



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

AUGUST 2019 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be August 1st, 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 August 1st meeting will start with "Grief: Doing It My Way."

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

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

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The Thursday, August 1st meeting will start with "Grief: Doing Grief My Way." "Everyone grieves differently and at a different pace." We hear that often but what does it really mean? Do we hold out hope that we loved and lost the same child so we will find ways to get over the loss together? Or does it mean I have to stumble through this pain on my own because we will both be grieving differently? Many times you may find it difficult to lean on one another, when to do so, you would be leaning on one who was already doubled over in pain. Other times you may reach out to friends and family members who want to help but don't know how, thus leaving you both feeling like you are walking on eggshells. Ultimately, every bereaved person must find their own way through the pain and loss, but many of the following articles offer insights into what helped them on their own grief journey.

Why We Grieve Differently



Each of us is unique with our own personality, life experience and ways we respond to the stress and events that happen throughout our lifetime. Therefore, it's not surprising that our grieving styles are different and no two of us will ever grieve the same way. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to feel or grieve after a loved one dies. As bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents, we are inundated with well-meaning and well-intended advice about how we should grieve and are even given imposed "rules" of grief. We are often blamed if we are too "strong and stoic" and likewise judged if we continue to grieve beyond someone's arbitrary time frame. People grieve with different intensities over varying duration's of time. Some people are more expressive with their grief and find it more helpful to talk and intrinsically "better" than another – they're simply different.

Despite the fact that we grieve differently, people generally experience some fairly normal and predictable reactions and stages to traumatic loss. Initially, shock and denial are typical responses to emotional trauma and serve as a protective response to the reality of what has just occurred.

You may feel as though you are walking around in a daze or feeling numb as if disconnected from your life, this usually gives way to overwhelming and intense feelings. Experience physical symptoms such as stomach cramps and feeling as

though you can't breathe are common reactions. You may have a sense that your heart has broken into a million pieces. Many people experience a sensation of a knot in the center of their being and have a feeling as though they will never be whole again.

You may experience intense anger and rage. Thoughts and behavior may change. You may experience repeated and vivid memories and flashbacks of the event which can-lead to reactions such as a rapid heartbeat or anxious feelings. Often people find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions. It is very common for sleeping and eating patterns to be disrupted for awhile. As time goes by, you may experience recurring emotional reactions to trigger such as something you see or hear, something someone says or simply the day of the week or month in which the loss occurred. When the reality of the loss begins to settle, you may sink into a deep sorrow and depression and feel your life is over.

Usually with time, this gives way to a coming to terms with the reality and a discovery of ways to move beyond your suffering, integrating the loss into who you are now with a renewed sense of hope and meaning for the future. The grief journey isn't necessarily a linear process. Sometimes you may find yourself revisiting a stage you thought you had left behind and think you're not making progress. Moving back and forth between stages is a normal part of the grieving process. Over time, symptoms of an emotional trauma generally subside to a manageable level and normal functioning gradually returns. If you find yourself resorting to destructive means of coping with the loss or having difficulty moving forward, you should seek professional help.

However people respond to a traumatic loss, it is important to recognize that we are unique individuals with unique styles, intensities of our emotions and timetables. We will all respond differently to the loss of a loved one. When we honor this truth, we can then accept our own manner of grieving and be sensitive and respectful to another's response to loss. We all have our unique personal journey back to wholeness and healing.

--Pamela Leonhardt, PsyD

The challenge is to engage in life again with renewed energy and embrace the new days with a gentle, welcoming spirit.

--Molly Fumia, *Safe Passage*

The Terms of My Surrender

From the moment you came into my life, I hated you. I despised you. You came on the heels of my worst nightmare come true - the death of my young daughter. I didn't know your name at the time. I just knew that you brought with you all the horrible feelings and emotions I had spent a lifetime learning how to repress and ignore.

You broke my defenses down. You pounded me with pain, panic, anger, confusion, hysterics, anguish ... and too many more to list. You came in waves; crushing one emotion down on me after another, but, in such quick succession it was hard to even breathe or stand. Sometimes the feelings and emotions came in combinations, leaving me a shaking, sobbing, angry mess. Soon, people around me who knew better told me that you had a name.

Your name was Grief.

When I realized who you were and how you operated, I decided to wage war on you. I couldn't possibly continue the barrage of emotions that constantly debilitated me, so I became determined to stop you in your tracks and send you back to the depths of darkness you came from.

In the early weeks and months, my first defense against you was to "play dead" like an opossum being hunted by predators. My mind became numb to dull your overwhelming pain. I felt as though I was going through the motions of life without really experiencing it. The sensation felt like when you stare at the open road in front of you on a long, boring drive and then can't remember how you got from one place to another. But over time, you found ways to defeat my numbness. I then tried distracting myself with work; burying myself with so much busyness you couldn't force your way in. But you were always there lurking in the shadows waiting for your moment to strike. When someone broke me out of my busy stupor by innocently asking, "How are you?" – at that moment, my concentration broke and you flooded into every crevice of my body. Enraged, I thought to myself, "Do you REALLY want to know how I am?" But I'd bite my tongue and flatly answer, "Fine," while you surged your pain through my body.

Having lost these battles, I began scanning over countless, books and articles to try to discover your tactics and secret weapons so that I could plot my next moves. I attended therapy and support

groups to learn from the experts and others who had survived you so that I could glean their winning strategies and use them for myself in defeating you. It didn't do much good. I found myself withdrawing from everything and everyone around me to try to isolate myself from you and all your triggers. It only served to strengthen your resolve.

Occasionally, I won small victories. Talking about you and your oppressiveness to others seemed to send you away momentarily. But in the quiet moments, you always reappeared. Writing about you made me feel as though I had the upper hand, but the glow of victory soon faded after the last word had been written. Exercising seemed to alleviate your oppression, but in retaliation, you often cranked up your attacks to leave me too exhausted— physically and mentally— to find the motivation to work out. Spending time in nature often gave me a sense of peace and inner strength that softened you some, but could never defeat you altogether.

I spent years fighting you until I finally accepted this fact: I cannot beat you. I cannot make you go away. In fact, the more I fight you, the stronger your feelings and emotions take over me. I've found that you feed on fear and anger. I've discovered you thrive and grow from any attempts to control or resist you.

So, if I can't win, I officially wave my white flag and surrender. But I do so on my terms:

I Will No Longer Fear You

Despite the few times when I thought the only escape from you was to end my own life, I am still here; still standing. I have survived every painful emotion; every panic attack; every uncontrollable rage; every bout of severe depression. I am stronger than I ever thought possible, and will no longer fear your attacks. While I know some will still come out of nowhere, take my breath away and bring me to my knees, I will stay calm and know that your attack will eventually subside. I will ride the wave and let it take me where it will, knowing that eventually I will find my way home.

I Will Support Your Other Victims

Much like others supported me in my time of need; I will reach out a supportive hand to anyone who is within your grasp, I will listen quietly to their story as many times as they need to tell it. I will share my experience with those who seek it in hopes it will bring them a sense of understanding and community.

I Will learn From You



Since you can be a destructive force to those who resist you, I will instead pull you closer and look to you as my ultimate teacher. For I have learned that deep within your pain and suffering lie kernels of truth and knowledge on how to live a meaningful life: a life without fear; a life filled with love and compassion. As you were created by losing a cherished loved one, you have love at your core. I will learn how to find the love at the center of every pain. I will learn to find the truth at the center of every fear. And when I learn these truths, I will share my knowledge with the world. These are the terms of my surrender, and I know you have no choice but to accept them.

--Maria Kubitz, TCF Contra Costa County, CA
In memory of Margareta Sol Kubitz



On Marriage

A child's death places a tremendous strain on the family unit. The surviving children are affected by undercurrents if they are very young, and if older, the realization that their world is not as safe as they assumed it to be. Couples in the marriage are also very vulnerable. Many marriages do not survive the devastation of grief.

Reverend Steve Wendfeldt of St. Charles Episcopal Church shared some of his knowledge learned from working with couples and families in grief. He spoke of good grief and bad grief within a marriage.

He saw good grief as each spouse being allowed to grieve in his or her own way. Couples need to remember that although they are married, each may have very different coping skills and accept the other's way of grieving. Bad grief was forgetting each may have very different needs and one spouse trying to make the other grieve the same way together.

Good grief is keeping the lines of communication open, rather than clamming up. Share the child who died. Talk about him or her, say his or her name often. Let your spouse know your needs. Ask your spouse his or her needs. This is not the time to expect your spouse to be a mind-reader. The emotional system is on overload. The radar system we have developed regarding our spouses may have shut down.

Steve also talked about how important it was to keep the intimacy of the marriage even though this does not necessarily mean sexual intercourse. He noted that overwhelming grief may often result in sexual impotence in the male. That is why the

special signals the couple had before their child's death need to continue - the special touch or gesture, special word or look.

There is a need in the early days of grief to verbalize the commitment to continue the marriage. After a child's death, there may be many changes affecting the marriage. The marriage may be different. Goals and area of importance may change. By doing nothing, you may not be prepared when the hard times come, which they definitely will.

By recommitting yourself to the marriage, you have given yourselves a fighting chance to survive the hard times that have the potential to destroy the marriage.

Steve also noted the family unit needs to maintain boundaries. The children need to know how far they can "bounce off the walls" before going out of the boundaries of the family rules.

Perhaps by being aware of the devastation of a child's death you will become part of the positive statistics on survival of a marriage rather than a divorce statistic.

--Kitsap Co. WA newsletter 4/91

Lesson's

In the 4 years since the death of my beloved son Joey, I have learned many lessons - lessons that were not my choice to learn.

I have learned what it means to go from a happy carefree family of 5 to a grieving heart-broken family of 4.

I have learned that grief hurts like no pain I have ever experienced before.

I have learned the unbelievable pain involved in arranging a funeral and burying a son.

I have learned that the death of a son takes its toll on the entire family.

I have learned that the general public who never experienced such a pain have many cures and "shoulds" for a grieving mother.

I have learned what it means to try to go on with life ... taking one step forwards and 2 steps backwards.

I have learned what it means to be so consumed with pain and grief that it is impossible to go on with trivial things of everyday life.

I have learned that the sun "dared" to come up the very day after my son died, and continues to do so daily.

I have learned the pain of getting 2 Mother's Day cards, instead of 3.

I have learned that Christmas and other family days are not so much fun any more.

I have learned that 4 years is the same as yesterday in my memory.

I have learned the pain involved in seeing my son's friends marry and have babies.

I have learned that life is not fair, and bad things do happen to good people.

Yes, I have learned so many painful lessons of life, just as each of you has.

But in these 4 years I have also learned that I can and must go on with my life. That going on with life and laughter does not mean I have forgotten my son or love him any less. Going on with life is just what my son would have wanted for me.

I have learned that I have the best, most loving husband in the world. Who else would have loved and supported me so during these 4 long years?

--Pat Moser, Bereaved Parents of the USA, Ocala, FL

The Myth Of Perfect Parenthood



The feeling of worthlessness is strong in many bereaved parents. I believe that the myth of Perfect Parenthood that is deeply set in us is one of the main causes. We expect that we will raise perfect children, provide them with the very best we can afford, and most of all, see that they are safe and secure in their lives. Then, when the unspeakable happens and our child dies, we feel we have failed totally and completely.

We did not see the unhappiness in our child in time to prevent his suicide. We did not spot the symptoms of her illness in time to prevent her death. We let him take the car instead of driving him ourselves. It's our fault. We failed to be a PERFECT PARENT. It sounds ridiculous, but unconsciously, below our awareness, lies the idea that if we had been doing our job as "Good Parents," we could have prevented our child's death.

Not one of us has ever said, "I expect to be the perfect parent," but on all sides of us, it is implied that we should be. The tv and advertising media are big contributors to this myth. The "Father Knows Best" type of tv programs convinces us that: we should be perfect parents. The parents in the tv shows always see that their child is depressed and know the right words to talk him out of it. The tv mother always discovers the illness in time for the doctors to cure her. The tv child has

been taught to drive carefully and if he does get into an accident, he comes out with fixable injuries.

Advertising tells us the right things to use to raise perfect children. If they are not perfect, it tells us the right things to use to make them perfect. It even tells us what insurance to buy that will help us pay for that perfection! We ourselves expect to do a better job of rearing our children than our parents did. All around us, other parents SEEM to be doing a better job with their children than we are.

We are bombarded from all sides by the idea that we should be perfect parents. Even before our child died, many of us felt inadequate as parents at times, but when our child died, we saw ourselves as total failures. Our unconscious minds told us we were not perfect parents, so therefore our child was dead. We failed. We were worthless. How unfortunate this is. As human beings we cannot be perfect parents. We need to realize that we did the best we could have done for our child with the emotional, intellectual and material tools we had. Our child's death, no matter what he died from, was not caused by our failure as parents. We need to be aware that this myth of Perfect Parenthood is actively at work in our subconscious minds and feeds our feelings of worthlessness. The pain of the loss of our child is devastating enough-- we don't need to beat ourselves down even further by allowing this myth to consume us.

--Margaret Gerner, TCF, St. Louis, MO

TCF

When a drunk driver killed my daughter, Allison, at age 19, it was a monumental effort to just breathe much less think my mind and body could survive. I was so dysfunctional that I lived everyday in just my pajamas. Going to my first support group meeting of The Compassionate Friends, I pulled a pair of jeans and sweatshirt over my pajamas. I listened as each parent spoke of their child and their grief I heard those whose child died months ago and those whose child died years ago. These were living, breathing people in the same room with me and not just names and stories in a newspaper or book.

It's 14 years later and, on occasion, I'll wear a pair of pajamas under my clothes when I go to a meeting just to remind myself of where I was and how far I've come in this journey I share with others.

--Barbara Reboratti

Grief Education

Recently, I overheard a lament by a very young, bereaved mom and it got me to thinking. She said, "I don't feel young anymore." Grief has that affect on all of us, regardless of our age, don't you think? We've instantly been made older when we are new survivors.

Of course she was referring to all of her friends. They are having babies, rejoicing over each new tooth and new step. They talk of mortgages, house plans, new carpet and wallpaper. They have baby showers, write thank you notes and take pictures for a baby book. But all this young mom was doing was making funeral plans, picking out a casket, getting sympathy cards instead of presents and suddenly feeling old. The bloom of youth had been replaced by the reality of life and death.

Nothing really grabs our attention like death. Everything that seemed important the day before suddenly has no significance now. What we worried about in the past has no bearing on today. Compared to death, everything else seems like a piece of cake. But, in the midst of this incredibly heart-wrenching time, I wonder if we haven't been given an opportunity to learn things our friends can't grasp. We have learned the value of enjoying each day as it comes, not always saving and waiting for a rainy day but doing things now.

We have learned the importance of giving hugs, saying thank you and sharing joys while our families are with us. We have learned to be grateful for the privilege of doing their laundry, fixing their lunches, buying groceries, waiting up till they come home, giving them advice and picking up the pieces when they don't follow our advice.

We have realized the satisfaction that comes from cheering their endeavors and overlooking their faults. We understand that memories are made each day, and we need to make them count because we may not have an opportunity to "add to our memory banks."

Yes, grief has made us older, but I hope that as time passes we can look back and say that it has also made us wise in ways that never would have been possible before. It's not that we wanted to volunteer to be bereaved! I often say that when someone says we only learn through actual experience, we should raise our hands and ask if we couldn't just try the correspondence course as an alternative. But, since the experience is upon us, I hope you can know that your family and

friends and those you work with and live with, someday will understand.

-- Carlene Vester Eneroth

Spokane, WA

Angels and Warriors and Cancer, Oh My



Having a child die before you is not easy. Everyone can agree on that. It is universal knowledge that parents are supposed to die first – sometimes too soon, but they still die first. Then the kids. Sadly, it doesn't always work out that way. Sometimes children die before their parents. It sucks, but it happens. Seven children in America will die from cancer today.

How we make sense of that as parents of a dead child will determine how we move forward. My husband and I have opted for acceptance. We accept that our daughter was diagnosed with cancer. We accept that she was one of the 50% of children diagnosed with a brain tumor that will die. We accept that there was so little information about her type of cancer, papillary meningioma, that there was no treatment protocol to guide her doctors. They did the best they could, but as a family member who is a cancer researcher told us, everything that was done for Donna was nothing more than "a shot in the dark."

So, we do our best to accept something that defies the natural order of things. We don't like any of it, but we accept it. We also know that other folks accept different things. In trying to make sense out of childhood cancer, many turn to metaphors for answers. Our children who have died become "angels," gentle and revered creatures lucky enough to fly above us and be with God, or "warriors" waging war against the enemy inside their body. This brings me no comfort.

The words we use to talk about cancer, in children and adults, influence how we think about cancer and those unlucky enough to be touched by it. Survivors are called "victorious" and "winners." Those who have not survived their cancer are called "angels" and "in a better place." I read a description last week that almost made me throw my iPad across the room. A respected cancer advocate wrote the words "those who have fought and surrendered to cancer" to describe people who have died as a result of the disease. Ugh. AARRRRGGGGHHHH.

Words matter, people. My 4-year-old daughter

is not an angel right now. She is a child who died of an aggressive brain tumor. I myself, early in treatment, used to refer to Donna as a warrior. Then one day I looked at her – my beautiful and vulnerable daughter. She was not a warrior. She was a girl, little more than a baby, under 2 years old. She held no weapons, she had no strategy, she answered to no general. Donna was no warrior. Just a little girl.

I even try to stay away from the analogy of "fighting" cancer, which is so very common. In a fight, we can all recognize that there are generally winners and losers. If those who are "victorious" over their diagnosis are the "winners," then it stands to reason that those unlucky enough to die after being diagnosed with a more aggressive strain of the disease or some unfortunate circumstance like infection, are "losers," or have "fought and surrendered to cancer." Hell, no!

My girl is not a loser, and she sure as hell never surrendered. Good freaking Lord, just days before she died, she was still attending school. Does that sound like surrendering to you? Not to me. Not a chance.

I don't want to be all self-righteous here, or play the cancer card – the card that implies the my opinion holds more water than yours because of its hard-earned credentials. I do, though, want to inform and question and educate.

When we use words like angel and warrior to describe a child with cancer, why do we do that? How are those the go-to metaphors for children diagnosed with the number one disease killer of children? Does it make it easier to accept the brutal consequences of a disease that is underfunded and ignored by so many? Does it make it prettier to think of thousands of angels floating above us, protecting us in a way that we were unable to protect them? Does it make us believe that these kids are stronger than they actually are if we wrap them in the imagery of warriors with protective gear and weapons to defend themselves?

Human nature demands that we try and make sense out of things we don't understand. I think that is a large part of these metaphors that romanticize these most vulnerable of children. Let's not do that anymore, OK? Let's not lay our own needs on these kids. They and their families are already carrying more than their fair share of burdens. Think before you speak. Ask the family what language they prefer. Is their child an angel? A warrior? Mine isn't. My child is neither. My child

is dead. Angels and warriors only confuse the issue.

--The Huffington Post, by Sheila Quirke

Endowment

Hope gives us vision for regaining the tenderness of memories.
 Hope carries us through to survival and healing.
 Hope offers us courage for acceptance and overcoming.
 Hope gives us new spirit and new laughter.
 Hope is among the greatest gifts to be found in time of sorrow.
 But hope cannot restore on earth what is lost to death.
 Hope can only go forward and make us new.
 Give space to hope in your life.
 By Sascha, From LARGO, Fall 2001

Twice Bereaved

I am a parent twice bereaved. In one thirteen-month period I lost my oldest son to suicide and my youngest son to leukemia. Grief has taught me many things about the fragility of life and the finality of death.

To lose that which means the most to us is a lesson in helplessness and humility and survival. After being stripped of any illusions of control I might have harbored, I had to decide what questions were still worth asking. I quickly realized that the most obvious ones – Why my sons? Why me? – were as pointless as they were inevitable. Any appeal to fairness was absurd. I was led by my fellow sufferers, those I loved and those who had also endured irredeemable losses, to find reasons to go on.

Like all who mourn I learned an abiding hatred for the word "closure," with its comforting implications that grief is a time-limited process from which we will all recover. The idea that I could reach a point when I would no longer miss my children was obscene to me and I dismissed it.

I had to accept the reality that I would never be the same person, that some part of my heart, perhaps the best part, had been cut out and buried with my sons.

What was left? Now there was a question worth contemplating.

-- Gordon Livingston, MD, in *Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart: Thirty True Things You Need to Know Now*



My Baby



A gift for such a little while,
 your loss just seems so wrong,
 you should not have left before us,
 it's with loved ones you belong.
 Do not judge a song by it's duration,
 Nor by the number of it's notes,
 Judge it by the richness of it's contents.
 Sometimes those unfinished are among the most
 poignant.
 Do not judge a song by it's duration,
 Nor by the number of it's notes,
 Judge it by the way it touches and lifts the soul.
 Sometimes those unfinished are among the most
 beautiful.
 And when something has enriched your life.
 And when it's melody lingers on in your heart.
 Is it unfinished? Or is it endless?
 --Author Unknown

Newly Bereaved...

What Should I Expect?

When a grieving family member first attends a TCF meeting, they may be so full of emotional pain that they can only sit and listen. To talk might require more emotional composure and energy than they currently possess. Others, fresh in their grief and quite possibly still residing in shock, might choose to talk non-stop; others may choose to hide their tears and actually find ways to joke about life. All of those ways are considered normal and acceptable. But, either way, talking or listening, laughing or crying, dialogue with other families who know and understand what you are going through will eventually be of extraordinary benefit.

Sometimes parents attend a couple meetings of The Compassionate Friends hoping for a ninety-minute miracle. Then when the pain remains, or actually becomes more intense as it surfaces, they decide not to attend any more meetings, where painful memories might evoke tears. Sometimes the newly bereaved just don't have enough physical energy to attend a meeting. They struggle just to make it through the day. Others assume the mistaken belief that if you just don't dwell on it, it will get better with time. These parents may try to force the grief down deep inside, and some people carry the unexpressed pain inside for years, where it continues to simmer and fester until it manifests

in serious physical consequences.

Unresolved grief does not go away. It can be eased or masked for a time with drugs, and often a parent turns to tranquilizers, anti-depressants, or other medicinal chemicals with unknown risk, seeking permanent relief from the emotional devastation.

But true healing occurs through a long process involving time, love and understanding of others, and by acknowledging, discussing and ultimately learning to accept all the feelings and experiences which surrounded your loss. It takes inordinate courage to confront the Demon of Death and the loss of a child. It also requires a certain amount of love and care for your fellow human beings to continue to share with other newly bereaved. But ultimately, when we decide to walk this walk with The Compassionate Friends, the love and support we offer to one another—as together we travel the road to healing—brings comfort, strength, understanding and finally, a newfound sense of purpose in our life. We are not alone, and by truly caring for one another we can help each other go way beyond “just surviving,” or “getting over it.” We are truly sorry for your loss and we extend ourselves to you with compassion and love.
 --Sharon Steffke © TCF Downriver One Heart Chapter, MI

Seasoned Grievors...

Summer Son

As a little boy his hair was so golden it was almost white. In the summer sunlight his hair glowed and at night in the darkness it still seemed to contain the light of day. For our family the summertime was a favorite season. California sunbeams meant swimming, boating and fun summer nights laughing around a campfire. The seasons rolled by and added up to happy years fading into beautiful memories.

It was not during the bitter bite of winter, melancholy fall, nor flowery spring. He died at the beginning of summer; the sunny days instantly became so brutal to bear. I squinted against the harsh brightness and hid in the shadow of sorrow. How many tears could I cry? More than could fill my ice tea glass, more than could fill the pitcher. The sunshine and sadness that first summer he was gone were relentless and inescapable, an endless summer. I swam against the tide of emotion and felt myself drowning in sorrow,

adrift in anguish.

Slowly over the years the joy of the seasons came back to me. The painful memory of that sad summer became overshadowed by all the seasons in which we shared our lives. Thinking of him running on a white sandy beach or roasting marshmallows to a crisp brings me a great deal of happiness. These memories are some of the best parts of my life. Relaxing and going with the flow I have waded back into a new life without him.

Now when I feel the warmth of the summer sun I feel the warmth of him. Remembering him like the sun because he brought light into my life. He lit the room with his presence; he lit me up with love and laughter. When I am at the lake I watch the waves lap the shore like a book endlessly turning the pages of time. I see the sun sparkling off the waves and I see him in those shimmering white lights. He is shining everywhere, blinking, winking from a place of peace.

I know that he is always there in that light and the warmth of that light is always within me. I am illuminated from the inside out by beautiful memories of my summer son.

--Donna Hogue, Granite Bay, CA

Friends and Family...

Dear "General Public, Friends and Relations"



Allow us to share with you a little of what we are feeling and how you can help and support us. First of all, we have suffered a tremendous loss, and we need to grieve. Even though this may make it uncomfortable for you to be around us, it's something we must do. We won't be "over it" in a few weeks or months, as you might expect. Hopefully, we will learn to live with it, and cope with it. If, in the first stages of our grief, we seem to talk incessantly about our child, how much we loved him, and all the details of his death, just listen to us and "be there." It is one of the kindest things you can do for us. Even in the future, would you give us the freedom and pleasure to talk of our dead child? Please mention his name from time to time or relate something you remember about him. It makes us feel good when someone else remembers!

Some of the problems bereaved parents face as part of their grief work are:

- * restoring emotional balance

- * deciding what to do with our child's belongings
- * lacking motivation
- * dealing with guilt and anger
- * feeling the intensity of the hurt knowing the individuality of grief
- * handling anniversary dates-birth and death
- * delaying major decisions for at least a moving, job changes, etc.
- * experiencing marital discord
- * going to the cemetery
- * remembering our child in special ways
- * feeling that "we are different"
- * dealing with the question, "How many children do you have?"

So you can see that grieving is work. Something we must do for our health's sake. A Compassionate Friends meeting is one of few places where we feel at ease talking of child—where we feel not so different alone, and, where tears are not intimidating those around us. If we sound, a bit selfish, I guess grieving at first, is selfish. Only after we resolve the many feelings that we have and accept the fact that our child is indeed dead, can we reach out to help others, experience growth and live again in a full and productive way.

We try not to be critical of you... After all before our child died, we were the "General Public, Friends, and Relations."

Thanks for this opportunity to share some our feelings. We need your help and support!

Sincerely, A Typical Bereaved Parent

--Carolyn Reincke TCF, Ft. Wayne, IN

Welcome...



To One in Sorrow

Let me come in where you are weeping, friend,
And let me take your hand.

I, who have known a sorrow such as yours.

Can understand.

Let me come in--I would be very still
Beside you in your grief.

I would not bid you cease your weeping, friend,
Tears bring relief.

Let me come in--I would only breathe a prayer
And hold your hand.

For I have known a sorrow such as yours,
And understand.

--Grace Noll Crowell

Editor's Note: The South Bay/L.A. Chapter of TCF wants to support you in your grief. Being

surrounded by other bereaved parents who can offer advice and demonstrate that it is possible to survive the pain of losing child, is helpful to many. We invite you to join at the next meeting.

Helpful Hint...



"When we lose our children, we don't just lose them at the stage they were when they passed. We lose them at every stage we missed, and our hearts will forever ache with that knowledge."

—L. Behrndt

Book In Review...



From Despair To Hope: Survival Guide For Bereaved Parents by Linda Zelik is the painful and heartrending story of a mother who lost her child. Linda gives advice on how to cope with emotions, different stages of grief, and how to take care so that the journey can be less painful. It is a book about hope, acceptance, and healing and advises all grieving parents on how to come to terms with their loss and grief and start living again. The author's personal experience of losing a child, her emotions and stages of grief are tangible and will give confidence to other parents who are going through similar loss, pain, and grief.

The book is divided into three sections. Part 1 is about the author's loss of her son and a glimpse into the family; Part 2 gives practical suggestions in dealing with the many stages of grief, and Part 3 is about after-death communications and signs which are demystified. The author gives tips and suggestions that will help readers deal with the challenges arising from grief so that grieving parents can find meaning in their lives and get back to normalcy. The black and white photographs in the book help readers connect with the author's story and her family. The journey of grief will become easier once this book is read. The author's story will reach out to readers and her suggestions to get respite from the pain of mourning will help many readers who are devastated by the loss of their child. Reviewed by Mamta Madhavan for Readers' Favorite.

—Author is our own South Bay/LA, CA chapter leader

My Memories of You

My memories are precious,
My memories of you.

I treasure them dearly;
I keep them hidden from view.
In the vault of my mind,
With no lock and no key,
It cannot be opened
By anyone but me.
I take them out
From time to time
To polish and clean them,
Keep them fresh in my mind.
To keep you here near me,
And to never forget
How valuable they are
To me, and yet
I still feel so poor,
So alone and deprived
Because you're no longer among us,
You're no longer alive.
So I cry to myself,
As I lay down to sleep,
And I still cling to you
Through the memories I keep.
—By Dale Willett

Your Child Has Died...

your child has died
and only this is certain:
that you will never be
the same again
not what you were
not what you might have been
your child has died
and grief may touch your vision
and new and restless nights
with want and pain
where once your life
found reason, strength, and peace
your child has died
the face of God is changing,
it may be closer and
more careful now
or may seem cold
and cruel and far away
trust in your soul
(how ever bright or somber
how ever calm or fierce)
trust in your soul.
— it will declare
your answer and your hope
in time
in time
—Sasha Wagner



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

Sam Boldissar
Born: 10/91 Died: 3/17
Parents: Jeeri & Frank Boldissar

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

Julian Burns
Born: 12/18 Died: 1/19
Parents: Daniel & Marta Burns

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

Ryan Dobie
Born: 7/92 Died: 2/19
Parents: Linda & Douglas Dobie

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mark 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

Marc David Guerreva
Born: 7/97 Died: 7/17
Mother: Sharon Cortez

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

Jillian Nicole Katnic
Born: 3/87 Died: 10/18
Mother: Debbie Hughes

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

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: 6/17
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

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

Quvia (Cody) Samuel
Born: 4/74 Died: 11/18
Parents: Vincent & Betty Samuel

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

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.tcsfbla.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: Michella Matasso Fincannon August 1986 - January 2006



My Precious Daughter, Michella,

As I share your picture for the newsletter I remember all the cheers and time you spent practicing for cheerleading. It brings a smile to my face. You are forever in my heart and I cherish all the wonderful memories I have of you. You made me proud to be your Mother each and every day. You will be forever loved and missed.

Happy Birthday!

Love, Mom

For Siblings...



For Surviving Brothers and Sisters: Re-entering School after the Death of a Sibling

Going back to school after the death of your brother or sister is a hard thing to go through. At first there are three groups of people to deal with: people who give you a lot of support, people who don't know what to say, and those who give you weird looks and stay away from you. This lasts for a little while.

After a short time, changes occur with each group; those who didn't know what to say start to speak or begin to talk, the group who kept away stops ignoring you, and the people who gave you a lot of support slowly return to their own affairs. After about a month and a half, everything goes back to normal and is over for everyone except you.

This is very difficult to accept and makes you feel all the more alone. After a while the shock for you goes away, and it is then that you need

support from your friends, peers, and teachers. This month is the first anniversary of the death of my brother. Most people will have forgotten and think everything is right with the world.

But it is not! Certainly not to my mother and me.

--Jordan Ely, Bereaved Sibling TCF Albany NY

There's No Competition

There are many things that we have in common with our parents that go beyond genetics. Sometimes our careers, politics and hobbies parallel our parents. One thing I have in common with my parents is we are all bereaved parents. My parents lost my brother Doug nine years ago at the age of 35. My son John died five years ago at the age of 4. All of this created a new dynamic for me in that I'm a bereaved sibling as well as a bereaved parent. It is this sibling aspect that I hope has made me a better parent to my surviving children, although Blake and Kelsey may beg to differ.

It is only natural that each generation wants to improve and be "better" parents than theirs and this holds true for me. I'd like to remind everyone that not all families mirror Ward and June Cleaver and that many of us have found that relatives are sometimes the least compassionate of those that we encounter. I have learned quite a bit from both of my parents on how to treat my surviving children.

I have one parent who I can talk freely to about my brother's or my son's death. We can cry together and not be the least competitive. My other parent's soul was buried along with my brother reveling in the pain and grief. Let me preface this by saying that my relationship with this parent was strained before my brother's death. It has been my experience that the pain of losing a child or sibling only intensifies existing situations. I can choose now to either learn from my parents or I can repeat history and risk alienating my surviving children.

I've tried to make it easy for Blake and Kelsey to talk to me about Johnny. I want Blake to understand that his grief is valid and that I respect him. I never want him to feel like his pain has to compete with mine. Kelsey on the other hand is in a different situation than Blake because she was born just 7 months after John died. For her I must

never let her feel that she is a "substitute" for her brother. I have to make them understand that they are loved no more, or no less than John. I've tried to create an atmosphere of open communication with Blake and Kelsey. As bereaved parents we must never allow the memory of our dead child to become more important than the lives of our surviving child(ren).

I know that there are days when the pain of burying a child is so intense that it permeates the center of our souls, but even though I'll always have this pain in some form in my heart it isn't the only thing there anymore. I also know the pain of hearing a parent say over and over that they have nothing to live for anymore. I also know how much it hurts to have a dead brother be elevated to "sainthood" and to be reminded that I can't measure up. If I can't see the joy that Blake and Kelsey bring me how can I remember the joy John brought me.

Bereaved parents and siblings must be tolerant of each other, at least for a while. Each must give the other the opportunity to heal a little before they assume one or the other is being unjust. Then we must talk to each other. Communication is the key, and if it works, it can lead to understanding. I learned not to expect miracles in this area with my one parent. I had hoped that when their only brother passed away last year that they would begin to understand what it is like to lose a brother, but they have chosen to just add one more tally mark to their "grief scoreboard" .

The loss of a child or the death of a sibling— which pain is greater? It doesn't matter. It isn't about competition. It's about sharing a loss and sharing the love that can lead to healing for us all.
--Tom Wyatt St. Louis, MO

Sometimes

Sometimes something clicks
and with a tear, remembrance of the pain
and the loneliness flood the heart.
Sometimes something clicks
and with a smile, remembrance of the love
and the laughter flood the senses.
And there are times when nothing clicks at all
and a voice echoes through the emptiness and
numbness
never finding the person who used to fill that
space.
And sometimes the most special times of all

a feeling ripples through your body, heart and soul that tells you that person never left you, and he is right there with you, through it all.
--Kristen Hansen, Bereaved Sibling
Kentfield TCF

For Grandparents...



For A Bereaved Grandfather

If you are a bereaved grandfather you may have special difficulty grieving the loss of a grandchild for two reasons. First, your grief is minimized by people who don't consider a grandfather/grandchild relationship to be very significant.

Secondly, like most men, you have probably been taught to keep your feelings inside. When a child dies, the concern of others is first for the mother, then the father. Occasionally some will be expressed for the grandmother. Rarely do people recognize that you are hurting too. When you weep or express pain, even among family and friends, your behavior may be questioned. You may feel embarrassed. A grandfather isn't expected to be upset. He is expected to concern himself with his children and his wife. Once I saw a grown man cry. "Now there goes a man with feeling!" said I. He was strong, able, quite well-built, with muscles, gray hair and charm to the hilt. I moved toward him slowly and said, "What's wrong?" The look he gave me was tear filled and long. "I cry for a child. My grandchild has died." So I sat beside him and two grown men cried.

-- Margaret From 'For Bereaved Grandparents'

From Our Members...



I wanted to share the following poem because it reminded me of my own situation. I needed the reminder that those of us who have experienced the loss of a child have a duty to reach out to other newly bereaved parents instead of backing away for fear it will dredge up painful reminders of our own loss. Remember how it felt to know that others were reaching out when we were newly bereaved.

--Linda Curtis

The People Who Stayed (a Looking-Back Prayer)

With full hands

and empty eyes,
 they appeared at your door.
 Friends from work,
 people from church,
 the friends of your child
 who knew your son or daughter
 in ways you never will,
 and their parents.
 Old friends.
 New friends born of loss.
 Family members
 battling their own blinding pain
 often turned into friends,
 even better.
 One time someone said,
 "I don't know what to say,"
 which was the best thing that day.
 They came with full hearts,
 open ears, a mouth sharing
 recall, remembrance, memories,
 hesitant, gentle words, a laugh.
 Could they sense we were crossing
 into a new, separate land,
 fearful, uncertain, unable to return?
 Even those who said too much,
 made incorrect assumptions,
 thoughtless remarks,
 took time to come,
 and taught us something.
 God, if I'm anything after all this,
 let me be a person
 who can walk up to the door,
 a person who stays.
 --Carol Thompson, Always Remembering Sarah
 5/27/2019

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, but donations are welcomed. 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: August 1st for September 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.tcfsbla.org. A receipt will be emailed to you for tax purposes. Please let us know if you want the tribute published in the next newsletter. For donations at the meetings, attach a tribute to your donation to be listed in the newsletter. (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.....(310) 648-4878
 Kitty Edler.....(310) 541-8221
 Richard Leach (grandchild).....(310) 833-5213

Kristy Mueller (sibling).....(310) 938-2409

LOCAL TCF CHAPTERS

Beach Cities/L.A. (Manhattan Bch): (970) 213-6293 Third Tue.
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 OF SUICIDE: Support Group for families that have lost someone to suicide. Contact Terry Jordan, LCSW (301) 859-2241
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...

thetearsfoundation.org
goodgriefresources.com
bereavedparentsusa.org
healingafterloss.org
survivorsofsuicide.com
taps.org (military death)
save.org (suicide/depression)
pomc.com (families of murder victims)
grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)
www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)
Griefwords.com (for grandparents)

childloss.com
griefwatch.dom
opentohope.com
webhealing.com
alivetogether.org
angelmoms.com

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
CHAPTER CO-LEADER: *position open*
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.



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 <http://tcfsbla.org/donate/> 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.

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 _____

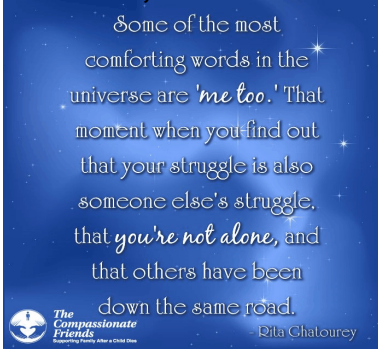
Birth date _____ Death date _____ Sent From _____

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.

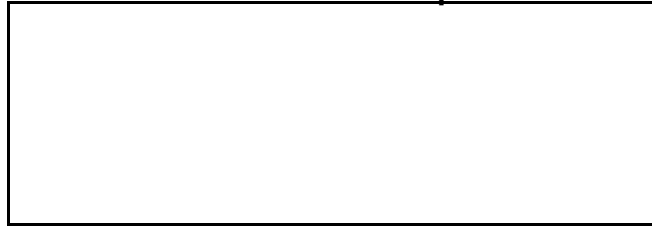
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South Bay/L.A., CA Chapter
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August 2019

– Return Service Requested –



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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.
©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.