

Personal Story

Allan, partner of Don



BUILDING A JUST SOCIETY

other people's stories

It's ironic that the horrific bushfires that devastated Victoria in 2009 led to my involvement with the Jesuit Social Services Support After Suicide program.

I wasn't caught up in the fires myself but my partner, Don, took his own life around the same time as the devastating blazes due to his mental illness.

The Coroner's Court was so caught up with dealing with the fires that rather than line up some counselling with me they connected me with Support After Suicide instead.

I am so glad they did. I don't think I would have done so myself without their prompting and it has made a big, big difference in my life. For me, counselling was really important, I think it saved my life.

Don and I were together for 22 years. He had a diagnosis of bi-polar disorder which he had managed really well for most of his life but in the last four years of his life it was a real struggle.

He'd made four attempts on his life so I was living with the constant fear of his suicide and I was bracing myself for it. Every time I got home I wondered if I would find him and eventually I actually was the one who found him at home after his suicide.

I had no idea how I would get through my partner's suicide. My normal life just stopped for six months. Initially I had a lot of help from family and friends but I didn't know what to do. When I could

not even take myself to the supermarket some counselling seemed a good idea.

A little door did open within me where for the first time I contemplated suicide myself. Yes, I did think of killing myself and it was scary. Seeing a counsellor helped me get through this. It was just vital for me. It was frightening to be starting to plan my death. I couldn't see my life without him.

I was in deep shock after his suicide even though I had been bracing for it. He'd attempted four times, so I guess I thought he wasn't really ever going to die, that it would be OK.

A week after Don's death I had my first session with Support After Suicide. I cannot speak more highly of the support I received. I needed to talk about it over and over again. I was seeing my counsellor twice a week at some stages. I truly valued our time together and it would have been a very dangerous time for me without it.

I found it much easier to have help from a counsellor because good friends and family can't keep hearing the same old things over and over all the time. I learnt to cope minute by minute, then hour by hour and now it is day by day. I don't need the counselling now but it is very comforting to know they are still there if I ever need to talk to someone again.

For Support Services:

www.supportaftersuicide.org.au

<http://community.supportaftersuicide.org.au>

Support After Suicide

PO Box 271

Richmond VIC 3121

Phone: (03) 9421 7640

Email:

aftersuicide@jss.org.au

Web:

supportaftersuicide.org.au

A program of
Jesuit Social Services