

## This Issue

|                                             |      |
|---------------------------------------------|------|
| The Healing Power of<br>Compassion .....    | 1, 4 |
| Memorial Quilts .....                       | 2    |
| From the Desk of .....                      | 3    |
| Navigating Life<br>After Sibling Loss ..... | 5    |
| Announcements .....                         | 6    |
| LOSS Support<br>Group Update .....          | 8, 9 |
| Mention My Name .....                       | 10   |
| Obelisk Dedication Fund .....               | 11   |



**Loving  
Outreach  
to Survivors  
of Suicide**

**The LOSS Program**  
Loving Outreach  
to Survivors of Suicide

Catholic Charities of the  
Archdiocese of Chicago  
721 North LaSalle Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60654  
(312) 655-7283  
[catholiccharities.net/loss](http://catholiccharities.net/loss)

## The Healing Power of Compassion

*Reeny Linstrom*

When my daughter, Cali, died by suicide in June of 2018, an acquaintance recommended the LOSS program. I am so grateful to her for connecting me with LOSS because this program has been the cornerstone in my grief healing journey.

Counseling with Father Rubey at LOSS was healing for myself and my family. I came to him at a time when it felt like a bomb had gone off in my family. His compassionate listening and wisdom were a life raft to me during what was the worst storm of my life.

In our sessions, he often spoke about the LOSS meetings and how they are helpful for “suicide survivors” — a group I never wanted to be part of. The meetings sounded depressing and frankly, I never thought I would attend one. But one evening, my husband and I decided to give a meeting a try, and we attended the 2nd Monday Open Meeting at Catholic Charities. Since it was an “open meeting,” we met others who had lost children to suicide, but also those who experienced other relationship losses. Members talked about the impact of losing a partner, a sibling, a parent, a child, or a friend. At the

meeting, I remember being touched by how much love was in the room. It was so clear that each group member loved the person they lost and would have done anything to help save them. Their suffering was remarkably similar to my suffering.

In the early days of attending meetings, I was struggling mightily with guilt, shame, blame, and wishing I could have done things differently to save my daughter. At LOSS, I met many who were struggling with those same demons. I found myself wanting to comfort them — tell them they were not to blame; they did all they could to help their loved one. I felt so much compassion toward every person I met. Yet, I was struggling with the same issues and could not find a way to feel compassion for myself.

Some online dictionaries define compassion as “sympathetic pity and concern for the suffering or misfortunes of others.” I do not like this definition. The word pity is not the right word! The word “Compassion” comes from the Latin “Compati” which means “suffer with.” Someone’s heartbreak becomes your heartbreak; another’s suffering becomes your suffering. This is what I felt at LOSS.

# OBELISK

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Catholic Charities partners with mission-driven people and organizations across Cook and Lake Counties to witness a message of mercy and hope to a world in need. We are called to serve and accompany anyone, regardless of their faith, gender, race, or ethnicity.

@ccofchicago



## Memorial Squares *and* Lifekeeper Quilts

Over the decades, LOSS members have created quilt squares that have been sewn into 24 memorial quilts. In each issue, we print the names of those who are memorialized on two of the LOSS Lifekeeper Quilts. We also display quilts at LOSS special events, including the Blossoms of Hope Brunch in April and the Evening of Remembrance in November. We encourage LOSS members to consider creating a quilt square.

We are displaying Lifekeeper Quilts in the St. Louise de Marillac Chapel at the Catholic Charities central office at 721 N. LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL 60654.

### Currently on Display at Catholic Charities: Quilt #10

|                          |          |          |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| Brenda Allred            | 2/26/64  | 4/1/97   |
| Billy Budnick            | 10/6/79  | 10/20/95 |
| G.R.T.                   | 8/1/62   | 8/3/98   |
| Paul Kammholz            | 2/21/56  | 5/21/98  |
| Nanette Marie Kessenich  | 12/16/55 | 7/3/90   |
| Steve P. Limbers         | 6/23/97  |          |
| Monica Lynch             | 1960     | 1993     |
| Steven Merena            | 5/3/39   | 10/4/95  |
| Bonnie Metnick Rubin     | 11/2/49  | 12/17/91 |
| Gayle M. Neuzil          | 1956     | 1995     |
| Casi Roach               | 1976     | 1996     |
| Robert                   | 2/13/74  | 6/20/96  |
| Ricky Scott              | 10/2/65  | 6/25/85  |
| Todd Allen Charles Trost | 7/25/60  | 10/9/93  |
| Patrick Uselmann         | 4/21/69  | 10/6/90  |
| Joe Westphal             | 12/13/62 | 1/4/97   |
| Paul Michael Wood        | 2/8/69   | 8/20/93  |

### Quilt #22

|                            |            |            |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|
| Daniel Baldonieri          | 01/02/1959 | 05/14/2009 |
| Jonathan Paul (Jon) Gettle | 02/21/1988 | 04/16/2002 |
| Patrick Ryan               | 12/09/1982 | 10/07/2007 |
| Mary Catherine Poker       | 11/25/1967 | 04/01/2009 |
| Michael Madry              | 03/31/1978 | 12/14/2007 |
| Elmer Edburg               | 04/24/1959 | 11/15/2001 |
| Mark W. Holt               | 09/27/1962 | 08/07/2006 |
| David Moscinski            | 04/28/1961 | 05/16/1995 |
| Frank Steponaitis          | 01/05/1956 | 12/11/2011 |
| Denise S. Linn             | 1975       | 03/18/1993 |
| Jahir A.                   | 12/19/1993 | 04/08/2016 |
| Lawrence Joseph Dougherty  | 05/08/1958 | 02/05/2014 |
| Adam Sinclair Hill         | 10/02/1978 | 02/04/2006 |
| James R. Valus             | 01/04/1955 | 11/24/1999 |
| Fritz Kahle                | 06/24/1977 | 06/10/2005 |
| Kevin Michael Jennings     | 10/19/1979 | 06/24/2016 |
| Jonathan M. English        | 06/19/1989 | 12/09/2012 |

### Quilt Square Guidelines

Cut a piece of material (heavy cotton materials suggested) to a 12" X 12" square. You can be as creative as you like (many people add pictures and messages). Leave 1" X 1" along the sides so the squares can be sewn together. When finished, mail your quilt square to: LOSS Quilt Project, c/o Catholic Charities, 721 N. LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL 60654.

## *From the Desk of*

### **Cynthia Waderlow, MSE, LCSW**

No need to speculate on whether some level of disruption and turmoil characterizes almost everyone's life at this time. I am referring to the political atmosphere in the U.S. and around the world, touching the lived experience of people trying to keep things normal. And for those who are grieving the deaths of children and others close to them, the turmoil is layered in heartbreak, and normal is nowhere. I'm noticing pain everywhere, and yet, we respond to greetings with customary responses along the lines of "Doing OK, how are you?" Truly, so many of us are not doing OK. Pain is everywhere.

The first years of suicide loss are so painful and disorienting that ordinary joy and contentment may not be accessible. Survival is a necessary word to describe living through a loss that destroys all that has been meaningful, and our habits of seeking comfort may no longer be effective. As a therapist, I'm very aware that suicide loss survivors have a different

perspective on their capacity to experience momentary relief from the pain of grief, and suggesting a practice for it may come off as absurd. Nonetheless, seeking moments of peace can be worth looking into.

The person who is engulfed in pain defends with anger, blame toward oneself or another, questioning or despair. It is part of the sense-making process. But the heart of pain is always just about the loss of what has been loved and our longing for it, and we can practice accessing that still place of grief. This core of grief is a place of profound depth, among the most spiritual states we can experience.

Accessing it is not easy. But for a few minutes, we can use self-direction to drop the defenses and allow the love and longing to be entered. Each of us must recognize the pain, the love and longing at the core, and quietly enter it, embrace it, leaving the resistance behind for a moment. This is true of all loss and pain, whether death, change, or disappointment. It often

produces tears, very painful, but is a response of loving expression and openness to our experience. It requires courage, but also, a relaxing in to just the love and longing. Other thoughts will try to intrude, but in this instance, we will just notice them, choose not to engage, and return to our deep sense of love and longing for the person who died. When we are only with the heart of the grief, we may notice a sense of acceptance or peace, even momentary. The resistance has quieted. This self-directed grief work does require practice, but no need for perfection. We are just looking in to the love and longing.

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Survival is a necessary word to describe living through a loss that destroys all that has been meaningful, and our habits of seeking comfort may no longer be effective.

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## *The LOSS Evening of Remembrance Service*

**Monday, November 3, 2025**

St. John of the Cross  
5005 Wolf Road, Western Springs, Illinois

Service begins at 6:30 p.m.

*Brief reception to follow*

**We invite all LOSS members, children and adults, to join us for a family-friendly interfaith service to remember loved ones who died by suicide. Attendees are invited to bring a photo of their loved one for our memorial display.**

**For information about grief support through Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide, call (312) 655-7283 or email [loss@catholiccharities.net](mailto:loss@catholiccharities.net)**



## The Healing Power of Compassion | continued from page 1

Compassion is a quality held high in all religious traditions. In Christianity, Jesus demonstrated compassion by healing the sick and feeding the poor. In Islam, compassion or “rahmah” extends to all of creation including humans, animals and the environment. In the Yoga tradition, compassion is emphasized through a key principle called “Ahimsa” or non-harming. It is about extending compassion, empathy and kindness FIRST to yourself and then toward all other beings.

Because of the trauma of losing my daughter, for a time, I was not able to feel compassion for myself. But by “suffering with” and having compassion for others at LOSS, I was slowly able to kindle compassion toward myself.

Once I was able to feel self-compassion and treat myself with the same kindness and understanding that I would offer to others, I started to heal. I still grieve and miss my dear Cali every day, but by practicing self-compassion, I am healthier, healing, and finding joy in my everyday life again.

I have found meditation to be a wonderful way to continue to cultivate compassion for myself and others.

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Someone’s heartbreak becomes your heartbreak; another’s suffering becomes your suffering. This is what I felt at LOSS.

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Consider searching the guided meditation of Jon Kabat-Zinn on YouTube.

*Reeny lost her daughter, Cali, to suicide in 2018. She and her husband, Jeff, have been active with LOSS ever since, attending meetings and now serving as group facilitators. Reeny is a lifelong yoga practitioner and instructor. In 2022, she completed training in Trauma Sensitive Yoga and has found that approach to be healing for survivors of suicide loss. Reeny and Jeff are pictured here with Cali’s dog, July.*



## From the Desk of Cynthia Waderlow, MSE, LCSW | continued from page 3

When I am responding to suffering for myself or another, suffering of any kind, I know that my mind will want to engage with resistance and a sense of injustice. I know that these are normal feelings. But when I can retreat for a few moments to the place of love and longing, I notice quietude, even briefly. And I feel closer with the universal state of suffering that affects all of us at one time or another, and compassion arises.

There are other ways to access the still point of grief. We read a lot about connecting with nature, a symbol for survival. This is another way to embrace our loss experience. Again, it can involve sitting quietly in the outdoors in solitude or with a pet, with awareness that nature and the moment are timeless, offering a continuation of what all of the living have known,

the cycle of life and death. And I often hear about butterflies and birds appearing to send messages to those in grief, reminding them of the loving connections that stay with us.

We can pray for ourselves and our loved one. We long for peace and connection, for blessings for ourselves and our loved one. This is prayer of great sincerity as we ask for relief from the weight of our grief and to renew our connection with the person we long for.

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There are mutual benefits in our spiritual work to relieve suffering with kindness when we can, as compassion allows less separation, more grace, toward others and ourselves.

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As fall comes in, as we continue to live with the contemporary provocations generated daily, I do wish all of us access to peaceful moments and loving connections that will benefit ourselves and each other. There are mutual benefits in our spiritual work to relieve suffering with kindness when we can, as compassion allows less separation, more grace, toward others and ourselves.

**To register for any service  
or LOSS event, email  
[loss@catholiccharities.net](mailto:loss@catholiccharities.net)  
or call (312) 655-7283**

## *Grief and Family Development*

# Navigating Life after Sibling Loss

*Cynthia Waderlow, MSE, LCSW*

Sibships can be our most long lasting intimate relationships involving nurturing, competition, jealousy and deep friendship. Siblings have been known to share secret languages, provide reality checks about family dynamics, offer significant interpretations relative to birth order and assist with reaching developmental milestones. We absorb messages from siblings, for better or worse, about who we are, and allow these messages to carry weight. And we may assign super status to a brother or sister, leaving us to strive to match their abilities or compensate for another sibling's failures. In many ways, we learn about ourselves from our siblings.

Sibling loss, especially from suicide, can impact surviving siblings with subterranean force, at times not surfacing for years, or at least the awareness of the full impact may not be known for years. The loss of a sibling, so closely related to the reality and existence of the other, confronts the surviving brother or sister with existential issues that they may not be able to articulate until they are older, when there is distance or safety in recognizing uncomfortable pieces of the relationship. Loss of a sibling in this way can also delay intense confrontation with grief because of pressure to address developmental tasks or assume emotional caregiving for other siblings or even parents. Becoming fiercely competitive or even angry can be a necessary channel for some bereaved youth until a later time when they are ready to revisit grief more directly.

As a therapist to children surviving any suicide, I know they are usually propelled beyond their readiness to face death, and I hold particular respect for their resilience and the paced, highly individualized, ways they engage with grief while continuing to navigate developmental tasks. When a sibling dies in this way they lose a significant mirror for their own identities. A complex chain of shifts and adjustments in the family system take place, causing one to become an only child, or to assume new roles, not always positive, or to fulfill new expectations. Children and youth who lose a sibling to suicide need time to articulate how their choices and growth were informed by the loss, bearing the unchanging memory of the sibling whose age will always be surpassed, and to form a cohesive narrative of the deceased sibling's life and its impact on them. Following, I offer some vignettes of sibling loss survivors with grief stories that illustrate their instinctive responses to profound losses that informed their development.

My friend, Kristina, lost her twin sister to suicide in Europe when they were 15 years old. Afterward, she showed nothing but resilience, joining in political action, practicing Zen Buddhism, coming to the U.S. and leaving all she knew behind at age 18. Only a sense of vacancy pervaded the apartment where she lived with her parents, and she found no comfort there. It was her goal to get herself to the U.S. In her late twenties, her sister's death, the death of Kristina's "other self," began to dominate her experience as she shared herself in intimate adult relationships. She tried to address her

fatigue and anger with yoga, but it was unfinished grief that was asking for attention. She was able to tell me that her sister's suicide felt like a vacuous disappearance. She was gone and no one tried to look for her. In the aftermath, Kristina no longer slept in the room she had shared with her sister, moving instead to the couch. Her father drank more while her mother lingered as silent and irritable. As she recalls her perspective, the suicide wasn't questioned. It just happened, creating a blunt space, and was not even regarded as mysterious. She now believes that this lack of shared questioning or searching impaired her grief process in the beginning. It was like being "lost in an old, familiar place." Not long after her sister's death, a stove was moved out of their apartment. She has no memory of the replacement, but carrying out the bulky, battered stove with her father seemed to feel like removing the last of her sister. The physical exertion may have opened her to feelings, but what surfaced was sorrow and a sense of being "done." Once she left for the U.S., Kristina did not return home for many years. The metaphor of the stove and the sense of vacancy stayed with her until she directly addressed her grief as an adult by necessity, which eventually allowed her to return to Europe and renew relationships. Her arduous efforts and delayed grief for her twin became her story of survival, that of slipping out of an empty house and into her self-created life in America.

Birth order provides an interesting lens for looking at the impact of sibling loss. A 13-year-old boy was the youngest of five children, all living at home. His kind, magnanimous, high

## Navigating Life after Sibling Loss | continued from page 5

achieving 15-year-old sister took her life while the family slept. He did not go to school the next day, and spent hours in the backyard during the chaos. He knew that something had happened to his sister, but was not sure if she was alive or not. He learned later, that day or the next, that his sister was gone. Years later, we recalled that those hours in the yard, taking in the confusion while apart from others, came to feel like his role and identity related to his family. He struggled inwardly with autonomy and assertion, yet showed amazing discipline and endurance regarding school and jobs and preparation for college. But the metaphor he created was a sense of himself, without a voice to contribute in the early hours of loss, diminished by the suicide of one who had always seen and responded lovingly toward him, and separated from others who had more direct involvement with the initial loss. The youngest, uninformed child built determination to master his goals, his personal work on himself and emerge as a whole, individuated adult, with much of this work inspired by his deceased sister's belief in him.

A 14-year-old girl had been very close to her 17-year-old brother when he ended his life. They were almost fused, I thought at first, but came to learn that she had always seen their differences, and she had been devoted to making his experience of the world a little easier. She had been generous, affirming, and practiced with her own common sense even when he might challenge her with his cynical, purist critiques. But she has grown her creative instincts, shaped by the limits and realities that she must navigate. After his death, she granted her brother his right to "leave" and engaged in a stubborn effort to

maintain her independent thinking. She is prone now to confront conflicts on behalf of her brother, who was sensitive and retreated from conflict. It is not easy for her, or I, to explain the balance with which she implements loyalties, both to her brother and to her individuating self. She constructed anime costumes for a convention they would have attended together, not with her brother's perfectionism, but with her own vision. This was her metaphor. She is engaged in an amazing process of identity formation, selecting art as well as arguments that honor her beloved brother who saw the world darkly and artfully, while developing her own world view, values and aspirations for the future.

A 9-year-old girl lost her brilliant, talented brother to suicide when he was away at college. While she does not lack for her own gifts, this child carries her brother's legacy and shows me what it is like for a younger child sibling to try to fill the shoes of her larger than life, older brother. I see her cultivating a riveting propensity for storytelling, weaving in dynamics of those in her family and school, often with a moral or ethical lesson a little beyond her years. She entertains and fascinates, dances, swims, does well in school. She will do very well with her supportive parents, and years from now, she will remember something of her brother's greatness, and her sense of being small and young and unable to comfort her mother's tears for an irreplaceable loss. Recently, she twirled and danced on a rainy beach, and as a girl who loves rainbows, I think she found her healing metaphor.

Finally, a teen boy with athletic gifts, but without an inclination to put his feelings to words, lost his older brother to suicide. He described his parents

as also not inclined to talk, and they went out to dinner every night because his mom could no longer cook while in the grips of her grief. The boy, now an only child, retreated to his safe place, his practice pool, moving in silence underwater, many laps each day. "What an amazing metaphor for grief work," I told him. Overcoming resistance, gliding in a blue, enclosing substance, measuring his breath and holding image after image of the brother he lost, feeling his lungs close to bursting, then taking a breath. This was his sustaining grief process and a powerful metaphor for healing.

In each of these vignettes, a bereaved sibling is finding his or her own path, identifying metaphors for healing and identity in the absence of the lost sibling. They assess for a new relationship with parents, a new role for themselves without the reflections offered by the sibling who died. The profound loss offers challenges to development, and they will remember the rituals and explorations that moved them through grief toward wholeness. Each of these young people used counseling, but the outcomes are far from one traditional model of resolution. Every story and person is so different. Their experiences, intense personal challenges, were not tidy and without problems. We want to provide support to siblings with the time they need to create their own narrative, implementing unique ways of being with their loss. Even with traumatic injury so often experienced with suicide loss, those who find a way to construct a story, often with meaning and metaphor, emerge as survivors with remarkable personalities in which the lost sibling remains a part of who they become.

## Announcements

### Evening of Remembrance

*Monday, November 3, 2025, 6:30 p.m.  
St. John of the Cross Catholic Church, 5005 Wolf Road,  
Western Springs, Illinois*

Our annual Evening of Remembrance brings survivors together for a service of comforting music and readings to honor those we have lost to suicide, followed by a time of sharing and light refreshments. We hope you will join us. For further information, email [loss@catholiccharities.net](mailto:loss@catholiccharities.net) or call (312) 655-7283.

### International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

*Saturday, November 22, 2025*

The LOSS Program and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Illinois will collaborate to co-host International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day Saturday, November 22, 2025, at 721 N. LaSalle Street in Chicago. This is a special annual event where survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding, and hope through their shared experience. For additional information, contact [loss@catholiccharities.net](mailto:loss@catholiccharities.net).

### LOSS Program 8-Week Groups

LOSS offers 8-week groups on a rolling basis throughout the year. Readings and other resources are provided. Participants are asked to commit to attending all 8 sessions to build and maintain group cohesion. If you would like to join the list for an upcoming 8-week group or want additional information, please contact us at [loss@catholiccharities.net](mailto:loss@catholiccharities.net) or (312) 655-7283.

### Men Are Suicide Survivors (MASS) Men's Group

MASS is for men who have lost a family member or friend to suicide. We offer a confidential setting to talk about your experiences and learn how others have dealt with similar situations. The next meeting is Monday, November 10, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. at Gorton Community Center, 400 E. Illinois Road, Lake Forest, Illinois. To register, contact Bill Teskoski at [w.teskoski@sbcglobal.net](mailto:w.teskoski@sbcglobal.net) or (312) 560-3119.

### At Peace Memorial

*Queen of Heaven Catholic Cemetery & Mausoleums,  
Hillside, Illinois*

A collaboration between Catholic Cemeteries of Chicago and the LOSS program of the Archdiocese of Chicago has resulted in the construction of a first-of-its-kind memorial at Queen of Heaven Catholic Cemetery & Mausoleums that we hope will bring some peace and healing to those who have been impacted by suicide. We are waiting for the arrival of artwork created for the memorial. Once the artwork has been installed, and pending suitable weather, we invite everyone to join us at Queen of Heaven Catholic Cemetery & Mausoleums for a special dedication service.

### STAR Group for First Responder Families

STAR is for family members of police officers and firefighters who have died by suicide. You will be in the company of other first responder families who understand the unique stress faced by your loved one. To receive the zoom link or for more information, contact Alicja Bochenek-Schultz at [abochenek@catholiccharities.net](mailto:abochenek@catholiccharities.net) or (773) 739-4341.

### Writing Group for Newly Bereaved with Sharon Bibro, LCSW

Writing about your grief is an excellent way to process your emotional response to loss. All you need is paper and pencil. We encourage all types of writing: journaling, freestyle, poetry, and any other form you like. This can be a meaningful addition to counseling and other LOSS groups. If you are interested, please contact LOSS at [loss@catholiccharities.net](mailto:loss@catholiccharities.net) or (312) 655-7283.

### Pastoral Support

Father Rubey, and Deacon Jesus Casas, pastoral care liaison for LOSS, are available to say home Masses, perform blessings, offer prayers and provide counsel around questions of faith following a suicide loss. Contact [loss@catholiccharities.net](mailto:loss@catholiccharities.net) or call (312) 655-7283 to learn more.

# LOSS Support Group Update

Our in-person groups are held in the following locations: **Downtown Chicago** (721 N. LaSalle Street, 7th Floor), **Marist High School in Chicago** (4200 W. 115th Street), **St. Joseph’s Church in Wilmette** (1747 Lake Avenue), **St. Francis de Sales Church in Lake Zurich** (135 South Buesching Road), **St. Joan of Arc Church** (820 Division Street, Lisle), **St. John the Evangelist Church Narthex** (10701 Olcott Avenue, St. John, Indiana).

## November 2025 Meetings

### In-Person

- 1st Thursday Group**  
November 6, 2025; 7:00 p.m.  
St. John the Evangelist, St. John, Indiana  
Group meets in Church Narthex  
Facilitators: Steve Costa, Jim and Kris Kazmierczak
- 2nd Monday Group**  
November 10, 2025; 6:00 p.m.  
Downtown Chicago  
Clinician: Deborah Major  
Facilitators: Jeanette Scalise, Jeff and Reeny Linstrom
- 3rd Wednesday Group**  
November 19, 2025; 6:00 p.m.  
St. Francis de Sales, Lake Zurich  
Clinician: Sharon Bibro  
Facilitator: Sandy Bourseau and Tish Guinter
- 3rd Thursday Group**  
November 20, 2025; 6:30 p.m.  
St. Joan of Arc, Lisle  
Clinician: Mary Novak  
Facilitators: Kathleen Sergent and Lance Beigh
- 4th Tuesday Group**  
November 18, 2025<sup>\*\*</sup>; 7:00 p.m.  
**\*\*Holiday schedule**  
Marist High School, Chicago  
Clinician: Michele Nowak  
Facilitator: Barb Murphy
- 4th Sunday Group**  
November 23, 2025; 6:00 p.m.  
St. Joseph’s Church, Wilmette  
Clinician: Laraine Bodnar  
Facilitators: Marion Kahle and Merle Cowin

### Online

- 2nd Tuesday Group**  
November 11, 2025; 7:00 p.m.  
Clinician: Sharon Bibro  
Facilitators: Jim and Tina Kranz
- 3rd Tuesday Group**  
November 18, 2025; 6:00 p.m.  
Clinician: Sharon Bibro  
Facilitators: Cherie Emling and Tish Guinter
- Special Interest**
  - Spousal Loss Group**  
2nd Wednesday  
November 12, 2025; 7:00 p.m.  
Clinician: Cheryl Joseph-Lukz  
Facilitators: Gina Petit and Eileen Hurn
  - Parent Support Group**  
3rd Thursday  
November 20, 2025; 6:30 p.m.  
Clinician: Deborah Major  
Facilitators: Kristen Coe and Lori Grennon
  - Spanish-Speaking Group**  
2nd Tuesday  
November 11, 2025; 6:30 p.m.  
Clinician: Victor Alvarez  
Facilitator: Yolanda DeLeon
  - STAR Group for first responder families**  
1st Tuesday  
November 4, 2025; 6:00 p.m.  
Clinician: Alicja Bochenek-Schultz  
Facilitator: Tish Guinter

## December 2025 Meetings

### In-Person

- 1st Thursday Group**  
December 4, 2025; 7:00 p.m.  
St. John the Evangelist, St. John, Indiana  
Facilitators: Steve Costa, Jim and Kris Kazmierczak
- 2nd Monday Group**  
December 8, 2025; 6:00 p.m.  
Downtown Chicago  
Clinician: Deborah Major  
Facilitators: Kerry Hamill and Kristen Coe
- 4th Tuesday Group**  
December 16, 2025<sup>\*\*</sup>; 7:00 p.m.  
**\*\*Holiday schedule**  
Marist High School, Chicago  
Clinician: Michele Nowak  
Facilitator: Lance Beigh
- 3rd Wednesday Group**  
December 17, 2025; 6:00 p.m.  
St. Francis de Sales, Lake Zurich  
Clinician: Sharon Bibro  
Facilitators: Sandy Bourseau and Tish Guinter
- 3rd Thursday Group**  
December 18, 2025; 6:30 p.m.  
St. Joan of Arc, Lisle  
Clinician: Mary Novak  
Facilitator: Kathleen Sergent
- 4th Sunday Group**  
December 21, 2025<sup>\*\*</sup>; 6:00 p.m.  
**\*\*Holiday schedule**  
St. Joseph’s Church, Wilmette  
Clinician: Laraine Bodnar  
Facilitator: Lori Grennon

### Online

- 2nd Tuesday Group**  
December 9, 2025; 7:00 p.m.  
Clinician: Sharon Bibro  
Facilitators: Jim and Tina Kranz
- 3rd Tuesday Group**  
December 16, 2025; 6:00 p.m.  
Clinician: Laraine Bodnar  
Facilitators: Tish Guinter and Cherie Emling
- Special Interest**
  - Spousal Group**  
2nd Wednesday  
December 10, 2025; 7:00 p.m.  
Clinician: Cheryl Joseph-Lukz  
Facilitators: Eileen Hurn and Gina Petit
  - Spanish-Speaking Group**  
2nd Tuesday  
December 9, 2025; 6:30 p.m.  
Clinician: Victor Alvarez  
Facilitator: Yolanda De Leon
  - Parent Support Group**  
3rd Thursday  
December 18, 2025; 6:30 p.m.  
Clinician: Michele Nowak  
Facilitators: Mark and Mary Edwards
  - STAR Group for first responder families**  
1st Tuesday  
December 2, 2025; 6:00 p.m.  
Clinician: Alicja Bochenek-Schultz  
Facilitator: Tish Guinter

To register for any group or event, call (312) 655-7283 or email [loss@catholiccharities.net](mailto:loss@catholiccharities.net)

## LOSS WEATHER LINE

In case of severe weather, please call the LOSS weather line to ensure that meetings will be held as scheduled.

**(312) 948-7902**

## Upcoming January 2026 Meetings

### In-Person

#### 1st Thursday Group

January 8, 2026; \*\* 7:00 p.m.

#### \*\*Holiday schedule

St. John the Evangelist,  
St. John, Indiana

#### 2nd Monday Group

January 12, 2026; 6:00 p.m.  
Downtown Chicago

#### 3rd Wednesday Group

January 21, 2026; 6:00 p.m.  
St. Francis de Sales,  
Lake Zurich

#### 3rd Thursday Group

January 15, 2026; 6:30 p.m.  
St. Joan of Arc Church, Lisle

#### 4th Tuesday Group

January 27, 2026; 7:00 p.m.  
Marist High School, Chicago

#### 4th Sunday Group

January 25, 2026; 6:00 p.m.  
St. Joseph's Church, Wilmette

### Online

#### 2nd Tuesday Group

January 13, 2026; 7:00 p.m.

#### 3rd Tuesday Group

January 20, 2026; 6:00 p.m.

### Special Interest

#### Spousal Loss Group

2nd Wednesday  
January 14, 2026; 7:00 p.m.

#### Parent Support Group

3rd Thursday  
January 15, 2026; 6:30 p.m.

#### Spanish-Speaking Group

2nd Tuesday  
January 13, 2026; 6:30 p.m.

#### STAR Group for first responder families

1st Tuesday  
January 6, 2026; 6:00 p.m.

## A Prayer for Survivors

—Therese Gump

Lord, I need your help to survive,

A part of me's gone, but I'm still alive.

Let me not be obsessed with "if onlys" and "whys"

Only you know the reason that somebody dies.

I must take time to weep, and smile when I can,  
And not be concerned with the judgments of man.

Can I learn how to numb the everyday pain,

So the hollow inside me will not remain?

May I substitute goals for my feelings of guilt,

And not be ashamed of the life I have built.

Make me believe that the sadness will pass,

That joy will return to my being at last.

Finally, show me the way to reach others like me.

Then I'll know my survival was destined to be.



*The Obelisk publishing fund is  
dedicated to the memory of  
**Randy Kolaczewski***



Mention My Name

Randy Kolaczewski  
11/30/1973—11/13/1999

Almost 26 years since you left us and not a day  
goes by without thinking of you.  
We Love and Miss You more than words can  
say!! Be at peace, dear Son!!  
Mom and Dad

Roy Coates  
12/21/1970—10/29/2002

In Loving Memory from all of your family.

Some nights missing you

—Rosemary Wahtola Trommer

is like the letter that doesn't come,  
the one I would carefully slit open and slowly unfold,  
then hold against my chest for a moment  
before letting my eyes take in the first line,  
the second, the rest, the last,  
the letter that would explain everything  
in language so plain  
it would make my hands shake  
with the truth of it,  
the one that would arrive with a return address  
so I would know where to respond if I dared,  
the handwriting even, familiar, easily read,  
with no pages missing, no passages indecipherable,  
the letter that never once has arrived,  
a letter I know only by its absence.  
And the emptiness itself becomes faithful.  
And the mystery becomes the only signature I trust.

Mention My Name submission form

Survivors need to be able to hear, see, and speak the names of the persons they have lost. To ensure your request is included, please send your submission at least two months before publication. Late submission will automatically be included in the next edition unless otherwise indicated. We always do our best to accommodate your request.

Mail your submission to: LOSS Program Catholic Charities, 721 N. LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL 60654  
(Allow two months for publishing.) A donation of any size is appreciated to defray the cost of printing and postage.

|                   |               |                 |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Name of loved one |               |                 |
| Date of birth     | Date of death | Month requested |
| Requested by      |               | Relationship    |

Share your message below. Please limit to 20 words or less; longer messages may be edited as space is limited.

## Obelisk Dedication Fund

To ensure continued publication, we have established an Obelisk Fund, which enables LOSS members to assist with the expenses of this newsletter. **There are three ways in which to contribute to our fund:**

**1. Dedication of one month's Obelisk:** To dedicate a specific month to your loved one, a family may contribute \$2,560, which will cover the total cost of that month's newsletter. Please send this form back with your donation and the name of your loved one, as well as the month you are requesting. Please add a second month choice as sometimes we have more than one member requesting the same month.

*I would like to contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ in memory of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*For the month of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.*

**2. Postage:** To make a donation to cover one month's postage, we ask that you send a minimum contribution of \$300. There will be a special section for those who contribute to our postage fund, and your loved one's name will also be on the Mention My Name page.

*I would like to contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ to cover one month's postage  
in memory of \_\_\_\_\_.*

**3. Publishing Fund:** To be listed as a donor for our publishing fund, a member may contribute any amount to the Obelisk Publishing Fund and have your name listed as a donor. Your loved one's name will appear on the Mention My Name page as well.

*I would like to contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Obelisk Publishing Fund  
in memory of \_\_\_\_\_.*

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of your loved one: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of death: \_\_\_\_\_ *Note: Please fill out for the Mention My Name page*

☐ Check here if you wish your donation to remain anonymous

Make checks payable to **Catholic Charities LOSS Program**. All donations to the LOSS Program are tax deductible.

Mail to LOSS Program, 721 North LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL 60654



NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
CHICAGO, IL  
PERMIT NO. 7018

LOSS Program/Area 281  
721 N. LaSalle Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60654

POSTMASTER:  
DATED MATERIAL  
PLEASE DO NOT DELAY



represents the support that we gain from meeting with other survivors so that we are not alone on our journey of grief. As we gain strength, the grief tapers off. Our spirits rise and we are able to look up again, to have hope for the future.

granite into place. On the sides of the obelisk, writings were carved into the stone, recording battles and victories of great kings; a permanent testimony to the rulers of Egypt in approximately 1400 B.C.

The LOSS Obelisk contains the writings of survivors and survivor-related issues. This is a record of our struggles, our battle to survive. It

The Obelisk was chosen as a symbol for the LOSS Program to describe the grief process. The symbol came from the definition of an obelisk: a solid upright four-sided pillar gradually tapering as it rises.

The original obelisks were erected in Egypt. The monuments were constructed by many people working together to pull a single block of

Why the Obelisk?