

HOPES PROGRAM

NEWSLETTER



UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **HOPES Adult & NJ4S Youth Loss Survivor Support Group**
 - First Tuesday of every month in Piscataway
 - Adult registration: 732-815-5749. Youth registration: 732-253-6586
- **TLC's "Behind the Scoreboard: Suicide Prevention for Athletes" training**
 - June 25, 2025 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM ET
 - [Register here!](#)
- **SAVE's ASL Suicide Loss Survivor Virtual Support Group**
 - 1st Sunday of each month
 - 7:00 – 8:30 PM ET
 - Conducted via Zoom.us; open to anyone in the U.S.
 - [Click here](#) for more information



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.

FINDING PEACE ALONG THE SHORE

As summer unfolds along the Jersey Shore, life seems to burst into motion—boardwalks buzz with energy, the scent of funnel cake drifts through the air, and the beaches of Wildwood and Cape May fill with sun-seekers chasing waves and warmth. For many, this season brings freedom, joy, and the simplicity of barefoot days. But if you're grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide, summer may feel anything but simple.

Where others see lightness, you may feel the weight of absence. Vacations once shared may now carry a silent ache. The ocean's endless rhythm may echo memories of someone who is no longer here. While the world rushes into celebration, your inner world might feel quiet, slow, or painfully out of sync. Please know this: there is no "right" way to be in summer when you're grieving. Just like the tides, your emotions will rise and fall in their own time. You don't have to match the energy of the season. Your grief is not a burden to be put away for the sake of a sunny day.

Still, the summer shoreline may offer gentle invitations for care and reflection. Below are suggestions on how to honor grief while making space for small moments of healing:

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**"In summer, the
song sings itself."**

**— William Carlos
Williams**

*The world may seem to
carry on effortlessly in
summer—full of light,
laughter, and motion.
But grief can make that
contrast feel especially
stark. It's okay if your
heart feels heavy, quiet,
or out of step. You don't
have to sing along with
the season.*

WAYS TO HONOR GRIEF ALONG THE SHORE

- Watch the sunrise over the ocean. Let the stillness of early morning wrap around you like a soft towel. Some days, just witnessing light return to the sky is enough.
- Write in a journal while sitting on the beach or your porch. You might write a letter to your loved one or release the weight of thoughts you've been holding. The act of writing, especially outdoors, can be quietly freeing.
- Walk barefoot through the sand or dip your toes in the surf. Gentle movement can help shift emotional energy, even in small ways. Stretching under a beach umbrella or breathing deeply with the sea breeze can be enough.
- Let your feelings ebb and flow like the tide. You might laugh one moment and cry the next—that's okay. Let your emotions come as they are, without forcing or fixing them.
- This summer, let yourself move at your own pace. Grief is not something to "get through" before Labor Day—it's a part of your story, woven into who you are. Suicide loss often carries layers of shock, guilt, unanswered questions, and deep longing. And when the world feels bright and buzzing, you might feel like you're moving through a different season entirely. That is okay.
- You're allowed to feel beauty and pain side by side. You're allowed to rest, to cry, to remember, and to laugh without guilt. Healing does not mean forgetting. Growth does not mean leaving your person behind.
- Just as the sea holds both calm and storm, your heart can hold both grief and hope. This season, let the shore remind you: waves come and go, but you are still here—breathing, remembering, healing in your own time.



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**"The cure for
anything is salt
water: sweat, tears
or the sea."**

—Karen Blixen

*Grief is felt in the body—
held in our breath, our
muscles, our quiet
exhaustion. Healing
often begins through
what we allow ourselves
to feel: tears, movement,
and small moments of
peace by the ocean.
Sometimes the waves
help us remember how
to breathe.*

REST FEST 2025 – NEWARK, NJ

A Free, Family-Friendly Wellness Festival in Newark

Sunday, June 29, 2025 | Newark Museum of Art | [Register here](#)

Grief is heavy. Life can be overwhelming. Rest Fest offers you a gentle pause—an invitation to reconnect with your body, spirit, and community in a safe, healing space.

On the final day of Newark's North 2 Shore Festival, Rest Fest creates a moment of calm in the heart of the city. This free wellness experience is open to all and specially designed to help soothe the nervous system and restore balance.

What to Expect:

- Guided meditation
- Restorative yoga
- Breathwork and reiki
- Stress-reduction practices
- Holistic healing opportunities
- Playful, joy-filled moments for all ages
- A high-vibration dance party to close out the day with music, movement, and celebration

Held at the Newark Museum of Art, this festival is more than an event—it's a community offering of care and compassion. The museum parking lot will be open and accessible.

Whether you come to sit quietly or move freely, you're invited to experience rest, fun, and connection—at your own pace.

Why?

Because after loss, we all deserve time to restore.



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THE STARFISH STORY

You may have heard the story before:

A young person walks along a beach at sunrise, where the tide has washed hundreds of starfish onto the shore. One by one, the person begins to toss them back into the sea.

An older passerby, watching, says, "Why are you doing this? There are so many—you can't possibly make a difference."

The young person pauses, picks up another starfish, gently returns it to the ocean, and replies, "It made a difference to that one."

For those grieving the loss of someone to suicide, this story holds a quiet truth. Grief can feel like that endless stretch of shore—overwhelming, scattered with pain, and far too much to carry. And when the world doesn't understand the depth or complexity of suicide loss, your sorrow may feel invisible, or even dismissed.

But like the person on the beach, we can begin with one small, intentional act of care—toward others, and toward ourselves.

- Maybe that act is saying a person's name out loud.
- Maybe it's reaching out to someone else who's hurting.
- Maybe it's allowing yourself to rest without guilt, or to cry without explanation.

These small actions may not "fix" the ocean of grief. But they matter. Each one is a gesture of love, survival, and quiet resistance to despair.

If you are carrying the loss of someone to suicide, know this: your grief is valid. Your pain is seen. And even if it feels like you're just one person, just one heart—your presence, your story, and your healing make a difference.

- To someone else.
- To the memory of your person.
- To yourself.

If you believe someone is struggling with suicide, start the conversation.

Consider sending a text or saying something like this:

I don't know exactly what you're going through, but I'm always in your corner. Want to grab some air or coffee soon?

Your pain is real, and so is the care people have for you. I'm one of those people.

I'm really worried about you. You don't have to face this alone. Can we talk or sit together, or reach out to someone who can help?

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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT:



The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to saving lives and supporting those affected by suicide. AFSP is a strong, committed partner of the TLC. One of its core missions is to provide compassionate resources for those who have lost a loved one to suicide.

AFSP offers a wide range of services for survivors of suicide loss:

Healing Conversations

AFSP connects newly bereaved individuals with trained volunteers who have also experienced suicide loss. Through a one-time phone, video, or in-person visit, survivors receive peer support and understanding from someone who truly "gets it."

Support Group Directory

AFSP provides a public directory of in-person and virtual suicide loss support groups across the country and beyond, helping survivors find connection in their communities.

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

Held each November, this special day brings survivors together for healing events worldwide. Whether attending virtually or in person, survivors find comfort, remembrance, and shared understanding.

Educational Resources and Personal Stories

AFSP offers a wealth of information—including videos, articles, and stories from fellow survivors—to help individuals better understand grief and begin healing.

Self-Care Tools

Practical guidance is available to help survivors care for themselves, access therapy, and build a personal path forward through grief.

To explore these resources, visit AFSP's dedicated survivor support page by [clicking here](#).

To explore or get involved with AFSP NJ, [click here](#).

If you believe someone is struggling with suicide, start the conversation. Consider sending a text or saying something like this:

I don't know exactly what you're going through, but I'm always in your corner. Want to grab some air or coffee soon?

Your pain is real, and so is the care people have for you. I'm one of those people.

I'm really worried about you. You don't have to face this alone. Can we talk or sit together, or reach out to someone who can help?

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UPDATES FROM THE TRAUMATIC LOSS COALITION

In May 2025, the Traumatic Loss Coalition (TLC) hosted a powerful training with Dr. Jonathan Singer titled "Suicide Prevention for Youth: How to Engage, Support, and Sustain Hope." The live session drew 227 attendees, and if you missed it, you can still watch the recorded training by [clicking here](#).

Upcoming, the TLC and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: New Jersey will present a new training featuring Dr. Kimberly O'Brien, Maya Doms, and Sierra Enge: "Behind the Scoreboard: Suicide Prevention for Athletes." This session is scheduled for June 25, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM via Zoom.

Don't miss this opportunity—[register here](#) to save your spot. For more details, please see the flyer at the end of this newsletter.

Words Matter

When discussing suicide, using safe and thoughtful messaging is essential—especially in posts, articles, and other media. Safe messaging helps reduce stigma, reinforces hope, and can ultimately save lives.

To learn more about best practices for safe communication, please explore the guidelines and resources provided by **T.A.P.S.** (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors).



Healing from loss doesn't mean forgetting—
it means learning to carry love like the tide
carries the sea, steady and ever-present.
This summer, let yourself find peace in the
quiet moments by the shore.

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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](#)
- [Local Outreach to Suicide Survivor Teams](#)
- [Mary's Garden Media](#)
- [The Compassionate Friends](#)



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



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



THE TLC HOPES PROGRAM'S SUICIDE LOSS SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUP

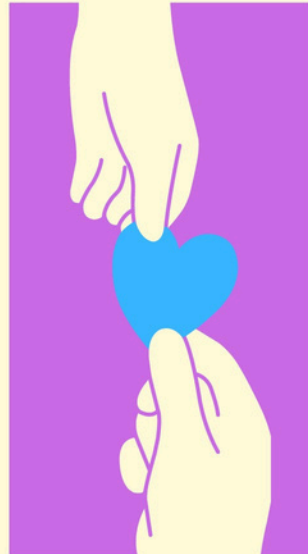


A supportive environment for adult suicide loss survivors to receive comprehensive bereavement support, resources and encouragement in the aftermath of a suicide loss.

First Tuesday of the month
7:00 - 8:30 PM
Piscataway, New Jersey 08854

Please call or text to RSVP if this is your first time attending the group.

Meeting details will be confirmed via phone.



We Are Here to Listen!

732-640-8509
732-815-5749



Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care
SUPPORTING MIDDLESEX COUNTY

NJ4S

YOUTH SUICIDE LOSS SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUP



A supportive environment for youth ages 8-13 who have been impacted by a suicide loss. Youth will receive comprehensive bereavement support, resources, and encouragement in the aftermath of a loss.

**EVERY FIRST TUESDAY OF THE
MONTH
7:00PM-8:30PM**

Parents please feel free to utilize the lounge or join the adult group.

****Food will be provided****



NJ4SMIDDLESEX@UBHC.RUTGERS.EDU

**REGISTER AT:
(732) 235-6586**

Behind the Scoreboard: Suicide Prevention for Athletes



Sierra Enge, MA



Kimberly O'Brien, PhD, LICSW



Maya Doms

Join us for an interactive discussion on suicide prevention for athletes, featuring Dr. O'Brien, Sierra Enge, and Maya Doms. This conversation will draw on both research and the personal experiences of each presenter as survivors of suicide loss, offering insight into how such loss can affect athletes and team participation. Together, they will explore the unique mental health challenges in sports and share insights, support, and strategies for fostering stronger, more compassionate athletic communities.

June 25, 2025 on Zoom
11:00 am - 12:30 pm EST
[Register here](#)



This presentation is for informational purposes and will not offer continuing education credits.