



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

MARCH 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 March 7th, the first Thursday
of the month at 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION:
The Neighborhood Church
415 Paseo Del Mar
Palos Verdes Estates, CA 90274
(South of Torrance Beach)

DIRECTIONS: Pacific Coast Hwy. to Palos Verdes Blvd. → Palos Verdes Blvd. becomes Palos Verdes Drive West. Veer Right. → Go to Via Corta (stop sign just past Malaga Cove Plaza). Turn right. → Go down hill to Arroyo (stop sign). Turn right. → Continue down hill to end of street. → Turn left on Paseo Del Mar. → 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 March 7th meeting will start with "Memories Of My Unique Child".

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

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

South Bay/LA Chapter of TCF
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance, CA 90510-1171
(310) 963-4646
www.tcfsla.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 March 7th meeting will start with...

"Memories of My Unique Child." We each have special memories of our children that made them the unique individuals they were. By sharing the special things our precious children were known for, we develop a better understanding of the uniqueness they each possessed. Remembering and sharing with your TCF friends the special quality you remember, the funny story, the time they did the unmentionable ... all these things that in combination made your child the person he/she was, is an important step in learning to deal with your grief, and a way to solidify your memories.

All bereaved parents tend to want to remember the good qualities and sometimes try and forget the little things that made them the remarkable child they truly were. By sharing the mistakes, the virtues, and the lessons they may have had to learn the hard way, we focus on the whole child in a realistic way. And let's face it, even with the trying times we all had with our kids, they were special and that specialness makes them that much dearer to us.

By reminiscing about their *virtues and their faults*, we keep from putting them on a pedestal. We keep them real in our minds and in the memories we are reaffirming in others. By only remembering the "good" times, we lose a part of who they were. And I'm sure all the memories I have, good and bad, are an important piece of my son I don't want to forget. How about you?

No matter how or when your child died, it is important for bereaved parents to remember their entire lives and not just focus on pain of their death. As bereaved parents we sometimes need to affirm to ourselves -and to the world- how we are forever changed by the presence of our children in our lives, no matter how much time we had them with us. We need to be able to reach back in time and remember the happy moments with our child. Those simple things that can bring a smile to our faces can go along way in helping us in our grief.

We invite you to share your child with us if you are ready. As always if you are more comfortable just listening that is fine. If you want to bring a memento that held a special place in their life, this meeting is a good time to bring it. Because our memories are all we have left of our child, those memories become a tool that we need— to overcome the fear that they will be forgotten.



Memory -- A Treasure Box

Sometimes we bereaved parents begin to fear that our dead children may be forgotten and we desperately don't want this to happen. We want our children remembered. We may fear that we will forget the sound of the child's voice or what his or her face looked like.

Our children lived as real people in this world, and they mattered. Now, they are gone from us, and the only place they exist (on this earth) is in our memory. We are told by well intentioned people "don't look back, look ahead." We know we cannot turn the clock back, but we can look back. Indeed, we must look back, and we must remember, for it is in memory where our children are now, and we begin to develop a new relationship with the child.

Memory can become a special treasure box for us. We hold the key. We can use the key, open the box, and spend time among our treasures. In time we learn what to remember and what to forget. And though it is true that we cannot hold a memory on our lap, wash a little face or fix a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in memory, in our treasure box, we can do these things. I'm sure if we were allowed to choose to keep our memories or to have them forever banished from our minds, we would choose to keep them.

In Compassionate Friends meetings we come together with our special memories and share with one another in an acceptable atmosphere. We do not judge one another here. Instead, we reach out in love, compassion, and understanding to help one another. We do not forget our children, for in memory we will keep - their heart beat within our own.

--Connie Andrews, TCF, Harvey County, KS

Spring Cleaning

As the seasons change and we become aware of the stirrings of nature, our thoughts turn to "spring cleaning". It prepares us for the new season by getting our "house" in order.

Let's dust off our memory chests, shake out and examine each item we've folded away in our heart and mind. Dig into the corners and bring light and air into the darkness. Deep in the closet we have accumulated all the things we couldn't

face or needed time to think about. We must go through these. As we sort through we will discard some unnecessary, unwanted feelings, hurts, anger, and other emotions. Now we can count our treasures and carefully fold and put them back in fresh containers, smaller, easier to find, more in time with now, and in good order,

A day spent doing these tasks will no doubt leave you exhausted, but the effort will bring a deep sense of contentment. For me, it brought a special plus, special memories and joys of Jim and Scott.

—Betty Stiegmeyer Pikes Peak, CO

The Not So Perfect Child

As much as you hear it proclaimed in the meetings, not all children who died were perfect. In this day and time you're fortunate if your children escape some of the horrors that are available to them. I've watched some of my friends and neighbors do a good job of parenting only to have the peer influence negate the positive input of the parents.

Many of our people have children die from incidents that were drug-related. These parents are often left with doubt about their parenting skills because of the guilt that is inherent in the grief process. It is easy for them to take all the blame onto themselves, losing sight of the fact that parents aren't all powerful people who can control all the good and bad things that happen to their children.

If you are out there feeling guilt or stigma because of the way your child lived and died, I hope you will begin today trying to forgive him and yourself. You have both been victims of the times, but it is up to see you aren't victims forever. There are good memories buried back there somewhere. Get in touch with them and remember all of the facets of your child's life - the good and the bad. We each have some of both, you know.

--by Mazy Cleckley, TCF, Atlanta, GA

Hats Off to Grief

It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Over the years I have found it frustrating to find words that are enough and deep enough to explain the depth or breadth of my pain following a significant loss.

Some years ago, I was at a garage sale and



spied a huge foam chicken hat for the tidy sum of 25 cents. I inquired as to whether they knew anything about the origin of this wild-looking hat. Evidently it was produced by our local blood bank and originally had a card attached with the slogan, "Don't be a chicken; donate blood."

When I saw that hat, it reminded me of how, as bereaved persons, we often feel that we stick out in a crowd. After our two sons died, I sometimes felt that people were going out of their way to avoid me. After all, I might talk about "it". I have heard some folks describing themselves as being like "Typhoid Mary," with all sorts of people avoiding any topics about the person who died.

After Dan and Mark died, I sometimes found myself trudging around the house in my old red bathrobe, crying my eyes out and wondering if there was any light at the end of the tunnel. Occasionally, I put on my chicken hat and tried to remind myself that someday I would be able to laugh again. I could not imagine ever again laughing or enjoying life, but intellectually I knew that it was possible.

When our other kids came home from school and saw this ridiculous picture of their mom wandering around the house with fistfuls of Kleenex, dressed in a ratty bathrobe and a chicken hat, I know they thought that I had slid over the edge. The twenty-five-cent chicken hat was a great object lesson for me. While I knew that things could change, I certainly could not imagine things changing for the better.

Over the years I started collecting hats whenever I found one that I thought might have a message for me that I might be able to use when reaching out to other bereaved persons. I had no idea that there were so many unusual and varied hats. Now I use my hat collection when I am teaching about the grief experience or when I am doing a program for bereaved people.

Quite often I will begin by donning a crash helmet. When someone dies, whether it is sudden or from a long-term illness, our world as we know it can crash.

I follow the helmet with a baseball cap that has a fish head sticking out of the bill. This reminds me that as bereaved people we can often feel like a fish out of water. When grieving a major loss, we can feel set apart from others. I follow up with my hat that has a tomahawk sticking out of the top, because often we feel like our world has been chopped to pieces, and us right along with it.

So often we hear from well-meaning friends that we cannot question why things happen, "It is for the best, we are not given more than we can handle," are statements we hear ad-nauseam. Hearing those well-intended, but usually not helpful comments, reminds me to put on my alligator hat because I and others have felt like snapping at someone when we hear such comments.

Some clients have told me that people close to them have set themselves up as experts on others' grief. One of the things that I have learned is that while we can be experts on our own grief, we are not experts on anyone else's grief. When I encounter people who give advice, but have no experience with grief, I remember the saying "don't let the turkeys get you down." So I whip out a turkey hat complete with velour feathers.

Knowing that we will get better, and believing it, are very far apart. In the early weeks and months of grief, it can seem impossible that we can ever come to terms with our world having changed so much. My "when pigs fly" hat really makes that point. It is a pink pig with wings.

Tolerance levels are often quite low for bereaved persons, and it can be hard to participate in social gatherings. We may feel like we are removed from everything and everyone. My dinosaur hat makes that point. And, because of low tolerance levels, we may feel really crabby. My crab hat illustrates that story nicely.

Anger is another common emotion. Sometimes we can pinpoint where our anger is directed and at other times we may have generalized anger. My concern is that we find constructive ways to work through anger. However, during this process, my shark hat satisfactorily expresses the feeling that I want to take a bite out of someone or something.

I have a baseball hat with two bills and the saying, "I am the leader. Which way did they go?" Confusion is a frustrating but very normal part of the grief experience. I often hear stories of bereaved folks driving in the wrong direction, missing appointments or showing up the wrong day, and so forth.

Once, after our sons died, I was having company over for dinner and reached into the oven for the baked potatoes. They were not there. So I quickly shut the oven door and then reopened it, thinking that my potatoes would reappear. Of course they still weren't there. With my company

all ready to eat dinner, I was frantically going through the kitchen to see where I had put the potatoes. I had them baking in the refrigerator. So much for being in charge. After telling that story, I whip out my bonehead headband.

We often find ourselves talking to ourselves and putting ourselves down. With the baked potato incident I was really busy telling myself what a bonehead I was. It is sometimes hard for us to give ourselves permission to make mistakes, and when we give ourselves a hard time, it only makes us feel worse.

My construction helmet is a reminder that for a very long time in grief, our lives are under construction. It takes long time to begin rebuilding and looking toward the future. Part of learning to adjust to a new reality is taking risks and trying new things. That could be a support group or counseling. We can also find ourselves with new roles in life. For some that may be assuming the role of both parents, or perhaps we need to manage a household for the first time. My giraffe headband, complete with long neck, reminds me that when we are adapting and taking risks, we are sticking our necks out into new and unfamiliar territory.

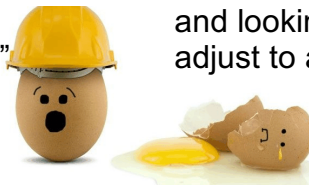
My butterfly hat serves as a reminder that our world has changed and that to learn to adjust and embrace life we will need to take a lesson from the butterfly and be open to change. Though many times we would like to go back to the way our life was before our loss, that is not an option.

I have a piano keyboard fashioned as a hat. The object of that hat is to point out that we need to play our own tune and dance to our own music, whatever that might be for us as individuals.

A favorite book of mine is "Me, Myself and You" by Vincent Collins. I took to heart what the author had to say in his opening paragraph: "It would be great if we were daisies, because even bugs do not bug daisies." We are not daisies and my daisy headband underscores that message.

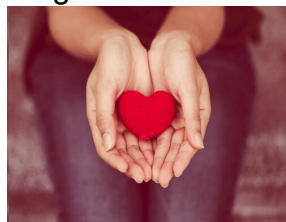
My star hat is bright and rainbow-colored and is a reminder that our horizon changes with a death and often our goals and dreams change as well. However, in processing and working through our grief, we can find new stars on our horizon.

A top hat trimmed with roses is my finale and one way of saying that we can be the leader of our own parade. We are not in charge of what circumstances come our way but we are in charge of working through grief and discovering a new world for ourselves.



Hats off to you as you work through and process your own grief and pain.

-- Eloise Cole - Grief Digest



From My Heart ...To Yours

The newly bereaved parents looked around the group at the meeting and hoped and prayed they wouldn't still be attending TCF meetings 20, 30, and 40 years from now. Well actually, we at TCF hope you will be. You see, the bereaved parents who answered the call in their hearts to continue to open the door for monthly meetings and to go each and every month with arms open

for hugs and tissue boxes passed around, are the one reason why you had a place to go and pour your hearts out, cry your eyes out, and feel justified in what you were experiencing since your child died.

If it were not for these bereaved parents who buried a child decades ago, there might not be anyone there to sit around and take the time to care about you, to listen with understanding, to offer support, to know what you are going through. It might have been many years ago, but those shoulders were dragging at one time, too.

Forty years ago, burying a child hurt just as much as it does for you today. Twenty years ago, the pain of loss was no different than it is for you today. These parents know. They understand. That's why they are still here. It is not because they can't move on with their own grief. It is because they want to help you move on with yours.

Thank goodness someone in your area listened to the voice in their heart to start a TCF group, to organize meetings, to put out a newsletter, to answer your phone call, to share their own story. Because of that, you feel safe to share your pain. And every time you share your feelings, every time you cry with someone, every time you work through your pain, healing is slowly and silently creeping into your heart.

One day you might feel you don't need to attend any more TCF meetings. We know that time will come. We will be happy for you. But if it should happen that a little voice in your heart continues to whisper . . . "Now it's your turn to help someone else," be sure and listen, because someone else is going to have to take the place of those who have been there for so many years

before you arrived.

So, look around at those who have opened the doors for you and helped you. Then listen to your heart . . . always listen to your heart.

--Cathy Heider, TCF North Central Iowa Chapter

Words From A Loving Father

A great sadness has come to me
 My life has changed for eternity
 The many days and nights I've cried
 Inside a part of me has died
 My son Sean - just twenty-three
 Took his life - his soul set free
 His life on earth was filled with pain
 beyond our comprehension
 But that was then, and this is now,
 and we survivors know how deep the pain can be
 When time stood still- the onslaught came,
 and took us all to hell
 The terrible moment frozen in our minds
 The day the laughter died
 The darkness came and stayed
 We came to be, the three of us,
 Mother, Father, Brother
 Left here on this earth
 We thought of joining Sean you see
 to find his loving mirth
 Once four, now three, we struggled to survive
 First loss, then guilt, then anger and more pain
 then forgiveness and denial -
 we want him back again
 But it is not to be, in this earthly realm
 Not ours to see and touch,
 nor hear his familiar voice
 But he is here as sure as we,
 in our hearts he lives
 Within us now until we die his seeds of love are
 sewn
 And there they'll stay and there they'll grow
 until we meet again
 When the three are four once more,
 in love's eternal embrace.

--Robert B. Merhar

Being a Father (In Grief)

A father endures a life of judgment after his child dies. If he takes action in grief, he is judged; do nothing and he is also judged. A man who shows emotion is labeled weak. If a grieving father shows no emotion, he is deemed to be cold

and adds weight to the misconception that men don't grieve; some will say he never cared about the child.

When a grieving father demonstrates real strength in adversity and manages to live a normal life, there are those who accuse him of using some artificial crutch to numb the invisible, torturous pain he carries. There are also those who believe he has some ulterior motive. When the dam that restrains tears eventually bursts, the mask he hides behind is washed away. A grieving father is excused; people will say they understand the consequences of this often destructive release of energy. However, "he is not the man he was" will be whispered. Of course we are not the men we were; the death of our children must change us.

The main reason fathers like me are often silent is simply the lack of anything meaningful to say. In social circles, the conversations of others seem trivial after your own child dies. You probably don't want to speak your mind anyway and let people into your mind set; a mind set you even want to hide from yourself. Silence prevails. This silence is useful, allowing a place for reflection; however it is important it does not follow you to your home, where the mother's tears flow. Being open about your grief allows both parents to work through it together; you cannot be found if no one knows you are lost.

In some respects, a life in grief is simply an amplification to the everyday life that we lived before our baby boy or girl died. Whatever you do in life, there are those who will judge, those who will be offended and those who could do it better. No one wants to hear of a dead baby. When I speak Ethan's name, some people are sympathetic, but there are many who are noticeably uncomfortable. It would be easier for everyone concerned if I remained silent; but there is no courage in silence.

The only way of avoiding offending others is to say nothing. Showing neutrality or indifference towards your own grief will never bring progress. Grief is not something that will just go away in time if ignored; rather it is a beast that must be tamed. If that means pissing people off, then so be it. My wish is that fathers have the same desire to speak out about their grief as mothers do.

--Extracted from Fathers Grief:

<http://www.fathersgrief.com/november2013/being-father-grief.html>

com/november2013/being-father-grief.html

Newly Bereaved... Count on Grief

Count on grief to increase vulnerability.

Human beings are most comfortable when they are in control of their lives and circumstances.

Death, even when it's expected, represents the ultimate "change in plans." When a loved one dies, our former safety and security no longer seem to exist. Instead, we may experience feelings of helplessness and vulnerability that are frightening, as well as disarming. Yet it is precisely this vulnerability that can break down walls of resistance to new thought processes and open the way for new perspectives.

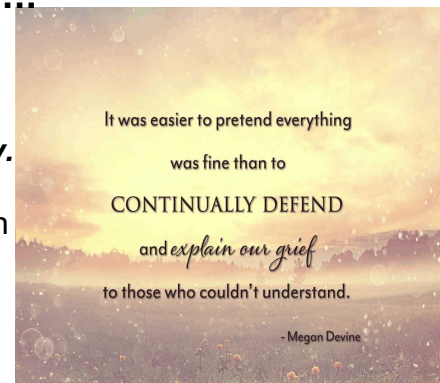
Count on grief to create change. Grieving is a walk through unknown territory. Familiar internal and external stabilities disappear in a whirlwind of changing thoughts, feelings, and emotional flux. We are reminded of our pain at odd times and in unexpected ways. Emotions hover near the surface and tears are hard to control. The stress of daily living taxes our protective defenses to the limit. Depression seems to slip in from nowhere, and anger erupts without warning. Because grief requires so much emotional energy, our tolerance for social game-playing is greatly diminished. The bereaved meet the world at a disadvantage, continually surprising themselves and others with unpredictable responses to familiar situations.

Count on grief to change social structure.

The bereaved find their social networks changing and transforming around them. Disappointment with family and friends is a common theme. Those we expected to "be there for us" may not be able to meet our needs, and friends we didn't know we had appear "out of nowhere" to fill the void. As we come to terms with whatever limitations and expectations we have for ourselves, we also become aware of the limitations of others. Not everyone we care about will receive what they need from us while we're grieving. Not everyone who cares about us will be able to fully share in our pain.

Count on grief to stress marital bonds.

Grief, like any other stress, complicates relationships. One grieving partner taxes a



relationship – two grieving partners find their pain doubled. Because grieving is an unpredictable, moment-to-moment process, couples must be prepared to build flexibility into their union. Marriages are challenged when each expects too much from the other, and neither receives adequate support from social or extended family networks. Marriages are strengthened when each partner feels supported and is allowed individuality and freedom from expectations.

Count on grief to define priorities. The bereaved often find themselves realigning their goals and objectives. For most of us, nothing is easily taken for granted after the death of a loved one. We understand that "now" is the only time there is, and that tomorrow may never come. Relationships are more precious than ever, and we are less comfortable with "unfinished business" relating to those we care about. Because the cares and concerns built into our busy lives pale in comparison to our loss, the emphasis on people versus things takes on far greater meaning.

Count on grief to increase spiritual awareness. The pain of grief prompts spiritual investigation into both the known and the unknown. Answers we were lacking, are held up for examination. Typically, there are many stages of distancing, moving toward, and moving within old and new spiritual concepts and beliefs. Our struggle for inner peace and unity seizes many priorities. In the majority of cases, our connection to ourselves and the universe becomes far more defined.

Count on grief to strengthen compassion. Grief tears down the boundaries between ourselves and others. Bereavement enhances our humanness and strengthens our ties to the world around us. Our loss is a life-changing event; we will never again be the people we were before. Pain somehow opens us to greater levels of awareness and a greater capacity for compassion and understanding. Bereavement provides the catalyst to become more giving, more loving, and more fully aware.

Count on grief to define the past and open doors to the future. For the bereaved, the world is completely new. The death of a loved one becomes a reference point around which we define where we've been and how we structure a path for tomorrow. Grief provides a "crash course" in some of the most profound lessons life has to offer. As bereaved individuals, we find ourselves with fewer answers. but far more insights. In time, we learn

there is no loss without gain and no sorrow without joy. As death closes doors behind us, new doors open before us.

--by Joannetta Hendel Bereavement Magazine

Seasoned Griever...

Bread Crumbs ... Finding Our Way Back



Bread crumbs are all we have. They are what is left behind after the death of our child. They are our memories and our mementos. A bread crumb is the little answering machine cassette tape that says "Hi it's just me. Leave a message at the beep." We may be the only people with a cassette tape in our safe deposit box. It's not much, a few quick words, but it's his voice—a small crumb from the original.

A bread crumb is his favorite shirt that I still can't part with, so I wear it for good luck on special days. A bread crumb is the last Father's Day card he wrote in his own hand before he went off to college. "Thanks for everything Dad, especially the \$. My years at home were better than words can say and I never took anything for granted. I've had the best childhood anyone could have. Thank you for the Ideas and opportunities I grew up with. I love you. Mark."

I call these things crumbs because they are a disappointing piece of the real thing, but treasured because they are all we have. I also think there is a second way of looking at this. Bread crumbs are a part of children's stories symbolizing signposts along the way to help lead us out of the forest—to find our way back to the land of the living, at least if the birds don't eat them.

I like to think that the return from grief is like finding our own way out of the forest. The way is marked by great changes or signposts if we will only follow the bread crumbs. Just think of them as gifts left behind by our children. They change us and they lead us out of the forest— but at a very different place than we first went in.

Here are three I have found. Maybe you will find others.

Crumb One.

We pick up a new sense of what is important and what is not. We suffer fools, superficial cocktail parties, and convenience friends poorly. We seem to develop an immediate impatience for the meaningless and the trivial. On the other

hand, we pick up an incredible sensitivity to the world around us that we did not have before. We watch the news differently. We value people more than things. We live more in the moment and less in the future because we know that sometimes "tomorrow" doesn't come.

Crumb Two.

We find our real self on the road back. After the loss of a child and a period of emptiness we do eventually come back. But we come back differently--and I believe better--than the person that entered that awful forest. With our new understanding of priorities, we listen again to "that still small voice" that we silenced in the race to climb the career ladder, or have the "perfect life", or do what our parents or teachers thought we "should" do. We find new courage to be the person we really are.

We begin living from the inside out instead of the other way around--from a sense of what is important, not what is expected. From a life of "what's in it for me?" to "how can I help you?" We discover new and compassionate friends and sometimes drift away from old ones. We go from a thousand name Rolodex of contacts to a handful of people we love.

We often also find our spiritual center and an inner peace. We become unafraid to die at the same time we are beginning to live again:

Crumb Three.

We pick up one more gift that I have noticed. We seem to get anointed with an ability to help someone else. You know what I mean. We didn't want it. We didn't ask for it, but, we got it, anyway. It's almost like a giant invisible radar screen gets mounted on our head, and we now picks up vibrations from other people in need. Also, we find that we really can help. People seek us out. People who don't know what to say when a child dies, calls us and asks: "Could you please go over?" We know we can and will if only to listen.

I am reminded of the story of a little boy who arrived home late from school. "Where have you been?" his mother asked. "I was helping Timmy who broke his bike," the child answered. "But, Honey," the mother said, "You don't even know how to fix a bike." "I know Mom," came the reply, "But I was just helping him cry."

Sometimes we can just help someone else cry, and that is enough. Unlike most other people, we can walk directly up to a bereaved parent or sibling, look them in the eye, and say, "I know how you feel." That is what TCF is all about. In helping

another person, we help ourselves heal, too.

So what do we do with these new gifts or bread crumbs left along the way for us? New priorities. A new sense of self. And the ability to help someone else. These are definitely good things. They did not come from the death of our child. Nothing good comes from the death of a child. As Rabbi Harold Kushner said in Seattle: "There is no silver lining." But there is change. These changes come after the death, when we recognize that we can't change what happened, but we can change what we do about it.

One day our surviving son, Rick, put his arms around us in a family hug and said: "Okay, Mom and Dad, now that we are a family of three instead of four, we each have to live our lives one-third better." That, more than any other moment in our grief, marked our turning point.

My wife has a recurring dream. She is in Heaven many years from now, and she greets our son. "Okay, Mom," Mark says. "So tell me everything you did after I died?" On that day she will be proud to answer: "I lived the rest of my life one-third better in your name."

I suspect most bereaved parents divide their lives into those two distinct stages of time: before and after the death. What we do in Stage Two we do in our child's name. And because we do it, the world after our child died in some small way is changed forever. And when the world in some small way is changed forever, then our child's life continues to make a difference. And when our child's life continues to make a difference, he or she is never entirely gone.
--Richard Edler, TCF South Bay/L.A. .. CA

Friends and Family...

Helping Others Help You Ten Rules for Self-healing



1. Tell friends to call you often. Explain that after the first couple of months you'll need their calls.
2. Tell your friends to make a specific date with you; none of this "we must get together for lunch." Remind them that you're bound to have "down" times and their patience would be appreciated.
3. Tell them to please feel free to talk about the person that has died — and don't avoid that person's name.
4. It's important for friends to understand that you may appear to be "doing so well" but on the inside

you still hurt. Grief is painful, it's tricky and it's exhausting.

5. Ask your friends to care but not to pity you.

6. Make plain that friends and relatives can still treat you as a person who is still in command and can think for yourself.

7. Tell your friends that it's all right to express their caring. It's OK for them to cry; crying together is better than avoiding the pain.

8. Let your friends know too, that it's all right to say nothing. A squeeze or a hug are often more important than words.

9. Let people know that they can invite you to socialize, but that you might decline.

10. Ask your friends to go for walks with you. You and your friends can "walk off" feelings. Walks promote conversation and help fight depression.

--Ruth Jean Loewinsohn

compassionatefriends.org/blog/helping-others-help-ten-rules-self-healing



Helpful Hint...

Life Insurance and Suicide, Commentary by Edward Bader, Sacramento, CA

If an insured completes suicide within two years of the policy issue date, the beneficiary will not receive the face amount of the life insurance policy. Does this mean that the premium payment was a wasted expense? No! A typical suicide clause reads as follows:

Suicide. The suicide of the insured within two years of the policy issue, date is a risk not assumed under this policy. In such event, however, there shall be a death benefit of an amount equal to the premiums received, without interest.



Welcome...

We Compassionate Friends Are:

Caring, crying, crippled friends.

Outraged with life, having outlived our children.

Meeting once a month to meditate; miserable

Parents all, whether natural, step, or grand.

Pained, pale, paralyzed, pathetic ... from

All walks of life. Agonized and aggrieved.

Sharing memories. Shocked. Seeking support.

Sad, yet sympathetic.

Individuals: isolated.

Old and young, oppressed opening our hearts.

Nice people, you and I.

Alienated from society, no one really understands.

Tragedy has struck, tears flow, time our enemy.

Emptiness inside.

Frail, fallen people; floundering through the day.

Ripped off, raged. Recalling and remembering.

Inconsolable at times.

Enduring pain and loneliness. Emotional.

Not wanting to let go.

Devastated. Longing to die to ease the pain.

Seeking answers.

My Compassionate Friends, I'm sorry we had to meet this way.

--Sharon K. Robertson Mount Vernon, OH

Editor's note: Many bereaved parents can identify with the preceding feelings. TCF is a place we meet to try and overcome some of these normal but overwhelming emotions. Come to a few meeting and decide for yourself how beneficial TCF can be.



Book Review...

Excerpt taken from the book, *After You* by Jojo Moyes ... "Okay. Well. Here's a real question. How long do you think it takes to get over someone dying? Someone you really loved, I mean." I'm not sure why I asked him. It was almost cruelly blunt, given his circumstances .

... Sam's eyes widened a little. "Woah. Well ...", he peered down at his mug, and then out at the shadowy fields ... "I'm not sure you ever do."

"That's cheery." "No. Really. I've thought about it a lot. You learn to live with it, with them. Because they do stay with you, even if they're not living, breathing people any more. It's not the same crushing grief you felt at first, the kind that swamps you, and makes you want to cry in the wrong places, and get irrationally angry with all the idiots who are still alive when the person you love is dead. It's just something you learn to accommodate. Like adapting around a hole. I don't know. It's like you become ... a doughnut instead of a bun."

"The mention of my child's name may bring tears to my eyes, but it never fails to bring music to my ears. If you are really my friend, let me hear the beautiful music of his name. It soothes my broken heart and sings to my soul." --Author unknown

So This is Normal

Normal is having tears waiting behind every smile when you realize someone important is missing from all the important events in your family's life.

Normal is trying to decide what to take to the cemetery for Birthdays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Years, Valentine's Day, July 4th.

Normal is feeling like you can't sit another minute without getting up and screaming, because you just don't like to sit through anything anymore.

Normal is not sleeping very well because a thousand what if's and why didn't I's go through your head constantly.

Normal is reliving that day continuously through your eyes and mind, holding your head to make it go away.

Normal is having the TV on the minute you walk into the house to have noise, because the silence is deafening.

Normal is every happy event in my life always being backed up with sadness lurking close behind, because of the hole in my heart.

Normal is staring at every boy who looks like he is my son's age. And then thinking of the age he would be now. Then wondering why it is even important to imagine it, because it will never happen.

Normal is telling the story of my child's death as if it were an everyday, common place activity, and then seeing the horror in someone's eyes at how awful it sounds. And yet realizing it has become a part of my "normal."

Normal is having some people afraid to mention my child. Normal is making sure that others remember her.

Normal is weeks, months, and years after the initial shock, the grieving gets worse sometimes, not better.

Normal is not listening to people compare anything in their life to this loss, unless they too have lost a

child. Nothing — even if your child is in the remotest part of the earth away from you — it doesn't compare. Losing a parent is horrible, but having to bury your own child is unnatural.

Normal is sitting at the computer crying, sharing how you feel with chat buddies who have also lost a child.

Normal is feeling a common bond with friends on the computer in the UK or US but yet never having met any of them face to face.

Normal is a new friendship with another grieving mother, talking and crying together over our children and our new lives.

Normal is not listening to people make excuses for God. "God may have done this because..." I know that my child is in heaven, but hearing people trying to think up excuses as to why my child was taken from this earth is not appreciated and makes absolutely no sense to this grieving mother.

Normal is wondering this time whether you are going to say you have two children, because you will never see this person again and it is not worth explaining that my eldest child is in heaven. And yet when you say you have only two children to avoid that problem, you feel horrible as if you have betrayed your child.

Normal is asking God why he took your child's life and asking if there even is a God.

Normal is knowing I will never get over this loss, in a day or a million years.

And last of all, Normal is hiding all the things that have become "normal" for you to feel, so that everyone around you will think that you are "normal."

--taken from A JOURNEY TOGETHER,
www.bereavedparentsusa.org.





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 Trilieggi & 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 Laulhere
Born: 9/74 Died: 3/96
Parents: Larry & Chris
Laulhere

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

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

Lizzie Jester
Born: 6/93 Died: 7/18
Father: Lee Jester

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 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 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

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 Mosher

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

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.tcsbla.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.

A Birthday Tribute to Alex J. Mantyla Mar. 1989 - Aug. 2008



Happy 30th Birthday, Alex!

How can it be 30 years since that Easter Sunday when you brought your bright light into the world? We so clearly remember your first steps, your first word (moon) and your first day of school. So many "firsts" that seem like they happened yesterday.

Even at a young age you had so many exciting ideas for your future. We loved that enthusiasm and encouraged you to find your dreams. You had so many. We're happy that you lived long enough to accomplish some of your dreams but our hearts break knowing how many of those dreams were not fulfilled.

But in your nineteen years you gave much of yourself to others that helped them reach some of their dreams. We've heard from so many who told us how your beautiful smile and crazy sense of humor, your courage in challenging situations and most importantly, your unwavering kindheartedness made such an impact on their lives.

We totally understand their feelings. You had the same effect on us and we're so grateful for all the beautiful memories you've left behind in our minds and our hearts. They keep your bright light shining even now, as we navigate our lives in this "new normal."

Alex, we feel your presence always. Thank you for watching over us.

Love, Mom and Dad

For Siblings...



Things Everyone Should Know About Siblings & Grief

Tragic as it was—hard as it was to suddenly

inherit two sons, and "As much as I missed her—I still felt sorrier for my parents, for her children, for her close friends, for everyone but me. I'm just the sibling, I thought. How wrong I was. How wrong so many of us are about siblings and grief.

These two experiences have given me unique insight into sibling grief. I've experienced how the death of two different siblings, at two different times of my life, and in two unique sets of circumstances has impacted my family and me. These two death experiences were completely different. My understanding and the impact these deaths, based on my age when they died, was completely different. But, both of my sisters' deaths had a profound impact on my life.

There are many things people need to learn about siblings and grief. Here are some I would like everyone to know.

Sibling grief is often misunderstood—by parents, families, friends, and counselors, even by the siblings themselves. So much focus is given to the parents of the lost child, to the children of the lost parent, to the spouse of the lost adult sibling. And, rightly so. But, what about the siblings? What about the ones who, like me, have grown up with the deceased? Who believed they would have a lifetime with their sister or brother? Who now face that lifetime alone?

Siblings may feel "trumped" by the grief of other family members. I sure felt this way, and it's common, since the focus is usually on the parents if a young sibling dies and on the surviving spouse or children if an older sibling dies. This may lead to minimizing a sibling's own loss.

Surviving children do, unfortunately, end up taking the fallout from parents', siblings', or other family members' mistakes, emotional blowups, or neglect. In many ways, siblings often experience a double loss: the loss of their sister or brother, and the loss of their parents (at least for a time, but sometimes, permanently). I know this from experience. Though my parents did the best they could, after my youngest sister died, our entire family was different. My mom retreated into her own grief, staying in her room, depressed and sick for years. My dad retreated into work and anything to take his mind from his pain. Luckily, I was already on my own, in college, at the time; my younger siblings weren't so lucky. At 9, 11, 14, and 17 years old, they grew up with a completely different set of parents than I had. I tried to step in as a "parent" figure over the years, but the separation from my parents in their time of need profoundly influenced their lives. It profoundly

influenced my life. It profoundly changed our family.

Even adult siblings will feel the loss deeply. The pain isn't less simply because you're older. In fact, in many ways, it's harder. You understand more. You know what it means to die, and you will feel the pain of the loss in a different way than young children, who still haven't developed abstract thinking and understanding, will. Grieve your loss. My best advice for siblings in grief: Feel the loss as long as you need to, and give yourself time to heal. Because sibling loss is so misunderstood, you may receive messages that make you feel like you should be "over it by now." They don't know sibling loss. Now, you do. It takes time. Lots of time. It's not about "getting over" the loss of a sibling. You don't get over it. You create your life and move on, when you're ready. But you will always remember your brother or sister—the missing piece of your life.

I once heard someone say, "When a parent dies, you lose the past. When a child dies, you lose the future. When a sibling dies, you lose the past and the future." That is the grief of a sibling—grief for what was past, and grief for what should have been the future. Just remember these things, my friends. Remember to be there for siblings in grief. You can be the difference in helping them create a bright future, even if they now must do so without their beloved sibling.

--Dr Christina Hibbert, *Overcoming. Becoming. Flourishing* (www.drchristinahibbert.com) This article has been extracted from Dr Christina Hibbert's website. You can read her full article on <http://www.drchristinahibbert.com/dealing-with-grief/siblings-grief-10-things-everyone-should-know/> TCF Queensland Australia Newsletter



For Grandparents...

My Grandchild Died

(Author wishes to remain anonymous)

Many months ago now my grandchild died. Some days it feels as if it were yesterday, other days it seems a life time ago. I am told by my friends and some of my family that it is time I "moved on". They tell me that I must put "it" behind me! It is not easy to smile back. It is not easy to tell them why I will never "get over it". How can you explain the grief? One cannot do so and I hope they never learn from personal experience what it is like for a grandmother to lose a grandchild.

I used to think my heart had broken but I now know that is not true. If my heart had broken I would not be here. My "being" broke, I feel as if I am a 3D jigsaw puzzle that broke into thousands of pieces the day my grandchild died. Slowly, through self help I have put that puzzle together. It is not perfect and regularly a piece, or sometimes a few pieces, slip out and remain out for some time. They can be put back in and need to be for me to live my life, but I find I have two pieces that will not fit back into that puzzle, no matter how I try. Some days one piece almost fits; this is the grief for my grandchild. It will always be a new piece in my being. That grief will remain until the day I die. It is a piece of puzzle uniquely shaped from happy and sad memories, from an undying love, from so many emotions. I touch this piece of puzzle often, sometimes the grief it brings is so intense it is almost unbearable, other days it does not seem so bad. Some days touching it makes me smile. It is always in my thoughts and I feel it constantly, however I can place it in my pocket and know that it rests safely there. It is at peace so I have learned not to struggle to try to make it fit.

The other piece is more difficult. It belongs to my child, the daughter I gave birth to, fed and nurtured, loved and cuddled. The daughter I watched grow from baby to adulthood. The daughter I helped shape into a wonderful human being. She too was part of my "being", I understood her and we shared a history. We were mother and daughter. Now that piece has changed shape forever and does not even look like fitting in. Can I mold the shape to fit, no not yet. Will it ever fit back in? I do not know. I understand that she has changed forever and I love her unconditionally but I wonder if I will ever get to know this new daughter. Is it possible to find that comfortable place I once shared with her? Can that natural mother daughter relationship be learned again now that we are not child and adult? She has had to change to cope, she has been dealt the most terrible of tragedies, and her life has changed forever. She lost a child. She has needed to find strength from her deepest self. She is grown up now, she no longer needs me to nurture her as a mother but I still need her as a daughter. I long for the day when I can feel her arms around me again and hear her say I, love you Mum from her heart. Maybe then that piece of puzzle will have days when it fits into my pocket comfortably too.

It will always be a piece of my puzzle whose shape has changed but hopefully one which also

becomes comfortable to hold.

Is this why they say a grandparent suffers a double grief when their grandchild dies? Maybe --Lehigh Valley PA Chapter newsletter.

From Our Members...



Lament For A Son

There's a hole in the world now. In the place where he was, there's now just nothing. A center, like no other— of memory and hope and knowledge and affection which once inhabited this earth— is gone.

Only a gap remains. A perspective on this world, unique in this world, which once moved about within this world, has been rubbed out. Only a void is left.

There's nobody now who saw just what he saw, knows what he knew, remembers what he remembered, loves what he loved. A person, an irreplaceable person, is gone.

Never again will anyone apprehend the world quite the way he did. Never again will anyone inhabit the world the way he did. Questions I have can never now get answers.

The world is emptier. My son is gone. Only a hole remains, a void, a gap, never to be filled.
--Nicholas Wolterstorff Independence MO TCF newsletter, 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.

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: March 1st for April 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. To make it easier for those who would rather donate online, just go to our website and use the donate button at www.tcf-sbla.org A receipt will be emailed to you for tax purposes. (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 definitely 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 all our children who have gone too soon.

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.

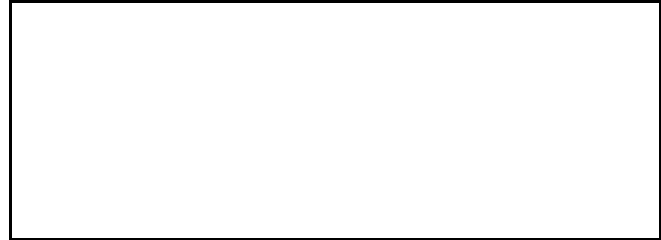
The Compassionate Friends
South Bay/L.A., CA Chapter
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance, CA 90510

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT 3223
TORRANCE CA 90503



March 2019

– Return Service Requested –



Time Sensitive Material, Please Deliver Promptly



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

**We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.**

**The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes,
but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain,
just as your hope becomes my hope.**

**We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.
We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.**

We are young, and we are old.

**Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh
and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.**

**Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength,
while some of us are struggling to find answers.**

**Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression,
while others radiate an inner peace.**

**But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends,
it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other
our love for the children who have died.**

**We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves,
but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love
to share the pain as well as the joy,
share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts,
and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.**

**WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.
©2019 THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS -- SOUTH BAY/L.A., CA CHAPTER**

If you no longer wish to receive this mailing or have a new address, please contact us.