



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *South Bay/LA Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

FEBRUARY 2018 ISSUE

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"This newsletter is sponsored by an anonymous family in memory of our children".

**OUR NEXT MEETING**  
will be Feb. 7th, the first Wednesday  
of the month at 7:00 P.M.

**LOCATION:**  
**The Neighborhood Church**  
415 Paseo Del Mar  
Palos Verdes Estates, CA 90274  
(South of Torrance Beach)

**DIRECTIONS:** Pacific Coast Hwy. to Palos Verdes Blvd. → Palos Verdes Blvd. becomes Palos Verdes Drive West. Veer Right. → Go to Via Corta (stop sign just past Malaga Cove Plaza). Turn right. → Go down hill to Arroyo (stop sign). Turn right. → Continue down hill to end of street. → Turn left on Paseo Del Mar. → Meetings are held at the west end of the church.

**--Please remember to park in the church parking lot and not on the street.--**

The Compassionate Friends  
Mission Statement...

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

The Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> meeting will have our guest speaker, Susan Auerback.

Don't forget to send in your updated information for our data base.

For a free Picture Button of your child, call Ken at (310) 544-6690.

TCF Lunch Group meets for lunch at Mimi's Café every Friday at 1:00. (Crenshaw and PCH). All members are invited.

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The Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> meeting will include our guest speaker, Susan Auerbach. Susan lost her son, Noah, to suicide in 2013 when he was 21. She will give an illustrated book talk that will focus on the book's themes of child loss (from any cause) and of the grieving process generally, as well as suicide loss. Susan illustrates her talks with comforting images and reads highlights from the book, followed up with a Q&A session. Her grief memoir, "I'll Write Your Name on Every Beach: A Mother's Quest for Comfort, Courage & Clarity After Suicide Loss" (Jessica Kingsley Publishers), bears witness to the devastating early years after a child's suicide, exploring challenges common to those left behind while offering insight and inspiration to help survivors heal. This book deals with the themes of suicide loss through the lens of the author's personal grief.



Susan Auerbach is a suicide loss survivor, trained in suicide awareness, gate-keeper crisis intervention and bereavement group facilitation. She is also a Professor of Education at California State University, Northridge, blogger for Walking the Mourner's Path After a Child's Suicide, and serves on the Advisory Board of Survivors After Suicide, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services Center, Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Suicide Prevention Network.

Part grief memoir, part personal essay, part self-help, the book blends her story with quotes from experts, original poetry, and soothing mind-body exercises to bring light and hope to the grief journey. Please join us for this guest speaker no matter how your child died. For those interested, her book will be available at the meeting. All royalties from the book go to the Noah Langholz Remembrance Fund for suicide prevention and postvention (survivor support) programs. You can go to her website, [www.susanauerbachwriter.com](http://www.susanauerbachwriter.com) for more information.

## Lest We Forget

It is not how our child died, but they have died. The grief does not change if our child died by accident, illness, or they choose to end their life by

suicide. The grief is the same and we all have to find our way through it.

The intensity of grief is not predicated on how we lost our child but in fact, that we lost our child, and the grief is the same. If we look at it as if we are all on this lifeboat surrounded by a sea of grief, we have no choice but to help one another.

--Ed Motuzas TCF, Metrowest, Holliston, MA

## What Now?

If you are reading this because your child died, I'm very sorry. If you are anything like me, you ask yourself regularly, "What now?" When my son, Wilem, died in 1994, my world turned upside down. Simple, daily routines became baffling and overwhelming. All the color went out of life. I had trouble sleeping. I had trouble eating. I had trouble leaving the house. I cried all the time at sad things, at happy things, at nothing. People tried to help, but they didn't know how. They didn't know what to say, and some of the things they did say made me feel worse. I started feeling different, isolated, and hopeless.

I didn't want to live and I didn't want to die. I just wanted the pain to stop. But it didn't stop, not for a long time. Day after day, I asked, "Now what?" Over time, I found some answers to this question. Here are some things I did to get through life one day at a time, until I could live again:

1. Stay sober. This might be the most important thing I did. The death of a child leaves you particularly vulnerable to becoming dependent on alcohol, prescription drugs, and other mind-altering substances. This makes things worse, not better. Grieving means feeling the grief. If you numb yourself, you only postpone the feelings. Also, drinking can lead to isolation. I needed other people to help me heal, and other people, like my surviving child, needed me. If you are having trouble getting sober or staying sober, get help.
2. Tell yourself you're not crazy; you're just out of your mind. Burying your child doesn't make sense. Our children are supposed to outlive us. Trying to make sense can make you feel crazy, and perhaps some people actually do go crazy. It's awfully hard to comprehend what has happened to our children and our lives. When our minds can't supply an answer that makes sense, we don't stop searching. So we have to "go out of our minds" to find an answer. I went outside of my mind in search of better minds. I investigated spiritual

matters, grieving processes, and I went to a therapist. All of these helped. I also talked to a lot of other bereaved parents. I don't feel like I'm out of my mind anymore.

3. Remind yourself that you don't have to go to social events, or if you do, you can always leave early, and you don't owe anyone an explanation. This is particularly good information during the holidays, and around family events like birthdays and anniversaries. I had a hard time being in groups of people, especially when a good time was supposed to be had by all. Often, when I declined an invitation, or tried to leave a gathering early, people wanted an explanation, as if the death of my child wasn't a self-evident excuse. Some of your friends and family may want you at a gathering because they think it's good for you to get out. That's for you to decide, not them.

4. Find a support group, or don't. Everyone grieves in his or her own way. There is no correct way to grieve, but there are things that help. Support groups can be uncomfortable, even painful, before they help you feel better, and it's up to you to decide how far you can go. If you are a group person, find a support group. I went to The Compassionate Friends where I met other people whose children had died. I got real information about the grieving process, and a place to talk about how I felt where no one judged me or tried to change the way I felt. There are a number of other support groups for bereaved parents, as well. If you don't see yourself as a group person, you don't have to put yourself through it. However, I do recommend that you find someone to talk to. Holding on to the pain can affect your health and make things worse.

5. Pain isn't always your enemy, and pleasure isn't always your friend. Sometimes, there is no choice but to hurt. And any search for pleasure just postpones the pain. I came across a Turkish saying I like: "Share the pain, it halves the pain. Share the joy, it doubles the joy".

6. Write. Get a notebook and start a journal. Write every day. Don't read what you write, just keep writing. Write to everyone who sent you a condolence card and thank them. Go into online chat rooms and write to other people who are grieving. Write poems, especially if you are not a poet. I'm not a poet, but here's a poem I wrote:

The Weight  
A big load  
for such a little boy  
you carried us all to your grave.



Strange place to come on your birthday.

I bring a balloon and flowers

I polish your marker

try to wipe off the years

the sun flashes dull on the aging bronze

--no vacancy, no vacancy.

My heart is so full

my world so empty

I dangle

in the hollow space between.

7. Do something mundane in your child's name, and don't tell anybody. We are all familiar with public displays such as planting trees and creating foundations in the names of our children. These are important acknowledgments of their lives. You can't plant a tree every day. But you do think of your child every day. You don't have to make a public statement to honor your child. Most of your grief is private and mundane. Sometimes it's hard to get out of bed and go to work. But you can do it in your child's name. It's easy to get angry when someone tries to squeeze into your lane in traffic. I'll often let someone in while saying out loud, "Willie, that one's for you." Live your life in your child's name. But don't tell anyone.

These seven suggestions came to me over time, and they worked for me over time. They are a compilation of experience shared freely with me by other people, who, in their grief, found compassion. And in their compassion they found it useful, sometimes necessary, to pass on what they had learned. I hope these tips help you, and if they do, that you find someone to whom you can pass them on.

--Carl Yorke Reprinted from We Need Not Walk Alone, national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.

## "The Fellowship of Those Who Bear the Mark of Pain"

We don't know each other when we meet on the street, at church, or at a meeting, but once our loss is known, people quietly share their pain with us. When we are alone with someone, a voice is lowered, eyes are downcast, and in a whisper we hear, "You probably don't know this, but I lost someone..." And for a few moments, we are immersed in each other's pain as someone shares their awful secret, knowing that we share a loss that is so profound that no one truly "gets it" without having walked in our shoes. It may be a child gone

for decades, a spouse we never knew, or an end so terrible it is never spoken of, but for just a moment we truly understand each other at a level so profound it cannot be described. It brings us a moment of peace to share our loss with another and know we are not alone.

Someone will quietly say, "We need to talk ... not now, but when we are alone," and you will know that they are fellow travelers on your journey. Strangely, they arrive from nowhere when you least expect it and sometimes when you need it most. I will not forget the snow plow driver clearing my drive way who learned of my loss. He stopped in the driving snow, locked eyes with me and in a very low voice said, "I carry a seven year old boy in my head. I'll never forget him; I see him every day. That's all I can say." He climbed back into his truck and slowly turned to me and said, "If you ever need anything, call me. You understand? Call me," and slowly drove away.

I remember the hardened woman at the DMV who stopped cold when she saw my son's death certificate and locked eyes with me in an intense stare. She stopped my mumbled explanations about missing forms with a soft, "Wait here," and spoke with the Manager returning with my plates and receipt. "It gets better," she said softly and called, "Next."

The Police Officer on a detail on my street asked about my son. When I told him, his eyes grew wet and he pulled off his glove and took my hand. "Whatever you need, whenever you need it," he said, handing me his card. "Call me," he said, "and I mean that."

As we arranged for a memorial stone, the woman at the Monument Company quietly shared her story with us. She lost two adult sons in two years, at the same age as our son. We were instantly friends and confidants.

The bond is instant and deep; your eyes lock and feelings flow unspoken; you have things to share that are so private, yet you share them with this stranger who is suddenly closer than family. "We need to talk ..." "yes, we do." In a world of the well-meaning "I know how you feel" (how could you know?) or "It will get better (no, it will get different, not better,) we may feel angry at inept greeting card expressions of grief. We must not forget that there is no common language for grief in our culture, no shared set of ways of acting and speaking that address the need to reach out to others in this time of crisis. People do the best that they can and we must accept the awkwardness

and hesitation as simple acts of compassion.

Eventually, the time comes when you face another grieving parent who has no idea of your loss or your pain and is facing the same torment that you live with every day. You watch for a private moment and you whisper, "We need to talk..."

We are fellow travelers on a rocky road; we are The Compassionate Friends, as Albert Schweitzer so eloquently put it, "we are the fellowship of those who bear the mark of pain."  
--John MacDonald, TCF North Shore/Boston



### **When Fatherhood Is Snatched Away**

Ask any man what is going on in his life, and he will immediately talk about 2 things: his job, and his children. Those are the 2 main identifiers in the life of a man. Men are less open to talking about the small, detailed items of everyday life that women love to talk about. But, they can talk forever about their jobs and their kids. Those are the things that make men tick!

When a child dies, fathers often grieve in ways that are worlds apart from the way mothers grieve. Mothers will openly cry bitter tears. They will seek out others to talk to about the heartache being felt. Mothers will often wear their emotions on the outside, allowing others to see and hear their pain—hoping that there will be a circle of family and friends that will stay nearby to help during this awful time of loneliness.

Fathers, on the other hand, will often turn inward with their pain, when fatherhood has been snatched away. Changes will occur that are subtler than with a grieving mother. Fathers will lose that enthusiasm they once had about their "bragging rights" of being a father. What greater accomplishment is there to a man than to be successful in his role as a father? To have that role suddenly taken away is a blow to the heart of a father that is devastating, and leaves a lasting imprint of pain upon his heart.

When a child dies, a father will often feel like he is a complete failure for not being able to prevent the unthinkable. He not only feels like he has failed his family, but, most important of all, he feels as though he has failed his child who has been taken away by death.

When fatherhood is snatched away, changes occur in men that are often misunderstood. Men

will frequently stop talking about the "father" part of their lives, and act as though it never existed. Talking about lost dreams of days ahead with his child is too painful, and remembering times past of walks in the park, trips to the store, or drives in the car together are too hard to even think about. No more soccer games. No more coaching the little league team. No more working long hours on the tedious details of his little girl's doll house. When a child dies, a large part of a his identity is suddenly taken away, and he is left wandering through a heavy fog, not knowing who he is any more.

How can a father get through this loss of his identity as a father? He needs gentle and constant reminders that he will always be a father - even if his child is no longer physically here. That's a hard concept to accept soon after the death of a child, but in time it begins to make more sense. Fatherhood can never be taken away! That is a title that will be worn by a father forevermore, and he needs reassurance of that! Fathers need space and time to readjust their thinking.

Women are by nature more verbal, so it is often difficult for a man to explain his feelings to his wife or others when a child dies. Men can sometimes work through this part of grief by building something in memory of his child - a garden, a memorial bench, a special display case in the room that holds photos and other treasures of times spent together as a family, and especially as father and child. Lastly, remember that you are never alone in this walk! Every step taken is a step closer in this journey of grief to healing!

--Clara Hinton [www.silentgrief.com](http://www.silentgrief.com)

## Not Guilt, Regret

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children safe from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn't we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, whether of anger or left unspoken, haunts us. Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty about that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever, come to our child, the correct name for emotion is regret.

The crushing pain is still there, but regret is

softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate. If that name doesn't feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time.

Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt - we feel regret.

--We Need Not Walk Alone, Summer Edition 2004



## Feelings

I need to talk to a friend, but I don't even know what I want to say. I wish someone could look inside my head and know all the things I wonder and think about. I'm scared, I'm so afraid. I am lonely and lost and so many other things. My head just spins and my heart aches and my stomach is in knots. I don't know what to do or what to say. I want to go and yet where?

I don't want to start all over again, and I don't want to make all the decisions alone. I really don't want to make any of the decisions. I don't want to think. I'm tired. Is this life? Things are rotten and cruel, and the pit I see is deep, long, and dark. How will I get to the top; how will I get out?

I wander through the house, doing the things I have to do and then realize I am just sitting on the floor with all the memories of him, friends, family, kids, heartaches, headaches, sadness, loss of dear ones, good times, bad times, worry times, struggles, fights, laughter, things we did that were funny and the mistakes we never seem to forget.

I want someone to put their arms around me and tell me it will be all right. "Just wait and see, you need time." I cry for hours hoping that all of a sudden something will happen to take away my fears and change what has happened in my life. But the moment does not change.

I hate the words, "why" and "how come." I pray for that great strength we are all supposed to have, and I ask for hope, guidance and, yes, another chance. I'd like to just turn back time for a few special moments, but it doesn't happen. I ask myself, why me? Why do I have the bad luck? What did I do that was so awful for this to happen? I look around and see really awful people and the awful things they do, and yet good things happen to them. Why not to me?

People say how strong I am, how tough I am. But I'm not as strong or tough as they think. They really don't even know me, not now. I play the game and laugh with everyone and enjoy life with

everyone and then they are gone and I go home again. Tomorrow all of this will repeat itself.

Life goes on, but how? Bv

This is how I am today, God. Please bring me peace tomorrow and put a smile on my face so I can put that smile on the face of others. I don't want to hear lies from others and I don't want to be told I'm in my own world of self pity. I am lost, mad, angry and hurt. I have needed to say all of these things to a dear friend who would not condemn but understand, accept and say nothing.

People keep asking me how I am, how I am doing. Well, this is how I am today. If I seem to fail people's expectations, then I am sorry.

--Shirley Lairmore, Moreno Valley, CA



## The Simple Thing

Mothers often come into my store with their children looking for special gifts for their teachers, coaches, den mothers, etc. I never fail to notice a mother browsing around with her son.

I can't seem to stop watching their every move, listening to their casual conversation, picking up an item they know the other one would like. Then he says, "Mom, look, did you see this?" and I immediately turn to look, thinking for a brief instant the voice is one I long so much to hear. I fight back the tears waiting for them to leave. I want to tell his mother that she has just experienced a most treasured memory as she unknowingly walks out the door and down the street with her son beside her, in a world that for her is still a place so normal, so care-free, so predictable ... and so very taken for granted.

--Mickey Crawford, Winder, GA

## Dear Family Members,

I don't know about you but it's hard for me to believe that a month has passed since the Holidays. Amazingly it's been a month and a half since our Worldwide Candlelight Memorial. The saying, "time flies" is so true. I was talking about this with a friend of mine the other day. Twenty years ago, when she was a child, she lost her brother. She was stunned when she realized 365 days had elapsed since her dad's passing. It wasn't the one year anniversary on the calendar; it was the "lost" days. She wondered what she did with the time.

Sound familiar? I told her in two words, "Grieving" and "Healing". Of course that was the

simplistic answer. We went deeper into all of the things that encompassed and talked about the things we go through. We talked about "The Fog" and how exhausting grieving on its own can be. When we pile all of the every day things that we have that need to get done on top of that it's very easy to lose the perspective of time. We can also realize some things just aren't that important anymore while other things move to the top of our list. Thankfully by the time we finished she didn't, in her words, "feel like a failure for not getting more things done". I encouraged her to be kinder to herself.

There's another part of perspective that's been on my mind a great deal lately. I can't remember ever having a conversation directly about it. Maybe we've talked "around" and "about" it at our meetings but we haven't put a word to it. My thought is about "Expectations". In time, what do we expect? I share with others that I never expect to be "over" the death of my daughter, Ashley, or stop missing her. My hope, when the fog cleared, was to be able to continue with my life and share the love my daughter taught me. I expected I would know what this looked like to me when the time was right but I was looking.

Please don't misunderstand. This question and thought won't apply to everyone but the seed has been planted. Early on this journey we're just surprised when we can put one foot in front of the other and others are happy if we can brush our teeth. I think there comes a time on our journey when we can and should step back and ask, "What do I do with this?" I feel its part of the journey and, yes, an important part of the healing. I often remind others to, "Be active in your healing".

Sometimes this can come as an intentional decision, such as a scholarship. Sometimes it's being a better person for the gift of love we've been given. Sometimes it's helping others on our journey. Of course, like our journey, this is individualistic but I do believe it's a choice. This can be difficult because we can feel that when this time comes we're leaving our loved one behind.

My perspective is just the opposite. It can be a celebration and a way of saying, "You still matter". Change and moving to a different place can be very hard in the best of situations. We can get comfortable with what we know. We may not like where we are but we know where we are. Please remember we all have something to offer. After all, we've gotten this far. The question is do we step back and see what that looks like no

matter where we, and they, are. Again, it's perspective. What's yours?

--Garrett Tollenger, Baltimore TCF

## Despair and Hope

I find myself thinking a great deal about despair. I think about it often enough that I actually looked it up. It means "to lose hope." I don't have a great deal of previous experience with despair. But now I belong to a new group. This group knows a great deal about despair. My previous group really didn't.

When I try to think of times I've felt despair before, it mostly takes me back to much younger days and failed romances. In the scheme of things, those problems (and others) no longer seem worthy of despair. In our bereavement, I believe a big challenge is to cling to our hope...to hope that may be small and quiet and fragile. Like Pandora, the figure in Greek mythology, as the world's unleashed trials and troubles swirl around us, we struggle to shut the lid on the box and preserve that one last potential comfort: hope. It's not easy.

--Peggi Johnson, Arlington, VA

## How Did Grief Get an Expiration Date?



Certain things need an expiration date. Milk, eggs, mayonnaise, meat, fish... there is a time we need to be done with them, and throw them away... I get all that. But does grief have an expiration date?

For some reason, there seems to be an acceptable shelf life—6-12 months—and then grief should be off the shelf, out of the home and permanently removed with the weekly trash service. If it was only that simple...

The "grief expiration date" myth must come from people who have never experienced a close death – otherwise they would know the truth. Everyone fears facing such a loss. They are hopeful that should death touch their world, it will only take 6-12 months to recover. No one wants someone they love to die. So, until faced with the reality, it's easier to think 'this won't happen to me, AND if it does it will only be bad for a finite, short amount of time and then...there's an expiration date and it is magically all gone.' What a wonderful world that would be.

I've heard time and time again there is a societal expectation to "get over" grief in 6 months, and at the longest, a year. Those who aren't grieving believe it, and often those who are also believe it – this sets grieving people up for false, and ultimately disappointing, expectations.

The one year mark looms like some golden carrot over the heads of those who are grieving. It is a symbol of hope that if they make it to the one year mark they will be in a much happier and pain free place.

The reality is they won't be over it, nor should they be. If someone spent years loving another person, the pain of that person's death simply will not be removed due to a date on the calendar.

The opposite actually might happen – people who are grieving may feel even more pain in year two because the initial numbness, which often serves as a protective barrier at the onset of loss, has worn off and they begin experiencing the full intensity of their feelings and grief. This is accompanied by the realization that life with loss is their "new normal."

I lost my mother at 9 and father at 12. I remember feeling the expectation of a grief expiration date myself. I remember being 15, five years after my mother died and three years after my father died. If I had a tough day missing my parents, people looked shocked, or avoided the subject, or avoided me. Sometimes I would hear insensitive comments, like "aren't you over that?" Or when someone experienced a more recent loss, I would get "Oh, poor [so and so]. What a tragic loss. Aren't you glad you are over that now?"

I remember beating myself up and doubting how well I was coping. If you allow yourself to believe there is an expiration date for grief, you will start to think you aren't doing well if you still miss your loved one 5, 10, 20, 40 years after the loss. In reality – it's normal. And it's okay.

This is what I know to be true: Grief IS a life-long journey. An emotional handicap you get up, and live with everyday. It doesn't mean you can't lead a happy life, but it is a choice, and takes work. The frequency and intensity of those grief pangs/knives should lessen over time, but the reality is every now and then for the rest of your life, you will feel those pangs. Everyone grieves at their own pace, and in their own way. There is no one way to grieve, and no certain order, and no time line.

There is definitely not an expiration date.

-- Lynne B. Hughes [www.hellogrief.org](http://www.hellogrief.org)

## For My Compassionate Friends



This is my love letter to you on Valentine's Day. When Sarah died I thought my heart would never again feel anything except pain. I was so overwhelmed with grief. My thoughts and feelings were only of my own tragedy. And then I met you.

You shared your sorrow and your tears with me. I learned of your loss, your life, your child now gone. And my heart was broken for you - my weary heart, that I thought would never care about anyone else ever again. When you shared the hurting, vulnerable, intimate core of yourself with me, my heart was revived. When you trusted me to know your precious child and your bruised love for this one who was the delight of your heart, my exhausted soul was encouraged. Your words comfort me. Your hugs strengthen me. Your tears quench my thirst.

As I see you heal, I know that I'll also become whole again. When I hear you laugh, I trust that lightness will one day return to my heart. Thank you for being my compassionate friend. I love you.  
--Lindy McClean TCF, Medford, OR

## You Can Survive...

Recently, a dear friend of mine lost her son to suicide. Unfortunately, this brought back memories of the loss of my two sons. The questions were there as my friend cried, "Why?" I couldn't tell her why; all I could say was that she may never know.

Why did my son take his life? Why was his older brother killed at work? These are questions to which I have never found the answers. I don't believe that God is a cruel God so I can't blame Him. Accidents happen, and sometimes surviving siblings take their lives. I was lucky to have my boys as long as I did. I value every memory, every picture.

I don't have the answers but I do know how to survive. I've found that talking with someone with whom you feel "safe" is a good thing. Writing about my loss has been a tremendous help and I am so grateful for the Compassionate Friends newsletter. In that venue, I felt "safe" in baring my soul. I walked and talked with a dear friend who later told me that he couldn't understand a word I said because I was crying so hard...but you know what? It didn't matter because he listened!

Surviving the loss of a child requires a lot of

grief work. I wrote and talked and read until I was exhausted every night. Since there is emotional and physical pain and aching, sleep is so important at this time.

Get in the shower and let the rush of water wash away your tears, your aches, the feeling that no one in the world knows how deeply you are hurting. The shower is a "safe" place, where no one hears your sobs, and no one asks questions or tries to express sympathy with words that mean nothing to you right now.

The one thing that is most important in recovery is that you need to feel "safe" whether talking, reading, crying, screaming or sleeping. Talk to that trusted friend. Let the shower wash away your pain. Take care of yourself. Let your caring friends hug you. Let the reading of other parents' losses make you aware that you are not alone. They've already gone through it and survived. So can you...

I love Life now; I enjoy Life; I appreciate Life so much more. Life is good! "Thank you for filling a place in my life that no one else could."

-- Pam Brown, Written with love, in memory of my two sons Jim and Jeff, submitted by Joan Conley TCF Kamloops BC

## Parents Of infants - On Losing A Baby May

Unlike parents who have had an older child die, our memories are few, and for some people, even nonexistent. Those of us who have had a baby die have found it common for some people not to recognize the loss as being as tragic as the death of an older child. Maybe it is just as tragic, maybe it isn't. For parents who have lost a baby, the tragedy is felt as intensely as can be. For parents who lose a baby, there is nothing else with which to compare their loss. It is just like we who have lost a child (at no matter what age) feel that no one can understand the way we feel unless they too have lost a child. Those of us who have not lost an older child have nothing to compare the loss of our baby with, just as those who have lost an older child cannot completely understand our feelings upon losing a baby. The death of an infant is often times considered "unfortunate" but so many feel that it can be remedied with the birth of another child. Some people find it difficult to understand the love, hope and the future that has been lost with the death of a "much looked forward to" baby.



In my own situation, I have found that the words of consolation most often given to me are things like, "You're young, you can have other babies. . ." or "It's so much better that you were never able to hold her and love her." And things like, "It's over with, forget it, put it all behind you..." The truth of the matter for me, at least was yes, I could have more babies, but it did not matter how many children I could have in the future, I still had lost Jessica. She was the baby daughter I had wanted and tried to have for eight years. Upon her death, all my hopes and dreams and my happiness I felt, were gone. The daughter I had looked so forward to holding and loving and spending time with was gone. Yes, since her death I have been blessed with the birth of two children, a son and another daughter. I give thanks daily for their health and loving presence. But, just as another child could never take their place, nor have they replaced Jessica.

Was it really better that I didn't get to hold her? I think not. If only I had been able to hold that blessed little angel in my arms, if only for one short moment, I would be better able to cope with my loss. If I had been able to see her (even though she was already dead) I would have had a memory to hold on to the rest of my life.

Learn to love her? I already loved her. Any mother who carries a child knows love for that child even though it is unborn. I loved her. I knew her. I knew that she would become quiet and still when I spoke softly to her. I knew that she would react with somewhat violent kicking when surrounded by loud noises. I knew her while she was yet inside me. She was real. I loved her. I can never forget about her. I never want to. I still wonder what she would have grown to be like, what she would have grown to look like. Would she have been fair and active like my son Justin, or would she have been dark and quietly composed like Ashlee? I think about these things even after four years. I expect to think about them for the rest of my life. I wonder what it would have been like around here with three children close in age, playing together. I wonder what it would have been like with three children to love. I wonder.....I guess for a parent of a baby who dies, the wonderings are the worst. We just do not know.

We have no memories to cherish. I am not trying to make a comparison with the loss of a child who lived to be older. I cannot compare things of which I do not know. I just know that a parent who loses a baby feels grief, and loss, to miss a child is

to miss a child. Of course, there are, as in everything, various degrees of feeling and to each parent his or her child was special and the feelings still go deep and the loss is still felt, no matter what age a child is lost.

--Deby Amos, TCF/Anniston, Alabama

## Newly Bereaved...



### Seeding a New Life

Do you get impatient with your grief? Wish it would go away? Wish you could have it over and done with? It's so painful – enough already!! If only we could. As much as we wish it, it will have it's way with us. It will tumble and spin us and spit us out. Then it will decide to gobble us whole again. There can be no getting away from it. There comes a time when realization dawns. That inner knowing that we must experience and feel our grief for all that it is. That we must go through it and let it sit with us until its ferocity is ready to leave us for a bit. And we even learn and grow in acceptance. The acceptance that it is a frequent visitor. It regurgitates through us and through our life. To seed this new life for ourselves is finally to surrender to our grief and to our loss. To know its fury and its nuances. To begin to face forward. And to begin to face life again.

It is not an easy life nor the life we ever envisioned. Oh how very different it is, this life of contrasts. This life that begins to bring us its nuggets of truth for us to digest as best we can. This life that we have now snakes its way through the harsh winters and the blazing summer suns. We will unfurl and will grow into it. We will begin to seed and plant our new and very different life. Each in our own way and in our own time. And one thing we will always know, that the seeds of love will be forever planted in the gardens of our heart.

-- Maureen Hunter, [www.esdeer.com](http://www.esdeer.com)

Shared by Becky Price, in loving memory of son Josh TCF, Rochester New York

## Seasoned Grievors...

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Please allow me to share some things that have helped me not only survive the last almost 10 years, but to thrive in a sense of the word. I think of them as my ongoing resolutions. Just "surviving" Scott's death was NOT an option as I knew that

Scott would not be happy with that. His philosophy was to enjoy life to the max! If all I could do was “survive” his death, I would NOT be showing appreciation for his life and the gifts that he gave me by honoring me with the almost 25 years we had together. So as difficult as it was, I began the journey to thrive by taking teeny, tiny baby steps.

I’m pretty sure that at the beginning I didn’t even know that was what I was doing. However, within a short time it became my mantra. Each morning I got up, took my shower, did something with my hair, and put on my waterproof mascara. Then it was a matter of putting one foot in front of the other to just keep moving forward. (I have to say that some days were backward movements, but that is to be expected. When I went backwards three steps, the next day I might go forward four steps.)

As a result of this desire to thrive, I would mention Scott’s name numerous times during the day as I spoke to friends, acquaintances and family. I must say they weren’t all extremely comfortable as I shared Scott with them, but as I listened to other people’s stories about their living children, it would remind me of Scott stories. If he had been alive, I would have joined in on the conversation mentioning some funny thing he had done, so I resolved to not hide my memories from myself or others. This became part of my healing process. Of course there were the huge waves of grief that would knock me to my knees and challenge my path—they were part of the healing journey as well.

I am extremely grateful to the handful of friends who would sit on the front porch with me and join in on the “Scott Stories!” Sometimes we would be sobbing and laughing at the same time. In addition, journaling my thoughts and feelings in the form of letters to Scott has been a tremendous help. At first it was me ranting and raving about the injustice of having to live without him and then the tone of the letters softened into my memories of him and the lessons that I had learned from him. Sascha Wagner stated it well in this quote: “The name of your child who has died is a magic word. Did you know? At any given moment—whether busy or still....STOP! And think or say that name. Something will happen and whatever that something is, let it happen...even if it be tears. The name of your child is a magic word...to heal your heart.”

As you begin this day, this week, this year, I hope you will use the magic of your child’s name as

well as the many beautiful memories that you have to bring Peace, Comfort and even an ever-increasing Joy on this journey to not only “survive”, but to “thrive!”

With Love, Respect, and in Compassionate Friendship, Suzanne Coleman (Scott’s Mom & Harry’s Sister), TCF Kitsap, WA

## Friends and Family...



## To Caring Family and Friends

You cried for me when I had no more tears to shed,  
And quietly did the everyday things I no longer cared about,  
Because you wisely knew that someday I would care again.

You pulled me gently from the darkness of despair  
And reminded me that the sun is still shining,  
And, when I was ready, I would feel its warmth again...  
That laughter and joy, though now muted, were still possible.

When grief and anger seemed overwhelming,  
You shared your serenity,  
And depression and anger faded.

When my candle burned so very low,  
You lit another and another and another,  
Until you gave me the strength and will  
To again strike a flame for myself.

For all of this, and for your love, I thank you.

--Elizabeth Lorber, West Burlington, NJ

## Helpful Hint...



It's not wrong to be upset. It's not wrong to cry. It's not wrong to want attention. It's not even wrong to scream or throw a fit. What is wrong is to blame and punish yourself for simply being human.

What is wrong is to never be heard, and to be alone in your pain. Share it. Let it out.

--Bryant H. McGill

**Welcome...****You're Not Alone**

At first you are numb—family and friends, they do care;  
But when you can feel again, family and friends are not there.

It may take them weeks, but it will take you years,  
To get through the pain that still brings you tears.  
So you cry, then you search.

You pray and you plan,  
To find answers to questions that they don't understand.

It takes someone special to help ease the pain,  
Someone who will listen because theirs is the same.

In this room full of people you have never known—  
In this room there compassion and you're not alone.

--Tonie Mason TCF Northeast Georgia  
Editor's Note: Being in a room filled with other bereaved parents and siblings, you find a safe place to vent your frustrations, sorrow, anger, pain and love for your child. We too, know the depth of these feelings that are overwhelming when you lose a child. Together we share what has helped and what lies ahead in our grief. Knowing others understand and have also endured a similar loss, gives us hope for the future. We welcome you to join us and see how helpful meetings can be.

**Book In Review...**

**Anna, A Daughter's Life**, by William Loizeaux.  
William captures his attention in his daily journal, expressing his journey of grief following the death of his 6-month old daughter, Anna. His openness and beautiful way with words validates the intensity of a father's grief and love. Anna left a distinctive imprint on her parents' lives, as her father has left on ours. Ordering information: Little Brown & Company, 1-800-759-0190.

**Grief Never Ends**

Grief never ends, but it changes.  
It's a passage, not a place to stay.  
The sense of loss must give way  
if we're to value the life that was lived.

--TCF Minneapolis Newsletter

**On Losing a Child**

Face your feelings  
Don't let them hide inside.  
Confront the pain  
Give it a name,  
Let it roam your heavy heart.  
Each teardrop you shed  
becomes a crystal bead  
to be added to your chain of sorrow.  
Keep the chain.  
Wear the beads with pride -  
A badge of your courage in facing the pain.  
Face whatever may come.  
Accept and be thankful  
for the lessons you have learned.  
Stay open to your feelings.  
Soon the pain will be mixed with other colors.  
You will be weaving a new tapestry.  
Each strand of emotion adds richness.  
Stay in the present moment.  
Look to the past to fathom the future.  
Keep one foot in the present  
and the other in eternity.  
I have children in both worlds.  
I am attentive to each for their lessons.  
We learn from our children.  
They are our blessings.  
By doing for our children  
we are enriched by them.  
It does not end when they leave this earth.  
We understand not with our minds,  
But with our hearts.

--Mariann Lindquist In memory of her son, Joel

**Valentines in Heaven**

Are there Valentines in Heaven?  
Are there Red Hearts everywhere?  
Do they line the golden streets,  
Or is that very rare?  
I wish that I could send you one,  
Right through Heaven's Gate,  
To say how much we miss you,  
On this special date.  
I'd like to send a Candy Heart,  
That is printed, "I Luv U,"  
And maybe you would whisper back,  
"I know, I Luv U too."

--Marilyn Rollins TCF Lake-Porter, IN





Troy Akasaka  
Born: 1/91 Died: 2/15  
Parents: Jay & Sharon Akasaka

Mike Sebastian Cortez  
Born: 5/97 Died: 6/17  
Mother: Rita Cortez

Jennifer Nicole Hower  
Born: 6/75 Died: 12/04  
Brother: Jeff Hower

Elizabeth Mann  
Born: 7/60 Died: 5/05  
Parents: David & Olivia Mann

Brandon Armstrong  
Miscarried: July 1995  
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

Scott Curry  
Born: 8/59 Died: 7/08  
Mother: Marilyn Nemeth

Miranda Howells  
Born: 8/91 Died: 11/09  
Father: Walter Howells III

Janet Sue Mann  
Born: 10/61 Died: 9/10  
Mother: Nancy Mann

Jeremiah Bell  
Born: 1/88 Died: 6/15  
Mother: Angela Alvarez

Dax Jordan Quintana Dantas De Oliveria  
Born: 6/17 Died: 8/17  
Parents: Alexandar & Sanderson Quintana Dantas De Oliveria

Rachel Suzanne Hoyt  
Born: 2/70 Died: 1/95  
Sister: Laura Hoyt D'anna

Alex J. Mantyla  
Born: 3/89 Died: 8/08  
Parents: Jarmo & Bonnie Mantyla

Scott Berkovitz  
Born: 5/88 Died: 1/16  
Parents: Carl Berkovitz & Maria Moore

Daniel Elijah Day  
Born: 4/93 Died: 5/16  
Mother: Kristen Day

Steven Ishikawa  
Born: 9/75 Died: 4/17  
Mother: Miki Ishikawa

Travis Frederick Marton  
Born: 10/91 Died: 1/15  
Mother: Ricki Marton

Noah Bernstein  
Born: 6/87 Died: 2/17  
Mother: Beth Bernstein

Michael David Deboe  
Born: 12/75 Died: 5/09  
Parents: Dave & Judy Deboe

Emily Matilda Kass  
Born: 6/95 Died: 3/06  
Mother: Susan Kass

Sarah Mc Donald  
Born: 10/00 Died: 6/23  
Parents: Tom & Shideh Mc Donald

Cheiann Jayda Berry  
Born: 12/2001 Died: 7/16  
Mother: Kristina Berry

Luke Edward Devlin  
Born: 12/07 Died: 12/07  
Parents: Jacqueline & Tom Devlin

Kathryn Anne Kelly  
Born: 12/72 Died: 1/91  
Parents: Dick & Timmy Kelly

Jeremy Stewert Mead  
Born: 10/61 Died: 11/14  
Mother: Carol Mead

Alex James Bonstein  
Born: 11/91 Died: 7/16  
Mother: Cynthia Sanchez

Allison Jeanine Kirkbride Dewart  
Born: 10/87 Died: 1/06  
Parents: Z & Michael Dewart

Colby Joshua Koenig  
Born: 6/84 Died: 1/10  
Parents: Cindy Tobis & John Koenig

Robert Andrew Mead  
Born: 5/65 Died: 4/11  
Mother: Carol Mead

William Joseph Britton III  
Born: 3/62 Died: 7/85  
Mother: Jean Anne Britton

Michael John Dornbach  
Born: 7/60 Died: 10/17  
Parents: Maria Triliegi & Edward Dornbach

Scott Koller  
Born: 10/83 Died: 3/15  
Mother: Betty Benson

Nicole Marie Megaloudis  
Born: 10/84 Died: 2/04  
Mother: Gail Megaloudis-Rongen

Frank Christopher Castania  
Born: 8/94 Died: 7/05  
Parents: Frank & Debbie Castania  
Grandparents: Richard & Ann Leach

Ramsay Downie, II  
Born: 2/64 Died: 10/99  
Parents: Ramsay & Sally Downie

Keith Konopasek  
Born: 1/63 Died: 7/95  
Parents: Ken & Mary Konopasek

Shawn Mellen  
Born: 05/81 Died: 8/99  
Godmother: Rose Sarukian

Vanessa Roseann Castania  
Born: 2/97 Died: 7/05  
Parents: Frank & Debbie Castania  
Grandparents: Richard & Ann Leach

Scott Michael Dykstra  
Born: 7/72 Died: 10/01  
Parents: Mike & Rita Dykstra

Michael Kroppman  
Born: 12/88 Died: 3/12  
Parents: Brenda & Greg Kroppman

Damion Mendoza  
Born: 7/76 Died: 6/92  
Parents: Carlene & Paul Mendoza

John Francis Cleary  
Born: 12/74 Died: 8/93  
Mother: Pauline Cleary Basil

Mark Edler  
Born: 11/73 Died: 1/92  
Parents: Kitty & Rich Edler

Bryan Yutaka Lee  
Born: 12/70 Died: 9/07  
Mother: Kathee Lee

Steven Douglas Millar  
Born: 2/70 Died: 10/00  
Parents: David & Suzanne Millar

Kelly Swan Cleary  
Born: 3/59 Died: 3/95  
Parents: Dick & Bev Swan

Michella Leanne Matasso Fincannon  
Born: 8/86 Died: 1/06  
Parents: Bill & Cheryl Matasso

Steven J. Lee  
Born: 1/63 Died: 10/06  
Mother: Donna Lee

Jacki Montoya  
Born: 10/89 Died: 7/15  
Mother: Theresa Montoya

Matthew Clifford  
Born: 1/80 Died: 3/15  
Parents: Bob & Melissa Clifford

Emma Nicole Fisher  
Born: 11/99 Died: 7/06  
Parents: Nancy & Elliott Fisher

Kevin Le Nguyen  
Born: 5/88 Died: 6/14  
Mother: Tracy Le Nguyen

Joshua Montoya  
Born: 4/15 Died: 7/15  
Grandmother: Theresa Montoya

Aaron Christopher Cochran  
Born: 11/90 Died: 9/12  
Mother: Julia Carr

Lexie Rose Gilpin  
Born: 4/09 Died: 4/09  
Mother: Michele Gilpin

Joseph Licciardone  
Born: 4/94 Died: 3/16  
Parents: Connie & Leo Licciardone

Danielle Ann Mosher  
Born: 8/78 Died: 6/97  
Parents: Paul & Rose Mary Mosher

Hannah Elizabeth Cortez  
Born: 9/92 Died: 7/13  
Parents: Rafael & Shari Cortez

Steven Paul Giuliano  
Born: 4/55 Died: 4/95  
Mother: Eleanor Giuliano

Richard Lee Luthe  
Born: 11/76 Died: 1/98  
Parents: Jeff & Lorraine Luthe

Benjamin A. Moutes  
Born: 3/07 Died: 5/10  
Parents: Kevin & Claudia Moutes



**Our Children**

Danielle Murillo  
Born: 5/96 Died: 4/14  
Parents: Cheryl Outlaw & Manuel Murillo

Christopher Myers  
Born: 10/86 Died: 5/06  
Parents: Janet & Larry Myers

Edward W. Myricks II  
Born: 4/72 Died: 10/11  
Parents: Edward & Sandra Myricks

Lisa Nakamaru  
Born: 12/93 Died: 10/14  
Mother: Grace Nakamaru

Richard Paul Negrete  
Born: 6/43 Died: 2/04  
Mother: Sally Negrete

Steven Scott Nussbaum  
Born: 5/61 Died: 11/15  
Parents: Will & Gloria Nussbaum

Stephanie Sue Newkirk  
Born: 12/67 - Died 10/05  
Mother: Cynthia McCoy

Sally Anne O'Connor  
Born: 12/62 Died: 2/11  
Mother: Grace "Darline" Dye

Isabella Ofsanko  
Born: 6/97 Died: 10/15  
Mother: Desiree Palmer

Dominique Oliver  
Born: 5/85 Died: 3/02  
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

Jessica Perez  
Born: 5/89 Died: 10/03  
Sister: Monica Perez

Andrew Periaswamy  
Born: 5/97 Died: 10/16  
Parents: Megala & Xavier Periaswamy

Daniel Paul Rains  
Born: 4/72 Died: 3/91  
Mother: Janet Ferjo

Leo Joshua Rank II  
Born: 3/11 Died: 4/12  
Parents: Roberta Redner & Leo Rank

Cindy Ranftl  
Born: 8/68 Died: 7/97  
Parents: Pat & Bob Ranftl

Sarah Lynne Redding  
Born: 12/80 Died: 12/05  
Parents: Linda Redding

John Patrick Rouse  
Born: 1/78 Died: 7/02  
Mother: Sharon Rouse

Michael B. Ruggera, Jr.  
Born: 4/51 Died: 4/96  
Parents: Michael & Frances Ruggera

Danny Ryan  
Born: 07/79 Died: 10/15  
Parents: Mike & Andrea Ryan

Andrew Patrick Sakura  
Born: 3/90 Died: 3/08  
Parents: Bruce & Karen Sakura

Daniela Mora Saldana  
Born: 3/17 Died: 3/17  
Mother: Rosa Saldana

Lisa Sandoval  
Born: 9/76 Died: 12/92  
Parents: Susan & Ruben Sandoval

Phillip Ruben Sandoval  
Born: 7/84 - Died: 6/16  
Parents: Valerie & Joe Desjardin

Andrew Sankus  
Born: 4/71 Died: 8/15  
Mother: Mary Sankus

Jonathan "Jamie" Schubert  
Born: 7/65 Died: 12/06  
Parents: Lynn & Roy Schubert

Spencer Simpson  
Born: 1/80 Died: 6/13  
Parents: Rich & Shelly Simpson

Gerald Slater  
Born: 2/71 Died: 8/94  
Parents: Bob & Gwen Slater

Paul Slater  
Born: 10/71 Died: 11/16  
Parents: Bob & Gwen Slater

Dale Lee Soto  
Born: 7/94 Died: 5/11  
Mother: Monique Soto

Jonathan David Streisand  
Born: 1/87 Died: 8/13  
Parents: Pricilla & David Streisand

**Remembered**



Kenneth Tahan  
Born: 2/66 Died: 7/16  
Parents: Shirley & Joseph Tahan

Anthony Tanori  
Born: 8/82 Died: 8/12  
Parents: Chuck & Sylvia Tanori

Catarina Sol Torres  
Born: 12/16 Died: 12/16  
Mother: Marcus & Vanessa Torres

Vance C. Valdez  
Born: 10/90 Died: 3/12  
Parents: Carlos & Maria Valdez

Lexi Noelle Valladares  
Born: 4/04 Died: 7/10  
Parents: Fausto & Erica Valladares

Manuel Vargas III  
Born: 3/95 - Died: 5/15  
Father: Manuel Vargas

Eric Douglas Vines  
Born: 7/77 Died: 7/91  
Parents: Doug & Lynn Vines

Dovan Vincent Wing  
Born: 6/83 Died: 9/17  
Mother: Becky Wing

Thomas Zachary  
Born: 12/85 Died: 7/11  
Father: Bob McGaha

Kevin Zelik  
Born: 11/85 Died: 6/10  
Parents: Joe & Linda Zelik

**Birthday Tributes...**



In honor of your child's birthday, we welcome you to submit a birthday tribute. Though your child is no longer here to buy a present for, think of this as a birthday present about your child. This tribute is an opportunity to share your child with us all. (We thank you for any birthday donations that help offset chapter expenses.)  
\* Please remember we are always working a month in advance and need your tributes by the first of the month preceding the actual birthday.

Sorry, no birthday tributes were submitted this month.

## For Siblings...



### A Grief All My Own

I was a freshman at college when my brother, Carl, died. The news reached me hours after he had been found at the base of the radio tower. Jim, a faculty member and family friend, stuck his head inside the door of my chemistry class as I waited for class to begin and motioned me outside. I was pleasantly surprised to see him, but my smile faded as I noticed the somber expression on his face. He took my hands in his as he told me of my brother's death. I searched his face desperately waiting for his expression to break in to a grin as people will often do before they let you in on the joke, but there would be no punch punch line. I drew back instinctively and as I pulled away, Jim tightened his grip. I began shouting "No!" over and over until I became aware of myself once again and sunk into his hug. When I started to breathe more regularly Jim walked back into the classroom to get my backpack. I began to grow physically and emotionally numb as he led me down the stairs to his van. He asked me if I had a friend who could wait with me until I could get to the airport. I nodded indicating I did. He drove over to her classroom and I carefully looked in to see if I could find her. Fortunately she saw me and dismissed herself.

When I got to the dorm, the RA (resident assistant) for my unit was already waiting for me. She and my friend, Heather, followed me to my room after an exchange of somber glances between them. Without much thought as to what I needed I packed a suitcase hoping I had everything I needed since I would be going home for the week. I was nearly finished packing when one of my roommates came into the room. She heard the announcement in chapel and came to see how I was handling the news. I was suddenly aware of how closely I was being watched. It was as though I had taken up residence in a fish bowl. The girls sat silently watching me, not quite knowing what else to do. I could feel their unease at not knowing what to say; afraid of saying something that would cause me to have some sort of nervous breakdown right in front of them. I desperately wanted to be alone. It was as though I was a hostess at a boring party needing to entertain my guests, but I was afraid to act anything but somber. Would they think Carl meant nothing to me if I tried to strike up meaningless

conversation? I felt an emptiness growing in the pit of my stomach. I wanted to crawl in bed and curl up against the wall. Yet, all I could do was sit uncomfortably while they watched. I was the elephant in the room. My brother had just died, yet no one could state the obvious: something horrible had just happened. I didn't know it at the time, but I had experienced for the first time a reaction that was to become all too familiar to me.

After a draining week at home, I was unprepared to face my friends, roommates, and acquaintances at school. I could feel the tension as I walked into my unit. The girls watched cautiously as if waiting to see if it would be OK to approach me. I wanted to tell them about the week and about all of the painful memories my hometown triggered of my brother. Actually, I needed to talk about it, yet I knew it was better to keep it to myself. I don't know how to explain it, but people react very strangely when they hear about someone's death. I couldn't count the frequency with which I was purposefully avoided or had someone quickly change the subject if I happened to mention my brother.

I soon discovered a positive reply when asked how I was doing avoided many uncomfortable situations. Most of the time people merely asked out of a sense of obligation, not concern. Few wanted to hear how my stomach turned when I walked up to his casket and saw the bruises, which ran down alongside his head and neck beneath the make up the mortician applied in an attempt to conceal them. Nor did they want to hear how my heart skipped a beat when I thought I caught a glimpse of Carl riding his skateboard down the street, only to have it break one more time when I realized it couldn't have been him. They didn't even want to hear how I found comfort in memories of him such as the time we were just little kids and had been sent to our rooms because somehow we had managed to irritate Dad. Unwilling to accept our punishment and allow our fun to come to an end we recorded ourselves giggling and set it behind our dad's chair knowing we were sure to get a reaction. We laughed hysterically when our dad heard the recording and sprang from his chair to catch us out of our rooms. I found I was truly alone in my grief aside from what I could share with my parents.

I try not to get angry when I think of how others reacted to me in my grief. I, myself, reacted toward others the same way before I lost my brother. Yet, it was difficult to be forced to create a

mask for the comfort of others when comfort was what I sought. Each day I “put on a happy face” and tried my best to appear together.

A few weeks after I returned to school the other girls in the unit no longer tolerated my grief. I could sense their irritation when I failed to get out of bed as they prepared for class. No longer was it necessary to try to comfort me. They had accepted my brother’s death and were done feeling bad. It would not have been a great shock to learn they had forgotten I had a brother. I was forced to stuff my grief for the remainder of the semester. I cried only when I was sure I was alone and knew no one would be back for a while. I carefully watched what I said as not to let anything about my brother slip into conversation. I found even sharing a good memory of Carl could set off a series of uncomfortable events. The mere mention of his name would cause my listeners to freeze. Would I break down immediately and fall to pieces at his memory? I didn’t know at the time it would have been OK. No one had to understand my emotions, nor did anyone have to deal with them. I was the only one able and willing to carry myself through my grief. I had to realize I could only do what I could as I struggled with my grief and had to remind myself I would be able to do more as time passed and the impact of his death gradually became less painful. It was necessary for me to understand if I never got over his death I would also be all right, as the death of a sibling is not something anyone ever truly gets over. Everyone deals with grief differently. If I were to only allow myself to grieve as much as other’s around me felt comfortable I would be quite miserable today.

It has been four years since his death and I continue to miss him. I still watch what I say to others, but I don’t worry so much about their reaction. I know what to expect from someone when they hear about Carl for the first time and have found ways to keep the evil of discomfort for all parties at a minimum. When Carl died I struggled with what my answer would be when someone asked if I had a sibling. I didn’t know how to answer. Would I say I did have a brother or would I say I had a brother? Neither answer seemed quite correct. Today I can answer the question. Carl was and always will be my brother. My memories of him are mine to share if I wish. My grief is also mine to deal with, as I need to. It is not open to the criticism of others.

--Carrie Pueschel Eastside TCF , Kirkland, WA

## Death’s Cavern

Death is a man  
 In a long black coat.  
 His face is grim  
 And shows no emotion,  
 For he sees  
 What no one else dares to see.  
 He looms above you  
 With grief and sorrow at his side.  
 The sickening scent of lilies  
 Fills the putrid air  
 For this is Death’s Cavern.  
 Behind those walls of crying  
 Are walls of grief.  
 And behind those walls of grief  
 Are walls of agony.  
 But behind those many walls  
 Are more walls,  
 But of laughter and love.  
 And when you get to those walls of love,  
 You cry no more.  
 For now you blame no one  
 But Death himself.  
 You remember happy times  
 Of laughter and happiness  
 Before you knew those walls  
 Of grief and sorrow.  
 You remember sunshine,  
 The warmth of it.  
 And you try to forget  
 The coldness of Death.  
 And as the years go by  
 You tend to put Death himself away.  
 But although you have love and laughter,  
 You will never completely forget  
 Death’s Cavern.

By Anna Kichorowsky, Age 12

Sister of Daniel Kichorowsky 4-7-89 – 5-23-93

## For Grandparents...



## Hope

I sat down regularly to read the many newsletters that I receive from the chapters across the county. Most of the time there were articles in them that made me cry a little. I read about children who are dead and parents who were hurting, but never did I come away from those reading sessions depressed. I came away with hope. Hope that the searing torment does lessen and eventually give way to warm, loving memories

of our child!

When we are in the deepest throes of our grief, when our beloved child has just recently been snatched from life by a tragic accident or succumbed to a fatal illness, or died in some other way, can we believe we can ever be happy again? When to simply get up in the morning is a major accomplishment, can we believe that we will ever be able to function with enthusiasm or purpose? When every thought of our children brings excruciating pain, can we believe that we will someday be able to think of him/her and smile? I know it is hard to believe that this will ever happen, but it will.

The words used in defining HOPE are expect, trust, anticipate, wish, desire and confident. These are the key words. If we expect, trust and anticipate feeling better, we will in time. If we wish it and are confident, the day will come when we will feel better. Of course, it doesn't just happen. It takes long hard grief work. It takes many painful hours of allowing ourselves to go through our grief. It takes patience and it takes time.

But know you will come to the light at the end of the tunnel. Know that there is hope. Know that many bereaved parents who have been in the same painful place that you are now have found life meaningful again. Know that you will too.

--Margaret Gerner St. Louis TCF

## From Our Members...



### Valentine Message

I send this message to my child  
Who no longer walks this plane,  
A message filled with love  
Yet also filled with pain.  
My heart continues to skip a beat  
When I ponder your early death  
As I think of times we'll never share  
I must stop to catch my breath.  
Valentine's Day is for those who love  
And for those who receive love, too  
For a parent the perfect love in life  
Is the love I've given you.  
I'm thinking of you this day, my child,  
With a sadness that is unspoken  
As I mark another Valentine's Day  
With a heart that is forever broken.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF, Katy, TX  
Submitted by Linda Curtis. I saw this in another

TCF newsletter last year and wanted to share it with you. Linda

## We say Happy New Year!

But for the newly bereaved (or grieved)  
It's not happy without you here  
I sit and cry and still ask why?  
While others celebrate  
I now somehow look to create  
A new life without you  
Looking to find a deeper, new purpose  
In my heartbroken world  
I must rely on my faith & hope to get me through  
Until I see you again, that's where I go and all that I  
can do

--Lori Galloway TCF south Bay/L. A, CA

We welcome and encourage you to submit contributions you found meaningful to you in your grief. We prefer your original poems and thoughts, but we can also print other material if proper credit is given to the author. Please take the time to submit a poem or article you found helpful.



**Get Your Photo Buttons...** Photo buttons are a perfect way to share your child, grandchild or sibling with others at monthly meetings. If you would like to have some made, simply bring a photo for each button you would like (color photo copies work great) to any of our chapter meetings and Ken can make them for you. There is no cost. Keep in mind that the button is about 3" in diameter, so the picture needs to fit inside that area and the actual photo is used, so make sure it's one we can cut.

**TCF is On Facebook ....** Please visit and help promote The Compassionate Friends National Organization's Facebook page by becoming a fan. You can get there by clicking on the link from TCF's national website home page at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org). Or, you can log into Facebook and search for The Compassionate Friends/USA. In addition to the social support aspect, The Compassionate Friends/USA Facebook page will have information about upcoming events.

**Our Website...** Joe Zelik is hosting the website and updating it with the current newsletter and chapter information. Thank you to those who are willing to get you newsletter online. To be able to send a reminder each month to let you know when the latest issue of the newsletter is available, we need your e-mail address. If you have not been getting a reminder e-mail, please let me know. To update our files, please call Lynn at (310) 530-3214 to update by phone. You can also log onto our website at [www.tcfsla.org](http://www.tcfsla.org) if you want to do it electronically. Thank-you for your understanding and



help. TCF South Bay/LA

**The National Office** of TCF has an ongoing support group for parents and siblings online. For a complete schedule and to register for Online Support, visit <http://compassionatefriends.org> and follow the directions to register. There is also a closed group chat room for specific topics that you need to register for.

**Closed Group Chat... TCF National has several closed Facebook groups you may find helpful on your grief journey. Click the blue link above to be connected and request to join.**

**TCF - Loss to Substance Related Causes**

*Moderators: Barbara Allen and Mary Lemley*

**TCF - Loss to Suicide** *Moderators: Cathy Seehuetter and Donna Adams*

**TCF - Loss to Homicide** *Moderators: Debbie Floyd and Kathleen Willoughby*

**TCF - Infant and Toddler Loss** *Moderators: Susan Peavler and Tiffany Barraso*

**TCF - Sibling Loss to Substance Related Causes** *Moderators: Andrea Keller and Barbara Allen*

**The Compassionate Friends Sounds of the Siblings** (for bereaved siblings) *Moderators: Tracy Milne and Keith Singer*

**TCF - Loss of a Grandchild** *Moderators: Betty Farrel and Jennifer Sue Hale*

**TCF - Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth** *Moderators: Kelly Kittel and Kenzie Janzen*

**TCF - Loss of an Only Child/All Your Children** *Moderators: Lisa Ridge and Vicki Woods-Ozias*

**TCF - Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver** *Moderators: Robin Landry and Rebecca Perkins*

**TCF - Loss to Cancer** *Moderators: Lee Meyerson, Michelle Setzer, Marguerite Caraway Ward*

**Healing the Grieving Heart...** Featuring experts who discuss the many aspects of grief, with a main focus on the death of a child and its effects on the family.

"Healing the Grieving Heart" can be heard on the Web live at [www.health.voiceamerica.com](http://www.health.voiceamerica.com).

**Welcome New Members ...** We welcome our new members to our chapter of TCF. We're sorry you have a need to be with us, but we hope you feel you have found a safe place to share your grief and will return. It often takes a few meetings to feel at ease in a group setting. Please try attending three meetings before deciding if TCF is for you. Each meeting is different, and the next one might be the one that really helps.

We encourage you to take advantage of our resources. We have a well stocked library of grief materials, a phone friend committee that welcomes calls at any time, and a members' directory to call another parent you have met at the meetings.

**Thank You ...** Thank you to all those who donate to our meeting basket or send donations to our chapter. Since

there are no fees or dues to belong to TCF, it is only your donations that keep us functioning, and we appreciate your help. Just a Hint: If you plan to leave \$\$ at the TCF meeting, you might want to make it by check so you can receive an IRS deduction. No amount is too small and they are needed to keep our chapter going.



**Birthday Tributes...** During your child's birthday month, you may place a picture and either a short personal message, poem, or story about your child in the newsletter. (Less than 200 words, please.) Do not cut your picture. We will block off unused areas. If it is a group photo, identify the person to be cropped. This tribute is an opportunity to tell a short story about your child, so we will be able to know them better. Photos must have identification on the back. Enclose a SASE in order for photos to be returned by mail. (Please do not send your only picture.)

Tributes must be in by the 1st of the month preceding your child's birthday month or at the prior meeting. (Example: Feb. 1st for March birthdays). Otherwise they will appear if space permits or in the following month's issue.



**Phone Friends ...** Sometimes you want or need to talk about the life and death of your child with someone that understands and can share your pain. The following friends are on the telephone committee, and are available to talk when ever you need someone who understands.

- Linda Zelik (chapter leader).....(310) 370-1645
  - Kitty Edler.....(310) 541-8221
  - Richard Leach (grandchild).....(310) 833-5213
  - Kristy Mueller (sibling).....(310) 373-9977
- REGIONAL COORDINATOR**  
Olivia Garcia.....(818) 736-7380

**Memory Book...** Our chapter has an ongoing Memory Book that is on display at each meeting. Each child is given a page in the book. Pictures, poems, or a tribute you choose that will help us to remember your child can be included. Feel free to add your picture to the Memory Book at any of our meetings. This is one way we can meet and remember the new member's children.

**Library Information...** At each meeting we have a library table. It is on the honor system. You may borrow a book and can bring it back at the next meeting. Many of you have books you got when you were newly bereaved and may no longer need. Perhaps you would like to donate books on grief that you found helpful. If you wish to donate a book to our library, please let Linda know so we can put your child's name on a donation label inside the book.

**Newsletter...** For those of you who are receiving the

newsletter for the first time, it is because someone has told us that you might find it helpful. We warmly invite you to attend one of our meetings. Please let us know if you know of someone who could benefit from our newsletter which is sent free to bereaved parents. We do ask that professionals, friends, and family members contribute a donation to help offset the costs involved. If any information needs to be changed, or if you would like your child included in the "Our Children Remembered" section, please contact the editor at (310) 530-3214.



#### Additional Grief Support ....

#### Bereavement Organizations and Resources:

**TCF National Newsletter:** For all bereaved parents and siblings. Published quarterly; subscription fee. Contact TCF Inc., P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 (630) 990-0010

**FAMILY & FRIENDS OF MURDER VICTIMS:** Rose Madsen, (909) 798-4803 Newsletter and support group, e-mail Roseydoll@aol.com

**ALIVE ALONE:** For parents who have lost their only child, or all their children. 1112 Champaign Dr., Van Wert, OH 45891 Newsletter available.

www.Alivealone.org

**SURVIVORS AFTER SUICIDE:** Support Group for families that have lost someone to suicide. Contact Sam & Lois Bloom (310) 377-8857

**OUR HOUSE/BEREAVEMENT HOUSE:** Support groups in LA & So. Bay (310) 475-0299 Also Spanish Support Group, Loren Delgado 310-231-3196. **\*NEW:** **Our House Grief Support Center has Free General Grief Support Group for Spanish speaking Adults in our area.**

**PATHWAYS HOSPICE:** Bereavement support and sibling group. Bill Hoy (562) 531-3031

#### NEW HOPE GRIEF SUPPORT COMMUNITY:

Grief support and education groups for adults and children. Long Beach, CA 90808, (562) 429-0075

**PROVIDENCE TRINITY CARE HOSPICE AND THE GATHERING PLACE:** Various bereavement support groups including support for loss of a child, support group for children 5-8, 9-12, and teens. (310) 546-6407

#### TORRANCE MEMORIAL BEREAVEMENT

**SERVICES:** (310) 325-9110 Weekly grief support.

**THE LAZARUS CIRCLE:** Monthly grief support. Meets third Thurs of each month, 6-7:15 at First Lutheran Church, 2900 W. Carson St. Torrance

**SHARE Pregnancy & Infant Loss:** Contact: Megan Heddlesten (800) 821-6819

**Walk With Sally:** Cancer loss bereavement & art therapy for children- Monica Fyfe (310) 378-5843

**Camp Comfort Zone** - Bereavement Camp for Children [www.comfortzonecamp.org](http://www.comfortzonecamp.org) (310) 483-8313.

#### Other Grief Support Websites...

agast.org (for grandparents)	groww.com
goodgriefresources.com	childloss.com
beyondindogp.com	griefwatch.dom
angelmoms.com	babysteps.com
healingafterloss.org	webhealing.com
survivorsofsuicide.com	opentohope.com
taps.org (military death)	alivealone.org
bereavedparentsusa.org	save.org
pomc.com (families of murder victims)	
grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)	
www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)	

#### LOCAL TCF CHAPTERS

**Los Angeles:** (310) 474-3407 1st Thurs.

**Newport Beach** (917) 703-3414 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed.

**Orange Coast/Irvine:** (949) 552-2800 1st Wed.

**Orange Co./Anaheim:** (562) 943-2269

**Pomona/San Gabriel:** (626) 919-7206

**Redlands:** (800) 717-0373 3rd Tues.

**Riverside-Inland Empire:** (909) 683-4160

**San Fernando Valley:** (818) 788-9701 2nd Mon.

**South Los Angeles:** (323) 546-9755 last Tue

**Ventura Co. TCF:** (805)981-1573 1&3 Thurs.

**Verdugo Hills:** (818) 957-0254 4th Thurs.

#### A SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Staples for their help in printing our newsletters each month and to The Neighborhood Church for the use of their facilities for our meetings.

#### CHAPTER OFFICERS:

CHAPTER LEADERS: Linda Zelik & Mary Santos

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines

PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks

TREASURER: Ken Konopasek

WEBSITE: Joe Zelik



#### STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Linda & Joe Zelik

Cheryl & Bill Matasso

Nancy Lerner

Kitty Edler

Mary Sankos

Marilyn Nemeth

Lynn Vines

Ken Konopasek

Susan Kass

#### Year End Donations

Rose Mary Mosher in memory of Danielle Mosher and Patrik Slezinger

Bruce & Karen Sakura in memory of Andrew Sakura

Ken, Claudia, Mama, Papa, Jacob & Sofia in memory of Benjamin Moutes

Gloria Nussbaum in memory of Scott Nussbaum

# DONATIONS TO THE SOUTH BAY/L.A. CHAPTER OF THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

The Compassionate Friends is a totally self-supporting organization. Our chapter is run entirely by volunteers, but we do have operating costs. Your donations are what keeps our chapter going. Please consider giving a donation in your loved one's name.

In loving memory of Benjamin Moutes, 3/07 - 5/10. Missing you always, especially this Christmas Season. You are forever in our thoughts.

Love, Mama, Papa, Jacob & Sofia

In loving memory of William Joseph Britton III, 3/62 - 7/85. In loving memory of my beautiful boy Billy- You are forever in my heart with beautiful memories...

Love, Mommy

With sincere gratitude and deep appreciation, we acknowledge the generosity of the previous individuals and companies. Your tax deductible donation, given, in memory of your loved one enables us to reach bereaved parents with telephone calls and information, and they also help defray newsletter and mailing costs. Please help us reach out to others in this difficult time. Indicate any special tribute you wish printed in our newsletter.

When making a donation, please make checks payable to: The Compassionate Friends South Bay/L.A. Chpt.

Mail to: The Compassionate Friends South Bay/ L.A. Chapter  
P.O. Box 11171  
Torrance, CA 90510-1171

In loving memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date \_\_\_\_\_ Death date \_\_\_\_\_ Sent From \_\_\_\_\_

Tribute \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month or it will appear in the following issue.

The Compassionate Friends  
South Bay/L.A., CA Chapter  
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**February 2018**

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.  
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes,  
but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain,  
just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.  
We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.  
We are young, and we are old.

Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh  
and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength,  
while some of us are struggling to find answers.

Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression,  
while others radiate an inner peace.

But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends,  
it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other  
our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves,  
but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love  
to share the pain as well as the joy,  
share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts,  
and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

**WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.**  
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*If you no longer wish to receive this mailing or have a new address, please contact us.*