

SURVIVOR SERIES

Introduction

The Survivor Series has been written for those who have been victims of pain and grief caused by life events and circumstances. The survivor's are those who are left behind to deal with the trauma, pain and grief. Through this series of specialized booklets, we aim to provide information and the necessary tools to help you move beyond victimization to victory, by taking control over your own life and well being.

Coping Skills Personal Tool Box—Print them and carry them with you, share them with someone who is grieving or experiencing pain!

Allow yourself permission to cry, be sad and grieve

Do not “Isolate” yourself! This is one of the unhealthiest things for a griever. If this is not by your choice, find support through a support group, grief therapy, place of worship or other support organizations.

Talk about your situation only when you choose, if you do not choose let others know that you do not want to talk until you are ready. Remember, it is not healthy to keep it inside, but it is also impossible to move forward if you keep reliving the story over and over again in thought or by repeating it.

Accept help or assistance from others

Do not make personal decisions you may regret later—WAIT!

Focus on your personal care; Eat, Sleep and Exercise to keep yourself well and to lift your mood.

Take as much time as you need to process your grief-there is no time limit!

Do not over extend yourself be gentle, patient and kind to yourself.

KNOW that you are not to blame for the decision of another, regardless of what you said, did or did not do.

If you feel guilty, FORGIVE YOURSELF! This is a big part of the healing process, living with guilt does not change anything or help your situation in any way.

Allow yourself to laugh, love and be happy again without feeling guilty

Allow yourself to live and know that your life is important and you have your own purpose regardless of the depth of the loss you have experienced...put yourself first!

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Suicide

The causes of suicide or suicide attempts

The thought process and pain that lead to suicide or thoughts of

The need to learn coping skills and reach out for help

The acknowledgment that we do not have control over another's actions or reactions

The acknowledgment that every life is unique and there is no substitute

Warning Signs

God's Love

Self Love

What causes a person to get to a place where they feel that their life is not important enough to go on?

The survivors want to know:

Why?

What happened?

What were they thinking?

How did I not see the signs?

People often get caught up in their grief, pain and thoughts and lose their ability to see clearly. They can be so full of pain, guilt, shame, fear and stress that they lose grip on reality, sometimes just for a moment and cannot see their way clear or out of a situation. They do not have the coping skills necessary to process their grief. When people carry feelings of shame and guilt they often put themselves down, beat themselves up using negative statements, and they sometimes lose their desire to live.

This often happens when someone has carried a painful event inside and kept it a secret because of the fear of judgment or rejection from others. It is unhealthy to keep painful feelings inside and to not process them. This stems from years of society's inability to talk about grief and the lack of tools to cope. These made-up or I should say fabricated teachings have been passed down for generations. The old school way of dealing with grief is to stuff it inside, pretend to be strong even when we want to cry and to not share with others because they may not understand or may judge us. In fact, all of the opposite of these beliefs are needed to process your pain; cry if you need to, talk about your grief without fear and know that you are not expected to be the rock and hold it all together when your life has fallen apart. Do not be afraid to ask for help, it actually reveals more strength and courage and makes you a stronger person because everyone is stronger when they have support. You are not meant to be alone...stand alone...grieve alone.

It is natural for people to contemplate suicide following a loss. This is a thought just like the many others we experience during grief. When pain is prominent we tend to lose our ability to see clearly and sometimes cannot see how we can go on without someone or something in our lives. But this is never the solution to your pain, life is meant to be lived and cherished even through our darkest moments.

There is no problem too big or too small to seek advice or help to resolve. I believe there is a solution to every problem; if you do not have the answer someone else will. Everyone has sad feelings at times. Sometimes people just feel trapped and they see no clear way out of a situation. It takes coping skills in order to move forward and move beyond the pain of our circumstances. There is a purpose for each of us and when you connect to others they may shed some light on your circumstances helping you see things you may not be able to see clearly on your own.

If you are a survivor of a suicide victim (family member, friend, co-worker), I want to say that you are not to blame in any way. We do not have control over one another. The survivors also second guess themselves or think they could have prevented the occurrence. We are only responsible for our own choices, actions and reaction. When we take on the responsibility of another's actions placing blame and self punishment on ourselves it only adds to our grief and fuels the pain that we are already experiencing. We cannot see the feelings and what another is carrying inside that causes them to take their own life.

If you have ever attempted suicide, then I am grateful you are here to read this message. You are here because you have a special mission and you need to find that purpose within yourself; carry yourself to the next stage, the next chapter in your life. **YOU ARE SPECIAL!** We are all unique and special in the eyes of God and each of us is here to serve a purpose in this big plan and thing called life.

Feelings of helplessness and suicide are normal thoughts that may occur during any type of trauma, grief or pain. These are sometimes passing thoughts, but if they are obsessive or continuous then you should seek professional help without feeling ashamed or embarrassed. This shows great strength. **KNOW THAT YOUR LIFE IS IMPORTANT, THAT YOU ARE IMPORTANT AND WHO YOU ARE MATTERS.** Everyone is here to walk their own path and live their own purpose. Through triumphs and tragedies you often find your greatest strength along with your life mission. But, if you allow life to knock you down without fighting back, without picking yourself back up, you will miss the reason you were put here, but so will the lives you were meant to touch. **YOUR LIFE MATTERS!** We are all here to make a difference and to do our part. Not one life matters more than another, we are all equal regardless of what we do, what we own, where we live or what nationality we are. **KNOW** that there is always someone who cares, who will never leave you, who made you perfect and knows you are perfect just the way you are. That is **GOD!** You may not always feel the connection, through your grief, sadness and pain, but his promise remains the same and **I KNOW IT TO BE TRUE.** God never walks away, he never hangs up the phone, he never gives up on you even when you have given up on yourself. He will stand there and keep trying to reach you until you know he has not forsaken you. Sometimes you are brought to this place of awareness through the toughest and most tragic situations.

Warning Signs of Suicide and the Need to Seek Professional Help

Talking about suicide or threatening to hurt oneself

Taking pills or hurting self

Increase in or start using drugs and/or alcohol

Inability to rest or sleep or over sleeping

Withdrawal and isolation from family, friends and society

Communication decreases or stops completely

Sudden bursts of anger and/or rage, talking about revenge

Loss of hope, purpose or seeing no way out of a situation

Mood swings or erratic changes in mood or behavior

Remember, every life counts, every life matters, every life is worth saving and living. Even when things seem unbearable these are just moments and as quickly as they came they can disappear. Please don't ever give up; the one person that should never give up on you is YOU!

Be you own cheerleader when times are rough. Keep your thoughts positive by looking at what you have instead of what you do not have. If all you have is your life, then you have it all. That is the only thing that matters, that you are alive and living...your life matters!!!

Please trust me when I say this, I have had my own doubts about myself and I now know that my life matters, it counts, God loves me and you and you are precious regardless if you realize it or not...love yourself, **Know, Know, Know** that you matter...look at yourself only through your own eyes and not through the eyes of others...be kind, gentle and caring with yourself and things will begin to change... maybe not on the outside, maybe not your circumstance, but when the inside changes and your perspective changes, everything begins to look different in your world. Become a mirror and let what you do not want or like reflect off of you, do not take it in!

Give yourself what others sometimes have not, cannot, will not...love yourself. God said love yourself as you do thy neighbor, he did not say put your needs last, he did

not say love others over yourself, he did not say that someone else's opinion of you matters more than your own...**No, No, No. Love Yourself, Love Yourself, Love Yourself**, for who you are, not what you have or what you own.

Love means to accept yourself just the way you are...without the need to change yourself to give yourself that love. Once you do this and release all expectation of yourself, life flows and it becomes brighter because you have accepted yourself as whom you are! This is the greatest gift you will ever give or receive; self love and acceptance. The only one you can count on to give you this is yourself;

So release all expectations from others and take responsibility for your actions, choices and reactions and you have conquered an amazing feat that many don't achieve in a lifetime. What are you waiting for? Start now...start this moment. Look at yourself in the mirror and say, "I love you! I love and I approve of myself! I am perfect just the way I am!"

This is my prayer for you:

May you always treat yourself with respect and give yourself the love that you deserve...and know that you are special and unique...there is only one YOU...there can be no substitutes!

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