

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

TAPAS[®]

Comfort and Support Since 1994

MAGAZINE

FOR THE LOVED ONES OF THOSE WHO SERVED & DIED



VOLUME 19 • ISSUE 2

TAPS Magazine is dedicated to the brave men and women who died while serving in the Armed Forces, and to their survivors. The magazine is written by surviving family members, friends, and care-giving professionals. We hope you will find comfort, support, information, inspiration, and a sense of connection within its pages.

Publisher: TAPS, Inc.

Editor: Elisabeth Beard

Editorial Board:

Ellen Andrews, Bonnie Carroll,
Jill LaMorie, Ami Neiberger-Miller

Art Director: Jennifer Bonney

★ **National Office** ★

3033 Wilson Blvd., Suite 630
Arlington, VA 22201

Email: editor@taps.org

Website: www.taps.org

Please send subscription requests
and address changes to: info@taps.org

★ **About TAPS Magazine** ★

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is a national nonprofit 501(c)3 Veterans Service Organization which publishes *TAPS Magazine* in furtherance of its mission to provide support services to the survivors of service members who have died while serving.

TAPS Magazine is published quarterly and sent free of charge to survivors, their friends and family, service members, and professionals who work with U.S. military survivors.



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T*A*P*S®

Comfort and Support Since 1994

TAPS offers immediate and long-term emotional help, hope, and healing to anyone grieving the death of a loved one in military service to America, regardless of their relationship to the deceased or the circumstances of the death.

TAPS is here for you
24 hours a day
7 days a week

Call us at 800-959-TAPS
Or visit us at www.taps.org



SUPPORTS the bereaved survivor through a network of peer mentors. Mentors are trained volunteers who have also lost a loved one in the Armed Forces and are now standing ready to reach out and support others.

PROVIDES the National Military Survivor Helpline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 800-959-TAPS (8277). Support is available from leading experts in the field of grief and trauma.

HOSTS the TAPS Online Community of survivors, providing secure chat rooms, message boards, blogs, peer group discussion sites, and an extensive website at www.taps.org.

SPONSORS Military Survivor Seminars and Retreats for adults and Good Grief Camps for young survivors in locations across America, giving survivors the opportunity to share, grow, and help each other heal.

CONNECTS survivors to resources in their local communities and provides grief and trauma resources and information.



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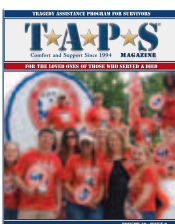


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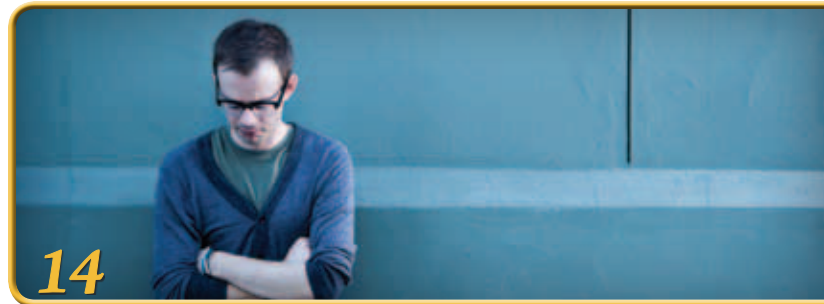


COVER PHOTO BY

Diana Roday Hosford

TAPS Senior Advisor, Strategic Partnerships

*National Memorial Day Parade 2013
TAPS survivors with TAPS Founder and
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Let Us Hear From You



We want to know your thoughts, perspectives, and opinions on TAPS programs and publications. Tell us what you think, send ideas for future topics, or submit an article. Submission guidelines can be found online at www.taps.org. Your TAPS family is waiting to hear from you. ☆

Casework Assistance Request

I just want to thank you for taking care of this rather strange turn of events concerning the eulogy of my son. I am eternally grateful for your immediate action in obtaining Deacon Rowland Desjardins. Rarely have I experienced such selfless dedication given to others in their time of need. You are truly an inspiration to me. I aspire to becoming an active part of our TAPS family so that I may help reach out to other military families.

Melissa Stalter Hicks, Florida
Surviving mother of
Sergeant Timothy Stalter

Pensacola Regional Seminar

I met so many people and made some friends. I enjoyed being there even under the circumstances. You never know how many people are going through the same as you are until you go to these seminars. The program was put together very well. I felt like a family member to everyone. Thank you again for this experience.

Randi McCaddon,
Surviving mother of
Captain Michael McCaddon

Nashville Widows Retreat

One thing I have learned as a widow with nine years under my belt is that TAPS events help me stay close with my husband. Through the ladies at these events, I remember things about him that I may have forgotten or lost details to over the years.

I enjoy getting to know John again and then bringing him back home to our son and our family with a new perspective, open heart, and fresh eyes.

Jessica Byrd, Pennsylvania,
Surviving spouse of
LCPL John T Byrd II

Timely TAPS Magazine

So, it's been four years already since he died. So, I don't need you anymore, right? I've been to a few TAPS seminars and I get the *TAPS Magazines* and life goes on. Except for the few days now and then when the day buckles under me and the sky comes crashing down and the loss is as present as the day I got the call. Then I take solace in the *TAPS Magazine* and knowing that you are there for me. Thank you.

Leasa DeLozier, North Carolina
Surviving mother of
Sergeant David Johnson

Philadelphia Regional Seminar

This was my first TAPS event. I was amazed at how everyone made me feel like family. I finally felt like I had a place I could be myself and cry. We all had different stories but we had one thing in common; we were hurting. Thank you TAPS! You are my lifeline to help me heal after losing my best friend and only sibling.

Hope Taylor Stapleton, Maryland
Surviving sister of
USCG LCDR Dale Taylor

Counseling Connections

My mother is very pleased with her therapist; I can't thank you enough for setting that up for her. Dr. B continues to be a wonderful outlet for me, and is an important part of my mental and emotional health. I never thought I would be one to rely on therapy, but she is really great. Thank you for that connection. I don't know where I'd be without her.

Name withheld by request

Good Grief Camp

I am the oldest sibling of three boys who all went through grieving at the same time. After my father died, many people in my house looked to me for strength, and strength is something TAPS has given me, and something I would like to share with others.

Jay Armstead, Maryland
Surviving son of
SFC Moses E. Armstead

[Editor's Note: Jay completed his first year as a mentor in the Good Grief Camp at the 2013 National Military Survivor Seminar.]



editor@taps.org



Run & Remember Team

Dear TAPS Family, ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

In Texas, we have really hot summers! Despite the heat, I enjoy the many wonderful things summer has to offer: ice cream, the pool, the beach, my birthday, my parents' anniversary, cookouts with family, and the Fourth of July. But I didn't always find summer so enjoyable.

On June 25, 1996, my husband Sergeant Dee "Soup" Campbell was killed in the Khobar Towers terrorist bombing in Saudi Arabia, just twelve days after my 30th birthday and the day before my parents' anniversary. We laid Dee to rest on July 3rd in his hometown of Angleton, Texas. The town asked that the funeral procession take the long way from the church to the cemetery so that they could pay their respects.

It was such a hot day, but it did not stop the local citizens from paying tribute to their fallen hometown hero. They added extra decorations at the courthouse, lined the streets through the entire town, and displayed American flags everywhere. However, the one flag I was concentrated on was the flag in the car in front of me—the flag draped over Dee's casket.

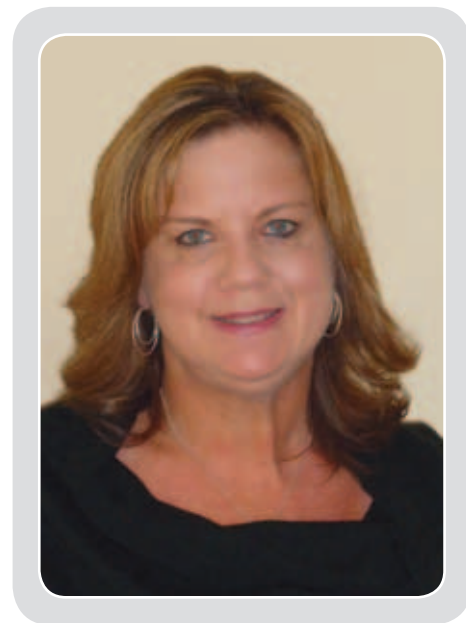
For the next few summers, it was all I could do to make it through the time between Memorial Day and the Fourth of July, and the Fourth of July celebration was no

longer fun. Summer was still hot, but it had also become horrible.

Almost two years later, depression had set in, and I needed to know there was hope. After careful consideration, I decided to attend my first TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar. That weekend, I began to see that there were other young widows like myself, and their words were the same as my own thoughts. It was at that TAPS seminar that I found a new "family" of understanding. About the same time, I began to take up running and was realizing how healing it was for me.

It was through a TAPS event that I met another young widow and discovered we both had running in common. She asked if I would be interested in forming a team and running the Marine Corps Marathon as a fundraiser for TAPS while honoring the memory of our husbands. I was hesitant when I found out a marathon was 26.2 miles, but when I thought about all that TAPS had done for me, I wanted to give back. That year, the TAPS Run and Remember Team was just the two of us, and together we raised \$5,000 for TAPS.

Thirteen years later, the TAPS Run and Remember Team runs or walks in events of all distances all across the country. Our team is made up of survivors, battle



buddies, and kind-hearted supporters. Many of our runners will ask to be connected with a surviving family and run for their fallen hero. In 2012 alone we had nearly 1,000 runners who participated in events and raised almost half a million dollars for TAPS.

Summers are still hot, but they aren't horrible any more. In fact, the last week of June is when I begin training for whatever fall event I am running for TAPS. Thanks to TAPS, I have learned to celebrate the life of my husband and not be so consumed with his death. That doesn't mean I don't still shed a tear or two and have my "moments." But there is something wonderfully poetic in remembering Dee and his service to our country at the same time we celebrate the birth of our great nation.

With Warmth and Care,
Marie Campbell

★ Run and Remember Team Director ★

**For more information about
the Run and Remember Team,
go to www.taps.org/run**



Mustering the Courage to Mourn

By Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD

“Whatever you do, you need courage.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Loss brings uninvited pain into our lives. In opening to the presence of the pain of your loss, in acknowledging the inevitability of the pain, in being willing to gently embrace the pain, you demonstrate the courage to honor the pain.

Honoring means recognizing the value of and respecting. It is not instinctive to see grief as something to honor, yet the capacity to love requires the necessity to mourn. To honor your grief is not self-destructive or harmful; it is courageous and life giving.

Self-expression can change you and the way you perceive and experience your world. Transforming your thoughts and feelings into words gives them meaning and shape. Your willingness to honestly affirm your need to mourn will help you survive this difficult time in your life.

Your spiritual purpose is not to repress or to overindulge your emotions but rather to allow them fully so that they move through you.

The pain of grief will keep trying to get your attention until you unleash your courage to gently, and in small doses, open to its presence. The alternative—denying or suppressing your pain—is in fact more painful. If you do not honor your grief by acknowledging it, it will accumulate and fester. So you must ask yourself: How will I host this loss? What do I intend to do with this pain? Will I befriend it, or will I make it my enemy?

I have learned that the pain that surrounds the closed heart of grief is the pain of living against yourself, the pain of denying how the loss changes you, the pain of feeling alone and isolated—unable to openly mourn, unable to love and be loved by those around you. Instead of dying while you are alive, you can choose to allow yourself to remain open to the pain, which honors the love you feel for the person who has died. After all, love and grief are two sides of the same precious coin.

Grief may never leave your side, but it will allow you to let go and venture forth on

your own more and more as days, weeks, months, and years pass.

Tap into your innate courage and accept the hand held out by grief.

It is the very act of mustering the courage to move toward the pain that ultimately leads to healing.

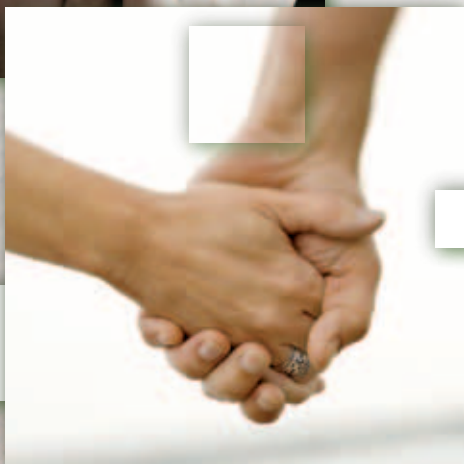
TAKE GRIEF'S HAND

Among your most special needs right now is to have the courage to grieve and mourn in a culture that doesn't always invite you to feel safe to do so. I have written this to help you draw forth your courage—the courage that already exists within you—to accept grief and mourning as they come.

There is a difference between grieving and mourning. Grief is the constellation of internal thoughts and feelings we have when someone we love dies. Mourning occurs when you take the grief you have on the inside and express it outside yourself. In other words, mourning is grief in action.

I encourage you to take grief's hand and let it lead you through the darkness and toward the light. You may not see the light at first, but forge ahead with courage, and with the faith that the light of hope and happiness does exist. Feel your pain, sorrow, sadness, disbelief, agony, heart-break, fear, anxiety, and loneliness as much as you can.

This may seem odd, as these emotions could well be the ones you most want to avoid. You might fall into the common thinking of our society that denying these feelings will make them go away. You might have the urge to stay busy and wait to “get over” your grief. Yet, ironically, the only way to help these hard feelings pass is to wade in the muck of them. To get in, and get dirty. Grief isn't clean, tidy, or convenient. Yet feeling it and expressing it is the only way to feel whole, once again. Unresolved grief can leave you feeling stuck or empty. Your ability to engage in life could be inhibited and you might feel like you've shut down.



Instead, choose grief. And as you walk with your grief, actively mourn. Cry when you need to, call a friend when you feel overwhelmed, join a grief support group, express yourself through writing, music, dance, or sports. By taking action, you will eventually integrate the death of your loved one into your life. In exchange, you will find the hope, courage, and desire to once again live a full and rewarding life.

While walking with grief, remember two important things:

1) Grief and mourning have no timeline. Your grief journey is unique and will take as little or as much time as needed, depending on the unique circumstances of your loss.

2) Taking breaks along the way is needed and necessary. I like to use the concept of dosing when referring to grieving and mourning. Grief is not something you can do all at once. Instead, take doses of grief in bits and pieces. Retreat and welcome respite as needed.

Grief may never leave your side, but it will allow you to let go and venture forth on your own more and more as days, weeks, months, and years pass. Tap into your innate courage and accept the hand held out by grief.

BEFRIEND COURAGE

What is courage? When you think of courage, images of bravery might come to mind—knights on horseback charging the line, firefighters risking their lives to rescue a family from a burning building, or hikers climbing Mount Everest. This is bravery, not courage. Bravery is loud and boisterous. Courage is soft and quiet. Without the steady, quiet resolve and unflinching commitment of courage, bravery would never happen. Courage is what fuels bravery. It is the bridge between fear and action. It is a still, quiet voice encouraging you to go on.

Find ways to make friends with courage. Imagine what it would be like to have courage as a friend who walks beside you at all times; a friend who never nags or pushes, but simply places a gentle hand on your back and whispers words of encouragement, helping you take the next step and the next. With courage by your side, you are able to go on, to walk through your days, and do the next right thing.

Cultivate a relationship with courage every day. Each morning, welcome courage. Before you rise, say your favorite quote on courage out loud. Maybe it is the Serenity Prayer, “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Or maybe there’s

another that you especially like. If you want, write down your favorite quotes on courage and put them on your fridge, dashboard, mirror, or computer at work. This will help you keep courage close, all day long.

Look for simple ways to give voice to courage throughout the day. Maybe it is simply having the gumption to get out of bed. But maybe it’s the courage to share how you feel about your loss with a coworker or friend, or to walk through the doors of a grief support group. It could simply be making a phone call you’ve been putting off, writing a thank you to someone who helped after the funeral, going to church alone, or finding the backbone to be honest with yourself about something you fear.

Healing after a death is hard. It takes courage in all shapes and sizes to mourn fully while living day to day. Congratulate yourself on welcoming courage, regardless of its size or reach. *

About the Author



Dr. Alan Wolfelt is a respected author and educator on the topic of healing in grief. He serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition and is on the faculty at the University of Colorado Medical School’s Department of Family Medicine. Dr. Wolfelt has written many compassionate, bestselling books designed to help people mourn well, so they can continue to love and live well. For a complete listing and to learn more about the natural and necessary process of grief and mourning, visit www.centerforloss.com.



The Story of Us

Love, Loss, Grief, Healing, and Everything in Between

By Jenna Grassbaugh ★ Surviving spouse of Army CPT Jonathan Grassbaugh

My husband once told me that despite the challenges life, law school, and the future might bring, all that mattered at the end of the day was that we had each other. He told me he would love me through the best of the best times and the worst of the worst. He was standing at a pay phone in Iraq when he uttered these words. Just a few months later, the worst of the worst times would begin for us. Well, not for us, but rather for me.

Jon and I met when I was a freshman and he was a senior at The Johns Hopkins University. At eighteen years old, I was a dedicated academic and allergic to exercise. I was not even a U.S. citizen, having moved from Scotland to Massachusetts when I was ten years old. Despite these handicaps, I loved military history and decided to join the Army ROTC program. I'd seen all the "Army of One" commercials where female Soldiers jump out of airplanes and blast through targets with M16 rifles. I knew it would be a challenge, but I was anxious to see if I could master this new and unfamiliar set of skills.

Jon was the Cadet Battalion Commander when I showed up at the ROTC building in my little white shorts and silver hoop earrings (I was yet to undergo my transformation from "girly girl" to "tough warrior"). After months of learning by some trial and lots of error, I began to understand what I had signed up for. Better yet,



I came to know the man I would later agree to marry.

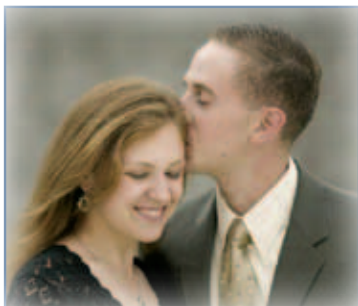
By the time Jon dropped to his knee and asked me to be his wife, I had been dreaming about those magical words for two years. A year later, I graduated and was commissioned in the U.S. Army. It was Jon who administered the officer's oath to me on May 24, 2006. Just weeks later we were married. Our wedding was like a scene out of a bridal magazine, and our whirlwind honeymoon was nothing short of heavenly. When we returned home, however, we had only five weeks together before Jon deployed to Iraq.

While I embarked on my new life as a law school student to pursue my goal of

becoming a military attorney, Jon became a minor celebrity in his unit overseas. He performed logistical feats like delivering sixty boxes of hot pizza to Soldiers at nine different outlying landing zones and producing cold Diet Coke for the caffeine addicts.

There was no way to know what was about to happen when I got the knock at the door on April 7, 2007. The weeks following the news of Jon's death were a blur of disbelief. I ate nothing for two straight weeks and became gaunt and listless. The world continued to turn, yet I was paralyzed, rooted to the spot.

How could everything I loved be gone in an instant after taking years to blossom



How could everything I loved be gone in an instant after taking years to blossom into the beauty of our life together? I stumbled through the process of picking up the pieces of my broken life, unable to fathom Jon's palpable absence.



Photos courtesy of Jenna Grassbaugh

into the beauty of our life together? I stumbled through the process of picking up the pieces of my broken life, unable to fathom Jon's palpable absence. For months, I found myself writing everything down—every precious detail, every precious memory. I feared forgetting what had made Jon who he was.

A month after I buried my husband at Arlington National Cemetery, I decided to withdraw from law school to become an active duty officer at Fort Bragg, where Jon had last been stationed. Many were concerned that I was making a hasty decision for the wrong reasons, but I knew that it would give me something to focus on other than myself. I spent a year in training before deploying to pick up where Jon left off, in Iraq. As an Army officer I wanted to do my part in contributing to the war effort overseas; as a widow I wanted to see for myself the place that my husband had spent his final days. Iraq did not give me all the answers, but it did allow me to recognize the potential I still had to do some good in this world, just as Jon would have wanted.

The bomb that ended my husband's life had come very close to shattering and completely destroying mine. Nothing seemed to lift the emotional weight that crushed my spirit when I contemplated living ten, twenty, perhaps even seventy more years without the one person I always said I couldn't live without. It took me four long years, but I finally figured out that some of the decisions I was making—or not making—were actually hurting rather than helping me to process the reality of Jon's death. So I made three new decisions. One was to avoid new relationships until I felt better. The second was to start a blog, through which I have worked out many issues. The third was to return to law school to finish the degree Jon always encouraged me to pursue.



Photo by Jonathan Quilter © The Columbus Dispatch

I am now over half way to my goal of joining the JAG Corps and serving the Soldiers who serve our great nation. As I look back on the six years since my husband's death, I recognize that although my journey through love, loss, grief, and healing has been fraught with emotional heartbreak, it has also included some remarkable achievements and moments of pure joy.

I had absolutely no idea what to do when those two notification officers showed up at my door. Nor did I have any idea what to do when they handed me a check for several hundred thousand dollars—a check that represented my husband's way of making sure that I'd be taken care of if our worst nightmare should become a reality. I hate to use the term blood money, but it often felt that way. I never felt right about using that money for anything that didn't have some greater meaning—that is, until now. Last fall, I experienced one of those quintessential moments of pure joy when I made the decision to use half of Jon's insurance money to create an endowment and fund the Captain Jonathan D. Grassbaugh Veterans Project.

When I thought about how I might turn a nightmarish situation into something good for others, this was it. The project will help veterans facing myriad issues—financial crises, landlord-tenant disputes, foreclosures, and other problems

—that require an attorney's help to reach a solution expeditiously. Beginning this fall Ohio State law students, under the supervision of a qualified lawyer, will work with these clients who have served our country. This work and this project mean more to me than any material thing that money could ever buy. This is my husband's legacy, and it's one that will go on long after I'm gone, too. It means that my other very worst fear will not come true—that in time, Jon will be forgotten.

When I graduate from law school next year, my dream of becoming an Army JAG officer will finally come to fruition. I wish Jon could be there to see me walk across the stage and receive that long-awaited degree. More than anything, I wish he could be there by my side while I experience the joys of professional success in an organization I already love.

I don't know exactly what else the years ahead will hold for me. But no matter what I may do in the future, I will continue to take flowers to Arlington and ask Jon to give me the strength to find my way as I continue to trudge clumsily forward. I will continue to reach out to others who find themselves in this impossible situation and to lean heavily on friends and family. Above all else, I will continue to love Jon, my beloved husband and best friend, just as he told me on the eve of our wedding, "always and forever, and nothing will change that—ever." *

About the Author

U.S. Army Captain Jenna Grassbaugh has served for six years and is currently attending Ohio State University's Moritz School of Law where she recently founded a veterans legal assistance project in Jon's name. For more information visit www.giveto.osu.edu/grassbaughveteransproject

Myths about Children and Grief

By Darcie D. Sims, PhD, CHT, CT, GMS

Children are often shuttled off or ignored by adults who may be grieving themselves and do not have the energy, resources, or understanding necessary to help them. Society tends to pacify itself with the rationale that children are resilient and thus fails to recognize that children need as much compassion and support as adults require in adapting to dramatic or traumatic changes in their lives.

Loss, regardless of the cause, challenges the communication skills of both children and adults. Adults who are dealing with their own sense of loss and helplessness may find it difficult to respond to children's needs and questions. And so, we perpetuate the conspiracy of silence. We might think that children don't understand loss or death, so let's look at some of the myths about children and grief.

Children don't understand death; therefore, they don't grieve.

Most people do not believe that children, especially very young children, have any concept about death. Yet we know that even very young children can respond to changes in their environment, and certainly a death in a family brings about changes in the family environment. The change of routine and the increased volume of noise and activity in a grieving household are changes that will affect children. While they may not understand why these changes are occurring, they will be able to notice that they have occurred and will respond accordingly. One does not have to understand why something occurs in order to respond to it. Children do grieve, just not like adults.

One does not have to understand why something occurs in order to respond to it. Children do grieve, just not like adults.

Children don't hurt as much because they understand less.

This myth reflects a misperception that because children are less experienced and knowledgeable, they will not hurt as deeply as those with more knowledge and experience. Perhaps the opposite is true. When one has little information and limited experience, reality may seem more scary and overwhelming than when information and support are readily available. Children need age appropriate information, skills to identify their emotions, and ways to express them in order to appropriately cope with death and grief. Size has nothing to do with the hurt in one's heart.

Infants and toddlers are too young to grieve.

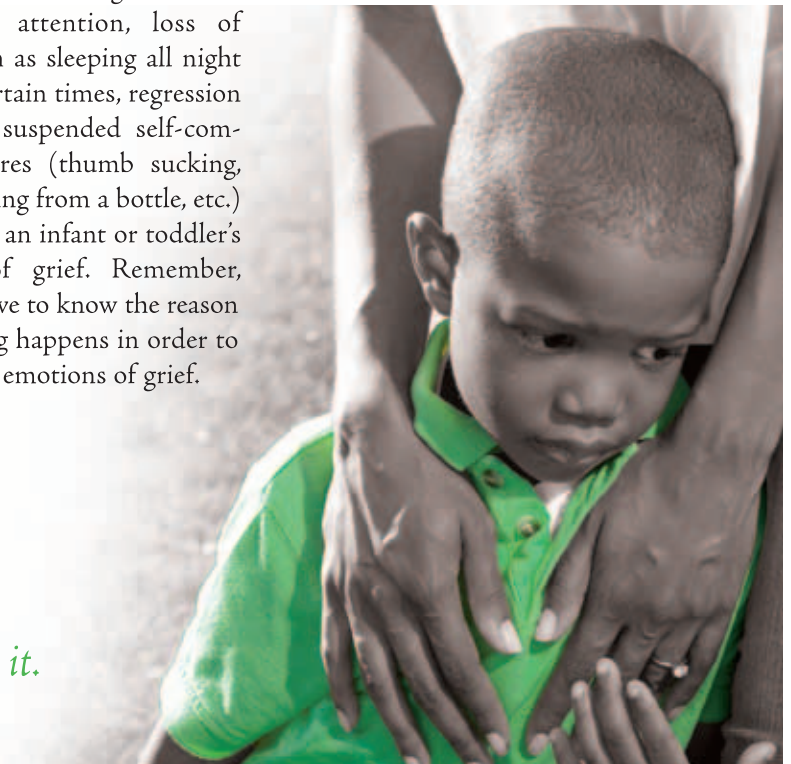
If a child is old enough to love and attach, he is old enough to grieve. Look for behavior changes that indicate responses to a changed environment to indicate an infant or pre-walker's grief. Increased demands for attention, loss of schedules such as sleeping all night or eating at certain times, regression to previously suspended self-comforting measures (thumb sucking, rocking, drinking from a bottle, etc.) are all signs of an infant or toddler's expressions of grief. Remember, they do not have to know the reason why something happens in order to experience the emotions of grief.

Children are resilient; they bounce back.

While children are, indeed, flexible both physically and emotionally, they are not rubber balls and do not simply bounce back from difficult experiences. Like adults, they must integrate their experiences into their knowledge base and find explanations for what happens to them. They will often grieve in short bursts of emotion rather than dwell on a particular feeling, as adults tend to do. The younger the child, the more quickly a grief moment may pass, but don't think a child is not grieving just because that child is playing outside or laughing at a cartoon. Children need as much compassionate understanding and support as adults do as they struggle through their grief.

Children are not affected by adults' grief.

Children are like sponges, absorbing everything they see, hear, and touch. Nothing



escapes their notice! Therefore, children are affected by the grief they see the adults around them expressing. This does not have to mean they are affected in negative ways, however. Many adults express their grief in completely appropriate and effective ways, and children learn from observing these grieving patterns and styles. Adults should be aware of the power of their actions and words, as children are often the unseen audience for such performances. Children who receive honest communications, patient teaching, and supportive modeling will learn to embrace their emotions and find healthy, nondestructive ways to express grief.

Speaking of the deceased will reopen a child's grief wounds.

This is a commonly held myth for many cultures. It is believed that continuing to speak of the deceased and expressing the emotions of grief will add to one's grief experience rather than help dissipate the emotions. For most people, however, expressing grief and staying connected to the deceased through the sharing of memories helps with the integration of the loss and the changing of the relationship. It is the hiding of pictures and never speaking again of the deceased that often keeps the wounds of grief open. Encouraging the sharing of memories helps establish a new relationship with the deceased.

Children should be protected and shielded from the pain of grief.

Many adults believe this to be true simply because they cannot face their own grief reactions. Grief hurts! It is neither a sign of weakness nor a lack of faith. Grief is the price you pay for love and when someone you love dies, it does hurt. While it may seem kinder to shield a child from experiencing the pain of grief, hurt and pain have their lessons to teach. We cannot rob ourselves of the richness of the tapestry that hurt and love weave together. To eliminate one from the loom is to break the thread and lose the fullness of the pattern. One can learn to embrace the emotions of grief and grow through the hurt to reach the other side where memories can sustain us in our sorrow.



Children cope with grief more easily if they have lots of activities.

The idea behind this myth is the thought that if children are kept busy they won't have the time or energy to think, to experience grief, or to ask questions that the adults may not have the answers to. Keeping children busy simply as a way to avoid difficult questions is a temporary fix at best. Children are aware of what is happening around them and they will think about death, experience it, and question it, whether they are busy putting a puzzle together or lying quietly on their beds. Establishing and maintaining open lines of communication are among the most positive actions adults can take to help children process their experiences with death and grief.

Childhood bereavement leads to a maladjusted adult life.

While bereavement during childhood is certainly a traumatic experience, it does not necessarily mean a doomed adulthood. If children receive appropriate and adequate support during a bereavement experience, they will integrate the loss into their beings and adapt appropriately. Children who do not receive adequate and appropriate support and have not learned effective coping methods, however, can often experience delayed grief reactions

and engage in inappropriate and destructive behaviors. While any bereavement experience is difficult, being bereaved does not automatically qualify someone for a maladaptive life.

A final thought

When you are discussing death with a child, remember that young children especially, think in concrete terms, not abstract ones. So when you say you lost Grandma, a young child may ask you to go find Grandma. Children have been taught to find the items they have lost, so it makes perfect sense for them to request that you help them search for the person who has become lost. Far better to say "died" than to have to explain that you don't really mean "lost" like in "lost a toy." The more you try to untwist that explanation, the more twisted it will become. And if you think about it, "died" is a difficult word to use, but "lost" is a hopeless one. *

About the Author



Dr. Darcie Sims is a bereaved parent and child, nationally certified thanatologist, certified pastoral bereavement specialist, and licensed psychotherapist and hypnotherapist. She is the president and cofounder of Grief, Inc., a grief consulting business, and the Director of the American Grief Academy in Seattle, Washington. Darcie is an internationally recognized speaker and writer, having authored seven books and numerous articles. She currently serves as the Director of Training and Certification for TAPS. For more information and a complete listing of her books, visit www.griefinc.com.

Looking for Hope in all the Right Places

My Journey of Grief

By Janet Crane ★ Surviving mother of SPC Jason Kyle Edens

I have always thought of myself as a strong person. In reality my strength had never really been tested until I experienced the losses of the last 13 years. I lost my dad in 2000, a half sister in 2004, another half sister in 2008, my mom in 2010, and my son in 2012. I have to say that I had handled all of my losses up to my son's pretty well. I was sad and did my share of crying, but things had gotten easier. When my 22 year old son, Specialist Jason Edens, was wounded in Afghanistan and then died 11 days later on April 26th, grief took on a whole new meaning.

After Jason's funeral, I returned home to Alabama and took another couple of weeks off before returning to work. Every time I was alone I just couldn't stop thinking about my son and my pain. I kept replaying every moment with him over and over in my mind. I would go and look at baby pictures, even organizing them all into chronological order, and would just flood them with tears while I was doing it. I thought this could not be healthy for anyone.

So I picked myself up and I headed back to work, because honestly I just didn't know what else to do. I love my job or that probably would not have been an option. I had been gone for five weeks and my coworkers had kept everything caught up for me, so I was able to ease back in. It was a really busy time of year so I managed to keep my mind occupied all day. The nights were the hard times.



Photos courtesy of Janet Crane

I would come home and the thinking and crying would start again. I was desperate to find help.

One of the first things I did was get on the computer and look up Gold Star Mom groups. I contacted one in Georgia and they invited me to come, so I drove the 2 ½ hours to meet with them. I met some wonderful ladies there but found out that the Gold Star Mothers are not really a grief support group. They are more about raising awareness for veterans and doing things to help educate people about military issues. I left there feeling

worse, although I did make a very good friend that I am still in contact with.

I wanted someone to "fix" me and my pain. I was just so anxious and so sad. I contacted the Fort Benning Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) office and, after several tries, finally went there to talk to someone. The coordinator gave me the number for a counselor that they have on staff, and I called to set up an appointment. When I met with her it was okay, but she had never lost a child so I just didn't see how she could understand.

My next thought was that I should try a regular paid therapist and I went through my health insurance to set up an appointment for counseling. I went several times, but again I realized that they did not have a clue what I am going through. Still desperate for help, I just didn't know what to do.

I bought and read books and found articles on the internet. Someone at my church told me about hospice, so I contacted them and went to some group meetings for a while, but again it seemed like they could only get me so far.

Since I was still searching, the hospice workers told me about The Compassionate Friends and I thought maybe I was getting closer to a good fit for support since these were all parents who had lost children. I attended a few of their sessions before deciding that losing a child serving in the military is a whole different experience.

By this time I had been through several instances of depression and several anxiety attacks. I think the real turning point finally came when I attended the Gold Star Mother's Day luncheon at Fort Benning in September. It was at this meeting that I met other newly bereaved mothers who were still grieving and searching for each other.

From their recommendations, I connected with several online groups. I know it sounds crazy but I found comfort, acceptance, and understanding with these groups, although I had never met the members. It was also through these groups that I learned about TAPS. I had been given a TAPS brochure way back at the beginning, but it had been filed away with all the other papers people were giving me at the time. As you probably know, we are barely aware that we are even alive at that point in time.

I attended my first TAPS event in February, and I must say it has been the best thing that I have done in all these months of my new "normal" life. It was at this TAPS Parents Retreat that I found others who totally understood my grief. I really don't even know how to put into words the value of this retreat. As a parent who lost her son less than a year previously, I had been searching for a beacon of hope, some sign that someday I would be able to enjoy life once again.



Spending time at the retreat with all of the other parents was a life changing experience for both me and my husband. We are miles further in our grief process now than we were before the retreat. My husband, as a step-parent, saw others grieving and now understands the huge amount of grief that I am feeling. We all

came into this retreat as strangers and parted with lifelong friends. It was so nice to be able to talk about my son and not make someone uncomfortable. The retreat was a place of hope, sharing, safety, and healing. My only regret is that I had to leave and return to the real world.

How have I survived this first year? I did it by searching out help and not giving up until I found it. I did it by carrying on my everyday life as much as possible and trying to give it my best shot. I did it by continuing to challenge myself physically. I am a runner so I made myself join a running group that meets on Saturday mornings. And last, but certainly not least, my belief in God has helped me through my pain. The hope that one day I will be reunited with all of my lost family members keeps me going each and every day.

Am I okay? No, I will never be okay. I still cry several times a day. But I refuse to let my grief define who I am. Do I sometimes feel guilty about carrying on with my life and trying to enjoy it? Sure, but I am still on this earth, so I must make the best of it. It is what my son would want me to do. I will choose to make the most of the time I have left on earth and try to live every moment as if it were my last. And I will continue to fight to live in this new "normal" and make my son proud of me. *

2013 TAPS Parent Retreat in Savannah, Georgia



Processing Anger and Blame

A Healing Step in the Grief Journey

By Mark Lamers, PhD

I recently had the interesting experience of participating in a Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) online chat on the subject of anger during the course of grief. The participants in the chat were family members of service men and women who died during their term of service. I was invited to join the chat based on my role as a psychologist and the presumption that, because of my training and experience, I would have something to contribute to the conversation.

In the course of the chat, numerous questions were posed to me, and I answered them as best I could, given the rapid presentation of questions and remarks. But in the time since I participated in this

fast-paced discussion, one question I was asked has stayed with me. I realize that at the time I was asked this question, I gave what I thought was a reasonable answer. The question and my response continued to nag at me, and I realized that my response was too simple.

The question I was asked was, "Is it normal to be angry at someone that you hold responsible for your loved one's death?" I responded, "Yes, it is normal to be angry at someone whom you hold responsible for your loved one's death." It turned out that this question was asked by a mother whose son had been encouraged to join the military by a friend of the family. Since the son had been killed in Iraq, the mother found she had difficulty tolerating this person's presence, as she blamed him for her son's death.

I thought a lot about this brief exchange in the days after it occurred, and I realized that while my brief answer seemed appropriate at the time, it also was inadequate. I realized that I had more thoughts on the subject that I wished I had presented.

While there are many, many differences between people, we all also have traits and tendencies in common with others. One of the traits that people share is the ability to get angry when something is perceived as frustrating

or threatening. As there is nothing that we perceive as more threatening than the circumstances involved with the death of someone we love, people naturally often experience anger as they are trying to come to terms with the death of a loved one.

I consider anger to be an active emotion in that it motivates people to make their environment safer for themselves and for those they love. Sometimes we know exactly what makes us angry; other times, we know we are angry but aren't sure exactly why. Blame arises when we make an attribution of responsibility for our feeling of anger. And the reason that the question I was asked about whether it is normal to be angry at someone associated with a death stayed with me, is because I realized that it made me think about the connection between anger and blame.

Blaming is a coping mechanism. It is a way of indicating where the responsibility lies for the act that caused a person to be angry. Blaming can have positive results, and when it is effective, blame can serve to begin a negotiation that will lead to some kind of recompense or reconciliation. Blame can also initiate a negative cycle of denial of responsibility, counter-blaming, and retribution. This negative cycle is also, unfortunately, a normal part of human behavior for pretty simple reasons. The person who gets blamed for something

I encourage people I work with to try to move through their feelings of anger and thoughts of blame by deciding what they want to do about it. Is there something they can do to make things better, or something that can happen to make things right?



Anger and blame should not be the final result of grief when a loved one has died; they should be aspects of the process that help lead to the start of healing.

might also get angry because of feeling threatened by the accusation, and might blame back instead of accepting responsibility. The person who gets blamed might also have a different interpretation of the circumstances, often one that deflects responsibility.

In my work as a psychologist, I often find myself working with people who are stuck in cycles of anger and blame. I sometimes get dismayed at the time and energy I see people expend attempting to get others to take responsibility for what they have been blamed for. I realize that people frequently feel compelled to act this way and that for many people it feels right. I believe this is why we recognize that forgiveness is such a virtue, for if forgiveness were easy, everyone would do it. Forgiveness, I've learned, is not a virtue just because it takes the pressure off the person being blamed, but also because it frees the person doing the forgiving from carrying the ongoing burden of holding others responsible.

Like anger, blaming is a normal human behavior. But just because something is a normal part of human experience doesn't mean that it is always reasonable. Sometimes the cost of pursuing something that is right is too high. After losing a loved one, this balance is often extremely hard to find. It can seem impossible to focus on healing, rather than blaming, when one has lost a loved one, especially a son or daughter.

I encourage people I work with to try to move through their feelings of anger and thoughts of blame by deciding what they want to do about it. Is there something they can do to make things better, or something that can happen to make things right? Often, the answer is that there really is nothing that can happen that will make things right. Other times, there are actions

that one can take to harness the motivating energy of anger to try and make changes in the world.

Another way to deal with thoughts of blame is to consider the motives of the person who is being blamed. Was the person who is being held responsible intending to cause harm? If they had known in advance that their acts would cause such harm, would they have done the same thing anyway? This way of thinking about blame is an exercise in perspective taking. When we say time heals all wounds, we acknowledge that through the perspective gained by the passing of time, even the worst pain decreases. Actively working on perspective taking in the present can also help healing occur.

It is important to recognize that anger and blaming are often normal parts of the experience of grief. It is also important to realize that the normal feelings of anger and normal thoughts of blame can lead to either positive or negative outcomes. Anger and blame should not be the final result of grief when a loved one has died; they should be aspects of the process that help lead to the start of healing. I know that this is sometimes a hard perspective to hear when a loss is new. I have also seen that this can be a hard perspective to hear when a loss is not new, when a person feels that all they have left to hold on to is anger and blame.

In retrospect, when I was asked if it is normal to be angry at someone who is held responsible for a death, I wish that I had answered, yes, it is normal—but blaming someone is really just one step in the process that hopefully, in time, will lead to some healing of the pain of the loss. *



About the Author



Dr. Mark Lamers is a psychologist and the Supervising Clinician for Humboldt County Mental Health in Northern California. As the son of pioneering hospice physician Dr. Bill Lamers, he grew up with the field of grief and bereavement studies. Mark received training with the VA where he formed a commitment to giving back to veterans and their families.

Reunion and Remembrance

By Ruth W. Crocker, PhD ★ Surviving spouse of CPT David R. Crocker, Jr.

By the time I had been kissed by the eighth guy in line in front of me, my face carried the scent of a potpourri of aftershave lotions. This was not a typical reunion with family, old friends, or classmates. I hadn't known any of these graying men, now in their sixties and seventies, until this moment.

As they hugged me and planted friendly kisses on my cheek or grasped my hands, they gave brief introductions.

"I'm Joe. I carried the code book for the captain."

"I'm Phil. I was his track driver. I don't know why I wasn't driving for him that day."

"I'm Dick. I was one of his platoon leaders in Alpha Company. So glad you're here. Dave was the best CO ever."

"I'm Lon. He let me fly the Texas flag on my track. He was my hero."

"There are so many stories we have to tell you," each one repeated over and over. "He was the best of the best."

They said they had known about me back in 1968 and '69, even if I didn't know them. My husband, Army Captain David R. Crocker, Jr., carried a picture of me in his pocket in Vietnam. At some point he had shown it to some of them; perhaps some quiet moment when they sat around eating "beanie weenies" from a pack of

C-rations or playing card games at base camp. For an infantry company in the area of Chu Chi Province, there wasn't much down time.

In April of 1969, one month before Dave was killed while inspecting a booby-trapped Viet Cong bunker, the unit had endured seventeen straight days of fire-fights, resulting in many injuries. Some of the guys greeting me at the reunion in 2006 were still in the hospital recovering when they learned of Dave's death on May 17, 1969.

Thirty-eight years later, at a point when I thought memories of Dave existed only with me and our family, I met these wonderful strangers by chance, because they had posted tributes to their beloved company commander on the virtual wall, a replica of the Vietnam Memorial on the internet. When Dave's brother Tom typed his long deceased brother's name, the words of praise came up. Tom tracked down the authors of the tributes and they invited us to the upcoming reunion of the 22nd Infantry Regiment Society.

Since 2006 I've met these men like family in different parts of the country every eighteen months. These are true reunions for them, many finding each other for the first time after three and four decades, bursting into never before told stories with vivid details. I visited the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC for the first time with them in 2008. For me these meetings where I listen to them tell stories into the night rekindle and support my memory of the deep love Dave and I shared for four years; a kind of reunion with him through these unknown heroes who were the last to spend time with him.

They were boys then, in their late teens and early twenties, mostly draftees who never expected to experience jungle warfare, stinging red ants, foot rot, monsoon rains, lack of sleep, burning sun, gunfire, constant



Photo courtesy of Ruth W. Crocker

fear for their lives, and ultimately the death of their leader—the guy they all believed was trying to save them from disaster. They called him “the old man,” even though he was only twenty-five.

After I received notification of Dave’s death from an Army colonel and a sergeant bearing a telegram, no first person reports followed. Dave’s father, an Army colonel himself, was devastated by the void of information about his son’s death. He yearned to know the events surrounding the death and to hear from witnesses. He had served in Vietnam two years before Dave was deployed, and he needed more details. Was it an accident or friendly fire? Why was Dave in that bunker at that moment? He wrote letters to higher command pleading for details, but only secondary reports followed, weeks later.

I was still too numbed by the reality of his death to be able to take in more information. I wanted to know more for the sake of Dave’s parents, but initially I had great difficulty comprehending the fact of his death, regardless of the circumstances. At first I thought I needed silence more than information, just to manage my grief.

An earmark of the Vietnam war was the silence that ensued afterwards. Many are still not able to speak about it. It was not until that first reunion in Omaha, Nebraska, 2006 that I heard about the chain of events leading to Dave’s death and the emotional aftermath for his comrades. “The men just sat around and cried,” said Dick, one of his platoon leaders. “They had to bring in support troops for us.”

How I wished that Dave’s parents had lived long enough to hear these stories. Fortunately, his two younger brothers and his sister were there in Omaha to hear them with me. His sister spoke for all when she said, “Dave had always been our hero, and to hear these stories about him is like a gift from Heaven. It brings him back. We were so close.”

Since connecting with these survivors, many of whom witnessed Dave’s death, we’ve met in Seattle; Atlanta; Washington, DC; and Colorado Springs. Each time,



more members of Alpha Company have been located, and the story stick continues to be passed, bringing back my beloved again and again in stories of the intense life they lived together trying to survive war. Deciding to come to a reunion the first time and speak about their experiences is scary, they say. I had a similar sentiment that first time, but they treated me like a much-loved sister. I feel like a princess restored to a lost country. I’m honored to be among them.

There is a knowingness that exists between us at these reunions with these people whom I’ve never known before. It is deeper and more palpable, more respectful, than any high school or college reunion I’ve experienced. Reunion means to reunite and they have united me with the memory of what it was to know my beloved as they knew him—a courageous, caring leader. With their descriptions I can see his smile, his concentration, his frustration, his blue eyes, his form and fitness, his desire to survive and protect and lead these guys out of chaos. I recall his sense of humor and I can almost remember the scent of his skin.

Dave never intended to be left behind in the war, any more than his battle buddies intended to survive him. Soldiers learn to help each other, and the intense bond among those who train and serve together

creates a lasting remembrance, a guarantee that our loved ones live on—their faces, smiles, and names going forward forever. Regardless of whether a soldier is lost to war or other circumstances, those who served with and knew him or her hold the treasure of their memory; a priceless gift to be shared with survivors when the opportunity arrives.

My new/old brothers are persistently bringing Dave back and holding him among us with their faithfulness to his memory. There is always an extra plate and place at our banquet table, and I’m already looking forward to the next reunion in 2014. ★

For information about unit reunions, go to www.military.com and click on Unit Finder on the left side under Resources. You might be able to reconnect with your loved one’s buddies and comrades.

About the Author



Ruth W. Crocker received a PhD in Nutrition and worked in many aspects of health care including counseling and Nursing Home Administration. A desire to write about her life experiences led her back to school where she earned an MFA in Creative Writing. Her essays have appeared in magazines and literary journals. She recently completed a memoir about her experience with the Vietnam War. She serves on the National Board of the Gold Star Wives and lives and writes in Mystic, CT. Contact her at www.ruthwcrocker.com.



19th National Survivor Seminar



Each year we gather in our nation's capital to honor our loved ones and support each other during the Memorial Day weekend. This year, we welcomed many survivors to their first TAPS event. Some were only a few short months into their journey, carrying a heavy burden of grief, pain, and uncertainty. Many came in search of connection and hope. Others were unsure what they were seeking; they just knew they needed to be in the company of others walking the journey. We witnessed broken hearts begin to mend as survivors came together to share their precious heroes, open their hearts to comfort fellow survivors, and fill the time spent together with love, laughter, tears, and hope. ★



“Honestly couldn't think of a better way to spend Memorial Day Weekend!”



"It's like a family reunion and I love it."



"TAPS gave me the tools to become a whole person again."



"Thank you for one of the most amazing, inspiring, and healing weekends of my life."



19th National Good Grief Camp



The 19th annual National Good Grief Camp for young survivors was a time of learning and growing, sharing and connecting, healing and rebuilding. Our staff and volunteers included more than 500 trained military mentors, each paired with a TAPS surviving child or teen. Many of the mentors were active duty service members who volunteered their time to assure our children that they are forever part of the military family and that the service and sacrifice of their loved ones is never forgotten. ☆



“Our families are blessed to have such awesome people who care.”



“Thank you TAPS. The smile on my daughter’s face is priceless.”



“We will cherish the memories for a long time to come.”



TAPS®

Run & Remember Team

Battle Buddies

TAPS provides support for anyone affected by the death of a service member, and that includes the battle buddies who trained and served with our loved ones. Not only are these service members TAPS survivors themselves, but many of them become runners and fundraisers on the Run and Remember Team as well. Sometimes they meet the family of their close friend who died. Often they are able to share stories of the one who died. Always they wear the names and faces of their friends on the back of their TAPS running singlet.

Coming from all the branches of service, these special runners count it a privilege and an honor to remember their fallen. Running in memory of a battle buddy can provide an outlet for healing for those who have taken the oath. It also helps them in their commitment to staying in top physical shape when they are still active duty.

Army Staff Sergeant Chris N. first heard about TAPS when his fallen teammate's widow attended a TAPS retreat. "My team did research into the charity while we were still in Afghanistan, and immediately we were interested in TAPS and the impact it had on our community."

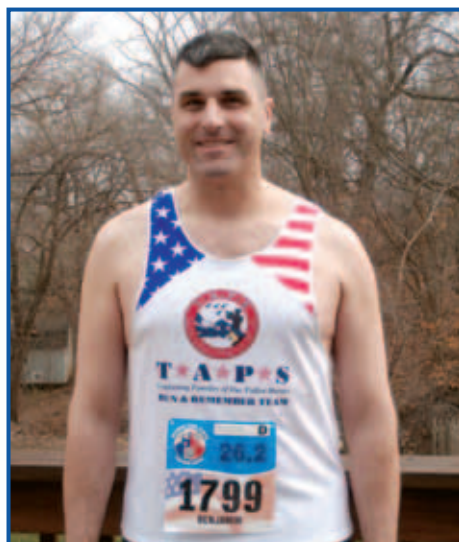
After returning home, Chris ran the Disney Princess Half Marathon for TAPS. "Running helped me in my process of grief," said Chris. "I lost several friends in Afghanistan last year, and they are all heroes to those of us who made it through the deployment. If I could talk to them now, I think they would all agree that their loved ones needed all the help they could get—and that TAPS is

a great organization that does just that. I take comfort in that."

With 17 years of military service, Navy Senior Chief Gina Colagiovanni runs in memory of her friend Navy Petty Officer First Class Steven Daugherty. Gina met Steve in the fall of 2000 when both were stationed in Pensacola, Florida. She told us, "He was one of those genuinely good people you were fortunate to have as a friend throughout the course of a military career."

Gina first heard about TAPS from a fellow service member. One look at the website and she knew she wanted to be part of the team. Seven races later (two marathons, four half marathons, and one 10K), Gina said, "The friendships that I have made and the memories that have been shared through my experience with the Run and Remember Team are among the most precious to me. The lives of these

*"The lives of these heroes live on in the hearts
and minds of their family and friends,
and out there on that race course,
it's all about them and sharing their stories.
I've been honored and humbled to be a part of it."*



I'm Running to Remember



CTT1 (SW) Steven P. Daugherty
May 16, 1979–July 6, 2007
Baghdad, Iraq

heroes live on in the hearts and minds of their family and friends, and out there on that race course, it's all about them and sharing their stories. I've been honored and humbled to be a part of it."

Marine Corps Major Ben Ringvelski has completed 18 years of active service. After multiple tours in Afghanistan, Iraq, Africa, and Kosovo, Ben is currently assigned to the Joint Staff. He was introduced to TAPS after his best friend, Captain Justin Peterson, died in Iraq in Oct 2006. He learned through Justin's wife of the support and healing that TAPS provides and was introduced to TAPS Run and Remember Team Director Marie Campbell after he finished the 2008 Marine Corps Marathon. His next race, the 2009 Marine Corps Historic Half Marathon, was as a TAPS team member.

To date, Ben has run 14 marathons and half marathons in honor of fallen warriors and their families. "There are 12 battle buddies, classmates, and friends on my TAPS singlet," he said. "The fallen I carry on my back are always a source of inspiration and motivation. Running in memory of my fallen friends definitely provides an outlet for both my personal healing as well as the healing of the family and friends of the fallen."

"Our common cause binds us together in our individual grieving, while providing an opportunity for fellowship and friendship."

Often when people see a TAPS singlet, they ask about it. At that point, according to Ben, the service member's story begins to be told and their memory lives on. "It's often in the starting corrals, along the race route, or in post race areas that folks thank me for my service and running for the fallen; they want to know more about the names and faces on the back of the singlet."

Army Master Sergeant Norma Dealcala has been in the Army for 23 years and is currently stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. After returning from her second deployment, running became Norma's new obsession. In 2010, she started running with the TAPS team.

"Becoming a member of the Run and Remember Team is the reason I now love to run," said Norma. "I know deep in my heart I am giving back something to the family—keeping their hero's memory alive and celebrating their lives. I want the families to know their loved will never be forgotten."

Norma has now run more than 20 races. "Every race as I remember why I am running, I cry, I smile, I laugh, and I am so thankful for this opportunity. I think of my Soldiers and how I want to keep their memory alive."

"I believe running has helped with my healing," she added. "I was devastated. I felt so much guilt, I was angry, and I



was in denial. Then I thought about their families and how the news was going to affect them."

When asked what he would say to another service member considering running for TAPS, Ben said, "Absolutely, do it! I've had the pleasure of becoming friends with many fellow service members and survivors across the country. Our common cause binds us together in our individual grieving, while providing an opportunity for fellowship and friendship."

Norma also credits the TAPS Run and Remember Team with providing a way for her to connect with others.

Chris agreed and revealed a tip on fundraising as well. "To those thinking about running: do it! I don't think committing to run was difficult; it was the fundraising. I got creative and promised everyone that I would run the half marathon in a tutu if they helped me reach my fundraising goal. I easily surpassed my goal after that announcement!"

Gina summed it up by advising us, "I would tell them that all things are possible when inspired by the memory of heroes. With every step, another family member left behind is taken in by the TAPS family. It's a service that costs us so little for those who have sacrificed so much... and TAPS brings better days." *

>>For more information about the TAPS Run and Remember Team, visit www.taps.org and click on Get Involved. Then Click on Run • Email run@taps.org • Phone 800-959-TAPS (8277)



TAPS Honor Guard Gala

Washington, DC ★ March 19, 2013

The annual TAPS Honor Guard Gala raises funds to support TAPS programs and honors outstanding people who support the mission to help families of fallen service members. This year's event raised \$1.6 million to fund TAPS programs and events. ★



★ Keynote Speaker General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was introduced by TAPS survivors Christopher and Gabrielle Pearson. ★



★ General Raymond Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army, introduced by TAPS survivors Austin and Ashley Audo, received the TAPS Honor Guard Gala Military Leadership Award. ★



★ Congressman Jeff Miller, introduced by TAPS Survivor Ellen Andrews, received the TAPS Honor Guard Gala Congressional Award.



★ TAPS survivor, USAF Technical Sergeant John Ferderer, was the recipient of the Senator Ted Stevens Leadership Award for his outstanding service as a TAPS Mentor since 2006. The award was presented by Sergeant Major Bryan Battaglia, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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Photos by Patrick Kelley, Bil Pratt, Sun Vega, and Teddy Wade



★ Masters of Ceremony Kyra Phillips of HLN and John Roberts of Fox News



★ Surviving spouse Amy Dozier, with TAPS Survivors, led the attendees in singing "God Bless America" at the close of the event.



U.S. Coast Guard Memorandum of Agreement

FLAG VOICE 370

It is my distinct pleasure to announce that I have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Coast Guard and the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). This MOA will afford Coast Guard active duty and reservist members, their families, and friends access to world class, no-cost tragedy assistance.

TAPS was founded in 1994 and is recognized nationally as a leading provider of comfort and care to anyone who has suffered the loss of a military loved one, regardless of the relationship to the deceased or the circumstances of the death. The comprehensive services and programs provided by TAPS includes peer-based emotional support, case work assistance, crisis intervention, and community-based grief and trauma resources, including, but not limited to, its National and Regional Military Survivor Seminars and Good Grief Camps. These services and programs are explained, in detail, on the TAPS web page – www.taps.org. I encourage you to become familiar with this web page, so that you can recommend TAPS services or programs to fellow Coast Guardsmen and their families when needed.

As detailed in the MOA, the Coast Guard will notify affected families about TAPS as soon as practicable after a loss and provide family members an Authorization for Disclosure of Information form. Should the family choose to submit the form, TAPS will be notified to contact the family. TAPS will then provide emotional help, hope, and healing to family members and friends who are grieving the loss of a Coast Guard member.

The complementary supportive efforts of the Coast Guard and TAPS will ensure that every deceased service member's family and friends have access to the services and support they need to deal more effectively with their loss.

The Coast Guard point of contact for Casualty Matters is LT Terry Walsh: Terrence.W.Walsh@uscg.mil. The e-mail account LTAP@uscg.mil will also be set up to answer any questions.

Rear Admiral D. A. Neptun, USCG
Assistant Commandant for Human Resources



Bonnie Carroll and Rear Admiral Daniel Neptun
sign the Memorandum of Agreement



LT Terrence Walsh, USCG Chief, Coast Guard Casualty Matters,
Patti Gross of TAPS, Bonnie Carroll, Founder and President of TAPS,
RADM Daniel Neptun, USCG, Assistant Commandant for Human Resources



Friends of TAPS

The Hartwell Foundation

TAPS is honored to have The Hartwell Foundation join us again this year as a partner in supporting our families, particularly the children of our fallen heroes. In 2012, TAPS was fortunate to have The Hartwell Foundation as a valued supporter of the TAPS Regional Good Grief Camps, and this year the foundation has significantly increased funding so that TAPS can bring these much needed programs to more children across the country.

The primary mission of The Hartwell Foundation is to grant awards for innovative and cutting-edge biomedical research that potentially benefits children. However, the foundation also sponsors additional missions to include special projects that directly benefit the health and well-being of children of the United States. TAPS is grateful to have received an Additional Missions grant of \$400,000 in 2013 to help make a difference in the lives of our youngest survivors.

The Additional Missions of The Hartwell Foundation are led by the Chief Executive Officer of the foundation, Rusty Hensley.

"We provide an opportunity for those we support to make a difference, and we

are very proud to support TAPS and the difference they make every day in the lives of those who have given so much in service to our nation," said Hensley. "We view this partnership as an opportunity to provide an on-going tribute to the brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice."

In 2013, TAPS is offering 12 Regional Good Grief Camps across America from Hawaii to Philadelphia and from Texas to Wisconsin. The TAPS Good Grief Camp for children and teens is America's first established program for children who have lost a parent, sibling, or loved one in military service to America. Young survivors have a chance to share, heal, and have fun in a loving supportive environment, surrounded by others of their own age who have experienced a similar loss. The camp includes opportunities for the children to learn coping skills, establish support systems, make friends, and discover that they are not alone in their grief.

TAPS Director of Youth Programs, Heather Campagna, said, "We very much appreciate to The Hartwell Foundation for supporting this very important program.

The bonds that are formed over these very healing weekends can be life changing for all involved."

One of our teen survivors wrote, "We shared experiences together that meant more because we had all been through similar circumstances. We all saw it through similar eyes. We also did the thing I feared most; we shared our feelings. Through this we built a connection."

"Every day, with the help of The Hartwell Foundation, we are here to honor the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen and Coast Guardsmen who have died serving all of us and to show our support for those they have left behind," said Bonnie Carroll, founder and president of TAPS. "The need for our services continues to grow and we are grateful to partner with The Hartwell Foundation to meet that need."

The work of TAPS is able to continue due to the invaluable generosity of those who, like The Hartwell Foundation, embrace our mission and care about the surviving loved ones who struggle every day to create a new normal out of their devastating circumstances. ★





Advice to New TAPS Survivors

The Saturday Message is a letter that comes through email to TAPS parents, spouses, siblings, and friends. It includes thoughts from the survivors themselves. When one asks a question, the others are free to respond. Asked recently what advice they would give to a newly bereaved person, TAPS survivors responded with powerful and diverse answers.

.....

**Deb Bonn ~ Surviving mother of
Ensign Elizabeth Bonn**

This will not be easy; take it one step at a time. If you can think ahead a day at a time, fine. If not, then take it an hour or a minute at a time, whatever you can handle. Losing someone you love hurts. That is the price

we pay for love. None of us would give up experiencing the love just because of the hurt now. That love will get you through. It does not end. You still love them and they still love you. Death did not change that. And in their own special way they will always be with you, not physically, but they are here.

Be kind to yourself. Do what you want to do, when and for how long you want to do it. You have no obligation to live up to the expectations of others. They do not know what you feel because everyone travels a different trail. Don't be afraid to reach out to others. Even though you have to travel the trail, you don't have to do it alone.

First, take the time to grieve and remember, and let the network of friends and family around you assist in this. They want to help, and it helps them as well. Together, it makes it a bit easier.

.....

**Caryn Fitzgerald ~ Surviving mother of
Private First Class Nathan Anderson**

The advice I would give to any new survivor is, "Don't wait to seek assistance!" Don't try to work through the grief on your own, because you don't have to! We have this organization with the experience and desire to help you so please don't ignore it, because those of us here are only here because we've been right where you are right now and know what you are feeling. Getting help from those who truly understand because they've been in your shoes is absolutely the best advice I would give anyone in my place.

.....

**Mary-Ann McLendon ~ Surviving
mother of Senior Chief Petty Officer
Blake McLendon**

Knowing what I know now, I wish I knew an easy way to go through it. I'd heal all of us who are suffering the loss of our special loved one. Unfortunately I don't have that ability, so my advice would be to take it one day at a time and know that in time things will gradually get easier to deal with.

Attend a TAPS Survivor Seminar and sign up for and read *TAPS Magazine*. I have found both to be very helpful.



Attending TAPS events helped us in many ways. We were able to talk to other parents who had lost a child and could relate to the pain and suffering we were going through. We were even able to meet other parents who lost their child in the same helicopter crash. It seems to be somewhat comforting to compare notes of what we were told and to find out how we are coping with our losses.

I also would advise you to find what works for you since we all handle grief differently. Journaling seems to help me at times. My husband gets on the computer and writes letters to our son, and then then "sends" them by erasing them. Long walks helped me a lot at the beginning. I'd go to a nearby park with tissue in hand. There I felt I could cry all I needed to without someone telling me not to cry. Crying in the shower also worked for me. I know no one likes to see us crying, but letting it out is therapeutic.

Going off for a weekend somewhere where you can get away from it all can also be helpful. Finding a way to honor your loved one by helping others in his or her name is also helpful. You just have to trust that things will get better. Nothing can make what happened not have happened, but learning to cope with it does gradually get more bearable in time.

.....
**David Cook ~ Surviving father of
Sergeant Trevor Cook**

First, take the time to grieve and remember, and let the network of friends and family around you assist in this. They want to help, and it helps them as well. Together, it makes it a bit easier. Alone, the pain is worse. Find the strength in the three F's: Faith, Family, and Friends. Without them, the struggle is that much greater. We also have found solace in meeting others in our shoes through TAPS. Utilize these folks' strengths and you will find peace coming quicker and easier

We all need to grieve. In many ways I will always remain sad. For me there will be no closure, but there is hope. You can live your own life well and support those you love and who also ache with the loss of your fallen loved one.

.....
than without. This is a hard thing to endure alone. We keep our son's memory and legacy alive with a scholarship fund in his name. Putting this together has been therapeutic and rewarding.

.....
**Annie Murphy ~ Surviving mother of
Major Michael Murphy**

When we lose someone we love, it is never an easy road. Whether it is a child, a parent, a spouse, other relative, or friend, the pain is something that we have to work through. I would tell you do not try to do it on your own. Reach out to others for help because I have seen so many people that do not get help and the pain often will go into the body and can cause illnesses and other problems, and life will end for that person even though they did not die physically.

.....
**Susan Britanisky ~ Surviving mother of
Lieutenant Colonel Jeanne Hutchinson**

Hold onto the memories and love you had between you. TAPS is a major help and outlet. You can speak your feelings here. Talking about your loved one is comforting. Time doesn't heal as much as it makes the pain more tolerable.

.....
**Donn Weaver ~ Surviving father of
First Lieutenant Todd Weaver**

Feelings change after the first months. At that point, as a family with strong connections to each other, we had to decide how we each would honor our hero. We also had to decide how each of us would live our own lives as fully as possible from that point on. I was reminded of the last scene in Saving Private Ryan. Fifty years after many died saving him, the sole survivor whose siblings were all lost in battle, turns to his wife at the cemetery in France to get her affirmation: "Did I live up to their sacrifice? Did I live my life well?"

We all need to grieve. In many ways I will always remain sad. For me there will be no closure, but there is hope. You can live your own life well and support those you love and who also ache with the loss of your fallen loved one. Going forward with life in positive ways may be the best way to honor him, and even more so, to honor his sacrifice. Think about it. Without our fallen and their comrades in arms throughout our history, our own lives would likely be far less rewarding and hopeful. Remember, our loved ones would not want us to fail to live the kind of life they would have wanted for themselves. Destiny changed their plans. Now it must also change ours. ☆



Walking Will Invigorate Body, Mind, and Spirit

By Leslie Becker-Phelps, PhD

Wouldn't it be great if you could do something simple that would leave you feeling happier and more energetic? Well, there is... and it's not taking Prozac. It's walking. No doubt, you don't think much about it most of the time—you just do it. Even the most sedentary people walk, even if it is no more than to and from their cars. All walking is a form of movement, and movement naturally feels good to us. If you do enough of it, we call it exercise and it has even greater benefits.

Many people are more aware of the physical benefits of walking than the psychological ones. This is unfortunate because walking is extremely beneficial for your emotional and psychological health. Consider the following benefits of walking, as well as any other exercising.

Being happier

Walking regularly can help you attain a better outlook on life. Some studies have linked moderate exercise to decreased depression.

Decreased stress

At its most basic level, walking provides an opportunity to move. In addition, walking gives you time away from your stressors and a chance to breathe fully and deeply. All of these things are stress relievers. By distancing yourself physically and emotionally from your stressors, you will feel more equipped to cope with them when you return.

Increased level of energy

People who walk regularly have more energy. One study revealed that people felt less tense and had more energy after walking for as little as ten minutes.

Remaining cognitively agile

Many studies show that physically active elderly people do better than their sedentary

peers on cognitive tasks, such as reasoning, vocabulary, memory, concentration, and reaction time. Some studies show similar results with young people, although these results vary.

Improved self-image

Walking regularly can help improve your sense of well-being and improve your self-esteem.

Improved sleep

People who exercise regularly fall asleep more quickly and sleep more soundly. This is a psychological benefit because good sleep translates to being more engaged, having better concentration, and thinking through ideas more clearly. Getting good sleep can also make us feel more vital and happier.





Weight control

If all of the above reasons are not enough incentive to walk, keep in mind that you can help control your body weight through walking (along with healthy eating). By burning more calories than you take in, you reduce body fat—that is, you lose weight. So, the more you walk, the more you burn. And, by obtaining and maintaining a healthy weight, you will feel better about yourself.

Given all of these benefits, you cannot deny that walking can provide a boost to your emotional health. Even so, you might still be resistant to doing it. As we all know, motivation is one thing, but having enough motivation to overcome inertia is another. Get over this hump with good planning and the right way of thinking.

Getting Started

Consider whether walking appeals to you. Walking has a different appeal to different people. For some, they use the uninterrupted time to catch up with a friend. For others, they enjoy the peace of blocking out the world as they walk alone. In addition, it provides an opportunity to enjoy feeling your body in motion, observe your environment, and to see that the world is much more than the details of your life.

Walking also provides all the benefits of many other forms of exercise with few of the hassles. It is easy to do. You don't need any special equipment, other than a good pair of walking shoes. You don't need to drive to any special location (like a field or a gym), leaving you free to walk at work,

at home, or any place else. And, you don't have to be particularly coordinated—an important factor for those of us whose two left hands are matched by two left feet.

Setting Goals

Set appropriate goals for yourself. If your exercise goals are too lofty, they will remain a pipe dream. So, be realistic. You can increase your walking with some relatively minor adjustments in your daily routine. Take the stairs at work, park a little farther away, or find the least direct route to your destination when at work or at the mall. And, while you're at it, pick up the pace. Even with a moderate increase in walking, you will notice an improvement in your mood.

If you're up for a greater challenge, enjoy taking brisk walks when you can. In fact, brisk walking three times a week for at least thirty minutes each time increases your cardiorespiratory fitness. While it is important to exert yourself, don't overdo it. You know you are walking at the right intensity if you are walking fast but can still hold a conversation. One wonderful benefit of this kind of walking is that it releases endorphins—your body's natural happy drug!

Reaping Benefits

Note the benefits of your exercise routine. Pay attention to the immediate increase in energy that you feel. Or, if you are tired after really pushing yourself, be aware of how your energy rebounds after a brief period of time. When you establish a routine, you will also see how you maintain

some of the benefits listed above. Consciously noticing these changes helps you enjoy them more and stay motivated.

By taking action, you can be happier, feel better about yourself, and feel less stressed. Action, of course, does take effort. But, be assured, that the solution is, well, a walk in the park! *

About the Author



Dr. Leslie Becker-Phelps, a licensed psychologist, is dedicated to helping people understand themselves and what they need to do to become emotionally and psychologically healthy. Her work is primarily devoted to her private practice in Basking Ridge, NJ and to her writing. She is the author of *Freeing Your Love from Insecurity* (available spring 2014). Leslie has presented nationally on a variety of mental health issues, is the relationships expert on WebMD's *Relationships and Coping Community*, and writes blogs for both WebMD and *Psychology Today*. For more information visit www.drbecker-phelps.com.



Seven Choices: Finding Daylight After Loss Shatters Your World

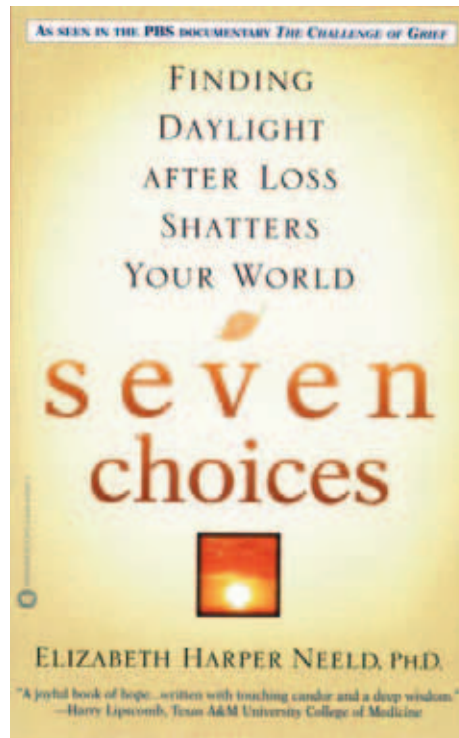
By Elizabeth Harper Neeld, PhD ☆ Reviewed by Betsy Beard

Early in my grief journey, I looked desperately for books or manuals or instructions—anything to help me get through each day—but bookstores didn't stock very many books about grief. I found this perplexing since death is universal and most of us will experience the loss of a loved one at some point before we ourselves die. For TAPS survivors, that loss seems to occur sooner rather than later, because many of our loved ones die in their teens, twenties, and thirties.

Seven Choices: Finding Daylight After Loss Shatters Your World by Elizabeth Harper Neeld was one of the few books I did find. I surprised myself by buying and actually reading a book with the word "choices" in the title. And not just one or two choices. Seven of them. It seemed to me at the time that there were no choices in grief. I felt as if I were caught up in a tornado and that there was nothing I could do other than to go along with it wherever it went.

Elizabeth Neeld quickly drew me in. She is an engaging writer whose husband died suddenly when he was taking a six mile run one evening. Even though I had lost a child to war, I felt somehow connected to an author who had experienced the grief of an immensely important person in her life.

In *Seven Choices*, Neeld describes seven major points on the map of the grief process. 1) Impact: Experiencing the Unthinkable, 2) Second Crisis: Stumbling in the Dark, 3) Observation: Linking Past to Present, 4) The Turn: Turning into the Wind,



Seven Choices is a book that is relevant for years after the death of a loved one. It is not necessary to read the entire book at once. In fact, I found it helpful to simply read new sections when I felt ready to do so.

5) Reconstruction: Picking Up the Pieces, 6) Working Through: Finding Solid Ground, and 7) Integration: Daylight.

Each chapter begins with an account of Neeld's own experience. She then describes characteristics of that point in grief, using the examples of sixty other griever who were willing to discuss their grieving

processes with her. Parents, children, siblings, spouses, and friends illustrate different aspects of the grief journey. Each chapter then includes a section that explains Critical Considerations during that time frame followed by sections subtitled The Choice and What We Need from Family and Friends.

For example, during the period of time Neeld calls Impact: Experiencing the Unthinkable, the choice is "We can choose to experience and express our grief fully." The main concept here is that we don't try to avoid grief or suppress it, but allow its expression. During Second Crisis: Stumbling in the Dark, the choice is, "We can choose to endure with patience."

Seven Choices is a book that is relevant for years after the death of a loved one. It is not necessary to read the entire book at once. In fact, I found it helpful to simply read new sections when I felt ready to do so. I have also found that it is useful to go back and re-read some sections, since the grief journey feels somewhat cyclical to me. By that I mean that we pass certain points in the journey more than once, but hopefully from a different perspective as we journey: more like a spiral that passes certain points on its upward course.

Additional resources for all who are grieving can be found at the end of the book. There is a section titled Helping Children and Teenagers Deal with Loss, as well as a Directory of Resources that includes TAPS, and Chapter Notes for those who want more information. ☆



TAPS VOLUNTEER

★ Belle ★

Volunteers are a very important part of the TAPS family. We are grateful for the countless hours they donate and the part they play in supporting the TAPS mission. Volunteers, we salute you!

Honor's First for Freedom is my full name, but most everyone calls me Belle. I'm a Golden Retriever, born on January 27, 2005, in Charlotte, North Carolina. I left my furry family when I was only nine weeks old and flew to Virginia to start my new life with my new family. My new mom Lisa Dolan met me at the airport in Norfolk, Virginia. Yes, I was born to travel! Besides my mom, I have a sister Becca and a brother Beau. Their father, Navy Captain Bob Dolan, died in the terrorist attack on the Pentagon in 2001.

After their Mr. Bob died, the Dolans attended Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors. Once a participant, my mom decided she wanted to give back to TAPS and honor her husband at the same time. That's where I come into the story. Mom had encountered therapy dogs after September 11, 2001, and after some research, she contacted Honor Therapy and Assistance Dogs in North Carolina. She wanted to raise a puppy in Mr. Bob's memory to work with the families who have also experienced the loss of their armed services loved one. That is how I came to be part of the TAPS family.

My first time at TAPS was May 2005. I was only four months old and was just a roly-poly ball of fuzzy fur when I first met the other TAPS families. Many of them were children and first timers like me, so they were scared and nervous, too. It didn't take long for the hugs and kisses to calm my nerves and theirs. Mom said I was making them feel safe and helping to heal their broken hearts. She said the hugs and kisses are comforting and healing, and it's the job of a therapy dog to comfort and heal.



*Thank You
Belle!*

I was officially in training back in 2005. It was Memorial Day weekend; a weekend set aside every year to honor and remember the military fallen. Each year TAPS gathers in Washington, DC, to remember the love, celebrate the life, and share the journey. That weekend, I loved, celebrated, and shared with many families. As a young one myself, I naturally gravitated to the youngest: the TAPS children. I became a mascot for the Good Grief Camp and cuddled and licked away many tears. This was my calling; I am a heart healer.

I love being a heart healer. Over the years, I've comforted families up and down the East Coast, the Southwest, and the Midwest. I've worked with veterans and nursing homes. I've rocked with Rolling Thunder and cheered on runners at the Marine Corps Marathon. I love that I have touched so many lives.

While every life I touch is important, no one I meet will ever be as special to me as my TAPS families. Each year Mom and I return to TAPS for the National Military Survivor Seminar in May. We see old faces and new ones, too. It makes me sad that new families are grieving, but I am happy to be there to help heal and comfort them.

This year was my 9th TAPS weekend. I am eight years old now and an honorary mentor at the Good Grief Camp for the kids. Every year I look forward to seeing my TAPS families, especially the children I call my "babies." Some of my "babies" are beyond their teens now and are mentors themselves. They, too, are heart healers. I'm so proud! ★

TAPS gives special thanks to Lisa Dolan for training and helping Belle attend all our national seminars.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

TAPS welcomes new volunteers. Email us at volunteer@taps.org or visit us at www.taps.org. Click on Support TAPS and then click on Volunteer to explore volunteer jobs, sign up, and take our online training course.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



I Did Not Take the Oath

By Linda Lamie ☆ Surviving mother of Sergeant Gene Lamie

*I did not take the oath; I did not raise my hand.
All I did was have a child who grew to be that man.
He did his job with honor; his men he led with pride.
He was not afraid to fight; he was not afraid to die.*

*The baby I held in my arms, the boy who became a man,
He put himself in danger in a foreign land.
He said not to worry; he said, "I will come home."
Those words come back to haunt me...spoken over a phone.*

*The knock on the door is always just a moment ago;
The tears in my eyes, the pain that breaks my soul
For I did not take the oath; I did not raise my hand.
All I did was raise a child who grew to be that man.*

*The baby that I held, the child I watched grow
Filled my heart with so much joy as only mothers can know
The memories of his life will stay with me forever.
The connection of our hearts can never be severed.*

*He is now a fallen hero and I a Gold Star Mother,
Because he gave his life for the protection of others.
But I did not take the oath; I did not raise my hand.
All I did was raise a boy who grew to be that man.*

Photo by Sgt. Chad D. Nelson, courtesy of the US Army



Thank You to Our Donors & Sponsors

We are grateful to the Friends of TAPS whose personal gifts, memorial tributes, grants, event sponsorships, and planned gifts enable TAPS to comfort and care for the loved of those who served and died.

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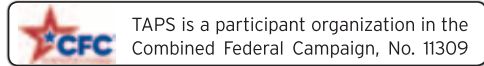
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In 2012, TAPS Programs Provided:

- 86,900** TAPS Magazines sent to survivors, caregivers, and commanders
- 12,234** anniversary memorial cards sent to survivors
- 11,869** calls received by the TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline
- 4,807** loved ones added to TAPS care
- 4,428** personal correspondences sent from TAPS Survivor Care Team
- 2,619** TAPS Resource Kits shipped to newly bereaved survivors
- 2,525** surviving adults attended a TAPS event finding hope and healing
- 1,228** children attended a Good Grief Camp or Camp Out
- 1,193** runners participated with the TAPS Run and Remember Team
- 840** surviving loved ones connected to free, unlimited grief counseling
- 717** personalized reports on local support groups sent to survivors
- 324** peer mentors connected with surviving loved ones



TAPS Photos by David Moss, Diane Parrot, and Sun Vega

CARING FOR THE FAMILIES OF AMERICA'S FALLEN HEROES SINCE 1994