



Survivor's Link

COMMUNICATING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



Suicide Awareness and Prevention

September is designated as National Suicide Prevention Month. This month, we recognize those affected by suicide and highlight some of their struggles.

As many people who have experienced loss due to suicide know, "pain isn't always obvious." Most people contemplating suicide, however, show some signs that this is on their mind. The American Association of Suicidology uses IS PATH WARM as a mnemonic device to outline and help remember the suicide warning signs.

Remember **IS PATH WARM?**

Ideation

Thoughts of suicide are expressed, threatened, or even just hinted at

Substance Use

Increased or excessive alcohol or drug use

Purposelessness

Seeing no reason for living

Anxiety

Feeling anxious or agitated, having nightmares, or being unable to sleep (or sleeping all the time)

Trapped

Feeling like there is no way out

Hopelessness

Feeling hopeless about self, others and the future

Withdrawal

Withdrawing from family, friends, usual activities, and society

Anger

Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge for perceived wrongs

Recklessness

Acting without regard for consequences, excessively risky behavior

Mood Changes

Dramatic changes in mood or showing emotional instability

If you notice any of these signs, don't be afraid to ask, "Are you thinking about ending your life?" Few phrases are more difficult to say to a loved one, but when it comes to suicide prevention, none are more important.

In the Navy, we talk about the "ACT" model for suicide prevention. This stands for "A" Ask, "C" Care, and "T" Treat. The ACT model encourages compassion and understanding, while ensuring treatment is sought. Knowing the available resources enhances your ability to get others the help and assistance they may need.

Never be afraid to offer your help — it could be what saves someone's life. For more information on suicide prevention, visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org or www.suicidology.org.

Navy resources can be found at <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/psychological-emotional-wellbeing/Pages/suicide-prevention.aspx>. If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, seek assistance by contacting the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

NATIONAL

SUICIDE

PREVENTION

LIFELINE™

1-800-273-TALK

1-800-273-8255

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

8 Tips for Parenting After a Suicide

Source: Military One Source, www.militaryonesource.mil

Most of us can probably recall the first time we ever experienced the death of a loved one. Whether it was an elderly grandparent, a relative who died from a long-term illness, or the beloved family dog, learning of death can be excruciatingly painful. But when a loved one dies by suicide, normal grief reactions such as shock, guilt, denial, anger, and depression may be paired with a deeper sense of guilt, failure and shame than if their loved one died in another way.

Society's attitude toward suicide often intensifies these emotions. Often after a suicide, family members play the "what if" game over and over and may find themselves reliving every mean word they ever said, every wrong decision they made, and every turn of event that they believe they could have changed. "What if I had only seen the signs? What if I had stayed home from work that day? What if I had loved a little bit harder?"

It's easy to get swept up in this questioning of why it happened and self-doubt, but when you're a parent, your children are looking to you for strength and guidance during this difficult time. What do you do? How do you cope with your own emotions and still continue to parent effectively? How do you talk to your kids about the suicide? Where do you go for help if you need it?

How to cope with your own emotions

As parents, we often have the desire to tend to everyone else's needs first – before our own. It's Parenting 101, right? But to best support your kids over the coming weeks and months, it's important for you to find ways to grieve and take care of yourself, too.

- **Get the support you need.** Pain, crying and sadness are a part of the grieving process. You are not losing your mind, you are in mourning. While everyone grieves differently, if you begin to feel out of control, hopeless or overwhelmed, you may need some outside help. You could get individual or family counseling, or you may want to join a support group online or in your local community that understands what you are going through. Recognize that it's not your fault. You may wonder, "Why wasn't my love enough? Why couldn't I stop this from happening?" Remember, you are not responsible for the decisions and actions of another human being.
- **Pay attention to your health.** During times of grief, you may feel that all you want to do is curl up on the couch and eat junk food, but proper sleep, healthy eating and light exercise can help you manage your emotions. In addition, use alcohol in moderation and prescription medication under a doctor's orders only.

- **Like other survivors, you will not "get over" the death of someone you love, but will find a new normal.** How long will it take to find this normal? Every person is different. For the sake of your children, though, it is important to live life so that they do not lose you as their parent too. You need to survive the death of your loved one, as hard as it may seem. Even in the midst of tragedy and loss, you need to find the strength to move back into your life and your role as a parent without your loved one present. The grieving process takes time and may be easier if you join a support group for surviving family members of suicide. It may help to reach out to others who know and have experienced the pain that goes with the loss of someone to suicide.

How to continue parenting

As parents, we try to protect and shield our children from hurt and harm in every way that we can. We kiss boo-boos, make our kids wear their seatbelts, and hug them after their first heartbreak. But with something as painful and confusing as suicide, where do we begin? Here are some suggestions:

- **It's best to tell the basic truth about the suicide.** Even young children know when they aren't being told the truth and can become even more upset or anxious by what they sense they aren't being told. However, make sure the details you provide are age-appropriate. Older children may need to talk about the details and their feelings, but it's important to protect younger children from these conversations.
- **Answer their questions as they come up as honestly as possible, and keep the communication open.** The stigma surrounding suicide can make it extremely difficult for surviving children to deal with their grief and can cause them to feel terribly isolated, as they may not want to upset you with their pain.
- **Stick to your daily routines.** Children thrive on routine, and it's very reassuring in difficult times if they can count on certain things remaining consistent.
- **Remain as calm as you can throughout the first days.** Your children's worlds have been turned upside down, and they may feel extremely vulnerable and needy.
- **Make sure your kids know they are not responsible for what has happened to your loved one.**

8 Tips for Parenting After a Suicide continues on page 5

Back to School Tips for Parents

Source: Military One Source, www.militaryonesource.mil

Starting the new school year can be a time of great excitement ... and anxiety. Help calm your child's fears (and your own) with these teacher-approved tips.

Meet the new teacher.

For kids, one of the biggest back-to-school fears is, "Will I like my new teacher?" Breaking the ice early on is one of the best ways to calm everyone's fears. Take advantage of your school's open house or back-to-school night. Some teachers welcome phone calls or e-mails – another great opportunity to get to know each other before the year begins.

If personal contact with the teacher isn't possible, try locating the teacher's picture on a school website or in a yearbook, so your child can put a name with a face. If your child's teacher sends a welcome letter, be sure to read the letter together.

Tour the school.

If your school hosts an open house, be sure to go. Familiarizing your child with her environment will help her avoid a nervous stomach on the first day. Together you can meet her teacher, find her desk, or explore the playground.

With an older child, you might ask him to give you a tour of the school. This will help refresh his memory and yours.

Connect with friends.

A familiar friend can make all the difference when heading back to school. You might try calling parents from last year's class and finding out which children are in your child's class this year. Refresh these relationships before school starts by scheduling a play date or a school carpool.

Tool up.

Obtain the class supply list and take a special shopping trip with your child. Having the right tools will help him feel prepared. While keeping basic needs in mind, allow for a couple of splurges like a cool notebook or a favorite colored pen. These simple pleasures make going back to school a lot more fun.

School supply lists also provide great insight into the schoolwork ahead. Get your child excited about upcoming projects by explaining how new supplies might be used. Let him practice using supplies that he's not used before — such as colored pencils or a protractor — so he will be comfortable using them in class.

Avoid last-minute drilling.

When it's almost time to stop playing, give a five-minute warning. Giving clear messages to your child is very important.

Chat about today's events and tomorrow's plans.

While it is important to support learning throughout the summer, don't spend the last weeks of summer vacation reviewing last year's curriculum. All kids need some down time before the rigors of school begin. For some kids, last-minute drills can heighten anxiety, reminding them of what they've forgotten instead of what they remember.

Ease into the routine.

Switching from a summer to a school schedule can be stressful to everyone in the household. Avoid first-day-of-school mayhem by practicing your routine a few days in advance. Set the alarm clock, go through your morning rituals, and get in the car or to the bus stop on time. Routines help children feel comfortable, and establishing a solid school routine will make the first day of school go much smoother.





A Survivor's Story

By Joanna Gorman

In the years before he killed himself, my husband and I spent so many hours talking about what would happen if he came back from war and deployments injured. What he meant was, "What if I came back missing a limb, unable to walk, unable to feed myself? What if I was burned beyond recognition? What if I was blind?"

I told him my plans. I would build ramps for him, have the doorways widened, have our bathrooms kitted out with handrails. The easily-accessible tub and shower would have handles he could hold onto while he washed himself. I would buy a van so he could drive everywhere. I would walk next to him as he wheeled himself. If he wanted prosthetics, he would receive them. The one thing I refused to do was leave him. We talked about potential worse-case scenarios because that's how we treated everything: tactically and strategically. We had to. We were a Navy family.

Some thought we were inviting bad things to happen with all that planning, but in the military community, you must be prepared. It's an imperative. You prepare and then you let go. Spouses become battle hardened. Spouses get on with life as best we can until our loved ones come back, if they come back. Sometimes they come back, having left their souls in other countries to dry up like old blood.

Michael came back, still walking but was profoundly injured in a way we couldn't see. To all appearances, he was a tall, handsome Irishman, proud

to serve. It was the 1990s. He felt it necessary, if he wanted a career with the Navy, to keep his stress to himself.

After a few more deployments, he came home and we wordlessly agreed to sleep in separate rooms. It was out of necessity. One night, he was thrashing about in bed so violently that when I tried to waken him as gently as I could, he put his hand around my throat, still asleep, but staring into my eyes, and insisting that I was the enemy. He would cry and scream in his sleep, whimpering, until he settled down. He was embarrassed, despite my saying he needn't be. I would just smile and say, "For better or for worse. That's what I signed up for." I didn't tell him about my own insomnia, about retreating into the darkest corner of the living room, sobbing into a pillow as quietly as I could, so I wouldn't wake anyone.

Not being able to stand the pressure of PTSD, I begged him to seek help, which he did very reluctantly. As predicted, we were met with disapproval and the suggestion that I go back to the United States if I didn't like the situation. Although it was Michael who was diagnosed with PTSD, I was the one, it was insinuated, making the matter worse. Thus, it was suggested that I go back to San Diego with our child. Michael was angry and horrified that the Navy now knew what our issues were and turned his anger on me. After I sought help from Michael's abuse, the constant answer from the Navy was, "Joanna, go home. And take your kid with you."

In 1997, Michael made the ultimate decision to kill himself. With the CACO's help, papers were signed and Michael was buried. And as far as the Navy was concerned, everything to do with my late husband was settled. I was none the wiser. The most emotional support I received from the

Navy, post-funeral, was the suggestion that I attend a grief support group. I managed to make it through 15 minutes of a meeting that consisted of women much older than myself. I was the youngest by far and the only one who lost her husband to suicide. I excused myself to use the restroom with every intention of not returning to the meeting. I knew that I had to go it alone with my son in tow.

"I'm a smart woman. I can figure this out," I thought. After his death, I also dealt with the detritus involved with burying someone. The throng of curious friends and family members around me wanted to know why Michael killed himself, but failed to realize that I had no answers. And they also failed to realize that such questions and statements ("How could you not know he was suicidal?" "You're his wife ... didn't you know?" "You must have known he was depressed."), while obviously no one's business, were also painful to consider. The constant line of questions and comments took their toll on me, but I dealt with them the best I could: turning a deaf ear to what everyone had to say and concentrated on my son.

Eighteen years later, it's honest to say that I still have no answers and I've made peace with the probability of never finding out. At the time of my husband's death, our son was 4-years-old. Our immediate need was to breathe and survive, not to answer any questions. Especially when you are a zombie, unable to breathe, think, eat, shower, or focus until something inside of you tells you it's okay that you're still alive and you being alive is not an anathema to your dead loved one.

I found out the hard way that even the strongest person needs help. It doesn't matter how long and hard the grief process is, it takes time to heal and there's no way to speed up that process. The worst thing I did

A Survivor's Story continues on page 5

A Survivor's Story *continued from page 4*

for myself was to deny myself my emotions. I thought (erroneously) that the best way to deal with them was to simply stop feeling. I was an emotional wreck every time something jumped out at me that reminded me of my husband: a song, driving past the base, a snippet of a show or movie, a scent. I felt I was getting better (meaning crying less), but every time a memory would surface, I would tailspin into the deep, dark void of "Why did you do this to me? To us? How could you leave our son?"

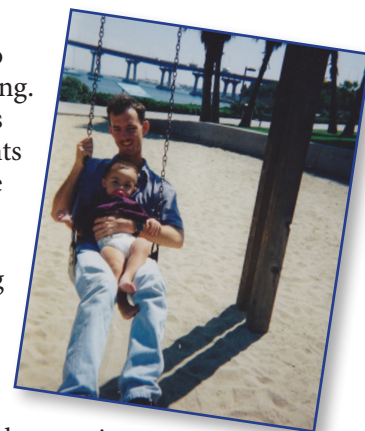
I would lay in the darkness and talk myself out of feeling anything. I became really good at it. To outward appearances, I was a young mom turning a corner in her life, raising a son, ending a chapter, and moving on. I grieved alone. Grieving alone was out of necessity. If there was guidance to be had, I didn't know what it was or how to even begin to ask for it. I come from a Navy background, my father having served for nearly 30 years. He is a 100-percent disabled Vietnam veteran. My extended family also represents all four branches of the military. I was the daughter of a master chief. I did not sit around and wait for things to happen. After my husband's death, I carried on as best I could with life: raising my son, working, finishing my degree. I dealt with my grief by taking great care with myself and concentrated on the things that were in my control: my life choices, my emotions, my interactions with others, my attempts to stay sane despite the fray and noise of being a widow. No one held my hand through it. I wish I could have received a bit more care from the Navy than the "case closed" impression with which I was left. It stung a bit. The Navy asked my husband to deploy, to help defend this country. Our little family made the sacrifice without hesitation. But after his death, I felt abandoned. At the time, no one reached out. I stayed off the radar from 1997 until 2014, when I met, by chance, a local representative of the Navy Gold Star Program.

Eighteen years later, I've gained enough perspective to forgive wholesale everyone and everything connected with

this chapter of suicide in my life, including myself. The chance meeting I had with a representative of the Navy Gold Star Program finally put to rest the irksome idea in the back of my mind that I no longer mattered and/or that I was forgotten. Navy Gold Star reached out and worked tirelessly to put things right for my son and myself. And although, time marched on and continues to do so, with Navy Gold Star, I am clearly not forgotten. Their kindness, remembrance, and inclusion of me into their fold have mollified a broken heart. A heart that, after all this time, I was surprised was still hurting.

The more I was able to share my experiences with Navy Gold Star as a young military widow with no emotional guidance, the more I realized that although the pain was still there and at times acute, I put my life back together in a way that makes me proud. I want to continue to help others in my position, survivors of suicide, not because I felt the Navy didn't help me when I needed them the most, but because it is ingrained in me to help survivors of suicide understand that there are others who have experienced this tragedy. Mistakes were made, but out of those mistakes lessons were learned and policies have improved since 1997.

There is no singular way to grieve or to help the grieving. But what we can do, across all boundaries and segments of society, is remember the ones left behind. Believe me, just asking, "What do you need?" and attempting to fulfill that need means scores to the survivor. Even if nothing can be done at the moment, pausing and sitting still with a survivor says, "I see you hurting. It is okay to hurt. I'm here for you." The Navy Gold Star Program continues to hold my hand, to include me, and to let me know that I'm not forgotten.



8 Tips for Parenting After a Suicide, *continued from page 2*

As a family, find a special way to memorialize your loved one; however, do not glorify or normalize your loved one's actions, as you don't want suicide to become the family pattern. A trained professional can help educate you and your children on prevention. Some families set up a Web page, create a scrapbook, make a donation to a special cause, volunteer somewhere, or plan a special family outing to celebrate the person's life, rather than focus on the way the person died. Remembering all of the wonderful contributions of a person's life and the ways the person touched others can be tremendously healing. And make sure your kids know that it's OK to take time off from grieving. You can all smile and enjoy things; this does not mean you have forgotten your loved one.

Where to get help

If you are having trouble coping with the loss and need to speak to someone, Military OneSource offers non-medical counseling to address issues such as parenting, stress management, and grief and loss issues. Call 800-342-9647 to find out more. You can also reach out to your Navy Gold Star coordinator for information and local resources. Visit www.navygoldstar.com to locate your closest coordinator. If you or someone you know is suicidal or in a state of crisis, please call 800-273-TALK (8255).

Stuff

By Pam Valliere – Gold Star mother since 2008, Naval District Washington Navy Gold Star Coordinator

“What do we do with his stuff? I was asked this when visiting a family that had recently lost their son. They had been notified that his personal belongings were being delivered to their house, and the thought of all of it coming to their home was overwhelming.

I can remember the day the Navy delivered our son's personal belongings. Our CACO offered to be there when his belongings were delivered, and we welcomed his presence. In typical military style, there was an inventory of every item that was delivered. It was almost comical going through his clothes. Did he really have 20 white, 20 khaki and 20 pairs of black socks? And the T-shirts ... dozens! There were the shorts and Tees as well as his sailing and workout gear. We just kept unpacking and putting items in piles in the living and dining room. Then there were his school supplies: books, notebooks, pens, and pencils. Oh yes, and one blue folder, one pen: ballpoint, black. It was endless and, with a rather dark sense of humor, we laughed at the brutal efficiency of that inventory.

But what to do with all that stuff? Our family looked to see if there was anything of his that we wanted. My daughters took some of his shorts and Tees to wear around the house. My son found some polo shirts. I found a few workout shirts and a dress shirt. My husband found some items as well. We would wear them around and I felt closer to my son. I found a bottle of the aftershave he wore and the scent clung to the shirt I had picked out. It took me a long time to wash that shirt because it smelled of him. To this day, I have the bottle of the aftershave and, although there isn't any liquid in it, the smell of it lingers and reminds me of him.

Some of my son's things were easy to get rid of. No one wanted his underwear or socks. Uniforms were donated (except for a couple special ones we kept), and the rest were packed up and put in his room. We hung pictures from the funeral and mementos in his room, so if someone wanted to “be” with him, they could go up to his room. Each year on his birthday or anniversary of his death, I would go to his room, and remember and mourn him.

Periodically, we would feel the need to go through his things. But in addition to our family, we opened it up to his friends. One friend who was in gymnastics with him asked if he could have Tony's old gymnastics grips. A young woman who had been friends with him asked if she could have the tie her mother had made for Tony to wear to a dance that matched her dress. We had found a letter or two from some young ladies that he had dated and asked if they would want them back. They all said yes and were so happy to have them. We did this almost yearly, and as we continued to go through his possessions, we were able to give or throw away stuff that we didn't need. At the time of his death, everything was valuable and had meaning. As time went on, what had value changed.

A few years ago, we moved from that house; the house where we had raised most of our children, waked and mourned our son. Our eldest son and two daughters had already moved out to law school, college and USNA, so only my husband and I were left. The new house wasn't going to have a room for Tony. It was time to go through his things again, this time with the knowledge that we were moving halfway across the country.

My husband was already at our new location, and I had stayed behind to finish work and tie up loose ends. As the anniversary of Tony's death approached, it was time to go through his stuff one more time. One of my daughters came home on his anniversary, and we took the time to do so. We figured we were always depressed on that date, why not go through the stuff again and pack up what was to come with us.

What I came to understand is that much of what we had kept until then had no meaning to us. If Tony had been there he would have been able to identify and relate a story for most everything we found. But for us, many items were a mystery. Since family and friends had already gone through and taken what had meaning for them, we were free to dispose of what we didn't understand. So out went his notes and tests from school, and pictures that didn't have him in them. He must have

Stuff continues on page 9



Chaplain's Corner: Just Keep on Living

by CNIC Force Chaplain's Office

"Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." – Proverbs 27:6 (New International Version)

There are so many emotional wounds that we bear simply by living – creating memories and learning from our failures and relishing the successes. Grandma Hattie is one who lived long and quite well. Grandma Hattie was fond of offering wisdom to her children and grandchildren. She would begin the engagement with, "Honey, have you ever experienced ... (name the malady or predicament)?" And the usual response is: "No, Grandma, I have not." Her response was always the same: "Just keep on living, baby, just keep on living."

Grandma Hattie's Socratic method of teaching life lessons to young ones comes to mind when the Psalmist observes: "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." Who among us is not guilty of desiring to hear what we want to hear? Who among us is not guilty of longing to believe what we sincerely desire to believe? All among us have certainly experienced the "multiple kisses of enemies" who give faint praise and mild adulation. Antony in William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (Act III, Scene II) offers these sobering words: "I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones"

Words from Proverbs, Grandma Hattie and Shakespeare all resonate with a challenge for us about applying life lessons. Most of our life lessons are born out of emotional wounds from enemies and from friends. In the end, our lives will one day speak of the impact that we have made on our circle of family, friends and even enemies. As we "keep on living", we bear the wounds from a friend much more gracefully than we endure the "multiple kisses of an enemy." In the end, the good that we do will live on in perpetuity, wrapped in meaningful impact far beyond our life expectancy.



Knights of Heroes

Knights of Heroes was established in 2007 to commemorate a fallen hero who left behind a spouse and five children. Each summer, families with children between the ages of 11 and 17 are invited to attend camp at no cost.

While the kids are at camp, the moms and younger siblings spend the week visiting sites in and around Colorado Springs, Colo. Lodging and travel arrangements are made for the families that attend from outside the local area. A mentor is paired with each camper, who is then challenged with activities such as rock climbing, whitewater rafting, hiking, canoeing, shooting, archery, and much more. Registration for Knights of Heroes' 2016 activities opens in October 2015.

For more information and to find out how to apply, visit www.knightsofheroes.org.



Survivor's Link is published quarterly by Navy Gold Star Program.

Navy Gold Star Program
716 Sicard Street SE Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20332
Phone: 1-888-509-8759

Disclaimer: It is the mission of the Navy Gold Star Program to provide Survivors with information on resources available to them. *Survivor's Link* is one of several tools used to accomplish that mission and from time to time will include information (including phone numbers and websites) for various non-governmental resources. The Department of the Navy does not warrant or endorse these entities, products or services.

www.navygoldstar.com

1-888-509-8759



NavyGoldStar

Healing and Growth through Meditation

By Jamie Banther, Navy Gold Star Coordinator, NAS Jacksonville



Relax. Breathe.

Those words sound so simple, right? But for those who have experienced loss, those two can seem almost impossible. Grief can take a toll on our health and affect us greatly, and finding ways to heal are very important. After all, the definition of healing is: The process of making or becoming sound or healthy again.

Meditation has become very popular as a source of healing and growth to individuals who are grieving. It can offer refuge, rest, and a time to reflect on the needs of your body, mind and spirit. Here is just one example of many ways to get started.

1. **Go to a quiet place where you will be free from distraction for 15 to 20 minutes.** Make sure you are in comfortable clothes and a relaxing setting.
2. **Sit quietly and comfortably.** Place both feet flat on the floor. Use the back of the chair to support your whole back so that your spine is comfortably erect. This frees the diaphragm and disinhibits energy flow through the spinal column. Think of a bamboo pole that goes from your head to the base of your spine. Two holes at the bottom release all tension from your body. Your chin is neither up nor down, but resting comfortably, perhaps slightly back to straighten the neck. Rest your hands in your lap. The shoulders, neck, and chest are very relaxed. Sit like a dignified mountain.
3. **Gently close your eyes, if that is comfortable.** If not, keep them open at half-mast, looking at a spot in front of you on the floor. Relax your entire body. Start at your feet and relax each part in turn. Especially warm and relax your abdomen. Let your facial muscles be smooth and relaxed in a pleasant, peaceful expression. Breathe gently and peacefully through your nose, if that is possible. Take regular, rhythmic, slow, abdominal breaths.

4. **Notice the gentle coolness of the air going into your body and pleasant, relaxing feeling as it leaves.** As you concentrate on breathing, allow external stimuli to fade into the background. Much as the sound of the waves at the beach begin to fade into the distance until you barely notice them, so the sounds of the world around you gently fade until you barely notice them. Notice that the simple act of breathing is pleasant. Be aware of your breathing and enjoy its pleasant rhythm. Notice that in closing your eyes and paying attention, your breathing tends to slow down and become more regular on its own. Don't try to make this happen. Just notice whatever the breath does.
5. **Imagine the breath to be like gentle waves on the shore.** Ride the waves of the in-breath. Ride the waves of the out-breath.
6. **Now begin to concentrate on the word "one."** See it rolling in on the in-breath, and say it silently to yourself. See it roll out on the out breath, and say it silently to yourself as you exhale. Let the word "one" fill your mind.
7. **Should distracting thoughts or worries enter your mind, just greet them cordially and without judgment** ("That's OK; that's life."). Watch them float into awareness, and then let them float like watching a cloud floating across the sky. Return to repeating the word "one" as you breathe in and breathe out. So, it's breathe in ... "one." Breathe out ... "one." Continue quietly and peacefully for the next few moments. Let the word "one" fill your awareness, reverberating peacefully in your mind. Eventually you, your breathing, and the word "one" become one. Most of your attention focuses on the peacefulness of resting in your true, happy nature. In time, you might simply stop focusing on breathing and the word "one" and simply rest in your mind, noticing that it becomes whole and peaceful. (If your mind wanders to distracting thoughts, then simply return to the method of counting and focusing on the word "one.")
8. **End your meditation rather slowly,** allowing peaceful feelings to spread to the rest of your life.

Don't get frustrated if you have trouble at first; being able to meditate can take practice. It's recommended to practice meditation once or twice daily for at least a week at first. Initially, you might wish to practice for about five minutes each time, increasing gradually to about 20 minutes each time. The more you meditate, the better you will get, and the better the results and benefits will be. You can always contact your local coordinator to help you find places in your area that offer a means to relieve your stress or anxieties.

Ref: The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook 2nd Edition: A Guide to Healing, Recovery, and Growth by Glenn R. Schiraldi, Ph.D.



Caught in the Web

By Sandra Neuman, Northwest Region Gold Star Coordinator

It is so easy to get caught up looking for information on the Web. Maybe that's why it's called the Web: Looking for information can suddenly feel like we are stuck somewhere in the middle of a sticky mess. Then when we find information, we question how reliable it is. There are some great websites, however, that have proven to be good resources for assisting in gathering reliable and to-the-point information.

An area of concern and one of life's frustrations is dealing with our finances. A basic financial literacy website is www.mymoney.gov. It is a great starting point for information intended by the U.S. government to help improve the financial education of the public. When worried about money and potential scams, a good site for information on consumer protection is www.consumer.gov. It is an easy-to-use U.S. government website that explains consumer protection practices – everything from managing debt – to scams and identity theft. Another website that assists in informing about scams is the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's www.consumerfinance.gov. Its mission is to make consumer financial products and services work correctly for Americans through education, enforcement and study of trends in the financial industry.

For education financial aid questions, the U.S. Department of Education has recently updated their website, www.studentaid.ed.gov. It is a pretty good resource to learn about federal student aid and how to apply using the FAFSA, and it now provides advice and information on repaying student loans.

One great resource for our Gold Star families is the Veteran Affairs' Survivor's website, www.va.gov/survivors. One of the popular links (www.va.gov/survivors/FAQs.asp) in that website has answers to more than 20 frequently-asked questions about benefits for Survivors. To find information on eligibility for bereavement counseling from the VA and how to request it, try www.vetcenter.va.gov/Bereavement_Counseling.asp. For information on job hunting and a great explanation of derived preference – where some Survivors may be able to claim veteran's preference when applying for Federal Jobs – visit www.fedshirevets.gov/job/familypref/index.aspx.

Hopefully some of these websites will help you as you explore the Web, so you don't get too caught up in the sticky process. Remember: When all else fails and frustrations levels are on the rise, just go to YouTube and pull up a funny animal video.

For some reason, a parrot playing the piano seems to lighten my day ... and I don't even like parrots ... or pianos.



Stuff, continued from page 6

had at least a dozen ball caps – most of from when he was a young boy. We didn't need to keep them. We had pictures of him wearing them; they didn't remind us of him, so they were for the donation box.

Pictures of him and videos and recordings of his voice – we kept them. He had been an Eagle Scout and had received many gifts that were Eagle Scout-related. We kept them so that perhaps one day we could give them to a grandson who made Eagle Scout. It would be a way to keep Tony's memory alive. Once we went through everything, we boxed up what we were to take with us and threw away or donated the rest.

There was a sadness and freedom with all of this. Sadness because I couldn't ask him what something was or why it was important to him. Freedom because keeping all that stuff was weighing us down. With culling the meaningful from the meaningless, we were able to perfect our memories of him.

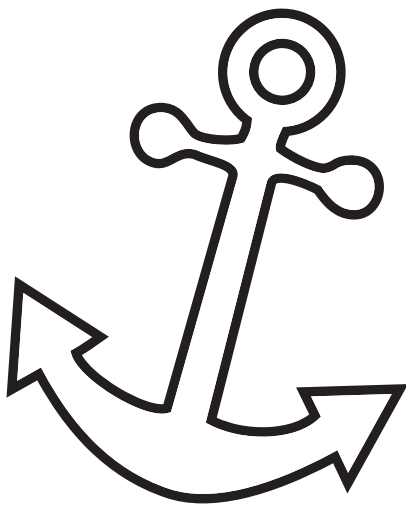
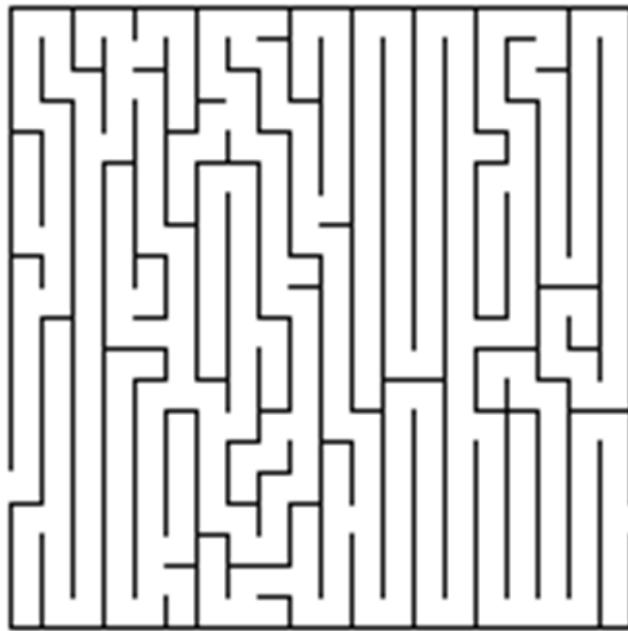
Today those mementos fill up half a bedroom closet. We have come a long way from the two rooms full of stuff. I'm sure when we move to our retirement home, downsizing will require us to go through Tony's things again.

So when a family asks me what do you do with all that stuff, I let them know there is no timeline or deadline to go through things or decide what to keep or discard. We kept Tony's stuff up in his room because at the time we couldn't bear to see his things every time we walked into the house. Other people surround themselves with their loved one's possessions.

Some families can't bear to see any of it. Whatever works for you and your family is fine. My only suggestion is to not move too quickly. The rule of thumb is not to make major decisions within the first year. That may hold true for this, as well. It would be a shame to get rid of stuff because in the sharpness of grief they were hard to have around. A year later you may wish you had kept some of it. Give yourself time to sort through your emotions as well as that stuff.

Sailor Bob's Corner










Help Sailor Bob find his ship!



Can you find all the Navy words?

I	G	I	A	P	P	L	A	N	C	H	O	R	J	H
W	B	U	E	J	X	Y	K	C	E	D	K	N	K	Y
A	V	O	R	Y	V	I	T	G	L	K	G	W	V	E
Z	C	I	B	A	V	W	T	Q	M	E	E	W	E	L
T	L	R	N	T	R	D	U	E	O	R	E	H	Q	L
Y	C	E	J	D	V	L	B	Z	F	G	D	F	N	A
N	C	T	O	A	F	T	E	G	R	E	U	L	U	G
G	D	P	M	E	T	L	L	A	M	W	N	A	E	F
K	L	O	B	H	O	S	T	U	E	C	K	G	A	E
C	O	C	W	K	P	S	T	C	P	A	Q	I	Y	O
E	G	I	H	L	A	T	U	H	X	A	J	B	B	I
D	M	L	W	U	P	E	C	D	H	Y	T	A	T	F
W	X	E	G	B	M	Q	S	E	W	F	J	A	U	H
U	S	H	I	P	D	T	F	R	R	E	U	X	C	P
J	W	R	O	L	I	A	S	M	D	W	H	P	P	R

ANCHOR
BOB
BULKHEAD
CATAPULT
DECK
FLAG
GALLEY
GEEDUNK
GOLD
HELICOPTER
NAVY
SAILOR
SCUTTLEBUTT
SHIP
STAR

Sad 	Loved 	Angry 
Scared 	Confused 	Happy 
Silly 	Worried 	Frustrated 

Feelings Tic-Tac-Toe

You are X, your friend is O.

Players take turns putting their marks in empty squares.

Each time you put a marker down, tell about a time you felt that way.

The first player to get three marks in a row (up, down, across, or diagonally) is the winner.

**A fun way to play the game is to use cereal, fruit snacks or small candy pieces as your markers instead of writing X or O.



Navy Gold Star Program Directory

Name	Phone	Address*
NAVY REGION SOUTHWEST REGIONAL COORDINATOR	619-532-2886	FFSP 937 N HARBOR DR BOX 53 SAN DIEGO CA 92132-0058
NB VENTURA COUNTY INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	805-982-6018	FFSC 1000 23RD AVE BLDG 1169 CODE N91 PORT HUENEME CA 93041
NAVBASE CORONADO INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	619-767-7225	FFSC BUILDING G SAUFLEY RD SAN DIEGO CA 92135-7138
NB SAN DIEGO INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	619-556-2190	NB SAN DIEGO FFSC 3005 CORBINA ALLEY STE 1 BLDG 259 SAN DIEGO CA 92136-5190
NAVY REGION NORTHWEST REGIONAL COORDINATOR	360-396-4860	FFSC 610 DOWELL ST BLDG 35 KEYPORT WA 98345
SMOKEY POINT SUPPORT COMPLEX INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	425-304-3721	SMOKEY POINT SUPPORT COMPLEX 13910 45TH AVE NE SUITE 857 MARYSVILLE WA 98271
NAVY REGION SOUTHEAST REGIONAL COORDINATOR	904-542-5712	FFSC BLDG 919 LANGLEY ST NAS JACKSONVILLE FL 32212-0102
NAS JACKSONVILLE INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	904-542-5578	FFSC 554 CHILD ST NAS JACKSONVILLE FL 32212
NSA MID-SOUTH INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	901-874-5017	FFSC 5722 INTEGRITY DR BLDG 456 MILLINGTON TN 38054-5045
NAS CORPUS CHRISTI INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	361-961-1675	FFSC 11001 D ST CORPUS CHRISTI TX 78419-5021
NAVAL DISTRICT WASHINGTON REGIONAL COORDINATOR	202-433-3059	FFSC 2691 MITSCHER RD SW BLDG 414 WASHINGTON DC 20373
NAVAL DISTRICT WASHINGTON INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	202-433-3055	FFSC 2691 MITSCHER RD SW BLDG 414 WASHINGTON DC 20373
NAVY REGION MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL COORDINATOR	757-322-9109	FFSC 7928 14TH ST SUITE 209 NORFOLK VA 23505-1219
NAVSTA GREAT LAKES INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	847-688-3603 ext 127	FFSC 525 FARRAGUT AVE STE 300 BLDG 26 GREAT LAKES IL 60088
NB NORFOLK INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	757-322-9182	FFSC 7928 14TH ST SUITE 102 NORFOLK VA 23505-1219
SUBASE NEW LONDON INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	860-694-1257	FFSC BLDG 83 BOX 93 GROTON CT 06349-5093
NAS OCEANA INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	757-492-8282	FFSC 1896 LASER RD STE 120 VIRGINIA BEACH VA 23460-2281

*When communicating with your coordinator via mail,
please add ATTN: NAVY GOLD STAR COORDINATOR to the address line.