



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

FEBRUARY 2019 ISSUE

EDITOR: LYNN VINES (310) 530-3214

e-mail: Lynntcf@aol.com

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be Feb. 7th, first Thursday
of the month at 7:00 P.M.

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

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 Feb. 7th meeting will start with "Healing A Broken Heart".

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

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

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

Chapter Co-Leaders:
Linda Zelik (310) 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 Feb. 7th meeting will start with... "Healing a Broken Heart". When our children die a part of us instinctively knows we will never be the same again. How could we be, with a heart torn in two. If it felt like part of your heart, had been ripped out and buried with your child, you are not alone. The thought that the intense pain and uncertainty will rule our lives forever is very common. This meeting we will discuss some of the ways we can mend our heart, understand our feelings, and learn to live with our "new normal".

Your Heart Will Mend, But It Will ...

... be a different heart,
... wear a deep and lasting scar,
... be a more compassionate heart,
... know life in a new and different way,
... understand the Eternity of Love

--Nancy Green, TCF, Livonia, MI



Life Will Never Be The Same Again...

Remember that life will never again be exactly the way it was before your loved one died. If you are expecting things to "get back to normal" after a while, you may be disappointed to find that the new "normal" is not like the old "normal." Your life will go on, but precisely because the person was important to you - it will not be the same without him or her. In the beginning it will seem as if your grief is running you, but in the end, you can learn to run your grief. When you understand what is happening to you and have some idea of what to expect, you will feel more in control of your grief and will be in a better position to take care of yourself, to find your own way through this loss and to begin rebuilding your life.

It is perfectly natural to need time and space to honor your feelings, and the memory of your loved one. It is also normal for significant dates, holidays, or other reminders to trigger feelings related to the loss. It is not unusual for the painful emotions of your bereavement, to make others feel extremely uncomfortable ... to the point of feeling profoundly helpless. Unfortunately, this may leave you feeling isolated and lonely. Your family and friends care about you, and are likely to offer advice about what they think is best for the grieving process. Listen to all the well meaning advice given to you but this is your grief, it is your

pain. No one other than you can work through your grief. It is incredibly important that you ... Do what you want to do! Do what feels right and most comfortable for you.

--Mark R Simpson extracted from
www.livingwithgrief

Your Grieving Heart

Your grieving heart ... The grieving process creates change in your life and in yourself that allows you to gradually relinquish your need for the lost one. Grief helps you come to terms with this, and to refocus your energies toward the future. Grief is not about "returning to normal". You will never be the same as you were. Grief is about finding a new life order for yourself.

As hard as you may find this to believe right now, the pain will eventually ease up and allow you to reinvent your life and your identity. You will reinvest in life and find yourself planning for the future with some degree of joy in being alive.

You will begin to sense some new beginnings; experience a new dawning of life that slowly replaces the previous despair and desolation and darkness. *"The pain passes, but the beauty remains"*.

--Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919)

Grief Coping Strategies A Practical Guide to Survival

Your grieving heart... Below we provide a quick listing of some proven strategies that may help you through a healthy and effective grief experience:

- ♥ Be gentle with yourself-- and patient. It takes a long time to heal. Some days will be better than others.
- ♥ Take care of your body-- You'll need it later. Eat healthy, even though you might find it hard to even eat right now. Get some stress vitamins and take one every day. Get some exercise. You don't have to get crazy with this. Just make yourself get out in the fresh air for a brisk walk or jog every day or two.
- ♥ Be selfish-- demand the right to grieve in your own way. It is not their bereavement, it's *yours*. You have nothing to offer other people right now anyway. Focus on yourself and *your* needs. Surround yourself with supportive loved ones.

♥ Cling to hope-- Things will get better, honest. Don't tell yourself "It's going to be alright". Instead, tell yourself "I will survive".

♥ Trust the grief-- It's your best friend right now. Go where it leads you.

♥ Don't duck the system-- It may be tempting to numb the pain of grief with alcohol or drugs, even prescription drugs. But everything will have to be faced and experienced sooner or later. Sooner is much better.

♥ Look for the gifts-- They may be tiny, but they are life-sustaining, and they are there.

--author unknown

Grief: A Lifelong Process

When my son was killed I was certain that I would die. My life went on autopilot, my heart was broken, my will to live was gone and I could see no meaning in the world. Six months later I was still in a bad place. I could not vary from a routine, I became angry very easily, I rarely laughed and I didn't communicate with many people.

On the first anniversary of my son's death I was a zombie. I dreaded the day. I remembered the last conversation; I went over his death in my mind a thousand times. I started asking myself what if I had done this or that ... would my child still be alive? I felt a misplaced guilt that was sadistically hammered home by the wrongful death lawsuit of my former daughter-in-law and her accompanying attitude that can only be described as purely malevolent. My husband, who was driving the vehicle when my son was killed, spent hours in self-recrimination, hours with attorneys doing depositions, hours quietly sobbing and my response was that we had to buck up. We had no choice. I hardened on the exterior, but inside I was broken into pieces.

I continued to go to Compassionate Friends meetings, became active in our chapter and read books on grief, death, dying and coping strategies. I leaned heavily on my Compassionate Friends as I endured the pain of losing my son and any possibility of a normal relationship with his children. I know the excruciating pain of intentional cruelty and the radiant warmth of compassion.

18 months after my son was killed, I decided that I had to quantify my progress. I began to

soften, to give positive reinforcement to those around me. I reached out to others. I stopped thinking of the negatives within myself and began searching for the positives. I began taking down my emotional wall and allowed some people inside.

It has been 3 years and 3 months since Todd was killed and, in hindsight, I can see the progress I have made. Initially each step was difficult. Now I move forward much like an amputee, progress is steady, but it is slow. I will never be the same again. A part of me has been confiscated by death. This is my reality.

I can laugh now, I can enjoy other people, I can see the beauty in each child I meet, each sunrise and each day. But I can also see and acknowledge the ugly side of this world. There is much cruelty in our world. There is much sadness. Some days I focus on the beauty and joy and some days I look at the cruelty and ugliness.

But the choice is mine to make. If I have a day that is good, it is because I have willed it to be so. If I have a bad day, I have also chosen this. For I have discovered that grief is a lifelong journey. Our children are with us forever. I close my eyes and see my son. I dream of him at night; our conversations are very interesting, very reassuring. He is with me. And because I always told him that the world is what you make of it, then I must also tell myself the same thing. My world is what I make of it.

Yes, I still grieve. I still miss my child. To hear his voice would be a gift worth more than my life. But I have my memories...memories of raising a beautiful son who became an exceptional man. Our time together was the most meaningful experience of my life. I knew it then, I know it now. There is a void in my life that will never be filled.

My world was never perfect. It certainly will never be perfect. Each day I ask myself what kind of day I want this to be. Sometimes I want it to be a bad day. My sadness overwhelms me and I choose to exorcize it with a bad day. I have the right to have a bad day: my only child is dead. But these days I usually want it to be a good day ... the kind of day my son would have enjoyed.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF, Katy, TX
In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen



Loss

When a loss hits us, we have not only the particular loss to mourn but also the shattered beliefs and assumptions of what life should be. These life beliefs must be mourned separately.

Sometimes we must grieve for them first. We can't grieve the loss if we are in the midst of "It's not supposed to happen this way"... We intellectually know that bad things happen- but to other people, not us, and certainly not in the world we assumed we were living in ...

Your belief system needs to heal and regroup as much as your soul does. You must start to rebuild a new belief system from the foundation up, one that has room for the realities of life and still offers safety and hope for a different life: a belief system that will ultimately have a beauty of its own to be discovered with life and loss.

Think of a lifeless forest in which a small plant pushes its head upward, out of the ruin. In our grief process, we are moving into life from death, without denying the devastation that came before.

-- Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, in *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*

Coping With Being Newly Bereaved And Childless

Experiencing the death of a child is the ultimate grief that any parent will ever encounter. Having one's only child or all children die compounds that ultimate grief to the point of being unthinkable for most people in our society today.

People often ask how one can possibly survive when all of our children are deceased. Most bereaved parents wonder that same thing for several years. Surely we will die. There is no way we can survive, let alone actually live when all our children are gone before us. Some have shared that they actually spent all of their resources, only to find themselves financially depressed years later when they realized that no matter how much they willed themselves to die, they were still on this earth.

Childless parents endure a similar grieving process as those bereaved parents with surviving children, but the difference begins quickly when there are no children and will never be grandchildren, no one to help celebrate special

occasions, or be there for us as we age. Often days, weeks, and months pass with no phone calls, visits, cards, letters, or interaction from family unless we, the bereaved parent, take the initiative.

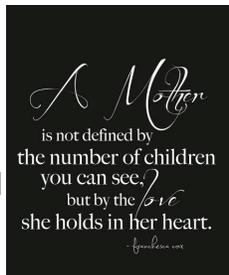
Childless parents have extreme difficulty with holidays and special events. Some of us are fortunate to have friends or extended family members who think to include us in special times or holidays, but others are left to spend all those days and nights totally alone. Most of us have learned to "entertain" others so that we are not left alone for those special times.

We learn to adjust to being childless and make friends with others who have had a similar experience. Some of us with no children get together during special holidays or visit each other during the year. There is a special bond of understanding that need not be spoken. Other now childless parents understand this unspoken bond as only those who "walk in our shoes" can truly understand.

Childless parents realize that we must plan for our future and see that all financial, medical, and business matters are secure and settled long before the time arrives when we will need assistance. What do we do with our precious mementos that belonged to our deceased child or "things" that are important to us and our heritage? Often, some of our relatives, friends, or children of friends care enough to want some of those things that are so precious to us. We also might come to find that our feelings about them may change as we age. Life's values may help us realize those things are not what matters anyway. We often find that what we do with our lives and how we manage to keep our children's memories alive by helping others are really what is more important.

Some bereaved childless parents also are widowed or divorced. Some also are an only child themselves and their parents are deceased. Some have since found that their family has "disowned" them as their childless state has made them unapproachable. These childless bereaved parents often need additional support from trained professionals.

I have found that by staying involved in church, community activities, nurturing relationships with other people, and working part-time, I have been able to keep a positive attitude most of the time and find a "new type of happiness" in life. Times and events occur occasionally that cause me to lose my perspective and get depressed. But I can



always observe others who seem to have a more difficult time with life events who have not been touched with the grief of having a child die.

I have also observed that parents who have not endured the death of a child do not always get support from their living children. I realize then that some things about being childless are perhaps not that different from those who have children. One dear friend has three children and several grown grandchildren for whom she often babysits, helps financially, and does things for. Yet, she often has to ask friends to mow her lawn or repair things that her children and grandchildren don't seem to notice need to be done.

I cried oceans of tears, told Rhonda's story and our grief story millions of times to thousands of different people, kept a journal-which is an invaluable tool of measuring one's progress-and allowed friends to help me when I needed help. I read every book I could find on grief, devoured all the newsletters, and listened to tapes until I realized I really was not going crazy. I found that things I thought, did, forgot, or was angry about were very normal for a bereaved parent.

I have learned that it is vitally important to find a local bereavement support group and to attend regularly in those first years of grief. Getting involved and "giving back" to those who are more recently bereaved than we are help us find healing.

We started Alive Alone, Inc., in 1988 to be an additional support system for childless parents, and publish a periodical that is specifically written by and for childless parents. We help these parents to network with others whose child was approximately the same age or experienced a similar means of death. We work with other support groups to provide seminars and sharing sessions for their regional and national conferences so that the needs of childless parents are met. For more information, please see our website online at www.alivealone.org.

Coping with the death of one's only child or all children is the most difficult experience anyone will ever encounter. But, it is possible to find a "new normal" and be able to reinvest in life again and find a new form of happiness.

--Kay Bevington Kay and Rodney Bevington 's only child, Rhonda, almost 16, died in 1980. Kay is a retired educator and bereavement specialist. They have been active members of the Van Wert, Ohio, TCF Chapter

Thoughts on Valentine's Day

"How sad this day must be for you."

I read it in their eyes.

As if there's no more love between us anymore, you and I.

How wrong they are.

They do not understand

the bond between a parent and child.

I do not have to see your face
to remember your sweet smile.

I do not have to hug you,
although if I could, I would.

I do not have to hear your voice,
our love is understood.

Everyday I think of you,
my thoughts are full of memories.
I realize that love does not end
with death's painful goodbye.

I await with hope until we can say hello again,
you and I.

--Karen Nelson TCF Elder Chapter, Utah



Valentine Memories

The talk about Valentine's Day memories in today's online sharing really hit home for me. This morning I tackled an activity I've kept putting off since our son, Lance, died in November 1999. I decided to pack all the odds and ends in Lance's room into boxes. As I handled all the things that had been important to him, I found it so emotional and the memories (and the tears) just overpowered me. I picked up one of his favorite books, one I'd read to him a jillion times and saw something sticking out at the top like a bookmark. I turned it over and it was a photograph that just clutched at my heart and reminded me again of all the joy Lance brought to us and others in his short life.

Lance was born with cerebral palsy and it affected his entire body. But the glorious thing is that it never hampered his spirit or the happiness and joy with which he moved through the world.

The picture I found was taken the year Lance was selected as Valentine King at his school. My wife, Beverly, and I went to the Valentine Ball that evening. Lance was in a wheelchair and could not stand or walk. But, oh how he wanted to dance like the others. Finally, Bev and I took him out of

his chair and held him under the arms as he “danced” with the Valentine Queen. The look on his face was one I'll never forget—pure joy, pure delight, blazing with energy. Lance stomped his feet up and down with the music, moved his arms back and forth and filled that room with laughter. Of course, he didn't want to stop and we danced ruts in the floor before it was all over. Beverly and I were worn out, but he was still raring to go with every song.

That evening is still one of my fondest memories among all those I treasure about Lance. I'm so glad we were willing to go through all that physical exertion to make it possible for him to dance. I believe that if I could open a window to heaven right now, he'd still be dancing. Thanks for letting me share.

--Harold Hopkins, TCF Lawrenceville, GA

My Thoughts on Mrs. Abraham Lincoln



Abraham Lincoln has always been my most admired and respected figure in the history of our country. After standing in front of his statue at the Lincoln Memorial, no one could ever forget the terrible marked sadness in his face, his forlorn and melancholy attitude. I have been picking up from other chapter newsletters the many pieces of prose and poetry attributed to Lincoln, which speak so poignantly of grief, and I have researched the Lincoln life.

It is for his wife, Mary, for whom I cringe now when I read how life dealt with her. Washington gossip circles referred to her “mental state”, that she was “deranged” and “eccentric”. The Lincoln's lost their second son, Edward, almost 4, in February 1850. Their third son Willie was born in December of that year and died in February 1862 at the age of 11. And then, the tragedy of tragedies. In April, President Lincoln was assassinated in front of Mrs. Lincoln's eyes ... her grief must have been worse than inconsolable.

How could life deal such a terrible fate to one woman? How could any one of us deal with such multiple tragedies? We know how easy it is to feel as if we are “going crazy” and how common that feeling is. To share that feeling in Compassionate Friends is more than wonderful ... to be assured that it is common, to learn and understand from other bereaved parents why we feel that way, and that it will pass helps immeasurably.

But tragedy stalked Mary Lincoln's footsteps,

for not quite six years later, her son Tad was killed at 18 in January 1871. History books do not say, but I pray that Mrs. Lincoln had ONE compassionate friend who understood her grief over the death of her three sons and her husband. One friend wrote of her: “Poor Mrs. Lincoln. She has been a deranged person.” Yes, of that I am sure. And then I thank God for The Compassionate Friends.

-- Mary LaTour, TCF/Dallas, TX

Murdered Children

Each set of circumstances surrounding the death of a child carried with it some things that all who have lost children share in common. On the other hand, each set of circumstances also carries with it some problems that are peculiar to it— or at least the circumstances serve to magnify and make worse some of the stages of grief ...

When a child is murdered, the grief process is complicated by intrusions into the parent's grief. Police, lawyers, and other members of the criminal justice system need information, evidence and testimony ... TV and newspapers focus on the victim and the grieving family. There is no privacy ... You wonder how one goes about doing his grief work in the glare of the public's eye.

When a murder is involved, there may or may not be a murder suspect to deal with. Some say having the murderer caught is better for them, while others say they don't want to deal with the murderer face-to-face. Neither way is easy.

There is additional pain and stress with preliminary hearings, postponements, trials and sentencing. Parents sometimes face what seems to be a lack of justice.

As do most parents of children who died violently and suddenly, be it in an accident, a suicide or a murder, they must deal, time and time again, with the thoughts that make them wonder about the emotional state of the child as he stared death in the face. What did the child think or say? In addition to this, they may have to face the knowledge that someone deliberately killed their child.

Of all these reactions, anger can really complicate their grief. It can be overpowering. This anger can spill out onto undeserving people, as well. Many people of murdered children are able to help themselves by directing their energies toward some form of social action, such as working for needed changes in our judicial system

or taking a stand on the gun-control issue. A number of parents have a need to make some sense out of the senseless. Whatever form it takes to satisfy this need is good ...

--excerpted from an article by Mary Cleckley, Atlanta, GA TCF

Comfort Zone

Before the suicide, I did not have a clear idea what my comfort zone was. By that I mean how much noise, conversation, housecleaning, or driving I could endure before feeling overwhelmed. After the suicide, I found even a few simple everyday tasks made me feel unglued. Building a comfort zone and setting boundaries around how much I would allow myself to take in from my environment became an important component of my healing process.

I had to make several modifications in order to cope. For awhile, I limited my time on the telephone and how much work I could do in a given day. I made a commitment to no longer watch violent movies because I knew their ability to trigger memories of the suicide. For night-time reading in bed I chose to read humorous books rather than dark murder mysteries. This helped me feel less overwhelmed and more comfortable. These changes do not have to last forever. But they can serve me well, just for today.

Today, I take heed of what causes me discomfort. I am learning my limits.

--by Catherine Greenleaf.

Reprinted from Healing the Hurt Spirit, Daily Affirmations for People Who Have Lost a Loved One to Suicide

There is Life After Infant Death

Here I am, two years later, a normal functioning person. It must be a miracle. Two years ago, I wouldn't have believed it possible, yet here I am. I can smile, laugh and do the everyday menial tasks that two years ago seemed to overwhelm me. I feel pain, but not the driving, stabbing pain of the past that comes and goes when the memories of the past creep in to disturb my happier present.

Somewhere along the road, I found the strength hidden within me to go on without Sara. I know my life is less rich without her, but still very much worth living. Does time heal all wounds? I don't feel healed, but time has given me a chance

to learn to live and cope with the pain. I can now go on and live a good life with my husband and three wonderful daughters.

I hope for all those whose pain is new, that they can just hold on until their day comes as mine has today. When they can say, "It's a miracle. There is life after infant death."

--Fran Downing Winchester HOPE newsletter

Newly Bereaved...

When Will I Want to Be Here?

Years ago, I read a lovely novel, *The Magic of Ordinary Days*, by Ann Howard Creel. Back then, I truly did appreciate the magic of ordinary days. I did. I greeted each day with purpose and a very long "to do" list. I fixed breakfast for my family, packed school lunches, awakened grumpy children, went to the school bus stop, folded laundry, emptied the dishwasher, walked the dog, shopped for groceries, made PTA calls, scheduled doctor appointments, showed up for my volunteer shift in the library. Then, I greeted the school bus (or waited for the front door to open), and dealt with the chaos of after-school snacks, music lessons, sports practices, homework, family dinner, baths, and bedtime stories. I was so grateful to be a full time mom. Even navigating the challenges, the bumps in the road, the injuries and illnesses, the disappointments with the school system it all felt so purposeful, so significant. It was magical.

So, now that I have no choice but to take on the cloak of bereaved parent, is it worse because once life held such promise, such hope? I know I can no longer bear to look often at Facebook; the accounts on my "wall" of ordinary days bring me to my knees. I loved ordinary. It makes me so sad that my ordinariness has vanished.

The challenge now is how to be on the planet when I don't want to be here. I am on the planet; I get out of bed, I function on some level. But I don't want to. It's the wanting to be here piece that I have lost. So, I keep reading the books, seeing the counselor, going to TCF conferences, and working to stay in relationships with people I care about. I am deliberately trying to not lose hope that maybe, one day; I'll want to be here.

--Peggi Johnson TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA



Seasoned Griever...

Are We Bitter? It's Our Choice

A few years ago I received a phone call telling me that a drunk driver had killed my friend's husband. The caller said I should go to see my friend. My first thought was, I don't really know the widow all that well. I'm sure she will have lots of friends to help her. What if she doesn't want to see me? What if she thinks I'm intruding?

After some internal struggle, I went to my friend's home. As I walked in, everyone became quiet, and then a whisper sort of rippled around the room, "Marilyn is here!" I saw my friend sitting on the couch. She motioned for me to come sit by her, and she whispered, "I've been hoping you would come. I have so many questions and I think you can answer my questions." My friend and I talked so easily that I nearly forgot anyone else was in the room.

That day I realized that I had gained a position of credibility because I had experienced the death of three of my four sons. Had I asked for that credibility? Absolutely not! But I got it anyway. The only choice I had in the matter was what I was going to do with my experience. Anna Quindlan stated, "Our lives are defined by those we have lost." I read that quote years ago, and it stuck with me. So what does it mean?

I think it means that once we have walked through the terrible trauma of the death of our precious child our lives are changed forever. How our lives have changed is totally up to us.

Because our child died:

We can be more sensitive to others.

We can be more observant and notice when others seem to feel sad.

We can show up quickly when someone dies.

We can answer the question, "Am I going crazy?"

We can help someone know it is normal to want to see their deceased child.

We can sit and hold someone's hand when they are afraid.

We can remember the death date of a child.

We can let others know they needn't fear they might forget their child. It won't happen.

We can be the one to remember special days of our bereaved friends.

We can be the one to help empty out a deceased child's room.

We can be the one to understand because: we are different.

We have let our lives be defined positively by those we have lost.

Here are the other choices. Because our child died:

We can choose to be insensitive.

We can choose to be indifferent to other's pain.

We can stay away when a tragedy happens to someone else.

We can refuse to offer comfort.

We can refuse to talk about our pain.

We can cause others to feel uncomfortable and afraid to mention our child's name.

We can allow our lives to be negatively defined by those we have lost.

It's up to us. We can be bitter or better. It is our choice.

—Marilyn Heavilin, TCF Redlands, CA

Friends and Family...



Not Another Flower

There was a day when the sun ceased to shine. You may have missed it; it didn't make the headlines of any national paper. February 2, 1997, to most, was only Groundhog Day. For me, it was nothing as trite as whether the furry creature did or did not see his shadow. Forget the promise of spring, what did it matter now? My life as I dreamed it stopped when my four-year-old laid lifeless in my arms.

How I remember those early months after his death. I wanted to be like my Victorian ancestors and wear black, even a veil. Then my clothes could shout to my neighbors, those in the grocery store lines, and the many at church—look at me, I am a parent doing the impossible: living without her child.

I remember those who helped us as we put one foot in front of the other on the rocky path. My husband, three children, and I couldn't walk it alone. Friends, with embraces as strong and wide as eagle wings, circled us, cried with us. They brought meals, sent cards, provided listening ears, and took care of our young children. Then there were those uncomfortable with our grief. During the first weeks they joined our tears, but as the months dragged on, their expressions and subtle hints were shouting, "Get back to normal. Look at the joyous side of life. Heal your broken heart!"

For some reason, as you may know, people put a timeline on grief. I think the general consensus is that you're only allowed two to three weeks of sorrow.

When you are new to grief, even simple tasks can be laborious. Your energy and patience levels are low. But hear a comment or two that is completely out of line for anyone to say, and suddenly, you are propelled by anger. How can I forget the older lady in our church that called me every day for two weeks? She'd start off by asking how I was doing. My guts felt like they were stripped out of my body and my heart, mangled. I'd say, "It's hard."

One afternoon this woman told me with all the sincerity she could muster, "God needed another flower in his garden in heaven and took Daniel." I nearly dropped the phone. This was supposed to provide comfort? I eventually did hang up, but politely. My frustration flared. I got a lot of laundry done that afternoon—throwing clothes into the washing machine, banging the lid shut, flinging socks and shirts into the dryer.

I am bolder now. When people tell me certain lines, aimed to help me and they don't work, I let them know. My new mantra is, "Cry with me. Don't pretend you understand why my child died. Don't try to rationalize why my son was diagnosed with cancer at the age of three and died at four."

Those who have helped are the ones who continue to remember his birthday and think of how hard it is to live the holidays without him. I appreciate the friends who join me at the cemetery, named by my children "Daniel's Place," and lift a helium balloon into the sky with me. Watch it soar.

I believe my son is vibrant and alive in Heaven now. I hope the balloon reaches him. Don't tell me it pops when it gets out of sight. Let me be like a child and not know the laws of the stratosphere. Let me wish he knows how much I love and miss him. Let me believe he is alive and touching the face of God.

The sun does shine again in my world. Although the hole in my mother's heart is always present, I'm grateful for the times I can tell Daniel's story. Remembering him, writing about him, even sharing his jokes with those I meet, brings healing. I place flowers at his grave. But Daniel is not another flower.

--Alice J. Wisler

Helpful Hint...



Now we've grown older (and maybe a little wiser) and we've learned that love isn't something you toss out, bury, pack away, or forget. Love isn't something that ends with death. Life can become good and whole and complete once again ... not when we try to fill up the empty spaces left by loved ones no longer within hug's reach, but when we realize that love creates new spaces in the heart and expands the spirit and deepens the joy of simply being alive.

-- Darcie Sims, Ph.D

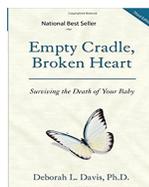
Welcome...



Where Else?

Where else - can you come into a group of complete strangers and talk about the death of your child? Where else - can you know that you are not alone in your bereavement? Where else - can others sincerely say to you, "I know how you feel?" Where else - will you not hear, "It's time you were over it and started getting on with your life," and other unwelcome advice? Where else - can you cry without feeling ashamed or laugh without feeling guilt? Where else - can you just listen and not talk if you do not wish to? Where else - can you reach out to newly bereaved parents who are experiencing the grief and pain you have felt? Where else - can you share the love and memories of your child/ren with others? Where else - NOWHERE, BUT AT THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS!!

--Dave Ziv TCF Bucks Mont, PA



Book Review...

Empty Cradle, Broken Heart: Surviving the Death of Your Baby - Deborah L. Davis, Ph.D. The heartache of miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant death affects thousands of U.S. families every year. *Empty Cradle, Broken Heart* gives reassurance to parents who struggle with anger, guilt, and despair after such tragedy. Deborah Davis encourages grieving and makes suggestions for coping. The book includes information on issues such as the death of one or more babies from a multiple birth, pregnancy interruption, and the questioning of aggressive medical intervention. There is also a special

chapter for fathers as well as a chapter on “progressive parenting” to help anxious parents enjoy their precious living children. Doctors, nurses, relatives, friends, and other support persons can gain special insight. Most importantly, parents facing the death of a baby will find necessary support in this gentle guide. (In our chapter’s library)

Tell Me

Are you still a child in Heaven?
Do you laugh and run and play?
Is your cancer gone forever?
Are there flowers where you stay?

Tell me what it's like in Heaven
Do you joke with everyone?
Is your laughter still as joyous?
Do you frolic in the sun?

When I join you there in Heaven
Will my dreams for you come true
Will I see you grow to manhood
Like I'd hoped on Earth to do?
--Barbara Bain TCF, Nashville, TN

Silk Roses for Susan

I took silk roses to your grave today.
Valentine's Day is coming
And you loved red roses
I stay there awhile and remembered
Your last Valentine's Day.
I kissed you and gave you candy
With money stuck in the top.
You tilted your head
In that certain way you had
And smiled, pleased at the gift.
Sweet daughter, I miss you so.
There was still much of life to share.
Nineteen is way too young for dying.
I would put fresh roses for you every day
If I could have you back.
But I can't change the ending.
So I took silk roses to your grave today,
And cried fresh tears instead.
--Ginger Elwood TCF, Knoxville, TN

We were put on the earth to love them for as long
as We live... Not for as long as They lived.
--Alan Pederson

The Locket

I opened it;

The locket was empty.
I don't know why;
for I know I filled it.
I filled it with my pain,
my sorrow, my anger.
But, it remained hollow
and empty... just like me.

When its contents were sad and hurtful,
it was those feelings that reduced me to a shell
of bitterness.

That empty heart was a living hell.

So I stopped.
I filled it again.
I filled it with love, understanding, and
acceptance...
with that came peace.

It began to beat again,
it pulsed with the rhythm of life.
May you also discover that treasured locket
and share it with many.

For an open heart is NEVER empty.
--Helen Leboldus, TCF, Calgary, AB

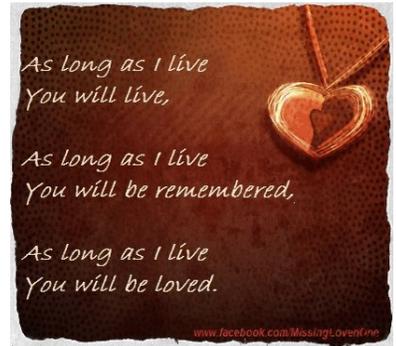
Compassion

“Compassion asks us to go where it hurts,
to enter into the places of pain, to share in
brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish.

Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in
misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to
weep with those in tears.

Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak,
vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with
the powerless.”
-- Henri J.M. Nouwen

Perhaps it is not so much saying GOOD-BYE
to our loved one
as it is saying
farewell to the old us and the life we shared.
--Darci Sims *Footsteps*





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

Cheiann 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 Broks 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 Lerner &
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

Marc David Guerrevia
Born: 7/77 Died: 7/18
Mother: Sharon Cortez
Father: David Guerrevia

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



Kyle Bernard Kirby
Born: 5/93 Died: 9/18
Father: Vince Kirby

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 Match
Born: 5/02 Died: 7/18
Parents: Mike & Shirley Match
Grandmother: Susan Match

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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: Desiree 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 Pulislich
Born: 1/75 Died: 1/18
Mother: Maria Pulislich
Sister: Michelle Pulislich

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 Edith 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

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

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

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

Matthew L. Weiss
Born: 9/96 Died: 8/18
Mother: Natalie Narumoto

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 this month.

For Siblings...



She's Here, But Not

She's here - but she's there.
 She's with us - but she's not.
 She's right around the bend.
 But then she's gone again.
 She's far away - but so near,
 It's like she's gone - but here again.
 -Stacy Sharp, age 11
 TCF Defiance, OH

What It's Like To Lose A Brother—

This time last year, my world looked completely different. My girlfriend had just moved in with me, it was my first year going back to uni, and my family was closer than ever, and I thought that things in my life would keep working out for the best. How wrong I was. I had no idea that my brother Bren would be killed in a motorbike accident in Vietnam only several months later. He was kind, hilarious, and charismatic, and it's such a waste that he's gone.

I'll never forget the night that the police came to the house to tell us. Mum and Dad's pain—their sobbing, screaming, and crying, will never leave my memory. I was dumbstruck, I couldn't believe it, I just stood there staring at the policeman, not wanting to believe anything he was saying. That night turned my life completely upside down, and since then I've just been trying to make sense of this new world I'm in, where I don't get to see my brother anymore.

It's really tough to lose your brother, and unbelievably painful. It's so painful that it takes ages to actually accept it, you accept it gradually

in bits and pieces over a period of months, because it's just not possible to take it all in at once. Losing Brendan the way we did was especially painful because he died during the overseas trip of a lifetime; he'd worked his butt off for all of 2015 to save up money to travel to Nepal, Burma, and Vietnam, and during his trip he kept us updated with Facebook posts with pictures and videos of all the fun he was having. Then he died.

We had to arrange for his remains to be flown home from Vietnam, before having his funeral. All of this was just like one big nightmare. I think that everybody processes grief differently, and that grief for parents and siblings looks different. For me, losing a brother feels like losing a piece of yourself; like a piece of yourself has died as well. I can never fully understand what Mum and Dad are going through, because I don't know what it's like to lose a son, but it's something that no parent should ever have to go through.

Grief is a monumental struggle, and if you've lost someone too I want you to know that you're not alone. If you feel like you're not coping at all, and you feel completely hopeless and empty, or that you can't work or sleep or eat, or if the pain is so bad that you are thinking about taking your own life, then it's OK to get help. Nobody can take away or fix your pain, but there are trained professionals, such as psychologists, who can give you useful techniques to stop the pain from completely dominating your life. The Compassionate Friends have been an instrumental part of our journey as a family and have walked along side us. We attend the monthly support meetings which have helped us all.

-- Josh Hobson (TCF QLD Member)

For Grandparents...



Grandparent's Grief

The death of your grandchild is like a double edged sword. You grieve for the death of a baby whom you cherished; a baby whom you had hopes and dreams for. But you also grieve the death of your own child, the baby's mother or father. For the baby's parents died with the baby. Not physically, but figuratively. Your own

flesh and blood, the person whom you once knew your child to be, will never be again.

Your child has been transformed in a moment of time into a new person. An overwhelming grief has touched their lives. It is a time of confusion, anger, and frustration for many grandparents.

Offer your unconditional love and support. Go to support group meetings with your child and go to a grandparents group for yourselves. Remember your grandchild on special occasions such as his or her birthday/death day, Christmas, and Easter.

Send your child a Mothers Day or Father's Day card reminding them that they are still the parents of the precious child, always loved but now lost.

Share their pain with them, even years later. surely create an even deeper bond of love, appreciation and fortitude withstanding the passing of time and circumstances.

--Joanne Cacciatore, The Web Page of Mother's in Sympathy and Sympathy and Support
--Borrowed From TCF, Troy MI newsletter

From Our Members ...



Blessings Inside Sorrow

There are blessings inside sorrow, or so I have been told.

I am not sure I always agree.

At times I can see the gifts I have been given.

Love ... without measure... fills my heart when I think of you.

But I loved you then too, when you were in my arms, not in my heart.

And I miss you now.

The emptiness you left can never be filled, not by any blessings I might receive from sorrow.

And yet, still, I wonder.

Are there blessings?

Would I have known how much I cared for you...

for your brothers, for your Dad,
were it not for your coming, and so suddenly,
softly, leaving, without a good-bye?

Would I treasure the life I have remaining
if it weren't for your loss?

Certainly I loved, and treasured before you left,
but hasn't my sorrow caused me to express that
love and to treasure more highly those around

me?

I KNOW I can't take for granted that they will always be.

In the aftermath of losing you, when life lay crumbled around me...

still was there not a glimmer of hope?

That life would go on, and, somehow,
we would survive, and build on the ashes of our broken hearts.

Building somehow in spite of our pain.

Mixing the cement of our love with tears,
we bound ourselves together even more tightly
than ever before.

And our love grows stronger.

And we have not forgotten.

What a bitter lesson!

And still, the emptiness will never be filled.

There yet remains a hole in my heart ... and in all our hearts.

Dear son, we will never forget you.

The blessings inside our sorrow will never fill the hole you left in the fabric of our lives.

It remains open, a testament that you mattered,
and that your coming and soft going made a difference.

And in that difference lies the blessing inside our sorrow.

We were blessed to have held you for a time,
even though you could not stay.

And even through our tears, we smile at the memories.

And we know that you are not completely gone.

You shadow our lives,

affecting them in big ways and small.

And though I would trade these blessings in a minute just to have you back in my arms,

I am indeed

grateful for the blessings inside sorrow.

--Lisa Sculley TCF Jacksonville/Orange Park Chapter, FL
In Memory of my son, Joey

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.

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: Feb. 1st for March 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 in 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 Elizabeth D. Szucs, April, 1972 - June 2011. We love you and miss your kindness, your smile and warmth. We will never forget you!!

Love, Irene

In loving memory of William Joseph Britton III, March 1962 - July 1985. Happy Heavenly Christmas!!

Forever in my heart!! Mommy

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
Torrance, CA 90510

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February 2019

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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.