

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

T★A★P★S[®]

Comfort and Support Since 1994

MAGAZINE

FOR THE LOVED ONES OF THOSE WHO SERVED & DIED



VOLUME 16 • ISSUE 3

TAPS Magazine is dedicated to the brave men and women who died while serving in the Armed Forces, and to their survivors. The magazine is written by surviving family members, friends, and care-giving professionals. We hope you will find comfort, support, information, inspiration, and a sense of connection within its pages.

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★ **About TAPS Magazine** ★

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is a national nonprofit 501 (c) 3 Veterans Service Organization which publishes *TAPS Magazine* in furtherance of its mission to provide support services to the survivors of servicemembers who have died while serving.

TAPS Magazine is published quarterly and sent free of charge to survivors, their friends and family, servicemembers, and professionals who work with U.S. military survivors.



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Comfort and Support Since 1994

TAPS offers immediate and long-term emotional help, hope, and healing to anyone grieving the death of a loved one in military service to America, regardless of their relationship to the deceased or the circumstances of the death.

TAPS is here for you 24 hours a day 7 days a week

Call us at 800-959-TAPS
Or visit us at www.taps.org

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SUPPORTS the bereaved survivor through a network of Peer Mentors, volunteers who have also lost a loved one in the Armed Forces and are now standing by to reach out to others.

PROVIDES a national toll-free help and information line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 800-959-TAPS (8277). Support is available from leading experts in the field of grief and trauma.

HOSTS the TAPS Online Community of survivors, providing secure chat rooms, message boards, peer group discussion sites, and an extensive website at www.taps.org.

SPONSORS Military Survivor Seminars for adults and Good Grief Camps for young survivors in locations across America, giving survivors the opportunity to share, grow, and help each other heal.

CONNECTS families to resources in their local communities and provides grief and trauma resources and information.



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* CORRECTION: In our summer issue, we incorrectly credited Will O'Neal's photos as Will O'Brien.



COVER PHOTO BY
Sgt. Randall A. Clinton

Photo provided by the Marine Corps



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Let Us Hear From You



We want to know your thoughts, perspectives, and opinions on TAPS programs and publications. Tell us what you think, send ideas for future topics, or submit an article. Submission Guidelines can be found online at www.taps.org. Your TAPS family is waiting to hear from you. ✪

National Seminar

I just wanted to say that my children enjoyed the grief camp. I feel that my kids are really missing out on having their Uncle Dave there because he was so military and he loved kids. I know this won't replace him, but it helps having someone special in the kids' lives that is military. Thank you so much for all the amazing things you do. It has helped me not feel so alone and I feel I have others to lean on when things get rough.

Jodi Jensen, Minnesota

Surviving sister of
Petty Officer 3rd Class David Cedergren

Fort Lewis Regional

Thank you for the opportunity to gather this past weekend at Fort Lewis with my sister and niece in honor and remembrance of my son, PFC Keith Jesse Moore. I so enjoyed hearing Darcie's inspirational, funny, and educational talks; Bonnie's friendly words of advice; and news about future events. It was especially valuable to exchange stories in the small groups and to talk about how we are learning to live four years after Keith's death. I am sure this will encourage us to share more.

Sue Turley, California

Surviving mom of
Private First Class Keith Moore

Saturday Morning e-Letter

I would like to thank you for your letter this morning. I am coming up on the one year anniversary of my son's death. I have some friends that do not understand what I am going through, but I do have some that do. I get the TAPS Magazine which helps a lot. Not only am I going through the loss of my son, but four months before he was KIA I lost my husband of 33 years. So as you can see I am going through a lot, but I am making it. I enjoy reading your writings every Saturday. Thank you!

Susan VanOsdol, Alabama

Surviving mother of
Specialist William VanOsdol

Magazine kudos

Thank you, TAPS—I lost my brother in 2008, but it wasn't in action. He had a massive heart attack at home at the age of 35. We began receiving your magazine after meeting with the CAO, and honestly I've been hooked since the first issue I started to receive. My father has now begun to read those first issues and we both anxiously await the next one. They help so much.

Katherine Klein, New York

Surviving sister of
Staff Sergeant Sean Klein

TAPS Chat

I just joined a chat for the first time. It was what I needed. So glad that TAPS is here. Monday is ten months, and I feel like I'm back to where I started with the tears and rawness. The big difference is that now I have support from others who know exactly where I'm at. Thank you TAPS!

Cherie Beck, Florida

Surviving wife of
Sergeant Major William Beck

Fort Hood Regional

We wanted to thank you very much for all you did to make our weekend at Fort Hood another relaxing, healing and memorable one. We can't thank you enough for making us feel like family and listening to our story and just being there for us when we need you. We know how hard all of you work to make it a very inspiring and helpful program and we are so thankful that all of you are in our lives. Thank you again from the bottom of our hearts.

Art & Diane Christy, Texas

Surviving parents of
Lieutenant Colonel Donald Christy



editor@taps.org



From the Editor

Dear TAPS Family, *

As we approach the fall season and the day we move our clocks back to standard time, I remember how unsubstantial time seemed in the early months of loss. In those days many of us were told that time heals all wounds. Some of us were told that we would go through sequential stages of grieving, spending a certain amount of time with each before moving on. The implication was that there was an orderly and timely progression through the valley of the shadow of death. Nothing was further from the truth for us.

Our friends were impatient when we didn't naturally follow their preconceived and impossibly short timeline of grief. But in those first few months of grief, the passage of time seemed impossible to grasp. It jerked forward and backward, sometimes seeming to take me all the way back to the first day of grieving. Time felt elastic. Sometimes it moved molasses-slowly, and sometimes it speeded up without my knowing where it went.

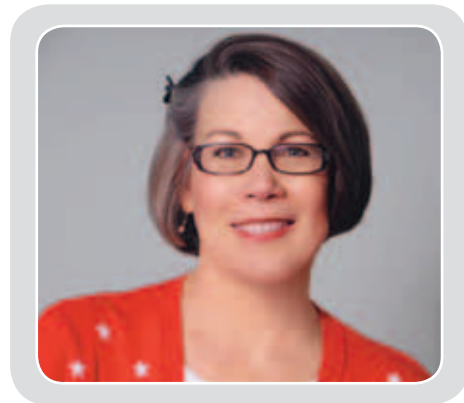
I remember the day of our notification. It began early and seemed to stretch into eternity. At one point I sat on the couch, unconnected and unfocused, wondering why the minutes simply were not moving forward. The angle of the sun's rays hadn't moved! The world had stopped! The earth wasn't even spinning. The day dragged on and on and on.

At other times in those first months and years it seemed that time would jump forward at the speed of light, like an overstretched rubber band snapping and hurtling through space, ending up a great distance from its starting place with no explanation of how it got there. I would flip a calendar page and wonder what had happened to the whole month. What had I been doing? Where had I gone? There was no evidence on the page that I had been present for those days.

The sensation of moving or not moving through time and space seemed so obvious to me that I even had a name for it: the grief time warp.

The sensation of moving or not moving through time and space seemed so obvious to me that I even had a name for it: the grief time warp. Maybe it came from watching too much science fiction on TV, but I seriously thought the entire time-space continuum had been destroyed. And so it had. For me.

There were never-ending nights that I lay in bed, listening to the subtle sounds of the creaking house. And then life would rocket forward into unknown territory. In the third spring after Brad's death, I noticed tender green leaves and the riotous color of flowers. How had I missed the previous two springs?



For those who are new to the journey, take heart. I now find that the clocks are back to working, and the earth is back to spinning. I can sense the passage of time. I can plan to do things in the future, trusting that it will arrive in due time. I can remember what I did yesterday and the day before and even last week. I have regained some sense of equilibrium. I am keeping pace with other humans. The space-time continuum has been repaired.

But every once in a while I am flung back in time to the dark day when my heart stopped and the sun stood still. I think it will always be so.

Betsy Beard

★ Editor, TAPS Magazine ★

Do You Remember?

By Darcie Sims, PhD, CHT, CT, GMS



Do you remember being six? Do you remember getting ready for the new school year and getting new crayons and a Big Chief tablet? Do you remember agonizing over which lunch box to choose and being worried about getting on the wrong bus? Do you remember the night before the first day and how hard it was to go to sleep?

Do you remember being ten and getting new shoes? Do you remember being worried about who you would have to sit next to on the bus? Do you remember spelling bees and the names of your three best friends?

Can you recall being "almost thirteen" and how long that year was? Can you remember wondering if HE (or SHE) noticed you and if he would call? Do you remember angora sweaters and saddle shoes and spending hours practicing dancing... "just in case"?

Does being sixteen ring a bell somewhere in your memory? Can you remember how to find the circumference of a circle or the area of a rectangle? Can you still conjugate Spanish verbs and diagram sentences? Do the lines of the Gettysburg Address or

something from Shakespeare still dance across your mind?

Can you remember your address then, or your phone number, or the color of your first corsage? Do you remember holding hands, your first kiss, the moment you knew it was something special? Do you remember trying out for the football team, the cheer leading squad, the lead in the class play? Do you remember being nervous about giving a speech or asking someone to dance?

Do names and places and events sometimes still float across your memory? Do you find yourself transported somewhere else in time when a special song comes on the radio? Do you remember records and the Beatles and the years before panty hose?

What do you remember? Can you recall the first time you ever fell in love and how you thought the stars were just for you? Do you remember the way to the grocery store and the secret handshake? Did you have a magic decoder ring? And how many jars of Ovaltine did you have to consume

just to get the prize? Did your mom save Green Stamps? (Did you?) How often did you trade baseball cards?

Can you remember raking leaves and mowing the grass and pulling dandelions? Can you remember carving pumpkins and working hard to create the very scariest costume? Do you remember when Trick or Treat was more treat than trick and we could eat the goodies we received? Do you remember the taste of candied apples and caramel corn?

Can you still smell the smoky scent of burning leaves and feel the crisp fall breeze on your face?

Do you remember what you did when the thunder grew really loud and the lights flickered? Do you remember how you managed to survive the first break-up, and then the second one, and the third? Do you remember swearing you would never fall in love again? And then you did...

Do you remember anything or everything? Are your memories treasure or trash? Do they bring comfort or pain or a little of both? What do you remember and what are we going to do with all those memories?





Do you remember anything or everything? Are your memories treasure or trash? Do they bring comfort or pain or a little of both? What do you remember and what are we going to do with all those memories?

Fall is the gathering time, and just as the animals begin to stockpile their hideaways with nuts and berries (and Oreos?) in preparation for a long winter's sleep, we too, seem to be gathering. When the air turns cool and the leaves begin to color, our thoughts seem to turn to yesterday, and we begin to take inventory of ourselves and our lives. What have we accomplished? Where have we been and what have we done?

We begin to gather in our memories and sort them, one by one, living and reliving the events that have shaped our lives. How come memories aren't very accurate? How come we remember things as being far worse or far better than they were? Why does time change the memories we carry with us into now? Why do some things begin to fade from view while other pictures remain etched forever on our soul? How come I can remember the pain, but sometimes have trouble remembering the smiles?

Are squirrels selective in their gathering of nuts, or do they simply want to get as many stored away as possible? Do bears take a personal inventory of their thoughts and memories before turning in for the winter? Why can't we be more like the animals and just take it all in and let it all go whenever it is necessary? Why do we have to hold onto some things and toss

others away? Isn't there room for all of our experiences? Aren't the human mind and heart and spirit large enough, flexible enough, strong enough to hold all of our thoughts, fears, guilt, and happiness, at the same time? Why do we have to be selective in our memories? I want to remember it all!

Every moment I have lived has been worth something. Some were obviously better than others, but I do not want to lose anything that I have experienced. I want to remember looking for elves under leaves and Grandma's special cookie recipe. I want to remember Grandpa's stories and the smell of my first bottle of perfume. I want to remember the warmth of being held, and I want to remember the joy of being loved. And if that means I will have to carry with me all of my memories, because I am too tired to sort them into the proper categories, then I will claim them all.

I will remember being scared, of being the new kid on the block again and again and again. I will remember the fears, the guilt, the funeral, the gloom, the thunder, and the rain, because I want to remember the sun, and the joy and the love. I cannot separate my life into neat little compartments, each designed to hold only selected memories.

I'm more like the squirrel, I guess. I will simply cram as many memories as I can into whatever moments I have and then I will stash them away for some cold winter's night when the fire is low and the night is dark. Then I can pull out some of the glorious moments of summertime, youth-time, love time, and remember again the joy of giving and receiving love.

Fall is the gathering time and I have spent my life gathering memories. I intend to gather in some more, too... So let the squirrels and the bears gather in their nuts and berries and prepare for a long nap. I'm not tired (yet) and there are still a lot of miles to go before I sleep. Who knows, something incredible may be just around the next corner, and I just might find a use for that algebra that I learned so many years ago! I might find love again, too... and that is worth remembering! ☆

About the Author



Darcie Sims is a bereaved parent and child, long time friend and keynote speaker for TAPS, author, thanatologist, pastoral bereavement specialist, licensed psychotherapist, and president and co-founder of GRIEF, Inc.

For more information visit:
www.griefinc.com



Photo Journaling

★ Remembering Adam's Story ★

By Felicia Young-Wilkinson,
Surviving mom of Army Sergeant Adam Wilkinson

There is a heart-shaped wooden plaque that hangs on the wall in my kitchen. It says "Home is where our story begins," and for many of us who have lost a loved one, we have many stories to tell. In each of our lives we will face challenges and trials. For my husband Paul and me, none has been more devastating than the loss of our only child to war.

That story began when our son, Sergeant Adam Alexander Wilkinson died on February 18, 2007 in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan. Suddenly our lives had been turned upside down, and our pain was raw and very real. There was no place dark enough to hide, and the minutes and days seemed to stretch out before us in unrelenting grief.

Like many other families we were faced with such questions as "How can we find the courage to continue when those who were so important in our lives are gone?" and "How can we keep our loved one's story alive?"

As Adam's mother, I experienced a myriad of emotions, and my grief was mixed with an urgency to do something to pay tribute to our son who had given so much of himself in service to our nation. I searched my soul, again asking the question, "How do I reconnect with our son and capture a life lived in such a condensed period of time under the most challenging of circumstances?"

Adam's story of service began in the spring of 2002 when he enlisted in the United States Army after graduating a semester

early from Fountain-Fort Carson High School in Colorado Springs where our family was stationed. Over the next years, Adam deployed several times while still making time for marriage and fatherhood. He volunteered for extra missions and took leadership roles and ongoing training. His attitude was always, "I want to do more." We were fortunate to visit with Adam and his family the Christmas before he returned for a second rotation to Afghanistan in late December of 2006. It was the last time we saw Adam alive.

After attending a unit memorial service in February of 2007 for Adam and the crew of the helicopter for which he had been the crew chief, one of Adam's closest friends approached us with several photographs of our son with various members of his unit, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR). The first photographs were taken in October of 2006 after Adam and other members of his unit had been involved in five months of combat in Afghanistan. In a series of photographs of his promotion ceremony, Adam raised his hand reciting the oath that would carry with it his promotion to sergeant and crew chief of aircraft 472 as his new rank was pinned on. That's when the idea came to me.

Several weeks later I decided to sit down at my dining room table and create a memorial album. I realize many of us may not be able



Our journey through grief has been a very painful one, but as time has passed I have come to the realization that to concentrate solely on Adam's death would be to cheat myself of the gift I was given in having him in my life for twenty-three wonderful years.

to bear to look at photographs of our loved ones when we are in the depths of grief. But as I slowly began to work on the album, I found that the power of those photographs began to replace some of the anguish and pain that I felt. They created a story of how Adam became a man of integrity in his own right, away from the protection and watchful eyes of his parents. His time had come to make his own mark in the world.

This is where our story of healing began. My husband and I are deeply grateful to those individuals at the 160th SOAR who were able to capture our son during such an important time in his life and for sharing those moments with us. As I continued to recreate Adam's story, I included every photograph I received from the unit, as well as photographs of my time spent at our son's unit during its annual memorial event. Scrapbooking became my lifeline.

It has been a little over three years since we lost Adam, and I continue to do my scrapbooking. I have gone back in time and started from the beginning, Adam's beginning. I started with those precious moments after he was delivered into my arms at the hospital on December 17, 1983. Then I progressed from celebrating his first Christmas with his grandparents in New York to graduation day at preschool at Fort Hood, Texas. In one photo he was wearing a cardboard mortarboard and waving his diploma as if to say, "Hey, Mom, I graduated! I did my best." Next came photos of the awkward days of middle school, burgeoning hormones, and the physical changes that come with growing up.

I remember Adam as a freshman in high school: eager to travel with his science class across the country and excited at the prospect of seeing the national parks in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. The memory still lingers with me of a pleasantly tired young man returning from his trip in the late afternoon. He was dragging his duffle bag up the drive with a broad smile that said his world had become larger.

There were photos of Adam's years in high school when he was involved in track and cross country meets and parties at the homes of his friends. In one of the captured moments he was wearing sunglasses. With an arched eyebrow and a facial expression that was full of teenage bravado, he seemed to say, "Hey, Mom, I'm too cool to have my picture taken!"

I went back through all the years, reviewing many photographs that I had taken during his lifetime. As special moments came to mind, I created more albums. I incorporated poetry that Adam wrote and added comments that would capture the true spirit of our son at various times in his life. But our story doesn't end here.

Our journey through grief has been a very painful one, but as time has passed I have come to the realization that to concentrate solely on Adam's death would be to cheat myself of the gift I was given in having him in my life for twenty-three wonderful years. By compiling photographs and rediscovering who Adam was, I also came to realize that I could begin to heal my wounds and renew my spirit as well. I found that I could capture the importance of his life not only for my husband and myself, but also for Adam's son, Carson Alexander Wilkinson. I knew that I needed to create a lasting memorial that Carson could hold onto in the face of having a father that he would never know.

The scrapbooks detail Adam's life from his early years to manhood, living testaments to a life lived with passion as well as a sense of responsibility and commitment.

My experience has taught me that this is how my courage was tested. I chose to honor and celebrate Adam's life by remembering what was good and true about our relationship: a relationship built on love, laughter, and treasured moments. I think about how he touched my life with his gentle manner, his patience, his amazing smile, his mischievous sense of humor, and a deep commitment to excel in his endeavors and do what was right. Now I know that our memories of Adam will last us a lifetime.

We all have stories to tell that can help us cherish the past as we begin our journey toward healing. Over time it is how we choose to respond to our journey that will help us move away from the darker days in the hope of moving toward days that are softer around the edges and filled with more light. Paul and I know that the bond of love that we shared with our son will always be with us. As my husband has said time and again, "We need to take this in baby steps," and we do just that. We do it by remembering. ☆

Photos courtesy of Felicia Young-Wilkinson



When a Brother or Sister Dies: Life is a Fragile Thing

By Claire Berman

What about me?

The incalculable loss of a brother or sister makes painfully clear to us that life is short and death is random. "When you're younger, there's a kind of fearlessness, a live-forever feeling," says a woman in her forties, looking back at the death of her kid brother five years earlier. "You lose your grandparents; you may even lose your parents... That's to be expected, though the timing and manner of their death can still be distressing. But when your sibling dies, it is too close to home. And you think, "Yes, that could be me. It could happen to me."

*But when your sibling dies,
it is too close to home.*

*And you think,
"Yes, that could be me.
It could happen to me."*

We think about our own mortality.

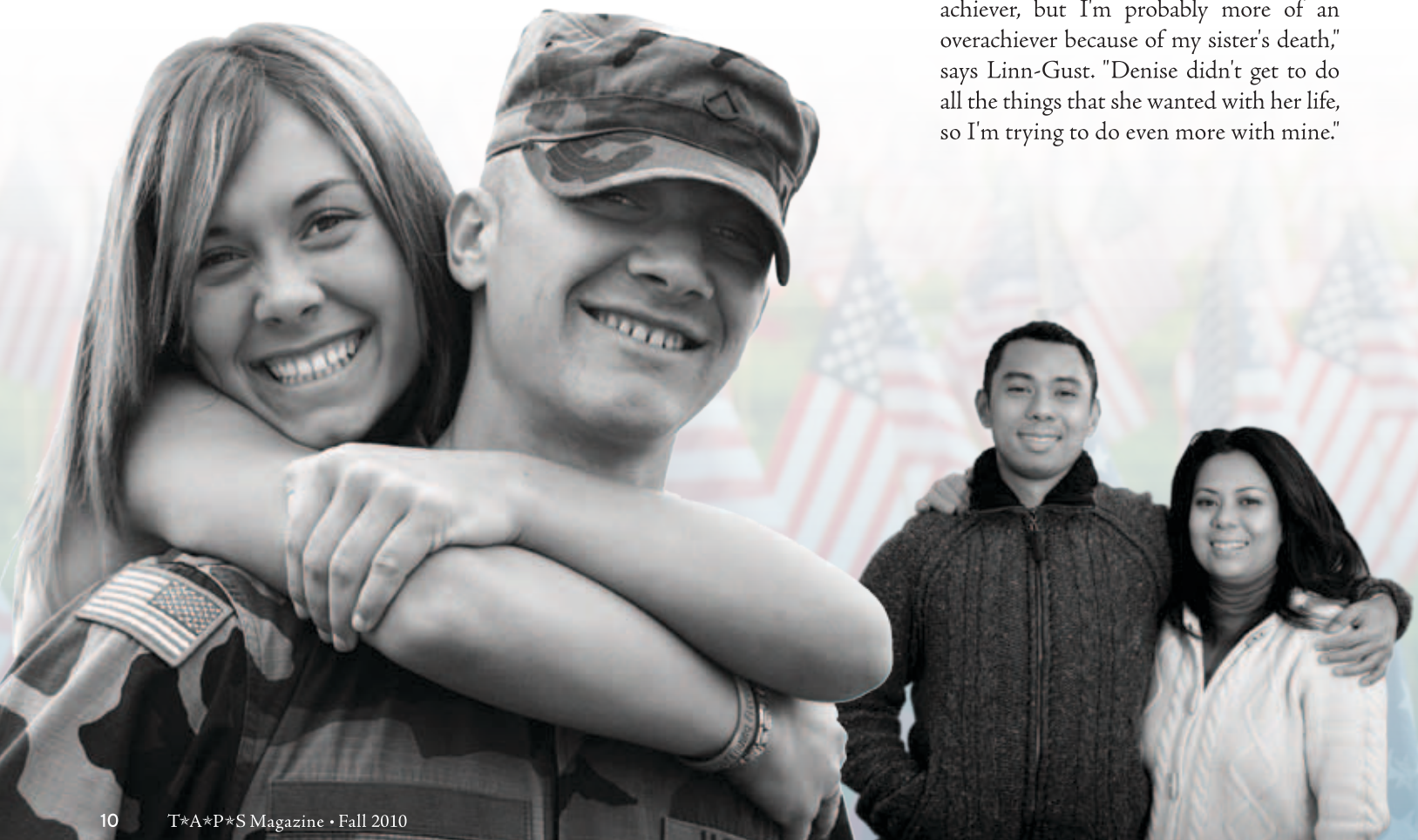
"Don't be embarrassed if one of the thoughts that goes through your mind after the loss of a sibling is Am I next?" writes psychologist P. Gill White, whose career was shaped by the early loss of her sister.

"Our siblings are our peers, so it makes sense that we think in this way at times."

Michelle Linn-Gust, whose sister, Denise, died by suicide at age seventeen, goes further. "My sister's death really gave me a sense of my own mortality," she says. "We're not promised anything, and I learned that early, and I fear (even though it's probably irrational) that I'm going to lose my own life in some way today or tomorrow."

We pay attention to the quality of our lives.

This strong awareness that life is finite has a positive side in spurring surviving siblings to live their days fully; to live, in a sense, for two. "I was always an overachiever, but I'm probably more of an overachiever because of my sister's death," says Linn-Gust. "Denise didn't get to do all the things that she wanted with her life, so I'm trying to do even more with mine."



Marian Sandmaier similarly feels a responsibility to make the most of her life. "My brother Bob was cut down at age thirty-three, and I'm still here," she says. "So when it comes to things I want in life, I think 'Go for it.' He would want me to. Bob was the essence of 'alive.' His eyes were always gleaming. He was often smiling. He was always in motion. His death has taught me an important lesson: to make the most of my life."

We reinforce other relationships.

Following the death of a sister or brother, many surviving siblings consciously strengthen their relationships with remaining siblings, or with spouses, partners, and close friends. "Losing someone you love, especially when it happens with little or no warning, teaches you to treasure the people in your life," says Alison, whose "healthy" sister fell dead of a heart attack at the age of forty-three. "It teaches you to remember to say I love you, to say the things you need to say and not put things off."

We reinvent ourselves.

"We can never be the person we were to the one who has died," says Heather Summerhayes Cariou, whose sister Pam succumbed to cystic fibrosis. "I can never be the Heather I was to Pam except in

memory. We are who we are to different people. And when the person is gone, there's a change of identity. You have to figure out: Who am I without my brother or sister in my life? Before my sister's death, the essential question in my life was 'What do I want to be?' After Pam died, it became 'What kind of person do I want to be; do I want to be a bitter person or do I want to be a forgiving person?' I want Pam to know me as I am now, to know who I am becoming. I want my me to be a constant gift to her, to the memory of her."

We move on but not away.

The fortunate among us eventually find serenity. Following the death of his brother, Eugene, of pneumonia at age forty-two, Hollis railed against God, man, and the medical establishment. In more ways than one, as he saw it, life wasn't fair. "I'd been through a lot of professional turmoil in the years leading up to my brother's death," he says. "I got caught up in the dot.com boom had a high-profile job, and lost all that. I thought it was the end of the world..."

"Since Eugene died, my anxiety about such things has diminished," he goes on. "While I continue to go through professional upheavals, those types of things seem very

trivial to me now. Quite honestly, things that I might have found devastating prior to my brother's death have barely fazed me following his death. I learned the hard way about what's really important and gained a greater level of serenity, if you will. My ongoing regret is that I'm unable to share this with my brother."

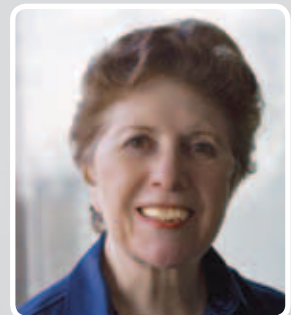
And we remember.

We honor the sisters and brothers we have lost by remembering their lives. We honor them by letting others in our lives know that we value them and their friendship. We honor them by living well: fulfilling the promise of our gifts; being compassionate and caring; appreciating what we have even as we are mindful of what we have lost. ★

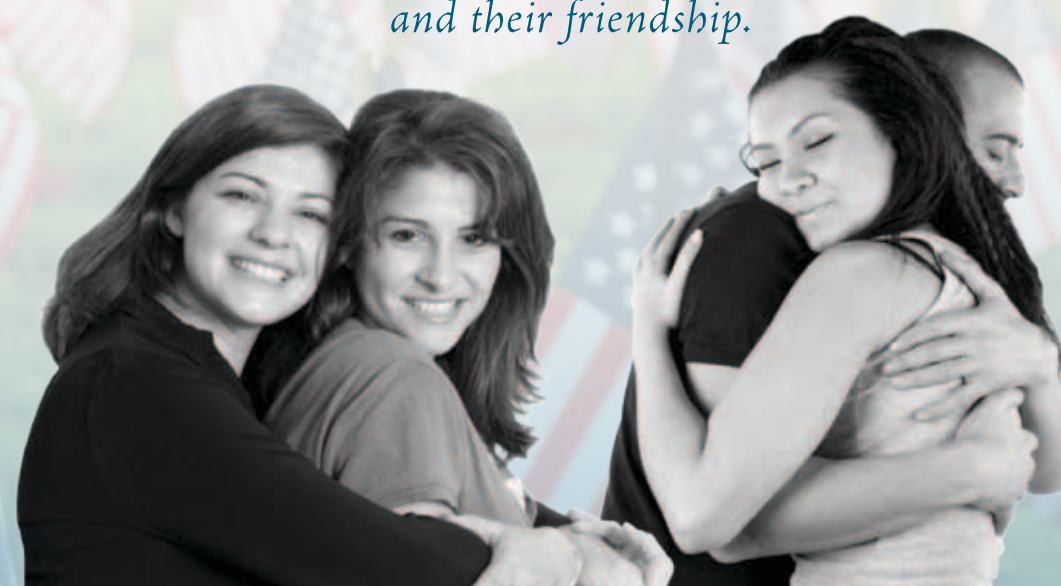
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We honor the sisters and brothers we have lost by remembering their lives. We honor them by letting others in our lives know that we value them and their friendship.

About the Author



Claire Berman is a freelance writer, former director of public education for the Child Welfare League of America, and former Executive Council member for the American Society of Journalists and Authors. Specializing in writing about the emotional dimensions of family relationships, she has authored or coauthored eight books, and her articles have appeared in publications including *Reader's Digest*, *McCall's*, *Family Circle*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. Berman has appeared on the *Today* show and has been featured in *People* magazine.



Lessons of Love

A teacher learns from her students and from T★A★P★S

By Priscilla Gott, surviving wife of Captain Lawrence William Gott, Jr.

Dear TAPS,

I am a 25 year old 7th grade Language Arts teacher and a wife whose husband died by suicide on March 30th, 2009. For a long time, I was angry with myself, because I felt like I failed him. Maybe I did not call him a hero enough, maybe I did not give him enough space, and maybe I became impatient and too short with him when he had his flashbacks and nightmares.

Larry worked with a highly classified Special Forces unit— so classified, that I never knew the other men in his unit or their respective wives. I never knew when he and those men would deploy or the extent of their deployment. The missions that my husband and his men engaged in were extremely dangerous...

After his first traumatic deployment, in which he lost a lot of men and experienced things that could not be conveyed in human words, Larry came home to me quieter than he had ever been. He was constantly nervous and on guard, and reacted in quick response as if he were once again on a sandy battlefield.

As much as I assured Larry that everything would be okay, I could not save my husband from his shadows and memories of war. Even with all of my heart-felt words, my beautiful husband thought of himself as a monster. Eventually, these haunting thoughts overwhelmed Larry and he took his own life.

As the first year of dealing with my husband's death progressed, I was blessed with support and compassion from an unexpected source—my 7th grade students!

When the new school year started in 2009, I told my students about my husband the first week of school. The days that followed

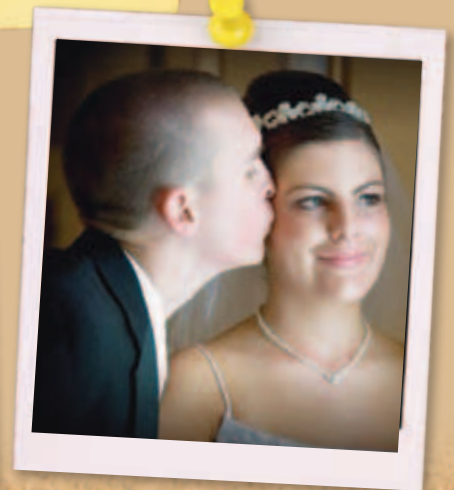
filled my heart with love and unyielding comfort. My students would take the time to draw me little pictures of Larry in the desert, or give me posters of soldiers to hang in my classroom. They would write poems or stories about Larry's heroism. They would take time to color pictures and write letters to soldiers overseas. They would help me raise money to purchase care packages for needy soldiers. They would even take time to try and learn who Larry was—from what size shoe he wore to what his favorite candy was. They helped keep the life that he lived alive in my heart and mind. Everything they did was to help me remember my husband's heroism and the heroism of so many other soldiers who continue to serve our country.

On the one-year anniversary of my husband's death, my students demonstrated extreme compassion and empathy. I had taken the day off to spend time

with Larry at the cemetery. When I returned to school the following day, there was a camouflage-dressed Build-A-Bear on my desk; a red, white, and blue heart-shaped jewelry box; and red, white, and blue roses. The endless concern my students exemplified brought me to tears and humbled my grieving heart. I could not believe that 12 and 13 year old adolescents could be so considerate to their teacher. It is because of my students that I was able to rise each day despite my husband not being there to wake up and to come home to each night. I will forever remember the students of the 2009-2010 school year. I am certain that Larry watched my class each day from heaven and laughed at how silly we were when we would imitate him playing Call-Of-Duty and have our classroom discussions about him.

Because I was nearing the end of this school year, I was becoming quite worried and uneasy. Where was I supposed to talk about Larry, laugh about his silly

As the first year of dealing with my husband's death progressed, I was blessed with support and compassion from an unexpected source — my 7th grade students!





mannerisms, and remember his sacrifice and heroism? If I didn't have my classroom and my compassionate students, I would not be able to do so. This was becoming a thunderous and dark reminder that I am one of a few and very alone in this world. I am brushed past by misunderstanding civilians who are either unwilling or too scared to listen to my story and hear and feel my pain. I am a 25 year old military widow. No one wants to place their hands on such a situation for fear of the intense icy pain that will trickle down from my heart and soul onto theirs. Oh, what was I going to do? I wept over and over again...

As May arrived I wondered what the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar might do for me. Would it heal me? Would it give me footing on such unstable ground? I did not know how it would help, but it was my only hope. With each passing day of my students coming closer to their summer vacation, I had hopes that TAPS would dive into my ocean of grief and be the life jacket to my drowning heart.

TAPS did just that. It saved me and pulled me into its lifeboat. I know that it is up to me to paddle to shore, but it is TAPS and the TAPS family that will replenish my weary heart and soul, provide me with a sturdy craft, and shelter against life's stormy weather and insensitive people. While at the seminar, I learned so many things from TAPS:

I learned that my grieving is very personal and because it is personal, it cannot be compared to someone else's.

I learned that my grieving will be inconsistent. I will have days where the sun shines brightly on my face and days where fog engulfs my very being.

I learned that my husband's PTSD caused him to take his life, but that does NOT make him any less of a hero. It also does not mean that he could not feel my never-ending love for him.

I learned that I am not alone because I share a unique and sacred bond with other military families. The love, respect, and appreciation we have for each others' situations is extraordinary and precious. We are united for all of eternity and I'd like to think that as we comfort and love each other on earth, so do our fallen heroes in heaven.

I learned that my need to talk about Larry is healthy because it is giving voice to the life he LIVED and the LOVE we shared each day on earth. It is a gentle reminder of the life and love he and I will have again when we are reunited.

So TAPS, I want to thank you for welcoming me into your life, for wrapping my weary body into your blanket of comfort and love, and for allowing me to connect with others who say so much without having to say

anything at all. A simple look, glance, or touch of a hand from a mother who lost her son, sister who lost her brother, father who lost his daughter, or widow who lost her husband is the face of God to my exhausted heart. I am proud of the family I have received to help with this life that I was afraid I would not be able to handle. Each time this life gets too heavy for my fragile hands, it is the TAPS family who surrounds me, and places the palms of their hands upon my arms. Together, we raise our pain and lift it towards the heavens. It floats away, far, far away...

TAPS, thank you for allowing so many of us to tell our stories, for allowing us to remember the lives our heroes lived, for allowing us to fill our insides with red, white, and blue. And thank you for allowing us to feel as though in a world of people who don't understand, we are understood. Last but not least, thank you to my husband, Captain Lawrence William Gott, Jr., who gave his life for freedom. Larry, I am so proud of you and am so honored to be yours. ☆

*Respectfully,
Priscilla A. Gott*

Photos courtesy of Priscilla A. Gott

Fixing a Hole: Grieving With Other Men

By Tom Golden LCSW

There I was dripping in sweat, the kind that rolls down the side of your head and innocently into your ear. The still summer evening was allowing me to hear my own breath and my own thoughts. I was determined to make this a great hole and I kept digging—probably farther than I really needed to, but on I went. What seemed like a great deal of sweat was swallowed effortlessly by the hole, absorbed as a matter of course by the dirt in the bottom. The hole and the dirt were equally unmoved by the tears I shed.

This hole was to be the home of a tree that was being given as a memorial to my father who had died the previous November. I had known the hole needed digging, but had put off the task until now—now being just about the last possible moment it could be dug. As I continued digging, I found myself flooded with memories of my father. My thoughts moved back and forth between recent events leading up to his death and childhood experiences. I remembered his engineering talents and nature and tried to dig the hole in a way that would please him.

As I dug the feelings flowed through me: the sadness of missing him, the gratefulness of having been his son, and the anger and frustration of my powerlessness. All of these feelings found their way into this hole. The act of digging became an avenue for the various thoughts and feelings to arise. Through the action I was opened to my own inner world.

I started wondering why I had put off this job, then realized that I hadn't and didn't want to do it. Actually digging the hole brought the death more into reality, and a part of me didn't want that. I've learned to accept this part that wants to deny things. Denial is not really such a bad thing,

and it doesn't go away as quickly as some people seem to think. I've noticed it has a slow, zigzag decay that can last a long time. In a way denial can be our friend, allowing us to slowly accept the reality at hand. I became aware of the battle going

on between the denying part and the digging-the-hole part.

The tree has since been planted in an emotional ritual attended by myself and the six men who donated the tree. It became an avenue for all of us to delve into our interiors and connect with a variety of issues from fathers to death.

The activity of buying, digging, planting, and gathering together became a hub for a wide variety of spin-offs. As we

stood around the tree we all had a chance to speak and to listen.

Somehow having an activity made this process flow smoothly. It would have been much more difficult to simply sit in a circle and talk about our feelings. It was through the doing that we could connect.

The tree now stands in a park that is adjacent to my home. Not only was the activity surrounding the tree helpful, now the tree has moved from being an activity to being a place. Each time I come and go I see that tree sitting there being itself. When I see the tree I am reminded of my father, my grief, and the men who lovingly honored both my father and my pain.

I have found a wide variety of activities that, like planting the tree, help me in connecting to my inner spheres. Writing, gardening, and music are examples. All of these activities can take me into myself and my grief and joy. Another example is a ritual I learned about some time ago from the Cree Indians of northwest North America: the tree wounding ritual. The following story describes this simple ritual and its beauty.

When his brother died suddenly, Jaque was torn by sadness and anger. Following ancient custom, he went into the forest, selected a tree, and after uttering a prayer, stripped away a piece of the bark. Now the tree, like Jaque, had lost something whose loss caused deep pain. Many times over the following months he returned to visit the tree. As the seasons passed, the wound in the tree healed. So did the wound in Jaque's heart. With the tree as a visible reflection of his loss, Jaque was reminded that he, too, was healing.

In this instance there is also an action and a place. Both action and place serve as "containers" or "hooks" for the inner state of the man. As the man performs the ac-

All of these feelings found their way into this hole. The act of digging became an avenue for the various thoughts and feelings to arise. Through the action I was opened to my own inner world.



tion or visits the place, he is afforded the opportunity to experience his pain, and as the above example points out, to have his healing reflected back to him. I have used this ritual a number of times and have found it extremely helpful. The trees I have chosen are mostly in my back yard and stand as reminders to me of my grief, pain, and healing.

Death professionals have long been confounded by the difference in men and women in visiting gravesites. The men tend to visit more often. The above ideas should give us a deeper understanding of why this takes place. Men tend towards linking their grief with a place, action, or thing. There are many examples: the man who wore his deceased daughter's ring as a remembrance of her, the man who carved a bust of his wife after her death, a man who built a pond in memory of his murdered brother, a man who wore his father's watch, and on and on. These activities are often quiet and unseen by most people. The casual observer might assume that the man is "not grieving," but that is many times not the case.

The use of activity as a means to connect with one's grief is not exclusive to men. Women also find this approach helpful. The difference is that women have a strength in connecting their emotions to their words and then are inclined to "share" those words with the people in their life whom they love. This difference has been

The activity of buying, digging, planting, and gathering together became a hub for a wide variety of spin-offs. As we stood around the tree we all had a chance to speak and to listen.

confirmed in recent research by UCLA researcher Shelly Taylor, PhD. Taylor found that when stressed, men and women often took different paths in helping themselves heal. The women were more likely to talk with others about their difficulties, what Taylor calls "Tend and befriend" while men were more likely to move toward taking some action or to withdraw and self-reflect. (The more traditional and well

known "Fight or Flight") This research helps us understand the differences we have been discussing.

Gender differences can often be clearly seen in a married couple who have experienced the death of a child. Frequently the man thinks the woman is "overdoing it" as she openly emotes and shares her feelings with those she loves. The woman, on the other hand, sometimes thinks the man "isn't grieving" due to his difference in chosen path toward healing. Both are immersed in the chaos of grief and have limited reserves to come to the aid of their partner.

It needs to be said that when we divide men and women into two distinct groups we are in dangerous territory. All people are unique in the ways they find to heal themselves. There are probably more individual differences in grief than there are gender differences, but the gender differences do exist and need to be honored. ★

About the Author



Tom Golden is the author of *Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing* and has been teaching mental health professionals around the world about men and boys and their unique paths in healing from stress, grief, and trauma. Tom calls on his thirty years of practical, hands-on clinical experience in working with the bereaved. In 1995 he created the internet's first interactive web page for grieving people, www.webhealing.com. Tom maintains a private practice in Gaithersburg, Maryland and also enjoys doing Skype consults for those not in the Washington area.

Finding the Path:

Walking in the footsteps of others

By Stacey Hrvatin, surviving fiancée of Army Captain Michael J. Medders

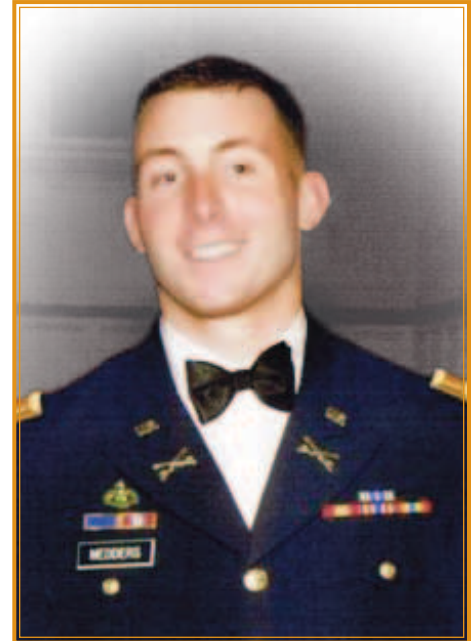
*This journey is
all your own but
there are others
who have walked
the path ahead
of you, and there
will be more
behind you.*

Now that I am a year and a half beyond the death of my fiancé, I am able to hold my footing a bit longer these days and look back. I look back at this journey so far and I can't believe this is the life I've lived. On an early September morning I was greeted by the men in uniform we so dread seeing when our loved ones are deployed. In a daze I wandered onto the porch as I heard them talking about my address, looking for my apartment unit. I leaned over and said, "You're looking for me."

They walked up the steps and everything proceeded as if I were acting it out in a movie. I remember it happening exactly how I would have staged it if I were going to film this situation, except THIS was real. My fiancé, Captain Michael Medders had been killed in Iraq. That is the moment my brain lost itself. From that moment forward I wouldn't be the same person.

My heart fell to the floor, and my memory of the next days, weeks, and months is spotty at best. I was swallowed by the grief of losing my fiancé, my best friend, our future, everything in one moment. I didn't think there would be any way I could continue on in the coming days. I thought at first I was still here to make sure everything was done correctly to lay him to rest as he deserved. I could take on that task; I could make sure that everything was done properly for him. Of course, he would have done the same for me. Then my thoughts told me it wouldn't be long, but every day I kept waking up. I would say to him, "What else baby? What else do I need to do?"

Recently hearing about another woman who had lost her love while deployed caused me to think of where she was in this journey. He had died two weeks before. This triggered a string of difficult



days for me. I was consumed with thinking about how she must be feeling and remembering how I was feeling. The hopelessness, the questions, the need to speak with my love filled my mind.

I perfected the ability to completely stop caring: stop caring about myself, stop caring about my family, stop caring about my friends, stop caring about my job, stop caring about what other people thought, and stop caring what other people said. No one knew the pain I was feeling. No one truly understood. It all felt so meaningless.

I searched, when I was able to comprehend what I was finding, for someone who had felt the same loss. It was a slow search because it was difficult for me to hear other people's stories. My wound was still so fresh, it was like taking off the bandage and realizing it was still bleeding... I'd put it right back on. There were days I just could not get on the computer because I was

overwhelmed with the emails from my friends, his friends, and friends of friends.

Slowly I was able to inch myself into other military survivor's stories. A friend passed on information about The American Widow Project. Again, inch by inch, I browsed the web page and slowly made contact. I reached out to see if people felt the way I did. Was I really going crazy? I was sure I was. The pain made me feel a dark side that I never knew existed. I was so sad and so angry. I needed to know which way I should be headed on this dark, weed-covered path.

TAPS Magazine helped provide support for me and I strongly identified with several articles. By reading others' stories I began to see the footsteps of those who had walked ahead of me. I saw people nearby in this journey and people farther ahead as well as behind.

In my travels I met a widow whose love was killed exactly a month after Mike and she was my sacred friend for a long, long

time, the only one I would reach out to on those horrible days. We'd talk about our stories; we'd go over our long, tear-filled days, or our short hopeless minutes. We kept each other walking forward, dragging each other at times. Thank God I found her. From the intense bond we formed I began to reach out and see if I could be part of this new crowd.

I met others who filled me with a sense of belonging, even in the moments I had never felt more alone. They completely understood. They were patient and understanding, and taught me about myself and how to find the strength I needed to get to the next day. Just hold on. Just keep going. That's all the advice I could take to heart. I remember one of my new friends talking to me on the phone about dating again. She shared how she was feeling and said, "I know you're sitting there thinking that you will never be in that place. I know because I was there too. Just keep going and you'll end up wherever you should be."

I made it through 2009, the year that was supposed to be filled with Mike's homecoming, bridal showers, bachelor and bachelorette parties, Mike's final days in the Army, his impending civilian job search, our wedding, our honeymoon, all our anniversaries, both of our birthdays, and all the holidays we expected to celebrate together.

These were the days we had already planned in detail.

I made it through the days that we had vividly imagined happening.

It was more difficult than I would have guessed in those early days but at the coming of 2010 I felt a release. Once I allowed myself to think about what lay ahead, I realized I felt slightly freer.

There were no expectations for 2010. I literally hadn't even thought about it until

the last week of 2009. It was a big step and I could feel Mike saying to me, "It's okay babe, keep going! I'm so proud of you."

Feeling stronger, I started to adopt Mike's way of thinking, seizing every opportunity I could, and doing the things that made me happy. I began trying things that took me out of my element. Mike lived life with such ferocity—enjoying each moment. His energy calmed my worry-filled mind and he taught me how to live a full life. That is the gift he gave me, among countless other things.

I will live life to the fullest. I will. And I am constantly amazed at how often I uncover things that he promised to help me understand. To me it's as if I am taking this path because of the part he played in my life. He took me this way, and now even though it's not the way we thought it would be, he's still guiding me to those things he was so sure of. He's helping me understand how to be happy again. I'm meeting people and doing things my old bubble-dwelling self would never have dreamt of.

If you are new to the path of grief, all I can tell you is to just hold on. Just keep going. This journey is all your own but there are others who have walked the path ahead of you, and there will be more behind you. They will use your steps for guidance, so don't feel guilty using the footsteps of those you see in front of you. Your path won't be exactly like mine or anyone else's. There isn't a right or wrong way to do this. There is only what you can do each day. It's okay to have bad days. It's also okay to have good days. Be gentle with yourself. Your journey is completely valid and you have others to remind you when you forget. ✨

If you have not connected with others, register for a TAPS Regional Seminar or request a Peer Mentor.

See www.taps.org for details.

Photos courtesy of Stacey Hrvatin





T★A★P★S Celebrity Classic

Hosted by Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers

\$400,000 donated to TAPS!

Photos courtesy of Dave Gill

The Colorado Honor Corps, led by Lynne and Bo Cottrell, hit another homerun this year with the 5th annual TAPS Celebrity Classic raising more than \$400,000 for TAPS! The Cottrells have been organizing the Celebrity Classic for five years, ever since a high school friend of Bo's lost his son in Iraq and turned to TAPS for support.

New celebrity hosts Larry, Steve, and Rudy Gatlin brought an exciting, distinctive sizzle to this remarkable event that included two sold-out dinner shows and a one-day golf tournament held June 18-19, 2010 near Denver, Colorado.

Beginning with the incredible Songwriter's Night dinner and show, the legendary Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers were joined by Nashville songwriters Rob Crosby, Brett Jones, Billy Montana, and Leslie Satcher. The audience was treated to the unique Nashville tradition of not only experiencing a fantastic show but also hearing the stories behind each song.

On Saturday, 25 golf teams enjoyed competing at the spectacular Arrowhead Golf Club known as one of the most beautiful and challenging courses in the

country. First place winners were Moody Insurance Team, Red Flight; Ashley Furniture Team, White Flight; Mitel Team, Blue Flight; local radio host and commentator Mike Rosen, Celebrity Champion; and Navy won the Military Team Competition.

Once again the Coors Cowboy Club donated their talents, all the food, and the expenses of driving from the Texas Panhandle to prepare and serve their famous prime rib dinner preceding Saturday's show. Their Chuckwagon Crew is renowned for their authentic western heritage style cooking and gracious hospitality.

Saturday evening's Grand Finale Concert featured a stellar and engaging performance by Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers playing their latest hits and award-winning oldies. Gary Morris also graced the stage as did Baseball Hall of Famer and All-Century Catcher, Johnny Bench (who knew he could sing?), and rock & roll icon, Jimmie Rodgers. Larry Gatlin invited 10 year-old TAPS survivor Cierra Becker onstage to play her guitar with them throughout the entire show, providing her with a once-in-a-lifetime experience!

In addition to silent auctions held both nights, Saturday's live auction with Jake Jabs, American Furniture Warehouse founder and CEO, as auctioneer was a huge hit, and generous bidders really came through to the tune of \$100,000! This year a "Philanthropy Auction" allowed donors to sponsor specific items for TAPS such as backpacks, Good Grief Camp supplies, shirts, balloons, or the Crisis Call Center for a week.

For the second year, TriWest Healthcare Alliance purchased the Griener Electric Traveling Barbeque dinner for the Fort Carson Survivor's Seminar and Good Grief Camp. Included are singers Tony David and Pam Hughes providing musical entertainment. This fantastic BBQ dinner and wonderful music created a magical ending to this year's intensely emotional but rewarding seminar with the children singing and dancing the night away!

Each year, unique highlights make this event special for the attendees. In addition to being serenaded by Johnny Bench and listening to the darling, talented Cierra play the guitar, another unforgettable moment was the gifting of an original oil



TITLE SPONSOR AIMCO'S MILES & JAN CORTEZ WITH RUDY GATLIN



LARRY AND RUDY GATLIN WITH THE COORS COWBOYS



JOHNNY BENCH AND CIERRA BECKER PERFORM WITH THE GATLIN BROTHERS



NATHAN LEININGER JOINS TONY DAVID AND WINNING MILITARY TEAM: NAVY



CIERRA BECKER DEBUTS ON STAGE WITH LARRY GATLIN



GARY MORRIS GRACES THE GRAND FINALE CONCERT



MUSIC LEGEND JIMMIE RODGERS



TITLE SPONSOR FRED BARTLIT ENCOURAGES BIDDERS



AUCTIONEER JAKE JABS STARTS THE BIDDING

painting donated exclusively for this event by renowned portrait artist Louisa Craft Jornayvaz. Purchased at last year's live auction, the piece was created to capture the essence of TAPS. As this beautiful art work was unveiled this year, the purchaser, Jana Bartlit, presented it as a gift to TAPS Survivor Crystal Becker and her family. Crystal then requested that the painting be displayed at the TAPS National Headquarters in Washington D.C.

The Gatlin Brothers were thrilled and humbled to be involved with TAPS and this exciting event. They were joined by 27 additional celebrities, all of whom donated their time and talent for the cause. Other guests included General Gene Renuart, Commander North American Aerospace Defense Command and US Northern Command; Lieutenant General

Michael Gould, US Air Force Academy Superintendent; Brigadier General Steve Ritchie, Retired, ACE pilot and TAPS National Board Member; Bonnie Carroll, TAPS founder and CEO; and three TAPS Survivor Families: the Beckers from Beesville, Texas; the Leiningers from Topeka, Kansas; and Taylor Heldt and her grandmother Gail Kriete from Washington, Missouri.

AIMCO and Bartlit, Beck, Herman, Palenchar & Scott, LLP were Title Sponsors again this year joined by major sponsors TriWest Healthcare Alliance, American Airlines, American Furniture Warehouse, Daveco Liquors, and the Red Lion Hotel Southeast.

Other key sponsors included Ashley Furniture, Gordon & Kaja Burr, Chase

Foundation, Colorado Party Rentals, Coors Cowboy Club, Bill & Rita Bass Coors, Tony & Danielle David, The Denver Post, Fishback/Stapleton Foundation, Griener Electric, Steve & Marla Grove, Lockton Companies LLC, Lanny & Sharon Martin, MillerCoors, Mitel, Moody Insurance Inc., Doug Morton & Marilyn Brown, Mountain Region Associates & Asphalt Coatings Co., John & Carolyn Saeman, Watson Family Foundation, and Wizbang Solutions.

Thanks to the tremendous support of dedicated sponsors, countless participants, and so many committed celebrities, local businesses, and volunteers over the past 5 years the TAPS Celebrity Classic has raised a whopping \$1,170,000 for TAPS! *

To learn more about this event, please visit www.taps.org/friends/classic.aspx.





Hero's Pledge

By Michele Hiester Marcum

IN HONOR OF HER BROTHER, ARMY MASTER SERGEANT MICHAEL T. HIESTER

*I pledge allegiance to my new-found friend, the one that flies above,
My childhood dream of tolerance and liberty and love.
Her glorious stripes of red and white, her field of patriot blue,
Her fifty stars with five points each; to her I will be true.*

*But there came a day our friendship wavered, high up on that mast.
She sank down in reverence, watched a trail of mourners pass.
Yet another wounded soldier had dropped out of the race.
But not an unknown identity. This time I knew the face.*

*When war came home with vengeance and beat down my front door,
I shook my head and glared at her. She'd stabbed me to the core.
She'd let me down, my dreams were crushed; we'd never be the same.
Childish views of her stars and stripes exchanged for my loved one's name.*

*Angry rivers of crimson red now raged across her field,
Held captive by banks of frozen white that refused to thaw or yield.
A rank of fifty sharpened stars now stood without salute,
Screaming volumes, saying nothing, silenced but not mute.*

*I pledged allegiance to that flag, I'd done so my life through,
But that was long before I learned that what I'd heard is true:
"Home of the free because of the brave," and "Freedom isn't free,"
These are gifts, not unalienable rights. Gifts that were given to ME!*

*Expensive gifts, as precious as life, too costly for me to buy,
Freely given by those unknown, those willing to fight and die.
In awestruck wonder, through tear-filled eyes, I searched her length anew.
And in her folds I found myself, an American, proud and true.*

*The seams, once tattered, near ripped apart, held tightly to each other.
The violent gashes stitched up tight, clinging like a brother.
Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, her flapping in the breeze,
Hemmed in prayer, my saving grace, she brought me to my knees.*

*I pledged allegiance to that flag, but now I understand
This tapestry of tenacity that blankets our great land.
Old Glory isn't just a quilted cloth of three distinctive shades.
It's we, the people, hand in hand, who ensure this flag won't fade.*

*Each of us a fragile thread, support none but just one.
But woven tight, it's strength we find, layered in with love.
For it's the lives we celebrate and love we can't forget.
And our journey's not our own, but shared with those we've met.*

*It's on behalf of a grateful nation that we remember these,
All gave some and some gave all, we owe a "thank you," please.
Old Glory's but a symbol of each American who's free.
Together, we weave the fabric of our proud TAPS family.*

*Stars of fifty, we began, for every state she serves,
But look between the layers, and you'll find beneath her curves,
Silhouettes of fallen heroes, embroidered exquisitely just for you,
And stars of shimmery golden threads in iridescent hues.*

*Our hearts, they weep. Our tears, they spill. Our grief comes crashing down.
But Old Glory keeps on flying high above each little town.
Greater love hath no man than those who've given all.
So raise our flag. Raise it high. We cannot let her fall.*

*We pledge allegiance to our new-found friend, the one that flies above,
Our adult dreams of tolerance and liberty and love.
Her glorious stripes of red and white, her field of patriot blue,
Her fifty stars with five points each, to her we remain true. ★*



After Grief: The Process of Healing

By Howard R. Winokuer, PhD, LPC, NCC, FT

Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Only two things in life are certain, death and taxes." Death is something that affects us all. No one is immune. Death is sometimes expected, sometimes unexpected. It happens to parents, grandparents, friends, relatives, pets, and others. Death often takes away something that is very precious to us and leaves pain and grief in its wake. The pain that is associated with grief can be overwhelming. It is filled with a wide range of feelings, behaviors, thoughts and physical sensations. Grief often engulfs us. It comes in like a wave at the beach, and unfortunately, we never know when it is going to hit. When people are grieving, it is not unusual for them to believe that they are going crazy. They often don't understand the range of experiences that they are going through. They only know that they hurt.

During the early stages of grief, our body takes over and protects us from the severe pain that we might be experiencing. We are often confronted with the memories and visions of our loved one dying. When this occurs, we might have a myriad of the symptoms including: anger, denial, self-blame or guilt, anxiety and depression. We might have also had un-

realistic expectations to become "our old self" again.

Grief is a process, it is not an event. It takes time to heal; however, time alone does not heal all wounds. We need to give ourselves the opportunity to do the grief work necessary in order for the process of healing to begin.

How do we heal? What can we do to begin taking care of ourselves after a loved one has died? There are many things that we can do to help; the following is a list of some of them.

Be gentle with yourself

Most of us know that we are our own worst critics. We expect more from ourselves than we would from anybody else. We often criticize ourselves, making statements like, "we are stupid" or "we should be over it already." Remember, work and time are what helps us heal. We need to allow that to occur.

Cry

Everyone has heard the expression "I just had a good cry." What does that mean? Why do they call it a good cry? Well, crying lets the pain out. Crying acts as both a pain reliever and a stress reducer. Let the tears come and help cleanse some of the pain associated with the loss.

Talk to others

Talking can be one of the most healing things we can do. There is a saying, "a joy shared is doubled, and a grief shared is halved." It is okay to halve some of our grief by sharing it with a counselor or a friend.

Grief is a process, it is not an event.

It takes time to heal; however, time alone does not heal all wounds. We need to give ourselves the opportunity to do the grief work necessary in order for the process of healing to begin.



Find a private place

Each one of us can benefit from spending a little time sequestered away. Whether it be a room in the home, a place in the woods, a spot by the lake or any place that is loved; it is good. And remember, use it regularly.

Don't make decisions

In daily life it is often difficult to make major decisions. During grief, it is even more difficult. Don't make a major decision like selling a house or beginning a new job. Wait until some healing has occurred before making major changes in your life.

Get enough rest and exercise

Grief is a very exhausting time; it takes our energy and leaves us empty. When a car runs out of gas, it stops; when we don't get enough rest, our body stops. Exercise is also important. It is interesting to note that mental stress leads to illness and physical stress leads to relaxation.

Eat healthy meals

In our fast paced society, it is easy to forget about well-balanced, home-cooked meals. It is often easier and more convenient to stop by some fast food restaurant. Food is the energy that keeps the body going. Give it high test. We are worth it.

When a loved one dies, our life changes. However, that does not mean that our life cannot once again be meaningful. When we make a decision to continue living, we honor the memory of our loved one who died.

Learn to laugh again

We often feel disloyal to the loved one who has died, by laughing and enjoying ourselves. Our loved one would want us to go on and find joy once again. When we rediscover our sense of humor, it helps bring us back to life.

Ask for help

Many of us have no problem "being there" when a friend or relative needs us. It is not just blessed to give; we also need to learn that it is okay to receive. When we receive, we allow someone else the opportunity to give.

Get daily hugs

Leo Buscaglia once said we all need at least ten hugs per day to maintain balanced mental health. We all need hugs. We all suffer from skin hunger. Reach out to the people who are close to you and ask for a hug. It often says more than words.

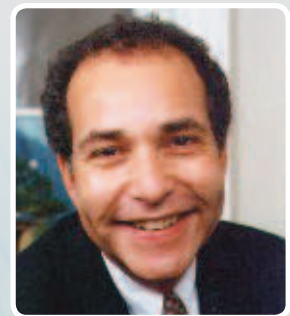


Give support to others

One of the gifts of grief is that it makes us more sensitive to the needs of others who are grieving. Become a "wounded healer" and reach out to others who are in pain. It will make a significant difference to the person in pain as well to yourself.

Grief is a part of life; no one can avoid it. When grief is experienced, growth can occur. When a loved one dies, our life changes. However, that does not mean that our life cannot once again be meaningful. When we make a decision to continue living, we honor the memory of our loved one who died. As we heal and begin to move on, let's remember the loved one and take the joys and memories of them with us as we proceed on our continuing journey. ☆

About the Author



Howard Winokuer is the founder of The Winokuer Center for Counseling and Healing and the immediate past president of The Association for Death Education and Counseling. During his twenty year career, he has worked with thousands of people suffering from issues dealing with grief and loss. He has conducted workshops and seminars throughout the United States, as well as in seven foreign countries. Dr. Winokuer has written numerous articles and has recently completed a book entitled *A Simple Guide to a Peaceful Life*.



When and How to Use Medicine for Grief

By Richard Dew, MD

It was a typical meeting of The Compassionate Friends, a national organization for parents who have lost a child. We were discussing what helped us cope with the death of our child. Joanna, a quiet lady who seldom spoke, suddenly blurted out, "I take Prozac. I couldn't have made it without it, and I don't care what anyone thinks." After a few seconds of stunned silence, several others confessed to "using drugs."

As a physician, I have been uneasy with what seems to be an almost blanket disapproval of medication by support groups, psychologists, and counselors. We are encouraged to cry, scream, beat on pillows, journal, or whatever it takes to deal with our grief. Each must grieve in one's own way and that is okay, we are told. But, if one must take medication, there is a subtle, and often not so subtle, message that we are not grieving properly.

The great physician William Osler said, "The desire to take medicine is perhaps the greatest feature that distinguishes man from animals." Americans in particular seem to think that there is a chemical solution to every problem: too fat, take a pill; too thin, take a pill; can't sleep, take a pill; can't stay awake, take a pill; no energy, take a pill; hyperactive, take a pill.

While those groups mentioned above tend to condemn medication, doctors as a group have a propensity to prescribe too freely. Caution must be exercised in deciding whether or not medications are needed. Just as important, caution is needed in deciding what drug should be used when one is needed. (See Table of Medications)






Most grieving people require no medication. However, without medication some will undergo much unnecessary pain, and a few may not survive without it.

I have found it useful to think of depression in two categories: Situational Depression (SD) and Chemical Depression (CD). Most people with SD do very well without medication. On the other hand, CD usually requires medication as part of its treatment plan.





SITUATIONAL DEPRESSION

Situational Depression (SD) occurs in response to the stresses and losses we experience in life: divorce, loss of a job, children moving away, problem children, death of a loved one, etc. Grief is a form of SD. From my own personal experience, I think the death of a child entails one of the severest forms of SD. For this discussion, the terms SD and grief are interchangeable.

There are several cornerstones in coping with Situational Depression:

-  Make a conscious decision that you will survive, no matter what.
-  Talk about and share your loss—over and over again. I found The Compassionate Friends invaluable for this.
-  An individual counselor is often helpful, but be sure that they are familiar with your particular type of loss.
-  Grief work is the painful process of intentional preoccupation with your dead loved one. Perhaps just a little at a time at first, but you make yourself do it. If we are to survive the loss intact we must hold up the image of what was and review it in detail again and again. Talk about it. Study old picture albums and scrapbooks even though it hurts.
-  Get enough rest. Insomnia is a common companion of grief. The old standbys of a bedtime routine and a warm bath are

helpful. Use medication for sleep with caution. Avoid benzodiazepine and alcohol entirely. Benadryl, Trazadone, Remeron, and Ambien are safe but should not be used nightly and may leave you drowsy the next morning.

-  Physical activity such as jogging or walking can burn off a lot of frustration.
-  Eat regularly but watch sugars and sweets. Too much of these can cause swings in blood sugar, which can affect mood and energy levels.
-  Spend some time alone each day. This is your time. Journal, read, cry, meditate, or whatever gets you out of the daily hustle and bustle.
-  Do something social each day. Just as you need time alone, you also need human interaction. It doesn't have to be big—call a friend on the phone, have lunch with them, or go for a walk with them.

CHEMICAL DEPRESSION

Chemical Depression (CD) results from lowered levels of substances in the brain called neurotransmitters, primarily the chemicals serotonin and norepinephrine. It is generally believed that 10-15% of the population is genetically predisposed to CD. Bipolar disease is the best known form of CD. If the neurotransmitter level is low enough, deep, potentially suicidal depression may occur, often for no apparent reason.

Those predisposed to CD may do well until something happens that lowers the neurotransmitter level. A classic example is the depression that results from taking certain types of blood pressure medicines or cortisone preparations. The hormones



As with any medical questions, seek the advice of your physician.
 Prescription medications should only be taken under the advisement of a licensed medical professional.

associated with pregnancy and delivery can trigger a chemically-induced postpartum depression. More pertinent to us, the stress of the severe grief reaction and SD that accompanies the death of a loved one may bring on CD.

Medications used to treat CD serve to raise the levels of neurotransmitters in the brain. Unless a near normal level of these is restored, the depression will persist. To imply that drugs are bad and that if one were only stronger, or had more moral fiber, or worked hard enough they should be able to overcome their depression is wrong. It makes as much sense to tell a

diabetic, who is deficient in insulin, that if they were stronger and worked hard enough they would not need "drugs," i.e. insulin.

People who have had previous bouts of clinical depression or have a strong history of depression in their family are more prone to CD. Many times, however, it is impossible to differentiate between a severe SD and a CD. Often a trial of antidepressant medication is the only way to tell. It will take three to four weeks to see if there is a response. I always caution my patients that antidepressants will not make you feel good. They make you feel more

near whatever is normal for you. Unfortunately for those grieving a close loss, that normal is the usual degree of SD that goes with grief. You don't feel good, but you're now in the same boat as the others in your group, and you are more able to do your grief work and benefit from it.

It's important to remember that medication may be a necessary aid to recovery in a small percentage of bereaved people, but they, just like the rest of us, still must use coping skills and utilize the previous suggestions for dealing with the SD that accompanies the death of a loved one. Medication may be a necessary aid, but it is only one part of the healing process.

ONE FINAL OBSERVATION

I have often heard medication referred to as a crutch. Some may view it as such. But if a person can't get to a support group or their counselor because of a broken leg, would we deny them a crutch? The same goes for those unfortunate enough to have CD at the worst time of their life. ★

About the Author

Dr. Richard Dew is a family practitioner in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. His youngest son, Bradley, was 21 when he was murdered. Richard has served as a chapter leader and on the national board of the Compassionate Friends. He has given numerous lectures, workshops and seminars to lay and professional groups. He has authored two books, *Rachel's Cry*, a book of poetry, and *Tunnel of Light*, a novel dealing with the stresses the death of a child places on a marriage and the spiritual crises many experience.

Both books are available at:
www.dewbooks.com

TABLE OF MEDICATIONS

MEDICATIONS TO BE AVOIDED: Addictive, tend to make depression worse

-))) **Alcohol:** to be avoided when used as a medication, e.g. for sleep or to ease stress and anxiety and when drunk in larger quantities than previously.
-))) **Barbiturates** (Nembutal, Seconal, Phenobarbital): older drugs, seldom used but extremely dangerous when used as sleep aids.

MEDICATIONS TO BE USED WITH CAUTION: potentially addictive, may make depression worse

-))) **Benzodiazepines:** Xanax (Alprazolam), Valium (Diazepam), Ativan (Lorazepam), Librium (Chlordiazepoxide), Klonopin (Clonazepam): May be used for short term relief of anxiety and agitation.

NEWER ANTIDEPRESSANTS: non-addictive, safe, generally have few side effects:

-))) Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft, Wellbutrin, Effexor, Lexapro, Lamictal
-))) Remeron and Trazadone are often used as sleep aids and are safe and non-addictive.

OLDER ANTIDEPRESSANTS: non-addictive, significant side effects, may aggravate heart or prostate conditions, used primarily when there is no response to the newer antidepressants:

-))) Elavil (Amitriptyline), Sinequan (Doxepin), Norpramin (Desipramine), Pamelor (Nortriptyline)
-))) Nardil and Parnate are a class of antidepressants that can have severe and potentially fatal side effects, require extreme caution with other medications and diet, and should be used only under the supervision of a specialist familiar with their use.



Day-by-day Books to

1

Healing the Hurt Spirit:

DAILY AFFIRMATIONS FOR PEOPLE WHO
HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE TO SUICIDE



By Catherine Greenleaf
Reviewed By Carol Lane

"Today I have permission to be sad. Sadness unlocks the grief through tears. On the other side of sadness is joy."

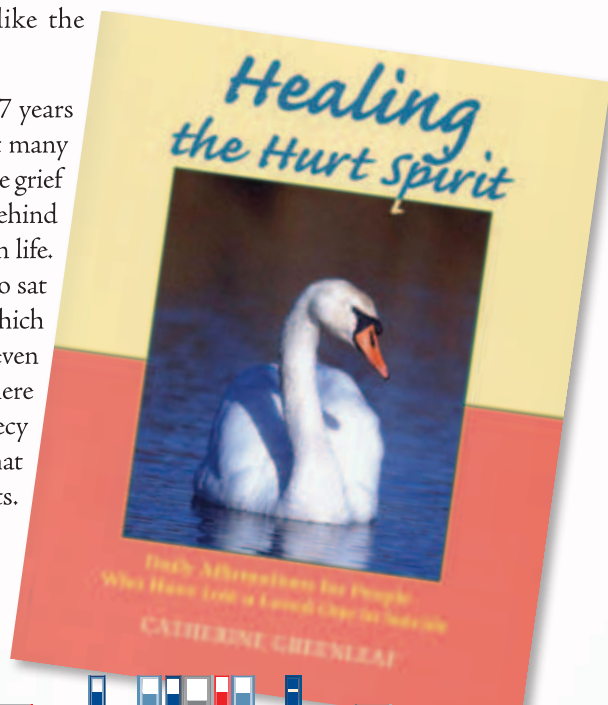
This book was written as a day by day journey through grief for people who have experienced the suicide death of a loved one. Catherine Greenleaf has experienced this type of death three times in her life and it took her 25 years to write a book that helps us to understand the emotions of a suicide survivor. Each page has a theme, a short essay, and a quote like the one above.

I lost my mother to suicide 27 years ago. At the time, there weren't many counselors who understood the grief that descends on those left behind when someone takes their own life. There were a lot of people who sat in judgment of the death which made this time in my life even harder to work through. There was always a sense of secrecy that was overwhelming, and that is what this book clearly targets.

Catherine Greenleaf addresses those societal opinions that have left the grieving person more isolated than ever. She encourages the survivor to join groups and get the counseling that is needed, but her book is also designed to reach out and help heal the heart one day at a time.

I recommend this book to anyone who has experienced suicide by a loved one. It helps us to remember that as we work through the sadness, there will be the joy that our loved one brought to our lives on the other side. *Healing the Hurt Spirit* helps dispel the myths that still exist in our society and leads us to the reality that one last event does not define our loved one's whole life.

The book is available at
www.centering.org



2

Living With Loss:

MEDITATIONS FOR GRIEVING WIDOWS



By Ellen Sue Stern
Reviewed By Melina Nolte

Five years after the death of my husband, Sergeant Nicholas Nolte, I read Ellen Sue Stern's book, *Living With Loss: Meditations For Grieving Widows*. This book truly has the capability of making you feel as if someone has taken hold of your broken heart and put it in their healing hands.

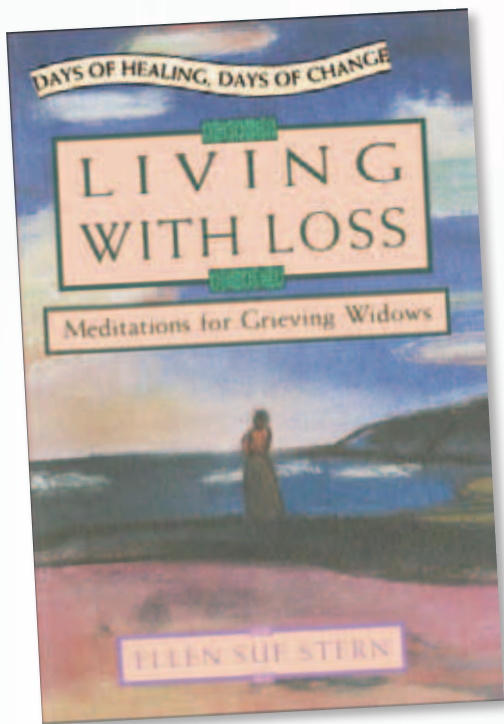
There is one page for each day for a year. Along with the reading is a quote and daily affirmation on each page. As I read these, it brought to mind a few things. First, that all the things I have experienced and continue to experience are normal in the grieving process. Second, that during that process we all may, at times, take a step forward, and then take two steps back. And lastly, that we are not alone in feeling this way and doing these things.

I found it tremendously comforting to be reminded of these facts by the book. I particularly liked the pages where you can write the words you never quite got to say to your spouse. I realized that even after all this time, one can still be in need of healing and this book facilitates that. Certain pages became my favorites, and I found myself often re-reading them as I looked to them for the strength and comfort they so eloquently provided.

Get You Through a Year

Living With Loss: Meditations For Grieving Widows contains immeasurable wisdom and reassurance that I believe can help many other widows. I wish that I had this book five years ago. I am fortunate to have it in my hands now. I can see why so many people have come to love this book and hold it dear to their heart, as I do today.

Living With Loss is available at
www.ellensuestern.com



3

Healing After Loss:

*DAILY MEDITATIONS FOR
WORKING THROUGH GRIEF*

★

By Martha Whitmore Hickman

We all know that our grief doesn't evaporate after a few days and weeks, even though some of our friendships do. This book was my constant and faithful companion during the first and second years of grieving. I liked it so much I bought copies for several friends who were also grieving.

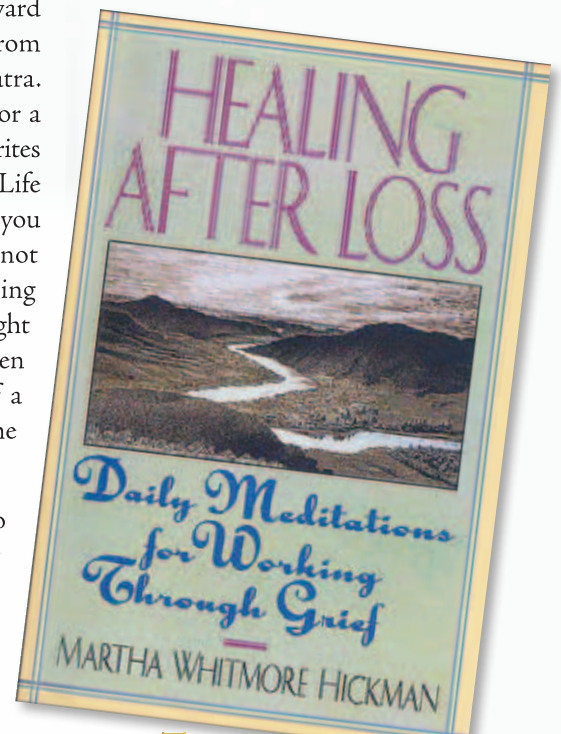
Healing After Loss is divided into 365 daily readings. Each reading starts with a short quotation followed by several paragraphs exploring the topic. At the end of each reading is a thought to carry us forward for the day. The quotations range from Sophocles to Shakespeare to Sinatra. Or they could be a stanza of a poem or a verse from the Bible. One of my favorites was written by Dag Hammarskjöld: "Life only demands from you the strength you possess. Only one feat is possible—not to have run away." After the intervening paragraphs, the author stated the thought for the day as: "I will not further burden myself by trying to fit some image of a 'model griever.' The strength I have is the strength to be myself."

Martha Whitmore Hickman is no stranger to grief, having lost her 16 year old daughter to an equestrian accident while on a family vacation. Her daily

reflections of the pain of losing a loved one validated my feelings without rushing me to be "over it." They also brought hope because I knew I was sharing the path with someone who had already walked down it herself.

Although I read the book sequentially, there is no reason it cannot be read randomly. Each page is helpful in dealing with some aspect of grief. It is also meaningful to anyone who has lost a loved one regardless of the relationship or manner of death.

Healing After Loss is available at
www.amazon.com ★





Department of Veterans Affairs

Vet Center Bereavement Counseling

When America experienced the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, TAPS was there in the Pentagon Family Assistance Center providing comfort and support for all those who lost loved ones on that fateful day. Hundreds of TAPS Peer Mentors volunteered their time over the course of six weeks, traveling to Washington, DC for a week, living in the Center's headquarters hotel, and offering comfort to those newly grieving the loss of their loved one.

Following this tremendously successful support effort, TAPS Founder Bonnie Carroll was contacted by the White House and appointed White House Liaison to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Over the course of 18 months, Bonnie had the chance to work closely with various VA agencies to implement programs that would benefit surviving families and strengthen the VA's commitment "...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."

Among the programs that were expanded and strengthened was the VA's Readjustment Counseling Service's (RCS) Vet Center Program. For decades, this agency had conducted veteran peer-based counseling and care for veterans in need of support and their families. Dr. Al Batres, Director of the RCS, drafted a policy change and requested that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs approve expanded eligibility to grief counseling that would include all family



members. Secretary Anthony Principi saw the need for this care and recognized the capability of the VA to provide these services, signing the policy change in August 2003. Since that time, all family members have had access to unlimited bereavement counseling, free of charge.

As one TAPS survivor said, "What a great gift to be able to talk about your feelings with a professional and learn coping strategies for the new emotions that pop up after a traumatic death. This is where the courage comes in. It is important to seek help when you are experiencing emotions that are sometimes confusing and overwhelming. If you feel you need help, seek the help of a counselor. Don't stay in that dark place for long. Seek the light of those who understand. By taking any of these small steps, you are demonstrating courage. And that courage is the lifeblood of healing." ★

BEREAVEMENT COUNSELING

What is Bereavement Counseling?

Bereavement counseling is assistance and support to people with emotional and psychological stress after the death of a loved one. Bereavement counseling includes a broad range of transition services, including outreach, counseling, and referral services to family members.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Does VA Have Bereavement Counseling for Surviving Family Members?

The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) offers bereavement counseling to parents, spouses and children of Armed Forces personnel who died in the service of their country. Also eligible are family members of reservists and National Guardsmen who die while on duty.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Where Is Counseling Offered?

VA's bereavement counseling is provided at community-based Vet Centers located near the families. There is no cost for VA bereavement counseling.

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How Can You Obtain These Services?

For more information on how you and your family may obtain counseling from the Department of Veterans Affairs, please call TAPS.

800-959-TAPS (8277)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★





Peer Mentor Profile

The heart of TAPS is the Peer Mentor Support network, survivors who have been trained and are willing to offer support to other survivors who are more recently bereaved. At TAPS we strive to match survivors with Peer Mentors whose losses are similar, although ultimately wounded hearts find solace with each other, even when circumstances differ. TAPS is grateful to its Peer Mentors, those special people who are able to reach through their own pain to help others cope with theirs.



Kristen Otto



Kristin Otto is one of two surviving sisters of Navy EN3 Daniel J. Otto who was killed in a motorcycle accident on May 26, 2008. He had been returning from visiting a friend in the hospital. "Dan's willingness to give his life for our country was just one of the ways that he gave of himself," said Kristin.

Months after Dan's death, Kristin found a TAPS brochure that had been included in a packet from casualty assistance. No one had told her about TAPS; she just learned of the organization while going through the packet. Her first connection was the TAPS Yahoo Sibling Group. She then received an invitation to the TAPS Care Group in Minnesota, facilitated by surviving mom, Colleen Betlach.

From there Kristin's involvement grew. She decided to become a TAPS Peer Mentor. "I have always had the urge to work with people and help people," said Kristin. "From the beginning I knew that this was something that I could do help others who were going through something similar. If I can give someone else a little bit of comfort in knowing that they aren't alone in all of this, it's a good connection."

In addition to mentoring newly bereaved siblings, Kristin hosts the TAPS Sibling Chats. She has also attended seminars and



Kristin and Meghan Otto

Photo courtesy of Kristen Otto

*Thank You
Kristin!*

retreats. "I think my most valuable adult experience has been the Sibling Retreat in Las Vegas in 2009. It was awesome to meet more siblings and make the connections," she said. It was the first time Kristin had spent

time with people who had lost a brother or a sister, other than her own sister.

Kristin also had the opportunity to work with the Good Grief Camp at the Minnesota Retreat in 2009. "Seeing things through a child's eyes is a completely different experience. Kids are so aware of things that we, as adults, wouldn't expect them to understand."

In the past two years, Kristin has learned that there is nothing "normal" about grief. "It will come and go. There will be days that you are angry beyond belief and days that you almost forget until something reminds you. You will never forget completely."

For Kristin, the hardest aspect of mentoring is that she always wants to solve problems. "I want to make things better for people, and with grief that is not possible. What works for me may not work for someone else." This is balanced by her knowledge that she can truly help someone else. In helping others, she has found that it helps her deal with her own grief, as well.

To other siblings, Kristin's message is this: "Our loved ones lived and died so that we can keep living. We need to live. Live your life how you want to, and don't let anyone tell you that you are wrong. You need to do what is best for you at this very moment." ★



T★A★P★S Run & Remember Team

First runners to run the Boston Marathon for T★A★P★S

The TAPS Run and Remember Team fields most of its runners every autumn in the annual Army 10 Miler and Marine Corps Marathon events in Washington, DC. But those aren't our only venues. Any runner can participate in any event in any location. This year, we are proud to acknowledge two runners who supported TAPS in the prestigious Boston Marathon!

Andre Karr

Andre Karr was first introduced to TAPS when he was accepted into the Air Force Honor Guard at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, DC. He volunteered as a TAPS Mentor and Team Leader at the National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp for young survivors for his three year tour. Although he has since retired from active duty, he continues to support TAPS in any way he can, and one of those ways is running for the TAPS Run and Remember Team.

Andre always said that he had no interest in running a marathon unless he had a chance to qualify for Boston on his first shot. His plan was to qualify and run it, just to say he was able to do it once in his lifetime. He had no plans on running another marathon... ever. But then he found a way to add meaning and purpose. He wanted to run for the kids of TAPS,

promote the organization, and in his words, "raise funds for all the wonderful things that TAPS does for our fallen heroes' families."

Heidi Anderson

Heidi Anderson is an active member of the TAPS Run and Remember Team. Residing in the DC area, she is the Director of Environmental Policy at SAIC (one of TAPS' major sponsors). Near the end of 2005, Heidi and a friend decided to run a marathon in the next year. They signed up for the Marine Corps Marathon; then searched for a military-focused charity. They found TAPS.

Heidi said, "I knew that I really needed a reason to train and run such a great distance, and I was so very touched by the great work that TAPS was doing for the families of our fallen heroes. My husband served 23 years in the Marine Corps, and I have always been a big military supporter."

Heidi proceeded to become more involved with TAPS, running for fallen heroes in 2006, 2007, and 2008. In addition she has found fulfillment serving as a member of the TAPS Board of Directors. Due to

several stress fractures she had to defer the Boston twice until finally, her last opportunity was this past April. "It was an amazing experience," said Heidi. "It was truly an honor to run in memory of our fallen heroes."

Race Day Report

Written by Andre in April 2010 to the supporters who contributed to TAPS:

Family and dear friends,

First and foremost, I truly appreciate your support for TAPS. It has been a moving experience to see the outpouring of support for such a fantastic cause. Thanks to you, I was able to meet my donation goal. You are all true patriots and are the reason this is such an awesome nation!

In the week before toeing the line for the Boston Marathon start, I was contacted by TAPS Run and Remember Team Director, Marie Campbell, and received some very exciting news. Heidi Anderson, a member of the TAPS Board of Directors, was going to join me as the first to represent TAPS while running the Boston Marathon!



Heidi and I met at the Boston Marathon Expo the Saturday before the race. We were able to take pictures, grab a bite, and talk about our reasons for running. I was running in honor of Staff Sergeant Brian Hobbs, the father of my first Good Grief Camp mentee. Heidi's was a story of Major John Ruocco's life and death: A similar, yet different story.

As Heidi was telling me about Major Ruocco, it reminded me that our troops fight on two fronts: One consumed by destruction caused by bullets, mortars, RPGs, and IEDs... and one that is not as easily defined. A front with no geographical boundaries. A place where we become our own worst enemy. Major John Ruocco took his own life three months following his return from Iraq.

We had beautiful weather for the start of the race. I clocked a respectable, yet conservative hour and thirty nine minutes at the one-half marathon line. Then, well... let's just say that the Newton hills and the change in wind direction made it very apparent that no land-speed records would be broken by me!

I focused on spreading the TAPS message my last half of the race by stopping to chat with large crowds on the sidelines. More than 500,000 people lined the course that day. It was an amazing experience to see the looks on their faces as I explained the TAPS mission. I made a lot of friends that day.

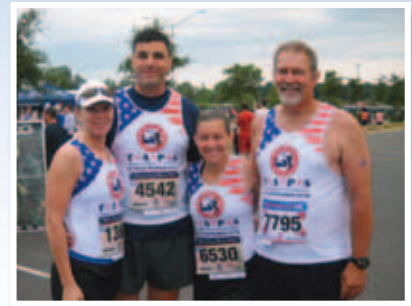
On Memorial Day weekend, I will be volunteering for my fourth year as a TAPS senior team mentor with the teen group during the TAPS National Good Grief Camp. I look forward to putting my arms around the shoulders of these young survivors and telling them about the support you have provided. They will know that they are not forgotten... that their loss rests in the hearts of many people... many true Americans.

Thanks again to all of you. Thanks again for the incredible support and amazing encouragement. You will always have a place in my heart.

~ Andre S. Karr

To learn more about these events, or if you would like to participate in another event in your local area, please email us at HonorCorps@taps.org or call us at 800-959-TAPS (8277). We will be more than happy to help get you started. ★

Even if you can't run across a finish line, you can volunteer for an event or donate on a runner's web page. Help us make this our best year ever.



SUPPORT THE TEAM

Future Run & Remember Team Events:

ARMY TEN MILER

★ October 24, 2010 ★
Washington DC

MARINE CORPS MARATHON MCM 10K, and the HEALTHY KIDS FUN RUN

★ October 30, 2010 & October 31, 2010 ★
Washington DC

SAN ANTONIO ROCK 'N ROLL MARATHON or HALF MARATHON

★ November 14, 2010 ★
San Antonio, TX

HONOLULU MARATHON & 10K WALK

★ December 12, 2010 ★
Honolulu, HI

DALLAS ROCK 'N ROLL HALF MARATHON

★ March 27, 2011 ★
Dallas, TX

MARINE CORPS HISTORIC HALF

★ May 15, 2011 ★
Fredericksburg, VA

SAN DIEGO ROCK 'N ROLL MARATHON or HALF MARATHON

★ June 5, 2011 ★
San Diego, CA





TAPS Regional Survivor Seminars

a place to heal



Photos from TAPS archives

“Someone asked me, ‘Isn’t going to a TAPS event like rubbing salt in your wounds?’ I told her, no, it’s like going home: you can laugh, you can cry, you can be silly, and it’s okay. You are with people who understand and you don’t feel guilty about laughing or joking around. It is the most amazing feeling when you can spend time with people who are strangers when you arrive and family when you leave. TAPS is home for me. They are always there no matter what. I thank God for TAPS and I wish people could understand: it’s not salt, it’s love that gets rubbed in your wounds, the love of healing.” ~ Robin Hartke, Surviving mom of Lance Corporal Stephen Dearmon

We are America’s family, for all who are grieving the loss of a servicemember. We all wish we weren’t members of this family, but are grateful for the connection and sense of belonging that TAPS provides. Without TAPS, many of us would feel isolated and out of touch. Like many

families, TAPS has hosted a national family “reunion” every year since its beginning in 1994: the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp for young survivors.

But in 2006, we expanded our outreach to introduce regional seminars, focusing on military installations where the death toll was highest and where the largest survivor populations were concentrated. That year we hosted three regional seminars. Since that time we have expanded the program, and have plans to complete 16 seminars this year.

“Our Regional Survivor Seminars for adults and Good Grief Camps for children provide a healing opportunity for survivors to receive the TAPS experience on a smaller scale,” said Regional Camp Director, Tina Saari. “These weekend events may be perfect for those who can’t travel too far and for those who want to participate more often than our annual seminar and camp.”

TAPS Regional Survivor Seminars provide an opportunity to join together with survivors for a weekend full of support, care, and hope. Under Tina’s guidance, the TAPS regional seminar team deploys twice a month to various locations to host a two day program for adults and children. Tina, an Army spouse who holds a BS from Texas A&M University and has also acquired an Early Childhood Education certificate, plans and coordinates regional events across the country. She is also the director of the TAPS Regional Office in the Gold Star Support Center of Fort Hood. Working with commanders and local groups, TAPS plans and finds sponsors for the materials, activities, lodging, and meals for each regional event. The only cost to the survivor is their transportation.

“Local Military Installation or Guard components participate in our regional events, providing a strong sense of service care and support,” said Tina. “Thanks





to wonderful community and corporate sponsorship, once you arrive for the weekend, these events are free of charge to our families. Join us for a TAPS Regional Survivor Seminar and meet other local survivors. We would love to see you the next time we are in your area."

Check the TAPS website to find a regional event near you. Join us as we Remember the Love, Celebrate the Life and Share the Journey!

"Please take the time and trouble to attend one of these Good Grief Seminars. It was wonderful. I came home with a smile on my face and a warm feeling in my heart... for the first time in a LONG time. I thought I had a handle on 'things'. The sharing sessions at this function really opened my eyes to several underlying things that were still on the edge."
 ~ Dana Chase, Oklahoma, Surviving mom of Staff Sergeant Lance M. Chase

For Adults:

The conferences provide a wealth of information, resources, and personal contact with fellow survivors in a spirit of friendship and understanding. We have gentle, supportive discussions allowing you to share and discover that you are not alone. Above all, we honor our loved ones as we connect with others to find hope and healing.

For Children:

TAPS Good Grief Camp for children and teens provides a safe and supportive atmosphere to conduct activities and opportunities to learn coping skills, establish and identify support systems and create awareness that they are not alone in the grief of their loved one. Children and teens meet others of their own age group to share and learn, together.

For Peer Mentors:

TAPS conducts a day of Peer Mentor Training at selected Regional Survivor Seminars for those who are at least 18 months beyond their own loss and ready to be there for others and offer support. Learn more about grief and trauma, gain basic helping skills, and become part of our TAPS Peer Mentor Team! For more information concerning Peer Mentor training, contact TAPS at info@taps.org.



»»» For upcoming seminars visit **WWW.TAPS.ORG** and click on Events.





Fort Hood Regional Seminar



Photos by Steve Maloney

For the second year in a row TAPS hosted a Texas-sized three day regional seminar on Fort Hood in Texas. More than 300 attendees came from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Alabama, New Mexico, North Carolina, Indiana, Nebraska, and California to brave the heat and share the time together.

“We are all here because someone died,” Darcie Sims said. “The story starts with one single word – love,” she said. “It’s not about how someone died that brought us here, but how they lived.”

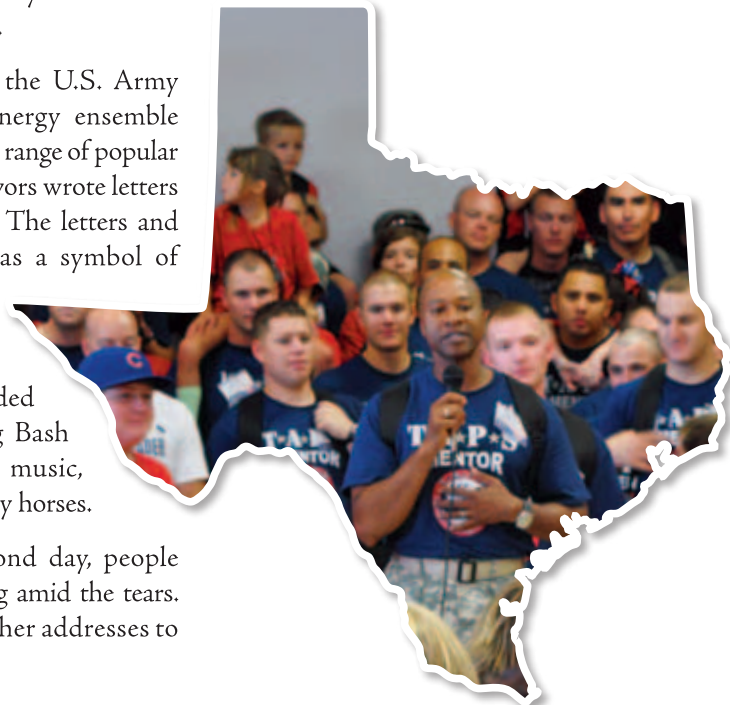
The Fort Hood event differs from other regional events in that it is longer, allowing for workshops in addition to general sessions, multiple sharing sessions, and extra activities. Workshops included financial planning, relaxation techniques, writing and journaling, after-death communication, hurtful things people say, and making PowerPoint presentations with pictures, words, and music to highlight the great memories we treasure. Sharing groups provided a safe haven for remembering loved ones as well as sharing the grief journey. Activities like line dancing and craft-making gave families a chance to unwind.

While adults spent time in workshops and seminars, more than 100 children participated in the Good Grief Camp to learn positive ways to deal with the death of loved ones and have some much-needed fun. Circle time sharing sessions, coloring books, and games helped the children express the grief they feel with losing an important loved one. Each child was paired with a trained military mentor who is a soldier at Fort Hood.

Friday evening featured the U.S. Army Soldier Show, a high energy ensemble production offering a wide range of popular music. On Saturday, survivors wrote letters that they tied to balloons. The letters and balloons were released as a symbol of continued connection to their loved ones while letting go of some of the pain. The time together ended with a Saturday evening Bash complete with activities, music, static displays, and Cavalry horses.

“By the end of the second day, people were smiling and laughing amid the tears. They were giving each other addresses to

keep in touch. They were sharing their feelings without the fear of someone telling them to ‘move on,’ which pretty much shuts down any communication,” said one participant. “This seminar allowed them to decide how to remember their loved one and move through grief, since we never forget those whom we love.” ★





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Washington, D.C. ★ October 31, 2010



Marine Corps Marathon

