

HELP AND SUPPORT IF YOU'VE BEEN AFFECTED BY SUICIDE

Gina Long talked to Suzy Clifford, the Founder of Hope After Suicide Loss, which was created to meet the needs and overcome the isolation of those bereaved by suicide. Martin Worswick has been helped by this wonderful small charity - he and Suzy wanted to share their heartbreaking, painful stories

Regardless of your age or gender, COVID-19 has changed the lives we once knew. Living day-to-day in a pandemic, within the government 'lockdown rules,' brings many challenges along the way. Earlier this week, the Zero Suicide Alliance, a collaboration of NHS Trusts, charities, business and individuals revealed that 503,000 people had completed its online course.

Suzy's story:

"Fortunately, most people will never experience the full wrath of suicide loss. On June 8, 2009 I fell upon my husband's body in the family garage and that powerful image was etched on my brain forever. In the past, I had grieved many times and felt the heartbreak that is associated with loss but I had never experienced the mental torment arising from suicide loss. A complex, psychological trauma that rarely responds to time-limited services often provided by general bereavement organisations.

Initially, I searched for people who spoke my language and simply 'got it'. Eventually, I became a volunteer for a national organisation and successfully established support groups in Ipswich, Bury and Lowestoft. In February 2019, myself and a small but dedicated team launched Hope After Suicide Loss (HOPE). We are a professional & local service with strong peer led values and every penny we raise is guaranteed to benefit survivors in Suffolk."

Martin's story.....

"On Friday, May 13, 1983, my mum took her own life when I was aged nine and my brother, 11. She was 37-years-old.

For the past two years, I have been attending HOPE group meetings with Suzy in Ipswich. Initially, I was concerned about being accepted into the group.



This is because my loss is historical in comparison to most other attendees, whose grief may be related to a more recent event and is therefore perhaps more raw. However, I needn't have worried. It is, honestly, the only place in the world where I have ever felt comfortable talking about my mum's death.

This is as a result of my poor dad trying to protect his young sons and almost pretend it didn't happen for fear of upsetting us further. Growing up with an elephant in the room that big is also why it took me 35 years until I first spoke to my brother about our mum.

This led to me leading a double life, one life, where I've achieved so much outwardly, whilst living another, suffering with anxiety, PTSD and depression internally. But again, I feel I am able to talk about all of this at HOPE and share my perspective from losing a parent to suicide as a child. At

the meetings, I am a big advocate of encouraging adults to explain to children (using age appropriate language) that their loved one took their own life. I'd encourage the same for anyone in grief to try and speak to someone.

Due to my role as a key worker in London, I have missed participating in the group Skype meetings so far during lockdown. But I look forward to future HOPE meetings. If other people didn't share their heart-breaking stories at these meetings, I wouldn't feel comfortable and be inspired to share mine."

HOPE allows survivors to be the author of their own recovery. They teach survivors to understand the often-complex steps leading up to suicide and the equally complex steps faced by those left behind. Without the personal service, HOPE provides many survivors would find themselves misunderstood, isolated or worse still having



ABOVE:
A Hope group meeting

LEFT:
Suzy Clifford from Hope

suicide ideology.

Covid 19 forced the charity to be creative in order to help survivors face life during these unprecedented times. They have continued to provide this much-needed service by offering phone support and talking regularly on block email. They have also added one to one and peer support via Skype sessions to our portfolio. HOPE is not government funded so during lockdown they have been actively looking for an investor or philanthropist(s) to give them financial support. Stating, their expertise & involvement would be welcome but is not obligatory in taking the organisation to the next level.

There is a real need for society to understand the extra hurdles those bereaved by suicide are forced to overcome. It is the only death where judgment is often passed on the person who has died by suicide & their loved ones left behind. The following



comments have been taken from HOPEs website & were put together by survivors from their personal experiences.

Like their name, it is imperative to offer survivors hope. Those delivering the service are ideally placed to testify and give evidence on how to make a recovery and go on to lead their lives as a fully functioning person. There is only one caveat attached to this statement and that is the survivor must commit to their own recovery, no one else can do this for them. HOPE gives survivors the tools to process and navigate through the trauma of their loss. They also give survivors a voice of their own and teach them to take back control lost on that fateful day. For more information please go to their website at www.hopeaftersuicideloss.org.uk

The Samaritans are also there for those that need support to listen 24 hours, 365 days a year by calling 116123.

RIGHT:
Martin Worswick



EXAMPLES OF WHAT NOT TO SAY:

- They're a coward and should be ashamed
- Do you mind me asking how they did it?
- I heard your loved one committed suicide
- At least they achieved their objective
- You had no idea they were going to do it?
- People who commit suicide are selfish
- Are you still not over it yet?

Positive things you can and should say to a survivor:

- I'm very sorry to hear your news
- I know someone you can talk to here is HOPEs number - 07531 087 623