



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

JANUARY 2020 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be January 2nd, 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 January 2nd meeting will start with "New Year, New Me: Finding Hope in the New Year."

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, Jan. 2nd meeting will start with “**New Year, New Me: Finding Hope in the New Year.**” While we may have survived the stress and overload of emotions from the holidays, we often feel let down when they are over. We sometimes wonder if the pain of our loss will always dominate every moment of our lives forever. Will depression always be around the corner? Will we ever be happy again? Will I ever be ME again? What can I do to find hope in the new year? Join us as we share our experiences and ways we found hope for our future after the loss of our precious children.

And Then There Was Hope

Once, in what is now another life, I thought support groups were for someone else. I felt that with research, personal work, discussions with the elders in my family and wise friends, I would find all the answers I needed. This worked well until December of 2002. My son died. The death of my only child changed everything. My standard methods of “self help” were not going to get me through this. I needed more than even Solomon could give me. And I desperately needed hope.

My first meeting at Compassionate Friends was in March of 2003. My son had been gone almost three months; I was traumatized, I could not speak and I was doubtful that I would ever find even an obscure hint of peace in my life. April’s meeting was somewhat better. I spoke a few words. In May I was rocked by the dual anticipation of Mother’s Day and my son’s birthday. In June I participated in the balloon liftoff; I sprained my ankle as we were walking back from the park. That night, as I set at home with ice on my ankle, I thought about the past five months. I realized that I was a different person than I had been earlier in the year. I was no longer the woman who walked into her first Compassionate Friends meeting because I was no longer walking alone. There were others at my side, in front of me, behind me, encouraging me, offering gentle suggestions, understanding and listening as I told my child’s story over and over and over again.

I discovered that those who had walked this road before me were holding the lanterns of hope to cast light on my life path. It was these people and only these people who could reach me, who could teach me, whose voices could penetrate my

fog, whose hearts could help me to begin the healing process.

By the time I marked the first anniversary of my son’s death, I was beginning to discover that I had been transformed into a different person. Like my child whose body had died but whose spirit lived on symbolically in the butterfly, I had become a different person. I physically felt the pain of other parents. The first time I offered advice I sat in wonder at the realization that this very effort brought a little more light into my soul. Part of my healing process became the helping process.

Healing is what we seek, but we will never be “cured”. As parents who have lost our children, we will never be the same people we were before our child died. I came to accept this fact. But I also found that we can live with this wound which, despite our initial certainty to the contrary, is not usually fatal. It is forever, it is painful, it is the worst wound

a human can feel, but it is not fatal. Even when I was wracked with physical pain in my grief, the light of my Compassionate Friends gave me a new perspective, one of hope.

Yes, a part of me died with my son, but the part that remains is constantly changing, continually evolving and always reaching for the light of hope. We each choose different ways to reach for hope, to live our lives as well as we possibly can without our precious children. But eventually we all awaken to hope.

My hope did not come as an epiphany out of the blue, but rather, it was more like a false dawn followed by true, muted rays of the morning sun. My hope was a process. I engaged the process by reaching out to others, listening, learning. I learned that the quick answer is rarely the right answer. I learned that silence often says more than words. I made peace with my pain, and I began to reach out to others with words of hope. For words were my gift to those who had given me so much.

At Compassionate Friends, we see many new faces each year. Most parents continue their relationship with the group for at least a year, some for even two years. A few stay three years. The good news is that those who do not choose to come to meetings have chosen to go forward with their lives in a different way. Going forward with their lives is a very positive step and the goal of each bereaved parent.



Not all of us stay; not all of us should stay. But for some of us, the hope continues to rekindle at each meeting. As we meet the newly bereaved and listen to their story, to their child's story, to the outpouring of pure agony and heartbreak, we hold the lantern. These parents will not know exactly what it is that we are doing as they are lost in the fog, as we all once were. Yet, we quietly hold the lantern, we keep the chapter moving forward, we meet parents and talk about their children, about our children, about grief, about life, about death, about pain and about hope. I have chosen to stay and hold the lantern for those who have followed me. For this gives me hope and peace and it keeps my child close to me in even the darkest of nights.

As grief is our companion, time moves forward; the pain becomes less searing, less encompassing. We learn to co-exist with our loss. We treasure our memories, we love our children and our hearts ache with our terrible loss. Yet, we have moved forward on the path. We are holding the lantern for others who find themselves on this path in life. We give this gift of hope with our presence which symbolizes the future of every newly bereaved parent. I remember my child as I walk this road with you.

-- Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF, Katy, TX

Hope: What I Need

TIME ~ Time alone; and time with others whom I can trust and who will listen when I need to talk. Months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings which go along with loss.

REST ~ I may need extra amounts of things I needed before. Relaxation, exercise, nourishment, diversion, hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a cause to work for, to help others, any of these may give me a lift. Grief is an emotionally exhausting process. I need to replenish myself – to follow what feels healing and what connects me to the people and things I love.

SECURITY ~ I need to reduce, or find help for financial or other stresses in my life. I need to allow myself to be close to ones I can trust. It helps when I allow myself to get back into a routine, and to do things at my own pace.

HOPE ~ I find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered and that time does help, gives me

hope that sometime in the future my grief will be less raw and less painful.

CARING ~ I try to allow myself to accept the expressions of caring from others, even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative also suffering from the same loss often brings me a feeling of closeness with that person.

GOALS ~ It often feels that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month, helps me get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a good rule of thumb.

At first, my enjoyment of these things just isn't the same. I know this is normal. As time passes, I will need to work on some longer range goals to give some structure and direction to my life. It is OK to get some guidance or counseling to help with this.

SMALL PLEASURES ~ I no longer underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food - all are small steps toward regaining my pleasure in life itself.

BACK-SLIDING ~ Sometimes after a period of feeling good, I find myself back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair or anger.

Intellectually, I know this is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. I'm told, this is because as humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and the meaning of death all at once. So, I give myself permission to let it in a little at a time.

DRUGS? ~ Drugs are not always helpful.

Sometimes, even medication intended to help me get through periods of shock may prolong and delay the necessary process of grieving. I cannot prevent or cure grief. The only way OUT is THROUGH.

--Alan Taplow Adapted by Alan Taplow from Judy Tatelbaum's book, *The Courage to Grieve*

A New Year's Perspective

*One step
at a time...*

Another turning of the calendar, another reminder that time doesn't stop – life doesn't stop – for the bereaved.

I observe the occasion with a different perspective now. New Year's resolutions seem pointless, even presumptuous, after you've

experienced the death of a child. Fresh starts won't change this reality, nor will the purest intentions avoid events that are simply out of our control. Admittedly, I've lost faith in the goal-oriented, purpose-driven, mission statement rhetoric that's so popular in our day, and find myself seeking instead to find meaning in the present moment.

It began as trying to just survive the present moment, which is the best we can do in early grief – one step at a time, one breath at a time. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, we begin to engage in life again. To notice the golden pink glow of a sunset, to listen to the solitary call of a blue jay, to give and accept hugs more openly. These are the doorways of hope.

It's in these small but significant experiences that I feel connected to what really matters. Alongside the heartache and emptiness of grief, there is beauty and goodness in this world, maybe even joy. I see Brandon smiling when I find it. Almost five years after his transition to heaven, a flow is returning to life.

And maybe this is how I honor him. Not by accomplishing great things in his name, but by allowing myself to continue with living, loving, trying something new, making mistakes, laughing, learning.

The death of a child is the ultimate sorrow. It affects every facet of life. As it becomes less all-consuming, it becomes an integrated part of who we are. We become more compassionate and forgiving because we've experienced our own pain and weakness. We live with less fear because we've already gone through the worst. We see through the superficial illusions of life because we're anchored in what really matters, holding out for something lasting and true.

These are the qualities we bring to the New Year, to the relationships and circumstances we will encounter. Goals and resolutions may have their place, but to live meaningfully is to bring light into the world. Wherever we can find that light, we'll meet our children there.

-- Robin Goddard, Brandon's Mom
TCF Brazoria County, Texas



What About Laughter?

Grief is such a serious thing. It breaks your life apart, and it leaves you confused and powerless. Grief is pain beyond words; grief is relentless force

and grief will not yield the field without an enormous struggle. And yet in the middle of all this emotional hardship there is often a deep and resonant intuition saying "life goes on." And does it also say "you'll heal"? Is there something in our spirit that keeps us breathing, waiting for the daylight, and ready (even against our will) to live again?

Surely, tears are inescapable at times of such grief— but what about laughter? Does it seem as if grievers know that both tears AND laughter will help us to keep going, to live again, and to enjoy life again someday? And in time, can we come to see laughter as an affirmation of our dead children's lives? We would not want to tell them would we, that their life is the cause of unremitting sadness from this day forward?

When you can, make your life ready for laughter.

Accepting The Unacceptable

"I will never be able to accept the death of my child." Does that sound familiar? Have you said that? Not surprising. That is one, if not the most, difficult thing we have to do to get to the other side of the long dark tunnel of grief.

What does "accept" mean? One parent told me he would never accept his daughter's death, because he said "accept" means to "agree, approve, to consent to," Obviously, in that context no one in their right mind would "accept" their child's death. But there are other meanings to "accept": "believe to be true," "acknowledge." We do not like the sound of those words either, but at some point, accept them, in order to get on with our lives.

By stating we will not accept it, what is accomplished? ... Will it make it not true? If only it were that simple. Then I would be 100% in favor of denial. But it doesn't work that way. There are some things that cannot be changed, no matter how hard we may want them to be.

One example: My husband had a heart attack a little more than a year after Eric's death. He vehemently denied he had had a heart attack.... He continued on with his HEAVY smoking. Then came his stroke. He is now badly paralyzed on his left side. He cannot deny his stroke. And he cannot go back, and accept his heart attack, change his way of living and perhaps avert the stroke. So what did his denial accomplish? It

made things worse.

So it is with us. Denial won't work. At some point in time, we know it has happened. I realized for myself, it was when I could say "Eric died." I could say the word "dead." It took quite a long time. I could say "I lost a son" but not "he died." One day it just came out. It actually shocked and upset me. But afterwards, looking back, I realized that was a big step for me. Not a happy one, but it was one of my turning points.

All of the "stages" of grief that we go through are hard. There is nothing easy about it. As Darcie Sims said..."grief hurts." That almost seems like too mild a statement. The feeling is impossible to put in words. It's devastating!!

"Grief work" takes time and effort. I wish there was an easier way for all of you. I can only give you the hope and encouragement that you, too, can make it. Be kind to and patient with yourself. God Bless!

--Mary Ehmann, TCF Valley Forge, PA In Memory of her son, Eric

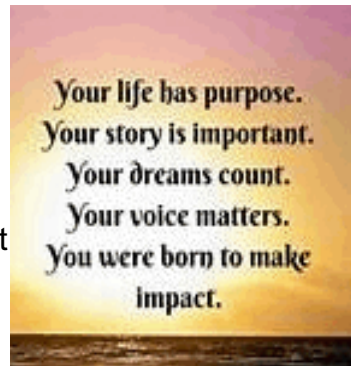
The Gift of Purpose

Our daughter Amanda was always very positive about her future ... and what I mean is that she knew what was happening to her, and where she was going.

Very rarely did she cry and complain about her situation. She knew she was dying, and she knew where she was going. I got so much strength from her, I only hope I gave her some comfort.

Soon after she died our family was together for a time of support and memories. Our son-in-law was asking me if I had ever considered the possibility that Mandy had completed her purpose on earth, and that is why she died. Before I could think, and answer, our daughter—his wife—asked him who would choose to live the life their severely Autistic son lived. For years I would rethink that conversation. About three years ago I shared the episode with an author who thought for a while and looked at me and said, "Yes, he came here to teach people love."

Three years later I realize that "yes" Mandy's life gave me a purpose. When she left I felt everything we all feel at varying times: anger, sadness, devastation, fatigue, guilt, and many more. But now after that ah-ha moment, I realize



our beautiful grandson does teach people love ... and he doesn't say one thing, but you can feel it. And I know Mandy's death has shown a purpose I would have never dreamed of, and I am thankful.

"...the journey that was Mandy's has given my life a purpose I never could have imagined."

If Mandy had stayed here I never would have known any of you, but now I know you and your beautiful children. When somebody walks through the meeting door for the first time I can comfort them and offer them hope. Yes, there was and is a purpose in something that has seemed so horrible.

Does this mean I don't miss my precious daughter? NO. I miss her every minute of every day, and forever will. However, it does mean, to me, that the journey that was Mandy's has given my life a purpose I never could have imagined.

I ♥ you Mandy, and I ♥ all of You! -- Mary

Guilty, Your Honor: The Burden of Guilt After a Suicide

Guilty, Your Honor, I whisper.

Have you ever done anything so horrible that you would prefer to hide in a dark closet for the rest of your life than have someone find out you did it? Have you ever done something so bad that even remembering what you did causes you to hyperventilate and shake?

I have. I've made too many mistakes in my life. I should have done better.

Sometimes I envision myself standing before a judge who wears a long black robe, with my head hanging low in shame. I am holding tightly to a large bulging sack.

The judge with the long black robe says, "Hold your head up to answer me. Who are you?"

I answer him quietly. "I am a mother, a wife and a teacher."

"Were you a good mother?" the judge asks. I notice his eyes are staring impatiently into mine.

"No, Your Honor," I reply, shaking my head sadly. "I was not a good mother." The judge says nothing, so I continue. "I tried my best, but I made too many mistakes. I brought them to show you. They are all in this sack," I explain, straining to push the sack closer to him so he can see it better. The judge looks at my sack and mumbles to himself, "Looks like this woman's got a ton of bricks here." Then, he sighs and says, "Hmmm—how do you plead?"

"Guilty, Your Honor," I whisper. "Guilty." The

reality is, however, I carried that huge sack of guilt with me from the moment the officer told me that my teenage daughter, Arlyn, took her life. I found the largest sack I could and opened it. Then, I threw bricks of guilt into it, one by one.

In the sack, I placed bricks for each memory I had of the times I had raised my voice to my children. I placed more bricks in for times I punished them for making childish mistakes. If only I had been more patient.

In the sack, I stuffed bricks for each time I was too busy grading papers or washing clothes or talking on the telephone to give my children, the most precious people in my life, my undivided attention. If only I had kept my priorities straight.

In this sack I also added bricks for memories of the many times when I had failed to listen to my children with my heart. If only I had been wiser.

After Arlyn died, I walked around carrying my sack of guilt; it was a painful reminder that some of my actions could have contributed to the depression that led to her death. I did not pull the trigger that hot August day, but I felt as if I did. To me, Arlyn's suicide provided tangible evidence that I had failed in the most important mission of my life—mothering. I deserved to have to spend the rest of my life lugging a heavy sack of bricks around.

This was almost a complete turn-around from the attitude I had before Arlyn's death. Prior to August 7, 1996, I had confidence in myself; I had achieved the goals I set, so I thought I knew it all. If there'd been a Miss Arrogance pageant, I would have won the crown.

But I was knocked to my knees when Arlyn died, and I would never stand tall again. Any crown on my head was shattered.

After Arlyn died, the world no longer made sense. I doubted every thing I had ever learned, my beliefs, and my values. Most of all, I saw myself as a huge failure in life. So here I was, trying to muddle through each day, attached to this huge burdensome sack of guilt that I could not and would not put down.

Ugh! My sack of bricks was so heavy: the bricks representing all the mistakes of my life were so heavy that I'd need the help of a bulldozer to move it, at least. Most of the bricks in the sack had to do with Arlyn: sins of commission and sins of omission. Arlyn had killed herself, and the guilt I felt was consuming me.

Every day after I woke up, I'd stand at the foot

of the huge ugly load and looked up at it. As much as I hated it, I felt connected to it. I sometimes reached out and stroked the bag up and down with one hand, never letting go with the other. It was MINE.

Day after day, I stood there, holding on to my sack full of bricks of guilt. Friends would walk by and shake their heads at me. "Let go of your guilt, Karyl. It's not your fault!" they'd say, often shaking their heads in disgust. "You're wasting your life," others would say. "Arlyn would not want you to lug that sack around forever."

I tuned them out. What Arlyn would want or would not want did not matter. She was not here to speak out. Sometimes, I'd try to explain how much I needed to hold on to the guilt, but they'd argue louder. So then, I closed my ears and turned away. They could not understand. And so it was.

Life went on for those around me, and I was alone. Except that I had my sack of guilt to keep me company. But then one day, for no particular reason, I reached into the sack and pulled out one of the bricks. It was dated July 5, 1996. It said: I went to Germany, so I was not here to take care of Arlyn during her last month of life.

I thought about it. If I had been here, would I have noticed that something was wrong with Arlyn? It's possible I would have. At the same time, it's more probable that I wouldn't have noticed anything. Arlyn was a master at deception, it seems. She'd been hiding her pain for years. So what makes me believe that she'd suddenly have changed and become transparent?

My tears began to fall then. I felt warm tears streaming down my cheeks. They were for Arlyn: Arlyn, my gentle little girl who was trapped in her own dark world by something beyond her ability to comprehend.

It hurt so badly to remember. So, so badly. But then, the tears began to fall faster, and they felt even hotter against my face. These tears were different; they were for me. I, too, was trapped in my own dark, lonely world, lugging this heavy load of guilt around. I, too, was trapped by something too complex for me to understand. Did I really deserve the additional weight of the brick dated July 5, 1996, just because I went to Germany? Was I a terrible mother because I took a vacation that I had dreamed of for years?

In my heart, I knew that I had not neglected



Arlyn by going on a vacation. In my heart, I knew that I did not need that extra brick adding weight to the overloaded sack. But could I bear to toss it out? Would the world fall apart if I removed it from the sack? I thought a while as I ran my hands over the brick. It felt rough, hard and cold.

Yes, I needed it. No I did not. Yes, I needed it. No I did not. Yes, I needed it. No I did not. Finally, I placed the brick on the ground beside me, and waited. I heard no loud crashes of thunder; the earth beneath me did not tremble. I looked up at the sack I'd been lugging. It really didn't look any different. I tried to push it; it didn't feel any lighter, but I knew it was. I had lightened the load just a little bit. I took a step forward, and I felt a gentle breeze brush my cheek. A butterfly flitted by.

--By Karyl Chastain Beal <http://ezinearticles.com>

A Place in My Heart

Hannah Elisabeth came into my life on a bright and sunny day. She was a tiny bundle that smiled and cried in a baby's way.



She became a part of my daily routine and quickly took a place in my heart. She was one of the cutest baby girls, and we all thought so from the start.

I held her, I rocked her, and sang her a song. I fed her, changed her, and laid her down for a rest. I did all the things a mother would do. I know I was giving her the best.

But then one day in my usual way, I put little Hannah to bed. And since that time my life has been filled with pain, sorrow and dread.

For you see, that day a year ago when I assumed everything was all right, I found little Hannah in such a way. No time will ever take away that sight.

They said it was SIDS. There was nothing I could do. But that hasn't helped me deal with my thoughts. I am still oh so blue.

With God's help, I seem to be coping. My faith and prayers are the key. My family and friends have been at my side. Their love and patience to guide me.

You may think from what I have said that Hannah was my little daughter. But no, she was not related to me. I was her daycare provider.

--Marjorie Crueger

Minnesota

Newly Bereaved...

Some Thoughts About My Journey

Some thoughts about my journey:

At first I thought...

...I would not survive her death.

At first I thought...

...I would never care about my living.

At first I thought...

...I would never have life goals (dreams) again.

At first I thought...

...the cycle of pain and numbness would never end.

At first I thought...

...I would never enjoy nature again.

At first I thought...

...I would never feel the beauty of a caring hug.

At first I thought...

...I would never love again.

I was wrong about

all of these things and others.

I wish all of you the resolve and strength to continue on your path to your future.

There is a future worth living, be patient, be gentle, you will make it.

-- Allen Roth, TCF, Mason County Chapter, WA

Seasoned Greivers...

The New Language of Grief

There are many different schemes and ways to look at the grief process. Some talk stages while others outline steps to be taken or tasks to be completed. I like to think of grief as a journey. However grief looks to you, it is important to understand that grief is not a sign of weakness nor a lack of faith. Grief is the price we pay for love.

When we first become aware of our loss, we may become numb. The literature refers to this as shock. Shock is a physiological phenomenon which protects us from further pain. When our circuits become overloaded, we cannot accept further information. Our numbness protects us from the reality of death. Our responses become mechanical. Decisions are made, actions are taken and events pass, all without our full participation. Shock is what helps us get through the necessary details of death. Our numbness can last anywhere from a few moments to several

months.

When we are faced with difficult steps on our journey, we sometimes wish to postpone our progress. We want to sidestep the pain. Perhaps we are not yet ready to deal with reality or perhaps we feel afraid, unsupported, unskilled or unprepared to face the unfolding of a new life. "I won't deal with it!" "I can't cope with it!" "I don't want to face it." Words that each of us has echoed again and again.

Instead of facing our grief, we postpone reality for a little while. It is easier to pretend that our child is away at camp instead of facing the bitter reality of death. And yet I know what it is that I am pretending. How could I ever forget? Perhaps we could replace the word denial with the word postponement. It accurately describes what we do with a reality we are not quite ready to experience. We simply postpone that part of our journey until we feel ready to tackle the new reality. Denial is not a lack of coping, but rather an accurate and creative way of postponing, until we feel more secure, more skilled, more supported. It takes a lot of energy to postpone reality for very long and so, eventually, most of us run out of energy to keep things in fantasy land. Slowly we move toward painful reality and begin the healing process of coping. When we feel ready, we will move from postponement to acknowledgment and then to action, in our own time.

Our journey toward awareness and acknowledgment hurts. Every part of us hurts. There's a tightness in the throat, a searing pain in the chest, a heaviness in the heart. It hurts to move. It hurts to breathe. It hurts just to be! Sometimes the pain is so intense we may develop physical symptoms. Sleep irregularities, changes in appetite and gastrointestinal disturbances are common. Heartache, restlessness, muscle tension and sighing may occur.

Anger and guilt are common emotions. You may feel angry with God, your spouse, your children or with others, either involved or totally separate from the death. You may be angry with yourself. You may want to withdraw and be left alone. Anger and guilt may be revisited many times.

Depression and feelings of emptiness or hollowness may temporarily overcome you. You may become preoccupied with images of your child. You may "see" or sense your child's presence. You may begin to wonder if you are going crazy.

As long as we are changing the language, I'd

like to replace acceptance with acknowledgment. Acceptance, to me, means agree with, and I will never agree with what has happened! But I can work towards acknowledgment of what has happened. As I begin to feel safer, more supported, more knowledgeable about the grief process and feel more skilled at grieving, I can allow whatever I have cast into postponement to resurface and begin then to resolve my grief.

I want to change one more word in the language of grief. Let's get rid of the word recovery and use healing instead. Recovery is a medical model word, designed to describe broken bones, not hearts. We recover from a broken arm or the chicken pox. We don't get over the death of someone we love. We get through it, one moment, one hour, one day, one hurt at a time.

Healing is a hopeful word. Healing doesn't happen all at once, nor does a language get changed quickly. Healing is a matter of choice. It begins to occur when we learn to reinvest our energies, emotions and love rather than replace them. We will always love our children and we will continue to have a relationship with them for the rest of our lives. We do not stop loving someone just because they die!

You know you're making progress when you fully understand that putting your child's things away does not mean you are forgetting him. You do not have to say goodbye. We no longer save for a child's college education, but perhaps we contribute to a scholarship in her name or create a living memorial to the love we shared. Our child died, but the love we share between us can never be destroyed.

The words we speak dictate our journey. Yet it seems more hopeful to speak of postponement instead of denial, acknowledgment instead of acceptance and healing instead of recovery. We are diminished by grief, replenished by love, held by hope. I want a language that reflects that hope, a language that reminds me of joy remembered, of love given and received, of life lived, not lost. May love be what you remember the most.

--Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CGC, CHT

Friends and Family... 

I Know You Are Listening to Me When:

*You come quietly into my private world and let me be.

* You really try to understand me even when I am

not making sense.

* You grasp my point even when it is against your sincere convictions.

* You realize that the hour I took from you has left you a bit tired and drained.

* You allow me the dignity of making my own decisions even though you think they may be wrong.

* You do not take my problem from me but allow me to deal with it in my own way.

* You hold back from giving me a word of "good advice".

* You do not offer me religious solace when you sense I am not ready for it.

* You give me enough room to discover for myself what is really going on.

* You accept my gift of gratitude by telling me how it makes you feel good by being helpful.

--Glen Crawford, TCF, Perth, West Australia

Welcome...



You Are Braver

You are braver than you will ever know. You may not realize it but you are valiant magnificent and strong in spirit. You are courageous. You have endured and somehow survived the most horrific injury that anyone in this life can suffer. Your child has died. But somehow you have miraculously found the strength to still breathe in and out. And after a while, you managed to put one foot in front of the other and have tried to the best of our ability to adopt to a strange new world, one that exists without your precious child in it. A world you must step out into and face every day without any outward sign that you are altered for life. If you were to wear your most grievous wound displayed on the outside of your body like a permanent stigmata, would people recoil, from the sight or would they perhaps offer compassion and understanding for your piteous condition?

That's why you are so brave. Although no one else can see how horribly injured you are, you are still doing your best to function and participate in this life. I want to challenge you to be brave just for once more. If you have not been to a Compassionate Friends meeting, please muster all the strength and courage you have to walk in the door for that first meeting. We'll help you from there. We care. We understand. We too have the same wounds as you. We need not walk alone.

--Diane Hochstetler, Dee's Mom

Book In Review...



A Broken Heart Still Beats, After Your Child Dies by Anne McCracken and Mary Semel. A remarkable collection of poetry, fiction, and essays compiled by a journalist and a social worker, both of whom have lost a child, this best-selling compilation gets to the heart of this hardest of trials.

Helpful Hint...



Overcoming Grief

The road to recovery from grief.... is to take time to do things which will enable us to give a renewed meaning to our lives. That's when our journey through grief becomes a journey of discovering ourselves, our potential, and our resources in the encounter with life. That's when we become BETTER PEOPLE rather than BITTER PEOPLE. In grief no one can take away our love. The call of life is to learn to love...again.

--Father Arnold Pangrazzi

Random Reflections

It's been a year now
 And the books say I should be
 Getting back to "normal."
 But I still can't pass your picture
 On the bookcase without
 Touching your face.
 I still was up in the night sometimes
 And can almost
 Hear your voice in the quiet.
 I still run to the window when the
 Dogs bark at night with the hope
 In the back of my mind that somehow
 You've wandered into the yard.
 I still whisper your name into the wind
 When I walk down our lane in the still
 Of evening and strain to hear an answer.
 When I'm troubled and upset
 I still talk to you like
 I always did and
 Imagine the advice you'd give me
 I still stop on our dark country road sometimes
 And turn off the car engine
 And lights and wait and hope that
 I can see or hear you.
 It's been a year now and the

Memories are still so vivid
That I can almost touch them.
It's been a year now and I now know
With all my heart that your
Presence will never fade in my mind.
--Tammy Walmann TCF, Miami County, KS

For The New Year

Where there is pain,
let there be softening
Where there is bitterness,
let there be acceptance
Where there is silence,
let there be communication
Where there is loneliness,
let there be friendships
Where there is despair,
let there be hope.

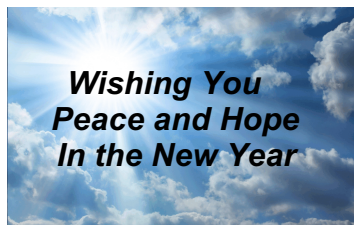
--Ruth Eisman, TCF Louisville, KY

I know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even to death. They continue to participate in every act, thought and decision we make. Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories. We find comfort in knowing that our lives have been enriched by having shared their love.

-- Leo Buscaglia

Forever Changed

Can you see the change in me?
It may not be so obvious to you,
I participate in family activities, I attend family reunions... I help plan holiday meals.
You tell me you are glad to see that I don't cry anymore. But I do cry!
When everyone has gone –
when it is safe – the tears fall.
I cry in privacy so my family won't worry.
I cry until I am exhausted and can finally sleep.
You tell me you admire my strength and my positive attitude.
But I am not strong
I feel that I have lost control;
and I panic when I think about tomorrow...
Next week... next year.
I go about the daily routine of my job, house work, trying to complete my assigned tasks, not to feel the pain, then I drink coffee and smile.
At times I think I am beginning to heal, but the pain rolls over me again



with a permanent scar on my heart.
You tell me that you are glad to see I'm holding up so well.
But I'm not holding up well.
Sometimes I want to lock the door and hide from the world.
I spend time with my parents, I seem calm and collected.
I smile when appropriate.
But I'm not!
You tell me it's good to see me back to my "old self".
But I will never be back to my "old self".
Pain and grief, have touched my life... and I am Forever Changed!!
– Author unknown TCF Queensland Inc

He Sings me Lullabies

Daddy, please don't look so sad,
Mama please don't cry
Cause I am in the arms of Jesus and he sings me lullabies.
Please try not to question God, don't think he is unkind,
Don't think He sent me to you, and then he changed his mind.
You see I am a special child, and I'm needed up above,
I'm the special gift you gave him.
The product of your love,
I'll always be there with you so watch the sky at night,
Find the brightest star that's gleaming,
it's my halo's brilliant light.
You'll see me in the morning frost that mists your window pane,
That's me in the summer showers
I'll be dancing in the rain.
When you feel a little breeze from a gentle wind that blows,
That's me, I'll be there planting a kiss on your nose.
When you see a child playing and your heart feels a little tug,
That's me, I'll be there giving your heart a hug.
So Daddy please don't look so sad,
Mama don't you cry.
I'm in the arms of Jesus and He sings me lullabies.
--Author unknown



Our Children Remembered



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

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

Mike Sebastian Cortez
Born: 5/97 Died: 6/17
Mother: Rita Cortez

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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

Frank Christopher Castania
Born: 8/94 Died: 7/05
Parents: Frank & Debbie Castania, Grandparents:

Scott Curry
Born: 8/59 Died: 7/08
Mother: Marilyn Nemeth

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

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

Richard & Ann Leach

Michael N. Daffin
Born: 2/85 Died: 4/17
Parents: Michael & Diana Daffin

Gregory Robert Ehrlich
Born: 4/91 Died: 2/19
Mother: Sarah Ott

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

Vanessa Roseann Castania
Born: 2/97 Died: 7/05
Parents: Frank & Debbie Castania, Grandparents: Richard & Ann Leach

Daniel Elijah Day
Born: 4/93 Died: 5/16
Mother: Kristen Day

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

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

Carina Chandiramani
Born: 5/86 Died: 9/18
Mother: Norma Chandiramani

Michael David Deboe
Born: 12/75 Died: 5/09
Parents: Dave & Judy Deboe

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

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

Blair Chapin
Born: 4/82 Died: 5/18
Sister: Elizabeth Chapin

Luke Edward Devlin
Born: 12/07 Died: 12/07
Parents: Jacqueline & Tom Devlin

Cody Jarod Esphorst
Born: 3/02 Died 7/19
Parents: Jesse & Julie Esphorst

Cheiann Jayda Berry
Born: 12/01 Died: 7/16
Mother: Kristina Berry

Michael Edward Clapp
Born: 2/93 Died: 4/18
Mother: Patti Clapp

Allison Jeanine Kirkbride Dewart
Born: 10/87 Died: 1/06
Parents: Z & Michael Dewart

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

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

John Francis Cleary
Born: 12/74 Died: 8/93
Mother: Pauline Cleary Basil

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

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

Alex James Bonstein
Born: 11/91 Died: 7/16
Mother: Cynthia Sanchez

Kelly Swan Cleary
Born: 3/59 Died: 3/95
Parents: Dick & Bev Swan

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

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

Tamara Lynette Boyd
Born: 12/65 Died: 12/00
Parents: Gloria & Gayle Jones

Matthew Hales Clifford
Born: 1/80 Died: 3/15
Parents: Bob & Melissa Clifford

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

Mark Scott Galper
Born: 2/62 Died: 5/97
Mother: Sheri Schrier

William Joseph Britton III
Born: 3/62 Died: 7/85
Mother: Jean Anne Britton

Aaron Christopher Cochran
Born: 11/90 Died: 9/12
Mother: Julia Carr

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

Lexie Rose Gilpin
Born: 4/09 Died: 4/09
Mother: Michele Gilpin

Larry Broks Jr.
Born: 7/88 Died: 9/17
Mother: Thessia Carpenter

Tiffany Lamb Corkins
Born: 7/70 Died 8/05
Mother: Nancy Lamb

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

Steven Paul Giuliano
Born: 4/55 Died: 4/95
Mother: Eleanor Giuliano

Scott Vincent Buehler
Born: 3/80 Died: 2/08
Mother: Elizabeth Buehler Miller

Hannah Elizabeth Cortez
Born: 9/92 Died: 7/13
Parents: Rafael & Shari Cortez

**Our Children Remembered**

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

Kathryn Anne Kelly
Born: 12/72 Died: 1/91
Parents: Dick & Timmy
Kelly

Gaby Lindeman
Born: 7/64 Died: 9/12
Parents: Gilberto &
Graciela Rodriguez

Sarah Mc Donald
Born: 10/00 Died: 6/17
Parents: Tom & Shideh
Mc Donald

Leslie Geraci Hart
Born 6/66 Died: 7/11
Father: John Geraci

Chase King
Born: 4/87 Died: 11/19
Mother: Laura King

Alberto Lopez
Born: 8/66 Died: 2/12
Mother: Albertina Lopez

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

Adam Guymon
Born: 4/89 Died: 4/06
Mother: Eileen Guymon

Colby Joshua Koenig
Born: 6/84 Died: 1/10
Parents: Cindy Tobis &
John Koenig

Richard Lee Luthe
Born: 11/76 Died: 1/98
Parents: Jeff & Lorraine
Luthe

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

Christie Hagenburger
Born: 4/63 Died: 12/17
Father: D.W. Hagenburger

Scott Koller
Born: 10/83 Died: 3/15
Mother: Betty Benson

Matty Mallano
Born: 5/02 Died: 7/18
Mother: Paula Mallano

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

Jennifer Nicole Hower
Born: 6/75 Died: 12/04
Brother: Jeff Hower

Keith Konopasek
Born: 1/63 Died: 7/95
Parents: Ken & Mary
Konopasek

Shauna Jean Malone
Born: 8/70 Died: 1/13
Parents: Tom & Mary
Malone

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

Rachel Suzanne Hoyt
Born: 2/70 Died: 1/95
Sister: Laura Hoyt D'anna

Michael Kroppman
Born: 12/88 Died: 3/12
Parents: Brenda & Greg
Kroppman

Elizabeth Mann
Born: 7/60 Died: 5/05
Parents: David & Olivia
Mann

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

Sarah Jade Hurley
Born: 6/97 Died: 5/17
Father: Tim Hurley
Grandmother: Laurie
Hurley

Cherese Mari Lauhere
Born: 9/74 Died: 3/96
Parents: Larry & Chris
Lauhere

Janet Sue Mann
Born: 10/61 Died: 9/10
Mother: Nancy Mann

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

Steven Ishikawa
Born: 9/75 Died: 4/17
Mother: Miki Ishikawa

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

Alex J. Mantyla
Born: 3/89 Died: 8/08
Parents: Jarmo & Bonnie
Mantyla

Christopher Metsker
Born: 11/94 Died: 3/18
Parents: Justin & Tara
Metsker

Alexander John Jacobs
Born: 3/90 Died: 8/19
Mother: Diane Jacobs

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

Travis Frederick Marton
Born: 10/91 Died: 1/15
Mother: Ricki Marton

Steven Douglas Millar
Born: 2/70 Died: 10/00
Parents: David & Suzanne
Millar

Stefanie Jacobs
Born: 5/87 Died: 1/97
Father: Rob Jacobs

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

Matthew "Matty" Louis
Matich
Born: 5/02 Died: 7/18
Parents: Mike & Shirley
Matich

Keith Moilanen
Born: 10/80 Died: 5/19
Mother: Jill Moilanen

Emily Matilda Kass
Born: 6/95 Died: 3/06
Mother: Susan Kass

Kevin Le Nguyen
Born: 5/88 Died: 6/14
Mother: Tracy Le Nguyen

Grandmother: Susan
Matich

Jacki Montoya
Born: 10/89 Died: 6/15
Mother: Theresa Montoya

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

Joseph Licciardone
Born: 4/94 Died: 3/16
Parents: Connie & Leo
Licciardone

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

Joshua Montoya
Born: 4/15 Died: 6/15
Grandmother: Theresa
Montoya

Douglas Drennen Kay
Born: 3/72 Died: 9/06
Parents: Diane & Steve
Kay

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



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

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

Dax Jordan Quintana
Dantas De Oliveria
Born: 6/17 Died: 8/17

Parents: Alexandar & Sanderson
Quintana Dantas De Oliveria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Our Children**

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

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

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

Carlos Valdez
Born: 10/90 Died: 1/12
Parents: Antonia & Refugio Valdez

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Remembered 

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

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

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

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

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

* For corrections or to add your child to the Our Children Remembered section of the newsletter, call Lynn at (310) 530-3214 and leave a message.

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.tcf-sbla.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 birthday tributes were submitted this month.

For Siblings... **I'm Trying**

I'm trying not to wake up every morning sad because I don't have him here starting our day together.
I'm trying not to cry when I eat lunch alone at some of our favorite

places.

I'm trying not to think that my life will never be as fun again.

I'm trying not to be sad that I don't have him here to put to sleep and kiss goodnight.

I'm trying not to feel so alone.

I'm trying not to keep thinking I should have done more to save him and how did I let him go.

I'm trying not to be mad at God for taking him, but to be grateful that he brought this wonderful boy into my life for all these years.

I'm trying to become the person I'm portraying on the outside when inside I'm really just barely keeping it together.

I'm trying to find a reason for me to still be here and not go join him in heaven.

I'm trying to find comfort in the fact that I have family and friends that are here for me if I need them.

I'm trying to be able to look at pictures of him and not be sad.

I'm trying to let all the good memories I have, heal my broken heart.

I'm trying to take all the well wishes, prayers and support I have gotten from friends and family in these past few months and be thankful instead of being reminded of my loss.

I'M TRYING. And though it may take some time, hopefully I'll find a place for myself where it won't be so hard and hurt so bad. And I take comfort in knowing that one day I will see my boy again and get to hold his little hand, kiss his chubby cheek and tell him how much I love him, like I did every day for the past 21 years. But for now, I'm trying.

--Fred Jordan, Peter's Brother
TCF, Honolulu

Q. I'm getting ready to face the first holidays since my older brother died. As his only sister, I

adored him and he felt the same about me. I don't want to see the New Year come. How can I handle going into a new year where I know my brother can never give me a hug and I can never tell him how much he means to me?

I'm seeing a counselor who tells me I will survive this holiday, and each one after that will be easier. How can this ever get easier? I just seem to be getting more and more depressed the closer January 1st comes.

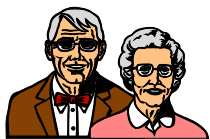
A. One of the hardest things that we go through after a loved one dies is "picking up and going on." How are we supposed to create a life that does not include them? The answer ends up being – that we don't. We realize that we will always carry them with us – their love, their hugs, their laughter, their pride, their strengths, and our relationship.

You're right – it is hard to start a new year that he won't know about, that won't include his hugs, his time, and the ability to tell each other how much you care. I won't kid you, the first holidays are the hardest!! After my brother's death, we didn't celebrate Christmas for a long time. What I finally came to realize is that part of him would always live on inside of me. Then I looked for ways I could include him (remember him) and celebrate his life at each of the holidays and other major events of my life.

As you celebrate your brother's life and remember him, you carry him forward with you into the new life you create. Consequently, it does get easier.

--Mary Paulson

For Grandparents...



(An informative reply to a blog on Whats Your Grief, LLC (WYG) and their website;
<http://www.whatsyourgrief.com>.)

Dearest Bernice, I cry for you at the unimaginable losses you have experienced. I'm glad you told your story because I think it helps to just get it out there. When my two precious grandchildren were killed, ages 18 and 11, in a tragic car wreck on their way to school Jan 18, 2017, my heart was ripped from my chest. Not only because of the enormous loss, but also because I could not "fix it" or make it better for my daughter and son-in-law. I have since learned a few things, and I hope in some small way you might find them helpful as well; if not now, maybe later.

- 1) Everyone grieves differently; some in silence, some in tears, some in anger, some in talking. It's all okay.
- 2) Read and learn from others who have experienced suicide and/or death of a child.
- 3) Memorialize your son and grandchildren in some way—plant a tree, have a memory garden, etc. I decorate their grave site with the changing seasons. I also have a sofa table filled with their pictures and other special things of theirs.
- 4) Write. Write down your emotions, feelings, memories, prayers, thoughts.
- 5) Live your life in such a way as to honor them—donate in their memory to a special charity or organization on holidays, birthdays, etc.
- 6) Great grief is natural with the loss of great love.
- 7) There is no "shortcut" with grief. It will be what it will be.
- 8) You don't know how strong you can be until there is no other choice.
- 9) Get up every day and make your bed. Even if you don't feel like it. Even if you just want to crawl back in it. Just make your bed so you will feel a sense of accomplishment.
- 10) Baby steps are okay. When you can't imagine a future without them, just take it a day at a time, or as my daughter has said, "a breath at a time" if that's all you can do.
- 11) And if you are a believer, pray, pray, pray. God knows what it's like to lose a son to a very cruel death. Cling to that unimaginable, enormous love and find comfort in Him.

Praying for you and all who have lost dear ones that you may know your worth, know you are loved, and know some day the grief will be more bearable. Baby steps, dear friends, baby steps.

From Our Members...



Just for Today

Just for today,

I will try to live through the next 24 hours... not expecting to get over my child's death, but learning to live with it... one day at a time.

Just for today,

I'll remember my child's life, not his death, and bask in the comfort of the treasured days and moments we shared.

Just for today,

I will forgive all the family and friends who didn't help or comfort me the way I needed them to.

They truly did not know how.

Just for today,

I will reach out to comfort a relative or friend of my child. For they are hurting too, and perhaps we can help each other.

Just for today,

I will free myself from my self-inflicted burden of guilt. For deep in my heart, I know if there was anything in this world I could have done to save my child from death, I would have done it.

Just for today,

I will honor my child's memory by doing something with another child, be it my own, or someone else's, because I know that would make my child proud.

Just for today,

I will offer my hand in friendship to other bereaved parents, for I DO know how they feel.

Just for today,

I will smile... no matter how much I hurt on the inside... for maybe if I smile a little, my heart will soften and I will begin to heal.

Just for today,

I will allow myself to be happy and enjoy myself, for I know I am not deserting my child by moving on.

Just for today,

I will accept that I did NOT die when my child did. My life did go on and I am the ONLY one who can make that life worthwhile again.

--V. Tushingham Bereaved Parents of the USA,
Tampa Bay Newsletter

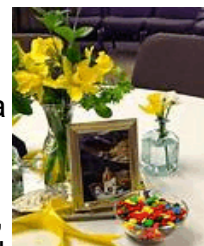
Submitted by Linda Cortez in the hopes that no matter when you are in your grief, that you can find the strength to focus on one of these steps, even if it is "**Just for today.**"

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.

Birthday Invitation... Birthday Table
In the month of your child's birthday, a Birthday Table is provided where you can share photos, mementos, your child's favorite snack, a birthday cake, a bouquet of flowers or anything you'd like to bring to share. We want to know your child better, so please take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the wonderful day of your child's birth. This is your chance to tell us a favorite story, or whatever remembrance you choose in memory of your child. Our child's, grandchild's, or sibling's birthday will forever be a very special day and we at TCF know how important that day is and how helpful and healing it can be to share with others. Please plan on attending the meeting of your child's birthday month and filling our Birthday Table with pictures and/or mementos.



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: January 1st for February birthdays). If you miss the deadline, call Lynn at (310) 530-3214 and let me know. I will try to fit them in. Otherwise they will appear in the following month's issue.



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.

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(chapter co-leader)...(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.Alivealone.org

Survivors of Suicide: Support Group for families that have lost someone to suicide. Contact Terry Jordan, LCSW (301) 859-2241

Our House/Bereavement House: Support groups in LA & So. Bay (310) 475-0299 Also **Spanish Support Group**, Loren Delgado 310-231-3196.

Pathways Hospice: Bereavement support and sibling group. Bill Hoy (562) 531-3031

New Hope Grief Support Community: Grief support and education groups for adults and children. Long Beach, CA 90808, (562) 429-0075

Providence Trinity Care Hospice and the Gathering Place: Various bereavement support groups including support for loss of a child, support group for children 5-8, 9-12, and teens. (310) 546-6407

Torrance Memorial Bereavement Services: (310) 325-9110 Weekly grief support.

The Lazarus Circle: Monthly grief support. Meets third Thurs of each month, 6-7;15 at First Lutheran Church, 2900 W. Carson St. Torrance

Share Pregnancy & Infant Loss: Contact: Megan Heddlesten (800) 821-6819

Walk with Sally: Cancer loss bereavement & art therapy for children- Monica Fyfe (310) 378-5843

Camp Comfort Zone: Year round Bereavement Camp for Children www.comfortzonecamp.org (310) 483-8313.

Other Grief Support Websites...

thetearsfoundation.org	childloss.com
goodgriefresources.com	griefwatch.dom
bereavedparentsusa.org	opentohope.com
healingafterloss.org	webhealing.com
survivorsofsuicide.com	alivealone.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:

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Marilyn Nemeth	Crystal Henning
Cheryl & Bill Matasso	Lynn Vines
Nancy Lerner	Ken Konopasek
Kitty Edler	Susan Kass
Sandra & Eddie Myricks	Mary Sankus

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.





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.

From Rita Dykstra in loving memory of Scott Dykstra, July 1972 - October 2001

From Claudia & Kevin Moutes in loving memory of Benjamin Moutes, March 2007 - May 2010

From Ruth Singleton in support of The Compassionate Friends

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 _____

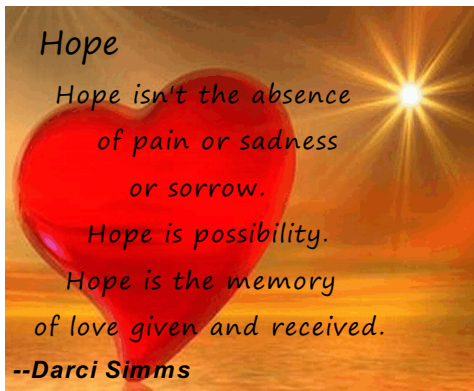
Birth date _____ Death date _____ Sent from _____

Tribute _____

We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear if time permits.

The Compassionate Friends
South Bay/L.A., CA Chapter
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Torrance, CA 90510

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January 2020

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.
The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes,
but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain,
just as your hope becomes my hope.

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

We are young, and we are old.

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

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

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

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

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

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