



## *Ellis' Story: Surviving the Loss of My Father*

I keep a wooden box full of chocolates in the back corner of my refrigerator. It's sat there for two years. You'd think I was saving it for something or it's a neglected guilty pleasure. I see it daily; but haven't touched it since November of 2019.

*It's the last thing my dad gave me before he died - I can't bring myself to move it.*

I've come to conclude that, for myself, moving on from the trauma of suicide is not only an unattainable desire, but also a great fear. It's a daily struggle to come to grips with the fact that he is gone and figure out what part of my life he still inhabits.

This need to "hang on" has not been easy to live with, as I'm sure many can relate. It's made it harder to talk about my loss, seek help and find my own path forward.

If you've ever worn a costume to a Halloween party and no one else dressed up - you're on track to understanding how the months after feel. No matter their actions, you feel alone in a room full of people you love. There's lots of support, but you're convinced no one truly gets it. There's outreach, but you're not sure if it's care or society's odd romanticism of suicide. And, there's an almost certain mindset that you are the only person in the world wearing this pain.

You become the storm cloud - yet people tire from only taking about the weather. They shoot glares when you rain on the subway, or stuff into an elevator. They begin to imagine you'd rather not talk about it.

As my luck had it, the cold New York winter kept my storm cloud from unleashing into a tropical storm. At best, that's how I can describe my first visit to a Samaritans Survivor meeting in January 2019.

It only took until half way around a circle of twenty introductions when I realized: everyone in this room understands this. Some are wise from weathering their storm decades ago, while others are still bailing water from the basement and without power. The true spectrum of experience is not always comforting, but every word spoken has value. I expected intense discomfort – but left wishing for "one more episode before bed" – preferring the meeting never end.

The brunt of discomfort that night came from walking back into a Wednesday night in New York. The meeting room, I realized, had been complete peace.

The Samaritans are a cause as noble as any. The suicide hotline saves countless lives per year on the front-lines. The survivor groups arguably save more – as they help families and individuals who have lost, rebuild. The embrace from a survivor group is a lifeline to anyone in need.

This year I made the decision TCS NYC Marathon to support Samaritans. I feared sharing my story and that raising money would be more "moving on" than I was ready for. In turn, I have found incredible fulfillment from the process. It's become an endeavor that, for the first time since his death, is entirely personal.



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While running, I realized that while very personal, my dad also existed in this effort. Unknowingly, he connected me to a community of other survivors who I now care deeply about. I want them to have the same support I received. It provides joy to know that maybe, one person has a shoulder in the aftermath thanks to my efforts.

For me, Samaritans aided my emergence from my personal storm cloud. While it will forever be on the horizon, it's because of them that I have a place where I can always go to talk about the weather. Thanks to Samaritans, I've made progress since 2019.

To me, progress is the ultimate accomplishment – Samaritans helped me find it.

*Ellis Grubman  
November 2021*