

Survivors of Bereavement
by Suicide



S.O.B.S.

Reg. Company No. 4754829
Reg. Charity Number 1098815

S.O.B.S.

Biannual Newsletter - January/June

January 2007

National Office: SOBS, The Flamsteed Centre
Albert Street, Ilkeston, Derbyshire, DE7 5GU

EDITORS' WELCOME

Welcome to the re-launch of the SOBS Newsletter. Our thanks go to those who attended the National Meeting in Birmingham last September and returned the questionnaires that had been distributed at the meeting. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gain some insight as to what might be expected from the membership in terms of presentation, content and frequency of the newsletter.

The general consensus was that the two issues we propose to publicise should occur in the summer and winter months, rather than spring and autumn. All were in agreement that the newsletter should be well presented and able to stand equally alongside newsletters from other national charities. There was also consensus that the newsletter should be available online, thus reducing postage and administration for the Central Office. The online version will be available later in the year.

Given our personal commitments, we decided that the months of January and June would best match the expectation of a winter and summer issue. As to content of the newsletter, the most favoured subjects are news from regions, promotion of events and information from other groups. These subjects will take priority; others, such as medical developments in the field of suicide prevention, poems, letters, etc., will be included as and when it is practical.



*In the depth of winter we know the Sun exists, but we cannot feel its warmth.
So too, in our grief, we know there is happiness out there, our task is to rediscover it.*

Our goal is to provide a newsletter that contains subject matter to give encouragement, insight and education into the issues that concern us as survivors of bereavement by suicide. We also intend being a vehicle and voice for those who wish to send us articles, information, poems and thoughts.

We wish everyone strength for the year ahead, both physically and mentally. As each day passes we hope it will be one small step towards rediscovering new horizons after the dark days of grief following a suicide bereavement.

Submission of articles, news, events, reflections, etc. for consideration for the June newsletter must reach the editors no later than 1st May 2007. We reserve the right to publish those submissions that seem most relevant and suitable for the newsletter. Submission does not guarantee inclusion. Submissions can be sent via e-mail to ann.davies@onetel.net or by post to Helen Walker at 46 Foxhill Road, Burton Joyce, Nottingham, NG14 5DB.

WORLDWIDE WISDOM

European Suicide Symposium - Slovenia - 8th to 12th September 2006

It was a fascinating experience to travel to Portoroz on the Adriatic coast of Slovenia. I had been invited to deliver a paper detailing the operation of the SOBS Helpline. Slovenia is one of the new republics that have emerged from the break-up of Yugoslavia and is an exceptionally attractive small country varying from the coastline just south of Trieste to the snow-capped (even in the summer) mountains of the Alps.

The symposium started for Jean and me with the Postvention (Bereavement Support) Seminar Day on the 8th which was led by Karl Andriesen who had been one of our speakers at the April 2006 Birmingham Support Day. Also on that day, we met Sue Simkin of Oxford University, Jonathan Scourfield of Cardiff University and Anna Brown of Papyrus, all of whom had also been at the Birmingham Support Day. It was a particular pleasure to again meet Jill Fisher from Queensland and other delegates from Australia and New Zealand as well as delegates from all parts of Europe, U.S.A. and Canada. It was a feature of this symposium that a number of the delegates were from Russia and other ex-communist countries that have particularly high suicide rates, which they explain primarily as resulting from excessive alcohol intake. In addition to renewing contacts, the Conference was also a unique opportunity to hear of the latest research from across the world and, perhaps more importantly, to meet and talk to others who are studying and practicing in the field of suicide prevention and postvention.

This coming year (2007) we hope to travel to Ireland for the International Symposium, which will be held between August 28th and 2nd September in Killarney. If you would like further details, please contact me on 01827 830679 or their website at <http://www.iasp2007.org/> *John Peters*

AN ASIDE

I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the First International Postvention Seminar for Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide held the day before the main conference. This first conference (with representatives from Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, Belgium, Slovenia and Germany) reflected, for me, the gradual upsurge occurring worldwide of an awareness of the needs of those of us bereaved by suicide. It was evident that people are working to change the responses of silence and stigma after such a bereavement to compassion and care. Here in the UK those of us involved in SOBS are contributing and part of that worldwide movement. *Ann Davies*

FUTURE SYMPOSIA

There are two major conferences relating to suicide prevention. One is the European Symposium and the other is the International Symposium. These symposia alternate annually. In 2007 the International Symposium is to be held in Ireland. In 2008, the European Symposium will be held in Glasgow and the following year's International Conference will possibly take place in South America, but that venue remains under discussion.

ADVANCE NOTICE - RETREAT 19-21 October 2007

Feel the need to get away, to retreat from the day-to-day humdrum of life? Here is your opportunity! The annual "Time To Get Away From It All - retreat" which offers a variety of relaxation therapies plus activities such as walking, art and photography, to mention just a few, is proving increasingly popular. In 2007 the event will be held at The Talbot Hotel, Oundle, near Peterborough. Places are filling up rapidly so, if you want to know more and/or are thinking of booking, please contact Trish Thomas on 01452 371945.

WORKING TOGETHER TO CARE FOR SURVIVORS

Early in November, I had the opportunity to give a presentation to Cruse Trainee Councillors about our SOBS group here in Nottingham. One of the issues I particularly wanted to get across was the difference between bereavement by suicide and a "normal" bereavement. I think the two bereavements are often treated in the same way, and I wanted to help the trainee counsellors to recognise that there are definite identifiable differences. To this end I used, as part of my presentation, a visualisation whereby I asked the group to step into someone else's shoes, just for a little while. I then took them through a normal happy Christmas Day, except it ended with the suicide of a family member, and I did this through the eyes of one of the family. I noticed some of the group were moved to tears. I followed this exercise by highlighting some of the particulars of a suicide bereavement: the earthquake of emotions; the agonising questioning of "Why?", the crass behaviours of others; sensationalised press reports and insensitive comments by coroners, police, clergy, friends and even family. The group responded well. The feedback after the event highlighted the fact that we had all learnt more about each other's role in the bereavement process and acknowledged that we are not in competition with one another, but offering different roads for people to travel during their bereavement journey.

Here in Nottingham and the East Midlands, we are looking to develop links with the various agencies whose work crosses the path of those bereaved and devastated by the tragedy of suicide. We have made contact with the Coroners' Offices and with the Police Liaison Officers. During 2007 we will be distributing information packs to these agencies for them to hand out to the survivors of a suicide death. Provision of these packs will be a further development of our network-building within the county.

Helen Walker

BITS AND BOBS



"Oh dear,
what a pickle
I'm in!"

A light note to help us smile again!



A verse observed and shared

Lead me from death to life,
From falsehood to truth.
Lead me from despair to hope,
From fear to trust.
Lead me from hate to love,
From war to peace.
Let peace fill our hearts,
Our World, Our Universe.

Submitted by Gill Irish

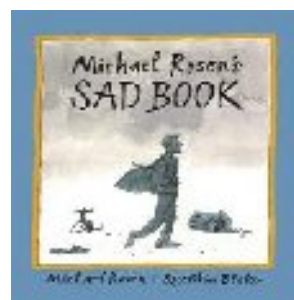
Useful Websites and Books

In person - Support Groups Scotland. This organisation assists those who have been bereaved by suicide. National Helpline available 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. every day. Tel: 0870 241 3337

Book - Bereavement through suicide
www.cruse.org.uk/acatalog/Bereavement_Through_Suicide.html

An interview with a man bereaved by suicide.
www.concordvideo.co.uk/de35m20.html

Book - Shades of Suicide - written by Ann Davies (Nottingham SOBS)
www.amazon.co.uk/Shades-Suicide-Verdict-Suicide-Bereavement



"For people of any age coming to terms with grief. This is a poignant and moving account, beautifully illustrated and sparingly written." *The Guardian*

Tewkesbury Abbey, 28th April 2007

We hope that everyone has received details of this Service of Thanksgiving being organised by members of the Gloucester Group to which all of us are invited. This is not a service of mourning or sadness, but one from which we can take comfort and celebrate the support and kindness we have received from each other through SOBS.



It is an occasion for wearing our Glad Rags and Big Hats! To help meet the costs of the event there will be a collection during the service so all offerings, whether big or small, will be appreciated. Please support SOBS by attending this event. For further details and/or to make a booking, please contact any of the following:

Trish Thomas 01452 371945
Suzanne Mattingley 01451 860578
robert.willmott@blueyonder.co.uk
or the form on the SOBS website.

Reflections

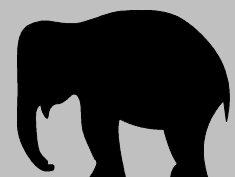
Friday 3rd November should have been Tom's 25th birthday, instead it was the fifth anniversary of his suicide. This intelligent, funny, good looking, clever, popular, loved young man took his own life and changed my life and the lives of his family and his friends forever... I know I will never see this boy again... I know (most of the time) how to avoid facing the pain of losing him, but the pain still takes my breath away. I imagine it resembles the pain of an amputee, who learns to live with the loss of a limb, but it is never healed - the limb will never re-grow. No-one can fully understand another's grief; I cannot presume to understand even how another mother feels. Each experience, each person is unique.

We, Tom's family, have been fortunate in the huge support we have received from family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances - our own as well as Tom's. All have helped in practical ways, listened to us, held us in our grief and dealt with the debilitating effects of post traumatic stress. We cannot thank them enough. On this, Tom's fifth anniversary, I ask you all to support in some way those groups of people who offer telephone help-lines, group meetings, literature, on-line help and events for those of us bereaved by suicide. The groups are: SOBS, Papyrus and The Compassionate Friends.

Extracts from thoughts shared by Avril Dawson.

THE ELEPHANT STORY ADAPTED FROM THE POEM "THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM"

There is an elephant in the room. It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around. Yet we squeeze by with "How are you?" and "I am fine." and a thousand other forms of trivial chatter. We talk about the weather. We talk about work. We talk about everything else, except the elephant in the room. There's an elephant in the room. We all know it's there. We are thinking about the elephant as we talk together. It is constantly on our minds, for, you see, it is a very large elephant. It has hurt us all, but we don't talk about the elephant in the room. Oh, please say his/her name. Oh, please say his/her name again. Oh, please, let's talk about their death, perhaps we can talk about their life. Can I say his/her name to you and not have you look away? For if I cannot, you are leaving me... alone... in a room... with an elephant.



Submitted by Jennifer & Roger Littlewood