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Group helps Cape Bretoners who have lost someone to suicide

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SYDNEY — Fran Morrison hopes her SOS message will reach the people who need it most.



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Fran Morrison looks fondly at her son Eric during his high school grand march. Eric Morrison would have been 25 if he was still alive but he killed himself three years ago. Fran Morrison said coping with her son's death has been difficult and she is starting a self-help group to help others deal with losing a loved one to suicide.

In this case, SOS stands for Survivors of Suicide, the new self-help group that Morrison is spearheading in the CBRM to help individuals and families coping with the loss of a loved one to suicide.

Morrison lost her own son Eric to suicide three years ago and has been attending a support group's meetings in Halifax every month ever since. It may take her almost five hours to get there, but Morrison says the extra effort has been worth it.

"After Eric died, I had to find things to connect with again," she said. "I lost everything. I lost every belief that I ever had. And I just felt like I was floating around in the universe with no purpose — you just get lost. "

The meetings in Halifax helped, allowing her to connect with others going through a similar loss. According to Morrison, the grief process for losing someone to suicide is different from

other forms of loss.

"The grief is a lot more complicated than normal grief," she said. "I've lost my parents, I've lost friends, I've lost people, and it's nothing like this. Nothing — well, losing a child — that in itself is bloody torture — but the guilt that you go through after you lose some by by suicide, it's 'what if I had done this,' 'what if I'd done that,' 'I should have done this,' and you go through all this stuff and you replay the last few weeks of their lives, over and over and

over again. People who have been there will understand that."

Morrison connected with another mother at the Halifax group who had also lost a child, and being able to talk about what she was going through with somebody who had also experienced it helped a lot. Being able to share and talk is necessary.

"People who are survivors of suicide are very high risk themselves," said Morrison. "If I didn't talk about it, I wouldn't be as far along in this journey. If you hold it in, it will make you sick — physically ill because you're holding it inside and it's got to come out somewhere.

"The focus of the group would be to share our stories and how we got through the grief and how we're getting through might help somebody find their way."

The first Sydney meeting will take place Tuesday, Sept. 23, at 6:30 p.m. at 188 George St., Sydney.

"When you go into these groups and you hear how many years people have been surviving this, it gives you hope that you can get through it too. It's a very worthwhile thing to participate in if you are a survivor. It's a confidential group where people can learn off each other and connect."

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