

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

T★A★P★S[®]

Comfort and Support Since 1994

MAGAZINE

FOR THE LOVED ONES OF THOSE WHO SERVED & DIED



VOLUME 20 • 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.

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★ **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 support survivors whose loved one died while serving in the armed forces.

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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TAPS®

Comfort and Support Since 1994

TAPS offers immediate and long-term emotional help, hope, and healing to all those 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

TAPS

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.

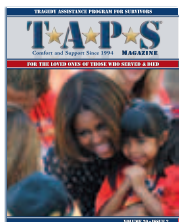
CONNECTS survivors to resources in their local communities and provides grief and trauma resources and information.

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COVER PHOTO BY
USCG Petty Officer 2nd Class Patrick Kelley
First Lady Michelle Obama with TAPS survivor Marianna Cardenaz on Memorial Day 2014



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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. ☆

TAPS Honor Guard Gala

It is an honor and privilege to be part of the Ambassador Committee. We are always inspired by the survivors and the bond that we feel in the room as we watch them together. They are so strong. TAPS gives them such a wonderful gift: the gift of love and compassion and hope, the gift of your amazing programs and camps and the gift of showing honor and pride for their loved one's sacrifice and service to our great nation. We can't thank you enough.

Linda Odierno

Wife of General Ray Odierno
Army Chief of Staff

Paying it Forward

Our event went phenomenally well! A lot of donations were mailed when people saw [our fundraiser for TAPS] in the newspaper. People I don't even know. So far we have \$5,391.00 and more donations are coming. I'm overwhelmed! This feeling of paying it forward to TAPS is such a great feeling for us, I just can't tell you how much we appreciate what TAPS has done for us. This is just a way to say thank you for all you do!

Bobbie McHenry, Pennsylvania

Surviving mother of
LCpl Chris McHenry

Gratitude for Our Loved Ones

My father was killed at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. I wanted to say thank you to those families that have lost loved ones since that day, defending our nation's freedom. Losing a loved one is always hard and I am sorry for their loss. I know a large number of these folks joined, and have chosen to re-enlist, due to the events surrounding 9/11, and my family and I want to say that their dedication, even at the cost of their lives, is still appreciated.

Jonathan Fisher, Virginia

Surviving son of
Dr. Gerald P. Fisher

In Memory of Darcie

The Special Tribute Edition honoring Darcie Sims was the most beautiful tribute that I have ever seen. The cover was stunning and shows Darcie just as she was. I was honored to attend two TAPS seminars in Northern and Southern California where she spoke and also the national Compassionate Friends Conference in Costa Mesa, California, two years ago. She was so incredibly helpful and has helped our family so much.

Candy Zinn, South Carolina

Surviving mother of
John Zinn

Philadelphia Regional Seminar

Being in Philly sparked a fire in me I thought died a long time ago. When Ryan was killed, I lost my military career with him. Since then, I've been floating about, wondering if I'd ever find a social/career purpose again. Would I ever be needed like I was back then? I was a medic; nurturing is in my blood. Helping others is what makes my world make sense. Well... I felt that purpose again. I honestly don't have words to describe how it felt. It would mean a great deal to me if there were other avenues in which I could help. Please let me know what I can do.

Amber Baum, Maryland

Surviving spouse of
SGT Ryan Baum

Workplace Giving

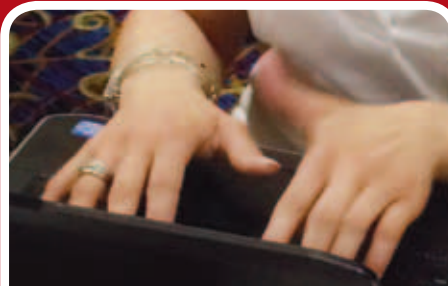
I chose to donate to TAPS this year through our annual CFC Campaign because I know that TAPS really does care. My sister lost her husband, my dear brother-in-law, from PTSD. Because he was not injured or killed in active duty the family did not qualify for help from several organizations. TAPS was the only organization that supported us through this devastation, and I will forever be grateful.

Bonnie Beliz, Texas

Surviving sister-in-law of
Michael Burnette



editor@taps.org



From the Executive Vice President

Dear TAPS Family, ☆☆☆

The tradition of memorializing the ultimate sacrifices of our service men and women is too often relegated to Memorial Day, when solemn observances compete for attention with mattress sales and barbecues. As one surviving sister noted, far too many choose “to enjoy the privileges granted by our service members and never acknowledge the sacrifice.”

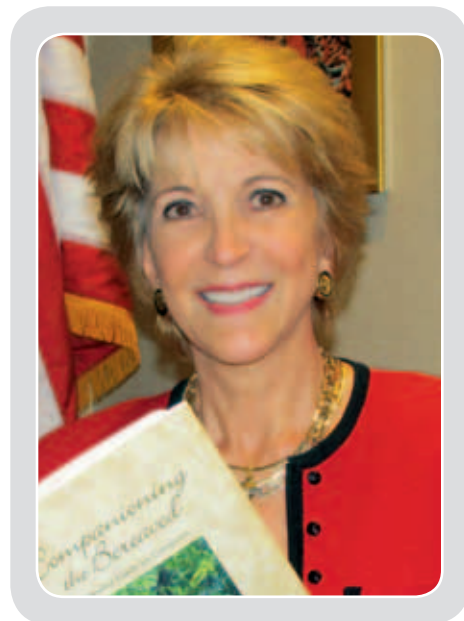
Adequate acknowledgment of the sacrifices of men and women in uniform cannot be accomplished simply or fully by pausing in a National Moment of Remembrance on the last Monday in May. While essential and fitting, it is an insufficient testament to the respect their service deserves, and it is an inadequate acknowledgement of the loved ones they left behind whose lives are forever changed by their absence.

From 1775 to 2010 alone, more than 538,000 men and women in uniform died from accidents, infections, illness, or suicide. Researchers estimate that each military death significantly impacts an average of at least 10 people—mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, fiancés, grandparents, and other family and friends. The consequences of loss to those who remain are major and lasting and certainly can't be healed with a folded flag or a benefit check.

Because military deaths continue regardless of peace agreements or executive orders, military grief will always be a raw and real part of the lives of those in uniform and their families who “also serve.” Military grief is, in fact, a permanent and painful reality of military service, and TAPS has been present 24/7/365 for more than 20 years to provide peer support and to share the journey of military bereavement.

Since its founding by Army widow Bonnie Carroll in 1994, TAPS has been honored to serve more than 40,000 surviving loved ones. Because death takes no time off, the staff and volunteers at TAPS have ensured that the phone has always been answered and the lights of hope have always been on. TAPS works round the clock with the military service branches, casualty assistance officers, chaplains, and community based organizations to offer compassionate support to anyone grieving the death of someone serving in the Armed Forces, regardless of the circumstances of death or relationship to the deceased.

With this enduring commitment to care for families of the fallen, it is no surprise that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin E. Dempsey, has characterized TAPS as the embodiment of “that bond of trust that we owe those who put themselves in harm's way for their country.”



This past Memorial Day weekend, General Dempsey once again joined the TAPS team of volunteers and partners as we came together in Washington, D.C., to honor the memory of those who died in service to this country. Together we remembered the love, celebrated the life, and shared the journey. As one surviving mother said last year, “Rather than sadness and mourning, rather than tears and pain, there is camaraderie and healing,” with the steadfast presence of TAPS.

Let us remember those we have loved and lost with a pledge to continue the TAPS legacy of service. Let our commitment to care for others be our tribute to those who have given, and will give, the ultimate sacrifice. Let us continue to honor their memories in the spirit of TAPS' enduring vigilance by offering support to the loved ones they never wanted to leave behind.

With warmth and gratitude,

Dr. Lynda Davis

☆ Executive Vice President ☆



The Fabric of Grief (What's in Your Closet?)

By Sarah Greene ☆ Surviving spouse of LTC David Greene

Has your wardrobe changed since the loss of your loved one? I can tell you that mine has definitely changed. I have expressed (and sometimes embarrassed) myself in almost every clothing choice throughout my grief, and I don't think I am alone.

The first year, I always wore a baseball hat; it was the best shield against the sympathetic looks and required very little peripheral vision. My nosy neighbor asked why I was always wearing the baseball hat and I told him it was to avoid conversations—but he never got the message. My clothing was routinely mismatched, unkempt, and a complete product of grief. I wore sunglasses a lot, too. They hid my hideously puffy red eyes from the public and protected me from eye contact. The sunglasses worked well inside and outside, but it was hard to read labels in the grocery store.



Sarah Greene

I lost some weight and my clothes became a little bigger. I sometimes wore my jeans without washing them for a long time. Eventually, I started buying clothes that had an interesting message to them. Some were decidedly unisex duds that said “keep away” to males and “I am a tough broad.” Others showed how I wanted to regress to the innocence of youth. I bought Chuck Taylor sneakers again; they made my feet remember being young and carefree.

I wore a lot of my husband's clothes in the early years of grief. I liked the feeling of his flannel shirts wrapping me up in a hug from my past. I wore his camouflage pants on a couple of occasions, his dog tags, his flight jacket in winter, and his t-shirts to bed. Sadly, the smell of my Dave has dissipated from the fabric of his clothing even though it is still ingrained in the fabric of my life. I think of him every day, and sometimes I wear his wedding band on a necklace. My own wedding band is on my right hand. It is there to comfort me and probably to let others know that I am a widow.

I have found that after nine years, my wardrobe has somewhat normalized. Each day is different. On certain days I wear a TAPS shirt to announce to the



world that I have sacrificed my heart on the altar of freedom. I now wear running shoes and I wear them out! I sometimes don something dressy, but it took a long time to want to do this, since I had only dressed up for my husband in my previous life. Much of the time I am a jeans and t-shirt girl, like I always was.

I have found that I also wear my new identity: my protective mommy pride, my vulnerability, and my new-found strength. Perhaps, my most important accessory is my smile. It is not always easy to wear, and sometimes it shows the strain of suffering, the emptiness of grief, and the loss of self that has churned inside of me all these years. But my smile is also hard earned and life affirming! It is most genuine when I meet someone who wears their own grief, too.

I have been distressed, dressed to express, and redressed. But I realize as I stare into my closet each morning, the choice I make still expresses how I feel, how I want to be perceived, and who I am.

Over the years, I may have worn myself thin, worn myself down, and worn myself out. I have been distressed, dressed to express, and redressed. But I realize as I stare into my closet each morning, the choice I make still expresses how I feel, how I want to be perceived, and who I am.

And sometimes, I still don't have a thing to wear!

Here's how some of our other TAPS survivors have altered their wardrobe and accessories in the time since their loved ones died:



Mary

★ *Surviving mother of Timothy* ★

I am relieved to say that I am wearing street clothes as opposed to bed clothing! I was in bed for 17 hours a day for two years, but I dress every day now. My special ornaments are the kittens Timothy gave me three months before he died, two Russian Blues who are all grown up. I hold them and drape them like furs around my neck many times a day. I feel their hearts beating and feel connected to my darling son.

Kathi

★ *Surviving mother of Samuel* ★

Jewelry has been the big change. I now rotate between a locket with Sam's picture in it, my Gold Star pendant, and a Marine Corps heart-shaped pendant. I also wear a memorial bracelet and memorial dog tags with Sam's picture on it.

Deb

★ *Surviving mother of Elizabeth* ★

Seven years later, I still wear Beth's clothes. They bring comfort and make me feel closer to her. They are like a cocoon that shelters and protects me. I still need more than memories; I need the tactile feel of being near her. I have worn one of her dog tags since the day the military gave them back to us. Tom, her dad, wears the other.

Rose

★ *Surviving spouse of Troy* ★

I used to wear a lot of dresses and skirts for my husband, but now I wear pants a lot. There's one colorful and beautiful skirt that he liked me to wear. I don't wear that skirt anymore, but I still keep it and sometimes look at it. It reminds me of my husband.

Betsy

★ *Surviving mother of Brad* ★

My wardrobe underwent a drastic change after Brad's death. At first I only wore black to match my mood. Then I expanded to include Army green. Gradually I allowed red, white, and blue. After about five years, I bought something orange. At the time I realized that it must be a sign of healing: my wardrobe had morphed from grief-wear to patriot-wear to a new normal.

Diane

★ *Surviving mother of Caleb* ★

My attire is dressier than it was. I represent my hero, my son, in my life.

Merry

★ *Surviving mother of Wesley* ★

I wear his bright red t-shirt on Friday: not for heart health, but to support the troops.

Rose

★ *Surviving mother of Nicholas* ★

I try not to wear black much. It took me a long time to go back to wearing the color red. It was too bright and too happy a color for me. I even gave away some of my clothes that were too cheerful.

Kathy

★ *Surviving mother of Jon* ★

I wear my trident necklace that my son gave me soon after he passed Navy SEAL training and said "never take it off." His dad wears our son's Gold Squadron cap.

Mary-Ann

★ *Surviving mother of Blake* ★

I tend to dress plainer than I used to. I try not to wear anything that is apt to have people start asking questions about Blake. That can still be painful to go into. I'm not into the latest styles and don't seem to wear as much jewelry.

Cathy

★ *Surviving mother of Jacob* ★

I have two silver bracelets, one with a heart that says, "You are always in my heart," the other with a number charm 23 with a birthstone bead and a charm number for the years he has been in eternal heaven. I change the number of the eternal bead for the next number on his birthday each year. ★

Whatever you find in your jewelry box, drawers, and closets these days, rest assured that you are not alone and that your tastes will likely change yet again. Your TAPS family is also here to provide you with a TAPS shirt when you attend one of our many events nationwide.

For more information, visit www.taps.org and click on calendar of events on the left below the banner.

Helping a Suicide Survivor Heal

By Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD

Historian Arnold Toynbee once wrote, "There are always two parties to a death; the person who dies and the survivors who are bereaved." Unfortunately, many survivors of suicide suffer alone and in silence. The silence that surrounds them often complicates the healing that comes from being encouraged to mourn.

Because of the social stigma surrounding suicide, survivors feel the pain of the loss, yet may not know how, or where, or if, they should express it. Yet the only way to heal is to mourn. Just like other bereaved persons grieving the loss of someone loved, suicide survivors need to talk, to cry, sometimes to scream, in order to heal.

As a result of fear and misunderstanding, survivors of suicide deaths are often left with a feeling of abandonment at a time when they desperately need unconditional support and understanding. Suicide survivors suffer in a variety of ways: one, because they need to mourn the loss of someone who has died; two, because they have experienced a sudden, typically unexpected traumatic death; and three, because

they are often shunned by a society unwilling to enter into the pain of their grief.

This article will guide you in ways to turn your cares and concerns into positive action.

Accept the Intensity of the Grief

Grief following a suicide is always complex. Survivors don't "get over it." Instead, with support and understanding, they can come to reconcile themselves to its reality. Don't be surprised by the intensity of their feelings. Sometimes, when they least suspect it, they may be overwhelmed by feelings of grief. Accept that survivors may be struggling with explosive emotions—guilt, fear, and shame—all well beyond the limits experienced in other types of death. Be patient, compassionate, and understanding.

Listen with Your Heart

Assisting suicide survivors means you must break down the terribly costly silence. Helping begins with your ability to be an active listener. Your physical presence and desire to listen without judgment are critical helping tools. Willingness to listen is the best way to offer help to someone who needs to talk.

Thoughts and feelings inside the survivor may be frightening and difficult to acknowledge. Don't worry so much about what you will say. Just concentrate on the words that are being shared with you. Your friend may need to relate the same story about the death over and over again. Listen attentively each time. Realize this repetition is part of your friend's healing process. Simply listen and understand. And, remember, you don't have to have the answers to his or her questions. Simply listening is enough.

Avoid Simplistic Explanations and Clichés

Words, particularly clichés, can be extremely painful for a suicide survivor. Clichés are trite comments often intended to diminish the loss by providing simple solutions to difficult realities. Comments like, "You are holding up so well," "Time will heal all wounds," "Think of what you still have to be thankful for," or "You have to be strong for others" are not constructive. Instead, they hurt and make the journey through grief more difficult.

Be certain to avoid passing judgment or providing simplistic explanations of the suicide. Don't make the mistake of saying the person who died by suicide was out of his or her mind. Informing a survivor that

Assisting suicide survivors means you must break down the terribly costly silence. Helping begins with your ability to be an active listener.



someone they loved was insane typically only complicates the situation. Suicide survivors need help in coming to their own search for understanding of what has happened. In the end, their personal search for meaning and understanding of the death is what is really important.

Be Compassionate

Give your friend permission to express feelings without fear of criticism. Learn from your friend. Don't instruct or set explanations about how he or she should respond. Never say, "I know just how you feel." You don't. Think about your helping role as someone who walks with, not behind or in front of, the one who is bereaved.

Familiarize yourself with the wide spectrum of emotions that many survivors experience. Allow your friend to experience all the hurt, sorrow, and pain that he or she is feeling at the time. Recognize that tears are a natural and appropriate expression of the pain associated with the loss.

Respect the Need to Grieve

Family members of persons who have died by suicide are often ignored in their grief. Why? Because of the nature of the death, it is sometimes kept a secret. If the death cannot be talked about openly, the wounds of grief will go unhealed.

As a caring friend, you may be the only one willing to be with the survivors. Your physical presence and permissive listening create a foundation for the healing process. Allow the survivors to talk, but don't push them. Sometimes, you may get a cue to back off and wait. If you get a signal that this is what is needed, let them know you are ready to listen if, and when, they want to share their thoughts and feelings.

Understand the Uniqueness of Suicide Grief

Keep in mind that the grief of suicide survivors is unique. No one will respond to the death of someone loved in exactly

the same way. While it may be possible to talk about similarities shared by survivors, everyone is different.

Because the grief experience is unique, be patient. The process of grief takes a long time, so allow your friend to proceed at his or her own pace. Don't criticize inappropriate behavior. Remember that the death of someone to suicide is a shattering experience. As a result of this death, your friend's life is under reconstruction.

Be Aware of Holidays and Anniversaries

Survivors of suicide may have a difficult time during special occasions like holidays and anniversaries. These events emphasize the absence of the person who has died. Respect this pain as a natural expression of the grief process. Learn from it. And, most importantly, never try to take the hurt away.

Use the name of the person who has died when talking to survivors. Hearing the name can be comforting and it confirms that you have not forgotten this important person who was so much a part of their lives.

Be Aware of Support Groups

Support groups are one of the best ways to help survivors of suicide. In a group, survivors can connect with other people who share the commonality of the experience. They are allowed and encouraged to tell their stories as much, and as often, as they like. You may be able to help survivors locate such a group. This practical effort on your part will be appreciated.

Respect Faith and Spirituality

If you allow them, a survivor of suicide will "teach you" about their feelings regarding faith and spirituality. If faith is a part of their lives, let them express it in ways that seem appropriate. If they are mad at God, encourage them to talk about it. Remember, having anger at God speaks of having a relationship with God. Don't be a judge, be a loving friend.

Survivors may also need to explore how religion may have complicated their grief. They may have been taught that persons who take their own lives are doomed to hell. Your task is not to explain theology, but to listen and learn. Whatever the situation, your presence and desire to listen without judging are critical helping tools.

Work Together as Helpers

Friends and family who experience the death of someone to suicide must no longer suffer alone and in silence. As helpers, we need to provide support and acceptance so that survivors can grieve in healthy ways. To experience grief is the result of having loved, and suicide survivors must be guaranteed this necessity. While the above guidelines will be helpful, it is important to recognize that helping a suicide survivor heal will not be an easy task. You may have to give more concern, time, and love than you ever knew you had. But the effort will be more than worth it. *

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 Second Year

Facing the Reality

By Janet Crane ★ Surviving mother of SPC Jason Kyle Edens

The second anniversary date of my son's death was April 26, 2014. Another Gold Star Mother had told me the second year was worse than the first, and I didn't believe it. But it was true in many ways.

Jason is buried several hours away from us, so we had made a special trip on the first anniversary of his death. I had known for several months that we would be going to his grave, and the stress and tension built each month it got closer. Why was that visit going to be different than the ones before? Because it was a major milestone signifying the ending of all of the firsts.

My husband Mike and I drove to the cemetery that day with my step-daughter and her husband. We lit candles and I stood there and stared at it and cried my eyes out. Yes, it was true. Yes, my son really was buried in that grave. Yes, it was now reality more than ever. And yes, I had to face a second year of living without Jason.

And so the second year began. Each day I continued to get up and pray that it had

all been a bad dream. Each morning on my way to work I vowed that I was not going to cry. But a song would come on the radio or I would see a Little Tykes yellow and red car in someone's yard, and the tears would flow. On the way home from work I would make another vow and yet again fail to keep it. I continued to make the vow, though, because I was confident that one day I would make the entire 17 miles without tears, right?

After that first year it seemed like the world had moved on, but I hadn't. I struggled each day with the need to be productive and to carry on with my life, but worried that I would forget. Crazy, I know. How could I ever forget that my child was gone? I remained as active as I could and tried to keep my mind occupied. If I went for a period of time without thinking of Jason, I would almost panic and have to reassure myself that it was okay.

All I had of my son were the memories, and they would come at me like a knife

sometimes. During the first year, I was in a daze, but the second year everything seemed crystal clear. I would see his pictures on the wall or see them on my computer, and the tears would fall. I would be sitting at my computer in my home office and look up to see his Gold Star flag and lose it. I would look at his flag case and medals. I could go on and on with the many triggers. The first year I don't think I saw any of that stuff, although it was there. They say the brain has a way of protecting us until we are capable of handling things, and I now understand what that means.

Yes, the second year was worse in many ways, but there were also positive things in my life. The tears came less often, if you can believe that. I met many wonderful people through TAPS and other avenues which supported me and continue to support me in my journey of grief. Some come and go, but many remain. I truly believe that God puts the right people in your life at the right time and place.



After the first year it seemed like the world had moved on, but I hadn't. I struggled each day with the need to be productive and to carry on with my life, but worried that I would forget.



*I continue to live for the amazing moments.
 Moments when I can honor Jason's memory
 and tell the world what a wonderful child
 I had and what a hero he is.*

In order to combat the continued grief, I got more involved with the community during my second year. I became part of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program and have a "little" sister. They say in helping others we help ourselves, and I have found it to be true.

I also continued to pursue my love of running in the second year. My team and I raised more than \$4,000 for the TAPS Run and Remember Team at the Soldier Marathon at Fort Benning in 2013. I had run my first marathon in 2004 and had forgotten how painful the training and the actual run was. But I decided to do a second one in Jason's honor despite the fact I had promised myself I would never do another! This time I had extra motivation for running through the pain and, believe me, it was painful.

The course started at the historic National Infantry Museum in Columbus, Georgia, and wound itself for six miles through Fort Benning. Then it continued along the banks of the Chattahoochee River on the Riverwalk to downtown Columbus. During the marathon, my knee went out halfway through the race. I kept going for the other 13.1 miles in severe pain, but I

was determined to finish. Quitting is not in my vocabulary, and all I could think of was, "I have to do this for Jason." Even with the pain, it felt good to finish.

As I approached the finish line, I saw my husband and three drill sergeants from Fort Benning standing there waiting for me. I was about an hour behind my estimated finish time, so they had been waiting quite a while. Mike had told the drill instructors about my reason for running and they had decided to wait as long as was needed. When I saw that they were holding Jason's picture board, I just started crying. They escorted me to the finish line holding up Jason's pictures while tears flowed down my face. That was an amazing moment. I felt like Jason was looking down and laughing at the sight of them, urging me on.

As we neared the second anniversary the following April, a friend said to me, "Wow, has it only been two years? It seems longer." Not to me... It still seemed like it was yesterday that I was holding Jason's hand,

standing beside the hospital bed and watching him take his last breath. I was afraid to move on because I felt like I would forget. I know everyone

hasn't forgotten, but sometimes it seems like they have.

I have moments that I think I am truly blessed, but then the reality of my loss hits me again. I am trying really hard to find that balance of grieving and missing my child but trying to carry on and do the best that I can. I know this will get easier, and eventually I will balance it better. I also realize that I don't give myself enough credit. It has only been two years; I try to remind myself of that, also.

Now I look for races and activities that are specific to veterans or military, along with any charity that may benefit someone less fortunate, because yes, even with the loss of my child there are always others less fortunate than I.

I continue to live for the amazing moments. Moments when I can honor Jason's memory and tell the world what a wonderful child I had and what a hero he is. Moments when I can help others also in pain.

Year three has now begun. *

Understanding a Widow's Heart Talking About the Hard Stuff

By Emma Wright ☆ Surviving spouse of 1LT Todd Weaver

SUMMER 2012

I could be setting myself up for failure as most of what has been weighing on my mind is difficult to discuss. The repercussions could intensify how alienated I feel, but in some lengthy conversations with my personal advisor (Mom), I was gently reminded that if we don't talk about the hard stuff, we don't change the hard stuff.

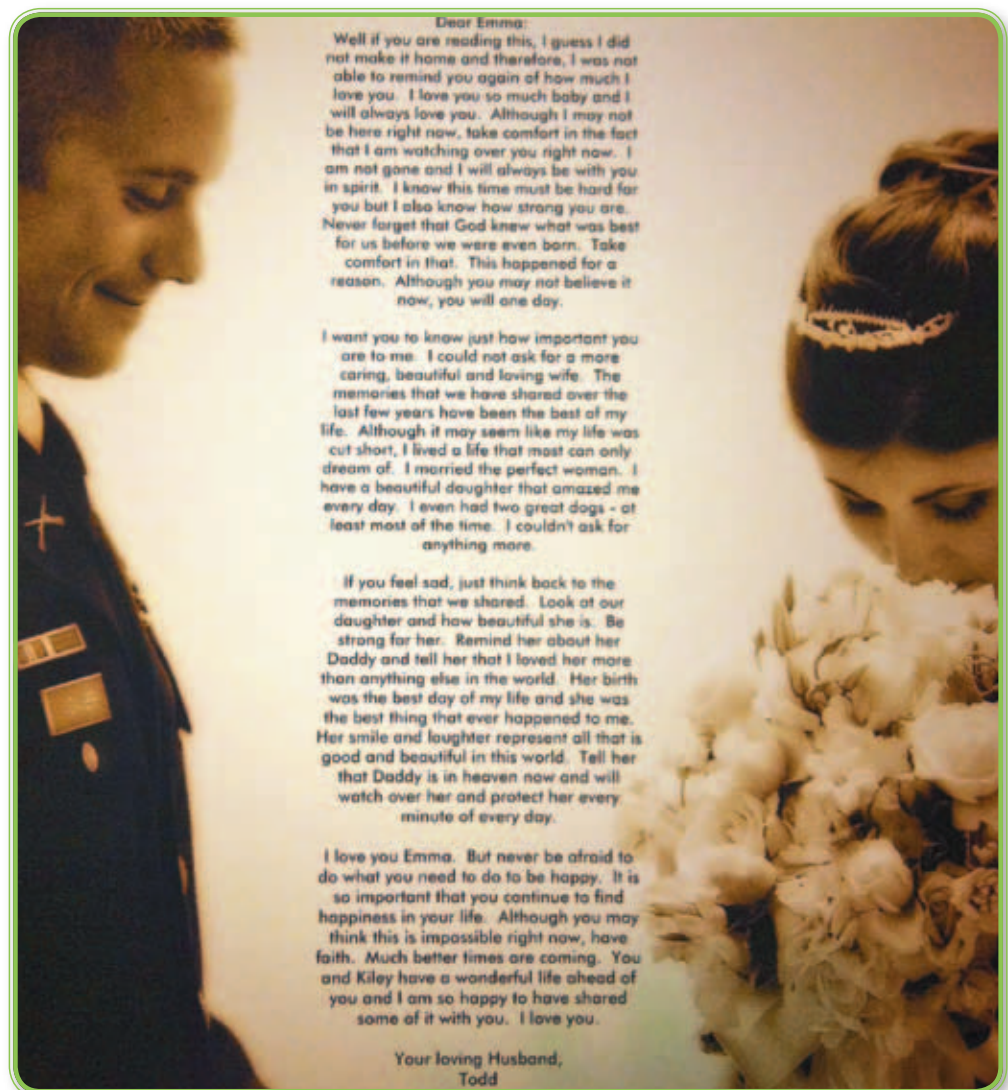
Since last year's global online backlash after sharing Todd's last letters to me and my daughter, I have been less apt to put myself in a situation where I could feel that much judgment. [Note: Emma posted Todd's last letters on her blog and they were copied and posted world wide.] Reading the hateful comments from people who must have thought I hadn't suffered enough certainly gave me cause to hesitate.

Can we talk about this, please? Because if I sit on it much longer I'm afraid that I'll build up so much resentment that it could be too late. I was motivated to write about and connect on this issue after this morning's sermon at my church. I felt as if, in a room of over 1,000 people, our pastor was just sitting across from me at a coffee shop maybe, hearing my heart and everything I have been through and learned, and verbalizing it in a way that I never could. That will stick with me forever.

Something to consider: being a widow (young or old, with kids or without) does not mean that the person has lost the ability to decide what is best for herself and her family. Many people aren't aware of how much added burden is placed on somebody experiencing grief when everyone else's opinions and expectations are constantly on their mind. I'm going to tell you something I haven't talked about before and I wish I didn't feel like I had to now.

The day before Todd deployed, we were sitting upstairs in the office finishing my battle book. For those of you who have never heard of a battle book, it is a directory of every important piece of information that you could ever think of in order to take care of a military spouse's daily routine in an emergency. If I were to be hospitalized for whatever reason during Todd's deployment, somebody could look at this book and know when to feed the dog, where we kept medicine, and what our daughter Kiley's needs were.

The more important part of that book goes through subjects that we don't ever want to have to consider as a possibility. But it was a possibility. And so we talked about Todd's funeral wishes if he didn't return from Afghanistan. We talked about wearing a uniform versus civilian clothes. We talked about what he would like to take to Heaven. And as painful and upsetting as these discussions were, if the worst were to happen and we hadn't talked about it, I might have questioned every decision I made, wondering whether it was what he wanted.



The hardest part of that conversation was when he told me about wanting to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. He'd never mentioned that before, and I didn't ask why. That's what he wanted, and I didn't need an explanation. If my husband had to come back to me under red, white, and blue, he would get whatever he wanted. No questions.

But I wanted to know if I would be able to rest there with him when my time came. He just stopped writing, looked at me, and said, "Well, I've always assumed you would remarry," followed closely with, "Kiley needs to have a dad." I can't imagine how difficult that thought had to have been for him. It hurt me to hear it because it wasn't a reality I wanted to live. His tone of voice said more than his statement did; he was serious and tender at the same time.

A lot of what Todd communicated in life never had to be spoken aloud, and during this moment—etched into my memory forever—I felt his desire for my happiness come through in a way I'd never experienced before. I've been trying to come up with a way to express the significance and depth of this conversation, but I can't. I can't because nobody else would understand; it was a bond that only we shared—so different than any other, friend or family alike.

Not having shared this intimate detail of our lives until now, it has been hard to cope with the reactions of others from the moment I started dating Alex. Somehow, the peace that I had—knowing my husband's heart better than anybody—got buried underneath the blanket of unspoken disapproval and abandonment.



I started to question whether my decisions for what Kiley and I needed for our future could ever be embraced with love and understanding.

To be totally honest, I don't feel like I'm even a factor in some people's minds anymore. Emma Weaver was replaced with Todd's widow. A bookmark in time, placed at September 9, 2010. Losing a spouse is emotionally devastating, but what makes it worse is that you have lost not only the person you loved, but also your identity as well as the hope that you'll be supported.

Take care of a widow's heart. We just ask for understanding when the time comes for us to move forward in our lives. Maybe our decisions aren't the same as what you would do or hope or expect. But you haven't lived through what we have lived through, haven't lost what we have lost.

This next part is where I'm going to call myself out, and others, too. All I can do is pray that by acknowledging my awareness of it and my desperate hope to connect my heart to yours, it won't be the last bit of

communication I ever get to have with some people.

Let's talk about social media. I take Todd's memory, along with all that I can teach and share with Kiley, very seriously. She needs to know what a great man her father was. And at the same time I want to balance that remembrance with our present and our future. Being able to express happiness again is amazing. Something as simple as a status update or life event is monumental...to me. So like every other person out there, that's what I do.

Except I started to take notice of who commented, liked, or messaged me. A trend was starting to appear. Any time I talked about Todd or tagged a picture of him, I was overwhelmed with positive feedback. Battle buddies, co-workers, old friends, new friends, mentors, strangers, you name it. It was encouraging.

Sadly though, my audience that commented on anything having to do with the concept of "moving forward" was much smaller. It hurt because I was acutely aware of the differences I was seeing. I can only hope that you'll hear my heart now. I'm letting you know how painful it has been to feel that I have lost not only Todd, but the ties to people he cherished on earth, too.

Todd doesn't get to grow old and reminisce about the old days, he doesn't get to go to reunions, and he doesn't get to share his daughter with the world. I do. I would like to be able to do that for him if you'll have me.

Take care of a widow's heart.

Please. ☆

Read part one of *Understanding a Widow's Heart* online in the *TAPS Magazine* archives. Go to www.taps.org/magazine and search by author.

Healing Through Our Strength

Knowing Our Weakness, Part One

By Tom Golden, LCSW

I gritted my teeth and slowly lowered my arm and hand into the murky water. I hadn't reached the bottom and the water was above my elbow. I couldn't see beyond a foot or so...then came the mucky, slimy, and smelly bottom. I groped around and found the object I was seeking. It was a small plastic action figure, which my son, Luke, had dropped into our small pond. I quickly pulled my arm and now smelly hand out of the water and handed Luke his treasure. I don't like sticking my arm into the muck. It's not infrequent though that something seems to accidentally slip in and I get my call to retrieve the booty.

This year as I performed this act I started to laugh. I realized that this action was a great

metaphor for intentional and conscious grief rituals, those times when we purposefully connect with our grief. When we consciously practice grief rituals we are putting our "arm" into a space where we can't see the "bottom." By practicing a conscious grief ritual we deliberately place ourselves in the path of our grief. We open ourselves to our parts that are not particularly pretty. In short, these are places that most of us would rather avoid but because we feel it necessary we trudge forward and stick our hands down in the bottom of the pond.

So why do this at all? Why not avoid all of this unpleasantness and attempt to maintain a perpetual happy mood? The answer is that by sticking our hands into the pond we are slowly diminishing the levels of grief that reside within. By confronting our pain we chip away at it and slowly bring ourselves to a place of transformation. The amount of grief that resides within is not infinite. Each time we connect with and express our pain from either a conscious or unconscious source we are diminishing the amount of grief that resides within and moving ourselves closer towards healing.

You can make an artificial division of grief by separating it into two groups: the conscious and the unconscious. The conscious grief is the ritual we are talking about. It is when we intentionally decide to "stick our hand in the pond." It could be simply pulling out a picture album and looking through the photographs. It could also be visiting the grave or talking with a friend about our grief. In these activities we purposefully move ourselves into a place where we can experience the pain. By looking through the pictures, visiting the grave, or talking with a friend we will most likely resonate our unfinished grief.

What is unconscious grief? This is the grief that comes bubbling up when we are least expecting it. It is when we suddenly realize that our hand is in the pond, covered by a wave of grief that hit us like a lightning bolt. That song on the radio that throws us into a state of grief or that product in the grocery store that reminds us of our loss or any of hundreds of events that can arise that involuntarily throw us into an unwanted state of grief. It is when grief confronts us unexpectedly and usually without our having requested its presence. Most of us find this difficult and want to minimize these states.

An interesting and little known secret is that the best way to diminish this unconscious grief is to find a way to consciously



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take samples of your grief on a regular basis. The action is something like a release valve on a steam engine. By engaging in regular conscious rituals we release the pressure from the unconscious parts and give ourselves a little more breathing room. When we intentionally experience the pain, the reservoir of our grief becomes less pressured and also less likely to erupt unexpectedly. This is less true in a powerful or acute grief where the eruptions are involuntary and often unstoppable, but even in these circumstances conscious connection with our pain will reduce the potency of the eruptions by a bit. Conscious grief rituals are not quick fix cures for grief; they are short-term pressure releases with long-term benefits.

Unconscious grief is unpredictable, difficult, and painful. As a therapist, I have always been on the lookout for ways to minimize the power of these unconscious waves of grief. I'm sorry to say that there is no easy cure. The most direct way has already been mentioned, that being the regular practice of conscious rituals. By deliberately finding vent for our grief we take the pressure off of the unconscious contents.

We can maximize the effectiveness of our conscious rituals by becoming more aware of our strengths. By knowing our strengths we are in a better position to use them consciously as a means to connect to our grief. Most of us will turn to our strongest ally when we are in trouble, and grief is no exception. It is through our strongest asset that we can gain some sense of stability and safety and dare to consciously connect with the grief.

In my observations of people grieving over the years, I have noticed that individuals tend to have a variety of strengths in

facilitating their conscious rituals. A person's strength is something he or she has been practicing for many years, something so familiar that it is automatic. Often we take it for granted and assume everyone else has this same capacity until others alert us that we have this special strength. It seems so natural to us that we don't see it as special.

Here are a few examples of some general strengths that people might have in connecting with their grief. Someone whose strength lies in their thinking and analysis will be drawn to heal their grief through study and reading, whereas a person whose strength lies in creativity will be more likely to use artistic endeavors in their rituals. Someone whose strength was in their practicality might be more inclined to dedicate something in honor of the person who died, while a person who found strength in interaction would probably prefer a verbal expression of the emotion.

Just as there are gender differences in healing there are plenty of other ways we differ, and one of the many ways to observe these differences is in gaining a greater understanding of our unique natures and unique strengths. Where is your strength? Where do you find safety? How can you connect your grief with your strength?

We will tend to connect with our grief in a wide variety of ways. You may find that you have a preferred mode of consciously connecting with your grief and this can lead you to identify your particular strength. It is not your only way to connect, just your preferred way. By knowing our strengths, we can more consciously facilitate a connection with our grief.



In part two we will examine the opposite of one's strength: one's least developed part. Just as one's strength is a vital aid in helping us connect to our grief in what feels like a safe way, our weakest part is also instrumental and useful. In part two we will see how to use this undeveloped part as a healing tool for our grief. *

About the Author



Tom Golden is a professional speaker, author, and psychotherapist whose area of specialization is healing from loss and trauma. Tom gives workshops across the country on many aspects of this topic, especially about men and their unique paths in healing. He is the author of *Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing* as well as the new ebook titled *The Way Men Heal*. For more information, visit www.webhealing.com and tgolden.com.

Healing Through Writing

By Artis Henderson, Surviving spouse of CW2 Miles Henderson

Author of *Unremarried Widow*

When my husband CW2 Miles Henderson was killed in Iraq in November 2006, I felt like I had lost everything. Miles was my best friend, my teammate, the reason I got up every morning. Without him, I couldn't imagine a future. Or any future I wanted to be part of. After months of a grief so blinding I could barely function, I realized with great sadness that my life was still going, even without Miles. I started to understand that I might grieve forever, but I would still need a reason to get out of bed. Writing became that reason.

My whole life I had wanted to be an author, and after Miles died I decided to do all I could to make that dream happen.

Amazingly, my first book was published in January 2014, a memoir about Miles's death. I had to relive many tragic moments to write the book, moments like the notification and the briefing. When I was writing those scenes, I thought my heart would break all over again. Somehow I came out on the other side, and now that the book is finished I feel like a great weight has been lifted.

For the first time since Miles died, I can speak about his death without falling apart. I can finally say his name out loud. Research has shown that writing about traumatic events can be helpful in the healing process. I know it was for me.

If you'd like to consider starting your own writing practice, here are some points to guide you.

WRITE EVERY DAY



Most writers agree that the hardest part about writing is getting started. There are so many more interesting things to do. You could walk the dog or sweep the deck or organize the fridge. There's an old joke that authors have the cleanest houses because they'll use any excuse not to write. Writing takes commitment. Try setting aside part of every day for your writing practice. It can be as little as fifteen minutes, just make sure the time is yours alone. Then put your bottom in a chair and a pen in your hand (or your fingers on the keyboard). It's easy to think you'll need the right equipment, like special software or a fancy desk with antique brass pulls or one of those high-tech writing chairs with optimal lumbar support. The truth is, you don't need much. Any paper will do; any pencil will work. Just commit to your practice.

TRY WRITING EXERCISES



Sometimes it's hard to know where to start. There are many great books filled with writing exercises, including the much-loved classic *Writing Down the Bones*. Here are two techniques I like to use. Begin with a free write. I give myself three notebook pages every morning. If you've read Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* you'll recognize these as her morning pages.

The pages are just for you. You can do anything with them. You can brag. You can cuss. You can complain about your neighbors. These pages will never be seen by anyone. In fact, I like to burn mine when I'm done.

*My whole life I had wanted to be an author,
and after Miles died I decided to do all
I could to make that dream happen.*



Miles and Artis Henderson.
Photo courtesy of Artis Henderson

Remember that you are never alone in this process.

Search for other writers who are struggling to translate their grief onto the page.



Think of this as your private space for ranting, seething, and hurting. Everything that's aching inside of you has a place on the page. I'm always surprised at what comes out during my free write: grocery lists, forgotten moments, secret wishes. Many times I won't realize how much something is on my mind until I write it down.

When your three pages are finished, here is your next assignment: write one memory. Make it as vivid on the page as if you were watching it in the movie theater. Include dialogue and sensory details, like whether it was warm out or what the room smelled like. Sometimes it helps to write about the moments just before or after an important event. Write about the night before your notification. Or the first night after. Write about the first Christmas after your loved one came into your life. Write about his or her last. Include every single detail you remember.

DEFINE YOUR WRITING GOALS



Writing may feel overwhelming if you don't have a clear sense of what you hope to do with your words. You don't need to know right away, but over time you will develop a sense for what you want to do with your work. Perhaps it will be a record of your loved one for you alone. Or maybe you would like to share your writing with friends and family members. You may even decide that you would like to publish work. Knowing this will help you choose which stories to include in your daily assignment.

JOIN OR CREATE A WRITING GROUP



Once you have a regular writing routine, you may want to consider joining or starting a writing group. Writing groups are excellent ways to improve your craft and to receive feedback on your work. Many

groups meet once a month or every two weeks. Group members will submit a writing sample ahead of time or read for an allotted time during the meeting. The other members offer constructive thoughts on the piece. One of the most important benefits of a writing group is that it provides a venue for your story to be heard.

At the remembrance service during my first TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar everyone was invited to come to the microphone at the front of the room and say the name of his or her loved one out loud. I still remember how difficult it was to say Miles's name and how powerful it felt, too. In our loss and our grief, it's important to say our loved one's name—and for other people to hear it. A writing group will give you that opportunity. Look for groups on meetup.com or at writing associations in your local community.

ATTEND A WRITER'S CONFERENCE



If you decide that you want to take your writing even further, then you may want to consider attending a writer's conference. Conferences are a great place to meet other writers and to hone your writing skills. There are writing conferences across the United States—and abroad—and chances are good there is one in your area. You will find that many attendees, especially memoir writers, are working through personal sorrow.

REACH OUT TO OTHER WRITERS



Finally, remember that you are never alone in this process. Search for other writers who are struggling to translate their grief

onto the page. You might exchange work or meet to do writing exercises together. Having even one person to share this experience with can be a great source of support. If you have questions about the process, don't be afraid to reach out to other writers. You can start with me. I'm always available at artis.henderson@gmail.com. *

About the Author



Artis Henderson is an award-winning journalist and essayist whose work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Reader's Digest*, *Florida Weekly*, and the online literary journal *Common Ties*. She has an undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a graduate degree from Columbia University's School of Journalism. She lives in Florida. Her first book, *Unremarried Widow*, is available wherever books are sold.

20th Annual

National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp for Young Survivors



All over America, but perhaps to a greater degree in our nation's capital, Memorial Day is a day to honor those who have died while serving in the Armed Forces. It is also an occasion for families to spend time together, especially those families whose loved one has died in service. Put all that together and you have the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp, held each year in Washington, D.C., over the Memorial Day weekend. TAPS survivors gathered on Thursday and spent the next four days as a family, united by both loss and love. During our time together we shared our stories, honored our loved ones, and engaged in a healing journey together.

This year we celebrated our 20th TAPS national seminar and camp with special activities and events. We are grateful to those who participated as survivors, those who volunteered in many capacities, those who presented workshops and activities, and those who honored our loved ones with us.



Friday

FRIDAY: We were honored with a visit at our opening session by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey. That evening some of us attended the Marine Corps Evening Parade while others toured the Pentagon or visited the monuments as part of their evening bus tour of Washington, D.C.



Saturday

SATURDAY: The children of the Good Grief Camp spent a day in the park with the Yellow Ribbons United folks, followed by their traditional dinner bash at the D.C. Armory. Adults ventured into workshops in the hotel or to off-site activities like indoor rock climbing, walking a labyrinth, or kayaking.



Saturday Evening

SATURDAY EVENING: Adults enjoyed a 1940s-themed evening at our "home away from home," complete with a visit from a USO traveling troupe.



Sunday

SUNDAY: TAPS children launched balloons with messages to our loved ones.



Monday

MONDAY: Some TAPS families attended the national Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington National Cemetery where First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden sat with our group in the amphitheater. Others marched alongside our float in the national Memorial Day parade. Still others attended the Washington Nationals baseball game where nine of our TAPS children took to the field as the starting nine.



Special thanks to our many wonderful volunteer photographers.

TAPS Honor Guard Gala

Recognizing 20 Years of Hope and Healing

Washington, D.C. ★ March 27, 2014

The annual TAPS Honor Guard Gala raises funds to support TAPS programs and honors outstanding people who support the mission to help surviving military families. This year's event raised \$2.3 million to fund TAPS programs and events throughout the year. A special 20th anniversary presentation highlighted twenty families, representative of the more than 44,000 surviving family members TAPS has assisted since its founding in 1994. ★



Keynote Speaker General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, exchanged fist bumps with TAPS survivor Lizzy Yaggy. ★



Air Force General Mark A. Welsh III, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, received the TAPS Honor Guard Gala Military Award, presented by TAPS survivor Cameron Santos-Silva.



TAPS surviving spouse Nicki Bunting, who lives in the Washington, D.C., area and advocates for families of fallen troops, received the Senator Ted Stevens Leadership Award, pictured here with her son. ★



Congressman Adam Smith, ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee and a strong advocate for our military personnel and their families, received the TAPS Honor Guard Gala Congressional Award, presented by TAPS survivor Gabriel Rao.



UTC Aerospace Systems Controls & Sensing Systems President Mike Dumais received recognition as the 20th Anniversary Gala Sponsor from Buzz Hefti.

The TAPS Engaged Philanthropist Award was presented to Ted Leonsis, CEO of Monumental Sports and Entertainment, by TAPS survivors Lauren, Justin, and Hope Stubenhofer.



TAPS survivors enjoying a special night out

Emcee Kyra Phillips of HLN with TAPS surviving children

Michael Warren of DynCorp, Bonnie Carroll, and John Wood of Telos

TAPS Care Groups

Finding Safety in Numbers

By Zaneta M. Gileno, LMSW ★ Director, TAPS Community Based Care

Sadness and grief are normal responses to loss. For many, especially those who suffer the unexpected or traumatic loss of a loved one, post traumatic stress compounds the grief response, making it even more difficult for surviving loved ones to integrate the loss into their lives. The need to be understood and to connect with others who understand is a key to finding hope and healing.

TAPS staff members in the Community Based Care program work to help survivors determine the level of support they need and make the introductions for the survivor to the appropriate service providers within their local community. This program provides all surviving loved ones, regardless of their relationship to the deceased, with tailored connections to individual grief counseling, support groups, and inpatient/outpatient substance abuse treatment, if needed. The program also creates and supports grief support groups known as TAPS Care Groups around the nation.

TAPS Care Groups are informal gatherings of surviving military families and loved ones, co-hosted by a TAPS Peer Mentor and a mental health professional. These groups are not therapy groups, but they are therapeutic. They meet at safe, easy-to-

find locations with available parking. All those who are grieving the death of a loved one in service to America, without regard to circumstances, relationship to deceased, branch of military service, or geography of death, are welcome to attend. There is no charge to participants, and the meetings are set at a regular time and date that best accommodates those desiring to attend.

"The people in this group accepted me and understood, but most of all they just listened to me. I'm so glad that TAPS is here for all branches of service and all military survivors."

Grief support groups serve several key purposes. The consistent opportunity to connect with others who have experienced the loss of a loved one can help survivors to feel that they are not alone, that there are others who have walked some of their same path. In a group setting, survivors learn that they share emotions and experiences, and normalizing these feelings with others can be a powerful impetus for hope and change.

TAPS Care Groups afford survivors with a truly understanding environment. We are a family of survivors and our TAPS Care Groups are a part of that tradition. We follow the companioning model of Dr. Alan Wolfelt, author, educator, and grief counselor for more than 30 years, who maintains that "companioning" rather than "treating" mourners is important, walking alongside of those who grieve and giving them the supportive relationship they need in order to grieve and mourn and find hope. We share the journey with you.

René Adams, surviving mother of Marine Sergeant Mark Adams said, "I really enjoyed getting together and sharing. It was a big help to me to meet other people with the same feelings. You felt their pain and they felt yours. You felt like a family dealing with the same pain. Everyone may deal with it differently, but the pain is the same."

"The group offered me a place of understanding and a feeling of belonging," said April Shoemaker, surviving spouse of Army Staff Sergeant Russell Shoemaker.

Tammy Eakes, surviving mother of Specialist Lance Eakes added, "My son was Army National Guard and we attended their Gold Star retreats twice a year.





Although it was good to get to see the families from my son's unit, my real support came from the monthly TAPS Care Group. As time went on, and life as well, this group became my lifeline. It is where I learned I wasn't going crazy, and that it was okay to feel the way I was feeling. The people in this group accepted me and understood, but most of all they just listened to me. I'm so glad that TAPS is here for all branches of service and all military survivors."

Care groups are facilitated by a TAPS Peer Mentor in conjunction with a mental health professional. These peer mentors have undergone special training to support survivors as peers, as well as completing TAPS Care Group Facilitator training.

Kimberly Taylor, surviving fiancée and peer mentor facilitator at the TAPS Headquarters Care Group, shared, "I am a peer mentor and group facilitator for TAPS. Attending the Care Group in this capacity has allowed me not only to share my love, Josh, but also to provide the safe venue for others to share. In the community formed by the group, healing begins. From sharing our loved ones as well as the turmoil of grief, we create a connection that is deeply felt. In that connection, we heal. As a facilitator, I get to be a part of that healing journey, to experience my own growth in healing and to support others in their healing. Providing this embracing environment which allows others to express their feelings safely and confidentially, gives me strength, while encouraging and supporting my new family."

For each group we match peer mentor facilitators with mental health professionals

"Group members often felt like this was one place where they could talk and have people really 'get' what they were saying or experiencing."

who understand grief and loss, and they lead the group as a team. One of our valued volunteer mental health professionals wrote, "Volunteering with TAPS and helping with the Care Group has been very valuable to me. I enjoy supporting the mission of TAPS and sharing my expertise with the peer mentor and the group. The time commitment is minimal but the rewards are far reaching. We lead as a team and together support the members in their grief journey. It is truly an honor."

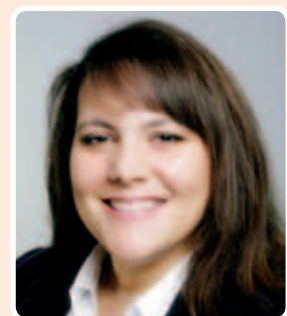
Another valued professional and TAPS supporter, VA psychologist Dr. Gregory Inman of the Raleigh Vet Center wrote, "The care group gives an opportunity for people at different places of the grief process to both seek and provide support in their journey. I found that as one person would talk about what they were going through, it would resonate with the other group members and lead to good discussions. It was helpful for others to hear another group member say what they were thinking, and know that their own thoughts weren't crazy. Group members often felt like this was one place where they could talk and have people really 'get' what they were saying or experiencing."

All TAPS Care Groups are listed on our website. We are expanding our reach every month, so please check the website often. If you are a TAPS Peer Mentor interested

in the possibility of assisting TAPS in launching a Care Group in your community, please reach out to us. We would be happy to discuss this with you. We are also recruiting skilled mental health professionals with the desire to help. Likewise, if you have space that can be donated on a monthly basis to host a TAPS Care Group, we would love to hear from you. *

From our home page at www.taps.org, click on "For Survivors" on the left, near the top. Scroll down and click on Care and Support Groups under the "Get Help" banner.

About the Author



Zaneta M. Gileno graduated with her master's degree in Clinical Social Work from Columbia University. She has been with TAPS since 2011 and works from the national headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. She comes from a military family and is honored to bring her education, passion, and experience to serve the families of the fallen at TAPS.

Feeling My Way Through Grief

By Betty Ann Rutledge

“Grief is not, as I thought, a state, but a process. Like a walk in a winding valley which gives you a new landscape every few miles.” ~ C.S. Lewis

I learned a long time ago that there is no way around grief. Can't climb over it, can't crawl under it and, as clever as I've tried to be, no way to sneak around it. The only way through grief is... *through* it. For the newly bereaved (and for anyone who is in a “hit of grief” at any point on their journey), traveling this road is painful, confusing, and downright terrifying in moments. So as we learn to find our way through this new landscape of grief, it's helpful to have a few definitions to guide us:

BEREAVEMENT: the state of having suffered a loss; state of sorrow over the death or departure of a loved one

GRIEF: deep mental anguish arising from bereavement; intense sorrow caused by the loss of a loved one; the process that allows us to say good-bye to what was and get ready for that which is yet to come

MOURNING: the actions or expressions of one who has suffered a bereavement;

conventional outward signs of grief for the dead; public, shared expression of a person's thoughts, behaviors, and emotions related to a loss

While we know that grief affects us at all levels of our being—physical, emotional, mental, attitudinal, spiritual, social, sexual—for many, the first thing we think of when it comes to grief is feelings. Most definitions of grief and bereavement make some reference to emotions. And for a lot of us, here's where the terrain becomes the most treacherous to navigate.

“I'm afraid if I start to cry, I'll never stop.”

“I'm so angry, I could scream.”

“I feel so hopeless, I can't even get out of bed.”

“I feel so sad, I don't know if I will ever recover.”

These and many other expressions of deep, emotional pain are commonly heard among bereaved people. It's no wonder then that we might be tempted to avoid feeling our emotions altogether. It sounds pretty overwhelming! But if we are truly going to find a way to live with our grief,

one of the essential tasks of mourning is experiencing the myriad emotions and feelings that spring from our losses.

A wise person once described it to me in this way. Think of your emotions as bubbles in a glass of soda or champagne (the beverage being your emotional body). As you experience a feeling—sadness, anger, fear, happiness, love, desire—that feeling floats up through your emotional body. And when it reaches the “surface,” like a bubble at the top of a glass of soda, it pops and evaporates into the air.

However, if you put a lid on your bubbles, actively trying to block negative emotions from traveling up their path through your emotional body, not only will you experience a build-up of negative emotions (that in turn will impact you physically, mentally, etc.), but you will also block the more welcome emotions—like joy and peace and love—from bubbling up in you.

Put another way, avoiding your feelings can lead to emotional indigestion. And just like having a good burp can ease your physical discomfort, letting yourself have



There is no way around grief. Can't climb over it, can't crawl under it and, as clever as I've tried to be, no way to sneak around it. The only way through grief is... *through* it.

a good emotional release will lead to a softening of your emotional body as well. This is not an easy process. It can be frightening to experience our feelings.

Many of us, for all kinds of reasons, have not been able to express our feelings. We've received messages our whole lives about "appropriate" behavior related to feelings. Some of those messages are gender-based like "big boys don't cry." Some we absorb from our families. Others are influenced by our faith, culture, personality, and life experiences.

A British-born friend describes his family as the "suck it up" type of griever, which essentially left him no room or permission to express his feelings. Another friend who comes from the West Indies told me that black women there often feel they must be strong for their families—especially their children—and that they cannot allow themselves to feel or show any kind of "weakness" like crying. They can't afford to, as they are responsible for so much in their lives and communities.

What messages have you absorbed about feelings?

Even the language of feelings discourages us with its negativity and judgment. People who express emotions openly are described as "falling apart" or "losing it." And how many times do we hear someone say "I'm sorry" while they are crying? What's to be sorry for? Feelings aren't good or bad—they just are.

We all have our histories and stories that have informed how we think, feel, and behave in response to grief—stories and histories that loom large when we are faced with the daunting task of mourning, experiencing the pain of grief.

So what can we do? A dear friend once counseled me to "lean into" my pain, to really let myself feel the sorrow and pay attention to what happens in those deepest, darkest moments of grief, to listen to the sounds my body makes, to notice the words that come to mind, and



Think of your emotions as bubbles in a glass of soda.

try to remember that this is just another bubble that will eventually move through me and pop.

If you're afraid to cry because you don't think you'll be able to stop, think about this. Have you ever heard of anyone laughing so much they couldn't stop indefinitely? Try to think of sadness as just another feeling, another bubble. Remember to breathe and trust that the moment of intense pain will ease.

Leaning into the pain has also been described as "being in the pit." Think of peaks and valleys; experiencing the painful emotions of grief can be a very deep valley. If you're new at this, venturing into the pit unaccompanied may not be such a good idea. A trusted friend or family member who can sit with you, a fellow bereaved traveler, or a counselor may be enlisted to provide comfort and safety.

I believe that my loved ones who have died want me to live as full a life as I possibly can. And for me, living fully requires me

to stand bravely and honestly in the fullness of my humanity: tears, fears, and anger as well as joy, love, and peace. And when standing is impossible and I am brought to my knees in despair, I try and remember the following quote from James Martineau:

"I bow in reverence before the emotions of every melted heart. We have a human right to our sorrow. To blame the deep grief which bereavement awakens is to censure all strong human attachments. The more intense the delight in their presence, the more poignant the impression of their absence; and you cannot destroy the anguish unless you forbid the joy. A morality which rebukes sorrow rebukes love. When the tears of bereavement have had their natural flow, they lead us again to life and love's generous joy." *

About the Author



Betty Ann Rutledge is a professional volunteer manager with over 20 years of experience in the field of healthcare, death, dying, and bereavement. Her work at the AIDS Committee of Toronto and Bereaved Families of Ontario included developing volunteer training programs based on the peer support model. She has journeyed with many people through illness, end of life, and bereavement including both her parents and many friends. She is committed to creating space for people to share their stories of loss, healing, resiliency, and meaning-making.

Grief and Your Health

By Margaret H. Gerner, MSW

The loss of a loved one to death is a life-shattering experience. It affects us physically as well as emotionally. The grief we experience is felt on an emotional level, and the stress of these emotions can create havoc with our bodies.

If we had a physical illness before our loved one died, our grief can exacerbate the existing illness. It can also open the way for physical illness if we have been previously healthy. Grief makes us susceptible to diseases such as the common cold, sore throats, and other infections. Other diseases shown to be connected to the stress of grief are ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, heart disease, and cancer.

The connection between the mind and body is not always recognized, but there is real scientific evidence that what we think and feel has a direct effect on our biological systems. This is an especially important issue for bereaved people because the loss of a loved one is the ultimate in stress—a stress that can last a very long time.

Bodies of all human beings and animals alike react to stress in basically the same manner. In 1944, Hans Selye a neurophysiologist formulated the three phases of stress reactions, but it is only recently that scientists could identify with considerable

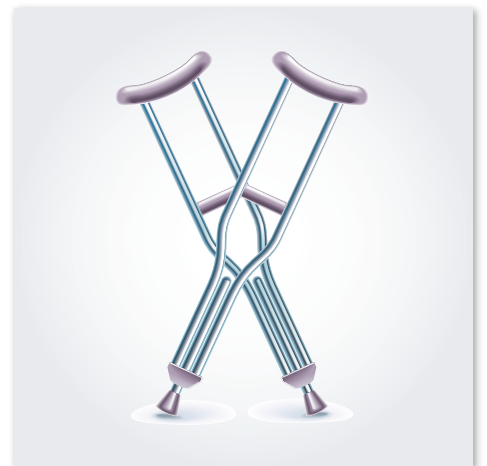
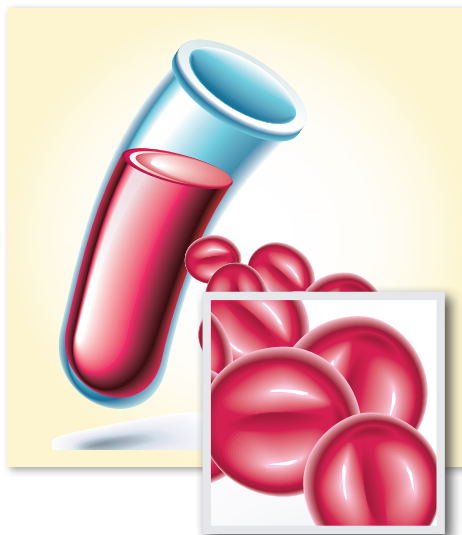
The connection between the mind and body is not always recognized, but there is real scientific evidence that what we think and feel has a direct effect on our biological systems.

accuracy what actually takes place. According to Selye the reaction to stress happens in three phases, but for our purposes we will only discuss phase one.

The first phase, or the alarm reaction, occurs immediately on contact with the stressor—grief at the death of our loved one. At the death, the brain "translates" the stress of grief into a chemical reaction in the body. The pituitary gland located at the base of the brain is stimulated to produce a hormone called adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH). This reaction is a protective one and, in essence, makes the body ready to do battle. The ACTH from the pituitary gland then travels to the adrenal gland, a gland at the top of the kidneys, which causes a chemical reaction which ultimately produces cortisone. As the cortisone level increases, it causes the production of ACTH to level off. This circle of the building up of one chemical that stimulates the production of another chemical that turns off the original one is known as biofeedback.

But what happens in the case of grief, when the stress continues for many months and the biofeedback does not operate as it should? Because the stress is continuing, the production of ACTH is continuing, thus causing the adrenal gland to produce more and more cortisone. The result is an abnormally high level of cortisone circulating in the blood, sometimes exceeding ten to twenty times the normal levels.

A high level of cortisone is one of the things that causes our immune system (the system that normally fights off disease-carrying bacteria, fungi, and viruses) to falter. The high level of cortisone affects yet another gland, the thalamus, which manufactures the white cells of our blood. With the thalamus not functioning properly, it cannot produce white cells that are effective. Those white cells normally locate and phagocytize (eat up) the invading germs, viral particles, and even pre-cancerous cells. Thus with the white cells unable to function properly, the individual is much more susceptible to the most common germs.





Of course, this is an over simplified description of the chemistry of stress, but knowing that there is a legitimate reason for susceptibility to illness during grief encourages us to take preventive measures. Just knowing that various manifestations—changes in eating habits, problems with sleeping, restlessness, lack of physical energy—are a normal part of the grieving process will lessen the stress to some extent.

Another way to lessen the stress, and probably the most helpful, is to acknowledge and appropriately express the emotions that we feel during grief. This can considerably decrease the potential for illness to develop because it displaces and releases the tension brought on by the stress of grief. And certainly good nutrition, exercise, and proper rest are essential preventive measures.

Another point to consider, too, is that the stress of grief is rarely the only stress we are experiencing at the time of our loved one's death. Problems in our marriage or with our surviving children or siblings are

examples of the other stresses that may be added to the stress of grief. Put a number of stresses together and our bodies will surely suffer.

We must be very aware that our loved one's death, and the resultant grief, is a legitimate reason for physical illness. We must do whatever we can to lessen our susceptibility. Heading directly into our grief and allowing ourselves to face our painful emotions is the most helpful thing we can do. Talking about our loved one and the circumstances of the death, crying when we need to, and talking with someone who will listen non-judgmentally to our anger and guilt is the primary way to successfully resolve our grief—and ultimately resolve the stress that is caused by the grief.

Many bereaved people experience some kind of physical illness in the first four to six months after the death of their loved one. For most, the illness can be directly tied into the extreme stress of their loved one's death.

Another way to lessen the stress, and probably the most helpful, is to acknowledge and appropriately express the emotions that we feel during grief. This can considerably decrease the potential for illness to develop because it displaces and releases the tension brought on by the stress of grief.

I know it is hard to be concerned about yourself physically when you hurt so badly emotionally. But remember, you will not always be in this much emotional pain. Remember, too, if you have damaged your body in the early months of grief, you run the risk of never completely recovering from the physical illness—and recovery for bereaved people means recovery in body as well as mind. *

About the Author



Margaret Gerner is a bereaved mother, grandmother, and sibling. She holds a master's degree in social work from the University of Missouri at Columbia and has worked in the field of bereavement for more than 25 years. She has written extensively for The Compassionate Friends (TCF) and Bereaved Parents USA (BPUSA) and has worked with both organizations to help other bereaved parents learn healthy ways of coping with grief.

Book Shelf: Unremarried Widow

By Artis Henderson ★ Reviewed by Joanne Steen

Artis Henderson's *Unremarried Widow* (Simon & Schuster, 2014) is her honest, gripping memoir about a fresh, bold love sandwiched between two eerily similar tragedies. I devoured this book with head-nodding agreement, and I am certain every military widow will find an abundance of ways to identify with it.

Traumatic death came calling early in Artis's life when her father, a pilot, was killed in the crash of his single-engine plane. Strapped into the back seat of the plane, five-year-old Artis barely survived the crash. Artis's mother raised her only child to be an independent, educated young woman. By age 23, Artis had spent more than a year abroad, studying and teaching in France. Back from Europe and living in Florida, Artis met her future husband, Miles Henderson, where many a military couple have met—on the dance floor. Chemistry turned this chance meeting into passion and love. Soon Artis found herself living a life she never imagined, in a seemingly foreign world—the world of military installations located smack-dab in the southern central United States. She was the girlfriend, the fiancée and, eventually, the wife of an Army aviator in a time of war.

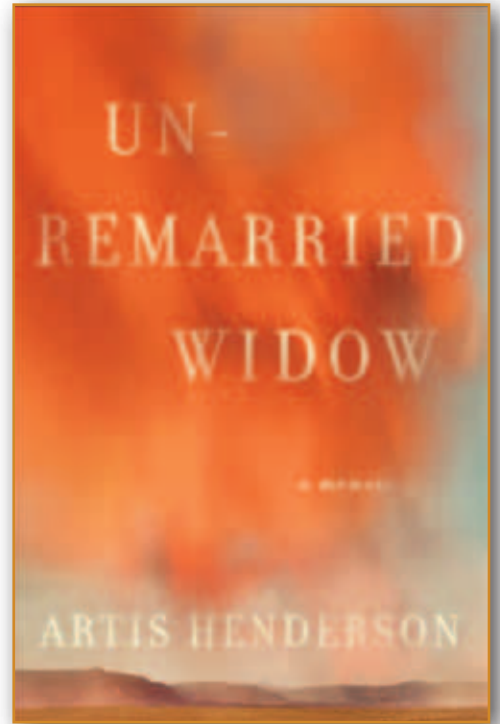
Artis and Miles were an unlikely match. Miles, a born and bred Texan, was conservative and confident, an Army helicopter pilot straight off a recruiting poster. Artis was a free-spirited non-conformist, an aspiring writer with dreams of traveling the world, the type of travel that would never be confused with a PCS move to a duty station abroad.

Artis made no secret that she struggled with military life. But, honestly, who

hasn't struggled with it now and then? In a poignant scene from *Unremarried Widow*, a newly engaged Artis finds herself at a party hosted by the women she works with at the local school. As part of an introductory, ice-breaker game, each woman was asked to write a question. Artis scribbled down the question that had taken up residence in her waking mind, "What if you love someone with all your heart, but you're afraid that being with him means giving up the life you imagined for yourself?" The answer came from the others in simple, wise words. "You figure out how to make it work. That's what marriage is." And that's what Artis set out to do. She and Miles shared a once-in-a-lifetime kind of love and topped it off with a genuine respect for each other.

Every military widow knows this love story is split into two parts: the before and the after. The after came early in Miles's deployment to Iraq. Once again, death came calling on Artis. The short life story of Miles and Artis is a familiar one to many a military wife made widow. In place of a happy homecoming when the deployment ended, Artis was dealt a cruel one: the sudden, traumatic death of Miles, a distant location, limited details, non-viewable remains, and the bureaucratic identity of an un-remarried widow, or URW in military-speak.

Onto the pages of *Unremarried Widow*, Artis spilled out her grief over the loss of Miles. The story doesn't end on a dismal note, though. Out of traumatic loss can come positive growth. Artis saw this



growth in the new friends she made at the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar. She chose to look within herself and ask, "What's next?" This was the same question Miles had posed to her in his "If you're reading this..." letter.

In *Unremarried Widow*, Artis does more than tell us her story. With a masterful use of real-life detail, she takes us into her story, and we relive it—as well as our own stories—with her from page one. Artis, you showed us the road through grief is never easy or speedy, but the trip is worth it. Thank you! ★

Joanne Steen is the surviving spouse of LT Ken Steen, USN, and the award-winning co-author of *Military Widow: A Survival Guide* (Naval Institute Press, 2006).



Forever 23 to Me

By Tara Cameron ★ Surviving sister of SSGT Joshua Jacobs

*Sittin' here countin'
The number of times I've laughed
Since you went away...*

*I carry them around in my pocket
Like I don't know when I'll get any more.
Ain't it funny how we used to laugh...*

At nothin'...

*Thinkin' about the days
You used to pin me down
When you got bigger than me...*

*Thinkin' about that wavy blonde hair
And that ornery grin
When you knew you'd always get your way...
But anyhow...*

*I watched you grow 'til you were 23
I watched you go when you were 23
You'll always be forever...
Forever 23 to me.*

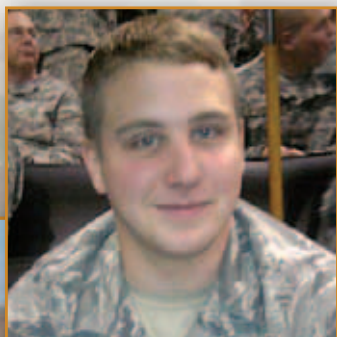
*Thinkin' about the time I saw you cry
Because you were scared for the very first time.
But you strapped up your boots, put that grin on your face,
And waved goodbye.*

*I'll never understand how someone
So full of life
Would be needed up there more than here.
Is God selfish... or are we?*

*If love is sacrifice,
Then I guess we're even now.
If love is selfless,
Then I suppose I should make my peace.*

*I'll sit here countin' how many times
I'm able to laugh,
Because I never counted them before.
I never knew how much it cost.*

*I watched you grow 'til you were 23
I watched you go when you were 23
You'll always be forever...
Forever 23... to me. ★*



Spotlight on Service

★ Pablo Ruiz ★

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!

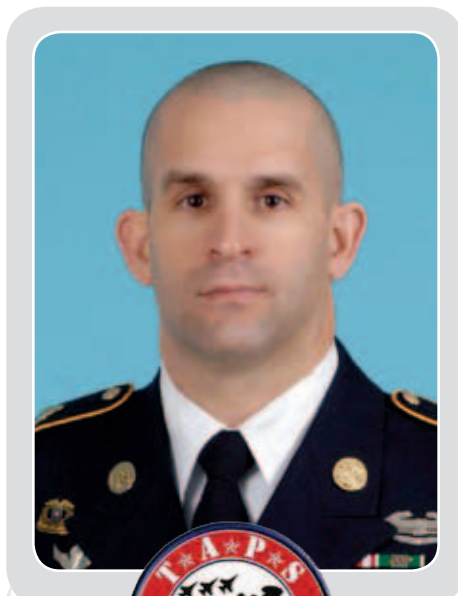
Army soldier of 11 years, husband of 19 years, father of a 19-year-old daughter in college, part-time student pursuing a degree in Management Human Resources... you'd think he'd have no time to volunteer. But that's where you'd be wrong. Sergeant First Class Pablo Ruiz, III, is a dedicated TAPS volunteer. In the two years he has been volunteering for TAPS, his commitment has surpassed all expectations.

As an active-duty member of the United States Army currently serving with the 3rd Infantry Regiment, Pablo has the responsibility of leading 33 soldiers and considers himself a mentor to them, both at work and outside of work, in his leadership role and personal life. With three tours to Iraq, Pablo is no stranger to service, and he's also no stranger to loss.

During the 2007 surge, Pablo's close friend died after being hit by enemy fire. Pablo was the first to reach him, pull him out of the position, administer first aid, and put him on the medevac helicopter. "That was truly the hardest thing I've ever done," said Pablo.

Pablo first heard about TAPS in 2013, prior to the 19th Annual National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp. As soon as he read about the opportunity, it just made sense to him to volunteer as a Good Grief Camp Mentor.

"The decision to be a mentor wasn't hard at all," Pablo said. "I would want this to be done with my child if something happened to me." Donating his time through what is normally a four day weekend for most active-duty service members "is replaceable," he said, "but the time with TAPS over Memorial Day weekend isn't.



*Thank You,
Pablo!*

A piece of their family is gone; four days is something I can take anytime, so it wasn't a factor," in deciding to donate his time to our organization.

As a mentor, Pablo formed an immediate bond with his mentee. "We kept in touch through this entire year," Pablo said, "and the bond continues to this day." This year, Pablo let his mentee know as soon as he registered, and his mentee requested Pablo as his mentor.

Being a camp mentor spurred Pablo to become more involved with TAPS, starting with TAPS' participation at Mayhem Fest

in Bristow, Virginia, and then straight into the Courage Campaign with both the Washington Wizards NBA team and the Washington Capitals NHL team. Nowadays he's helping spread the news about what TAPS is, who we serve, and how to get involved. Pablo truly believes in the TAPS mission, and knows that we offer much-needed programs for military families whose loved one has died.

When asked the most difficult thing about being a volunteer, Pablo simply said, "It's enjoyable; it's rewarding. There's nothing hard about it. Being in the military... spending time in the field in 20 degree weather with other men... that's hard."

Pablo looks at his time as a camp mentor as one of his most valuable experiences and always encourages others to participate if they can. Being brought together with his mentee and his TAPS group is important in "getting to know about them, where they came from, and how the military has molded their future," he said. "Even though their loved one was taken while in military service, the children still very much feel that the military is a part of their family." We in the TAPS family feel the same way about Pablo.

For Pablo, the bond that he shares with his mentee, the joy of the surviving families at the Courage Campaign launch with the Capitals, and seeing smiles on the faces of survivors is what it's all about. ★

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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, sign up, and take our training course.
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TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline and Website Live Chat

By Kyle Balduf, LMSW ★ TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline

We all remember that day—the day the world stopped for us. We remember the knock on the door, the phone call, the person on the other end fumbling for the words to explain that life had changed forever. After the initial waves of shock rolled over us, we began to thaw, so to speak, and became acquainted with the nature of grief. Grief is patient. It waits until we are tired or have the time and space to process. It is also no respecter of sacred days. Those of us grieving the death of a loved one learn that often the most difficult moments come in the dark of night, during lonely weekends, or on holidays, when many services are unavailable.

Because of this, TAPS chooses to make services and support available every day of the year and any time of the night or day through constant access to the TAPS helpline. Since its inception, TAPS has operated this national toll free number for survivors to receive support, information, and access to resources. The helpline is a constant connection to an array of comprehensive support services, serving as the initial gateway to TAPS, identifying needs, providing comfort, and connecting survivors to the appropriate services.

Helpline staff members are trained caregivers working around the clock to provide you with the best possible care. They have advanced degrees in areas such as counseling, social work, and pastoral counseling. They have been therapists, chaplains, and hospice workers before coming to the Helpline. TAPS has made an intentional effort to include peer survivors on the helpline staff so that when you call, you will be able to speak to a trained peer



“I called the TAPS helpline today and loved the support, care, and knowledge base that the staff I spoke to conveyed,” stated one recent survivor. “I’m looking forward to learning more and getting the support our family needs.”

professional who can truly relate to you. The helpline staff who have lost a loved one in the Armed Forces never imagined they would endure such pain or loss, but are honored to be able to use their loss for good, by serving other survivors.

The purpose of the helpline has always been to provide you with a constant source of support from an equipped, compassionate soul who will walk with you in your grief and provide you with vital resources in your greatest time of need.

“I called the TAPS helpline today and loved the support, care, and knowledge base that

the staff I spoke to conveyed,” stated one recent survivor. “I’m looking forward to learning more and getting the support our family needs.”

In December 2013, TAPS launched a new initiative to complement the helpline. For many years, TAPS has operated a number of digital communications avenues including weekly chats with other survivors and online message boards, all moderated by TAPS staff. The need to provide further avenues, for those seeking general information about TAPS services or for those who may not feel comfortable calling to speak about their loss, led to the creation of the TAPS Website Live Chat. The live chat feature allows visitors to www.taps.org the option of “chatting” in real time with a TAPS helpline staff member.

There may be times when you are so overwhelmed by grief that it would be challenging for you to have a conversation on the phone. But in the midst of that deep grief, you

may still want to tell your story or seek some support. When a member of the helpline staff is available for chat, a pop-up box will appear as you browse the website. Simply click on the Chat Now button, and TAPS Website Live Chat will provide you with a way to communicate with TAPS staff by typing rather than verbally explaining your story and needs.

Whether you need to talk or prefer to type, don’t wait to get the support you need. TAPS helpline staff are here for you and ready to bring the light of hope into your darkness. ★

Run and Remember

Beneficiary Races

The Run and Remember Team is an extraordinary program that offers survivors and their friends a healing opportunity to honor their loved ones while working out their grief in a physical venue. The program also gives survivors a chance to raise funds and awareness for TAPS.

In addition to our own Run and Remember Team, TAPS has partners throughout the year that choose TAPS as the beneficiary of the funds that the race itself raises. Here are four such partners. *



ARMY MARATHON
thearmymarathon.com



The Army Marathon, run on the first Sunday in March, includes a marathon, half marathon, and 5K race. Held first in 2013, the course runs in the vicinity of Fort Hood. Its stated mission is to honor the service and sacrifice of all service members, their families, and survivors by supporting charities that focus on the military community. TAPS is one of those charities.



GIVING THANKS 5K
givingthanks5k.info



The Giving Thanks event is a family-oriented 5K or 1K recreational jog/walk/wheelchair event in Vienna, Virginia, run on Thanksgiving morning to benefit fallen and wounded service members and their families. Thanksgiving is a time for reflection, and this event provides a place to gather families of the fallen and wounded with those who want to express their gratitude for the sacrifices.



**JEFF GALLOWAY 13.1
HALF MARATHON**
jeffgalloway131.com



The Jeff Galloway 13.1 is named for Olympic runner Jeff Galloway: author, speaker, and "America's Running Coach." Having worked with TAPS runners in the past, Jeff chose TAPS as one of the beneficiaries of the inaugural Jeff Galloway 13.1 in Atlanta, Georgia, on December 13-14 this year. TAPS runners who register for the half marathon using the discount code taps14 will save \$20.



WINDY25
windy25.org



Windy25 supports charities that provide resources and services for the military community and their families in the spirit of "we will never forget." It is run as a tribute to the Windy25 crew who died in Afghanistan on April 5, 2005 and to recognize and honor the sacrifices of our nation's servicemen and women, their families, friends, and comrades-in-arms.

If you are interested in joining the Run and Remember Team, whether as a runner, walker, or supporter, consider one of the above races or check out other races on our website. Go to www.taps.org and click on Support TAPS near the top. Then click on Run. Let's honor our heroes and raise awareness and funds for TAPS!

Thank You to Our Donors & Sponsors

We are grateful to the Friends of TAPS whose event sponsorships, grants, memorial tributes, and personal gifts allow us to fulfill our mission of comforting and supporting the loved ones of those who served and died.

HERO

**Booz Allen Hamilton
Fisher House Foundation
– Hero Miles**

**Colorado Celebrity Classic
The Hartwell Foundation
Prudential Financial**

**SAIC
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USO**

PATRIOT

**AIMCO
BAE Systems
DynCorp International
Land of the Free Foundation
Lockheed Martin**

**Monumental Sports and
Entertainment Foundation
New York Life Foundation
Oshkosh Defense
Telos Corporation**

**UnitedHealthcare Military
& Veterans
Washington Capitals –
Courage Caps**

EAGLE

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American Bus Association
American Legion Child Welfare
Foundation
Major General Kevin Bergner
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Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Chisholm
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Mr. Foster Friess
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Mr. Mark B. Grier
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Hotels for Hope
Jim Koons Automotive Companies
JP Morgan Chase & Co.
L-3 Communications
Linda Parker Hudson Charity Fund
Mr. Michael Louden
Lt. Gregory Zavota Memorial Fund
Microsoft
Northrop Grumman Corporation
PricewaterhouseCoopers

Riunite / Banfi Vintners
Sevenly
Skydex Technologies
SunTrust Bank
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Szews
Travis Manion Foundation
TriWest Healthcare Alliance
United Concordia / Highmark
USAA Federal Savings Bank
Washington Nationals
Washington Wizards – Courage Hats
Windy25 Memorial 5K

LIBERTY

Alcoa
Alfred Phillips Foundation
Fort Myer Thrift Shop
Applied Information Sciences
Ashton Tiffany, LLC
Association of Military Banks of America
Bell Labs
Ben Stein and Alexandra Denman
BJ's Charitable Foundation
BlackRock Matching Gifts
Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina
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The Richard Tam Foundation
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TAPS is a participant organization in the
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Join the TAPS Run and Remember Team

Participate in the spirit of honor, the spirit of courage, and the spirit of love.
Run to remember your loved one or pledge your support to one of our runners.

Go to www.taps.org and click on **Support TAPS**. Then select **"Run"** for more information.

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR 2014

»» **Big Wild Life Runs**

Anchorage, AK – August 17, 2014

»» **Navy 5 Miler and Navy-Air Force Half Marathon**

Washington, DC – September 14, 2014

»» **Air Force Marathon, Half Marathon, 10K, and 5K**

Dayton, OH – September 20, 2014

»» **Army Ten Miler**

Washington, DC – October 12, 2014

»» **Marine Corps Marathon, MCM 10K,
and One Mile Kids Fun Run**

Washington, DC – October 25-26, 2014

»» **Giving Thanks 5K**

Vienna, VA – November 27, 2014

»» **San Antonio Rock 'n' Roll
Half Marathon and Mini Marathon (5K)**

San Antonio, TX – December 7, 2014

»» **Jeff Galloway 13.1 and Barb 3.1**

Atlanta, GA – December 13-14, 2014

