



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

APRIL 2018 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be April 4th, 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 April 4th meeting will start with "Common Themes in Grief Recovery."

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 April 4th meeting will start with “Common Themes in Grief Recovery.” People who are grieving want to get better, but often don't know where to begin. The goal is not to "get over" the loss, but rather to incorporate it into our lives. When we are grieving we want the pain to end ... to get through this tragedy and still be able to function. With hindsight we can reflect on the many things grief will teach us. While not everyone will grieve in the same way, many helpful suggestions will apply to each of us. Although there are no magic formulas that will guarantee the resolution of grief, at this meeting we will be discussing various solutions that other bereaved parents have used to regain control of their lives, and eventually, to make peace with their loss.

Grieve One Day At A Time

It takes time and practice to get good at living with loss. It will always feel surreal and alien. It will always sting like peroxide poured out onto scraped skin. But like any physical training goes, when you started you could only run so far and now, when you look behind you, you can see that you can run farther now and even further tomorrow.

Grief is a daily journey, but the confusion lies in the idea of working towards getting over it, past it, and putting it behind you. That is not necessarily what is needed. There are many losses you can grieve fully and put behind you; a loss of a job, a relationship, a possession or opportunity. These losses can be and should be worked fully through as dwelling on this type of loss can spiral you into depression and loss of self-worth.

Losing a loved one does not compare to a recoverable form of grief. You don't recover, you don't get over it, you don't get past it, or put it behind you....but, and this is a big “but”, you need to learn how to live with it. Notice it, but don't dwell on it. Like your eye color, this loss has become a part of your physical and mental being. Not to be worn like a chip on your shoulder, but rather a limp that, while at times, inconvenient and painful, will not prevent you from going where you need to go and reaching your full potential.

Grieving is as much of a physical process as it is a mental one, and yes, painful. Very painful. Who wants to stay in a place of pain and torment? But how do you recover from the unrecoverable? Get past what cannot be gotten past? One day at a time.

Acknowledge that your goal is not to get over it, but rather to live with it, and that is okay. Only take on what you can easily manage in your daily affairs to prevent from becoming easily overwhelmed. Stop and check out, whenever needed, to reset yourself mentally. Do not push yourself to the point of exasperation and anxiety-induced panic. Be open to change, welcome it, everything is changing and will continue to do so as you move around and get to know your grief.

Don't take it personally that people do not understand. In fact, quietly allow yourself to rejoice in the fact that they don't. This mind shift will keep you in a positive place and prevent perpetual frustration. Forgive yourself for the inevitable mistakes you will make along the way and be forgiving to others for theirs. You are already holding on to enough painful feelings to allow for the bitterness of “unforgiveness” to weigh you down even more. But most of all, I repeat, take it one day at a time and take it easy on yourself. You are, even on your worst days, doing the best you can and will continue to be better.

--Reprinted from *Hope In The Storm*



The Journey of Grief

Grieving is a journey. And although not everyone's path through the process is the same, there is a general path that many of us follow. We move out of the flatlands of “life as usual” through two landscapes before returning to the changed life that awaits us.

The first landscape is the grey tunnel of shock. When the loss is devastating, our minds often send us straight into denial. When denial ends, we experience shock. People in shock experience life as if through a fog. They can't focus to drive, they don't want to eat, and they often need help making decisions.

The second landscape of grief is a bleak mountain range: all jagged peaks, impossible climbs, frightening heights, and hard, hard work. Of course, what we all want to do is move from shock directly to the green pastures of “normal” on the other side of this mountain, but it doesn't work that way.

Every reminder of the loss brings a fresh wave of grief. Sometimes the sadness becomes emptiness or even despair. Sufferers and those around them are often surprised by how anger can bubble up on this journey of grief. People who are grieving often feel guilty for being angry. But anger, like denial, is a normal and healthy part of

the grieving process. It will pass faster if we can simply acknowledge what we are feeling.

The goal of the journey through grief is to find a new normal. Most people are vastly relieved to discover that they are not alone and that other sufferers are toiling away. This is the time when bereavement support groups can be very helpful. We begin to realize that the person or thing we lost is still with us, but in a different way.

At some point, we may declare ourselves to have healed. But even then, a holiday or a whiff of a smell transports us back to our loss. Those visits actually start to take on a sweetness, even in their difficulty, because a part of us is glad to be reminded of what was once so important to us. When that happens, we know our journey of grieving is nearly complete.

--Christine Robinson, Heart to Heart (Selected Passages)

The Huntington Beach Bereaved Parent Support group shares what they have learned about grief.

I Have Learned:



- To take one day at a time.
- Not to say, "if only," or "I should have".
- To appreciate what I've got and not moan about what I "don't got".
- To appreciate life and not take it for granted.
- If today is bleak, tomorrow can be better.
- To appreciate the moments when I can laugh.
- That without my support group, I would be lost.
- How very much I need my "new" friends.
- How much I treasure and love my daughter's friends.
- Not to take my health for granted.
- What is trivial.
- That if my energy level is low, I don't push myself.
- The importance of exercise.
- That grief is not time-bound.
- That no one grieves like me; everybody grieves differently.
- That the pain never goes away, but it does get "softer".
- That no one can comfort me the way Jesus can.
- To allow the grief, pain, and loss to become a part of me.
- That there is a reason to keep on living (and loving).
- That joy does return ... only in a different way.
- That someday we will be together again.
- To ride "the wave" of denial, anger, depression, and acceptance.
- To accept that I may never know why.
- It's okay to say, "No."
- Not to blame people when they don't understand.
- The ability to face adversity (courage).
- To be strong and resolute.
- The importance of support and encouragement.
- That there is friendship and family, OR, family and friendship!
- That to lose a child is the "ultimate tragedy!"
- That I need others who have been there to help me through this journey.
- That love never dies.
- That time is an ally.
- That every moment really matters.
- That I must create a "new normal" for myself.
- That eventually you do want to go on and live again.
- That my daughter's love of life continues to give me the strength to go on.
- That I must reinvest the energy I gave to my child into something/someone else.
- That over time, I have more control over my grief.
- That I will always have tears on my heart.
- That it is so important to keep my daughter's name and memory alive.
- That only in the articulation of grief does it diminish.
- That making new traditions helps.
- How the soft glow of a candle helps to warm my heart again and bring my daughter near.
- That it doesn't matter how our children died, just that they have.
- That over time, the cemetery brings peace and solitude ... not just tears.
- How the pain and grief I feel one day isn't necessarily the way I will feel the next day.
- That some of the things I thought I'd never do again since my daughter died - I have.
- That I can laugh again and not feel guilty.
- That along with all the pain and despair, joy and happiness have found a place in my life again.
- People who have not lost a child can't possibly understand what I went through.
- That not only does one lose a child, but they can also lose their belief system, some family members, and some friends in the process.
- Our society is deficient in death education and really doesn't know how to respond to the grieving person.
- Some people want to see and be around

“happy” people and only have so much to give to those who are grieving.

- Everyone grieves differently, and there is no “right” or “wrong” way to grieve.
 - There is no time frame for “getting on with your life” after the death of your child.
 - Strangers can give more than some relatives.
 - You don’t always have until tomorrow.
 - The world does not stop when your child dies.
 - Being among nature helps to bring some softness to my heart and brings my daughter closer to me.
 - That as unbelievable as it is to me, I have come to reconcile my daughter’s death. A “settling” has taken place within myself.
 - You don’t have to have money to be rich.
 - A broken heart will mend ... almost.
- Nancy Lundt



The Anticipation of Spring

Spring is a time for growth and renewal. As a child, teen, and then an adult, I always looked forward to spring with anticipation. The thoughts of green grass, budding trees, and blooming flowers of all varieties and

colors were a welcome change from the long cold, dreary Michigan winter.

It was a magical time of year. When I was a child, each member of my family watched anxiously to lay claim to being the first to spot the familiar hop-hop of the returning robin, the first sign that spring was actually here. We could finally take off the gloves, shed our heavy winter coats and boots, and roll down the windows on the car to hear the laughter of children playing outside and smell the fresh mown grass as we’d drive down the road.

That’s the way it was for me on the first day of spring 12 years ago. I remarked how beautiful the tulips looked as they danced in the wind. The trees were budding, and there was magic in the air. My kids and I shed our heavy winter coats, flinging them in the backseat, rolled down the windows of the car, and started singing in celebration of the beautiful day we were experiencing.

And then ... "IT" happened. Suddenly, undeniably, horrifically—my world, my spring, my life changed. My 5-year-old son, Stephen, died that first spring day. His 8-year-old sister, Stephanie, my firstborn, died a few hours later, enough past midnight to list the next day on the death certificate. Gone was the laughter, the magic, the beauty of my world.

The springs that followed were no longer filled with anticipation or magic. They were dark and ugly and filled with memories too painful to talk about. I wanted nothing to do with “spring.” If H.G. Well’s time machine had existed, I would have entered it at the end of winter and fast-forwarded through spring.

As time marched on and one spring followed another, I learned an important lesson in my journey through grief: As much as I wanted to, I couldn’t fast-forward through the hard spots. I couldn’t go around them. I had to go through them slowly, like a dog paddling through water, so I could get to the other side. Somehow doing this taught me to cope, to endure, to face tomorrow and all the first days of spring that followed. It’s much like the transformation that takes place when a butterfly emerges from a dark, cold, seemingly

Life Will Never Be The Same Again...

Remember that life will never again be exactly the way it was before your loved one died. If you are expecting things to "get back to normal" after a while, you may be disappointed to find that the new "normal" is not like the old "normal." Your life will go on, but precisely because the person was important to you - it will not be the same without him or her. In the beginning it will seem as if your grief is running you, but in the end, you can learn to run your grief.

When you understand what is happening to you and have some idea of what to expect, you will feel more in control of your grief and will be in a better position to take care of yourself, to find your own way through this loss and to begin rebuilding your life. It is perfectly natural to need time and space to honor your feelings, and the memory of your loved one. It is also normal for significant dates, holidays, or other reminders to trigger feelings related to the loss.

It is not unusual for the painful emotions of your bereavement, to make others feel extremely uncomfortable...to the point of feeling profoundly helpless. Unfortunately, this may leave you feeling isolated and lonely. Your family and friends care about you, and are likely to offer advice about what they think is best for the grieving process. Listen to all the well meaning advice given to you but this is your grief, it is your pain. No one other than you can work through your grief. It is incredibly important that you.... Do what you want to do! Do what feels right and most comfortable for you.

--by Mark R Simpson, extracted from
www.livingwithgrief

lifeless chrysalis.

A few years ago, as winter was drawing to a close and the first day of spring was quickly approaching, I looked out the kitchen window toward the budding pear tree in the backyard and discovered it was full of chirping robins. I smiled and knew that spring somehow wasn't going to be so bad. It was once again time to enjoy the smells of the season, the beauty of the budding trees, and the magic that the season had to offer. And I knew Stef and Steve would have wanted that for me.

--Pat Loder, TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI

Easter Means Forever

Today I want to write a few lines about Easter and life after death, a subject of profound interest to everyone, young and old. At Easter we commemorate the supreme mystery of life; we reaffirm the glorious hope that life is eternal. An immortal parable to me is the most satisfying illustration on the subject of life after death. It has to do with a baby in a pre-natal state. The baby is nestled up under his mother's heart, well fed and happy. He likes it there. Suppose, then, that somebody comes to the baby and tells him, "You're not going to stay here. You're going to be born," and he learns that being born means he would leave this warm, secure place. That would not be "being born" to him. That would be "dying," for dying is considered an end. And the baby would say, "I don't want to die out of this place. I like it here. I'm warm, I feel love all around me, I'm happy and content. Just leave me alone. I don't want to leave this nice place."

But there comes a day when he is born ... or looking at it from his angle ... when he dies out of that place and is born into our world. What happens to him? The first thing, he feels soft, tender, loving hands gently holding him. He looks up into a wonderful face that is full of love, and loving eyes are shining down at him.

Then as he grows he has the fascinating experiences of childhood and young manhood, and the future is before him. He feels strong. It is good to be alive. He marries and has children. He becomes middle-aged, is creative and happy, and life is good; indeed the world is good. He loves it.

Then the years begin to add up. His hair becomes white and his step a bit feeble. And he knows he has to die, to leave all this and go away into another place, some uncertain place that is

mysterious to him.

And once again he protests, "I don't want to die! I like it here. I love to feel the warmth of the sun on my face, the softness of rain, the bite of snow. I love to see great blue-shrouded mountains shouldering out the sky. I love to watch the ocean washing upon soft shores of sand. I love to be with my family and friends. Life is good. I don't want to leave here." But, as it happens to all humanity, one day he does die to this world.

What happens then? Does God all of a sudden change in nature? That doesn't make sense. Isn't it reasonable to believe that the first thing man will feel is the touch of great, loving hands, that he will look up into a face that is infinitely loving, and he will look around him wonderingly, and his breath will be taken away by the beauties that he sees? All tears will be wiped from his eyes and he will ask, "Why was I so afraid of this thing called death, when as I now see, it is life more wonderful than ever before?" And he will be forever alive.

THAT IS WHAT EASTER

REALLY MEANS.

IT IS A FAITH, A HOPE.

But when you really think it through, it also is a very rational conclusion.

--Norman Vincent Peale

What is Homicide Grief?

Not all grief is the same. Every person will manage and display their grief differently, and certainly different types of loss can result in varying emotions for the bereaved. The intensity of this loss can remain with homicide survivor families forever after the actual incident, and over time, can result in further pressures. Often, family members struggle to communicate with each other, individuals struggle to retain concentration at work, children's schooling suffers, families can even disintegrate in divorces and estrangement, and people can begin to feel despondent about life in general.

Society offers many misconceptions about grief. Many people believe it is a lineal experience where the bereaved person goes through various "stages" of their grief, eventually reaching some kind of "acceptance". When a homicide occurs, the family's grief is often worsened by a seemingly drawn-out legal process, of bail hearings, preliminary trials, adjournments, mental health assessment, more adjournments and perhaps finally the trial. Then comes the preparation and



delivery of an impact statement, and hopefully the sentencing. For families bereaved by homicide, the constant involvement in the investigation and the legal process creates a situation where survivors of homicide victims re-live the horror of what has happened to their loved one.

When the investigation is over and it then becomes a matter for the courts, survivors may feel dissatisfied with the level of involvement they have in the judicial process. For loved ones of the victim, the law appears “black and white” in other words, murder is murder! They soon realize however that the law has many shades of grey. Families can often feel lost or swept up in the legal system, liaising between various agencies, and government departments in the midst of trying to function in everyday life.

So, how does someone move forward from here? Terms such as “get over it” and “move on” must be removed from your vocabulary! No one should ever be expected to “get over” the loss of a loved one to murder.

However, to allow ourselves to be consumed by grief, so much so that our entire life dissolves because of it; is no solution either. We never “get over it” we do however slowly and with great support, understanding and encouragement work to evolve through it. Many counsellors, talk of “accommodated grief”, that is the point in a bereaved person's life where they begin to reinvest in the world again.

While it is impossible not to think about the horrendous and cruel cowardly act of murder without anger and distress, gradually over time the bad days very slowly lessen, where we can focus more on the special memories and adventures we had together. While our lives will never return to what was normal, we strive to create a new type of normal, allowing us a rare insight into what is truly important and meaningful in life. There is no guide book that exists, we write our own guidelines as we evolve through it.

--Canadian Parents Of Murdered Children

<http://www.cpomc.ca>

On Suicide

Dear Parents,

My daughter, Lynn, killed herself. I have been where you are now. I know how badly it hurts. I know that you feel the most terrible aloneness of your life. It is normal for you to feel desperately unhappy, angry, guilty, frightened and out of control. You wouldn't feel terrible if you hadn't



loved your child so much.

Most people who kill themselves had depression— usually unrecognized and undiagnosed. People who have depression have an illness. Chemicals get out of balance in their brains, which regulate how they think, feel and behave. No amount of love and caring, or trying to build up their self-esteem could have altered their misconception that their situation was hopeless.

Please don't let anyone tell you how you should feel. People will say that the death of a child by suicide is the “worst” thing that can happen, that you will “never” get over it. Don't believe them; these are the voices of the taboo and stigma on suicide. This is part of the extra burden you will have as a suicide survivor. Others don't hear gasps of shock as we do when we tell how our child died. Others don't hear gross jokes and ridicule about the manner of their child's death. That's extra for us.

You may feel bewildered and stunned; go over and over the events leading up to the death; feeling that somehow— if you had done one last thing— you might have saved your child; you may be fearful and anxious about yourself and the rest of your family. These things, and more, are normal reactions after a suicide death.

You will survive the suicide death of your child because you have to, but you have the choice about how you will survive. You have gotten through the days since your child died— the worst that can happen already has happened. It cannot get worse. You have been through the worst, and you have survived. The next several months will gradually get easier, but it probably won't feel that way day by day. It will be up and down. It helps to look back over a week or a month and compare. Recognize your small victories. Death leaves a scar that we always have, and we will feel pain from it through our lives, but the intense pain you feel now will gradually get better; the pain won't be there forever. Ultimately for suicide survivors, it is not so much how our children died, as that they died.

Keep in mind that you are a good person, and you deserve to be happy again. You are going to be alright, but it will not be easy especially at first. I still miss Lynn, but I know she went as far as she could, and that she would have stayed with us if she could. Some people, like your child and my Lynn, have to leave before the play is over. Be good to yourself.

-- Adina Wroblewski, Professional Speaker/ Writer about Suicide & Suicide Grief

Kathie

He has a hard time looking me in the eye
when I talk about her. His eyes fill with tears.
He fights them back.

“Don't cry, never cry”, his ego tells him.
All the strength leaves his face
and he holds the weight of his head in his hands.

He can't say her name.
He says “baby”, “the baby”.
When I say “Kathie” his insides are trembling.

But he battles for control; fights back for strength;
fights for energy; fights out of fear.
He lost his daughter, he can't lose himself.

Crying, I ask him if he holds the same memories,
the same feelings.
He says, “I think differently than you do” with all
the strength his voice can muster.

His face says he is lying. But I let him lie.
What purpose would it serve to force him to suffer
more? I have my answer. I am comforted.

We hold each other, protect each other,
and tuck her in safely,
lovingly in our hearts and minds.
Until another day...

Maybe then
he can love her
without being afraid.
--<http://www.myforeverchild.com>

For the Newly Bereaved



In the early stages of grief,
you may feel completely hopeless. The thought
that your pain will ever subside seems impossible.
The idea that you will ever enjoy life again seems
ludicrous. Holidays, birthdays, and death days
seem intolerable, and your goal is simply to
endure and live through them.

You may feel disoriented, removed from what's
going on around you, and numb to feelings or
emotions. In the early stages of grief, it is not
unusual for people to have little desire to live. You
may experience deep or mild depression and feel
that no one understands your pain. You may
vacillate between incessant talking and total
silence. Most early grievers are oblivious to
anyone else's pain and don't want to know that

others are hurting.

In the middle stages of grief, the pain subsides
every once in a while for at least brief moments.
Some days, your grief is not your only waking
thought, although you do still think about it
frequently through the day. Waves of grief still
come, but they do not last as long or come as
often.

You may begin to realize that others have
problems, and you may occasionally find yourself
offering help and advice to another hurting person.

Holidays are not dreaded quite so much, and
you will probably have learned by now that you
don't have to be tied to traditions and will feel free
to celebrate special occasions in your own way.
Death days and birthdays are still probably quite
uncomfortable. As you become more fully aware -
of the injustice of your situation, you may become
obsessed with the thought that you must right the
wrongs of the world. Grieving people can become
driven and single-minded in their mission,
neglecting everything and everyone else around
them.

In the late stages of grief, you begin to find a
new normal that seems somewhat comfortable.
Obviously, you prefer to go back to the old normal
but since you can't, you begin to view the new
normal as an acceptable second best. You still
think of your loss fairly often, but the waves of grief
are infrequent. You begin to make your grief work
for you by sharing your story, getting involved in
support groups, and helping others.

Holidays are tolerable, and you may even look
forward to some of them. The impact of birthdays
and death days has lessened, but you know they
will never be forgotten. As you work through the
later stages of grief, you desire to “start living
again.” You look forward to things being exciting
or thrilling again, but you discover that, because of
your traumas, the edge is off life. You have been
robbed of your innocence— that ability to trust
unconditionally. You will never view life through
“rose-colored glasses” again.

You are determined to make this experience
count, but you may feel unsure about yourself.
Your confidence may waver. It is necessary for
each person to grieve - in his/her own way and at
his/her own pace. Grief will include various
combinations of tears, talking, silence, depression,
anger, fear, guilt, helplessness, and hopelessness,
as well as a multitude of other emotions. Healthy
grief will eventually be resolved. For some, this
will take a few months; for others, it will take years.
--Adapted from *When Your Dreams Die*, by
Marilyn Willett Heavilin, Riverside TCF

Seasoned Grievers...

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

For Friends and Family...

The Gift of Someone Who Listens

Those of us who have travelled a while
 Along this path called grief
 Need to stop and remember that mile,
 That first mile of no relief.
 It wasn’t the person with answers
 Who told us of ways to deal.
 It wasn’t the one who talked and talked
 That helped us start to heal.
 Think of the friends who quietly sat
 And held our hands in theirs.
 The ones who let us talk and talk
 And hugged away our tears.
 We need to always remember
 That more than the words we speak,
 It’s the gift of someone who listens
 That most of us desperately seek.
 --Nancy Myerholtz, TCF Waterville/Toledo, OH

Helpful Hint...



There may be members of your family, some friends or neighbors who will imply that going to the cemetery every day is morbid and perpetuates your grief. Don’t you believe them.

What they don’t understand is that we cry and think of our child whether we go to the cemetery or not. It comforts some to go every day; some only feel a need to go now and then; and still others never return to the cemetery after the funeral. How often you go has nothing to do with the intensity of your grief, it is just another example of how differently we all react. You know how you

feel, and that is what is really important as you hesitate to make changes in your routine without guilt. Do what you need to do and don't worry how it may appear to someone else.

--TCF Quad City Area Chpt. Moline, IL newsletter

Book Review...



Healing A Grandparent's Grieving Heart - 100 Practical Ideas After Your Grandchild Dies.

Compassionate advice and simple activities to help you through the loss of a grandchild. Code: HGRO Price: \$11.95 The Centering Corporation 1-866-218-0101

Welcome...



Dear Bereaved Parents:

Seven years ago we became members of a group we never wanted to belong to. A group that consisted of parents who have lost a child or children. The purpose for us "joining" the group was to learn how to live without the physical presence of our daughter, Sherri, and to hopefully gain support from other bereaved parents who had been on the journey longer than we. "The group" was our lifeline in learning how to begin a "new normal" without our daughter. Many of you, I'm sure, never realized how much you gave to us throughout the years, on those Tuesday evenings.

Hearing your comforting words, sharing your own stories, and feeling an acceptance of what we were going through and expressing, made our group meetings a place where we felt we could come and pour out our hearts. You understood when we expressed how we felt we were losing our minds, how we were going crazy, how one day we felt we could function again, and by the next day be in the fetal position. You all understood this "craziness"- you all understood our erratic behavior. You empathized and didn't judge our ups and downs, our changes in feelings from one week to the next, our anger, our struggle as we searched for a new belief system, or our seeking out a psychic one week and denying it a year later. No, we weren't judged - there were "no shoulds" placed on us. We had heard enough "shoulds" and "ought-to" from those that have never lost a child and who didn't have a clue as to what a bereaved parent goes through.

Yes, this "group" that we never wanted to join was our lighted path on our journey through grief. It was the other bereaved parents that helped us learn how to live a new normal and gave us the

strength and courage to go on and create a new life without our daughter. It was the support that we felt at meetings and the nonjudgmental statements from others that kept us coming back and looking forward to the Tuesday group. It was a "safe" place for us to express our inner most pains- a place that was safe for both of us to cry a river of tears. It's important to us that our group continues in this supportive, nonjudgmental way so that other bereaved parents who attend our meetings can also feel free to share and express their pain and sorrow in a trusting, supportive, and accepting environment.

No, we sure didn't want to join this group, but we are thankful for our "bereaved parent community" for continuing to help us on our journey and for being there on Tuesday evenings. For two hours we are together and in total communion with each other and our children- and we understand.

Love, Debbie and Norm

-- Bereaved Parent, Huntington Beach Newsletter
Editor's Note: For those of you who are newcomers, we extend our hands in friendship and our hearts in understanding. We are truly sorry for the circumstances that bring you to our group, but we are glad you found us. Our chapter of TCF is here to help. We have no easy answers, but the understanding that comes from shared experiences will help to ease some of the pain of your grief. You will find sharing and talking with other parents and siblings will help you feel that others do understand and that the pain of grief will lessen over time.

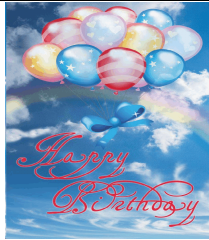
Benchmarks

Good bye would be too difficult,
Although I know you are gone.
Instead, I keep you in my heart
And your memory lives on.
I have redefined my purpose, son,
Since you are no longer here.
With your death I faced a choice
To die, exist, or to live free.
My life has changed forever, child,
I'm redefined each week,
You would call these "benchmarks"
Of goals set and then achieved.
And so I set my benchmarks,
Achieving many, reshaping some...
But everything is different now
Except your mother's love.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF Katy, TX

A Special Birthday

Please God, make them remember
That today is a special, birthday.
Make them understand that
The memories don't go away.
Bless them, with ears to hear and hearts that care.
Enable them to listen while I share.
Shelter them that they may never know my pain.
Help them to help me know that my child's life was
not in vain.
Help them to remember, Lord that I wish
That my child was here
So we could still celebrate.
To understand that I still
Feel the nearness of my child.
To see beyond my smile and the
Words, "I'm okay."
Please God, just let one remember today
Is a special birthday!
--Author unknown



When Death Steals Our Future

When death steals our future
Dreams are shattered like crystal glass
Looking ahead becomes so painful ...
yet so does looking back
Our foundation is shaken to the core
Our perspective is jaded with pain
Dark shadows cover the landscape
For the survivors that remain
The hour glass has lost its sand
A leak we cannot repair
We live now on planet grief
Every minute is dark despair
Tears escape at every turn
We find sadness in every mirror
Our shoulders ache with a tremendous weight
Of trepidation and of fear
Fear of every sunset
That ushers in another sleepless night
Fear of every sunrise
That doesn't make it right
Reality is a cruel reminder
That we live with a broken heart
So we wrap ourselves in sorrow
To allow a healing to get its start
Grief is not a recovery
Death is an injury to our soul
Where body, mind, and spirit
Come together for a common goal
To repair the rip in the fabric
Of the tapestry of who we are

We weave together unraveled threads
On the loom of a falling star
Our life is recreated
From the threads of broken dreams
A pattern brought to life in death -
A dream within a dream
We cannot escape the ravages of time
That redesign this life coat that we wear
It is a part of our cosmic story
Every thread, every rip, and every tear
But repair itself it will
It is the evolution of our kismet
We are but passing colors and particles
Of people that we have met
We are redesigned every minute
Every hour of every single day
We are resilient by our very nature
And we long to find a way
It is only in becoming courageous
That we come to heal from our grief
It is only in the chasing of our dreams
That we can allow release
Release from trying to heal the hurt
To only nurturing a will to survive
It's okay to bring the hurt along ...
a reminder you are alive.
--For Don and Kim Bodeau in honor of their son
David --Mitch Carmody © 2014,
www.heartlightstudios.net

I cried in my car, and was ignored.
I cried in church, and was pitied.
I cried at work, and was shunned.
I cried at home, and was hushed.
I cried at The Compassionate Friends,
And others shared their tissues and tears.
--Nora, TCF, Greenville, SC

Memories

Memories are flowers growing in the heart
Flowers picked on happy days
That time arranges in bouquets
To warm the heart in tender ways
By feelings they impart
Memories are pictures taken through the years,
Pictures of a smiling face.
A happy time, a favorite place...
These pleasures time cannot erase.
They are kept as souvenirs.
--Laura Rogers TCF ~ Northfield, NJ



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

Brandon Armstrong
 Miscarried: July 1995
 Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lorian Tamara Elbert
 Born: 5/66 Died: 10/07
 Mother: Dorota Starr Elbert

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

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

Jesse Eric Esphorst
 Born: 9/00 Died: 3/17
 Parents: Jesse & Julie Esphorst

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tamara Lynette Boyd
 Born: 12/65 Died: 12/00
 Parents: Gloria & Gayle Jones

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

Mark Scott Galper
 Born: 2/62 Died: 5/97
 Mother: Sheri Schrier

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

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

Adam Guymon
 Born: 4/89 Died: 4/06
 Mother: Eileen Guymon

Scott Vincent Buehler
 Born: 3/80 Died: 2/2008
 Mother: Elizabeth Buehler Miller

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Leslie Geraci Hart
 Born 6/66 Died: 7/11
 Father: John Geraci

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

Wayne Douglas
 Born: 9/71 Died: 1/10
 Mother: Marie Galli

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gaby Lindeman
Born: 7/64 Died: 9/12
Parents: Gilberto & Graciela Rodriguez

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

Shauna Jean Malone
Born: 8/70 Died: 1/13
Parents: Tom & Mary Malone

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

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

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

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

Max McCardy
Born: 4/05 Died: 8/15
Parents: Derk & Akemi McCardy

Joseph Mc Coy
Born: 9/11 Died: 11/14
Mother: Amy McCoy

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

Kirk Mc Nulty
Born: 7/84 Died: 2/14
Mother: Elaine Mc Nulty

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stephanie Sue Newkirk
Born: 12/67 Died: 10/15
Mother: Cindy McCoy

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



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

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

Ryan William Thomas
Born: 2/82 Died: 4/04
Mother: Linda Thomas

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

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

Laura C. Toomey
Born: 1/61 Died: 12/78
Mother: Michael & Elizabeth Toomey

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

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

Michael D. Toomey
Born: 4/62 Died: 2/05
Mother: Michael & Elizabeth Toomey

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

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

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

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

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

Carlos Valdez
Born: 01/61 Died: 01/12
Parents: Antonia & Refugio Valdez

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aaron Rico
Born: 12/89 Died: 12/10
Parents: Cameron & Annette Rico

Lorian Tamara Talbert
Born: 5/66 Died: 10/07
Mother: Dorota Starr Elbert

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

Dominic Niall Pennington Roque
Born: 8/02 Died: 9/09
Parents: Kerrie & Ren Roque

Catrina Sol Torres
Born: 12/16 Died: 12/16
Mother: Sheri Torres

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

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

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

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

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

Patrik Stezinger
Born: 1/89 Died: 8/17
Parents: Raul & Rosemary Mosher

Aaron Young
Born: 9/74 Died: 6/15
Mother: Sheila Young

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

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

Steve R. Young
Born: 7/57 Died: 2/90
Mother: Marjorie Young

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

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

Whitney Marie Young
Born: 8/87 Died: 11/06
Parents: Marlene & Steve Young

**Our Children Remembered**

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

Michael Jordan Zareski
Born: 8/70 Died: 12/17
Parents: Susan & Norm Zareski

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.

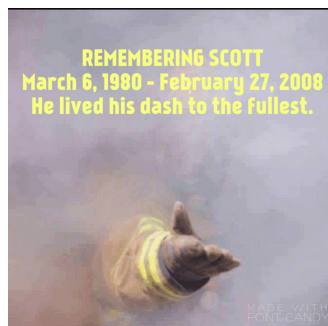
**A Birthday Tribute to:
Edward W. Myricks
April 1972 - Oct. 2011**



Happy Birthday to our beloved son. Eddie, you would be 46 this year. Every 6 months we celebrate you, by doing one of your favorite things, having steamed crabs in Redondo Beach. Just the close family, Dad and I, your children, your sister and her family. We all love and miss you very much and keep you close to our hearts.
Happy Birthday Son,
Love Mom & Dad

A Birthday Tribute to:

**Scott Vincent Buehler
March 1980 - Feb. 2008**

**For Siblings...****The Other "I Love You"**

"Wow." That one word meant everything to me. There I was, the picture of nervousness in

white. The ceremony was just a few minutes away, and there I sat in that room on the brink of one of the biggest days of my life. I looked up, and there you stood in the doorway, all 6'3" of "little" brother complete with tux. I braced myself for what would come next as I saw your face curl into the smile we had always shared.

"Don't touch my stuff." "Cow." "Stay out of my room." This was the extent of our heart-to-hearts growing up. I'd go to my room for peace and quiet and seconds later, your music would be shaking the windows. You drank out of the milk carton, left the bathroom a mess of puddles, and thought nothing was ever your fault. You could spoil even the best of my moods in five seconds flat and then breeze out of the room to finish your day. For years our contact was restricted to passing each other on our way to somewhere else - maybe a wave if we happened to pass on the road. By our late teens, we had grown into our own lives, and they had very little to do each other anymore.

I remember one day I'd noticed you'd started shaving. Another day I was shocked to finally see a hint of muscle on that beanpole frame. It wasn't until my wedding day, though, that I realized that you really, finally had grown up. And it isn't until now that I realize that in such a short time you taught me some really big lessons about life and love. It was impossible to think that in one moment you'd be gone. It was unimaginable to me that the first funeral I'd ever go to was not for my 87-year-old grandmother, but for my 20-year-old brother. And it was crazy to think that this same bratty, brother would be the one to teach me how to live my life and even what it means to really love someone.

One Sunday morning, a phone call from my mom made the unthinkable a reality. Suddenly, those wishes I had always made out loud about being an only child began to echo in my head. I spent the first few nights just rocking and crying and repeating the same four words. "I love you, Mike." "I love you. Mike." Oh, why didn't I ever just tell you that? All that silence, all that yelling, all those opportunities I wasted in getting to know you were eating up my soul. This wasn't the plan. We were supposed to become friends again when we grew up. There was supposed to be so much time left. Time to start over and meet again as adults. How could we just leave things like this? How could we have been so cheated? I got my wedding pictures back right around the time that you died. When I saw them, I remembered that

day and what you had said. It was not what I had expected, not “that dress makes you look fat” or “what happened to your hair?” but just one simple word: “Wow.”

With some people in your life, the words “I love you” just comes in another form. The bond between siblings can be a quiet thing that even they don't always realize is there. We may have driven each other crazy all those years, but we couldn't have been so good at it if we hadn't known each other so well. I may not get any more days with you, but I got at least one that meant everything to me. I got one day when you weren't my bratty little brother and I wasn't the stuck-up older sister. I got at least one day when we were more than family; we were friends.

It's been a year now, and I think of you every day. I think of you when I feel I'm doing more of what I think I have to do, than what I want to do. I remember our Mom ended up being so thankful that you decided to ditch work to go to the lake the day before you died. I think of you when I'm tempted to judge someone because they don't fit in my standards. I remember the friends of yours I had called “losers,” who showed up by the hundreds to say how much you meant to them and to be there for your family at the toughest time of our lives. I think of you when I pick up the phone to talk to Mom and Dad every few days, just to keep close and let them know I love them. Because ultimately, the people you love in this life are really all that matter. You taught me that real love persists through anything: the longest silences, the harshest words, and even death. And that sometimes that can be the most painful thing in the world.

I try to remember two things on those really bad days that still come around from time to time. One is that grief is an amazing testament to the person who has left. The more hurt I feel, the more I understand how much you really touched my heart. The second is that sometimes love just hides in strange places for a while, but sooner or later it always turns up, sometimes in the form of just one simple word and a smile. But in any form it takes, it's something to be treasured.

--Kim Singletary, TCF Kamloops, B.C.

For Grandparents...



A Grandmother's Grief

My mother, diagnosed with lymphoma, died just before Mother's Day in 2008. Only two

months prior, she had been a high spirited fun-loving woman, the heart of our family who was looking forward to her 90th birthday celebration that fall. As I cared for my dear mother, knowing I would soon lose her, I reflected back on my daughter Kristen's death at age seven and my mother's concerns about me at that time.

I had been so consumed by my own grief then, and the grief of my young son, only nine when his sister died, that I was hardly aware of others' grief. Not until a few years ago did my mother confide her pain of not only grieving for her precious granddaughter, but her daughter as well. Her fear was that the tragic and sudden loss of Kristen could also mean the loss of her daughter.

“Kristen drowned in the ocean,” she said, “but you were drowning in grief. I know you felt helpless to save her, but I felt the same about you. I had no idea how to rescue you.” Surprised to hear this, even though I had also feared losing my mind, I became aware for the first time of the unique role grandparents play when their grandchild dies.

I recently became a grandmother myself and have been overjoyed with this new role of welcoming Joseph into the world. My favorite picture is of my mother, shortly before she died, with a huge smile and outstretched arms reaching for baby Joseph when meeting him for the first time. While my mother's death, unlike Kristen's, is part of the natural cycle of life, I will miss her deeply. She taught me so much. I think of her often in my new role as a grandparent.

When Joseph was born, I had the luxury of spending the first several weeks with him, watching him change daily as his parents moved nervously into their new role. I loved being witness to the bond developing as they changed from being a couple to being a little family. My son, a resident in anesthesiology, studies nightly, often with Joseph nestled against his chest in a baby sling. He once shared how much he misses his baby while he spends long hours at the hospital. Watching the creation of this strong parental bond, I became aware of the unique dual bond of the grandparent. A bond that takes her heart to places she never thought possible...a bond that should never be broken. I now appreciate more than ever what my mother experienced.

--Arleen Simmonds TCF/Kamloops, B.C.

From Our Members...

Arms Wide Open

It was too soon for me, God...
but it was in Your time.
She was ready – she raced toward You
free of everything...
arms wide open.
The shackles of her earthly existence
broken away, her joy returned
with arms wide open.
Her blonde hair blowing, dancing in the light
on her way toward You...
arms wide open.
She lived life packing in heart-filled memories...
arms wide open; she was unafraid.
I can see her laughing and lovely
embracing Your Kingdom and doing Your work
with arms wide open.
My loss and longing so deep and scary lives on.
She was gone from me too soon.
She was only borrowed anyway.
You have her once again.
She loved You, God, and You took her back...
Your arms wide open.

For my precious daughter Stephanie on
Mother's Day 5/14/2017

--Cindy McCoy 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.



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.


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: April 1st for May 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 co-leader).....(310) 370-1645
Mary Sankus (chapter do-leader)....(310)648-4878
Kitty Edler.....(310) 541-8221
Richard Leach (grandchild).....(310) 833-5213
Kristy Mueller (sibling).....(310) 373-9977
REGIONAL COORDINATOR
Olivia Garcia.....(818) 736-7380



Our Website... Joe Zelik is hosting the website and updating it with the current newsletter and chapter information. 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 correct 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, or e-mail me at Lynntcf@aol.com

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

Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter: TCF National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters. We encourage everyone use the valuable information it holds to help you in your grief. To receive TCF's e-newsletter, sign up for it online by visiting

TCF national website at www.compassionatefriends.org. and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.

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. **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 (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 3rd 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	Marilyn Nemeth
Cheryl & Bill Matasso	Lynn Vines
Nancy Lerner	Ken Konopasek
Kitty Edler	Susan Kass
Mary Sankos	

FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE...

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that St. Louis, Missouri, will be the site of the **41st TCF National Conference** on July 27-29, 2018. "Gateway to Hope and Healing" is the theme of next year's event, which promises more of this year's great National Conference experience. The 2018 Conference will be held at the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel. We'll keep you updated with details as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

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. Or, you can log into Facebook and search for The Compassionate Friends/USA. **TCF is also now on Twitter. Search for TCFofUSA.**

The National Office of TCF has an ongoing support group for parents and siblings online. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" listed under the Find Support menu. 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



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.

No donations were received this month.

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 _____

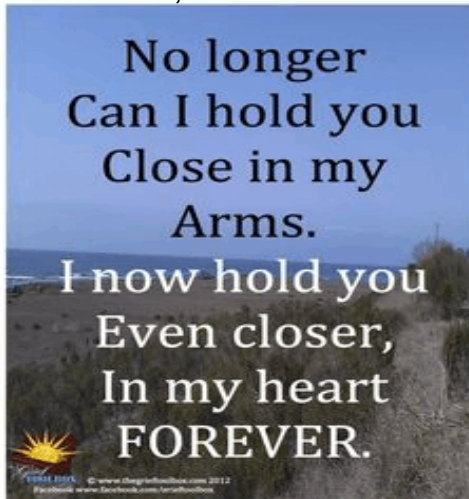
Birth date _____ Death date _____ Sent From _____

Tribute _____

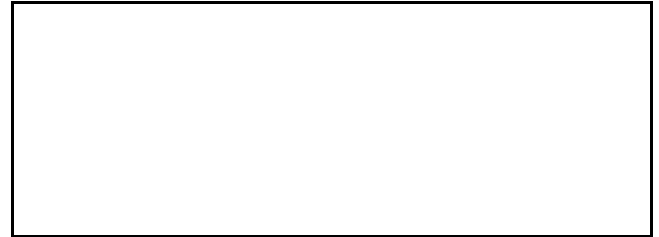
To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month or it will appear in the following issue.

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