

# HOPES PROGRAM

## NEWSLETTER



### UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **Adult Loss Survivor Support Group**
  - First Tuesday of every month in Piscataway
  - Call to register 732-815-5749
- **Sleep Health and Suicidal Behavior in Youth**
  - See flyer below for more information
- **Invisible Pain Day**
  - 11:30 AM – 3:30 PM on January 11th; see flyer below for more information
- **The Alliance of Hope Loss Survivor Forum**
  - Reminder – this resource is available 24/7 at this [link](#) or by visiting [allianceofhope.org](http://allianceofhope.org)



### WHAT IS THE HOPES PROGRAM?

#### ***Helping Others Process the Experience of a Suicide LOSS***

The Traumatic Loss Coalition's HOPES Program exists to provide immediate encouragement and support to families bereaved by the suicide loss of a child (21 and under), empowering survivors to begin their healing journey and eventually thrive despite such an overwhelming loss.

The HOPES Team is a group of first responders with lived and professional suicide loss experience who go to the scene of a suicide and provide encouragement, support and resources to those newly bereaved by a suicide loss. If the team was not invited on-scene at the time of the loss, a referral can be made anytime thereafter for family support. The goal is to shorten the elapsed time between the death and survivors finding support and resources to help them cope with this devastating loss.

### GRIEF AND THE HOLIDAYS

The holiday season can be an especially difficult time for those who have experienced the loss of a loved one to suicide. Amid the festive lights and joyful celebrations, feelings of grief and isolation can feel even more intense. If you're navigating the complicated emotions that come with such a profound loss, you're not alone. In this post, we'll explore ways to manage grief during this challenging time, offering support and practical tips for honoring your loved one's memory while caring for yourself.

#### **1. Allow Yourself to Grieve**

- Acknowledge your emotions without judgment and allow yourself to cry or feel sad.

#### **2. Create a Memorial Tradition**

- Light a candle or write a letter to honor your loved one, creating space for reflection.

#### **3. Set Boundaries**

- Limit holiday events and create new traditions that focus on self-care and healing.

#### **4. Practice Mindfulness**

- Use breathing exercises or go for a nature walk to center yourself in the present moment.

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### GRIEF AND THE HOLIDAYS, CONTINUED

#### 5. Seek Support

- Connect with a therapist, support group, or trusted friends and family for emotional support.

#### 6. Prioritize Your Health

- Get gentle exercise, eat nourishing meals, and rest to maintain physical and mental well-being.

#### 7. Engage in Creative Outlets

- Try journaling, painting, or listening to music to express complex emotions.

#### 8. Do Something Kind for Others

- Volunteer, perform small acts of kindness, or send thoughtful messages to others in need.

#### 9. Spend Time with Animals

- If you have pets, cuddle with them, or consider volunteering at an animal shelter.

#### 10. Create a Peaceful Space

- Simplify your environment with soft lighting or calming scents to reduce the likelihood of being overwhelmed.

Remember, grief has no timeline, so be gentle with yourself. Focus on what brings you comfort and healing, and take things one step at a time.

For more ideas on how to cope during the holidays, visit [here](#).



**"In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me, there lay an invincible summer."**

**— Albert Camus**

*This quote reminds us that even in the coldest, most difficult times, there is strength within us to endure and eventually heal.*



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“Spring passes, and  
one remembers  
one’s innocence.  
Summer passes,  
and one remembers  
one’s exuberance.  
Autumn passes, and  
one remembers  
one’s reverence.  
Winter passes, and  
one remembers  
one’s  
perseverance.”

–Yoko Ono

### AFSP’S INTERNATIONAL SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS DAY

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day is an event in which survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding, and hope through their shared experience. Next year, International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day is Saturday, November 22, 2025. If you were not able to join an in person meeting, view a recording of the 2024 survivor day presentation at this [link](#) or the 2023 documentary [here](#).

### COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: FRIENDS FOR SURVIVAL

Friends for Survival is a 501(c) (3) tax-exempt charitable, non-profit bereavement outreach organization available to those who are grieving a suicide death of family or friends. They also assist professionals who work with those who are grieving a suicide tragedy. Friends for Survival, organized by and for survivors, has been offering suicide bereavement support services since 1983. All staff and volunteers have been directly impacted by a suicide death.

#### Friends for Survival Offers:

- Monthly meetings of grief support and education
- Newsletter of sharing and information
- Comprehensive list of resources and reference library
- Speakers available for work places and agencies impacted by a suicide death
- Education from healthcare professionals and community advocates
- Toll Free Suicide Loss Helpline: 1-800-646-7322

To learn more or access all that Friends for Survival has to offer, click the image below or visit [friendsforsurvival.org](https://www.friendsforsurvival.org)



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### LOSS SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUPS

AFSP and TLC hosted a Youth Loss Survivor Support Group training to help bring more in-person, suicide specific support groups to the state. When we learn of any starting, we will send more information.

The HOPES Program started an Adult Loss Survivor Support Group that meets the first Tuesday of every month in Piscataway, New Jersey from 7:00 – 8:30 PM. If you are interested in joining, please call 732-815-5749 for the meeting details or email [brett.peppe@rutgers.edu](mailto:brett.peppe@rutgers.edu)

### 5-4-3-2-1 GROUNDING EXPLAINED

This is a simple grounding exercise that can be done anywhere to aid in stress reduction. In your environment name these things that you had not noticed before:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

This exercise helps you to remain present, can lessen feeling overwhelmed, and can help to calm the mind.

### UPDATES FROM THE TRAUMATIC LOSS COALITION

The Traumatic Loss Coalition hosted the Annual Conference on December 5, 2024 titled "Enhancing Suicide Prevention Practices: The Importance of Building a Life of Meaning." The conference was led by and highlighted the research of Dr. Ed Selby and Dr. Evan Kleiman of Rutgers University.

There were over 150 behavioral health practitioners, educators, social service professionals, faith leaders and youth/family workers present for this year's conference. Save the date as the next annual conference will take place on **December 4, 2025**.

**If you're struggling, it's okay to share your feelings. To start, you could copy one of these texts from IASP and send it to a trusted contact.**

When you get a chance can you contact me? I feel really alone and suicidal, and could use some support.

I don't want to die, but I don't know how to live. Talking with you may help me feel safe. Are you free?

I'm struggling right now and just need to talk to someone - can we chat?



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### MEET THE HOPES TEAM LEADERS

#### BRETT PEPPE



Brett is the Program Manager of the HOPES Program. Brett is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Clinical Alcohol & Drug Counselor, and was a former Somerset County TLC Coordinator. In addition to his professional experience, Brett is a survivor of suicide loss.

#### WENDY SEFCIK



Wendy is the Team Lead of the HOPES Program and works as the Bergen County Suicide Prevention Coordinator and Co-Chair of the NJ Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council. In addition to her professional experience, Wendy is a survivor of suicide loss.

***No matter when you went through your loss, we are here to support you. Call us anytime at 732-815-5749.***

### SURVIVOR SUPPORT RESOURCES

- [Alliance of Hope](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Comfort Zone Camp](#)
- [Friends for Survival](#)
- [Good Grief](#)
- [Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss](#)
- [Mary's Garden Media](#)
- [The Compassionate Friends](#)



**The HOPES Program is funded by the NJ Department of Children & Families in partnership with Rutgers Health.**



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



RUTGERS HEALTH  
University Behavioral Health Care

**Reminder: 988 is the Crisis and Suicide Lifeline. Call, Text or Chat at anytime.**





## Sleep Health and Suicidal Behavior in Youth

### **Tina R. Goldstein, PhD.**

University of Pittsburgh  
Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic  
Pittsburgh Foundation Endowed Professor in Psychiatry  
Research and Professor of Psychiatry and Associate  
Professor of Psychology



**American  
Foundation  
for Suicide  
Prevention**

New Jersey

Dr. Tina Goldstein's presentation delves into the intricate relationship between sleep health and suicidal behavior, emphasizing findings from her prospective study. The research explores how disruptions in sleep patterns, including insomnia, poor sleep quality, and irregular sleep schedules, may contribute to heightened risk factors for suicidal ideation and actions.

**February 28, 2025**  
**11 am - 12:15 pm EST**  
**via Zoom**

Certificates of participation will be distributed. This presentation is for informational purposes and will not offer continuing education credits.



Are you or someone you know affected by suicide?

**JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL**



# INVISIBLE PAIN DAY



A day we commemorate those we have lost by suicide because of mental illness

Let's come together after the holidays to support and encourage one another while gaining knowledge and useful resources for you or a Loved One.

**IN-PERSON EVENT: SATURDAY, JANUARY 11TH, 2025**  
11:30AM—3:30PM (REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 10:30 AM)

**SNOW DATE: SATURDAY, JANUARY 18TH, 2025**  
11:30AM—3:30PM (REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 10:30 AM)

**LOCATION: MIDDLESEX COUNTY FIRE ACADEMY**  
1001 FIRE ACADEMY DRIVE, SAYREVILLE, NJ 08872

## Who is This Event For:

Those who have lost a Loved One by suicide; community supporters; anyone who has a Loved One struggling with mental illness.

## What to Send:

(Optional) If you would like to have your Loved one's picture(s) be a part of the memorial slideshow, please email [info@darrenmemorial.org](mailto:info@darrenmemorial.org) at least one week before the event.

## What to Expect:

- Support/ Encouragement
- Guest Speakers
- Vocalist
- Resource Tables
- Therapy dogs
- Activity Tables
- Candlelight vigil
- Lunch
- Poetry reading

A Calming sensory room will be available to speak with a Licensed Therapist.

**SCAN TO REGISTER**



Brought to you by:  **NAMI** New Jersey  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

**Darren Clark Jr  
Memorial**

