

FACILITATING SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS

TRAINING WORKSHOP 2: BEST PRACTICES AND HOW-TO'S



Rethink The Conversation®
Let's Start Talking

CAS

COPING | AFTER | SUICIDE

I'VE BEEN THERE. AND I'M HERE

HOUSEKEEPING AND LOGISTICS

- No formal break
- Questions?
 - Type your name into the chat box
 - 15 minutes at end of each block

www.copingaftersuicide.com/support-groups

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HOME HOW I CAN HELP SUPPORT GROUPS MORE

SUICIDE LOSS SUPPORT GROUPS

Coping After Suicide® peer support groups are for those who've lost a loved one to suicide.

We meet on Zoom so you can participate from wherever you live (you'll be amazed at how warm, welcoming, and genuine Zoom support groups can be).

The groups are small and private, so you'll feel truly seen and heard.

They're professionally facilitated by a hand-picked member of the Coping After Suicide® Support Group Facilitator Corps, who are all highly-skilled, experienced, and knowledgeable individuals with a deep personal and professional understanding of suicide loss. You'll receive valuable evidence-informed strategies and resources for coping with this complicated and painful loss.

All groups meet in 10-session cycles and new members are welcomed at the beginning of each cycle:

“

*"This group has given me so much,
it's hard to find the words."*

*"The group has been extraordinarily helpful for me.
I have felt a deep inner shift happen."*

"I found I kept saying to myself: 'omg yes'."

"This is just what I needed."

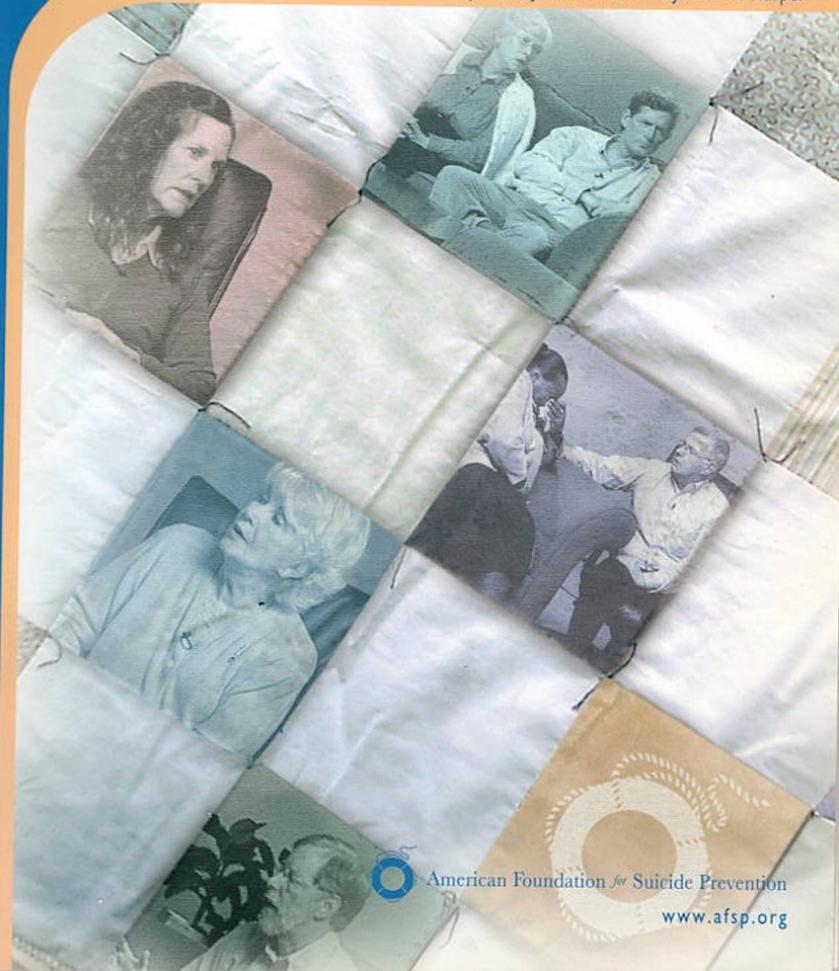
"My only regret is not joining sooner."”



American Foundation
for Suicide Prevention

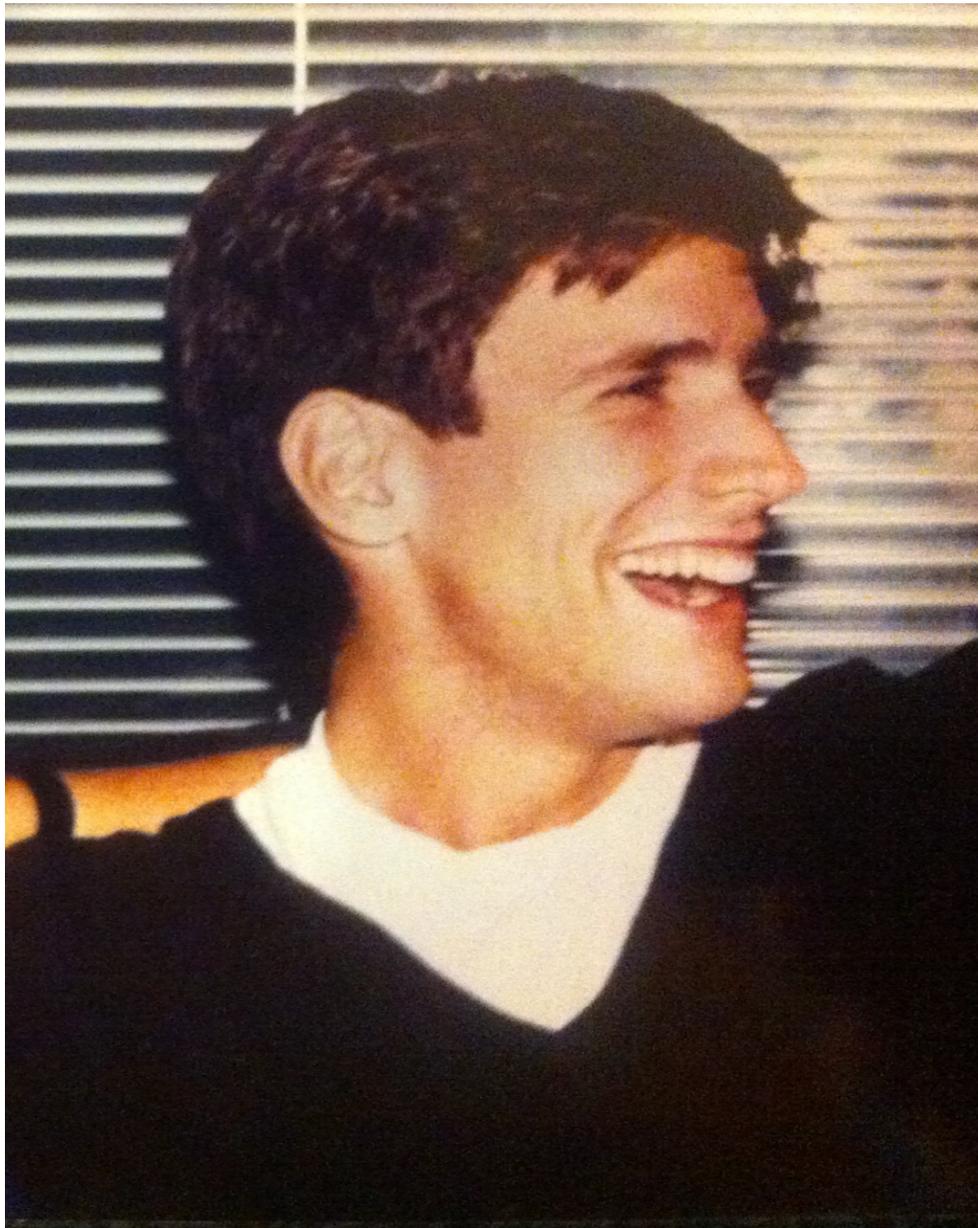
Facilitating Suicide Bereavement Support Groups: A Self-Study Manual

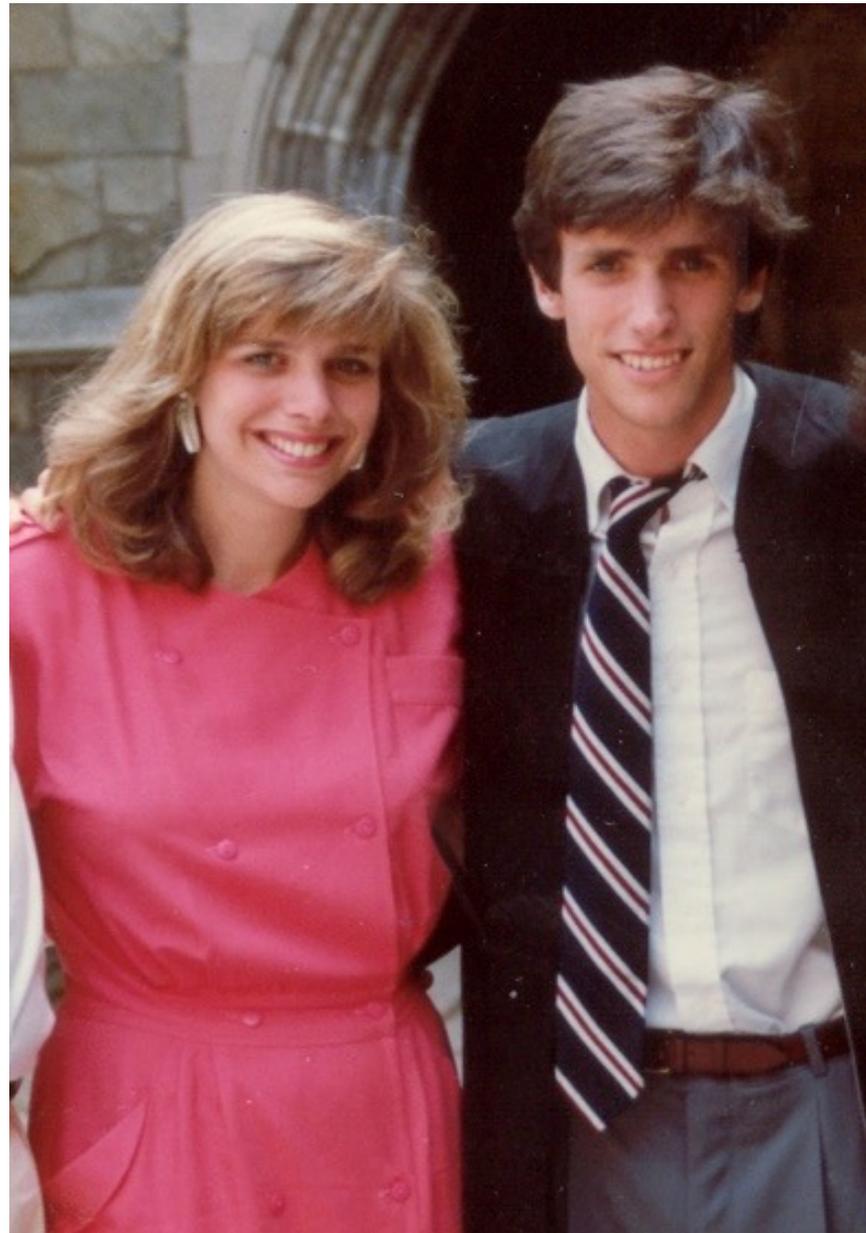
John R. Jordan, Ph.D. and Joanne L. Harpel

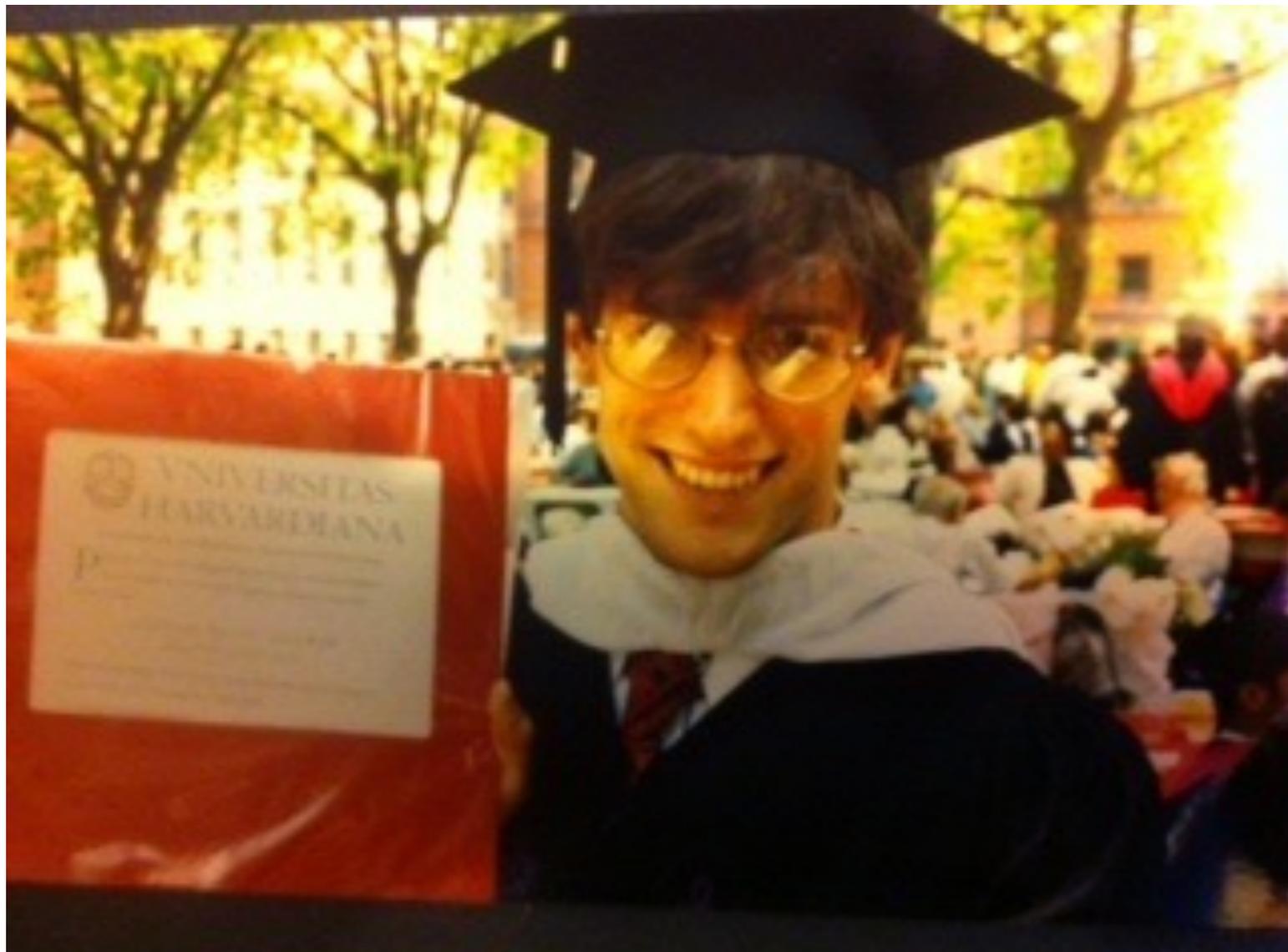


American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.afsp.org











Goals

- Facilitation 101
- Practical strategies
- Tips and tricks
- Go-to ideas to keep in your back pocket

Well-Functioning Groups Have Guidelines

- Clear expectations = confidence and comfort
- Disseminate in advance?
- Available/read out loud at the meeting?

Sample Guidelines

- We **start our meetings** at 6:00 p.m. If you arrive late, please come on in (and just do your best to join the group without interrupting the flow of conversation or mood of the group.)
- We'll **end the meetings** promptly at 8:00 p.m., out of courtesy to those group members who may need to return to relieve babysitters, have work to finish, or who are simply emotionally tired.
- Unlike 12-step meetings, in which members are discouraged from responding to what others say (“cross-talk”), our group is about **interaction and dialogue**. Having said that, please remember the primary rule of support groups: **adults learn best by hearing the experiences of others, rather than by giving or receiving advice**. Our goal is to support each individual as they find their own way of dealing with their loss.
- Try not to assume that you know what someone else is thinking or feeling. Instead, just **ask**.
- **Share the airtime** of the group.
- For everyone to feel safe, we need to trust that whatever is shared in the group will be kept **confidential**. It's fine to discuss your thoughts and feelings about the group with someone who is not a member, but please don't reveal the details of what any individual has shared or disclose the names of people who have attended the group.
- Bear in mind that being in the group may feel awkward or even painful at times, particularly in the beginning. This is natural. **Be patient and gentle with yourself and your fellow group members**.
- May you feel seen, heard, and understood. May you find warmth, comfort, and understanding here. Grieve fully. Heal well.

Well-Functioning Groups Have Structure

- Opening
- Go-Round
- DISCUSSION
- Closing

Starting the Meeting

- Welcome
- Introduce yourself
 - If you're not a survivor of suicide loss yourself...
- Business items (scheduling)
- Opening statement/ritual
 - "I'm so sorry for the reason you're here, but grateful we're together"
 - Poem, candles
- Go-Round
 - Your name, who you lost, their name and age, how long ago
 - Purpose?
 - *"What were you listening for?"*

Then...

- Prompt questions - have a list of go-to's
 - Practice - beware of the compound question
 - *“Who’s struggled with feeling angry?”*
 - *“The holidays are coming up soon, how are you planning to handle them?”*
- Closing
 - Question
 - *“What will you take away from tonight’s meeting?”*
 - *“What’s one thing you’re looking forward to this week?”*
 - Poem/ritual (holding hands?)

Handling Silence

- Groups “breathe”
- “WAIT”
- 7 Mississippi
- Nonverbals
- Getting the ball rolling again

The Hierarchy of Options

1. Say nothing (“WAIT”)
2. Ask an open-ended question to the group
 - *“What has been the hardest so far?”*
3. Pivot from the individual back to the group
 - *“Thanks so much for sharing that, Ellen. Has anyone else . . .?”*
4. Ask an open-ended question to an individual
 - *“Sandra, how have you handled telling people how your loved one died”*
5. Make a summarizing/reflecting statement then ask a question
 - *“Several of you have struggled with feeling angry. Has anyone had a different experience?”*
6. Share your own POV/experience

DISCUSSION QUESTION

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE FACILITATOR, WHAT'S THE MOST CHALLENGING SITUATION YOU'VE SEEN (OR ARE WORRIED ABOUT)?

Challenging Behavior in Groups

- **Sharing the air-time (monopolizers and silent members)**
- **Advice-giving, judging, and help-rejecting complaining**
- **Interpersonal dynamics**
- **Expectations and boundaries**
- **Content**
- **Intense emotion/member in possible suicidal crisis**

RESOURCES

HANDOUT: Go-To Books and Resources for Survivors of Suicide Loss

FOR CRISIS GUIDANCE

- Crisis Text Line: text “TALK” to 741-741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION (www.afsp.org)

- Support Group directory and Drop-In calls for facilitators

Jordan, J. R. (2011). Group work with suicide survivors. In John Jordan & John McIntosh (Eds.). *Grief after suicide: Understanding the consequences and caring for the survivors* (pp. 283–300). New York, NY: Routledge.

QUESTIONS...?

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