



**SURVIVORS OF
BEREAVEMENT
BY SUICIDE**

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National Newsletter

Bi-annual January/June

January 2011

Introduction



Dear Friends,

Welcome to a new attempt at the Newsletter

I must first of all apologise to those of you who were offended in any way by my first letter and allocating you all certain months to communicate with me. I respond better to structure with flexibility but now appreciate that others do not. If it helps...use it; if it doesn't...ignore it.

However, my grateful thanks to those of you who responded to my letter with encouragement and even sent me articles to include in the first letter. I need all your help to make this newsletter a success. Some of you have very ambitious ideas, even to a glossy magazine, but this is only a Newsletter at the moment, coming out twice a year. Perhaps in the future we can do more.

We want this Newsletter to be helpful and informative so please continue to send me your news and anything you feel we could use, including photographs.

Ann Culley
Surrey group Leader
sobs.news@googlemail.com

The High Wycombe Group

The small High Wycombe Group continues to meet monthly on the third Wednesday evening, but from November 2010 will be meeting in a hall in Henley-on-Thames as a few of the regulars will be taking over the facilitation of the group from Janice.

We have been most comfortable in the Church Hall in High Wycombe but the Church is redesigning its property on the site and the Hall will be demolished in the coming months.

We will continue to be known as the High Wycombe group – this will make life easier with the Bank, and until we are able to get on a more sound footing. However, there is a change to our contact number which will be: 0795 843 4082.

Hopefully the change of venue will serve as a means of getting people from a slightly different area as well as those from the M40 corridor.

Suzanne Mattingley
High Wycombe group

Group Management Training

I was delighted to be asked by Eric to put together a training day for group leaders. After running the telephone helpline training for the last two years this additional chance to work with the group was very welcome. The day included an overview of Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide; we looked at the operating manual and the paperwork required. We also had a session on problems with groups and how to overcome them. The afternoon concentrated on fundraising and gave some practical tips on how to raise money for the groups.

As always, the day included people already running groups and individuals thinking of setting up new groups. This mix of attendees is always valuable as the experienced members are always willing to pass on their knowledge and experiences.

The feedback from the session was very positive and there will be a few changes made to the programme before the next session.

As always, I would like to thank the participants for sharing their experiences with the group. I learn something new every time I deliver training with the group. I look forward to many more successful sessions with Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide.

Stella Scott
Development Worker
Erewash Council for Voluntary Service

Comment from a Trainee

Once again, I would like to thank you and your team for the excellent training delivered. The training was excellent and I will be discussing the outcomes of this with Rosemary when I meet up with her later this week. I certainly left full of enthusiasm and I am confident that our newly 'reformed' group will be a success in providing support for those bereaved by suicide.

I would also like to reiterate my delight with the venue and for the excellent service and customer care provided by staff at the Hallmark Hotel, Derby,

*Kind Regards
Paul J Kodur*

Maidstone Volunteers Week

For the first time Maidstone Town Centre Management held a 'Volunteers Week' at the local shopping centre (The Chequers Mall). This was between 26th and 30th October 2009. They allowed Voluntary Organisations to promote their charity and have a display stand free of charge.



With the help of Verlie we had the stand ready by 9am on the Tuesday and later on Tina joined us. I would like to thank them both for their much needed support.

The centre was fairly busy through the day and whilst only a handful of people approached us, many others noticed the outstanding banner. I would like to thank Eric in the office for sending this down, as it made all the difference to the display.

Hopefully this will become an annual event and in turn raise the profile of our charity.

Sheila Burgman
Maidstone Group Leader

Book Reviews

"WHY I JUMPED"

By Tina Zahn and Wanda Dyson
Published by Revell, a division of Baker Publishing group

I often have the radio on while I work in the kitchen, but if I'm honest I am not always listening to it. That was the case one day last year when I was busy baking and suddenly my attention was grabbed by the author of 'Why I Jumped' being interviewed on Woman's Hour.

We all ask why did they do it yet not many people are around to tell us why. The story, like many I guess, has

not one reason and one reason only but is a lifelong process of lies, secrets, broken dreams and bad choices ending in postpartum depression that finally pushed her to the edge and she jumped off Tower Drive Bridge in Wisconsin. This bridge is some 200feet above the Fox River in America. She almost took a policeman with her.

In Tina's case the ending is positive and she found hope. I recommend this book to you.

Helen Parish
Surrey Group

"MUM, CAN YOU LEND ME TWENTY QUID?"

By Elizabeth Burton-Phillips
Published by Little Brown Book Group
ISBN 9780749951726

Elizabeth Burton-Phillips had twin sons (Nick and Simon) in 1976. She was a teacher and middle-class mother and never thought her sons would become involved with drugs. They were identical twins, blond and beautiful and full of fun. They often gave their teachers headaches by swapping places with each other. When they were older they would also fool their girl friends in this way. Everything appeared wonderful and life was very full.

In 1989, when the twins were 13 years old, they began smoking cigarettes and quickly moved on to cannabis. Their mother was quite unaware of this. Soon after this the family moved home to give the boys a better start in life and for the daughter to start 6th form studies. The boys smoked cannabis more and more and eventually left school and moved into a flat together.

This led them to become friends with other drug addicts and soon they were using ecstasy, cocaine and other drugs together with the cannabis. Frequently they would ask for the loan of 20quid, hence the title of the book and a frequently used ploy of others. Now they were drug dealing, lying and stealing from their mother.

In 1998 they started taking Heroin and their addiction to this came very quickly. They tried many times to stop but it was impossible. Both boys were totally addicted, in debt and ill. In 2003 and aged just 27 years Nick was found hanging in his room. He had also overdosed on Heroin.

The shock of Nick's death brought Simon to his senses; he sought help and is now drug free and living a normal life.

Elizabeth Burton-Phillips has been very honest in this book as has her son Simon. They have openly expressed their feelings and thoughts. Many have benefitted from this book.

This book is a must for all those who have lost someone through drugs and suicide. It a warning to parents, teachers and all who work with children and young people. I fully recommend this book.

Ann M. Culley
Surrey Group

Sea to Sea Cycle Challenge Raises £600 plus

A SOBS supporter from West Yorkshire has collected over £600 from sponsors after riding across England from the Irish Sea to the North Sea in four painful days.



Mairead and a friend cycled the 178 miles from Ravenglass on the Cumbrian coast to Tynemouth in Northumbria, staggering their journey between bed-and-breakfast overnights close to Hadrian's Wall.

"For me it was a real personal challenge to attempt something like that" said Mairead, "I had four weeks to reach a level of fitness, but doing the ride for the Bradford group of SOBS was what spurred me on.

"People have been so generous, the ride has raised about £660 already . . . the response has been tremendous . . . well worth all the pain in the saddle!"

The Bolton Group

The Bolton Group has an average of 20 people a month attending, some are regulars and there have been a few new ones over the last 12 months.

In September we went on our annual retreat to the Franciscan Friary, Pentaaph, in North Wales. This year there were 18 of us and the ages ranged from 19 years to 60+. The two young girls attended the retreat last year; they did not want it to end and could not wait to attend this year. They also brought along a young male friend of theirs who was 20 and he said it was the best weekend and would definitely come again. It is very reasonably priced. All the food is homemade with local produce being used as much as possible.

We get everyone together before departure and ask for feedback to ensure that the weekend has fulfilled their needs. There is no structure to the weekend and the feedback from the ones attending has been very positive and they want it to continue in the same way. We have been fortunate to receive a donation to have a plaque erected at the Friary on one of their many benches in the grounds dedicated to the Bolton Group's loved ones.

SOBS has been our saviour. We lost our son Malcolm, aged 23, in March 2000 and at that time we were all in deep shock. Our eldest daughter saw a story in a magazine of another survivor and gave us the helpline number. It was a couple of weeks before I could pluck up the courage to phone. When I finally did get in touch we had just missed the September meeting at Lymm, this was our nearest group. The lady on the 'phone was Hilary who ran the Lymm group at that time. She really

understood, and mentioned there was a conference at the weekend, which she gave us directions for. When we arrived we could not believe how many people had attended, survivors just like us, at least 50. The day was very structured, in the morning they had 3 guest speakers and the morning finished with 2 survivors telling their stories. It was very emotional listening to survivors' stories and a relief to know we were not on our own. After lunch we went into specific groups – parents, siblings etc, it gave us a chance to talk with other parents who were going through the emotions that we were experiencing. At the close of the day we all gathered together for a debrief to ensure we all felt safe to leave. A brilliant although very emotional and physically draining day.

After that we attended the Lymm group every month where we could meet others who were also survivors. We gained so much support that we decided we would like to help others and so in August 2001 we found ourselves opening the Bolton Group (at this stage there were 9 groups in existence). The experience was scary; would we be able to do this, how many people would turn up? So many questions running through our minds. We had no need to worry as the first night we welcomed 26 people and broke their isolation. It was a good start for the opening of the group, although it was also sad to know there were others suffering as we had.

When we first started we had a young lady by the name of Maria who lost a very close friend. She attended for a while and decided she wanted to help others, her own grief inspired her to train for Bereavement Counselling, and unfortunately her training took place on the same night as the meetings. It was some years later Maria contacted us again to ask if the group was still going. The next meeting Maria returned as a fully qualified grief counsellor and offered her services to anyone who attended the group without charge. She encouraged me to train as a counsellor. I have completed levels 1-3 and when I have completed level 4 I will be a qualified counsellor. Facilitating the group has given us strength to carry on and help others. One of our group members has opened the Blackburn Group and another, the Manchester Group.

We aim to carry on for as long as we can and continue to help other survivors.

Janet and Noel
Bolton Group

Acknowledgements

May we take this opportunity in thanking everyone who has kindly raised money and donated to our organisation and also to the generous support from our Grant Funders.

Finally, **Thank you** to all our Volunteers, without your hard work and dedication, we could not continue to provide support for those who need it most.

If you do not wish to receive this publication in the future please notify Eric or Christine at the National office on 0115 944 1117 or email us sobs.admin@care4free.net

New Groups in 2010

2010 saw a large growth in support groups throughout the UK: Sheffield, Edinburgh, Cumbria Aberdeen and The Scottish borders, we also saw the re-opening of the Cardiff group after a short closure; this is now being run by Sarah Moore with John Coyle helping. We have a group intending to open in January/February 2011 in the Isle of Wight. There have been enquiries from Gary Kelly in Newcastle and Jacqueline Sell from Guilford Surrey. We anticipate the growth of new groups will continue during 2011.

Helpful Quote

This quote is submitted by Toni Haymes. Toni helps to facilitate the Manchester Group with Annabel Day.

A quote which I have found to be really helpful to me whenever I feel really low is from, I think, "A Special Scar".

I have written this in the back of my diary and every time I'm feeling in the depths of despair and missing my husband so much it hurts, I read it over and over to myself.

"I can be the victim of an unredeemable loss or a survivor coming through the darkness and into the dawn."

Another book which I found helpful is "When the Crying's Done" by Jeannette Kupermann, even though it is not specifically about suicide.

Suicide is Everybody's Business

Breaking Down the Barriers

Suicide Myth: People who talk about suicide are just trying to get attention.

FACT: People who complete suicide usually talk about it first. They are in pain and often reach out for help because they do not know what to do and have lost hope. Always take talk about suicide seriously.

Suicide Myth: People who are suicidal definitely want to die.

FACT: The vast majority of people who are suicidal do not want to die. They are in pain and they want the pain to stop.

Suicide Myth: Once people decide to die by suicide, there is nothing you can do to stop them.

FACT: Suicide can be prevented. Most people who are suicidal do not want to die; they just want to stop their pain.

Suicide Myth: Suicide only strikes people of a certain gender, race, financial status, age, etc.

FACT: Suicide can strike anyone.

Blackburn Group

Our condolences go to the Blackburn Group at the loss of one of their members, Justine Hargreaves. Justine was a valued member of the group and died on 17th October 2010.

Justine found great help and comfort in the following poem which we quote in her memory.

REFLECTION

Another day for you to wonder, another for you to mourn
It wasn't my intention to go before the coming dawn
My pain was deep within my heart and troubled head
It wasn't my intention to go without words said.

My fame of mind seemed normal, or so I heard them say
It wasn't my intention not to see another day
I did not mean to make you suffer or cause you so much pain
It wasn't my intention to never see you again.

Despair and confusion left my aching heart unsure
It wasn't my intention to suddenly close life's door
If only I could give you reasons and brush the tear away
It wasn't my intention to leave you and not stay.

I did not mean for you to grieve, now left alone to cry
It wasn't my intention to leave you, forever asking why
As the burdens of life's worries slowly ebb from my heart
It wasn't my intention to tear your soul apart.

Y. Docherty

Hilary Ravenscroft

We are sad to announce the death of Hilary Ravenscroft whom many of you will remember, not only the immense amount of work she did for the charity, but also for her dynamic personality and charm.

Dates for your Diary

Group Leader Training Day – 29th January 2011

20th Year Celebration and Volunteers Conference – 16th April 2011

Birmingham Support Day – 14th May 2011 for more information contact John 01827 830679

Telephone Helpline Training Day – 21st May 2011

Group Leader Training Day – 16th July 2011

Scottish Conference – 10th September 2011

Gloucester Retreat – 21st, 22nd and 23rd October 2011 for more information contact Trish 01452 371945

Bolton Retreat - no dates available at this moment. Contact Janet and Noel for more information 01942 201744