, grieving not just the death of our child, but the loss of friendships, self-esteem, and self-identity as well.

We learned that grief is a natural and normal reaction to loss. It is a physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual response. It is a complex process, guided by our past experiences, religious beliefs, socio-economic situations, physical health, and the circumstances of the loss. Love, anger, fear, frustration, loneliness, depression, and guilt are all a part of grief. It is important to understand, however, that grief is not a sign of weakness or a lack of faith; grief is the price we pay for love.

Grief is adapting, changing, discarding, trying on, taking off. It's a dance and just as we learn the steps, the music changes and we begin again and again and again. We discovered that grief takes far longer than anyone expects, but grief is a dynamic process, a living process with many ups and downs, peaks and valleys, stops and starts.

Grief is being numb, in shock, frozen, protected by a physiological fog that keeps the pain and intensity of reality from our minds, at first. Grief is hurt, raw physical hurt, as well as psychological, spiritual, and emotional pain. It is a terrible physical internal injury that no one sees, because we learn, early on, to hide behind the "I'm fine" mask that society demands we wear.

Grief is being angry, feeling guilty for everything, being frustrated, and feeling helpless. We live with the jagged pieces of a broken

We discovered that each of us grieves alone, but that you do not have to be alone in your grief.

We also learned, and are still learning, that there are no time frames for grief. Each will grieve in his own way, in her own time frame.





We can heal from the terrible hurts of grief, but only if we allow ourselves to claim every hurt and learn to live through them, not avoid them. There are no short cuts to grief.

heart, not quite sure it will ever mend or that we will ever live beyond today. But we do and somehow, we struggle through the depression, the loneliness, and the fear.

We discovered that each of us grieves alone, but that you do not have to be alone in your grief. We also learned, and are still learning, that there are no time frames for grief. Each will grieve in his own way, in her own time frame. Grief may seem endless, yet it is a journey, with many stops and starts.

Grief changes as the seasons do, but grief isn't a seasonal song. It's a lifetime song, but it doesn't have to be a sad song forever.

We can heal from the terrible hurts of grief, but only if we allow ourselves to claim every hurt and learn to live through them, not avoid them. There are no short cuts to grief. No one can make the hurt any less. But there are things you can do to help yourself and support those who are hurting so deeply.

A FEW SIMPLE STEPS TOWARDS HEALING

- Acknowledge the loss.
- Embrace and own the experience and the loss - whatever you are feeling.
- Allow yourself to experience all the emotions of grief.
- Find ways to express your anger and pain in non-destructive actions.

- Find supports. Build a support system of compassionate listeners.
- Skip the self-judgment. Let the judgment of others pass through you without damage.
- Forgive yourself for whatever you believe you have done or not done.
- Work toward healing.
- Practice forgiving yourself for living.
- Concentrate on your loved one's life, not the death.
- Discover the person you are now.
- Begin to release the hurt in search of hope.
- Release the anger and the guilt. Be careful what you release. Once released, you cannot have that hurt, anger or guilt again.
- Never, ever, ever forget your loved one lived.

MAY LOVE BE WHAT YOU REMEMBER THE MOST

Our loved ones died. We did not lose them or the love we shared. Our loved ones are still and always will be a part of us. We cannot lose that love. I will learn to weave my grief into the tapestry of my life, but I will never say good-bye or stop loving Big A.

Come with me on my journey through grief. You cannot eliminate the pain of death, but you can ease the loneliness, confusion, and despair. Come with me and know that we are all a family circle, broken by death, but mended by love. *

About the Author



Dr. Darcie Sims is a bereaved parent and child, nationally certified thanatologist, certified pastoral bereavement specialist and licensed psychotherapist and hypnotherapist. She is the president and cofounder of Grief, Inc., a grief consulting business, and the Director of the American Grief Academy in Seattle, Washington. Darcie is an internationally recognized speaker and prolific writer, having authored seven books and numerous articles. She currently serves as the Director of Training and Certification for TAPS, as well. For more information and a complete listing of her books, visit www.griefinc.com.

White Stones of Honor

By Ken Ashley ★ Surviving father of Corporal Benjamin Ashley

It couldn't have happened...but it did. It shouldn't have happened...but it did. There it was, that wooden box that was holding my precious son, my only son, draped in the colors of the country he fought and died for. It's still hard to say... but, there it was. There I was, standing beside that box, my hand gently lying upon that revered cloth and again the tears flowed freely, and I would not stop them from flowing. They were coming from the break in my heart. They still come, you know; every once in a while they flow, and again I will not stop them.

I can't really recall the weather outside. All I know was that it was hard to see through the pain. It was like trying to look through glass, stained with smoke. But again, I remember the flags...those beautiful, glorious, waving, grand flags. The Patriot Guard brought them in honor of my son. They were there to accompany my son to his final post, there to accompany him to rest with heroes of the past...fellow American heroes.



Photos courtesy of the Ashley family

I found myself wishing the drive to Fort Leavenworth would go on and on, because at least I was with him. All along the highway people would stand on the overpasses with hats off, hands over their heart or above the eyebrow showing their respect to another fallen warrior. And I

found myself pleading within my heart, "Oh don't forget, please don't forget, the price that was paid. Not just by my fallen warrior, but by all those who fell...for us. Oh, please..."

I looked out the window of the black coach they call the "family car" and before I wanted it to be over, it was over. We had arrived at my son's final post, his permanent post. His new "peeps," he would have called them, lined the streets leading to the national cemetery on post. They were saluting, standing proud as though to welcome a fellow soldier. And yes, there were faces of pride and respect...and tears. There were children of the soldiers posted there with small flags in their hands and I knew that living on an Army post, they understood.

We came to a stop sign. The last stop sign before we would leave him to rest. I looked out the window and I saw them. There they were standing...row upon row, line upon line, straight and upright...standing tall, standing proud, standing at attention, those white stones of honor.

I came to realize that each stone represented someone—a true person—a true human stating with confidence and without reservation, "My life for the cause of freedom," and I was humbled.



As we drove by them, my eyes were fixed upon those white stones. And I came to realize that each stone represented someone—a true person—a true human stating with confidence and without reservation, “My life for the cause of freedom,” and I was humbled. Humbled, because now my son would join the ranks of those patriots.

Each white stone announced the name of the one who rested there. From wars of the distant past and the not so distant past to the present. And there are stones that mark the graves with no names. They too gave their lives for the cause of freedom. They all should be remembered, never to be forgotten. And now my son would join their ranks. There is a white stone waiting for him. To mark his act of courage, his act of valor, his act of sacrifice.

As the black coach came to a stop, I stepped out of the car as they were bringing that box to the pedestal to rest. There it was, sitting so still. Old Glory was again draped over it like a warm mantle as if protecting it from the elements. The family sat along the side of the pedestal. I looked again at that respected piece of cloth and it seemed as though it was saying to me, “Your precious son is now my precious son, and I will cover and protect him for right now his blood is mingled with the blood of his fellow brothers and it will run, as long as I fly, through the red stripes I wear.”

My mind began to remember. I remembered waiting 10 years for him to be born

and when he finally arrived... oh, the joy. I remembered bringing him home from the hospital and lying down on the bed and placing him on my chest and feeling him breathe...oh, the joy. I remembered the first day he went to school, how excited he was...oh, the joy. I remembered when he earned his Eagle Scout Badge; he was as proud as were his mother, sister, and I...oh, the joy. I remembered when he told me, “Dad I’ve joined the Army. I want to make a difference.” Oh, the fear and the joy. I remembered performing his marriage when he said his vows to the woman he loved so deeply and passionately...oh, the joy. I remembered the last time he called home from Iraq. He was laughing so hard he could barely talk. And then he said, “Gotta go dad, I love you.”

Oh, the joy...oh, the sorrow.

I was brought back to the present by a command echoing in the air, and I knew what was coming next. “Ready, aim, fire,” and seven rifles fired a volley into the air; three times they fired. And I wept. The

crack in my heart became a crevice. And then in the distance I heard the faint sound of bagpipes playing “Amazing Grace.” And like before, it was over before I wanted it to be over.

Because now I had to leave him, and I would never see him until we met again in Heaven. The people who followed us there were now silently getting into their cars and leaving. I turned around and took one last look at those white stones of honor, and they spoke... “Do not fear, for your son is now safe with us. He is now a brother of the white stones, and we take care of our own. You are welcome to return whenever you wish to visit him. We only ask one thing: when you come, remember us, too. Speak our names out loud, and we will know that we are remembered and that the price we paid is not in vain. Thank you. Thank you for being strong enough to give your son to the cause and for leaving him here with us. Remember, speak our names.”

I turned as I was stepping into the black coach and I said with all the hope and pride I could muster at the moment, “I will remember. I will speak your names every time I return. I will.”

As I looked across the field of white stones, standing so proudly against the evils and terrors of this world, my heart felt hope—hope because there are still men and women of this great country who are not afraid of these white stones. *





Somewhere in New Guinea
November 19, 1944

Dear Sis:

This morning I went out to the cemetery to visit the graves of some of my pals. I wish that the relatives of those dead could visit these graves. It would, indeed, help them in their sorrow to see how nicely and neatly the graves are kept. But after I came back to camp these thoughts have kept in my mind:

TO THOSE I SOLDIERED WITH

On the wind-swept beaches of New Guinea, just where, now, cannot be said;
Comrades so brave lie sleeping in their silent, sandy beds.

The ocean breezes so softly whisper as each day they calmly blow,
Sleep peacefully, O dear comrades, 'neath your crosses row on row.

They were our friends, our buddies, whom we dearly loved and knew;
Whose hearts and souls were always so kind, so brave, and true.

Who came so far from loved ones, to give their precious lives,
And left to mourn their leaving—mothers, sweethearts, babes, and wives.

'Tis not that we should know, and understand just why,
That God, in His mighty wisdom, saw fit that you should die.

But as you sweetly slumber, in your dim and narrow graves,
The Stars and Stripes forever, shall so proudly o'er you wave.

Slumber peacefully, dear comrade, in your bleak and silent grave,
But we, who are the living, know well the price you gave.

Your precious life, you gave it; all any man could give;
That liberty and freedom always, throughout this world, should live.

And we, who are the living, shall indeed carry on,
'Til this cruel strife is over and victory is our song.

We salute you, my dear comrades, for the price you freely gave,
While you so sweetly slumber, in your cold and narrow grave.

Slumber peacefully, dear comrade. Your life here on earth is done;
The battle torture over, peace of mind to you has come.

But God, who reigns in Heaven, so sweetly calls on high,
"In my house come dwell forever and no more, my servant, die." *

Private Olen M. Varner

Sibling Loss

By Heidi Horsley, PsyD, MSW, MS

In the United States today, there is a natural, assumed order to the deaths we will experience in our lives. We believe that our grandparents will die first, then our parents, then our brothers and sisters, and then our children. However, that is not how it happens for thousands of people each year, and that is not how it happened for me. When my brother Scott and cousin Matthew were just 17 years old they died together in a fiery car accident.



In a sense, our siblings are parallel travelers in life; we have a shared history. We expect this to be the longest relationship we will ever have. Our siblings are part of our past and part of our present. We expect to grow old with them, and it's devastating to lose them before their time.

People ask, "Do you have closure?" I remind them that closure is for bank accounts, not love accounts. I really don't even understand the concept of closure. Growing up with a brother made me the person I am today; if he had never been in my life I would be a very different person. We never get over the person that died. What we get over is the intense pain. When our sibling dies, we lose the relationship we once had but we don't sever those bonds. We continue to have a relationship. My brother continues to be an important part of my life, and he always will be.

The majority of siblings in the United States today will spend 80-100% of their lifetimes with each other in some capacity. Our siblings serve as our protectors, confidants, rivals, and role models. Growing up we spend 33% of our time with our siblings: more time than we spend with parents, friends, or teachers. So it is ironic that bereaved siblings are often the forgotten ones in the aftermath of death.

Siblings tend to experience their loss being unacknowledged or minimized as they try to support their parents through their grief. When a bereaved sibling discloses that they've had a sibling die, a common response is "that must have been really hard on your parents," or "you need to be strong for your parents." There is often little or no acknowledgement of our loss. However, we have not only lost a sibling, we have lost the future we thought we were going to have.

It is important to avoid clichés when speaking with those who have had a sibling die; "they're in a better place, time heals all wounds, cherish the memories, God doesn't give you any more than you can handle." These clichés don't help; they only serve to minimize our loss. Before my brother Scott died, when someone had a death I would send a condolence card, now I send myself.

I, along with countless others, have learned how to eventually find a new normal and create a new relationship with those who are no longer with us. We lean on others' hopes until we find our own. The reality is that we don't forget, move on, or find closure, but rather we honor, remember, and incorporate our deceased family members into our lives in a new way. In

fact, keeping memories of your loved one alive in your mind and heart is an important part of your healing journey. Thankfully, our deceased loved ones are a continuing presence in our lives and always will be.

Remember, you don't have to walk this path alone. If you've experienced a loss, there are many groups and organizations, such as the Open to Hope Foundation and TAPS, that can help you. I wish you peace, joy and love on your journey,

and may your ongoing connections with those you've loved sustain you even during your darkest hours. ☆

About the Author



Dr. Heidi Horsley is a licensed psychologist and social worker, and is the Executive Director and Co-Founder of the Open to Hope Foundation (www.opentohope.com). She is an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University and in private practice in Manhattan. An internationally known grief expert, author, and bereaved sibling, Heidi co-hosts the syndicated internet radio show, Open to Hope. She serves on the National Board of Directors for The Compassionate Friends and on the Advisory Board for TAPS.

Children's Bereavement and Emotional Wellness

Part 2 ★ By Andrea Hug, MaPC, MPS, LCPC

As grieving parents, we are concerned about the care and support we are able to offer our grieving children. How can we help children bounce back when they have experienced a profound loss or trauma? How do we offer good bereavement support for children? How do we help others to help our children? Consider the following topics in light of your child's loss. Go through the bullet points with your children to help them evaluate their own thoughts and feelings on the topic. It will raise your awareness of the issues a bereaved child faces and give your child a place to say what needs to be said.

EXPLORING SUPPORT

Who's got your back?

When someone very close to you dies, your idea of relationship changes drastically. Someone who was supposed to be there is no longer there in a tangible way. Who can we count on now? Who can we trust? The experience of upheaval challenges everything we rely on and expect. Exploring this dimension of loss with your child is critical for all future relationships. A child needs to understand what support is, how it helps, and how to ask for that help. Knowing there are still people in their lives that they can count on and ask for help allows them to feel safe.

- Explore support in the family. Who has been supportive? Who has not? Who has tried but what they did wasn't helpful? Who helps you when you have a bad day?

- Explore support within yourself. What characteristics do you have that help you when you feel sad? What are some coping skills that you learned since your loved one died? What things have you figured out that help? Does talking about your feelings help? How?

- Explore support through your friends. Do you have a best friend that you talk to? Is there a friend who helps you laugh even when you feel bad? Did your friends come to support you when your loved one died? What do you like to do with your friends?

- Explore support in the community. Is there a coach or teacher you like who would help if you had a problem? Is there a doctor who can help you when you are sick? Who helps you find a book at the library? Do you have a clergy member who has supported you?

LEARNING TO TELL THE STORY

What happened?

Bereaved children have had an experience that has profoundly altered their lives. The details a child shares about that story are

very important. As your child grows, the story will change as new understanding develops. Learning how to tell the story is essential. Situations will arise when the child will be asked about what happened. Elaborating on their own stories helps children establish what they know and what they need more information about. It helps them face the parts of the story that are scary or that they don't know how to say. As they tell the story, they can learn to live with it and incorporate it into their hearts.

Telling the story includes what happened. As a child tells the story, the events are highlighted: the sickness, accident, or cause of the death; finding out about the death; the rituals that followed; and what happened afterwards. A child may have a public story and a private story.

- What do you know about the death? A child may not have all the pieces of the story. These can be filled in by adults who support the child but must be done in a gentle way.

- What do you believe happened? Understand that children tell the story from their own perspective. If a child is misinformed, give him the opportunity to tell the story as he believes it to be true. Give honest, gentle, age-appropriate facts if the facts are incorrect.



● What did you leave out? Pay attention to the parts of the story that the child is not comfortable telling. Gently help by asking questions, offering vocabulary, and honoring the struggle.

TALKING ABOUT EMOTIONS

Why do I feel this way?

Feelings are neither right nor wrong; they just are. And when a child experiences a profound loss, the feelings are huge. Often children have not learned how to identify or articulate their feelings. And if they cannot do that, they have an even harder time actually feeling them. Most children are able to talk about positive feelings—happy, glad, excited, or joyful. However, the darker emotions can overwhelm a child and, without the emotional intelligence to deal with them, a child sometimes makes bad choices about what to do with them.

A bereaved child is a perfect candidate to learn about emotional intelligence. According to Wikipedia, emotional intelligence is “the ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions.” Children can have many dark emotions such as loneliness, sorrow, guilt, sadness, worry, anxiety, hopelessness, despair, and fear. These are hard to identify, articulate, and work through without coaching. Offer a safe place to explore the feelings. Teaching children that all people have these feelings gives them confidence that they will get through the feelings even if they are difficult. It is important to normalize the feelings and explore how to manage them.

- What is an example of a difficult emotion?
- Who would you talk to about those emotions?
- Can you think of a time when you had a BIG emotion and it went away? What happened?
- Who helps you when you feel: afraid, lonely, sad, anxious, worried, hopeless, etc? What do they do that helps?
- What makes you feel better?

EXPLORING HOPES AND WISHES TOGETHER

I wish I may, I wish I might?

Most children are optimistic and have a natural curiosity that encourages them to strive to new heights. Hope is what powers us onward and helps us to extend ourselves to reach for more. Bereaved children have had their world crash in on them far too early in their lives. They feel more vulnerable than children who have not faced such a loss. They have to deal with tremendous disappointment and the realization that bad things happen to good people.

Children may not want to wish or hope if they think there is nothing to believe in. This is precisely why it is important to explore this area with them. Without hopes and wishes, children may lose their natural curiosity about their future. Even though they have experienced tragic loss, there is still room for exploring hopes and wishes. They need to know that with effort, some good things will happen, they can make a difference, and change comes from within. Sometimes, all their efforts will not produce the end result they hoped for, but the attempt is still worth it because they have gotten farther than if they had not tried. Children will learn coping skills as they go forward and explore their hopes and wishes: courage, determination, integrity, honesty. Asking questions helps your children explore this issue.

- What if you try?
- What if you try hard and your wish doesn't come true?
- What if you hope for something that can't come true?
- Did the person who died influence your hopes and wishes for yourself?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Can you think of a hope or wish that you can make to help yourself achieve your goal?

WHAT'S NEXT?

Once you have read this article, we hope you will spend some time with your children brainstorming individual coping techniques for yourself and for them. Use photos, magazine pictures (collages work well here), drawings, writing, and crafts. Together, you will grow emotional wellness and give your children the tools they need to manage their loss. *



About the Author



Andrea Hug is the surviving spouse of Lieutenant Christian A. Hug, USNR, a search and rescue helicopter pilot who died in 1993. She holds master's degrees in both Pastoral Counseling and Pastoral Studies from Loyola University in Chicago, and is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. She worked for two years with TAPS Adult Survivor Care Team, having spent the previous six years working in hospice with young surviving widows and children.



Good Grief Camp-Outs

Reflections of a First Time Mentor



By Lt Col Robert R. Statchen, Connecticut Air National Guard

One of the many TAPS activities offered throughout the year is the summer overnight Good Grief Camp-Out for children who have lost a parent or sibling. I was honored to have the opportunity to volunteer at one of these camps last June and would like to share my experience.

In addition to the tragic death of a loved one, many TAPS children also experience a break with the military lifestyle they have known all their lives. They move away from a military base, which is often the only community many of them have ever known. They lose their friends and also the camaraderie that anyone who has served in the military understands. When these children lose a parent, they also lose the military support structure of their lives.

The Good Grief Camps and Camp-Outs show the children that they can still have a strong connection to the military life they grew up with. The camps also provide an opportunity to talk about their loved ones in a safe place. Their civilian friends don't really understand the magnitude of the loss.



The camp gives them a chance to talk openly about the best things they remember about their loved one, what they miss the most, and what they are feeling—both good and bad.

At camp, one military member (a mentor) is assigned to each child (a mentee). Mentors are active duty, guard, reserve, and retired military members. The mentors spend all their time with the children over the three day camp, having received four hours of orientation prior to the children arriving.

In my camp at Fayetteville, North Carolina, many of the mentors were young Marines from Camp Lejeune

and young Soldiers from Fort Bragg. Many of them were veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and had lost close friends on the battlefield. There were also many other mentors with no combat experience, like myself. Additionally, there were veterans from other conflicts including Vietnam. As part of the orientation, mentors discussed their own grief issues both in their personal life and on the battlefield.



Photos, TAPS Archives



Immediately after orientation, the mentors meet their mentees. I can say without hesitation that I was as nervous about meeting my mentee as anything I have ever done professionally or personally. I kept asking myself, "How can four hours of orientation prepare me to help these kids?"



Usually when I meet people having these types of personal problems in the military, I walk them to the Chaplain and get back to my paperwork. This time I was going to stay in the room.

The days are divided into grief sessions and recreational and social events divided by age groups. The grief sessions are not counseling. The mentors are told during orientation that they are not here to counsel the kids or replace a loved one. They are also not here to fix things (often a tough concept for military members in general and men especially). They are there to listen and show the children that they care. The grief sessions are conducted by a trained facilitator with all the mentors and mentees for that age group together. It was during these sessions that I started to understand the enormity of the pain these children are experiencing.

One exercise in particular was pretty powerful for me. One person would stand in the middle and say one thing he would like to do again with his or her lost loved one. If that was something you would also like to do with your lost loved one, then you would get up and move to another chair.



Similarly to musical chairs, the person who did not make it back to a chair would stay in the middle and share with the group. When the facilitator first explained the activity, my mentee looked confused and said simply, "I would do anything with my father if I had the chance." Eventually, the children began to slow down trying to get the free chairs because they wanted to be in the middle and say what they would do with their lost loved one. When the facilitator announced the last round, the mentees all groaned, and the game went on for another 15 minutes even though lunch was the next scheduled event!

In another exercise, the mentees would finish a sentence from a card they would take from the facilitator. One card said "When I see a person in a military uniform, I..." One boy responded that he always feels he can go up and talk to the person no matter where they are. Another girl said

that she sees the uniform but doesn't see the face because she just sees her dad. Those responses really showed the connection the children still feel to the military, even if they have been geographically separated from the military because of their loss.

Recreational and social activities take down the intensity level considerably. There were very few times when we were not throwing a football, shooting baskets, swimming, or playing cards, chess or Jenga. We even threw some horse shoes and played croquet and badminton.

At the end of the camp, I exchanged contact information with my mentee. After all my reservations about mentoring, I sincerely do believe it helps. The kids (and mentors) universally wanted the camp to last longer and also wanted to come back as soon as they could. *



About the Author

Lt Col Statchen is the Staff Judge Advocate for the 103rd Airlift Wing in the CT ANG. In his civilian capacity, he teaches at the Western New England University School of Law and the United States Coast Guard Academy.



To sleep or not to sleep, that is the problem...

Advice from T★A★P★S survivors

For many of us, sleep patterns are disrupted after the death of a loved one, whether the trouble is lack of sleep or too much sleep. Sometimes we toss and turn, waiting for sleep to overtake us. Other times we waken suddenly in the middle of the night, heart racing and thoughts whirling. And sometimes we just want to pull the covers over our heads and ignore the new morning. It can come as a surprise that the problems of wakefulness or oversleeping can last as long as they do.

Earlier this year, survivors who subscribe to the TAPS Saturday Message shared some strategies that helped them relax enough to get the rest they needed. It is our hope that you might find something in the suggestions below that will work for you. Since we are all individuals, what works for one does not necessarily work for all. Try the suggestions that appeal to you.

It is best not to watch TV or use your computer just before bedtime.

~MARY-ANN MCLENDON ★ Surviving mother of SPCO Blake McLendon

My husband and I both had a great deal of difficulty sleeping through the night. We were running on two to four hours of broken sleep per night for the longest time. It was horrible! We tried many things and nothing seemed to work for either of us, but a little further along we slipped back into a more normal sleep pattern. Here are some things that have worked somewhat for me:



- Sleepy time tea helps relax the body, making it easier to go to sleep.
- Sunflower seed and bananas can help with sleep problems. Try eating a banana two hours before bedtime. A handful of sunflower seeds at bedtime helps me sleep longer without waking up.
- It's important to be in a dark room. Turn alarm clocks away from you if you have a lighted digital type. No night lights, no TV's turned on, and black out window coverings are recommended. Or use a blindfold made for sleeping. The darker the better.
- It is best not to watch TV or use your computer just before bedtime. It has to do with the kind of blue light they emit that adds to the sleep problems.

I lie in the bed, grab my journal, and write

~SHANETTE BOOKER ★ Surviving spouse of SSG Andre Booker

When my husband Dre first passed away, I used to sleep in his favorite high school sweater. He always wore that sweater when he wasn't feeling well or if he had a hard time falling asleep. I found great comfort in putting it on before going to bed. The other thing that helped is that my phone alarm is set for 10:29 every night with Taps as its ring tone. After Dre passed away I would hear the night bugle call on the post where we were stationed... it helps me now to remember that it's time for "us" to go to bed. I lie in the bed, grab my journal, and write to him as if we were talking about how our day went. After that I find myself snuggling up with his favorite blanket and I close my eyes and think of him holding me as I "trick" myself into falling asleep.

After three years, sleep comes a little easier than in the beginning.

~SUSAN BRITANISKY ★ Surviving mother of LTC Jeanne Hutchinson

Sleeping after the death of a loved one, especially if the death was not anticipated, is impossible for a long time. After three years, sleep comes a little easier than in the beginning, but waking up each morning is still difficult. Sleep is necessary so, for the most part, I think of our beautiful successful child and send her our total love and tell her we will be with her eventually. This gives me some comfort of mind and body and allows sleep to come.

If I have trouble getting to sleep, I warm a glass of milk.

~ROSE D'ANGELO ★ Surviving mother of TSgt Nicholas D'Angelo

I still do not get enough sleep. If I have trouble getting to sleep, I warm a glass of milk and put a teaspoon of honey in it. That works for me. I keep a journal and it seems to help me to write in it as often as I can. I take things one day at a time. If I have trouble sleeping, I do not worry about it. I read scriptures and books written by people who have experienced losses like I have. Lots of prayers, too. I pray for God's comfort, strength, and peace for myself and my other children.

I get up and do some things that never got done during the day.

~SHIRLEY HEMENWAY ★ Surviving mother of ET1 Ronald Hemenway

I was working right after Ronald died, and yes, there were days I went to work very tired. Usually, the next night I could sleep because I hadn't had much sleep the night before. I still have nights I can't sleep, so I get up and do some things that never got done during the day. I feel better if I accomplish something on the nights I don't sleep. Keeping busy seems better than tossing and turning all night and keeping my husband awake.

The dark is the worst time for my mind.

~ALICE DANIEL ★ Surviving mother of SSG William Daniel

The dark is the worst time for my mind. I pray for each and every one of you to come up with your own method of coping with sleep time as soon as possible. I learned two things early on. One was not to go to bed until I could no longer hold my eyes open. The other was that if I woke up in the middle of the night, I might as well get up. Otherwise I lie in bed and

my mind wanders to places I do not wish to visit. However, I could not sit in my den like a bump on a log from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. Needlepoint, crochet, puzzles or any mind-occupying activity is a good thing to do. When it became apparent that I was not getting enough sleep to operate on, I finally gave in to our long-time family doctor and began taking a nighttime sleep aid which has helped tremendously.

On those nights when I wake up and can't get back to sleep, I sit up and read.

~KATHY ALLEN ★ Surviving mother of SSGT Charles Allen

On those nights when I wake up and can't get back to sleep, I sit up and read. I find that a good book takes my mind to other places where I can relax and, for a short while, not think about what has happened. On one night, I knew I wasn't going to get back to sleep anytime soon, so I got up as if it were morning, put on a pot a coffee, and started watching a movie. After a cup of coffee, I fell asleep on the couch and woke up as the movie ended. I was able to go back to bed and sleep through the night.

I can have a great deal of trouble falling asleep. My mind wanders places I don't want it to go.

~MARY RICHARDS ★ Surviving mother of A1C Kenneth L Richards

I can have a great deal of trouble falling asleep. My mind wanders places I don't want it to go. Memories and my imagination can seem so real! I was given the gift of a set of CDs with sound tracks that help ease anxiety and help me fall asleep. I don't use it all of the time, but it can help. I also use a guided meditation to keep my mind clear and "whirling-thought" free to help ease me into much needed sleep.

I'm not much of an early riser, but I just get up and get going. There is always laundry to fold or food to prepare. One of the other things I do is try to avoid napping. Sleeping during the day just keeps me up longer at night.

In this darkness, I find it helpful to remember Psalm 30:5 "Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning." I will not be forever weeping. There will be joy again. A time will come when my darkness is relieved and a new day begins. ★





Books to Support Survivors of Suicide Loss

Kim Ruocco, the director of TAPS Suicide Postvention Programs, is a survivor of suicide loss herself. As the director of the TAPS programs, Kim reaches out to military families and personnel throughout the country, bringing support and the expertise of more than 20 years as a social worker. These are the books Kim recommends to those who have experienced a loss by suicide.

BOOKS FOR GENERAL READING

Finding Peace Without All The Pieces After a Loved One's Suicide
By LaRITA ARCHIBALD

Beginning with the suicide of her son in 1978, LaRita leads the reader from the initial trauma through the psychological and emotional landscape that must be traversed to find eventual peace, giving survivors of suicide loss a framework for understanding the complexities of suicide grief and the reassurance that what they are experiencing is normal. She shares stories of military suicide loss and how those left behind gained the strength to work through the circumstance of their tragedies.

Touched by Suicide: Hope and Healing After Loss
By MICHAEL MYERS, MD,
& CARLA FINE

Whether you are struggling with fresh grief at a loved one's death by suicide or your loss happened years ago, you will see that you are not alone. Five million Americans are affected—directly or indirectly—by this tragedy each year. In this definitive guide book, Myers and Fine combine their perspectives to offer compassionate and practical advice to anyone affected by suicide.

Surviving the Shadows... A journey of Hope into PTS
By BOB DELANEY WITH
DAVE SCHEIBER

Surviving the Shadows is an uplifting journey through powerful and inspiring stories about an array of people who have suffered from post traumatic stress. Delaney introduces you to medical experts who have developed methods in dealing with the disorder and profiles programs around the country devoted to assisting PTSD sufferers. The stories will help you understand post traumatic stress and show we can help each other overcome it.



Transforming Traumatic Grief
By COURTNEY ARMSTRONG

This book provides compassionate support and creative ways to soothe and transform your emotions with powerful, but simple, strategies that: promote healing and calm feelings of anxiety, anger, or despair; alleviate nightmares, intrusive images, and ruminating thoughts; relieve guilt and regrets so you can open up to new experiences in your life; help you get the kind of support you want from other people; and retain "the living story" of your loved one and sense them as a positive presence in your life.

Why People Die by Suicide
By THOMAS JOINER

Drawing on clinical as well as personal experience, Joiner brings a comprehensive understanding to seemingly incomprehensible behavior. Among the many people who have considered, attempted, or died by suicide, he finds three factors that mark those most at risk of death: the feeling of being a burden on loved ones, the sense of isolation, and the learned ability to hurt oneself. Joiner uses information taken from clinical anecdotes, history, literature, popular culture, anthropology, epidemiology, genetics, and neurobiology.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

But I Didn't Say Goodbye: Helping Children and Families After a Suicide

BY BARBARA RUBEL

Seen through the eyes of Alex, an eleven-year-old boy, whose father has died by suicide, this story is a glimpse into a child's traumatic and life changing personal experience. *But I Didn't Say Goodbye* introduces you to a bereaved family immediately after a suicide and ends five years later. The dialogue will show you how you can help develop honest, open communication between children and the people in their lives.

After a Parent's Suicide: Helping Children Heal

BY MARGO REQUARTH

Focusing on how to help children and teens in the aftermath of a parent's suicide, this book provides an overview of current thinking and research on suicide and explores the increased risk of mental health issues for child survivors. In addition to information about how children grieve at different developmental levels, it also offers comfort to the bereaved, specific coping strategies for families facing this trauma, and insight into what promotes resiliency.

BOOKS FOR SPOUSES

No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving The Suicide Of A Loved One

BY CARLA FINE

Carla Fine brings suicide survival from the darkness into light, speaking frankly about the overwhelming feelings of confusion, guilt, shame, anger, and loneliness that are shared by survivors. Fine draws on her own experience and on conversations with many other survivors—as well as on the knowledge of counselors and mental health professionals. She offers a strong

helping hand and invaluable guidance to family and friends who are left behind, struggling to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives.

I'm Grieving as Fast as I Can: How Young Widows and Widowers Can Cope and Heal

BY LINDA SONES FEINBERG

Feinberg guides young widows and widowers through the normal grieving process while highlighting the special circumstances of facing an untimely death. Hundreds of young widows and widowers, with whom the author has worked for more than a decade as a counselor, share their thoughts and dilemmas about the situations that arise as a result of losing a loved one. Among them are what to tell young children experiencing a parent's death, returning to work, and dealing with in-laws and other relatives.

BOOKS FOR PARENTS

My Son, My Son

BY IRIS BOLTON WITH
CURTIS MITCHELL

Iris Bolton describes in detail her journey from the devastation of losing her son Mitch by suicide to the step by step healing that took place in her life. The book is hopeful and helpful to those who have suffered any loss. It gives promise of recovery and healing and learning to live with the terrible event. Written in 1983, *My Son, My Son* is now in its 18th printing and is used as a teaching guide for students in colleges from California to Maine.

Chasing Death: Losing a Child to Suicide

BY JAN ANDERSON

Chasing Death attempts to put candid words to the often incommunicable pain that the surviving families endure, not only through the telling of Kristian's story, but through the experiences of other families mourning the loss of a child, stepchild,

grandchild, sibling, friend or relative to suicide. This book clearly demonstrates how debilitating the grief can be and how it can still cripple a survivor years after the event.

BOOKS FOR SIBLINGS

Do They Have Bad Days in Heaven?

BY MICHELLE LINN-GUST

Michelle Linn-Gust takes the reader through the personal experience of losing her younger sister Denise Linn and weaves in the available research for sibling survivors. Michelle also describes sibling loss throughout the life span; no matter how old you are, you'll find valuable help in this book. Michelle explains suicide, the grief process, and how sibling death impacts the brothers and sisters left behind. She adds practical advice for how sibling suicide survivors can help themselves.

An Empty Chair: Living in the Wake of a Sibling's Suicide

BY SARA SWAN MILLER

The accounts of siblings' experiences in this book are based on interviews with more than thirty people from all over the United States, as well as the author's own experience of losing a sister to suicide. Just as sibling relationships are varied and complex, so the feelings and experiences of sibling suicide survivors run a long and complex gamut from deep grief, to anger, to guilt, to relief. These accounts will help others see that they are not alone. *

These books will be available at the TAPS Suicide Survivors Seminar in October. In addition, LaRita Archibald, Courtney Armstrong, Iris Bolton, and Bob Delaney will be presenters this year at the seminar.





What Grieving People Want You to Know

By Virginia A. Simpson, PhD, FT

Through my work and the privilege of listening to so many stories, I have come to wonder where people get their ideas about how another person is supposed to grieve.

Here's a test for you:

- ❖ How long does it take to recover after someone you love has died?
- ❖ When should a person begin to "get on with their lives?"
- ❖ Do you think it's better to mention the deceased's name to the grieving person or to avoid mentioning the name so that you won't make that person cry?
- ❖ Do you think it's a good idea to tell a grieving person how strong they are?

You can figure out the answers to these questions by understanding what grieving people want you to know about them.

1. I am not strong. I'm just numb. When you tell me I am strong, I feel that you don't see me.
2. I will not recover. This is not a cold or the flu. I'm not sick. I'm grieving and that's different. I will not always be grieving as intensely, but I will never forget my loved one and rather than recover, I want to incorporate his life and love into the rest of my life. That person is part of me and always will be, and sometimes I will remember him with joy and other times with a tear. Both are okay.

3. I don't have to accept the death. Yes, I have to understand that it has happened and it is real, but there are just some things in life that are not acceptable.

4. Please don't avoid me. You can't catch my grief. My world is painful, and when you are too afraid to call me or visit or say anything, you isolate me at a time when I most need to be cared about. If you don't know what to say, just come over, give me a hug or touch my arm, and gently say, "I'm sorry." You can even say, "I just don't know what to say, but I care, and want you to know that."

5. Please don't say, "Call me if you need anything." I'll never call you because I have no idea what I need. Trying to figure out what you could do for me takes more energy than I have. So, in advance, let me give you some ideas:

- (a) Bring food.
- (b) Offer to take my children to a movie or game so that I have some moments to myself.

So please, just love me as I am today, and know, that with your love and support, the joy will slowly return to my life. But I will never forget and there will always be times that I cry.



(c) Send me a card on special holidays, birthdays (mine, his or hers), or the anniversary of the death, and be sure and mention her name. You can't make me cry. The tears are here and I will love you for giving me the opportunity to shed them because someone cared enough about me to reach out on this difficult day.

(d) Ask me more than once to join you at a movie or lunch or dinner. I may say "no" at first or even for a while, but please don't give up on me because somewhere down the line, I may be ready, and if you've given up, then I really will be alone.

6. Try to understand that this is like I'm in a foreign country where I don't speak the language and have no map to tell me what to do. Even if there were a map, I'm not sure right now I could understand what it was saying. I'm lost and in a fog. I'm confused.

7. When you tell me what I should be doing, then I feel even more lost and alone. I feel bad enough that my loved one is dead, so please don't make it worse by telling me I'm not doing this right.

8. Please don't call to complain about your husband, your wife, or your children. Right now, I'd be delighted to have my loved one here no matter what they were doing.

9. Please don't tell me I can have other children or need to start dating again. I'm not ready. And maybe I don't want to. And besides, what makes you think people are replaceable? They aren't. Whoever comes after, will always be someone different.

10. I don't even understand what you mean when you say, "You've got to get on with your life." My life is going on, but it may not look the way you think it should. This will take time and I never will be my old self again. So please, just love me as I am today, and know, that with your love and support, the joy will slowly return to my life. But I will never forget and there will always be times that I cry.

What a Grieving Child Wants You to Know

1. I want someone who will listen to me when I speak and not tell me that what I'm saying is wrong or that I shouldn't be feeling what I feel.

2. I want someone who will talk to me, honestly and with compassion. I don't want to be talked at or ignored.

3. I want people to understand that I, along with my parents and other family members, have lost someone I love very much.

4. I don't want my pain compared to my mother's or father's. You may think they feel worse than I do, but unless you are me today, going through this terrible nightmare, you don't know how I feel.

5. I want my teachers to understand that even though it may not seem like it, I am

And most of all, I want your unconditional love, compassion, understanding, and patience.

doing the best I can. It's hard for me to focus on schoolwork or anything else right now. But how can I tell you about my sorrow and fears and confusion, when I'm not sure myself what's going on.

6. I want someone to look me in the eye when they speak to me.

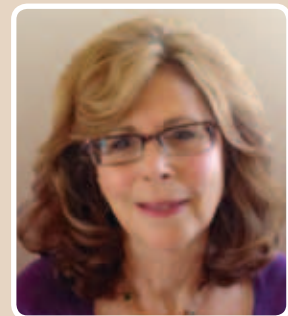
7. I don't want anyone telling me I have to be strong for my mother, father, sisters, brothers, or anyone else. I don't know what that means. Are you telling me I shouldn't cry? Are you telling me I shouldn't feel? When someone so important to me has died, what does being strong mean?

8. I want someone to tell me what it is like to grieve. I want someone who will help me understand what this is and if I will survive.

9. I want to talk to someone my own age so that I will know I am not the only one and that I will survive.

10. And most of all, I want your unconditional love, compassion, understanding, and patience. *

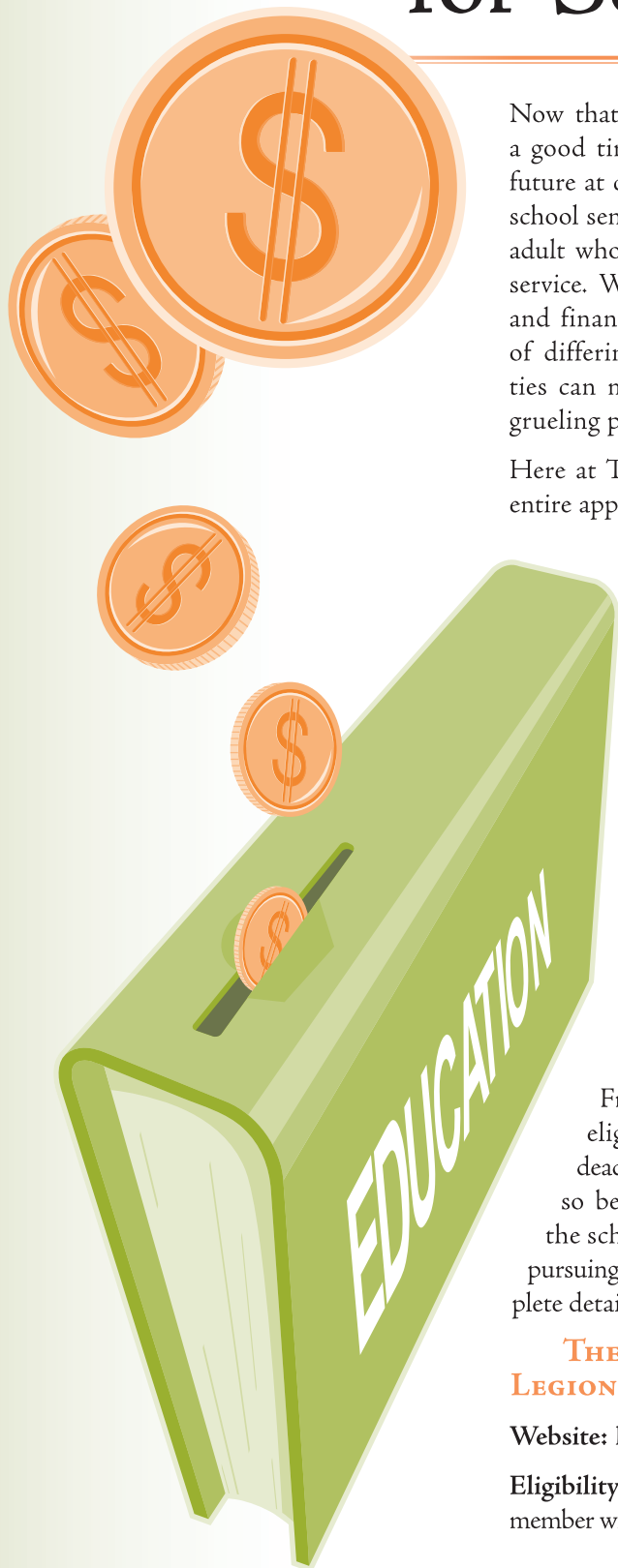
About the Author



Dr. Virginia A. Simpson is a nationally and internationally recognized authority on dying and grieving. She brings more than a quarter of a century of experience and expertise to her work helping grieving children, teens, and adults cope with the loss of a loved one due to homicide, suicide, accident, or illness. She has appeared on numerous television and radio programs, is a sought after public speaker, and is also a consultant to school personnel, psychologists and other mental health professionals. For more information and articles, visit www.drvirginiasimpson.com



T*A*P*S Top Picks for Scholarships



Now that school is back in session, it's a good time to start planning for your future at college, whether you are a high school senior, surviving spouse, or young adult whose parent has died in military service. When applying for educational and financial resources, the large range of differing requirements and eligibilities can make the scholarship search a grueling process.

Here at TAPS we understand that the entire application procedure can be overwhelming, so we have sorted through many of the scholarships available to families of the fallen. Listed below are the Casework Assistance team's top picks for scholarships and educational resources. Our criteria for judging included recipient eligibility, allowed allocation of funds, average dollar amount, and ease of application. Although there may be many more resources available to specific individuals, this list will get you started.

From time to time, the rules for eligibility, amounts offered, and deadlines for application can change, so be sure to visit each website for the scholarships you are interested in pursuing. Contact information and complete details can be found on the websites.

THE AMERICAN LEGION, LEGION LEGACY SCHOLARSHIPS

Website: legion.org/scholarships

Eligibility: Dependent children of a service member who died on active duty are eligible.

Applicants must be high school seniors or high school graduates.

Allocation: Grants for educational assistance are based upon income level.

Deadline: Applications must be post-marked no later than April 15.

THE CHILDREN OF FALLEN PATRIOTS FUND

Website: fallenpatriots.org

Eligibility: Dependent children of a service member who died in the line of duty are eligible. Applicants do not have to be college age to enroll for future assistance, and educational counseling can be provided as college approaches.

Allocation: Grants assist with educational costs related to tuition, books, fees, room and board, supplies, etc. Funds are paid out directly to the educational institution.

THE CHILDREN OF FALLEN SOLDIERS RELIEF FUND

Website: cfsrf.org

Eligibility: Dependent children and spouses of a service member who died in connection to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), or Operation New Dawn (OND) are eligible.

Allocation: Funds are distributed prior to the fall and spring college semesters. Amounts of each grant are dependent upon availability of funds and level of need.

DAVID FRY SCHOLARSHIP

Website: gibill.va.gov/benefits

Eligibility: Children of an active duty member of the Armed Forces who has died in the line of duty on or after September

11, 2001, are eligible. A child may be married or over 23 and still be eligible.

Allocation: Scholarships pay for full tuition and fees paid directly to the school for all public school in-state students. For those attending private or foreign schools, tuition and fees are capped at \$17,500 per academic year. Students attending a private institute of higher learning in Arizona, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, or Texas may be eligible for a higher tuition reimbursement rate. A monthly housing allowance as well as a stipend for books and supplies is included.

FISHER HOUSE FOUNDATION'S JOANNE HOLBROOK PATTON MILITARY SPOUSE SCHOLARSHIP

Website: militaryscholar.org

Eligibility: Scholarships are offered in partnership with the National Military Family Association to spouses of active duty, guard and reserve, deceased, or retired service members.

Allocation: Scholarships aid in paying for tuition, fees, and room and board for GED or ESL, vocational training, professional certification, post-secondary school, and graduate school for in-class or on-line courses on a full-time or part-time basis.

Deadline: March 1

FISHER HOUSE FOUNDATION'S MILITARY CHILDREN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Website: militaryscholar.org

Eligibility: Scholarships are offered in partnership with the Defense Commissary Agency to dependent unmarried children under age 23 of active duty personnel, reserve/guard, and retired military members; survivors of service members who died while on active duty; or survivors of individuals who died while receiving retired pay from the military.

Allocation: Awards provide for payment of tuition, books, lab fees, and other related expenses.

THE FOLDS OF HONOR FOUNDATION CHILDREN'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Website: foldsofhonor.org

Eligibility: Dependent children of a service member who died in the line of duty are eligible. The service member must have been deployed in support of OEF, OIF, or OND. Applicants must be in grade K-12.

Allocation: Scholarships up to \$5,000 subsidize tuition, tutoring, school uniforms, books, fees, after school educational programs, and approved educational summer camps.

THE FOLDS OF HONOR FOUNDATION IMMEDIATE USE SCHOLARSHIP

Website: foldsofhonor.org

Eligibility: Dependent spouses and children of a service member who died in the line of duty are eligible. Applicants must be currently attending, or must have been accepted at, a college or vocational, technical, or certification program.

Allocation: Funds of up to \$5,000 (\$2,500 per semester) are awarded for use toward expenses.

Deadline: November 15 for spring 2012-13.

THE FOLDS OF HONOR FOUNDATION FUTURE USE SCHOLARSHIP

Website: foldsofhonor.org

Eligibility: Dependent children of a service member who died in the line of duty are eligible. Applicants are enrolled from infancy up to 11th grade.

Allocation: Scholarships of \$5,000 are placed in a college fund for when the child starts college.

HOPE FOR THE WARRIORS

Website: hopeforthewarriors.org

Eligibility: Spouses of service members who died in the line of duty after September 11, 2001 are eligible.

Allocation: Financial assistance is awarded for continued education at accredited universities, colleges, and trade schools. Scholarship awards of \$5,000 are made co-payable to the scholarship recipient's institution for payment of tuition, books, and supplies. The scholarship may be applied for each year for up to four years for a maximum benefit of \$20,000.

Deadline: See website for spring and fall deadlines.

SURVIVORS AND DEPENDENTS ASSISTANCE (DEA)

Website: gibill.va.gov/benefits

Eligibility: Scholarships are offered to children and spouses of veterans who died, are totally disabled as the result of a service-connected disability, or are missing in action or captured. There are also periods of eligibility related to age and/or time elapsed since the VA has qualified the recipient as eligible.

Allocation: The program offers up to 45 months of education benefits. These benefits are to be used for degree and certificate programs, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training. Spouses may take a correspondence course. Remedial, deficiency, and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances.

A Final Word

As you begin your scholarship search, remember that TAPS is here for you. Our Casework Assistance department is available to help you research scholarships and walk you through every step of funding your education. Call us at 800-959-TAPS(8277) for more information about the scholarships listed here or other opportunities, including state-specific, National Guard, and alternate-eligibility scholarships. *





CredAbility ReConnect

Helping Survivors Deal with the Financial Aftermath of Military Loss

TAPS is excited to announce the launch of CredAbility ReConnect, a free online financial education and counseling program for military survivors. The goal of the program is to help grieving military families resolve financial difficulties and build economic security as they rebuild their lives in the years following the death of their loved one. Supported by a grant from Citi Community Development, the program was developed by CredAbility, a national nonprofit credit counseling organization, in collaboration with TAPS,

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) and the Military Spouse Corporate Career Network (MSCCN).

Many families of our fallen service members face financial challenges following the death of their loved one. The loss can be so overwhelming that it eclipses other parts of life, and survivors can easily find themselves dealing with serious financial issues because their attention is so focused on other things.

Regardless of the relationship to their loved one, survivors are often required to make financial decisions immediately after a military death has occurred. For a surviving spouse, military pay is cut off following a death and a new financial management system must be put in place to address the household's needs. In cases where the service member is not married, surviving parents must close bank accounts for their deceased child and manage the financial matters left behind. Adult siblings may feel the need to support other family members during the difficult transition, regardless of whether they are just starting a career, enrolling in college, or finishing high school at the time of their brother's or sister's death.

Survivors often struggle to concentrate and perform well on the job when returning to work following the death. In many cases, they need extra time off (usually without pay) to settle the estate, or they may undergo grief counseling that prevents them from working full time. Other complicating factors include forced relocations, job loss, changes in employer, or interrupted schooling that results in forfeited tuition and the immediate repayment of student loans. All of these situations can bring financial challenges, especially when survivors have little or no savings to fall back on. The financial implications can last for years.

Life insurance, including Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI), can cause a particular heartache for survivors. Regardless of who received the money, all survivors who have lost a loved one are forced to reconcile the conflicting emotions that can arise from receiving—or not receiving—any amount of money from the government. The TAPS Casework

CredAbility ReConnect provides the tools and education you need to maintain financial stability during challenging times.

ReConnect
FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT FOR ARMED SERVICES VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES
A program in partnership with TAPS

To learn more visit www.CredAbility.org/TAPS or call 888.344.3255

Are you working to help those who are grieving the loss of a loved one to gain access to free financial education and counseling resources?

CredAbility ReConnect is a grant-funded program that provides free financial education and counseling resources to military survivors. The program is a combination of several counseling and support services that can help you manage the financial challenges and build economic security for your family.

Our certified counselors can help you create a family budget, find a debt management plan, avoid foreclosure or get your business credit back to work. We also provide necessary resources to help you manage the financial challenges and build economic security for your family.

In addition to counseling, our personal financial planning program supports the Small Family business of 50 employees. Our business advisors and a financial advisor will allow you to create a business plan and a financial plan.

Services included on the program are:

- Working with the Financial System of Obligations
- How Do I Handle Debt?
- Understanding Military Benefits
- Learning on a Limited Budget
- Finding Your Budget: Understanding Budget Development & Adjustment
- Understanding Your Rights: Handling Your Debt Discharge
- Reporting with Creditors
- Interest to Creditors
- Getting Your Debt
- Getting Back to the Basics

To learn more visit www.CredAbility.org/TAPS or call 888.344.3255

Assistance Department frequently hears expressions of guilt about using what some refer to as “blood money.” Reluctance and inner turmoil seem to be a common theme among survivors wondering what to do with these funds.

For some, the money becomes its own stressor related to the death of the service member. Retrieving that money means accepting that the loved one is never coming home. Ignoring the money may not be the best decision for your family’s situation. Making use of the funds can create fears of making mistakes in managing the money left to you.

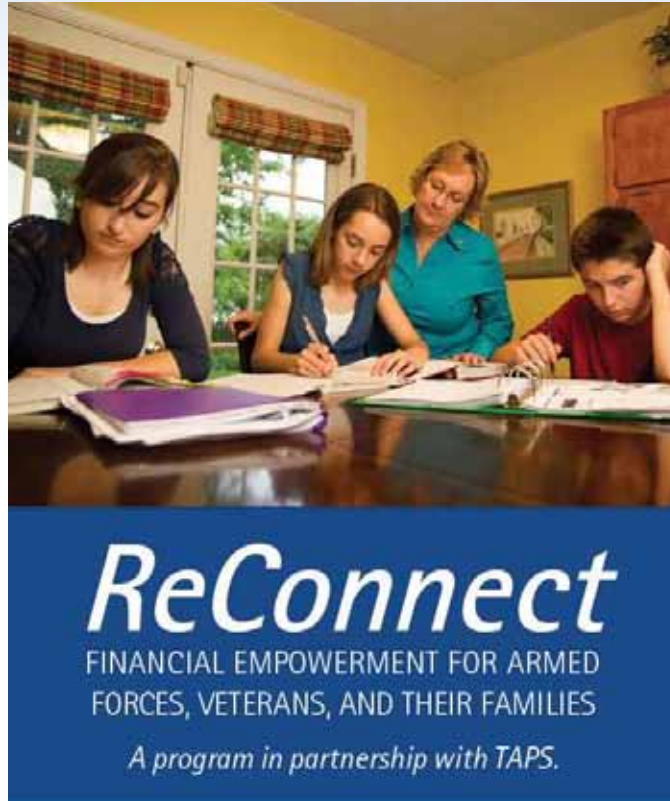
Where can one turn when struggling to find the new normal of changed finances? Who will help figure out the tax implications, set a budget, and allocate the resources to sustain the family over the long term?

TAPS survivors now have a dedicated website for advice and information on debt management, loans, budgeting, foreclosure prevention, home purchasing, and more. To get started, visit www.credability.org/taps and register.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

CredAbility ReConnect addresses financial challenges through a combination of online tools, education, and counseling. Individuals and families served by TAPS are able to access custom versions of the online program using the website above. Courses are straightforward and full of useful information that is helpful for all survivors. The courses are comprised of modules that involve a time commitment of 15-20 minutes each.

Easing the Transition: Online courses, such as Understanding Your Military Benefits and Reconnecting Financially help ease the financial transition for those who have experienced the death of a service member.



Budget and Credit Counseling: Personalized financial check-ups help users manage their money better and prioritize spending through easy-to-follow plans. Online courses help with wise use of credit, debt reduction strategies, and setting goals for a healthier financial future.

Debt Management Plans: Custom affordable repayment plans, often with reduced interest rates, fees, and penalties for qualified individuals, help families pay down debt, negotiate with creditors and regain their financial footing.

Foreclosure Prevention and Home Buying Guidance: HUD-certified counselors provide guidance to individuals who are behind on their mortgage payments or face foreclosure, as well as to prospective homebuyers.

Credit Counseling: Free one-on-one credit counseling with a CredAbility certified counselor is also available by telephone at 888-808-7285.

ABOUT CREDABILITY

CredAbility is one of the leading nonprofit credit counseling and education agencies in the United States, serving clients in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, in both English and Spanish. Founded in 1964, CredAbility is accredited by the Council on Accreditation and is a member of the Better Business Bureau and the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC). CredAbility is funded by creditors, clients, individual donors, and grants from foundations, businesses, and government agencies. For more information, please visit www.CredAbility.org.

ABOUT CITI

Citi, a leading global bank, is an established leader in the national effort to support veterans and active-duty service members, including those in the Guard and Reserve. CredAbility ReConnect is the latest initiative in a coordinated, firm-wide effort in this area. This year, Citi launched Citi Salutes, a one-stop resource that consolidates all of Citi’s programs, products, and partnerships that support the greater veteran’s community. For more information, please visit www.citigroup.com.

ABOUT CITI COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Citi Community Development (CCD) leads Citi’s commitment to achieve economic empowerment and growth for underserved individuals, families, and communities. Their focus areas include: commercial and philanthropic funding; innovative financial products and services; and collaborations with institutions that expand access to financial products and services for low-income and underserved communities. For more information, please visit www.citigroup.com. *



Run & Remember

A Special Connection

Each year the TAPS Run and Remember Team pairs willing runners with families of the fallen whose loved ones will be commemorated by the run. As our largest running event of the year, the Marine Corps Marathon (MCM) in October fields the most runners and therefore makes the most connections between families and runners.

Last year Lisa Arnold, a mother of five young boys, ran the MCM in honor of Marine Corporal Dustin Derga who was killed in action in Iraq. Dustin was the first of 23 Marines and Navy Corpsmen killed during Lima Company 3/25's 2005 deployment. Dustin's father Bob and stepmother Marla Derga began an email correspondence with Lisa prior to the marathon, and Lisa gave Bob the honor of designing her TAPS contribution page, allowing him to share the story of Dustin's life and his pride of service.

Lisa Arnold: I have wanted to run the MCM for years now and really felt that if I ever got the opportunity, I wanted to run it for a military charity as a way to give back to those who serve. While looking at the registration page for the MCM, I came across the TAPS website and instantly knew that was the charity I wanted to run for. I was impressed with the mission and signed up to be a TAPS runner right then!

Bob Derga: We posted pictures of Dustin [on Lisa's fundraising contribution page]. This was healing for us and also allowed us to share Dustin's story with a wide audience. We worked together in helping raise funds for TAPS in honor of Dustin, and together we far exceeded Lisa's goal. That collaboration started a friendship between our families that has given all of us so much in return.

Lisa Arnold: The Dergas were amazing in their support of the run, from raising pledges to being my biggest cheerleaders.

They sent me a DVD with photos of Dustin on it—photos from the time he was a young boy to his days in Iraq. It enabled me to really have a connection with him as a person. In the same package was a Hero's Bracelet with Dustin's information on it. I wore it every single day during my training. Also in the package, wrapped in tissue paper, were Dustin's dog tags. I can't really put into words how I felt holding those tags in my hands for the first time. His dad had asked me if I would wear them during the race and it was the greatest honor I have had in my life. To be trusted with something so precious and so sacred was overwhelming.

Bob Derga: In July of 2011, Marla emailed Lisa to express her admiration of Lisa's efforts. She told Lisa then that she had always wanted to run the MCM herself, but felt she was too old and out of shape to do so. Lisa immediately emailed back and encouraged Marla to begin training. Lisa was so enthusiastic that Marla had to try! So she bought a good pair of running shoes and began training. Slowly but surely, with Lisa's help and encouragement, Marla began seeing her fitness improve.

Lisa Arnold: The 2011 MCM was physically a very difficult marathon for me but I truly felt Dustin's spirit there with me every step of the way. I was terrified of losing his tags and so I also had them pinned to my singlet. When the run got really hard, I would touch the tags and ask Dustin to help keep me going. I realized after the run, that the tags were pinned over my left chest...over my heart! It was



The fact that people you do not even know would take the time and effort to run in honor of your fallen loved one means so much. ~ Bob

completely unplanned that way, but that is exactly where they belonged.

Bob Derga: Unfortunately we could not be in Washington DC for Lisa's run as we were in San Francisco that weekend. That didn't matter. We were with her in spirit and felt that we were part of the run. We exchanged phone calls and e-mails that weekend leading right up to her run. We were overjoyed when we spoke to Lisa by phone just as she finished the marathon and we were boarding the plane to come home. Lisa had done it—run the entire marathon to honor Dustin.

Lisa Arnold: My family and I met up with Dustin's parents a few weeks after the

MCM so that I could return Dustin's dog tags to them. I also wanted to give them my medal from the event. It was an emotional meeting... Bob and Marla shared stories and more pictures of Dustin. It helped all of us to get to know him better.

Bob Derga: Our first face-to-face meeting took place in November 2011 at a restaurant half way between our homes in Ohio. Marla and I were so nervous to finally meet Lisa, this angel who came into our lives. Her entire family of five boys and her husband were there, and each of the boys wore Marine Corps Marathon shirts. Lisa returned Dustin's dog tags that night, and also gave us something else that will be always treasured: her 2011 MCM Finishers Medal.

Lisa Arnold: Marla has decided to run the 2012 MCM! We have already run a few races together and will run together every step of the way along the 2012 MCM course for TAPS.

Bob Derga: Lisa suggested forming "Team Lima" for TAPS and we began trying to find runners for each of the 23 fallen from Lima Company. We still need a few more runners but we are pulling our team together.

Lisa Arnold: The MCM was one of the best things I have ever done. The TAPS families have made the ultimate sacrifice and have asked for nothing in return. Running for TAPS is a very small way for me to say thank you to them for their sacrifice. It is so important that these families know that we, as a country, remember their fallen hero, that their life and sacrifice will never be forgotten, and that we are grateful. Running for TAPS has also evolved into a way to teach my boys about honor and sacrifice. They have taken Dustin on as

"their" soldier, and through developing a relationship with the Dergas, they have really started to understand what a huge sacrifice it is to be in the military. What started off as just doing a run for a great cause has turned into so much more.

Bob Derga: The effect of meeting Lisa has been outstanding. Marla loves running and working toward her goal of running the MCM. The effort has brought her more health and vitality and brought her closer to understanding some of the hard effort that goes into building a Marine through physical training. Marla is now running an average of 15 miles a week

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outside, and says she often imagines Dustin and the other Lima Marines running with her as she pounds out the miles. God willing and with Lisa's help we will all cross the finish line together as Team Lima!

Lisa Arnold: I have gotten so much more than I ever could have imagined from being a TAPS runner. Being paired with the Dergas has been a huge blessing.

Bob Derga: The fact that people you do not even know would take the time and effort to run in honor of your fallen loved one means so much. Having gone through the last year of training herself, Marla knows firsthand how much time and effort that really does take. The people who run the MCM for our fallen are amazing! They keep the spirit of our fallen loved one's pride of service moving forward as they run the MCM in their memory. *

► If you would like a TAPS runner to honor your fallen loved one in a Run and Remember event, please email us at run@taps.org.

Photos courtesy of the Derga family





7th Annual Colorado Celebrity Classic Benefits T★A★P★S

By Christine Burtt

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors has received a gift of \$360,000, thanks to the hard work of volunteers and the generosity of donors involved in the *Colorado Celebrity Classic*.

The sold-out weekend featured a golf tournament at Bear Dance Golf Club with a special competition for military teams, live and silent auctions, and two dinner concerts. The western-casual events were held June 15-16. The Navy team won the military tournament.

Now in its 7th year, the *Colorado Celebrity Classic* has become a calendared "must-go" event in Denver and a model for how to have fun while raising significant donations at a charity fundraiser.

In addition to such a compelling cause, the event's success may be attributed to the dedication and creativity of its producers, Lynne and Bo Cottrell. This dedicated couple is known for their leadership, attention to detail, and ability to recruit outstanding talent.

Much of the cost of the event is donated, so that TAPS receives almost all of the contributions. A few examples: The Coors Cowboy Club Chuckwagon Crew drove up from Amarillo, barbecued and served a complete prime rib dinner for 600 guests.

Steve Grove provided the venue for the grand finale dinner and concert at his Ranch at Cherry Creek. WizBang! Solutions donated production and printing of the event programs. The Red Lion Hotel Southeast donated celebrity suites plus additional amenities. Colorado Party Rentals provided all the Saturday night dinner tables, chairs, and linens.

Celebrity golfers and entertainers also gifted their time and talent. Music at the Songwriters Showcase was provided by top-of-the country chart artists Billy Montana, Brett Jones, Frank Myers, and Jeff Dayton. Saturday's Grand Finale Concert featured the extraordinary musical talents of headliner Michael Martin Murphey, Eddy Raven, American Idol



Photos courtesy of Black Tie Colorado and Dave Gill Photography



ED AND GAYLE NOVAK



JOE COORS HELPING THE
COORS COWBOYS SERVE



LYNNE COTTRELL WITH BONNIE CARROLL



**PERFORMER MICHAEL MARTIN MURPHEY,
WHO WILL HEADLINE THE 2013
CELEBRITY CLASSIC**



SONG WRITERS EDDY RAVIN, FRANK MYERS, JEFF DAYTON, BILLY MONTANA AND BRETT JONES

finalist, Ritchie Law, The Lawmen, Eddie Johnson and the Johnson Family. Tony David, Pam Hughes and Kerry Edwards played for more than 90 minutes during the cocktail reception. KOA Clear Channel talk show radio host Steffen Tubbs was the master of ceremonies for the Saturday Grand Finale Concert & Dinner.

Auctioneer extraordinaire, Roger Sierens, called the live and Paddle Auction that raised

a phenomenal \$142,000! Donors were asked to sponsor items such as the TAPS 24/7 Help Center, backpacks and other Good Grief Camp supplies, or scholarships for families to attend the National TAPS Survivors' Seminar and Good Grief Camp.

The Cottrells attribute the high net contribution to many generous donors such as title sponsor Aimco; Tri-West HealthCare Alliance; Jake Jabs and American Furniture

Warehouse; MillerCoors; Greiner Electric LLC, Taylor Oil Properties, and other friends of TAPS.

More than 70 local volunteers keep the two-day program running like a well-oiled machine.

In its seven years, the *Colorado Celebrity Classic* has raised a more than \$2.1 million for TAPS. *



MILES AND JAN CORTEZ



**MG JOSEPH ANDERSON, GENERAL OF
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**GENERAL (RET) GENE RENUART, WINNING
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**PRESENTATION TO STEVE AND MARLA GROVE, WHO DONATED THE RANCH VENUE,
TITLE SPONSOR MILES CORTEZ AND JAKE JABS, MC STEFFAN TUBBS**

TAPS is grateful for the time and energy that the Cottrells and their team of volunteers put forth each year for the annual TAPS Celebrity Classic.

We are humbled by their dedication and thankful for their support.





TAPS VOLUNTEER

★ Roseanne Lehman ★

Volunteers are a very important part of the TAPS family. We are grateful for the countless hours they donate and the part they play in supporting the TAPS mission. Volunteers, we salute you!

Although she's not a survivor of a military death, Roseanne Lehman is no stranger to loss and grieving. She's relatively new to involvement with TAPS, but certainly not a new face to the volunteer scene. And from the looks of it, she's here to stay for the long haul. A native New Yorker now living in the Metropolitan DC area, she's found a new sense of purpose and focus with the TAPS family.

Roseanne was born and raised in Yonkers, New York, and grew up in a large Italian family, having never lived outside of the Tri-state area until meeting her husband. After marriage, her husband's career took them to Colorado. Although Roseanne spent most of her professional career in the legal field, she stopped working in order to make time to care for her father, a cancer patient. After almost eighteen months in Colorado, her father died, marking this tragic event as her first encounter with grief.

While in Colorado, Roseanne discovered her love for volunteering, mostly because it provided the flexibility she needed for her father while satisfying her urge to help others. Her first experience was with the USO at the Colorado Springs Airport. This was also her initial involvement with the military. Eventually that volunteer job took her to a location on Fort Carson in what is typically known as the single soldier's lounge where soldiers on post can relax, watch television, use phones, and play pool and video games.

When her husband retired from his job in Colorado, he took a position with DynCorp International, and they relocated to DC. Roseanne wanted to plug herself back into volunteering and it was through



Thank You Roseanne Lehman!

her husband and his position at DynCorp that Roseanne found TAPS in 2011.

Roseanne's first experience with TAPS was working with Zaneta Gileno and Renee Napier, assembling Community Resource Reports for families. As her knowledge of TAPS increased, Roseanne started assembling the Survivor Resource Kits for the newly bereaved.

What is so special about Roseanne is that while assembling the packages, she visualizes the person opening it, trying to understand what is going through

their mind. "I think about each box I put together and who it's going to. So I don't just throw things into a box," Roseanne says. "I think about when they open it what it will look like to them. I try to place items in a way that they don't get jostled too much and look like a big mess, because I want them to feel when they open the box, that it was packed by somebody who thought about them and what they're going through and what they might be feeling."

Roseanne's favorite part of volunteering at the TAPS office is seeing the hand written notes and letters of gratitude that have been affixed to the walls in the break room. To Roseanne, knowing that there is a positive difference being made is what drives her to continue and is what she feels is the most rewarding part of volunteering.

"I just feel that I've been so fortunate and blessed in my life, that I want to give back to those in need," Roseanne said. As for future volunteer opportunities with TAPS, Roseanne said that since her first experience with TAPS she has been interested in volunteering at the National Military Survivor Seminars held in Washington DC each year over the Memorial Day weekend. "My husband had a great experience [at the TAPS seminar]," she said.

In the short time Roseanne's been an active volunteer, she's become a strong pillar of the TAPS family. We thank her for her selfless dedication. ★

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TAPS welcomes new volunteers. Email us at volunteer@taps.org or visit us at www.taps.org. Click on Volunteer Central to explore volunteer jobs, sign up, and take our online training course.



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★ Donations through January 2012 ★

Thank you to the Friends of TAPS whose personal gifts, memorial tributes, grants, event sponsorships, and planned gifts continue to uplift, comfort, and care for the loved ones of those who served and died.



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