Greetings Air Force Families,

It is time for snow, at least for some of us. The holiday season is upon us, and we are entering a new year. We have faith that you will enter the new year with greater peace of mind and heart. Hopefully you are utilizing your support network to connect with other family members who can relate to your loss, as well as serving as an extension of each others’ support system.

Your Winter 2011 Newsletter will address winter blues and ways to cope with it, how to maintain safety during the winter months, ways to stay active in the cold, and how to cope with being without your loved one over the holiday season. Cold, gloomy weather has a way of bringing our spirits down. This, on top of the grief you are already experiencing, is not the best combination. Not to mention, some of you will be faced with not having your loved one for the holidays for the first time. Being without someone you love over the holidays is difficult regardless how long it has been. We would like to acknowledge this, and make suggestions about how to better cope under the circumstances.

We would like to thank you for allowing us to continue being a part of your support system. It is truly an honor to be in a position to support the families of our fallen Airmen. We hope the outreach and support we are providing helps ease your journey. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to better support you.

We hope the information provided in this newsletter will help you better understand what you are experiencing and give you a continued foundation for healing.

Air Force Families Forever
“Ensuring that the families of our fallen Airmen are never forgotten by providing immediate and long-term compassionate support.”

Please know that we are not attempting to endorse any company, service or product, nor are we attempting to impose any beliefs on you. We are simply giving you options to explore as you desire.
Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):
Sometimes called “the winter blues,” SAD is a type of depression related to seasonal variations of light. SAD affects half a million people every year between September and April, peaking Dec. – Feb.

Who’s affected by SAD?
People who live in places with long winter nights are at greater risk for SAD. Locations that are rainy or cloudy during the winter months can also contribute.

Prevalence:
- 3 out of 4 SAD sufferers are women
- The average age of onset of SAD is between 18 & 30
- SAD occurs in both the northern and southern hemispheres, but is rare in those living within 30 degrees latitude of the equator
- The severity of SAD depends on a person’s vulnerability to the disorder such as other life stressors, hormones, genetics, etc.
What are the symptoms of SAD?

- Depressed mood: misery, hopelessness, despair, loss of self-esteem
- Anxiety: tension, intolerance to stress
- Lethargy: fatigued, lack of motivation, inability to carry out normal routine
- Sleep problems: desire to oversleep/difficulty staying awake; disturbed sleep/early morning waking
- Loss of interest in usually enjoyable activities
- Overeating: craving starchy and sweet foods
- Social problems: irritability and desire to avoid social contact

Also...
- Poor concentration, indecisiveness
- Recurrent negative thoughts
- Increased alcohol use/smoking
- Weight gain
- Conflicts with other people, intolerance
- Heaviness of arms and legs
- Behavior disturbances (in children)
Let’s fight off the winter blues!!

- Exercise will help maintain your weight, stay healthy, and relieve stress
- Eating healthy will help your mood and energy level
- Adopt healthy habits & hobbies
- Plan something exciting, give yourself something to look forward to
- Do something relaxing – listening to music, meditation, and positive affirmations can help keep depression away
- Embrace the winter: look for cold weather activities
- Get social support through family, friends, co-workers, etc.
- Aim for 7 – 8 hours of sleep each night, don’t oversleep (makes you more tired)
- Set a timer on a light to go on early in the morning to avoid morning gloominess
- Use a dawn simulator (SAD light box) for artificial daylight
WINTER FUN!
COLD WEATHER MONTHS DO NOT HAVE TO BE DRAB!

A few suggested cold weather activities...

ASSEMBLING MODEL CARS

sledding

crocheting/knitting

drawing/painting

playing board games

winter concerts

puzzles

ice skating

interactive video games (Wii/Xbox 360 Kinect)

watching movies

playing

skiing

ice sculpting

ice fishing
Winter Safety Tips

Safety is always important, however there are extra precautions that should be taken throughout the cold weather season...

Winterize your home
• Check heating systems & change filters
• Have a safe, alternative heating source
• Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors (change batteries when time changes)
• Inspect and clean fireplaces and chimneys

Prepare for weather-related emergencies, including power outages
• Stock food that doesn’t require cooking or refrigeration
• Have plenty of potable water on hand
• Have battery-operated lights/flashlights
• Store extra batteries (in a dry place)
• Have a fully-stocked first-aid kit
• Keep extra medicine (be aware of expiration dates)
• Have sand/ice melt for icy walkways
• Keep warm clothing handy, plus extra blankets/sleeping bags

Prepare your vehicle for winter
• Have your vehicle serviced
• Check tire tread
• Check/replace windshield wipers
• Keep fuel level high to avoid ice in gas tank/fuel lines
• Use a winter formula windshield washer
• Keep an emergency kit in vehicle:
  ✓ Blankets
  ✓ Food and water
  ✓ Jumper cables, flares, tire pump (or good spare), bag of sand (for traction)
  ✓ Compass and maps
  ✓ Flashlight w/extra batteries
  ✓ First-aid kit
  ✓ Plastic bags
Being without your loved one for the holidays

Few things are harder than spending the holiday season without a dear one who has been lost to you. Here are a few suggestions on how to cope with loss over the holidays:

~ Scale back on holiday activities if you want to; try not to feel obligated to maintain tradition (maybe consider a new tradition)
~ Say a prayer before the holiday dinner in memory of your loved one
~ Light a candle in honor of your loved one
~ Share fond stories with family and friends about him or her
~ If you live near the cemetery, decorate his/her memorial site
~ Give yourself permission to express your emotions as they come to you
~ Write an unsent letter to your loved one letting him/her know how you are feeling
~ Remember your loved one in prayer at your place of worship
~ Plant a tree in honor of your loved one as an enduring symbol

“May your heart find peace”
“All You Need Is Love” by Judy Gentz (mother of 1st Lt Joel Gentz)

I ran a marathon in my son's memory this fall and my usual post-race routine is to have a massage a couple of days later. The massage therapist I went to I have know for years. She has special skills that I find intriguing. I had heard she saw auras and being a little bit skeptical, had never talked with her about it. However, this year was different. Since my son, 1st Lt Joel Gentz was killed in action on June 9, 2010 I have sought comfort and peace in ways I would have never imagined. ANYTHING, to know my son had not been afraid, had not experienced pain, and was in a better place. So, I went out on a limb and asked Joanne to read my aura. After my usual massage, Joanne spoke. She told me a couple of things that were personal and relevant, then handed me a piece of paper. On it was written, "Joel was with us, and he wants me to tell you this, ‘Love as if your heart has never been broken.’”

After I stopped crying, I thought deeply about this. I have grieved every single day since Joel was killed. I wake thinking of him, and my last thoughts at night are of him. With my heart so consumed with grief, what is left? I have a husband whom I love dearly and two other children who are absolutely amazing and awesome. I have a daughter-in-law who is reeling at being forced to accept her husband's death, the loss of her home on base, the loss of friends who think being a widow is catching, the loss of hopes and dreams. I admit it has been impossible for us to support each other fully. And here was Joel telling me how to do it... Love as if your heart has never been broken. No judgment, no resentment, no looking back, no second guessing... just love.

How fitting for this season of holidays, New Year and new beginnings. How fitting that a 25 year old USAF 1st Lt would teach his Mom about faith, hope and LOVE. Another great man once said, "These things remain: faith, hope and love... the greatest of these is love." (John) I believe it, and now I need to figure out how to LIVE IT. I am sure with the help of my son, I will. And, I hope that those of you who are living with the pain I know, will have the sense that your son or daughter, husband or wife, brother or sister wants you to "Love as if your heart has never been broken." Peace be with you all....
Upcoming TAPS Events

Camp Pendleton Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp
Friday, January 20 2012 - Saturday, January 21 2012
Location: Camp Pendleton, CA

Hawaii Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp
Friday, February 3 2012 - Saturday, February 4 2012
Location: Kaneohe Bay, HI

Widows, Widowers, and Widowed Significant Other’s Retreat
Tuesday, February 21 2012 - Saturday, February 25 2012
Location: Homestead, FL

Parent’s Retreat
Thursday, March 1 2012 - Sunday, March 4 2012
Location: Tampa, FL

TAPS website:  www.taps.org or call the phone number listed above for more detailed information about upcoming events

The US Air Force proudly endorses the TAPS organization
Support Center

Note: These resources provide additional information that may be useful or interesting and are provided consistent with the intended purpose of the Air Force Families Forever Program Newsletter. However, Air Force Families Forever Program cannot attest to the accuracy of information provided by these resources or any other linked resources. Air Force Families Forever Program providing resources does not constitute an endorsement by our program or any of the sponsors of the resources or the information presented.

http://webpages.charter.net/ps4fs/Shawls/
Access the above website if you would like to request a prayer shawl. The prayer shawls are handmade and sent to the families of fallen service men and women.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.
Toll-free: 877-969-0010
PH: 630-990-0010
Website: www.compassionatefriends.org
Local chapters in your area

http://www.americanwidowproject.org/

http://www.journeyofhearts.org/grief/accident2.html

http://www.bereavedparentssusa.org/
Air Force Families Forever
Contact Information:
Sadiqa Moore, Family Support Coordinator,
302-677-2393
sadiqa.moore@us.af.mil

Scholarship Links

• www.afcrossroads.com
• www.military.com
• www.militaryscholar.org
• www.finaid.org
• www.afsahq.org
• www.fastweb.com

References used for newsletter:
www.webmd.com
www.medicinenet.com
www.homesafetycounsil.org
www.txdot.gov
www.grief.com
www.suttervnaandhospice.org
www.mnmha.org

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