



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

February 2020 ISSUE

EDITOR: LYNN VINES (310) 530-3214

e-mail: Lynntcf@aol.com

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be **February 6th, 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 February 6th meeting will start with **“Learning To Handle Our Feelings After The Death Of A Child.”**

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

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

South Bay/LA Chapter of TCF
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance, CA 90510-1171
(310) 963-4646
www.tcfsbla.org

Chapter Co-Leaders:
Linda Zelik (310) 370-1645
Linelik@gmail.com
Lori Galloway (760) 521-0096
Lorijog01@gmail.com

The National Office of TCF
P.O. Box 3696
Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696
Toll free (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

The Thursday, **Feb. 6th meeting** will start with **“Learning To Handle Our Feelings After The Death Of A Child.”**

Day and night, many thoughts pass through people's minds when they are grieving. These thoughts often trigger strong feelings. Understanding these raw emotions will help you handle them and start to heal. The truth is that awful things happen and often nobody can stop them. Sometimes people are powerless, but to admit that you are powerless can be very scary. Feeling guilty is one way to avoid feeling powerless. That is why you may find yourself picturing different endings and thinking of “if only”. “Why” is a constant thought. Anger, fear, hopelessness and/or shock overloads our senses. After a child dies we need to learn how to handle our overwhelming feelings of loss and start to rebuild a balance in our lives. We welcome you to join us as we begin the meeting discussing how we started to gain control over our feelings and how we learn to handle this “New Normal” that is now our life.

Moving On After Losing A Child

Losing a child has been described as the worst kind of loss anyone could possibly go through, a searing and unspeakable pain. The emotions that accompany a loss of this magnitude is much like plumbing the depths of an abyss, not knowing if one will ever be able to climb out of it one day, unscathed and whole. When a child dies, a part of the self is cut off and many bereaved parents like to use the metaphor of an amputated limb.

I once read an account of a father who had lost his only son and his words were poignant. "For the amputee, the raw bleeding stump heals and the physical pain does go away. But he lives with the pain in his heart knowing his limb will not grow back. He has to learn to live without it. He rebuilds his life around his loss. We bereaved parents must do the same."

A 'new normal'

The first year after a child's death is the most difficult. In any loss, the first "everything" is always tough. Anniversaries, birthdays and holidays are guaranteed to trigger a deluge of pain and tears.

It's been two and a half years since my son died and yet the ache remains. Like amputation,

parental bereavement is a permanent condition. The hopes, dreams and aspirations you had for the child now gone, is lost forever.

The pain, though, subsides with the passage of time in a way. The adage "Time heals" has somehow proven true, though when my mother, who had been widowed for close to two decades, first told me about it, I was incredulous and refused to believe that it was even a possibility.

Two years down the road, when I meet friends whom I haven't seen since Migi's death, the question that invariably crops up is "Have you recovered?" My response to that query is usually a knowing smile, quietly thinking to myself, Does anyone ever really recover from the loss of a child, or a loved one for that matter? Perhaps "recover" is not quite the correct term. I'd like to think that "moving on" is more like it. Bereaved parents eventually find resolution to their grief in the sense that they learn to live in their new world.

Dennis Klass, professor of bereavement studies at Webster University, in St. Louis, Missouri, says, "Parents who have lost a child 'resolve' the matters of how to be themselves in a family and community in a way that makes life meaningful. They learn to grow in those parts of themselves that did not die with the child. They learn to invest themselves in other tasks and other relationships. But somewhere inside themselves, they report, there is a sense of loss that cannot be healed."

From my own experience, I have learned to make the loss of my son a part of my life, and to try to forge a new meaning out of it. In the first year after he died, I would often ask myself, "What is the meaning to this loss?" I would wrack my brains trying to make sense of his death. I had to find a reason, a meaning to it, or else I felt his death would have been in vain.

After a loss, be it a child, a parent or a sibling, life can no longer return to normal. Instead, in its place, a "new normal" is established. This is what I have found most helpful in my grief work these last couple of years: finding that new meaning and building a new life around the loss has helped me tremendously in moving on after his death.

For many of us, it is very difficult to let go of the

You never really stop loving someone, You just learn to try to live without them.

pain because we sometimes equate letting go with forgetting. However, I've learned that healing, or letting go of the pain, does not mean forgetting because moving on with life does not mean that we don't take a part of our lost love with us.

Allow yourself to grieve

Give yourself time to grieve and do it well. There is no need to rush back into the stream of things after the death of a child. Your life is in disarray, nothing makes sense.

Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are a release and an essential part of the grief work. Bear in mind, too, that men and women grieve differently. Women are more open and willing to cry and talk about their pain. Men tend to internalize the sorrow and have different styles of coping.

Be easy on yourself. There's no rush and no one should put a timetable to your grief. For some, it takes a year, for others, two, a few others, three. Only you will know when you have found a resolution and come to terms with the loss. So long as you do not harm yourself or become dysfunctional (initially though, disorientation is a normal part of the grieving process) over a long period of time, then you are fine. If you feel that your emotions are spinning out of control, do not be afraid to seek help.

Sometimes that is all that is needed by a bereaved parent, for someone to be there and listen to them talk about their child. There aren't too many people comfortable with that, and I think it is such a gift if you can do that for a friend who has just lost a child.

However, the bereaved parent must also realize that his/her experience goes against the grain, distorts the normal order of the universe. Children under normal circumstances are expected to outlive their parents. A bereaved parent becomes every parent's worst nightmare. They feel sad for you but cannot quite comprehend your pain. For them, being around a bereaved parent is like walking on eggshells. They are just so afraid to add any more pain to the existing grief.

Talking to someone who has likewise been through the same experience is a very big help. The best person who can understand the pain of a bereaved parent is one who has been through the same trenches. Bereaved parents speak the same language, their hearts know the same sadness.

I have found that it is in reaching out to others, in stepping out of the shadow of one's

sadness that one is also able to heal. Investing oneself in activities that give meaning to the loss helps alleviate the pain and aids in building a new life that would keep the memory alive and well in our hearts and I am certain, make our children proud.

--Excerpts from an article by Cathy Babao Guballa, Philippine Daily October 29th, 2000 Issue
© 2000 Philippine Daily Inquirer

It Seems To Me That ...

We are all individuals. We have lived our own lives in our own way. We have responded to the crises in our lives in our own way. We have to want desperately to survive our child's death, to put the pieces back together in some workable assemblage of us.

For all of us there are times of incredible frustration, bewilderment, anger, and rage. What can we do for ourselves to help work through some of those impossible moments? These are some of the things that have helped me and others:

CRY, go ahead and let out the tears! They build up, and there's pressure. Let them flow! It's not immoral, it's not illegal, and it's not fattening to cry. The absolute worst that could happen is that you discomfort someone who doesn't understand. **SO WHAT!!!**

SCREAM, good and loud (also a pressure releaser). If you can't find a place to scream alone, please do warn family members what you're about to do. If you have a stall shower, scream as you shower.

SMASH, choose something that doesn't matter and that won't hurt you: chipped dishes, a cardboard box or carton, a broken something you don't need. (Get china from garage sales.) Smash away, sweep it up, throw out the residue. The action of smashing lets off steam.

POUND, not to build something (but that's good, too), just to let off grieving's energy. Take a hammer and pound on a tree stump, a board that doesn't matter, an old phone directory, a pile of newspapers. Perhaps choose by how much noise you need or can accept.

SCRUB, floors take downward pressure, and that seems to suit better than walls. And after you've scrubbed, you can



always buff with paste wax.

Monotonous, rhythmic, forceful activity may end up a plus - a clean floor.

RIP AND TEAR, don't just toss away the junk mail. Reduce it to a million tiny pieces, and then put them all in the garbage.

SWEAR, sometimes the "bad" words are the words that best fit how we feel. Be honest. After a few years you mostly won't feel that bad, and you mostly won't have to describe things that way. When you need to, allow yourself.

EXERCISE, floor exercises, walking, bike riding, swimming, tennis ... something you enjoy that will use energy. Start small and build up.

BEAT, find a recipe for old-fashioned, home-made fudge. No easy stuff with marshmallows or cream cheese. Make the kind you must "beat vigorously for ten minutes. That's an energy expender!

WORDS, either aloud or to a friend who can understand and will listen, or on paper to share or not, as you choose. (A private journal is great therapy!)

Grieving is hard work. Sometimes a short spell of doing something physical helps us get through the tough stuff.

--Morris Area, NJ TCF Newsletter

I Learned to Cry

Since your death I have learned to cry. In the past, only trickles of tears flowed down my face. Stifled sobs escaped my lips. Tightness choked my throat, constricted my chest. I restrained any embarrassing sounds that might slip out, even when I was alone. Now, my times of tears are moments of healing and wholeness. Abandoning all self-consciousness and inhibitions, I open to the moment's miracle of raw emotion. My face contorts and implodes, forcing my eyes to close. My chin draws back and down. The muscles of my neck expand up and out, releasing my pain, instead of holding it captive, buried somewhere dark and lost. My head rolls back. From deep within, the sound of suffering rides upon a blast of breath, free and flowing. Rhythmically rocking my body, it rushes forth like the wild winds of winter. In its intensity I feel absolutely open, free and clear.

"My pain," becomes "THE PAIN," the sorrow of all who have lost loved ones. The boundary of "I"



and "other" melt and disappear. A sense of vast oneness surrounds my soul. For a moment I find peace. No thoughts. No pain. No memories. No struggle. Only now. Only sorrow. Only love. Only you.

--David Heimlich TCF-Springfield, IL Chapter

Fathers Grieve Too

Most of the time, fathers are neglected grievers... While we know a lot about grief now, people still aren't sure how to respond to a man's feelings. It's safer to ask how your wife is doing than to ask how you feel. And as a man, you have a lot of thoughts and feelings now.

You may feel: angry, depressed, lonely, hopeless, disappointed, confused, hurt, sad, afraid, out of control, confused, empty, guilty, helpless, like a failure, and frustrated.

You may have times of real panic and worry about your family. You may have lost the confidence of being the Daddy who makes things right. And you may spend a lot of time asking yourself "Why?"

This can be one of the toughest times in your life, and it's important to take care of yourself and the hurt you're feeling.

Every man is touched by tragedy at some time. You may find you need to be strong and take control. You may feel like you're taking care of everyone else, making all the arrangements and doing all the work. This can be especially true as you make funeral arrangements and greet family and friends. After the funeral, though, people are likely to expect you to act as if nothing happened. One grief counselor said, "In our society we're allowed three days of grief...just through the memorial service."

You never really "get over" your grief as you begin trying to get back to normal you may find your feelings popping up when you least expect them. Along with some feelings mentioned earlier: You may feel like you're going through the motions of living. You may feel distant from people. And you may find yourself unusually angry.

Being Angry

Men and women grieve differently. Women have more permission to cry and talk. Men have more permission to be angry. It's okay to be angry when your child dies. It's unfair, unjust and an angry situation. The biggest problem with anger is where to direct it. A lot of times dads do get angry

at their wives and kids...just because they are around. When you think you're being angry for a long time or more often than you want, you may want to take a look at how you're directing your anger. Talking to another dad whose child has died, talking with your pastor, nurse, social worker or just a friend who can see things clearly can be helpful.

Talking

One of the things that can help your hurt is talking about your child. You have strong, cherished memories. You have memories of bad and good times and the actual experience of the death. When you don't talk about your child or your experiences and feelings, your family may think you're cold and don't care. You may seem distant from each other and out of touch.

If you have trouble talking, you may want to do just a little each day with your wife or friends or both. Remember: Talking may lighten your pain, clear your anger and affirm your feelings.

Working

This may be a time when you want to be careful about your work. You may find yourself using your job as a way to cover up your feelings. You may work until you become overly tired...hoping it will help you sleep. You may work to try to forget your grief when what you may need is someone to listen to you and show they care. Work can be a distraction and it can be a relief, but it is seldom a total solution to sadness. It can also be very frustrating. You may find yourself: staring into space when you should be working, making more mistakes than usual, getting fed up when people ask about your wife, not getting the support and care you need.

Some of the support and care can come through your marriage. A lot of people think a child's death makes couples closer. Actually, the opposite can be true. You may both be so wiped out with your grief that you can't lean on each other. You may be scared about what's happening to each other and to your relationship. If that happens remember:

It's important to keep courting...even now. Talk about how you met. Remember how you fell in love. Share what you like about each other. Go out on a date, even if it's a short walk. Touch and hold each other. Realize you each grieve differently – respect each other's way of grieving. Accept your first sexual sharing after the death as a warm, gentle caring that brings you close, affirms your tears and quiets your sadness.

See if your area has a group of parents who have experienced the death of a child. If so, go to at least one meeting. Just hearing other fathers talk can make a big difference in how you see your grief, your marriage, your work and yourself. If you're a single father, a group may be especially valuable to you.

--By Rev. Terry Morgan, Chaplain James Cunningham, Dr. Ray Goldstein, & Earl Katz



Valentine's Day

My last Valentine's Day with my daughter Julie was February 14, 2002 for she died on February 25, 2002. Julie was a patient in the hospital on that Valentine's Day as she had had a seizure at home on February 9. I remember my boss telling me it was time that I took a leave from work to stay with Julie so I was with her day and night. I think he knew the time was near, but I did not want to believe that... I had had so much faith for so long that she would beat this horrific disease of breast cancer that there was no way she was dying... God wouldn't allow this.

On that Valentine's Day I left the hospital in the morning and went to the mall to buy Valentine Day presents. I had intended to buy flowers for all the nurses for Julie had such special and caring nurses. I had no idea what I was going to get Julie as what could I possibly buy her. She certainly did not need clothes or jewelry and in my search, I stopped at the perfume counter of the department store and found some Elizabeth Arden Green Tea lotion. Julie had come upon green tea in her battle and always drank it. I thought perhaps the lotion would be just as soothing to her. I returned to the hospital with my arm full of flowers and balloons for the nurses and Julie and for those who had been sitting with her while I was gone.

I still remember giving Julie the lotion and her then saying in her soft voice that had become a part of her now, "Mom, would you put some on my legs?" So while she sat in the chair, I sat on the floor and massaged that lotion into her legs and feet and arms. She didn't want me to stop for it smelled so good and made her feel good. She felt "pretty" she said... So for over an hour I sat there with her and she and I talked as best as we could...

I will always remember that "green tea" lotion and in fact, I still have the jar in my bathroom and when I open it to smell it, I remember that last Valentine's Day with my daughter Julie. Now it has

become the Julie lotion for as soon as I open the jar I can still see us sitting there.

Like Marie said, Valentine's Day's come and go now, but they will never leave a memory like the last Valentine's Day with Julie and that "green tea" How I miss her so..... --Rita

My Son

One of my deep sources of pain and sadness is my inability to vividly convey the essence of my son to those who did not know him in life. His vitality, his vivacity, his talents and charisma - not even two thousand words can come close to portraying the exact quality of his brilliant smile; his characteristics, his quirks, his uniqueness keep evading my best efforts. Should I ever be able to find the eloquence to capture him in words, I know the world would stand still and grieve, for the loss is monumental.

To have him blanketed by stereotypes and dismissed as a suicide statistic, is one aspect of suicide survival I cannot accept. His was not a disposable life. So, I brazenly speak of my son's suicide, to break down the wall of silence and misunderstanding that surrounds this taboo subject. I sadly understand those parents that will not admit publicly the cause of death.

My first encounter with the public reaction to suicide was three months after my son's death. I attended my first "bereavement support" meeting. It was a group for bereaved parents. I entered that room and watched it fill with about thirty persons. The meeting started, the clockwise introduction began: "name, child's name, date of death, cause of death." As I heard parent after parent introduce their child and the many causes of loss, the litany was chilling: drowning, cancer, murder, car accidents, physical abnormalities, and finally more than two thirds around the circle it was my turn - at the word "suicide" the collective gasp that echoed in my ears will never leave me. I physically felt alone in this room where I had come to seek solace, understanding, help. Even in my semi-comatose state of those first few months, I knew I could find no identification and support within this group.

As time has passed, and I've regained some consciousness - I am constantly tripping over the stereotypes that envelop suicides. As I review my

school's "crisis" policy in regard to suicide, the words "drug abuse, conduct problem, problems with the law, broken homes" leap out of the written page. As I read clinical studies regarding suicide and suicidal behavior, the same words can be found. In looking over prevention leaflets, the sentence "loving, supportive families" leap out resounding with accusation. In speaking with "professionals" I've heard their bias as they speak in amazement of those in a social class they do not easily identify with suicide. The director of "Family Services," in speaking of a recent suicide, actually used the phrase, "he was a member of the tennis set, not one you would think of as a likely suicide."

A religious leader finally whispered to Stereotypes and Suicide. He saw suicide as cowardice. Our churches and established religions nervously skirt around the issue. I have never heard a sermon on suicide from the pulpit.

At a recent conference of the Compassionate Friends, in one of the sharing workshops, I encountered a mother whose child died of drug overdose. She came to the suicide workshop wanting us, the suicide survivors, to confirm for her that she did not belong there. I had met others who were just as defensive and insistent - "my son's death of drug overdose was clearly an accident not a suicide!!!" - and these very people would be shocked if I told them how insensitive and hurtful their words are. Most people want to be kind, they want to be understanding, they want to be supportive. The actual reactions,

however, often fall short of these goals. I have come across the "curiosity seekers," the "accident gapers," the fearful, the "gregarious emotion" seekers and finally the defensive. Death is a reality most do not care to deal with. Our society has sanitized it as much as possible and removed it from the home to the hospital and funeral parlor. The only way to "Saran Wrap" suicide and render it "politically correct" for a society skirmish about life issues, is either to render it irrelevant or disposable.

So I find myself introducing my son to strangers with a mini-resume. My 20-year-old son, Alexey, an extremely intelligent, sensitive, talented, gifted young man, with many friends and strong family ties, hanged himself. I am not trying to be cruel in removing the security and luxury of people to distance themselves and dispose of my son's act. I am convinced that until these stereotypes are removed, the status quo will continue even when



43rd TCF National Conference
July 24-26, 2020 • Atlanta, GA

the statistics scream for attention. There is something wrong, very wrong, occurring. Until we can look at suicide clear-eyed, we will not be able to reach the understanding necessary to lower its occurrence.

A wise Rabbi said, "A person cannot offer hospitality, if she/he is not at home." So, I speak out, so that our society can finally feel at home with suicide and only then can it offer hospitality. All people within a society are affected by the stereotypes. No one is immune, not the professionals, not the well-intentioned nor the well disposed. We, the suicide survivors, are left with the task to educate. Our loved ones have made us "the experts," and if we don't lead—how will anyone ever follow?
--Letizia Grasso



My Eternal Valentine

Today is your birthday, my sweet Valentine
In my heart you now live, my soul you entwine
For you came into my life and gave so much love
Then you were beckoned to join all the Angels above
I know that He called you, He called you by name
"Marissa, come my child," as His Angels came
They encircled you into their wings and cradled you near
Your Eternal journey was begun, there was nothing to fear
I know that Jesus himself greeted you as your spirit soared
I know that you knew Him as your Savior, our Lord
He gently welcomed you into His Heavenly Home
A place for you He prepared, no need to roam
I am certain that he calmed you, for I know you wanted to stay
But the Lord, His Plan fulfilled, it was your Heaven's Day
Though I ache for you here with me, My Darling Baby Girl
I am consoled that you are mine not only of this world
You are mine and mine alone, Eternally
What greater Gift, my Lord give to me?
Your birthday, I remember, though it brings tears
Tears of Joy, Happiness, and Memories so dear
I will never ever forget you, my precious Twinkle Star
I need only look into my heart, my soul, for there you are
And there you will Live on through my life and in

the hereafter

Marissa, your Love lives in me, you are my heart's laughter

Happy Heavenly Birthday, sweet baby of mine

You are mine forever, My Eternal Valentine

--Laurie Myers MarissaMyGirl@aol.com

Marissa Gabrielle Myers February 14, 1995 - August 6, 1998

Newly Bereaved...

The Isolation of Grief

Now, I've never been a stranger to the isolation that comes from feeling like you just don't fit into your surroundings. But I've never felt as isolated in my whole life as I have after the death of my daughter.

As a child, I was a shy, introverted person and often felt different than the people around me. At the time, I never really knew why. While I didn't like the feeling of isolation, I didn't understand what caused it so it just became a fact of life. Over the years my shyness has lessened, but I still prefer interacting with small groups or one-on-one in-person conversations, and still look forward to time alone. I've learned to accept it as my personality, and it works for me.

After my daughter died, my sense of isolation grew exponentially as a result of grief. In the immediate aftermath of her sudden death, our house was filled with family and friends who were showing their support for us and helping us do what had to be done: planning the memorial, visiting the cemetery to secure a plot, working with our insurance company requirements, etc. They prepared meals, made sure we were left alone when we needed our space, gave us hugs, and shed tears with us. The phone rang often, and I found myself doing most of the talking when the other end of the phone was uncomfortably silent as people struggled to find the right words to say. Even in my numbness, I was able to understand the dilemma of "I'm sorry" doesn't seem to be enough when someone has just lost a four-year-old little girl.

A few days after the memorial service, everyone went home. Less sympathy cards arrived in the mail until there were none. The phone stopped ringing. Our daughter's preschool arranged a weekly meal donation and then my work did the same, which was a huge help...but eventually those stopped coming too. We were left alone to figure out how to pick up the pieces of our

shattered hearts and shattered lives. We went to counseling and support groups. But we were forced to accept the fact that life was going to keep moving forward without our precious girl in it. It was devastating.

That devastation led me to a self-imposed isolation from a world I could no longer stand to be a part of. I didn't want to talk to people who couldn't understand my pain because I didn't want to have to explain myself. The sound of laughter or gossip produced outright anger in me. The everyday acts of going to work, chores, grocery shopping, or even something as simple as showering were agonizingly painful and almost impossible. I wanted nothing to do with any of it. I found myself not answering the phone and not returning messages. I turned down invitations to get together with friends who weren't sure how to help me.

I managed to make sure that I fed my surviving kids and took them to school and practices, but I was no longer the mom they were used to. They stopped wanting to talk to me about how they felt because they knew it would make me even sadder, and they were frightened that not only did they lose their sister, but there was a potential that their mom was losing her ability to take care of them. Over that first year or so, the suffocating pain began to lessen, though not by as much as I would have hoped. I got better at doing those everyday tasks that didn't seem so impossible anymore. I began to adjust to the "new normal" any grieving person must accept.

Then the isolation of grief began to change. While I started answering the phone and accepting some of those invitations, I felt isolated in the sense that I continued to think of my daughter and experience the pain constantly, but very few people talked about my grief or even mentioned her name any more. I felt completely alone.

Support groups and counseling helped. So did reaching out to other parents who had lost children, and I preferred their company over others. I found myself part of the secret society of grieving parents who mostly keep their grief to themselves and only share it with those who understand because they are faced with the same loss and pain. I found that sharing my feelings with these people helped me immensely.

Now that more time has passed, I am learning how to balance becoming fully reinvested in life while respecting my continuing needs for grief support. I still look forward to support groups and

talking with other bereaved people, but I also appreciate that when I allow myself to enjoy and appreciate everyday life, joy will come even without my daughter being physically here.

Despite my continued longing for her to be at my side and the ability to experience the wonder of watching her grow, I know that she will always be with me in spirit. She is forever in my heart, my memories, and my thoughts. And these days, I don't mind sharing that with anyone who cares to get to know me.

--Maria Kubitz TCF Contra Costa County, CA

Seasoned Griever...

One Mother's View....



Following Dale's lead, I interviewed another bereaved parent for the new sharing column.. This month we hear from Debbie Walty who lost her daughter Rachel.

Q: How long has it been since your child died?

A: 6 yrs 4 ½ months

Q: May I ask how your child died?

A: An accidental overdose

Q: Would you mind describing for us what that time was like for you?

A: I was just devastated and barely went through the motions of living every day. My other children and my grandchildren (from my daughter) were what kept me going. I put on a mask every day and got up, got dressed and got going. There are many details that are still blurry.

Q: For you personally, what did you find was the most challenging aspect of life resulting from your child's death?

A: I was so close to my daughter and spent a lot of time with her that it was challenging just to figure out what to do with myself during of all the times I had always been with her. There was just an empty hole.

Q: Most people, but not all, report that the passage of time helps them. Have you found that to be true and, if so, could you relate for us what the intervening years have been like?

A: I believe the grief gets a bit softer over time, but then there are some days that I'm just overwhelmed with it. Her angel day and birthday are very difficult to get through.

Q: Are there other things you have found that have been a comfort to you? Would you share those things with us?

A: I came to my first TCF meeting about 11 months

in. It was so good to be with other parents that understood what I was going through and to know that it was possible to survive the loss of my daughter. I also work with a couple of folks that have lost their children. It is comforting for me to know that they are close by if I ever need support and vice-versa.

Q: For you personally, what would you say has been the most beneficial thing that has helped you over the years in dealing with your grief?

A: I have found that helping others helps me more than I ever realized it could.

Q: Some report that the memory of tragic events tends to fade with time. Do you find that to be the case as well and, if so, would you say that that which fades is the memory of the person, the memory of the details, or is it that the memory of the details simply lose the impact they once had?

A: With me it's the memory of the details that have a lesser impact. I can remember just about every detail of the day she died and the day before. Some days I relive it over and over, and have a tough time...other days it's not so bad.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to pass on to The Compassionate Friends community?

A: Just stay connected and don't isolate yourself. Thank you so much to you Debbie for sharing a little of your story.



Friends and Family...

For Friends and Family ... Don't Tell Me's

Don't. Please don't tell me I'm richer for having had him. I am too busy being the poorer for having lost him.

Please don't tell me there is a light at the end of the tunnel. What tunnel is that? My only tunnel vision is consumed with blackness right now.

Please don't tell me I'll understand it all one day. Promises. Promises. There's nothing like here and now explanations.

Please don't remind me he's in a better place. My maternal instincts have been grossly abused so that he can be there.

Please don't tell me spring will come and birds will sing again. Right now, I only hear they're out of tune, and they jar my no longer musical ear.

Please don't bother to remind me I'll be reunited with him one day. My life is here and now and his face, is conspicuous in its mind tearing absence.

Please don't tell me that things could be worse. I am saturated with the present bleak winter of my

grief, and if there's worse than this, then stop the world, I want to get off!!

Do remind me that if I can do but one small act of kindness, give one dot of comfort, be of value to just one other on this strife torn earth, then I can give no greater gift to my lost child.

--TCF, Greene Co. Chapter, Paragould, AR.

Welcome...



Symbols

We are fast approaching Valentine's Day, filled with symbols of love ... hearts and roses. As a young schoolgirl, I can remember wishing I would get a valentine from someone special. My friends and I would count how many valentines we had received, feeling certain that the more you received, the more it indicated your popularity.

As I grew older, I was thrilled when I received flowers from that special someone. Surely this was, true love. As a married woman, Valentine's Day was always special. Glen and I usually went out to dinner, and I often received flowers or a special gift that said, I love you! While those gifts were much appreciated, I would be hard pressed now to tell you what we did or what I received.

However, one Valentine's Day will stay frozen in my memory forever, February 14, 1983. Glen took my arm and steadied me as I walked into a mortuary to view the body of our 17 year old son, Nathan, who had been killed by a drunken driver on February 10th. We had ordered a spray of seventeen red roses to be placed on his casket. When I ordered those flowers, I was stunned to discover how high priced roses are on Valentine's Day! At first, I had decided I would be content with carnations. Then the florist saw in my eyes how much I wanted my last gift to my son to be the very best ... red, long stemmed roses. The florist promised she would provide us with roses, regardless of how little we could afford to pay.

That afternoon, I drank in every detail of my boy, his hair, the bruise on his face, the National Honor Society pin on his lapel, those wonderful, strong hands. Then I pulled myself together for a very special appointment. I was the Academic Counselor at Nathan's high school, and we had arranged a special viewing for the students prior to the general visitation. I watched as young girls brought beautiful bouquets' of red roses they had received from their boyfriends, but now they were placing them below our son's casket. Their final

act of love for a very dear friend.

It has taken me a long time to be able to actually celebrate Valentine's Day in a normal fashion. In fact, I guess I never will be able to do that. Valentine's Day is no longer a superficial type of holiday where I just send cards or give candy or flowers without much deliberation beforehand. The symbols are still there; I just see them differently now:



~ THE ROSE: A symbol of love that cannot be separated by death.

~THE HEART: Broken, bruised, and bandaged, but not defeated.



And now, there's one more symbol:



~The HAND: As we offer our hands to each other in friendship, in understanding, in strength, we are saying:
WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE, WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS!

May your Valentine's Day be filled with roses that will encourage your broken heart and give you strength to offer a helping hand to others who are grieving.

--By Marilyn Heavilin TCF Redlands, CA
Editor's Note: Please join us and see for yourself how beneficial it is to share our stories and our pain, and to find hope for the future after a child's death.



Helpful Hint...

I would like to say to those who: mourn: Look on each day that come as a challenge, a test of courage. The pain will come in waves, some days, worse than others, for no apparent reason. Accept the pain. Little by little, you will find new strength, new visions, born of the very pain and loneliness that seems, at first, impossible to master.

--Daphn du Maurler, reprinted from TCF Verdugo Hills, CA newsletter

Books in Review ...



MEN & GRIEF by Carol Staudacher A guide for men surviving the death of a loved one. This book is also an excellent resource for care givers and mental health professionals. (paperback)
These and other grief related books are available from the Centering Corp. Call (402) 553-1200 for

a catalog.

Intentions

I intend to find peace and become whole again.
I intend to live life fully and in honor of all that she was unable to do.

I intend to cry less.

I intend to laugh and forgive more.

I intend to embrace all that is still good in my life and recognize all the blessings that I have.

I intend to make something of this terrible pain.

--Jane Schindler In Memory of Emily Ann Schindler

Grief, You and Me

Grief, you are my mate, my constant companion. wrapped around me, close as a lover's limbs entangled heaps of appendages interwoven in intimacy

Some days I try to disentangle, disengage from you in irritation, picking and plucking you from me, like fleas on a cat's fur.

Some days I try to push you away shut you out, slam shut the cellar door and walk away into the kitchen and cook a big meal only to notice you sitting at the dinner table.

Sometimes I just let go completely and fall into you head first, heart first, defenseless, before your gigantic tsunami of ache. Pummeled and tumbling in directionless white water I cry out

Grief, you are much bigger than me taller, stronger, fiercer, you will outlive me, exhaust me, overpower me!

Will I ever find my way back to up?
Where is the air?
Which way is air, and sun, and life?

Sometimes I wonder,
will we someday merge
as old married couples do,
no longer having distinct identities, you and me.

Maybe you will seep into my bones and we will just grow older and sweeter together
--Nadine Gregg, TCF Santa Cruz, CA



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

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

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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

Castania, Grandparents:
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

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

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

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

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



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

Marc David Guerrevia
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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Danielle Ann Mosher
Born: 8/78 Died: 6/97
Parents: Paul & Rose Mary Mosher

Benjamin A. Moutes
Born: 3/07 Died: 5/10
Parents: Kevin & Claudia Moutes

Danielle Murillo
Born: 5/96 Died: 4/14
Parents: Cheryl Outlaw & Manuel Murillo

Christopher Myers
Born: 10/86 Died: 5/06
Parents: Janet & Larry Myers

Edward W. Myricks II
Born: 4/72 Died: 10/11
Parents: Edward & Sandra Myricks

Lisa Nakamaru
Born: 12/93 Died: 10/14
Mother: Grace Nakamaru

Richard Paul Negrete
Born: 6/43 Died: 2/04
Mother: Sally Negrete

Stephanie Sue Newkirk
Born: 12/67 Died: 10/15
Mother: Cindy McCoy

Steven Scott Nussbaum
Born: 5/61 Died: 11/15
Parents: Will & Gloria Nussbaum

Trevor Mitchell Nicholson
Born: 7/99 Died: 1/18
Parents: Brad & Kendra Nicholson

Sally Anne O'Connor
Born: 12/62 Died: 2/11
Mother: Grace "Darline" Dye

Isabella Ofsanko
Born: 6/97 Died: 10/15
Mother: Desiree Palmer

Dominique Oliver
Born: 5/85 Died: 3/02
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

Jessica Perez
Born: 5/89 Died: 10/03
Sister: Monica Perez

Andrew Periaswamy
Born: 5/97 Died: 10/16
Parents: Megala & Xavier Periaswamy

Donnie Vincent 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

 **Our Children Remembered** 

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* 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.

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

Birthday Tributes... 

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

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

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

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

tributes by the first of the month preceding the actual birthday.

Sorry, no birthday tributes were submitted this month.

For Siblings...



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,
Those 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

For Grandparents...



I Am Sean's Grandmother

On Sept 1, 2002, I stood in the room at the hospital looking into the face of my daughter Denise and seeing only pain. I knew I was about to enter into the black hole. I felt the shooting sting through my heart as my daughter delivered the horrible news and seeing her I stepped immediately into "fix-it mode," the worst decision I ever made.

But that was my role as a parent – to fix things. It almost always worked in the past. Put a band-aid on it, wipe away some tears or a tight hug. It has been working for forty plus years. So, that is where I stayed for at least the next two-plus years; if only I knew about "support mode" at that time.

It was very difficult to watch as my daughter seemed unable to smile or laugh. Denise always had a great sense of humor and a smile that always made you want to smile back. I listened to her, felt her pain and cried thousands of tears with and without her. I yelled at God and wanted to know how he could be so cruel to both my daughter and me. He was supposed to be a loving God. When I stopped yelling I cried out to him, I begged him to please give me the support I needed. Wow! What a revelation. Why didn't I think about supporting and not fixing sooner?

How many times in the past had my friends and family been there to support me? When my parents and three of my brothers died the support I received was what helped me the most.

As grandparents, it is easy for us to get stuck in fix-it mode. We believe that we must have the answers and the magical powers to help those in our family heal. We not only carry our own grief but also the grief that our child bears as well as our grandchildren who are now bereaved siblings. We certainly are caught in the middle and have big shoes to fill. It took time but I finally came to the conclusion that trying to fix things simply doesn't work. I needed to be in "support mode" which meant supporting my children and grandchildren in their own unique grief journey while seeking support for myself. "Support mode" is where we can most effectively help our children and grandchildren by grieving with them and learning to heal together.

When we support our children and grand-children in grief, it allows us to know when they are ready to start to go forward in the healing process. Just like in our own grief, we don't try to push or rush anybody. Support mode considers the process of grief and allows the time and space for each of us to take baby steps. Support mode gives our grieving children and grand-children a safe place to feel every hurt, embrace every tear and yet welcome the warmth of laughter and smiles once again when the time feels right.

Slowly the smiles did return and the laughter too for all of us. As a family, we learned together that grief doesn't have a time limit. As a grandparent it is a gift, in that we know our children, we can read their face and hear it in their voice, we know every facial expression and what their eyes are saying. Our grieving children cannot hide their pain from us. Support mode makes it alright for us to not hide our pain from them either.

So I want to close by saying that the first step toward moving from "fix-it mode" to "support mode" is to find a friend or family member who understands your loss and will support you in your grief. We cannot help others until we have found support for ourselves. We need someone who will just listen. The next most important thing is to take care of ourselves. Exercise, eating well and taking care of our health gives us the added strength and energy we will need to help our family in grief.

So what is my advice to other grandparents trying to fix things? Rip the band-aid off and realize this is a forever journey for us, our children and our grandchildren. Together, our family has come a long way on our grief journey. Denise started attending a TCF support group twelve years ago and served as a Chapter Leader for seven years. Today, we are working together to help plan and organize the TCF National Conference in 2016 in Phoenix, Arizona. To all my fellow grieving grandparents, always remember, You Need Not Walk Alone.

--Therese Starkey



From Our Members...

Commitment to the Memory of the Deceased Child

The deceased child is a permanent part of the past and lives on in the shared memories and experiences of your family and extended family.

Death ended your child's life but not his or her relationship to the family. The choice here is whether to deny the reality of the death and to fight the rage you feel for the senselessness of the loss, or to commit yourself to the nearly unbearable task of accepting reality and the seemingly endless suffering it brings.

ONE WAY TO START THIS JOURNEY is to decide how you can and will shine your light on your child's memory. Within your family, special traditions can be created in which the whole family has a part. One family took helium balloons to the cemetery and, after a family service, let the balloons go and watched them drift up into the sky and become lost in the clouds.

For other families, donating books to a library (with their child's name in the books) is a form of tribute at birthdays Christmas, etc. Having children remember their sibling in prayers or when grace is said is another form of remembering.

KEEPING A DIARY OF STORIES that friends and relatives remember, and sharing them with children in the family who are young, are valuable ways of remembering. Retrieving as many pictures as possible and completing family albums help some families keep a special place for their deceased child. Saving tangible items for siblings is another way to help the family remember the child's life.

In some societies there is a name for a man or woman who has lost a child. Instead of being called the mother of someone or father of someone, he or she is called "father or mother bereft". Because our society has no recognized role for the bereft parents, it is left to the parent to create one.

IT IS MOST UNFORTUNATE that it is often close friends and family who shut off the past memories of your child. This is usually done to relieve the anxiety of the friend who is afraid he will hurt you more if he mentions the child's name. The permanent reality of your child's death is no more real or important than the permanent reality of his having lived. You have a right to that reality, and helping friends and family learn and grow to understand this is worthwhile. Others who can't or won't learn and grow may not remain as close and involved in your new life as before. You will change. Your marriage and family will change. Your friends must also change to fit into your life as a bereaved parent.

MANY PEOPLE ARE WAITING to take your lead - to learn how you want them to remember your

child. Encourage others to tell you stories about your child and thank them. Tell them that it helps you to give meaning to the child's having lived by hearing his name. Reward people for taking risks by asking how you are. Tell them how they can help you by simply listening - that there aren't any magic words.

Hearing about your demised child or telling your story helps you adjust to a world where your child is missing as a physical presence but remains as a rich and treasured memory. Learning how to cherish the irreplaceable memory of the missing member in your family is a healing part of grief.

—Nancy Hogan, RN,MA

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 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.



Newsletter 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.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	alivelaone.org
taps.org (military death)	angelmoms.com
save.org (suicide/depression)	
pomc.com (families of murder victims)	
grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)	
www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)	
Griefwords.com (for grandparents)	

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Staples for their help in printing our newsletters each month and to The Neighborhood Church for the use of their facilities for our meetings.

CHAPTER OFFICERS:

CHAPTER CO-LEADER: Linda Zelik
CHAPTER CO-LEADER: Lori Galloway
NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines
PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks
TREASURER: Ken Konopasek
WEBSITE: Joe Zelik



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Linda & Joe Zelik	Lair Galloway
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.



Hope, Healing and Aloha: TCF Hawaii Regional Grief Conference 2020 will be held on **March 27, 2020** (Friday) and March 28, 2020 (Saturday). With a lineup of prominent speakers, we encourage you to join us for this important conference while spending time in Hawaii. No matter where we come from, we all share a desire to better understand and cope with the loss of our loved ones and the grief that subsequently entered our lives. The conference will feature workshops on all aspects of grief. All the speakers have presented at TCF National Conferences and have made a big impact on those seeking hope. (CEU) are available

The conference will be held at the Ala Moana Hotel in Honolulu. The Ala Moana Hotel is next to Ala Moana Shopping Center and is a few blocks from the edge of Waikiki (See Map). The hotel rates for standard rooms are: \$177.00 for single/double occupancy; \$227.00 for triple occupancy (plus portorage, excise tax, and accommodations tax). These are excellent rates for this location in Honolulu. Ala Moana Hotel has created a dedicated website where hotel reservations for this event can be made. (This is separate from conference registration.) The secure website is <https://book.passkey.com/e/49782047>. We encourage you to reserve your hotel rooms as early as possible as we have a limited number of rooms available at these reduced rates and anticipate they will sell out early. Feel free to contact Terry or David Kaniaupio – kaniaupiotcf@gmail.com for more information. Our website is: <http://compassionatefriendshawaii.org/home.aspx>.

The 43rd TCF National Conference will be in held in Atlanta, GA on July 24-26, 2020. "Sharing Sweet Memories of Love" is the theme of the event, which promises more of the great National Conference experience. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our TCF/USA Facebook Page and elsewhere as they become available. For now, save the date.



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 my son, Jonathan "Jamie" Schubert, July 1965 - December 2006. He fought for Justice for the most needy.
Love Mom

In loving memory of Danielle Mosher, August 1978 - June 1997 & Patrik Stezinger, January 1989 - August, 2017. Forever in our hearts, Never forgotten
Paul & Rosemary Mosher

In loving memory of my son William Joseph Britton III, March 1962 - July 1985.
Jean Anne Britton

In loving memory of my beautiful daughter, Lisa Sandoval, July 1976 - December 1992.
Love, Mom

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 _____

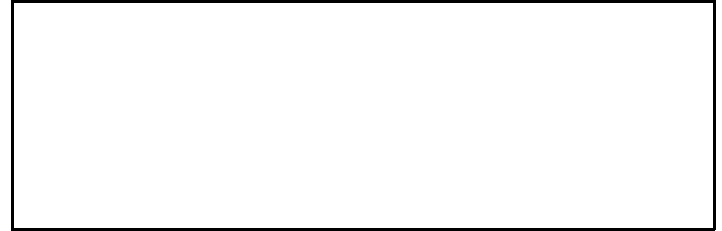
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue.

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

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT 3223
TORRANCE CA 90503



– Return Service Requested –



February 2020

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.
©2020 THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS -- SOUTH BAY/L.A., CA CHAPTER

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