



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

OCTOBER 2019 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be **October 3rd, 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 October 3rd meeting will start with "The Many Masks Of Grief."

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, Oct 3rd meeting will start with “The Many Masks Of Grief.” Denying your grief, running from it, or minimizing it only because it is so turbulent, seems to make it more confusing and overwhelming. To lessen your grief, you must embrace it and learn to cope with our new role as a bereaved parent. Since society is uncomfortable with grief we learn to adapt and hide our pain. One way we may do this is by donning a mask for different occasions. No matter how we may appear or how we may act, we are different from other people. As bereaved parents we all have a need to wear a mask at certain times. There’s the mask to wear for the public. A smiling face, I’m sure you recognize this act of trying to avoid the topic of death. A mask of trying to conceal the deep and desperate longing for your child. A business mask, because grief is taboo in the workplace.

Because you cannot heal without mourning or expressing your grief outwardly, we try to compartmentalize it...To control when and how we grieve. In doing so, we wear a mask to make others more comfortable and sometimes not to have to lie. Friends look at us and may think we’re okay but we’re still hurting from our child’s death. We mask this feeling on the surface, but the emptiness is still inside us and doesn’t fully go away. While masks help, we need to make sure we don’t start to hide our grief from ourselves. Join us as we share ways we hide our true feelings behind a mask and how we learn to balance our grief while doing so.

Halloween (and other) Masks

The month of October brings with it a smorgasbord for the senses. We can hear the crunching and crackling of leaves under our feet. We can see the brilliant reds, oranges, and yellows splash the earth. We can feel the magical approach of winter in the air. October is also for Halloween, a date synonymous with masks.

As bereaved parents we have, at various times, worn many and varied masks. We have masked our feeling of despair, sorrow, and anguish for the sake of our loved ones, friends, and acquaintances. We have masked our feelings of anger and bitterness for the traditional belief that a kind God would not do this to innocents. Most importantly, we have masked the person we have become, the person that has evolved after living through the death of a child.



Let us celebrate the month of October by beginning to take off some of our masks. A very positive and helpful way to begin this process is to attend the next Compassionate Friends meeting. Share your sorrow, your fears, your bitterness, and disappointment. Above all, share your progress and triumphs through the arduous journey of grief. When you enter a room full of caring and supportive people who have shared your grief, there is no reason to wear a mask.

--Cathy Crawford, PROPS - Erie The Truth

The Truth

What does one do with “the truth?” When I am asked, “How are you? How are you really?” my **true** answer would be “I wish I were dead.” Such a response, however true it may be, is a conversation stopper of epic proportions. If the conversation doesn’t end immediately, then I have to be prepared for a barrage of “You don’t mean that! You can’t mean that! What about your husband and daughter? Jordan would not want for you to feel that way!” And so on. While I know people probably mean well, it is not helpful to require me to lie.

When Jordan was in his mid-teens, we made it compulsory for him to attend confirmation classes at our church. When the classes were concluded, he advised us that he was not ready to be confirmed. My husband, a “cradle Episcopalian,” was horrified and planned to demand that Jordan go through with confirmation. One of the youth ministers took Jeff aside and advised, “You do realize you’re requiring him to stand up in front of the whole church and lie?” So, we stayed home that day. We didn’t require him to lie; we were sad, we were disappointed. We missed out on a rite of passage that had mattered to us. But how could you require someone you love to lie?

Is this something we’re promoting as a culture? We’re lied to regularly by elected officials, by business leaders, by institutions of higher education... usually with money and power as the motivation. So, is that why our culture is okay with expecting bereaved parents to lie about how we feel? We’re certainly not motivated by money or power.

But how do I answer the “How are you?” question? I answer, “I’m okay.” At least the conversation doesn’t stop. At least I’m not further isolated.

--Peggy Johnson TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA



Musings On Halloween, Past And Present

As I type this, the nip in the October air is a reminder that the major holidays are just around the corner. Halloween paraphernalia has been in the stores since July with Christmas decorations right behind them. For those of us who are bereaved parents, this means the sooner the decor is on the store shelves, the longer we have the constant reminders that we will be facing the holidays without our child present. Whether this is your first Halloween following their death or years down the road, such as in my situation, the holiday season stirs the emotions. For example, with Halloween, there could be the sorrow of no longer having to find that perfect costume or witnessing the delight in your child's eyes as they head out the door to trick-or-treat. If your child was an adult when they died, perhaps it is your old memories of Halloweens when they were youngsters. And there are those whose children died before they ever had the opportunity to create memories, the sadness that they were never able to experience even one holiday with that child.

Halloween can be particularly hard to get through. In the past, I always thought of it as innocuous enough; costume parties, children excitedly dashing door-to-door looking for treats, pumpkin carving, and the occasional harmless prank. However, after my daughter Nina died, I became acutely aware of things that I had never given a second thought. For instance, my neighbor made their whole front yard into a graveyard scene of fake headstones with scary or silly epitaphs on them, and terrifying creatures coming out of the earth. Before Nina died, I also found cemeteries "creepy", but now look at them differently, even with a sort of reverence. I no longer have a problem going out to my daughter's grave-site, even in the middle of the night. I find the solitude of the historic countryside graveyard where she lays peaceful, dignified and worthy of respect. I was hurt by what I felt was ridicule and disdain for the final resting place of our loved ones' physical bodies. In addition, some of the masks portrayed faces of death in a way that I found highly offensive, especially since I knew many who lost their children to some of the means depicted. I perceived it as a mockery of the tragedies that

these families suffered.

Though I still don't pretend to understand the allure of the above-mentioned Halloween depictions, they aren't as painful to me as they were the first few years after Nina died. Especially in the early grief years, we become hypersensitive to our surroundings and more keenly aware of anything related to death. It is pretty hard to look past the non-bereaved populations seeming nonchalance about something we take so personally. Though we wish there was more understanding, we also know all too well that they cannot truly empathize unless they have walked in our shoes. It is easy to forget that, before our children's deaths, we too may have shown the same indifference. We'd like to think that we would not have been so callous because we now know firsthand how much this hurts those affected. However, before we lost our "innocence", truth be told, we probably didn't give any of it much thought.

On this 10th Halloween without Nina, I do my best to ignore all the ghoulishness surrounding this time of year. If I do find I am having difficulty, I try very hard to focus on positive memories of Halloween's past, such as her grade-school costume party where our basement became a makeshift haunted house where blindfolded "witches" and "fairy princesses" shrieked and giggled as they plunged their hands into bowls full of peeled grape "eyeballs" and wet macaroni "brains." Or the photos I have of her in different costumes over the years, from Care Bear to Punk Rocker. Then there is the photo taken of Nina on her last Halloween. No longer of trick-or-treat age, she stayed home to pass out the candy and carved her own Jack-O-Lantern that she is pictured proudly along side, with her ever-present smile and that wonderful twinkle in her brown eyes; such precious memories.

For those with a missing trick-or-treater this Halloween, the first holidays are the most difficult. Though I find they are easier to bear as time marches on, there will always be the awareness that someone so loved is absent from the family gatherings. Remember that this roller-coaster grief-ride brings different feelings with each passing year. It is important to allow those feelings—whatever they may be—and let them happen. Try not to be waylaid by other's expectations of you. Trust your instincts. Truly, only you know what is best for you.

-- Cathy L. Seehuetter TCF St. Paul, MN



The Waves of Grief

Grief is like the ocean tides with their constant ebb and flow. Sometimes

the tides are quiet sometimes the strong wind blows. The pain is like the ocean waves that roll way out in the sea. Sometimes the motion is gentle and lulls me into a sense of complacency.

But then from out of nowhere treacherous storm clouds fill the air. The sharp, white foam waves lash over me and overwhelmed me with despair. Just as a vicious storm waves battering the rock will eventually etch their mark, so too, the ravishment of pain and grief, have taken a toll on my heart.

--"Living With Loss," Summer, 2007, livingwithloss.com

On Losing a Child

Face your feelings
 Don't let them hide inside.
 Confront the pain
 Give it a name,
 Let it roam your heavy heart.
 Each teardrop you shed
 becomes a crystal bead
 to be added to your chain of sorrow.
 Keep the chain.
 Wear the beads with pride -
 A badge of your courage in facing the pain.
 Face whatever may come.
 Accept and be thankful
 for the lessons you have learned.
 Stay open to your feelings.
 Soon the pain will be mixed with other colors.
 You will be weaving a new tapestry.
 Each strand of emotion adds richness.
 Stay in the present moment.
 Look to the past to fathom the future.
 Keep one foot in the present
 and the other in eternity.
 I have children in both worlds.
 I am attentive to each for their lessons.
 We learn from our children.
 They are our blessings.
 By doing for our children
 we are enriched by them.
 It does not end when they leave this earth.
 We understand not with our minds,
 But with our hearts.
 --Mariann Lindquist In memory of her son, Joel

HOPE

Hope can stand for many things. Hope is like a scout that goes out ahead into that unknown territory known as grief. That scout lets you know that you can travel there, you can survive this "landscape without gravity." Let's take a brief look at some of the possibilities of what TCF members offer when they lend us some hope.

- H** 1) TCF offers us help in learning how to heal when we don't know where to begin.
 2) TCF offers us a hand to hold when we feel lost and a reassuring hug when times are tough.
 3) TCF offers us an opportunity to be honest about our feelings without fear of judgment or censure.
 4) TCF shows us that happiness can again be possible as we move once again into life—honoring our child's memory as we go.
- O** 1) TCF gives us an opportunity to be open and forthright in expressing our deepest emotions.
 2) TCF gives us an outlet for our anger, frustration, and guilt.
 3) TCF provides ongoing outreach and support when those in our other support systems may have receded or disappeared altogether as our grief journey moves from days and weeks into months and years.
 4) TCF offers us a sense of optimism that life can be good again and that the intense pain of early grief will not last forever.
- P** 1) TCF helps us gain perspective on what we are experiencing, yet has the patience to listen to our story as many times as we need to tell it.
 2) TCF offers us a place where we may feel safe and protected as we share our pain and our memories.
 3) TCF offers us the promise of more inner peace as we move toward a place of remembering more about our child's life and dwelling less on the circumstances of the death.
 4) TCF helps us understand the need to pardon ourselves for any mistakes we may feel we made as parents and not to blame ourselves for our child's death.
- E** 1) TCF provides education about the grief process so we can better understand and cope with what's happening to us.
 2) TCF offers encouragement that our pain will not always be so great and that we will survive.

3) TCF members provide the true empathy which only those who have walked our path can know.
 4) TCF offers us a chance to express what is in our hearts and embraces us with understanding.
 --Excerpted from the keynote address by Susan Chan at the Jefferson City, Missouri Regional TCF Conference, September 21, 2002

The Simple Thing

Mothers often come into my store with their children looking for special gifts for their teachers, coaches, den mothers, etc. I never fail to notice a mother browsing around with her son.

I can't seem to stop watching their every move, listening to their casual conversation, picking up an item they know the other one would like. Then he says, "Mom, look, did you see this?" and I immediately turn to look, thinking for a brief instant the voice is one I long so much to hear. I fight back the tears waiting for them to leave. I want to tell his mother that she has just experienced a most treasured memory as she unknowingly walks out the door and down the street with her son beside her, in a world that for her is still a place so normal, so care-free, so predictable ... and so very taken for granted.
 --Mickey Crawford, Winder, GA

A Letter To My Son October 22, 2010

Dear Andrew



I said it aloud a few weeks ago. I said it in a large group, where many people heard me. I have never said it aloud before, not even to my most trusted friend. I have never said it in my deepest thought, not even in late night solitude, when truth stares wonderingly into the mirror of dream-glazed eyes. What have I said? I said, "I have come to a place in my life and my grief, where I have found peace." Yes, Andrew, I have found peace. I have found peace with what I know and what I will never know. I am at peace with what I feel and what I do not. I am at peace with who I am and who I am not.

There, now I have written it. And now I am writing to you, that I may understand what I have said and what it means. My son, I have written you so many letters over the years – letters full of discord, full of questing, full of pain. Now, this

letter is different because *I am different* – even more different that at the time of my last letter. I don't know how visible these differences are to others because people are such subtle reflecting glasses.

In any case, I am on new ground, writing to you about this. I don't know how to write about peace. How do I write about the absence of turmoil, the absence of anguish? How do I write about the absence of pain and anger so close to the surface that they suffused my life for so long?

Oh, I'm still sad, sad for you, sad for all my losses, but especially yours. Yet that sorrow has gone deep within me, and like a liquid, it has found its level in every cell and every pore, flowing simultaneously to every extremity and to my core, so that it is an integral part of me.

In retrospect, back at the beginning, I read poetry and being patient with sadness, but, while it resonated in my brain, I never fully understood it until now. My future was written in my grief and pain and I needed time to read and comprehend it. I needed to know the truths of life and being, and to internalize them. Perhaps one of those truths is about peace.

For so much of my life, even that now distant part before your death, I thought about that peace, true peace, was an absence of discord, to end to troubling thoughts, a space where my mind would no longer drive me crazy. I wondered if I could ever find peace in my life. I wondered if serenity would forever elude me. After you died and for a long time, I stopped thinking about finding peace. After what happened to you, I knew, deep in my heart that peace would never be attainable. Instead, I suppose, I tried, one day at a time, merely to accept whatever I felt, whatever I thought. And so, I confess, it was with no small surprise that I heard myself say aloud, before people I mostly had never met, that I have found peace. And there it is again, that phrase that seems so pregnant with meaning. But what meaning?

I can certainly tell you what this feeling of peace is not. It is not an end to worry, to fear, to anger. I am still, a human being. But I no longer struggle with these so-called negative expressions of self. I no longer fight against these natural by-products of caring, about myself and others, and I no longer subject myself to self judgement on the basis of my internal make-up.

But what is it, this peace? I can tell you what

I now know. I know that I have been mistaken about peace all along. I know that peace is no mere absence. It is not a void, a vacuum in the place inside me where intense energy once defined my very being. It is not like outer space, whose tranquility is merely a lifeless emptiness. If my peace were such a pressure less void, nature would find a way to fill it. Ideas, thoughts, feelings would come tumbling in, haphazard and tumultuous, and any initial perception of accord would quickly drown in a deluge of random vortices – a tortuous plasma of conflicting white hot feelings.

No this peace is definitely a presence, not an absence. It is an acceptance, a form of being. It is the living presence seemingly of another species. It is the organic extension of another dimension. It is timeless and yet of the moment. It is more than the tranquility of the ocean depths, for that is but the inertia of water's weight, ponderous and insensible.

This peace is solemn, yes, but sensible and even sensitive. It does not seek to crush, but to reach out, to share by harmonizing all that it touches. It is a soft melody that sings in the beating of the heart, soundlessly, hoping that all can hear. This peace is the soul of passion and compassion. It knows death and yearns for life. It comprehends and respects age and it embraces youthfulness, without need of youth. It is a positive pressure that exactly balances within against without, above against below, open against closed. It is the soft voice of experience, and even wisdom, and it is no longer silent. It says, "Come to me with your woes and I will share my caring. Come to me with your sorrow and I will share my understanding. Come to me with your despair and I will share my hope."

And I hope that you, too, have found peace, my son.

Love, Dad

–by Rob Goor

Permission To Grieve

I was 10 years old the first time I was introduced to death. Both of my grandfathers and my dad's best friend died within weeks of each other. My memories surrounding their deaths were very clinical. It was treated simply as a part of life.



No crying (at least, not publicly), no grieving, no display of loss. They died, were buried, and not mentioned again.

When I was 22, my only brother was shot and killed, leaving behind a wife and 5 young children. I know my mother was grief-stricken, but once the funeral was over, so were the tears. She very carefully hid her pain. Again, my brother was not talked about or his death discussed. When I look back now, I realize I had quite a struggle with handling my grief. Although I didn't know I was grieving, it came out in erratic behavior. It finally resulted in a divorce from my first husband, and a total division of my family.

I was 41 when my 19-year-old son committed suicide, and again I was faced with grief. This time, there was no escaping it. I went immediately to my own mother, knowing she had to understand. After all, she had lost her only son. But what I got was correction and scolding. I had not even buried my son when I was told to: "Stop crying!" "You need to straighten up!" "You're only making yourself sick, you need to cut it out!" "This is what Richie wanted to do; you can't change it, so forget it!"

I think everyone around me wanted me to act as if nothing happened, and let's go on with our lives. But this time, I couldn't. No one wanted me to cry. My husband would let me - if I went into another room. My children could not handle being around me because I was too depressing. The only member of our family who gave me "permission" was my 8-year-old son, Gene. He would not only talk about his big brother, but would remind me at Easter to put colored eggs on the grave. When Richie's birthday came around, that first year after his death, Gene told me I had to make Richie a birthday cake. At Christmas, Gene reminded me to hang up Richie's stocking. Gene also felt the importance of "owning" his big brother's possessions. Even now, 5 years later, Richie's sports trophies, baseball, and matchbox cars are proudly on display in Gene's room. Gene did not show his grief in sadness; he showed love in remembrance of his only brother.

I grieved silently and alone for 3 years before I realized I needed help. It was my counselor at the Christian Counseling Center who finally told me, "I'm giving you permission to grieve!" It's OK to cry in front of people - It still hurts. It's OK to miss my son - I loved him. It's OK to forgive myself - It wasn't my fault.

It's OK to ask for help - We all need compassion. Don't be sorry that others are uncomfortable with your grief. That's their problem. They don't understand because it has not happened to them. Forgive others - but, most of all, forgive yourself.
--Carol Helmlinge Edgewater, MD

"Names"

Our names mark our presence on the planet. They give credence to the reality of our existence. One of the great joys of becoming a parent is that we get to select the name for our child. We know that these little ones will be identified by their names all through their lives – and after they have died. When I look at the Our Children Remembered pages each month, I often think about the children, how dearly they were wanted, how carefully they were named. I can imagine the discussions about the names, the choices, the final decision. Then the welcoming of the baby into the world. I am touched by the words of parents who write so movingly about their children, wanting so much to hear their beautiful names. Our fear is that these beloved names will be silenced and forgotten. My parents' first child, a nine pound boy, died at birth.

My mother decided not to name him; she wanted to save the name for a hoped-for future son. (My dad left the decision to her.) The baby was buried in an unmarked grave in a family cemetery. I have wondered, in the years since my own son died, if not naming the baby was an effort to stem the horrible pain of his death. My parents told my brother and me about the first baby, but, like most people of their generation, they did not discuss their feelings about his death. The baby was present in our family, however, even though unnamed. For years in my childhood, I daydreamed about my older brother and what my life would have been like had he lived. It felt odd that he had no name. I made up names for him, gave him adventures, let him be a hero in my life. He may have been unnamed, he may never have breathed, but he influenced my life. I think my mother erred in refusing to name the baby. I have the deepest respect and understanding of her decision and her pain, and I think much of it was due to her shock at the baby's death and the tenor of society those long years ago. But, oh! how important are our children's names. They are our songs, our music. We love their names; we love

the souls who bear those names. We meet a baby with our child's name, and we feel connected. We compare spellings. We look at their hair, their coloring, their wonderful eyes. We remember
--Kitty Reeve/TCF Marin and San Francisco, CA

Newly Bereaved...

Driving

You know how it is when you are driving: suddenly you realize you've driven several miles, but you don't remember getting there. With grief the miles are years. Driving is habit. The destination changes; you are to turn left, but you still turn right. When the child in the store calls, "Mom!" I turn the way I always did.

We detour to avoid obstacles. I drive blocks out of my way to bypass his playground. If you are old enough, you will see a car like one you owned when you were young, and you will travel back through time. Yesterday, I saw my child in the passenger seat of a small car approaching a red light. I changed lanes to get a better look. His head was the same, his blue eyes familiar. He was close, but his mother drove him away.

I should have driven forward, but I couldn't. Wiping my eyes, I could see in my rear-view mirror the driver behind me honking his horn, screaming, "What's the matter with you?" The question I was asking myself.

--Shelly Wagner



Seasoned Grievors...

Rescuing Yourself From A Bad Day

It's no fun to be struggling to stay alive and be positive about life, when our heart is broken and we feel overwhelmed and lost with the death of our loved one. Even though we are making progress and have promised ourselves to "hang in there," to go through our grief rather than choosing to avoid it, we still have to deal with the excruciating bad days that can suddenly appear without any warning.

When my two oldest children, 21-year-old Denis and 19-year-old Peggy, were killed in a 1986 car accident, I had no idea how long the grief process would be part of my life. I gradually learned that

it's not a short-term process, nor is it a long-term process, but rather a life-time process. It's how we handle it, make the most of it, incorporate it into our lives, that helps us put our best foot forward, giving us the power to be valiant on those days that are dark, bleak, scary, and threaten our hard-earned progress.

I found some of these ideas a real tonic to lift my spirits, give me hope and help me climb out of the dark pit that seemed to surround and engulf me. Hopefully, some will work for you.

Be Connected. Love never dies. We want to keep the communication lines open with your loved one. Whether we are talking to them, praying to them, writing about them, or lighting a candle for them, our relationship continues. They are not gone, they have simply gone ahead. To feel even closer to them, some of us lovingly wear a linking object, something that belonged to them, like a sweater, a hat, a piece of jewelry. Others march directly to the tattoo parlor to choose a meaningful symbol, a heart, a butterfly, a shamrock, to feel connected in a special way. Each of us finds something that helps our heart remember all those treasured memories with our special person that bring a welcome smile to our face and lighten the burden in our heart. Maybe making a shrine on a tabletop, cabinet, sideboard, or TV, sharing framed pictures of our loved one or any objects that were meaningful to them, or items significant to us like angels, butterflies, flowers, printed prayers, or sayings, would help us feel lovingly connected when we miss them so much. Some hang their loved one's picture by the front or back door, throwing a kiss or greeting to them as they enter or leave their home, making them a part of their everyday lives, always remembered, staying connected.

Be Determined. We want our loved one to be proud of us, watching over us as we walk each stepping stone of the grief journey. It's hard work. Hang on while riding the roller-coaster of grief. You can yell and scream all you want as your grief hits all those curves and dips and bumps, but don't give up. Know that a bad day just means you can "start over" tomorrow. Have realistic goals that you can meet. Be fair to yourself. The bad news is that we all have bad days that blind side us, but the good news is those days enable us to feel the

beauty of a good day, the love of a of a dear friend, the magnificence of a gorgeous sunset, and the elegance of a bouquet of flowers.

Make a list of Affirmations, promises to yourself, and hang them on the bathroom mirror or refrigerator door, reminding yourself what you have promised yourself to do, like, "I commit to healing," "I express my emotions," "I tell people what I need," and "I make time for myself." If we are determined to make the best of each day, we can make crisis an opportunity for good things to happen. Staying in dialogue with God helps too, whether we are ranting, raving, crying, questioning, or bringing our most passionate feelings to our Creator. God is the only One capable of handling the full intensity of our negative emotions, our questions, our fears, and our pain.

You will see answers, often in unexpected ways, which will get you out of the doldrums.

Be Daring. Try new avenues of help, opening yourself to new experiences like joining a support group, attending a bereavement conference, seeking private counseling, or checking out the grief books in your own public library. Let yourself be inspired by the heartfelt messages of these facilitators, speakers, and authors, as they share their wisdom, giving you both a challenge and motivation while filling your soul up with hope and good thoughts. You would be surprised at the happy faces that greet me after bereaved grandmas, moms and dads, and siblings show me their new tattoo (and most times their only one) inscribed with a sign that gives them support and a deep connection with their loved one. Just touching it seems to infuse them with new strength on a bad day. Collect some memorabilia, special objects with great sentimental value of your loved one, and make a Memory Box or add to the one you already have, filled with letters, cards, pictures, diplomas, prayers, medals, whatever warms your heart, like Denis' little Ziggy doll dressed in graduation cap and gown, with "I is a brane" emblazoned on its chest or Peggy's last Mother's Day card three months before she died, which read, "Remember all that trouble I used to give you, I'm almost through!"

Be Positive. It's what you tell your head. Each morning when I get up, if I say, "I'll never see my children again," my stomach does flip-flops and I feel devastated. But instead, if I say, "I'm one day closer to seeing Peggy and Denis," my heart sings.

*Know that a
bad day
just means
you can
"start over"
tomorrow.*



Stay in the present. Every moment is precious. Now is the time for us to forgive, reach out, and express our love. As Mother Teresa reminds us, "Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love." Repeat things that you know bring a glow to your day. It could be reading, golfing, walking, the dog, visiting a good friend, playing with a grandchild, listening to soothing music. Follow your heart. That's the rule of thumb. Do what you can handle, not what overwhelms you. Some of us might be letting the laundry pile up, ignoring the cooking, avoiding relatives, or not answering the telephone, but we might be creating the most gorgeous garden or knitting hundreds of scarves or becoming a master carpenter. We grab onto anything that is a lifeline for us, something that relieves our pain and gets us through another day, maybe even with a smile.

We have the power to choose. Remember, your own mind is a sacred enclosure into which nothing harmful can enter except by your permission. We can control how we do our grief work and our attitude toward our healing. When we can't control what's happening, we challenge ourselves to control the way we respond to what's happening— that's where the power is. We can infuse our life with action and love. Our choices will direct our healing through every step of the process, and we will feel the comforting rewards of our positive actions.

So, as we are busy rescuing ourselves from a bad day, let us remember and even smile at Voltaire's prophetic words, "Life is a shipwreck, but we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats," reminding us to be grateful for life and the chance for a better tomorrow.

—Elaine Stillwell M.A., M.S. TCF Long Island NY Wife, mother, grandmother, educator, author and speaker, Elaine E. Stillwell, M.A., M.S., shares her gifts of hope and inspiration with the bereaved, simply telling what she has learned to cope and survive following the deaths of her two eldest children, twenty-one-year old Denis and nineteen-year old Peggy, in the same 1986 automobile accident. Elaine shares her unique gifts of caring and humor with audiences across the United States at workshops and seminars, in radio and TV appearances, and her numerous magazine articles.

Helpful Hint...



Grief never ends, but it changes. It's a passage, not a place to stay. The sense of loss must give way if we're to value the life that was lived.
--TCF Minneapolis Newsletter

Friends and Family...

Sharing A Private Grief

The other day someone said to me, "My grief is too private to share." I think we all feel that way sometimes. We are saying two things when we say that. First, "You couldn't possibly know how I feel." And second, we are saying, "I hurt so much, I'm not about to tell of my anguish and leave myself open to your judgment of my feelings." We have to protect ourselves, but in protecting our privacy are we forgetting anything?

Is it possible that our friends are not judging us and that in not giving voice to our sorrow we are closing the door to the healing love that may be in store for us? It is probable that our friends don't know what to say to us. People have no trouble wishing us "get well soon", or "happy birthday", but it is hard for people to express their sorrow, often for fear of hurting us. That they don't express their grief isolates us. Sometimes we have to encourage others to address the issues closest to our hearts for our own protection.

--Pat Ryan TCF Silverdale, WA

Welcome...

My Son Is Dead - And You Expect ME To Feed The Cat?



Isn't it amazing how society is so rigid in their expectations? There are rules you know ... STEPS we must all take ... Who ever set these standards obviously has never lost a child, the core of your heart and soul. It just doesn't work that way.

Simple every day tasks are impossible to complete. The only constant in your upside down world is pain, unlike any pain you have ever known. Shortly after your child's death you are expected to return to your job, take care of your household, pay the bills, and yes, even feed the cat! It has been a year for me, since I lost my son, and I still go totally blank mid-act. I stand in a store, with no idea what I came in for, or I cry over the bananas, because Lee loved them. I can go from laughter to tears in 1.1 seconds.

The Compassionate Friends has been a life saver (or perhaps a heart saver) for me. Only those who have experienced the same heartache,

will understand when you "go crazy." They will understand when you say "I need to be alone - but I can't stand to be alone!" Each grieving parent must heal in his or her own way, in his or her own time. One step forward, 15 back, spin around and start over, only to repeat the same progress, one step forward, 15 back, spin around ... You got the picture.

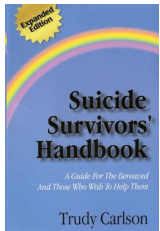
But you don't have to heal alone. You need not walk alone. Join us, we know you're not crazy—just a grieving parent. We do care.

-Ann Stuits TCF Roseburg, OR

Editor's Note: Please join us as we walk this path through grief. You do not have to do it alone.

Being with other bereaved parents who truly understand this tsunami of emotions you are facing makes the loss easier to bear. Hearing how other bereaved parents are coping often gives you insight and helps to alleviate some of the pain.

Book In Review...



Suicide Survivor's Handbook
SSHO A Guide for the Bereaved and
Those Who Wish to Help Them by
Trudy Carlson. Trudy wrote this book
after the death of her son, Ben, to
suicide. This book answers what

every parent wants to know, the question WHY. It also covers the shame and guilt, and the anger associated with losing a loved one. Not only should every suicide survivor have this book, but friends and professionals as well. Available from The Centering Corp. 1-866-218-0101

Survival Is Possible

As you travel

Through the maze of living

Seared by the sorrows

Life hands out

You can survive

You can recover

Learn to live again

Get familiar with your transformed self

Discover new reasons to go on

If only you will reach out.

Helping others with their agonies.

You will survive

If you never lose sight of Hope.

--By Norma S. Grove – W. Central Iowa Chapter

Tears Are For Treats

Red and golden leaves
scattered on the ground
Bright orange pumpkins,
with faces oh so round.



Just a reminder that Halloween is neigh
And soon little tricksters will soon be stopping by.
Faces painted funny, some an awful fright!
As each cry out "Trick or Treat" on this Halloween
night.

Eyes brightly twinkling behind the mask they wear
Oohing and aweing at the candy fare.
As I gaze upon them I recall a time before
When my own little trickster would roam from door
to door.

Such a joy filled time, he delighted in the fun!
Picking out his costume, till he found just the right
one.

Carving out his pumpkin in eerie designs
Laughing and dancing, with fun on his mind.
Little tricksters wonder why a tear starts to flow
As I pass out the treats, but they just don't know .
I search for a face among them, from a Halloween
long ago.

So mommies and daddies I beg you please
Hold tight to those memories, that you share
tonight

For you are truly blessed, to share in their
Halloween delight.

—Sheila Simmons, Steven's mom Atlanta GA

The Shadows of the Night

I sit alone in the shadows of the night.

Looking up at the stars that shine so bright

I think of you somewhere far up above

I remember all the laughter, happiness, and love.

The full moon shines bright in the sky

Staring at the fall moon, I start to cry

From the face of the moon above the tree

I see your face staring back at me.

Then it starts to rain and the sky turns gray

I remember what happened two years ago in May

It continued to rain the whole night through

I think the rain meant that you were crying too.

--Lisa Johnson—TCF, Baltimore, MD

"Life turns out best for those who make the best of
the way life turns out."

—Art Linkletter (Father of two children who died)



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Parents: Alexandar & Sanderson
Quintana Dantas De Oliveria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Birthday Tributes...



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

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

Sorry, no tributes were submitted this month.

For Siblings...



Guarantees

I always felt safe with Chris. There was always a guarantee that I would be taken care of because of him. I knew that he had my back, and would move mountains for me. There were always guarantees when he was in my life. He loved me. He believed in me. He was my guarantee in life. Chris was always going to be there, cheering me on, giving me advice, laughing with me, fighting for me.

There was nothing that prepared me for the day when the guarantee was no longer there, when Chris died. There was no longer a guarantee that I had another birthday with him, another Christmas, another wrestling match in the middle of the living room floor, which always ended with him winning.

Now, with the guarantees that I had gone, I was left with a mess. The remaining members of my family were working through their own grief, so there I sat, alone. Everyone in my life was wearing head-phones, and I was invisible. I would speak, and no one would listen. I would try to have the same type of conversations with my parents as before, but it just wasn't working. Nothing worked any more. Everything was broken. I just wanted to laugh again. So I had a choice to make.

I made the choice to create my own, new guarantees. I had to be there for me. What Chris's death taught me was that there were no tried and true guarantees in life. Life is going to change. Life is going to evolve. People are going to leave us; people are going to die. I had to change my relationship with my parents, and other living siblings. I had to love, cheer myself on, and

give myself advice. I had to fight for me! My brother, US Army Captain Christopher Frank Soelzer, was an amazing man. He was too big for this world. He lived every day as if it was his last. His laugh and his spirit could fill a stadium. I am eternally grateful to my parents for giving me such a wonderful human being to grow up with. I am blessed to know what unconditional love is. The world lost an incredible piece of the puzzle that Christmas eve in 2003. But I have the guarantee of knowing that heaven gained an angel that day.
--Tim Seltzer

Dreaming of You

There is a space between
the dream world I have left,
And the busy day I am about to join.
Soon I will return to a world in which
You do not live anymore.
I want to linger in this space,
And remember every detail
Of my dream of you.
I can clearly see your face,
You haven't aged.
You are still my older brother,
Even though you are
Playing with my children,
Whom you have never met.
I touch your arm,
And tell you about my life now.
I can hardly believe
You are here with me ...
I want to stay right here, with you,
Not let you out of my sight,
And bask in your presence ...
I have missed you so much.
As I recall details of my dream,
I miss you so intensely,
My heart aches ...
I don't want to open my eyes ...
I don't want to leave that space.
As right in this space,
I allow myself to be with you,
To think of you,
And in that moment,
I feel so close to you.
It is so long since I have seen you,
These dreams are the closest I can get to you.
It's a bittersweet experience,
Dreaming of you ...
I've opened my eyes,

I'm getting ready for the day.
 Soon, that sensation
 Of being so close to you
 Will be gone ...
 And I don't want to let you go.
 -- Claire Kuhnell TCF, Victoria Canada

For Grandparents...



Grandparents Remembrance:

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is two fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together.

We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

--Susan Mackey TCF Rutland, VT

From Our Members...



The Crazy Emotional Roller Coaster

As a bereaved mother for nine years, I'd like to share some insights I have learned about the infamous emotional roller coaster. Having the understanding that you aren't alone can be quite helpful in surviving the early years after losing a child.

First, it is important to know that grief does not have a timetable nor are the stages simple or linear. Any seasoned griever will tell you that this is not an easy or predictable journey and everyone grieves differently. Having said that, I would like to explain about many of the common emotional challenges so you can better understand them and therefore be somewhat prepared. These emotions can be so overwhelming that the

bereaved person is afraid they may be losing their mind. Most importantly, please understand that these emotions are transitory and will diminish or completely go away in time. They can include:

Numbness: In the very beginning we feel like we are devoid of emotions and just going through our days in a fog. This is our psyche giving us a buffer of time as we build up the strength to face the challenges ahead. This can last for days or even months.

Denial: Since the death is too painful to accept, especially when it was sudden and unexpected, it is not uncommon to deny the death even happened. I actually experienced this during my son's burial service.

Memory loss and disorganization: Since the memory of our child's death consumes our every waking thought it is no wonder that the mundane trivialities of everyday life get forgotten. Things like remembering to put gas in the car or difficulty with making simple decisions are some examples.

Bargaining: We play the irrational game in our heads of "Maybe I could have prevented my child's death if only..." or "Dear God, can we please have a do-over and take me instead?" Although fruitless, most of us do it.

Feeling isolated and alone: No one, not even our family or closest friends can truly understand what we are feeling.

Crying: I cried excessively while others rarely or never cry. Again, since every person is unique, there is no right or wrong way in this. Crying, however, can be a helpful release of emotions and even physical toxins. Sometimes it helps to use a trigger to open the floodgates (song, photo, item of clothing, etc.)

Guilt: Although completely irrational, there seems to be an unwritten law that parents should always be able to keep their child safe from any harm - and certainly from dying. Other than keeping them in a protective bubble their entire life, this is impossible.

Inability to sleep, or sleeping too much: Both extremes can be linked to depression and/or anxiety. Most of us experience this after such a life-altering tragedy. Take heart because this does lessen and eventually resolves with time. Talk to your doctor if you need help with this. I needed prescription sleeping pills for three years.

Anger: Most of us want to lash out, scream or just hit something. We think, This should not have happened, my child should not precede me in

death! Since there is no easy way to release this anger, it can make us feel like a ticking time bomb. I found counseling, grief support groups and exercise helped me in this area.

Physical pain or illness: Since our mind and body are interconnected, any severe emotional trauma can adversely affect our immune systems and therefore our physical health.

Two important things to remember are that you don't have to go through this alone, and these emotions are normal when you are a bereaved parent. That is why The Compassionate Friends is so beneficial. Getting together and sharing what you are experiencing with others who truly understand lets you know that you are not crazy or alone. My husband and I started attending meetings less than two months after losing our son. We both felt like this was our "lifeline" and the only place where we didn't feel different from everyone else.

--Linda Zelik TCF South Bay/LA CA Chapter facilitator, Author of: *From Despair to Hope, Survival Guide for Bereaved parents*

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.

Our Next Steering Committee Meeting... will be Tuesday, Oct. 8th at 7:30 pm at Linda & Joe Zelik's house. (19405 Linda Dr., Torrance) If you would like to share your ideas and suggestions for meetings, or would like to help with the planning of the World Wide Candle lighting, we would love to have your input. All members are invited. For

directions or more information call Linda at (310) 370-1645.



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: October 1st for November birthdays). If you miss the deadline, call Lynn at (310) 530-3214 and let me know. 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
- Lori Galloway.....(760) 521-0096
- 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.Livealone.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	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 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.

In loving memory of Eddie Myricks II, April 1972 - October 2011. To our beautiful son, Eddie who came into our lives, stole our hearts, and took part of them away with him when he left us. We love and miss you so much, Mom & Dad

With sincere gratitude and deep appreciation, we acknowledge the generosity of the previous individuals and companies. Your tax deductible donation, given, in memory of your loved one enables us to reach bereaved parents with telephone calls and information, and they also help defray newsletter and mailing costs. Please help us reach out to others in this difficult time. Indicate any special tribute you wish printed in our newsletter.

When making a donation, please make checks payable to: The Compassionate Friends South Bay/L.A. Chpt.

Mail to: The Compassionate Friends So Bay/ L.A. Chapter
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance, CA 90510-1171

In loving memory of _____

Birth date _____ Death date _____ Sent From _____

Tribute _____

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

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

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TORRANCE CA 90503



Halloween

It is here, this day of merriment
and children's pleasure.
Gremlins and goblins and ghosts
at the door of your house.
As the other children come

to the door of your mind. Faces out of the past, small ghosts with sweet,
painted faces. They do not shout. Those children who no longer march
laughing on a cold Halloween night, they stand at the door of your mind-
and you will let them in, so that you can give them the small gifts of
Halloween- a smile and a tear.

-- Winter sun by Sascha

October 2019

– Return Service Requested –



Time Sensitive Material, Please Deliver Promptly



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.
The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes,
but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain,
just as your hope becomes my hope.
We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.
We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.
We are young, and we are old.
Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh
and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.
Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength,
while some of us are struggling to find answers.
Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression,
while others radiate an inner peace.
But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends,
it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other
our love for the children who have died.
We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves,
but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love
to share the pain as well as the joy,
share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts,
and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.
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If you no longer wish to receive this mailing, need corrections, or have a new address, please contact us.