



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

MAY 2018 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be May 3rd., the first ***Thursday***
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 ***Thursday*** (new day of the week), May 3rd meeting will start with "Handling Special Days." Regular meetings are from 7 - 9 PM with sharing and visiting and grief library times from 9 - 9:30 PM.

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

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(Please note our new day of the week.) The Thursday, May 3rd meeting will start with "Handling Special Days." After the death of a child, certain days or events will pounce on us as if screaming "My child is not here, I can't even contemplate celebrating anything!" Special days will forever be changed. Any given month may hold an event that you will need to face without your departed child. We will be discussing the upcoming Mother's Day, Father's Day, birthdays, death anniversaries, graduations, weddings and holidays. These special occasions will forever be viewed differently. Even if it has been awhile, they can sometimes catch us off guard. If this is the first year without your child, you may be overwhelmed with emotions and not know what to do about celebrating anything "special". We will be discussing various methods other bereaved families have devised to make these holidays and special occasions a little easier.

Special Days

Spring comes and with it the uneasy awareness of difficult days ahead. For those who are still going through all of the "firsts" without their child, we want to share with you some of the ways parents have coped and managed. Mother's Day... Father's Day ... graduation ... vacations - these are special family times which often catch us unaware and bring unexpected tears and painful memories of young lives cut short. You can make these special days easier with some planning and with encouragement from those who have already been there.

Whichever day lies ahead for your family, try to focus on doing something meaningful and tangible in remembrance of your child. Share thoughts and suggestions about the possibilities: planting a tree, starting a garden, donating a book, lighting a candle, putting flowers on the altar or taking that long talked of vacation. Remember, tears and moments of sadness are expression of love. Also remember:

1. Take one day at a time.
2. Keep things simple.
3. Change your routine from past years.
4. Make plans to keep busy.
5. Give your surviving children some space--they not only feel your sadness, but they also have their own feelings to deal with.
6. Remember that the anticipation is often worse

than the day itself.

--Fox Valley, IL TCF Newsletter



Days of Our Lives

Before my son died, life was filled with one happy event after another. The days came and went, one month evolved into another, and the "special" days on the calendar added a new and joyful dimension to our otherwise routine lives. Philip's sudden death changed every part of my life, including the way I now look at the days, the months, the seasons, and those special occasions that previously were times of great anticipation. Now my calendar is not always my friend; rather, it is a guide through my life as a bereaved parent. This is how my calendar now looks:

JANUARY - A new year begins, and I am here to see it enter. My son does not have the opportunity to grow, to learn, and to develop as I do. When the new year dawns, I feel guilt because of all I have and all that he is missing.

FEBRUARY - How I miss the Valentine made by tiny hands and lots of glue, and the "I love you, Mommy" prompted by his dad. Do children still make silhouettes of Lincoln and Washington to tape on the refrigerator on President's Day?

MARCH - In the south, the trees are beginning to bud and daffodils are bobbing in the gentle breeze. I remember when he picked everyone in the yard and offered them to me in his chubby hand. Then he blew his nose into them, trying to sniff their fragrance. Daffodils now make me sad.

APRIL - Easter and spring symbolize new life. Oh, how I wish his life was here with me. There are no new Easter clothes to buy for him and no eggs to gather in his basket. His chair is conspicuously empty at Easter lunch.

MAY - As soon as the Easter displays are taken down, Mother's Day displays go up in the stores. I can wear a red rose that day because I rejoice that my own mom is still living, but how can I show the world that my heart is broken because I am a mother who has lost a child?

JUNE - The last day of school arrives and I wonder what he would want to do with his summer. Vacation provides a nice relief, but the homecoming is so painful, that I wonder if it is worth the trip. My heart breaks for my husband because he lives through Father's Day without his precious son.

JULY - The fireworks are beautiful in the sky and I wonder if Philip can see them. I miss him at the parades and cook-outs. I didn't get to teach him about our nation's birth.

AUGUST - It is now time to buy new school clothes, new crayons, and a back-pack. The mall seems crowded with blonde, blue-eyed boys.

SEPTEMBER - The new school year begins and I see children all around me in various stages of anxiety, getting ready to meet new teachers and new friends. I see boys and girls parade down the street to and from school, but my son is not among them.

OCTOBER - Halloween - what would he want to "be" this year? He-Man? A ghost? Thundercat? When the small children knock at my door for treats, a lump forms in my throat.

NOVEMBER - Sitting around a bountiful table with all of the relatives seems to make his absence even more pronounced than before. For three years after Philip's death, I was thankful for nothing; now am thankful that I had him for even a little while. This is still my hardest time.

DECEMBER - Christmas and Hanukkah are family centered occasions that cater to our children. What should we do with his stocking this year? What would Santa be bringing him if he were alive? Will I be able to sing the carols this year? His special ornament is on the tree and the memories of his two Christmases are bittersweet.

With a calendar so loaded with special times and special events, no wonder we bereaved parents are constantly on a roller coaster. It is understandable that at every meeting of The Compassionate Friends parents can be heard saying, "It has been a hard month". When you add to these months the day of our child's birth, the date of his death, and birthdays of other family members, the days of our lives seem overwhelming.

It has been four years since Philip died and I can honestly say that the days, months, and special occasions do get easier to bear. I do believe, however, that it is unrealistic to think that they will ever be the same.

--Elaine Grier, Philip's Mom TCF, Atlanta, GA

The First Anniversary of Loss

Here it comes, the dreaded anniversary. You may be wondering: "How will I deal with it? If the stress today is this bad, how horrible will I feel on

the actual date?" As the first anniversary looms closer on the calendar, you may find yourself visiting the past, reliving the days of your loss, the deep sadness, and maybe remembering the shock of your loved one's passing.

We know the day is getting nearer, and it is the anticipation of special days that cause our mind to go back. Fortunately, many feel the anticipation of the date is worse than the actual date itself.

The first year after a loss is so difficult because it is a year of firsts: the first Christmas, New Year, birthday (yours and theirs), Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day, each of these special dates brings the pain and the anguish of living without your loved one. Reliving the intense emotions that you experienced when your loss was new is not unusual.

Getting through the first year is hard. Nobody really can know what is in store for them in their grief journey. It is different for each of us. However, after getting through the Year of Firsts, we begin to see and know we will survive. We got through the funeral or memorial service, read and responded to all the sympathy notes, took the flood of calls that are (each in their own way) so hard to bear. Then the quiet time settles in, when the calls and the notes stop coming, the visits from well-wishers are fewer and farther between. We have faced some of the difficult milestones, isn't this enough?

Unfortunately, grieving does not "turn off" after one year. Time does not erase the past, but it does provide an opportunity to think about our loved one, process our loss, and find meaning. Anniversaries and reminders, although painful at first, do become easier. These important dates give us a perfect chance to remember the happy things, the things that made our loved one special, and bring opportunities to build memorial traditions.

--Author unknown



May Memories

Something about the month of May always catches me off guard. The weather seems to think it is August one day and then January the next. The Jacaranda trees with their beautiful purple blooms are proof that summer is almost here. The flowers that are evident in people's yards remind me of the time spent together getting our own garden and yard in shape. The many moans and groans as the entire family devoted a day to pulling weeds, trimming

trees and planting vegetables and flowers now brings a smile to my face.

At my son's funeral, I was so overcome by the scent of the many different flowers that I did not think I would ever enjoy flowers again. The following May, the idea of cleaning the yards or planting anything left me cold. Who cared what the yard looked like. What difference did it make. Mow the grass... that was good enough.

For Mother's Day, my surviving son's and their dad came home from the nursery with five huge rosebushes. They had each picked their own favorite, and a massive rosebush covered with bright orange roses (Eric's favorite) and an unusual light purple one (my favorite color). There they sat. What's a mom to do? We all donned gloves and tools and went to work planting. The satisfaction in a clean yard, beautiful flowers and the peace that came from digging in the earth did much to renew my spirits.

I guess the point I am trying to make is at some time after wallowing in your grief, you may need a gentle push to start enjoying the small things in life again. It is very easy to become so used to feeling empty inside that you start feeling like it is your "new normal". Don't get stuck there. The effort to plant those rose bushes made me realize I needed to enjoy the little things all around me. Flowers have become enjoyable again. Looking at the trees with their new green leaves can make you appreciate spring. The world can be forgiven for not having stopped the day your child died. We are still here and doing ok. One day at a time we have coped and gone on. Just as our children would have wanted.

Now the sight of butterflies flying over rose-bushes lifts my spirits. It's like a gentle reminder from my departed son that there are reasons to smile again ... reminders to have faith ... reminders that life can hold as much joy as we allow it to.

--Lynn Vines TCF So. Bay/LA, CA

Mother's Day and Father's Day

Understandably, the two days set aside by our society to honor the state of parenthood are like proverbial salt rubbed in our wounds. For those of us who have no surviving children, these two holidays also bring up many questions. Will anyone acknowledge that we are parents? Will we allow ourselves to acknowledge that we are parents?

In the stationery store there are Mother's and Father's Day cards for wives and husbands, for aunts and uncles, for people who have "been like a mother or father" to the sender. But there are no cards for parents like us. Are we parents? Of course we are! Daughters and sons do not stop being daughters and sons when their parents die. We are mothers and fathers who children have died.

--Author Unknown



The Butterflies Are Coming

Dear Friends,

It's spring! The butterflies are coming. Many of us at TCF hold the butterfly with utmost regard, for it is a symbol of our child's life after death. We think of our children being born into a free and more beautiful existence after the drudgery of a caterpillar's life here on earth.

But what about us? Does the butterfly hold an even deeper meaning for bereaved parents? It seems, in fact, we have died also. We are never the same after the death of our child. But, can we be transformed into a beautiful creature or are we doomed to be trapped in the web of a grief cocoon forever? I believe it is simply a matter of choice. We can stay in the silken threads which we have spun for ourselves. It's quite safe there.

Perhaps if we isolate ourselves with a really tough cocoon, no one can ever reach in far enough to hurt us again. But if we take a chance on emerging into a new person, the light of our children's love will have a chance to shine through our newly formed wings.

It won't be easy. The grief cocoon holds anger, fear, guilt and despair. But we can work through it. In fact, there's no going around it. All butterflies must work their way through an ugly cocoon.

The butterflies are coming. Won't you join them?

--Kathie Silief TCF, Tulsa, OK

After The First Year

After the first year the pain changes from a crushing weight to a wickedly cutting edge. Time speeds up from a grinding plodding to a more normal routine. And sometimes you forget, for a moment, that your whole life was destroyed just last year.

After the first year you start to remember the

good times. You can tell a funny story about your child and save the crying for later. But sometimes it seems like you're the only one left who mourns. "What's the matter with you anyway? It's been a whole year." After the first year your child seems a little closer and yet still so far away. Miracle of miracles, you haven't forgotten how he walks, his voice, the shape of his head, or the solid warmth of his fingers curving around yours. Those memories ambush you at many unlikely moments and tear you apart.

After the first year, your heart begins to thaw. You remember that you once loved your surviving children and love them once again. You remember that life used to hold joy; and you rediscover some small enjoyment in living. You learn to piece your life back together in a different pattern. After the first year you pick up your burdens and go on. Amazingly you have survived a blow more painful than anything you ever imagined. Even though you wish you had died too, it slowly dawns on you that you must still live because after the first year, comes the second year.

--Liz Ford TCF Madison, WI

Grief Triggers Can Become Healing Triggers

As I was driving down the street about a year after my son, Brendon, died, there was a young man standing on the side of the road, getting ready to cross. When I passed him, I looked in my mirror to see what he was going to do. As he began to run across the street, he had the exact same gait; same arm and leg motion as my son. It was Bren in someone else's body. My heart sank and my tears streamed. I pulled off the road. My grief had been triggered.

My wife, Kathy, works as a checker in a grocery store. It took her almost two years after Brendon died to muster the strength to get the job. It was a leap of faith. A few months after she started, a woman came through her line with the same brand of chili we'd found on the stove when we went to Bren's apartment to get clothes in which to bury him. Her grief triggered and she started to cry.

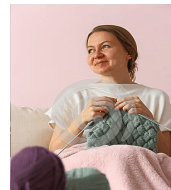
The woman reached in her purse, said nothing, and handed Kath a Kleenex. She knew something very sad had happened. Kath's grief had been triggered. What was, is, it for you? We've all experienced those painful sights, scents and sounds that remind us of our children's deaths.

Was it a trip to the grocery store where you saw their favorite cookie and found yourself on the floor sobbing? At the mall were you suddenly hit with a scent that said, "It's you; it smells just like you," and you had to sit down? In your car, as you flipped through radio stations, did a song come on that was your song together and you had to pull to the side of the road?

Grief triggers can be crushing and it's okay to let them knock us down. It's okay to occasionally walk backwards and let those emotions wash over us. It's important we experience them fully and not push them away. But if we do our work and positively express our suffering, they can't keep us down. They can't win. As we move forward in our journey it's possible to know that death did not take all when it took our kids' bodies. Death can never take their spirit, their life force. It can't have our memories or our love; only life gets those. Death is not as powerful as it thinks it is if we don't let it be.

Healing triggers happen when those same sights, scents and sounds that once knocked us down, now lift us up because they're a reminder of our living, breathing, laughing, loving children. By using our time wisely and embracing the power of letting go and forgiveness, we can transition from grief triggers to healing triggers. In embracing those healing memories is where we can find our smile and find our children.

For our children to have died, it meant they had to have lived first, however long that was. If we focus on their living, and let go of their dying, we can heal; we can smile and find meaning again. Look for your healing triggers, they're everywhere.
--Brendon's father
fromheartbreaktohealing.weebly.com



The Courage to Move On

The first time I picked up knitting needles was on a beautiful October morning in 2002, six months after my five-year-old daughter, Grace, died from a virulent form of strep. Learning to knit wasn't just a way to distract me during the long months of grieving... It also was an attempt to redefine myself. Once Grace was born, I became the mother of a little girl. That meant I combed her fine blond hair and taught her the ABCs; that we lay together on the sofa, singing along to her favorite movie Oliver! I had a vision of a future - which Grace grew up and my role changed: I would shop with her for lipstick, teach her to ride waves in the ocean and

share my favorite books with her. Once, when asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, Grace said: "I want to write books like my mommy, except I'll write mine in nail polish."

When your child dies, that imagined future dies too. Unable to grasp what had happened, I could no longer make sense of words. I could not read. I couldn't write. I needed to find something new. Yes, for distraction for meditation, but also to put me on a path that was not all wrapped up in who I had been. I needed something without Grace's fingerprints on it.

This is the part of grief that I did not yet know. Like most of us I knew the common things: how hard each birthday and anniversary would be; how my husband, Lorne, and I might not sleep or eat very much; how we should try to talk about our pain. Grief brings an emptiness with it, like someone punched a hole in you. My arms and my lap ached from the emptiness Grace had left behind.

After the death of someone we love, we are forced to figure out who we are now. It is difficult to reach the point where you realize that moving forward doesn't mean leaving behind the person you've lost. I remember how upset I became when we had to buy a new car shortly after Grace died. A part of me wanted to keep everything exactly as it had been. I even resisted painting the living room. Each small change seemed to make preeminence daughter disappear a little more.

Then, that same October when I learned to knit, my husband began redoing the cracked asphalt sidewalk in front of our house. Every weekend, as the leaves changed from green to gold and then began to fall, he dug and measured and planned an intricate herringbone pattern. When the sidewalk was finished, he began work on the driveway, removing the sharp gravel and replacing it with cobblestones. By the following fall, Lorne had relined our small city yard with beach stones and circular patterns of cobblestone and brick. By the garden, he laid the stones in a heart shape for Grace. This physical labor distracted him. It helped the long weekends to pass, and he found a new passion. Our yard, our driveway, our front walk—all of it had changed. And it was beautiful. One warm spring evening, I looked around our exquisite yard. When we moved to this house, Grace had dubbed it "our happy house." That night I smiled—remembering and believing that, even with changes, it was indeed still our happy house.

How to move on: Part of the work of grieving is

to channel our emotions and energy into activities that help us redefine ourselves. Some people turn to creative pursuits. For me, it was knitting. The soft clicking of the needles helped me to relax. Some people reach out and help others by volunteering. And some, recognizing that life is precious and short, fulfill their dreams.

To help yourself heal, do what moves you. Or do what matters. Adopt a cat. Visit Spain. Ride a bike. Help the homeless. Be a mentor. And in each new activity, remember the loved one who brought you there. Then take those first tentative steps into the rest of your life.

--By Ann Hood, in the 2/4/07, issue of *Parade*.



Excerpt from **Healing After Loss**

"If we didn't love them, we wouldn't care so much." At first the grief is so consuming, it may be hard to look ahead and foresee rejoicing - that we have been privileged to share life with this person.

Even when death is premature and the circumstances are terrible, we can know that, down the road, our gratitude for the life of the person will far outstrip the terrible grief that at first seems to take up the whole landscape of our lives. A friend whose son died by suicide told me that an important milestone in her healing was the making of two lists: one, of the bad things about her experience with this son; and another, of the good things. Needless to say, the list of good things was by far the longer list.

It will take time before the scale, tipped initially with the primary weight of grief, rebalances itself and our joy in the person's life again takes preeminence. But if the relationship has been one of joy and mutual appreciation, this will happen. I am grateful, from the bottom of my heart, that I have shared the life of my loved one. And I trust that someday my happiness as I remember our life together, will outweigh the grief I feel now."
—Martha Whitmore Hickman, reprinted from Solano County TCF newsletter

There is an Egyptian story that says when God created the world, He made everything small so that it could grow up with time. The grain into the wheat, the baby into the man, the bud into the flowers. Only sorrow was created full grown so that it might decrease with time and Man might be able to live with it.

Still A Mother

Mother's Day is coming soon
 More flowers on the grave
 Some for my mother long since gone
 Some for the son I couldn't save
 One I understand so well
 It's no big mystery
 It's always been the truth of life
 That they will pass before me
 It's the other way around
 That has me baffled still
 It's not the way it's supposed to go
 It's such a bitter pill
 We're given these most precious pearls
 Although we'd gladly pay
 To love and cherish till we're gone
 To protect through all our days
 How did I fail, what was the point
 How could I let him slip
 I tried so very very hard
 Played according to the script
 Life changed the rules, it fooled me good
 I thought I had it straight
 You nurture, love and build them up
 They're wonders you create
 Then it's your turn to look with pride
 At all your effort's worth
 Not the time to say goodbye
 To bury deep beneath the earth
 I feel so cheated, so denied
 Of what is my rightful due
 It wasn't one child that I bore
 It always has been two
 Do I deny him on that day
 Although we are apart
 And pretend he wasn't here at all
 Or left his footprint on my heart
 No! I will shout it to the world
 Shout with all my might
 He was here! He left his mark
 But grew tired of the fight
 He's at peace, I tell myself
 I had to let him go
 I had to trust in God alone
 To finally take him home
 I grieve him still but must move on
 Despite my pain and strife
 It's sometimes good, it's sometimes bad
 That is the way of life
 There is the one that is still here
 I must remember that today



She was the first, she'll be the last
 Throughout my life I pray
 I'm still a mother, tried and true
 I proudly have the stats
 I know it wasn't all in vein
 My daughter's testament to that
 She is my joy, my proudest deed
 No one can take away
 She gives me worth and title true
 To claim this Mother's Day
 --From the Poems and Prose of Deborah Streb
 In loving memory of Adam Marano TCF, Rochester NY

Newly Bereaved...

The Myth Of The Grief Time Line

How long does it take to fall in love? How many seconds pass before a parent loves their newborn child? How many arguments and rivalries can the bonds of siblinghood withstand? How many sleepovers and phone calls before you know a friend is true? These are silly questions, aren't they? They're like riddles with no answer. There's no scale to measure love or to quantify the bonds of friendship and family.

So why then do we often hear questions like these: "How long does grief last? When will it end? When will I be over it?" If grief is the result of losing someone we loved, cared for and/or connected with, then are these questions also just riddles with no answer? The idea of a grief time line is somewhat of a misnomer.

Anyone familiar with grief understands that associated feelings, setbacks, breakthroughs, roadblocks, triggers, and resolutions can occur at unexpected, unpredictable and inexplicable times and durations. Grief is not a race with a start and finish line, it's a labyrinth with twists and turns and dead ends. Grief is like trying to swim past the break in the ocean – you wade in but every once in a while a wave comes up and knocks you back a few feet. You're still deeper than when you started, but not as deep as you were before the wave hit.

How long will it take you to get past the break? It depends on your strength, the ocean, the tide and the weather. Grief cannot be mapped on a time line, although "Normal Grief" should be negatively correlated with time. This means the more time that passes, the less extreme and agonizing grief feelings should be. There will still be bad days, but overall it's average intensity will

diminish.

Feelings of grief will diminish, but not disappear. Grief is infinitas which means "being without finish". Grief doesn't end, but with time it should look different – more peaceful, hopeful, constructive and positive. Here are a few small indicators you might be making progress in your grief. I find it important to note, you can take steps forward, yet still grieve your loved one. Just because you return to work, date, or decide to have a child does not mean you won't continue to grieve the person you lost. The capacity you have to be happy, enjoy life, and love others exists in addition to the love you feel for your deceased loved ones. Because love...love is infinitas.

You start to feel "normal". You have more good days than bad. You experience an increase in energy and motivation. You remember memories fondly as opposed to experiencing them as grief triggers. You can constructively think about the loss of your loved one and the impact it's had on your life. Your Sleep patterns return to normal. You experience feelings of optimism about the future. You see improvement in performance at work. You're able to focus on personal health and well-being. You feel ready to date again, have more children, and/or make new friends. Your relationships feel more functional and healthy. You feel as though you are "rejoining the human race". You feel ready to get out of the house. You experience an increase in desire for emotional and physical intimacy.

--<http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/myth-grief-time> line

Seasoned Greivers...

Wisdom

As bereaved mothers, we know the joys and the pain of Mother's Day. Through the life and death of our child, we have loved much and lost much. We are far better people because of our children. Our wisdom surpasses anything we could have considered possible before our child died, for now we know loss, the darkest places of the human psyche, the deepest valley of the soul and the depths of insurmountable pain. This wisdom was not chosen by us. It is, nevertheless, our wisdom and experience to share with others as we choose. It is ours to keep in our minds as we live a life without our child. It is the purest wisdom one finds on this side of the moon.

We will continue to learn much about life as we live on after our child has gone. We were active participants in the lives of our children; we must be active participants in the mourning and grief following the deaths of our children. From this experience we grow....it is painful growth, but it is absolute growth of mind and spirit. As our growth increases exponentially, we find that, wondrously, we have come full circle.

One day we choose to focus on the life of our child. When that day comes, as it does for each of us, we are released from the darkness and despair and gently enter into the ambient glow of the light hope. Tentatively we take our first steps into the light. Then gradually we move with more confidence. The light glows brighter as we accept the healing it provides to us. As we heal, we reach out, we return to life, we work a little harder, love more deeply, and give freely to others. Our perspective turns outward. We will still reflect, but we will not be enveloped by our grief. We will laugh again, we will smile. We will even act spontaneously on occasion. We will live....live in the shining light of hope.

And so, gentle mother, as you mark Mother's Day, 2008, think of your child's life. Think of love. Think of times passed and those to come. Think of your journey. Think about your vast wisdom. Think about hope. You are a remarkable work in progress. Think about that.

Peace to you on Mother's Day,
--Annette Mennen Baldwin In memory of my son,
Todd Mennen TCF, Katy, TX

Friends and Family...

Let Me Grieve

Please let me grieve
For my child who has gone
There is no time limit on love
Though you see things wrong
You tell me to "get over it"
And get on with my life
I'm doing the best I can
So are many husbands and wives
You see, our child is a part of us
From the day they were born
And though they're not with us
Our hearts are still torn
Before you judge us
And tell us what to do



Just remember one thing
 This could happen to you
 I know it's hard to think
 Of losing your own child
 But if you truly understood the pain
 You would think for a while
 Hurtful things said
 Make tears start to flow
 No matter how much time passes
 I didn't want my child to go
 I'm moving on and coping
 I'm doing the best that I can do
 But it's hard to do things
 That I once used to do
 Please don't judge me
 And tell me how I should feel
 The pain I live with
 Is very real
 I cannot forget the child
 That once lived here with me
 I can't help the pain
 That hurts deep inside of me
 Talk to others
 Whose child has died
 I'm not the only one
 Who feels this pain inside
 Our child was here
 We loved them on earth
 That love never ceases
 From the day of their birth
 If you care about me
 As you say you do
 Always remember
 It could happen to you
 -- Sharon Bryant



Welcome...

To all our sage grievors and especially to those newly bereaved who have joined us for the first time. We are sorry we had to meet under such circumstances, but we are glad you found us. We would like to do all we can to help you through these times. We cannot hurry you through it, or take away the pain, but we can help you understand more about what you are going through. Sometimes just knowing what you are feeling is normal can be helpful.

We are other parents who have experienced the death of a child and offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, support materials and a listening ear. We

have learned the key to survival for bereaved families is communication. We know that if you have been to your first meeting, it was probably very difficult. We ask that you give us more than one meeting to decide if the Compassionate Friends is for you.

It takes courage to attend your first meeting, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from other parents who are having or have experienced the feelings of grief that you are now feeling. There are no registration fees; to share or not to share is your choice, you do not have to speak a word if you do not care to. If you are more comfortable bringing a friend or relative along with you, please be certain they will be most welcome. The TCF Credo really says it all, "... We Need Not Walk Alone, We are The Compassionate --Seattle WA newsletter



Helpful Hint...

Wounds don't heal the way you want them to; they heal the way they need to. It takes time for wounds to fade into scars. It takes time for the process of healing to take place. Give yourself that time. Give yourself that grace. Be gentle with your wounds. Be gentle with your heart. You deserve to heal.

--Dele Olanubi

Book in Review...



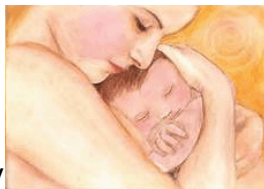
Love Never Dies-A Mother's journey from Loss to Love by Sandy Goodman. Sandra shares her story in a way that will help you find your own path through your most private pain. You, too, can emerge from the deepest hurt and darkness into the awareness that the love you lost still remains with you in so many ways. Hardcover. Code: LIDO, Price: \$12.95 To order, call (866) 218-0101

Having a Good Day

How pleasant it was, this sunny day,
 To laugh at happy moments that came our way.
 The sky was blue and a gentle breeze
 made a sighing sound through the trees.
 It's times like this we are in disbelief
 That we aren't doubled over in our grief.
 It means we've moved forward since then,
 and soon we'll be with our little girl again.
 --Dan Gardner, TCF Nashville, TN

In The Beginning

In the beginning we hurt so bad
 we can't even think straight.
 Our days and nights run together,
 as we cry out for relief
 from the pain that has
 seemed to swallow us whole.
 That pain now accompanies us everywhere.
 There is no place we can hide.
 It has taken over our life.
 It knows our name.
 It knows where we live.
 It knows that our loved one has died
 and so do we sort of, but not really.
 We are still looking for them
 To walk in the door,
 To say our name,
 To reach over and give us a hug.
 With every day that passes
 Our longing for them grows.
 We do not want to believe that
 They died and are not coming back.
 That reality chases us relentlessly,
 Until one day their empty chair
 Speaks louder than our denial,
 And the wall begins to break
 Where we have hidden our heart.
 In Memory of Shawn, from Deb K., Shawn's Mom
 --TCF Redlands, CA newsletter



A Mother's Love

A mother's love for her child may
 begin with the very dream of becoming a mother...
 A mother's love for her child may begin
 with the thought of maybe expecting the news...
 A mother's love for her child may begin
 with the verification of her expectations...
 A mother's love for her child may begin
 with the affirmation that the child lives within her...
 A mother's love for her child may begin
 with her first sight of the new life that
 she has delivered into the world...
 A mother's love for her child may begin...
 But it may never end...
 Not even death can steal away a mother's love for
 her child
 A mother's love for her child knows no end!
 --Diana Rohrbaugh, TCF Anne Arundel Co., MD

Mother's Day Letter To My Son

There's so much to tell you-
 Since you've been gone...I want you to know how
 different life is.
 Though I cherish every memory with all my heart, I
 wish you were still here.
 I look at your picture every morning when I wake
 up and every night before I sleep.
 I touch your face through the frame- and see your
 sweet smile- I smile back.
 I gently set the picture back on the table and turn to
 start my day.
 A day of tasks and things to do.
 Most people I see in the day- do not know of the
 huge hole in my heart, they are not aware that I
 see everything very differently from them.
 It's okay that they don't.
 I am not bitter or angry- I am bereaved- and
 missing a big part of me.
 The family has grown- you are an uncle.
 The kids would love you so much.
 You would have impacted who they will become.
 Your unconditional love for us, your thoughtful
 ways and humor- were such a big piece of our
 lives.
 Two children were born that were given your name
 as their middle name.
 You probably would have been a husband and
 father by now- something you so dreamed of.
 You would have been where you wanted to be in
 your career, that you studied and worked so hard
 for, so you could make a difference in our world.
 Your time on earth was so very short, however, I
 feel there was nothing left unsaid for us.
 For that- I am grateful.
 The holidays come and go- they are so difficult.
 Your absence so deeply felt.
 Your birthday is still celebrated.
 The day you passed away- so deeply painful and
 sad.
 On this Mother's Day- I want you to know- how
 much I miss and love you-
 You always made this day so special for me with
 your beautiful cards and flowers.
 I will try not to cry- but most likely, I will.
 Being your mom brought me so much joy.
 I will forever miss that.
 I will close for now, my son- when I see you again, I
 will tell you more.
 Hugs & kisses, Mom (In loving memory of my son,
 Paul McManus Jr.) Carla Smith, Rochester NY



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

Michael N. Duffin
Born: 2/85 Died: 4/17
Parents: Michael & Diana Duffin

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trevor Mitchell Nicholson
Born: 7/99 Died: 1/18
Parents: Brad & Kendra Nicholson



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rennie S. Wible
Born: 8/66 Died: 1/18
Mother: Jinx Wible

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

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

**Our Children Remembered**

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

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

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

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

Michael Jordan Zareski
Born: 5/71 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.

Sorry, no birthday tributes were submitted this month.

For Siblings...**Do I Have To?**

Mom, do I have to stop loving my brother because he is not here?

Will I forget all about him because he's not near?
I remember all the things we did together, even though we were very young.

I laugh and feel warm each time I think of a particularly funny one.

Sometimes I get so angry that he's no longer here to share,
But I know he knows it's only because of how much I still care.

I miss him, so even though at times we didn't agree,

Just knowing he was there made things feel safe for me.

He always felt he had to be my strong, protective big brother,

And that's a bond we'll always share forever with each other.

He tried to protect me even when he, too, was just as scared.

No, I won't stop loving that big brother of mine,
Not now, not ever, not till the end of time.

He will always be a part of what makes me be me.

And that's the part of our love that will live eternally.

--Jackie Rosen, TCF N. Dade/S. Broward, FL

Life After My Younger Brother's Death

~excerpts

Back in 2002, I was a sophomore in college enjoying the freedom and joys that college can bring. The summer was starting off great, then on June 28th I received news that no one can ever be prepared to hear. My younger brother, Andy, was involved in a car accident that killed him. He was just 18 and I was 20. The week following the accident, my parents' divorce papers went through. It was not solely because of Andy's death, but it still meant that my family as I had known it had disintegrated, all within the virtual blink of an eye.

I went numb. Numb to where I felt like I was watching somebody else do what I was doing. I don't remember a whole lot from that time period in my life. I kept thinking, my brother, my brother, my brother. I distinctly remember the crushing feeling that Andy was dead. During the first few weeks I felt like I was the only person who had ever experienced this pain and sadness and that I was alone in a sea of people having a great time.

I knew I had to talk to somebody, but people did not understand and much more often, I felt did not want to. I tried one-on-one counseling with the psychologist, psychiatrist and a grief counselor. It did not help. The antidepressants were depressing to take and knowing that I was paying someone to listen to my problems was somehow embarrassing.

I do not remember who first mentioned TCF, but somehow I found out about the meetings. I

think I got out, "My name is Tony and ..." and then it was all over. Tears ran down my face and I shook and trembled with grief. I looked around and realized I was not alone. Suddenly, I felt that people who understood me and knew what I was going through.

It was so nice to talk about what you feel, see how others feel and know that you are not, in fact, going crazy. I attended meetings and went to candle lighting ceremonies for two years.

Not a day goes by that I don't think of my brother. How much different things would have been. I have to thank good friends and TCF for showing me how to continue this amazing life journey. I am so grateful and inspired by the tear-soaked shoulders I was allowed to cry on when I needed it so badly. I am heartbroken and hopeful for those who need that shoulder now. I am thankful and humbled by TCF who have played such a good role in my life. From the deepest part of my heart, I thank you.

-- Tony Lee, We Need Not Walk Alone TCF newsletter

-- Reprinted from We Need Not Walk Along, Autumn 2010

Reflections

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations: that life isn't always fair or predictable; that sometimes even my best still isn't good enough; and that from the day of her death, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness.

Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts. As a result of my sister's death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor and to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss. I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the rough times. But most of all I have been given the gift of time – time to heal and time to replace those painful memories of death with the priceless memories of my sister's life.

-- Cathy Schanberger

Sometimes all a person needs is a hand to hold and a heart to understand.

--Andy Rooney, bereaved sibling

For Grandparents...



Organ Donation Can Help Many

My 18-year-old grandson, Randy Krieg, was on his way to work when he was in a horrible accident on Nov 29, 2005. He suffered severe brain swelling and was declared brain dead on Dec. 1. Because of Randy's age, excellent health and giving nature we thought about organ donation.

When a representative from Gift of Life approached us we were informed that Randy was a registered organ donor. We knew this is what Randy would want and we began the painful process of saying goodbye to the child we dearly loved– our "Gentle Giant."

Gone were Randy's plans of culinary school after high school graduation, marriage and children with his girlfriend Angie and the eventual opening of his own restaurant in St. Martin. Yet his life ended up meaning so much more.

There truly is no greater gift than life, which is something he gave many. Randy's heart, kidneys, liver, pancreas, corneas, bones and skin saved and improved the lives of over 50 people - many of whom have sent us letters of gratitude, letting us know how their lives have changed since Randy's gifts.

Randy's selflessness has changed all of our lives: Members of our family are now registered organ donors. We check the box on license and car registration forms to donate to the organ donor fund and we participate in donor run/walks to raise the awareness of organ donation.

Randy may be gone, but the lesson on giving he taught all of us will live on. He is our hero. Your death has shaped me but it is your life that has changed me for the better. It is for that reason that your death will never overshadow your life.

-- Gloria M Perlis, TCF Lehigh Valley, PA

From Our Members...



I am going to be Okay

Today someone I loved died. I can't believe it. I don't believe it. I won't believe it. Family comes, friends come. The phone keeps ringing. The doorbell rings again and again. The ringing seems far away. I hear it, but I seem unable to answer. My legs won't move. My feet won't move. I am glued to the chair. Others answer for me. They

seem to know – I don't remember how.

Tomorrow comes. I didn't want it to ever come. I wanted to go back to the time before you died. There, I said it. You died. Does that make it true? There must be some mistake, I tell myself. Maybe this is just a bad dream. If only someone would wake me up. When people ask me what they can do for me, I try to tell them the only thing I want is you. They look sad, they gently shake their heads, they hug me and still you're not here.

Your funeral is over. Everyone says I did so well. I hardly cried. Don't they see I can't cry, not yet. "She is in shock," I hear someone say. "Give her time, that's all she needs." I wonder, Can it really be that simple? If it is, I just want to run through time, however much time it takes to get to the place where I don't hurt so bad, don't miss you so much. But no, I can't do that. Even if I could, I would only be farther from you. My heart cannot bear that.

Days pass. Tomorrow will be one month since you died. I wonder how I can just skip that day. I am afraid of it; of reliving every single detail of your death, knowing one month ago you were here with me and my world was okay. Now I have no world. Everyone keeps telling me I just need to make a new world. But I liked my old one. I never asked to have it taken from me. Even if I wanted to, I don't know how to start over. I don't know where the beginning of that world is, or how to get there. Everything is so hard and makes me so tired. I just want to stay in bed.

Days pass and turn into weeks. I am stuck in a world foreign to me, wondering where you are and how you could have left me. I force myself to go through the motions of living and caring for others. They don't seem to notice it's just pretend and I am the star of the hardest role of my life. If only they had just an inkling of the place I am in – of my fractured and broken heart.

I never used to read the obituaries. Now I feel compelled to do so. I feel like a kindred spirit to others who must also travel the road I am on. I still feel so alone. Now they feel alone too. I feel like I should say something to them, but I do not know them; I only know their pain.

Months continue to pass. I am back at work, back in church, getting my hair done. It all still seems strange, different, and doesn't matter like it used to. Friends call. Sometimes I say, "Yes, I will go to dinner." Other times I say, "Thanks for calling, but not today." Many days it is still easier to just be alone where I don't have to hide my tears

when they come, where I can talk to you and not feel strange, where I can just be however I am that day and not try to fit into the place others have carved out for me.

Finally, one day I surprise myself. I am humming a tune. For a little while, I feel lighter. I almost smile. I begin to judge myself. What's the matter with me? How can I be even a little happy when you're not here? But then I hear your voice in my head, or is it in my heart, the place where you live, saying you are glad. I am humming; glad I can smile, encouraging me to live again. I don't know whether to laugh or cry, so I do both. But later that day I find myself humming again, and I smile, knowing I am going to be okay.

--Deb Kosmer ©

Sound familiar? Submitted by Linda Curtis

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.

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.



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: May 1st for June 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

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.

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 e-mail Lynn at Lynntcf@aol.com If you want to do it electronically. Thank-you for your understanding and help. TCF South Bay/LA

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.

Local Support Groups...

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
 beyondindogp.com
 angelmoms.com
 healingafterloss.org
 survivorsofsuicide.com
 taps.org (military death)
 bereavedparentsusa.org
 pomc.com (families of murder victims)
 grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)
 www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)

childloss.com
 griefwatch.com
 babysteps.com
 webhealing.com
 opentohope.com
 alivealone.org
 save.org

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.

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 LEADER: Linda Zelik
 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. More information or registration available online at www.compassionatefriends.org.

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

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

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. In addition to the social support aspect, The Compassionate Friends/USA Facebook page will have information about upcoming events.

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.



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 Steven Giuliano, 4/55 - 4/95. Forever in our hearts, beautiful memories, love in Jesus.
Mom and Family

In loving memory of Scott M. Dykstra, 7/12/72 - 10/05/01.
Love, Mom

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 _____

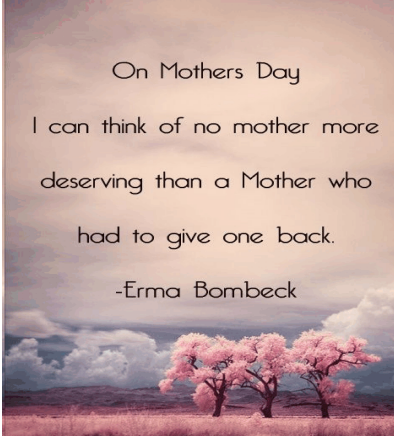
Birth date _____ Death date _____ Sent From _____

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.

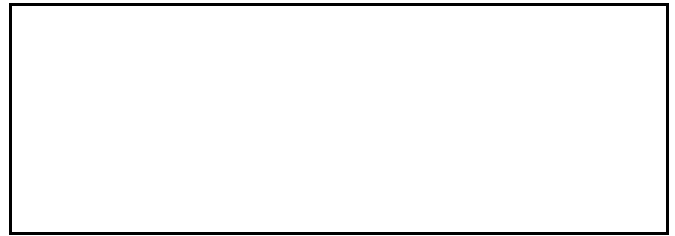
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May 2018

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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.