

Survivors After Suicide

Your Path Toward Healing
Erasing the Stigma – Suicide is Preventable

A Program of Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services July 2014

Didi Hirsch Co-Founder Norman Farberow Honored

By Lyn Morris

Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center co-founder Dr. Norman Farberow was honored at the 47th Annual American Association of Suicidology Conference in April. Didi Hirsch Vice President of Clinical Operations Lyn Morris introduced a video tribute to Dr. Farberow. Here are excerpts of her remarks:

Today, it is with great love and respect, that we honor Dr. Norman Farberow, a founding father in Suicidology, a pioneer in the field. Many of us are here today because his work has either influenced our careers, saved our lives or helped us cope with losing a loved one to suicide. For some, we are here for all those reasons.

Dr. Farberow is a prolific, brilliant man, yet he is the most humble man you will ever meet. In fact, when he was being interviewed for this tribute and was asked to describe his most enduring contribution to the field of suicide, he graciously declined to answer, not wanting the spotlight to be on himself. But today he is in the spotlight so I am going to highlight what I know to be most important to him – the impact of his contributions on people's lives.

In 1958, Dr. Farberow co-founded the first Crisis Line in the nation. It began operating from the homes of our founder fathers – who include Dr. [Edwin S.] Shneidman and Dr. [Robert E.]

Litman – with their wives answering the phones. After the national recognition they received from conducting a psychological autopsy on Marilyn Monroe, they were flooded with calls and had to increase to 24/7 coverage. Today, there are hundreds of crisis centers saving lives across the nation and even worldwide. At times, we get feedback from our callers to the Suicide Prevention Center. One particular caller said, "Please thank whoever made this crisis line possible; it saved my life tonight." So on behalf of that caller and millions more, thank you Dr. Farberow.

Dr. Farberow is an enthusiastic educator. In 1965, he started training law enforcement officers, understanding that first responders were often in situations where they were dealing with suicidal individuals and they could be the difference between life and death. A few years ago, there was an Orange County Sheriff who was called to the scene of a man

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Didi Hirsch President/CEO Dr. Kita Curry, Suicide Prevention Center Co-founder Dr. Norman Farberow and Didi Hirsch Vice President of Clinical Services, Lyn Morris, LMFT at the 47th American Association of Suicidology Conference, held April 9-12 at the Century Plaza Hyatt Regency in Los Angeles.



Always With Me

By Rossano Galante

On a rainy night in December 2010 I returned home from a Christmas concert to discover my partner, Douglas, sleeping peacefully in his reclining chair with his faithful Irish setter, Kiley, lying next to him. The CD player filled the dimly-lit house with joyous Christmas music. I was surprised Doug didn't wake up when I entered so I went to check on him. As I approached, I saw his pale face and noticed his chest was not rising to take in the cool evening air. I realized he wasn't sleeping and my stomach and chest tightened as the blood left my face and my mouth and throat became dry. I frantically tried to revive him until the paramedics arrived. To my horror, they were unable to bring him back.

That night was the beginning of my two-year journey through grieving hell that included trauma, guilt, anxiety, fear, loneliness and loss of hope. During those grieving years, I had a handful of dreams about Doug in which he never spoke to me. Whenever I awoke from those dreams, I was filled with intense

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Rick's Corner

The theme at this year's American Association of Suicidology 47th Annual Conference was **Never Alone: Survivors Helping Survivors**,

providing the message that we, as survivors, do not have to cope with our losses by ourselves.

There is a network of survivors, locally, nationally and internationally, that provides support and hope when we are struggling to make sense of the incomprehensible.

There are online resources that provide space to communicate our thoughts and feelings.

Our local groups, Survivors After Suicide, provide a safe and nurturing place to talk about our thoughts, feelings, frustrations and pain.

If you do a Google search for "suicide survivors," our groups are listed on the first page.

We are survivors who offer words of hope, shoulders of support and healing embraces for new survivors or those whose loss may have been years in the past.

Whenever moments of darkness descend or the pain and grief seem overwhelming, reach out to members of your group, your facilitator or co-facilitator or attend the drop-in group in your area.

Each of us has the capacity to be a support for other survivors. We've been there. We know the pain and have felt the despair. We've needed a shoulder to cry on, someone to wrap their arms around us, someone to not tell us "it will be OK," but rather to say, "I am here. Let me help."

Be aware. Be helpful. Provide hope.

Peace and Love,

Rick

Rick Mogil has been program director of Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention and Bereavement Services since 2007.

Haiku

By Michael Mitchell



Waves will roar and spray,
And the clouds will float away,
But my mom will stay.

Suicide Attempters Find Help, Hope and Support at Didi Hirsch

By Robert K. Stohr, M.S., L.M.F.T.

Each year, there are more than 5,000 suicide attempts in Los Angeles. According to at least one study, almost half of the people who survive a suicide attempt go on to make a second fatal or non-fatal attempt in the next five years. As the Division Director for Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center and a fellow survivor of a suicide loss, I want to assure you that we are dedicated to providing help and hope to those in pain and in danger of dying.

Nearly three years ago, we formed **Survivors of Suicide Attempts**, a program that provides support to people who have attempted suicide. Since our first group met, we have helped dozens of people find new strategies to cope with painful and persistent thoughts of suicide. Our program has been so successful that our treatment manual is under review by the National Suicide Prevention Resource Registry to become a "best practice" nationwide. We were also pleased when the American Association of Suicidology announced at its 47th annual conference in April that their board of directors has created a new division to represent suicide attempters and the people who love and care for them.

Meanwhile, our crisis line, which is the oldest and largest in the nation, will set a new record of taking more than 58,000 calls this year. We continue to serve an area of over 21 million people, and have currently expanded our chat services to 8 hours a day. Our crisis counselors use text services to communicate with deaf persons and others who are unable or unwilling to reach out to us by computer or phone. We are also one of five centers in the nation taking calls on the Disaster Distress Helpline for people coping with natural or manmade disasters.

We couldn't do what we do without the help of our wonderful staff and phenomenal volunteers, who work as crisis counselors, provide support to fellow survivors and assist us with outreach efforts.

Too many of us have lost our loved ones to suicide. In my own experience, I have found healing by forging my pain into action to make a difference. I hope this newsletter brings you light and hope and that each of you continues to find solace and healing among our community of survivors. I also invite you to join us at our annual Alive & Running 5K Walk/Run fundraiser for the Suicide Prevention Center!

Robert is Division Director of Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center.

Resources for Survivors and Suicide Prevention

HELP LINES

Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services Suicide Prevention Crisis Line Los Angeles and Orange Counties: (877) 7-CRISIS or (877) 727-4747
Chat available 4:30 pm-12:30 am daily at www.didihirsch.org/chat
Text services also available

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-TALK or (800) 273-8255

TEEN LINE:
Teen hotline staffed by teens 6-10 pm
(800) TLC-TEEN or (900) 852-8336

Trevor Helpline:
Suicide hotline for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning youth
(800) 850-8078

RESOURCES

American Association of Suicidology (AAS) (202) 237-2280
www.suicidology.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
(888) 333-2280 • www.afsp.org

Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services:
Eleven sites in LA and Orange Counties
(310) 390-8896 • www.didihirsch.org

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
for family of people with mental illness
National: (800) 950-6264
www.nami.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
www.samhsa.gov

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
(877) GET-SPRC (438-7772)
www.sprc.org or www.sprc.org/thespark

NEWSLETTER

Survivors After Suicide Newsletter is a publication of Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center. Survivors After Suicide provides support to those who have lost loved ones to suicide.

SAS Program Numbers:
LA: (310) 895-2326
OC: (714) 547-0885

Editor: Kim Kowsky
Editorial Board: Lois Bloom; Samuel C. Bloom; Norman Farberow, Ph.D.; Rick Mogil; Richard Stohr, MFT

Reprint Policy:
Nonprofit support organizations may reprint material from our newsletter.

More resources at www.didihirsch.org

Upcoming Events

**Alive & Running
5K Run/Walk for Suicide Prevention**

September 28, 2014

**American Foundation for
Suicide Prevention
International Survivors
of Suicide Loss Day**

November 22, 2014

**Survivors After Suicide
Holiday Potluck**

Saturday, December 6, 2014, 6-8pm
Veterans Memorial Park – Teen Center
4117 Overland Ave.
Culver City, CA 90232

Summer Potluck for SAS Members Celebrates Hope



With "hope" as its theme, the SAS Summer Potluck on Saturday, June 14, included 65 survivors who shared memories of loved ones lost to suicide while gathering in a celebration of life, change, healing and resilience. New survivors received white carnations, which symbolize hope, from veteran survivors before talking about loved ones they lost. Each gathering ends with a candle lighting ceremony representing the past, present and future.



SAS is a network of survivors that offers words of hope, shoulders of support and healing embraces for all Survivors of Suicide, whether their loss was recent or years in the past. SAS holds a summer and a holiday potluck each year.

Just Walk With Me

By James R. Kok

I want to tell you about it...
 No, I really don't. I'd rather keep it to myself; handle it alone.
 I do think it would be good for me to share it with you, but I don't want to because I'm afraid of what you'll say or how you'll act.
 I'm afraid you might feel sorry for me in a way that makes me feel pathetic – like I'm some "poor thing."
 I'm afraid you will try to cheer me up – that you will give me words or text or prayers that tell me in a subtle way to stop feeling bad. If you do that I'll feel worse (but hide it behind my obedient cheerful smile). I'll feel you don't understand. I'll feel you are making light of my problem (as if it can be brushed away with some brief words of cheer).
 I'm afraid you'll give me an answer. That this problem I've been wrestling with for some time now (and about which I have thought endless thoughts) will be belittled. That you might answer in a half-minute what I've struggled with for weeks. I'm also afraid you might ignore my problem, talk quickly about other things – tell me of your own.
 I'm afraid, too, you might see me stronger than I am, not needing you to listen and care. (It's true, I can get along, but I shouldn't).
 What I'd really like is if you would "just walk with me." Listen as I begin in some blundering, clumsy way to break through my fearfulness of being exposed as weak. Hold my hand and pull me gently as I falter and begin to draw back. Say a word, make a motion, or a sound that says, "I'm with you." If you've been where I am, tell me how you felt in a way that I can know you're trying to walk with me – not change me.
 But I'm afraid you'll think I'm too weak to deserve respect and responsibility; you'll explain what's happening to me with labels and interpretations; or, you'll ask me, "What 'ya going to do about it?"
 PLEASE just walk with me. All those other things seem so much brighter and sharper, smarter, and expert. But what really takes love is to "just walk with me."

This excerpted essay, read at the potluck by survivor Marilyn Nobori, appears on the Care & Kindness Ministries' website at www.craeandkindness.org.

IN HONOR OF

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|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Rory B. Aguilera | Dr. Nina Gutin | Laura Ornest |
| John Belton | Mary Halligan | William Phillips |
| Katie Bryan | David Hampton | Alexander Rodecap |
| Sean Coady | Dr. Vera Jashni | Isabelle Rothbard |
| Dr. Kita Curry | Kam Kamerschen | Andrew Rubin's Birthday |
| Roberto di Carlo | Pamela Kluff | Jesse Sanderson |
| Karen Dowling | Katy Kolodziejski | Lisa Schumacher |
| Patrice and Barney Feinstein | Kim Kowsky | Emanuel and Lorraine Stolaroff |
| Charlotte and Jeremy Fletcher | Stanley Lelewer | Kelley Vandewalle |
| Lynn and Jimmy Foscue | Janine and Henry Lichstein | Stephanie Yamaguchi |
| Asher Freeman | Andrea Montes | Robert Zigman's Birthday |
| Jim Gross | Alice Mui | |

IN MEMORY OF

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|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Julian Asea | Pedro Javier, Jr. | Hallie Rabin |
| Brandon C. Bailey | Candice Joanne Kasch | Douglas Ravenscroft |
| Rob Beach | Warren Douglas Kolodny | Aaron Salatino |
| Tom Brockish | Deanna Elaine Knott | Sam |
| Joey C. | Jacqueline LeBlanc | Oscar Saxe |
| Henri Cao | Dr. Lee Leibman | Daniel Schast |
| Tessa Glanz Caruso | Stanley Lelewer | Lynn Schibik |
| Jason Crawford | Dr. Joel David Locketz | Becky Schrag |
| Matthew Dawson | Nicholas Lloyd Luecke | Christopher Shaun |
| Roberto Di Carlo | Daniel Mardahl | Chris Shutter |
| Ben Dravis | Miguel Angel Martinez | Casey Smith |
| Joshua Erman | Rick McClung | Emil Stefanov |
| Andrew Estrada | William Irving McConahey | Anthony Albert Tanori |
| Jordan Mark Farkas | David Modjallal | Ursula Teran |
| Joe Fox | Ed Mogil | Sampson Thompson |
| Harry Fujita | Catherine Aiko Nobori | Brandon Toh |
| Claudia Grossman | Sam Noorbakhsh | Eddie Villaneda |
| Vanessa Haros | Ashley P. | Gregory Walkowiak |
| Ernie Haro | Terri Parrella | Ron Wasserman |
| Sergio Hernandez, Jr. | Floyd Patterson | Carol Wichman |
| Galen Hundley | Diane Pinkelman | |

16th Annual

Didi Hirsch
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

ALIVE & RUNNING

5K Walk/Run for Suicide Prevention **SEPT 28, 2014**

REGISTER ONLINE
www.AliveandRunning.org



**Walk, run or volunteer...
Strollers and dogs welcome!**

- USA Track and Field Certified Course
- Free walk/run t-shirt
- Chip timing and Awards
- 15 age groups
- Kiddie 1K
- Expo • Entertainment

Starting line:

North of LAX at W. 88th Street
and La Tijera Boulevard,
Los Angeles, CA 90045

- 7:45 a.m.** Warm-up
- 8:00 a.m.** 5K Start
- 9:15 a.m.** Kiddie K

Dr. Norman Farberow..., continued from page 1

standing on the ledge of the rooftop of a building, ready to jump and end his life. The Sheriff was able to talk this man off the ledge and saved his life, crediting the training he had received from the Suicide Prevention Center. Dr. Farberow knew back then that training people on how to help someone at risk saves lives. As a psychologist and clinician, Dr. Farberow knew that although helping individuals with suicidal thoughts or behaviors could prevent suicide it did not cover everyone at risk. He realized that survivors—people who have lost a loved one to suicide—were also at risk. So in 1981, he created Survivors After Suicide bereavement support groups. Because of Dr. Farberow, survivors did not need to be alone or struggle in silence. One survivor I know tried groups several times and kept dropping out; she was struggling with the loss of her son and was having her own thoughts of suicide. The group co-facilitator, a survivor, continued to reach out to her encouraging and supporting her through her grief. Not only did this

survivor finally make it through the group, but she now co-facilitates groups and helps other survivors. Today, there is a worldwide community of survivors who Dr. Farberow has helped cope with their grief and find a purpose in giving back to others.

Dr. Farberow is an innovator. Back in the day, he started a group for people who had attempted suicide, understanding that helping those most at risk was crucial in preventing suicide. Today, there is a national movement to listen and support people who have attempted suicide. Not only are more groups and resources being developed, they are being developed with the input of attempt survivors, people with lived experience. One attempt survivor who attended a support group said, "I finally have a voice and can talk about suicide without getting automatically hospitalized because of fear."

Lastly, Dr. Farberow is a renowned researcher and author. He loves to teach and although he would never call himself a

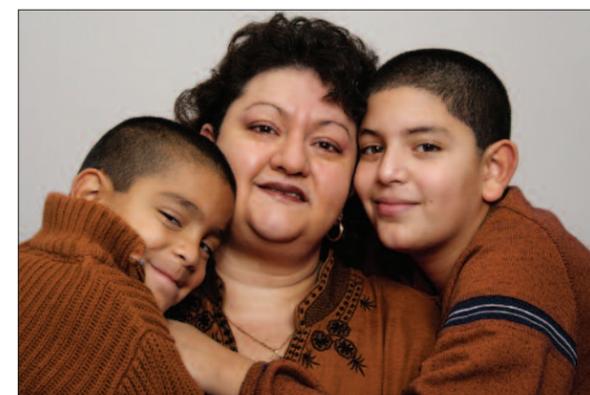
mentor, he has been to me and many others. I'll never forget the time I received a call from him and he said, "I have been asked to write a chapter about the Survivors After Suicide Program for a book being written by John McIntosh and John Jordan. I told them I would only do it under one condition – if I could have someone write it with me." And then he said, "Would you be interested in writing this chapter with me?" I told him I would be honored to write the chapter with him. Upon the final review before our submission, I noticed that he had listed my name first and then his as the authors. I told him there was a huge mistake – but he smiled and said it wasn't a mistake. I told him, "But you are Dr. Farberow and everyone knows your name and not mine." He then said graciously, "That's the point...I have had my time, it's time for the younger generations to have opportunities to carry on this work." And then with his charming humor, he added, "Plus, ladies always go first."

Breaking Through Stigma

By Sandra Yi, MFTI

Although we have made our presence known here in the Orange County, stigma still remains present around our community, and prevents people – particularly members of minority groups – from reaching out and getting help. Orange County has large communities of Vietnamese, Korean, Arabic, and Spanish speakers, many of whom are plagued by western stigma as well as their own cultural stigma about mental health and suicide.

One cultural group we frequently interact with is Latinos. We've had many Spanish parents reach out for services for their children but refuse services for themselves for various reasons. As we saw this occurring time and time again, we realized this was a situation where stigma was preventing healing so we set out to find an effective and emotionally safe way to penetrate the stigma in this community. We started a Spanish Survivor After Suicide (SAS) group, only to find that people were unwilling to participate. They often stated they were "not interested in therapy." We realized this was going to be harder than we thought. After much consultation, discussion, and brainstorming, we adjusted our goals and renamed our group to "Workshop: Losing a Loved One to Suicide." We hope the newly named workshop will reach people who may not be interested in therapy but may still benefit from the safety and comfort of a group focused on suicidal loss. The funny thing about stigma is that it makes us afraid of the things we don't know. When we offered to educate people on the topic, they started to respond. We had planned on having one educational workshop where we provided psychoeducation on suicide and a personal story shared by one of our survivors from Los Angeles. The first meeting drew 10 participants and the results were incredible. Once they realized there was a safe space to discuss their loss and heartaches, everyone started to open up and share. Our survivor co-facilitator said she was



impressed in two ways by the workshop: "First, everyone came and was committed. Husbands came with their wives and the husbands participated and shared from the heart. Second, everyone was so genuine, humble, and loving. There were tears of sorrow and the bond that was made was incredible. For me, it was a fabulous success."

The group ran late because people were so connected with one

another and wanted to know more. Each participant voiced a request for more Spanish workshops. That is when we knew that we had reduced the stigma of mental health and suicide for this group of participants. To meet requests for more groups, we have added three more Spanish workshops, which all resulted in high attendance and most important, healing.

We feel so honored that this group of Spanish-speaking participants allowed us into their pain and healing journey. We are also so proud of them for being brave enough to face stigma. We feel the experience has been a true reflection of Didi Hirsch's mission statement to transform "lives by providing quality mental health and substance abuse services in communities where stigma or poverty limit access" and hope that we can continue to serve other groups throughout Orange County.

Sandra Yi, MFTI is a Bilingual Therapist I for Didi Hirsch's Survivor Support Services in Orange County. Didi Hirsch provides survivor support services, education and outreach in Orange County in partnership with Access California Services, Korean Community Services and Vietnamese Community of Orange County with funding from the County of Orange Health Care Agency, Behavioral Health Services, Prevention and Intervention Division, Mental Health Services Act /Prop. 63.

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sadness and despair. After a few years the dreams nearly stopped and now I am doing much better. I believe the grieving process is almost complete, although I miss him every day.

Douglas H. Vought was a beautiful, kind, loving, generous and gentle man who had

suffered from severe depression since childhood. He tried to help himself with therapy, medication and even electroshock therapy but nothing seemed to alleviate his pain. In my opinion, Doug didn't really kill himself; depression killed him.

Now when I dream of Doug, he is alive.

In a recent dream, he smiled and said hello as we embraced. It felt so good to hug him. When I awakened from my dream, I did not feel depressed. I felt elated, joyous and happy to know Doug is still with me and always will be.



4760 South Sepulveda Boulevard
Culver City, California 90230

Mailing list changes cannot be made unless corrected or duplicated labels are mailed to SAS at the address above

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SAS Group Meetings

Everyone who has completed an eight-week Survivors After Suicide Support Group is invited to attend scheduled monthly meetings at any of the locations listed below. There is no charge.

Drop-In Groups

San Gabriel Valley

Meets the 4th Wednesday of each month, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Meeting dates: Aug 27, Sept 24, Oct 22, Nov 26,
Dec 24 (no meeting).

Santa Ana

Meets the 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Meeting dates: Aug 6, Sept 3, Oct 1, Nov 5, Dec 3.

San Fernando Valley

Meets the 2nd Saturday of each month, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Meeting dates: Aug 9, Sept 13, Oct 11, Nov 8, Dec 13.

South Bay

Meets the 2nd Sunday of each month, 11:00 am – 12:30 p.m.
Meeting dates: Aug 10, Sept 14, Oct 12, Nov 9, Dec 14.

West Los Angeles

Meets every Tuesday night, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Eight-Week Groups

Our eight-week support groups for those who have lost loved ones to suicide take place on the following schedule:

Group 1: Late February Group 2: Late May Group 3: Mid August Group 4: Mid October

Groups meet once a week for an hour and a half for eight consecutive weeks, with locations in Sherman Oaks, Culver City, Redondo Beach, San Marino and Santa Ana.

To be placed into a group, please call: Los Angeles: (310) 895-2326; Orange County: (714) 547-0885