



Survivor's Link

September

COMMUNICATING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



Navigating Grief Through the Seasons: Coping Tips for Fall

By April Tischler, Navy Gold Star Coordinator

A bright mustard color starts to emerge through mature green foliage, like a wave, to signal the change of season to come in New England. The season change can also bring about unique challenges and triggers by impacting how we process and manage our grief. Seasonal changes can significantly affect grief and emotional well-being. The winter months can intensify feelings of isolation and sadness, while spring may offer a sense of hope and renewal. Summer might provide distractions, and autumn can also evoke memories as nature transitions toward dormancy. Understanding these fluctuations is crucial in finding effective ways to cope.

Managing grief during autumn:

1. **Embrace nature:** Take advantage of the beauty of autumn to find solace. Engage in outdoor activities such as walking in parks, hiking through colorful foliage, or simply spending time in nature to foster healing and introspection.
2. **Reflect on memories:** Autumn often triggers nostalgia. Use this season as an opportunity to reflect on cherished memories of your loved one. Create a memory jar or journal where you can write down special moments, helping to honor and preserve their legacy.
3. **Seek support:** Don't hesitate to lean on your support system. Reach out to friends, family or support groups to share your feelings. Identify people you are safe to talk to openly about your grief, as this can alleviate emotional burdens and promote healing. Contact your Navy Gold Star Program coordinator for additional support resources. Grief does not have a boundary of time, and grief counseling can be helpful even years after experiencing loss.
4. **Practice mindfulness:** Engage in mindfulness exercises like meditation or yoga to stay present and cope with the emotions that autumn may evoke. Grounding yourself in the here and now can provide a sense of stability during a time of transition.

Grief is a personal journey, and the changing seasons can influence its course. Understanding how different seasons impact grief empowers us to be proactive in our coping strategies. By embracing nature, reflecting on memories, seeking support, and practicing mindfulness during autumn, we can navigate grief with resilience. Remember, there is no timeline for grief, and each person's experience is unique. Be patient with yourself and allow yourself the space and time needed to heal.





The Truth Behind Practicing the Spiritual Discipline of Being Still

By CNIC Force Chaplain's Office

“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” – Holy Bible, New International Version, Psalm 46:10

The frenetic pace of our lives can cause such emotional distress. Most of us live a daily pattern of much to do and far too little time to get it all done. Maybe that is why there is so much discussion these days about mental health and wellness. Much of this type of discussion focuses on many among us reporting feeling alienated, isolated, anxious and all alone.

The truth: You are not alone. Psalm 46:1 begins with an assurance: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

Most Lutherans are quite aware that Psalm 46 inspired Martin Luther to pen a timeless hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” The theme of this psalm and of the hymn is a declaration that outward tumult or inner emotional distress can be addressed effectively with the same resolve. That resolve is simple: God is our source of peace, strength and help. No matter the trouble that arises around us or within us, be still and know that God is present and with each of us.

The awareness: God is with us. Practicing being still will raise our awareness of just how near and present God truly is to each of us.

Interestingly, most of us do not like too much time with our thoughts. Practicing being still can be intimidating. Why? Because practicing being still can usher in feelings and thoughts that we are busy running away from. But this stillness time also allows us to catch up with what is truly disturbing us or bringing us joy and a sense of accomplishment. It is important to be aware of our feelings, our fears, our ambitions, our desires, and all that make us who and what we are.

The truth: Practicing being still is a spiritual discipline. Just like praying is a spiritual discipline, so is being still. Practicing being still is no different than the physical discipline of walking or running for 30 minutes on a regular basis. There are wellness benefits.

One wellness benefit of this spiritual discipline is that we are reminded that God is an “ever-present” help. We are reminded that we are actually surrounded by people who care about us.

The truth: Reach out for help if you are feeling isolated and all alone. If daily living is causing inner turmoil, reach out to a friend, coworker, Navy counselor, or chaplain. Reach out to the trusted persons in your life. There are many who are near and willing to help by simply listening.

The conclusion: The truth behind practicing the spiritual discipline of being still is that you are never alone, and help is one phone call or text message away.

Gold Star Children's Day "Flat Stanley" Event

By Alicia McCoy, Navy Gold Star Coordinator

This year, in honor of Gold Star Children's Day, which is celebrated on Aug. 1, families were invited to submit a photo of themselves and their hero visiting places or doing activities that they liked to do with their fallen hero (think "Flat Stanley" concept). Submitted photos could include a drawing of their hero taken with the child/children, or could be an older photo of the child and hero from before the loss. The invitation to participate was shared on the Navy Gold Star Facebook page and via emails sent to families around the world. While this was a "first-of-its-kind" event, there was at least one happy submission received!

Navy Gold Star child Ryan Williams, 9, and his mom, Marlene Silva of Chesapeake, Virginia, submitted a photo of Ryan with his dad, fallen hero Logistics Specialist 1st Class Joseph Williams, U.S. Navy, from the family's first trip to Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Based on the big smile on Ryan's face, it's easy to see why this was a great memory of an activity done with his dad! Huge thanks to Ryan and his mom Marlene for participating!



Bells Across America For Fallen Service Members

By Stephanie Hunter, Navy Gold Star Program Analyst

In association with Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day, which is celebrated the last Sunday in September, the Navy Gold Star Program, along with Navy Mutual and in coordination with Navy installations across the country, will host the 8th Annual Bells Across America for Fallen Service Members ceremony on Sept. 21.

Bells have been used for centuries by the Navy for timekeeping, safety and communication, to sound alarms, in ceremonies and events, and to signal the presence of important persons. However, during these ceremonies, the bells rung will not signal anyone's presence; instead, they will toll in their absence.

Bells Across America provides service members, survivors and members of the community an opportunity to commemorate the life and service of those who died while on active duty. The primary focus and mission of the Navy Gold Star Program is to provide an unprecedented level of service and commitment to our Navy Gold Star families. Bells Across America For Fallen Service Members is one way the Navy recognizes the sacrifices of our fallen heroes and the Gold Star families left behind.

For more information on ceremonies, please contact your local Navy Gold Star coordinator, or send a message to www.facebook.com/navygoldstar or www.navygoldstar.com.

Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day

By Stephanie Hunter, Navy Gold Star Program Analyst

Since 1936, the last Sunday in September has been designated as Gold Star Mother's Day to recognize and honor those who have lost a child while serving our country in the United States Armed Forces. In 2009, fallen service members' families were officially recognized and added by presidential proclamation, renaming the observance to Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day.

Each year, the president signs a proclamation reaffirming our commitment to honor the individuals "who carry forward the memories of those willing to lay down their lives for the United States and the liberties for which we stand." This year, on Sept. 24, we will pay tribute to those mothers and families who have sacrificed so much.

The Navy Gold Star Program provides survivors a safe environment to experience their own unique grief while assessing needs and ensuring appropriate resources are provided. The program supports Gold Star families while they adjust to the new normal and provides opportunities for remembrance so they know they will forever be a part of the Navy community.

As we observe Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day, let us all remember that that no one has given more for our nation than the families of the fallen, and let them know they will never be forgotten.

For more information on the Navy Gold Star Program, please call 1-888-509-8759, or visit www.facebook.com/navygoldstar or www.navygoldstar.com.



World Suicide Prevention Day

World Suicide Prevention Day is Sept. 10. Each year, an estimated 703,000 people die by suicide around the world. For every suicide, there are likely 20 other people making a suicide attempt, and many more have serious thoughts of suicide. Millions of people suffer intense grief or are otherwise profoundly impacted by suicidal behaviors. World Suicide Prevention Day focuses attention on the issue, reduces stigma, and raises awareness among organizations, government and the public, sending a singular message that suicide can be prevented.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24/7 in the United States. It is committed to improving crisis services and advancing suicide prevention by empowering individuals, advancing professional best practices, and building awareness. Please visit <https://988lifeline.org> for more information.





We Remember

In this edition of Survivor's Link, we honor those lost during several key moments in military history that occurred during the months of September and October.

Sept. 11: Patriot Day – On Patriot Day, our nation continues to honor, recognize and remember the nearly 3,000 people who lost their lives during the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001. As the towers fell, the Pentagon burned, and the ground smoldered in a rural Pennsylvania field, our nation rallied to stand arm-in-arm. Each year on 9/11, officially designated Patriot Day, we stand together again and vow to “never forget.”

Oct. 12: USS Cole Remembrance Day – On the morning of Oct. 12, 2000, USS Cole (DDG 67) was attacked by terrorists while moored for refueling in the Port of Aden, Yemen. Seventeen Sailors lost their lives and 37 more were injured that day. Commemoration events remember and honor the 23rd anniversary of the 17 Sailors who were lost from the attack, the Gold Star families, and the crew who so valiantly fought to save their ship and return it to service.

Oct. 26: USS Oriskany – On Oct. 26, 1966, a deadly fire broke out aboard the San Diego-based aircraft carrier USS Oriskany while it was stationed off the coast of Vietnam. The fire started after a lit flare was locked in a flare locker. The fire swept through five decks, killing 44 men, mostly air crew, and injured 156 more.

Make a Difference Day

Observed on Oct. 28, Make A Difference Day shows that anyone, no matter their age or background, can take action that improves their community. Big or small, every project makes a difference. Here are some simple ways to celebrate Make a Difference Day.

- Perform an act of kindness. Even the smallest things can make somebody feel so much better.
- Volunteer in your community.
- Give someone an uplifting compliment.
- Organize a cleanup in your community.
- Donate blood.
- Mentor someone.
- Help a neighbor.



Children's Grief Awareness Day

Children's Grief Awareness Day is Nov. 16. Created in 2008 by the Highmark Caring Place, A Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents and Their Families, and since recognized by organizations around the world, Children's Grief Awareness Day is observed every year on the third Thursday in November. This time of year is a particularly appropriate time to support grieving children because the holiday season is often an especially difficult time after a death.

Children's Grief Awareness Day seeks to bring attention to the fact that support can make all the difference in the life of a grieving child. It provides an opportunity for all of us to raise awareness of the painful impact that the death of a loved one has in the life of a child and is an opportunity to make sure that these children receive the support they need. To learn more, visit www.childrengriefawarenessday.org.



International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day is an event in which survivors of suicide loss come together to find connection, understanding and hope through their shared experience. This year, International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day is Nov. 18. Also known as Survivor Day, the day was designated by Congress as a day for those affected by suicide to come together for healing and support. It always falls on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, as the holidays are often a difficult time for suicide loss survivors. To learn more, visit <https://afsp.org>.

Grieving
Looks
Different
for Everyone

afsp.org/loss



Have You Met Your Navy Gold Star Coordinator?

By Lisa Bauch, Navy Gold Star Program Analyst

Your Navy Gold Star coordinator is here to help you navigate the sometimes confusing and often overwhelming time after the loss of your loved one while you adjust to your new normal. Your coordinator is here for you and can act as a trusted resource to connect you with offices and organizations to meet your needs, whether they be benefits related, navigating a move, identifying a counselor, or any other obstacle or question you might encounter. They will help you remain connected to your Navy family for as long as you like by hosting events and activities as well as keeping you in the loop on activities and resources relevant to you. Your coordinator will also help honor your loved one by ensuring that they are not forgotten through memorial and remembrance activities.

Whether you are new to our program or have been speaking to us for years, we would like to introduce (or reintroduce) you to our staff, starting with a few of our most seasoned Navy Gold Star coordinators. To find out who your coordinator is, visit www.navygoldstar.com/locations.



Patricia Jackson

Navy Gold Star Program Coordinator

Patricia “Patsy” Jackson is married and has three children. Patsy is a plank owner of the Navy Gold Star Program, which stood up on Oct. 1, 2014. She started her journey with Navy Gold Star families in 2011 while serving as a financial counselor for the Survivor Outreach Services Program at Fort Meade Army Community Services in Maryland. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Sociology from Morgan State University and a master’s degree in Human Services from Murray State University. She loves working with the military community, as her husband is retired Army and her travels always connected with the armed forces, their families and non-governmental entities. In her spare time, Patsy loves to engage with and help people. She also loves to sing karaoke.



Emily Kolenda

Navy Gold Star Area Supervisor

Emily Kolenda serves as the East Area supervisor for the Navy Gold Star Program after previously working as a Navy Gold Star coordinator since January 2017. In her current role, Emily is the direct supervisor for Navy Gold Star coordinators who connect with survivors residing on the eastern side of the United States.

Emily holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Longwood University. She was a certified therapeutic recreation specialist and previously used this certification to work in California and Mississippi within the mental health field. Emily transitioned to employment with the Department of the Navy in September 2013 to fulfill a passion of working with military families. As a military spouse, Emily used her knowledge and experience to share information and engage military personnel and their family members with programs offered through Fleet and Family Support Centers. Her involvement with the Navy Gold Star Program has allowed Emily to support a military family population that is often less recognized to ensure they have the resources and support for their journey ahead, and to make sure our nation’s fallen warriors are honored, respected and remembered.

In her spare time, Emily enjoys traveling, swimming, pickleball, and spending time with her family.



Have You Met Your Navy Gold Star Coordinator?



Erick Roberts

Navy Gold Star Area Supervisor

Erick is the West Area supervisor for the Navy Gold Star Program and has been with the program since 2017. He started as a Navy Gold Star coordinator aboard Naval Base San Diego providing direct support to families and planning and delivering remembrance events. He went on to serve as the Navy Region Southwest Navy Gold Star coordinator working as part of the region team to make program improvements, increase client access to resources, and ensure program quality for all the families in his area of responsibility. Erick is passionate about the Navy Gold Star Program, the families he serves, and his team of coordinators who work to ensure the highest quality of customer service is delivered. His vision is to provide an atmosphere where coordinators have the tools to perform at a high level and are able to provide the utmost care to survivors and ensure their needs are being addressed. Erick works tirelessly to make program process improvements and increase access to resources and services for all Navy Gold Star survivors. Erick feels privileged to be able to continue to serve military families and their loved ones, to assist those families as they progress through their grief journeys, and to lead a team of compassionate professionals who provide such an important service.



Susanna Del Llano

Navy Gold Star Program Coordinator

Susanna received her Master of Science degree in Community Based Counseling from Texas A&M University Corpus Christi. Susanna is a former Navy dependent, as her father is retired Navy. Fun fact: When Susanna was 6 years old, she flew as an unaccompanied minor from Houston, Texas, to Tokyo, Japan, where her father met her. Susanna had the privilege of attending the Department of Defense (DoD) school onboard Kadena Air Force Base, where her father was stationed. Susanna has been providing support to military personnel and their families for 18 years, and has been providing assistance to Gold Star families for seven of those 18 years. Susanna takes great pride in providing the best support possible to the Navy families she has the honor of working with. In her spare time, Susanna enjoys reading, coloring and spending time with her family, especially her two granddaughters.



National POW/MIA Recognition Day

Though not here...



their sacrifice is not forgotten

September 15, 2023 | **#NotForgotten** | www.dpaa.mil |





VETERANS DAY



ARMY
MARINE CORPS
NAVY
AIR FORCE
SPACE FORCE
COAST GUARD

NOVEMBER 11, 2023

HONORING ALL WHO HAVE SERVED

WWW.VA.GOV



Navy Gold Star Coordinators

Area of Responsibility	Phone
California (Los Angeles County/Northern CA), Japan, Guam, Korea	901-671-6720
California (San Diego/Riverside), Colorado, Utah, Hawaii	901-930-8290
California (San Diego/Riverside), Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada	901-930-8308
Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Minnesota, Canada	901-930-8062
Washington, Alaska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Iowa	901-671-7519
Texas	901-930-8109
Michigan, Illinois, Indiana	901-930-8593
Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Tennessee	901-930-8300
Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Europe	901-671-6521
Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maine	901-671-6910
New York, New Jersey, Vermont, New Hampshire	901-930-8388
West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, and these counties in Virginia: Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Alexandria, King George, Manassas, Dumfries, Fauquier, Stafford, Spotsylvania	901-930-8578
Virginia (any county not in Northern Virginia)	901-930-8008
North Carolina, Kentucky, Ohio	901-930-8210
Georgia, South Carolina	904-542-5712
Florida	904-542-5706

Note: All postal mail should be sent to the below address.

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 ATTN: Navy Gold Star Program
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 Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5140