

“Somebody Please Help Me!”

I was honored to have been able to attend, in person, the 2024 Grief Companionship Project Conference in Langley, Washington. During the conference while listening to speakers from Support 7 etc., I found myself feeling like an outsider in regards to the assistance that is being offered to families/individuals when confronted with a violent and unexpected death. My son Adam's death was traumatic, sudden and unexpected. His manner of death by suicide was, horrifying, loud, blinding, and turned my world as I knew it upside down. My son died of suicide by law enforcement. It was broadcast on television and will forever remain available for his children to access.

Let me bring myself back to why I am writing this. At the scene of the incident, I was approached by several detectives asking me questions about what had happened prior to the shooting. The questioning continued over the next few days, probably weeks, but I was numb to the trauma I had just witnessed. My senses had completely shut down, and I don't remember all of what they were asking me. What I do remember is this; while I was standing on that sidewalk staring at the van that my son's lifeless body lay in, and being questioned, I was alone. Though my niece driven me to the scene, I was alone. No comfort, no feeling of safety. No one asked me if I was ok, or what did I need in that moment, is there someone I could call Etc. The answer to all of those and more was, No. I was going home to tell my grandchildren that their father had died only a couple hours earlier. My son, my only child, had died four blocks from home on the early hours of July 30, 2022, six days after his thirty-fifth birthday. I sat on the edge of my bed staring at the chair he fell asleep in the morning before everything spiraled. I wish I had known it was going to be the the last time I would talk to him and see him alive. I cried, I wailed, and all I could think about was how much I wanted to go with him. I felt abandoned by my family that morning. I felt lost. Because my soul was lost. I didn't know what to do or what I needed. I wish that there was a support group like Support 7 here. During the conference I was fortunate to meet and have conversations with those that work with Support 7, clergy and those that are companionship individuals like me who have lost someone traumatically and unexpectedly. I heard Adam's name repeated several times during our conversations. I could share what was wonderful about him without feeling the need to explain his death. I was made to feel like his death is not what defined him because it wasn't. Because of the way Adam died, I felt like I had no right to ask for help. And in that moment, I wouldn't know how to do that anyway. I was in shock, I didn't even know how to function, let alone survive. I'm sure in my mind I must have been screaming, “HELP ME, SOMEBODY PLEASE HELP ME”. I can look back now at that day and realize what I needed. I didn't have the capacity to know that that

day, that moment. And this is why I am passionate about bringing the Grief Companionship Program to Southern California. My world, my journey, is different now. I know I am not the only one who lost a loved one the way my son died. It doesn't really matter how or why in that moment. What mattered is that someone I loved was gone and I was very much, painfully alone, and scared. Those of us who have experienced a disenfranchised, uncommon death, need attention too. We want to feel safe, be comforted, be seen and feel heard. Our loss is no less heartbreaking and traumatic than any other loss.