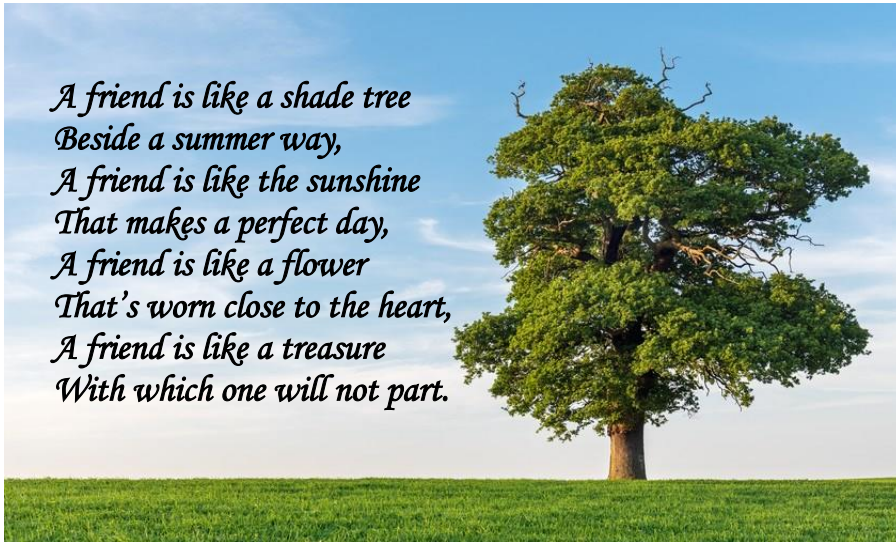


Haven Herald



Loss of a Friend

by Jill Bellacicco

On June 25 of this year there was a video online in which two friends of the late Anthony Bourdain, chefs Eric Ripert and Jose Andres, encouraged everyone to give a toast or share a memory as a tribute to Bourdain on what would have been his 63rd birthday. Though Bourdain has been gone for over a year, he is obviously dearly missed by his friends and all those who enjoyed his shows and writing. His closest friends are trying to cope, but they miss him, and celebrating his life is a way to try to heal from the pain they are experiencing.

Losing a beloved friend can change our lives in profound ways. Whether it is someone we have been friends with for most of our lives or a person we met more recently, the loss can be devastating. My "best friend" just visited me and I thought about how I would feel if this person were no longer in the world. It would not make sense and I can't really imagine it. So when I thought about this topic, the enormity of such a loss began to sink in.

The support we get from others when a friend dies will not likely be nearly what is given when a family member dies. We may be hurting terribly but not finding true acknowledgement for what we are going through. Loss of a close friend can be just as difficult as losing someone in our family because friends often fill the emotional needs that families cannot. We lose a person we trust with whom we share a history, someone who was a constant presence in our life. So what do you do?

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Letter from the Executive Director

Fall can be that "back to reality" season when work and schedules kick in after a more carefree summer. It brings with it more adjustments, cooler, shorter days as well as beautiful colors and harvest moons. Things get busy in the fall at Haven with the start of our fall groups and planning for training class. We look forward to welcoming back our volunteers who were traveling during the summer and enjoy renewing these friendships.

The topic for this newsletter is loss of a friend. Friends bring such joy and richness to our lives and when we lose them it leaves us with an empty feeling and a deep heartache. It can be a devastating loss that takes time to work through, yet it is not always acknowledged in the same way as the loss of a family member.

It is important to feel this loss and take time to grieve for someone you shared a genuine friendship with who was there for special moments in your life or helped you through the tough times. Friends make such a difference.

Jill Bellacicco



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There is no clear path forward, but grieving a friend is important and, yet, can be challenging, as we may feel our grief is dismissed by others as not being all that significant. Don't hesitate to take the time to get what you need to see your way through. Here are a few ideas that may help:

- Talk to someone who will listen
- Seek help from a support group
- Contact a mutual friend who you can share stories with you about the person you both lost
- Write a tribute about your friend and share it with the family
- Visit a place that was special for you and your friend
- Make a donation to honor your friend

Whatever you do, take the time to truly grieve the loss. It is painful and exhausting but it helps in the long run, no matter what others may think.

When friends we have not seen in years die, we may need to go back in our thoughts to the times in our lives when we shared these friendships that were important to us. These losses can bring up emotions and stir memories that could be both happy and upsetting. Another difficult thing many people face as they get older is the loss of several friends in a short period of time. The circumstances of the death can also be extremely difficult to cope with if the loss is from an accident, suicide or sudden illness.

Friends can be part of our greatest joy and most trustworthy support. So, regardless of the timeline or circumstances of a friendship, it is necessary to give these losses the thoughtfulness and respect they need. We are grieving for a person who made a difference in our life. We miss these friends when they leave us. As Eric Ripert stated on Twitter the day Anthony Bourdain died, "Anthony was my best friend." He recognized the gift he had.

What Worked for Me

by Kathleen Sebek

In memory of Allen B. 1948 - 1995



It is early spring 1989 and my dearest friend and soul mate, Allen, calls me from Florida. "I don't know how to say this but I have AIDS. I'm coming home." Allen and I had been best friends since high school. He was the kind of friend who knew what you were thinking before you knew it. He was that person with whom you shared your hopes and fears, that person with whom you could be completely you. What I remember most about him is the laughter we shared, the laughter that brings tears to your eyes and makes your body shake and later hurt from the shaking.

But this is about the loss of Allen. Allen was no stranger to death. He had learned from past experiences and chose to live what life he had in a joyful and honest way. There was no pretense. He educated himself about his illness and treatment and educated those around him. He talked about it and expected his loved ones to join in the discussion. He talked openly about dying. He did not tolerate platitudes or allow the dismissal of these discussions.

But, what helped? It was only in retrospect that I saw it. What helped was Allen's fierce insistence that we talk about not only death but also about his life and our life together as friends. He knew great love, joy, and peace as well as the physical and emotional pain of illness and impending death. He remained a man of great faith. He gave us the opportunity to say what we needed to say. And that was a generous gift, a gift many do not receive.

It is January 1995. Allen is on the AIDS floor at George Washington Hospital. His roommate is dying and we leave the room so the family can have time with their loved one. We are walking up the hall; Allen is very weak. He stops in the hall, looks at me and says "I love you." These are his last coherent words to me and, yes, another gift that has sustained me throughout the years without him. He had planned his funeral; I was honored to be a pall bearer and a reader.

Coping with the Death of a Co-Worker



When a co-worker dies, it can have a significant impact on those in the workplace. There is an element of "family" in most work units. People get to know one another, as they work side by side and share work and personal experiences. Sometimes co-workers become close friends and spend time together outside of work. Others keep their relationship at work but develop a deep connection from working together. Some people do not develop close ties at work and reserve their intimate relationships to outside family and friends.

The effects of the loss of a co-worker will be determined by many factors, including, but not limited to: the number of years worked together, the nature of the relationship, the age of the deceased, the suddenness of the death, and other challenges that may be facing the work group and its staff and/or faculty at the time of the loss.

The Grieving Process

Depending on the nature of your relationship with your deceased coworker, you may or may not go through a grieving process following the death. Grief is a universal, natural, and normal response to significant loss of any kind. It is how we process and heal from an important loss. It can be a painful and tiring experience. Understanding the grieving experience, and how best to cope with it, can help in your recovery from grief of any kind.

Ways to Cope with the Loss

Acknowledge the Loss

It is better to give each other permission to talk about what has happened and its impact than to go on as if nothing had happened. It may be helpful to allot time at staff meetings for people who want to check in on how they are doing.

Acknowledge Individual Reactions

When a co-worker dies, it affects each person in the work unit in a very different way. Some are deeply affected by the loss, while others are not. Some people want to talk about their feelings, while others want to deal with them in private. Some may take much longer than others to adjust to the loss. Be aware of the different ways that people react to the loss and respect those differences.

Be Kind to Each Other

This is not an easy time for the work unit and many adjustments have to be made. People may not be at their best. Cut each other some slack; be gentle and understanding with one another during this time. Find ways to cooperate to share any additional workload.

Funeral and Memorial Events

Provide information for everyone on arrangements that have been made and when feasible, provide time to attend for those who are interested. However, be mindful that each family is different and may choose not to publish funeral or memorial event information.

Honor the Lost Coworker

Consider honoring the person who died in an appropriate way, e.g., collecting money for a charity, creating a memorial book or bulletin board or sending a letter to the deceased's loved ones.

Excerpts from "Be Well at Work" - A Faculty/Staff Health Programs. For the article in it's entirety visit uhs.berkeley.edu/bewellatwork



HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED

Haven is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is funded mainly by donations from individuals in the community who wish to support our work and by those who donate in memory of a loved one. Donations are tax deductible. If you are interested in making a donation, please contact Haven at (703) 941-7000 or at havenofnova@verizon.net

Haven of Northern Virginia, Inc.

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Fall Schedule

Six-week General Bereavement Support Group
Wednesday, September 18 – October 23, 2019
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Six-week Suicide Loss Support Group
Tuesday, October 8 – November 12, 2019
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Six-week Widow/Widower/Partner Support Group
Saturday, October 5 – November 9, 2019
Time(s) to be determined

Call or email Haven to register for the groups.

Drop-in Suicide Loss Support Group
1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Haven also offers individual support; please call to schedule an appointment. For immediate support without an appointment, a volunteer is available on a walk-in basis Monday through Friday between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Contact Information

Haven of Northern Virginia
4606 Ravensworth Road
Annandale, Virginia 22003
Phone: (703) 941-7000
Fax: (703) 941-7003
E-mail: havenofnova@verizon.net

Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
www.havenofnova.org

Messages may be left on our voicemail after hours