

# Survivors After Suicide

Your Path Toward Healing • Erasing the Stigma • Suicide is Preventable

A Program of Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services Summer 2019

## Emotional Heart Attack— Remembering My Husband Tom Lind

By Karlyn Nelson

Tom—my better half, my loving husband, Theo's amazing father—ended his life the day I started chemo for breast cancer. He was there for my first treatment, but he wasn't here to celebrate my last. From the moment I was diagnosed, he said he'd be by my side every step of the way. He was my biggest supporter and the one I could always lean on. I just wish he had leaned on me in his last months, his last days. I wish he had asked for help—if not from me, from someone, anyone. Because the world was a better place with Tom in it, and I am struggling to find my way without him. It just doesn't seem right that I conquered my disease but he couldn't conquer his.

I am still trying to process a lifetime without the man who was my world. Tom loved hard, worked hard, did life hard. On the inside his heart was so, so big—maybe too big. He felt the highest of the highs, but unbeknownst to most, also felt



Karlyn Nelson with husband, Tom Lind, and 3-year old son, Theo.

the lowest of the lows. Ultimately, those lows are what took him from us. At his memorial service, our priest called it an emotional heart attack. And that's what I've chosen to call it. Because the Tom I know, whom I loved so dearly, would not hurt us or leave us searching for answers. It could only be something so sudden as an emotional heart attack that would cause him to do this.

Depression doesn't care that your

smile is contagious. That you would do anything for your beautiful little family. That you're killing it in a career you love with a client list a mile long. Or that you have a hundred people who would help take your pain away if they could. Depression doesn't care what your life looks like on paper.

Tom's depression came in fits and spurts and he didn't like talking about it. He didn't want to burden you with his problems but he'd be happy to take on yours. He would occasionally get help for his depression, but he'd always end treatment before the issues were really resolved. To him, depression was a weakness he refused to accept in himself. Because how could someone whose smile lit up a room be depressed? He just didn't buy it.

He was the son of a surgeon, the oldest of four brothers, the friend you counted on, the partner you trusted, the father who provided. Tom's life mission

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Get Ready for the 21st Annual Alive & Running 5K Walk/Run!



Start building your teams and inviting family and friends to join you on **Sunday, September 29, 2019** at the 21st Annual Alive & Running 5K Walk/Run for Suicide Prevention!

This inspirational, life-affirming event raises funds and awareness for Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center. The proceeds help keep the 24/7 Crisis Line running, provide support at the scene of a suicide, bolster training for students and first responders, and fund support groups for people who have attempted suicide or are grieving a loss.

This year our featured speaker is Talinda Benington, wife of Linkin Park's Chester Bennington, who died by suicide in 2017. Multicultural pop artist Alex Boye, recipient of the 2019 Erasing the Stigma Leadership Award, will perform for his second year in a row. Find more details and register or donate at [www.aliveandrunning.org](http://www.aliveandrunning.org).



# Rick's Corner

It is 2019—sixteen years since my brother Ed's suicide. What has Ed missed since 2003?

The high school graduation of both his granddaughters; the birth of more grandchildren and his great grandson; the death of our mother; the celebration of our father's 95th birthday and many other experiences I wish he'd shared with us.

Ed has no memory of these events, no swelling of the heart with pride, no warming tears of joy or burning tears of sorrow. But I do. I remember for him through the roiling fog of grief.

I take comfort in talking to him at each of these events, asking for his opinion, sharing a laugh, then looking furtively around hoping no one has heard me talking to the clouds.

I hope the therapists reading this account don't question my sanity. My conversations with Ed are wistful thinking, not psychosis.

Therein lies the change—moving from wishful to wistful, from wishing he were here to carrying him here with me, always.

To paraphrase a great Dusty Springfield song, "Wishin' and hopin' and thinkin' and prayin'" can only take us so far.

Remembering and sharing keeps the memory of our loved ones alive.

*Rick*

Rick Mogil  
Program Director  
Didi Hirsch Suicide Bereavement Services

## Resources for Survivors and Suicide Prevention

### HELP LINES

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline/  
Didi Hirsch Suicide Crisis Line**  
24/7 English and Spanish  
(800) 273-TALK or (800) 273-8255

**Lifeline Crisis Chat/  
Didi Hirsch Crisis Chat**  
Lifeline Crisis Chat 24/7  
[www.crisischat.org](http://www.crisischat.org)  
Didi Hirsch Crisis Chat 1pm-9:30 pm  
daily [www.didihirsch.org/chat](http://www.didihirsch.org/chat)

**TEEN LINE:**  
Staffed by teens 6-10 pm; all other  
hours covered by the Didi Hirsch  
Suicide Prevention Center  
(800) TLC-TEEN, (800) 852-8336  
or (310) 855-HOPE

**Korean Crisis Line**  
(877) 727-4747

**Trevor Helpline:**  
Hotline for gay, lesbian, bisexual,  
transgender or questioning youth  
(800) 850-8078

### RESOURCES

**Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services:**  
10 sites in L.A. and Orange Counties  
L.A. County (888) 807-7250  
O.C. (714) 547-0885  
[www.didihirsch.org](http://www.didihirsch.org)

**American Association of Suicidology  
(AAS)** (202) 237-2280  
[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

**American Foundation for Suicide  
Prevention (AFSP)**  
(888) 333-2280 [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

**National Alliance for the Mentally Ill**  
For families of people with mental  
illness. National: (800) 950-6264  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration (SAMHSA)**  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

**Suicide Prevention Resource Center**  
(877) GET-SPRC or (877) 438-7772  
[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org) or [www.sprc.org/thepark](http://www.sprc.org/thepark)

### NEWSLETTER

**Survivors After Suicide** is a publication  
of Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention  
Center. Survivors After Suicide  
bereavement groups provide support  
to those who have lost loved ones to  
suicide.

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Rick Mogil; Patricia Speelman  
**Designer:** Curtis Hill

**Reprint Policy:**  
Nonprofit support organizations may  
reprint material from our newsletter.

**More resources at**  
[www.didihirsch.org](http://www.didihirsch.org)

# Strength

By Terry Jago

In the early days of my grief,  
a tear would well up in my eyes,  
a lump would form in my throat,  
but you would not know—  
I would hide it,  
And I am strong.

In the middle days of my grief,  
I would look ahead and see that wall  
that I attempted to go around  
as an ever-present reminder of a wall  
yet unscaled.  
Yet I did not attempt to scale it for the  
strong will survive  
And I am strong.

In the later days of my grief,  
I learned to climb over that wall—  
step by step—  
Remembering, crying, grieving  
and tears flowed steadily  
as I painstakingly went over,  
The way was long, but I did make it,  
For I am strong.

Near the resolution of my grief,  
a tear will well up in my eyes,  
a lump will form in my throat,  
but I will let that tear fall—  
and you will see it.  
Through it you will see  
that I still hurt and I care,  
For I am strong.

Reprinted from

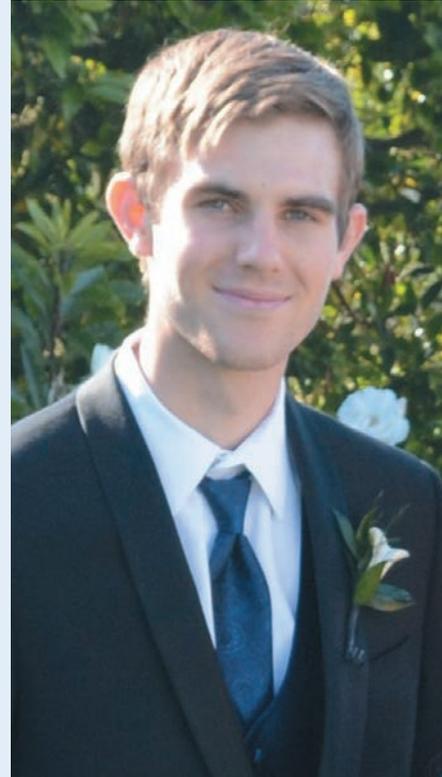
*Comforting Friends*

July/August, 2018 Vol XXI, Issue 7

# David's Story: A Mother's Remembrance

By Kathy Welch

My son, David Sliff, was 23 when he died by suicide December 31, 2017 after losing his battle with depression. David was an extraordinary young man, gifted in writing, playing music, and anything mathematical. He understood people with a depth and sensitivity that most of us never achieve in a lifetime. He tried fitting into a world that didn't always welcome the sensitive souls with the same acceptance and kindness he showed others. David was studying to become a physicist. He wanted to help make the world a better place.



David wanted to live and tried desperately to get help. While working with a psychiatrist, he researched anti-depressant medications, applied to numerous clinical trials, studied the neurobiophysics of the brain, underwent brain studies, adhered to a strict diet and purchased expensive supplements that promised to increase his brain wellness. David knew he had a brain abnormality and was determined to find a medication that would give him stability and alleviate the emotional and physical pain his depression caused. When he couldn't find the help he sought, David eventually turned to researching the least traumatic ways of taking his life.

Even though I was acutely aware of my son's depression and am an ICU nurse who has cared for many survivors of suicide and their families, I wasn't

able to save him. People say, "You did everything you could have", but I will always wish I had done more. People have said it wasn't my job to save him, but try telling that to any parent.

This is David's story and, although he is no longer here to continue his journey of life, his family and friends now have the opportunity to continue living their lives in a way that honors David's kindness toward others. My message today is about how our loss can lead to our own growth and survival.

Our stories, although different, share a common thread.

Our loved ones died from a severe clinical depression and suffered both physically and emotionally. We all have lived through that tragic experience and understand what others do not. We have all asked ourselves, "How do we go on? Will we ever survive, get out of bed, laugh or love again? How do I even function or interact with others?"

We've heard "everyone grieves differently" a million times but one thing I have learned from experiencing such a profound personal loss is that I'm not alone. Not only am I not alone but we really do need each other for our own self-care and survival after suicide. The extraordinary bond that we as survivors have, and the understanding we can provide one another, is one of the greatest sources of strength I have experienced.

# Melancholie

JoAnn Hadfield

At Starbucks after a grueling Saturday morning workout, and likely facing a routine, solitary Saturday afternoon, I opened a friend's post of the 'Melancholy' sculpture: My reaction was immediate. This sad, beautiful sculpture made my heart pound. Bittersweet, but It made me happy! I thought I never have to explain myself again. THIS is how I feel....And someone else on this planet understands. I felt much less alone.



*Sculptor Albert Gyorgy created his artwork, Melancholy, as a way of coping with the intense sadness and isolation he felt with the loss of his wife.*

## For Both of Us

By Sacha

As long as I can  
I will look at this world  
For both of us.  
As long as I can  
I will laugh with the birds,  
I will sing with the flowers,  
I will pray to the stars,  
For both of us.  
As long as I can  
I will remember  
How many things  
On this earth  
Were your joy.  
And I will live  
As well as you  
Would want me to live  
As long as I can.

Reprinted from  
*Forever Remembered*,  
Marcia Woodward & Dan Zadra,  
November 1977

## Survivors Find Hope and Healing Making Art



*Kita Curry, Melissa Rivers, Ed Massey, Ronda Rousey and Pamela Kluft unveil Massey's three-story canvas on exterior of new Suicide Prevention Center*

In December of 2018, more than 60 children and adult survivors of suicide loss and attempts gathered in Ed Massey's art studio in Redondo Beach to share their stories and paint the eye-catching three-story tall canvas that now adorns the exterior of Didi Hirsch's new Suicide Prevention Center in Century City.

Pamela Kluft, Vice Chair of Didi Hirsch's Board of Directors, generously sponsored this project to honor her sister, Beth Hess, who died by suicide in 2012. Didi Hirsch also partnered with Massey's non-profit, Portraits of Hope, to create the public art piece.

Shortly after staff moved into the new 14,156 square foot center, Board member Melissa Rivers and suicide prevention advocate Ronda Rousey helped unveil the banner before a large crowd of survivors and camera crews. The uplifting floral artwork serves as a beautiful reminder to all who enter that hope and healing is possible after the loss of a loved one.

## ORANGE COUNTY SERVICES



*Orange County Tree of Hope*

The Orange County office discussed the importance of allowing a safe space for Survivors to leave their mark after transitioning out of services. As a result, the Tree of Hope was established in 2019. Before departing, Survivors can take a leaf and personalize it with an inspirational message. Some Survivors may choose to write a hopeful word or quote. Others put the initials of their loved one. No matter what each Survivor chooses, the meaning of the tree is to instill hope and support, and to memorialize their loved one as well as their journey here with Didi Hirsch MHS. They pick a unique place on the Tree to place their leaf so that when they return or survivors who are seeking services come for the very first time, they are given a visual that they do not walk this path alone. As the message above the Tree of Hope reads: "There is Hope and there is Help".

**- OC Team**



*Árbol de Esperanza del Condado de Orange*

La oficina del Condado de Orange converso acerca de la importancia de permitir un espacio seguro para que los sobrevivientes dejen su marca durante su transición después de nuestros servicios. Como resultado, el Árbol de Esperanza se estableció en el 2019. Antes de partir, los sobrevivientes pueden tomar una hoja y personalizarla con un mensaje de inspiración. Algunos sobrevivientes pueden elegir escribir una palabra o cita de esperanza. Otros escriben las iniciales de su ser querido. No importa lo que elija cada Sobreviviente, el significado del árbol es inculcar esperanza y apoyo, al igual como conmemorar a sus seres queridos y su trayectoria aquí en Didi Hirsch MHS. Pueden elegir un lugar especial en el Árbol para colocar su hoja, para cuando regresen o para nuevos sobrevivientes que están buscando servicios por primera vez, tengan una imagen visual de que no caminan por este camino solos. Como lee el mensaje localizado arriba del Árbol de Esperanza, "Hay Esperanza y hay Ayuda".

**- Personal del Condado de Orange**

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### ***Emotional Heart Attack (Continued from cover)***

was to make others happy and live up to their standards. Little did he know that his standards were so much higher than most. He felt so deeply. Things stayed with him. He would spend hours, nights, days, trying to solve problems to help others.

But now I'm wondering why. Why is depression still not fully talked about? Why do we often hide suicides? Why do we so quickly dismiss mental health issues? To me, it doesn't make any sense. Because depression, like cancer, or

diabetes or the color of your eyes, is not a choice you can control. Yet I'm being lauded as a warrior, a fighter, a survivor, because I have cancer—something that chose me. But my husband, who suffered from mental illness, sat in silence, in regret, often in loneliness. Many, like Tom, are afraid to reach out. Or share their story. Or seek deeper answers. And this breaks my heart.

I know my story of the amazing, funny, generous Tom Lind, is only one of many. No one should have to feel

this pain, to seek answers to so many unanswered questions, or experience a life not lived to its fullest potential. No one should have to suffer in silence. We must erase the stigma attached to mental illness. We must recognize the signs. We must encourage mental health.

My husband Tom died by suicide on September 24, 2018 at the age of 41. We will always remember you and I will love you forever.

## IN HONOR OF

Lori and Lawrence  
Sroka-Hartley  
Avant Artists  
Daniella S. Ayala  
Jane Levin Barber  
Kelly Brown  
Crystal Li Cohen and  
Andrew J. Cohen  
Kita Curry  
Jeff Eamer, MA  
Idris and Sabrina Elba  
John Englund  
Andy Erman  
Dr. Norman Farberow  
Kimmy Hirsch Feinstein

Patrice Hirsch Feinstein  
Lynn G. Feld  
Charlotte and Jeremy Fletcher  
Robert Floch  
Linda and Marty Frank  
Ruben J. Garcia  
John Gasienica  
Jairo Guarnizo  
Michael D. Hindman  
Erin Hubbard  
Diana Hufford  
Masahito "Eddie" Ito  
Clay Kaspuski  
Pam Klufft  
Kim Kowsky

Estanislao Kreutzer  
Ali Lafayette  
Mary and Stan Lelewer  
Nancy Levin  
Carolyn Levitan  
Janine and Henry Lichstein  
McKenna Grace Martin  
Dawn and Andrew McIntosh  
Christopher Mendoza  
Barbara Miras  
Keri Mossel  
Madison Murphy-Sinclair  
Laura Ornest  
Andrew Pappalau  
The Honorable Donald F. Pitts

Doria Ragland  
Florence Rosenbloom  
Andrew Rubin  
Nancy and Miles Rubin  
Jilliene Schenkel  
Lisa Schumacher  
Miguel Serricchio  
Leila Rouhi Shaffer  
Barbie Shapiro  
Andrew Erik Smith  
Mr. and Mrs. Washington  
Rebecca Zeitlin  
Eileen and Robert Zigman

## IN MEMORY OF

Jordan  
Mimie and Brody  
Julio Aleman  
Larry Ames  
Julie Anderson  
Miriam Atlee  
Christopher Bendasch  
Thomas M. Barthle  
Benjamin Beezy  
Scott Bentley  
Drew Bernstein  
Sammy Bloom  
Anette Brown  
Erik Brown  
Philip Rodger Brown  
Sean Brown  
Michael Edward Clapp  
Josemaria Comparan  
Chris Cornell  
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Orly Degani  
Terri Ann Dulaney  
Kevin Ellison  
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Larry Szpila  
Brandon Toh  
Bear Townsend  
AJ Trevino  
Marcos Vidal  
Johnny Wardlaw  
Job Weiss  
Mark and Andrea Weitz  
John Winterrowd  
Paul Woodrow  
Jennifer Nohelani Worrell  
Aaron Yanagisawa  
Joshua Young  
Alex Zambory

*July 28, 2018 through June 27, 2019*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **21st Annual Alive & Running 5K Walk/Run**

Sunday, September 29, 2019, 7:00-9:45 a.m.

[aliveandrunning.org](http://aliveandrunning.org)

### **International Survivors of a Suicide Loss Day**

Saturday, November 23, 2019

Visit [afsp.org](http://afsp.org) for times and locations of events in Los Angeles, Ventura and Orange Counties

### **Survivors After Suicide Winter Potluck**

Saturday, December 7, 2019, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

Veterans Memorial Park, Rotunda Room, 4117 Overland Avenue, Culver City

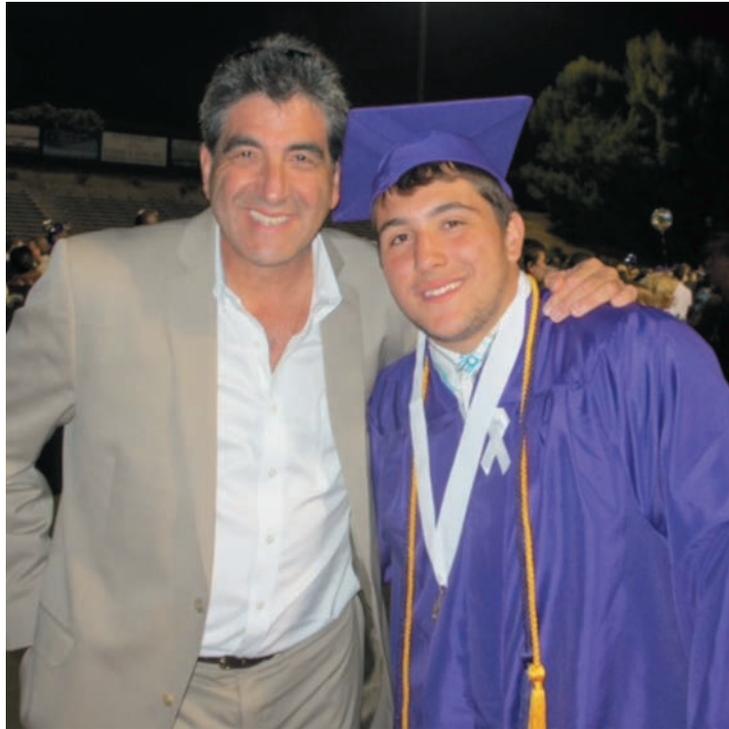
# Continuing Alex's Legacy

By Miguel Serricchio

For more than 3 years, I have tried to make sense of losing my son, Alex, to suicide. Not being very religious, when people tell me "God has bigger plans," or there is a "larger meaning," I struggle to comprehend it.

My entire life, I have always focused on the positive. This might sound like the opposite of what you would want to do after losing someone you love. Don't get the wrong idea. The hole in my life and heart will never be filled. I hurt every day and this will never go away. But now, my goal is to remember Alex's kind soul and how he always looked for ways to help others even when he wasn't able to help himself.

After losing Alex, our family chose different ways to keep his legacy alive: I became a Big Brother for a year and now volunteer at Didi Hirsch as a peer facilitator, member of the Speakers' Bureau, and advocate in the Hispanic community. My oldest son, Ignacio, and Alex's best friend, is a huge advocate for Mental Health education and started a #GreenNailChallenge to help raise awareness. My daughter, Maru, a professor, LMFT & Art Therapist, has focused her career on mental health.



*Miguel Serricchio with his son, Alex.*

Since Alex left us, many parents have reached out to me, worried about their son or daughter. They want to talk, understand, and figure out how to deal with it. Recently a colleague asked if I would join her and her two daughters for dinner. She told me her 22-year-old was struggling and hoped that, by sharing my story, her daughter might be willing to open up.

During dinner, we talked about life and, half way through, I felt comfortable

enough to tell Alex's story, the path I was taking, and how I was dealing with it. We said our goodbyes and agreed to have dinner again soon. The following day, my colleague hugged and thanked me. She told me how my story had encouraged her oldest daughter, who had dropped out of college and was on a downward spiral, to talk about her suicidal thoughts and cutting herself.

Three months later, her daughter asked to meet with me. For over 2 hours, she told me her story: her difficulties as a pre-teen, the family dynamic, and how she was hiding everything because no one would listen without judgment.

I listened, interjected a few comments here and there, but mainly just listened. She wanted to thank me.

After hearing Alex's story, she decided to turn things around. She is back in college, just started a new job, is going to therapy, seeing a psychiatrist, and more importantly, is willing to share her struggles with her family. We agreed to meet as mentor-mentee at least monthly, or whenever she needs me. I think Alex would be proud.

## Do You Know a Teenager Who Has Experienced the Death of Someone By Suicide?



Help us connect teens to an 8-week grief support group where they can talk with other teens about their shared experience. Meetings are in small groups, once a week, for 90-minute sessions where they'll learn healthy stress-management tools and new and creative coping skills to help them deal with their loss. Here they'll find emotional and therapeutic support from clinicians and other teens so they don't feel isolated and alone. Teen support groups are part of the new Everychild Suicide Prevention Project.

For more information call 424-362-2911 or [spccounseling@dididhirsch.org](mailto:spccounseling@dididhirsch.org).



4760 South Sepulveda Boulevard  
Culver City, California 90230

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**Sunday, September 29, 2019**  
**7a.m.—9:45a.m.**  
**West 88th Street and**  
**La Tijera Boulevard near LAX**  
**[www.aliveandrunning.org](http://www.aliveandrunning.org)**

## SAS Group Meetings

Everyone who has completed an eight-week Survivors After Suicide support group is invited to attend scheduled monthly meetings at any of the locations listed below. There is no charge.

### Drop-In Groups

#### San Gabriel Valley

Meets the 3rd Saturday of each month, 10:00—11:30 a.m.  
Meeting Dates: Aug 17, Sep 21, Oct 19, Nov 16, Dec 21

#### Santa Ana—English and Spanish

Meets the 1st Wednesday of each month, 6:00—7:30 p.m.  
Meeting dates: Aug 7, Sep 4, Oct 2, Nov 6, Dec 4

#### San Fernando Valley

Meets the 2nd Saturday of each month, 11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.  
Meeting dates: Aug 10, Sep 14, Oct 12, Nov 9, Dec 14

#### South Bay

Meets the 2nd Sunday of each month, 11:00 a.m.—12:30 p.m.  
Meeting dates: Aug 11, Sep 8, Oct 13, Nov 10, Dec 8

#### West Los Angeles

Meets every Saturday morning from 10 a.m.—11:30 a.m.

### Eight-Week Groups

Groups meet once a week for an hour and a half for eight consecutive weeks starting in February, June and October with locations in Sherman Oaks, Culver City, Redondo Beach, San Marino, Santa Ana and Newbury Park.

Please call to be placed in a group.  
Los Angeles/Ventura counties: (424) 362-2912 or Orange County: (714) 547-0885