



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

May 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".

****MEETINGS CANCELLED****
We will let you know when meetings at The Neighborhood Church and Mimi's Café will resume.

LOCATION:
Online only for the time being.

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 May meetings are available online only for the time being. See pages 17&18

The Mimi's Sharing group is cancelled until further notice.

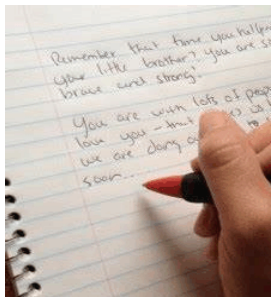
For a free Picture Button of your child, call Ken at (310) 544-6690.

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
Linzelik@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 May newsletter will start with **“Finding Hope for the Future While Grieving.”** As bereaved parents, each and everyone one of can use some hope. Whether it is a new loss or it's been awhile, we have experienced first hand the overwhelming feelings that come with the death of a child. Those deep and difficult feelings are likely being exacerbated by the current coronavirus outbreak, and our reactions will vary. Right now, we're more isolated than usual, practicing “social distancing,” keeping at least six feet from strangers and friends. All this on top of our grief can easily make us feel there is no hope. While the more newly bereaved may still be somewhere in that robotic stage of grief, others parents may see a sliver of hope for the future. My wish is this newsletter will remind us of ways we grow, change and adapt to our loss. At any time, COVID-19 or not, we can only hope to take the next step. We must learn how to reorganize our life and find hope for the future.



An Open Letter to Bereaved Parents

My heart breaks all over again when I hear of another child who died too soon. Unfortunately, I understand and truly know the

horror and suffering in your heart. We also lost our beloved child, Michael, who was 21 years old and died in a motorcycle accident just six and a half years ago. I feel compelled to write a letter in hopes that in sharing my journey it may provide you with some sense of hope for the future at a time when only darkness seems to prevail. Most newly bereaved parents wonder if the pain will ever subside and question if they will ever get better. I recall my feelings of desperation, wanting someone to tell me that eventually, I would make it and be OK. I am here to tell you that you will get better, but it is an incremental process that is different for everyone. I want you to know that there is light that will slowly replace the darkness. A renewed sense of living fully with an increased compassion for others will become a part of your existence as you heal, as it has for me.

The loss of a child is like no other. Initially, there are no words to describe the unfathomable, incomprehensible, and immeasurable loss of a child. You move through your days experiencing a myriad of emotions from shock, denial, anger, and

deep despair, which often brings you to your knees. As I have learned in my own healing journey, time heals and the grief does soften. Of course we never "get over" or "resolve" the loss of a child. I remember so vividly in the early months how every breath and every heartbeat hurt. Every second of my waking hours were thoughts of my son, and I constantly replayed the "video" of that horrible day in my mind. I often wondered how anyone could possibly survive the kind of unbearable and intolerable pain that flowed through to the core of my very existence. I longed for peace in my heart and prayed each day that the torment would eventually dissolve. I held on to the smallest sliver of hope that someday I would want to live and embrace life once again.

I feel that time has come, but not without a great deal of enormous difficulty and effort as I traveled my healing journey. A sense of joy and renewed purpose in life has replaced the deep despair that lingered in my heart and every cell of my being where it resided for such a long time.

Even though time does heal, you will never be the same again, and you will always look at life differently. The reality of what has just happened to you will not totally become a part of your existence for a long time. It's an amazing gift that our psyches don't experience the full impact of trauma when it initially occurs. For me it felt like the "news" traveled through different parts of my body and each individual cell as time moved forward. It took quite some time for every cell in my body to truly "know" the full impact of my loss.

The jolts of reality initially hit you like a huge crashing wave in an expansive deep ocean, and you wonder if you can ever find your way to the surface again. As time goes by those crashing waves will become gentler, and you won't feel like you are drowning in a sea of sorrow. Eventually you will find yourself standing on the shore reflecting back on the tumultuous storm that you have survived.

You will question over and over again and ask "why ... what if .. if only ... is he/she OK?" until you don't need to anymore. I came to the realization that even if I were handed the reason (if there is a reason) that my precious son left this Earth, he still wasn't physically with us and it wouldn't bring him back or ease my sorrow. For whatever the reason our beloved children left this Earth too early in our way of thinking, and we will never know why until it's our time to make our transition and join with them

again. You will most likely go through a process of questioning your faith. I trust you will come to some level of acceptance over time.

Some people will come into your life and others will simply need (or choose) to distance themselves because it's too hard and painful for them. Family, friends, and co-workers will most likely be there providing much needed support, love, and compassion for awhile as you begin this healing journey. Over time, that may become quite difficult for some. It takes a very special person to travel along this path with a bereaved parent. I found that a very few special people in our lives were able to

be present with the magnitude and intensity of our emotions and support us for the long haul. Our greatest strength came from other bereaved parents because no matter how well intended and heartfelt the people in our lives were, they simply could not understand the magnitude of our grief. Lucky for them. Be patient with those who try to support you and who will undeniably make comments or say platitudes that you won't find very helpful. I learned to disregard any phrase that included the words, "at

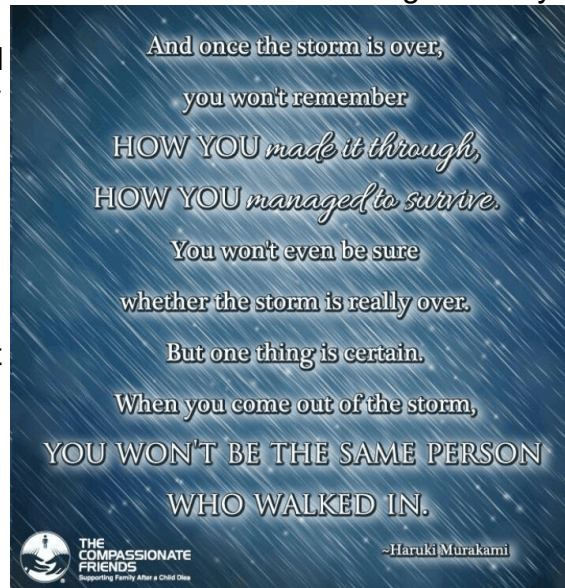
least.... " Others will be afraid to mention your child's name or ask you how you are for fear that they will "make you sad." They just simply don't know what to do or say and are doing the best they know how. Who could blame them for that?

You learn to deal with all kinds of comments and people and also learn to forgive their frailties. We are the ones that have to learn to live in a world that sometimes doesn't seem very compassionate or patient with our grief. The beauty is that your life will be blessed with new friends that seem like angels who will appear to hold your hand and help you through the rough times. The support and love I received from my more seasoned, bereaved parent friends and TCF were a Godsend and a lifeline that I deeply cherish. They are friends for life -- a special kinship that we share. I encourage you to surround yourselves with a few other bereaved parents who have traversed this path before you when you are ready. They are the ones who can truly light the way when you begin to lose your way.

Although it's difficult to accept, there are many

gifts and blessings that come out of the enormity of your loss. Appreciate them but know that anyone of us would gladly trade any of those gifts and blessings in a heartbeat to spend just one more minute with our child.

Perhaps you have already received signs from your child. I haven't talked to a bereaved parent who hasn't. People who are experiencing trauma are usually very open to the universe and its messages to help us along the way. Those gifts are wonderful blessings, and we hold them so dear to our hearts. Don't despair if you haven't received messages from your child - be patient.



Be kind to yourselves, gentle and loving, and nurture your hearts. Don't be afraid to ask for help from others. Give yourself whatever you need to deal with each day and don't expect too much from yourselves. Sometimes just remembering to breathe is an admirable goal for one day. Don't judge your grief. Many times I thought I should be "handling my grief better" because I was a psychologist and my grief did not seem to fit the grief model in my textbooks.

It didn't take me long to let go of my unrealistic expectations and allow my grief to unfold and manifest in whatever way it was meant to.

There are many layers of grief that we don't even realize until we find ourselves processing a different aspect of the loss that we hadn't considered before. I learned that people who have lost a child deal with their grief in their own time line and their own way. There is no right way, other than what feels right for you. There are things you can do to help care for yourself such as massage, exercise, therapy, creativity, and journaling, to mention a few. If you have a partner, be patient with each other. There may be times when you hold each other so close as if each of you were holding on to a lifesaver in the middle of the ocean and at other times when you become quite distant. Know that is normal.

Remember that stepparents grieve, too. If you have other children they, of course, will go through their own grief process in their own time... often years later. Life will take on a "new normal" after the years pass.

I wish I had been dealt a different hand, but I wasn't and neither were you. The most I can do is to offer myself and any words which can give you some hope and comfort in a time of such tremendous suffering. I hold you close to my heart and pray for your healing as you begin this most difficult journey. It is my hope that you shall, too, someday feel a sense of peace in your heart I also pray for your now beloved Angel Child as he/she begins a new journey in another realm of existence.
--Pamela S. Leonhardt, PsyD *Blessings, 7/14/99*

Finding Hope

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



Getting On With Life—What Does It Mean?

Of all the statements and spiritual platitudes quoted at me since my son Daniel's death, the phrase that I hear most frequently makes me squirm the most. "You have got to get on with your life." Recently I quit squirming long enough to ponder the meaning behind this phrase that is usually said to the bereaved in the form of a command. Exactly what does this phrase mean? What are people implying when they say it?

I was pregnant when Daniel died, and three months later I gave birth to a baby girl. Wasn't that getting on with life? I nurtured my three children, took them to school, the park and birthday parties.

Now wasn't that going on with life? I even cooked dinner at least four times a week!

At first after Daniel's death, I would have liked to literally stop my life and be buried next to my son, but I kept existing. Like a plastic bag tossed about by the wind, I was fluttering, being carried by the events of life. Seasons came and went. In the spring, I planted marigolds and tomato vines. In the autumn, I jumped in fallen leaves with my children. I continued; I am still continuing to live.

Now I may be bereaved, but I am by no means a fool. As I ponder the meaning behind "getting on with life," I know exactly what those who say this have in mind. "Forget your dead child. Quit grieving. You make me uncomfortable!" Getting on with life means don't acknowledge August 25, Daniel's birthday, anymore. Forget how he slid down the snowy bank in the recycle bin, sang in the van and ate Gummy Bears. Forget he had cancer, suffered and died at only age four. Don't see the empty chair at the dinner table, don't cry, just live!

Some who are more "religious" would like to believe that a bereaved parent can claim, "My child is safe and happy in heaven. Therefore, why should I yearn for him?" Perhaps I pose a threat to certain types because I have let it be known I question God.

I weep. I have been angry. I miss my Daniel. Maybe old friends feel if they hang around me too long I might convince them that a few of their illusions about life are just that, illusions. As my cries of anguish are heard, there are those who can only think how to make me be quiet. To stop my heartfelt yearnings, they say quite sternly, "You must get on with your life."

I am living. I do move on with life with Daniel in my mind and in my heart, although he is not physically here as I continue to live and to love. To sever his memory totally from my life would cause destruction and damage that would ruin me. To push Daniel out of my life and not be able to freely mention his name or write and speak about who he was on earth would only bring more pain to my life. I'd shrivel up. Comfort for me comes in remembering with smiles how he drew with a blue marker on his sister's wall, ran outside naked and picked green tomatoes. For the reality is, getting on with life means continuing to cherish Daniel.

--Alice J. Wisler, Bereavement Mag. 9/10 2000, Colorado

Mothers Day and Fathers Day

With Mothers Day and Fathers Day approaching, reflection on our child's (children's) life is almost inevitable. Some of us, especially those newly bereaved, may feel that with the loss of our child came the loss of our status as "parent." We may feel we must forfeit this title, and that is painful.



This feeling then amplifies our sense of loss, and the tight downward spiral of emotional pain begins again. Add to this painful mix the fear-filled anticipation of these upcoming holidays and the result is often a wish we could sleep through the whole thing. Or run away. Many of us would just as soon never participate in those holidays again. Too painful.

As tempting as avoiding them may be, it's nearly impossible to do, especially if there are surviving siblings at home. They may feel the need to observe these days to create a fantasy that everything is "okay" so that we will be "okay" again. Or they may need to assure themselves that you're still their parents.

Whatever the reason, we may feel even more stressed and hurt. With such things as this going on while we are struggling with our grief, we are overwhelmed. We cannot imagine a time in the future when we'll be able to face these holidays.

And there will probably be well-meaning friends and family advising us on how best to face these days. They love us and mean to help us, but we're just not able to handle any of it. Will it ever get better? Will there come a time when Mothers Day and Fathers Day don't cause us such terrible pain? Yes, No, and Maybe. Take your pick. In any order. They all are answers to these questions. And they all are not answers to these questions.

The fact is, we all grieve differently. Husbands and wives grieve differently. Siblings grieve differently. No one way is "right", no one way works better for everyone. The consensus among experts seem to be that the "right" answer is the one with which you feel the most comfort. And that it may change from time-to-time. And that's okay. You don't "progress" through the stages of grief, as if on a ladder, and stay on the "top" rung for good. Grief stages are more like a set of trampolines and we bounce from one to another as we move from one stage to another. Some bounce us higher and

others drop us lower, but in the end, we have to try them all, maybe several times, before we begin to heal.

--Compiled from several sources. TCF Orange County CA newsletter

Making Mother's and Father's Day Special



Here are a few hints to help you through these days after the loss of a child.

- 1) Pamper yourself– this is a special day in your life. You are a parent forever and your child is your child forever.
- 2) Do what you need to do– what helps you. Grieve your way.
- 3) Be with those who surround you with love, not demands or advice.
- 4) Plan ahead– do things that make you feel good or give you a moment's peace.
- 5) Start new rituals to make new memories.
- 6) Share your thoughts with family members; decide together what the day should include. (If you are alone, find a good friend.)
- 7) Include deceased children in the day– through prayer, lighting a candle, telling stories about them, looking through pictures, planting flowers or a garden, doing a good deed, writing about them, making their favorite recipe.
- 8) Join with another bereaved family to honor this day and have mutual support.
- 9) Start a garden or add to a special garden in memory of your child.
- 10) Use this day to plant spring flowers so you can always see your child in each bloom and each bouquet that you cut.
- 11) Visit the cemetery if that helps your heart on this day.
- 12) Plant a flower or shrub that will come to bloom this time of year.
- 13) Do something special for someone else or something special in your child's name (helping TCF, Cancer Care, MADD, Scouting, a nursing home, etc.)
- 14) Listen to music that makes your heart feel good.
- 15) Cook some favorite recipes that your child enjoyed or cooked for you.
- 16) Buy a present for yourself from your child and enjoy the comfort it brings you.
- 17) Write a poem or article in memory of your child, sharing memories or whatever has helped you.




- 18) Attend a family gathering of relatives - their love and support can give you a lift on this day.
- 19) Make a booklet of favorite poems that help your heart, and give copies to dear relatives and friends in memory of your child.
- 20) Take part in a special church ceremony honoring Mother's Day and Father's Day.
- 21) Set aside some special time to grieve, unloading all the frustration and sadness that can envelop you on such a day giving you time to meditate alone.
- 22) Write a letter to your child, telling what's in your heart (perhaps some unfinished business or some new blessing that has enriched your life).
- 23) Allow the tears to flow- crying is healing and allows a release for your feelings.
- 24) Think of a way to "share your child with the world" - making sure his or her memory lives on through scholarships, writing, good deeds.
- 25) Give and get plenty of hugs.
- Elaine Stillwell Rockville Center, NY

This Mother's Day tribute from the internet got me to thinking... When facing the future, we need to regain our sense of humor. Let's start with some of the silly sayings that are a part of everyday life. --LV

In Appreciation of Mother's Wisdom

1. My mother taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE. "If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished washing the floor." 
2. My mother taught me RELIGION. "You'd better pray that will come out of the carpet."
3. My mother taught me about TIME TRAVEL. "If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"
4. My mother taught me LOGIC. "Because I said so, that's why."
5. My mother taught me MORE LOGIC. "If you fall out of the swing and break your neck, you're not going to the store with me." 
6. My mother taught me FORESIGHT. "Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."
7. My mother taught me IRONY. "Keep crying, and I'll give you something to cry about."
8. My mother taught me about the science of osmosis. "Shut your mouth and eat your supper."
9. My mother taught me about CONTORTIONS. "Will you look at that dirt on the back of your neck!"



10. My mother taught me about STAMINA. You will sit there until all those vegetables are gone."
11. My mother taught me about WEATHER. "This room of yours looks as if a tornado went through it."
12. My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY. "If I told you once, I've told you a million times. Don't exaggerate!"
13. My mother taught me the CIRCLE OF LIFE. "I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."
14. My mother taught me about BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION. "Stop acting like your father!"
15. My mother taught me about ENVY." "There are millions of less fortunate children in this world don't have wonderful parents like you do."
16. My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION. "Just wait till your father gets home." 
17. My mother taught me about RECEIVING. "You're going to get it when we get home!"
18. My mother taught me MEDICAL SCIENCE. "If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they're going to freeze that way."
-  19. My mother taught me ESP. "Put your sweater on; don't you think I know when you're cold."
20. My mother taught me HUMOR. "When that lawnmower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."
21. My mother taught me HOW TO BECOME AN ADULT. "If you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up."
22. My mother taught me GENETICS. "You're just like your father."
23. My mother taught me about my ROOTS. "Shut that door behind you. Do you think you were born in a barn?" 
24. My mother taught me WISDOM. "When you get to be my age, you'll understand."
25. My mother taught me JUSTICE." One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!"
- How many of these did you mother teach you?

Memorial Day

I saw you today, in the downy soft face of a newborn babe, nestled lovingly in the protective arms of his mom. I felt the joy that only a mother could feel, radiating from her face as she proudly gazed at him. It took me back to another day when you first came into my life.

I saw you today in a precocious four-year-old at the supermarket. His little hands grabbed for colorful boxes of cereal and other goodies. His bewildered young mom kept one hand on him and one on the cart while explaining to him why he couldn't have everything he saw and what would happen to him if he didn't behave.

I heard your voice today through the backyard fence in the voices of children as they negotiated at play. Who was going to be the first to go down the slide and who was going to tell Timmy next door that he couldn't play? My mind raced back to another day when you came running in from play, saying someone wasn't being fair.

I wiped the tears from your dark little face and brushed your hair back with my hand. Somehow a hug and a kiss would even the score. Out you'd go to get into it again.

I saw you today, in a young boy 12 or 13 years old racing his bike down the street. I remember the blue one we bought for you and how proud you were of it. How I worried as you flew like the wind down the street, hoping you wouldn't get hit by some careless driver. How we searched the town after it was stolen from the parking lot at school; the disappointment you felt when we couldn't find it.

I saw you today on the football field as the boys were out for practice. Driving by, I remembered your games, the ones I missed because I had to work. How proud I was when I did see you play.

I saw you today in a young army private just home on leave; those civilian clothes were no cover for that short cropped hair. Your hair, soft as a kitten it was. I was the only one you'd trust to cut it. "Thanks, Mom," you'd say, "that's just how I wanted it." That hair, cut within an inch of your scalp, was not at all your style. You looked so strange this Christmas when you came home on leave. But you were my son, and you looked very handsome to me, and I was so very proud of you.

I saw you today in the handsome strong face of an eighteen-year-old. The smile on his face belied the turmoil within. Only God knows why he, like you, decided that life wasn't worth living anymore. He ended his life with a single shot just as you ended yours. I sit and stare at his picture in the obituary column of the morning paper. Hot tears sting my face as I think of his mom, how much she must have loved him. I share in her grief,

remembering the numbness of the first few days and the unbearable pain. I say a silent prayer for her and the young man, knowing for her what surely lies ahead. As she lays her son to rest, her memorial day has just begun. For as each passing moment, hour, and day evolve into weeks, months, years, she will see her son and hear his voice in someone else's child, and she will remember.

--Mary A. Bell TCF, Ankeny, IA



I Just Miss You...

I just miss you. There really is no other explanation for the heaviness felt in my heart. It is as simple and yet as complicated as that - I just miss you. What I wouldn't I give for one more moment. One more moment to touch you, see you, hear your voice, look into your eyes and tell

you how much you are loved.

I never knew missing could hurt so badly. I never knew that missing would change me so irrevocably. I never knew how deep and wide love could flood into my life. I never knew how precious this life was and just how much love could hurt until you left. And I had no clue that the cause of the depth of my pain could be narrowed down into four little words - I just miss you.

Your absence has flooded through every part of me. And like a flood, it has left cracks in my foundation. The flood of your absence has obliterated the core pieces of who I once was. It has cracked my heart wide open and left me fighting to survive it all.

For you my sweet child - I keep breathing, I keep fighting, I keep living. For you - I love more deeply and laugh more freely. For you - I cherish this one life I've been given. No matter the amount of pain and heartbreak. For you - because you exist in every corner of who I am. And your name has transcended from the title you were given on the day you were born into an emotion that describes your absence. Because when the depth of MISSING emerges, all I can do is utter your name. And when someone asks me what weighs heavy on my heart...yours is the name that flows out. Nothing more is needed to describe what it is I am feeling because you are that feeling. The feeling of missing you, loving you, longing for you, and all the feelings in between.

Time is passing and still some days there is a heaviness that weighs me down. I keep searching for the words to explain where it comes from or why it's there. It feels very tangled and complicated... and the only words that seem to come forth are - "I just miss you." I miss you more than words can say and emotion can express. Everything I do has been washed by the waters of your absence. Even my heart beats to a steady rhythm of you and its echo rings through the space where you used to be. I have never known so much love, so much joy, and so much heartbreak. And some days the only explanation for the suffocating pain that still lingers is... I just miss you.

--Mary Hejnal, TCF Eastside WA newsletter

Beyond Surviving: "Twenty Five Commandments"

Hundreds of books have been written about loss and grief. Few have addressed the aftermath of suicide for survivors. Here again, there are no answers; only suggestions from those who have lived through and beyond the event. I've compiled their thoughts.

1. Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with "why" it happened until you no longer need to know "why", or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings, but all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy — you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do.
7. Having suicidal thought is common. It does not mean that you will have to act on these thoughts.
8. Remember to take one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. Don't panic if emotions return like a tidal wave. You may only be experiencing a remnant of grief; an unfinished piece.

14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as The Compassionate Friends, or Survivors of Suicide groups. If not, ask a professional to help start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, i.e., headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, etc.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and go beyond just surviving.

-- Author Unknown



Life Is for the Living

I went to offer condolence, a job I abhor, but done it must be. The grief-stricken mother paced the floor and tearfully poured her

heart out to me. She said "What does one do with the baby bed when the baby dies? What does one do with a heart that moans and aches and cries? What does one do with all the tiny things made by loving hands? What does one do with shattered dreams ... and hopes ... and plans?"

I tried to console her, but she looked at me with reproachful eyes and said, "But what could you know of a mother's grief when her baby dies? "The sorrow that lay dormant all these many years ripped thru my aching heart and filled my eyes with tears. " I answered her softly

"Twice, I have knelt beside a tiny grave with none left to call me Mother. Twice, I have loved a tiny soul, each one more than the other. I know the ache of empty arms in a house that's suddenly still. I know the pain of a broken heart that moans and cries at will. Our baby bed was placed in the attic, with a tear drop on the dusty floor. An old trunk stored the tiny things they never ever would wear.

The shattered dreams
were placed in the back of my mind for a later
giving. And my heart mended itself, my dear,
because life is for the living."

--Greater Ozarks Chapter, Springfield, IL

Newly Bereaved...

In Time



When we grieve and hurt, we seem to be more aware of everyone's shortcomings, mistakes and limitations. When we grieve and hurt, we seem to be less capable of forgiveness and understanding. When we grieve and hurt, we must try to realize that feelings of anger and frustration are natural, and that they are temporary. In time, we will rediscover our ability to understand and forgive many people, not only others in the world around us, but also ourselves.

The important words here are "IN TIME."

--Sascha Wagner, from *The Sorrow and the Light*

Seasoned Grievors...

The Uninvited Visitor

Some visitors are uninvited but the worst are those that leave briefly only to return again and again, always it seems when least expected. You can't dissuade this particular uninvited visitor to stay away, though all of us try hard to do so. Personally, I have tried to be invisible hoping the visitor would not see me and would just leave. Admittedly, I have even tried to fake how I am feeling, so the visitor would not stop by. I have even gone away from home on trips just to try and avoid this visitor!

But time and time again, the uninvited visitor finds its way to me. This visitor intrudes when I have a bit of happiness. And, the visitor comes often when I least expect this visitor. You have this uninvited visitor as well. This unwelcomed, uninvited, intrusive visitor is grief.

When grief first came into my life, it crowded everything else out. When grief kept showing up again and again, I felt like I was trapped in the middle seat of an airplane on a journey I did not buy a ticket for. I felt smothered between row mates who had little if any consideration for me, leaving me feeling as if they no longer knew I even existed.

As they leaned comfortably to the side or stretched into the aisle, I was left barely able to breathe. As time waned on, I learned how to be a better traveler. I became better at integrating this uninvited visitor into my life. Some days, I almost forgot the visitor was still here. Those days came more often, now seven years after the death of my son. Sometimes though, it is as if grief deceptively lured me into a zone of letting down my guard. It seemed when my guard is down, I suddenly found myself boarding the plane again with only a middle seat available for me to take. I have learned to use my elbows a bit on this journey. I use my elbows to combat the uninvited visitor rather than to hide, to run, or to fake how I feel.

This journey has a lot of turbulence. When I heard the news of the shooting in Florida, I grimaced knowing 17 families would be boarding the plane to begin a journey they would not want to be on.

The Compassionate Friends will be there for them now and forever in the future. Together we will help all families with the uninvited visitor on this horrific grief journey.

--Tony's mom, Debbie TCF San Diego newsletter

For Friends And Family...

Share Your Memories with Me

Please share your memories with me. Don't hesitate to tell me your stories about my son. I may shed a tear or two, but don't let that discourage you. Share with me the camping trip you took together, the times he laughed with you, and the times he helped a friend. Share with me all the times, good and bad; your memories will then be mine, too.

I only have memories, and I can't add to them without your help. Memories are all that I have left.

--Jane Kelley TCF, Richmond, VA

Welcome ...

I'm Here



I cannot ease your aching heart,
Not take your pain away,
But let ME stay and take your hand
And walk with you today!
I will listen when you need to talk;
I will wipe away your tears

I will share your worries when they come;
 I will help you face your fears.
 I am here and I will stand by you,
 Each hill you have to climb,
 So take my hand, let's face the world;
 Live one day at a time!
 You're not alone, for I'm still here.
 I will go that extra mile
 And when things are a little easier,
 I'll help you learn to smile!

--By Jeanne Losey

Editor's Note: Every bereaved parent brings their own pain and story to the meetings. By being there for each other and listening and offering suggestions, it eases everyone's pain. What you have found helpful in your grief may be just the information another bereaved parent who is struggling with their own pain needs to hear. We invite you to attend the meetings and see for yourself how helpful they can be.



Helpful Hint ...

The lasting gift that any loved one gives us is their presence in our hearts ... It is up to us to dedicate ourselves to integrating that loving spirit into our ongoing lives."

--Carol Staudacher, From the book *A Time to Grieve*



Book Review ...

Parting Is Not Good-bye by Kelly Osmont and Marilyn McFarlane Nobility Press, Portland, Oregon. This is a book about a single mother who loses her only child. She tells her experiences in a very moving and personal way. She shares her frustration, anger, hopelessness, and agony. She also shares her strengths and recovery. Her son was 19 years old when he died, and she describes the relationship of mother and son before this tragedy happened, and takes you through the hope of her son's recovery, and his death. She explains how her life has changed and how she found the strength to survive.

Happy Mother's Day

Happy Mother's Day to those of you who have only dreamed of a child you could never conceive.
 Happy Mother's Day to those of you who never got to feel your child flutter in your womb for he was

gone too soon.

Happy Mother's Day to those of you who went through labor to hold a still, silent yet perfect angel baby in your arms.

Happy Mother's Day to those of you who looked day by day at your healthy baby only to find her silent, cold and gone one day.

Happy Mother's Day to those of you who fought hard and whose child fought harder for a life too short.

Happy Mother's Day to those of you who knew the day was coming when you would no longer hold your child yet you gave him a full life.

Happy Mother's Day to those whose child was 4 or 5 and brought you crushed wildflowers last year but who have gone on since then.

Happy Mother's Day to those of you who could no longer pick up your baby because she was too big, but in the end you rocked back and forth invaded by grief.

Happy Mother's Day to those of you who raised your children well but had to bury them all too young, all too soon.

Happy Mother's Day to all who are mothers whether they cherish their children all on earth or they spend Mother's Day enthralled by their grief for a brief moment in time. Were we more mothers then than now? NO! Be clear and let no one take away our right of motherhood!!

-- Jean Stewart, Mother to Rebecca "Becca" Stewart
 10/16/1998—1/1/1999 And Christopher Stewart
 1/18/2000—1/18/2000

There Is a Light

There is a light in this world - a healing spirit more powerful than any darkness we may encounter.

We sometimes lose sight of this force when there is suffering, and too much pain.

Then, suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who hear a call, and answer in extraordinary way;

--Mother Theresa

Hope

Hope is not pretending that troubles don't exist. It is the trust that they will not last forever, that hurts will be healed and difficulties overcome.

It is faith a source of strength and renewal, that lies within, to lead us through the dark to the sunshine.

--Author unknown



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

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

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

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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chidinma Ezeani
Born: 8/89 Died: 10/19
Mother Ifeoma Ezeani

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joel Draper
Born: 1/94 Died: 5/2004
Mother: Tracy Solis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Parents: Alexandar & Sanderson
Quintana Dantas De Oliveria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* 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.tcfsbla.org)

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

Sorry, no tributes were submitted this month.



For Siblings...

Playing In The Shadows

We grew up together,
Big sister, little brother.
I took care of you
Until you were old enough to care for yourself.
Though you didn't say it,
I knew you loved me.
We played in the sunlight, you and I
Remember the games of "Mother-May-I" and
"Hide-and-Seek"?
Sure we had our fights
As all siblings do,
But through it all we never lost
Our love for each other.
Now you're gone.
I'll never see you again
except in the memories of those sunny days.
You will forever be sixteen--
Far too young to die.
You had your whole life to live.
I'll always grieve, but I must go on.
Still, without you,
I play alone in the shadows.
--Cheryl Larson TCF Pikes Peak, CO

Ask Dr. Paulson

Mary A. Paulson, Ph.D., is a bereaved sibling as well as a child and adolescent psychologist at Harding Hospital in Worthington, Ohio. Her question and answer column, aimed at bereaved siblings and the family who loves them, appeared in TCF's national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone* (and previously TCF's National Newsletter) for 15 years. She has now retired from writing this column and Dr. Heidi Horsley, licensed psychologist, social worker, and bereaved sibling will continue answering sibling related questions in *We Need Not Walk Alone*.

Q. What are some ways I can remember my sibling? How have other bereaved siblings memorialized their dead brother or sister?

A. That's a great question to which there will be as many answers as there are people to ask. The place to start with that answer for you would be:

- 1) What are you doing when you feel peace, comfort, and have a smile on your lips when you think about your brother or sister?
- 2) What things did you enjoy doing together?
- 3) What would fit in your budget and time to do?
- 4) What would make you feel that you were honoring your brother or sister?

Whether it's a collage of pictures, a scrapbook, a donation to a good cause, lecturing, writing a book, volunteering for a worthy cause, setting up a scholarship fund, etc., the important part would be doing something that would bring peace, comfort, and smiles to you and your family. I have given you a place to start. From there, I would recommend that you continue to ask this question of others you love and respect until a concrete idea is formed.

Good luck on your venture. I think this will be a great step in your healing process.

For Grandparents...



A Grandmother's Grief

My mother, recently diagnosed with lymphoma, died just before Mother's Day. Only two months prior, she was a high spirited fun-loving woman, the heart of our family, who was looking forward to her 90th birthday celebration this fall. As I cared for my dear mother, knowing I would soon lose her, I reflected back on my daughter Kristen's death at age seven and my mother's concerns about me at that time. I had been so consumed by my own grief then, and the grief of my young son, only nine when his sister died, that I was hardly aware of others' grief.

Not until a few years ago did my mother confide her pain of not only grieving for her precious granddaughter, but her daughter as well. Her fear was that the tragic sudden loss of Kristen could also mean the loss of her daughter. "Kristen drowned in the ocean but you were drowning in grief. I know you felt helpless to save her, but I felt the same about you. I had no idea how to rescue you." Surprised to hear this, even though I had also feared losing myself, I became aware for the first time of the unique role a grandparent plays when their grandchild dies.

I recently became a grandmother myself and have been overjoyed with this new role of welcoming Joseph into the world. My favorite picture is of my mother, shortly before she died, with a huge smile and her arms outstretched reaching for baby Joseph when meeting him for the first time.

While my mother's death, unlike Kristen's, is part of the natural cycle of life, I will miss her deeply. She taught me so much and I think of her now in my new role as a grandparent. When Joseph was born, I had the luxury of spending the first several weeks with him, watching him change daily and his parents move nervously into their new role. I loved being witness to the bond developing as they changed from being a couple to being a little family. My son, a resident in anesthesiology, studies nightly with Joseph often nestled against his chest in a baby sling. He once shared how much he misses his baby with his long hours at the hospital. Watching the creation of this strong parental bond, I became aware of the unique dual bond of the grandparent. A bond that takes her heart to places she never thought possible—a bond that should never be broken.

I now appreciate what my mother experienced. The lesson for me is that while the focus is often on the bereaved parent, we must also be sensitive to the grief of the grandparent. And, too, there is this: Staying mindful of the flow of life and death in one's family can be a source of renewal and joy, even (and especially) in the midst of our darkest grief.
--Carol K., TCF Marin County, CA

From Our Members...



One Moment in Time

As bereaved parents, we have a line of demarcation in our lives. This line is like no other. Other people define their lives by that one big career step, move or degree. But in other people's lives, things are different. We are not like other people. We experienced a clearly defined moment in time when everything changed. The tectonic plates of our lives shifted at one moment on one date of one year. Nothing will ever be the same. We definitively mark the time before and after our child died. Life was different before our child died. It was easy; it was filled with promises of tomorrow, accomplishments, setbacks, goals set and achieved and happiness that abounds in the natural order of life. But our basic assumptions

were shattered and our world turned inside out at that one moment in time when our child died.

Can we ever feel as optimistic about life as we did before that moment in time? Will we ever again believe that one day we will feel balanced, optimistic and serene?

We certainly can, and most parents certainly do. As you read the articles in this month's newsletter about the journey through grief, consider the gentle optimism that presents itself in these parents' words. Each of these parents has walked this lonely road. Each has come through the darkest, rockiest valley into a gauzy sort of light which gradually crystallized into a true sunshine as time moved forward.

How did they do it? Insight is offered in these parents' stories. We must do our grief work, face our demons and stand them down. We must talk with others, set limits on what we will tolerate, and hold our line. We must seek counseling, attend seminars, attend TCF meetings or other offerings that give us the support of parents who have lost a child or help us in acquiring skills to cope with our pain and loss. We must take grief breaks in the beginning and for the first year or two. We must take care of ourselves physically, mentally, and emotionally.

But most of all we must keep our child with us as we complete our life's journey. How we choose to complete our journey is unique. The common denominator that all of us share is the need to find a precious flicker of hope which we can nurture and coax to a radiant glow. We all find it in different ways and at different times on our grief journey. But, rest assured, we all find it. I call it "my little light."

One day you will feel the burden lifting. You will laugh about things your child said or did. That moment will gently envelop you. There is hope. Let your little light glimmer and then glow.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF Katy, TX In Memory of her son, Todd Mennen. Submitted by Linda Coertez

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.



Looking To Our Members For Your Help:

1. We need to find someone to help Lori co-lead the meetings. Linda will soon be stepping down.

2. We need a webmaster to put the finished newsletter online each month and to keep the website up to date. Joe's last month will be Dec.
3. We need the donation of a used laptop so Lynn can use it for the newsletter.
4. We need everyone's suggestions for the chapter. A flyer will be going out shortly.
5. We need "seasoned greivers" who come back to meetings to help and encourage the newly bereaved. Help TCF be there for the bereaved families who are counting on us. Let us know how you can help... Please call (310) 963-4646.

A BIG Thanks to Albert Garcia for translating the newsletter into Spanish. It will be available online later this month. Let me know if you would like an e-mail reminder or a hard copy mailed to you. (310) 963-4646 or Lynntcf@aol.com

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: May 1st for June 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.tcfsgla.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. CCZ offers FREE one-day family programs, community programs, and 3-day weekend camps. All programming empowers children to grieve, heal, and grow in healthy ways.

Our weekend camps provide children with the opportunity to break their isolation and realize they are not alone in a fun and healing environment. Grief evolves with each developmental stage a child reaches, so learning to manage grief in a healthy way is important at every age. Whether the child's loss was ten years or three months ago, encourage them to attend – you may have an opportunity to change the course of their life.

Other Grief Support Websites...

- | | |
|--|--|
| thetearsfoundation.org | childloss.com |
| goodgriefresources.com | griefwatch.dom |
| bereavedparentsusa.org | opentohope.com |
| healingafterloss.org | webhealing.com |
| survivorsofselfharm.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
- SPANISH TRANSLATOR: Albert Garcia

PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks

TREASURER: Ken Konopasek

WEBSITE: Joe Zelik

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Linda & Joe Zelik

Marilyn Nemeth

Cheryl & Bill Matasso

Nancy Lerner

Kitty Edler

Sandra & Eddie Myricks



Loir Galloway

Crystal Henning

Lynn Vines

Ken Konopasek

Susan Kass

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.

Online Support (Live Chat) TCF offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. The following list was valid as of March 3rd.

Please Note: Times posted on the schedule are based on Pacific Time. Select "enter room" under the chat room you would like to participate in and you will be prompted to register. Once registered you will be able to log-in with your username and password that you have set up. You can keep abreast of any changes by going to: www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/online-support

MONDAY

7:00 - 8:00 AM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Karen & Jeanne

6:00 - 7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator Muffy & Mysonsmom

TUESDAY

5:00 - 6:00 PM PST

Loss to Substance Related Causes Moderator: Becca and Cathy

6:00- 7:00 PM PST

Bereaved Less than Two Years Moderator: Debbie

6:00- 7:00 PM PST

Bereaved More than Two Years Moderator: Becca & Carol

WEDNESDAY

7:00 - 8:00 AM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Debbie

6:00 - 7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Karen and Carol

THURSDAY

5:00 - 6:00 PM PST

No Surviving Children Moderator: Adaline & Izzy

6:00 - 7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Carol & Donna

FRIDAY

7:00 - 8:00 AM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Karen

5:00- 6:00 PM PST

Loss to Substance Related Causes Moderator: Cathy and Muffy

5:00- 6:00 PM PST

Pregnancy/Infant Loss Moderator: Nikole

6:00-7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Muffy

SATURDAY

6:00 - 7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Michelle and Carol

SUNDAY

5:00 - 6:00 PM PST

Suicide Loss Moderator: Izzy

6:00 - 7:00 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings Moderator: Carol & Diana

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.

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 this year's event, which promises more of last year's 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. Registration is now open. Go to www.compassionatefriends.org/event/43rd-tcf-national-conference for more information and to register.



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 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 Elizabeth Mann, July 1960 - May 2005. Dear Liza, Forever in our hearts.
Love, Mum & Sister, Vicki

In loving memory of John Francis Cleary, December 1974 - August 1993.
Love, Mom & Dougl's

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-

May 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.