

SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT CLINICIAN TRAINING PROGRAM

Developed in Collaboration with:

The American Association of Suicidology

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

John R. Jordan, Ph.D.- Instructor

Description:

The suicide of a loved one can have a profound and sometimes devastating impact on those left behind, called suicide loss survivors. Bereavement after suicide may entail high levels of disorientation, guilt, regret, anger, shame, and trauma. Survivors sometimes also find their relationships with other people changed, as they struggle with the social stigma often placed on suicide, and the altered family relationships that have been changed by the feelings of guilt, blame, and failure that suicide may engender. Survivors may also be at risk for elevated rates of complicated grief and future suicidality themselves. All of this makes surviving the suicide of a loved one a potentially life-transforming ordeal that requires a level of support that goes beyond traditional grief counseling. Yet very few mental health training programs devote any time to training clinicians about the challenging work of suicide postvention – helping survivors cope with the tragic loss.

This workshop is designed specifically for mental health professionals who provide grief therapy for suicide loss survivors. It will provide a focused overview of the impact of suicide on survivors, and the clinical and support responses that are needed after a suicide occurs. The workshop will include didactic presentation, group discussion, case examples from the presenter's practice, and video clips from grief therapy sessions. Topics to be covered will include:

1. Research about who is a survivor and the risks to their own mental health and well-being that survivors may face
2. The psychological impact of suicide on survivors and common themes in the bereavement of survivors
3. What research with survivors tells us is needed to help with healing
4. The tasks of loss integration and recovery for survivors
5. Postvention options for survivors
6. Principles of postvention after client suicide
7. Principles of longer term clinical work with survivors
8. Examples of specific clinical techniques that can be of use in grief therapy with survivors

Educational Goals:

At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Offer a working definition of a suicide survivor
2. Identify at least five common themes in the impact of suicide on survivors
3. List tasks of psychological re-integration after suicide
4. Describe several options for intervention with survivors
5. Describe three categories of clinical technique with survivors.

Agenda

- I. Introduction – 9:00 AM
- II. Suicide Survivors: Who Are They?
 - A. Who is a survivor?
 - B. Are survivors at risk?
- III. Break – 10:30 AM
- IV. Understanding the Impact of Suicide Loss – 10:45 AM – 12:15 PM
 - A. Foundational concepts in thanatology (the study of death and bereavement)
 - B. Common themes in suicide bereavement
 - C. Post-traumatic growth after suicide
- V. Lunch – 12:15 PM – 1:00 PM
- VI. What Can We Do to Help Survivors? – 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM
 - A. Research on survivor needs
 - B. The psychological tasks of loss integration and goals of postvention
 - C. Postvention options for intervention
- VII. Break – 2:30 PM
- VIII. Grief Therapy with Survivors – 2:45 PM – 4:15 PM
 - A. A general framework for understanding the roles played by the grief therapist
 - B. Specific techniques that may be of help in work with survivors
 - C. Summary: Guidelines for clinical work with survivors
- IX. Wrap-Up – 4:15 – 4:45 PM

Biography: John R. Jordan, Ph.D., FT

John (Jack) Jordan is a licensed psychologist in private practice in Pawtucket, RI, U.S.A., where he specializes in working with loss and bereavement. He was also the Founder and the Director until 2007 of the Family Loss Project, a research and clinical practice providing services for bereaved families. He has specialized in work with survivors of suicide and other losses for more than 35 years. As a Fellow in Thanatology from the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC), Jack maintains an active practice in grief counseling for individuals and couples. He has run support groups for bereaved parents, young widows & widowers, and suicide survivors, with the latter running for over 13 years.

Jack is the Clinical Consultant for Grief Support Services of the Samaritans in Boston, where he is helping to develop innovative outreach and support programs for suicide survivors. In 2011, Jack was the co-recipient of the Leaders in Suicide Prevention Award from the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention for his work with the Grief Support Services at the Samaritans. Jack is also the Professional Advisor to the Loss and Bereavement Council of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). He is co-chair of the Survivors of Suicide Loss Task Force of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, where he is helping to write new national guidelines for suicide postvention in the United States. In 2006 Jack was invited to become a member of the International Workgroup on Death, Dying, and Bereavement, and was the recipient of the ADEC 2006 Research Recognition Award. Jack has also been involved in several research projects on the needs of people grieving after a suicide, and in 2004 received research funding from AFSP.

For over 30 years, Jack has provided training nationally and internationally for therapists, healthcare professionals, and clergy through the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and as an independent speaker. He has also helped to organize and lead dozens of healing workshops for suicide survivors. Jack has published over 50 clinical and research articles, chapters, and full books in the areas of bereavement after suicide, support group models, the integration of research and practice in thanatology, and loss in family and larger social systems. He has published in professional journals such as *Omega*, *Death Studies*, *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, *Psychiatric Annals*, *Crisis*, *Grief Matters*, and *Family Process*. He is the co-author, with Bob Baugher, of *After Suicide Loss: Coping with Your Grief, 2nd Edition*, a self-published book on suicide bereavement for survivors and their friends and family. He is the co-editor, with John McIntosh, of the book *Grief After Suicide: Coping with the Consequences and Caring for the Survivors* (Routledge, 2011), a professional book on the impact of suicide and interventions to help suicide survivors. He is also the co-author with William Feigelman, John McIntosh, and Beverly Feigelman, of *Devastating Losses: How Parents Cope With the Death of a Child to Suicide or Drugs* (Springer, 2012), a book on the results of the largest study ever conducted of bereaved parents who have lost a child to suicide, drug overdose, accident, and natural causes. He is also the co-editor of the newly released *Attachment Informed Grief Therapy – The Clinician’s Guide to Foundations and Applications* (Routledge, 2016).