



## Surviving After Suicide: Reaching Out To Help Others

### HOPE AND HEALING AFTER SUICIDE

**April 30, 2016 - Cedar Shore Resort - Chamberlain, SD**

**Grief is a journey not meant to be traveled alone.....**especially grief resulting from the loss a loved one to suicide. The Helpline Center invites you to a day of hope and healing.



- ☞ **Connect with others who have lost a loved one to suicide.**
- ☞ **Listen and learn from internationally known speaker, Donna Schuurman.**
- ☞ **Receive the book *The Wilderness of Suicide Grief: Finding Your Way* by Dr. Alan Wolfelt.**
- ☞ **Return home with understanding to help you and your family heal.**
- ☞ **Find new hope and compassionate healing.**

Want to know more? See page 2 of this newsletter for an interview with conference speaker Donna Schuurman. See page 3 for additional conference and registration information. Join suicide loss survivors from across South Dakota at **Hope and Healing After Suicide**.

**Questions? Email: [twyla@helplinecenter.org](mailto:twyla@helplinecenter.org) or call (605) 339-4357**

### SAVE THE DATES

**Step Forward to Prevent Suicide Walk/5K Run**  
**Brookings, SD - April 16, 2016**  
**Sioux Falls, SD - June 18, 2016**  
**Pierre, SD - September 10, 2016**

## DR. DONNA SCHUURMAN SHARES HER THOUGHTS

The Helpline Center is honored that Donna Schuurman, EdD, FT will join us at the Hope and Healing After Suicide conference as the main speaker. Dr. Schuurman is the Sr. Director of Advocacy & Training at The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families in Portland, Oregon, where she has served in various roles since 1986, including 25 years as Executive Director. She writes and trains internationally on bereavement issues. She is a member of the International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement, and a founding board member of The National Alliance for Grieving Children. She also serves as a national trainer for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. We asked Dr. Schuurman to share some thoughts on her work with survivors of a loss to suicide.

**Helpline Center:** Many survivors of suicide feel very alone in their loss. What would you like to share with them?

**Dr. Schuurman:** In 1986 The Dougy Center for Grieving Children and Families started our first "Healing After a Suicide Death" group for children ages 6 to 12, as well as a concurrent group for their parents or adult caregivers. For the prior four years, the families were in groups with others whose parent or sibling (or for the



adults, spouse or child) died of an illness or accident. Although the commonalities of age and loss brought them together, some of those with a suicide death asked if we could have groups just for them. Although it's sad to report that this group has been full and often has a waiting list over these last 30 years, we're honored to provide a safe place where

**Dr. Donna Schuurman** - continued on page 4

## SURVIVOR VOICES

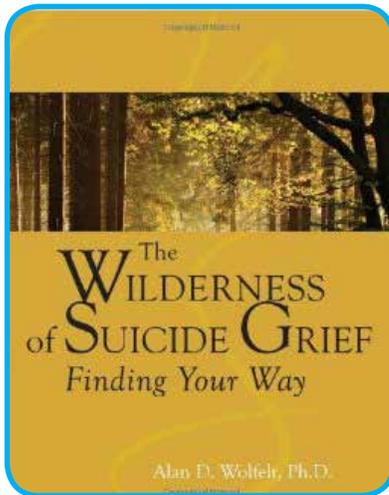
**Transform your story of suicide loss into a story of suicide prevention.**

*Survivor Voices training can help you learn how to speak about your loss and tell the story of your loved one's life and death to promote healing, increase knowledge and understanding about suicide, and support suicide prevention efforts. This two-day training helps survivors learn how to tell their story in a safe and effective manner within a supportive environment. Speak the truth about suicide. Help others learn how to prevent suicide and how to best support survivors of suicide loss. Sign up now for the next training to be held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota on Saturday, April 23rd & Sunday, April 24th from 9:00am to 3:00pm each day. There is no fee to attend.*

For more information or to register: Call 211 or 605.274.1416 or email [twyla@helplinecenter.org](mailto:twyla@helplinecenter.org)

## HOPE AND HEALING AFTER SUICIDE

**Hope and Healing After Suicide** is a one day event for adult survivors of a loss to suicide. Conference topics will include tackling the question of 'Why?' Participants will learn about the myths and realities of why people die of suicide. Suicide loss survivors know



how words spoken about their loved one and about suicide can impact them. Learn how words help or hinder healing after a loss to suicide. Information on ways survivors can take care of each other and themselves will be provided. In addition, there will be information about ways to support grieving children and teens after a loss to suicide. The workshop is designed for adults 18 years or older. It is not appropriate for teens or children.

The conference will be held on Saturday, April 30, 2016 at the Cedar Shore Resort near Chamberlain, SD. The conference will begin at 9:00am CST and conclude at 4:00pm CST. Pre-registration is required. Included in the \$15.00 registration fee are all conference speaker sessions, lunch, and a copy of Dr. Alan Wolfelt's book, ***The Wilderness of Suicide Grief: Finding Your Way***. More information about Dr. Wolfelt and his book, a \$16.00 value, can be found on his website at [www.centerforloss.com](http://www.centerforloss.com). Any overnight accommodations are the responsibility of

participants. A limited number of scholarships are available if cost is prohibitive for survivors to attend the conference.

The Helpline Center is offering you two ways to register. Participants can register on line at <http://survivorsd.eventbrite.com> or mail in a completed registration form with the \$15.00 fee. Please make checks payable to Helpline Center and do not send cash. Watch your inbox for a printable brochure and registration form. Print the brochure to fill out and register yourself or pass the word by printing it to share with a friend or family member.

**Hope and Healing After Suicide** is made possible with support by the South Dakota Department of Social Services. ☺

## STEPPING FORWARD IN BROOKINGS

The **2016 Step Forward to Prevent Suicide Walk/5K Run** in **Brookings** will be held on Saturday, April 16th. The Helpline Center partners with the SDSU Lost & Found



campus organization for this annual spring event. All proceeds support local and state-wide suicide prevention and crisis programs.

**Stepping Forward** - continued on page 6

**Dr. Donna Schuurman-** *continued from page 2* children and their families can openly share with each other and receive support. Families bereaved by a suicide death often receive less social support than those whose family member died in a car crash or from a heart attack. The stigma of suicide remains strong, and for some, the sense of preventability may contribute to guilt, self-blame and/or shame. You are not alone! If there's no support group in your area for families impacted by the suicide death of a family member or friend, consider starting one.



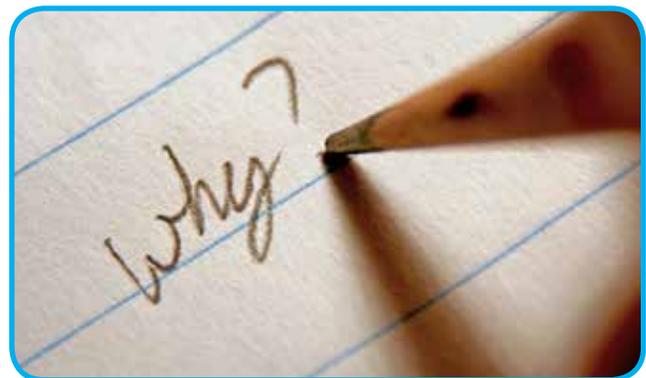
**Helpline Center:** What words of hope do you have for families recently grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide?

**Dr. Schuurman:** There are no short-cuts in the journey of grief. Allow yourself to feel what you feel, and don't let the judgments of others interfere with what you need. After a suicide death, we can be overcome by the "what ifs" and the "if onlys": What if I'd reached out sooner? If only I'd known he was feeling this way. Allow yourself to question and cry, rage and remember, and reach out to others you know or believe will be of support. Drink lots of water (not alcohol), take walks and hot baths, and reach for resources that can provide you the comfort, understanding and support you need and deserve. As one mother recently said three years after the death of her son, "I wouldn't say it's gotten necessarily better or easier; I feel like I just, I don't know, got more

used to it. Like you have this grief you just put in your pocket and it's always there, and sometimes you notice it more than others." Know that grieving someone you loved (or even someone you didn't always like or love) is healthy, normal and healing. Time alone – despite the oft-stated phrase – does not heal all wounds. What heals wounds is attending to them: sometimes covering them with tinctures and bandages; other times opening them to the fresh air. If you can, write... read... be gentle with yourself, and find people who accept and support you without over-trying to make you feel better. Finding others who understand, and having forms of expression for your experience are two avenues that will aid in your healing.

**Helpline Center:** What words of advice do you have for families grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide?

**Dr. Schuurman:** When someone we love dies of suicide, one of our over-arching questions is "Why?" (On a side note, this is a question kids, and many adults ask after deaths caused by disease and accidents as well, though it is often heightened after a suicide death.) Some people conclude that "we'll never know why," while others point to depression or other mental illness, problems in relationships,



finances or a host of other contributing factors. While there are no simple answers, there is one underlying commonality, and it is this: The person's perception of pain overwhelmed

**Dr. Donna Schuurman** - *continued on page 6*

## REMEMBER, CELEBRATE, HEAL

Twenty survivors gathered at the Sertoma Butterfly House & Marine Cove in Sioux Falls for the International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day on Saturday, November 21, 2015. During this family event survivors spent time surrounded by the healing sights and sounds of nature. Each family represented was invited to release a butterfly in memory of their loved one. Later author and speaker, DeeDee Raap, led the group in an art activity giving each person the opportunity to share treasured memories of their loved one and connect with other survivors. Each adult survivor there received a copy of DeeDee's book, *Find Your Pink Flamingos*. Survivors stated they found the event both meaningful and healing. They would recommend it to other survivors in the future. The Helpline Center would like to thank the Sertoma Butterfly House & Marine Cove and DeeDee Raap for making this event possible through their generous donations. ☺



### JOIN OTHER SURVIVORS TO FIND HEALING AND SUPPORT

**Surviving After Suicide Class** - This nine-week suicide bereavement class is for adults who have lost a loved one to suicide. The class is appropriate for both those whose loss is recent or those who have been struggling with their grief for a long time without support. It combines an educational aspect with the support needed to begin or continue the healing process. The next Surviving After Suicide class begins Tuesday, April 12, 2016. The class meets consecutive Tuesday evenings from 7pm to 8:30pm at the Helpline Center offices located in the Non-Profit Center at 1000 N. West Ave, Suite 310 in Sioux Falls. There is no charge for the class, but pre-registration is required.

**Surviving After Suicide Support Group** - This monthly grief support group is for adults who have lost a loved one to suicide. The group meets the first Thursday of each month from 7pm to 8:30pm at the Helpline Center offices located in the Non-Profit Center at 1000 N. West Ave, Suite 310 in Sioux Falls. There is no charge for the group and registration is not required. ☺

*For more information or to register: Call 211 within the Sioux Falls area. Call 605.274.1416 outside the Sioux Falls area. Or email [twyla@helplinecenter.org](mailto:twyla@helplinecenter.org)*

**Dr. Donna Schuurman-** *continued from page 4*  
their capacity to imagine any way out of the pain other than to die. Those of us who are not experiencing suicidal thoughts may have difficulty imagining this experience, but if you imagine that you are in excruciating physical pain, all you can think about is getting out of the pain. Everything else becomes secondary. The same is true for psychological pain, or what the founder of modern suicidology (the study of suicide), Edwin Shneidman, termed “psych-ache,” an ache of the soul. If you can step back and imagine that your loved one’s psych-ache was so extreme and deep that he or she resorted to self-destruction to escape the pain and hopelessness, you may find a depth of compassion and understanding that can provide perspective as you struggle with the questions you have surrounding their death.



**Helpline Center:** Could you share a story of one of your most inspiring experiences with families who have lost a loved one to suicide?

**Dr. Schuurman:** One of our very wise teenagers, whom I’ll call Nathan, shared a quilt that his aunt made for him after his father’s suicide death. He spoke of his father’s love of camping and nature, and all the good memories he had with his dad. Too often after a suicide death people become defined by how they died, rather than who they were in life: ordinary and extraordinary fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters with flaws and talents. When asked if it was hard for him to talk with his friends or other teens about his

father’s death, he replied, “No, it isn’t hard for me to talk about at all. But it seems like it’s pretty hard for other people to hear.” That’s a kid with depth and insight! He expanded on the topic of how people may treat you differently after they find out your dad died of suicide by saying that “in a suicide death, there are so many more ways for people to be insensitive...” Nathan, like many of his fellow teens, has been forced, through his father’s death, to confront and make meaning of a lot of things his peers don’t. Over the last 30 years in this work, I have seen scores of kids come through this painful loss with insight, grace and drive that leads to compassionate career choices and post-traumatic growth.

**Helpline Center:** Is there anything else you would like to share?

**Dr. Schuurman:** No matter where you are in your journey – newly bereaved or years after the death – you will find support and care and information to assist you as you adapt to the “before and after” changes in your life.

**Come join us!** ☞

**Stepping Forward** - *continued from page 3*

**Brookings Step Forward to  
Prevent Suicide Walk/5K Run**  
SDSU Student Union, Brookings, SD  
Saturday April 16th, 2016

**Check-in begins at 8:30 am with walk and  
run events starting at 9:00 am.**

**The 5K run and 1.5 mile walk will follow  
the 2015 routes**

**To register go to [www.helplinecenter.org](http://www.helplinecenter.org)  
or call (605) 274-1418 after 2/15/16.**

**See you there!**





The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) will hold their annual conference in Chicago this spring. AAS is the accrediting body for the Helpline Center's work with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Each year one day of the conference is set aside for the needs of survivors of suicide loss. Programming is designed to provide survivors of suicide loss with educational tools and resources to help with their individual journeys of healing and to help them transform their experience into action.

This year the *Healing After Suicide Conference* will take place all day on Saturday, April 2nd. The theme for the conference is *A Place for Everyone for Hope and Healing*. Saturday's program will begin with a presentation by Sheila Hamilton, Emmy Award-Winning Broadcaster, Author, and Suicide Awareness Advocate, followed by a loss survivor panel presentation. The rest of the day includes sharing/educational sessions in the morning followed by a luncheon, with concurrent workshops and a closing ceremony in the afternoon.

For more information or to register please go to [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org), click on the 'Annual Conference' link followed by another click on the '28th Annual Healing Conference'. Helpline Center staff will be in attendance at the conference. Please contact Twyla at 211 or 605.274.1416 or email [twyla@helplinecenter.org](mailto:twyla@helplinecenter.org) to connect if you are planning to attend the conference. ↻

Visit [helplinecenter.org](http://helplinecenter.org) for more information on Suicide and Crisis Support Programs.



[www.helplinecenter.org](http://www.helplinecenter.org)  
[help@helplinecenter.org](mailto:help@helplinecenter.org)

1000 N. West Ave. Ste. 310  
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

Admin: 605-334-6646  
Fax: 605-332-1333



## Support Survivor Services

The Helpline Center is here all day, every day to help those at risk of suicide and those impacted by the loss of a loved one to suicide.

Please consider making a donation to the Helpline Center to support our services. Call 605-274-1418 or go to [helplinecenter.org](http://helplinecenter.org) today.