



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

AUGUST 2018 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be August 2nd, 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**, August 2nd meeting will start with "Anger and Grief".

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

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

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The Thursday, Aug. 2nd meeting will start with “Anger and Grief”. Our children have died... we have every right to feel cheated and angry at the world. While everyone grieves differently, at some time in your grief you will become angry. Angry at the circumstances surrounding your child’s death, at the illness or hands of another that took your child, anger at God for not sparing your child, even anger with your beloved child for leaving you. Anger is so intertwined with our emotions that we may not even realize how it can seep into our daily lives and keep us in constant flux. We may not even be aware the unsaid thoughts and pain we are experiencing is indirectly related to anger.

At this meeting we will also be discussing things people say, things said to us that hurt like “You’re young, you can still have other children.” “When are you getting over “it”, etc. such things as the word “closure.” We must keep in mind that most often things said to us are a reaction to their discomfort with death and that are only mouthing something they thought they should say without realizing the implications to our feelings. Nevertheless, they were hurtful at the time we were most vulnerable. Please join us as we offer ways to overcome some of the anger and unfairness of the situations we are all in due to the death of our children.



Meditation on Anger

How come I feel my face flush when you urge me to hurry? I can hardly put one foot in front of the other. Why did my temper flare when the clerk moved me to another counter? I don’t want to make one more change, not even a little one. Why am I irritated at the party chatter? It seems inane and unimportant. How can I forgive myself for snapping at my co-worker? My concentration is nil. Where did this “me” come from? Irritable. Angry. Upset. Impatient. When I was a child, I needed my mother at times like this. Now, I need my child.

--Author Unknown TCF Concord, Massachusetts

Anger at God after a Child Dies

Many people who suffer the death of a child find themselves feeling angry at God. This anger is sometimes expressed directly: “I’m angry at God for allowing my child to die.” Most often, however, the anger reveals itself in less direct phrases such

as, “Why would a loving God allow my child to die?” “Doesn’t God have any mercy?” “Where was God when my child experienced so much suffering?” “With all the horrible abuse being done to children by some adults, why did God take the child of loving parents?”

It is important to understand that anger is a normal, healthy part of grief. While not all parents who suffer the death of a child feel angry at God, most will feel this way at someone or something over the long process of grief. The best support we can provide to these individuals is to listen in silence. This will allow them to work through the anger in their own time frame.

Michelle remembers the intense anger she felt at God when her daughter, Robin, died a year after being diagnosed with leukemia. “The depth of my feelings surprised and concerned me,” she recalls. “I thought I was losing my mind. Although God was the chief target of my anger, I was also angry at my family, friends and strangers I’d see at the mall with their children. Even the weather affected my mood. When it rained I was angry, and the same was true when the sun shone brightly. And most of my energy was directed at God.”

Michelle’s anger gradually subsided. She attributes this to the permission she received from her minister to express her feelings during their many pastoral counseling sessions. “Reverend Johnson told me that God could take my anger and still love me as His child,” she remembers. “This was very important for me to hear. Many other people tried to defend God, saying that He didn’t cause Robin’s death. I know they meant well, but I didn’t find their efforts helpful at all.”

Recently I spoke to a group of hospital chaplains at a medical center in the Los Angeles area. The subject addressed was death and dying. At the beginning of the workshop I showed a videotape of a woman grieving the death of a loved one. The woman said that she was angry at God for allowing her loved one to suffer with cancer for nearly two years before dying.

GRIEVING PEOPLE DON’T NEED THEIR FEELINGS ABOUT GOD STIFLED OR REDIRECTED. GOD CAN HANDLE THE ANGER OF HUMANS WITHOUT OUR DEFENSE OR JUSTIFICATION. ANGER IS A NORMAL, HEALTHY PART OF THE GRIEF PROCESS.

At the conclusion of the video I asked the chaplains how they were going to care for the grief-stricken woman. Several of them replied that their

first agenda was to get the woman's "anger off of God." When I asked why they felt this was necessary one chaplain replied, "Because God didn't cause her loved one to suffer." I then asked the group if they thought that God could handle the anger of one hurting woman—whether or not God caused the suffering? They all agreed that God could.

Mona knows the pain of not only having a child die, but also being told that her anger at God was wrong. Her first child, Jason, died shortly after being born. "When Jason died," she recalls, "I asked God where was His mercy? It had taken my husband, Tim, and me more than two years to conceive. It didn't make any sense that God would allow our child to die. I was definitely angry at Him."

Mona says that many people tried to shift her anger away from God. This was especially the case with her and Tim's minister. "The first thing my Pastor said," she remembers, "wasn't, 'I'm sorry for your loss,' or some other compassionate words. Instead, he said, 'Mona, God's not to blame. Remember He, too, suffered the death of a child. We simply live in a world where tragedies occur.' "

Mona did not find his words helpful. "I know Pastor was well-meaning," she said. "But he seemed to be more concerned with defending God than caring for Tim and me. Although I continued to be angry at God, I no longer expressed my feelings out loud. Pastor seemed to imply that my anger was misguided or wrong."

Grieving people don't need their feelings about God stifled or redirected. God can handle the anger of humans without our defense or justification. Anger is a normal, healthy part of the grief process. Given the permission to be expressed, it will eventually help bring about healing and a renewed sense of wholeness.

-- Reverend Al Miles, Coordinator of Hospital Ministry with Interfaith Ministries of Hawaii at The Queen's Medical Center.



Please....

Please.... don't ask me if I'm over it yet. I'll never be "over it."
 Please.... don't tell me he/she's in a better place. He/she isn't here.
 Please.... don't say "at least he/she isn't suffering." I haven't come to terms why he/she had to suffer at all.

Please.... don't tell me you know how I feel, unless you have lost a child.

Please.... don't tell me to get on with my life. I'm still here, you'll notice.

Please.... don't ask me if I feel better.

Bereavement isn't a condition that "clears up."

Please.... don't tell me "God never makes a mistake." You mean He did this on purpose?

Please.... don't tell me "at least you had him/her for so many years." What year would you choose for your son or daughter to die?

Please.... don't tell me God never gives you more than you can bear— who decides how much a person can bear?

Please.... just say you are sorry.

Please.... just say you remember him/her if you do.

Please.... just let me talk if I want to.

Please.... let me cry when I must.

Please....

--A Compassionate Friend @ The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Forgive Until Forever

Grieving is a fierce and overwhelming expression of love thrust upon us by a deep and hurtful loss. Yet, grieving is frequently such an entanglement of feelings that we often fail to recognize that, ultimately, forgiveness must be an integral part of our grief and our healing. For what is love if forgiveness is silent within us?

We learn to forgive our children for dying, ourselves for not preventing it. We begin to forgive our God or the fate we see ruling our universe. We start to forgive relatives and friends for abandoning us in their own bewilderment over the onslaught of emotions they sense in our words and behavior.

I believe we must be open to the balm of forgiveness, through its expression in our lives. Be it through thought, word or deed, we find small ways to seek life once more. Deep within us, forgiveness is capable of treading the wasteland of our souls to help us feel again the love that has not died. It is the beginning of release from the dominance of pain, not from the continual hurt of missing those we have lost, but from lacking the fullness of the love we shared with our child. That love lives with the strength inside ourselves and yet our beings are so entrapped in a whirling vortex of anger, despair, frustration, abandonment and depression that we often feel it only lightly.

Let us all heed the quiet message heard so

softly in the maelstrom of the spirit. Forgive, forgive and forgive until forever, let love enfold our anguish, helping us to grow and to give beyond this hour to a rich tomorrow.

--Don Hackett TCF Hingham, MA



It Comes In Waves...

For the past 10 days, I've had the joy of actually taking a "real" vacation. I've been on the Panhandle of Florida near Pensacola on Navarre Beach. Every morning I watch the sun come up and every evening I've witnessed glorious sunsets. We've watched dolphins greeting us in the early morning as they feed right off shore, found so many seashells as we walk most days. My favorite and most cherished find was the sand dollar. I will carefully carry them with me on the flight home making sure they are safe and in one piece when I return to South Dakota.

As I write this note to you all, I could not help but find many analogies to our grief and how this journey parallels the ocean, the beach and all it teaches us. I've often used the analogy of grief coming in like a tsunami, rip tides that will pull you under and sweep you out where you feel as if you might drown, calm waters that give us respite and peace.

The tsunami of grief comes in and destroys all that we know. The death of our precious child is that tsunami. It takes all that we knew to be beautiful, delightful, and loving and leaves us feeling like we will never be the same, life isn't worth living without the one that gave us so many reasons to get up every day and be grateful. This week, I heard from a family whose son died by suicide. She was desperately wanting support; she found BP USA and reached out for that life line. There is no Chapter near her...perhaps someday she will want to pay it forward and start one. Perhaps when she is at that place where she can move to her "calmer sea", she will be able to rebuild.

I thought also about the beautiful "sugary" sand that I walked in these past days. I could be walking along, and it sometimes felt like cement and then it would be washed away by the waves and my footing didn't feel so secure. I would then move closer to the berm away from the pounding surf. The sand was deceiving there as well. It appeared to be easy to move forward but there again, I found

that it was a struggle. It was sometimes hard work to move forward. I know that our grief journey is also like that.

We struggle every day to find our footing. To get out of bed each day...meet the demands of life without our children. In my early days of mourning, I would say to those around me (if they really listened), "the sun comes up every day and sets in the west everyday". "The world didn't stop the day my world ended". "When will this thing I hate most ever go away?" "Will I ever have faith again?" "Will I ever experience joy again?"

My dear friends, this much I know to be true... the answer is "Yes." It has been 13 years this December 24th since my son was killed. Early on, I would never have believed that after my tsunami and all it destroyed in its wake, that I would find treasures left for me under the pile of wreckage. Each one of you that I meet, speak with through emails, telephone calls and letters are my "treasure". You are precious to me; I wrap each one of you up and carry you just as I will my precious sand dollars.

--BPUSA BOARD PRESIDENT, DELAIN JOHNSON: A JOURNEY TOGETHER, www.bereavedparentsusa.org

Why Does It Hurt So Much To See Life Go On After Child Loss?

If you're like me, one of the most difficult things for me to hear is how quickly life has gone on for others following the loss of my son. I want to know others are feeling some of my loss. I *need* to know that others still remember my son. I want so desperately to know that others still think of him. ***And, yet the fact is that life has gone on very quickly for most.***

It hasn't been quite one year since my son died, and I've noticed more and more that when I mention his name people are starting to shut me down. I think it makes it uncomfortable for them to hear me talking about him. Some people have said that they are afraid I might be stuck in too much pain. Others just get a pained look on their face as if to say, "Why are you bringing up this sadness again? Can't we just focus on only the happy things in life?"

The truth is it comforts me to talk about Mike. I want to say his name. He is one of my children and his life was intertwined with us as a family for forty-two years. How can I talk of anything without mentioning him?

His memories dance within my head day and

night.

Just before Easter my daughter-in-law said to me that one of the last pictures she took of Mike was with bed-head. She said he was standing in the kitchen making coffee and looking over at the kids when she snapped the picture.

I cried. I cried a lot when I heard of this last picture.

I cried because I know how much they miss him. I cried because I pictured him standing there barefoot as he always did getting his cup of coffee in the morning. A simple ritual, but one of so much meaning. He was ready to begin his day — watching his children, and planning on enjoying some quiet time with his wife at the beginning of a new day.

Yes, I cried. But, I need to hear things like this. I want to hear stories about my son. I want to hear the everyday things about his life.

I need to know that he is remembered and missed! I need to know that he is still loved!

I wish that people understood how important the little conversations such as this are to parents who have lost a child. I wish others understood how much we long to hear stories about the little things that our child did — the things that we didn't always get to see or hear about.

I wish that life didn't go on so fast for others.

When Mike died, I began Journaling my thoughts. I live alone — the rest of the children are adults and I'm left with memories. Precious, beautiful memories.

And, some very sad memories, too.

With the help of my youngest daughter, I have written a book about this journey of child loss. It's not just my journey. It's the journey that each of us who has lost a child, a grandchild, or a sibling is taking. This is not an easy journey. It's hard. It's difficult. And, yes, it's often very sad.

We are left with the job of figuring out how to rebuild our lives while living in our brokenness.

I hope you'll read the book. I think it will help you. I think it will help you a lot. My life hasn't gone on too fast. I'm still here, and I want to share my son with you as we travel this journey of child loss together. ***Child Loss — The Heartbreak and the Hope*** is a book that will help you understand more about this journey of grief we're taking. Will you get the book and walk hand-in-hand with me through this pain?

--A JOURNEY TOGETHER,

www.bereavedparentsusa.org



Here Are The Top 10 Things I Have Learned About Grieving As A Couple

1. Go to grief counseling as a couple if you can. It will help you understand and accept differences in grieving at a time when you both need each other so much.
2. Know that you each have strengths, weaknesses and limitations - chances are these are different for each of you. It sounds obvious, but can be very hard to accept that both of you have suffered a great loss and one of you may not be able to give the other what you need in such a desperate time. Grief takes a lot of energy and you may not always have much to give your partner during this time. Also, you each have different ways of coping and dealing with your grief— neither of you is wrong - allow the other space to do what they need to do, whatever that is.
3. It is normal to have disagreements over nothing that turn into big blow-out fights.
4. It is normal to get frustrated with each other. Grief requires tremendous patience. Try to be as patient as you can with yourself and your partner.
5. It is normal to take things out on each other. Try to be aware of this and stop yourself from doing this as much as you can.
6. Know that no matter how good your relationship is, or how supportive your partner is, grief can make you miserable, cloud your judgment, and make you feel like you need a divorce.
7. It is usually not a good idea to make any big changes when you are grieving and this includes leaving your relationship.
8. No matter how alike you are, each of you will have different things that upset and bother you more than other things, and different stages and time frames for your grief. Do your best to understand that you do not have to agree or be feeling the same things at the same time to accept each other's feelings and support each other.
8. No matter how much you love each other, there will be times when you will feel completely alone while grieving the loss of your child. Grief is lonely.
9. Always do your best to have a united front to family, friends and the rest of the world - no matter if you agree or not. Other's judgments have a great potential during this time to pull you apart.
10. You are much stronger as a pair than as two separate individuals. There will be times when it feels like you have no one in the world to support,

listen and stand up for you. Try your very hardest to be there for each other as much as you can. NO-ONE else in the world loved your child more than each of you. Therefore, no-one else in the world shares this world of grief the same as the two of you.

-- Caroline, Mom to Jack Robinson, *Sharing*

Beatitudes For Survivors After Suicide

BLESSED are they that recognize suicide grief is compounded; that we grieve the death of a beloved person, but first and foremost, we grieve the cause of the death.

BLESSED are they that give us permission to mourn the loss of one dearly loved, free of judgment, censure, and shame.

BLESSED are spiritual guides who relieve our concerns for the repose of our loved one's soul with the truth that God is All-Knowing, All-Loving, and All-Forgiving.

BLESSED are they that don't offer the meaningless cliché, "Time Heals," because, for a long while, the passing of time holds no meaning or value for us.

BLESSED are they that don't say, "I know just how you feel" but instead say, "I am here for you. I will not tire of your tears or your words of sorrow and regret."

BLESSED are they that have the patience and love to listen to our repetitive obsession with WHY? without offering useless answers or explanations.

BLESSED are they that affirm the worth of our deceased beloved by sharing memories of his/her goodness and times of fun, laughter, and happiness.

BLESSED are the mental health care providers who explain to us that, very probably, our loved one died of a terminal illness called depression.

BLESSED are they that challenge our sense of omnipotence with the reminder that no one has enough power or control over another to cause them to end their life.

BLESSED are the first responders to our loved one's suicide who try to relieve our sense of guilt and responsibility by assuring us, "This death is not your fault."

BLESSED are they that lend acceptance to the value of the relationship we shared with the one who died by allowing us to speak of them and "what might have been."

BLESSED are they that allow and encourage us to use our loved one's death in a manner that gives

our loss and grief meaning and purpose.

BLESSED are they that do not expect us to find closure, grief resolution, recovery, or to be healed, understanding that these terms define "grief work in progress" that will take the rest of our life.

BLESSED are community care givers who direct us to suicide bereavement support groups where our anguish is understood, our loss validated, and where we are encouraged by the example of others who have traveled this road before us.

BLESSED are "seasoned" suicide survivors who role model that not only can we survive, but, in time, we can thrive we can regain peace of mind, restored confidence, renewed productivity, and a revived zest for living.

BLESSED are all who honor our loved ones by remembering how they lived rather than how they died.

--LaRita Archibald TCF/Kamloops BC newsletter



A Father's Point Of View– The loss of an infant son

How does it feel to be a father that has lost his first born son? At first it was like the world was the worst place to be. The pain and anguish were so great that I just could not bear it. Many men have said to me, "I don't know how you can bear it." They make it sound like I have a choice. All I really wanted to do was die with him.

My son was only 2 months old, but I can tell you that in those 2 months he taught me the importance of family and love and how precious life can be. At the same time, he taught me how fragile we are and how vulnerable we are. He touched me so deeply that he was able to physically and emotionally change who and what I am. People that have never experienced this type of loss will never know how it can change a person. When you lose a child you lose all of your hopes and dreams. People can't understand that your life is forever changed.

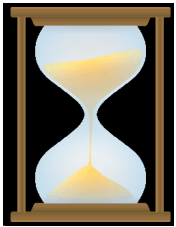
When you lose a baby people can be very cruel. They feel that you could not be emotionally attached, since you do not have too many memories of his life. You should just have another child and the pain will go away. People do not realize that it is not how many memories you have of a child, but that bond you have from when you see them for the first time. That bond is why it hurts so much whether he is a baby, child,

teenager or adult. It does not matter. You have lost something so precious that only people that have experienced it could understand.

As a father who now has a beautiful 2-year-old son, the pain does not go away. Sometimes it can be worse. Every step and every thing that my son does is wonderful, but it also reminds me that Brandon did not get a chance to do the same things. Time has helped me reach an understanding of how short life is and to not take my new child for granted. Brandon has taught me to cherish every breath and every smile Ethan has to offer. By my doing this I will continue to honor Ethan's big brother, Brandon David Orozco.

--Gerardo Orozco, Potomac, MD TCF

Newly Bereaved...



Time Will Ease the Hurt

The sadness of the present days is locked and set in time, and moving to the future is a slow and painful climb.

But all the feelings that are now so vivid and so real can't hold their fresh intensity as time begins to heal.

No wound so deep will ever go away, yet every hurt becomes a little less from day to day.

Nothing can erase the painful imprints on your mind; but there are softer memories that time, will let you find.

Though your heart won't let the sadness simply slide away, the echoes will diminish even though the memories stay.

--Bruce Wilmer TCF Cumberland, NJ

Seasoned Grievers...

Closure: Is it a Reality?

The use of the word "closure" is often heard in public circles or in the media especially after a tragedy and implies finality. The word comes with the sense that there will be a time, day, or event like a funeral that marks when a grieving person will be "healed" or "over it," as though it were a disease and you could magically take a pill to be cured. There is an expectation that when the eulogies are said and the casseroles are gone, the grief somehow magically goes away. The truth is that those of us who are in TCF realize that the

death of a child or sibling changes our lives forever, and we will never truly "be over it."

Yes, we will not have the intensity of the pain and sorrow we had at the beginning of our grief. We will go on with life and find a new normal for us, but life will never be as it was before the death, and we will never be fully "healed."

Sometimes those around us have attempted to comfort us by pointing to deadlines, replacements, or "at leasts." We have heard it said, "At least you have other kids," or "You can have another baby," or "Hasn't it been 6 months?" Many see "comfort giving" as a short-term support effort, and soon we will be "over it" as we are kept busy returning to the tasks of daily living and focusing on our blessings. These comments hurt rather than provide the comfort they are meant to provide. Grief follows no plan, no stages, timetable, formula, or schedule. There are no road maps; there are no absolutes.

We learn in TCF that everyone grieves differently. Grief is like being lost. The familiar things we relied on to live each day are gone. We must find new anchors or stabilizers along the way and learn a new way of relating to the world and people around us. We are forced to live without our child or sibling. The reality of our loss often far outweighs what we have remaining. Grief is all consuming, distorts reality, and we begin to mark time in "before or after our loved one died."

No one can hurry the process of grief; no one can do it for us. Not even our spouses, parents, or other children can help us in those early days. The truth is that when our grief is new, we feel exhausted physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

We barely have enough energy to breathe. We feel as though we have no control over our lives anymore, nor do we care. We realize on some level we are helpless. We might even feel hopeless or purposeless. Some of us feel isolated, lonely, and misunderstood. Some feel like everything is trivia compared to the loss we have experienced. Some feel as if the world is spinning on around us, and nobody really cares that our child, sibling, or grandchild died. All of these feelings are normal and part of the grieving process. And yes, we also need to realize it is a process—a very long, gradual, and difficult process. Time does not heal all wounds, but time softens the intensity of the grief. What helps is finding those who will listen with their hearts and give us hope and understanding. Those who will spend hours, days, and months with us as we tell

our story over and over so we can somehow believe it ourselves. What helps is to surround ourselves with those patient people and meaningful activities that comfort and support.

Gradually, the cold darkness of grief begins to give way to the warmth of the memories, acceptance, purpose, and reinvestment in life. We learn to speak of our loved one without crying, and to begin to accept that whatever time we had with him or her, we would have taken even if just but a moment. We learn that grief is the price we pay for loving our child or sibling so much, and we wouldn't want it any other way. Our relationships with family, friends, and yes, even God can be strengthened or challenged as we look for new ways to connect with them. We may lose old friends who don't really understand. We learn that problems in life are not overwhelming. We are handling the worst thing that can happen to us; what else can happen? We learn to more deeply cherish those we love. We help others in grief without batting an eye.

Sometimes we pick up "gifts" along the way by becoming more caring, compassionate toward others, and appreciative for what is important in life. New strengths can develop as we find our new selves along the way. Life will be different as we learn to cope, but still have meaning.

For those of you who are new in your loss, we hope that you will continue to share your sorrow with us and learn from those further ahead on the path of grief. Someday it won't hurt as much as it does now, and you won't always feel "this elephant on your chest." We encourage you to ask the family and friends around you for what you need and tell them when their expectations for you are too high. We hope you will explain to them that your grief is not on a timetable and will probably not ever reach what society calls "closure." Explain to them that you will always miss your child or sibling, but you will learn to live with a broken heart. We hope you will inform them that the mention of your child's name is music to your ears and it's okay to talk about him or her. Your TCF friends will be with you and hold your hand every step of the way.

--Carol Dyck *Carole J. Dyck RN became a bereaved parent in 1989 when her son Chris died in an automobile accident. Carole was a co-leader of the Verdugo Hills TCF Chapter, Glendale, CA for several years and served on the National Board of Directors of The Compassionate Friends.*

Friends and Family...



I'm Not Contagious ~ excerpts

In the two or three weeks immediately following my brother Nick's death, I received numerous calls, cards, plants, flowers, and offers of help. My loss sat on the front burner of many wonderful people's stoves for about 21 days. I was in their thoughts, prayers, and blessings. Unfortunately, many issues and events vie for front-burner status. Part of me understood why the love, attention, and concern started to recede. Another part of me wanted to throw a full-blown temper tantrum live at Madison Square Garden. "My brother, Nick, is dead. Gone. Finished. Have you forgotten?" I would cry, and have a grand time berating others for overlooking my plight. No wonder I resonated so deeply with Madeline Sharples' poem, "Aftermath." I could have written the same poem, simply replacing her word "son" with my word "brother."

In my fantasy, I would tattoo a large "G" for grieving on my exposed forehead so that no one could possibly forget what had recently happened. They would have to remember to ask me, "How are you doing?" Either that or they'd be feigning blindness! Inside of me, there's a voice screaming to be heard: "No, you don't get it! I just lost my brother! Lost my brother! One of the most significant people in my life! Don't you dare move on to the next topic...I'm still on this topic and I am not ready to move on and I won't be ready to move on for quite some time."

My heartfelt request to the world goes something like this: "If you feel like you don't know what to say, don't say much. Just show up! I have not just come down with strep throat! I'm not contagious!"

When you have strep throat, a kiss, hug, or even a handshake is discouraged. The well-wisher will keep a distance, offer sincere apologies, and the sick person will understand. But we don't have strep throat. We have grief. It's not a sickness, but a condition with symptoms and circumstances. Sorrow. Pain. Longing. Regrets. Tears. Unanswered questions. Forms to fill out. Belongings to give away. Shock. Insomnia. Memories, good and bad. Wills. Death certificates.

These symptoms last much longer than two weeks or a month; perhaps some will last a lifetime. They may be acute at first, but they don't go away when the initial wave of sympathy cards, visits, and other greetings ebbs. The intensity of the symptoms may ease, but they do persist. Unfortunately, many well-wishers disappear or forget or have new things on their own front-burners. Under our breath, we grievers are saying, "Please don't disappear. I need you." We don't really need that much, yet some friends and family members seem to feel like attending to us is the equivalent of running a marathon. In fact, all that's needed is empathy ... that ability to walk a mile in our moccasins, as the old saying goes.

What do we need? The answer may be a bowl of chicken soup because we've forgotten to eat. We may need some groceries or a prescription filled at the drugstore. We may even need some solitude. However, don't confuse solitude with solitary confinement or quarantine. We are neither dangerous nor contagious. Well-wishers accrue karmic gold stars for showing up at a time when many can't.

We may need someone's presence or vitality or willingness to listen. We may need someone to hear the same story or memory or lament twice, three times, or more. We need others to let us move through our grief at whatever pace our particular journey selects. We do not need to be talked out of our feelings, unless we have asked for it. We don't need cheering up or problem-solving, unless we have asked for them. No one can hasten our return to pre-loss levels of activity or interest.

The gift of attention we need is one that permits us to just be where we are in our grieving process. We will get better. Our condition will improve, but it takes time and patience: gifts we can give to ourselves and hope to receive from others.

In our country, grief can be invisible. If you met someone who was unaware that you'd recently suffered a major loss, how would that person know? Perhaps you appear a bit sadder or more distracted than usual. More than likely, you look much the same on the outside as you looked the day or two before your beloved died. By comparison, if you were walking on that same sidewalk with crutches, it would be instantly obvious that something was not right. Your injury would elicit a question and open the door to further conversation about the trauma: "What happened?"

"Are you okay?" In the aftermath of a death, crutches are not prescribed for treatment of our heartache. Because there is nothing visible to signal our grief to the outside world, it's easy to feel even more contagious.

I like to think I'm wearing my grief badge when I talk or write about my brother's death. By sharing my experience with others, my grief becomes more visible. I join a community. I hear and feel nods of recognition and support, and I feel a lot less contagious. This isn't a community that any of us wanted to join, as the entry requirements are very painful. It is nonetheless a loving community with sympathetic arms to hold us. What a gift to receive in the aftermath of such a profound loss.

--Martha Clark Scala

Welcome...



Who We Are

We are The Compassionate Friends. We are your organization. We are you. No better, no smarter, no more experienced (well, maybe slightly, only because we have been at it longer), just fellow bereaved parents struggling along. We come from all walks of life. We are just people, grieving parents (siblings and grandparents) who are trying to help themselves and others. No pat answers, no glib replies, no religion, no color, and no judgment...truly, WE ARE YOU.

You may not know us all well. Say nothing or say a lot. No barriers, no requirements. Only the promise that whether you listen or lead, you will find genuine understanding and shared experiences. Come to a meeting and realize that you are truly not alone in your grief and loneliness, in your anger and the craziness and pain. WE ARE YOU!

--TCF/ Portland, Oregon newsletter

Book in Review...



You Are The Mother of all Mothers: Message of Hope for the Grieving Heart. A beautifully written book for all mother's whose child has died. Angela writes from the heart and lets mothers know that they are not alone in this battle. Every page is filled with support, love and kindness. The illustrations and words in this book make it a must-have for all grieving mothers.

Helpful Hint...**On Grief and Healing**

The surest road though grief is to feel it not deny it. If you are hurting, the best advice is to allow your feeling ... Cry, if you need to cry. Rage, if you need to rage. Admit the longings, the loneliness or whatever you are feeling. Don't suppress yourself. Feelings, expressed, ultimately disappear, but when you suppress yourself, nothing changes.

--Author Unknown TCF Contra Costa County Chapter, CA newsletter

The Love You Bring

I looked toward the clouds today and for a moment
saw your face
And wondered just where you have gone with the
hope it's a peaceful place
Did you show yourself to me today to tell me you're
all right?
Or was it just a daydream playing tricks upon my
sight
Then I thought of when you left still too young to
say a word
Yet the look you gave us said it all in our hearts,
your good-bye was heard
You have changed our lives forever your short time
here not in vain and hope you know we tried it all to
keep you safe from pain
We will always feel the void inside because you are
not here
But each new thought you send our way let's us
know you're always near
So until our journey nears its end and we hear the
Angels sing
We'll face each new day as it comes and live off the
Love you bring.
-- James Sullivan

Why?

After a while,
you reduce all of your tortures
to one simple question: Why?
You no longer say, "What if...?"
You no longer say, "How could this happen?"
You only ask, Why!
Until one day, you find yourself sobbing the truth:

No one can ever know.

--Sascha Wagner

A Grieving Parent Is...

A grieving parent is someone who will never forget their child no matter how painful memories are.

A grieving parent is someone who yearns to be with their dead child

but cannot conceive leaving their living ones.

A grieving parent is someone who has part of a heart as the rest is buried with their child.

A grieving parent is someone who begs for relief from the memories which plague them and then feels guilty when they get it.

A grieving parent is someone who pretends to be happy and enjoying life when they really are dying inside.

A grieving parent is someone who can cry or laugh at the drop of a hat whenever they remember their beloved child.

A grieving parent is someone who feels as if they just lost their child yesterday no matter how much time has passed.

A grieving parent is someone who fears for their remaining family because they cannot bear to have any more losses.

A grieving parent is someone who sits by their child's gravestone and feels a knife stabbing their heart.

A grieving parent is someone who wants to help others who have lost loved ones because somehow their loss is theirs all over again.

-- Judy Skapnik

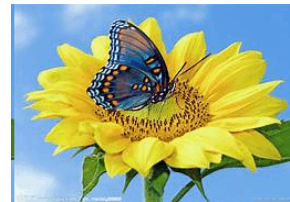
A Butterfly

Some say a butterfly is a member of the insect world...

I say that a butterfly's story has yet been untold... For I believe a little butterfly is a lovely gift from Heaven above...

A beautiful symbol of our children's spirit coming to earth, reminding us of their never ending love.

--Frances Conner, Strasburg, VA



"Anger is an energy.

It cannot be destroyed or forgotten.
It has to be converted."

--Leo Madowa



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

Brandon Armstrong
 Miscarried: July 1995
 Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tiffany Lamb Corkins
 Born: 7/70 Died: 8/05
 Mother: Nancy Lamb

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

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

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

Jeffery Mark Engleman
 Born: 6/61 Died: 2/10
 Parents: Janette & Laszlo Engelman

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

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

Richard Paul Engelman
 Born: 02/66 Died: 03/95
 Parents: Janette & Laszlo Engelman

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cherese Mari Lauhere
Born: 9/74 Died: 3/96
Parents: Larry & Chris Lauhere

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



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Elizabeth D. Szucs
Born: 4/72 Died: 6/11
Parents: Dolores & Frank Szucs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 Pulislich
Born: 1/75 Died: 1/08
Mother: Maria Pulislich
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

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



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

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: Michella Matasso Fincannon August 1986 - January 2006



Dear Michella,

In days that go by, I still cry. I miss my beautiful little Michella. I miss your laugh and your smile. I miss our fun filled family functions. I miss your little dances. I miss sitting and talking with you while we sipped coffee. I miss who you would have become, and much, much, more.

That's why I love speaking for MADD. I like to talk about you and hopefully prevent someone else's loss.

Love, Mom



For Siblings...

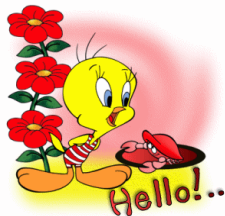
SIBS Don't be surprised at extremely strong feelings of rage and anger, guilt and regret. Also, there will be times of longing for that brother or sister which are so intense you think you can't stand it – but somehow you will stand it. You may have a profound sense of being alone because no one understands what you're going through. If you can, try to find someone outside of your family to talk to, someone who will listen. If you think it's necessary, don't be embarrassed about seeking professional counseling.

Acceptance takes time, but finding it is a big part of grief work. Your life will not return to the way it once was – there will be a "new normal." Don't expect others to understand what you're going through because they can't. They're in an awkward position of unintentional ignorance about death and grief. What you can expect is that people will either say "dumb things" that will hurt you or make you mad, or they will say absolutely

nothing.

That's why ... it's important for you to know that you're not alone. There are others like you who do understand your pain, your anger, your sense of helplessness. REACH OUT.

--TCF, Verdugo Hills, CA



Why The Death Of A Sibling Is like Losing A Part Of Yourself

If you're anything like me, you grew up in a fairytale surrounded by siblings who stood 10 feet tall. You grew up with parents who were as brave as super-heroes. You grew up naive to the world around you. Don't get me wrong, I was well aware of what the news never failed to talk about. I knew mothers and fathers could lose their battles with cancer. I knew children could be kidnaped. I knew houses burned down, and car accidents happened almost every day.

But I had created a world where my family was untouchable, where nothing could ever happen to them because they were mine.

Five years ago, a police officer knocked on our front door. It was 10 PM, and I had just gotten ready for bed. "There's been an accident. You need to come to the hospital right away."

By this point, I had seen enough TV shows to know this was not what you wanted to hear from a police officer, especially not at 10 PM, and especially not when your older brother still hadn't made it home.

I lost a brother that day. I lost a cheer-leader, a mentor, and a best friend. The safe space I had created so easily disappeared, and I was left to tackle the world without the one person who had always paved a path before me.

There's no word to describe the loss of a sibling. If you lose a spouse, you're a widow or widower. If you lose your parents, you're an orphan. But if you lose a sibling, you just become the girl who lost her brother.

My therapist described it as losing a limb. If someone tells you it gets better with time, the person's lying to you. Yes, cuts get better and wounds do heal. But when you lose an arm, it's foolish to await the day it "gets better." You simply learn to live with one arm.

I learned to do the things I know he would have liked. I learned to listen to the songs we sang together in the car without breaking down in tears.

I learned - and am still learning - to function normally without him just a phone call away.

However, "normal" lately been like a blanket too short for the bed. Sometimes it covers you just fine, and other times it leaves you shaking in the cold. I've come to find the worst part is I never know which one it's going to be when I wake up.

It's been almost 5 years since that day. Some days the ache is a little less than before, but other days it makes me want to lock myself in my room. And some days, I still feel like I am stuck in a void. There is no statute of limitations on grief. There is no time limit to waking up crying, or having to leave the grocery store because you see your sibling's old friends. There is no special cure for those dull aches in your heart that don't seem to ever go away.

But, coming from a sister who thought she would never find the light again, know there will come a day when the thought of that loved one brings a smile to your face instead of leaving you gasping for a breath you cannot find. There will come a day when you find yourself talking about your sibling, and you do not feel uncomfortable. There will come a day when the universe sends you a sign to let you know your sibling is doing OK.

And there will come a day when the 19 years you were able to have with your sibling becomes enough for the 19 more you'll never have. There is no other love like the love for a brother. And if you're lucky to have a brother who was also your best friend, that love is going to cover you during the best of times, and hold your hand through the worst.

--Kady Braswell, Bereaved Survivor

My Sister, My Friend

Within our hearts
You will always be.
Our minds will be filled
With sweet memories.

Your spirit and love
Will never be gone,
For each life you touched
Will carry them on.

--Catherine Hall TCF Hinsdale, IL

For Grandparents...



A Grandparent's Point of View

The death of a child is a most tragic thing. It affects so many – family, friends and even strangers.

My grandchild died, and only a grandparent can understand the special love we have for our grandchildren and the loss we feel. For us, it is a double loss. Not only is your grandchild gone, but you also watch your child die each day.

The smile that was always on my daughter's face is no longer there. The hurt is so deep and there are so many questions. You feel helpless as a parent. You can't kiss the hurt away as you did when they were a child. You have no answers for their questions, for you can barely understand your own feelings.

Each day I hope and pray for a little ray of sunshine to show on my daughter's face. I search for a little something to say or do that will comfort her. It seems there is no end to the suffering.

As time has slowly gone by, I see the healing process begin. In time, a ray of hope will shine on my daughter's face and a smile will make her eyes light up again. She will turn to me for what little comfort I can give her. There will always be a part of me that is gone. In time I will learn to live with the part that is still here.

--Ruth Eaton

From Our Members...



A Grieving Parent Is...

A grieving parent is someone who will never forget their child no matter how painful memories are.

A grieving parent is someone who yearns to be with their dead child

but cannot conceive leaving their living ones.

A grieving parent is someone who has part of a heart as the rest is buried with their child.

A grieving parent is someone who begs for relief from

the memories which plague them and then feels guilty when they get it.

A grieving parent is someone who pretends to be happy

and enjoying life when they really are dying inside.

A grieving parent is someone who can cry or laugh at the drop of a hat whenever they remember their beloved child.

A grieving parent is someone who feels as if they just lost their child yesterday no matter how much time has passed.

A grieving parent is someone who fears for their remaining family because they cannot bear to have any more losses.

A grieving parent is someone who sits by their child's gravestone and feels a knife stabbing their heart.

A grieving parent is someone who wants to help others who have lost loved ones because somehow their loss is theirs all over again.

-- Judy Skapnik 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: August 1st for September 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
survivorsofsuicide.com	opentohope.com
taps.org (military death)	alivealone.org
bereavedparentsusa.org	save.org
pomc.com (families of murder victims)	
grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)	
www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)	

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

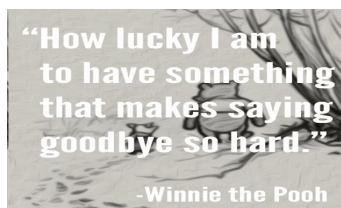
Moderators: Robin Landry and Rebecca Perkins

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 Cherese Mari Lauhere September 1974 - March 19967. Cherese, our beloved daughter. You gave us so much love and joy. We have always been so proud of you. You were smart, beautiful on the inside and outside, loving, kind and funny. You always wanted to help children. Your foundation www.cherese.org continues to help thousands of lives. Your memory lives on. We love and miss you every minute of every day.
Our love always, Mom, Dad, Todd and Tere

In loving memory of Jonathan "Jamie" Schubert, July 1965 - December 2006. In loving memory of my son, "Jamie", attorney and counsellor for the US Supreme Court, called "a warrior for justice for the most vulnerable", who I still hold close to my heart.
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 _____

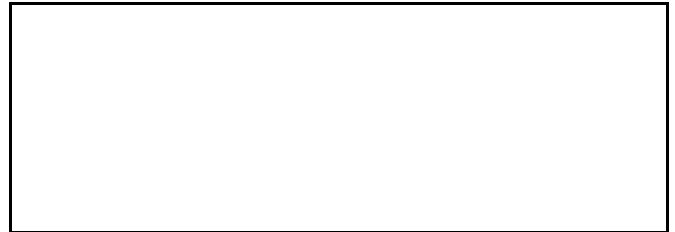
To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month or it will appear in the following issue.

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

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August 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.