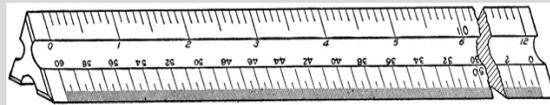




A July 2016 note from Joan Shirley, as one victim to another and as the Victim Advocate for the Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death

This month we are going to talk about

“How Do You Measure Your Grief and Recovery?”

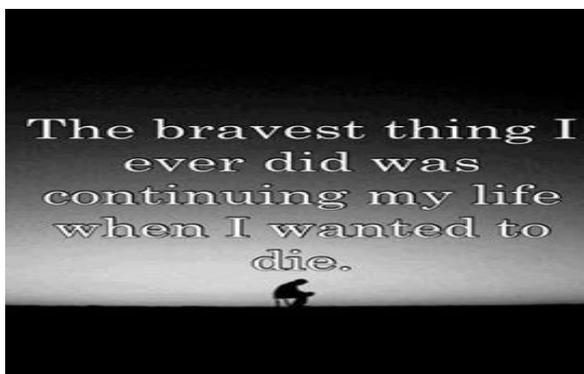


Grief doesn't magically end at a certain point after a murder victim's death or after an attempted murder. It changes with time. Reminders often bring back the pain of continued loss no matter how long it's been; often with extreme pain and devastation.

Our son, Kevin, was 17 yr. old when he was murdered on May 29, 1999. This 17th year's anniversary was a poignant reminder for me that our Kevin has now been gone for as many years as he was alive! After all of these years when I thought that the anniversary couldn't possibly surprise me anymore; this year's came around with a real sadness that caught me off guard. When I went to the murder site to put flowers on the boys' memorial stone, I realized that the area where he died is very different. The many neighbors who found them murdered that night have all moved away from that corner; their reasons for moving have been “escaping the painful memories of that night.” The trees, bushes and grasses are all so tall and the ground around his memorial stone continues to wash away. Most sadly, after all these years, for many in the area this corner means nothing to them. That's when the reality of time really struck me; 17 years. To me it often feels just like 1999 but others have forgotten or didn't live here then which makes me sad and deep down inside, a little angry. Life has moved on, others have moved on and so have I in many good ways. Still, I remember and grieve the loss of Kevin and that reality means going to the site and the cemetery for the rest of my life.



In our presentations that Pat and I make around ABQ, we have a slide on our power point presentation that looks like this:



“The bravest thing I ever did was continuing my life when I wanted to die.”

I believe that this saying is true; how many of us just wanted to die rather than keep living without our loved one/s and/or the life we enjoyed before this happened to us? Then, we realize somewhere “down the road” that we have actually continued to live and we have found “new and different” lives. The question is how have we found the strength to go on and build new lives? What things have we done to help ourselves to be able to live these “new” lives?



Support from Each Other

We are extremely proud of our homicide support group in Los Lunas! This group of 9-10 people truly represents a vibrant support group! They are committed to be at as many group meetings as possible, they listen well to each other and offer support and suggestions that may help others in the group, they attend other members’ court hearings and they support each other’s events of memorialization. They are there for each other every day; worrying about their members when people are missing. Sure, they are there also for themselves to learn about the grieving process as well as how the criminal justice system works, or doesn’t work, and to talk about their own struggles, but they want to make sure that everyone is heard and encouraged whenever possible. This month, Pat acquired free movie tickets from the Starlight Theater in Los Lunas to give to our group; the owners of the theater recognized how important this group was to the health of their community and wanted to recognize them for their courage. We want to sincerely thank the owners again for their generosity and understanding of what murder families have to go through each and every day. Sure, support groups work for those who attend them and actively participate in them and we thank each of those members for their dedication and hard work. Mary Ann remarked that “I look forward to coming

each month” and Diana remarked that “we come here to learn; we have no idea what to expect.” If you live in Los Lunas, you are most welcome to join this group; you will be glad that you did!

Group Information note: The **Rio Rancho** group is taking a short break during the summer to find a new meeting space. The **ABQ** groups continue to grow and are learning to depend on each other; a feat that is not easily obtained. You are most welcome to come to our groups; we hope that you will come.



Support from NM Crime Victims Reparation Commission

Families have asked us to help them fill out their NM Crime Victims Reparation Commission applications so that they could possibly be reimbursed for their funeral and counseling costs. This fund of money is federal and state monies obtained through required fees from offenders. There are some reasons why applications are denied but for the most part, most are approved at some level. Even if an application is denied; counseling costs are always covered. Financial and health burdens are overwhelming after victimization and the NMCVRC is there to help whenever it is possible to make victims’ lives better. If you haven’t had an application filed for you and your victimization has been within the last two years; give us a call and we will get that process started for you.



Information and Referrals can help

In some cases, justice and recovery may come from the civil justice system and some families have depended on us for referrals to civil lawyers – we can give you information on the role of the civil justice system. We also can provide information about other support programs and other types of support and assistance. We have the names of many additional support agencies which might help you in your journey; especially for grieving children. We refer our children to the Children’s Grief Center of NM for quality grief counseling as they are the experts in grief in children. We can get you in touch with the Office of the Medical Investigator’s (OMI) grief counselor for free grief counseling.

We have gone to court with families for personal support and also to meetings with detectives, DA’s and with OMI. Sometimes, we just need another set of ears and someone who isn’t traumatized by our own victimization to listen and ask questions that will simplify the understanding of the process for us.



Volunteers also help with grief and recovery

With the support of our volunteers, we have had our Snowflake Memorials in December, helped facilitate our support groups, provided Spanish speaking support, counseling, civil justice support and other activities during each of the almost 5 years that we have been in existence.

We thank our volunteers for their many talents which they so willingly share with us and you!

In closing:

Some of you have chosen to “go it alone.” If that works for you, our hopes are that you have a positive resolution in your case as well as your personal recovery. You will still get our newsletter and your murdered loved one will be remembered in our “Those We Have Lost” section in January or July. All of you are always welcome to call us, go through our website, ask about Skyping, send us an email, or come by our office M-F from 12-3pm. Also know that some of our families get an additional level of grief support by attending another grief support group in ABQ, Silver City, Los Alamos and Santa Fe– COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS; contact is me at 505-294-1018 for more info.

We don’t know everything but if we don’t, we can promise you that we will keep digging until we find some answers to your needs. Please, don’t hesitate to get in touch with us, we want to help; helping you along your journey is our passion. Take care of yourself and know that we do care.

We received this message from one of our families when we sent them a support message on the death anniversary date –

Joan and Pat,

Thank you both for your kind words & thoughts this week. You're correct that this is a rough week. Seems like no matter how much time passes the heart always knows that time of year. Emotions run high, everyone is on edge and only when we really stop to think about why we are so angry and sad do we realize that it's that horrible anniversary that turned our lives upside down. It means a lot to me to know that someone other than my family remembered what this week means to us and remembers that time heals all wounds, but the scars still remain. VM

Best thoughts, Joan



505-243-2222