



# ACCESS<sup>SM</sup>

AirCRAFT Casualty Emotional Support Services

[www.accesshelp.org](http://www.accesshelp.org)

*I have allowed myself to be inspired by the lives of those I lost*  
- Joan Lunden



I remember the day my father died as if it were yesterday. I was 14. My father had wanted our family to join him on a business trip in our new plane, but my mother didn't want my brother and me to miss school. Then at the last minute she changed her mind. We arrived just as the plane was taking



Joan, her father Erle, and her brother Jeff

ing off. I stood by the runway waving goodbye. That was the last time I would ever see my dad. His plane crashed somewhere in Malibu Canyon, CA on the way back.

Although it's been many years, my father's death still has a profound effect on my life. His words of constant encouragement ring in my ears to this very day. They are my inspiration to rise above the roadblocks of life; to succeed as a worker and a friend, and to be the best I can be.



Heidi, board member Rachel Courtney, and Joan at the 8th Annual Hearts, Clubs & Aces Event. Rachel and Joan both lost their fathers in plane crashes.

While growing up, my brother and I had two very close friends named Jed and Jay Johnson. The Johnson twins were always at my house. They even came on our family vacations with us. My dad was like a father to Jed and Jay.

*Continued inside...*

***That is the real magic of ACCESS, a program where role models who have experienced the same type of loss can uniquely help others on their painful journey***

## What We Do

ACCESS is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to pairing individuals suffering in the wake of private, commercial and military air disasters with volunteers who have lived through similar life-altering tragedies years earlier. ACCESS has over 250 trained Volunteer Grief Mentors who are on-call to provide free peer-to-peer care from the minute an aviation disaster occurs, for as long as the grieving need support.

## ACCESS Air Disaster Preparedness



ACCESS participating and evaluating a full scale simulation of an aircraft water crash at San Francisco International Airport.

Some of the most important work ACCESS does starts before an air disaster occurs. Our firsthand experiences have taught us just how important the first few interactions after an air disaster can be.

This is why ACCESS provides courses based on the hundreds of case studies of our own experiences to prepare companies, airlines and care teams that respond to aviation disasters so that they can provide the most sensitive and effective care possible.

Go to [www.accesshelp.org](http://www.accesshelp.org) to learn how ACCESS can train your team

## We Couldn't Do It Without You!

ACCESS relies on your generous support to provide our free care to those who call us for help. If you have ever lost a loved one, you know that grief is a life-long journey.

**Donations can be made at [www.accesshelp.org](http://www.accesshelp.org)**

**Your tax-deductible donations will make it possible for ACCESS to:**

- Train & educate our Volunteer Grief Mentors
- Provide our helpline & website
- Distribute bereavement resources
- Expand our outreach so that those who need ACCESS will know that we are here for them
- Provide free, immediate and long-term peer-to-peer bereavement care to those affected by air disasters

**We would be so grateful for any amount that you can contribute in support of our efforts.**

## SAVE THE DATE



**The 9th Annual Hearts, Clubs & Aces charity golf tournament, dinner and auction is on September 6, 2013!**



ACCESS founder, Heidi Snow

*From the bottom of my heart, I thank all of the amazing people who make ACCESS possible by giving us the precious gift of survival after our losses.*

My fiancé Michel traveled all the way from France to surprise me for Christmas. We thought this would be one of many holidays together. We never could have imagined it would be our last. I lost Michel the next summer on TWA Flight 800. At the time of the crash, I was overwhelmed with grief and had nowhere to turn. Only those who had experienced this type of loss understood what I was going through.

I founded ACCESS in the fall of 1996 so that no one would have to go through the experience of losing someone in an air crash without the support of others who have been there. All of the work we do at ACCESS is to transform our personal experiences of losing loved ones in air disasters into support for others. ACCESS provides a safe, compassionate and confidential place for the bereaved to rebuild their forever-changed lives.

As ACCESS has grown, so many amazing and generous people have volunteered to share their hard-earned knowledge and resources to help make the grieving process easier for those suffering in the wake of air disasters. We have over 250 Volunteer Grief Mentors who come forward simply because they remember how hard it was for them to get through each day after their sudden tragic losses. It has been so touching to witness the kindness of others over the years.

To share what has worked at ACCESS with the world, we launched our first book, ***Surviving Sudden Loss: Stories from those who have lived it***. We have found that learning about someone else's journey through grief can provide a unique comfort to others experiencing loss.

**The 28 firsthand stories of grief and survival in this book are for:**

- Those who have lost loved ones tragically
- Family members and friends who are helping the bereaved through their grief
- Crisis response teams who interact with those who have suddenly lost loved ones
- Everyone with loved ones in their lives

With a foreword by Mayor Rudy Giuliani, our book presents real-life voices of people courageously sharing intimate stories of surviving sudden, tragic losses and the remarkable people they have become as a result. Whether you have lost a loved one or not, these stories will touch you.



All proceeds from the book benefit ACCESS.

**Purchase this book at:**  
**[www.accesshelp.org](http://www.accesshelp.org)**

**On behalf of all of us whose lives have been tragically changed in an instant, I thank you.**

*Joan's story continued...*



Jed Johnson

On July 17, 1996, while I was reporting on the TWA Flight 800 disaster as host of *Good Morning America*, I was called into the control room. They had someone on the phone frantically trying to see if his twin brother Jed was in the crash. Jed was scheduled to be on the later flight to Paris. The producers of the show contacted TWA and confirmed our worst fear: that Jed, my childhood best friend and first boyfriend, was on that plane.

Never before in my twenty years on *Good Morning America* had I gone on the air unable to speak, but that morning my co-host, Charlie Gibson, explained to the viewers that I needed a few moments to regain my composure.

A year before my father's crash, two of his colleagues, who were private plane pilots, had crashed and died. It was my father who went to their homes to tell their wives. In the days following my dad's crash, those two women practically lived at our house, helping us through the first few days.



Joan & her father

And that is the real magic of ACCESS, a program where role models who have experienced the same type of loss can uniquely help others navigate their painful journey.

*Heidi has shown the world that one person can make a difference, and the enduring success of ACCESS is a testament to her passion to help others.*



Joan and Heidi at Camp Takajo in Maine

When you meet Heidi you cannot help but be struck by a sense that she is carrying on in the face of a tragic event. I was impressed by how she was able to find new strengths after losing her fiancé on Flight 800 and turn her sorrow into a source of joy.

A terrible tragic moment, though difficult at the time, can become a source of strength and courage. Like Heidi, I have allowed myself to be inspired by the lives of those I lost.

Some of us have the opportunity to finish our work here, and tragically some of us are taken away too soon.

*To my dad: I remember every word you ever said, Dad. To my dear friend Jed: Your devotion and support gave me the courage to pursue my dream in New York. Without you both, I would not be who I am today.*

## Belonging through ACCESS: A Connection with Joan Lunden

by Deb Hawkins

I lost my dad in a private plane crash off Crooked Island in the outer islands of the Bahamas. This is the sort of thing you hear about on the news, the sort of thing we have all become numb to because it will never happen to us...until it does. In a split second my life changed in ways that I had never considered. The loss of a parent at the age of twenty-eight is a tragedy. My siblings and I were left with a large hole in our lives and in the fabric of our family. It's not something you can describe to someone who has not had a similar experience.

***ACCESS continues doing what it does best: helping people cope with the present and prepare for the future.***

Recently I attended ACCESS' 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Hearts, Clubs & Aces golf fundraiser in California. I sat in a room full of strangers but I felt a certain sense of belonging. Then when the guest of honor Joan Lunden spoke, I knew I was in the right place. She told of the fateful last flight her father took and the impact it had on her and her family. I had of course seen her on *Good Morning America*, but when she told her story, I felt a connection. Her story is eerily similar to my own. I was no longer alone on my journey as I realized there are countless others whose hearts also feel heavy and are raw with emotion from this type of tragedy. This is what ACCESS is all about. As the night came to a close and the last auction item was claimed, I left knowing that ACCESS continues doing what it does best: helping people cope with the present and prepare for the future.

- Deb Hawkins lost her father on a private plane crash on 4/12/97



Lisa Gale and Deb Hawkins with their father Sheldon

## The Hardest Work I Have Ever Done

by Marilyn Kausner

No matter how I try to brace myself, the pain of facing the holidays without my youngest daughter is crushing. Elly would be turning twenty-eight on December 13th. The reality that she is gone still lies upon my heart like a heavy blanket. The dates hit like bullets: Thanksgiving, Elly's birthday, Christmas, New Year's, and the anniversary of the crash on February 12th.

Four years in, it's still the hardest work I have ever done or will do. My best friend who lost her son in a motorcycle accident told me she had to live her life well so that he won't look down from heaven feeling guilty that his death ruined her. That is some good motivation. For me, it translates into investing what I can into those I still have.

- Marilyn lost her daughter on Continental Flight 3407 on 2/12/09

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2013**



Ellyce Kausner

It's supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year. The twinkling lights, music, and smells all evoke memories. Remember how it used to feel?

One of the Kausner family traditions is to pile the whole family into trucks and vans with plenty of hot chocolate and head for the hills of Western New York in search of the perfect Christmas tree. For our family, this day is mandatory and sacrosanct.

### Elly's 24th Birthday Party

Connor was with his mom Laura (Elly's sister) at the airport on February 12, 2009 waiting with balloons to welcome his Aunt Elly home.



Elly & her nephew Connor

The first year after the crash, the family decided the show must go on. But I hid in my bedroom until they left and sobbed until they returned. The tree sat in the driveway for a week.



**Join us for our 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Hearts, Clubs & Aces Golf Tournament, Dinner, and Silent/Live Auction!**

More than just the usual charity golf tournament or fundraising auction, our Hearts, Clubs & Aces event has participants, sponsors, and volunteers alike circling the date on their calendars every year. This memorable day includes golf, games, prizes, a cocktail party, silent auction, dinner and an exciting live auction!

**To register visit [www.accesshelp.org](http://www.accesshelp.org)**



Golf Volunteers at our spring Beauty Bash at Benefit Cosmetics





## We couldn't do it without you!

### Ways you can help ACCESS...

- ♥ Make a tax-deductible charitable donation through the mail or online at [www.accesshelp.org](http://www.accesshelp.org)
- ♥ Sponsor or volunteer at our upcoming Hearts, Clubs & Aces Golf Event
- ♥ Volunteer to help or donate auction items to our events & other fundraising efforts
  - ♥ Share your memorial stories on our website & in future newsletters
- ♥ If you have lost a loved one in or survived an air disaster, become an ACCESS Volunteer Grief Mentor to help others through their grief
- ♥ Help to spread the word about ACCESS

**We are so grateful to all of the amazing people who make ACCESS possible!**

Helpline: 877-227-6435

ACCESS is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.  
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[www.accesshelp.org](http://www.accesshelp.org)



## Grief Changes Everything

by John Titus, author of *Losing Alicia:  
A Father's Journey After 9/11*

This time of year is filled with celebrations: my anniversary, my wife's birthday, two granddaughters' birthdays, Christmas, and my birthday. Christmas was Alicia's favorite holiday.



Alicia Titus

She was killed on September 11, 2001 on United Flight 175. At first, holidays, birthdays and other special days were so painful. I didn't know how we would get through it.

For the first Christmas after Alicia's death, our immediate family and her boyfriend went away from the hustle and bustle and traditional reminders of the holidays to the mountains in Montana. The second Christmas was spent on the beach in Florida.

During the first year I wrote daily in my journal, which became a book in 2011. It was a place I retreated to try to make sense of this horrific loss. I prayed, I went to therapy, and I joined organizations like ACCESS and September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows. Compassionate others who have experienced similar losses, have helped us in untold ways. When we join together with caring others who really know what we are going through, it gives us great comfort.

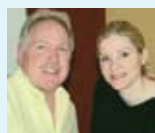


Bev & John Titus  
memorializing Alicia

Eventually, as we learned to cope with our loss, we also learned how to re-integrate back into our extended family's holiday traditions. I have learned how to cry when I need to and to allow my emotions to run their course. I have allowed the grieving process to unfold with all of the pain, the sadness, despair and heartache. And I have learned how to live more fully with the understanding that life is experienced in the here and now, and tomorrow is promised to no one.

*To all of you who are experiencing grief during this holiday season, I send my heartfelt love and compassion.*

- John lost his daughter on United Flight 175 on 9/11



Dr. Ken Druck & Heidi

*"I've had the honor of working with the ACCESS Volunteer Grief Mentors for many years and ACCESS is one of the best peer-to-peer bereavement support programs in the world."*

- Dr. Ken Druck, ACCESS Volunteer Grief Mentor lead trainer and author of *Real Rules of Life: Balancing Life's Terms with Your Own*



### Dr. Ken Druck's Tips for Surviving Holidays, Birthdays, Anniversaries & Other Special Days After a Loss

Often we approach special days like birthdays, holidays and anniversaries with apprehension—to us, these dates remind us that we will never see or speak with our loved one again. The key to survival is being self-compassionate. Take a deep breath. The best way to get through this day is by doing what is right for you. Remember, surviving a special day is but one step in the process of grief. Healing is forever and this is only one day in your journey. Here are a few suggestions for those of you who wish to approach the special day with something specific planned:

#### The days before...

Make plans and reduce the pressure and anxiety that can build up before the special day.

Set realistic & reasonable expectations for the day.

Do things that allow you to relax.

Get the emotional support you need.

Give yourself permission to talk about your loved one.

Take whatever steps you need to help you get through the day without judging yourself or comparing yourself to others. The grieving process is a highly personal one.

Children can experience these special days differently. An activity independent of you may be what they need.



#### On the day

Do what is most meaningful to you. Balance your needs with those of your family.

Be gentle with yourself -- grief is an exercise in self-compassion, not a performance for the benefit or approval of others.



Surround yourself with loving and nurturing people. Protect yourself from unwanted phone calls and visitors.



Allow yourself to be sad, angry, quiet or confused—whatever you are feeling is understandable and acceptable.

Allow yourself ample time to rest and decompress at the end of the day.

#### The days after...

Talk about what happened on the special day with people you trust. Remember, fond memories will keep your loved ones with you.

There may be a "letdown" period in which you feel relieved or sad now that it's all over. Allow yourself to feel whatever feelings come up.



Be forgiving of how the special day went. Everyone grieves differently, embrace this without guilt.

Make a gentle transition back to your everyday life with a light schedule that allows you time to rest and recover.



Continue to take good care for yourself to help you regain your strength and peace.



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Emotional Support Services



*A special thanks to everyone at Motley Rice LLC for their continued generous support of ACCESS and for donating the printing and production of this newsletter.*



We had a full house with over 150 guests at the ACCESS **"Baseball & Birdies" Charity Event** at the Hi Dive next to the San Francisco Giants' stadium. The event celebrated the launch of the US Open and that evening's San Francisco Giant's game. We auctioned & raffled off once-in-a-lifetime VIP passes to the US Open & tickets to what turned out to be Matt Cain's "Perfect Game." We are so grateful to our incredibly generous ACCESS fans who made the evening most fun and a home run!

## ***A special thanks to all of our generous donors for supporting our efforts!***

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