



Survivor's Link

COMMUNICATING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



Dealing with GRIEF

by Rufus Bundrige,

SE Regional Navy Gold Star Coordinator

Handling grief is a challenge, especially when people think they have to go through it alone. Actually, there are plenty of support groups where one can grieve and communicate with other individuals who have experienced this tremendous loss as well. Based on my own experiences of losing a mother and a sister, the most important thing is to realize that life continues and the memories of your loved one will be with you forever. One can turn grief into something positive, such as learning how to help others handle their grief.

In the beginning phase of grief, you come to accept the reality of the death. The loss and your grief are your primary experience at this time. You may experience a sense of unreality. You may be shocked at the news of the death and feel bewildered or stunned. This may be a time when you need care and assistance with practical tasks. You know intellectually that the death has occurred, but may find that you have moments of denial when you think or feel as if it has not really happened. Denial is nature's way of giving you breaks from hard truths. You are able to take things in at your own pace. To know in your heart and in your experience that the person is gone takes time. Numbness may allow you to do the things that are necessary,

such as making arrangements for the funeral, informing others of the death, etc. People may interpret this as strength and coping, and may be surprised when you do express feelings of distress and seclusion.

The Kübler-Ross Model of The Five Stages of Grief* explains:

- 1. Denial** – One of the first reactions is denial, wherein the Survivor imagines a false, preferable reality.
- 2. Anger** – When the individual recognizes that denial cannot continue, thoughts become: "Why me? It's not fair!"; "How can this happen to me?"; "Who is to blame?"; "Why would God let this happen?"
- 3. Depression** – During the third stage, the individual becomes saddened by the certainty of death. "I'm so sad. Why bother with anything?"; "I'm going to die soon so what's the point?"; "I miss my loved one. Why go on?"

4. Bargaining – The fourth stage involves the hope that the individual can avoid a cause of grief. People facing less serious trauma can bargain or seek compromise.

5. Acceptance – In this last stage, individuals embrace mortality or inevitable future, or that of a loved one, or other tragic event. "It's going to be okay."; "I can't fight it, so I may as well prepare for it."

Kübler-Ross later expanded her model to include any form of personal loss, such as the death of a loved one, the loss of a job or income, major rejection, the end of a relationship or divorce, drug addiction, incarceration, the onset of a disease or chronic illness, an infertility diagnosis, and even minor losses.

* <http://psychcentral.com/lib/the-5-stages-of-loss-and-grief/000617>

Obtaining Your Sailor's OMPF

Did you know that you may not need to petition the National Archive to obtain your Sailor's Official Military Personnel File (OMPF)? The Navy Personnel Command (NPC) in Millington, Tenn., maintains the records of Navy members who were discharged, retired or died after 1997. To request the Navy Military Personnel records of a deceased Sailor, submit the following information directly to the NPC Office: their full name, Social Security number, date of death, address to where the record is to be mailed, and your signature. Please be aware that proof of relationship to the service member may be required if the requester is a sibling or not otherwise listed in the member's service record. Submit your request to:

Navy Personnel Command / PERS-313
5720 Integrity Drive
Millington, TN 35055-3130
901-874-4885

Your Navy Gold Star coordinator would also be happy to assist you in this process. To locate your closest coordinator, visit www.navygoldstar.com.

A Sibling's Perspective

by Gold Star Brother since 2008, Naval District Washington

Losing a sibling is tough, no surprises there. I always thought my brother was someone that would be an old friend, a close family member I could confide in after my parents were gone. I always imagined him as the best man at my wedding, the fun uncle to my children, and the muscle I could invite over to help me with my home renovations when I bought the fixer-upper. He was my best friend. I love my sisters very much, but it's just not the same with them. I see other brothers now and can't help but be a bit jealous. Losing a brother is not like never having one. I know very well what I'm missing, and I'm not happy about it, but I live with it. Cousins and close friends have stepped up in many ways and filled that void, but there is still an emptiness.

I feel the silver lining in all this is that I am a Gold Star sibling, although I didn't always refer to it that way. When my brother died, he was serving a purpose and that brings me some comfort. He was in the military and intended to be of service. He was gifted and likely would

I am a Gold Star sibling ...

have gone on to do great things. I have a reason to be proud despite his untimely death. A lot of people don't have that privilege when someone close to them dies suddenly, and I am very fortunate in that regard. When I tell other people he was killed while he was in the military, there is usually an unspoken respect from those hearing about it. This is comforting, but I always feel the need to disclose that he was not killed in combat and that he was on leave when he died. Most people assume that he was in Iraq or Afghanistan, and I don't like the idea of people thinking I've overstated his sacrifice by not correcting their assumptions. I think part of me believes his sacrifice was "less" than if he was actually killed in combat, however wrong or right that is. I think that makes my family unique compared to most Gold Star families, and it is something that causes me to be conflicted.

Because of my brother's death, I'm much more sensitive to loss. I think through that experience I've become a much more compassionate and empathetic person. I also think his death presented me with an opportunity to reassess my life at a point where I needed to do that. I've more personally experienced mortality and realized that the small stuff isn't so important and that I need to not just survive, but pursue my life with a purpose. I've also learned that I'm much stronger and much more capable than I thought I was. Speaking on behalf of my family at my brother's eulogy was a perfect example of this. I also have much less patience for pettiness or smallness in others.

I think of my brother less and less as the years go on and, in some ways, that concerns me. I don't mention him to

people unless they get to know me and, even then, I am eternally conflicted on when I should mention him and to what extent. However, I still think of him often, but not always when I expect to. I expect to be a bit depressed on his birthday, on the date of his accident, Memorial Day, family holidays, and other patriotic or military-themed events (because they remind me of his funeral). What I don't expect – or that I am learning to expect – are the visceral reactions I have to unexpected situations, such as seeing young men (about his age when he died) dying in war movies, 21-gun salutes, hearing about other young men killed before their time on the news. The less obvious examples are numerous and often catch me completely off-guard. Things like finding an old picture of the two of us in a stack of old photos, my best friend unexpectedly making a toast to him at his wedding a couple years ago, seeing a post by one of his friends on his Facebook page pop up on my newsfeed, or even someone phrasing something the way he would. It's also a bit sad to know that whomever I marry and the children we have together will never get to meet him, and that my second-hand stories about him will be all they know of him. More unnervingly, part of me fears experiencing this same loss some day with one of my own children.

In dealing with my brother's death, I've taken it one day at a time since it happened. When I was a first-year law student, I was so overwhelmed with everything happening all at once (law school, his death, etc.) that I just buried myself in my work as a distraction. I would allow myself to grieve as little as I absolutely needed to in the morning, then suck it up and get through the rest of my day, grieve at night, then go to sleep, and repeat on a daily basis. I did this for months, and it was incredibly draining. I felt as if I did not have the luxury of grief.

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The School Environment After the Loss of a Parent Due to Suicide

Coping with a parent's suicide can be an extremely difficult road, especially when a child is expected to return to school and a "normal" school routine while also coping with the loss of an integral part of their home and school balance – their parent.

According to Grief Speaks, a resource on grief, loss and transition, "A child returning to school after a parent's suicide is a very important part of the healing. School provides children with a sense of normalcy and reassures them that life goes on, even after a tragedy.

Every child is different in how much time they feel they need until they return to school. Some choose to go back soon after the death to see their friends and feel the predictability of school instead of the sadness and confusion at home. Others feel very anxious about returning, as it means being away from the security of home and family. They may need a few extra days or attend school part time for a short period. If there is a lot of fear, perhaps speaking to a counselor may be helpful.

It is helpful to contact the principal, teacher, school counselor, and nurse. Often people have learned about the death within the community. Families can decide how much information to share. Details are not necessary, but it helps to let the school know what the child understands or has been told. Meeting privately with the teacher is helpful for younger children. Teens need to be involved in this process, if they choose."

Grief Speaks provides some recommendations to help children respond to questions by peers:

- Children need to be prepared for what they may encounter at school. Friends may seem awkward around them and not know what to say. Many educators find it difficult to help child survivors. Let children practice responding with such things as: "Thank you."; "I am too sad to talk about it now."; or "I don't want to talk about what happened. Maybe you can talk to my mom." Remind them that even if an adult asks, sharing information or expressing feelings is not required.
- A child can respond with: "My dad had an illness in his brain that caused him to end his life. The medicines he tried did not help him." Or, "My dad died from complications of depression."
- Peers can say things that are upsetting too, as suicide is so frightening that sometimes children say cruel or upsetting comments. It is hard for children to let peers know that their feelings have been hurt. This is a good time for adults, such as teachers, neighbors, or coaches, to help out and use this time to talk about how children can support a friend and the importance of being kind.

TAPS Campouts

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) organization offers a series of "campouts" geared toward children and siblings 6-17 years old who have lost a loved one on active duty. These events give our young Survivors the opportunity to memorialize their loved one, while still experiencing traditional camp activities. Campers often are comforted knowing that there are other children who understand what they are feeling and experiencing. Experienced grief facilitators lead the TAPS Good Grief Camps, and each child is paired up with a trained military mentor. To learn more about future TAPS events and campout opportunities, visit www.taps.org/events.



Beat the Heat and Sun this Summer

Heat-related illness occurs when the body's temperature control system is overloaded. Those at greatest risk for heat-related illness include infants and children up to 4 years old. Even young and healthy people can get sick from the heat if they participate in strenuous physical activities during hot weather. For heat-related illness, the best defense is prevention.

- Never leave infants, children, or pets in a parked car, even if the windows are cracked open.
- Dress infants and children in loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Schedule outdoor activities during morning and evening hours.
- Stay cool with cool showers or baths.
- Seek medical care immediately if your child has symptoms of heat-related illness.

Just a few serious sunburns can increase you and your child's risk of skin cancer later in life. Their skin needs protection from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays whenever they're outdoors.

- Cover up. Clothing that covers your and your child's skin helps protect against UV rays.
- Use sunscreen with at least SPF (sun protection factor) 15 and UVA (ultraviolet A) and UVB (ultraviolet B) protection every time you and your child go outside.

For more information on this and other summer safety tips, visit www.cdc.gov/family/kids/summer.

Summer Budgeting Tips

By Leanne Barger,
SW Regional Navy Gold Star Coordinator

Summer often can be more expensive than other seasons. What can make summer so expensive? Vacations, weekends away, camping, day trips, sporting events, landscaping projects, weddings, graduations, summer clothes, summer camps, family barbecues, back-to-school shopping, running the air conditioner, and the list goes on and on. With a little planning, you can have the best summer yet without breaking the bank.

Be realistic about what you are comfortable spending on a vacation and create a trip budget. One way to budget for a vacation is to have a dedicated travel fund and only use that fund for vacation travel. Once a budget is decided on, prioritize what you want to get out of your vacation and what activities are on your "must do" list. Traveling to nontraditional summer locations can provide additional savings. Be sure to shop around and do research on your destination. Check with local tourist offices and websites for destination-

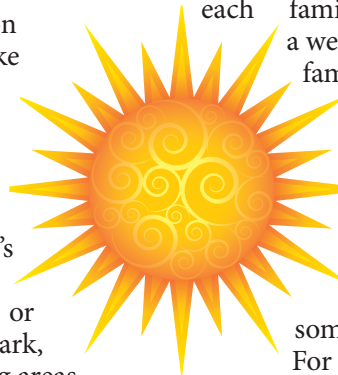
city deals and coupon books, as well as information on free events. Don't be afraid to ask for discounts. Did you know that the Halekoa in Hawaii and Shades of Green at Walt Disney World have Survivor packages for Gold Star family members?

Not going on a destination vacation? You can still take advantage of the long summer days. Become a tourist in your own area and you may be surprised how much there is to do! Whether it's walks along the beach, bike rides in the woods, or evening concerts in the park, your town or surrounding areas probably offer many free options where the only thing you need to bring is a lawn chair and a picnic. When exploring the local area, be mindful of the hidden costs of free entertainment in your community (parking, "fancy" picnic items, souvenirs, etc.) and plan accordingly.

Look at creative ways you can cut costs in other areas when preparing your summer budget. Take advantage of the nice weather and consider making your lunch every day and eating it outdoors. Temporarily

suspend gym and cable memberships while you participate in more evening time activities. If you can, use your car less and walk or bike to your destinations. Pick three or four family friends and start a family dinner night. If you have four families, then each family would cook once a week for the other three families. These are great nights for socializing and entertaining because you can add a theme to your night and play board games. You get a free dinner three days a month, and it's something fun to do for free. For those with children at home, create your own summer camp. Partner with a few parents and agree that each parent will plan a kid-friendly activity once a week. Choose a couple of free activities, such as a scavenger hunt, and a couple of activities at a reasonable cost, such as a museum. These are just a few examples on how to save while having fun.

Don't know where to start in your budget planning? Come see your local Gold Star coordinator for resources that can help.



Chaplain's Corner: Resiliency and the Rhythm of Living

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." – Maya Angelou

by CNIC Force Chaplain's Office

The word "resilience" is commonly used in military services these days. Military leaders are rightfully concerned about their troops' and family members' resilience. Resilience impacts readiness. What is the definition of resilience? Resilience is commonly defined as the capacity to withstand stress and catastrophe. Experts in the counseling field are very much aware of the human capacity to adapt and to overcome. The truth is there is a daily opportunity to adapt and to overcome. Usually our capacity to develop a high level of

resilience is contingent upon how well we handle risk and adversity.

Risk and adversity are constantly a part of our life experience. So, resilience is not new for any of us. Actually, resilience is the rhythm of our lives. Our personal experiences teach us that we have a capacity to rebuild our lives even after devastating tragedies. This capacity is activated when we are in supportive, affirming relationships. Renewal comes when we are in a relationship that nourishes us spiritually, mentally, socially, and physically. So, as we live out our lives, resilience contributes

to our readiness. Readiness is about being prepared to attend to life's challenges and rebounding from any circumstantial setbacks. Circumstantial setbacks have a way of increasing our strength to endure.

There are many sources that guide us as we deal with circumstantial setbacks. If you walk through CNIC's workspaces, you are likely to find the five guiding principles from our Commander, Vice Adm. Dixon Smith. The principles read:

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How to Choose a Counselor or Therapist

Military OneSource, www.militaryonesource.mil

We're all subject to the pressures that come with everyday life, relationships, and responsibilities. Service members and their families face the added challenges of relocations and deployments. With everything you have to manage in your life, you or someone in your family might feel overwhelmed and want to talk to a professional with a different perspective. For those times, a counselor or therapist may be the answer. Read on to learn more about the different types of counselors, their qualifications, the kinds of problems they address, and how they can help.

Medical and non-medical counseling

The words counseling, therapy and psychotherapy are often used to describe the same process. Counseling may be designated as either medical or non-medical. Medical counseling specifically addresses issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, child abuse or neglect, domestic violence, suicidal ideation, and other medically diagnosable issues.

Non-medical counseling addresses issues such as improving relationships at home and at work, stress management, adjustment difficulties (for example, returning from a deployment), marital problems, parenting, and grief or loss.

Counseling and therapy can take place individually, with another person (a spouse, for example), with a family, in a group, or in some combination of these. During counseling sessions, you work with a trained professional who talks to you about self-identified problems and helps you find ways to cope with them. For example, the counselor can help you identify patterns of thinking and behaving that either benefit or work against you.

Confidentiality

Non-medical counseling is confidential, with the exception of situations that are required by state laws or federal and military requirements to be reported (e.g., domestic violence, child abuse, threats of harm to self or others, and other "duty-to-warn" situations).

Different types of counselors and therapists

Several different types of counselors who meet professional standards and licensing requirements may provide counseling or therapy for a wide range of issues, including parenting, grief, and couples or family relationships. The following information will help you better understand the different types of recognized counseling specialists and how they are qualified to help.

- Social workers have a master's or doctoral degree in clinical social work. They are trained to understand how people are affected by their environment, including family and culture, and can provide individual, family and group counseling.
- Marriage and family therapists have a master's or doctoral degree in psychology, education or social work; postgraduate certification in marriage and family therapy; or both. They usually focus more on practical counseling and are trained to deal with interpersonal relationships, including family and couple conflicts.
- Mental health counselors also have a master's or doctoral degree in psychology or education. As with many counselors or therapists, mental health counselors specialize in helping people cope with a particular problem. Others may specialize in a particular area, such as educational or religious counseling.
- Psychologists have a master's degree – and possibly a doctoral degree – in psychology, education or social science. Psychologists are specially trained to use psychological and educational testing to help identify and resolve problems. Like other types of counselors, they work in many settings, including mental health centers, hospitals and clinics, schools, and private practice.
- Psychiatrists are licensed medical doctors specially trained to assess, diagnose, and treat a patient's mental and physical condition, often working as part of a team with other professionals. They are able to hospitalize patients and, in most states, they are the only therapists who can prescribe medication. Psychiatrists treat people with more severe problems and collaborate with primary care physicians, as well as therapists, to implement and manage a medication regimen for clients.
- Certified pastoral counselors are members of the clergy with specialized training in psychotherapy. All service members have access to pastoral counseling by trained, qualified military chaplains through their commands and installations. These counselors are ordained by individual religious denominations before entering the military. Once commissioned, they are further trained and certified to provide assistance to service members of all faiths and their families.
- Licensed professional counselors generally have a master's degree in counseling or in a related field and provide general mental health counseling services.

Regardless of which type of counselor or therapist is right for you, the important thing is that you find the help you need when you need it.

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As time has gone on, I've been able to slowly unpack what I tucked away and come to terms with the reality of what happened. Sometimes the unpacking is easy and sometimes it is explosive and emotional. I also find solace in the fact that my brother's death, though tragic, has changed all of our lives for the better in some way. My baby sister, now an adult, was inspired to go to the Naval Academy and find her true calling. My mother became involved with volunteering after my brother passed and now has a job she loves because of him. My father and I, once cold and distant toward each other, were forced to work through a lot of long-standing resentment and disappointment between us because we no longer had my brother as a go-between or distraction from our own issues and flaws.

Growing up, my brother and I were rivals. After his death, in a strange way, I felt liberated. I no longer had someone to whom I could be directly compared. Our whole life, he and I had arbitrarily (and unknowingly) divided up the world into what I could do and what he could do. Suddenly, those divisions were gone and half the world I had never seen was opened to me. It was like my own toppling of the Berlin Wall. I no longer had to be different than him or oppose him, so I could be however I wanted to be. I applied for the Marine JAG program after graduating law school, which I would never have even considered if he were still alive (it would have been on his side of the divide). Though unsuccessful, in the end I learned a lot about myself I never would have through that process. I learned to be more outgoing and warm like he was (and which I had envied, but felt I could not emulate). In some ways, being "more like my brother," – something which would have been a major breach of protocol between the two of us if he were still alive – suddenly became a way to keep his memory alive. It was also my way of granting him a bit of immortality.

Above all, I know more than I ever hoped to know about what other siblings like my sisters and I are going through.

Grief is a perpetual work in progress.

I think grief is different for each person, and that each person will grieve at his or her own pace. Those who have recently lost their brother or sister should feel free to take it day by day. No one has all the answers, nor should they be expected to. Grief is a perpetual work in progress. You will never "get over it," but you do need to learn to live with your new reality. It is important to remember your loss, but also to move forward and not be completely consumed by grief. Your brother or sister would want you to go out and live life, not shut yourself in and shut down. Moving on doesn't mean forgetting. It just means moving forward and honoring your sibling's memory.

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"Take Customer Service to the Next Level; Be Brilliant on the Basics; Make Smart Business Decisions; Live a Culture of Continuous Improvement; and, Represent Navy to the Surrounding Community." You may be wondering, "So, what do guiding principles in CNIC's workspaces have to do with our personal lives?"

In making a personal application of the CNIC five guiding principles, this is what it looks like:

"Take Self-care to the Next Level by Embracing the Positives in Your Life with a 'Can Do' attitude; Be Brilliant on the Basics and Practice What We all Learned in Kindergarten – Be Kind to Self and to Others; Make Smart Personal Decisions – Be Careful Who You Associate with, Choose Only Encouragers; Live a Culture of Continuous Self-improvement by Getting in Shape Spiritually, Physically, Emotionally and Spiritually; and Represent Your True Self to All Who Cross Your Path by Committing Your Valuable Time with People Who Matter and on Things That Matter."

It matters to understand that resilience is the rhythm of our lives.

www.navygoldstar.com

1-888-509-8759



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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.

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

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