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H.O.P.E.

Helping Overcome and Provide Encouragement

Dear Friends,

Legendary actor Michael Caine was asked what fatherly advice he had for his children. Immediately, his mind went back to an encounter with a community theater producer. Caine worked with that producer long before he became a famous actor.

At the time, Caine was in rehearsal, waiting behind a door to come out during a scene in which a couple on stage were having an argument. They started throwing furniture, and a chair lodged in front of the door. Caine's cue to come on stage came but he could not open the door because of the chair. "I can't get in!" he shouted. "The chair's in the way."



Without hesitation, the producer said to Caine: "Use the difficulty!" Confused, Caine asked what he meant by saying "use the difficulty." The producer explained: "Well, if it's a drama, pick up the chair and smash it. If it's a comedy, fall over it."

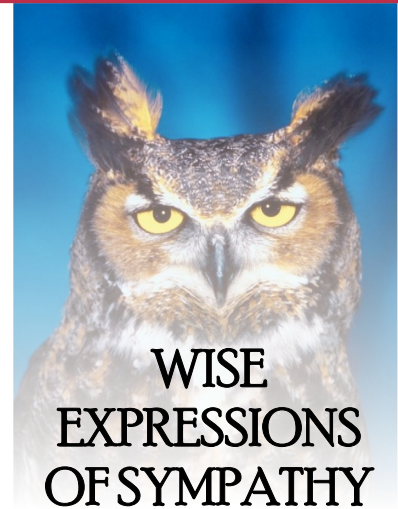
Caine says the point was not lost on him. "This idea stuck in my mind, and I taught it to my children — that any situation in life that's negative, there is something positive you can do with it. Use the difficulty — it's like a motto in our family," he said.

Michael Caine's wisdom can also be used by those who grieve the death of a loved one. Even though the loss is deeply painful, griever have found ways to "use the difficulty."

For example, many say . . .

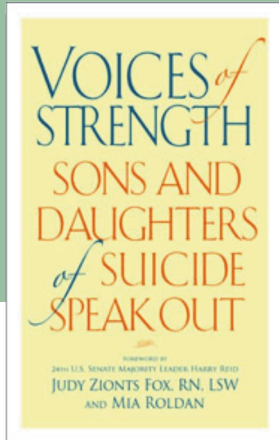
- ◆ They have gained a deeper appreciation for life;
- ◆ They have discovered the healing power of friendship;
- ◆ They have experienced a greater sensitivity and compassion. This was observed by poet William Wordsworth who wrote: "A deep distress has humanized my soul."
- ◆ They have tapped into new strengths and talents previously unidentified.
- ◆ They have moved their lives into new dimensions.

What these griever have in common is this: All "used the difficulty" of grief to their advantage!



Q. *What are the best ways to express sympathy and express condolences when someone you know has lost a loved one. I'm always afraid of sounding like a fool or saying something insensitive.*

A. *That's a great question and easy to answer. The "best" words are simply "I'm sorry about your loss." Other good responses include: "I will keep you in my thoughts /prayers." "I want to hear from you and will listen anytime you wish to call, visit or talk." "I love you and care about you." It's also good to offer practical assistance, remain in touch and send a handwritten note expressing concern, kindness and compassion. A warm embrace or hug is always appropriate.*



LESSONS ABOUT SUICIDE GRIEF FROM SENATOR HARRY REID

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the thought of those who have survived it."

Remaining silent about the loss deepens the pain. "Afterward, my family did not talk about it, and we bore the heavy burden of that tragedy in secret," he writes. Privately he

There are approximately 32,000 suicide deaths every year in the United States. An additional 650,000 people

receive emergency treatment every year after suicide attempts. More people die from suicide than homicide.

Whenever a family experiences suicide loss, a wide range of confusing and conflicting emotions emerge: sadness, anger, guilt, regret, frustration, depression, despair. Senator Harry Reid, the 24th US Senate Majority Leader is one whose life was touched. In the forward to the book *Voices of Strength: Sons and Daughters of Suicide Speak Out*, he shares personal lessons learned about suicide loss.

Suicide is like a haunting fog he says. It was in 1972 when Mr. Reid had just spent a memorable afternoon with legendary boxer Muhammad Ali. Upon returning to his Las Vegas law office he was given an urgent message to call his mother. That was when he learned his father shot himself. "I had never thought of suicide as something that would affect my life. Suicide was something that only happened in other people's families. Suicide is like a haunting fog, having no boundaries and forever lingering in

wondered who was to blame and what he could have done to prevent it. "My embarrassment and shame made a melancholy situation even worse."

Being open about his father's death was therapeutic. After keeping his feelings to himself for many years, Senator Reid found the courage to be open about his father's death. "For the first time, I found myself sharing with my Senate colleagues the fact that my father killed himself." He now speaks publicly about the importance of suicide prevention. Suicide survivors are not alone even though it may feel that way. "I now understand that my father was not alone, and neither was I as a survivor. Every time someone commits suicide, we all lose in many different ways. Someone once said 'The person who completes suicide dies once, but those left behind die a thousand deaths.'"

The veil of secrecy must be lifted and that is most effectively done by suicide survivors. "Together, we must lift the veil of secrecy that for too long has kept us in the dark about the dynamics of suicide and surviving the loss of a loved one. I hope that by sharing my story I have helped give hope to those considering suicide and insight to those coping with the loss of a loved one."

Quick Tips For Grief Recovery

✓ **Give it time.** Don't let others rush you through grief. Avoid those who say "you need to get over it."

✓ **Avoid major changes.** Grief is a time of emotional and mental instability. Unless absolutely necessary, avoid making any major changes in your life.

✓ **Let tears flow.** Crying is a healthy expression of grief. Don't hold them back for the sake of others.

✓ **Take it one day at a time.** Some days will be good while others will be difficult. Go with the flow. Little by little, the good days will begin to outnumber the bad ones.

