



# Haven Herald



## Is it Just “The Blues” or Something More?

by Jill Bellacicco

While exploring the topic of the “winter blues,” we cannot disallow the fact that “the blues” may be more than a temporary condition that is solely the result of lack of light or a recent loss. Depression is a natural part of the grief process, but for most people it is temporary and manageable. In some cases, especially if the individual has a history of depression or another mental illness, depression can be all consuming and require medical attention.

Clinical depression is an illness that is unrelenting in its sadness and pain. It isolates people, takes away self-confidence, and brings despair and loss of hope to the individual experiencing it. Depression can cause both physical and mental pain and completely affect a person’s ability to function normally. Without question, the symptoms of depression should always be addressed. Treatment is critical, and positive support of family and friends can make a huge difference for recovery. Stress can make symptoms worse, and lifestyle should be modified if possible. Understanding that depression is a serious illness that may require immediate attention is significant, especially if you are grieving a loved one. If you are in doubt about your state of mind, it is always a good idea to see a medical professional. You may not require treatment, but it won't hurt to find out. Attending a grief support group or talking to someone such as a therapist or grief counselor can be very helpful. Grieving a loved one is the most difficult thing we have to do in life. It is a great struggle that requires us to adapt in ways we could never have imagined.

Take care of yourself, and know that you can always get the help you need.

## Letter from the Executive Director

When the holiday season is behind us, we will have an opportunity to start a new year fresh with resolutions of change. This seems like a good idea unless you are struggling with the loss of someone you love.

Winter can be a very difficult season with its cold weather, shorter days and extra time inside. More than any other time of year, winter parallels the dark, difficult mood of grief. In this newsletter we recognize that the “winter blues” represents for many people a depressing and painful time. At the same time, we should emphasize that if one is suffering from clinical depression, treatment is critical.

Haven offers a workshop, “Journey through Grief,” in the winter as well as a training class for new volunteers.

We keep going, but we understand that the blue mood of winter can have an even more devastating impact for those in grief.

Jill Bellacicco



## What is Comfort Food?

by Joni Greene

In the winter, when you are down, the days making our favorite comfort food. But can be a one-dish meal, simple to make and sentimental feeling when we are eating it. as a young child sitting at the kitchen table



are short and it is cold outside, we talk about what is it and what does it really do for us? It easy to-digest. It often provides a nostalgic or It allows our mind to wander back to the days having our parents take care of us.

My comfort food is rice with spaghetti sauce. I was the only person in the family who ate it, so I felt special when my mother would make it for me. Maybe that is what comfort food is; it is the feeling of being special, even if we are making it ourselves – we are thinking about us and not anyone else.

We need to be selfish when we are going through grief. We need someone to take care of us, to listen to us and make us feel special. Like comfort food, grief is individual. No two people pick the same food, just as no two people go through grief the same way.



## What Worked for Me

by Debbie Jecklin

The year that my mother unexpectedly died, I wondered how I could celebrate Christmas with the giant hole her death left in my heart. My mother was born into an exceptionally large and loving family with seven sisters and three brothers. Loving arms were always available to crying babies and unhappy children, so it was natural that I turned to my aunts for solace.

Hearing of the usual family gathering, I mulled over the difficulty of celebrating the holiday, but I decided to go for the first time in years. When I arrived, hugs and kisses greeted me. My aunts weren't sad or mourning, even though each had lost a spouse, parents, and three siblings. How could they happily celebrate, I wondered. But you don't ask such a question on a day of happiness and togetherness, so I just watched and listened. My aunts were guiding, talking to and kissing the children and exclaiming over every word they spoke. As I talked with my cousins and then each of my aunts, it occurred to me that perhaps I brought a sense of my mother to them as they did to me. I tried to learn how to be happy, while living through the loss of my mother.

As I drove home, the images of the day persisted. I recalled the joy in my relatives' exchanges and the sharing of themselves with others. My healing began that day. I saw that I would heal, and it gave me hope. We cleave to what we have—the joy in the family that remains. We look to the children, and we look to the new generations who will survive us and carry on our family's love.

This Christmas I will hold my first grandchild, Minna, during her first Christmas celebration. Somewhere in her eyes, I know I will see a spark of my mother, and I will pass on the love that she, her sisters and her brothers always gave to me. That gentle abiding love is what sustains me.

***Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: you don't give up.***

***---Anne Lamort***



## Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

by Ron McNally

*“Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a mental illness that affects moods and behavior. The causes of SAD are not entirely known. People with seasonal affective disorder experience a profound reaction to the seasonal changes.”<sup>i</sup>*

*“If you're like most people with seasonal affective disorder, your symptoms start in the fall and may continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making you feel moody. Less often, seasonal affective disorder causes depression in the spring or early summer.”<sup>ii</sup>*



When my wife Sarah and I were first married, she suffered from SAD, although we did not understand that at the time. We were both college students in East Lansing, Michigan, where it seemed as though the sun disappeared in the winter and did not reappear until spring. The days were mostly grey because of an inversion that would set in over the city in the winter.

Over Christmas vacations, we would drive out of East Lansing on our way to visit family and were often pleased to discover the sun was shining. We would drive through Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin and into Iowa. The drive across Wisconsin was especially beautiful with bright sunshine, snow covered hills and black and white cows roaming those hills. The scenery was just what we needed to get into the Christmas spirit.

When we eventually moved first to Indiana and then to Virginia, Sarah's SAD symptoms eased; there was more sunshine in the winter. Her symptoms were helped even more, when she began taking medication for low thyroid. Sarah would always insist that it be seasonally adjusted. She felt the need for less medication in the spring and more in the fall, and the doctor's thyroid tests proved her right. Much later, Sarah was given light therapy for a condition other than SAD; nonetheless, it helped her SAD symptoms.

While anyone can have an occasional down day during the short, cold, grey, winter days, SAD is a persistent, seasonally related condition. Symptoms vary and may include sadness, loss of energy, loss of enthusiasm, loss of motivation, and loss of interest in friends or family.

Although there is no cure for SAD, there are treatments that can help relieve its symptoms. The most effective treatment is light therapy, which can be done at home. One sits for a short time in front of a special light that mimics sunlight. Symptoms usually improve after a few days. A doctor should be consulted before undergoing light therapy, as a high quality light is needed. Anti-depressants and psychotherapy are also treatments for SAD.

<sup>i</sup> [http://www.ehow.com/how-does\\_5019038\\_understanding-seasonal-affective-disorder.html](http://www.ehow.com/how-does_5019038_understanding-seasonal-affective-disorder.html)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/seasonal-affective-disorder/DS00195>



### 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](mailto:havenofnova@verizon.net)



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## **WINTER SCHEDULE**

### **Community Presentation**

“Coping with the Holidays after the Death of a Loved One”

Thursday, December 5, 2013

7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

### **Winter Workshop**

“Journey through Grief”

Saturday, February 8, 2014

2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

**Space is limited. Please call for reservations  
for the presentation and/or workshop.**

Open 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 by phone and in person; 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**

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### **Hours of Operation**

Monday through Friday

9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

[www.havenofnova.org](http://www.havenofnova.org)

Messages may be left on our  
voicemail after hours