

For the Loved Ones of Those Who Served and Died

TAPS[®]

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

TAPS MAGAZINE | SPRING 2022



WHAT'S INSIDE: UNDERSTANDING YOUR GRIEF

PRIORITIZING SELF-CARE WHILE GRIEVING ★ A BITTERSWEET GIFT

We Remember Them

In the rising of the sun and at its going down;
we remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter;
we remember them.

In the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring;
we remember them.

In the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer;
we remember them.

In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn;
we remember them.

In the beginning of the year and when it ends;
we remember them.

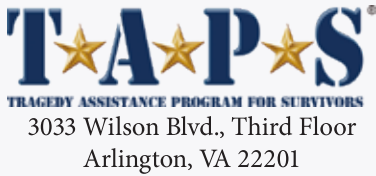
When we are weary and in need of strength;
we remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart;
we remember them.

When we have joy we yearn to share;
we remember them.

So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us;
as we remember them.

~ Poem by Rabbi Sylvan Kamens and Rabbi Jack Riemer from
Gates of Prayer, published by Central Conference of American Rabbis.



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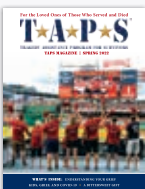
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**SHARE YOUR STORY
BRING HOPE TO SURVIVORS**

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TAPS PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- ★ 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline
 - ★ Peer-Based Support Network
 - ★ Survivor Care Team
- ★ Community-Based Care Connection
 - ★ Casework & Benefits Assistance
 - ★ Suicide & Illness Loss Support
 - ★ Grief & Trauma Resources
 - ★ Education Support Services
- ★ TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®
- ★ Online Community: Care Groups & Webinars
 - ★ Regional & National Seminars
- ★ TAPS Together (One-Day Gatherings)
 - ★ Women's Empowerment
 - ★ Men's Program
 - ★ Young Adults Program
- ★ Youth Programs: Good Grief Camps
 - ★ College Experience Program
 - ★ Sports & Entertainment Events
- ★ Publications: Magazines, Newsletters, & Blogs



ON THE COVER

During their 2021 Salute to Service baseball game, the Washington Nationals honored TAPS survivors in Washington, D.C.

ABOUT TAPS

Caring for the Families of America's Fallen Heroes

Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, we are a family of military survivors ready to embrace and connect all who grieve the death of a military loved one with resources, services, and programs. TAPS provides support to survivors regardless of the manner of death, the duty status at the time of death, the survivor's relationship to the deceased, or the survivor's phase in their grief journey. At TAPS, we open our hearts and resources to the world with our award-winning programs and services to support all military bereaved. TAPS is fortunate to work with leading experts in the fields of grief, bereavement, trauma, and peer support to integrate decades of research on military grief into action to help heal hearts.

At TAPS, we:

Honor and Remember: We cherish the lives of our military loved ones and celebrate military survivors as the living legacies of their service and sacrifice.

Empower: We empower survivors with healthy coping skills, resources, and opportunities to connect in the comfort of their home, their community, their region, and the nation to grow with their grief.

Connect: We connect all those grieving a military death 24/7 to a nationwide network of peer-based, emotional survivor support and critical casework assistance.

Educate: We inform and educate using research-informed best practices in bereavement and trauma care for survivors and advocate on behalf of survivors with policy and legislative priorities.

Create Community: We build community with survivors to provide comprehensive comfort, care, and resources where they live, when they need it, and in a manner comfortable for them.

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TAPS exceeds industry standards for financial accountability- we remain committed to fiscal integrity. We are proud to have received many of the top nonprofit charity ratings available and are devoted to enhancing our support of all those grieving the death of a military loved one.



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To our TAPS families,

Welcome to the 2022 TAPS Spring Magazine – your hug in the mailbox. It serves as a reminder that you are not alone in your grief journey. Within these pages, you will find articles written by grief professionals who are here to support you and stories written by fellow TAPS family members who hope to bring you comfort. We hope you will be touched, inspired, and encouraged by what you read.



Spring is a time of gentle warmth, of longer days, budding flowers, and emergence from a dark winter. When we are grieving, it may feel so unfair that the world around us is coming to life again when our loved one is still gone. How dare the flowers bloom and the sun shine? At TAPS, we hold on tight to each other without judgment or direction. We accept wherever we are at the moment – facing the sunlight or closing the drapes.

You have a TAPS family that just “gets it” and is here for you with patience and love. We uplift each other as we take steps toward futures in which we can embrace the sunshine again and bloom in our unique ways while honoring our loved ones.

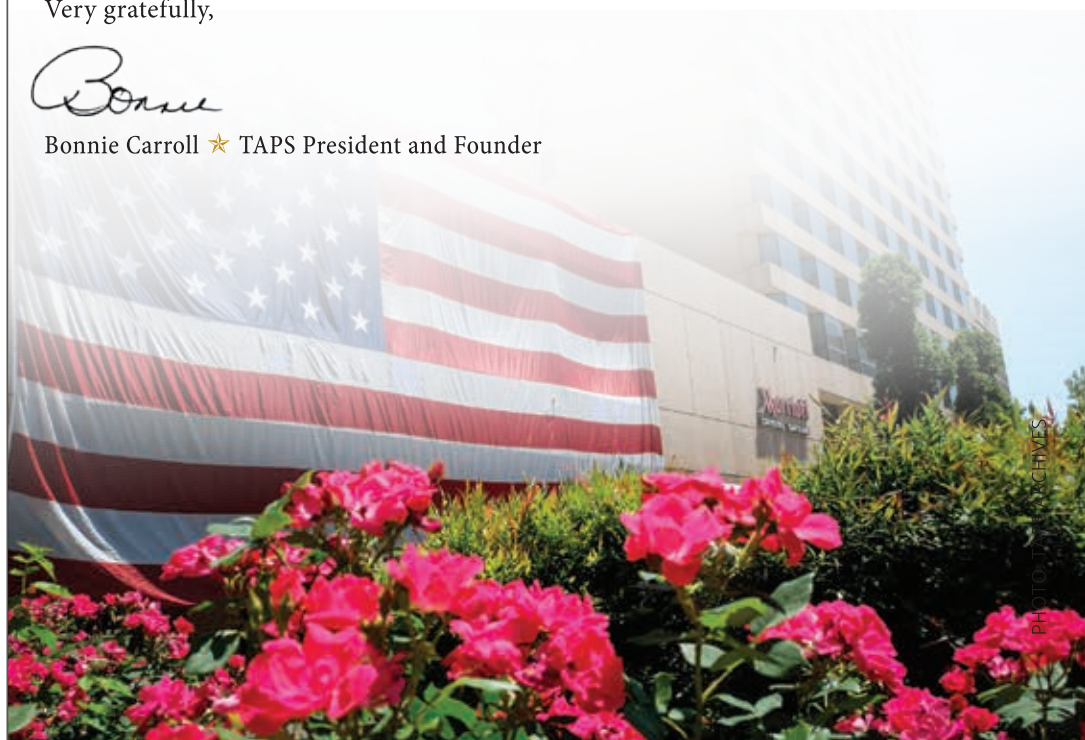
At TAPS, compassion and care are ever-present. Our 24/7 TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline is available to you at 800-959-TAPS (8277). We can connect you with professional grief counselors, TAPS Peer Mentors, and more. You can find inspiration and join conversations online through our social media outlets (@TAPSorg).

TAPS is a home built on love and understanding. Wherever you live or may go, TAPS is always a safe place for you to find support, reconnect with friends, and offer your experiences and kindness to others. We also invite you to attend our 28th Annual TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar this Memorial Day from May 27 to 20, 2022, in Arlington, Virginia.

Very gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bonnie". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Bonnie Carroll ★ TAPS President and Founder



Dear TAPS...

LIFELINE

Losing my husband 7 years ago was devastating. I felt alone, scared, mad, and sad beyond belief. TAPS was a lifeline for me. Having an organization full of individuals who “got it” and supported me was amazing. The journey of grief is never ending and a roller coaster of emotions, but I am in a good place to offer support to those who are new to loss. My loss created an overabundance of empathy and compassion in myself. I am ready to give back.

Jennifer Hartway

Surviving spouse of U.S. Army
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jon Hartway

CARE PACKAGE

Last night, I received your wonderful care package, and I was amazed by all the great information you’ve packed into that “small” box! Thank you so much for caring so much about my well-being. I really appreciate your empathy!

Christa Dannenberg

Surviving spouse of retired U.S. Army
Lieutenant Colonel Peter Dannenberg

PEER MENTOR PROGRAM

The TAPS Peer Mentor program has allowed me to turn the tragedy of losing my son from suicide into a purposeful experience, helping other grieving fathers – men who would have otherwise not had someone to journey with them. Knowing I was there and, more importantly, that I made the journey less cumbersome for them is extremely healing for me.

Jon Ganues

Surviving father of U.S. Air Force
Airman First Class Jon Ganues, Jr.

BREATH OF FRESH AIR

My TAPS Peer Mentor contacted me right away, and we’ve talked a few times already. She is warm, caring, and open. She makes sure to set a date with me for our next contact. I’ve been grateful for such a great match. I’m also so impressed by the follow-through of this organization. I’m accustomed to having to fight for any help and to make multiple phone calls. What a complete breath of fresh air! I also appreciated the package I received and found it quite helpful.

Sue Johnston

Surviving spouse of U.S. Army
First Lieutenant Richard Johnston

TAPS IS THERE

I appreciate all TAPS has done for me and my family since my son passed away. The support has been more than I ever expected, and the sincere contact from the other mothers who also lost their child has been amazing. Helping with all the paperwork and making sure all was received where it needed to be and done properly has been such a blessing, as I know I could not have done it alone. This organization is truly what we needed in our time of need and grief. Today, I came back from town to find a gift box on my doorstep. As I opened it, more than the items in it flowed out. I could feel the love and support behind each item in it, and I appreciate it so much. There are just not enough words to say how much I have grown to love and be thankful for this organization. As I get through this horrible process of grief I am going through, I truly hope that I can do something to return the support and love to someone else who may need it. Thank you TAPS, and may God truly bless your mission.

Sue Kirk

Surviving mother of U.S. Air Force
Technical Sergeant James Kirk

WALKING TOGETHER

The impact of TAPS outreach and support has truly helped and enabled me to cope. I didn’t know how to go on after the trauma of suicide. I found it the most gut-wrenching and acute pain that I have ever endured. In the moments of anger, I had to work through the thought that the pain was lifted from my son and passed on to me — the survivor. TAPS has helped me walk with others through the pain of loss and recognize that grief is really just love. I read somewhere that “grief is love with no place to go.” That’s what I needed in TAPS – support and recovery from grief and suicide. I am now writing a book about suicide. Some days I can type; some days I can’t type. Sometimes the grief gets complicated, but I know TAPS is there to help.

Regina Reifinger

Surviving mother of U.S. Army
Sergeant Thomas Reifinger

THANK YOU

Sending a grateful and huge thank “YOU” for keeping my son and I emotionally afloat during our rough seas. We are taking one step at a time during this unknown journey to find hope and peace... I greatly appreciate everything you do to help military families. Thank you again for helping me through this season of life.

Shari Chisolm

Surviving ex-spouse of U.S. Navy
Chief Petty Officer Scott Rudy



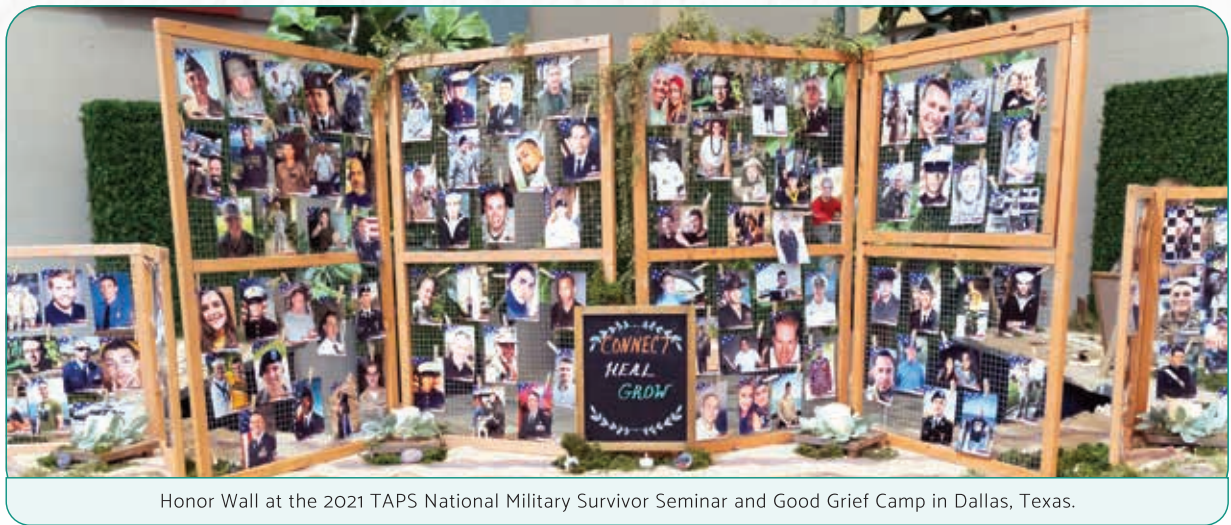
Visit taps.org/deartaps to submit your TAPS experience and share hope and encouragement with others.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR GRIEF

Ten Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart

PART 2 of 4

Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. ★ TAPS Advisory Board



Honor Wall at the 2021 TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp in Dallas, Texas.

*This article is the second part of a four-part series excerpted and greatly condensed from the second edition of Dr. Wolfelt's classic book, *Understanding Your Grief*, first published in 1992. In this series, Dr. Wolfelt covers his Ten Touchstones—essential physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual signs for mourners to seek out on their journey through grief.*

THE TEN ESSENTIAL TOUCHSTONES:

1. Open to the Presence of Your Loss
2. Dispel Misconceptions about Grief
3. Embrace the Uniqueness of Your Grief
4. Explore Your Feelings of Loss
5. Understand the Six Needs of Mourning
6. Recognize You Are Not Crazy
7. Nurture Yourself
8. Reach Out for Help
9. Seek Reconciliation, Not Resolution
10. Appreciate Your Transformation

TOUCHSTONE THREE EMBRACE THE UNIQUENESS OF YOUR GRIEF

In the course of human life, everyone experiences loss and grieves. But our grief journeys are never precisely the same. Despite what you may hear about grief stages or what you should or should not be thinking, feeling, or doing, you will grieve and do the work of mourning in your own way. This touchstone invites you to explore some of the unique reasons your grief is what it is—the “whys” of your particular journey through the wilderness.

WHY 1: Your Relationship with the Person Who Died

Your relationship with the person who died was different than that person's relationship with anyone else. In general,

the stronger your attachment to the person who died, the more difficult your grief journey will be. Ambivalent, rocky relationships can also be particularly hard to process after a death, however.

WHY 2: The Circumstances of the Death

How, why, and when the person you love died can significantly impact your journey into grief. Military deaths are often sudden and unexpected, and they may be violent. Such circumstances do not allow you to prepare and can give rise to traumatic grief. The age of the person who died also affects your feelings about the death. When we feel that a life was cut short, our innate sense of injustice colors our grief.

WHY 3: The People in Your Life

Mourning is the outward expression of grief. Part of the benefit of mourning involves continuously moving your grief



from the inside to the outside. Mourning also signals the people in your life that you're hurting and need their empathy and support to heal. Healing requires an environment of caring and gentle encouragement. Without a stabilizing support system of at least one other person, odds are you will have difficulty reconciling your grief.

WHY 4: Your Unique Personality

Whatever your unique personality, rest assured, your grief will reflect it. How you have responded to other losses or crises in your life will likely also be consistent with how you react to death. Other aspects of your personality—such as your self-esteem, values, and beliefs will also impact your response to death. Any preexisting mental health issues will probably influence your grief as well.

WHY 5: The Unique Personality of the Person Who Died

Just as your grief journey reflects your personality, so is the unique personality of the person who died. Personality is the total of all the characteristics that made this person the way they were. The way she talked, the way he smiled, the way she ate her food, the way he worked—all these and so many more little things go into creating personality. It's no wonder there's so much to miss when all these mannerisms are gone all at once.

WHY 6: Your Cultural Background

An important part of how you experience and express your grief is your cultural background. I mean your family's guiding values, rules (spoken and unspoken), and traditions when I say culture. Your family's ethnicity and origins often shape this. Commonly passed down from generation to generation, education and political beliefs also shape your cultural background. Your culture is your way of being in the world.

WHY 7: Your Religious or Spiritual Background

Your belief system can tremendously impact your journey into grief. You may discover that your religious or spiritual life is deepened, renewed, or changed as a result of your loss. Or, you may well find yourself questioning your beliefs as part of your work of mourning.

WHY 8: Other Crises or Stresses in Your Life Right Now

Whatever your specific situation, I'm sure that your grief is not the only stress in your life right now. And the more intense and numerous the other current ones are in your life, the more overwhelming your grief journey may be.

WHY 9: Your Experiences with Loss and Death in the Past

One way to think about yourself is that you are the total of all that you have experienced in your life so far. The more "experienced" you are with death, the less shocked you may feel this time around. Conversely, you may find that even if you have a lot of experience with loss, this death hit you harder. You might feel surprised by the intensity of your grief. Rest assured, grief can be unpredictable, so work toward accepting your grief as it comes.

WHY 10: Your Physical and Mental Health Background

How you feel physically and mentally significantly affects your grief. If you were dealing with physical or mental wellness issues before the death, your symptoms might now be worse. If you are tired and eating poorly, your coping skills may diminish.

WHY 11: Your Gender

Your feelings are your feelings, regardless of your sex or gender identification. Gender norms and social constructs may influence your grief and how others relate to you at this time. Our cultural understanding of gender and gender norms is evolving, and grieving people get to be grieving people—as they should. And, I believe all people are born with the instinct to grieve and mourn.



WHY 12: The Ritual or Funeral Experience

Funerals and memorial services for someone you love can help or hinder your personal grief experience. Holding a meaningful ritual for survivors can aid in their social, emotional, and spiritual healing after death. If you were unable to have or attend a funeral or if the funeral was minimized or distorted somehow, you may find that this complicates your healing process. Be assured, however, that it is never too late after death to plan and carry out a ritual (even a second or third ceremony) that will help meet your needs.

yearning that often comes with the loss. You may feel a sense of restlessness, agitation, impatience, and ongoing confusion. You may notice an inability to complete tasks. You might also experience a conscious or subconscious searching for the person who has died. For months (or even much longer), your mind may continue to look for the person – in your home, crowds, or places they used to frequent. You may even dream about the person who died. Yearning is normal, too, which is the intense, near-constant ache of missing the person.

ANXIETY, PANIC, AND FEAR

Feelings of anxiety, panic, and fear are also very typical in grief. You may be afraid of what the future holds or that other people in your life could die soon. You may be more aware of your mortality, which can be scary. You may feel vulnerable, even unable to survive, without the person who died. Financial problems can compound feelings of anxiety.

Under no circumstances will you allow your fears and anxieties to go unexpressed. If you don't talk about them, you may find yourself retreating from other people and the world in general. And if you are experiencing panic attacks, be sure to seek help from your primary care provider and or a therapist.

EXPLOSIVE EMOTIONS

Anger, hate, blame, terror, resentment, rage, and jealousy are explosive emotions that may be a volatile yet natural part of your grief journey. It helps to understand that these feelings are a form of protest. Think of a toddler with a favorite toy. The toddler wants the toy, so when it's yanked out of his hands, his instinctive reaction is to scream, cry, or hit. When someone loved is taken from you, your instinctive reaction may be much the same.

If explosive emotions are part of your journey (and they aren't for everyone), be aware that you have two avenues for expression outward or inward. The outward avenue leads to healing, while the inward one does not. Keeping your explosive emotions inside can cause low self-esteem, depression, guilt, physical complaints, and sometimes even persistent thoughts of suicide.



TOUCHSTONE FOUR EXPLORE YOUR FEELINGS OF LOSS

So far on the path to healing, we've explored opening to the presence of your loss, dispelling common misconceptions about grief, and embracing the uniqueness of your grief. As strange as your emotions might seem, they are a true expression of where you are in your grief journey at any given moment. How they feel for you is the primary way you experience these touchstones. Rather than deny or feel victimized by your feelings, I want to help you learn to tune into and learn from them.

SHOCK, NUMBNESS, DENIAL, AND DISBELIEF

Thank goodness for shock, numbness, and disbelief! These feelings are nature's way of temporarily protecting you from the full reality of death. A critical point to realize is that you should not prevent yourself from experiencing these feelings. Instead, be compassionate with yourself. Allow for and surrender to this instinctive form of self-protection, especially in the early weeks and months after a death.

DISORGANIZATION, CONFUSION, SEARCHING, AND YEARNING

Perhaps the most isolating and frightening part of your grief journey is the sense of disorganization, confusion, searching, and





GUILT AND REGRET

Guilt, regret, and self-blame are common, natural feelings after the death of someone loved. You may have a case of the “if onlys.” You may wonder, “If only I had encouraged him to stay home, if only I had been with her that night, if only I hadn’t said, etc.”

If you find yourself experiencing such regrets, please be compassionate with yourself. When someone you care about dies, it’s normal to think about actions you could or could not have taken before the death – whether to prevent it, to have done everything you could, or to have closed the loop on any unfinished business.

SADNESS AND DEPRESSION

Sadness can be the most hurtful feeling on your journey through grief. We don’t want to be sad; sadness saps pleasure from our lives and makes us feel crummy. But, sadness is a natural, authentic emotion after the death of someone loved. Something precious in your life is now gone, so of course, you are sad. Depression plays an essential role. It forces us to regroup – physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. The natural depression of grief slows down your body and prevents major organ systems from being damaged. It aids in your healing and provides time to begin reordering your life slowly. These natural feelings can ultimately help you move ahead, assess old ways of being, and make plans for the future.

A FINAL THOUGHT ABOUT THE FEELINGS YOU MAY EXPERIENCE

When you add up all the thoughts and feelings you’ve had since the death of the person you love – as well as all the emotions you’re yet to have in the months to come – we call this experience “grief.” It’s a deceptively small, simple word for such a wide-ranging, challenging assortment of feelings. Your behavior while having these feelings is also part of your grief journey. Mourning – or expressing your emotions outside of yourself – is sometimes, but not always, intentional. Your feelings may come out in strange and unpredictable ways, and this, too, is normal.

I hope you will be kind to yourself as you encounter and befriend all your feelings and behaviors of grief. Patience is paramount, as is self-compassion. You feel what you feel; there are no rights or wrongs. And when you’re struggling with your feelings or need to let them out, I hope you’ll remember to reach out to the people who care about you. Having these feelings is normal and necessary, as is expressing them outside of yourself and having them affirmed by others.

And so, the cycle of experiencing a feeling in grief involves embracing, acknowledging, befriending, sharing, and finally, having others witness and empathize with it. Each time you complete the circle, which you will continue repeating, you take one small step toward healing.

Editor’s Note

The Fall 2021 Issue of the TAPS Magazine published the first article in this series. While this four-part article series will give you a taste of *Understanding Your Grief – 2nd Edition*, you will also find the entire book a helpful companion. The new edition, just published in September 2021, adds brief passages on topics ranging from vulnerability, soulmate grief, complicated grief to mindfulness, the power of ritual, and more to the original bestseller. It is also available in a daily reader version titled *365 Days of Understanding Your Grief*.

About the Author

An internationally noted author, educator, and grief counselor, Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition and is on the University of Colorado Medical School Department of Family Medicine faculty. He has written many books that help people mourn, all listed on the Center for Loss and Life Transition website.



PRIORITIZING SELF-CARE WHILE GRIEVING

Dr. Gloria Horsley, P.h.D ★ TAPS Advisory Board



PHOTOS: TAPS ARCHIVES

In the middle of grief, self-care often falls to the bottom of the priority list. We busy ourselves with arrangements to make, bills to pay, and voids to fill. Distracting ourselves with washing dishes or putting together donations can keep the overwhelming grief at bay – if even for just a little while.

But the airlines have it right: If you don't put on your own oxygen mask first, you'll never be able to help anyone else. And those who put self-care low on the totem pole are frequently people who are looking for ways to make others' lives easier. If other people have what they need, it takes one burden off their minds.

The problem is that when grief is involved, the burden never lifts unless we take some time to take care of ourselves. Anyone who constantly puts others first eventually becomes depleted. In fact, Simmons University's School of Social Work reported that self-care is vital for those in caring professions, from social workers to healthcare professionals. "Scheduling time for self-care is just as important as scheduling time for everything else," says Simmons' Shari Robinson-Lynk, a professor of practice in social work. "Hoping and waiting until you have time means you rarely have the time to do it."

Here's how you can best use that time to give yourself as much attention as you give others.

CLAIM YOUR TIME

Give yourself a "vacation" from every other responsibility on your plate, whether it's for a day or an entire week. Schedule up with things that give you space to decompress: hot baths, walks in the woods, and a trip to

your favorite hobby store. When inundated with others' needs, feelings, and requests, it's easy to lose track of how you're feeling and coping. Remembering that you're a person, not just a vessel to hold things in (or upright!), can go a long way toward healing.

SET BOUNDARIES

Worrying about others amidst your own grief can be draining. Not worrying about others at all can be equally draining. You can find a good middle ground by determining what's truly important and what's not. Will you regret not helping out with the memorial fundraiser? Commit to making it a priority. Are you less than excited about giving a speech on grief to a local grieving parents group? Then, gently, but firmly say no.

CHECK IN ON YOUR PHYSICAL NEEDS

If you've recently lost a loved one, it's easy to become so consumed with your grief and your to-do list that you forget to do basic things like eat lunch or go to bed at a reasonable hour. Periodically make a point to check in: Are you hungry? Is your body craving a drink that doesn't contain caffeine? Are you so tired you're dragging yourself from appointment to appointment? Giving yourself permission to stop and eat or book a day at the spa to take care of dry skin and tense muscles can be a blessing in the middle of crushing grief.

GET CREATIVE

Creativity can take many different forms, from writing to painting to constructing LEGO towers. Whether you're knitting or doing woodworking, give yourself an outlet to express your feelings — anger,

sadness, regret, relief, joy, gratitude, and dozens of other emotions can come out in many different ways. Using creative outlets to see what bubbles up can be comforting and energizing.

LET OTHERS HELP YOU

If you're a compassionate person who is used to attending to others' needs, it can be hard to accept help, even when you need it. After all, you think you may be taking help from someone who needs it more. But when you're grieving, there's no shame in letting others' strength shine. If a friend offers to take something off your plate, let him; if a neighbor wants to bring you weekly casseroles for a while and you could use the help in getting dinner ready, take her up on it! If guilt still follows you, remind yourself that you'll return the favor someday.

DIVE DEEP INTO YOUR GRIEF

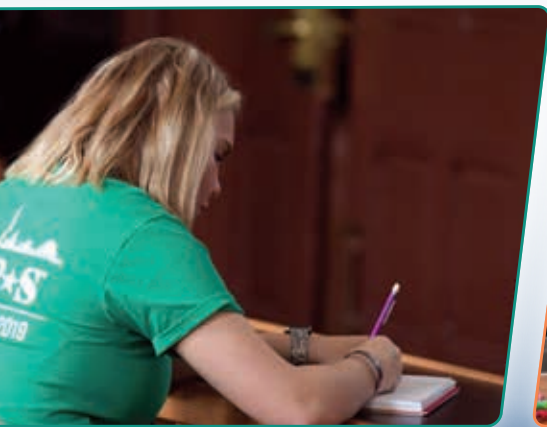
If you've been running yourself ragged to get things done or help others, the exact thing you may need is time to grieve. Surface-level grief is often all we have time for when we're not getting enough time to sit down and just be. Read books on grief and coping, attend a grief support group, and spend time in silence meditating or praying. It sometimes can feel like you're feeling the myriad emotions of grief while you're busy running around. Still, it's occasionally shocking how many feelings wait on your doorstep when you welcome them in.

Self-care can easily take a back seat to other things when you're grieving. But self-care is a key component of coping and healing, and assuming you'll "get around to it" is a recipe for never making yourself a priority. Take the time now to care for yourself – future you will thank you for it.



Expressing Your Grief: Healing Through Writing

Stephanie Frogge, MTS ★ Senior Member, TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline



“Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak whispers the o’er-fraught heart and bids it break.”

~William Shakespeare

Going public – sharing one’s letters, poems, or other written thoughts – is an intensely personal and potentially risky experience. But not all writing has to be widely read to be valuable. Keeping a diary or writing a letter that no one but you will ever read can have a significant positive impact on the healing journey following the traumatic death of a loved one.

The idea of writing as a positive aid to healing is not a new one, but recent research has helped to confirm its value. There is an abundance of scientific evidence that suggests a link between therapeutic writing and the successful management of traumatic experiences. Less clear is exactly why scriptotherapy (the fancy word for therapeutic writing) benefits those who practice it.

Mental health experts have suggested a variety of reasons why writing may be so helpful. One theory suggests that writing may bring troubling issues from the subconscious to the conscious, enabling us to manage them better. Others suggest that by labeling and describing events, the writer is able to gain more control over them. As one TAPS survivor described it, writing “helped me to catalog and classify the pain; not that it took the pain away, but it was my way of wrestling it to the ground.”

Yet another explanation for the value of therapeutic writing lies in the concept of reframing – looking at an issue or problem in another way or from another angle. Just the experience of writing about a problem, according to some researchers, provides a different point of view from talking about the problem. Using her computer’s cut and paste features, one survivor found writing to be more effective than thinking or talking about her feelings. “Writing was the only way to get it all out, and by using the

computer, I was also able to arrange and rearrange my thoughts to make them more coherent.”

Some proponents of scriptotherapy affirm something many of us know first-hand: the repression of grief and trauma can actually harm the body. The opposite of repression is expression, and by expressing ourselves through writing, we may actually be helping ourselves physically. Some very interesting research on therapeutic writing has noted that writing before bedtime may serve as a sleep aid for some people.

Getting Started

Unlike the work of professionals, our writing does not have to be good to be good for us. Since no one is going to see it except you, forget about spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The following are some writing ideas that may help you get started, if writing is not something that comes easily.

One caution, however: Therapeutic writing can be enormously helpful but does not replace the skill and training of a professional trauma specialist. Whether or not you choose to incorporate your therapeutic writing into your work with a good counselor is between the two of you, but please don't let any of the following ideas serve as a replacement for other types of care you need.

Letter Writing

Write a letter to your loved one telling him or her how much you miss them. Write a letter to the president describing to the best of your knowledge exactly how your loved one died. Write a letter to the actor you think would do the best job portraying your loved one in a movie of their life. Remember, you're not going to send the letter so don't hold back.

Following her son's death in a helicopter crash, one mother wrote a letter to introduce her deceased grandmother to her son. "My grandma never knew my son – she died years before he was born – but it was important for me to believe that they were meeting in heaven. I know it sounds crazy, but it really helped me, and it was the first thing I did that focused on his life rather than his death."

Poetry and Psalms

Poetry, perhaps because of the creative element involved, is believed to be especially suited for tapping into the subconscious. While not everyone can sit down and dash off publishable poetry, the following are a couple of ideas to help you put pen to paper. First of all, forget about trying to make everything rhyme; this is a free verse experience. Start with a feeling word such as "sadness" or "devastation" or "horror," and explain why it means something to you. Try an alphabet poem. Write each letter of the alphabet down the side of your paper, then start writing.

*A memory of my
Boy is one that I
Cherish. I hold it close and
Dare others to
Explain "why."*

Keep creating until you've used all the letters.

Psalms offers another structured way of creating poetry and incorporates a conversation with God. A full one-third of psalms are considered lament psalms – poems of extraordinary grief and rage. Lament psalms follow a specific formula: an address to God, the complaint, an affirmation of trust, a petition or request for intervention, and finally, a blessing. Try writing your own psalm. Just as the psalmists did, be specific in your complaint. Make it as graphic as you are comfortable with. If you are unable to bless God, simply acknowledge that you are not able to do so at this time.

Journal Writing

The words "journal" and "journey" come from the same root word that means "day." Our grief journeys are characterized by constant change – some days better, some worse, some familiar, some utterly unexpected. I encourage you to record that journey in some form. No matter how long you've been on this road, make this the day you begin to write.

Putting our feelings on paper and then going back and reading the words shifts our experience with the trauma to one of thinking about it instead of just feeling about it. When we are able to think about and study something, we are able to process it in a different way.

Capturing Memories

Although most of us will publish our writing, making a point to capture special memories and stories serves as a therapeutic writing technique and reassures us that important memories will be preserved, not forgotten. "How we met" stories are almost always significant to surviving spouses, and "what he/she was like as a child" are a rich source for siblings and parents. Start jotting those special memories down and you won't have to worry about forgetting.

Responding to Quotes

Although there are no "rules" in therapeutic writing, there are still some people who aren't confident about their writing or find it hard to just begin. A useful technique for the "writing-challenged" among us is to react to

quotes about a particular topic. Although quotes are easy to find on the internet, here are some you might want to try:

"Death leaves a heartache no one can heal; love leaves a memory no one can steal."

~Irish headstone

"A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is braver five minutes longer."

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Given a choice between grief and nothing, I'd choose grief."

~William Faulkner

A Final Thought

One consistent theme among those who shared their own stories about therapeutic writing was the sensation that their loved one "knew" what had been written. We know that writing to our deceased loved ones can be cathartic. Perhaps, though, there is value in the belief that somehow our loved ones are able to receive the messages that may come from our deepest places and represent our most profound feelings.

Poet Sheila Bender says, "We write because something inside us says we must, and we can no longer ignore that voice". Whether you pick up a pen or put fingers to a keyboard, don't ignore that voice anymore. Begin to write!

About the Author

Stephanie holds a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Texas Christian University and a master's degree in Theological Studies from Brite Divinity School. Stephanie has more than thirty years of experience in the area of trauma response. She is the former National Director of Victim Services at Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and serves as a senior member of the TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline.



#HonorThem

28TH Annual National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp



May 27–30, 2022
Arlington, Virginia

JOIN US in Arlington, Virginia, in-person or virtually.

Each Memorial Day, our country pauses to remember those who have served and died. As our nation reflects on the costs of freedom, we come together to tell the stories of our fallen heroes. We name our loved ones, celebrate their lives, and decide again to live bigger and better on their behalf.

The monuments and memorials of our country's capital surrounding us nearby in Washington, D.C., remind us that a grateful nation never forgets. Support and loving care of our TAPS family remind us that we are part of that story.

taps.org/national ☆ seminarregistrations@taps.org

FOR ADULTS: WORKSHOPS & CONNECTIONS

All those grieving a military loved one – family members, friends, or fellow service members – are invited and encouraged to attend the National Military Survivor Seminar. Support and connection await you, no matter where you are in your grief journey.

During the days we are together, you will have the opportunity to meet and connect with other survivors while participating in workshops led by grief and loss experts, small-group sharing sessions, family-style meals, and special events throughout Washington, D.C.

taps.org/seminars ☆ seminarregistrations@taps.org

FOR YOUNG ADULTS: PILLARS OF GROWTH

The TAPS Young Adults Program is for 18 to 30-year-old surviving children and siblings. Whether you are transitioning to this program after graduating from the TAPS Good Grief Camp or are new to TAPS, know that your peers are here to heal, learn, and grow with you.

Adjusting to adulthood is difficult enough, and adding grief to the scenario makes it more challenging. The TAPS Young Adults Program considers this as it addresses five pillars of growth: Personal Development, Financial Stability, Communications, Career Development, and Service to Others. This program strives to help survivors create well-rounded lives full of hope, healing, and growth by exploring practical life skills.

taps.org/youngadults ☆ youngadults@taps.org

FOR YOUTH: TAPS GOOD GRIEF CAMP

The TAPS Good Grief Camp provides a safe space for children who have lost a military loved one to explore grief and embrace healing. Led by child development, mental health, and education experts, this program mirrors the TAPS adult curriculum providing families with a common language crucial to strengthening family bonds.

While honoring their loved ones, children and teens will connect with their peers; develop coping skills through games,



crafts, and other age-appropriate activities in a fun, supportive environment; and, learn how America honors our fallen service members.

taps.org/youthprograms * youthprograms@taps.org

VOLUNTEER AS A TAPS LEGACY OR MILITARY MENTOR

TAPS invites active-duty military, veterans, and legacy mentors (TAPS Good Grief Camp graduates) to register as volunteer mentors for the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp. TAPS Youth Programs staff will train legacy and military mentors during the event.

As a mentor, you will support a child or teen as they connect with their peers, find healthy ways to share about their grief, and learn how to honor their loved ones. While doing art projects, playing games, throwing or kicking a ball, engaging in memorial activities, or being silly, you will have purposeful fun with a child who needs you. Along the way, you will create lasting memories and feel pride for your amazing impact on military children and their families.

taps.org/militarymentor * mentors@taps.org

BECOME A TAPS PEER MENTOR

As a TAPS Peer Mentor, you can help peers through one-to-one mentoring while

participating in various TAPS activities and events, including seminars, retreats, TAPS Togethers, care groups, and TAPS Online Community virtual gatherings.

Through ongoing training, you will learn more about grief and trauma, how to identify suicide risks and warning signs, and basic helping skills to become part of our nationwide TAPS Peer Mentor Team.

If you are interested in attending the in-person Peer Mentor training on Sunday, May 29, 2022, you can sign-up as part of your National Military Survivor Seminar event registration.

taps.org/peermentors * peermentors@taps.org



TAPS.ORG



For the Loved Ones of Those Who Served and Died



TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

TAPS NATIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR HELPLINE 800-959-TAPS (8277)

Grief knows no boundaries. Challenging moments, when survivors may need extra support, can come at any -time. The TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline is answered live— 24/7/365— with gentle care for all those grieving the loss of a military loved one. Our loving network of peer professionals ensures that each Helpline caller has open access to all that TAPS provides. Whether a survivor needs emotional support, connection to resources or programs, or to share what’s in their hearts– we always have time, we always answer, and we always care.

PEER-BASED EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Survivors helping survivors is the foundation of TAPS. We bring survivors together to find strength and hope through our TAPS Peer Mentor network. Survivors who are at least 18 months out from their loss volunteer their time and receive training to become Peer Mentors, who are paired with newly bereaved survivors to help them navigate the aftermath of loss. This program provides comfort to survivors and lets them know that they are not alone. Peer Mentors also lend support at TAPS events throughout the year.

CASEWORK ASSISTANCE

TAPS Casework assists surviving military families during these difficult times. Our casework team strives diligently to align with partners and third-party resources to address the individual needs of each family, such as pro-bono legal assistance, emergency financial resources, information on state and federal benefits, and private social services support. Survivors receive compassionate and responsive support to guide them towards the path of long-term stability and self-sufficiency.

EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES

Along the grief journey, experiencing a shift in occupational desires or goals is common for military survivors. TAPS Education Services empowers survivors as they seek to enter a new phase of life through pursuing post-secondary education. We serve as a guide to scholarship information and benefits, align available resources and educational goals, and determine the best options for financial assistance.

COMMUNITY-BASED GRIEF SUPPORT

Military survivors may benefit from individual grief counselling. Skilled therapists can help those grieving work through difficult questions, changes in relationships, and secondary losses. The right counselor can guide survivors to discover their strengths and develop coping skills that work for them. With the support of our strong community partners, TAPS connects survivor to free, grief counseling, trauma resources, and local support groups. We perform careful research and compile resources with love and care, locating supports for survivors near their homes.

SURVIVOR CARE TEAM

At the heart of our survivor support, the TAPS Survivor Care Team compassionately connects survivors with all the resources that TAPS offers. Members of our Survivor Care Team are surviving military family members who have been through extensive professional training on emotional, peer-based support, traumatic death, and grief. They are proud to serve as advocates, attentive listeners, and companions for their fellow survivors. Through personalized support, our peer professionals create safe spaces where survivors feel heard and empowered to develop their long-term support systems.

SUICIDE LOSS SUPPORT

TAPS has supported thousands of military suicide loss by offering them home, healing, and renewed opportunities for growth. We understand that suicide grief is different – death by suicide can leave behind a wake of powerful, complicated emotions and questions. Our special programs and resources provide compassionate support for all suicide loss survivors and safe spaces to honor and grieve their loved ones. Our unique approach helps stabilize survivors and surviving families – guiding survivors towards a path of “healthy grieving” and growth.

ILLNESS LOSS SUPPORT

TAPS is a leader in ensuring that surviving military families whose loved ones died from illnesses are recognized, cared for, and aware of all benefits they are eligible for. We compile relevant legislation, medical studies, expert testimony, literature, and reports to create reference manuals that serve as the foundation of future advocacy work. We critically raise awareness about the effects of toxic exposure, help families navigate the benefits process following a military loss, and provide connections for survivors who have lost their loved ones after having been their caregivers.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The pain of loss ushers in hard questions: Why are we here? What is our purpose? TAPS Women's Empowerment programming helps survivors incorporate concepts of identity and spirituality into transformative goal-setting. We provide survivors with tools to inspire confidence that help them move into the lives they have imagined. Through in-person and online events, we bring together a vibrant, compassionate community and supportive sisterhood of surviving women – who treasure opportunities to be each other's teachers, confidants, cheerleaders, and friends.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Though their lives are marked by grief, young TAPS survivors know their lives will also be marked by camaraderie, mentorship, emotional maturity, adventure and fun. Led by experts in the fields of child development, children's grief and loss, mental health, and education, TAPS Youth Programs provide safe spaces for military children to explore grief and embrace healing, such as Good Grief Camps, family campouts, and online programming for parents and guardians of grieving children.

YOUNG ADULTS PROGRAM

Designed for surviving military children and siblings ages 18-30, the Young Adults Program helps young adults graduating from the TAPS Good Grief Camp transition into a more mature program. Our dynamic curriculum focuses on five pillars of growth through in-person multi-day all-expense paid experiences, seminar programming, and online groups and discussions: personal development, financial stability, communication, career development and service to others. We provide young adult survivors with tools to help them create a well-rounded life full of hope, healing, and growth.

TAPS INSTITUTE FOR HOPE AND HEALING®

The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® is a national and worldwide leader in training and education for grief and loss professionals, bereaved individuals and families, both military and civilian. Usefull information on grief and bereavement support is available at no cost to all through webinars, webcasts, and other events. The Institute offers programs focused on understanding suicide; understanding children's grief; practical tips for coping with grief; wellness workshops; and creative ways to keep the memories of lost loved ones alive. For professionals, the Institute hosts academic programs instructed by field experts. A wide range of health and social service professional boards offer continues education credits for these programs.

PUBLICATIONS

TAPS has created several proprietary publications to serve the survivor community, offering valuable inspiration and information. In collaboration with subject matter experts, we have designed a series of pocket-size guides – available at no cost to survivors and readily accessible online – that provide information on resources and services for grief and bereavement support. Our other publications include the book, *Healing Your Grieving Heart after a Military Death: 100 Practical Ideas for Families and Friends* by Bonnie Carroll and Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.; the children's book, *Klinger: A Story of Honor and Hope*; and the TAPS Magazine.



TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE ROBERT J. DOLE

TAPS HONORARY BOARD MEMBER
July 22, 1923 – December 5, 2021

On December 5, 2021, our longtime friend, the Honorable Robert J. Dole, 98, passed away in the early morning hours. His precious family, our nation, and our TAPS family will dearly miss him.

He was a warrior and the “greatest of the greatest generation,” always placing his beloved country above partisanship and politics.

In 1945, at the age of 21, while deployed to Italy during World War II, U.S. Army Second Lieutenant Dole was severely wounded by the enemy while trying to assist a fellow injured soldier – permanently losing mobility in his right arm and parts of his left arm. He received two Purple Hearts and the Bronze Star for Valor.

After much perseverance and determination, Dole pushed forward from his injuries and joined the world of politics. He served for 36 years in Congress as a representative and then senator, and he was the Republican nominee for vice president in 1976 and president in 1996.

After leaving politics in 1996, his service didn't stop.

He became the National Chairman of the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., ensuring there would be a place where the greatest generation would be honored and remembered. That beautiful memorial came to fruition in 2004, and on any given day, until his last days, a person might find him at the memorial shaking hands with his fellow WWII veterans.

TAPS was also blessed to be a part of his service.

In 1999, a young TAPS survivor Megan Gibbs, introduced Senator Dole as our guest of honor at the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar banquet, sharing in her own words what it meant to be a hero and how Senator Dole was America's hero. She captured his heart, and he stood with TAPS for the remainder of his life, listening to our stories, honoring our heroes, and sharing our grief. He knew what service and sacrifice meant, and he became a part of our TAPS family.

A few months later, Senator Dole spoke as the keynote at our 2000 TAPS Honor Guard luncheon, and he joined our TAPS Honorary Board. Our friendship with Senator Dole led to the beautiful relationship with his lovely wife, Senator Elizabeth Dole, and TAPS' amazing partnership with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation (EDF).

It was always an honor when Senator Dole would wave to our TAPS families at Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day. He recognized our sacrifices, felt our grief, stood with us in honoring our heroes, and loved us all. We miss him dearly, and we will never forget him.

KIDS, GRIEF, AND COVID-19

Linda Goldman, MS, LCPC, NBCC, FT ★ TAPS Advisory Board



DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Children grieve differently at different developmental stages. The Swiss educator Piaget explains children's cognitive understanding of death through the following developmental stages at approximate ages, which describe age appropriate developmental concepts surrounding the grief process:

- ★ Sensorimotor Stage, Ages 0-2: A child's concept of death is characterized by "out of sight, out of mind."
- ★ Preoperational Stage, Ages 2-7: A child's concept of death includes magical egocentricity, reversibility, and causality.
- ★ Concrete Operations, Ages 7-12: A child's concept of death is curious and realistic.
- ★ Formal Operations: Ages 13 and Up: An adolescent's concept of death is self-absorbed, and they see death as remote and rely on their peers for support.

Children and teens have had their world turned inside out during the coronavirus pandemic. The familiar has turned foreign, the expected has vanished, and the world as kids knew it pre-COVID-19 has transformed into a surreal new normal. Overwhelmed by virtual classes, home quarantine, cleanliness and health pressures, isolation from friends and school, financial insecurity, racial unrest, political chaos, COVID-19 illness, and death, young people face enormous challenges impacting their life.

CHILDHOOD LOSSES DURING THE PANDEMIC

A brief glance at the following childhood losses highlights what young people are experiencing during the pandemic, especially the loss of safety and protection by the adult world.

- ★ Loss of Relationships
- ★ Loss of Environment
- ★ Loss of Skills and Abilities
- ★ Loss of Self and Self-esteem
- ★ Loss of External Objects

- ★ Loss of Habits and Routines
- ★ Loss of Privacy
- ★ Loss of Protection by the Adult World
- ★ Loss of Future and Safety
- ★ COVID-19 Illness and Death Challenges

Children and families are experiencing unprecedented challenges during the coronavirus. The difficulties caused by social distancing may prohibit kids from visiting loved ones in the hospital, hugging their person, or saying goodbye in person. Facetime, phone chats, and Zoom meetings have become virtual antidotes. Yet, not having personal hospital visits can be a great loss, provoking anxiety and disturbing imaginings of what is happening to a loved one.

Creating an open-ended dialogue with children about illness or death begins with adults finding age-appropriate language to use. We can define death for children as when the body stops working. Usually, people die when they are very, very, old; very, very sick; or doctors and nurses cannot make their very, very injured bodies work again.

Toddlers and preschoolers might not understand that death is permanent. Using clichés such as "Dad went on a long trip" or "We lost Aunt Jane" may leave them waiting for their person to be back. Emotions can range from temper tantrums to withdrawal because of difficulty verbalizing fear or sadness.

Young children often feel death is reversible. For example, Joey wrote a letter to Grandfather after he died and waited every day for a response. Magical thinking, causality, and egocentricity characterize this age group, with kids feeling they magically cause a death. A six-year-old may explain, "If only I could have been with mom in the hospital. I could have saved her."

Pre-teens know that death is permanent. Their fear of death and the pandemic is more realistic because they know people can die and want to know the facts about the death. A child may wonder about the coronavirus, “How does COVID invade the body? What are doctors doing to save lives?”

Adolescents may feel an enormous burden of a death during the pandemic as unfair, unpredictable, and aggressive. Teens look to peers for support.

COMMON SIGNS OF GRIEVING CHILDREN

Grief is not linear for toddlers or teens. It can hit children at unpredictable times when least expected— during a classroom Zoom lesson, watching a movie, or reading a book. The following are common signs of grieving children:

- ★ Retelling events of the deceased’s death and funeral (or lack of funeral)
- ★ Dreaming of the deceased
- ★ Idolizing or imitating behaviors of the deceased
- ★ Feeling the deceased is with them
- ★ Speaking of their loved one in the present
- ★ Wanting to “appear normal”
- ★ Enjoying wearing or holding something of their loved one
- ★ Rejecting old friends and seeking new Friends with a similar loss
- ★ Asking to call home during the school day (if they are socially distanced back at school)
- ★ Being unable to concentrate on schoolwork
- ★ Bursting into tears without warning
- ★ Seeking medical information on death
- ★ Worrying excessively about their health or the health of others
- ★ Appearing to be unfeeling about loss at times



- ★ Beginning “attention-seeking” behaviors
- ★ Being overly concerned with caretaking

KID’S COVID-19 ACTIVITIES

During COVID, there are many activities to support grieving children creatively. Kids can:

1. Use rituals to remember a person after a death, such as creating a sharing circle of memories at home.
2. Write symbolic goodbye letters telling a loved one how you feel and say goodbye.
3. Participate in family rituals by saying a prayer, lighting a candle, making a favorite family dinner, or creating a virtual Celebration of Life event.
4. Use projective play to remember a loved one. For example, Taylor’s mom died,

and he missed her. He pretended to call her on a toy telephone, “Hi Mommy, how are you? I miss you. I love you. Let me tell you about my day.”

5. Make a memory box to house sacred objects from their person and decorate it.
6. Sing a song or draw a picture about their person. They can share with others and keep it in a special place.
7. Create a chatroom of memory sharing about the person that died.
8. Plan a virtual memorial service or make family plans for an in-person one at a later time. Ask a child, “Once it’s safe to host a service in-person, where would you like to have it? Who would you invite? Will the family make a booklet? What pictures will you show?” and so on.
9. Stimulate open discussion on grief.

LEARNING FROM THE COVID VIRUS

Kids are resilient. They want to feel OK and normal, even during these unfamiliar, challenging times. We must encourage the belief that this period is temporary and support skills of accommodation and flexibility.

Learning the importance of hygiene can prove beneficial throughout a child's life. Washing hands before eating, wearing a mask to stop contagion, and maintaining social distancing require their discipline to stay healthy. Kids can adopt an attitude of accepting living with the virus while still being creative and happy and seeing a bright future. A positive outlook can emerge.

We can help youngsters grieve losses during the pandemic by creating a safe oasis for expression, mentoring positive attitudes, and supporting creative ideas with the following suggestions:

1. Recognize and validate kids' losses during the pandemic. Each loss is important and needs to be understood. No soccer, no lunch at school, and no real-time with teachers can be enormously stressful. Perceived loss of safety and health can create anxiety and worry about their future health and happiness.
2. Be aware of the accommodation a child is experiencing during COVID-19, such as no classroom to work in, mask-wearing, social distancing, confinement to home, and new health standards including washing to prevent the virus. Affirming it is difficult.
3. Be available and ready to discuss the virus with kids. Children share when they are ready. Adults must be present and prepared for those conversations; they can begin by explaining that "COVID-19 is a small, invisible virus that can make people sick."
4. Understand behaviors when kids verbalize feelings, ranging from anger about not seeing friends, sadness from isolation, frustration with schoolwork, and fear about health. Feelings might be projected onto others or expressed through sudden outbursts of emotion.



"We are powerless to control the losses and catastrophic events our children may need to experience, but by honoring their inner wisdom, providing mentorship, and creating safe havens for expression, we can empower them to become more capable, more caring human beings."

~ Goldman, Children Also Grieve, 2020

5. Limit media exposure. Use the news as a teachable moment with children. Present facts and resources while correcting misinformation.
6. Become a role model. Create positive discussions about professionals working to stop the virus and keep everyone healthy.
7. Maintain the daily routine. Maintaining routines such as bedtime and brushing teeth importantly supports normalcy amid upheaval and change. Continue chores like making the bed or drying the dishes. Include a daily hygiene program for washing hands, social distancing, and mask-wearing. Maintain expectations for homework and good grades.
8. Support connections. Encourage friendships through technology to help kids with digital lessons.
9. Create a new structure through family activities. Families can join together to create healthy meals, take walks, and play games.
10. Show affection. Families may be living in isolation, but they do have each other. Hugs and physical contact are important during the day. A mother may ask her children daily, "How is your heart?"
11. Honor children's questions. Every child is important, and so is their grief. Follow

the child's lead by letting them tell you where they are in their grief process, listening, and responding to questions. Often these questions are windows into hidden feelings and thoughts.

12. Create a resource library about COVID-19 to facilitate discussion.

CHILDREN REMAIN RESILIENT

Children are living in "extraordinary" times and navigating uncharted territories. The COVID-19 virus has assuredly created new stresses, anxieties, and challenges surrounding grief and loss for kids. In many cases, this virus and its subsequent quarantine have generated feelings of isolation, loneliness, and social limitations, which inhibit the grief process in the "ordinary" way. Yet the silver lining for many kids in this COVID-19 era is their surprising ability to persevere during challenges, learn new coping mechanisms, and problem solve in ways previously unimaginable.

The resilience displayed by our youth far outweighs their limitations. A new generation of youngsters has arisen, many strengthened by their accommodation to the coronavirus. They are mastering effective health procedures while growing compassion for their underserved peers. As their guides, mentors, and loving presence, caring adults can support children in this newfound way of living—reminding them that they are loved and respected for their ability to cope during difficult times.



PARENT'S CORNER

THE STRENGTH OF THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

*"Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.
They come through you, but not from you...
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth."*

~ Kahlil Gibran, "On Children," in The Prophet (Knopf, 1923)

Through this excerpted quote from his poem, "On Children," Kahlil Gibran expresses a hard truth for those of us raising children – that, in reality, we are bringing them up to leave us one day and forge their own paths. As their parents, we are responsible for nurturing them, teaching them right from wrong, and preparing them to "take the helm" as they navigate life's many challenges. No parent does this perfectly – that is for sure – and, sometimes it feels like we are entirely missing the mark, especially when we are grieving.

If you feel this way, please know that you are not alone. Keeping all of these things in mind, let's look at three areas where we have the most power and influence in our children's lives.

Social Cues and Problem Solving

Our children pay attention to how we interact with others and navigate difficulties and problems that might arise in our lives. Have you ever seen your child react to something and think to yourself, "Oh my, they look and sound just like me!"? The saying "Children are keen observers but poor interpreters" suggests that they always watch and take things in, but they are not always great at implementing these lessons to their own lives. Children learn most of their social cues and problem-solving from watching us. Social cues involve interactions with others, such as generosity, kindness, forgiveness, and politeness. Problem-solving skills involves working through solutions to personal challenges and interpersonal conflicts. Often, parents ask us how they can

help their children in these two areas. We have the power to help them by modeling the values we want them to one day apply to their lives with friends, family, and coworkers. Consider how you might model these behaviors to them, even in small ways.

Security and Predictability

The death of a family member can interrupt a sense of safety and predictability that may have previously existed in the home. As parents, we wonder what we can say or do for our children to restore our everyday routines. To best establish security and predictability in the home, we can set clear behavior expectations, consistently hold each other accountable for misbehavior, and positively reinforce good behavior.

First, think about the values that are most important in your home. These things may be kindness, sharing, forgiveness, being considerate, or other things that promote healthy interactions. With your children, share why these values are important and agree together to make them "laws of the land."

We can also develop daily, weekly, monthly, and annual routines to establish a sense of security. Daily, we can create a bedtime routine with our kids. Prioritize this time with them, and they will look forward to it. Alternatively, we may set a time when everyone eats dinner together daily. Weekly, we might have special nights, like movie nights or eating out at restaurants where kids eat for free. Monthly, we could plan a family activity for everyone to do together,

perhaps a hike or backyard bonfire. Annually, establish certain special days, which could be holidays, birthdays, or days that were special to your person who died. As parents, we have the power to plan these occasions and set priorities for the family that our children will carry into their adulthood.

Moral Support and Encouragement

As we bereaved know too well, life can be harsh. Being an encourager and moral support to our children can be challenging, particularly when we are struggling ourselves. While our children need to learn to work through life's difficulties, motivating them along the way is also helpful. Have you ever been relaxing on the couch or enjoying a beautiful day outside when your child keeps saying to you, "Mom! Look at me! Watch this!?" They don't even expect us to compliment them– they just want us to see them and know that we are watching. That is what encouragement is all about. As parents, we have the power to lift their spirits in ways that no one else can. They will absorb the energy of our words of love, attention, and ability to see them as others cannot.

Remember that we do not have to be perfect; perfection is, in fact, impossible. Yet, we can establish positive relationships with our children, using these three areas as a starting point. We can create encouraging and supportive homes that teach healthy social cues and problem-solving while offering safety and security. Children will take these values into their adulthood and one day be a part of their future homes.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

MY FAVORITE THINGS

This interactive activity offers your family a way to learn more about one another and spend quality time together, while doing the things you all love most.

Supplies:

- Index cards
- Pens
- Markers
- A bowl
- A calendar



Directions: Pass four index cards, pens, and markers to each family member. Have everyone write a different activity that they like to do on each of their four index cards – with one activity per card. Then, place all cards in a bowl and mix them up. One at a time, have each family member draw an index card out of the bowl, talk about why this activity is fun, and ask who wrote it. Go around the room until you pull each card.

After you finish, decide as a group which activities you can do in the coming weeks and when you can do them together. Mark these special family outings and activities on your calendars. If you would like, you could also have everyone list one bonus activity – something that they loved to do with their person who died. You can include those in the group activity and plan times to do them.

A SNAPSHOT IN TIME



This perspective-building activity offers you and your children a way to identify how you have grown over time – physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially.

Supplies:

- Time capsule items
- Paper
- Pen
- Markers
- Tin boxes
(ex: lunch box, craft store tin box)

Directions: Have each family member choose an item representing something about themselves or their grief to fill time capsules. They can also select items reminding them of the person who died. On a piece of paper, have each person write down their item and explain why it is important to them, how it reflects who they are, or how it represents their special person. You can also include some sentence starters for each person to complete, such as the following:

When I grow up, I want to be ...
What I like to do most with my time is ...
My best friend is ...
I feel sad when ...
I feel happy when ...

Place all items and paper with lists and descriptions in tin boxes and seal it – perhaps with tape for a good seal. Use one tin box for each family member. Find a special place around your yard or neighborhood to bury each person's tin box. On another piece of paper, be sure to write down instructions to where you placed the box, which you can keep somewhere safe and accessible. Mark one year from the day you buried the boxes on your calendars to dig up and open the boxes. On this day the following year, take turns sharing your items and the explanations you wrote about them. See what has changed over the year and what might have stayed the same.



A BITTERSWEET GIFT

FINDING COMFORT IN TEAMS4TAPS

Elizabeth Engleman-Hammett ★ Surviving Mother of U.S. Army Specialist Tyler Brent Hammett

It was Super Bowl Sunday, February 2, 2014. My family and I were settled in front of the television watching the game, as we do every Sunday during football season. It wasn't quite half-time, rather late in the day, so we were a little more than perplexed to hear someone knock on our front door. In their Army dress blues, two men had come to solemnly deliver the gut-wrenching news that our son U.S. Army Specialist Tyler Brent Hammett had died earlier that day.

It is the news that will alter the course of your life forever; it is the news that begins the grief journey. The immediate days and weeks that follow will bring a rapid, cascading series of arrangements and decision-making. People will visit, lovingly deliver food, send cards and flowers, etc. A lot will happen, but it is all a blur in retrospect.

One early memory stands out. Among the sea of sympathy cards, I remember receiving one from TAPS. I had no idea who they were, but I could roughly figure that it had something to do with Gold Star families. So many hazy questions had me wonder: *What was a Gold Star family?, Were we one now?, How did TAPS know?, What is 24/7 assistance for grieving families?* I just set aside the card with the others.

Over the next few weeks and months, that peculiar time occurred when the visits waned - the casseroles stopping coming, we had exhausted our leave at work, and we watched people carry on with their lives. But, we were hurting. We were still waiting for Brent's phone calls, looking for his silly Facebook posts, keeping his room clean for when he was on leave, and buying his favorite foods at the grocery store. Feeling

so alone, we just tried to stay busy. But, we were still stuck. No one understood - or so we thought.

It was in those difficult days that TAPS would fill the painful void.

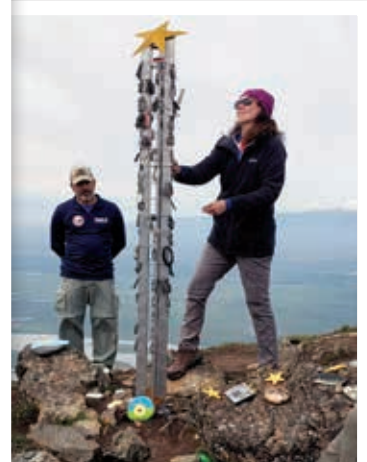
The TAPS Magazine had started appearing in our mailbox. I'd make it about halfway through an article before I couldn't see through with tears, then book mark the page. But with time, I would muster the strength to pick the magazine up again and finish an article. This cycle went on for a while. Wash. Rinse. Repeat. Eventually, I could get through an entire issue, and I began looking forward to the magazines and email correspondence from TAPS. It was like meeting up with friends, being in a long-distance embrace with other people who understood my grief.



U.S. Army Specialist
Tyler Brent Hammett



Brent did a service project with his Staff Sergeant to build playgrounds for children with disabilities near his base in Fort Rucker, Alabama. I LOVE this photo because Brent REALLY was that kind of guy to look for volunteer projects in his free time. He was even coaching a youth flag football league at the time of his death. For his volunteerism, he was posthumously presented with a Certificate of Commendation by the Mayor of Troy, Alabama.



Elizabeth visited the summit of Gold Star Peak while attending the TAPS Alaska Survivor Experience in July 2021. TAPS gave us dog tag replicas of our loved ones to add to the monument at the summit.

After about a year without Brent, an email asked survivors to write a remembrance of our loved one about a special memory of our local sports team. For the first time, I reached back out to TAPS. It felt greatly cathartic to share a story about Brent being the only Marylander stationed in Alabama when our Baltimore Ravens won their second Super Bowl. We would attend our first TAPS event a few months later, a youth Play 60 clinic sponsored by the Baltimore Ravens. It was here that my husband Michael, younger son Gareth, and I would meet the amazing Jessica Harper and Diana Hosford of the teams4taps division. It was the start of a beautiful friendship.

Adolescents and teens have an especially difficult time coping with their grief while also dealing with quintessential growing pains. I knew that my husband and I would probably be okay in more intimate TAPS gatherings, but we wanted our youngest to feel comfortable exploring the TAPS community with us. Our son Gareth was only 12 years old when he lost his big brother, which is why I initially turned my attention to TAPS events that centered around one of his favorite things: sports.

Committing to singular sporting events and casually meeting with other survivors

felt appropriate for us in our early stages of grief. Sports are my family's happy place – our escape – so connecting with teams4taps just felt right. Attending sporting events with TAPS taught us that it was okay to laugh again, that we were entitled to individual joy even as we each continued to grieve. Since our sports connection felt comfortable, we continued this route within TAPS for several years.

We have attended numerous sporting events through teams4taps with the Baltimore Ravens, Baltimore Orioles, and the Washington Capitals. In 2017, we were welcomed to the Ravens training facility and met many players and Coach John Harbaugh. The Ravens organization even honored Brent during the next game! The memory of Brent's face on that hometown jumbotron, while hearing our fellow Ravens' fans cheer as Brent was honored, still brings instant bittersweet tears to my eyes.

In 2019, we took an extended TAPS trip to the Pro Bowl experience in Orlando, Florida. Gareth wrote an essay to attend the trip discussing the correlation between him playing in a local flag football league and Brent coaching a local youth flag football team while serving. This trip was



The Hammett family at a Washington Capitals game with teams4taps.

the first time we ever collectively shared stories and shed tears with other survivors in a group setting. And still, sports was the element that brought us survivors together.

With time, each family member has made additional steps (each at their own pace!) towards meeting more survivors within the TAPS family. I found immense hope, healing, and camaraderie in attending a Women's Empowerment Retreat. I also recently participated in my first TAPS Expedition: climbing Gold Star Peak in Alaska, where TAPS leaders use the profound healing that nature offers us. I have also become a peer mentor, Gareth and I have spent a few days volunteering at TAPS Headquarters, and my husband I recently attended our very first regional seminar. Whether your grief journey has just begun or you are eight years or 15 years+ along, TAPS is ALWAYS there to meet you where you are.

Each survivor knows that grief can overtake you at any time – some days, you cope better than others. Being surrounded by a compassionate community is invaluable. TAPS offers numerous, unique ways to help us all on our grief journeys - from large-scale gatherings to sporting events, support groups tailored to our relationships with our lost loved ones, and so much more. The sheer beauty of TAPS is that the organization is so multi-faceted. It reaches all survivors in ways that suit their comfort zones, be it in print, online, and in-person through various physical settings. My family's gateway into this precious community happened to be sports. Having that community meet us where we are on any given Sunday is a bittersweet gift.



The Hammett family at the TAPS Pro Bowl Experience in 2019 in Orlando, Florida.

2021 TAPS

SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT

HIGHLIGHT REEL

If you or your fallen hero have/had a special connection to sports (team, player, league) or the entertainment industry (music, TV/film, theater, etc.), please share your story and photos with us by emailing teams4taps@taps.org or Stars4TAPS@taps.org.

What a remarkable year for TAPS Sports & Entertainment!

In light of challenging times, we are even more thankful for the special in-person and virtual opportunities that our many partners helped provide for our TAPS families. Below is just a fraction of the wonderful events and special moments that took place across the country (and the UK) to recognize surviving families and honor their loved ones.

TAPS.org/entertainment



TAPS is an official military charity partner of NBA Cares through their Hoops for Troops initiative. The partnership provides TAPS families the opportunity to honor their fallen heroes and meaningfully engage with NBA teams, players, coaches, and staff throughout the year.



TAPS kids took part in a special baseball clinic at Play Ball Park during the MLB All-Star Week in Denver, Colorado. The military surviving children practiced batting and fielding before they put their skills to use in a game, all while their heroes were honored on the Jumbotron. The MLB and the Colorado Rockies also presented TAPS with a generous donation during the event.



George Kittle of the NFL's San Francisco 49ers is a big supporter of TAPS both on and off the field. In December, TAPS was fortunate to receive this custom helmet designed and signed by George, which we auctioned off with all proceeds benefiting TAPS programs and services.



USA Basketball honored TAPS families during the US Men's and Women's National Team exhibition games in Las Vegas. The games served as preparation before the teams traveled to the Tokyo Olympics, where both teams took home gold medals.



During the Pacific Northwest Virtual Survivor Experience, a two-day virtual event for survivors to learn more about jobs in the sports industry, TAPS Teens spoke with several sports figures, including Candice Dupree. Dupree, a forward who played for the WNBA's Seattle Storm at the time (now with the Atlanta Dream), grew up in a military family and shared her experiences during the meet and greet.



Our good friend Toni Trucks featured TAPS in her curated holiday gift box via Military Made during December, including items from veteran and military-spouse-owned businesses. Toni, who first met TAPS families on the set of SEAL Team, has been a constant supporter of TAPS and recently accepted a position on the TAPS Honorary Board.



Surviving family of U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Jose E. Melbert, Sr honored their Fallen Hero at halftime of the North Carolina Courage game on Memorial Day Weekend.



TAPS Survivors enjoyed a virtual cooking session with Chef Robert Irvine, a longtime TAPS supporter and TAPS Honorary Board Member. Irvine created this special opportunity for survivors who had participated in the "2019 Robert Irvine Foundation's Presents TAPS Las Vegas Survivor Experience" to reconnect during the pandemic.



TAPS families enjoyed a D.C. United game on the Fourth of July weekend thanks to the support of Leidos. Upon arrival, survivors received signed jerseys and honored their fallen heroes on the jumbotron during halftime.



Reigning World Series Champions, the Atlanta Braves, welcomed TAPS families and honored their fallen heroes at their Memorial Day game. The Braves created replica dog tags representing each TAPS fallen hero and placed them in their dugout during the game. Afterward, they sent the dog tags to each family.



TAPS was fortunate to once again partner with the National Football League (NFL) for the UK Experience. Freddie Falcon, the Atlanta Falcons Mascot, helped kick off the event by greeting survivors at the Welcome Dinner on opening night.



TAPS is an official military charity partner of the NFL. During Salute to Service month in November, NFL teams honor TAPS Families and their Fallen Heroes across the country. Seen here, two TAPS kids enjoy a game at Mile High Stadium.



The NFL's *It Takes All of Us* TV spots, which ran during NFL games in November, featured the surviving spouse and son of U.S. Army Specialist Ramon C. Ojeda. This video campaign highlighted the work TAPS does and how it impacts surviving military families.



The Washington Capitals, a longtime teams4taps partner, and LiUNA, the team's military appreciation sponsor, honored TAPS families on the jumbotron during a special game.



TAPS families received portraits of their fallen heroes painted by Joe Everson at the Los Angeles Chargers Salute to Service game.

UPCOMING » IN-PERSON

SEMINARS AND GOOD GRIEF CAMPS

MAY 27-30

Arlington, Virginia

**28TH ANNUAL NATIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR
SEMINAR AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

JULY 8-10

Denver, Colorado

**MOUNTAIN REGIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR
SEMINAR AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

AUGUST 26-28

San Antonio, Texas

**SOUTHERN REGIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR
SEMINAR AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

OCTOBER 7-9

Dallas, Texas

**14TH ANNUAL NATIONAL MILITARY SUICIDE
SURVIVOR SEMINAR AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

NOVEMBER 18-20

Los Angeles, California

**WESTERN REGIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR
SEMINAR AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**



TAPS EVENTS



SURVIVOR EXPERIENCES AND RETREATS

JUNE 13-17

Orlando, Florida

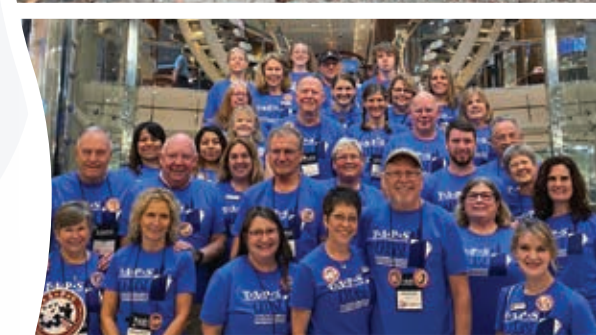
TAPS BAHAMAS & PERFECT DAY AT COCOCAY SELF-FUNDED CRUISE



SEPTEMBER 5-9

West Creek Ranch, Montana

MONTANA MEN'S RETREAT



SEPTEMBER 8-12

Bolivar, Tennessee

TENNESSEE FAMILY CAMPOUT

SEPTEMBER 19-23

Maumee, Ohio

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT



OCTOBER 3-7

Julian, California

CALIFORNIA FAMILY CAMPOUT



**OCTOBER 30 -
NOVEMBER 4**

Sedona, Arizona

**SEDONA WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT RETREAT**



» Visit taps.org/events
for more information

UPCOMING ONLINE TAPS EVENTS

FIND COMFORT AND HEALING ONLINE



TAPS ONLINE COMMUNITY

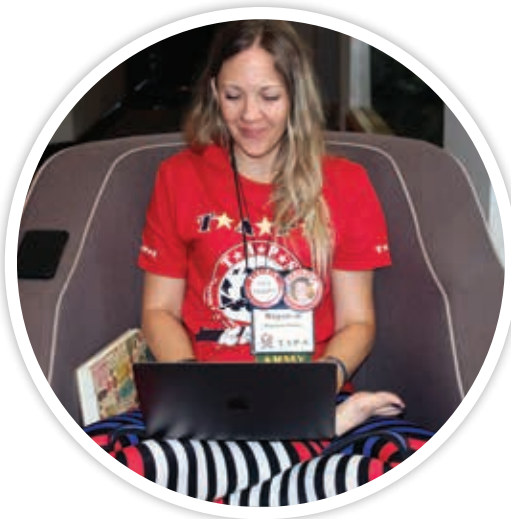
The TAPS Online Community is here for you – wherever you are in your grief journey, the country, or the world. The recently updated TAPS online Community allows you to explore all of our online programs – including online groups, workshops, and coping skills programs – in one place. Through online sessions, connect with, learn from, and be inspired by fellow survivors. Finding your peers within the TAPS family has become easier than ever! New programs and many opportunities for rich engagement await you.



★ taps.org/onlinecommunity
★ online@taps.org

ONLINE GROUPS

Count on Connections: Online groups are peer-led, facilitated sessions that bring together survivors with similar experiences, where there's never pressure to share but always an opportunity. We value the importance of knowing that there are “places” we can show up and feel supported by others of shared loss and experience. And, you can decide to connect with us each week or whenever it is convenient or compelling. Our TAPS Family will always welcome you.



TAPS INSTITUTE FOR HOPE AND HEALING®

taps.org/institute ★ institute@taps.org

Empower yourself through grief, resilience, and wellness education at the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®, where practical information on coping with loss is accessible to all. At the Institute, TAPS and the Hospice Foundation of America have teamed up to provide workshops, seminars, panel discussions, and more to train professionals and help individuals and families thrive after loss. Visit the Institute to access its event calendar, register for upcoming live webinars, and watch archived webinars online today.

UPCOMING LIVE WEBINARS

Navigating this New Grief and Loss Journey
MARCH 29, 2022 ★ 12:00 PM-1:00 PM EST

★ Karen Monts, MS, LBSW,

Director of Grief Support Services and Practice Manager
of Counseling Services, Hospice of Michigan

Finding Your Voice through Writing
APRIL 12, 2022 ★ 12:00 PM-1:00 PM EST

★ Rachel Kodanaz, TAPS Advisory Board, Author, Speaker

VISIT OUR FREE ON-DEMAND LIBRARY

ACCESS VIRTUAL PROGRAMS
AVAILABLE TODAY, INCLUDING:

TAPS Suicide Postvention Mode™:
A Roadmap toward Post-traumatic Growth

Coping with Special Days –
Finding Comfort in Remembering

How to Talk to Children
about Death and Grief

Reducing Mental Health Stigma

Men, Grief, and
Post-traumatic Growth

AND, MUCH MORE!

WORKSHOPS AND SERIES

Learn Together: Workshops and online series provide the opportunity for us to learn together, have shared experiences, and create community – all of which can help normalize our grief and contribute to healing along the way. Our current offerings meet weekly or monthly, including theatre labs for adults and families and online series in grief leadership for adults and young adults.

COPING SKILLS PROGRAMMING

Discover Self-Expression: Every month, TAPS online offerings include two unique sessions exploring new ways of coping with your grief, ranging from mindfulness to movement and everything in between. Some sessions will involve materials for creative expression or simple tools for self-care. A list of materials needed for each session will be provided in the email confirmation you receive when you register.

RECURRING ONLINE GROUPS

By Relationship

- Parents
- Parents of Suicide Loss
- Siblings
- Spouses/Partners/Fiancés/Significant Others

By Cause of Death

- Accident Loss
- Combat Loss
- Illness Loss
- Suicide Loss

By Peer Group

- Spanish Speaking
- Parenting Grieving Children
- Men's Chat
- Moms Mentoring Moms
- Women's Circle
- Young Adults Social Hour
- All Survivors Welcome
- Peer Mentors

GIVING BACK AND PAYING IT FORWARD

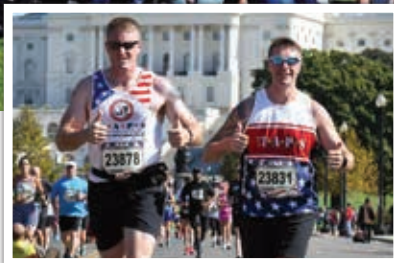


TAPS relies on the generosity of its supporters to fund the critical resources, programs, and services vital to the healing of those who have lost a military loved one. The TAPS mission is a 24/7 effort, and the TAPS Development Team strives to accomplish two goals: (1) share the TAPS mission of hope and healing, and (2) raise funds necessary to support our military survivors.

The COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020; the country was uncertain about its economic future. Many donors held onto or redirected their funding to charities addressing food insecurity or COVID relief in response to the unpredictability. TAPS never wavered in our commitment to survivors and raised enough to stay operational. Our TAPS Family has asked for ways to give back through it all, and there are many ways to create a meaningful impact.

CREATE A FUNDRAISER

Individuals and organizations reach out to TAPS with fundraising ideas, and through collaboration, we will bring them to life! TAPS is here to help with special fundraisers and campaigns, including social media promotion, tracking donations, and presenting the TAPS mission at events.



We have supported various fundraising events, such as cornhole tournaments, Studio SWEAT's 24-hour spin challenge, CrossFit workouts and pullup challenges, Project M.I.K.E.'s woodworker auction, motorcycle clubs, ironman competitions, and Aurora's Lemonade Stand.

EVENTS

TAPS is fortunate to be the beneficiary of many events across the country. Golf tournaments are popular and provide the opportunity to tell the TAPS story to a national audience. Employee groups use their resources to host Bowl-A-Thons or walks for TAPS. Team TAPS encourages teams or individuals to raise funds at endurance events, such as the Marine Corps Marathon or Armed Forces Cycling Classic.

EMPLOYER PROGRAMS

Through employer programs, you can maximize your giving at no additional cost. Many employers offer monetary rewards for their employees' volunteer time, which they can then donate to a charity

of their choice. Some companies also have matching gift programs and contribute an equal amount to an employee's charity.

NO-COST FUNDRAISING

By designating TAPS as your AmazonSmile charity of choice, Amazon will donate a percentage of your purchases back to TAPS, all at no additional cost. You can also host and share a fundraiser with friends on Facebook for TAPS on a birthday, holiday, or loved one's anniversary.

There are many ways to support TAPS, and we welcome your creative ideas!



Get in touch with us and visit our website for more information:
development@TAPS.org * TAPS.org/support

Honor the Legacy, Support the Mission

REMEMBERING OUR NATION'S FALLEN HEROES AT TAPS NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS



100%
OF YOUR
DONATIONS
SUPPORT
TAPS PROGRAMS
AND SERVICES

Space is limited

Visit taps.org/tribute today!



Hero Tile Wall

TAPS National Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia is America's home for all those grieving the death of a military loved one. Here, legacies live, and love lives on. We honor all of our military loved ones, support TAPS mission, and commemorate lives lived in selfless service with our Hero Wall.

We invite all military survivors to honor the legacies of their fallen heroes by purchasing a tribute tile on our Hero Wall, including pictures of loved ones and personalized inscriptions. They will be proudly and permanently displayed by the entryway of the TAPS National Headquarters.



Remembrance: \$250
Remember your loved one with this 4" x 5" tile.



Tribute: \$500
Create a tribute to your loved one with this 8" x 5" tile.



Salute: \$1,000
Salute your loved one with this 8" x 10" tile.



Honor: \$2,500
Honor your loved one with this 16" x 10" tile.

GRATEFUL NATION MEMORIAL HERO WALL

As surviving families, we are connected by a common thread. We are part of a larger American legacy of grief and loss. The Grateful Nation Memorial Hero Wall is an online home where surviving military families everywhere can honor and share stories about their loved one, at no cost to survivors. You can share the legacy of your fallen hero with our supporters on social media by adding your loved one to the online Grateful National Memorial Hero Wall.



Grateful Nation Memorial



800-959-TAPS (8277) ★ TAPS.org

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors offers comfort, care, and resources to all those grieving the death of a military loved one.



 TAPS is a participant organization in the Combined Federal Campaign, No. 11309

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS
3033 Wilson Boulevard, Third Floor
Arlington, VA 22201

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“Those we love are always connected by heartstrings into infinity.”

~ Terry Guillemets

