



**SURVIVORS OF
BEREAVEMENT
BY SUICIDE**

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NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2017

Dear All,

I hope that you all found your own way to survive Christmas and the New Year Celebrations. It is a very individual choice and there is no right or wrong way, just what works for you.

As we look forward to 2017 there is great economic uncertainty and no one knows exactly what the immediate effect of Brexit will mean for us all. Most charities are concerned about the impact of the referendum result. Economic uncertainty means that charitable donations are likely to be hit. People donate from their disposable income. If there is less disposable income there will be a decrease in donations and charities will have to compete even harder for a share.

Many charities attract donations with images of suffering, but it is not easy to portray the depth of a Survivor's devastation and suffering in this way. Like so many charities, SoBS **needs** donations to survive.

I wish to say a huge thank you to everyone who has given so generously in the past or have fundraised for us. All donations and fundraising that we receive in 2017 will be very much appreciated and will enable us to continue to open new groups and invest in training for Helpline volunteers, Group Leaders and volunteers.

As we face these uncertain times we have much to be positive about. Our great strength is in our Chair, Trustees, Independent Advisors, Group Leaders and all our volunteers who give so generously of their time. All willingly and bravely carry the emotional cost of their voluntary work for SoBS. You are all the reason why SoBS is unique and best able to give essential support to the Survivors who turn to us.

I want to say a huge thank you to Eric, Chrissie and Christine at Head Office for all their hard work and all the support they give to us all.

I know that together we can face the challenges of 2017 and continue to provide SoBS essential services, meeting the needs and breaking the isolation experienced by those bereaved by suicide.

I wish you all peace and kindness in 2017.

Joy Heal (Trustee and Uttoxeter Group Leader)

Norfolk SoBS



Norfolk SoBs had a busy weekend. We had a Retreat day at Walsingham Shrine (England's Nazareth) for the groups. Bill Armstrong, Retired Norfolk Coroner, joined us as our Guest of Honour. Father Philip Barnes conducted a very personal Memorial Service for our loved ones, lost to suicide. A song very special to me, Sarah Mcloughlin, Resting in the arms of the angels was played at the end of the service.

We then had quiet reflection time in the Holy House and lit a memorial candle for each of those that we have lost. We all joined together in the Refectory and enjoyed a lovely meal. Some survivors went across to the Shrine Shop nearby. It's an interesting place with lots to look at and a wonderful selection of gifts and books.

Sadly, following the stillbirth of my grandson baby Harry, I took a six-month break from a management role and worked in the shop. It was a time I will always remember with gratitude and a sense of belonging to a wonderful family. I was looked after by the peace that the Shrine gave to me.

On Monday, we went over to Kings Lynn as we had been invited to a Presentation of a cheque for £4,336.00 by the Mintlin Crematorium. A wonderful opportunity to meet a staff member bereaved by suicide and the Mayor. Another invitation arose from this for next year.

Then in the evening another Presentation and a lovely meal with Reepham Rotary, and yes, we are allowed.... laughter! They were a witty bunch! Plus another cheque for £1,000. Rotary are sponsoring us

for the next year. Gary Hazelden at NSFT kindly put Norfolk SoBS forward.

Thanks to all at Head Office for your ongoing support, I will always be grateful to Eric for his kindness when my 27 year old son took his life in 2007.

Jacqui and Volunteers
Norfolk SoBS

An Appreciation of Our Services from a Grateful Survivor.

“Like hedgehogs, I have wanted to hibernate since the sudden death of my son in July. I've wanted to curl up in a ball, put out my spikes in protection, to stop certain people coming near me. Thanks to SOBS, I have people who I do want near me, helping me to get through this winter of darkness.

Thank you for being there and giving us the vital support and lifeline for many of us who are struggling to cope since the loss of our loved ones to suicide.”

SoBS SWINDON ENGAGING MEN PROGRAMME GETS ON TRACK!



Following the highly successful launch-day afternoon at the Nationwide Sports Ground, which attracted over thirty survivors, the next event took place on Monday 22nd August 2016 at Swindon Robins' Speedway, courtesy of CEO Mike Bowden.

Eleven survivors enjoyed good company and a hearty meal in the hospitality suite at The Abbey, followed by what turned out to be a thrilling evening of speedway, which was won right at the end by Swindon Robins against the reigning champions, Poole Pirates.

Steve Carter is heading up the SoBS Swindon EMP on a temporary basis under the overall group leadership of Jacky Parry. Steve said of the speedway evening: “It was everything I could have hoped for and just what the EMP is about – the opportunity to get the menfolk together at an activity which absorbs them,

but which also provides chances to talk to other survivors about their journey through the grieving process. There was also the thrill of speed, sound and contest taking place, which all made for an absorbing evening. I am seeking to find other similar activities for the group of up to twenty men in order to construct the programme for the coming year. SoBS Swindon EMP is indebted to Swindon Robins' CEO Mike Bowden for the complimentary tickets and hospitality for the evening. Thanks are also due to Jacky Parry for the networking she has done to make this sort of activity possible.”

Are you interested in setting up an Engaging Men Programme for your SoBS Group? The aim is to roll out the project across as many local groups as possible. To make contact with Steve Carter about the programme, e-mail him via sobsengagingmen@outlook.com

Poems

Reflections...

"I wanted but I couldn't
So I tried another way
But with each little failure
A little did I die
Lost dreaming with emotions
My heart wrapped in my hands
I left
And shedding many thoughts
Imagined myself dead..."

I wanted and I wouldn't
Confused and gone astray
Yes with each small rejection
A small part broke away
In bits I sought the pieces
My hands gathered them in
I held
And watching fragments
Dared to join again..."

I wanted and I trusted
I was fragile, quite afraid
Yet with each tiny getting-by
Gained tiny minutes saved
Blessed and so responsible
My parts grew into one
And giving, growing, living
Renewal was begun..."

David M.J. O'Grady (c) 2016
Survivor & Independent Adviser to SoBS



Losing You

11.03.12- For Mum

Gut wrenching, soul destroying
Devastation at how you chose to go
No goodbyes, no explanation, no hearing for my plea
Of needing you still, missing you always
And loving you so

Questions, questions so many go unanswered
Why that way? Why that day?
Was it something I said or omitted to say?
Did you have second thoughts?
It's too late anyway

Then the anger steps in
Saying how could she leave? It was selfish you know
The home you had made, that I so loved to visit
Offers only a shell and stone cold walls at which to yell
Of course you were the heart of the home

Then guilt plays her hand,
How could I blame you
Deflated and low, listening to another voice
You simply weren't yourself
And clearly felt you had no choice

Now simply your absence I have to accept
The silence I am left with speaks volumes
And yet
I am realising somehow, life does carry on
And there's joy to be found, even though you are gone

You see Death could not hold you,
Your love carries on
It's here in the people you doted upon
And I'll love you and miss you
Til my own life's end
You're my confidant, teacher
My Mother and friend x

By Jacqui Craine in Memory of her Mum

Grief and bereavement In Memory of William Chubb-Willow. Written by the Chubb Family



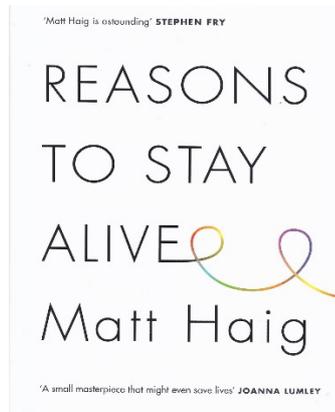
The death of a loved one by suicide creates a kind of temporal "anchor", which is dropped into our lives with such colossal force that it severs our own personal timeline into two parts; everything that ever happened before, and everything that has happened (or will happen) after... William took his own life on 17th January 2014. Although the 'initial' period of grieving will usually be between 2 - 5 years, the 'ripples' from that temporal anchor (falling into our lives with such colossal force) will last for decades, if not for the rest of our lives. We have met people (through SoBS) whose loss occurred 5, 10, or even 15 or 20 years ago, and they are still confronted at regular intervals by that paradox between "it feels like yesterday" and "how can it be that long?" We were also advised a number of times (at SoBS) that the second year of "anniversaries" would almost certainly be harder to deal with than those in the first year. This seemed counter-intuitive to us at the time, but has proved to be true.

Throughout the first year of "anniversaries" (birthdays, Christmas, even Bank Holidays, and, in our case, Mother's Day and Father's Day) we were still so numbed by the devastating shock of Will's death, combined with the denial, anger, bargaining, and, let's face it, the depression, that each of these landmark days was only made 'special' by being a more painful iteration of every other day. During this second year, the parade of anniversaries simply means that we are confronted with the inescapable finality of Will's death.

Time does not heal all wounds; some wounds will never heal, we just have to learn to live with them.

(This is a small extract from a wonderful article. You can find the whole article called "The nature of time, grief and bereavement" and "Reasons to Stay Alive" on <http://william.chubb.muchloved.com/>)

Book Review "Reasons to Stay Alive" by Matt Haig



This short book is an astonishingly open account of the author's own experience of depression and anxiety, and his eventual (and continuing) recovery.

He talks also about suicide and being a man, because men are three times more likely to take their lives than women, and suicide is the leading cause of death in men under 35.

Matt Haig's approach is not one of brutal honesty, but rather a complete frankness about what it is really like to suffer mental torment. The book is written in a deceptively simple style, which is aimed entirely at providing a message of hope. (The faint-hearted should note that there is also the occasional use of the 'f' word).

The chapters are short, enlivened by lists that manage to be both terrifying and amusing at the same time. There is also a "conversation across time" (between 'now me' and 'then me'), which may sound a bit clumsy and daft, but which works really well, and provides the central message of hope. I skimmed through the book again recently looking for passages to quote here, and then realised that I would end up quoting from practically every other page, including an 8 page sequence that is an electrifying account of what it's like to suffer a panic attack (during a trip to the corner shop). I have limited myself to the following passage:

"Depression, for me, wasn't a dulling but a sharpening, as though I had been living my life in a shell and now the shell wasn't there. It was total exposure. A red-raw, naked mind. A skinned personality. A brain in a jar full of the acid that is experience".

I would recommend "Reasons to Stay Alive" without reservation to anyone who has lost a loved one by suicide.

Review written by Graham Chubb

News from Bradford SoBS

2016 has been an active year for the Group. In January, we began planning a Day Conference in Manchester. This planning was because previous Conferences and Support Days have not taken place in our part of the country and we thought it would be good to offer the experience to the northern groups.

Those who attended the Conference heard very interesting talks from several speakers. It was good to hear from Greg Shaw from West Yorkshire Police about the training module that he has Produced about the new police protocol, which had originated in Gloucester; included in it were sections of video taken from a training session taken by Trish Thomas.

This resource has now been shared with a number of Police Forces as well as the NHS, the Fire service and other statutory Organisations. For those of you who are not familiar with it, the new procedures cost virtually nothing to put in place, but give the survivors of any kind of sudden death, help at the point of receiving the bereavement message and the chance, with the leaving of a leaflet, to access help whenever they feel the need. It also helps the police to leave a better memory of the delivery of that tragic message with the family. It is now active in West Yorkshire.

Later in the day we heard an interesting talk from Phil Pitchford on Life after Trauma using his own experiences after his loss; Steve Carter gave us an insight into his Engaging Men project and Farzana Ali told us about some of her aims in studying the effects of suicide bereavement for her doctorate through Huddersfield University.

The talk that sent our time schedule a little haywire was from Richard Borrett, a barrister who talked to us about Inquests. We began to understand the complexities of the inquest system and it was very good that he was willing and able to answer the many questions that arose.

We enjoyed excellent food and drinks while having valuable socialising time to talk to other survivors, as essential as hearing the speakers.

In November, we organised a Support Day in Manchester. We had an excellent day, with a speaker from The Child Bereavement Trust and a medical speaker from the Coronial System, both talks bringing about lively question and answer sessions. Two members of the Bradford group gave their testimonies of survival after their own bereavement, which were very moving. Both speakers gave the interesting insight that when referring to suicide we need to say that it is the result of illness. Again, we had valuable socialising time and we also had a remembrance time for our loved ones.

In our group, we try to regularly review what we can offer our survivors and have now begun a periodic social meeting at a local restaurant where we hope people can begin to bond and build friendships with more ease than at the formal meetings.

Next summer we hope to organise one or two walks with a pub lunch in addition to our meal meetings.

At our Christmas meeting, we enjoyed a meal to which we all contributed something and then lit candles and shared photos and a good memory of our loved one. We also talked about our coping strategies for the season!!

In conclusion, it is very sad to report that Yorkshire and Humberside have the highest rates of suicide in the country. In fact, there were over 430 suicides of young men alone, living in Yorkshire as reported by the BBC.

Another statistic is that every 2 hours one man in England takes their life....

The better news on this sad front is that a local man in Halifax, Luke Ambler, who was bereaved of his brother in law Andrew Roberts by suicide, has founded in his memory, 5 months ago, "Andy's Man Club" where the emphasis is that "It's all right to talk". It has been a success and is now beginning to grow. Lots of info about it on Facebook!

In view of the numbers information, it is essential that our valuable group work continues and grows. In Bradford meetings, we have had survivors from as far away as Newcastle on Tyne, going on for 100 miles away, North Yorkshire, Wetherby and the far end of the Calder Valley bordering Lancashire.

We really do need another group to support the North East of England!

Golf Club raises £1892.50 for local SoBS Group

Joy and Phil Heal want to say a huge Thank You to Michael Johnson who chose Uttoxeter SoBS Group as his charity for his year as Captain at the Manor Golf Course, Kingstone, Staffordshire. Michael chose the group after hearing the Golf Club staff talking about an event that the SoBS group had held there. Michael and the lady captain, Sheila Duncan, who supported a Cancer Research charity held several events during 2016. The two Captains raised an amazing £1892.50 for each charity. We at Uttoxeter SoBS Group want to thank all the Club members, visitors and staff for supporting the fundraising and especially Michael who we have had the honour to get to know.

Thank You Rayne Precision Engineering



We would like to say a huge Thank you to Andrew Simmel, owner of Rayne Engineering, Fenton, Staffordshire for raising £1841.86 for SoBS. £1000 was donated to central funds to help support the opening of new groups and the training of new Group Leaders and Volunteers. £841.86 was donated to the Uttoxeter SoBS Group and helped to fund a Time to Remember Family Activity Day which was a truly wonderful event.

Thank you, Andy, for all your past and continuing support.

Henley-on-Thames Group raises funds

The Henley Group raised just over £264 by holding a coffee morning and raffle. The monies raised will be donated to the current campaign to help set up more support groups around the UK.

Thanks to all those involved.

Become a Trustee and make a difference

Trustees Wanted - Survivors of Bereavement by suicide are looking for new Board members to join them and help influence the future shape and direction of their organisation.

We are particularly keen to recruit individuals who have relevant work experience in areas such as marketing, fundraising, finance, human resources, business development, law and safeguarding, although this is by no means essential. You should have a keen interest in mental health, enthusiasm and commitment along with skills and experience gained through family life, volunteering or professional roles.

You must be eligible to become a company director. This role is voluntary with paid expenses and involves attending up to six Board meetings per year as well as involvement in chosen work streams and other events.

The following guidelines from the Charity Commission are available on the web.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509664/cc3.pdf

If you are interested, please contact our National Office. Telephone: 0115 944 1117
Email: sobs.admin@care4free.net

You can also complete the following application form from our website <http://uk-sobs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/TRUSTEES-APPOINTMENT-APPLICATION-.pdf> and attach it to an email for the attention of the Chief Officer sobs.admin@care4free.net



Dates for your Diary

Kent Retreat Weekend 7-4-17 to 9-4-17
Contact Sheila on 01622 751 976
Email: shebee330@gmail.com

Gloucester Retreat Weekend 20-10-17 to 22-10-17
Contact Margaret on 07810 386 216
Email: onemargaretcarter@talktalk.net

Bolton Retreat Weekend 8-9-17 to 10-9-17
Contact Janet on 01942 201 744 or
Maria on 07391 540 763
Email: janet_taylor7@sky.com

SoBS launches online Forum

Survivors are 300% more at risk of taking their own life. It is vital that Survivors have access to support and SoBS is a unique charity where those bereaved by suicide support others who have lost loved ones to suicide.

There remain vast areas of the UK where there are no SoBS Support groups. Even where a support group exists Survivors may be unable to attend meetings: lone parents, shift workers. There may also be survivors who need support between meetings.

This forum is set up to meet the needs of those who cannot attend groups or need support between monthly meetings. It is a safe environment where survivors can contact other survivors to share support, views and helpful information.

SoBs Forum can only accept membership from those aged 18+.

Accessing our Forum:

You must apply to become a member of this forum. The application form can be found on the SoBs Website:

<http://uk-sobs.org.uk/we-can-help/apply/>

The password is: try me out (including spaces and lower case).

Once you have completed the application please keep checking the junk mail as your code to activate may be returned to your junk box.

Submission of articles, news, events, reflections, etc., for consideration for the June 2017 newsletter must reach the editor no later than 1st May 2017. 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 Email to Joy Heal sobs.news@googlemail.com or sobs.admin@care4free.net

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