



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

JULY 2018 ISSUE

EDITOR: LYNN VINES (310) 530-3214

e-mail: Lynntcf@aol.com

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be July 12th., the **SECOND *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.

For this month only, we will be holding our meeting on the ***SECOND Thursday, July 12th*** due to the church being closed for the holiday. The **Thursday**, July 12th meeting will start with "Vacations After The Death Of A Child."

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.

South Bay/LA Chapter of TCF
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance, CA 90510-1171
(310) 963-4646
www.tcfsbla.org

Chapter Co-Leaders:
Linda Zelik (310) 963-4646
Lzelik@gmail.com
Mary Sankus (310) 648-4878
Marysankus@yahoo.com

The National Office of TCF
P.O. Box 3696
Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696
Toll free (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriend.org

The Thursday, July 5th meeting is postponed until July 12th because the church is closed for the holiday. The first Thursday of the month will resume for the August meeting.

“Vacations After the Death of a Child is our topic.” This month we will start the meeting by discussing how family vacations change after the death of a child, and then move on to different subjects. Not all vacations are tension-free or without problems, but after the death of a child, the mere thought of going on vacation may seem overwhelming. You need to realize that grief goes with you in your suitcase, on the airplane, or in the car. At the same time, bereaved families need to build new memories of good times together with their spouse and/or surviving children. We need to de-stress and recharge both mentally, spirituality, and physically. This meeting we will be sharing ways to cope and the benefits of actually making yourself go on a vacation after the death of your child.

Vacations

Vacation time can be painful for bereaved parents. Caught up with normal demands of making a living or keeping a household going, we have less time to think than we do on vacations, especially the "take it easy" kind at a hideaway, tucked away somewhere. In the summers following Tricia's death, I found vacations could bring a special kind of pain. We avoided going to places where we had vacationed with her. At one time, I thought Williamsburg might be off my list forever since we had a very happy time together there. I tried it one summer three years later and found that she walked the cobbled streets with me. Now that nine years have passed and the pain has eased, maybe the happy memories we shared in Williamsburg can heighten the pleasure of another visit there.

For the first few years after Tricia's death, we found fast-paced vacations at places we had never been before, to be the best. The stimulation of new experiences in new places with new people refreshed us and sent us home more ready to pick up our grief work. That is not to say when we did something or saw something that Tricia would have enjoyed, we didn't mention her. We did, but it seemed less painful than at home.

One caution: Do allow enough time for sleep; otherwise, an exhausted body can depress you. We've said it many times: **YOU HAVE TO FIND YOUR OWN WAY, YOUR OWN PEACE.** Let



vacation time be another try at that; but do give yourself a break in choosing the time and locale where that can best be accomplished. Don't be afraid of change— it can help with your re-evaluation of life.

--Elizabeth Estes, TCF Augusta, GA

Newly Bereaved; Advice for Summer Healing

Whether you are newly bereaved or you have been on this journey a long time, the change of seasons and the thoughts of coming "events" are hard but it is how you approach them that matters the most. How will we handle vacation this year? How can we go on vacation without our child? How can I possibly have a good vacation without my child? Why would I want to go on vacation without my child? These are some of the

questions we ask ourselves either knowingly or unconsciously and the answers are as vast as the way we grieve. For my family it wasn't a question of whether or not to go on vacation the following summer (we lost our son December 2001) but it became a question of why shouldn't we go? We had vacationed at the same place for 18 years and we started thinking about all the good times we had at the "pond" over those years.

For us it became a desire to "go back" and visit the place where our son had been happy and felt safe and secure—a place where we could go and just let go. For both my husband and I and now our daughter and her family, the pond continues to be a place where we can go and feel close to our son because we know how much he loved it there. It was hard that first year and even the next as we looked for him everywhere. We chose to have a different campsite than we normally used that first year, but the next we moved back to our favorite campsite—it just felt right. As hard as it was to return to the pond there was and is a peaceful feeling that comes to us there as we allow all of the good memories to invade our waking moments, and we open our hearts and head to those memories knowing that our son had been there and it was one of his favorite places to be...

As you make plans for the summer, whatever they are, know that you have to do what feels right to you—there is no right or wrong. If you can, open your heart and follow it and let those stored memories carry you through.

--TCF North Shore Boston, Editor, Cindi Bolivar

Grief & Vacation Time

Vacation time, like holidays, can be especially painful for bereaved parents. Vacations, especially the "take it easy" kind which release the mind to think, are sometimes very hard. For the first few years, you may find fast-paced vacations to be best. Places you have never been before, new experiences, new places, or new people may refresh you and prepare you to pick up your grief work when you return. Our memories do travel with us, but somehow they seem less painful than at home. Remember to allow enough time for rest—an exhausted body will often lead to depression.

Some couples have even found an occasional separate vacation or weekend to be helpful. Allow space, since you are not grieving at the same rate. When you go alone, you do not take your mate's memories, only your own. It can be a time of sorting out and straightening priorities. The bottom line is, you must find your own way. Don't be afraid of change.

--Leona D. ~ TCF, Amarillo, TX

Reflections in Sand And Time

I looked across the lake, then onto the sand, wishing I was still standing there holding your small hand.

Sand castles, buckets and shovels flashed into my mind, as I remembered all those precious memories you left behind.

Tiny footprints took me many, many years back in time, but of those I looked at—yours I couldn't find. But as I stood there going so far back in the sand, I almost could feel you holding my hand.

--Linda T. ~ TCF, York, PA



July 4th—"Freedom" for Bereaved Parents? July 4th... Independence Day...

A day most Americans celebrate their freedom. For bereaved parents, unfortunately, freedom of the body is far different than freedom of the mind. Before our children died we knew we had the freedom to...

watch them take their first step.

listen for their first word.

watch them step onto the school bus for the first time.

watch them go on their first date.

watch them graduate.

watch them walk down the aisle to be married.

see our grandchildren be born.

For bereaved parents these freedoms are gone forever.

Why did we have to lose these freedoms? Sometimes we lose these freedoms because the world has the wrong priorities. Sometimes we lose them because people abuse their freedoms. What freedoms must be changed?

...the freedom of cancer to strike our children

...the freedom of a drunk driver to be put back on the road with a slap on the wrist

...the freedom of AIDS and other diseases to run rampant

...the freedom of criminals and students to obtain guns and kill their classmates

...the freedom of drivers to ignore the speed limits with impunity

...and on and on and on.

When these freedoms are exercised and we are unable to stop them, the deaths of our children destroy our freedom to pursue happiness in our lives.

Our country, of the people, by the people, and for the people, must wake up to the fact that freedom is a fragile commodity. As bereaved parents, we have become a living testimony to this fact.

--Wayne Loder, Lakes Area MI TCF Chapter

Lost Potential

Last year I attended a workshop presented by a specialist in grief named Dr. Cable. Dr. Cable said many important things about the grief process, but as a bereaved parent, one thing stuck in my mind. He said that if you ask a bereaved person to describe his deceased mother, he will say, "Oh, she was so sweet. She always wore flowered dresses and loved to bake cookies." But, if you ask a bereaved parent to describe her deceased child, she will say, "Oh, he would be five this year and just starting kindergarten," or, "She would be twenty-two this year and graduating from college."

You see, we bereaved parents grieve the lost potential of our children. Our children don't stop growing in our minds. We grieve again and anew each year as our child would have been a different age.

--Chris Anderson ~ TCF, Walla Walla, WA

Starting Our “New Normal”

How do we get back on our knees and learn to crawl again after having been crushed by the terror of our child's death? What can we do to learn how to live again, which is exactly what we try to do? We've begun a new life, a new normal, where we look different, we act different, and we communicate differently than we did in our past life. Most bereaved parents will tell you we now live in terms of before and after our child died. All events are measured in terms of the instant they passed away. When a neighbor tells us they went on vacation last year, we think my child would still have been alive for another six months. Or, we figure exactly how many days, weeks, months, or years they would have already been gone. It's an automatic calculation.

My first baby step to my new normal came with the acknowledgment of our son Brandon's death. March 16, 1998, at 4:15 p.m. through a phone call from my wife, Kathy, was how I first learned that Bren had been murdered. Nine months later, sitting at my desk at our photo studio, the realization that Bren's physical body was never coming back washed over me. It was still a while before that acknowledgment completely lived in me, but it was a small first step to my new normal. When I was able to say, and believe, that Bren's body was never coming back, I began to heal ever so slightly.

Leaning on those who are willing to support our lifelong journey can help build our new normal. For me, that person has been my sister Marcia. Her unconditional love in the face of my anger, confusion, and irrational behavior has kept me from falling. She could not understand my pain over the murder of her nephew, and never professed to, but she has understood and accepted an emotional turmoil in me that she can relate to. She was grieving her loss, too, but still has reached out to me on many, many levels.

The single most powerful factor in starting my new normal had been the realization that death did not take all of my child. Brendon's death did not take all of his life. His spirit and life live on through my memories. Everything I had with Bren when he was alive still lives in me. Every hug, every kiss, every laugh, and every tear will always be a part of my life. I certainly wish there had been many more memories to be made, but that decision was not mine to make. In the beginning, the memories I

had were mostly about what I lost. I thought Bren was gone forever and I would experience his life again only when I died and we were reunited. Now, most of my memories are more about what I had, and still have, with him. The good times, the bad times - all the times are special and treasured moments that I hold closely and am very grateful for. It's very painful to have lost our son, but we have not lost all of him. His life force and wonderful spirit shines in our lives.

My realization about Bren's life was not something I consciously decided to feel. I didn't go to the healing store and buy it off the shelf. Through my grief work, and leaving myself open to all possibilities of healing, I was able to bring Bren's life back into mine. Frankly, I don't think we have all that much control over our grief. It just kind of drags us along. What we can control is how we do our grief work and our attitude toward our healing. I believe the terms "grieving" and "healing" are synonymous. As we grieve, we heal.

We must never stop fighting for our children. Their lives are out there waiting for us to bring them back into ours. This is a rough, rough journey, but if we travel it side by side, hand in hand with our kids' lives, it can make our path a bit easier.

--Rob Anderson, Sugar Grove IL

**Why?**

That's what we ask. The truth is we may never be able to know for sure "Why."

But we do know there is no single "should have done" or "could have done" or "did" or "didn't do that would have changed the "why."

All that "love could do was done"...

--Jason Isley

Power Of Choice

Grief can be a powerful force full of signs and symptoms. Some of these include sadness, loneliness, lack of appetite, increased appetite, inability to sleep, exhaustion, irritability, lack of interest in activities that one used to enjoy, forgetfulness, anger, and frustration, just to name a few.

When grief is present these symptoms can seem to take over and consume. It can be hard for

one to realize that joy and happiness can be found again. Due to these symptoms, the griever may feel hopeless and unable or unwilling to move forward. It is during these times that a decision must be made. Am I going to use my grief as an excuse to fail or as motivation to move forward?

Although it can seem appealing to give up at times, there are always choices. The choices can range from deciding to get out of bed in the morning, to meeting a friend for lunch, to choosing to go back to work. Although each of these choices is vastly different, the theme behind each one is very similar - Will I choose to give up or keep going? Will I choose to let my grief be an excuse to fail or motivation to move forward?

Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist whose wife and siblings died in a Nazi concentration camp where he survived, worded it best...“When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves.” You cannot change the situation that caused your grief. What you can change is how you will respond. Choices are always available, even in the midst of tragedy. It is up to you, the griever, to open your eyes to these choices and make your decisions, not based on what you feel today, but on what you want for your tomorrow.

--Rachael Garrett (Tears to Hope Mar-Apr 2014)
TCF Greater New Orleans newsletter

For the Newly Bereaved

We welcome you, we are sorry for the cause that brings you to us and we know how devastated you are. We have all been there. Nothing is required of you and there are no dues or fees. You need not speak a word or you can share. Attending your first meeting does take courage, but our members who attend find a comforting network of support, friendship and understanding that only friends who have "been there" can give. Based on our experiences, we suggest you attend three or four meetings before evaluating the benefit of our group to you. Just come, be as comfortable as you can and let us walk with you.

Meetings are a place to talk about your child, a place to remember the joys of their life and the pain and struggle of living without them. It is a place to meet other parents who have in fact survived what may seem impossible to you right now. Meetings



are not "the answer." Grief is not a problem to be solved and meetings are not "pity parties" although there are tears and sadness, but there is also hope.

Meetings do not bring about closure. You close on a house, not the death of a child. May you find your own peaceful solution to fit your individual needs for coping with special dates which are painful after losing your child. We are here to help.
--Janet G. Reyes TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

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 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 counselors, 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, Kamloops, BC

See It, Snap It, Send It...

Having his picture taken was not one of my son's favorite things. Seth was often the one behind the camera or the one who was videotaping the family field day to catch the best parts on film. It has been two years and six months since my precious son, 29 years old, took his life. I avoid the word “suicide” because somehow in my mind I want to believe it was his choice, however, confused or desperate.

I need to look at all the pictures I do have of him now when I feel the emptiness and pain in my heart. I have to send those memories to that place so it will help ease that loneliness and to replace it with a celebration of his life. I make him present again by reliving those memories of his laugh, his successes, his serious conversations, his challenges, his doubts, his hugs.

There are times with I can laugh and sing again. I don't dance any more. The joys I feel are jaded somehow feeling something is missing to make it whole. There are times when my life is a



series of just distractions: work, shopping, church, cleaning, etc. etc. etc. just to avoid facing the bitter emotional reality of grief yet again. There are moments also that I have to lean into the pain of his loss and let it hurt and cry to move forward.

Some helpful skills I have learned is to live in the present, that I can control my thoughts. I have to avoid the “what ifs” the “why me” the “what could I have done...” Seth is present now in my life and my heart in a different way than he was when he was alive; and I have learned to love him in a new way.

I am a better person because of his life and his love for the short 29 years he lived. My love for him grows stronger every day just as it would have if he was here for me to talk with again.

Compassionate Friends has helped me to acknowledge that my loss, my pain, my survival is precious to others who have lost children. The pain which binds us will also help us to survive one day at a time.

The day Seth died, my bishop came to the house, and blessed the place where he took his life. Then he turned to me and said “Each day you awake is one day closer to when you will see him again.” Whatever your religious beliefs I pray that this will give you hope and comfort as it does for me.

So my prayer for each of you who have lost a loved one is that you can find some comfort and joy in revisiting those precious memories of their beautiful lives. So take lots of pictures of those who are still with you and celebrate their lives too. God bless your pain and give you peace.

--Linda Khirallah Porter, TCF Tyler, TX

Starting Over Again

As parents, how many times have we told our children to “try, try again?” “You can do it, just start over,” we'd say, be it a coloring book not kept within the lines, learning to tie shoes, school assignments, or later, other difficulties that life brings. Little did we think that this well-meaning advice we gave out of love for our children's well-being would be the words that we must follow. “Hang on.” “Don't give up.” “Try again, and start over.” All this now applies to us. Had the situation been reversed, we would not have wanted our children to live out the rest of their lives in pain, and unable to go on. We would have wanted them to continue, not in constant sorrow, but with hope for

renewal and better days ahead.

As we have said to them—they would be throwing it right back to us—it is a hard road that you must travel, but you can do it. What you wanted for me, I want for you. Do what you have to, to find your way out of the dark tunnel, and when you fail, pick yourself up and start over again. You can do it. What we wanted for our children is no less than they would want for us. If we could hear them, right now, they would be saying: LIVE, for life is not a moment. LOVE, for that is what really matters. GO ON, for we shall be together again, someday.

--Mary Ann L. ~ TCF, Gloucester County, NJ

Our Friends Are Worth It



When I had my first miscarriage, three of my friends were pregnant. We had been friends since high school, and while our lives had taken divergent paths, we had remained friends through college and boyfriends and broken hearts and nutty professors and new boyfriends and fiancés. We cried when one of us wasn't chosen to pledge a sorority. We were bridesmaids in each other's weddings. We were by each other's sides with wine and chocolate when one of us broke an ankle or had to say goodbye to a beloved pet. We comforted each other when there were deaths in our family or our circle of high school friends. We called ourselves the Four Musketeers and vowed we would be friends until we were old ladies with blue hair.

Then, we all became pregnant one by one over the course of a few months. Two of us came home to the town we grew up in after marriage, and two of us were scattered on each coast. But, thanks to Facebook and smart phones, the distance between us seemed like nothing. We texted each other daily and set up a group on Facebook just for us to keep up with each other's pregnancies. We joked about how "one in four pregnancies end in miscarriage" and decided that was for other people, not us. And then, it was one of us. The joke was on me, but there was no joke in that.

At the time, my friends were so supportive and caring and loving. One of them flew out to visit me the next weekend as a surprise. She was a few months ahead of me, and she had no idea that looking at her cute little round belly would break my

heart every time I looked at her. She tried, she really did. She took me out for sushi. She tried to be a good friend. She tried to say all of the right things.

Except they weren't the right things. It is never right to say, "Thank God it happened early. I can't imagine if something happened to my baby NOW." Especially while you are rubbing your own full-of-life belly. It is never right to say, "You'll have another one, I just know it!"

The weekend ended, she flew home, and I began avoiding each one of my friends. I didn't look at our Facebook group, and I began to dread their calls and texts. And I felt like the world's most terrible friend. I couldn't understand what was wrong with me. I couldn't understand how I could almost hate the women who had been there for me through so much, but I did. I hated them. I loved them, but I hated them. And it really wasn't even their fault.

Less than three months later, I became pregnant again. I breathed a sigh of relief, called each of my friends one by one, and told them I was once again a member of their special club. They all breathed a sigh of relief, too. Two of my friends were far enough along that they knew they were having baby boys. The other friend did not know what the sex of her baby was, and we teased the other two that we would have girls who would marry the boys. We laughed about being mother-in-laws someday.

Just a few weeks after I passed the point of my first miscarriage, the first of my friends gave birth to her little boy. We gathered around our friend's hospital bed and took turns kissing him and vowing to be his aunties until we were old and senile. The happiness in the room was palpable, and we placed our hands on each other's bellies as we toasted with plastic champagne flutes of sparkling grape juice.

I went home dreaming of the day my friends would gather around MY hospital bed kissing and loving MY precious little baby who would be swaddled in a soft pink blanket. The next day at work, the cramping and bleeding started. I was 13 weeks pregnant, and I thought I was safe." I wasn't safe. Later that night, I gave birth to a thumb-sized baby in the emergency room at the same hospital where my friend lay snuggling her newborn son just a few floors up.

Once again, my friends really did try to be there for me. They just didn't know how. I wasn't always

very nice to them, and they eventually gave up and began avoiding me as much as I avoided them. Over the next months, each of their babies arrived pink and screaming. They all gathered around each other's hospital beds, but one of us was missing. Me.

I couldn't be there. I couldn't be there to joyfully welcome my friend's babies when I couldn't welcome my own. And they didn't understand. I received texts and e-mails and cards telling me how much I hurt them by not being there for them. I wanted to tell them how much I hurt when they weren't there for me.

I would like to be able to write that my story has a happily-ever-after ending, that I soon joined my friends in the motherhood club, but I have since had 3 more miscarriages—5 altogether. One of my friends now has two beautiful children. All of my friends have full arms and lives, and my arms and home are still empty.

In one way, though, my story does have a happy ending. Despite all of the loss, hurt, tears and distance between us, we remain friends. Our friendship has changed, though. In some ways, it has changed for better and has deepened, in other ways, it has changed for worse. It hasn't been an easy road, that's for sure. We have all worked together to maintain our friendships, even though the threads that connect us are tenuous and fragile at times. The reason I have been able to stay friends with them at all are many and varied. The biggest reason is because I came to the realization that they were each so important to me and I couldn't imagine my life without them, and I vowed to do whatever it took to keep our friendship intact.

However, the main reason our friendships have survived is because we have all had to learn how to not only be completely honest with each other, but we have had to learn how to really listen to each other as well.

Let me explain. I had to learn how to tell them how I really feel, and I had to do it in a non-threatening way. While I sometimes wanted to angrily shout, "Why are you so insensitive to my feelings??!" I had to instead take a step back and realize that my friends were not intentionally trying to hurt me, that they really did want to help, they just didn't know how. So, I had to learn how to nicely tell them they were hurting my feelings without making them feel attacked. In turn, I had to also learn how to listen to them. When they apologized for accidentally hurting my feelings, I

had to accept their apologies and not hold onto the hurt I felt. I had to listen to them and accept their feelings when they told me that while they understood how sad I was, it hurt them when I shut them out of my life. When they cried and told me that they missed me, I had to allow myself to cry too, and admit that I missed them as well.

I have learned more than ever that friendship is a two-way street, full of bumps and potholes and slippery surfaces. And while it is hard sometimes to navigate this treacherous path when we are grieving and our friends have what we so desperately desire for ourselves, it is very worth it in the end if we can remember why we are friends in the first place. It is hard but worth it to let go of hurts and resentments, especially when we know in our hearts that our friends love and care about us. It is worth it to do what it takes to maintain a close friendship at a time when so many things are out of our control. None of it is easy, but in the end, it's all worth it.

—By Redlynn Kaufmann-Townsend

From Share Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support

Newly Bereaved...

No One Else Can Do this For You.



People will speak of "closure," of "moving on," of "getting over it," of grief coming to an end. Smile kindly, and know, anyone who says these things hasn't lived this thing called grief.

To lose a child is to lose the very heart and soul of you. It is overwhelmingly disorienting. It takes a long, long time to find yourself again. It takes a long time to grow new life around the chasm of such grave loss. It takes a long time to grow beauty from ashes.

There will always be a hole in your heart, the size and shape of your child. Your child is absolutely irreplaceable. Nothing will fill the void your child left. But your heart will grow bigger—beautifully bigger—around the empty space your child left behind. The love and pain you carry for your precious child will be woven into every thread of your being. It will fuel you to do things you never dreamed you could do.

Eventually, you'll figure out how to live for both of you. It will be beautiful, and it will be hard. But, the love you two share will carry you through. You

will spread this love everywhere you go. Eventually, you'll be able to see again. Eventually, you'll find your way again. Eventually, you'll realize you survived.

-- Angela Miller

Seasoned Greivers...

Change and Challenge



As I look back over the past six years since our son died, I realize how much I have changed. When we talk about grieving, we often forget to mention that we grieve, too, for the person we were before our child died. We might have been energetic and fun loving, but now are serious and absorbed.

Our friends and family miss the "old us" too, and their comments show it: "Don't you think it's time to return to normal?" or, "You don't laugh as much as you used to." They are grieving for the person who will never be the same again.

Like the caterpillar who shrouds itself in a cocoon, we shroud ourselves in grief when our child dies. We wonder, our families wonder, our friends wonder – when will they come out of it? Will they make it through the long sleep? What hues will show when they emerge? If you've ever watched a butterfly struggle from the safety of a cocoon, you'll know that the change is not quick or easy – but worth the effort!

We begin to mark our struggle from the cocoon of grief when we begin to like the "new us." When our priorities become different and people become more important than things – when we grasp a hand that reaches and reach in turn to pull another from his own cocoon, when we embrace the change and turn the change into a challenge. Then we can proudly say, "I have survived against overwhelming odds. Even though my child's death is not worth the change in and of itself, the changes and challenges give me hope that I can feel fulfilled again. I can love again."

--TCF, Appleton, WI

"The lasting gift that any loved one gives us is their presence in our hearts. It is up to us to dedicate ourselves to integrating that loving spirit into our ongoing lives."

--Carol Staudacher

Friends And Family...

Support From Family And Friends

There are many things that a newly bereaved person needs during the first few weeks. One of the most important is support from their family and friends, who should be there to let them talk and to really listen, to give hugs, and to help with any chores the bereaved are not able to accomplish yet. It's hard for them to even think ahead to what should be done—washing clothes, cleaning, even answering the telephone may seem impossible. Many families have found it hard to go shopping for just basic groceries. They need someone to lend some thoughtful ideas and maybe see to some of these tasks a few times until their numbness has lightened a little.

Family and friends need to realize that the person who is grieving may never be the same. They will always be without their loved one and their lives will never be the same as before the death.

Since my daughter Teresa died I too have changed a lot; I have many new friends; I do things I'd have never done before, such as becoming a chapter leader, a newsletter editor and just recently writing articles on grief in these newspapers. I have more compassion towards others than before, and my interests are so very different now. If there were gifts resulting from a death, I'd say I have received many. Some people may think what I do is depressing. I feel it is helping others and at the same time helping me with my own healing.

--Jackie Wesley, TCF East Central Indiana and Miami-Whitewater Chapters

Book in Review...



I Have No Intention of Saying Good-bye By Sandy Fox. Five or more years after the death of their children, 25 families open their hearts and share stories of courage, hope and their attempts to make sense out of the most unbearable loss of all. In addition to helping themselves, learn how these parents help others and what advice they give to those still having difficulty living in a world without their child. Available online at www.centering.org Code: IHNO Price: \$15.95 Mention TCF for free shipping.

Helpful Hint...

“So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME—to hurt, to grieve, to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be “crazy” and TIME to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don’t measure your progress through grief against anyone else’s. Be your own timekeeper.”

--Darcie D. Sims

Welcome...**Strangers & Friends**

Bereaved parents gather monthly and tell their stories again and again. The pain is evident on their faces yet strength comes deep from within. To simply attend these meetings is courageous. We enter as strangers, and we depart as friends. I've attended our group meetings for over four years. I never had the honor of meeting these children in life, yet I know them intimately—how each lived, and how each died.

Some of us were blessed to have our children several years, and others only a few. Some children lived just a few months, days or minutes—and some never took a breath. Still, our pain and emptiness is universal.

Our grief is universally unique. As individuals our journeys lead us in many directions, yet once a month we come together, to tell our stories again and again. These “strangers”, these people, I now call friends.

--Kathy A. ~ TCF, Fort Collins, CO

Beautiful Dream

Eyes open wide
I awake from a beautiful dream
Within seconds the painful reality of my life sets in
I find myself wanting to scream
Grief so strong
Impossible to explain
Living with a broken heart
Struggling with the pain
Eyes closed tight
I pray for that beautiful dream
A short escape from the painful reality
That makes me want to scream
--Robert Willis ~ TCF, Frederick, MD

Remembrance

I see your smile in the brightness of the summer sun.
A gentle breeze is the touch of your hand on mine.
A wave breaks softly on the shore and I hear you whisper,
"Remember me."
A winged bird begins its flight into the distant sky.
The sound of children’s laughter fills the air.
The evening stars become your eyes, and I reply...
"You are ever near."
--Pricilla Kenney ~ TCF, Kennebunk, ME

It's Okay to Grieve

It's Okay to Grieve.
The death of a child is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed and, somehow, our dear one returned. Such hurt!
It's ok to Grieve.

It's Okay to Cry.
Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to level off and continue our cruise along the stream of life.
It's okay to cry.

It's Okay to Heal.
We do not need to prove we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel guilty, for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing.
It's okay to heal.

It's Okay to Laugh.
Laughter is not a sign of less grief. Laughter is not a sign of less love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh.
It's okay to laugh.
--Patricia Lufty Nevitt TCF Austin, TX



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

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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 Trilieggi & Edward Dornbach

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Douglas Drennen Kay
Born: 3/72 Died: 9/06
Parents: Diane & Steve Kay

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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: Desireé Palmer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Donnie Vincent Puliselich
Born: 1/75 Died: 1/08
Mother: Maria Puliselich
Sibling: Michelle Pulislich

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Our Children Remembered**

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

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.

**A Birthday Tribute to:
Leslie Geraci Hart
June 1996 - July 2011**

One month after her birthday, after a courageous fight against cancer and never once complaining, our baby Leslie passed.

We remember the joy she brought to all of us, but the pain of her loss never goes away.

I love you forever, Pops



**A Birthday Tribute to:
Eric D. Vines
July 1976 - July 1991**



Oh Eric,

Happy Birthday! For the past few days I have been puttering in the garden and remembering all the times we worked together adding flowers and vegetables to our gardens. The tradition of adding a butterfly each year for your birthday is the closest I will come to gardening with you now. I found some butterfly stakes that I will add to the rosebushes that the Case family sent for your funeral.

Aunt Laurie was commenting how beautiful they are this year. The rosebush decided to come out bright red this year. Common sense tells me the graft wasn't done right so that is why some years it is yellow, some years it turns out to be red. But, I like thinking they are "special" because you were so special. As I sit here watching, a butterfly is fluttering from rose to rose, reminding me of the saying "A butterfly to remind me even though we are apart, your spirit is always with me you're forever in my heart."

Happy Birthday, Love, Mom

**A Birthday Tribute to:
Elizabeth Mann
July 1960 - May 2005**



Dear Liza,

As your birthday draws near I think of the many birthdays we spent together. The emptiness of not being able to celebrate with you and your family never leaves. Though the pain is lessening with time, there are still many lingering effects. The following poem by Jamie Anderson, helped me make some sense of my grief.

"Grief Is Just Love With No Place To Go
Grief, I've learned, is really just love. It's all the love you want to give, but cannot. All that unspent love gather's up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go."

Happy Birthday Liza, Love Mum

For Siblings...**A Letter to My Brother**

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here. Why?

How can this be?
 Someone tell me the reason, the answer.
 How can I fill the void, the space once so full of
 life? What will I do?
 How will I be strong for others when the sting of
 pain is so real, so near?
 Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams
 at the injustice,
 The unfairness of losing you.
 I miss you. I think of you every day and feel you in
 my heart always.
 Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your
 living had a reason.
 Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a
 lifetime's worth.
 You blessed us with your presence, your
 specialness.
 I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left
 as a legacy.
 You shaped the purpose of my life.
 I can see the world through your eyes.
 --Robin Holemon TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

Questions/Answers from Bereaved Siblings

All of a sudden I burst into tears and cannot control crying.

You have the freedom to cry when you need to. Crying is a normal reaction. You may feel embarrassed, but most people will react with sympathy and wish for themselves that they could cry freely. Crying is a natural outlet to grieving.

Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.

At some time everyone is angry at the person who died. Anger does not mean you loved them less; it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.

I can't concentrate. I can't think and I can't remember anything. I think I am losing my mind.

You are not losing your mind, although it may feel that way. Your mind is probably overloaded. Not only do you have to go through your daily routine, but your mind is flooded with thoughts and feelings for your brother or sister. This is temporary; your memory and concentration will return over time.

I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying. I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy. Am I?

Some grieving people experience intense

dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings you have during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.

I feel so guilty for the way I yelled at my brother. We would fight about the silliest things. I'll never be able to tell him how sorry I am.

Brothers and sisters in every family quarrel and don't apologize after every argument. Even though you fought, you still loved your brother and he loved you.

Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.

This is truly one of the most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents. Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another.

--This Healing Journey an Anthology for Bereaved Siblings



For Grandparents...

The Grief of Grandparents

There is no bond greater than the bond between parent and child. When a child dies, the pain of parental loss is near the top of the scale of human grief, and there is an immediate outpouring of sympathy and concern for the bereaved parents. But other grieving family members, including siblings, are often seen as secondary players who must provide support to the distraught parents. Among these forgotten grievers are the grandparents.

In many families, the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are every bit as profound as those between parents and their children. The death of a grandchild also ranks high on the scale of human grief – but it is rarely acknowledged. There are few books or support groups addressing the grief of grandparents, and bereavement counselors who specialize in this kind of grief are rare. Grandparents are usually left to cope as best they can.

When a grandchild dies, the anguish of grandparents is doubled. Their grief for a son or daughter suffering this tragic loss only compounds their pain at the loss of a beloved grandchild. Grandparents who outlast a grandchild struggle with a death that seems out of order; they may cope with survival guilt, perhaps wondering why they couldn't have died instead. Moreover, a grandchild's death chips away at a grandparent's assumed legacy. Most of us hope to make a mark

in the world, and the achievements of our children and grandchildren are a part of that dream. When one dies prematurely, that loss resonates through the generations, and like the bell in John Donne's poem – "it tolls for thee."

Many families are fractured by divorce, violence or mere inattention, and struggling single parents are hard pressed to provide the consistent and unconditional love that children need. Grandparents fill the role of the enduring presence, the ones who are available and who can be depended upon for affection and support. The deep, nurturing love shared by many children and their grandparents is a bond that is extraordinarily painful when broken by death. It is a grief out-of-sight, but nonetheless powerful.

If you are a grandparent who has lost a grandchild, you have every reason to grieve deeply. Life is complex, and many of our fundamental questions have no apparent answer: Why do such bad things happen? What is the meaning of such pain? For now, your task is to mourn the death of this child and to take care of yourself as best as you can. If you want help, look for a book that addresses parental grief and substitute "grandparent" as you read. Perhaps your local hospice, faith community or mental health center has a support group for grieving grandparents. If not, ask them start one. There may be other grieving grandparents among your friends and neighbors, and you can share your common grief and mutual comfort.

Above all, be patient with yourself, and:

- Don't try to suppress your grief. Stoicism won't work.
- Select the relatives or friends who give you comfort, and tell them how you feel.
- Don't accept a comparison of your grief to that of others; grief is unique to each person.
- Take time off from your grief occasionally. Go visit a friend or take a short vacation at a place that you love.
- The loss of a beloved grandchild is a severe blow, but avoid thinking that life has no more to offer.

Some of the world's grandest music and literature were created out of personal tragedy. Find your own expression of your loss and your search for meaning — see if you can create your own requiem.

It is important that you find ways to fill the void in your life. The worlds of literature, music, and art are sources of great comfort in a time of grief. Think of the great works of Bach, Handel,

Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven; what comfort they can bring! If you have always wanted to paint, take some classes and dedicate your efforts to the memory of your grandchild. Sign up as a volunteer for a local hospital or food bank. Helping others can strengthen the nurturing identity that has been injured by this death. By putting your pain to work, the good that comes from it can heal.

When a great loss hits us, we are numbed and life seems meaningless for a while. But with the passage of time, we again begin to see that life is still worth living, not just for others but for ourselves, as well. Just as you loved a grandchild, there are others — friends, neighbors, and even strangers — who await your love. For all its cruel twists, this life is still the only one we are given. You have every right to be a survivor and to make the most of each day and each year. I suggest you get started today.

--By Helen Fitzgerald, CT



From Our Members...

"We have many relationships in our lives, but the unique nature of the parent-child relationship is so special, so deep, so life changing, that we endure and even embrace the pain because we had, for that time in our lives, a relationship of pure love and pure joy with our child."

--Annette Mennen Baldwin, 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: July 1st for August 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 co-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 - Year round 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
survivorsofselfharm.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)	

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 Sankus	Crystal Henning
Sandra & Eddie Myricks	

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.

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

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

TCF - Loss to Substance Related Causes

Moderators: Barbara Allen and Mary Lemley

TCF - Loss to Suicide Moderators: Cathy

Seehuetter and Donna Adams

TCF - Loss to Homicide Moderators: Debbie

Floyd and Kathleen Willoughby

TCF - Infant and Toddler Loss Moderators:

Susan Peavler and Tiffany Barraso

TCF - Sibling Loss to Substance Related

Causes Moderators: Andrea Keller and Barbara Allen

The Compassionate Friends Sounds of the

Siblings (for bereaved siblings) *Moderators: Tracy*

Milne and Keith Singer

TCF - Loss of a Grandchild Moderators: Betty

Farrel and Jennifer Sue Hale

TCF - Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth

Moderators: Kelly Kittel and Kenzie Janzen

TCF - Loss of an Only Child/All Your Children

Moderators: Lisa Ridge and Vicki Woods-Ozias

TCF - Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver

Moderators: Robin Landry and Rebecca Perkins

TCF - Loss to Cancer Moderators: Lee

Meyerson, Michelle Setzer, Marguerite Caraway Ward

TCF is On Facebook Please visit and help promote TCF. 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 Sarah Lynne Redding, 12/80 - 12/05.
Love Mom

In loving memory of Michael B. Ruggera, Jr. 4/51 - 4/96.
Love, Dad

In loving memory of Eric Douglas Vines, July 1977 - July 1991. Happy Birthday Eric!
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.

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

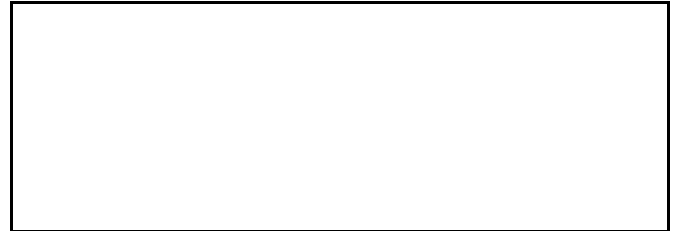
NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT 3223
TORRANCE CA 90503



*I wonder... as I lay here
thinking of you
What you must see
from your fabulous view.
Whistlers, screamers,
bright flashes of light*

*Make this July 4th a special night.
Can you see all the celebrating and fun
As you look down after the setting sun?
I wonder...*

– Return Service Requested –



July 2018

Time Sensitive Material, Please Deliver Promptly



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.

©2018 THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS -- SOUTH BAY/L.A., CA CHAPTER
If you no longer wish to receive this mailing or have a new address, please contact us.