



E-Mail Newsletter

NOVEMBER 17, 2007

NOVEMBER VOLUME 2, NUMBER 11

"Friends
Helping
Friends."

Everyday is
A gift, that's
why we
call
today,
"the
present"

Taking care of you

People have been starting to think about the holidays, the beginning of fall tends to bring on the anticipation of all the holidays that are about to hit us all right between the eyes. Many of us have been through this before, lean on us to help you get through them. Don't look for trouble and try not to dwell on them, get through today, maybe tomorrow or the next week or so, don't worry about the holidays, they will be here whether you want them to come or not. I'll add more on the subject in the December Newsletter also.

Uh-Oh, It's That Time Again!

by Russell Friedman & John W. James

The holidays are approaching. A joyous time. A festive time. A time when families and friends celebrate the passage of another year and the coming of a new year.

But not everyone will feel like celebrating.

If this is the first year since the death of a loved one or a divorce, the holidays may be difficult. Since time does not heal emotional wounds, subsequent holiday times may be painful and awkward for you. Even surrounded by family and friends, you may feel isolated, alone, and as if no one understands.

As we move toward Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah and New Year's Day, again this year, we will also be reminded of the great losses suffered on September 11, 2001. Even those of us not directly affected by the attacks, likely will feel some of that overwhelming sadness.

How grief feels

Grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss. It is marked by conflicting emotions that result from the change in a familiar pattern of behavior. But from the standpoint of the grieving person, this is how grief may feel:

Grief is the feeling of reaching out for someone who has always been there, only to find when we need them one more time, they are no longer there.

Adapting to the absence of a loved one is difficult enough. But, the first holiday season, with its constant reminders of holiday joy and tradition, can be especially painful. At the Grief Recovery Institute we've talked with thousands of people who've told us they wished they could jump from late October right to mid-January. We've heard the same sentiment from people enduring their first holiday season following a divorce.

It's normal to worry that you won't be able to handle the pain of that first holiday season, whether the missing loved one is a spouse, parent, grandparent, sibling or child. You may even think you'd rather skip holiday gatherings. Those feelings and fears are not illogical or irrational. They represent a normal, healthy range of emotions about painful loss and our society's limited ability to talk openly and honestly about grief.

A taboo subject

We all experience losses and we all grieve. Yet, grief is one of the most off-limits topics for discussion in our society. It seems strange that one of the experiences we are all going to have, is the one experience we are ill-prepared for and ill-equipped to talk about. Even more troubling is all the misinformation passed on about grief.

We have been taught to believe that "Time heals all wounds." So people will say, "It just takes

time." The griever assumes the advice to be correct, and waits while time goes by. But time is neutral and does nothing but pass.

People also say, "You have to be strong for the children" [or other family members]. So we pass that on to the griever, who dutifully acts strong for the kids, while burying their own feelings deeper and deeper.

We have been socialized to believe that intellectual remarks will help with emotional conflict. So others say, "Don't feel bad, he led such a full life." Maybe he did. But the griever is in emotional turmoil, and that comment, which may be intellectually accurate is not emotionally helpful.

"Recovery from loss is achieved by a series of small and correct choices made by the griever," and none of the pat remarks identified above help the griever take those correct and necessary steps. Rather, the griever is led down a path that leads to more isolation and loneliness.

What grievers want

Several years ago we conducted a survey that asked: "What is the best way to act around someone who has just experienced the death of a loved one?" From the multiple choice answers, 98 percent of the respondents chose: "Act as if nothing had happened."

We also surveyed those who had experienced the death of a loved in the past five years. We asked them: "In the weeks and months immediately following the death of your loved one, what did you most want and need to do?" Ninety-four percent responded: "Talk about what happened and my relationship with the person who died."

This holiday season, there will be plenty of hurting people who, given the opportunity, will want to talk about someone they miss. You will be a most cherished friend or family member if the grieving person feels safe enough to talk to you about what is so foremost on his mind and in his heart. If the person doesn't want to talk about it, don't be offended.

A safe start

At the very least, we suggest that you to bring up the topic, and allow them to decide if they want to talk about it. If you're thinking that it is an awkward question and you don't know how to ask it, we agree with you. So, here's a simple phrase which allows the griever to respond or not as they see fit, but is not an interrogation or a command that they must talk about the loss. "I heard about the death in your family...I can't imagine what this has been like for you."

If you look at that phrase you'll notice that it is actually a statement, but the use of the word "imagine" invites an answer without ever asking a probing question. Interestingly, over the years, we have found the word "imagine" to be the single most open-ended emotional word in the English language. It implies that whatever the griever says will be acceptable. It implies that whatever the griever says will not be judged or criticized. Those are very important safeguards for the griever, who is hyper-aware of any comments or questions which imply that he is wrong or defective for having the emotions associated with loss.

Just use your own memory and experience to recall how important it was to feel safe when your heart had been affected by a painful loss. Many of you may remember having felt hurt by people who were really very close to you, when they said things that didn't feel right, or equally, when they avoided the topic, and left you feeling very confused.

If a friend gets a new sports car, we wouldn't dream of not asking all about it. We know they really want to tell us all about it. We must adopt a parallel notion when something sad or upsetting has happened. We know, in many cases, they really want to talk about it.

If people don't feel safe to talk, they may find other ways to soothe themselves. That could include alcohol, drugs and food - something in plentiful supply at holiday time, and which may have negative or disastrous consequences.

Take a chance

Communication has its risks. Bringing up a loss - yours or someone else's - may not be welcomed. Good taste and timing are important. For instance, we're not suggesting that just as Grandpa starts to carve the turkey, you blurt out, "How have you been since Grandma died?"

However, from personal experience, we can tell you that it would not make any sense not to mention someone very important to us. Russell's personal story illustrates this idea: "My mother died ten years ago on the day before Thanksgiving, and that holiday hasn't been the same for me since. But I always take the opportunity to toast my Mom and say how much I miss her. Invariably, the others at the table start talking about people they miss. The stories and the memories they evoke are filled with laughter and tears."

The ability to communicate our emotions openly and clearly, happy or sad, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of being human. It is less human to exclude from discussion those people so important in our past.

Being afraid of sad feelings can deprive us of the treasure trove of memories attached to relationships with people who have died. Overcoming this fear, especially at holiday time, allows us to claim the full memory of the person we're missing. People are surprised to discover that even though there may be some sadness, there may be plenty of joy as well.

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May you all have a Happy & healthy Thanksgiving! Remember if we think long and hard we all have something to be grateful for.

Until next month

Good grief

AnneGD@groww.org

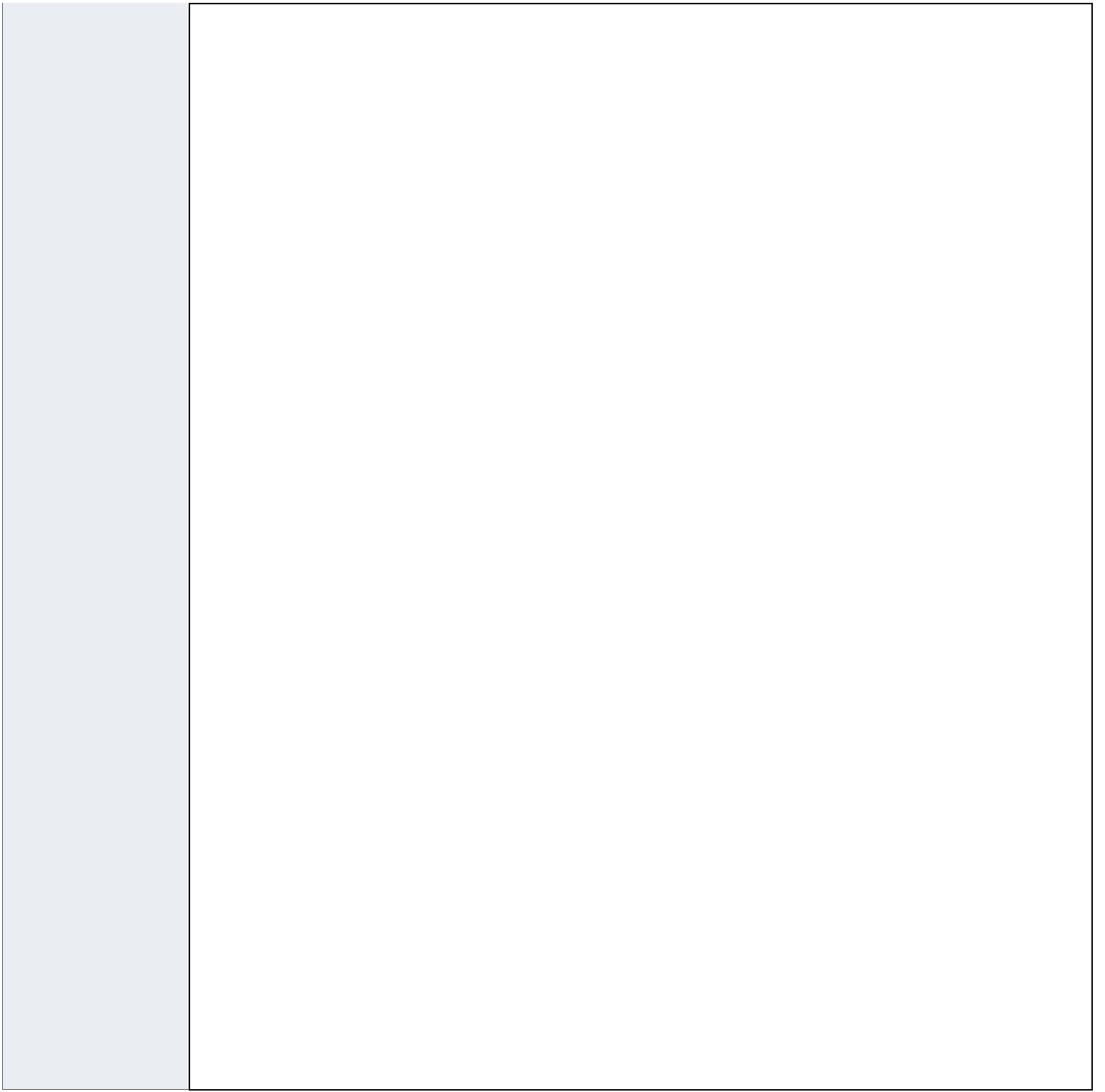


Chatting Tips: staff@groww.org

When you do get in to the chat room, are you finding you can't keep up and the screen is too small? Look up at the top right hand corner and click on the button which says FLOAT... it will open a new window... now MAXIMIZE that window by clicking on the square in the upper right hand corner... the square is between the "-" and the "x"... it will make the room larger, then type *chat font size 14 or 16

If you are having trouble connecting to the chat rooms, you may need to update your java. Are you getting that blue screen when you try to log on? Try this link and follow the instructions, it should solve your problem

<http://java.sun.com/getjava/download.html>



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Help GROWW

- * GROWW has been a lifeline to me.
- * GROWW is the only place where I don't have to hide what I'm really feeling.
- * Nobody understands what I'm going through like my GROWW family does.
- * I don't think I could have survived without GROWW.

When I read daily how much GROWW means to so many, I know that we are continuing to fulfill the promise upon which this site was founded by JudyD in early 1998.

GROWW has never, and will never, ask for contributions as a condition of membership. The price of admission is way too high already.

But I wonder how many of you know that GROWW is supported solely by voluntary donations from members. Although the site is free to use by all who, sadly, qualify to be here, it is not "free." The site must be paid for, the chat rooms must be paid for, the message boards and all the pages that you can access through the GROWW site all cost money, and, as I said, all these expenses must be met by donations.

If you would like to help us keep the promise alive, and can afford a small monthly - or one time - donation, it's easy to help GROWW help those who need us. If a fraction of those who spend days and nights on the site committed to just a small donation, it would go a long way toward helping us meet expenses. You can make a monthly donation either by check or through paypal, every little bit helps, just think if the over 2000 people alone who receive our Newsletter sent \$1. or \$5. what that could add up to. Tax time is around the corner, please consider GROWW as one of your charities, if you work and can donate through the United Way, you can specify GROWW as your charity of choice. You can also purchase GROWW items through cafepress. You can also join Igive, it doesn't cost you a cent, when you make purchases through Igive using their stores a percentage goes to the charity of your choice. It is easy to join and easy to use. Many people prefer to shop online then deal with all the happy people out there in the holiday spirit.



\$5 BONUS DONATIONS

For every new member who joins iGive.com and shops within 45 days, we'll donate an extra \$5 to their selected cause. Offer ends soon!

[Tell a friend about iGive.com today.](#)

You can also order GROWW items online from cafepress. It does all the shipping and making of the items.

Follow the link:

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Go to www.igive.com and you can donate money to GROWW by purchasing through igive, you don't pay anymore, it costs you nothing and GROWW gets a little bit.

This may sound a lot like a commercial, and maybe it is. But have you ever wondered just how GROWW is available to you 24/7 every day of the year?

Thank you to our wonderful members who do donate, have donated, and/or will donate. We wouldn't be here without you.

AFSP's National Survivors of Suicide Day - November 17th

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is appealing to organizations in related fields (mental health, suicide prevention, and bereavement) to ask that you help us reach out to survivors of suicide loss to tell them about this conference for bereavement after suicide loss.

Please disseminate the message below to anyone within your organization or constituency who might be interested. If you need any further information, please contact Rebecca Thorp at rthorp@afsp.org or 212-363-3500 x10 or Joanne Harpel at jharpel@afsp.org or 212-363-3500 x32.

Thank you very much,

Joanne Harpel, Director of Survivor Initiatives
Rebecca Thorp, Assistant to Survivor Initiatives

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On Saturday, Nov. 17, 2007, AFSP will sponsor its ninth annual National Survivors of Suicide Day, reaching out to tens of thousands of people who have lost a loved one to suicide. The day of conferences will connect survivors through a satellite and Internet broadcast, allowing survivors to share their experiences of loss.

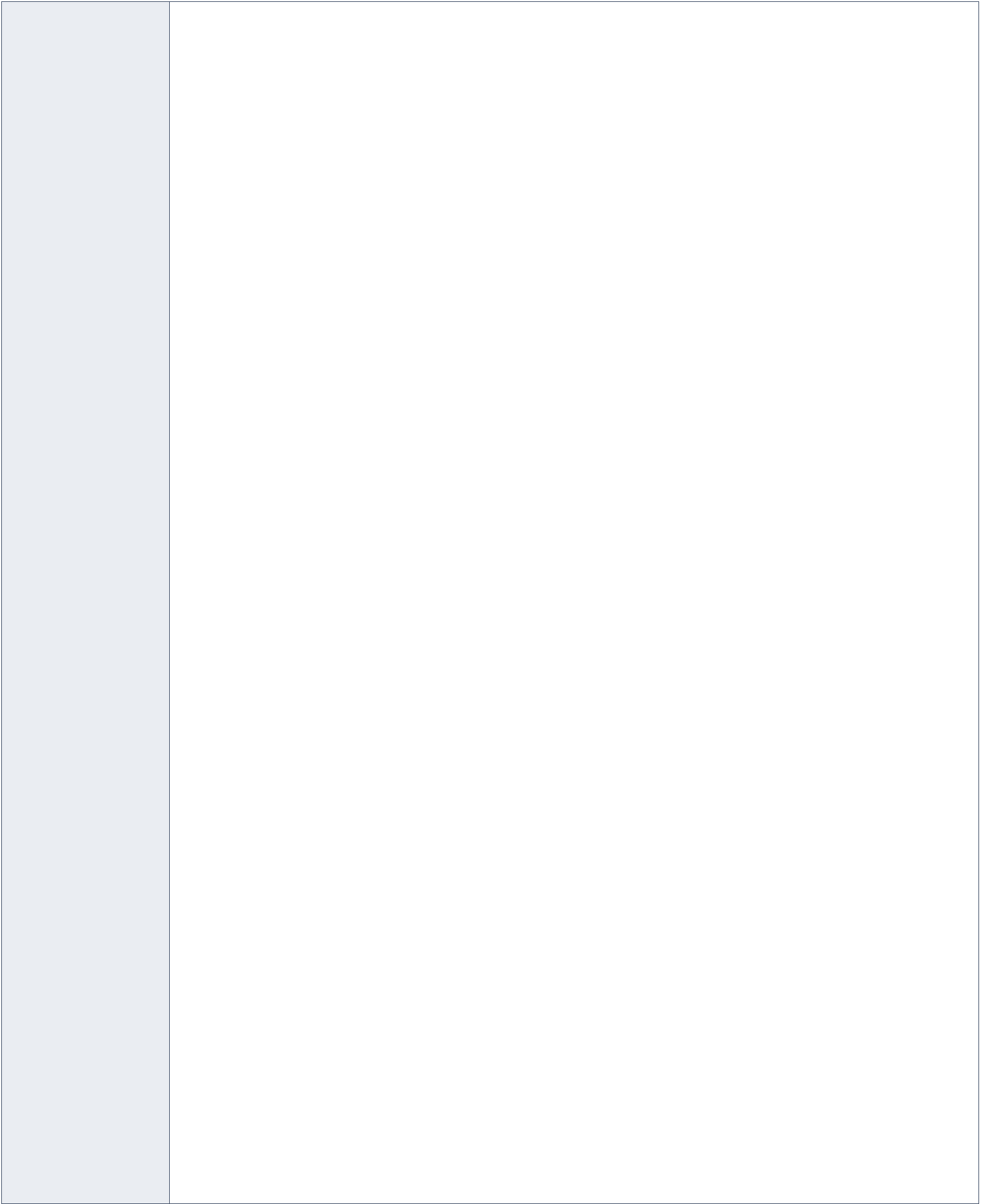
All local conferences will join in the broadcast (1-2:30 p.m. EST), which will offer emotional support to survivors of suicide loss and information about resources for healing. The broadcast will feature a panel of experienced survivors and mental health professionals.

Please click here to find a conference site near you. *(This list is continually updated as new sites register.)*

For those survivors of suicide loss who don't live near a conference site or who find it difficult to attend in person, the 90-minute program will also be broadcast on the AFSP website from 1-2:30 p.m. eastern time, with a live online chat immediately following the broadcast. The program will also be archived on the website for a full year afterwards, so survivors can watch it free of charge, anytime.

We hope you'll share in this powerful day of support, information, and healing. If you have any questions, please contact AFSP at inquiry@afsp.org.

Please feel free to pass this message on to anyone you think might be interested.
www.afsp.org



RECIPE

MEXICAN DIP

2 container of soft cream cheese

2 pkg of Mexican shredded cheese

2 can of chile NO beans

2 bags of frito scoops

get an oven safe pan, put one layer of cream cheese, followed by a layer of chile. Then a layer of cheese repeat the layers again.

Bake at 350 for about 30 minutes or until cheese is bubbly and hot.

Serve with scoops

Enjoy