



*Groff-High-Eckenroth
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H.O.P.E.

Helping Overcome and Provide Encouragement

Dear Friends,

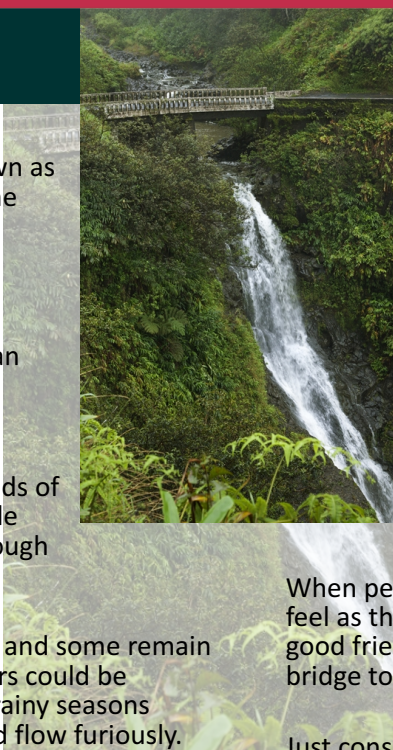
One of the most famous and revered of Tibetan kings is known as Tang Tong Gyalpo. He lived in the fifteenth century.

Unlike other kings who became famous for military conquests, foreign relations, or brutality, Tan Tong is remembered as being a bridge builder.

During his reign he built hundreds of sturdy iron bridges over the wide Himalayan rivers which run through the Tibetan plateaus.

Until those bridges were built – and some remain to this day – crossing those rivers could be treacherous particularly in the rainy seasons when the rivers would swell and flow furiously.

In order to build those bridges, Tang Tong developed technologies which were highly advanced and original. Prior to his time, no one had been able to build long, sturdy iron bridges. To this day, King Tang Tong Gyalpo continues to



be revered and appreciated by the people of Tibet.

His life as a bridge-builder is a beautiful metaphor for the way all of us ought to live our lives.

Would not our communities and cities be more pleasant, more kind, more gentle and more hospitable places if each one of us sought to be someone's bridge over troubled waters?

When people face great personal challenges and feel as though they may drown in them, it is a good friend who appears and becomes their bridge to safety.

Just consider the endless opportunities which come your way, often daily, to be just that kind of friend to another person.

Even though you are grieving a loss, reach out. Help another person. Be someone's bridge over troubled waters.

A LESSON IN GRIEF COMFORTING FROM RABBI ABRAHAM HESCHEL



Rabbi Abraham Heschel

Rabbi Abraham Heschel is regarded as the most important Jewish leader of the 20th century. He was not only a Rabbi but a professor and widely read author. One day he was with a friend when they learned about the death of another Rabbi's sister. Rabbi Heschel insisted that he and his companion leave New York and visit the family members immediately. "We went to the airport, we flew to Boston, got into a cab and went to the house," his friend recalls adding:

"Heschel walked in, he hugged (the mourners), he sat silently for an hour.

He didn't mumble a single cliché, 'How old was she?' What difference does it make? . . . 'I know how you feel.' You don't know how I feel. None of the clichés. He just sat there in silence for an hour. And then he got up, hugged them and we left. I learned that you don't have to be glib. You just have to care."

Rabbi Heschel exhibited both wisdom and sensitivity. When it comes to comforting a bereaved person less is more. When visiting with a grieving individual a simple "I'm sorry" and an embrace is sufficient.

“Count your blessings...”

Though this is a popular, well known cliché, it is still a sound psychological principal for cultivating both happiness and hope.

Consider Michael Gates Gill's experience. He was a senior executive at a major New York City advertising firm when, abruptly he was fired and forced to re-invent himself at 63 years of age.

After job searching for months, he finally accepted a position as a barrista with Starbucks. The author of *“How Starbucks Saved My Life”* and, more recently, *“How To Save Your Own Life,”* Gill reminds people to count their blessings. He recommends making a gratitude list. This is something he did one day and his list included these entries providing him with “unexpected joy:”

- In the surprising satisfaction of working really hard to clean a toilet and making a bathroom sparkle like a new car.

- In the song I happen to hear that sends me singing out loud as I walk down the block.

A SIMPLE WAY TO LIFT YOUR SPIRITS:

Count your blessings



- In the warm sun of an early April day that catches me by surprise when I have spent so many months getting used to the cold gray days of winter.

- In the delight of going to bed on a rainy afternoon with a good book.

- In the deep enjoyment of spending time with my children - simple lunches in the city or long walks in the country - as I observe and marvel as they create their own remarkable lives.

- In the feeling of gratitude in waking at the beautiful first light of dawn.

- In the simple act of sharing a smile or a joke as I serve others a good cup of coffee.

- In walking home in the soft blue dusk of summer and seeing a full moon rising in the sky.

Today, begin to count your blessings. In doing so, a more balanced perspective will emerge creating space for hope to grow and flourish.

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS

There are slightly more than 30,000 suicide deaths every year in the United States. Those deaths impact some 1 million people.

Besides immediate family, others affected by someone’s suicide are friends, neighbors and co-workers. Those individuals – the survivors – often end up grieving longer and more intensely than those mourning other types of loss.

Suicide survivors face additional challenges such as: guilt over failing to prevent the loss and shame reinforced by social conditioning. Here are ways to support people who have lost a friend or family member by suicide.

- **Acknowledge the death** as you would the death of any other person. Be present. If you can't be present, then write a letter or phone.

- **Ease guilt.** Ultimately, if a person wishes to end their life, they will find a way. Remind grievers it’s not their fault that the suicide happened.

- **Respect different styles of grieving.** Remind yourself that people grieve differently. Don't make judgments about how the person should be grieving.

- **Show you care by words and actions.** Cry with them, embrace them, tell them “I’m sorry. I want to do whatever I can to help.”

- **Encourage openness.** The people closest to grievers should know the death was by suicide. There’s no value in hiding this fact. The grievers’ wider community needs accurate information so that they can provide effective support.

- **Make connections.** Research and provide information about suicide grief

support groups nearby. If necessary, offer to go with them to the first meeting or two.

- **Be comfortable with their feelings.** There will be a variety of confusing and conflicting emotions: anger, depression, frustration and sometimes, even relief. Allow grievers to express their feelings. It’s an effective way of exploring and dealing with them.

- **Stay in touch.** Be there for the long haul. Stay in touch in the weeks and months after the funeral. Contact them on special days: holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, etc.

- **Recommend online resources.** Two of the best web sites are: The American Association of Suicidology – www.suicidology.org and The American Foundation For Suicide Prevention - www.afsp.org.