

Survivors Helping Survivors

SHARING LEADS TO HEALING AND FREEDOM

Mental Health America received this story from a mother who lost her son to suicide.

I lost my son, Jason, nearly 20 years ago to suicide. I felt every emotion there can possibly be. He was the most incredible human being I ever knew – he was filled with love, artistic talent and humor. There wasn't a person that knew him who didn't love him. Why did this happen? Why was he taken away so young when he could have gone so far? Why me? Why my family? The loneliness and emptiness was the worst – the realization that he was gone and I would never see him again.

Today, my faith has helped me. God is walking with me. I still miss him – but I feel him. I know and believe that his spirit lives on – that he's with me – especially when I need him most.

I keep him alive by talking about him and sharing my experience with my family, my friends and sometimes acquaintances when the situation arises. I've found that when I open up and share, people are more willing to share their experiences with me.

Those of us who are left behind need to be there to help each other. The ones who have left us are with God – and they're O.K. Talking about Jason keeps him alive, helps me heal and sets me free of all those bad emotions. Then, I'm free to go on and live my life.

There is a life out there and a world of people and experiences. Our loved ones want us to go on. We will be with them again some day. There is a saying, "God doesn't give you anything that you can't handle." I believe this is true. You go through ups and downs. But if you ride the waves, feel the emotions and let them happen, those sad feelings will pass. They come and they go.

I am grateful that I had my son for almost 19 years. That's better than not having him at all. I love you, Jason. I miss you so much.

If you would like to share your story with us, please email it to info@mhawisconsin.org, or mail it to 734 N. 4th St., Suite 200, Milwaukee, WI 53203.

HELP MHA SAVE PAPER! GET OUR NEWSLETTERS VIA EMAIL.

The *Survivors Helping Survivors*, Mental Health America of Wisconsin's quarterly publication that provides resources and information related to mental health issues, is now available via email. If you are interested in receiving *Survivors Helping Survivors* or any other e-newsletter via email, you can subscribe by visiting our website at www.mhawisconsin.org. Sign-up information will be located directly on our home page.

Additionally, MHA is making every effort to send only one newsletter to each address. If you're receiving more than one copy, or if you prefer to read it online at www.mhawisconsin.org, call us at 414-276-3122 or e-mail your changes to info@mhawisconsin.org.

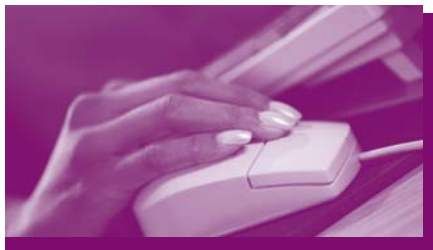


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NEW WEB SITE FEATURE OFFERS SEARCHABLE RESOURCE AND SUPPORT GROUPS DIRECTORY

Mental Health America of Wisconsin (MHA) recently added two new search features to its web site, making it easier for people to find support groups and health and wellness resources.



Search the new Health and Wellness Resource Directory to find information on advocacy, basic needs, domestic violence, helplines, mental health services, prescription assistance, support services and much more.

Visit the new Support Group Directory where you will find more than 100 different mental health related support groups on depression, anxiety, attention deficit disorder, eating disorders, grief, survivors of suicide, anger management and more.

A support group is a safe place where people gather to share their feelings and concerns with one another. Typically, mental health professionals and peer facilitators who volunteer their services lead these groups.

Go to MHA's web site at www.mhawisconsin.org to visit either of these directories.

CONGRESS EXPANDS ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT



Mental Health America of Wisconsin (MHA) applauds the United States Congress for passage of legislation that will provide more equitable coverage of mental health and substance abuse disorders in private health insurance coverage. The bill, which was passed last week and signed by the President, requires that when businesses cover these disorders they do not impose more restrictive conditions on that coverage, such as higher co-pays or lower annual benefit amounts, than they require for other medical conditions.

“This bill clearly makes a statement that mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders are valid medical conditions that can be effectively treated,” said Karen Handrich, President and CEO of MHA. “This bill says to people who experience these disorders that they are worthy of the same level of coverage that is provided to people who experience heart disease, diabetes and other chronic medical conditions,” Handrich added.

While there have long been concerns about the cost of requiring “parity” for mental health and substance abuse disorders, the recent experience of providing just such equal coverage in the

Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan helped to dispel this myth. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the law would increase premiums only two-tenths of one percent.

“This legislation tells me that employers have now come to recognize the value in providing adequate treatment for these disorders,” said Shel Gross, MHA’s Director of Public Policy. Both the business and insurance industries supported the legislation. “We know that mental health and substance abuse disorders are major causes of lost productivity and both short and long term disability costs for employers. This legislation reflects an understanding that an investment in treatment will reap huge payoffs for businesses and for our society. The bill applies only to plans covering businesses of more than 50 employees. It does not require that they provide mental health and substance abuse coverage, but surveys have found that most large employers do routinely include this coverage in their benefit packages. MHA encourages employees to make sure they let their employers know that this coverage is important to them. The law will go into effect for most plans on Jan. 1, 2010.

SURVIVORS HELPING SURVIVORS WOULD LIKE TO HEAR YOUR STORY

If you have a poem, meditation, poem, artwork or book review to share, email us your correspondence to danielle@mhawisconsin.org. You can also send your correspondence to Mental Health America of Wisconsin, 734 N. 4th Street, Suite 200, Milwaukee, WI 53203

SUICIDE SURVIVORS: THERE IS NO CLOSURE AFTER A SUICIDE

by KEVIN CARUSO

Suicide is extremely painful. And it is very difficult to move on after a suicide.

And looking for “closure” after a suicide is a natural thing to do.

But I would suggest that you not focus on closure, because it will never happen. The pain will always be there, and the challenges that suicide has placed before you will never disappear. And you will never find the answers to all of your questions about the suicide.

Some questions in life simply have no answers.

So...

Focus on living your life one day at a time. In the best way that you can.

Focus on healing.

Focus on CELEBRATING the life of your suicide angel.

Focus on getting help for you and your family.

Focus on HELPING OTHERS who are in pain.

Focus on loving others.

And remember that the intense pain that you are feeling represents the great

LOVE that you have for your angel.

And the love that you have for your angel will never “close.” And thus the pain will never “close.”

No, there is no “closure.”

There is just love.

Source: *Suicide.org*

SURVIVORS HELPING SURVIVORS SUPPORT GROUPS

It can be so powerful to connect with other survivors. And such a relief to be able to talk openly about suicide with people who really understand.

For so many survivors, a crucial part of their healing process is the support and sense of connection they feel through sharing their grief with other survivors. The most common way this sharing occurs is through survivor support groups. These groups provide a safe place where survivors can share their experiences and support each other.

It is natural to feel a bit unsure about going to your first support group meeting. Please feel free to call one of the support group facilitators prior to attending to ask any questions you may have.

Learn more about Surviving Suicide Loss from the *American Foundation for Suicide Prevention* at www.afsp.org.

Survivors Helping Survivors

Date: 1st Thursday of each month
Time: 7-9 p.m.

Location: Jerusalem Empowered African Methodist Episcopal Church (King of Kings Lutheran Church)
9524 W. Good Hope Road, Milwaukee
Call Joan at (414) 545-8786 or MHA (414) 276-3122

* Contact MHA at (414) 276-3122 for possible room changes.

* During the winter months, as a general policy, this group and the St. Luke's group is cancelled when Milwaukee Public Schools are cancelled.

Survivors Helping Survivors

Date: 2nd Tuesday of each month
Time: 7-9 p.m.
Location: St. Luke's Medical Center, Health Sciences Building #1, Dining Room D
2901 W. Kinnickinnic River Parkway, Milwaukee
Call Mary Ellen at (414) 543-0787 or MHA (414) 276-3122

Survivors of Suicide

Date: 3rd Monday of each month
Time: 7 to 9 p.m.
Location: Waukesha Memorial Hospital, 725 American Ave., Waukesha
Call Jill at (262) 970-9738 or JCol116@aol.com

Survivors of Suicide

Date: 1st Thursday of each month
Time: 7-9 p.m.
Location: Rogers Memorial Hospital
34700 Valley Road, Oconomowoc
Person/Phone: Michelle Unertl
(800) 767-4411 Ext. 580.

Survivors of Suicide Support Group

Date: 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month
Time: 6:30-8 p.m.
Location: NAMI Racine, 2300 De Koven Ave., Racine
Person/Phone: NAMI Racine
(262) 637-0582,
Facilitator: Luann Simpson, MSW, LCSW.

Death By Suicide Peer Support Group for Teens

Date: 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month
Time: 6-8 p.m.
Location: Kyle's Korner, 7106 W. North Avenue, Wauwatosa
Call (414) 777-1585
Ongoing peer support group for children ages 3 - 18 who have had someone close to them die by suicide.

Death By Suicide Peer Support Group for Widows and Widowers

Date: Ongoing - Every other Wednesday
(Call for dates)
Time: noon - 1:30 p.m.
Location: Kyle's Korner, 7106 W. North Avenue, Wauwatosa
Call (414) 777-1585

For a listing of other support groups, including grief, depression, anxiety, and much more, visit our web site at www.mhawisconsin.org.

The experience of being in the physical presence of other survivors has, in itself, a therapeutic value which cannot be duplicated by any other methods of resolving grief. A veteran survivor can instill a subtle message of hope with his or her very existence.

Rev. Charles T. Rubey, M.S.W.

CONSIDER MAKING A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA

Mental Health America of Wisconsin relies on your donations to continue providing the community with quality services. Secure online donations can be made at www.mhawisconsin.org, or by mailing a check to Mental Health America of Wisconsin, 734 N. 4th Street, Suite 200, Milwaukee, WI 53203. Your support is deeply appreciated:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Please check the box if you DO NOT WISH to receive future editions of *The Bell*:



For more information on mental health issues, visit our web site at www.mhawisconsin.org

FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION ABOUT MHA PLEASE VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT WWW.MHAWISCONSIN.ORG

Survivors Helping Survivors

Survivors Helping Survivors is a quarterly Newsletter for families and friends who have lost someone to suicide. Comments and suggestions are always welcome. Contact Danielle Lennie at Mental Health America of Wisconsin (MHA) at (414) 276-3122.

Phone (414) 276-3122
Fax (414) 276-3124
Address 734 North 4th Street, Ste. 200
Milwaukee, WI 53203-2121

For more information on mental health issues, visit our web site at www.mhawisconsin.org

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Return Service Requested



The MHA is a United Way agency.