



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

JANUARY 2019 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 Jan. 3rd, 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. → Go to the WEST parking lot. Meetings are held at the west end of the church.

--Please remember to park in the West church parking lot and not on the street or East lot.--

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 Jan 3rd meeting will start with "A New Year, A New Me???"

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.

A new chapter of TCF has started in Manhattan Beach. More info on page 15.

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) 370-1645
Linzelik@gmail.com
Mary Sankus (310) 648-4878
Marysankus@gmail.com

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

The Jan 3rd meeting will start with... A New Year... A New Me??? Many bereaved parents have a difficult time with facing the new year that seems to stretch ahead of us. How will I make it through a whole year without my child? If this is your first New Years day to deal with, you may resent the fact that your child isn't here. You may be at a loss to explain how you can plan or look forward to anything this year. (Remember, if you take it one day at a time it will not seem so overwhelming and insurmountable). Our children would want us to go on. Of course there will be days when you feel overwhelmed and consumed with depression, but those days will balance out with days that almost seem normal.

We change from our child's death... We need to acknowledge that fact and find ways to move on as a bereaved parent. We need to look at the future and the new year as a challenge that we can face. But, we also need to recognize the fact that we are most definitely changed from our loss. We go through many stages of grief, yet the bottom line is we have to relearn how to live a normal, happy and productive life without our child. As we work our way through shock, denial, guilt, anger, physical reactions and depression we sometimes get stuck. The following articles have good strategies for resolving grief. If we attempt to follow some of these suggestions, this new year can turn into something bearable, if not positive.

Taking Stock

Happy New Year!!! "How can it ever be happy again?" "How will I ever make it through another year of this torment?" When we are hurting and so terribly depressed it is hard to see any good in our New Year; but we must try.

First, we must hold on tightly to the idea that we will not always be this miserable. That we will someday feel good again. This is almost impossible to believe but even when we don't believe it, we must tell ourselves over and over again that it is true, BECAUSE IT IS! Many parents whose children have died some years in the past will attest to this. Remember also, no one can suffer indefinitely as you are suffering right now.

Second, we must face the New Year with knowledge that this year offers us a CHOICE. The choice is whether we will be on our way to healing

by this time next year or whether we will still be in the pit of intense grief. We must remind ourselves that if we choose to be on the way to healing we must go through our grief, crying, being angry, talking about our feelings of guilt, and doing whatever is necessary to move toward healing.

Third, we must look for good in our lives and find reasons to go on, and accept the fact that our continued suffering will not bring our child back. Many of us have other children and a spouse for whom we must go on. Most importantly, we have our own lives that must be lived. Most of us know that our dead children would want us to go on!

No, this coming year may not be a happy one, but it can be a constructive one. Through our grief we can grow and become more understanding, loving, compassionate and aware of the real values in life. LET US NOT WASTE THIS NEW YEAR!

--Margaret Gerner, MSW St. Louis MO

What Kind Of "New" Year Will It Be?

Well, since you are reading this, you must have survived those dreaded holidays. Some of you may be holding onto your sanity by the skin of your teeth, but you're here. For now, that's enough.

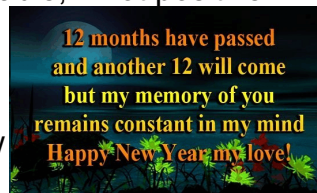
If this is your first or second new year without your child, consider that an emotional victory. I'm sure you wondered several times how you could possibly survive all that family warmth and frivolity without your child. Well, you did.

Now it is a brand new year. It's up to you what you make of it. Do you want to spend the year bitter, angry, withdrawn, and tormented? Or do you want to begin to enjoy life again and start healing? Believe it or not, it IS up to you.

I'm going to assume that you want to begin healing. There are a few things that you must know. It absolutely is NOT disloyal to your child's memory to smile again or enjoy yourself. Would your child wish everlasting pain on you? Would he/she want you to cry every day for the rest of your life?

One of the key elements to softening the pain is to try to think about all the good things that you have instead of what you've lost. I know that seems impossible, but force yourself to try. If you've got family, friends, health, whatever, count your blessings.

Another important element to healing is to be



grateful that you had your child at all. I know that seems ludicrous when you feel you've been robbed because you "should" have been able to watch your child grow old. The fact is that you aren't going to do that. What ever memories you have of your child, or whatever joy you get from having loved him/her, no matter how briefly you had them, is worth hanging on to.

You also need to trust. Look around your next TCF meeting. Do you see the veterans laughing and sharing joyful stories with each other? Do you hear about new babies, weddings, hope, and love? Trust that these parents love their children as much as you love yours. Trust that life can go on again.

Even though it sounds impossible, trust us when we say you will find happiness again. No one will try to tell you that you will eventually heal to the point where it doesn't hurt at all. No one will tell you that you'll be your old self soon. We realize you have been changed forever by the death of your child. For now, you'll just have to take our word that it does get better and the pain does dull itself a little with time.

It's a brand new year, why not try to make it one of healing and health, occasional smiles, reaching out to others, and remembering the good times? Maybe you can even start looking forward to the future.

As radical as all these concepts may seem to you now, guess what? When you do finally feel that you've made some progress, these will be what you did to get there.

Take it easy on yourself. We're with you.
--Kathy Hahn Lower Bucks, PA

This Is Another Year Just Beginning

This is another year just beginning - afresh with new days, new opportunities, new challenges. It occurs to me, however, that it is a very difficult task to keep from concentrating on past years and the sadness we endure just because it is a new year and the calendar has flipped the page.

Moving on to a brighter tomorrow and letting go of the pain of yesterday is a gradual process. We cross that threshold one step at a time - a small step, at first, faltering and stumbling - but somehow getting there. With patience, effort and persistence, once again we will be able to celebrate life as the year stretches on before us, putting behind us our sadness, our guilt, our

failures and our pain. We will be able to smile again. We will be able to remember our precious children in life rather than death. We will recognize in our days many little blessings and will be able to share our joys with others.

Whenever that "New Year" begins for you, I celebrate with you that marvelous accomplishment, and wish you great peace, courage, and comfort. HAPPY NEW YEAR!
--Alice Weening TCF Cincinnati, OH



A New Year's Perspective

Another turning of the calendar, another reminder that time doesn't stop – life doesn't stop - for the bereaved. I observe the occasion with a different perspective now.

New Year's resolutions seem pointless, even presumptuous, after you've experienced the death of a child. Fresh starts won't change this reality, nor will the purest intentions avoid events that are simply out of our control. Admittedly, I've lost faith in the goal-oriented, purpose-driven, mission statement rhetoric that's so popular in our day, and find myself seeking instead to find meaning in the present moment.

It began as trying to just survive the present moment, which is the best we can do in early grief— one step at a time, one breath at a time. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, we begin to engage in life again. To notice the golden pink glow of a sunset, to listen to the solitary call of a blue jay, to give and accept hugs more openly. These are the doorways of hope.

It's in these small but significant experiences that I feel connected to what really matters. Alongside the heartache and emptiness of grief, there is beauty and goodness in this world, maybe even joy. I see Brandon smiling when I find it. Almost five years after his transition to heaven, a flow is returning to life. And maybe this is how I honor him. Not by accomplishing great things in his name, but by allowing myself to continue with living, loving, trying something new, making mistakes, laughing, learning.

The death of a child is the ultimate sorrow. It affects every facet of life. As it becomes less all-consuming, it becomes an integrated part of who we are. We become more compassionate and forgiving because we've experienced our own pain and weakness. We live with less fear because

we've already gone through the worst. We see through the superficial illusions of life because we're anchored in what really matters, holding out for something lasting and true.

These are the qualities we bring to the New Year, to the relationships and circumstances we will encounter. Goals and resolutions may have their place, but to live meaningfully is to bring light into the world. Wherever we can find that light, we'll meet our children there.

-- Robin Goddard,
TCF Brazoria County Texas



Night Agonies

In the deepest part of the night, when I am alone with my blackest grief, I reach deep inside myself and measure the depth of love for my child. I focus on these feelings, now made unequivocal by death, and realize that an emotion so strong, so pure, cannot be obliterated by the physical act of dying.

My love lives on. This link to my child remains, unbroken, unaltered. This bond, the strongest two people can share, continues. But how can it remain, if my child does not? A solid bridge must have a secure footing on either side. The strength of the love that flows to my child from the deepest part of my being remains as it was in her life. I must conclude it is still anchored in the very fiber of my child's soul--on the other side of death. With the reawakened awareness of the connection of our love, I find proof of her continuance, a soothing reassurance that though she is no longer with me, she still IS.

--Sally Migliaccio, TCF Babylon NY

How Are You?

"How are you?" How very often, as newly bereaved parents, we are asked that question. Suddenly those three simple words are no longer a standard greeting but an honest expression of concern and inquiry as to our emotional and/or physical health. "How are you?" also becomes a polite way of asking if we are making progress in recovering from our loss and our grief. Some even ask this question because they need reassurance that we will soon be "back to normal," for our grief often makes those around us uncomfortable. Others may want to hear us answer that we feel awful because of their need to

comfort or to pity us.

In the early weeks following the accidental death of my ten-year-old son, I keenly felt the entire neighborhood's curiosity about "how I was doing." Every time I left my house, I seemed to meet at least a dozen people who asked, "How are you?" I soon discovered that a quick, pat answer satisfied most of the folks I encountered and was far easier than searching for an honest response. I began with "not too bad," after a few weeks progressed to "pretty good," and finally switched to "fine thanks, how about you?" These responses satisfied my friends and neighbors, but inside, the nagging question of "How am I, really?" became increasingly difficult to answer.

There was no thermometer, no measuring stick, no gauge with which to measure my recovery from the pain of my child's death. Some days I didn't feel too bad. Other days I felt as though I had been assaulted, raped, and ripped apart by life itself. Was this roller coaster of emotion normal, I wondered? Did this wildly fluctuating state of mind mean I was recovering, or not recovering, or even still sane? I had no sure way of knowing.

Eagerly searching for some way to measure and assure myself that I was indeed on the way to recovery, I began reading books written by other bereaved parents. In Compassionate Friends meetings I listened to others share their stories of loss and felt much less alone. I made a list of all the people I knew who had lost children, including some for whom it had been many years. It helped to know other people who had survived and made me feel less like an oddball or a curiosity in society.

Six months after Doug's death, a skilled and gentle therapist, himself a bereaved father, greatly reassured me by saying that I was "just about where I should be at six months." I now understand that "just about where we should be" at any given time can be very different, but still true, for each of us. So many factors contribute to our emotional state during this time—physical health, fatigue, significant dates, our relationships with the other important people in our lives. An honest answer to "How are you?" might be quite different, but still true, each day.

Four years have passed now, and the question "How are you?" still is asked. I sometimes still wonder how to answer. I know I feel better today than two years ago, although not necessarily

better today than yesterday. I know the anniversary date which just passed was less painful than previous ones. I am not certain how the next one will be, however, for I've learned that recovery is not a steady process.

To answer "How are you?" or "How am I?" seems to require that I make some judgment about myself. Am I good? Am I not good? Am I improving? Am I better than yesterday? Or last week? Or better than some other bereaved parent? I no longer feel the need to make those judgments. I am learning to acknowledge and accept my feelings, whatever they happen to be. I've stopped trying to measure myself against some nonexistent or artificial standard, but I try instead to accept myself as I am. I know I will always be different than before, but that's OK. I will heal, although I will never be whole. The sun will shine, although the sky will never be cloudless. Life will be full again, even though a certain portion of it will always be empty.

Perhaps these paradoxes hold a clue as to why it is so difficult to answer the oft-asked question "How are you?" It is difficult to know if we are "better" when we know we'll never be the same as before. It is difficult to know if we are on the road to recovery when we've not traveled this way before and aren't even sure where this road leads. Accepting the fact, however, that recovery is a road to be traveled, rather than a destination to be reached, quiets the nagging question of "how we are doing".

Measuring progress is no longer important when I cease to strive toward some distant goal and simply accept the "ups and downs" of the grief process. This is not to say that I no longer feel anger or sadness or the longing for my son. I do. I simply try to accept those feelings as a natural part of my grief and not feel guilty about still having them.

Those folks who are waiting for me to return to "normal" or "my old self" may not think I am making much progress. And indeed I'm not, according to their expectations. I've begun asking "Who am I, now?" rather than "How am I?" and find that discovering who I am, now, can be an interesting and exciting process of exploration.

If you meet me today and ask, "How are you?" my answer will probably be "I'm OK." "I'm OK" says it well. It says that I accept myself as I am



right now. I accept my feelings, whether I happen to be laughing or in tears. I accept where I am in the grief experience, even though I'm not sure just where that is. I accept myself, although I am different from you. I accept my needs, my beliefs, and my values, even though they may not be what other people think I should need or believe or value. I also accept the fact that I am still recovering and will always be. I am not complete, finished, recovered, but still in process, and that's OK.

"I'm OK" may sound like a simple, easy, pat response to the often asked question. Actually it is profound and filled with truth if you understand the struggle and the process through which it evolves. I challenge you to try it for yourself. You may be surprised at the depth of its meaning. Then the casual question of even a passing acquaintance will serve to remind you that, in spite of whatever pain you may be feeling at the moment, you are still a person of worth and value. You are neither good nor bad, better or worse. You are simply, like the rest of us, "OK." --Marjorie Lyon TCF Mt. Vernon OH

Suicide: How Do We Say It?

From the moment we learned of our daughter's death, I knew that the word "suicide" had the power to erase her life while emblazoning her death in neon letters in the minds of her friends and colleagues. During the unremitting misery of those early days, I even toyed with the idea of telling no one she was gone, willing her to stay alive in the thoughts of those who knew her, forgetting that I'd already notified our family and closest friends. It was a fairy tale wish I contrived as a way of allowing myself a momentary escape from the unthinkable reality of her death. If her death were never acknowledged, would she still be here?

My fantasy vanished in the cold light of the days that followed. I knew that we could never dishonor Rhonda's memory by concealing her suicide. I wrote a letter to friends and relatives, informing them of the events leading up to her death. I hoped my letter would quell the inevitable whispers by openly acknowledging her depression and her decision to end her own life. I implored them to speak often and openly about her to us; to do otherwise would deny her existence.

I never intended to embark on a campaign to

confront, let alone eradicate, the stigma of suicide. What mattered most was that we who loved Rhonda must not let the circumstances of her death diminish her memory or her accomplishments. I explained that she had “taken her own life” or that “she died of suicide.” An expression I refused to use then and refuse to use to this day, is the despicable “committed suicide,” with its implications of criminality. Historically, that term was an instrument of retaliation against the survivors, and it has no place in today’s enlightened society.

Many people prefer to say, “completed suicide,” but as a parent who witnessed my child’s 20-year struggle against the demons of clinical depression, I don’t care much for that, either. “Died of suicide” or “died by suicide” are accurate, emotionally-neutral ways to explain my child’s death.

My first encounter with suicide occurred many years ago when my dentist, a gentle family man in his mid 30’s, took his own life. Since that time, I have known neighbors, relatives, friends and other hard-working, highly respected individuals who died this way. I’ve facilitated meetings in which grieving parents declined to speak about their children because they couldn’t handle the group’s reactions to the dreaded “s” word. I’ve known parents who never returned to a chapter meeting because of negative comments about the way that their child died.

Rhonda was a gifted scholar, writer and archaeologist who, like my mother, suffered from adult-onset manic depression (also called bipolar disorder). She made a lasting contribution in her field, and a wonderful tribute to her life and her work appeared in *American Antiquity*, Journal of the Society for American Archaeology (October, 1994).

Both my daughter and my mother suffered tremendously in their struggles to conquer and conceal their illness. Neither of them won that battle, but my mother responded to medications that minimized the highs and lows, and she died of cancer at 87. Sadly, doctors never discovered a magic formula that could offer Rhonda the same relief. She ended her own life at age 36, after a year of severe depression that was triggered by life stresses beyond her control. I saw her battle firsthand, and I witnessed her valiant struggle to survive.

She wanted desperately to live; she died

because she thought she had no alternative. In his revealing book, *Telling Secrets*, the great theologian Frederick Buechner describes his father’s suicide, which occurred when Buechner was just a boy. The conspiracy of silence that was imposed on Buechner and his brother had a profound effect on their development and their relationships with other family members. “We are as sick as our secrets,” he concludes.

We whose children have taken their own lives must do all that we can to help eradicate the secrecy and stigma that surround their deaths. If we allow these to persist, we allow their lives to be diminished. We owe our children more than that.
--© 1999 by Joyce Andrews, TCF/Sugar Land, TX

In A Baby’s Castle

In a baby’s castle,
Just beyond my eye,
My baby plays with angel toys,
That money cannot buy.
Who am I to wish him back,
Into this world of strife?
No, play on, my baby,
You have eternal life.
At night when all is silent,
And sleep forsakes my eyes,
I’ll hear his tiny footsteps,
Come running to my side.
His little hands caress me,
So tenderly and sweet,
I’ll breathe a prayer, close my eyes,
And embrace him in my sleep.
Now I have a treasure,
That I rate above all others,
I have known true glory,
I am still his mother!
~ Author Unknown~



Newly Bereaved...

Grief Is Hard Work...

Much as you may want to do so, there is no way to avoid this grief of yours. You cannot wait it out, you won’t get over it quickly, and nobody can do it for you. **It’s called grief work because finding your way through grief is hard work**, and if you put it off, like a messy chore it will sit there waiting to be done. And the longer it waits,

the harder it becomes. A great deal of emphasis is put on the "Stages of Grief". I do not support this emphasis. I believe we should concentrate on how it may affect your ability to function, every hour of every day. It is not a sequential process of stages, once you finish with stage 1 you move on to 2. It feels a lot more like one step forward and two steps back... It is an emotional roller coaster...

Physically our bodies grieve. Your heart may actually ache, your head may hurt. Your stomach may feel upset or ache. You may have difficulty sleeping. You will have difficulty concentrating. You will feel exhausted. All are common to grievers. If you are worried at all about your health please see your doctor.

Emotionally we have all sorts of feelings that hit us like waves, sorrow, anger, emptiness, anxiety, pain, guilt, profound loss... Accept them, they are neither good or bad...they just are. They are likely to hit you unannounced when you least expect them...

Know they will not last forever...you can and will handle them. Emotional distress is often displayed by crying/tears/eyes welling up with water, "a lump in your throat" – an inability to talk...these very obvious physical signs... what about those who don't display their grief/distress outwardly...those who are not seen to cry...those who hold their grief inside. Unfortunately, we are quick to assume their grief is finished...when it may be just beginning....

Mentally sometimes, it is all we can think about. Grief can play with your mind. You may go over and over things in your head. Decisions seem so difficult to make, you forget things, you read the same sentence, over and over, you act differently and can't work out why.

Spiritually some people feel they could never get through grief without faith. Others say death destroyed their faith. Your spirit will search and yearn...your heart will ache. For some this can be a time of spiritual growth...

--TCF Queensland Australia

★
*Tomorrow, is the
first blank page of
a 365 page book.
Write a good one.*

-Brad Paisley

Seasoned Griever...

It's A New Year...But I Still Grieve

"The holiday celebrations are coming to an end... everyone is making new year's resolutions. I can picture it in my mind every year, a clean

slate, offering a year full of promise and optimism. For a brief moment I am almost excited at the prospect. Then, before I know what has happened, my old companion has joined me to remind me that for me at least, all is not perhaps shiny new and bright. My old companion is grief.

This story was related to me by one of the bereaved whom I saw in my work as a grief counselor with Hospice. Some might consider "the old companion known as grief" unresolved grief. But in the context of this life story, this was not the meaning at all. Quite the contrary, this spry lady in her late 70's had suffered many losses. She had lost two husbands, one early in life and one recent; had lost two children, one at birth and one in mid life, was dealing with the illness of her contemporaries and her own declining health. Her losses stretched over a lifetime. She had successfully faced each loss, working with her faith, community and professionals to adapt.

While she had adapted and accepted the loss of her loved ones and she was in the midst of acceptance of her declining health, there were moments where grief visited. Be it picking up an anniversary card which evoked memory via a lump in the throat. Or a song playing that conjured a bittersweet memory of a dance together. Or the feel of a baby blanket that was never used. But the key is that grief came only for a brief visit. This is not unresolved grief, but rather a gentle reminder that we loved and still love despite the absence of our loved ones. Love endures beyond death. These brief visits from grief remind us that we are human.

As for the New Year, the slate may not be quite as shiny and bright as this courageous lady might have expected, nor for any of us who have lost loved ones for that matter. After loss, perhaps the slate is a bit aged from knowledge and wisdom. But it is this knowledge and wisdom that leads us eventually to healing and compassion. That knowledge and wisdom comes, however only to those who manage to work through their grief, confronting the issues as they arise. We often hope that once this "grief work is done" we will return to normal; that our lives will be righted and that life as we knew it will be restored. Veteran grievers know this is not the case. Once we have lost a loved one, our lives are indeed transformed to a new normal. This transformation takes place very slowly, almost without our understanding. But it does occur.

Wishing you a transforming new year full of happiness, healing and a compassionate heart.
 --Fay Ellis Jones Eller, Ph.D - Fay is a bereavement counselor with Hospice and Palliative Care of the Eastern Shore. www.hpces.org



Friends and Family...

Child Loss—Where Are My Friends?

“What happened? Where are my friends?” Those are probably two of the most pain-filled questions that parents and families of child loss ask following the death of a child. This seems to be the one thing that is misunderstood the most by grieving parents. Prior to the death of the child, life was full and happy and friends were calling, stopping by the house, planning fun outings, picnics, and planning vacations together. But, it doesn't take long following the death of a child to realize that those very same friends seem to have disappeared.

Why does this happen? Why do so many of our friends disappear following the death of our child? I've wondered about this for many, many years beginning with the death of my thirteen-year-old sister and then later on with the death of my son. It was something I didn't understand then, but I've grown to realize that the trickling away of friends is fairly universal among those of us who have lost a child.

Talking about child loss makes others uncomfortable. It's not fun. Grief seems to put a wedge between friends making it difficult to talk and enjoy each other's presence any more. During the first months following the loss of a child, parents live in a deep, thick fog where it's almost impossible to see even a sliver of hope. They look to their friends for solace — for listening ears — for comfort, and soon come to realize those faces that once were so familiar are no longer the faces that come knocking at our door. In fact, nobody comes knocking at our door!

Life picks up its regular pace for others — back to the routine of work, soccer games, movies, running errands, and doing all of the other things that fill up time almost immediately after our loss. I'm not saying that our friends don't care. I'm just saying that life goes on for them.

For the parents of child loss, time stands ever so still. We are frozen in that moment of hearing those horrible words, “I'm so sorry.” Our

hearts never beat the same after that. To say it's disappointing and hurtful to have our friends move on without us, is putting it mildly. The absence of our friends burns our hearts right to the core. The pain stings and hurts and pounds and throbs.

This is when we need our friends the most!

Following the death of my son, life was bleak for a long, long time. There were days when I thought I was going to die — very literally die. My blood pressure shot up sky-high from stress and grief. I was weak and dehydrated from not eating and sleeping. Depression swallowed me and kept me in a sea of drowning tears. I plummeted into a deep, lonely hole of loss. My phone remained silent. I prayed that somebody — anybody would show up with some food and words of comfort. I had other children that needed to eat. They needed to see a bit of normalcy in their lives. I'd forgotten what it was like to smile. Just to see a friend's smile and hear a reassuring voice would have meant so much. But, it wasn't to be so. Sadly, being a preacher's wife at the time, there were expectations of me displaying a “greater faith” (what does faith have to do with grief?), and instead of comforting friends, I was expected to give comfort to others. I didn't have the strength to carry on through each hour, let alone be any kind of strength to others!

During that time, I nearly had a mental and physical collapse from the weight of grief, depression, and loneliness. What I did find was something quite amazing. There was a young man who bagged groceries who noticed my puffy eyes and slumped shoulders. He never failed to ask me how I was feeling and I knew he genuinely meant it. He made going to the grocery store a little bit of an easier task for me.

My doctor was genuinely concerned. He took the time to sit and talk and explain the many emotions of child loss while I cried. He never judged me or thought I was crazy.

A total stranger saw me crying while walking through the children's section in Walmart and she offered me a tissue. She didn't say a word, but she was there.

I learned through the years how to find new friends — the kind of friends who are there through the thick and thin of life. Isn't it amazing how we can openly and honestly share our hearts with strangers who are feeling our same pain of child loss and instantly they become our friends? Many years have gone by since the death of my

sister and the death of my son. Most of my old friends are gone. I now think of them as past acquaintances who simply didn't "get it." They didn't understand the depth of pain that is caused by child loss.

Today I'm an advocate for parents and families of child loss. I want us to speak openly and freely about our children. I don't want us to feel alone in the "club" that we now belong to. I want us to be able to grieve in our own way, in our own time, and know we'll be given tons of support. ***I want us to be friends!*** Love, Clara

--Clara Hinton, website founder and author of Silent Grief.



Helpful Hint...

"There's no way around grief and loss: you can dodge it all you want, but sooner or later you just have to go into it, through it, and, hopefully come out the other side. The world you find there will never be the same as the world you left."

--Johnny Cash



Welcome...

Welcome New Members

As a general rule, we tend to shy away from becoming a member of a group or organization of which we know very little. That is especially true at a time when we are probably at the most vulnerable time of our lives...when our minds are still trying to make sense of what has happened to us and decisions, large and small, are being demanded of us. At some point in time when reality begins to set in, we start to think of survival and picking up the pieces of what used to be our lives. And then we hear about The Compassionate Friends.

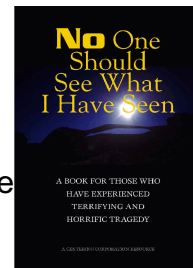
Attending your first meeting takes courage. We know this and it is always hard for us to say "welcome" because we are so very sorry for the reason which made you have to attend one of The Compassionate Friends (TCF) meetings. However, we are glad you found us. We cannot take away your pain, but we can offer our friendship, compassion, support, and hope. We ask only that you please try to attend at least three meetings before you make up your mind, "This isn't for me." With TCF, you'll have a chance to

meet others who are making the same journey and you'll discover that special bond that occurs when you are with others who truly understand.

--TCF Kirkland WA

Book Review...

Edition (2015) If you have been awake all night, if dreams become terrors, if you can't eat or want to eat all the time, if you feel as if you are encased in plastic, and when your family and persons who love you try to touch you, you feel nothing; if you wonder what life is all about and whether it's worth living anymore; your loved ones know you can say, *No One Should See What I Have Seen*. If you have experienced terrifying, horrific tragedy, been in war, are a returning soldier, witnessed a murder or other violent death, found someone who has completed suicide, have images of a loved one who died violently or experience fear and/or anger about a horrific event. This book is for you. . . This book is for all of us. \$7.95 Centering Corp.



Carrying Memories Into The New Year

With the church bells' ringing the new year enters echoing the days of yesteryear memories of happiness, the smiles of our children the sunlight within each face

Who will remember these dear ones far from our yearning arms

Who remembers all they were the way she danced, the hat he wore

With the old year gone, will they no longer be known?

We will remember them; each one

We will hold them in our hearts as we carry memories into this new year.

We will allow the memories to make us laugh, to make us sing.

Their lives will fill the air as the church bells ring.

--Alice J. Wisler

"Time heals," many people say. It may. It may help to dull your pain. The medicine of time, taken by itself, is not sure. Time is neutral. What helps is what you do with time."

--Rabbi Earl A. Grollman



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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

Connor Aslay
Born: 5/99 Died: 7/18
Mother: Erin Aslay

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Larry Brooks Jr.
Born: 7/88 Died: 9/17
Mother: Thessia Carpenter

Scott Vincent Buehler
Born: 3/80 Died: 2/08
Mother: Elizabeth Buehler
Miller

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

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

Carina Chandiramani
Born: 5/86 Died: 9/18
Mother: Norma Chandiramani

Blair Chapin
Born: 4/82 Died: 5/18
Sister: Elizabeth Chapin

Michael Edward Clapp
Born: 2/93 Died: 4/18
Mother: Patti Clapp

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christie Hagenburger
Born: 4/63 Died: 12/17
Father: D.W. Hagenburger

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

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

Sarah Jade Hurley
Born: 6/97 Died: 5/17
Father: Tim Hurley
Grandmother: Laurie Hurley

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alberto Lopez
Born: 8/66 Died: 2/12
Mother: Albertina Lopez

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

Matty Mallano
Born: 5/02 Died: 7/18
Mother: Paula Mallano

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

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

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

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

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

Matthew "Matty" Louis Matich
Born: 5/02 Died: 7/18
Parents: Mike & Shirley Matich
Grandmother: Susan Matich

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christopher Metsker
Born: 11/94 Died: 3/18
Parents: Justin & Tara
Metsker

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

Jacki Montoya
Born: 10/89 Died: 6/15
Mother: Theresa Montoya

Joshua Montoya
Born: 4/15 Died: 6/15
Grandmother: Theresa
Montoya

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Donnie Vincent Puliselich
Born: 1/75 Died: 1/18
Mother: Maria Puliselich
Sister: Michelle Puliselich

Shannon Quigley
Born: 12/68 Died: 1/09
Mother: Kathleen Shortridge

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

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

Jeffrey Alan Rakus
Born: 10/86 Died: 7/06
Parents: Tony & Donna Rakus

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Our Children**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brittany Anne Suggs
Born: 10/88 Died: 4/16
Mother: Camille Suggs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

David Michael Villarreal
Born: 11/90 Died: 2/18
Parents: David & Barbara
Villarreal

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, click on the following link to donate online. www.tcfsbla.org)
* Please remember we are always working a month in advance and need your tributes by the first of the month preceding the actual birthday.

Sorry, no tributes were submitted.

**For Siblings...**

Q. I'm getting ready to face the first holidays since my older brother died. As his only sister, I adored him and he felt the same about me. I don't want to see the New Year come. How can I handle going into a new year where I know my brother can never give me a hug and I can never tell him how much he means to me? I'm seeing a counselor who tells me I will survive this holiday, and each one after that will be easier. How can this ever get easier? I just seem to be getting more and more depressed the closer January 1st comes.

A. One of the hardest things that we go through after a loved one dies is "picking up and going on." How are we supposed to create a life that does not

include them? The answer ends up being – that we don't. We realize that we will always carry them with us – their love, their hugs, their laughter, their pride, their strengths, and our relationship.

You're right – it is hard to start a new year that he won't know about, that won't include his hugs, his time, and the ability to tell each other how much you care. I won't kid you, the first holidays are the hardest!! After my brother's death, we didn't celebrate Christmas for a long time. What I finally came to realize is that part of him would always live on inside of me. Then I looked for ways I could include him (remember him) and celebrate his life at each of the holidays and other major events of my life. As you celebrate your brother's life and remember him, you carry him forward with you into the new life you create. Consequently, it does get easier.

--Mary Paulson

A Year of Grief

It has been a year since you went away.

Time goes by so slowly,

I never knew so much pain,

Along with fear and emptiness,

Could be felt by anyone.

Your death has sent me into

A darkness and void words can't describe.

I never knew I could cry

'Til there were no more tears,

But these came unannounced.

The price of loving a brother as special as you

Will take me a lifetime to pay.

My pain hasn't been for me only,

For friends don't want to see

The cost of loving and losing.

They say get on with your life --

But they don't understand

How big a part of my life you were.

So I will take my pain,

Along with my special memories,

And live day by day.

These memories from happier days

Are all I have of you now,

So I will place them first in my heart.

If I was given a choice,

Knowing the pain and devastation

That I feel today

I would still want you

To be my brother to love



for memories can't be taken away.

--Greta Sharp, TCF, Andalusia, AL

For Grandparents...



Grandparent to Grandparent: What advice would you share with a newly bereaved grandparent?

As I pondered this question my initial response was, "I have no advice" because when you are experiencing the horror and pain of losing a grandchild there is no path that seems to lead in the direction that you wish that you could go. So many times the prayers and wishes are that the power greater than we, should reverse their decision and take us instead. Take us and allow the precious little one the opportunity to remain on this earth and fulfill our child's hopes and dreams. But we know deep in our hearts that this is not possible. So I would say to each and every grandparent who is in pain, "build the foundation for memories"! It is something that we do so very well. Grandparents bring to the extended family, love, hope and joy, but most important strength!

Our children are looking to us for guidance and support. Talk about the missing angel and the beautiful times no matter how short they were. Bring identity to the "grandbaby" that will last through eternity with friends and family members and others that we touch. Also remember that regardless of how uncomfortable the outside world is about the mention of the name or the feelings attached, it's okay!

Seek out peace, poetry, anything of beauty that will allow you to attach to the beauty of the child that died. Music is one of the things that allowed me to cry when my stubborn strong image was refusing! Crying cleanses some of the pain and brings with it some peace. Don't punish yourself; don't second-guess about what you could have done differently to change the current situation. Just remember that neither you nor your child had control. Each of us will deal with the grief as our minds will allow and no one has the right to tell you to "get over it, get on with your life"! You will never get over it; you will only learn to put it into perspective as that hole in your heart the size of the Grand Canyon begins to mend.

--Pamela Handprints/ Summer 2001 Newsletter

<http://www.handonline.org>

From Our Members...



As I sit in heaven and watch you everyday,
I try to let you know with signs I never went away.
I hear you when you're laughing, and watch you as
you sleep.

I even put my arms around you to calm you as you
weep.

I see you wish the days away, begging to have me
home,

So I try to send you signs so you know you aren't
alone.

Don't feel guilty that you have life that was denied
me,

Heaven is truly beautiful, just you wait and see.

So live your life, laugh again, enjoy yourself, be
free,

then I know with every breath you take you'll be
taking one for me.

—author unknown



Grieving Couples

In a loving relationship, we try to support and care for each other, through good times and bad. Usually, when one of us hits rock bottom, the other can try to be the mainstay for a little while, to help the other along. But when our child dies, we are both cast into the same dark place, struggling with the worst thing we have ever faced. We are there together, but we may discover that we are also there alone. We may experience and express our grief so differently that we fear our relationship is falling apart, just at the time we need it most. We may discover differences between us that we were unaware of before this tragedy struck. Realizing that many couples struggle in this way can make the differences less damaging, though not less painful.

Where the relationship has been strained, the death of our child may exacerbate the difficulties, but for some couples the opposite may happen and we become closer than we have been for many months or years, as we struggle together to survive our family tragedy.

HOW WE GRIEVE

The nineteenth century stereotypes, of men feeling constrained from weeping and talking about their suffering, while women were allowed to do so, are not so simple in reality. Two of our most basic needs are to cry and to talk. It is hard when our reactions are not in step, and we find ourselves

feeling unsupported at our time of greatest need. When one of us needs to talk, the other may be fighting to hold themselves together and simply be unable to respond. We need other people to be there for us, to be our support, and having other family members and friends does help. But even when we have such support we can sometimes slip into an attitude of blame and resentment towards our partner. Grief makes all of us more extreme in our reactions, so it is not surprising that it exaggerates our differences too. Each of us carries our past history of earlier losses and bereavements, and the ways we have learned to cope may only now become apparent to our partner; the differences between us may increase our sense of isolation.

Our sexual relationship can also become more difficult, with one of us in desperate need of closeness, comfort and the release which sex can bring, while the other feels that this is totally inappropriate. For some of us, our sexual relationship is the one thing that remains constant in these troubled times. For some, sex may symbolize our shared love for our family, while for others it is almost an insult to our dead child, the pleasure becoming a source of guilt and distress. We need not to expect too much of each other, or of ourselves, but understanding and a common ground can be very hard to achieve, and may take a considerable time.

Our spiritual insights may be different, too, even if before we thought we shared common beliefs. One of us may find support and strength in our long-held faith, with prayer becoming a mainstay of our grieving, while for the other religion becomes a focus for rage at a God who could allow our child to die, and our beliefs fall apart, at least in the short term. Alternatively, one or both of us may have been sure that this life is all that there is, only to find that we are now drawn to religion in our search for meaning or for comfort.

If one of us changes radically, it can drive a wedge between us. Or we may have philosophical, agnostic or atheistic views, and find support in these. Blame and guilt are often an integral part of our feelings as parents; we blame ourselves for our child's death, for not having been able to keep them alive. Some of us need scapegoats for the insupportable tragedy, finding in them a focus for our sense of anger at the destruction of our family unit. Each of us may have quite different concerns, and find it very difficult to accommodate the feelings of our partner.

The time span of our journey through grief may also be quite different. One of us may have hardly begun after six months, while the other feels an urgent need to 'get on with life'. We cannot easily adapt our own journey to our partner's time frame. The things we do to survive are often very different: some may like to write, talk, gardening or cooking. Our surviving children, if we are fortunate enough to have them, can be a source of shared strength and focus, or a strain and a tension.

The desire to continue to function as a family can bring us all together, but it can also seem almost impossible to sustain. The children need us to help them in their loss, just as we need them, but that does not mean that they are always easy to help. One or other of us may be unable to cope with the children, with the other having to do it all. Additional difficulties may arise where step-parents and stepchildren are concerned.



It helps if we can talk with our children about their feelings and include them in deciding what to do about their brother or sister's clothes, books, sports equipment and bedroom. We should try to avoid making hurried decisions about her or his belongings, and take as much time as we need, not being influenced by what other people think we 'should' be doing. It may be useful to discuss this aspect with members of TCF to know the different ways in which they managed this.

SURVIVING

Each of us had our own special relationship with our child, we are still their mum and dad, and they have their own place in our hearts. If we can avoid competition in our grief, and record the story of our son or daughter's life and death in a way that honors the role each of us played, then we have a real basis for conversation, for shared memory.

It helps too if we can avoid making assumptions or judgments about our partner. Silent withdrawal is a valid means of coping with our grief, even though it may be hard for our partner to bear. We need to be aware of each other's mood-swings; we may feel we are on an emotional see-saw - when one is up, the other is down. We need time and privacy to grieve as individuals, and also time together without the other children.

GRIEVING COUPLES

All of us have to re-enter the world at some point; we have to go back to work, restart our social life, go on holiday, acknowledge that we are allowed to know enjoyment again however

unimaginable this may seem at first. External circumstances dictate some of these, as do the needs of our surviving children, but our inclinations may not be in harmony. If we try not to blame each other for 'hanging on' or for being unfeeling or hasty in our suggestions, then perhaps we can resolve some of these differences without increasing our distress. We need to have realistic expectations of what we can achieve, together and separately.

We may need to look closely at our partnership, to give each other space, and to pursue different paths without being afraid that this will drive us apart, to recognize that one may be better able to cope with some things, the other with different ones. Adjusting to our 'new normality' can be difficult.

The Compassionate Friends offers help in a variety of ways. One or both of us may find comfort and strength in talking to other parents who have battled through similar difficulties and survived them. It can help to meet with others who understand our need to talk, to retell the story of our loss and go over the narrative of our child's life. Contact may be through group meetings, the telephone or email, the website, the annual Gathering. There is a bimonthly magazine and a wide range of leaflets, and an extensive library which includes books on the particular aspects of grief which can cause difficulty to couples.

THE WAY FORWARD

It is sometimes said that a relationship is like a dance: we have to find a tempo that works for us both, but then each of us has our own steps. Our grieving will probably have intensified our awareness of each other and our sense of 'together yet alone'. The need to remember our child and to share memories will always be there. But our lives do continue, and the insights into our relationship that have been so painfully discovered as we grieve may enrich our partnership in the years ahead. As a family we are changed forever by the death of our child, but the shared memory of our son or daughter is a most precious treasure for always.

--This article amended and used with permission from The Compassionate Friends UK 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.

New TCF Beach Cities/L.A. Chapter Started in Manhattan Beach...

Kristen Day who has attended some of our meetings and last year's candle lighting has started a new TCF chapter in Manhattan Beach. Their meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month. It is located at the Manhattan Beach Community Church on Artesia and Peck. The meeting start at 7:00 P.M. For more information contact Kristen Day at (970) 213-6293

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.

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.

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.) You can mail them to the P.O. Box or send them by e-mail to Lynntcf@aol.com

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

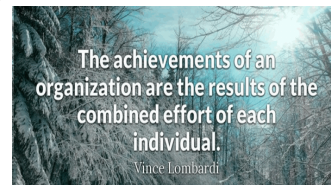
Memory Book... Our chapter has an ongoing Memory Book that is on display at each meeting. Each child is given a page in the book. Blank pages are located in the back of the book. Feel free to take a page home to work on. Pictures, poems, or a tribute you choose that will help us to remember your child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

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

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 donations are defiantly 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 your 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



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) 938-2409
Regional Coordinator
Olivia Garcia.....(818) 736-7380

LOCAL TCF CHAPTERS

Beach Cities/L.A. (Manhattan Beach): (970) 213-6293. Third Tues
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	

National Office Information

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 <http://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.



The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia, on July 19-21, 2019. "Hope Rings in Philadelphia" is the theme of this year's event.

The National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone's wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program culminating with the annual Walk to Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves. Join us as together we remember and share the everlasting love we have for our precious children, siblings and grandchildren.

- Choose to attend over a hundred different workshops and sharing sessions, given by professionals and also individuals just like you.
- Take advantage of "Healing Haven" to receive free personal services such as a massage.
- Craft items to commemorate the love for your family member in the "Crafty Corner".
- Step away for a quiet moment of pause in the "Reflection Room".
- Explore the TCF Marketplace offering items for purchase that are meaningful to all on the grief journey together.

We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our TCF/USA Facebook Page and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

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 tax deductible donation is what keeps our chapter going. If you want the ease of using a credit card, we now have a credit card or pay-pal account for donations. Use the "Donate Link" on our Website at www.tcsbla.org Or if you prefer, you can always mail in a check to the P.O. Box

Please consider giving a donation in your loved one's name.

In loving memory of Andrew Sakura, March 1990 - March 2008.
Love, Mom & Dad

In loving memory of Scott M. Dykstra, July 1972 - October 2001.
Love, Rita Dykstra

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 So Bay/ L.A. Chapter
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance, CA 90510-1171

In loving memory of _____

Birth date _____ Death date _____ Sent From _____

Tribute _____

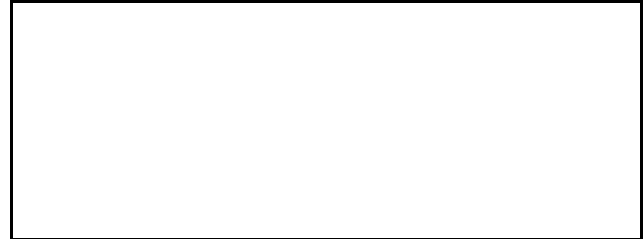
To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month or it will appear in the following issue.

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