



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *South Bay/LA Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

SEPTEMBER 2019 ISSUE

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

**OUR NEXT MEETING**  
will be **September 5th, 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 Sept. 5th meeting will start with " Learning To Accommodate Your Pain."

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.

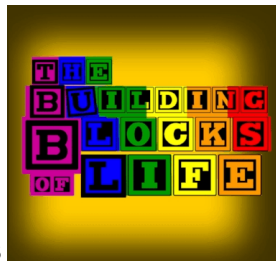
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**The Thursday, Sept. 5th meeting** will start with "Learning To Accommodate Your Pain." Grief work takes physical, emotional and spiritual energy... energy you probably don't feel you will ever have again. While grief over the loss of your child is the most devastating and misunderstood pain you can experience, it is a pain we must face in order to overcome it. There is no magical cure but with time and a lot of grief work you can learn to diminish the pain and resume a "New Normal." Join us as we share how we have learned to reconcile and adapt to our new role as a bereaved parent.

## Rebuilding Your Life One Piece at a Time



Death, especially unexpected death, changes one's life in ways that cannot be expected. With the death of someone close, one's world is forever changed. One analogy I have found myself using with clients is the following: If you were to imagine the day before your loved one died, there was an intact picture of your life. The picture may not have been perfect, but it was there and it made sense. There was a beginning, a middle and an expected end. With death comes the destruction of that picture. It is as if the picture is taken out of your hands, smashed to the ground in a thousand pieces and then some of the most treasured pieces are forever taken away.

The challenge with grief is to then take all of those pieces which are left and attempt to make a new picture. The picture of the life you once had is impossible to recreate, as much as one may try, it cannot be recreated with pieces missing. A new picture must be assembled with the pieces that are left and with new pieces that are picked up along the way.

The process of "putting the pieces back together" is one that often feels chaotic and confusing. It may sometimes be surprising to find out how much thinking is involved in the grief process. Thoughts bounce around trying to connect "what was" with "what is" and struggle to make sense out of what seems to be incomprehensible.

With each piece, the bereaved, through trial and error, find where each piece belongs or even if it belongs at all. This process is different for every person and does not adhere to any kind of

timeline. This (what feels like endless) thinking is the work that grief demands—it is the creation of a new picture of your life—created one piece at a time.

--Written by Stephanie Elson, lifted from the Tears to Hope August/September 2007 newsletter of The Amelia Center, Birmingham, AL, providing a place of hope for grieving children, parents and families, [www.ameliacenter.org](http://www.ameliacenter.org)

## Learning to Float in Grief

***We need to learn how to be comfortable in grief without drowning.***

When my children were little, they did not want to put their faces under water. During swimming lessons, I watched as their wonderful coach gently worked with them to get more comfortable. First they blew bubbles and then gradually put their heads further in the water. It took a long time, over several lessons, before they were able to bob up and down freely. Their coach was an experienced swimmer, who competed in college and had been teaching swim lessons for years. He said that 90 percent of learning to swim is figuring out how to be comfortable with your head under water.

I don't know enough about swimming to comment on the 90 percent, but I can say that once my children were finally willing to put their heads under, they soon loved the water. Not everyone takes so long to get comfortable with water. I witness many little kids jumping in the pool with no care in the world (as their parents scramble to get them because they are in over their heads). But the principle holds: most people enjoy swimming more when they are comfortable with their head under water. Until you can get your head down, it is hard to swim or float. If your head comes out, your body goes down and you start to sink. When immersed and relaxed, you begin to realize that you will float, and over time you start to appreciate freedom in the water.

It is similar in learning how to find joy in the midst of grief. Wade into the pain (like getting use to the cold) until you feel some warmth. Face the pain long enough to be able to look around and see that joy and life remain. You can learn to float while immersed in grief.

How do we get comfortable with grief? There is no one right way. Often, time helps, but it does not guarantee complete healing as the cliché suggests. Others choose to face grief head on. But completely hiding from grief tends to be a difficult option.

Stephen Colbert agrees. Famous for his character on The Colbert Report, what many people do not realize about this funny man is how intimately Stephen Colbert knows grief. When he was 10 years old, his father and two brothers were killed in an airplane crash. More recently his mother died. In interviews, Colbert shared his thoughts on grieving: “The interesting thing about grief, I think, is that it is its own size. It is not the size of you. It is its own size. And grief comes to you. You know what I mean? I’ve always liked that phrase, ‘He was visited by grief,’ because that’s really what it is. Grief is its own thing. It’s not like it’s in me and I’m going to deal with it. It’s a thing... and you have to be okay with its presence. If you try to ignore it, it will be like a wolf at your door.”

Colbert said he learned from his mother lessons about embracing pain: “What she taught me is that the deliverance God offers you from pain is not no pain — it’s that the pain is actually a gift”. What’s the option? God doesn’t really give you another choice.”

Susan also knows grief. Her parents, husband, and a son have all died. She maintains that you can have grief and joy at the same time, but you can’t run from the grief. “The secret is you don’t hide from yourself emotionally. I think that if you hide, you’re more dead than you are alive. And you can never ever experience the same level of joy and happiness that you will experience if you don’t fully understand and recognize that when grief comes, you invite it to have coffee.” Laughing, Susan adds, “You might not ask it to stay for lunch, but you invite it to have coffee.”

You need to learn how to keep your head under water to enjoy swimming; but you also need to learn when to come up to breathe, so that you don’t drown. You have to watch out for undertow, waves, rocks, and other people crashing into you. You have to know your limits so you don’t go too deep or too far, tread too long, or get too tired. It is helpful to be with others when swimming so that someone can help if needed.

The same is true for grief. We need to learn how to be comfortable in grief without drowning. Watch out for the undertow. Be careful about other people pulling you under. Learn your limits and know when to come up for air. Moments of laughter and joy help us catch our breath. Immersing ourselves in grief long enough to discover that we can float gives us more freedom to feel the joy and love that remain. And in both

grief and water, it is best not to be alone.

[www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-grieve/201401/learning-float-in-grief](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-grieve/201401/learning-float-in-grief)

## How Do I Know That I Am Getting Better? (For Teens and The Rest of Us)



Progress through the grief process is so slow that it is sometimes difficult to know if you are getting anywhere. There are times when you may feel as if you are taking one step forward and then two steps back. It's a common feeling. If a member of your family has died, I would expect all of your family to be experiencing something similar.

One person told me that she feels as if she is riding on the pendulum of a giant clock, swinging back and forth through her grief. Meanwhile, the clock ticks away the minutes, the hours and the days. She also said that time itself was really weird for her: in some ways, it was going by so fast that she couldn't believe that it was seven months since her dad's death; in other ways, the time seemed to drag. Fast and slow at the same time — that's what you can expect your recovery to feel like. Also expect that you will keep going back and revisiting your grief occasionally, especially at big events in your life. In times, those visits will be less painful than they were the first time around.

Following are some clues that will help you to see that you are beginning to work through your grief. These ever-so-slight clues can be missed unless you are aware of their importance:

- \* You are really in touch with the finality of the death: You don't have those moments of thinking she has not really died, hoping that she is on a trip.
- \* You no longer burst into the kitchen looking for him to be sitting at the table with a cup of coffee.
- \* You can review both pleasant and unpleasant memories. So often when a loved one dies, people want to talk about and remember only the good stuff, when, in reality, not everyone or everything is perfect. There are things about the deceased you realize that you don't miss at all.
- \* You can drive somewhere without crying the whole time. It seems that when a person gets in a car and starts driving, it is easy to get into a hypnotic state, start thinking, and then cry. Many people tell me that driving is a time when they really mourn the loss of a loved one.

You realize that painful comments made by family or friends are made in ignorance. People often

don't know what to say after a death, and sometimes say exactly the wrong thing. People who have not experienced what you have, really don't have a clue about what you are feeling. Still, they want to be helpful. You're making progress when you come to realize this.

\* You can look forward to holidays and birthdays.

You and your family have settled back into old rituals and customs or even developed some new ones.

\* You can reach out to help someone in a similar situation. It can be very healing when you can turn a tragedy into something useful by being able to help another person.

\* The music your loved one listened to is no longer painful for you to hear. When you turn on the radio, "that song" is no longer a bridge back to the pain.

\* Some time passes and you have not thought of your loved one. Yes, this is a sign that you are moving on. It means that you are getting on with your life and letting the past be the past. It doesn't mean that you will ever forget your loved one.

\* You can enjoy a party, a good joke, or the sunset without feeling guilty.

\* Your eating, sleeping, and exercise patterns have returned to what they were before the death. When once again you have a routine or schedule in your daily life, you know that you're making progress.

\* You no longer feel tired all of the time. You can concentrate on homework, reading a book, or watching a favorite television program.

\* You can find something in your life to be thankful for, even something as simple as the beginning of a new day.

\* You feel confident again. You can accept things as they are and do not keep trying to return things to what they were. You and your family have changed since the death, and you are no longer trying to go back and recreate the past.

\* The vacated roles your loved one played in your life are now being filled by others or even yourself. This is happening while, at the same time, you know that some roles will always remain vacated – and that is OK with you.

\* You can enjoy experiences in life that are meant to be enjoyed.

\* You can acknowledge your new life and even discover personal growth from your grief. You are a better person because of it.

--Taken from *The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends* by Helen Fitzgerald.

## The Brain Must Follow the Heart

Some survivors try to think their way through grief. That doesn't work. Grief is a releasing process, a discovery process, a healing process. We cannot release or discover or heal by the use of our minds alone. The brain must follow the heart at a respectful distance. It is our hearts that ache when a loved one dies. It is our emotions that are most drastically affected. Certainly the mind suffers, the mind recalls, the mind may plot and plan and wish, but it is the heart that will blaze the trail through the thicket of grief.

--Carol Staudacher in *A Time to Grieve*

## How Many Children Do You Have?



I am part of a blended family. My wife and I were both previously married and we have four children. I am also a bereaved step-father. Most of us who have had loved ones die have experienced well intended people say something they think will help or protect us and we have thought ... if they only knew. But they don't because they have not been where we have been.

We've felt the silence from others who have gone out of their way to avoid us because they don't know what to say or do. They know we must be hurting and they don't want to cause us anymore pain by bringing up our loved ones death. If they only knew how much we love to talk about our loved ones. If they only knew how much we love remembering the sparkle in their eyes when they were excited about something or the blush in their cheeks when they were embarrassed. If they only knew we keep our loved ones nearby when we say their names and speak of them. But they don't because they have not been where we are.

Most of us have also experienced the awkward moment when someone you've just met asks you about your family and during the next few seconds you have to decide how to answer. I certainly have. I remember times when we have been asked, "How many children do you have?" and we told them about our three living children and the death of my step-son Jesse. Almost always the response was, "Oh, I'm so sorry". Almost always I could feel these surprised well intended people pull back and I imagined them saying to themselves, "Why did I ask them about that?" Now the shoe was on the other foot, I wondered if we had caused

them to be uncomfortable and in some way, in pain. If so that was not our intention; we do not want to cause pain. So the dilemma continued, how do we answer this question? Do we speak only of our three living children because we don't want to cause others pain? Do they really care how many children we have or are they just making casual conversation? Do we tell them everything or just what is easy?

In the past we did take the easy way out on a few occasions but that didn't work either. This caused pain to us; the pain that is caused by untold truths, the pain of feeling your loved one's existence has faded in some small way, the pain of betrayal of our love for my step-son. This was not an option for us. The easy way was not easy ... it was a lie.

And so the quandary continued, how do we answer this question? My answer came to me while listening to another bereaved parent discussing the same problem. I thought, if only they knew how we love to talk of our loved ones it would be so much simpler. The answer was simple . Tell Them.

So now when we are asked how many children we have I begin by saying, "Thank you for asking that question because it gives us a chance to talk about our children, and we love to talk about all of our children and especially Jesse!"

We then continue and tell them about all of our children and about Jesse's death. Since giving this truthful answer to that previously perplexing question, I have never felt that awkward feeling nor felt the "pull back" of the people asking the question. On the contrary, it has always led to a wonderful conversation about all of our children including Jesse.

My wife and I have a blended family... We have Four children.... and we always will.

-- Cliff Romberg,  
TCF/St. Paul, MN

## The Myth of the Grief Timeline

How long does it take to fall in love? How many seconds pass before a parent loves their newborn child? How many arguments and rivalries can the bonds of siblinghood withstand? How many sleep overs and phone calls before you know a friend is true? These are silly questions, aren't they? They're like riddles with no answer. There's no scale to measure love or to quantify the bonds

of friendship and family.

So why then do we often hear questions like these:

"How long does grief last? When will it end? When will I be over it?" If grief is the result of losing someone we loved, cared for and/or connected with, then are these questions also just riddles with no answer? The idea of a grief timeline is somewhat of a misnomer.

Anyone familiar with grief understands that associated feelings, setbacks, breakthroughs, roadblocks, triggers, and resolutions can occur at unexpected, unpredictable and inexplicable times and durations.

Grief is not a race with a start and finish line, it's a labyrinth with twists and turns and dead ends. Grief is like trying to swim past the break in the ocean – you wade in but every once in a while a wave comes up and knocks you back a few feet. You're still deeper than when you started, but not as deep as you were before the wave hit. How long will it take you to get past the break? It depends on your strength, the ocean, the tide and the weather.

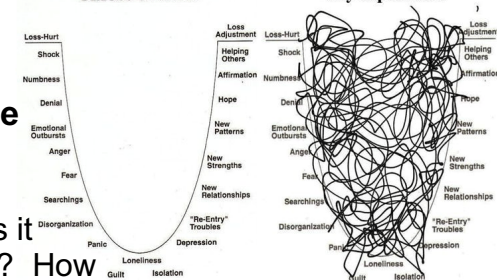
Grief cannot be mapped on a timeline, although 'Normal Grief' should be negatively correlated with time. This means the more time that passes, the less extreme and agonizing grief feelings should be. There will still be bad days, but overall it's average intensity will diminish. Feelings of grief will diminish, but not disappear. Grief is infinitas which means 'being without finish' . Grief doesn't end, but with time it should look different – more peaceful, hopeful, constructive and positive.

Here are a few small indicators you might be making progress in your grief. I find it important to note, you can take steps forward, yet still grieve your loved one. Just because you return to work, date, or decide to have a child does not mean you won't continue to grieve the person you lost. The capacity you have to be happy, enjoy life, and love others exists in addition to the love you feel for your deceased loved ones. Because love... love is infinitas.

- \* You start to feel 'normal'.
- \* You have more good days than bad.
- \* You experience an increase in energy and motivation.
- \* You remember memories fondly as opposed to experiencing them as grief triggers. You can constructively think about the loss of your loved one and the impact it's had on your life.
- \* Your Sleep patterns return to normal.
- \* You experience feelings of optimism about the

STAGES OF GRIEF

My experience



future.

- \* Improvement in performance at work.
  - \* You're able to focus on personal health and well being.
  - \* You feel ready to date again, have more children, and/or make new friends.
  - \* Your relationships feel more functional and healthy.
  - \* You feel as though you are 'rejoining the human race'.
  - \* You feel ready to get out of the house.
  - \* You experience an increase in desire for emotional and physical intimacy
- <http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/myth-grief-timeline>

## The Tattoo

"Mom, when I turn 18 I'm going to get a tattoo!" Hannah announced. "Hannah, what would you possibly want permanently inked on your body that you won't be embarrassed about when you're 80?"

It was about a year between the time Hannah made that statement and when she died. In those first years after they pass time isn't relevant anymore, blocks of time fade into oblivion when nothing matters. I do remember that very shortly after her death I "understood" why people got tattoos and I had to get one "for her". It made sense to me at the time that it would be one of the few things I could still do for her and, in a way, for me too, one last thing we could share.

The design came easy as each property of the tattoo had to mean something. I went to the tattoo parlor with hopes the artist would bring it to life the way I saw it in my heart. I sat in the chair a bit apprehensively as he prepped my forearm, not my bicep where it could easily be hidden from the public. I chose this location so it could be seen by anyone and everyone, to show Hannah was here and she mattered, plus, in that location people would see it and ask about her, after all, it is my job to keep her memory alive. Part way into the process the artist asked me if it hurt to which I answered, "not near as much as her death". As I left the salon, I left with Hannah permanently emblazoned on my arm for the world to see. A heart with her name inside written in a beautiful script with a rosebud through it. Rose is her middle name. A rosebud is symbolic of a young life that ended too soon. It is surrounded by a crown of thorns to show that her death will always



hurt...

-- Kim Pietruszewski, Hannah ZumMallen's mom  
TCF/St. Paul, MN Chapter

## One Family's Tribute A Survivor's Story

I could never have imagined that one event would abruptly change the course of my life and the lives of my family. That's the impact suicide has - it alters your entire life. You try to live through the incredible pain, sorrow, and confusion that his irreversible act creates. You ponder the "what ifs," and how your loved one cheated himself and you of the wonderful gift of life. How does one become a "survivor"? Simply, but extremely arduously, by just surviving. Survive by seeking professional therapy, guidance and support. Most importantly, exercise your emotions: cry, scream, talk, write, etc., and use any and all coping mechanisms that will benefit you. Be certain to verbalize your feelings, positive or negative. Take one day at a time.

Life is different for me since the death of my brother five years ago. The things that helped me cope may not necessarily benefit you, but you will ultimately find something that helps you through your grief. Promise to love your family and friends, and most importantly, yourself.

—The Farrell Family

## Snapshots Of A Too Short Life: Understanding Infant Loss

I remember the first time I saw a photograph of a stillborn baby. It was on one of the pregnancy website forums that I had joined for mothers that all had estimated due dates in April 2007. I was pregnant with my very first child, and the image disturbed and terrified me.

I didn't understand. The photo weirded me out. It seemed so strange to me that a woman would put a picture of her deceased baby as her profile picture in a pregnancy forum of all places. And I posted a picture of my beautiful daughter in her white gown, taken shortly after she passed away.

I enlarged and printed that picture, framed it, and hung it in my living room for all to see. Suddenly, I understood. Suddenly, I was part of the "club" of grieving mothers.

Those pictures were no longer disturbing or strange; they were beautiful. I completely got why a mother would post her stillborn baby as her

profile picture; that photo captured the few moments that a mother was able to hold her precious baby. It represented the only (or one of only a few) of the images that the mother has to hold through her entire life. Because there will be no pictures of first birthday parties, first teeth, trips to the zoo, the first day of school, growing up, high school graduation, weddings, and so forth. There are only those treasured moments when we met, and then said goodbye, to our child. Our hopes, our dreams, our future, gone in an instant.

I understand why it makes people uncomfortable. Death is uncomfortable. It's difficult to know what to say and do. Seeing a picture of a baby gone from this world captures our greatest fears as parents. I just ask you to remember that the picture is not about you and your feelings. It is about a grieving parent, trying to grasp on to anything that they can; to remind the world to remember their child.

We, grieving mothers, are bonded by a common sadness. A common experience that you have to share to truly understand. But many of us are determined to do what we can to alleviate the pain for any parents new to this "club" we never wanted to join, but paid the highest dues to enter.

About six months after I lost my infant daughter, I began to write and blog about my grief, pain, and life in general. I found and connected with other grieving parents. A whole new world opened up to me. Faces of loss, stories of grief, but most importantly, stories of survival, which have encouraged me and propelled me forward.

One of the common themes we share, whether our loss was an early miscarriages, late pregnancy, infant loss, or an older child, is that desire to make known that we will always be that child's mother. Whether we are mothering them in our arms or in our hearts. Hence, the posting of the pictures, that are purely a statement of that mother's love and devotion to her baby, taken too soon.

To the grieving moms out there: you are always their mother.

And to the lucky moms who get their children here on earth: The next time you see a mother post a picture of her stillborn baby, or an infant that died shortly after birth, try not to be offended or disgusted. Try to remember that for her, that is all she has.

--Alexa Bigwarfe from her blog

## Friends and Family...

### How Can You Survive?

You stood there staring with your eyes open wide when I told you my only child had died. Then I heard that question again today and those thoughtless words that take my breath away, "I could not go on living had my child died." "How can you stand it, how can you survive?" You seemed not to notice the hard painful lump that had settled in my throat despite my brave front I tried to speak, but my mouth was bone dry. All I could do was just stand there and stifle my cry. Then you turned in silence and I followed your lead. Wiping tears off my face as I struggled to breathe.

How do I answer these questions you ask? Should I tell you the truth and then wait for your gasp? I've been told by other parents who have also lost a child that they have heard

these words before and cannot believe the guile of those who think life simply stops because you're left to bear the greatest tragedy of all, lost hopes and bleak despair.

Yet perhaps you do not realize the pain you have just caused so once more I will answer in hope to give you pause. I would have gladly died, exchanging my life for his. Willing myself into my son's broken body, for weeks I prayed for this. When he took his last breath, I was left alone in this place to live one day at a time and remember his sweet face.

You ask me how I stand it; how I manager to survive? How I can stand to go on living when my only child has died? The answer is so simple; I'm amazed you cannot see that the answer you seek does not lie with me. The Lord in His wisdom makes me draw breath each day I do not know His reason, I do not know His way. I wake each morning with my son's death on my mind. Living only for heaven to hold the child I called mine. This is how I stand it; the only reply I can give I did not die, I did not survive, and I did not want to live.

So when next you see a parent grieving for their child take care to be gentle and just offer us a smile. For our numbers are great and our hearts have been broken. We need only your love with your arms wide open.

--Nancy, Alive Alone, Oct., 1998 In memory of Eric. Eric was killed in a car accident with his best friend.



## Newly Bereaved...

### Grief Is

Grief is ~ Feeling great joy and unbelievable sadness in the same moment.  
 Grief is ~ Feeling like you're breaking apart but knowing you can't – you're already broken  
 Grief is ~ Realizing you don't go to hell from here, you're already there  
 Grief is ~ Waking in the morning and crying because you did  
 Grief is ~ Fake plastic smiles and sad puffy eyes  
 Grief is ~ Hiding yourself away so no-one else need suffer  
 Grief is ~ Going through the motions and not knowing why  
 Grief is ~ Not knowing how to explain anything  
 Grief is ~ Listening to people say they understand but knowing they don't  
 Grief is ~ Feeling absolutely alone and smaller than small  
 Grief is ~ A hole inside that no-one can see exactly the shape of her  
 Grief is ~ Never ending  
 Grief is ~ Not wanting to eat, sleep, work, dream, or face today  
 Grief is ~ Feeling like you're going insane, and realizing you already did that last week, and the week before, and the week before that  
 Grief is ~ The worst feeling ever - sadness far beyond sad  
 Grief is ~ Visiting a grave to try to feel better trudging through knee deep snow to clean off a headstone and have a talk  
 Grief is ~ Trying to figure out why you're still here doing everything you can think of so you'll finally be allowed to go be with her  
 Grief is ~ Getting it out only for it to fill back up and doing it over and over and over  
 Grief is ~ Dreading the holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and tomorrow  
 Grief is ~ Friends leaving your life and you not knowing why - you ought to see them run  
 Grief is ~ Feeling guilty for things you didn't do, wrongs you didn't commit, and for not being able to save her  
 Grief is ~ Counselors and medications that don't really help  
 Grief is ~ Anything but peaceful  
 Grief is ~ Learning to drive and cry at the same time  
 Grief is ~ Being told to get over it or suck it up

buttercup  
 Grief is ~ Shaking uncontrollably for no apparent reason  
 Grief is ~ Not being able to enter a room or the bedroom  
 Grief is ~ The willingness to do absolutely anything to try to feel better  
 Grief is ~ Being kicked while you're down people can be so cruel  
 Grief is ~ Being taken advantage of  
 Grief is ~ Having to hang up the phone because you're crying too hard to be understood  
 Grief is ~ Writing stupid poems that no-one will ever read  
 Grief is ~ Memories both painful and good  
 Grief is ~ Packing up her belongings to send them to the vultures that are circling  
 Grief is ~ Layout her coat on a table and watching as the cats fight over who gets to lay on it – it still smelled like her  
 Grief is ~ Being angry at God  
 Grief is ~ Picking up the pieces of your life just to put them down again  
 Grief is ~ Trying to figure out what grief is  
 Grief is ~ Trying to learn about grief from people who have never felt it  
 Grief is ~ Crying in your sleep, grief is hurting this bad and still being alive  
 Grief is ~ Having to explain to someone who hadn't heard she was gone  
 Grief is ~ Being told to remember the good times and knowing those are the memories that hurt the worst  
 Grief is ~ Crying so hard you throw up  
 Grief is ~ Having to fight with family members for her last wishes to be kept  
 Grief is ~ Finding a trinket that once made her smile  
 Grief is ~ Feeling like you did a week after she passed four years later  
 Grief is ~ Love doesn't die just because she did  
 -- Dale Miller © Used with permission from Centering Corp - Grief Digest Magazine 2018 Volume 14, Issue #3 7230 Maple Street Omaha, NE 68134

## Seasoned Grievors...

### Life Can Be Good Again

For nearly sixteen years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the





sounds that marked his presence. Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of finding life once more.

He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong. Life still had meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the years before his coming. Indeed, even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give it purpose and resolve.

Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process but I know that this is much easier to write than it is to experience.

I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unremitting pain that engulfed me in those early years. Working through them was the most demanding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years. Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing. Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual.

These points included: Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.

Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem unable to help us in our time of deep trouble and need.

The accepting, at last, the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.

Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends, and surviving siblings, our love for whom seems shrouded behind the totality of our grief.

Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through

writing a book, planting trees, sustaining scholarships, or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention.

A time comes for many to find new homes, jobs, and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives.

Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us to grasp today and tomorrow with hope.

No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.

Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy, and his shortcomings live on in me. No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life.

Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.

Is this not our goal, to heal, to find strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

--Don Hackett, TCF, Kingston, MA

In Memory of my son, Olin

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**Welcome...**



**Do You Know?**

Do you know what I've learned, that the deepest, truest healing offered by The Compassionate Friends comes not in the first few years, but later?

Do you know that just when you think there is no more to gain by coming to meetings, something you will say or do will help another, And another. . . And exponentially, through your opened heart, there can flow riches, gifts beyond imagining?

Do you know that TCF's truest alchemy lies not in what we can get but what we can give?

That by turning grief's dark energy and inner absorption outwards towards the hope of helping others, we can regain a sense of purpose, honor our beloved children, and take them with us as we do? All this. . . If only you stay on - or come back - to help those more newly bereaved, sharing your own unique path through grief and learning, along with others, what you did not know you know.

~Genesse Bourdeau Gentry, Mom of Lori & Megan, TCF Marin County, CA Author of Stars in the Deepest Night: After the Death of a Child

**Editor's Note:** We encourage both newly bereaved and seasoned greivers to attend our meetings to offer and receive insight into our new role of bereaved parents.



## Helpful Hint...

"Recall the unforgettable memories of the past as you search for a meaningful future. Even in your overwhelming despair, you will realize that part of that child's life will live with you forever."

--Rabbi Earl A. Grollman



## Book In Review...

**Barry Stories *The Spiritual Journey of Parents Who Lost a Son*** by Carl Douglas & Pearl Douglas. Bereaved parents take us on their journey from the black abyss of grief back into the sunshine of life. Barry's death in a tragic boat accident, at age 31, saddened his friends and shattered the lives of his parents. Barry's parents were angry with God and cast into painful despair. They have integrated these unique stories about Barry with their pilgrimage. Available from the Centering Corp. Call (402) 533-1200. Remember to tell them you are a member of TCF for free shipping.)

## Bittersweet

Bittersweet parents we are, loving and giving still.  
We render what tears grief demands...  
Until, out of grieving darkness  
we come to celebrate our children's life  
And our own.

-- Sascha, bereaved mom to Eve and Nino

What wound did ever heal but by degrees?  
--William Shakespeare Othello

## A Flicker in the Distance

In this time of grief,  
When the darkness is so great,  
And your heart is aching so,  
You feel that it may break.  
Remember that in this darkness  
There is a candle's light  
A flicker in the distance  
Small but intensely bright.  
That tiny little glow  
That seems so far away  
Will grow brighter and brighter  
With each passing day.  
Time does not heal, as they say,  
But it tends to numb  
The ache we feel inside our heart  
When that darkness comes.  
In time your heart will feel lighter  
And the memories won't bring such pain  
The tears won't flow as often  
And you will find laughter again.  
So keep your eye on that distant glow  
To see how far you came...  
Because at the end of the darkness  
That flicker becomes a flame.  
Jacquelyn M. Comeaux  
In Memory of Michelle, Jerry, and Danny  
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granted by the author

## Finding Hope

Some find hope in butterflies, and some in children's smiles.  
Some find hope in photographs, and some in walking miles.  
Some find hope in quietness and solitary reflection.  
Some find hope in helping others and sharing friendly affection.  
Some find hope in holding tight to all the old traditions.  
Some find hope in the creation of a special new variation.  
Some find hope in family gathered, some in cherished friends.  
Some find hope in seeking God, feeling peace in worship again.  
Beyond the sad and beyond the past, beyond the ache that lasts and lasts, there is a path that winds its way into your future and a hopeful day.  
-- Karen Pope



# Our Children Remembered



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

Brandon Armstrong  
Miscarried: July 1995  
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Our Children Remembered



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 Kropman  
Born: 12/88 Died: 3/12  
Parents: Brenda & Greg Kropman

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



# Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dovan Vincent Wing  
Born: 6/83 Died: 9/17  
Mother: Becky Wing

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

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

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

Aaron Young  
Born: 9/74 Died: 6/15  
Mother: Sheila Young

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

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

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

Steve R. Young  
Born: 7/57 Died: 2/90  
Mother: Marjorie Young

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

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

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

Whitney Marie Young  
Born: 8/87 Died: 11/06  
Parents: Marlene & Steve Young

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

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

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

Thomas Zachary  
Born: 12/85 Died: 7/11  
Father: Bob McGaha

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

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

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

Michael Jordan Zareski  
Born: 5/71 Died: 12/17  
Parents: Susan & Norm Zareski

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

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

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

Kevin Zelik  
Born: 11/85 Died: 6/10  
Parents: Joe & Linda Zelik

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

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

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

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

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

## Birthday Tributes...



In honor of your child's birthday, we welcome you to submit a birthday tribute. Though your child is no longer here to buy a present for, think of this as a birthday present about your child. This tribute is an opportunity to share your child with us all. (We thank you for any birthday donations that help offset chapter expenses, click on the following link to donate online. [www.tcfsbla.org](http://www.tcfsbla.org))

\* Please remember we are always working a month in advance and need your tributes by the first of the month preceding the actual birthday.

### A Birthday Tribute to: Lisa Sandoval Sept. 1976 - Dec. 1992



Though your race was short  
Your goal was long...  
to head towards the finishing line  
Not to meet your  
Bro - Mom or Dad  
But to reach your heavenly Father  
Who sits high on his throne.  
You followed his direction  
you always kept his Law  
Now your reward  
is a piece of the Sky!  
You'll always remain  
a part of my Life...  
I'll keep you so close till the  
day that I die.  
'Cause your Ma Ma's little girl  
and you were so much of my life.  
Please remember to greet me when  
its my turn to die  
'Cause I've waited so long to hold you  
in my arms again.  
Please remember to talk  
to the Lord up above  
that your family down on earth  
still struggles with missing you so.  
So if its "His" will to grant us some peace,  
We sure would appreciate it becuse  
we are all so weak.  
I Love You, Lisa  
Love, Ma Ma

## For Siblings...



### Two Viewpoints

*The following letter, signed "Sibling," appeared in the Louisville, KY newsletter. It is a poignant expression of love and pain that is typical of*

*siblings' reactions. It is hoped that, for those of you with teenagers, it will offer clues leading to freer communications and sharing of feelings.*

Dear Parents of "Compassionate Friends":

I am writing to let you know how I feel and maybe how some of the other siblings feel. There have been times when my parents start really getting extra down about my brother. I usually leave the room. I feel that no matter how hard I try, I will say or do something that will hurt them more, or that they won't understand what I'm really trying to say. They already feel enough pain. I really love them and I understand enough about how they hurt, but I'm just not good at saying what I feel. It seems like it never sounds right. I also hold my emotions back from them. I always hear it is best to let it out, and I do, but not in front of my parents.

I'm afraid they might try to hold their emotions back in front of me, so I won't get upset. I've had rough times for the past couple of years, and I'm still having hard times, so I'm always afraid they will hold back if they see me getting upset. I know that would just hurt them more when they try to hold it back. I love to talk about the good times my brother and I had, but I'd just rather be alone when I cry for him. Just once in a while my sister and I can talk about him, but that's the only person I can really talk to. I hope and pray with all my heart that my parents will understand, but I just can't talk to them.

I miss my brother a lot more than I think they really realize. I love and care for them too much to go and upset them even more. Maybe I'm wrong, but please parents, understand how I feel. May we always be close.

Love, Sibling

### My First Five Years As An Only Child

I've been without my brother for five years. I guess the hard part is over now. Sometimes I think I have aged 30 years in the past five. In a strange way, these past five years have been the best and worst years of my life. I have accomplished the many things of a typical young adult learning to drive, graduating from high school, going to college, and starting a career. Every one of my accomplishments has been clouded by the fact that my brother George is not here to share each milestone, and is not achieving any more milestones for himself. He was cheated

of so many things. He will never graduate, get married, have children or travel. He will never grow old, and I will never have a brother to grow old with. I'll never have nieces and nephews. The sibling relationship, usually the longest relationship of one's life, has been cut short for us. In these five years, although I have learned to accept that he is not coming back, the difficult part is dealing with it day by day.

My relationship with George ended just when we started to become friends. The childish fights and other annoyances of having a big brother were changing to real conversations and to having an occasional ally. I am angry about all the things that we have missed and all the things that will never be, and I guess I always will be. Five years heals a lot of wounds, but the hurt will always be there, no matter how many years pass.

In these past five years, I have been forced to grow up too fast. I have been forced into a new outlook on life. I have felt lonely and alone. I now realize that I will never be the same person as before. Maybe I am a better person because of what I have been through. Five years ago I never thought I would survive, but I am still here dealing with it every day. I don't know what the next five years will bring, but at least I have made it this far.  
--Kristin Steiner TCF Staten Island, NY  
In Memory of my brother, George

### Missing You ...

Missed you today when I  
thought of something funny  
and wanted someone special  
to laugh with ...

Missed you today when I got  
my feelings hurt and needed  
someone special to talk to ...

Missed you today when I  
noticed how beautiful the sky  
looked and wanted someone  
special to enjoy it with ...

Missed you today when I  
thought about how much I  
like being with you,

And wished you were here so I  
could tell you so ...

I love you Craig, and miss you  
so very much dear special brother  
Love, Jill

### For Grandparents...



### A New Normal (grandparent...)

My life has a new normal. Actually, I don't even know what NORMAL is, other than "just a word" making me think of typical, usual, everyday, etc. Do I dare go on? Do I WANT to go on?

Life changed abruptly the morning of Friday, June 20, 2008. My beautiful 30 year old daughter, Crystal, died of a ruptured aortic dissection. What is that – the lining of the aorta peels loose inside and as the blood pumps through, the tear becomes bigger and bigger, closing off the artery, which then bursts. At least that is what I'd been told. She had never complained of chest pains or trouble breathing. All it really means is MY DAUGHTER IS GONE.

Like it or not, I have had to learn to "go on". I have learned to keep my daughter in my heart, and to go about the business of life, or raising our 13 year old granddaughter as she learns to live without her mother. Sometimes learning sucks. We'd prefer to NOT learn this lesson, we'd prefer to fail this test and have her back in our lives every day.

However, that is not the learning plan for our family. So, we do the daily homework of life ~ living. My husband and I are not just Faith's grandparents, we are parenting her. We'd finished parenting when our youngest left for college 12 years ago; until June 2008. We've had to learn to have a new role in Faith's life, while maintaining the grandparent role with our other two granddaughters., Kat (15) and Gracie (6). They have had to learn we still love them just as much as Faith; but our role with Faith has changed. I have also had to learn it is ok to not feel guilty about all the "extras" we do for Faith in the role of parenting AND to still do grand-parenting things with all three granddaughters.

Life is full of learning moments. And I have learned this is my new normal, life will never return to the old path because my daughter cannot return. So, we learn to like, if not love, our new normal.

--Debbie Thornton

## From Our Members...



### Kindergarten Angel

When the Kindergarten bus rolls past  
my window this Fall,  
there will be tears rolling down my face.  
A sweet little five year old should be leaving home,  
for a seat where, for the first time,  
she would take her place,  
but my front door won't be pushed open,  
no last minute hugs for me;  
only my lonely heart aching for a little one who  
was never meant to be.  
Would she have a ponytail?  
Would it be curly or straight?  
Would she walk to the bus timidly  
or with a confident gait?  
Would there be tears in her eyes  
as she waved good-bye  
or merely a carefree glance?  
Would she think of me on her first kindergarten  
day?  
Would she sing? Would she skip? Would she  
dance?  
Almost five years have passed since the night we  
said good-bye,  
there was no hello, no coos, no cry...  
only a silence so loud that I, too, wanted to die.  
And since that time, I've held her tightly in my  
heart;  
we are bound by a forever love although our lives  
are, for awhile apart.  
United in thoughts of what could have been,  
my life moves ahead, although the light of her  
memory will never dim.  
And while, this Fall, the school bus will have an  
empty place,  
my heart and my eyes, of longing, will be full.  
She is forever my love, my unknown treasure,  
my special Kindergarten Angel.  
--By Mary Jo Gruber  
In memory of Jessica Anne August 25, 1991  
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, 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](http://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](http://www.comfortzonecamp.org)  
(310) 483-8313.

#### Other Grief Support Websites...

thetearsfoundation.org	childloss.com
goodgriefresources.com	griefwatch.dom
bereavedparentsusa.org	opentohope.com
healingafterloss.org	webhealing.com
survivorsofselfharm.com	alivetogether.org
taps.org (military death)	angelmoms.com
save.org (suicide/depression)	
pomc.com (families of murder victims)	
grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)	
www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)	
Griefwords.com (for grandparents)	

#### 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 CO-LEADER: Linda Zelik  
CHAPTER CO-LEADER: Lori Galloway  
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	Lori Galloway

#### 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](http://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](http://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.

In loving memory of an amazing person, Elizabeth Dolores Szucs, April 1972 - June 2011. You leave behind a legacy in the South Bay to be remembered. I don't know when I realized how blessed I am to have had a sister such as you. I just remember looking at you at a very young age knowing you were amazing.

I love you and Miss you, Irene

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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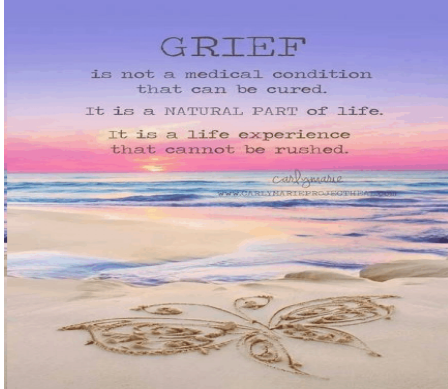
To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month or it will appear in the following issue.

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

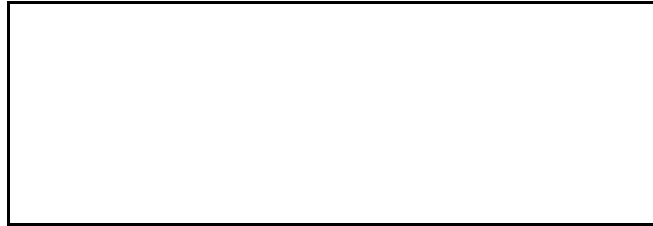
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– Return Service Requested –



**September 2019**

## **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.**