

For the Loved Ones of Those Who Served and Died


# TAPPS<sup>®</sup>

SPRING 2021 | MAGAZINE



**WHAT'S INSIDE: PAIN INSPIRED PURPOSE**

**IN THE MIDST OF GRIEF ★ NEVER FORGOTTEN: NFL'S SALUTE TO SERVICE**



Grief is the reminder  
that love was present,  
and that even if it's  
no longer in its  
original form,  
that love still exists.

– MICHELLE MAROC



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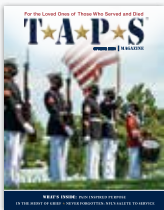
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# TAPS IS HERE

24 HOURS A DAY / 7 DAYS A WEEK  
202.588.TAPS (8277)

- ★ National Peer Support Network
- ★ Connections to Community-Based Care
  - ★ Casework Assistance
  - ★ Emergency Financial Assistance
  - ★ Education Resources and Support for Post-Secondary Education
- ★ TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®
  - ★ Grief and Trauma Resources
- ★ Seminars, Retreats, One-Day Gatherings
  - ★ Sports & Entertainment Events
  - ★ Women's Empowerment Program
- ★ Good Grief Camp for Children/Teens
- ★ National Military Mentor Program
  - ★ Young Adult Program
- ★ TAPS Online Community
  - ★ TAPS Magazine



## ON THE COVER

Arlington National Cemetery  
PHOTO BY ELIZABETH FRASER

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# Our Mission

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is the national nonprofit organization providing compassionate care to all those grieving the death of a military loved one. We honor our heroes by caring for all those they loved and left behind. We do this through peer-based emotional support, grief and trauma resources, programming for adults and children across the country, casework assistance, connections to community-based care, and the National Military Survivor Helpline that is available 24/7. Services are provided at no cost to survivors by survivors, with love and care.

## Connect with Us!

### SHARE YOUR STORY

Your stories can bring hope and healing to TAPS families. We invite you to share a story about your loved one or your grief journey. All submissions will be considered for TAPS Magazine, our blogs at [taps.org](http://taps.org), and other TAPS publications. We invite you to read our submission policy and submit your story at [taps.org/shareyourstory](http://taps.org/shareyourstory).

### JOIN OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY

Information on resources and programs are easily found at [taps.org](http://taps.org). You'll also find blogs, message boards and chats for connection to others. Learn more at [taps.org/onlinecommunity](http://taps.org/onlinecommunity). Also subscribe to our Saturday Morning Message (SMM), a weekly email written by and for survivors. Request the SMM via [online@taps.org](mailto:online@taps.org).

### KEEP IN TOUCH

Share your thoughts or TAPS experience with us at [editor@taps.org](mailto:editor@taps.org). (Content may be edited for publication). Also join us on social media:

[facebook.com/tapsorg](https://facebook.com/tapsorg) | [@tapsorg](https://twitter.com/tapsorg) | [@tapsorg](https://www.instagram.com/tapsorg)

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## YOU CAN TRUST TAPS

TAPS exceeds industry standards for financial accountability. We are proud to have received many of the top nonprofit charity ratings available.



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# YOUR TAPS FAMILY SENDS HUGS TO YOU

## THROUGH THE PAGES OF TAPS MAGAZINE



### Dear TAPS Family,

As the weather warms and the bright blooms of spring appear—our hearts can find comfort in this season of renewal; nature's display of the beauty that is present and resilient, despite a cold, harsh winter.

The previous year presented us with the challenge of a pandemic, yet as a family we supported one another and found ways to stay connected.

As we move forward in this year, we invite you to join us, whether in-person or virtually to explore and discover the beauty and love of your TAPS Family. We have so many ways you can connect, share, and grow.

The following pages provide stories of gentle courage and hope, guidance on how we can look within ourselves and find what we need to move forward; all with the knowledge that we are not alone.

Wherever you are on your journey and whatever you may need, comfort and support are here for you. Together we grow stronger and we find our time to bloom and share our beauty with the world once again.

With hugs,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bonnie". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a personal and warm style.

Bonnie Carroll  
*TAPS Founder and President*



# DEAR TAPS...

## THE POWER OF PEER SUPPORT

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

**Jon Ganues,**

Surviving father of A1C Jon W. Ganues, Jr.,  
U.S. Air Force

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

**Sue Johnston,**

Surviving spouse of Richard Johnston,  
U.S. Army, Veteran



PHOTOS: TAPS ARCHIVES; KELLY HAZELT; MELINDA KANE; MARK CAROSIELLO

# We Are Here for You!

## TAPS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

### NATIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR HELPLINE

Grief knows no boundaries. Moments when we need extra support can come at any time. Our Helpline is answered live — 24/7/365 — with gentle care from peer professionals who ensure the caller has open access to all that TAPS provides. Whether you need emotional support, connection to resources and information or if you want to share what is on your heart, the TAPS Helpline is here for you. Call 202-588-TAPS (8277).

### PEER-BASED SUPPORT

This is the foundation of TAPS. Survivors helping survivors — coming together to find strength and hope. Our Peer Mentor network offers a supportive companion as you navigate the aftermath of loss. Survivors who are at least 18 months out from their loss volunteer their time and receive training to be a supportive presence for new survivors. You will gain comfort in knowing you are not alone. Peer Mentors also lend support at TAPS events throughout the year. Find out more: [taps.org/peermentors](https://taps.org/peermentors)

### CASEWORK ASSISTANCE

Managing paperwork and unexpected needs can add to the weight of grief and loss. Our casework team delivers compassionate assistance for all the needs a family may have, including access to pro bono legal assistance, emergency financial resources, information on state and federal benefits, and connections to private social services support. Find out more: [taps.org/casework](https://taps.org/casework)

### EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES

TAPS guides survivors through the bureaucracy and paperwork necessary to receive the education benefits available for the dependents of America's fallen heroes. Coordinators work with you to determine the best options for financial assistance. Find out more: [taps.org/edu](https://taps.org/edu)

### COMMUNITY-BASED GRIEF SUPPORT

TAPS provides connection to free and unlimited grief counseling, trauma resources and local support groups. We can assist in finding the right grief counselor to help you develop coping skills, work through questions and navigate the myriad of emotions associated with grief and loss. Careful research and a large network of strong community partners help locate support close to home. Find out more: [taps.org/griefcounseling](https://taps.org/griefcounseling)

### SURVIVOR CARE TEAM

A pillar of TAPS support is our Survivor Care Team. This team of peer grief professionals are all military loss survivors, just like you. Armed with firsthand experience, your care team member will help you connect with the resources and support you need. They will help you discover hope and find resilience as you navigate the grief journey. Find out more: [taps.org/survivorcareteam](https://taps.org/survivorcareteam)

## SUICIDE LOSS SUPPORT

A death by suicide can leave behind a wake of emotions that complicate an already painful grieving process. Many of us ask, “Why did this happen?” We worry that our loved ones will be remembered for how they died instead of how they lived and served. Suicide loss survivors can be assured they have a safe space within TAPS to remember, honor and grieve their loved one. Special programming and resources, including the annual National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar, provide gentle, understanding support as we work through the emotions associated with this type of loss. As peers, we want you to know that you can and will survive this. You are not alone and we will be by your side, offering comfort, care and hope. Find out more: [taps.org/suicideloss](https://taps.org/suicideloss)

## ILLNESS LOSS SUPPORT

TAPS is leading the effort to ensure families whose loved one died from illness are recognized, cared for and aware of all benefits they are eligible to receive. TAPS is working to raise awareness about risks and effects of toxic exposure and help families navigate the benefits process after loss. We are pulling together relevant legislation, medical studies, expert testimony, literature, and reports to create a reference manual to serve as a foundation for future advocacy. Find out more: Email [illnessloss@taps.org](mailto:illnessloss@taps.org)

## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The pain of loss ushers in hard questions: Why are we here? What is our purpose? Our Women's Empowerment programming helps incorporate concepts of identity and spirituality into transformative goal-setting. You'll be provided with tools to help you move confidently into the life you've imagined. Find out more: [taps.org/empowerment](https://taps.org/empowerment)

## YOUTH PROGRAMS

Though their lives are marked by grief, young survivors at TAPS know their lives will also be marked by camaraderie, mentorship, emotional maturity, adventure and fun. Led by experts in the fields of child development, mental health and education, TAPS Youth Programs provide safe spaces for military children to explore grief and embrace healing, including Good Grief Camps, summer campouts, teen adventures and family retreats.

## YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS

This dynamic program is for surviving children and siblings ages 18-25 and helps our graduating Good Grief Camp children transition into a program all their own. The Young Adult Program focuses on five pillars of growth: Personal Development, Financial Stability, Communication, Career Development and Service to Others. Each individual is given tools to create a well-rounded life full of hope, healing, and growth. Find out more: [youngadults@taps.org](mailto:youngadults@taps.org)

## TAPS INSTITUTE FOR HOPE AND HEALING®

The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® serves as a resource and training center. Through webinars, webcasts, workshops and events, the Institute educates survivors of loss as well as professionals who work in the area of death notification, funerals and grief and bereavement support. For military loss survivors and other survivors, the Institute provides programs such as understanding suicide; understanding children's grief; practical tips for coping with grief; wellness workshops and creative ways to keep the memories of loved ones alive. For professionals, the Institute offers academic programming taught by experts in the field. For these professionally oriented programs, continuing education credits are available from a wide range of health and social service professional boards. Find out more: [taps.org/institute](https://taps.org/institute)

## PUBLICATIONS

TAPS has created several proprietary publications to serve the survivor community and offer valuable inspiration and information. A series of pocket-size guides, with input by subject matter experts, offer insight and information on available resources and services. These guides are provided at no cost to survivors. Other publications include the book, “Healing Your Grieving Heart after a Military Death: 100 Practical Ideas for Families and Friends” by Bonnie Carroll and Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., the children's book “Klinger: A Story of Honor and Hope” and the “TAPS Magazine”. Find out more: [taps.org/publications](https://taps.org/publications)

# A LOOK AT LONELINESS

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

*“The eternal quest of the individual human being is to shatter his loneliness.” — Norman Cousins*

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased our awareness of the problem of loneliness. We were lonely before the novel coronavirus arose, and we're even lonelier since routine social distancing, isolation, and quarantining became unfortunate necessities. Of course, for those of us in grief, the natural loneliness of loss also compounds our feelings of separation and isolation.

Today loneliness is a crisis that cuts across cultures, continents, and classes. Britain has added a Minister for Loneliness to its federal government. In the United States, thirty-five percent of adults over the age of 45 report feeling lonely. In one recent Cigna survey, over half of Americans said they always or sometimes feel that no one knows them well. And young people are lonely, too. Some studies have found that Millennials and Generation Z are the loneliest of all.

Human beings are social creatures. While each of us is a capable, autonomous individual, we are not meant to exist for very long individually. Since time began, we've lived in social groups. We are built to interact with and rely on others. We are built for empathy, connection, and love—especially when we are grieving.

That's why loneliness hurts. But not only does loneliness wound us emotionally, it causes measurable physical harm. Studies show that lonely people are more likely to get sick, suffer cognitive decline, and die sooner. Scientists have learned that loneliness even affects the body on the cellular level. Social isolation can trigger chronic inflammation, which elevates the risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, and dementia.

Loneliness is a personal mental wellness challenge, but it's also a public health threat as ominous as any pandemic or global climate danger. If you've been feeling lonely or know someone who has, it's time to take stock and address the problem.

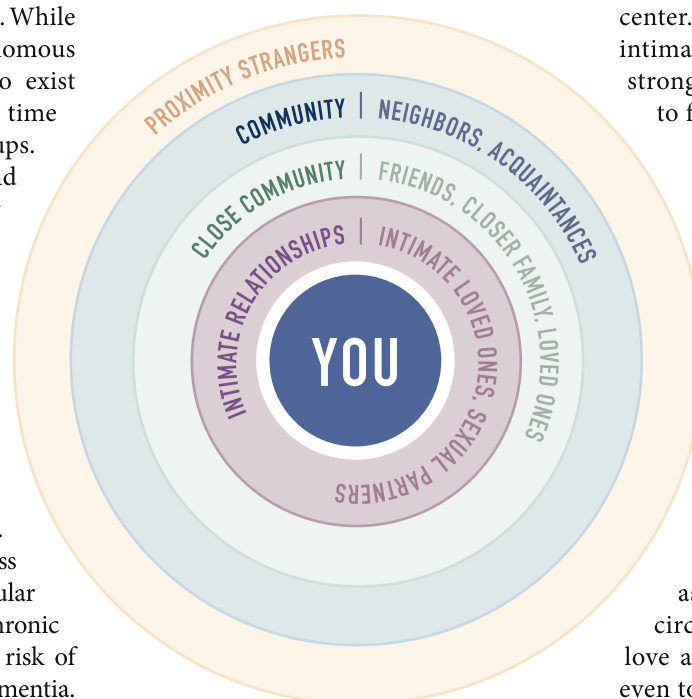
## MEASURING YOUR LONELINESS

All of us are part of a number of communities and relationships. And all of these together form our circles of connection. Depending on your life circumstances right now, you may be connected to your immediate family (partner and children, if you have them), your chosen family (close friends), your family of origin (mother, father, siblings), your casual friends and acquaintances, your extended family, your work community, your neighborhood, any groups or organizations you belong to, and the city or town in which you live.

In the Wolfelt Loneliness Inventory that follows, you will score your sense of loneliness in several circles: proximity, community, close community, intimate relationships, and you. Any section with a low score (mostly 1s and 2s) is an area in your circles of connection that would probably benefit from strengthening and maybe expanding.

Yet keep in mind that each person's need for connection is different. Based on your personality, degree of extroversion or introversion, and life circumstances, you may feel well connected with lots of people in your life or just a few. In general, I would say that it's necessary to have a tribe. That is, it's important to have connections in all of the concentric circles, even if you only have one or two solid entries in each circle. In addition, when it comes to combating loneliness as well as being supported in grief, the most important circles are those toward the center. If your relationships with yourself, intimate others, and close community are strong and fulfilling, you are less likely to feel lonely.

Finally, don't overlook the fact that “you” are in the center of the circles of connection. Excellent self-esteem and self-care ripple out from the center, naturally engaging and buoying all of the other circles. Conversely, poor self-esteem and self-care ripple out from the center but have the opposite effect. They damage and weaken the connections in all of the other circles. Think of healthy self-love as propelling good vibes through the circles of connection and poor self-love as emanating weak and sometimes even toxic vibes.





NOW I INVITE YOU TO TAKE  
**INVENTORY OF YOUR LONELINESS**

<b>THE WOLFELT LONELINESS INVENTORY</b>	NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN
I SEE OTHER PEOPLE IN STORES AND PLACES I VISIT ROUTINELY.	1	2	3	4
I AM AROUND OTHER PEOPLE IN MY DAILY LIFE.	1	2	3	4
I CHAT A BIT WITH STRANGERS IN PUBLIC PLACES.	1	2	3	4
<b>PROXIMITY SCORE (OUT OF 12)</b>				
I KNOW MY NEIGHBORS AND TALK TO THEM.	1	2	3	4
I FEEL PART OF SEVERAL COMMUNITIES.	1	2	3	4
I PARTICIPATE IN GROUPS AND SHARE THE SAME INTERESTS AS OTHER PEOPLE I SOCIALIZE WITH.	1	2	3	4
I FEEL CONNECTED TO MY COMMUNITY.	1	2	3	4
<b>COMMUNITY SCORE (OUT OF 16)</b>				
I FEEL THAT I HAVE COMPANIONSHIP IN MY DAILY LIFE.	1	2	3	4
I FEEL THAT I HAVE MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT.	1	2	3	4
I HAVE PEOPLE IN MY LIFE TO SPEND HOLIDAYS AND OTHER SPECIAL DAYS WITH.	1	2	3	4
I FEEL OTHER PEOPLE KNOW ME PRETTY WELL.	1	2	3	4
<b>CLOSE COMMUNITY SCORE (OUT OF 16)</b>				
I FEEL LIKE I HAVE PEOPLE I CAN TALK TO ABOUT MY BIGGEST DREAMS, WORRIES, AND LOSSES.	1	2	3	4
I HAVE THE AMOUNT OF PHYSICAL CLOSENESS OR TOUCH IN MY LIFE THAT I WANT.	1	2	3	4
I HAVE THE AMOUNT OF SEX IN MY LIFE THAT I WANT.	1	2	3	4
I FEEL I HAVE THE BEST FRIEND(S) I WANT.	1	2	3	4
I FEEL I HAVE THE PARTNER I WANT.	1	2	3	4
<b>INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS SCORE (OUT OF 20)</b>				
I FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF.	1	2	3	4
I TREAT MYSELF WITH KINDNESS AND SELF-COMPASSION.	1	2	3	4
I TAKE GOOD CARE OF MYSELF.	1	2	3	4
<b>SELF-RELATIONSHIP SCORE (OUT OF 12)</b>				

**TOTAL SCORE (OUT OF 78)**



Before we talk about loneliness scores, I want to emphasize that loneliness is not truly a measurable experience. The scale I've created is meant only to help you begin to understand your loneliness better. If you feel deeply lonely, you are deeply lonely, no matter what your score may say. The same goes for minimal or more occasional loneliness. With those caveats firmly in mind, on this scale, 19-38 points to severe loneliness, 39-57 moderate loneliness, and 58-78 mild loneliness. In general, any section with a low score (mostly 1s and 2s) is an area in your circles of connection that would probably benefit from strengthening and maybe expanding. In addition to understanding the degree of your loneliness, the sections in the scale will also help you discern which areas of your life would most benefit from more connection.

### FINDING YOUR WAY PAST LONELINESS

Finding your way past loneliness involves befriending yourself and befriending others. But as you have probably realized, it's not as simple as saying, "I just need to make friends" or "I just need to socialize more."

For one, making friends and socializing is difficult for some people, and the more disconnected you are at this point, the more difficult it can be. For another, you may already have friends and social circles yet still feel lonely, especially during this time of isolation and social distancing.

Despite current restrictions, the best way to build bonds with others is through proximity, repetition, and quality time.

This may sound totally obvious, but when we're physically near someone frequently,

we're more likely to develop a strong relationship with them. Being together in person is best, but when that's not possible—such as when people live in different communities, for example—it's still possible to maintain close ties through frequent video calls, emails, and texts.

But quality time is the other essential factor here. As you may have experienced yourself, you can be around someone every day yet not feel close to them. Perhaps you even live in the same household with others yet feel like you don't have effective, cherished relationships with them.

Emotional bonds are built on quality time. What does that mean? Quality time is time spent with another person or people in which you are focusing on each other, communicating well, and empathizing. You can be in the same room with another person, each immersed in your own phone. This is not quality time. But if you sit together in front of the same laptop or a TV, watching a favorite show and chatting about it as it plays, that may count as quality time. Similarly, distractedly talking "at" each other while you're busy with other things is not quality time, but stopping to look each other in the eyes and really give one another undivided attention—that's the quality time that's needed to build love and devotion as well as provide you with divine momentum toward healing your grief.

Stop for a second and think about the most cherished moments in your life—the ones that not only bring a smile to your face but also tug at your heart. It's likely they were spent sharing quality time with those you loved the most. That's one of the most important questions I hope you will keep in mind as you

find your way through loneliness: How can I spend more quality time with people I care about and who help me feel supported in my grief?

To create a detailed plan for making better friends with yourself and building stronger connections with others, I invite you to read the full text of my new book *If You're Lonely: Finding Your Way*, from which this article is excerpted. With intention and support, you can find your way through loneliness. You are a worthy person who needs and deserves connection. There is help, and there is hope. Fortunately, TAPS provides a number of resources that foster connection and community, so they are an excellent place to start.

I am hopeful about you finding your way through loneliness. In my career, I have worked with many lonely people who have worked to rebuild self-esteem and connection with others. Their lives have been transformed for the better by the concepts and small daily practices covered in *If You're Lonely*. Yours can be transformed, too. I wish you a more connected 2021.

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*A longtime TAPS supporter, Dr. Alan Wolfelt serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition and is a member of the TAPS Advisory Board. He has written many books that help people mourn, including *Healing Your Grieving Heart After a Military Death* (coauthored with TAPS President Bonnie Carroll). Visit [www.centerforloss.com](http://www.centerforloss.com) to learn more about grief and to order Dr. Wolfelt's books.*

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# THE GIFT OF COMFORT THROUGH OTHERS

David Gross | Surviving father of Maj. Kevin Gross, U.S. Army National Guard

The third anniversary of Kevin's passing was in March. Over that time, I have learned that my grief can come at any moment, anywhere, and in a variety of ways, some almost subtle, some violent outbursts, and everything in between.

I have also learned that comfort and support for my loss can come at unexpected times and in unexpected ways. Many months ago, I had a dentist appointment in town, but before that I visited Kevin's grave at Oregon's Willamette National Cemetery. As I made my way down the hill I got a call from the office. I was late, and was I coming? Yes, I said. I thought the appointment was at 1:30 but it was actually at 1:00. Yes, I am only 10 minutes away, I said.

When I arrived, I apologized to the receptionist, a woman I knew from past appointments. I explained I had been to the National Cemetery visiting with my lost son, and then was hurried back to my waiting dental chair.

As I was checking out after my procedure, the receptionist asked what I had said as I came in. I must have been talking too fast. She was confused. I explained that I had lost my son some time before and he was buried up at the National Cemetery. "Oh," she said, "I am so sorry." I said that he was a military man, and showed her his photo, in dress blues, that I carry in my organizer wherever I go. She looked at Kevin and remarked that he was such

a good-looking man. "Yes," I said. "He was 46." She looked up at me, our eyes met. I could tell she had been moved, and she said, almost softly, "My age. Today is my birthday."

A moment passed. "Well, Happy Birthday!" I replied. And she smiled. But as I turned to go she said, "Wait!" She came around the counter, embraced me, and held me for what seemed like a full minute. I whispered, "Thank you, that means a lot." A tear came to my eye as she released me. We said good-bye, and I drove the two hours home with her comfort wrapped around me. A comfort that had come at such an unexpected time and in such an unexpected way.



## Editor's Note:

*As we move through our daily lives, we can have chance encounters that allow us to share our loved ones, make a connection, and experience comfort that stays with us. We never know when that comfort may come just when we need it. We invite you to share your unexpected moments. Send us a note at [editor@taps.org](mailto:editor@taps.org).*

# PAIN INSPIRED PURPOSE: Finding Meaning After Suicide Loss

Kaylin Jennings-Knight | Surviving spouse of Andre Knight, U.S. Army Veteran

I became widowed at the age of 27. At the time, I was five months pregnant and raising three young children. My late husband, Andre, was a disabled army veteran who suffered from PTSD and TBI. He lost his battle to PTSD on June 6, 2017. Many remember this date as D-Day. For my family, we remember this day as the day our world changed forever.

Being a young, pregnant widow presented many challenges; my age, a new marital status I didn't want to accept, and a new reality that I was forced to live in. For my three children this new reality seemed like a terrible nightmare from which they could not wake up. I delivered my fourth child, a beautiful baby girl, whom my husband had nicknamed "Peanut" while I was pregnant. I thank God he picked her name out that

May, a month before he died. Our Kaylina (aka "Peanut") was born. Being a widow and mother was a twisty mix. I thought grief was hard but having a newborn up at 2am while I experienced insomnia actually worked out because we kept each other company—as odd as it sounds it was not that bad.

As the children and I adjusted to life without Andre, it was like wading through waves of the ocean, some calm and others so turbulent. I struggled to get air, I screamed, but realized I was already above water.

Reality became more abstract when I lost my dad on May 7, 2018 to complications from a liver transplant. My world stopped. I had to come to terms that I had lost two important pillars in my life: my husband and my dad.

## FROM HELP! TO HOPE

Help! This cannot be real, this cannot be my life. Surely, I must have lost my mind. I remember at the beginning of my grief journey, I would cry, cry and cry. I remember wearing black and keeping my hair in a bun for a whole year. I felt lost, I did not know where to go, what to do or where to begin...

Then I connected with TAPS. I did not know that would be a day that would forever change my life and have a lasting impact on my grief journey and ultimately help me to the road of healing.

The TAPS Peer Mentor program is amazing. Making the decision to connect with a peer mentor was the best choice I could have made. My peer mentor



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KAYLIN JENNINGS-KNIGHT

“THE TAPS PEER MENTOR PROGRAM IS AMAZING. MAKING THE DECISION TO CONNECT WITH A PEER MENTOR WAS THE BEST CHOICE I COULD HAVE MADE.”



Kaylin Jennings-Knight

was incredible, she was there for me. She supported and encouraged me. Her compassionate care inspired me to become a peer mentor myself.

In 2019, I went to the National Military Survivor Seminar in Arlington, VA and took the training to become a peer mentor. To provide support and comfort as a peer mentor to other women who have lost their husband by suicide has been therapeutic, rewarding, and empowering.

My peer mentor also inspired me to further my education and to pursue my educational goals of returning to school. After prayer and consideration, I began school in the summer semester of 2019 at Liberty University studying Psychology in Crisis Counseling. I was able to transfer my credits from my previous university which cut my time in half for my degree!

### **PAIN, PURPOSE, PASSION**

Though my pain has not been easy, grief is a journey, and it has birthed pain inspired purpose, and God has given me the strength to keep going. I was on the search for purpose, meaning, and how in the world can I help others who have gone through the same thing as me. I have a passion to help people and I desire to become a Crisis Counselor, working in crisis intervention, suicide prevention and providing support for those who are grieving.

I believe that grief teaches you to live, love, and honor. Live each day to fullest, love those around you by finding new meaning in love, and honor your loved ones by sharing their story and inspiring others to do the same. Their legacies live on only if we continue to share them.

In the fall of that same year, I took another leap of faith and I made the decision to attend the Suicide Seminar in Phoenix, Arizona. That's where I became empowered to share my story with others. I faced fear and divorced the blame, shame, and guilt I was feeling. I finally felt free. Worrying about the perception of what others thought and even how they feel surrounding my husband's death was beyond my control and not a main factor in my healing. The seminar gave me courage to use my voice, gain understanding and knowledge about suicide, and the strength to face trauma.

### **CONNECTION, COFFEE, AND COMMUNITY**

Three years now into my grief journey, I do not look like what I have gone through! If it were not for this organization, I don't know where my family and I would be. I do not think I would be where I am today.

I remember when I first heard Bonnie Carroll's story I thought, "wow she is brave and has so much courage." Those nights when I would call the TAPS helpline and speak to Bonnie and she would listen to

me, her love, compassion, and support left a lasting impression in my heart. When Audri shared coffee with me on the phone one day after returning home from my husband's funeral and having a meltdown in the kitchen because coffee was not made and it was my first day having coffee without him –that was an act of selfless love. I will never forget the compassion and empathy of Susan, my TAPS Care Team contact, who spoke to me and helped me with all of my needs.

The lifelong connections of all my TAPS family I will cherish forever. So meaningful too, are the cards I receive every year for Andre's birthday and anniversary. Grief is an individual journey. It is the community nobody wants to join, yet in that community everyone is like a pattern sewn together on a quilt, our common bond is love. I will forever be grateful for TAPS and all they have done for my family and all the other survivors.

I have learned to never apologize for my grief. We are all on our own grief journey marching to our own beat. We are grieverers in this world of non-grieverers. Focus on your grief journey, not what others think of you. Love, honor and remember in your community of trusted people: your TAPS tribe.

Thank you TAPS for honoring my husband and reminding me that "Love Lives On." For each and every person at TAPS I am grateful for all you do!



# NEVER FORGOTTEN:

In a year of unprecedented challenges and difficulties, teams4taps and the NFL's Salute to Service program continued to shine a light on the power of sports to unite people and create hope.

Jessica Harper | Sports & Entertainment, TAPS

**2020** was a year like no other. So perhaps it's not surprising that our 2020 NFL Salute to Service events were also like no other. From telepresence robots, zoom parties, and "homegating," the experiences were as unconventional as they were meaningful. Thirteen NFL teams, our largest amount to date worked alongside teams4taps to celebrate the lives of our Fallen Heroes while raising awareness—and funds—for TAPS.

We extend our deep appreciation to the NFL and all our NFL 2020 Salute to Service teams: Atlanta Falcons, Baltimore Ravens, Chicago Bears, Detroit Lions, Houston Texans, Indianapolis Colts, Jacksonville Jaguars, Las Vegas Raiders, Los Angeles Chargers, Los Angeles Rams, New England Patriots, Philadelphia Eagles, and San Francisco 49ers.



TAPS SURVIVORS, WITH BONNIE CARROLL, JOIN WITH FALCONS' PLAYERS AND LEADERSHIP FOR KICK-OFF SALUTE TO SERVICE VIRTUAL EVENT. PHOTO: TAPS ARCHIVES

## OLD FRIENDS

**Atlanta Falcons:** Since 2016, the Atlanta Falcons have partnered with TAPS to honor our families and their Fallen Heroes. In 2020, they invited the 280 TAPS Families who were hosted over the past four years to take part in their 2020 Salute to Service. The Falcons created a "Never Forgotten" graphic containing the names of the Fallen, mailed each family a personalized "homegating" kit and organized several virtual activities—including player visits, Q&As with the Falcons and TAPS leadership, and a special TAPS page on their website. Survivors were

“ Salute to Service Weekend with TAPS and the Atlanta Falcons did not disappoint. From zoom calls, virtual walk through of the stadium this morning, to being a virtual fan on the Jumbotron It was another amazing experience in the books! And the best part, my boys got to be with me this time!! So beyond blessed to have been able to honor [Sgt] Philip John Pekarske [USMC] again. Love and miss you but I know you're watching over us.”

**Melanie Kuhn,**  
Surviving spouse and TAPS Peer Mentor



MIKE CLARK, SURVIVING FATHER  
PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE CLARK



THE ATLANTA FALCONS "NEVER FORGOTTEN" BANNER INSCRIBED WITH THE NAMES OF THE 280 FALLEN HEROES HONORED AT THEIR 2020 SALUTE TO SERVICE GAME AT MERCEDES BENZ STADIUM. PHOTO CREDIT: ATLANTA FALCONS STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

designated as virtual cheerleaders and virtual fans, appearing on the Halo Board to cheer the team on during the game. In a video released before the game, Falcons CEO and TAPS Board Member, Steve Cannon, read aloud the name of all 280 Fallen Heroes.

**Detroit Lions:** Long time Salute to Service partners, the Detroit Lions, have the distinction of being the first NFL team to fund scholarship opportunities for TAPS children as part of their Inspiring Change program. For their 2020 Salute to Service, the Lions honored the Fallen Heroes of the 19 TAPS scholarship recipients (2019 -2020). Coaches, players, and families met via zoom after practice and the families received a replica helmet with their Fallen Heroes decal. In addition, the Lions donated the proceeds of their "Fan Cutouts" for the Salute to Service game to TAPS!



"FAN CUTOUTS" AT LIONS SALUTE TO SERVICE GAME

2019: LIONS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT, KEVIN ARNOLD, WITH LIONS QB MATTHEW STAFFORD  
PHOTOS: DETROIT LIONS STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



**San Francisco 49ers:** This year, the 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo and TAPS partnered together to create a special



ARMY CPT SHAWN WALKER WITH HIS DAUGHTER KLOE  
PHOTOS: KIMBERLI WALKER



TAPS SURVIVORS, KLOE AND KIMBERLI WALKER, WITH THEIR NEW GEAR



49ERS QB JIMMY GAROPPOLO VIDEO MESSAGE TO THE WALKERS PHOTO: SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

surprise for a surviving TAPS child in honor of her father. CPT Shawn Walker was an avid 49ers fan and when he died, his daughter Kloe continued to cheer for their favorite team. As part of the 49ers Salute to Service events, Jimmy put together a customized care package and surprised the Walker family with a personal video. The 49ers also honored five TAPS Fallen Heroes (one from each service branch) as "Fan Cutouts," located behind the team bench at their November Salute to Service game.

**NEW BEGINNINGS:**

**Indianapolis Colts:** teams4taps was honored to work with the Colts for the first time to honor 10 TAPS Fallen Heroes as part of their Salute to Service Program. The Colts hosted TAPS Families for a virtual event and sent them all an amazing "homegating" package filled with Colts/TAPS Salute to Service gear! They also honored all 10 Fallen Heroes at Lucas Oil Stadium before the game. Families received signed replica Colts helmets with their Fallen Heroes initials.



THE COLTS HOSTED TAPS FAMILIES FOR A VIRTUAL EVENT AND SENT THEM ALL "HOMEGATING" GIFT PACKAGES  
PHOTOS: TAPS ARCHIVES

**Philadelphia Eagles:** In their first team Salute to Service event with TAPS, the Eagles came up with a novel idea—using robots for the TAPS Families to "attend" practice. The robots allowed the families to be on the sidelines and for the Eagles players to make virtual visits. The Eagles wore Fallen Heroes decals on their helmets during the game; the Defense wore RT for SFC Towns and the Offense wore JJ for CPT Jones.

SURVIVING SPOUSE, AMY JONES, WITH EAGLES QB CARSON WENTZ VIA ZOOM  
PHOTO: AMY JONES



INITIALS OF CPT JASON JONES ARE WORN ON THE HELMETS OF THE EAGLES' OFFENSE



TAPS SURVIVORS "ATTENDING" EAGLES PRACTICE VIA ROBOTS

PHOTOS: EAGLES STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

27TH ANNUAL NATIONAL  
**MILITARY SURVIVOR  
SEMINAR**  
*and*  
**GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

MAY 28-31, 2021  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

*You are  
invited to  
Join Your*  
**T★A★P★S**  
*Family*

**E**ach Memorial Day, our country pauses to remember those who have served and died. As our country reflects on the costs of freedom, we come together — as a family of military survivors — to tell the stories of our heroes. We remember the love they brought to our lives. We celebrate their lives and their service. We share the journey — drawing strength from one another to carry forward; living with purpose, with pride, and with hope.

This event is open to all military survivor adults and youth. If you are unable and/or have concerns to attend in-person, we encourage you to attend our live workshops virtually. Please double check that you select the correct button (in-person, or virtual) when you submit your registration.

COVID-19 Information — For those attending in-person, we will adhere to CDC and WHO standard event safety protocols. These include but are not limited to, face masks to be worn at all times and social distancing guidelines. We look forward to being together again and encourage anyone who is unable to adhere to the in-person safety protocols please register for our virtual seminar sessions. The sessions will be live and we look forward to making them interactive with our speakers!

PHOTOS: TAPS ARCHIVES



**LEARN MORE AND REGISTER TODAY:**





### FOR ADULTS

If you are grieving the death of a military loved one, whether a family member, friend, or fellow service member, you are encouraged to attend this time of hope and healing. No matter where you are in your grief journey, support and connection await!

During the days we're together, you'll have the opportunity to participate in activities, workshops led by experts in grief and loss, and small-group sharing sessions.

### FOR YOUNG ADULTS

The TAPS Young Adult Program is for 18–25 year old surviving children and siblings and helps our graduating Good Grief Camp children transition into a program all their own.

Transitioning into adulthood offers many challenges. This program takes that into consideration when addressing the five pillars of growth: Personal Development, Financial Stability, Communications, Career Development, and Service to Others. In exploring practical life skills, this program strives to help each individual create a well-rounded life full of hope, healing, and growth.

### FOR YOUTH

The TAPS Good Grief Camp provides a safe space for military children to explore grief and embrace healing. Led by experts in the fields of child development, mental health, and education – programming mirrors the adult curriculum and provides families with a common language crucial to strengthening family bonds. Children and teens will honor their loved ones, connect with their peers, and learn coping skills through games, crafts, and other age-appropriate activities in a fun and supportive environment.

Childcare will be offered for children under five-years of age by trained professional, licensed and insured caregivers.

### BECOME A TAPS PEER MENTOR

During the seminar, TAPS will be conducting two Peer Mentor training sessions for adult military survivors who are at least 18 months beyond their own loss and are ready to offer support to others. Completing this training provides you with added support for your own journey while partnering closer with us to provide care for survivors who share your loss. As a Peer Mentor, you will have a wide variety of opportunities to choose from to support your peers through activities such as seminars, retreats, TAPS Together, hosting a Care Group, supporting the Online Community, and providing one-to-one mentoring.

If you're interested in attending the Peer Mentor training for adult military survivors, you can register for the in-person training as part of the seminar registration. After you've registered, you'll be contacted by the TAPS Peer Mentor Program staff.



# JOIN YOUR TAPS FAMILY

» FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [TAPS.ORG/EVENTS](https://taps.org/events)

No matter where you are in your grief journey, support and connection await you at a TAPS Seminar. Both regional seminars and national seminars are inclusive, discussion-based events that include workshops for understanding and processing grief and small-group sharing sessions where you can connect with peers. TAPS Seminars are held in conjunction with TAPS Good Grief Camps for young survivors.

Over family-style meals, during workshops, and while participating in special events, you'll get to know other surviving family members in a relaxed, welcoming setting. TAPS Seminars give you space to feel the encouragement and hope that you can heal and pride in sharing your loved one with others.

You'll leave a TAPS Seminar with information and inspiration, knowing you have been among people who understand. Our seminars offer both in-person and virtual participation options.

Find a TAPS Seminar near you. If you're looking for other ways to connect with peers, TAPS offers a variety of programs for survivors.



## TAPS SEMINARS & GOOD GRIEF CAMPS

JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31

### COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

APRIL 16 - 18

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL  
SEMINAR & GOOD GRIEF CAMP

### ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

MAY 28 - 31

NATIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR  
SEMINAR & GOOD GRIEF CAMP

### LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

JULY 23 - 25

WESTERN REGIONAL  
SEMINAR & GOOD GRIEF CAMP

### JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

AUGUST 13 - 15

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL  
SEMINAR & GOOD GRIEF CAMP

### COLUMBUS, OHIO

OCTOBER 1 - 3

MIDWEST REGIONAL  
SEMINAR & GOOD GRIEF CAMP

### DALLAS, TEXAS

OCTOBER 8 - 10

NATIONAL MILITARY SUICIDE  
SURVIVOR SEMINAR & GOOD GRIEF CAMP

# ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT WITH YOUR TAPS FAMILY



## IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Care and support are with you where you live. Opportunities to find support, both virtually and in-person are offered through TAPS Care Groups and Our TAPS Togethers programming.

Learn more at [taps.org/caregroups](https://taps.org/caregroups) and [taps.org/tapstogethers](https://taps.org/tapstogethers)



## ONLINE

Our virtual gathering place – the TAPS Online Community offers weekly video and text chats where you can find connection, from wherever you are in the world and wherever you are on the grief journey.

Learn more at [taps.org/onlinecommunity](https://taps.org/onlinecommunity)



## TAPS INSTITUTE FOR HOPE AND HEALING®

World-class grief and trauma education resources are available for you. Gain insight, information, and coping tools from leading experts in the field of grief and loss.

Learn more at [taps.org/institute](https://taps.org/institute).



## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Our vibrant, compassionate community of surviving women is a place of support and inspiration, where we treasure opportunities to be each other's teachers, confidantes, cheerleaders, and friends.

Learn more at [taps.org/empowerment](https://taps.org/empowerment)



# Incredible Benefits of Gardening

Excerpt from article originally published SEP 14, 2020 | [happydiyhome.com](http://happydiyhome.com) by HappyDIYHome Staff

**G**ardening is much more than a hobby or fun pastime. In fact, there are many proven benefits of gardening that people enjoy. No matter if you're a hobby gardener or a professional-level horticulturist, spending time out digging in the dirt and caring for your plants, you too can enjoy these various benefits of gardening.

If you're considering getting into gardening, either a huge outdoor garden or a small herb garden in your home, understanding the benefits is a great way to feel good about what you're doing and enjoy it even more. Read on and discover the various large and small benefits of gardening that you can enjoy every time you settle down to tend to your plants.

## 1. Gardening Boosts Mood

Did you know that gardening can boost your mood while increasing your self-esteem levels? When you make time to go out and work in your garden, your anxiety levels can go down and you could start to feel less depressed.

## 2. Gardening Can Boost Your Immune System

You're a lot more similar to your plants than you realize, and your body is just as capable of photosynthesis as they are. This is where your plants use sunlight to make their food. Your skin works in the same way by absorbing vitamin D for this benefit of gardening. Vitamin D helps strengthen your bones, boost your immune system, and it can also help lower your risk of developing multiple sclerosis, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, prostate cancer, bladder cancer, breast cancer, and colorectal cancer.

## 3. Gardening Helps Form Connections

Community, family, or school-oriented container gardens are coming up everywhere around the United States. Some of the main factors that drive these types of garden's popularity have more to do with simple human connections and interaction than the food you get from it. The connections are one of the main benefits of gardening.

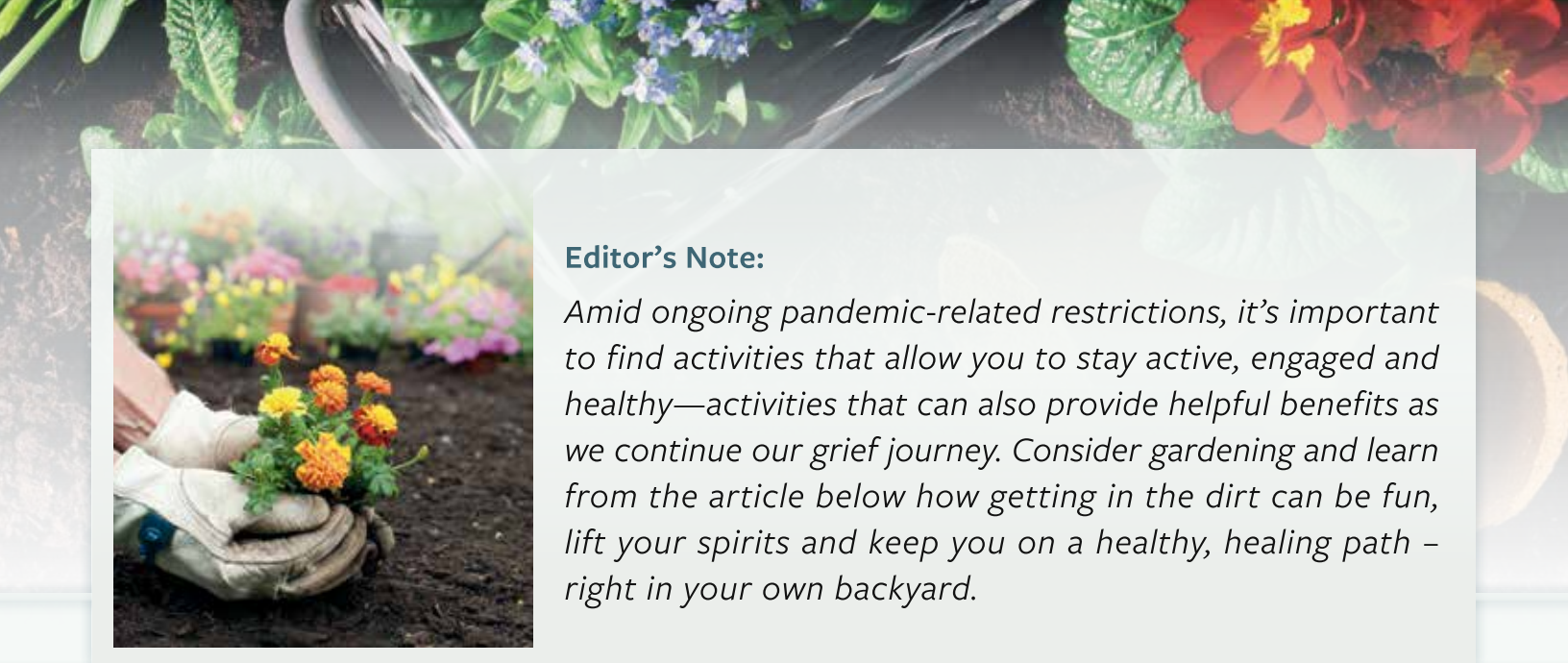
## 4. Gardening Builds Your Strength

Gardening is exercise because you do small tasks like cutting grass or raking that fall under the category of light or moderate exercise. However, you also dig, shovel, and chop wood to get this level up to moderate exercise. All of these tasks ensure you work your muscles, and this can help build up your strength. You'll eventually use every major muscle group you have when you work in your garden, and this is one of the major benefits of gardening for older people.

## 5. Gardening Improves Hand Dexterity and Strength

Gardening requires you to make precise movements, and this benefit of gardening helps build your hand strength and dexterity. This is especially important as you age, and doctors even recommended rehab programs for stroke patients involving gardening tasks as a productive and satisfying way to build their hand strength and improve how well their hands work.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ONSTIK & ALEXRATHS



**Editor’s Note:**

*Amid ongoing pandemic-related restrictions, it’s important to find activities that allow you to stay active, engaged and healthy—activities that can also provide helpful benefits as we continue our grief journey. Consider gardening and learn from the article below how getting in the dirt can be fun, lift your spirits and keep you on a healthy, healing path – right in your own backyard.*

**6. Gardening Can Help You Eat Better**

The cost of fresh produce can skyrocket in the off-months, and this causes a lot of people to turn to canned vegetables. One benefit of gardening is that you can harvest a huge amount of vegetables, and you don’t have to be a professional to do it. There are dozens of easy vegetables to grow, and you can preserve them to eat later in the year. You may even discover new vegetables that you’ve never tried before, and you’re getting food that doesn’t have pesticide or herbicide treatments on it. You can have fresh, organic vegetables and even fruits if you live in the right climate to grow them.

**7. Gardening Can Improve Your Self-Esteem**

With your busy life, it’s easy for your self-esteem to drop. This is especially true if you’ve never gardened before and you’re not sure if you’re going to be good at it or not. You plant your seeds, water, weed, and fertilize your garden, and watch it grow. As more plants start to grow, your self-esteem will also improve. It feels

great to accomplish new tasks, and gardens give you endless opportunities to learn new skills.

**8. Gardening Helps You Sleep Better**

Spending a few hours outside has the pleasant side effect of wearing you out. It also helps you clear your head of all of the anxious or stressful thoughts that are plaguing you, and this can help you fall asleep faster. The moderate workout you get weeding and tending to your garden are other benefits of gardening because it can help you feel more tired. In turn, you should be able to fall asleep quicker, sleep deeper, and wake up feeling refreshed and ready to take on the day. If you garden every day, you could start sleeping much better each night.

**9. Gardening Encourages Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a state of focusing on the present moment, and you see it a lot with meditation. However, you can achieve the same state by gardening. One of the benefits

of gardening is to be able to dedicate your entire attention to the task at hand. This could be making sure you get all of the weeds out, planting everything in the exact right place, or monitoring your vegetables so you pick them at the best time possible. It’s possible to get lost in what you’re doing and spend hours out in your garden making sure everything is healthy.

**10. Gardening Gives You a Sense of Purpose**

One final benefit of gardening is that it can give you a sense of purpose. It’s a way to care for something and nurture it from a tiny seed up to a large plant. Sometimes, this is enough to give you a sense of purpose and pride when the plants take root and start to grow. It doesn’t matter if you’re taking on a larger project like growing raspberries or something smaller like keeping a houseplant healthy, the feelings are the same. You can grow plants all year-round to keep this sense of purpose going.

*Full article (25 benefits of gardening) available at: <https://happydiyhome.com/benefits-of-gardening>*



# Returning to Work

## Routine Can Help the Healing Process

Rachel Kodanaz



**R**eturning to work may be daunting to someone who has just suffered the death of a family member or close loved one. Mustering the courage to re-engage in normal daily activities feels so distant, yet it has been proven that returning to work, school or worship plays a significant role in well-being.

**When returning to work after my husband, Rod, suddenly passed away, I worried:**

- How would I interact with my co-workers?
- How would I control my emotions?
- Would I be able to concentrate?
- Would I be able to perform as I once did?
- Would I be able to care for my daughter and myself?

As the sole provider for my 2-year-old, I really didn't have a choice. After my extended bereavement leave, I dreaded the thought of returning to a place where I once found immense satisfaction. Unbeknownst to me, returning to work was one of the most influential and powerful aspects of finding my way through the tornado in my personal life. I experienced several avoidable hiccups with my colleagues, manager and clients, but returning to work was the greatest gift I gave myself.

Following Rod's death, my world had become so confusing and chaotic. The workplace provided me a daily routine, allowing me to expend energy on something other than my messy life. I felt a sense of accomplishment checking off tasks each day, knowing there was some normalcy in

my routine. The return was overwhelming at first; however, the days that followed created a cadence once I relaxed and believed in me. My management position was exhausting, so I found the long-lost sleep I desperately needed, allowing my physical self to help my emotional self through a very difficult time.

### **DIFFERENT PEOPLE, DIFFERENT NEEDS**

As grievers, returning to work satisfies different needs for each of us. Many return to a job they held prior to the death, while others find themselves rejoining the workforce for financial reasons or to manage a family business. Still others enter the workforce as a tool to assist in their grief journey, by embarking on a new endeavor to

challenge them emotionally and physically. Whatever the reason, returning to work can be a positive experience if approached with care, knowledge and managed expectations for yourself and your employer.

After someone has experienced a life-changing loss, we often forget that the griever is not the only one having a first-time experience. It's a new encounter for co-workers and management as well. Our expectations of each other far exceed our knowledge or coping skills, requiring everyone involved to communicate essential needs and to revisit those necessities as time goes by.

When returning to a job that was held prior to the loss, the anticipation of the return is often more daunting than the reality experienced on the first day. To ease the transition, I recommend the manager spend time with the employee prior to the actual return. This can be a short meeting to help set expectations for all parties, building a plan for the return that may include a lighter workload, shorter days, or reduced interaction with clients. Co-workers can similarly be proactive and reach out to their grieving team member by acknowledging the loss with a card, an email, donation to a cause honoring the loved one, attending the service, or sending food. This allows the griever to return having already re-connected with their co-workers.

### **TELL COLLEAGUES WHAT YOU NEED**

The relationships we develop in the workplace vary based on personalities, length of employment and interaction with each other. Different co-workers will play different roles in supporting the returning team member. As the griever, finding the courage to communicate your needs is challenging. One suggestion is to embrace those co-workers you feel most comfortable with, creating a circle of support to assist with the transition. I suggest asking for what you need rather than risk disappointment. I learned first-hand that an employer needs to maintain business as usual and they cannot predict your needs as they may have never walked in similar shoes. They can listen to your requests and help you be as successful as

possible in your return. It is also helpful to maintain open lines of communication and managing your own expectations.

If you are returning to work out of financial necessity, the need for healthcare benefits or to manage a family business as the sole survivor, the newfound obligation to work may send a shockwave through your already impaired body and soul. The fear of not being qualified for a particular job, the reckoning of juggling family needs and the instability of your own emotions can wreak havoc. All those feelings are real and need to be addressed one by one, breaking them down into reasonable pieces while asking for help from friends and family. Embrace the offers of food, carpooling, cleaning, errands and other generousities. Accepting support is a form of empowerment, not weakness. Your life as you once knew it is transitioning, so try not to fight the transition. Be patient, reward yourself for accomplishments and know the days in the future will get better.

Many grievers return to the workplace for interaction and to achieve the feeling of accomplishment. My advice is to proceed slowly as the workplace is a tool, not a solution, to help you through your grief. Often, surviving family members embrace an organization in line with the cause of their loved one's death, including a particular illness, suicide or the prevention of future accidents or illnesses. They bring with them a sense of urgency and knowledge that an organization may value or a skillset they may need. Other grievers may search for opportunities that satisfy

their creative aspirations or their craving to learn something new. If you have the luxury of time, be patient as you search for the right fit that allows you to grieve and work at the same time.

Regardless of the reason for returning to work after a significant loss, be sure to take the time to establish your boundaries. As you travel through your grief journey, rebuilding your strength and re-aligning your priorities, continue to revisit your needs but most importantly communicate them to your employer and co-workers. The greatest rewards I experienced following my return to work was establishing a balance of self and family and the feeling of empowerment that I would find my way through the tornado of my loss.

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*Rachel Kodanaz is a frequent contributor to TAPS programs and has been addressing national audiences for over 20 years on the change, growth, and acceptance that comes with embracing life challenges. Her experience in management at Fortune 100 companies and the death of her young husband provides insight into challenges and solutions supporting grief in the workplace. Rachel is the author of "Grief in the Workplace: A Comprehensive Guide for Being Prepared", and other books on grief and loss. RachelKodanaz.com.*

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# IN THE MIDST OF GRIEF

## WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM OUR CHILDREN

Amanda Gallagher | Surviving spouse of Capt. James C. Gallagher, U.S. Army

I am a mother to three incredible daughters, who have always given me more than I could ever give them. They are bright, kind, and funny. Since the day each of them was born, I've learned more about love than I can put into words. All their father or I ever wanted for them was the absolute best. Above all, we wanted what all parents want for their kids—that they feel safe.

When their father, my husband, died suddenly as a result of suicide in May 2018, safe no longer felt possible. But to my surprise it was my children who would show me I was wrong.

I was devastated on the night my husband died. Traumatized from having found him. Lost. Despondent. Just sitting upright was hard. I still feel nauseated when I think back to those first few hours. The most overwhelming feeling was a deep-seated fear. I was afraid for myself and very afraid for my children.



Capt. James C. Gallagher, U.S. Army

### MY DETERMINATION

The world now was scary and unpredictable. My high school sweetheart, the man I'd fallen in love with when I was 16, the man I adored and trusted more than anyone else in the world, had died violently and unexpectedly in our home while our daughters slept. The worst possible thing had happened, the thing I'd spent my entire marriage as a military spouse dreading: My husband was dead, and I was alone and defenseless. The worst part was waking my children to tell them their beloved father was gone. He was their hero, their whole world. I was terrified of what this was going to do to them.

In the weeks that followed, my fear gave way to a determination to protect them. First, I resorted to my most basic parenting instinct—being honest. Telling them the truth was hard, but it was the only way forward. My sweet daughters, who were only five, eight, and nine at the time, sought to comfort me. As a parent I felt guilt but also pride.

It shouldn't be the children's role to comfort their mother, so I pushed back a little and my fear took over again. I accompanied them to therapy. I signed them up for endless activities. Lego camp. Dance camp. Outdoor camp. I was desperate for normalcy. I wanted to manipulate our grief, do everything all at once to fix it. I wasn't reflective or mindful. I was afraid.

In retrospect it was all a little much. I didn't need to schedule every moment or watch my children for risk factors every minute of every day. My hypervigilance was counterproductive, but I was desperate.

A few months after our loss I took the kids to the TAPS National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar (NMSSS) in Florida. That is what helped most. My children were able to process their grief for the first time with other kids like them. They gained knowledge, language, and, most of all, confidence. They were better able to tell me what they wanted and needed. (It was not another summer camp.)

### MY FRONT ROW SEAT

Early on, what my children craved most was connection, which is why TAPS has been so powerful for them. I craved connection, too. TAPS helped me recognize that my overscheduling had left my daughters feeling overwhelmed and disconnected from me. It was hard to hear, but it made sense. There were plenty of days I didn't want to talk endlessly about my feelings, days I certainly wouldn't have been interested in activities like dancing. I was grateful for their candor, and for once I felt hope. Hope that we would be okay. My children were grieving, sure, but they were healing too. They were finding a way forward for themselves and our family.

After that first seminar, I got a lot better at listening. My girls did an amazing job opening up. They've accomplished a lot since then, and I'm privileged to have a front row seat. One of my proudest moments was when my older two girls—now 10 and 11—participated in a panel at the 2020 TAPS virtual NMSSS called "Ask the Experts." They fielded very difficult questions from adults and children alike on what helped them find a path forward after loss. They expressed with clarity beyond their years that after a loss of this magnitude it's not just the adults who are different people. The kids are, too.



## MY REVELATION

And it's okay to be different after something like this! It's okay to ask for space. It's okay to get angry. It's okay to be happy again, too. I watched my girls, who just a little over two years ago had been devastated on the floor of a hotel room when they learned of their father's death, rise to the occasion in a way that would have seemed impossible then. The most important thing my daughters shared on the panel that day was that they are different now but not broken. They didn't need to be fixed. It was a breath of fresh air for me, truly a revelation.

My children have shown me what it means to be a living legacy. They are resilient, like so many of their peers at TAPS. My daughters have shown me they are up to the challenge of profound loss and complicated grief. When given the space and permission to be honest, they do it and do it well. It's been hard for me as a mom to watch them grow and know that I can't always protect them from the world.

## MY NEW HOPE

Still, watching them these past two years has given me hope. My children will be okay and therefore so will I. What we've been through is hard. It isn't fair or deserved. But we can do more than just survive this loss; we can thrive and learn and grow as a result of our experiences, as they have, and we thankfully don't have to do either alone. I hope I never forget to listen to and trust my kids and push them to do better not out of fear—but out of love. I wish for them the opportunity to continue to support others and show them there is hope after suicide loss.



Amanda and her daughters (Lacey, Mollie, and Aimee) after participating in a virtual panel during the TAPS National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar -October 2020



Lacey, Mollie and Aimee at Thanksgiving, 2020

The Gallagher family attended North Carolina Courage soccer game in 2019

# HI FAMILY

## KIDS' AND FAMILY ACTIVITIES

As we move into spring, we invite you to join with others in creating some awesome items where you can explore your grief, share with your family, and honor your loved one!

Our Youth Programs have been busy over the winter, participating in projects and sharing time together gaining strength and hope. We've connected virtually, keeping our spirits high and sharing adventures and laughs with our military mentors and our TAPS friends!

We are continuing a wonderful line up of virtual care groups, our teen coffee hours and family nights. Learn, create, and grow with TAPS Youth Programs!

### GRATITUDE JAR OR BOX

**MATERIALS:** Mason jar or box, modge podge or glue, tissue paper, stickers, markers, ribbons, scissors, strips of paper, writing utensil.

**WHY:** Provides your family an opportunity to share what you are grateful for and why.

**HOW TO USE:** Decorate your jar or box as you wish. You can do one together, as a family or each have their own. This jar can be anything you want it to be to represent what you are grateful for. Each day, write on the strips of paper one by one, something you are grateful for and add it to the jar or box. While at family dinner or during family time, come together and take the strips of paper out and read them to each other. The person who submitted this gratitude shares with the family why they are grateful for the item on the paper. You can even make this a game if you're sharing one jar or box and have the family try to guess who submitted the gratitude!

### CREATE A FAMILY HEALING FLOWERPOT

**MATERIALS:** Purchase small terra-cotta pots. Use one large pot for a family project or several small pots for each individual family member.

**WHY:** This activity shows you that things can be broken, but we can be put back together. Very much like ourselves.

**HOW TO USE:** Carefully break (do not shatter) the pot(s). Using paint pens and markers, have each family member write on the inside of the broken pieces about what they are feeling within their grief. On the outside of the pieces write or draw sources of support, what makes the broken parts feel better. Work together to glue and piece the pot back together. \*optional - plant a flower, small tree, or another plant within the pot and watch what can grow from this family healing pot. (Adapted from *Ryan's Heart - All rights reserved 2009. He calls it "Heart-Break" Pot- Ryan's Heart—a non-profit organization for grieving families Presque Isle, ME ryansheartnpo.org*)

### "IN MEMORY OF" RECIPE PLATE- OR LOVED ONE'S FAV RECIPE PLACE

**MATERIALS:** Plain white plate that you can write on (ceramic works too), sharpies.

**WHY:** To commemorate a favorite recipe on a plate you can use or display.

**HOW TO USE:** Write ingredients and instructions on the plate using the sharpies. You can also draw picture, decorations, etc. Bake the plate itself at 350 degrees for 30 minutes to set the ink. Let it cool in the oven.

**SHARE:** Your projects with us at [youthprograms@taps.org](mailto:youthprograms@taps.org)

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

Parenting after a loss can be difficult. You might feel exhausted because of all the tasks of work, home, and caring for your children. Sometimes, just taking care of daily responsibilities might be all the energy that you can muster. Your TAPS family stands in solidarity with you as you navigate the challenges grief has brought to your home. Though you may feel like no one understands, there are many individuals and families who have gone before you and many walking with you now in their grief. Here are a couple of tips from others who have walked a similar road as you.

★ **PRIORITIZE YOUR HEALTH** – Taking time to care for yourself may seem unattainable right now with all you have to do in any given day. Start small and avoid overwhelming yourself. Whether you are an early riser or late-night person, plan activities that recharge you before your children are awake or after they go to bed at night. Take friends up on their offer to help you during the day. Even if it is watching your children once a week, every other week, or once a month, plan time to do something just for you. Some parents have expressed that they feel selfish taking time for themselves. Research is clear that children fare better when their parent is healthy.

★ **SPEND TIME WITH YOUR CHILDREN ON THEIR TERMS** – Research bears out that children who have a positive relationship with the adults in their lives are more likely to be healthy. Children crave the attention of their parent even if they may not express it. Make a priority of planning time where your children can have your undivided attention. Even if it is for small amounts of time throughout the week. During these interactions, join them in whatever they might be doing or would like to do. Letting them lead you in play can open communication and build strong bonds that bolster their self-confidence.

## TEEN GRIEF

Parenting a teen may find you overwhelmed most days. However, your teen is also feeling the stress of their grief in emotions and feelings such as anger, fear, sadness, exhaustion, loneliness, sleep deprivation, and crying. Does this sound familiar? The uncertainty of COVID and the loss of their new normal makes this a very unprecedented time in all our lives.

The virtual Teen Groups we offer are helping teens to ask for help, talk to their parent, and be engaged with family and friends. We invite you to be a part of this path. Some things your teen wants to know are:

**SAY YES** – If your teen asks you to do something with them, say yes. Your involvement in their life is important.

**TALK TO YOUR TEEN** – Having conversations builds upon your relationship. Your voice in their life matters. Ask them about their day. Acknowledge where they are in their life and grief. Listen and validate their reactions.

**SHOW THEM YOUR LOVE** – Hug them. Let them know you are glad they are in your life. Find gratitude and notice the good things in their lives.

**SPEND TIME TOGETHER** – Do something outside together, as weather permits. Watch a movie or play a game. Your presence in their life makes a difference.

**ASK THEM WHAT THEY NEED** – Being a teen and parenting a teen can be challenging. Asking what they need from you reflects your care and love for them, even if the answer is, “I’m not sure.” The fact that you asked shows you care.





PHOTO LEFT: NATE SISCO AND HIS FAMILY NIGHT ARTWORK



PHOTO RIGHT: MONICA, DOMINIC, BELLA JAIKARAN SHARE THEIR "ARTFUL" CREATIONS FROM THE WINTER SHADOW ART PROJECT FROM FAMILY NIGHT.

## JOIN US MONTHLY FOR OUR PARENTING CARE GROUP

MEETS VIRTUALLY

THIRD TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH

7:00 PM EASTERN

# LET'S CONNECT!

## JOIN ONE OF OUR UPCOMING CARE AND SUPPORT GROUPS

This virtual monthly gathering offers safe, fun, and supportive activities for bereaved children ages 5 to 12.

### NEW TO LOSS TEEN GROUP

Teens, ages 13 to 18, who are less than two years from their loss can join this virtual interactive gathering each month.

### TEEN COFFEE HOUSE

All bereaved teens ages 13 to 18 are welcome to join this interactive, fun, virtual gathering led by some of their favorite Military Mentors and Group Leaders.

VISIT [TAPS.ORG/YOUTHPROGRAMS](https://taps.org/youthprograms) FOR INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES, RESOURCES, AND MORE

# TAPS EDUCATION CARE PACKAGE

TAPS Education Support Services is excited to open the application sign up to receive an Education Care Package for incoming and current college freshmen. These care packages are for surviving children and siblings headed off to college or enrolled as current college freshman.

Every care package includes a variety of items for young adults, including a TAPS Education Resource Report — a personalized document with information on the federal, state, and private education benefits and scholarships the survivor may be eligible for, information about on-campus support available at the survivor's university or college, information on the school certifying official, and other programs for which he or she may qualify for. Also included in the care package are a variety of fun and useful items to help the student get started at college while honoring his or her loved one.



**COMPLETE THE REQUEST FORM AT  
[TAPS.ORG/EDUCATIONCAREPACKAGE](https://TAPS.ORG/EDUCATIONCAREPACKAGE)**

*Note: If a student is entering college as a freshman in the fall semester of the current year and attending the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar as a Good Grief Camp attendee, those care packages will be disbursed at our seminar rather than mailed.*

**QUESTIONS ABOUT ELIGIBILITY?**

**E-mail [education@taps.org](mailto:education@taps.org) or call 202-588-TAPS (8277).**



# Lessons Learned on A Breath of Fresh Air with TAPS Outdoors

**F**or both the nature novice and the avid adventurer, the urban greenspace and the wild backcountry, A Breath of Fresh Air is a themed series of tips, tools and tricks to help you navigate the wilds of our natural world and the wilds of your grief. Videos and downloadable content can be accessed anytime, anywhere from [taps.org/outdoors](https://taps.org/outdoors).

## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED ON OUR JOURNEY SO FAR:

1

### Getting and Staying Grounded

**THE LESSON: GETTING GROUNDED = GETTING PRESENT**

- Find stillness and become fully present in the moment. Being in tune to what's happening around us, we can better connect with what's happening within us.
- Being grounded is an active process and a choice we make. It can be as simple as looking at a photo of nature in your office and taking deep breaths for sixty seconds or as complex as a mindful two hour hike through a local park.

#### YOU TRY IT:

- Take a few deep breaths and begin to notice the chirps of birds, the crispness of the air, the smell of freshly brewed coffee. Allow yourself to simply be.

2

### Changing Landscapes

**THE LESSON: CHANGE IS INEVITABLE, BUT NAVIGABLE.**

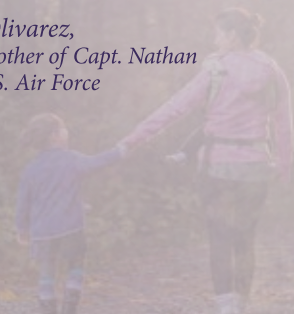
- We can hold both the gravity of loss and the bounty of gratitude, learning that they each have lessons to bestow. Like the leaves and daylight dwindling in late fall, blooms and bright days return with spring. The constant movement in our natural world reminds us that when we acknowledge change, and move with it through gratitude, change can be just the catalyst we need.

#### YOU TRY IT:

- Take five minutes. Grab your journal or notebook and take a short stroll or sit down outdoors. Notice three things that have changed or are changing around you. How do you see these kinds of changes within you? Write about it for a few moments and share it with a friend or with TAPS.

*Some of my most cherished memories with my son, Nathan, were spent outdoors adventuring. A Breath of Fresh Air has encouraged me to explore the world around me, finding beauty in every season, especially the episode on "gratitude." Being separated from family during the holidays due to the pandemic was difficult, so I focused on how grateful I am to live in a temperate climate that allows me to walk outside every day and see beautiful flowers blooming in winter!*

~ Marlynn Olivarez,  
Surviving mother of Capt. Nathan  
Olivarez, U.S. Air Force



### 3

#### SEASONS OF GRIEF

**THE LESSON: THE SEASONS OF NATURE AND GRIEF COME AND GO. WITH EACH ONE WE MOURN, WE LEARN, WE GROW, WE LOVE.**

- Each season of grief presents its own challenges and learnings. We explored a few seasons of grief like darkness, rituals, peace and giving.

**YOU TRY IT:**

- Take a moment and acknowledge the season we are in right now: spring. What does spring look like where you are? Are buds starting to burst out of your once barren plants? Or are they already blooming? How have you experienced a season of blooming in your grief journey? Take a few moments to write about it.

*This program has given me strength, and a new found sense of peace, purpose, and joy. "Seasons of Grief" particularly the Season of Peace, resonated with me the most. I found myself feeling irrelevant and without purpose, as December marked two years since I lost my husband, Mike, and it was all compounded by the short days and snowy weather.*

*Then, unexpectedly, I adopted a three-month-old puppy, Ruby, from a rescue. My pup and A Breath of Fresh Air were just the motivation I needed to get outside, and I have discovered miles of trails I didn't know existed outside my front door!*

~ June Heston,  
Surviving spouse of Sgt. 1st Class Liam Nevins, U.S. Army National Guard

### 4

#### Breathing in the New Year

**THE LESSON: MOVE FORWARD WITH AN OPEN HEART, CARRYING YOUR PACK OF EXPERIENCE AND SUPPORT.**

- Moving forward in healthy ways requires reflection on where we've been, planning for the future and a collection of tools and a strong community to keep us motivated.

**YOU TRY IT:**

- Take a walk and find three items in nature representing where you've been, where you are now and where you're going. Take time to reflect, be in the present moment and build hope for the future. When you're ready, take time to write, paint, or simply create something all your own, setting the stage for the trail ahead.

*Some of my personal motivation tools are things like removing barriers to my success by keeping my gear laid out, remembering the rewards for getting outdoors are better health and mental wellness and magical moments spotting birds and landscapes, and remembering that taking care of my wellness means that I can be of better support and service to others. As an avid outdoors woman, A Breath of Fresh Air helped remind me of those simple magical moments outdoors like going off trail with my pup and taking a moment to look up at the tree tops.*

~ Maeve Nevins-Lavtar,  
Sgt. 1st Class Liam Nevins, U.S. Army National Guard

#### Campfire Chats

- Monthly virtual Campfire Chats brought survivors together to share about their personal experiences outdoors and lessons learned.

*Everyone's unique perspective in the Campfire Chat enabled me to think less about grief and more about appreciation of the world around us as we talked freely about being outside and shared photos of our experiences!*


~ Paul Gilson,  
Surviving stepdad of Navy ET3 Michael Halpert



**Continue the journey with your TAPS Family. Check out Season 2 of A Breath of Fresh Air at [taps.org/outdoors](https://taps.org/outdoors). Up Next: "Sowing Seeds"**

# Volunteering as an Act of Healing

Stephanie Frogge, MTS



*“What we have done  
for ourselves alone dies  
with us; what we have  
done for others and the  
world remains and  
is immortal.”*

~ALBERT PIKE

**A**ltruism is defined as the practice of being concerned for and acting upon that concern for others without there being any direct benefit to the person engaging in it. For many, volunteering for a worthy cause is one way of practicing altruism even if we don't necessarily think of it that way. A quarter of Americans volunteer their time and talent whether in their faith community, their kid's school, in a healthcare setting, or a local organization whose cause speaks to them. Volunteering, of course, is giving of one's time and talent without remuneration – that is, you don't get paid.

Volunteering in the United States is taken seriously. Data is kept on who volunteers and where. The Corporation for National and Community Service tells us that the highest percentage of volunteers reside in Utah and Minnesota and the value of volunteering as calculated by the Independent Sector is \$25.43 an hour – more than \$200 billion dollars a year. Countless government agencies, faith organizations and non-profit charities would be unable to achieve their mission without the contribution of altruistic

people who give their time and expertise with no expectation of anything in return.

For bereaved people, volunteering is often one of those things that can, and should, be put aside until some level of equilibrium is restored. For most of us, simply getting out of bed, keeping the lights on and the children fed was the outer limit of what we could manage for a significant length of time. Bereavement counselors wisely advise against making important decisions or doing unnecessary work for a period of time in recognition of diminished energy and decision-making capacity.

And yet...one of the paradoxes of grief is that when you have the least amount to give to someone else, an act of altruism may actually be very helpful and healing. For some bereaved, volunteering (as opposed to random acts of kindness, which are also beneficial) becomes a valued component of their own healing journey. Scientific research is beginning to test various theories as to why that might be the case and the findings around what benefits correlate to volunteer service are intriguing.

## We Get It

Unsurprisingly, people who have had traumatic experiences have a greater sense of efficacy as it relates to helping others. In other words, people who have experienced trauma and loss know well how much an act of kindness or a helping hand can truly help someone. They are also less likely to experience what's known as “compassion fade,” which is a tendency to become overwhelmed and therefore less likely to help in the face of large-scale or reoccurring need.

## Physical and Mental Health Benefits

Volunteering has been linked to a variety of physical and mental health benefits including blood pressure regulation, a reduction in depression, and an increase in brain chemicals that reduce stress.

A study out of Carnegie Mellon University found that among older adults (over age 50) those who volunteered regularly were less likely to develop high blood pressure. A study of volunteers in the UK found that half of those who had volunteered for at least two years reported feeling less depressed





**LEARN HOW YOU CAN VOLUNTEER  
AND SUPPORT THE TAPS MISSION.**  
**VISIT [TAPS.ORG/VOLUNTEER](https://taps.org/volunteer)**

and almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of those whose volunteer work included using their professional experience and expertise also reported feeling less depressed. Volunteering may delay the onset of dementia and is linked to greater brain functioning. A Canadian study found that seniors who regularly volunteered at least one hour a week were almost two-and-a-half times less likely to develop dementia. Volunteering may even help you live longer. A study of data found that people who volunteer have lower mortality rates than those who don't, even when controlling for age and physical health. Other studies have shown that volunteers with health conditions report a decline in pain and depression when serving as peer supporters of others suffering from a similar condition. Some research suggests that volunteering may help you keep in better physical shape.

### Social Benefits

Even for those with a social network, bereavement is lonely. And with one in ten adults reporting having no close friends and almost half of Americans describing themselves as lonely, the potential social benefits of volunteering cannot be overstated. Loneliness is more detrimental to your health than obesity! Some researchers theorize that grief symptoms may be temporarily diminished simply because volunteering gives people something else to think about and do for a period of time. Other researchers suggest that being around others who are also experiencing challenges and difficulties help to keep our own loss in some perspective. Volunteering also gives us access to new friends and social networks. Strong social networks have long been known to positively impact physical and mental health. For some survivors, being in a temporary setting with people who are either unaware of or do not focus on the loss can serve as a temporary respite from being the object of unwelcome sympathy and concern.

### Financial Benefits

For bereaved individuals who may be entering the job market or making a job change, volunteering may improve their hiring prospects. One study found that people who regularly volunteer have a 27% better chance of gaining employment and in another survey, 60% of hiring managers reported looking favorably upon a job candidate's volunteer experience. Of course, volunteer work can be an opportunity to hone existing job skills, gain experience, develop new skills, learn about potential job openings, and develop career contacts that may lead to employment.

### Sense of Purpose

For many survivors of traumatic loss, volunteering serves as a direct link to our loved one whether we serve as a volunteer in their honor or engage in a specific type of volunteer activity because it was an important cause or service to our deceased loved one. Volunteer opportunities can give survivors a sense of helping to prevent similar deaths such as work with a suicide prevention program or volunteering for a traffic safety initiative. Research has found that after experiencing a traumatic event, those who are able to teach or train others, or in some other way use their negative life experience to help other people coped better than those who did not have the opportunity. Even when the volunteer experience isn't directly linked to our deceased loved one, deriving a sense of purpose while engaging in meaningful work is a component of creating a new normal.

The potential benefits of volunteering are significant even though we cannot yet prove correlations or demonstrate direct links to beneficial outcomes. For example, it may be that people in already good physical health are more likely to volunteer and it stands to reason that if the volunteer experience involves physical activity, there will be greater physical benefit. Social

interactions of any kind are shown to increase mental and physical well-being so positive effects of volunteering may be less about the volunteer work and more because of the association with like-minded people. We know that acts of helpfulness that trigger brain chemicals improving mood are not limited to those that occur in a volunteer setting. Despite these gaps in current research the overarching premise is unmistakable: helping to make the world a better place is good for the mind, body and spirit.

If you feel you've got the time, energy, and interest to serve somewhere as a volunteer, take into consideration how your energy is already spent on a day-to-day basis. For example, if you're now a single parent you may want to choose something that allows you to work alongside adults. If you work in a helping profession, you may prefer to avoid direct services. That's not a hard and fast rule but rather something to consider as you think about where you might want to contribute.

Finally, avoid over-committing. You don't need to chair the gala or clear the forest (unless you really want to!); small, short-term projects and contributions are a good place to begin especially when it's hard to predict how you will feel. The goal is to be pleased with what you've given, not exhausted.

TAPS is one of those organizations that would be unable to achieve its mission without a community of dedicated volunteers who do everything from serving as military mentors to making food for seminars, raising funds, and putting stamps on anniversary cards. Each one is precious and each one helps us to care for the families of America's fallen heroes.

# MAKE A DIFFERENCE – SUPPORT T★A★P★S

## WORKPLACE GIVING

**MATCHING GIFTS:** Double your donation to TAPS through your employer’s matching gift program. Inquire with your Human Resources Department.

**COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN:** The TAPS Combined Federal Campaign donation **ID code** is “11309.” Make sure to indicate this number on the CFC donation form distributed by your federal employer.

**HOST A DRIVE:** Host a workplace drive to collect supplies to support TAPS programs all year round, through the Fill a Backpack Campaign or the TAPS Holiday Gift Card Drive.

## SHOP

**SHOP AMAZON:** Designate TAPS as your charity at smile.amazon.com. There is no cost to you. Purchase supplies from the TAPS Amazon Charity list at smile.amazon.com/charitylists to support programs all over the country.

**SHOP TAPS:** Support TAPS by shopping at our TAPS Store.

**LOVE LIVES ON:** Download, stream or purchase Love Lives On from all major music platforms.



TO LEARN MORE, VISIT  
[TAPS.ORG/SUPPORT](https://TAPS.ORG/SUPPORT)

## SPONSOR

**HOST A FACEBOOK FUNDRAISER:** Fundraisers can be tied to a birthday, holiday, or the anniversary of a military loved one, or simply to support TAPS. Once you create your fundraiser, share it with friends and family.

**HOST A COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER:** Look for opportunities to raise funds for TAPS in your neighborhood, school, workplace, church or social clubs.

**RACE WITH TEAM TAPS:** Participate in one of our Team TAPS events throughout the country. Our teams often include military surviving families, children and people who want to honor America’s fallen heroes.

When you sign up to run with Team TAPS, you will get a unique opportunity to honor a fallen hero on the race course through our Fallen Hero Match program. You will also get a branded Team TAPS singlet or short-sleeved running jersey to wear during the race.

## VOLUNTEER

**SOCIAL MEDIA VOLUNTEERS:** As a TAPS social media volunteer, you’ll have the opportunity to help us spread the word about the TAPS mission. We want to build a vibrant online presence, so we invite you to follow us on social media; like, share and comment on our posts; and tag us in your posts. We ask that your comments are always positive and kind and in keeping with the TAPS mission.



**FACEBOOK:**  
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**SNAPCHAT:**  
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**YOUTUBE CHANNEL:**  
[youtube.com/c/tapsorg](https://youtube.com/c/tapsorg)

# To All Who Have Shared Your Hearts...

TAPS would like to extend heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the countless survivors of military suicide loss who have allowed us to walk alongside them in their grief over the years. It is because of your engagement, participation, and faith in us that we were able to develop the TAPS Suicide Postvention Model™, which has helped thousands of survivors grieve the loss of a military or veteran loved one to suicide, and which was officially published as a peer-reviewed article in January. Developing this model has been a true labor of love—a love shared from the insights and feedback offered by thousands of you. For every person who ever attended a TAPS seminar, with every story that was shared, from every tear that was shed, out of every hug that was exchanged, and in every heart that came seeking healing—every single one of your contributions have been woven into the thread of this program. You trusted us in your darkest time of need, and we are now able to offer this model as a gift to all those seeking the possibility of hope and healing. From tragedy, we have learned, grown, and developed strategies to best care for one another, to heal emotional wounds, and to help change and save lives.

We are grateful for you and we love you!

*Kim R. ... Kim Bradley ... Coulter Atumpf-Patterson*  
*[Signature]* Matt Mabe

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READ MORE ABOUT THE TAPS SUICIDE POSTVENTION MODEL™: [TAPS.ORG/SUICIDE-POSTVENTION-MODEL](https://taps.org/suicide-postvention-model)



800-959-TAPS (8277) ★TAPS.org

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



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

**TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS**

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Arlington, VA 22201

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"Thank you for your kindness and support. Although the journey is difficult, it's the support you provide that makes it more bearable."

~Mary and Gilbert Muñoz

Surviving parents of Capt. Gilbert A. Muñoz, U.S. Army