



Behavioral Health Department

November, 2023 NEWSLETTER



November 18th is International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

This day is celebrated by being an occasion to bring suicide loss survivors together, to share with one another experiences of healing, hope, and grief after losing a loved one due to suicide.

How can I observe and support International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day?

Not only is this day to remember those loss to suicide, but it's a day that promotes suicide prevention, as suicide survivors can learn of resources to help with healing and support. You can partake in International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day by:

- Seeking out resource material on suicide prevention to educate yourself and others on the topic
- Attending a suicide prevention march and other such events meant to bring about public attention to suicide
- Finding an organization to donate to, like the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- Spending time reminiscing about a loved one lost to suicide and doing something to honor their memory
- Going to a suicide loss support group
- Practicing self-care to maintain both your physical health and mental health

Grief after experiencing a loss

People who have loss a loved one to suicide may find themselves developing symptoms of grief, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and a myriad of other mental health conditions. Understanding grief and the many different ways it can manifest in someone can play a crucial role in the healing process.

The five stages of grief is a model that many consider to be outdated, since grief is an individual experience and varies even for people who are processing the same kind of loss. That being said, there are emotions tied to the grieving process, that are encountered by many people but the order, severity, and duration of each are all aspects that are highly individualized, these emotions include:

- Shock
- Denial
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Anger
- Shame and guilt
- Acceptance

Remember, there's no "right" way to grieve over a loss. The only recommendation is that people should be careful not to rely on unhealthy mechanisms to cope that could cause harm to themselves or to others. If you find yourself struggling with grief, you may want to consider reaching out to a mental health professional for help.

Source

"International Survivors Of Suicide Loss Day: Grief, Healing, And Resources". *betterhelp*, 17 July 2023. <https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/current-events/international-survivors-of-suicide-loss-day-grief-healing-and-resources/>. Web. 23 Oct. 2023.



Youth: A Resource Guide for Professionals, Families and Communities

If you or a loved one are experiencing a crisis, or any other problems, contact us at (715) 779-3741 to begin services or to help answer any questions you may have. Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00am -4:30pm

If this is an emergency, call 911, or if you are experiencing a mental health crisis, call the Bayfield County Mental Health Crisis Line 24 hours a day at 1 (866) 317-9362.

CERTIFIED PEER SPECIALIST SERVICES

A Peer Specialist is an individual with lived recovery experience who has been trained and certified to help their peers gain hope and move forward in their own recovery. By sharing experiences, peers bring hope to people in recovery and promote a sense of belonging within the community (SAMSHA)

PEER SUPPORT IS..

- Delivered by individuals who have common lived experiences.
- People with mental health and/or substance use disorders have a unique power to help one another based on shared connection and deep understanding of this experience.
- Peer Specialists offer support, strength, and hope to their peers, which allows for personal growth, wellness, and recovery. (SAMSHA)
- Peer support is ongoing, available, and flexible.
- Peer support enhances other health care services by creating emotional, social and practical assistance necessary for staying healthy and managing. (Peers for Progress)

WHAT SERVICES DO PEER SPECIALISTS PROVIDE?

Peer specialists support their peers both individually and in small groups.

- Help peers create individual service plans based on recovery goals and steps to achieve those goals
- Use recovery-oriented tools to help their peers address challenges
- Assist others to build their own self-directed wellness plans
- Support peers in their decision-making
- Offer a sounding board and a shoulder to lean on...and more!

PROVIDING HOPE

Modeling recovery, engaging, and connecting are just some of the ways peers make a difference in the lives of others. The bond that is essential in peer support means that both the person giving support and the person receiving support benefit from the relationship. (MHA)

SERVICES INCLUDE:

Education and skill- building

- ⇒ Wellness planning
- ⇒ Crisis planning
- ⇒ Self- advocacy skills
- ⇒ Budgeting

Services that help

- ⇒ Identify strengths and use the strengths to reach goals
- ⇒ Identify and overcome barriers to participate in community resources

Connect with resources

- ⇒ Visiting community resources to familiarize
- ⇒ Teaching and modeling skills needed to utilize resources
- ⇒ Wrap around services
- ⇒ Cultural wellness and healing

Building relationships and encouraging community based activities

- ⇒ Employment
- ⇒ Relationships
- ⇒ Physical activity
- ⇒ Self- directed hobbies

Using SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness to guide a holistic approach to recovery, a Certified Peer Specialist will work with you to discuss meaningful goals in one or more of these important dimensions; financial, social, spiritual, occupational, physical, intellectual, and emotional. Each of the dimensions contribute to your overall wellness and individual recovery.

The Health Benefits of Owning a Pet

There are some powerful health benefits a person can experience with owning a pet. In celebration of November being Human-Animal Relationship Awareness Week, which is November 12-18, you could read this article to find out how caring for an animal can help improve one's wellbeing, leading to less bouts of stress, depression, and anxiety; this comes from the website, HelpGuide.org (<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/mood-boosting-power-of-dogs.htm>).

The benefits of pet ownership

Alongside the joy that pet owners feel with having an animal companion in their lives, recent studies have found that there are physical and mental health benefits that humans encounter when they form bonds with animals.

With the passage of time, pets have evolved and have become acutely attuned to humans, being able to differentiate between the wide range of behaviors and emotions that we do. For example, dogs not only understand some of the words we use when speaking to them, but are even better at being able to interpret our feelings based off our tone of voice, body language, and gestures.

Pets, especially dogs and cats, are great animal companions that can help to reduce stress and anxiety, ease feelings of loneliness, encourage physical activity, and even improve the state of a person's cardiovascular health. The companionship of an animal helps children to grow up to be more secure and active as adults, as having a pet can add joy and unconditional love to anyone's life.

Pets can improve your health

People who have pets, often go on to experience better health benefits compared to people with no pets; however, a pet isn't always just a dog or cat. Rabbits may be an ideal choice if you have allergies to other animals and are an easier furry friend to keep if you have limited space. Birds are a great option for older adults, as they are social animals and interacting with birds can help to sharpen one's mind. If you are looking for more pet considerations, maybe you'd be interested in a reptile like a snake or a lizard. Even having fish in an aquarium can be beneficial for you, since watching them swim can relax you by reducing muscle tension and lowering your pulse rate.

Studies have found that:

- Pet owners are less likely to struggle with depression than those without pets.
- People who have pets have lower blood pressure when they experience stressful situations in comparison to those without pets.
- Playing with a pet helps a person produce more serotonin and dopamine in their body, which can help them to feel more calm and relaxed.
- Pet owners have lower levels of triglyceride and cholesterol (heart disease indicators) than those without pets.
- Heart attack patients who have pets end up surviving longer than those without.
- Pet owners who are age 65 and older make 30 percent less doctor visits in comparison to those without pets.

One reason that owning a pet can result in these therapeutic effects is that they fulfill a need for touch that's deeply ingrained in all humans. Interacting with pets has even led to long-term changes for hardened criminals in prison, as there's many prison programs that involve inmates training dogs and for them, it's often the first time they are experiencing mutual affection. Touching a loving animal by hugging or petting it can help to calm and soothe you when you're feeling stressed or anxious. By welcoming a pet into your family, not only does this help improve one's mood, but it can also ease feelings of loneliness. When it comes to pets, most dogs require physical activity which often involves the owner partaking in healthy exercise for the sake of the dog; however, exercise can yield benefits like significantly boosting a person's mood and helping with depression.

Pets can improve your lifestyle

Making a commitment to adopt healthy lifestyle changes can help to alleviate the symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, bipolar disorder, and PTSD.

The kind of healthy lifestyle changes a person could experience from taking care of a pet includes:

- **Increasing time spent exercising.** Going out for a walk, hike, or run with your dog is a fun and simple way that you could begin incorporating healthy exercise into your daily routine. Dog owners who engage in these activities with their pets are more likely to meet daily exercise requirements and the dog greatly benefits from exercising every day as well. Exercise will also help you to strengthen the connection you have with your animal, make training the dog much more manageable, and keep your pet healthy and active.
- **Receiving companionship.** The effects of companionship can help to combat illnesses and add years to your lifespan, while isolation and loneliness can lead to depression. Being a pet owner gives you the satisfaction of feeling that you are needed and wanted, and can distract you from your problems, especially if you happen to live alone. It's not uncommon for dog and cat owners to talk to their pets about the troubles they're facing, in order to sort out and try to resolve their issues. And coming home each night to a dog's wagging tail or a purring cat is a surefire way to defeat loneliness.

- **Helping you to meet and interact with new people.** Pets are a social magnet, helping their owners to start conversations and develop new friendships. When dog owners run into each other outdoors, this type of situation could lead to a friendly talk between the individuals. There's also pet stores, club organizations, and training classes that pet owners could go to, in order to meet new people.
- **Reducing feelings of anxiety.** Having a pet as a companion can provide comfort, decrease levels of anxiety, and foster development of self-confidence for people who are overwhelmed by the world and all the things going on in their life. Since pets live in the moment—they aren't concerned about what happened yesterday or what will happen tomorrow—they can help you to start being more mindful and appreciate living in the present.
- **Encourage you to incorporate more structure and routine into your life.** Pets, especially dogs, are kept healthy and happy by following a regular feeding and exercise schedule each day. Developing a consistent schedule of expectations to be performed every single day helps to keep not only the animal balanced and relaxed, but the pet owner as well. Even if you are feeling depressed, anxious, or stressed, your pet is a consistent presence in your life and relies on you to perform daily routines, in order to care for them.
- **Using your pet for sensory stress relief.** A healthy way to quickly help you cope with stress is with touch. Petting or holding an animal is something you could do to lower your blood pressure and feel less stressed.

The decision to own a pet is a major commitment

Despite all the benefits that come with owning a pet, the important thing to remember is that getting a pet isn't a miracle cure that will immediately improve your mental health. Those who benefit from owning a pet are typically individuals who have a love and appreciation for domestic animals, plus they also have the time and energy to ensure the pet is getting the kind of care and attention, it needs to be happy and healthy. If you don't consider yourself an "animal person," you aren't going to experience any health benefits or see improvements in your life with pet ownership.

Even if you have a love for animals, it's important to understand the commitment and dedication involved with caring for a pet. As a pet owner, you'll be responsible for the animal for however long its lifespan lasts for—dogs, for example, can live up to 10 to 15 years. After having a pet through its lifetime, you'll then go on to experience grief and mourning, as you adjust to no longer having your companion around anymore.

Finding the perfect pet

If you are open to the idea of owning a pet, congratulations: this decision is one that will introduce you to a new relationship that's both unique and rewarding. While pets tend to make people happier, more resilient, and feel more secure in comparison to those without pets, it's important when picking a pet to choose based off what will best suit your preferences and lifestyle.

Consider talking to others you share your household with to determine what qualities should be sought when picking a pet and which ones should be avoided.

Below are some lifestyle considerations that could influence the kind of pet you get:

- **Little physical activity.** If you spend most of your free time at home, consider choosing a pet that enjoys leisure and would be satisfied staying in one place. You could get a cat or rabbit to cuddle up with, adopt an older dog that you could take on leisurely walks, watch fish in an aquarium, or listen to a bird sing and whistle.
- **High physical activity.** If you enjoy being active and spend a lot of time outside, either walking or running, an energetic dog might be the perfect partner for you.
- Young children or the elderly present in household. Families who have young children or elderly living with them need to take into consideration factors that could overwhelm these individuals like the pet's size and energy level. Puppies and kittens are very active, easily wearing out those who don't have a lot of energy but are also delicate and can't be handled roughly. Large or rambunctious dogs should be avoided as they could easily injure or knock over either a small child or an older adult.
- **Already having pets in the household.** It's important you consider the happiness of your current pet and if they can easily adjust to sharing their home with a new animal. While some animals love having a new friend to play with, not all animals are open to a new pet joining the family. Pets who were given all your attention beforehand may resent having to share you.
- **Environment.** If it's important to you to have a tidy home without animal hair sticking to surfaces, dirt being dragged in, or stains from "accidents," then a curious dog or long-haired cat are probably choices you should forgo. Instead you should look at pets that are confined to their living quarters, this can include fish, birds, hamsters, or reptiles.
- **Landscaping preservation.** Certain pets will cause your landscaping to deteriorate. With dogs they may be tempted to dig holes when outside on the lawn, and dog urine can result in yellow patches.
- **Time person is willing to commit.** Caring for a pet is a long-term commitment that lasts the animal's lifetime. This can be 10, 15, or 20 years for a dog or cat, while a bird can live up to 30 years or longer. Adopting a senior dog or cat from an animal shelter or rescue organization is always another option to consider, as you'd be giving a deserving animal a chance to live out its remaining years in a loving home.

Ultimately you should pick a pet that will fit best with your lifestyle and that you can take care of. If you are having doubts about a larger animal, begin small by getting a fish or a caged pet like a bird or hamster. If this goes well, you can always get a bigger pet later on.

Drowsy Driving

Being alert when you drive will protect yourself and others who are on the road. In celebration of November being Drowsy Driving Prevention Week, which is November 5-11, here are the risks that can result from drowsy driving and tips, so you don't find yourself driving in this condition; the information below comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/features/drowsy-driving.html>).

Drowsy driving is the act of a person driving while sleepy. This is usually due to not getting enough sleep, but other causes are because of untreated sleep disorders or shift work (working sometime outside of the usual 9 to 5 routine). Use of prescription and over-the-counter medications can lead to drowsiness, and mixing alcohol with sleepiness is a combination that can significantly impair a person's motor and cognitive skills.

It's impossible to know the exact moment your body will surrender and be overcome by sleep. Finding yourself asleep in front of the wheel is undoubtedly dangerous, but even if you don't succumb to your sleepiness, being sleepy will affect your ability to drive safely.

Drowsiness:

- prevents you from being able to focus your full attention on the road
- slows your reaction time if you encounter a situation where you need to brake or steer suddenly
- affects your ability to think clearly and make good decisions

Which individuals are at the greatest risk of being drowsy drivers?

- Teens and young adults
- Drivers who spend time on the road between midnight and 6 AM; another time to be wary of is the late afternoon
- Drivers who don't get a sufficient amount of sleep
- Commercial truck drivers
- Drivers whose work schedule involves them working the night shift or long shifts
- Drivers who have untreated sleep disorders—for example, sleep apnea, where a person will repeatedly stop and start breathing multiple times in their sleep
- Drivers who take medications where drowsiness is a side effect

Warning signs of drowsy driving

- Constantly yawning or blinking
- Difficulty remembering the last few miles driven
- Passing an exit that you need turn on
- Drifting between lanes
- Hitting a rumble strip either in the center of the roadway or along the shoulder

If you find yourself exhibiting any of these warning signs, turn off the road to rest or let someone else take your place as the driver. Trying to make yourself more alert by turning up the volume on the radio or rolling down a window, isn't an effective way for you to deter sleepiness.

Ways to prevent drowsy driving

- Get an adequate amount of sleep each night! The recommended amount of sleep that most adults should aim for is at least 7 hours, teens on the other hand, need at least 8 hours.
- Start and maintain good sleeping habits, such as having a regular bedtime routine.
- If you notice you have symptoms commonly seen in sleep disorders like snoring or feeling sleepy during the daytime, schedule an appointment with your doctor to talk about treatment options.
- Be careful not to take medicines that make you sleepy before driving. Check your medicine labels to make sure drowsiness isn't a side effect or you can talk to your pharmacist about any concerns you may have.
- Avoid drinking alcohol. Alcohol can impair your driving skills and increase drowsiness.

Dial 988

If you are facing a suicidal crisis or are in emotional distress, dial 988 to contact the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The lifeline will connect you to a local crisis center, where you'll talk to a crisis counselor who can provide emotional support and can help find crisis resources for you as well. This lifeline offers free, confidential support—24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**NEW 24/7, FREE, AND CONFIDENTIAL
SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE**



9-8-8

OR VISIT 988lifeline.org TO CHAT



-BOREDOM- *Name it to Tame it*



If you have ever seen the movie, "Fantastic Mr. Fox" you probably know what "boredom" is. The main character, Mr. Fox is shown at the beginning of this movie to be a poultry thief, but upon being caught in a farmer's trap and being told by his wife that she's pregnant, he's urged to quit his job for something safer if they make it out of the situation alive. Luckily they do and Mr. Fox switches his occupation to being a newspaper columnist instead. However, 2 human years (12 fox years) later, Mr. Fox becomes bored of his mundane, safe job and yearns for the excitement of his old job.

Up to this point in the story, Mr. Fox kept the promise to his wife to stop stealing poultry, in order to protect their family from farmers in the area. However, Mr. Fox ultimately does end up breaking that promise, so he could put a stop to his boredom and relive his glory days of pulling off a heist without being caught. At first, Mr. Fox promised himself that he'd only steal one more time and never again; however, after it goes off without a hitch, he sneaks out each night to continue stealing. The farmers eventually come to realize what is happening and agree to team up, so they could get rid of Mr. Fox and put a stop to their livestock being stolen. The lesson that one can learn from "Fantastic Mr. Fox" is that boredom shouldn't be addressed by turning to something dangerous that could put you or others in harm's way.

To learn more about boredom, including how to overcome boredom and the effect that boredom can have on mental health, visit the links below:

<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/boost-your-brain-with-boredom>

And

<https://mind.help/topic/boredom/>