

# FACILITATING SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS

## TRAINING WORKSHOP 1:

### THE NUTS & BOLTS OF GETTING STARTED

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Rethink The Conversation®  
Let's Start Talking

# HOUSEKEEPING AND LOGISTICS

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

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COPING | AFTER | SUICIDE

I'VE BEEN THERE. AND I'M HERE

# 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*

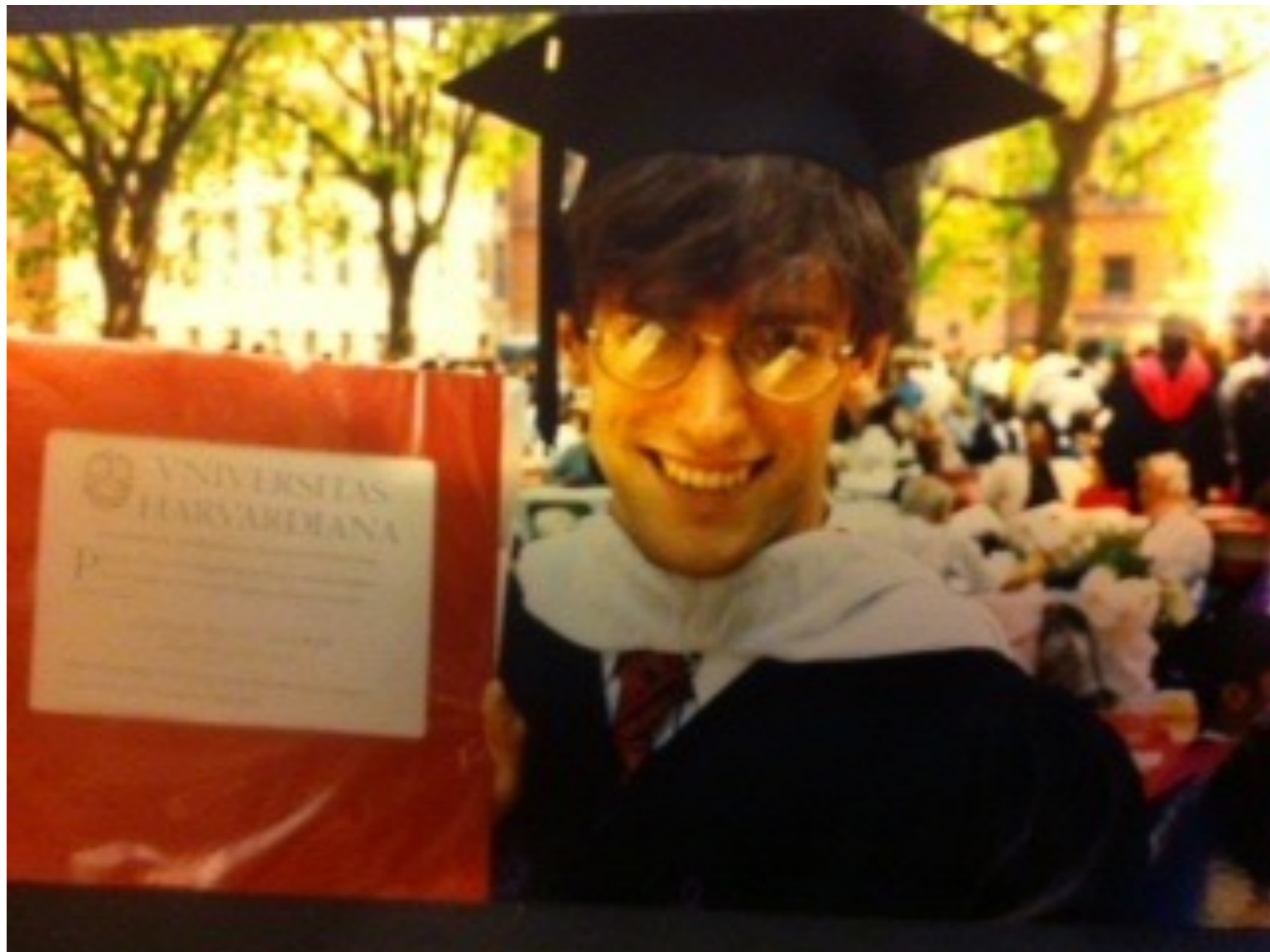
John R. Jordan, Ph.D. and Joanne L. Harpel



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)











# Why Do People Seek Out Support Groups?

- “Affective” or “Intuitive” coping style
  - Feeling-based
    - feeling seen and heard
  - Communication-based
    - expressing emotion
  - Connection-based
    - closeness and community
- Instrumental coping style
  - Thought-based
    - Reading, researching, analyzing
  - Action-based
    - Goals, projects

# What Makes a Well-Functioning Group?

- Emotionally safe
- Open, honest, respectful sharing
- Buffet, not consensus
- Everyone is a full and equal member
  - no visitors (moral support, students, reporters)
  - “survivors” of suicide attempts
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Balance of sharing, listening, and offering support
  - when is too soon to join?
  - sharing your story
  - sharing the air-time
  - being with others’ pain

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

*"This is just what I needed."*

*"My only regret is not joining sooner."*

# Holding the Molten Steel



## **Molten Steel**

**98% Fe**

**0.04 - 1.5% C**

**1% Mn**

**various alloys**

**3000°F**

**Fluidity ~ 6 cp**

# What's The Facilitator's Role?

- Creating a safe environment (judgment-free zone)
- Facilitating (mostly), Leading (some) and Teaching (rarely)
- Screening?
- Co-facilitator, if possible
  - Non-verbal cues
  - Share the responsibility and availability
- **It's the Group's Group**



# Watch Out For...

- Being an expert
- Becoming “The Hub”
- Editorializing (“good point”)
- Having an opinion about where someone is in their grief
- Over-caretaking and compassion fatigue
- Your own personality, style, and limitations
- Your own need to share your experiences/story/grief
- Defensiveness, if you’re not a survivor suicide loss yourself

# Ask yourself...

- Am I ready?
  - being a “participant-observer”
  - the 3-meeting test
  - consulting relationship with a mental health professional
- What is my motivation?
- Am I comfortable with it?
- Do I enjoy it?
- Am I good at it?
- What’s hard for me?

# Administration and Logistics

- Location
  - Pros and cons
  - houses of worship, hospitals, mental health clinics, funeral homes, libraries, colleges, private home (be careful)
  - parking, public transportation, restrooms, room set-up, tissues
- Host/sponsoring organization?
- Frequency and timing and duration of meetings
- Open/drop-in v closed groups
- Getting the word out
  - include location and/or time?
  - social media; flyers in houses of worship, funeral homes, mental health professionals and clinics, libraries, hospice
  - <https://afsp.org/information-for-support-group-facilitators>

# The Content (aka the “What”)

- Ironically, *least* important from POV of the facilitator
- Why? Because it's the group's group

# What Groups Talk About

- Why?
- Who
  - Guilt (did I have some role?)
  - Blame
- Rejection/abandonment
- Intention (is suicide a “choice”)
- Did I know him/her?
- Anger
- Relief

# What Groups Talk About (cont'd)

- Method
- Suicide notes
- Stigma, shame, telling the truth
- Family dynamics
  - Parenting
  - What to tell children
  - Hypervigilance
  - Grief competition
  - Different grieving styles (affective and instrumental coping)
- Mental illness/mental health system

# 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](http://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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