

Haven Herald

HOPE

Pandemic life has impacted all of us in some way or another.

These have certainly been challenging times trying to navigate the many difficulties we faced to stay healthy and maintain our well-being. As stated by Lucy McBride in the Washington Post on March 10, 2021, *Regardless of our individual pandemic experience, each of us has faced some level of loss, grief and despair.* As the situation changes for the better, we now need to look forward to a brighter future. Hope is the answer and lights the way forward.



“A rainbow is a prism that sends shards of multicolored light in various directions. It lifts our spirits and makes us think of what is possible. Hope is the same – a personal rainbow of the mind”. By Charles Snyder

While hope is an undoubtedly personal experience and one that can be challenging to define, the value and positive impact hope can have on human life is widely recognized and difficult to ignore.

People often speak about hope strengthening their resolve and accompanying them even in their darkest hour; guiding them through seemingly desperate circumstances.

Hope helps us remain committed to our goals and motivated to take action towards achieving. Hope gives people a reason to continue fighting and believing that their current circumstances will improve, despite the unpredictable nature of human existence.

Source: *What is Hope in Psychology + 7 Exercises and Worksheets.* Elaine Houston, B.Sc. 01-09-2020

<https://positivepsychology.com/hope-therapy/>

Letter from the Executive Director

We enter the season of summer with thoughts of brighter days ahead. The suffering and uncertainty of the past year has made it difficult to trust the future, but, somehow, we have hope.

Haven is taking incremental steps to re-open as our volunteers begin to come in to answer the phones again for the first time in over a year. It seems good to be back to a more normal routine.

Grief requires a different level of hope and resilience. It is a unique experience unto itself and should be valued as such. It requires self-compassion and patience. The concept of hope in the midst of the trauma and pain of grief is often hard to see. In this edition of the newsletter we explore the idea that hope can help bring us through the challenges of grief, and, also, give us perspective on moving forward.

Hope can be the choice that makes all the difference.

Jill Bellacicco





Hope is the Companion that Helps Us Believe in Tomorrow

by Renee Nickell

I was about seven days into our state's stay-at-home orders for COVID-19, when I awoke from a night's dream. It went something like this: It was dusk at the high school my brother and I attended. The parking lot was packed with cars. My parents and I had wondered where my brother, Sam, had gone. It's one of those weird dreams where you are your current age in the dream, but you are also 16 again. I began searching for cars until I stumbled upon his. He wasn't there. I pulled out my phone to text him and as I scrolled through my texts, I realized there were no recent texts from him.

I then went into my contacts and scrolled. There was no Sam. Maybe it's under another name. Sammy, brother, bro. Nothing. The beat of my heart was on time like a drum, faster and faster. Where was my brother? I became frantic, grabbing random strangers' arms, turning them toward me. I was confused as to why my brother was nowhere to be found, no evidence of him in my contacts and I even doubted he had even existed. It had turned from dusk to complete darkness as every car was leaving until the only car left was his. And I was standing there — alone. I understand it is no coincidence I had a dream like this during this time of isolation when feeling alone is an understatement. I hadn't felt that alone since the first two years after his death. We are approaching nine years — how can that be?

As I sat quietly with my morning coffee, my heart suddenly sank as I began to think of all the military families who are at home — alone. Alone with their thoughts, their memories, the haunting sound of their loved one's laughter. I could feel the worry grow inside me for those who are fearful of forgetting. I remember those days, when that was me feeling hopeless in despair and all alone. I thought of the parents who couldn't see their grandchildren or rely on any adult children to comfort them, or the spouse suddenly thrown into schooling children at home, with no one to lean on. The child, afraid perhaps, of losing another parent. A world forced into isolation with so many already dealing with depression and anxiety. Who will be there for them? Maybe suppressed grief began to surface in the loneliness.

I could identify with the sibling. The sibling that hasn't just felt quarantined during a pandemic. But the sibling that has felt the isolation of feeling alone in their grief far longer. The sibling that withdraws a bit more each time someone asks them how their parents or the spouse is doing, not even thinking to ask how they are. Bypassed as if their grief was over as quickly as the burial.

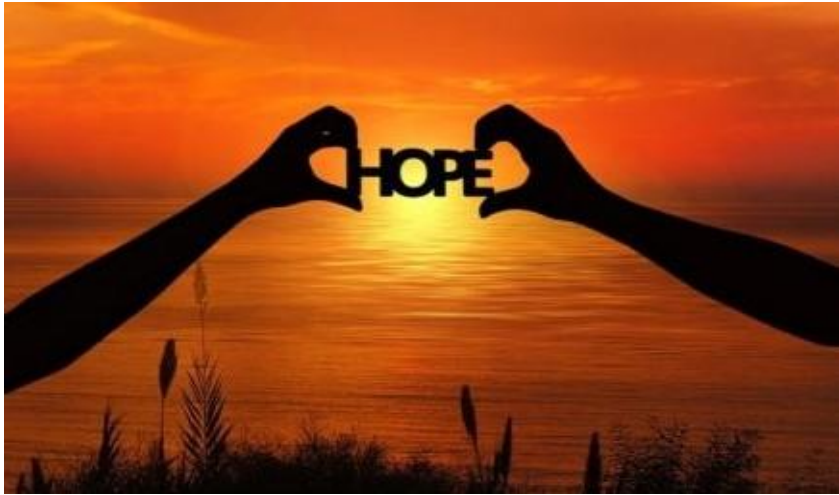
About three years after Sam had been killed, I started writing a book about our life together. I deleted every word. I wasn't ready. I had far too much I still needed to face. At the six-year mark, I started again. This time, I had walked through a tremendous amount of healing and I wanted a book that would tell certain stories, but especially to tell the sibling story: the story of sibling love, unwavering loyalty, and the closest friend one will ever have. I wanted other siblings to know they aren't alone. I wanted to show the parents and spouses what our grief looks like, to bring them a level of understanding. I wanted to show how families aren't perfect, we are all just trying to make it. I wanted to display grace, and love, and forgiveness toward the deepest wounds. Most importantly, I wanted to give others hope. Even in the midst of the deepest and darkest isolation, hope is the spark that can get us through anything.

Hope was the friend that saw me in my darkest time of depression. Hope was the woman who helped me finish the Marine Corps 10K the year after Sam was killed, when I had fallen one mile in — and she encouraged me the entire way to the finish line, sacrificing her placement in the race. Hope was the horse that helped me through the demons of my past and my crushing anxiety. Hope was the pastor who helped me get to Dover to retrieve Sam's remains, when we couldn't afford it. Hope was the TAPS magazine in the mail or the TAPS Resource Kit I had thrown into a corner of my closet right after Sam was killed, finding it at just the right moment. Hope is the middle name I gave my sweet baby girl, born 10 days before Sam's birthday, four years after his death, and reminded me it was okay to live again.

In a time when our country is in recovery mode and most likely, your heart is too, let us reflect on those things or people, or our faith, that continue to guide us and give us hope. Hope to get through the day, the night, the week. Hope to believe again for greater things — for the impossible. Let the love of those we miss be our guide through the troubled waters of life, but also our inspiration that we can and will, get through this life. Together.

Excerpts from <https://www.taps.org/articles/26-2/hope-is-the-companion> 7/10/2020.

“Hope is an essential constituent of human life”
by Benjamin Franklin



Exploring Beliefs About Hope

The objective of this exercise is to begin the process of thinking about hope and what it means to have hope. Write some hope-focused questions on pieces of paper and answer at random. The following are guide questions that can be used at home, with clients or with groups to explore the ritual of hope and evaluate different methods of expressing hope:

- What does it mean to have hope?
- What are the benefits of having hope?
- In your opinion, what does a hopeful person look and sound like?
- How have you used hope in your own life?
- Are there any risks with having hope?
- If a picture on your wall could remind you of hope every morning, what would that picture be?
- What is the smallest possible change that could increase your hope?
- Try to think about some communities or individuals that might benefit from hope?
- Consider different ways of expressing hope within different communities. Do you think some methods would be more effective than others and why?

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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.

4606 Ravensworth Road

Annandale, Virginia 22003

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Summer Schedule

ZOOM
Four-week Widow/Widower/Partner Support Group
Saturday, July 10 – July 31, 2021
11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Call or email Haven to register for the groups.

ZOOM 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 by phone; please call or email us to schedule an appointment.

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