

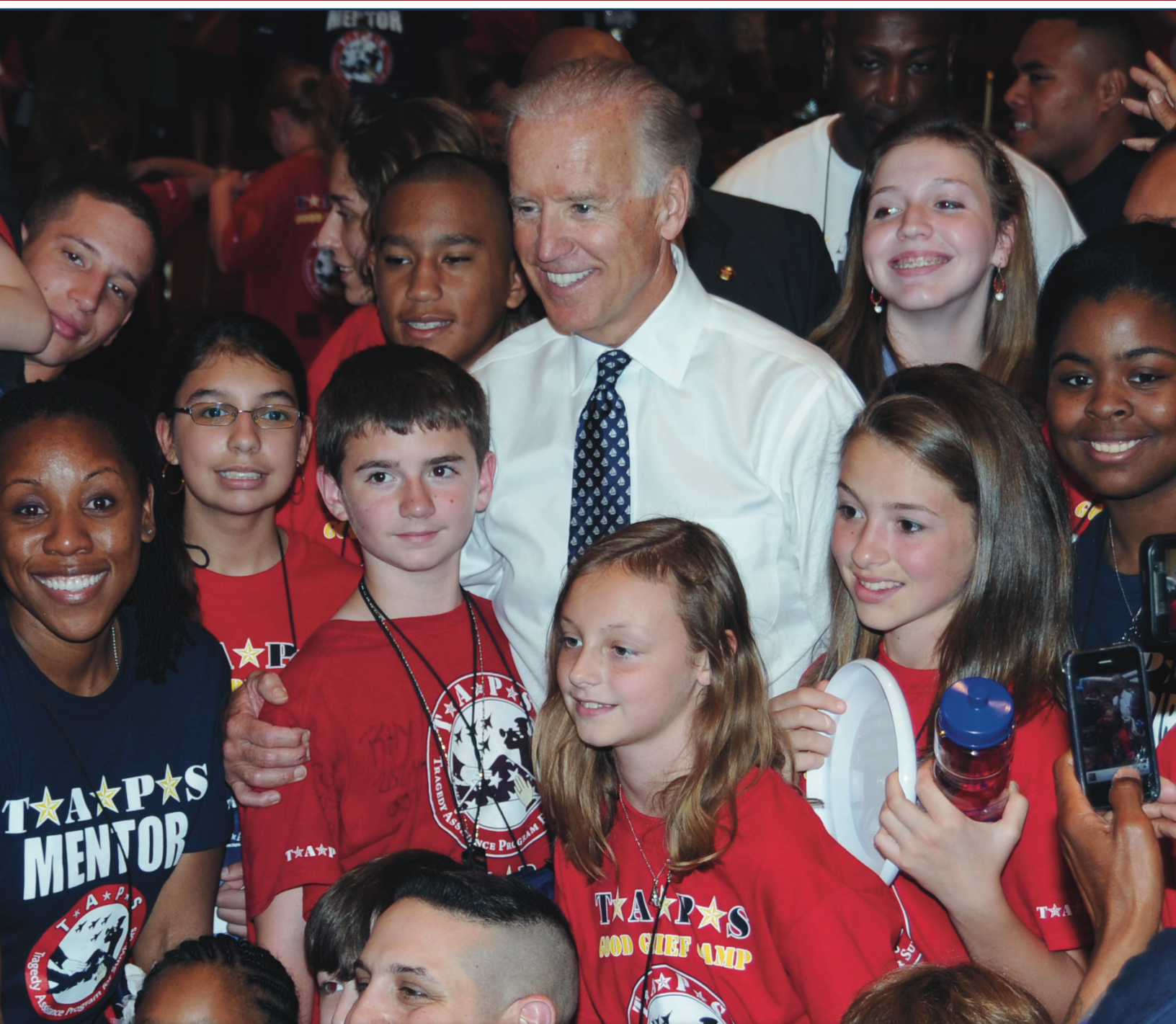
TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

T★A★P★S[®]

Comfort and Support Since 1994

MAGAZINE

FOR THE LOVED ONES OF THOSE WHO SERVED & DIED



VOLUME 18 • ISSUE 2

TAPS Magazine is dedicated to the brave men and women who died while serving in the Armed Forces, and to their survivors. The magazine is written by surviving family members, friends, and care-giving professionals. We hope you will find comfort, support, information, inspiration, and a sense of connection within its pages.

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★ **About TAPS Magazine** ★

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is a national nonprofit 501(c)3 Veterans Service Organization which publishes TAPS Magazine in furtherance of its mission to provide support services to the survivors of servicemembers who have died while serving.

TAPS Magazine is published quarterly and sent free of charge to survivors, their friends and family, servicemembers, and professionals who work with U.S. military survivors.



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TAPS®

Comfort and Support Since 1994

TAPS offers immediate and long-term emotional help, hope, and healing to anyone grieving the death of a loved one in military service to America, regardless of their relationship to the deceased or the circumstances of the death.

TAPS is here for you 24 hours a day 7 days a week

Call us at 800-959-TAPS
Or visit us at www.taps.org

TAPS

SUPPORTS the bereaved survivor through a network of Peer Mentors. Mentors are trained volunteers who have also lost a loved one in the Armed Forces and are now standing ready to reach out and support others.

PROVIDES a national toll-free help and information line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 800-959-TAPS (8277). Support is available from leading experts in the field of grief and trauma.

HOSTS the TAPS Online Community of survivors, providing secure chat rooms, message boards, peer group discussion sites, and an extensive website at www.taps.org.

SPONSORS Military Survivor Seminars for adults and Good Grief Camps for young survivors in locations across America, giving survivors the opportunity to share, grow, and help each other heal.

CONNECTS families to resources in their local communities and provides grief and trauma resources and information.



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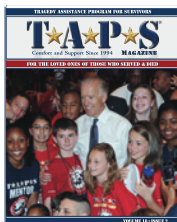


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COVER PHOTO BY

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Let Us Hear From You



We want to know your thoughts, perspectives, and opinions on TAPS programs and publications. Tell us what you think, send ideas for future topics, or submit an article. Submission Guidelines can be found online at www.taps.org. Your TAPS family is waiting to hear from you. ✧

TAPS Parent Retreat

Last weekend I had the opportunity to attend the first Parent Retreat sponsored by TAPS. It was one of the most rewarding weekends of my life! We may all have different stories and different ways of coping, but we have one common bond that ties us all together. That bond is the loss of a child either directly or indirectly through serving our country. I'm still on a high from spending time with my newly found family! All those around me that have tired of hearing of my son now are subject to news of the parent's retreat. What an awesome experience it was. I will cherish those days for the rest of my life.

Sue Sawyer, Florida
Surviving mother of
SGT Marcus Mathes

Ongoing Support

You all have been such a blessing in the lives of families that have lost loved ones. Usually we have the support right after their death, but then when we need it the most, everyone has abandoned us. But you stay a constant in our lives, and for that I feel truly blessed. Thank you to all of you.

Theresa Luna, California
Surviving mother of
PFC Kevin Luna

Good Grief Camp

I can't tell you how much you and the mentors and the camp have changed Kayley's life. In my mind I will always have the image of her sitting on the curb at Fort Lewis back in 2007 with such a somber and sad look about her, not wanting to let go of that balloon. I look at her now and see the smile on her face and watch her grow every year she comes to camp. Without TAPS our children would not grow into who they are becoming. Thank you for always being there for us and our children.

Jenna Henderson, North Carolina
Surviving spouse of
SFC Christopher D. Henderson

Run and Remember

Yesterday I had the privilege of watching the TAPS team run in the Disney Half Marathon at Disney World, Florida. It was an honor to hold up a TAPS sign cheering on the crowd and even more special when I saw the young lady who wore Kyle's picture on her back, running in the race and crossing the finish line. I saw her face, we made eye contact in that crowd of people, and at that very moment my brave nephew was honored once again for the ultimate sacrifice that he paid for his country.

Joseph Younis, Florida
Surviving uncle of
Corporal Kyle Schneider

TAPS Care Groups

Thank you for all your support and love. My son was Army National Guard and we attend their Gold Star retreats twice a year. Although it's good to get to see the families from my son's unit, my real support comes from TAPS seminars and the monthly TAPS Care Group. As time went on, and life as well, this group became my lifeline. It is where I learned I wasn't going crazy, and that it was okay to feel the way I was feeling. The people in this group accept me and understand, but most of all they just listen to me. I'm so glad that TAPS is here for all branches of service and all military survivors.

Tammy Eakes, North Carolina
Surviving mom of
SGT Lance O. Eakes

TAPS Magazine

I just had the opportunity to read, cover to cover, the latest TAPS magazine. Very powerful and touching both for the bereaved and for the care provider.

Robert Wagner
Casualty Section, USMC



editor@taps.org





Survivor Seminar Programs

Dear TAPS Family,

Summertime! School's out, but that doesn't mean that grief disappears. For TAPS children, summertime can be even harder than school time. Now that the kiddos are at home all day, they may slowly start slipping into the summertime blues after their first few weeks of freedom, complete with "I'm bored and there's nothing to do." A mom or dad or brother or sister has died while serving in the Armed Forces, so a significant person is no longer here to play catch, make popsicles, or plan a well-earned vacation. And the remaining parent has the entire weight of raising the children all day every day, without a break.

If your children have found help, hope, and healing in our national and regional Good Grief Camps, why not send them to one of our three USO/TAPS Good Grief Camp Outs this summer? If they just can't get enough of TAPS, and especially if they weren't able to attend the 18th Annual TAPS National Good Grief Camp over Memorial Day weekend, we would love to see them this summer!

We are excited to partner with the USO again this year to bring you several Regional Survivor Seminars and Good Grief Camps across the country as well as three different

outdoor overnight camps. The USO/TAPS overnight camps are designed specifically for children, between the ages of 6 and 18, who have lost a parent or sibling serving in the Armed Forces. This 3 day, 2 night camp experience is filled with traditional and military themed camp activities, in addition to grief education and emotional support. All activities are led by an experienced and trained grief facilitator. In addition, each child is matched with a trained military mentor from the area.

There is something for everyone, whether your children are big campers and very tuned in to the great outdoors or a little more like me and consider a hotel stay to be "camping." Lodging will be provided in cabins complete with bunk beds, electricity, and indoor plumbing (thankfully).

Campers will find comfort in knowing that there are other children who understand what they are feeling and experiencing. We also provide an opportunity to memorialize each camper's loved one. The children learn coping skills and develop friendships and support systems that will last long after they have returned home.

There is no charge for the camps; all lodging and meals will be provided, but transportation to and from camp is your responsibility. Please register as soon as possible as we can only accommodate 50 campers, and space will fill up fast. This summer we will be coming to the Fort Bragg/Camp Lejeune, North Carolina area, Fort Hood, Texas, and the Camp Pendleton/San Diego, California area.

We hope your children can join us for a weekend of fun, fishing, swimming, hay rides, military static displays, campfires and s'mores, and so much more! *

Tina Saari

* Director of Survivor Seminar Programs and Military Installations Support *



Upcoming 2012 USO/TAPS Good Grief Camp Outs

FORT BRAGG

Sunday, June 24

-to-

Tuesday, June 26

CAMP PENDLETON

Friday, August 10

-to-

Sunday, August 12

FORT HOOD

Tuesday, August 14

-to-

Thursday, August 16

Please visit www.taps.org to register for one of our upcoming camps or give us a call at 800-959-TAPS if you have any questions.



So You Think You're Going Crazy?

By Darcie D. Sims, PhD, CHT, CT, GMS

I first began to think about going crazy shortly after our son died. It seemed innocent enough in the beginning. Just an occasional sound that came from his bedroom or a whiff of his scent that would catch me by surprise. I didn't think much of it. In fact, I rather enjoyed those little reminders of him. But after sharing my first encounter with him with a neighbor, I knew the rest of the world would think me daft.

So I quit telling other people about my little conversations and my little encounters. I just kept them to myself.

They weren't that special, except to me. I thought I saw him once on a playground about half a block away. By the time I reached the fence, however, he had become the little boy he really was and not my son. And once while I was in a store, I knew I heard him tell me to buy the Twinkies. I know I heard that! So I did, and I enjoyed every one of them, too.

I found myself looking forward to these little encounters but never sharing them with anyone. And for quite some time, little reminders of our child flitted across my life... just often enough to keep me going. But then, after a number of months (or was it years?), the messages grew less noticeable. I think I was beginning to "get on with my life" (one of the all-time favorite expressions of those who "understand"), and I guess I didn't need to have the contacts.

I noticed that I still clung to little things, though...I kept his picture very close to me. We had moved several times by then, and we no longer had any of his room furnishings or very many physical reminders of his presence in our lives. We didn't refer to the extra bedroom as his, and life had settled

into its usual circus pace. But I still kept his blanket. I had wrapped it in tissue and placed it carefully in the cedar chest to lie in state until his big sister would one day need it for her child. But I kept getting it out and hugging it. I never told anyone that. I was afraid to. But I thought I could smell him whenever I held that small piece of soft wool. I knew I could pretend for a little while. And I *knew* I was going crazy.

Everyone in our family managed to keep something secret for years after our son died. His big sister kept his favorite stuffed bear very close to her pillow, but out of sight. Dad kept a small treasure tucked away in his drawer and carried it with him whenever he deployed with the Army.

Once, we discovered we were all going crazy when we asked a neighbor to look after the house while we were going on a two-week vacation. We handed over the keys, a list of phone numbers in case of emergency, and

the pictures of our son. She looked at us with sympathy and caution. I remember telling her the house could burn down or the burglars could take everything...except those pictures. We finally put them in the safe deposit box. Everyone else in the world keeps important papers and jewels in their safes. We keep a few photographs—our only tangible link to what was.

We once discovered a widowed friend of ours often wore her late husband's bathrobe. Many of us sleep with an extra pillow to hug during the night. We sometimes set a place at the table by accident or keep the pipe filled and slippers in the closet. We are reluctant to rearrange the room or even to touch the things. And when we do manage to touch and clean and rearrange, we always keep something for ourselves. It may not be much to anyone else, but to us, that tiny secret something is the one link we have with the reality that someone we loved *did live*.

*I noticed that I still clung to little things, though...
I kept his picture very close to me.*



Few books tell us it's normal to hang on to tiny mementoes of the past, but no one thinks it's weird to keep the old high school yearbooks.

Because after awhile, we may begin to wonder if that life ever really did happen.

We do seemingly strange things—little routines that we may not even realize are a part of our beings. We sit in the same place, regardless of how many are at the table. We keep a lookout just in case, knowing that “just in case” will never really come. We treasure the objects of our loved ones more now than when they were alive. It becomes difficult to throw away anything they touched.

Does it matter to anyone else that I still have our son's holiday place mat? It's tucked way down below all the other tablecloths in the drawer. I can't—no, I don't want to—toss it away. It's ours; it's our grief, our pain, our healing. And the rest of the world will just have to figure out how to live with our craziness or pretend to understand!

No one ever talks about these unusual behaviors or secrets. Few books tell us it's normal to hang on to tiny mementoes of the past, but no one thinks it's weird to keep the old high school yearbooks. No one thinks it's unusual to still have your wedding dress or a corsage or your first shoes (which may be bronzed and on top of the dresser). No one thinks it's crazy to remember... so why do we, the grievers of the world, suffer under the burden of fearing for our sanity?

It's ours; it's our grief, our pain, our healing. And the rest of the world will just have to figure out how to live with our craziness...



Because we think we should be “over it” by now. And we should have control over these things. We should have the grass mowed and the weeds pulled and the dust bunnies eliminated and the dryer emptied and the bills paid and the house clean and the meals nutritious, colorful, and full of fiber. We “should” ourselves into insanity!

I figure as long as the conversations I hear in my head don't lead me to tall bridges, sharp objects, or dangerous encounters, I'll be okay. If those things begin to happen, then I do need to talk with someone besides the microwave. But for most of us, being “crazy” is simply a matter of being in touch with all of our self—the outer reality (that everyone sees and assumes represents the inner us) and the interior parts (the secret self who may reside within)—and not being afraid of who we are now.

The past is past, but only if we allow it to be. Sometimes we need to carry it with us. Sometimes we need to let it rest. Sometimes we can't figure out quite what we need. And sometimes we don't even know how to know what it is we need! But most of you reading this just think you are the only one who has ever heard the frozen Oreos calling your name in the middle of the night. (I answer!) Or you are the only one who still has the bathrobe.

We all have our little secrets, sometimes kept secret even from ourselves. I stopped thinking of them as signs of abnormal behavior long ago, and I've been happier ever since. Now, when I hear his sigh or get a quick glimpse of his smile in the sun, I just say a silent hello...

Just remember, love doesn't stop talking to us simply because we don't have to do its laundry anymore! *

About the Author



Dr. Darcie Sims serves as Director of Training and Certification for TAPS. She is the president and cofounder of Grief, Inc. and the Director of the American Grief Academy in Seattle, Washington. Darcie is a bereaved parent and child, nationally certified thanatologist, certified pastoral bereavement specialist and licensed psychotherapist and hypnotherapist. A prolific writer, Darcie has authored seven books and numerous articles. For more information and a complete listing of her books, visit www.griefinc.com.



Sibling Revelry

By Michele Hiester Marcum ★ Surviving sister of MSG Michael T. Hiester



Co-conspirators. Confidants. Comrades. Alternately friend and foe. Two apples from the very same tree. Two peas tucked in a single pod. That was us, my brother and me...

Here's where I'd like to elaborate on our quiet, idyllic childhood, leisurely painting the words in feathery pastel strokes with a gentle hand. But I can't. Life at the Hiester house was vibrant and hectic and boisterous and always, always full. Neighborhood kids flocked to our house, the neat little two-story, white-sided home with huge picture windows, shuttered in blue, and the largest yard within five blocks.

In the early years, our wide-open front porch sheltered all the bus stop kids before school and became the official Lego Land each day at 4:00 p.m. By 4:15, we'd all be battle-ready, with forts erected and cannons in place along the perimeter, protecting the flowerbeds and perhaps the neighbor's cat. Or some days, the cat was unlucky enough to be declared more an enemy than ally.

As embarrassing as it is to admit now, weekends were sometimes spent square dancing in the garage, which had been morphed into a home daycare for mom's business. We'd invite all the neighbor kids over, shove the toy shelving aside and test our newly-acquired dancing skills with all the bravado only elementary kids are naïve enough to muster. Our music teacher would have been proud.

But we, my brother and I, didn't always get along. More battles were won and lost over the remote control, ownership

of meaningless possessions, and irritating habits than I would care to admit. Just 17 months apart in age, we were too much alike to get along well much of the time and too stubborn to ever just walk away. Sometimes I think I single-handedly prepared him for combat with my inability to cease fire. Oh, if only I had learned to shut up. If only.

I remember one particular vacation, back in the era of wood-paneled station wagons and non-existent seat belt laws, before our sister came along. Our family travelled all the way to Florida and back with the back seat laid flat, luggage and coolers separating the two of us from sight, if not by sound. Nothing but two little rectangular compartments in which to sit and play. Independently. Still, all these years later, we joked that it was one of the best vacation we ever took, simply because we did not fight.

But we also shared many loves and experiences which brought us together, whether we wanted to be or not: a love of peanut butter, identical passions for independence, a single tiny shared bathroom, and an overlapping circle of friends. Despite all our differences, we loved each other with a depth that only siblings can understand or replicate. For a time, we were the best of friends.

Winters found us building snow forts, expertly firing snowballs, fiercely competitive for nothing more than bragging rights. Summers, we'd team up with our friends for kickball or flag football, never keeping score but always competitive. Late afternoons, when the other kids were called

Two apples from the very same tree. Two peas tucked in a single pod. That was us, my brother and me...

To say I miss him would be an obvious understatement. To say I love him would simply not be enough. He was, and is, my only brother, my frequent confidant, my sometimes friend, my forever hero.

home to dinner, we'd take turns keeping watch from the top of the wobbly pine tree at the far side of the property. I don't know what we were looking for, if anything, but I'm rather certain we never found it. And still, we were mostly content. We didn't know what the future held, and so we were satisfied with whatever came our way. Or didn't.

Life was just a journey... a voyage of learning, and we were blessed. Our biggest life lessons, in fact, were discovered right there in that overflowing house in the middle of town. We learned the value of hard work in that abundant garden, the magnitude of love in the arms of a large, extended family, the meaning of friendship inside the wide-open front door, and the sanctity of prayer around our old harvest table. Friends were family, and family members were friends. Our home was a warm, sunny spot, rich with fertile soil in which to sink our roots.

And thus, we grew, my brother and I. At first a diminutive trunk, growing as one, with willowy and tentative branches. As the years passed, we began reaching, far and wide, in opposite directions, but both reaching for the sky. At times, our roots still firmly planted, we'd find our branches overlapping, interfering, maybe interlocking... perhaps embracing. We grew as one, but individually. Somehow. Another year, another circular ring, another layer of age and wisdom.

Eventually, the sibling rivalry dissipated. A bit, anyway. We grew up without outgrowing one another. We continued searching, each of us on the lookout for which road we'd dare to travel. Michael's path led him to the military, which really, I think, led him

right back to our front porch. If only life could be as easily reconstructed as Legos.

He died a few years back. March 26, 2005, to be more accurate. Killed, to be exact. Kabul, Afghanistan was the place. Far from our childhood home, far from our family, far from his own two-story, white-painted home on Main Street that he shared with his wife and children.

To say I miss him would be an obvious understatement. To say I love him would simply not be enough. He was, and is, my only brother, my frequent confidant, my sometimes friend, my forever hero. He is the one who tormented me because he could, defended me because he wanted to, believed in me because he chose to, and loved me no matter what... simply because he did.

And thus begins the sibling revelry... the celebration of his life. Though I miss the strength of his branches interlaced with mine, the whisper of our leaves when we were in tune with one another, the creak of our limbs when the winds picked up, I stand firm. His roots, entwined with mine, deeply planted and thriving, secure me to this spot. Protected by the fertile soil of our family, memories sprouting up, he supports me still. I choose to remember not how he died, but how he lived. Arms outstretched, reaching heavenward.

His career is summed up in brevity: MSG, E8, KIA. But what I remember most, as his branches sprout anew, are the windows in which I saw who I wanted to be. His blue eyes, blue like those shutters so many years ago. Blue eyes just like mine. Like mine, the sibling. "Just" the sib. The sib left behind. *



Children's Bereavement and Emotional Wellness

Part 1 ☆ By Andrea Hug, MaPC, MPS, LCPC

I vividly remember when my husband died. My children were four, two, and four months old. I hardly knew how to be a parent, let alone a sole parent to bereaved children. I remember going to see a counselor and saying, "What do I need to know to help these children grow up to be happy, healthy, productive members of society?" Now, 18 years later, I offer to you what I have gleaned over these past years.

First, it is helpful to have a working knowledge of the normal developmental stages. Knowing that each of us goes through stages at approximately the same time in our lives helps to evaluate if we are on track. Throughout our lives we lean on the lessons learned from the previous stages, and each stage becomes a building block for the one to follow. The following descriptions are meant as a guide, and you should always check with your pediatrician to assess appropriate milestones.

- From birth to 18 months old a child is learning to trust a caregiver. If consistent care and appropriate responses are not provided, a child learns mistrust.

- From 18 months to 3 years a child is gaining autonomy—mastering skills such as walking, grasping, and potty training. Without mastering this, a child learns to feel shame and doubt.

- From 3 to 6 years of age a child is beginning to learn independence. In this age bracket the child starts branching out and exploring outside the home. With success, this can cause a child to gain initiative and confidence, but without mastering the task, it raises feelings of guilt.

- Between the ages of 6 and 12, a child deals with the demand to learn new skills. Early days in school will provide success, and thus a child grows in confidence. Without success, a child begins to feel inferior to his or her peers.

- From 12 to 18 years old, the child's peers are very important since teens achieve a sense of identity through the interactions with their peers. Questions involving occupation, sexuality, politics, and religion are explored, with peers influencing how a teen identifies himself. Mastering this task is important to a child's ability to direct his or her path in life. Often this is when a child decides to go to college or learn a trade. Without mastery, confusion and depression may creep in.

How well a child comes through these stages affects their emotional wellness—the ability to regulate feelings and form close, secure, interpersonal relationships. Emotional wellness basically means that a

child plays well with others. This influences how a child makes decisions and how they behave.

When children have a significant loss it can impact them so deeply that it causes them to regress to a previously mastered stage. For example, shortly after my husband died, my two-year-old daughter needed to use a pacifier again after not using it for several months. The pacifier offered her safety which she trusted. Her regression to that place of comfort also reminded her that she could trust even though her world was chaotic. To support her, I needed to offer additional hugs and comfort her more frequently before she could feel settled enough to give up the pacifier. Children may revert back to bedwetting or other less mature habits. A child who is 10 may not have the confidence that he used to have and may pull away from his peers rather than engaging with them because he doesn't feel as smart or as good at a skill. By high school, a child's emotional wellness can affect who they choose as friends and their future career choice.

It is important to remember that bereaved children must go through their losses very differently than an adult does. At each developmental stage they must reconcile the loss in new ways. This may sound



overwhelming, but as parents we naturally companion our children through their developmental stages. We explain life to them in a way they can understand. Explaining the circumstances of the loss will be no different. What is important is to recognize the developmental stage of your child when the loss occurred. Be aware that the loss may cause the child to revert to the previous developmental stage, so offer comfort and gentle companionship while your child is learning to cope with the loss.

Because of your child's profound loss, his or her self-esteem may be affected. Self-esteem is fostered through the affirmation and positive regard received in daily interactions throughout a child's lifetime. For a bereaved child, positive esteem grows when a parent focuses on what the child is good at and helps him or her transfer those skills to other areas, like grief.

Focusing on important issues as you offer care to your children will help them move through their loss and incorporate the loss into their lives. I offer here some suggestions that can help them process their grief.

● **Help your child understand his or her own temperament.** A child may be quiet or outgoing. He may need stimulation from outside or he may be able to use his imagination to manage his time. Your child may naturally know that as he reads he will learn how to manage the pain or have the ability to soothe himself. Other children need to feel that constant comfort from a close family member. Because you know your child, you are the ideal person to

help your child understand his temperament and learn what would help to ease the pain.

● **Put yourself in your child's place and imagine what he or she is feeling.** Often we project how we feel, and imagine that our children are processing the loss the same way we are. I remember one day feeling really awful the entire day and thinking my child should as well. But my child was only four years old, and she could only tolerate her pain for a few moments at a time. On the other hand, I was also guilty of thinking that my child might not feel so bad since she was so little when her father died. These are examples of how I did not put myself in my child's place and imagine how she was feeling.

● **Clarify the situation together and brainstorm solutions.** Children intuitively know what they need. Listen to them for their practical ideas about how to find solutions.

● **Take time to relax or play together.** It is important to remember that you love each other and hold precious memories in common. Having fun by watching a movie, playing a game, or ordering a pizza together reminds you that there is still joy in life.

● **Stick to a routine.** Routines create safety. A child knows what comes next and can manage time when there is a routine.

● **Build resilience.** Resilience is the new buzz word. Basically it means how a person bounces back after trauma. Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg has identified seven C's of resilience including competence, confidence,

connection, character, contribution, coping, and control. Visit www.healthychildren.org for many good articles including Dr. Ginsburg's informative article titled "Building Resilience in Children." Hover on the Healthy Living tab and click on Emotional Wellness.

● **Recognize that it takes time to heal.** There are healthy ways to process grief. Helping your child be resilient takes attention and love. You offer this already. Recognizing the developmental stages that your child faces helps you respond appropriately to your child. As you companion them, remember that their loss may be influencing their behavior. Even 10 years after the loss, a child will be significantly affected by the death of a loved one.

In our next article, we will look at practical things you can do for bereaved children to help them develop emotional wellness to carry through adulthood. *

About the Author



Andrea Hug is the surviving spouse of Lieutenant Christian A. Hug, USNR, a search and rescue helicopter pilot who died in 1993. She holds master's degrees in both Pastoral Counseling and Pastoral Studies from Loyola University in Chicago, and is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. She worked for two years with TAPS Adult Survivor Care Team, having spent the previous six years working in hospice with young surviving widows and children.





Peer Mentor Miracle

By Meredith McMackin ★ Surviving mother of Corporal Julian McMackin Woodall

My grief journey began when my older son Julian was killed in Iraq on May 22, 2007. Although I was in shock for some time, I knew that I wanted to do something positive in his honor to help others heal from the wounds of war. In my previous "life" before Julian's death, I taught art and painting. After his death I struggled to express my feelings of loss through my art work, but I felt increasingly drawn to help others rather than paint in my studio. And then I realized I could combine my interests through the field of art therapy. I am now in my second year of studies.

In the years since 2007, I've met other families whose loved ones died in military service. I have spoken with other surviving mothers and feel a deep bond with them. Thanks to one of those moms, I connected with TAPS last summer. She had posted photos on the internet, and I saw large groups of folks, all in red t-shirts, and I asked her what they were about. She told me, "It's TAPS; you should check them out." On the website I read about the Peer Mentor Support Network and knew I wanted to be involved because of my desire to connect with other families and to provide some comfort to those more newly bereaved.

Because it had been more than four years since Julian's death, I hoped I would have the strength to listen to another mother's feelings without plunging into my own despair. So last September I attended a TAPS Regional Military Survivor Seminar where I completed the Peer Mentor Training. It was an intense experience to be in a room full of grieving families and loved ones during the seminar, but it also felt so freeing to be given the time and space to grieve openly, in a safe place where I felt I wouldn't be judged or told what I should



CORPORAL JULIAN McMACKIN WOODALL

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do or feel. TAPS created an atmosphere of loving support where everyone's feelings were honored.

The next day I completed the mentor training, which was wonderful. The approach to listening and supporting another seemed so positive, but I was nervous that I might say the wrong thing and offend or hurt someone when they were in such a fragile place emotionally. When we had our graduation ceremony at the end of the day, our trainer Darcie Sims hugged me and whispered in my ear, "You'll find the right words."

TAPS gave me time to think about the training and let it all sink in before contacting me about a grieving mother who was seeking a mentor. They told me she was the mother

of a Marine (from Camp Lejeune where Julian had been stationed) who had been killed in combat in Afghanistan nearly a year previously. They asked if I would feel comfortable in reaching out to her. I knew it was an important commitment, but I was anxious to become a mentor and I said, "Absolutely!"

I was pretty nervous the first time I called Connie... still worried about finding the right words. She said it helped just to talk to another mother. We had a number of phone conversations, at least every other week or more, and it got easier each time. I became more relaxed and would share my experiences that I thought related to how she felt, and she seemed to be interested in how I got through that first year.

Honestly, though, I sometimes felt at a loss. I wished I could say just the thing that would take her pain away, although I knew that was beyond anyone's ability. It's hard to listen to someone who is suffering so much. At some point, however, Connie totally made my day when she said I was like her guardian angel. It brings tears to my eyes even now thinking about how great that made me feel.

Looking back, I realize that the first time I read Connie's last name, it rang a bell. It reminded me of the minister of the church my family attended when I was very young. My parents had become close friends with him, and I had heard them say many times over the years what a fine man he was. But somehow, I forgot about that until Connie called one night in tears. As I talked to her that night I became emotional as well, and she ended up comforting me! It was Julian's birthday, and he would have been 26 years old.

The next day something clicked in my head. During our conversation, Connie had mentioned that her father had been a minister. I asked my sister and parents right away, and they confirmed that the last name was the same. Then I told Connie and she called her dad. He remembered my parents, as well. They had played golf together every week, and he had baptized my siblings and christened me as a toddler. Even more astonishing, a charcoal portrait of Connie's father, which was drawn by my mother, now hangs in Connie's daughter's house. We were filled with joy and amazement—such a gift to find a previous connection between our families!

Even before this discovery, I felt a growing sense of strength from mentoring Connie. It gave me a feeling of satisfaction and peace that I could be of comfort to another

mother who was grieving the loss of her son. It also helped me gain a new perspective on what I'd gone through. I was able to see how I had moved from that intense level of pain and grief, and I realized that I'd done a lot of healing over the years.

Because of this connection and my desire to do what I could to help Connie along her healing journey, I felt inspired to create a portrait of her son, just as my mother had done for her father 50 years before. I know the power of art to communicate feelings and I hoped to be able to visually capture a little of her son's essence to give back to her. As I studied his face from a photograph taken in Afghanistan, I began to feel a connection to him as well, as if I was getting to know him. It was the most meaningful work of art I had done for a long time.

Although I know I will always miss my son in this world, I feel that Julian is still very much a part of my life and always will be. I've developed a new relationship with him on a spiritual level, and I believe that my coming together with Connie was not a coincidence, but rather an instance in which Julian guided me towards greater growth, joy, and peace in my life. It seems as if he and Connie's son somehow got together and brought about this miraculous, healing family reunion. I am so very thankful to them, to Connie who so bravely shared her grief with me, and to the TAPS family for providing this opportunity for healing and peace.

Although not everyone will have the extra miracle of a family connection with those they mentor, the true miracle of peer support is how healing it is for both mentor and mentee. When we share each other's burdens the pain is decreased, the joy increases, and we both become stronger. *

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Loss, Grief, and Manliness

What Every Man Should Know About Losing a Loved One

By Brian Burnham, M.Ed.

In the beginning of February 2009, I was just entering my last semester in my master's program for counseling when after a brief illness, my father died. I had thought of myself as a well put together guy—at the top of my class with a fiancée and strong prospects for the future—but this put me into a complete tailspin. I swung from fits of intense rage, to depths of deep depression, to cold and distant numbness.

What made matters even worse was that I had no clue what was happening to me, and my classmates and mentors, despite being in the counseling field, seemed just as bewildered. What was happening to me was grief, and like many men in our society, I was woefully unprepared for it.

Unfortunately, the death of a loved one is something that everyone will experience at some point in their lives. Modern American society, however, does little to prepare us for the inevitable loss of a loved one. We need only look at our TV commercials—with their emphasis on staying young and healthy in the hope of living forever—to see that we live in a culture that prefers not to think about or even acknowledge the existence of death. This is why, when the death of a loved one does occur, many men do not understand the experiences they are having and how grief is affecting them. So in an effort to better understand my own experience and to help my fellow men, I've put together some research on the way men experience and cope with grief.

SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF IN MEN

Research shows that after a loss, men experience greater changes in mood than do women and experience more consequences for their physical health. However, we tend not to associate typical grief symptoms such as sadness and

Many men do not understand the experiences they are having and how grief is affecting them.



crying, depressed mood, and a sense of hopelessness with men or manliness. While men do experience these “typical” symptoms of grief, they may display less of them. This is due, at least in part, to the fact that there are a number of symptoms that are common in men but relatively rare in women, giving the male experience of grief a unique character.

These symptoms include:

ANGER: often directed at someone or something seen as responsible for the loss, but sometimes directed at the self or at nothing in particular.

IRRITABILITY: grieving men may be easily irritated and annoyed and may overreact to small annoyances.

WITHDRAWAL: grieving men may withdraw from social contact as well as withdraw emotionally, experiencing an emotional numbness.

RUMINATION: persistent thinking about the deceased or death in general.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE: grieving men may attempt to cope by abusing alcohol or other drugs.

It's possible for a grieving man to display any and all of the gender specific symptoms described above and relatively few of the typical symptoms. This can cause anxiety in some men (because they feel like they're “not grieving enough” or “not grieving the right way”) and confusion in those around them who don't understand why the grieving man is reacting the way that he is. However, the way men grieve will vary widely from man to man, and what they are experiencing is normal.

The length of the grieving process will also vary widely from man to man. While most human resources departments only grant three days bereavement leave, grieving typically takes much longer. Two months is considered the “standard” length of time after which a person should be evaluated for more serious problems. However, recent research suggests that the process may be much longer and that even well adjusted men may still have symptoms, such as sadness, on the anniversary of the deceased's

passing, as much as twenty years later. The important fact to remember is that every man will grieve at his own pace and should not worry about “being over it by now.”

The degree of symptoms men experience will also vary widely. Research has shown that some men experience only mild symptoms of grief for a short period, while others experience much stronger symptoms for a longer period. Surprisingly, research shows that the intensity of symptoms is not related to the quality of relationship the grieving person had with the deceased.

Permitting yourself to honestly experience grief is an important step towards healing.



HOW MEN COPE

Now that we have a sense of what grief is like for men, the inevitable question is “What do we do about it?” Most men deal with grief using the same strategies that they use to deal with everything else, by controlling their emotions and relying on their own internal strengths. Men therefore do not respond well when asked to do “grief work” which typically involves talking about the emotions associated with the loss. However, simply avoiding thinking about the loss is not helpful either. According to research, those who coped with a loss most effectively were those who alternated between “loss oriented coping” which involves thinking about the loss and what it means for the person and “restoration oriented coping” which includes planning for the future and problem solving.

Since men tend to be planners and problem solvers, restoration oriented coping often comes naturally to the grieving man. But a grieving man also needs to address issues and emotions associated with the loss itself. Often these issues will challenge the grieving man’s identity and sense of masculinity. Coming to terms with these challenges, as well as resolving regrets related to the deceased are all part of a man’s long-term coping with loss.

While every man’s experience of grief and coping style will vary, there are some things that all men who are grieving have in common, and so the following tips are presented for those who are grieving.

EXPERIENCE YOUR GRIEF IN YOUR OWN WAY:

As long as you are not harming yourself or others, there is no wrong way to grieve. Grief is a unique experience for every man and the way you grieve may not be what others expect or what you expected for yourself. Permitting yourself to honestly experience grief is an important step towards healing.

GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO

GRIEVE: After the passing of a loved one, there are often many arrangements to be made and others mourners to be supported and cared for. While no man wants to shirk his duty, it is important to allow time for yourself to grieve as well.

WATCH OUT FOR HARMFUL BEHAVIORS:

While experiencing anger is normal, it is important to manage that anger so that it doesn’t harm others. Also, grieving men are much more likely to develop problems with alcohol or other substances. Their use should be carefully monitored.

CALL ON YOUR MAN FRIENDS:

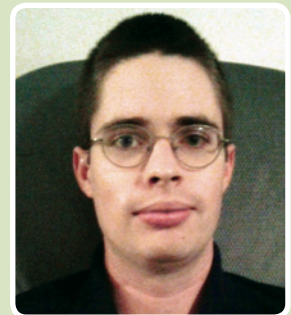
Other men, especially other men who have had a similar loss, can be some of your strongest sources of support.

KNOW WHEN TO SEEK HELP:

For most grieving men, psychological counseling may be helpful but is not necessary. However, if you experience serious thoughts of suicide or self-harm or develop an alcohol or other drug problem, seek psychological care immediately. *

› This article first appeared as a guest article on Brett and Kate McKay’s blog on The Art of Manliness website. For more information and articles, visit artofmanliness.com.

About the Author



Brian Burnham holds a Masters of Education in Counseling from the College of William and Mary and currently works as a consultant for Military One Source. He also serves as a member of C Company (Medical) 429th Brigade Support Battalion, Virginia Army National Guard. For more information about Military One Source, including articles and other resources, visit www.militaryonesource.mil.

Artful Grief

A Journey of Healing

Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR

When I conduct workshops and stand in front of grieving military families at TAPS seminars, I stand not only as an Art Therapist, but as a mother who has suffered loss. On October 11, 2001, I received a phone call from the New York City Police Department telling me that my seventeen-year-old daughter Kristin had fallen from the roof of her college dormitory. Kristin had succumbed to a mental illness and taken her own life. So began my journey into the labyrinth of grief, one that I continue to walk, one that is ever evolving and changing with time.

We are bound by our stories of loss, bound by heartache, and bound by our healing journeys. One of the greatest gifts the bereaved can give is to share what worked and how it worked. I found healing in the creative process of my art, making collages, one after another. I cut and tore images out of magazines and pasted them on various sizes of colored foam board. I visited and revisited the territory of Kristin's death. Over time there was transformation and healing. This worked for me and this is what I now share with others. This is a story of how art heals.

In the months following Kristin's death, concepts were not helpful to me. I did not take comfort in knowing that death was universal and a part of our shared experience as human beings. I did not take comfort in knowing that grief and bereavement were normal, highly individualized human processes. I was in pain. My body and soul ached.

I found comfort in traditional therapy as well as two peer support groups—The

Compassionate Friends and Survivors of Suicide. I found additional comfort in the creative process of collage which I embraced a year into my bereavement. I found that it quieted my mind and opened my heart to healing in ways not previously experienced.

For many who grieve, the intensity of the emotions eases naturally, but for a small percentage, the feelings of loss are long lasting and incapacitating. This is known as complicated grief. My grief was complicated.

For those who grieve a military death, there are also factors that may “predispose survivors to complicated grief,” according to Dr. Jill Harrington-LaMorie, a military survivor herself who now works on the National Military Family Bereavement Study at the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress. The exposure to *both* grief and trauma leave some survivors at risk for developing complicated grief and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

One element of my complicated grief was a visiting and revisiting of the moment Kristin died. This “event story” was difficult to talk about because of its violence, but the unspeakable found a way to be seen and heard through the collages I created. There was release, for the telling and retelling was an important healing element.

“These acts of making and sensing, or ‘sense making,’ are ways of knowing,

shaping, and storying grief and loss,” say Doctors Thompson and Berger in their writings on expressive arts therapy and grief. “This way, experiences do not remain ‘sense-less,’ silenced, unseen, immovable, or untouchable.”

In January 2002, after completing my first three collages, I created collage number four, titled “Suffering.” The 20 x 30 inch red foam board held the fragments of my story. When I sat down to begin, I did not plan to touch the violence; it happened as I came across the image of a young



"Suffering" courtesy of Sharon Strouse

WE ARE BOUND BY OUR STORIES OF LOSS, BOUND BY HEARTACHE, AND BOUND BY OUR HEALING JOURNEYS. ONE OF THE GREATEST GIFTS THE BEREAVED CAN GIVE IS TO SHARE WHAT WORKED AND HOW IT WORKED.

girl with butterflies in her hair. I looked at it and saw Kristin on the concrete. I imagined red everywhere. I could easily have turned the page; instead I tore it out and glued it down. I looked at it.

In my journal I wrote, *"I glue you down in a way that allows the rupture to be seen. I like the torn edges and leave them. There is some kind of physical release in the experience of tearing. I tear and align myself with the truth of the exposed ragged and uncontrolled edges of your death. Cutting with scissors produces a different experience; there is more control. It is clean and neat. There is nothing clean or neat about death... I place another image of your descent into my space. My attention rests in the wound of your death."*

I spent hours each day for weeks working on this collage. While a candle burned, I played soft music and found a way to let go. I let go by allowing those images to come into form. Their strength and power diminished over time. The energy of creating provided a safe and still place for the trauma to rest. The revisiting felt

compassionate. I found a measure of calm and peace through the process which infiltrated the rest of my life. My nervous system quieted.

Over the years I revisited the "event story" whenever it came to mind. It was part of the beauty of art, one of the healing properties that allowed what was unconscious to become conscious. I moved, not in circles, but in an upward spiral, coming to that moment from a different place in time and a different place in my healing journey. According to Thompson and Berger, "In expressive arts therapy, an attitude of openness and receptivity invites images to appear and allows them to find their appropriate forms."

After four years and 17 more collages, I created collage number 22, titled "Silver Death." Five years after Kristen's death, the "event story" image was simple; there were no parts and pieces. There was integration. What was broken and shattered had become whole.

In my journal I wrote, *"She almost shimmers. She is in a prayer-like position, eyes downcast, and arms hidden within the folds of her dress. She is pure energy. She holds all of you, both your life and death. Death reaches her hand out beyond the mirror's frame and drops a red rose into the field. Flesh appears on the hand of the skeleton. Life does come back slowly, bit by bit. There you are with your bunny rabbit and angel wings. You have a wreath on your head, reminding me of the gold beaded headband we buried you in. You were sweet and innocent then and I am able to experience your sweet innocence still, even with your suicide. You are held in silver grace, your blood a rose."*



"Silver Death" courtesy of Sharon Strouse

After so many years of dealing with the torments of Kristin's shattered body, it was a relief to see her angelic. In that moment, the image of her death appeared spiritual and peaceful.

Making art heals. These are the words I weave throughout the workshops I offer during my times with TAPS. I watch as the bereaved come into our Rita Project Open Studio. I watch as survivors find courage and allow their stories to move through them and onto the blank pieces of paper. I watch as they shed tears and soften. I am not surprised, but they are often surprised at how much better they feel after being in and with the stories they keep inside.

Paper, scissors, and glue are all you need. No talent is required, only the willingness to explore your grief, artfully. *

About the Author



Sharon Strouse holds a degree in psychology and a master's degree in art therapy. Her collage making process, in response to the trauma of her daughter's death, developed into a template for work with others. She is a sought-after workshop presenter, author, and artist. Her private practice in Baltimore, Maryland includes art and meditation (www.attherefuge.com). Sharon is a director for Rita Project: Baltimore, devoted to using the arts to help those who have lost someone to suicide and those who have attempted suicide to connect with the power of creating (www.ritaproject.org).



18th National Survivor Seminar

Memorial Day weekend is a special occasion for TAPS families to gather together in the nation's capital to find comfort and support in each other. The 18th Annual National Military Survivor Seminar was a time of connecting with others, learning about grief, making new friends, and exploring support. More than 2,100 participants from across the country joined together to make this year's national seminar an event to be remembered. ☆



"We're here to honor you this weekend. Most Americans have not had the life-altering experience of being handed a folded flag like all of you have. We honor your sacrifice... and will never forget it."

~ General Martin Dempsey,
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff





“It can and will get better. There will come a day, I promise, when your thoughts of your son or daughter or husband or wife will bring a smile to your face before it brings a tear.”

~ Vice President Joe Biden, Recounting the tragic deaths of his first wife and infant daughter



“Our hearts go out to the families we have met at this TAPS event and to all military families coping with the death of a loved one.”

~ Christine Park, President of the New York Life Foundation



It is my hope that on Memorial Day—and every day—these families will know that our entire nation mourns alongside them, and that we will never forget their loved ones.”

~ Dr. Jill Biden



18th National Good Grief Camp



Children and teens found a place of comfort, support, and compassion over Memorial Day weekend as they coped with the loss of a loved one. This year, for the first time, TAPS provided two similar but separate camps: Good Grief Camp for those who have lost a parent or sibling and Honoring Heroes Camp for all other children and teens. The two camps followed similar schedules and field trips, and the Good Grief Camp featured additional components of coping with grief. ★







The New York Life Foundation

Partnering with TAPS to help grieving military families



Christine Park, President of the NYLF Foundation • Reflections of our weekend with TAPS •

This year, TAPS was honored to have the New York Life Foundation (NYLF) as the Title Sponsor for our 18th Annual National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp.

Protecting families and providing financial security has always been the heart of New York Life's mission. In addition, New York Life takes special pride in the NYLF which has awarded more than \$155 million, since its founding in 1979, to national and local nonprofit organizations. But they don't limit their giving to a commitment of dollars; they also promote the active engagement of their employees in making a positive difference in communities through volunteering.

In 2008, under the leadership of Christine Park, President of the NYLF, the foundation added a new focus on supporting childhood bereavement. As part of their work on this issue, the NYLF has created resource materials including a guidebook titled "After A Loved One Dies—How Children Grieve," the National Resource Bereavement Guide (in partnership with the Moyer Foundation), and a website (www.aChildinGrief.com) where these and other resources can be found. They are available at no cost.

To further their goal of supporting grieving children, the NYLF stepped up to assist military children by partnering with TAPS to provide comfort and support to the families of the fallen.

Inspiring. That's the word I'd use to describe the Memorial Day weekend my colleagues and I spent at the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp. Adults and children, facing a life without the one they love, come together to support each other as they learn to cope.

There's something special about this gathering. Bound by their connection to their military "family," they share their stories with the pride that comes from knowing their loved ones' death was in service to their country. No less painful, no expedited grief, but shared pain somehow makes the burden lighter.

The children bond quickly with the help of their assigned mentors—military personnel who offer their weekend to be a buddy to a grieving child. Bereavement activities, mixed with lots of fun, help each child move along on their own grief journey, knowing they're not alone in this experience.

Moms and dads, spouses and children, brothers and sisters come together to learn from and support each other. Their stories

are heartbreaking, but their time together is healing. How privileged we felt to be included, to share—if just for a short time—their struggles with loss and their efforts to gain a "new normal."

Our teams of New York Life volunteers helped set up for the camp, registered children as they arrived, coordinated the balloon release and many other "duties as assigned." It felt good to be part of the big TAPS family.

This was our first year of providing support for TAPS. Considering how important their work with military families is and how aligned it is with the New York Life Foundation's focus on helping grieving children, I'd say the partnership is a smashing success.

Our thanks to TAPS for making us welcome. Our admiration for all TAPS does and for all the terrific people who make it happen, staff and volunteers alike. And our sincere best wishes to all the families who are in need of TAPS. The people of New York Life salute you.



For more information about the New York Life Foundation, please visit www.newyorklife.com. For bereavement stories, articles, videos and other resources, go to www.aChildinGrief.com



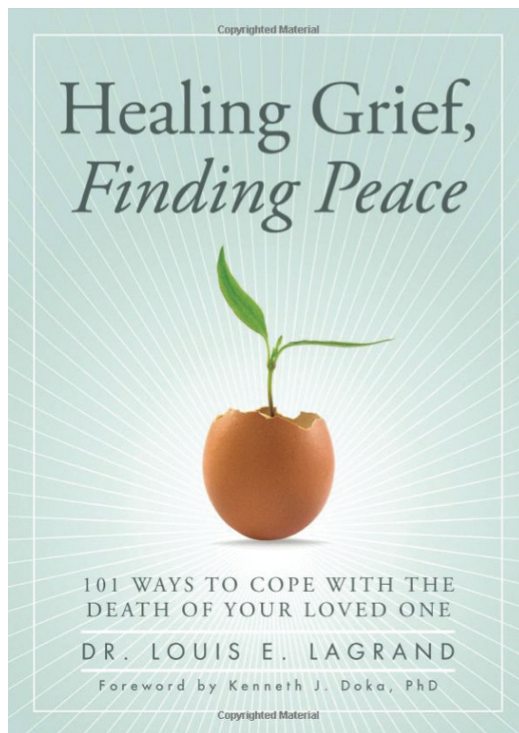
Healing Grief, Finding Peace

By Dr. Louis E. LaGrand ☆ Reviewed by Carol Lane, M. Ed.

When survivors are new to grief, it is very hard to concentrate on a short paragraph, let alone a whole book. If that is true for you, try *Healing Grief, Finding Peace* by Dr. Louis E. LaGrand, published by Sourcebooks, Inc. (2011) Naperville, Illinois. Written in short easy-to-read sections, this book is uplifting and contains many concrete suggestions for those who are grieving.

The first sections of the book offer an understanding of grief. Among other topics, Dr. LaGrand explains that grieving style is different for everyone—even those in the same household. Rather than looking at griever in the more typical way of describing how men and women grieve, he explains that each person's personal style will determine the degree in which the survivor will cope either intuitively (with feelings) or instrumentally (with actions). This gives the mourner permission to exhibit any emotion and the freedom to understand why individuals may choose to heal in dissimilar ways.

The later sections of the book focus on ways to heal. Section Four includes 47 "Inner-Strength Healing Strategies," while Section Five details 81 "Powerful Long-Term Healing Strategies." Among the latter, Dr. LaGrand talks about releases for anger. One of these releases is to "look for physical outlets for the stored-up anger through exercise." He continues on with other ideas in case exercise doesn't work for you. By offering many examples of reducing stress, he continually encourages the reader to try a variety of strategies toward healing.



As you read this book, Dr. LaGrand's deep understanding of many types of mourning is evident, making the book appropriate for anyone.

One of the most interesting elements of this book is that the author tells you to skip the parts in it that make you uncomfortable and come back to them in a few months. Your emotions will change as you walk the path of grief. *Healing Grief, Finding Peace* is also packed with inspirational quotes from a variety of sources. Dr. LaGrand often quotes survivors who have different relationships to the person who died. He also tells about his own grief, as he is a survivor

himself, having suffered the death of parents, siblings, and his only daughter. As you read this book, Dr. LaGrand's deep understanding of many types of mourning is evident, making the book appropriate for anyone.

Dr. LaGrand's advice to those who are mourning becomes a creative collaboration with the reader. For example, he writes, "Silently keep repeating these seven words over and over again: 'I am free to choose my path.' Then begin to examine each alternative." He proceeds to give concrete examples that you may accept or reject, allowing you a certain amount of control even though the death of your loved one can make you feel that you have lost direction. LaGrand's goal is that, "you will choose to keep building connections and an attitude that will bring you peace and love."

Dr. LaGrand is a Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York and Adjunct Professor of Health Careers at the Eastern Campus of Suffolk Community College in Riverhead, New York. He is also a certified grief counselor, directing support groups and giving workshops on grief to schools, hospices, and health agencies. The author of eight books and numerous articles, he is known world-wide for his research on the extraordinary experiences of the bereaved. You can visit his website at www.extraordinarygriefexperiences.com.

Healing Grief, Finding Peace is available at Amazon.com. ☆





The Spiritual Path to Healing

Part 2 ☆ By Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD

EDITOR'S NOTE: The death of a loved one challenges us in many areas including our religious and spiritual beliefs. While spirituality and religious tradition help many who are grieving, TAPS does not endorse any one spiritual belief or religion over another.

This magazine may well be in your hands because someone you love has died. I am so very sorry for your loss. You have been “torn apart” and have some very unique needs. Among these needs is to nurture yourself in five important areas: physically, emotionally, cognitively, socially, and spiritually. While all of these areas are important, this article offers practical ways to nurture yourself in the spiritual realm.

Nurture Your Spirit

Nurturing your spirit relates to caring for that part of yourself that is transcendent. You can care for your spirit in ways ranging from inspirational reading to listening to or playing music, being with those you feel support from, walking in the woods, strolling on the beach, or spending time in the company of wise people of any spiritual path.

Nurturing your spirit means giving attention to your underlying beliefs and values. It also means being non-judgmental as you observe

and appreciate people who have a different faith or spiritual outlook than you have. You can expand your own spiritual journey by going beyond your comfort zone and trying one of the practices in this article that you would not normally participate in.

◆ **Take Action:** Look over the spiritual practices in this article and select one to participate in that you might not naturally be drawn toward. Try it out and be open to how it expands your capacity to nurture your spirit.

Set Aside Time Each Day for Spiritual Practice

You get up every morning. You brush your teeth. You shower. You eat breakfast. Perhaps you read the newspaper or check your e-mail. You say hello to your family or coworkers or neighbors.

Every day you engage in rituals of self-care. You take care of your body. You take care of your brain. You probably take care of your social self, at least to some degree. But how do you make sure you are caring for your emotional self and your spiritual self each and every day? Your spirit needs feeding just as much as your body does. Set aside time to feed it each day.

What will you do with your spiritual time? You decide! Perhaps you have a favorite spiritual practice, such as yoga or meditation. Maybe you could use your daily time to try different ideas in this article.

◆ **Take Action:** You know that you're supposed to exercise your body for 30 minutes a day. Start exercising your spirit for 30 minutes a day, too. Begin today.

Reach Out to Others for Help

Perhaps the most compassionate thing you can do for yourself at this difficult time is to reach out for help from others. Think of it this way: grieving may be the hardest work you have ever done. And hard work

Feel the wind and sun on your skin. It doesn't matter if you are in a garden or a park, in the mountains or beside the ocean. Nature will soothe your soul and refresh your spirit.



is less burdensome when others lend a hand. Life's greatest challenges—getting through school, raising children, pursuing a career—are in many ways team efforts. So it should be with mourning.

Sharing your pain with others won't make it disappear, but it will, over time, make it more bearable. Reaching out for help also connects you to other people and strengthens the bonds of love that make life seem worth living again. When Bill Cosby's son Ennis was murdered, Mr. Cosby reached out to other families who were that day also confronted with the murder of their children. He was not alone and you aren't either.

♦ **Take Action:** Call a close friend who may have distanced himself from you since the death and tell him how much you need him right now. Suggest specific ways he can help.

Visit the Great Outdoors

During times of grief and loss, many people find it restorative and energizing to spend time in nature. Returning to the natural world encourages you to discover what is essential both within you and the world around you.

As a human being, you are a part of the natural world, and you are interdependent with it. As many naturalists would remind you, a close relationship with nature grounds your psyche and soul in the spiritual certainty of your roots. If you lose touch with nature's rhythms, you lose touch with your deepest self, with what some would call "the ground of your being."

If you allow yourself to befriend nature, you will discover that its timeless beauty is renewing and healing. Observe how children respect and honor the spirit of nature and its beauty because they understand it instinctively. Flowers, birds, bugs, and butterflies often bring enthusiastic cries of recognition in children. You too can approach nature with the openness of a child. Take pleasure in the sounds, sights, and smells that fill your senses.

Look up at the sky filled with beautiful clouds or twinkling stars. Stand barefoot

in cool grass. Play in the snow. Taste sweet strawberries from the field. Feel the wind and sun on your skin. It doesn't matter if you are in a garden or a park, in the mountains or beside the ocean. Nature will soothe your soul and refresh your spirit.

♦ **Take Action:** Today, reflect on your relationship with the natural world. Go for a walk or hike and invite the Divine to come along. Allow nature to sustain you and bring you peace.

Go to Exile

Choosing to spend time alone is an essential self-nurturing spiritual practice. It affords you the opportunity to be unaffected by other's wants and needs. Alone time does not mean you are being selfish. Instead, you will experience rest and renewal in ways you otherwise would not. A lack of alone time produces heightened confusion and a muting of your life force.

Getting away from it all can become your refuge. So much of modern life invites you to keep busy—e-mail, cell phones, satellite TV, all competing for your attention. Yet when you have special mourning needs, the last thing you need is distraction. Remember, this time of exile is not only for you. As you rest and renew, you can also better meet the needs of those who depend on you. Your human spirit is naturally compassionate, and once you feel restored, your instinct to be kind and generous will be revitalized.

Even Jesus went to exile. He modeled the simple spiritual practice of rest and alone time as a natural, nourishing, and valuable companion to times of busyness. Jesus would sometimes send people away, disappear without warning or explanation, and retreat to a place of rest. If Jesus went to exile, so can you!

Within your exiled time and space will evolve the insights and blessings that come to the surface only in stillness and with time. Schedule alone time on a regular basis. Don't shut out your family and friends altogether, but do answer the call for contemplative solitude.

♦ **Take Action:** Schedule one hour of solitude into your day today.

Create

Get in touch with the Creator by creating. Make something that expresses your feelings or honors the loss you are mourning. Is there a creative activity that you find you lose yourself in—that you get so involved in that you lose all track of time and place and you become immersed in your creative process? If so, that's the kind of activity you want to do now.

Write. Paint. Sew. Scrapbook. Knit. Garden. Cook. Play an instrument. Decorate. Organize. All of these activities are forms of creation. Pick one that moves you.

♦ **Take Action:** Make something today.

More Ideas

The ideas in this article are excerpted from Dr. Wolfelt's book *Healing Your Grieving Soul: 100 Spiritual Practices for Mourners*. For more information and to order this or any of his grief resources, please visit www.centerforloss.com. *

About the Author



Alan Wolfelt is a noted author, educator, and grief counselor. He serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado and is on the faculty at the University of Colorado Medical School, Department of Family Medicine. Dr. Wolfelt is known for his compassionate philosophy of "companioning" versus "treating" mourners.



An Introduction to Grieving

By Kenneth J. Doka, PhD

Whenever we face loss, we experience grief. Our reactions are unique and individual; none of us experience grief in the same way.

Not only are we different, but our losses are different. Some may grieve a spouse, others a child, parent, brother, sister, or friend. Each of these relationships is unique. Some may have been close; others may have had more tension or conflict. Circumstances may differ. Some losses are sudden, while others follow a prolonged illness. And we may each be able to draw upon different levels of support.

As we experience loss, we may need to remind ourselves of these basic facts. Sometimes we torture ourselves wondering why we do not respond as others, even our family members, do. But each of us is different.

We may feel anger—at God, towards the person who died, perhaps towards someone who we feel is not responding the way we'd like him or her to respond. We may feel guilt, too. Could we have done something differently or done more? We may even feel responsible for the loss.

Other emotions are common. Feelings of sadness, longing for the person's presence, jealousy of others who have not experienced our loss, and even relief that a prolonged illness has ended may trouble us, but they are normal and natural responses to grief. Grief may affect us in other ways. In some, the experience of grief may be physical: aches and pains, difficulty eating or sleeping, fatigue. We may constantly think of the person, even replaying in our mind some final episode or experience. Grief can affect our spiritual selves. We may struggle to find meaning in our loss; our relationship with God may change.

I often describe grief as a roller coaster. It is full of ups and downs, highs and lows, times that we may think we are doing better and times that we may think we are sure we are not. The metaphor reminds us that our sense of progress may feel very uneven.

But there are things we can do to help ourselves as we experience grief. First it is important to accept the fact that we are grieving. Take time to grieve, to realize that life will be different and sometimes difficult. We need to be gentle with ourselves.

Second, we can learn from the ways we have handled loss before. We need to draw on our resources—the coping skills we have, our own sources of support, and our spiritual strengths. And

from earlier experiences, we can learn the mistakes we need to avoid.

We do not have to struggle alone. We can share our grief with family and friends. We can seek help from clergy or counselors. Hospices and funeral homes may be able to suggest mutual support groups. And librarians and bookstores can recommend books that can assist us as we grieve. *

› This article reprinted with permission from Hospice Foundation of America's (HFA) monthly newsletter *Journeys, Newly Bereaved Issue*. For more articles on grief and bereavement visit the HFA website at www.hospicefoundation.org/journeys

About the Author



Dr. Kenneth J. Doka is a Professor of Gerontology at the Graduate School of The College of New Rochelle and Senior Consultant to the Hospice Foundation of America. A prolific author, Dr. Doka's books include *Spirituality and End-of-Life Care*, *Grieving beyond Gender: Understanding the Ways Men and Woman Mourn*, and *Men Don't Cry, Women Do*. Dr. Doka is a past president of the Association for Death Education and Counseling and has keynoted conferences throughout the world. He participates in the annual Hospice Foundation of America Teleconference and has appeared on CNN and *Nightline*.



Photo, TAPS Archives



TAPS VOLUNTEER

★ Kris Giuranna ★

Volunteers are a very important part of the TAPS family.

We are grateful for the countless hours they donate and the part they play in supporting the TAPS mission. Volunteers, we salute you!

Whether it's a regional Good Grief Camp at Fort Hood, an outdoor camp in North Carolina, or the national camp in DC, chances are you have seen the familiar face of one of our favorite Marines and mentors, Sergeant Kris Giuranna. Kris has been a part of the team since 2008 when he first volunteered for the Ohio Regional Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp. There he noticed that one of the TAPS banners had one of his fallen battle buddies on it, and from that point on, Kris was hooked.

"I saw the banner that had Marines sitting on a truck; one of those Marines was Nick Kirven... Nick was a Marine I really looked up to, and he was killed in Afghanistan in 2005. It was very touching to see his picture on the banner. About a year later," said Kris, "I had the opportunity to meet his parents at a TAPS event and let them know I was with their son in Afghanistan. That was an opportunity I will never forget."

As a decorated Marine with three combat deployments in both Iraq and Afghanistan, Kris opted to work in the DC area to be closer to his own child in Philadelphia. After serving as the Deputy Commander of Tours at the Pentagon, he most recently served in the role of Sergeant of the Guard leading a team of 24 troops at the Marine Corps Barracks in Washington, DC.

One of the most dependable and loyal volunteers and mentors for the Youth Program, Kris has taken his own personal leave time in order to volunteer for TAPS events. He has helped at the last four national Good Grief Camps in DC, more than twenty regional Good Grief Camps



Thank You Kris!

across the country, Snowball Express with the TAPS team, the USO/TAPS overnight camps, the annual TAPS Suicide Survivor Seminar, our Honor Guard Galas, The Big Miracle Premiere, and several of our Run and Remember events in the DC area.

Kris helps out in any capacity needed and when he isn't leading kid's groups, acting as a human jungle gym, serving as a TAPS security guard, or helping us carry boxes everywhere, you might even

find him in the back of the room selling our Baghdad Bracelets.

When asked about volunteering for TAPS, Kris said, "I decided to volunteer because I had always wanted a way to continue giving for my friends that lost their lives; I just wasn't sure how to do it. When my buddy explained to me what TAPS was, I felt as though it was a perfect match for what I wanted to do." For Kris, volunteering at TAPS is an opportunity to help the families of the many that have made the ultimate sacrifice. It has not only given him a chance to help others, but has also helped him through his own grief and hard times.

"The best part about volunteering with TAPS is being able to help all the families. The services all have their rivalries and claim to be the best, but in the end we all share a common goal and a passion to help people. TAPS is an excellent opportunity to just help, regardless of rank or service."

Kris has proven to be a true leader and role model for all of us, children and adults alike. He is the first to step up and volunteer, no matter the task or the location, and we commend him not only for his years of service to this country but also for his dedication to the families and children of our fallen heroes. ★

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TAPS welcomes new volunteers. Visit us at www.taps.org and click on Get Involved to explore volunteer jobs, sign up, and take our online training course.

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BIG MIRACLE

Courage, Hope, and the Heart of TAPS

TAPS is about remembering the love and celebrating the life. When we all get together, we share stories of our loved ones and we smile when we remember all the good memories we shared, and the blessing it is to have had this person in our lives, if even for too short a time. When parents meet, the conversation often includes wonderful stories of fun loving, dedicated, talented children who grew up to serve their country. Siblings remember a childhood shared with someone amazing, someone they thought would always be there. For spouses and significant others, there are special stories about that first meeting and falling in love and planning a future together.

This year, Universal Studios released a film about just such a meeting—the love story between an Army National Guard Colonel and a White House staffer, who met while rescuing three grey whales stuck under the ice in Barrow, Alaska. The real-life story is that of TAPS founder Bonnie Carroll and her husband Tom Carroll, kindred spirits who came together across thousands of miles and found incredible love and joy. While the movie, *Big Miracle*, ends with their wedding, the book by Tom Rose, from which the movie was adapted, closes with the tragic death of Brigadier General Tom Carroll in 1992 and the founding of TAPS by Bonnie Carroll as a way to honor his legacy.

The movie was filmed entirely in Alaska, where Bonnie still lives. During the filming she served as a technical advisor on the set,



helping Dermot Mulroney and Vinessa Shaw, who played the roles of Tom and Bonnie, respectively. While on set, Bonnie also spent time with the rest of the cast, including Drew Barrymore, John Krasinski, Ted Danson, Kristen Bell, and others. All were eager to hear of the “rest of the story” which included the founding of TAPS and the programs helping thousands of surviving military families.

Universal Studios was so supportive of the work done for surviving military families and so excited about the partnership with TAPS, they made the decision to shift the

official movie premiere from Los Angeles to Washington, DC. With title sponsorship from partner Telos Corporation, TAPS hosted more than four hundred surviving military family members who traveled from all parts of the country to be there with over a thousand celebrities, military leaders, members of Congress, corporate partners, and friends of TAPS. As one family member who attended the premiere said, “This film gave me hope and let me know I will survive; I’m so grateful for the comfort and care I have found through TAPS.”

Big Miracle is a family film about hope and courage and inspiration. It doesn’t seem as if the whales will survive when they are trapped under the ice with only one small hole for surfacing to breathe. But then the community pitches in to help them. Eskimos, soldiers, oil field workers, and the media work together to cut new holes in the ice to lead the trapped whales out to the open water and freedom.

In the same way, we survivors can feel as though we are trapped, barely able to keep breathing in and out. We are grateful for the help of loving, caring people from the community, the military, TAPS, and our families and friends. As they surround us with support, we find our way, just like the whales, one breath at a time.

Ultimately, it’s all about the love and the life. Our “big miracle” is that our loved ones were in our lives, and we will hold them in our hearts always. ★



Tom and Bonnie Carroll's wedding



Bonnie with Dermot Mulroney (as Tom Carroll) and Vinessa Shaw (as Bonnie) on set to film the wedding scene



Bonnie Carroll and John Krasinski



Drew Barrymore



Bonnie Carroll and Ted Danson



Drew Barrymore and Bonnie on set in Alaska



TAPS Board Member John Wood, CEO of Telos, the sponsor of the Premiere, and Jessica Marquis.



Vinessa Shaw, Drew Barrymore, Bonnie, and Dermot Mulroney on the set of BIG MIRACLE



T★A★P★S Honor Guard Gala

Washington, DC ★ April 17, 2012

The TAPS Honor Guard Gala raises funds each year to provide TAPS programs for families of our fallen military. This year's annual gala raised more than \$1.5 million, while saluting those who have made a difference in the lives of military survivors. ★



TAPS survivor Erin Gallagher displaying the Senator Ted Stevens Leadership Award



Emcee Kyra Phillips of CNN with her husband John Roberts of Fox News



General James F. Amos, Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, accepting the TAPS Military Leadership Award



TAPS Run and Remember Team Director Marie Campbell, surviving spouse and speaker Jennifer Stratton, TAPS Founder Bonnie Carroll, sponsor John B. Wood of Telos Corporation, Gala Committee Chair Buzz Hefti, and TAPS Military Mentor Staff Sgt. Bryce Whittington



Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff USMC Sgt. Maj. Bryan Battaglia and Army Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno with their wives



Congressman Norm Dicks receiving the TAPS Congressional Award

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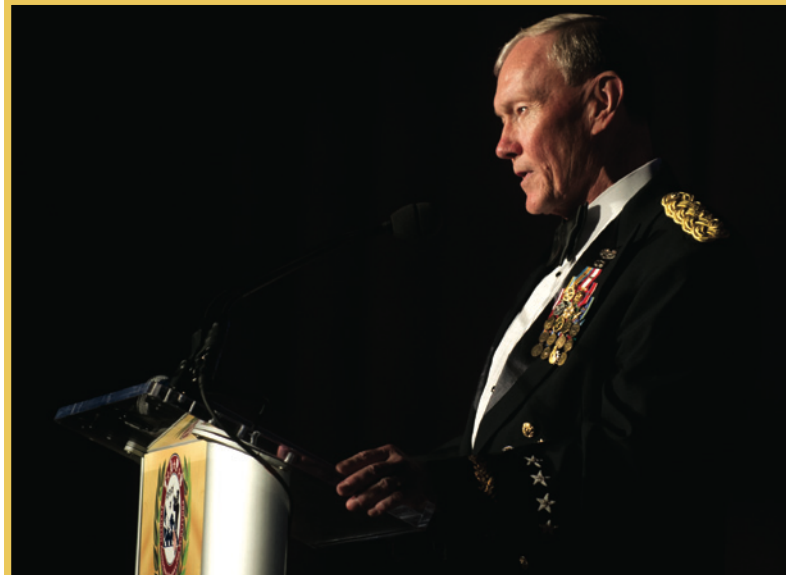
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Photos by Myles Cullen, Jackie Ross, Bill Pratt, and Sun Vega



The Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium decked in patriotic colors for the TAPS Honor Guard Gala



General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, delivering the keynote address



TAPS survivor Autumn Letendre singing the National Anthem with the Color Guard in the foreground



Run and Remember

A Win-Win Outcome

By Betsy Beard ☆ Surviving mom of Army Specialist Bradley S. Beard

When I first came to TAPS in 2004, I just assumed that somehow the military or the government was paying for the services and resources that were made available to me at the time: the national toll free helpline, the Peer Support Network, a free lifetime subscription to *TAPS Magazine*, the interactive TAPS website, the online chats, and the national seminar with all its speakers and materials and bus transportation to special events around DC during the seminar.

In truth, I felt somewhat entitled at the time. I had just lost my only son in combat in Iraq. *Somebody* should provide help and support. After all, I knew I wasn't making it through this one on my own. Because of that entitlement reaction, it wasn't until months or years later that I could actually consider the concept that

TAPS is a *nonprofit* organization dependent upon the generosity of others who care deeply about our nation's legacy of service and sacrifice.

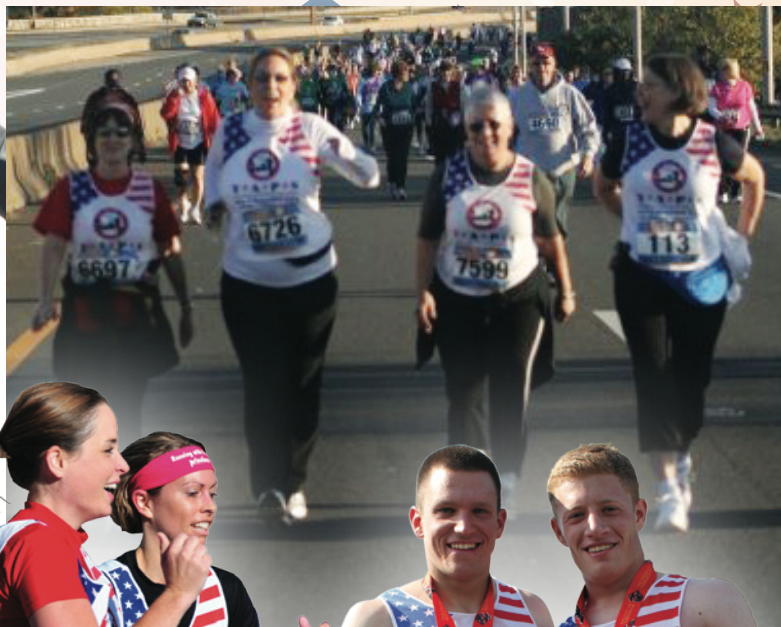
Although TAPS is a national Veterans Service Organization, it receives no funding from the federal (or any other) government. Nor does it receive funding from any of the branches of the Armed Forces. Certainly this is explained on the website, but in those first months after Brad died, I was in no condition to appreciate what that meant.

My grief-fogged brain didn't realize that TAPS had a small but dedicated staff who connected survivors, provided support, answered the phones, planned events, and (in their spare time) sought out grants and funding so that the mission of TAPS could continue. I was not aware that there were also special friends and partners who raised funds through golf tournaments,

sales of bracelets, and the occasional bake sale. I just took all the TAPS programs for granted. I didn't even fully understand the contributions of the TAPS Run and Remember Team, although I had heard of it and seen photographs.

The Run and Remember Team was still in its infancy then, and team director Marie Campbell, whose husband died in the Khobar Towers bombing in 1996, fielded several dozen runners for the Marine Corps Marathon (MCM) each year. "The team was started not only as a way to remember my husband Dee," Marie said, "but it was also a way for me to give back and say thank you to TAPS for helping me." Although Marie was a full time school-teacher in Texas, she volunteered and made time to put the team together, provide inspiration, and connect volunteer runners to surviving families. That was in 2004.





In the intervening years, Marie joined the TAPS staff as the Director of the Run and Remember Team, which has grown into a force for healing that provides major fundraising opportunities, not only in the MCM but in any race that is run anywhere in the world. Under Marie's leadership, the team has grown to include hundreds of runners, families, supporters, and friends running hundreds of races in hundreds of places.

Through the Run and Remember team, TAPS provides an opportunity not only for friends who want to support us, but also for those of us who are surviving family members. It's a perfect opportunity for any of us to give back to the organization that has helped us through our darkest days and sleepless nights.

And that's where the winning comes in. TAPS benefits from having team members raise funds throughout the year. Runners benefit from having a meaningful focus to their run and a charity partner to support. Family members benefit by having their loved ones honored. Those survivors who join the team to run or walk also reap all the physical benefits of outdoor exercise, while honoring their child, sibling, spouse, or friend. In addition to all that, the friendships that are formed between runners

and surviving families benefit everyone. And that is why I called this article a Win-Win Outcome. Actually, for those who were counting, it is a win-win-win-win-win proposition.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

If you would like to have someone run in honor of your loved one, write to Marie at run@taps.org. She will work with you to connect you to a volunteer runner. The runner will be given a fundraising website and you can collaborate on text that will honor your loved one. Then simply send the fundraising link to your family and friends, allowing them to make a donation in memory of your loved one. When friends and supporters make donations, you will see the thermometer gauge fill in until it reaches 100% of your fundraising goal. During the race, your runner will wear the signature TAPS singlet with a

laminated photo of your loved one pinned to the back. If you attend the race, you will be able to meet your runner in addition to communicating with him or her during the entire process.

If you would like to run or walk in memory of your loved one, join the Run and Remember Team today. You will be given a fundraising website as well as training tips and articles. You will set up your website to tell about your loved one, send out the link to friends and family, and then lace up your shoes and start training. On race day, you will wear the signature TAPS singlet with a laminated photo of your loved one pinned to the back. Go to the TAPS website today at www.taps.org or email the Run and Remember Team staff at run@taps.org. They will be happy to help get you started. ★

Photos, TAPS Archives



National Sports Teams & Defense Contractors Team Up to Support TAPS

Washington Capitals and Skydex Technologies

The National Hockey League's Washington Capitals highlighted their ninth Salute to the Military Night in March with a donation to TAPS. Bonnie Carroll, founder and president of TAPS, accepted a check for more than \$105,000. The funds were raised through the Capitals' Courage Caps Campaign in which nearly 2,500 caps and 2,000 t-shirts were sold.

This year's campaign was sponsored by SKYDEX Technologies, an industry leader in developing protective products that increase survivability and reduce injuries for our Armed Forces. Working with the Capitals to benefit TAPS was important to the company because the program aligns with SKYDEX's mission to protect service members.

"The great success of this year's campaign has gratified and overwhelmed us all," said

Mike Buchen, SKYDEX president and CEO. "This is not just a normal fundraiser. This is a piece of people's hearts going out to people who really need help. There is no organization more deserving than TAPS and no better partner than the Washington Capitals. SKYDEX is proud to have been part of this effort."

To launch the campaign, Washington Capitals Charities hosted a skating party

for nearly 100 surviving family members and children. They ate pizza, watched the team practice, and skated with the players.

"It means a lot to have the Courage Caps campaign support TAPS financially," said Carroll. "The funding will make a huge difference in our ability to provide services 24/7 for our military family members who have suffered a loss."



Photo courtesy of Ami Neiberger-Miller

Washington Redskins and Oshkosh Defense

The National Football League's Washington Redskins teamed up last fall with their military appreciation partner Oshkosh Defense to raise funds for TAPS. In October the team and Oshkosh honored TAPS at the game between the Redskins and the Philadelphia Eagles, as a group of surviving families of our fallen military helped carry a huge American flag out onto the field.

On their website, the Redskins team noted, "The Redskins are proud to partner with Oshkosh Defense and salute their unwavering support of our troops and their families."

Oshkosh Defense donated two dollars for every signature collected on the TAPS signature boards located at the "Pro Football and the American Spirit" exhibit at the team's stadium in Maryland. The signature boards were also part of Oshkosh Defense's exhibit at the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) 2011 Exposition, where attendees could add their signatures to show support for the surviving families. The total amount of the donation came to \$100,000.

"We are grateful to Oshkosh for their generous support of TAPS. Oshkosh's efforts will help TAPS provide comfort and care for so many families who are grieving the death of a loved one who served in the Armed Forces," said Bonnie Carroll, TAPS founder and president. *





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Thank you to the Friends of TAPS whose personal gifts, memorial tributes, grants, event sponsorships, and planned gifts continue to uplift, comfort, and care for the loved ones of those who served and died.



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Go to www.taps.org and click on "Run and Remember Team" for more information. *



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Washington, DC ★ October 21, 2012

**Marine Corps Marathon, 10K,
and Healthy Kids Fun Run**
Washington, DC ★ October 27 and 28, 2012

Rock 'n' Roll Marathon & Half Marathon
San Antonio, Texas ★ November 11, 2012



Photos, TAPS Archives