



Life after losing a child to mental illness

Lost Too Soon



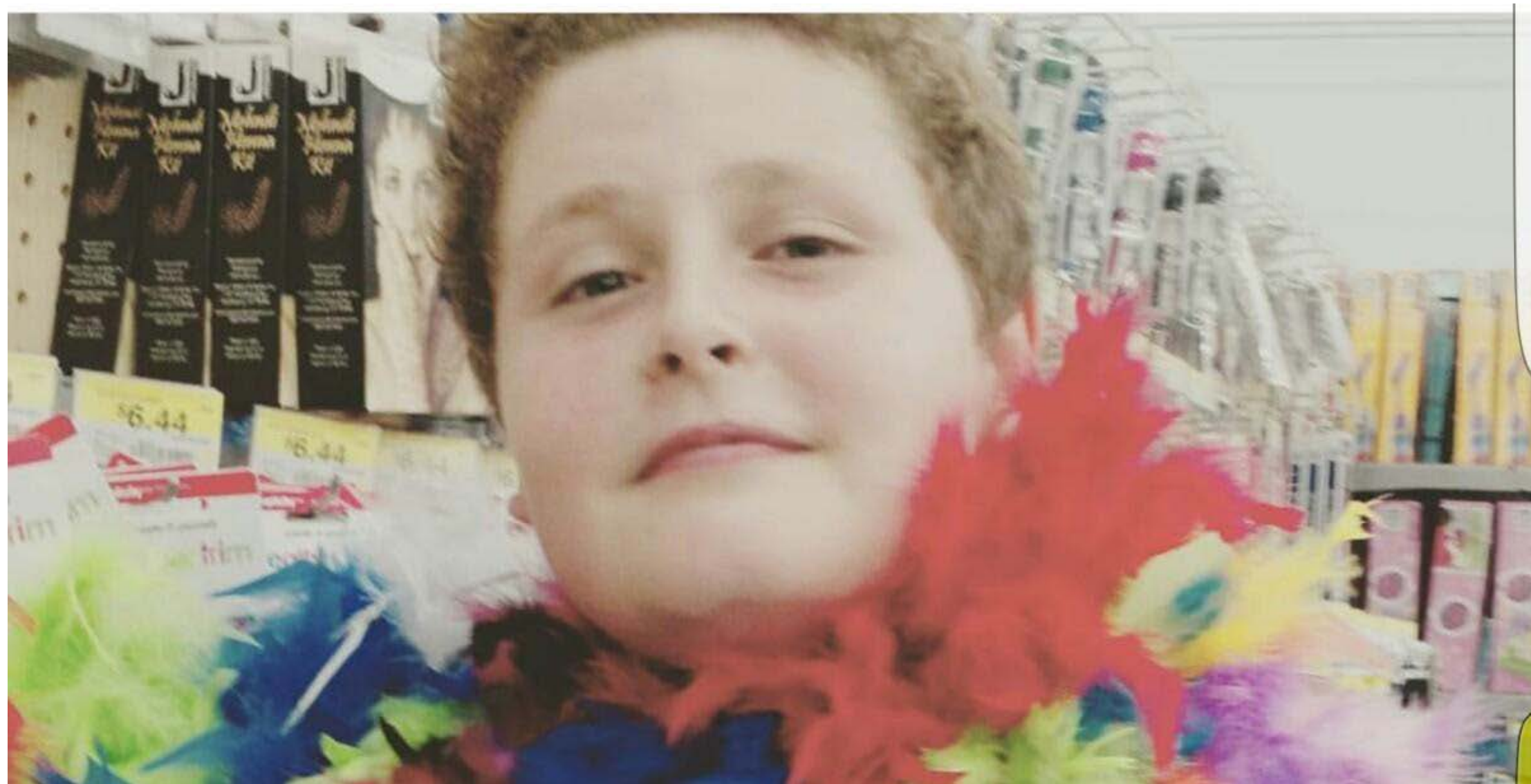
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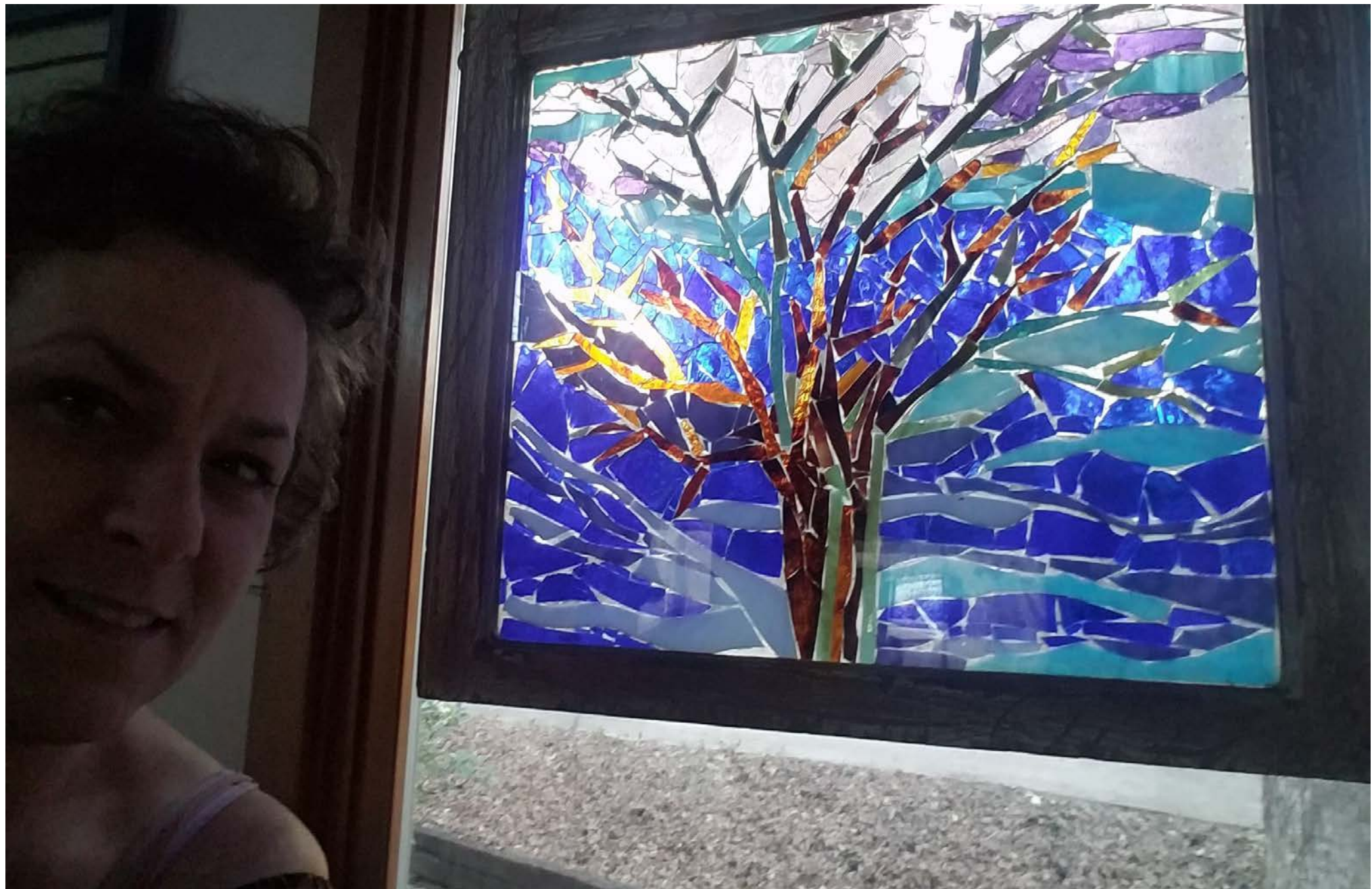
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“And when great souls die, after a period peace blooms, slowly and always irregularly. Spaces fill with a kind of vibration. Our senses, restored, never to be the same, whisper to us. They existed. We can be. Be and be better. For they existed.” --**Maya Angelou**

“When someone you love becomes a memory, that memory becomes a treasure.” -unknown

Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also more hard to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden: Its easier to say ”My tooth is aching” than to say “My heart is broken” -
C.S. Lewis

It doesn't get easier. You just get stronger.

Topics of focus

Theories, models, and stages of Grief

Mourning vs Grieving

Complicated, Ambiguous or Disenfranchised Grief

Mental Illness

Suicide and LGBTQI +

Journey to healing

Community Resources

Why this topic?

- My story: Dream of walking with Hank hand in hand on a dark path. As we walk and talk, I fall our hand break free and as I look up, out before me I see thousands of diamonds twinkling and sparkling. I realized that in my pain and sorrow came growth, opportunities, ideas and change. Examples in my life... relationship with daughter Leona, improved communication, more authentic, in the moment, gratitude and truth. Changed my professional focus to honor my son. I want people to hear Hank's story so I may communicate the struggle and help other families in their journey and eventually find hope and ways to shift attitudes, update policies to promote a more welcoming community so that all people feel included regardless of their status, sexuality, race, religion and mental health.

Definitions

Grief: is a powerful emotion and physical reaction (psychobiological) to the loss of someone or something, what we feel on the inside, a blend of yearning and sadness, along with thoughts, memories, and images of the deceased person

Bereavement: the human condition or experience of having lost a loved one to death

Mourning: is the array of psychological processes that are set in motion by bereavement in order to moderate and integrate grief by coming to terms with the loss and reorienting to a world without our love one in it. The outward expression, often culturally related. examples: wearing black clothes, planning a funeral, sharing memories, creative expressions; art, music, writing, etc.

Group Discussion Questions

1. Individual Grief Story: Who, when, how and now
2. What would you say to someone after the death of a loved one or what has someone said that was not helpful?
3. How many people have you lost in the past year, 5 years and lifetime?
4. Examples of your Mourning, Coping, Resources? What Helps?

Grief Experts

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

The Five Stages of Grief (1969)

Denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance

Dr. Lois Tonkin's

Model on Grief (1996)

A wound we gradually heal around, means the loss of someone will always be part of us

Dr. Therese Rando

Theory of The Six Rs of Mourning (1988)

Recognizing the reality of the death, reacting to separation, “re-experiencing” good or bad memories, letting go of how things were and accommodating memories in a changed world Recognize, React, Recollect, Relinquish, Readjust, Reinvest

Dr. Margaret Stroebe & Dr. Henk Schut's Dual Process Model (1999)

Oscillating between these stages as you accommodate someone's physical absence from your life and practical activities that give you respite from the pain

More stages, theories, models and ideas

Dr. J William Worden Four Task of Grieving (2013)

Accept the reality, process the pain, adjust to life without their physical presence and create new connections with them in our memory

Robert Neimeyer

Reconstruction of Meaning (2001)

Adjusting to the alien place you find yourself in when someone dies. “Meaning-Making”, through assimilating and accommodating and acceptance of your changed world. Uses writing, journaling and letters to deceased

Kenneth Doka & Terry Martin

Adaptive Grief (2011)

Three types: Instrumental mourners; activities, actions: Intuitive Mourners; emotional
Dissonant Mourners; suppress and avoids Some people are blended

16 Different Types of Grief People Experience

Liz Kelly, LCSW from TalkSpace

1. Normal Grief
2. Anticipatory Grief
3. Complicated Grief
4. Chronic Grief
5. Delayed Grief
6. Distorted Grief
7. Cumulative Grief
8. Exaggerated Grief
9. Secondary Losses
10. Masked
11. Disenfranchised
12. Traumatic
13. Collective
14. Inhibited
15. Abbreviated
16. Absent

Normal Grief

Grief in and of its self is normal, with a huge range of emotions, some physical, others are behavioral, emotional or social. Grief is unique like a fingerprint, we all experience, process, move through, express and mourn differently. No time table, depends on who is lost, situation and the relationship 6 months -1 year

Physical reactions: tightness in chest, feeling weak, nauseated, restless, tearful...

Behavioral reactions: forgetful, confusion, absent-mindedness, dreaming of the person

Emotional reactions: anger, shock, denial, numbness, loneliness, relief, apathy, irritability, misplaced anger

Social reactions: dependent on others, withdrawing from friends, avoiding family, colleagues, friends, relationship difficulties

Complicated Grief

when the usual responses to the death of a loved one do not fade over time and can impair or prevent them from leading their normal lives.

- Persistent focus on the loss
- Intense, daily longing
- Feeling that life is meaningless
- Replaying aspects of death in mind
- Intense attachment or rejection of reminders
- Bitterness and anger at the world
- Longer than 6 months -1 year to grieve and process
- Requires help from mental health professional

- **Complicated Grief:** prolonged, intense, typically has significant impact on your ability to function
- **Distorted Grief:** Noticeable change in behavior, self destructive, anger, lashing out
- **Traumatic:** violent death, trauma, can result in impairment in functioning
- **Exaggerated Grief:** noticeably disruptive, intense reaction, self destructive, suicidal thoughts, self harm, substance abuse, nightmares, abnormal fears, development of psychiatric disorders ex: leaving lights on, not wanting to be alone
- **Chronic Grief:** extremely intense, longtime, difficulty making progress
- **Delayed Grief:** the event happened long ago and the reaction occurs later

- **Masked:** presents as physical or behaviors that impair several areas of life
- **Inhibited:** not showing obvious signs or outward forms of grief, likely to have a physical reaction due to not dealing with the grief
- **Abbreviated:** The person lost is replaced after a short period of time with something or someone new ex: have another baby, marry soon after widowed
- **Absent:** not showing any typical signs, denial, shock, acting as if nothing happened
- **Vicarious Trauma:** occurs in providers as a result of bearing witness to the trauma experienced by others, leads to burnout, compassion fatigue and turn over in PLWH

- **Secondary Losses:** the loss affects several areas of our life that experience additional losses stemming from 1st loss

Ex: loss of son, job, relationship and social life

- **Cumulative Grief:** “Grief Overload”, compounding loss, # of losses over time
- **Collective Grief:** Affects large groups, communities, institutions Ex: War, natural disaster, loss of public figure
- **Anticipatory Grief:** expecting the loss in the near future, envisioning life without the person

Pros: allows for forgiveness, say goodbye ex: terminal or chronic illness

Disenfranchised/Ambiguous: you don't feel validated in your feelings, stigma, judgement or misunderstanding ex: overdose/suicide/murder/Traumatic Brain Injuries/mental health conditions

US Statistics of Mental Illness

- 21% of US adults experienced mental illness in 2020
- 1 in 5 adults have a diagnosable mental condition in a given year
- 46% of Americans meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their lifetime
- ½ of those who will develop conditions will do so by age 14
- 4% of Americans have suicidal thoughts
- 18% of Americans diagnosed with mental illness Anxiety most common
- LGBTQI+ 37% have mental illness

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced or witnessed a shocking, scary, or dangerous event.
- Intense flashbacks
- Recurring nightmares
- Sensory experiences that trigger trauma
- Unwelcome thoughts
- Paranoia and fear
- Anxiety
- Jumpiness

Suicide Statistics and LGBTQ+

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-34 CDC 2019
- LGBTQI+ youth being 4 times more likely to seriously consider suicide, make a plan for suicide and to attempt suicide than their peers
- Trevor Project estimates that at least one LGBTQI+ youth between the ages of 13-24 attempts suicide every 45 seconds in the US
- Between 2015-2019, the percentages of 15-17 year olds who said they identified as “non-heterosexual” rose from 8.3% to 11.7 % according to nationwide surveys by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- 2021 Trevor Project 2021 National survey found LGBTQI+ youth of color reported higher rates of attempting suicide than their white peers in the past year. 12% white attempted, 31% native/indigenous, 21% black, 21% multi racial and 18% of Latinx and 12% of Asian/Pacific Islander

More statistics about LGBTQ+ youth suicide

- Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how interdependent and multidimensional social identities at the individual level, such as race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, are shaped by interlocking systems of privilege and oppression at the societal level, such as heterosexism, cisgenderism, and racism. (Crenshaw 1991)

- Key risk factors for LGBTQI+ youth suicide

Minority stress, rejection, lack of social support and affirming spaces, discrimination, conversion therapy, Affirming spaces in activities and especially at school, policies and practices (Trevor Project 2021 National Survey)

Community Resources & Groups

- Grief support groups
- SOS: Survivors of Suicide
- MHA: Mental Health America
- NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness
- Funeral Homes
- Churches
- Private therapist
- FAVOR: Faces and Voices of Recovery
- SCAADAC: SC Alcohol And Drug Abuse Center
- DAODAS: Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services
- SCDMH: SC Department of Mental Health

Smile
Safety
Support
Sensitive
Similarities
Sincere
Sanity
Self-care
Stop Secrets
Sunrises and Sunsets

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