



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

March 2021 ISSUE

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

****REGULAR MEETINGS
Still Cancelled ****

We will let you know when meetings at The Neighborhood Church will resume.

LOCATION:

Online only for the time being. Join us on Zoom for our virtual meetings. For more information call Connie or Leo at (310) 536-9305 or e-mail Connie at Conniestar58@gmail.com

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.

"Parent's Perspective On Their Own Grief," is the topic for the March 4th Virtual meeting using Zoom. See page 15 to request the link for the meetings. It is very easy to join just by clicking on the link in your email. Leo will walk you through it ahead of time if you are worried about technicalities, just email him at Liccica79@gmail.com

The Friday, TCF Sharing group takes place at Hoff's Hut's outdoor patio dining area (Crenshaw & 237th St in Torrance) at 1 PM. Call (310) 963-4646 to let us know you are coming for the reservation.

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

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Chapter Co-Leaders:
**We need a Co-leader
Could that be you?**
Lori Galloway (760) 521-0096
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P.O. Box 3696
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The March 4th Zoom meeting will start with "Parent's Perspective On Their Own Grief." Everyone grieves differently. We will hear that phrase over and over in our grief. But how does that effect the way we each mourn? Everyone's emotional level is different. Sometime in our grief we all feel helpless and hopeless on this path we've been thrust on. But, ultimately, we will all grieve according to our own personalities and cultural upbringing... Some may suppress their anger, others explode at the smallest things. Some want to talk, others find it to painful to put their feelings into words. Some can analyze the emotional roller coaster they are on while others feel overwhelming depression and convince themselves they will always feel this low. There will be some overlap in our grief and often we need to take it day by day. In the following articles take a moment to see how we each must subconsciously find a way to come to terms with the loss of our children, keeping in mind that we all grieve differently and "my" way is right for me. Hopefully we can learn from each other ways to avoid some of the pitfalls in grief.

The After Loss Credo

I need to talk about my loss. I may often need to tell you what happened or to ask you why it happened. Each time I discuss my loss I am helping myself face the reality of the death of my loved one.

I need to know that you care about me. I need to feel your touch, your hugs. I need you to just be "with me. (And I need to be with you.) I need to know you believe in me and in my ability to get through my grief in my own way. (And in my own time.)

Please don't judge me now or think I'm behaving strangely. Remember, I'm grieving. I may even be in shock. I may feel afraid. I may feel deep rage. I may even feel guilty. But above all, I hurt. I'm experiencing a pain unlike any I've ever felt before.

Don't worry if you think I'm getting better, and then suddenly I seem to slip backward. Grief makes me behave this way at times. And please don't tell me you know "how I feel", or that it's time for me to get on with my life. (I am probably already saying that to myself.) What I need now is time to grieve and recover.

Most of all, thank you for being my friend. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for caring. Thank you for helping, for understanding. Thank you for praying for me. And remember, in the days or years

ahead, after your loss-when you need me as I have needed you, I will understand. And then I will come and be with you.

--Barbara Hills TCF Newsletter of North Central, MA



Am I Down for the Count?

I abhor boxing and have not a shred of comprehension about why it is called a "sport."

That abhorrence, however, did not prevent me from being a fan of the Rocky movies from long ago. So, I have a general idea of the procedures and possible outcomes of this endorsed method of brutally bashing in the head of an opponent. The terminology has seeped into my brain.

It's been four years since my son died and I wish I had the answer to this question: am I down for the count? I don't know.

I get out of bed. I function. I guess I would be considered productive. Is there joy? Not really. Is there gleeful anticipation of the future? Not at all. According to my friend Dennis Apple, this is called "slogging." So, I slog. I get through the days. I try to fulfill my obligations. I have a schedule. I have a "to-do" list and I cross off items.

And I try very, very hard to respect the advice I get from more seasoned grievers. I try to be open to the idea that this may get better (?), softer, easier. I try to have hope. I try to believe that there will come a day when I can consider a future that I actually want to imagine.

But I sometimes can't help but wonder: am I down for the count? Have the blows been too much? Can I get back to a standing position, even if wounded and bloodied? Can I stand?

--Peggi Johnson TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA

Dealing With Grief: Grief & the Family

Traditionally, the focus of grief has been on the individual. But my experiences--as a sister, daughter, and mother-- have taught me that dealing with grief is not meant to be an individual process. Along with culture and religion, families teach us how to handle death, dying and grief.

Understanding loss and grief from a family perspective enables families to engage in the work of grief together, to heal not only the individuals but the family as a whole.

Family Dealing = Family Healing. Though the emotions of grief can be a highly personal

experience, families can learn to reach out and support one another, despite their differences. Family members can turn toward one another in dealing with their grief, and families who are able to do so are more likely to find not only individual healing, but healing for the family unit as a whole.

Families can unite under the weight of grief by following some of these simple tips:
 Couples—remember to just be there for each other. It's ok to grieve a little on your own, but don't shut each other out. Make time to listen, to talk, to do things together, to just love each other. Be patient.
 Parents—remember your children. If you are overcome by your own grief for a time, enlist the help of other adults who can serve as care giver and support your children in the meantime. Work to see the good in them, to recognize their efforts, to love them. Children—are resilient but they have feelings too. Adults can help children identify and process what they feel. Validate that what they are experiencing is real. Let them know they are not alone.

The family's role is to provide the physical, loving attention we need through loss. As we read in the New Testament, "...ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy..." (John 16: 20-22). Families can not only survive, but thrive, if they allow their unique experiences of grief to knit them together and heal them as one.

--Adapted from Dr Christina Hibbert's Dealing with Grief article

<http://www.drchristinahibbert.com/dealing-with-grief/grief-and-the-family/>



I'll Have The Beef Chow Mien

So much of my progress is a result of my seeking knowledge. I gathered this

knowledge by asking other bereaved parents questions and by observing their actions. I did this because as the cliché goes, "knowledge is power."

I realized very early on the no one could take this dark ride for me. Choices had to be made and, right or wrong, I had to make them.

I could have chosen to let my life end when John died. Not necessarily in the physical sense, but more so in the spiritual sense. It would have been very easy for me to bury my soul right along with Johnny. Five years earlier I stood, just as my son

Blake was standing then, at a brother's grave and I watched a parent do just that. Why on earth would I want to inflict that much pain on my surviving son?

To deny the pain that I felt would have been impossible but it would have been equally futile, dishonest, and destructive to deny the love I feel for Blake and Kelsy.

Denial is a huge waste of time and energy. I think what has helped me most has been acceptance.

I will never accept that there is a good reason for John's death. I don't believe in the "Grand Tapestry" theory. If you do and it works for you then I say BRAVO! for you.

I accept that he is gone. That one sounds simpler than it actually was. I accept that my life will always be different. I accept that tears will always be a part of my life, just as laughter will also always be a part of my life. I accept that sometimes when I hug the kids, I'm actually hugging Johnny in my heart. I accept that it is up to me to make the most of my life.

I once wrote that it is how we let our children's lives affect us that becomes the legacy that they leave behind. I believed it when I wrote it and I still believe it today. All of these things that I've accepted and the ones I've not mentioned, didn't all happen at once.

Each progression in our grief work brings new acceptance with it. It doesn't happen instantly either. The decisions are ours to make. We are on our own, but we are not alone.

Just as I found out that getting better does not mean forgetting Johnny, I discovered a group of people who have been there and understand. People that I could turn to for advice, compassion, and support.

I went to TCF meetings and I shared my fears and feelings. It wasn't easy and it hurt, but it also helped. It supplied me with information which in turn became options. No one— and I do mean no one— has the right to tell any of us how to grieve our children's deaths.

Having said that, let me say that another bereaved parent is qualified to exchange ideas with us. It is up to us to sort out what will help and what will not help us. I personally would have a real problem with taking advice from someone 4, 5, 6, 7, or more years down the road and is still standing on "square one."

There are people who look up and are bewildered when they realize they are alone

because they have alienated everyone around them. They chose to let their child's death become their very existence. I find this terribly sad.

If you're newly bereaved the road ahead is nasty, but if you find a way to survive it you will emerge a stronger person. Make choices that feel right for you.

Remember that every step won't be forward and that every step backward isn't always a defeat.

TCF is a well of ideas and knowledge. We in TCF need to remember that we are a support group whose mission is to help people resolve their grief in a positive manner.

Don McLean wrote in the song *Crossroads*, "There's no need for turning back, all roads lead to where we stand and I believe we'll walk them all, no matter what we have planned."

Search out what works for you. Call a phone friend when you need someone to talk to or just to be listened to. I wouldn't be here today if I hadn't done that.

It's like a Chinese Menu where you can select an entree from column "A" and a side dish from column "B". Find out what your options are and make your choices.

May we all find peace and hope for tomorrow.
--by Tom Wyatt TCF, St. Louis, MO

My Husband, My Friend

The times I have started to say,
Remember when ... remember the time ...
But, you would not remember,
You were not the one there.

Your grief and mine,
So different, so far apart,
Sometimes I believe you grieve for my pain,
Rather than his death.
Your guilt of not loving him,
Nor he you, and the grief that caused me
Even when he lived.

You hold me, you listen,
Even when sometimes you have heard enough,
You cry with me and for me,
You help me grieve,
My husband, my friend-
His stepparent.

--Becky Logsdon TCF, Cheyenne, WY

I Remember

Dear one,
I greet you every morning
As I arise and look at your picture
. . . and remember.
I see you every day
As I look at the field we walked
. . . and remember.
I hold you every year
In my heart on your birthday
. . . and remember.
I grieve for you always
As the years come and go
. . . and remember.
I hope to be with you again
As I pass into eternity
. . . and rejoice.

--Jean Fisk TCF, Contra Costa County, CA
In Memory of my son, Barry



The Irritability of Grief

As much as I have read about grief, I don't think I've read anything about how irritable it makes me. I'm guessing I'm not alone. I am short tempered, easily annoyed, and just generally uncomfortable in my own skin. There seem to be many contributing factors. First, even after four and a half years, I often do not sleep well. I go to bed too early, probably, because often I'm just "done" with the day and want it to be over. Then, I wake up in the middle of the night and can't go back to sleep because I ruminate over and over about Jordan's death, all the circumstances surrounding it, all the difficulties since. I wish my mind had an "off" switch. I could sure use one.

Next, my chest still hurts. Not as much of the time as it used to, but still often enough to bother me. There is an elephant who has planted its foot upon my chest.

Third, it takes a lot of energy to put on the mask I wear so that I can maneuver about in the world. The mask that smiles at the good news of others, the time they have with their intact families, the joys and challenges that come with an ordinary life. The kind of life I used to have.

There are fifty-five conditions listed on Wikipedia that can cause irritability. Grief isn't one of them.

Insomnia and sleep deprivation are. I think grief should be there too.

I find exercise makes it better as does a dose of sunshine. Having a dog helps, especially a dog who "has issues." Also, I'm not irritable when I am engaged in trying to be helpful to someone else. So I try to do more of that.

But I am still irritable. Grief just makes me irritable.

-- Peggy Johnson TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA

Grieving And Driving

We hear a great deal these days about "drinking and driving." My lovely daughter, Jane, was killed by a drunk driver three years and four months ago, so that makes it much, much too late for my family. I hope the big push to keep drunks off the streets and highways, will perhaps prevent others from having to go through this awful pain and agony that we are suffering through.

"Grieving and driving" is, however, another problem which most people are totally unfamiliar with. At times I feel as though my head is detached from my body, that my mind has taken a leave of absence and I do not think straight at all. Very often, I can leave all other matters behind and the tears I have fought back all day start to flow.

In my conversations with other bereaved parents, I have found that this is a common problem. Many times other family members have been involved in accidents. Within six months of Jane's death, my niece, two of my sisters, and my son were involved in accidents. One of these was very tragic wherein another person died.

There is a great need to be aware of what can happen and what we can do about it. After having had a number of very shaky things happen while "Grieving and Driving", I decided to tell you about them in the hopes that we can all become more aware of our situation.

-- Peggy Miller TCF Seattle

Editor's Note: Over the years I have talked to many bereaved parents who have had either close calls or actual accidents while driving during their first year of grief when we seem to be on auto-pilot. We all need to focus extra hard while driving during this difficult time. LV



"Depression and Suicide"

I often struggle to think about what I am going to write each quarter and this one is no different. But I have decided that this month I am going to concentrate on those individuals who for whatever reason leave this world by their own hand. As you all know through my writing that both my boys died by suicide and it has been a long journey through the dark days and the pain. However, I have come out the other end with a greater understanding of what it must have been like for them to have gotten to that place in time and how the choice they made ended their lives.

TCF has had many calls recently from very distressed parents who have had a child die this way, so this is why I want to speak to you all this quarter about suicide as it is relevant. In the initial stages for many it is difficult to discuss this as they see it as a stigma and are afraid their child will be looked upon in a detrimental way. Suicide is not a palatable word is it? But it is what it is and although many think it is not what anyone should do, it does happen and it happened to many TCF families.

Having a mental illness is not for the faint hearted and must be a very difficult illness to deal with. Depression and suicide work hand in hand but depression can be helped. So as parents dealing with the death of a loved one due to this, it is scary and undeniably difficult to come to terms with. However, please do not mistake depression as a bad thing as it is real just as real as someone having cancer, heart disease, diabetes or a broken leg, but depression and harmful thoughts cannot be seen and if you cannot touch it, see it or recognize it, how can it be treated? Many in society still look down on mental health. Yes I would rather my children were with me but they are not and what I am trying to convey is that suicide (although very traumatic for those dealing with its affects) is a plea for help and a way of releasing the persons pain. Without more information those suffering believe it is the only way to be rid of this emotional pain.

My memories of losing my first child in those initial weeks, months and even years are imprinted on my mind never to be forgotten, as the pain stayed with me for such a long time. I found that I could not sit still and wanted desperately to find out why, so I bought book after book looking for answers not only to why this had happened but where was the spirit of that beautiful soul? It surely was not gone completely. I found solace in the literature and it

took me on a path of self discovery which changed my life.

I am blessed that I found The Compassionate Friends, as it helped me to heal from the very deep emotional pain and has supported me to find a place where I am at peace with the death of both my children. I realized that I could not change what had happened even though I had done so much to help both my boys when they were alive. Hopefully from what I had learned and gone through I could be of some help to my fellow bereaved and so it all began, and here I am many years later working as a volunteer in the organization. I will be eternally grateful for the support I was given and I hope I have been able to support those who came after me in some way.

Grief is a very personal journey and so unique in so many ways but in other ways the same. This may sound contradictory, but when as bereaved parents we gather together at our peer support group meetings, we hear and understand many things that others discuss and this brings us a sense of belonging. For many they do not need that belonging but for others the sense of sharing is important and strong, and this is when your healing begins.

Through sharing with others no matter the cause of your child's death, it supports you in the knowledge that you are understood and although the rest of the community thinks that there is a time limit on your healing you are accepted by your fellow bereaved and encouraged to speak your child's name whenever you need to. This creates a safe place to be, with a feeling of complete understanding. All the people I have shared with in TCF are still part of my life even although I do not see many of them anymore. They are there with a warm hug, a word of hope, a way to manage my grief or have sat with me and listened. Those people never leave you as they are the ones who helped you on your journey and those are the ones who encouraged and nurtured you. When I am down, and let me assure you I do get down sometimes, I remember something one of those people said to me and it brings me joy as I realize I did hear them and they are still by my side.

I would encourage those of you who have been afraid to take that initial step towards TCF to put your foot forward, it will be a challenge and no doubt difficult but it will have results which will stand you in good stead and help with the healing process. You may be with TCF for a short time or a long time but

you will find friendship and support which will be with you forever.

Please be kind to yourselves, give yourself a pat on the back for the courage you all have, understand that others have no idea what any of you are going through, and always remember the love you all have for your precious child will keep you strong.

Love and Blessings, Allison

--Alison Flanagan (Mother of Roddy and Aidan) from Reflections the newsletter of TCF Western Australia



Something I Couldn't Tell You

Something I couldn't tell you about happened at least a decade ago. It was October—a brilliant day of sunshine and quick changes. Clouds raced across the sky, and the sun went blank, then reappeared—such light as one sees when leaves have quickly left the trees and all is bare. I could tell you about the garden—just how barren it lay except for the cherry tomatoes, which happened to cling to the dry vines whose crinkled leaves smelled of declining life that cool October day when a child, trailing a scrap of blanket went outside to eat tomatoes.

The changes made that day are with us still: they change us even now. I couldn't tell you how bare that day has made me. Such a blankness should come to all who think they know what happens next, and next, and after October comes November.

Unplanned events can leave us detached, cut off, untried, like leaves blown here and there. I won't tell of changes. I'll only say what happened in October when stopping work, a cold I couldn't bear came over me. Running out, I happened to see my face reflected. It was blank, pale, afraid, soon to gain a new blankness. I ran to the pond, dyed dark with leaves, dyed red with the shirt of him who happened to be floating there. If only I could change that day, the hour, the harvest I would, dripping wet and cold from the water, that old October. I was a mother for three years and four days in October. On the fifth day, I rested blankly from mothering. I cannot bear to tell you any more.

New leaves have greened and grown. New changes, children since then, have happened. Since that October, countless other leaves have blanketed the pond, changed it from October's reds and browns. I've barely noticed.

--Susan Pitner TCF Cincinnati, Ohio

Seasoned Grievers...

Finding Spring Again



It is the end of February, which means we are nearing the end of what has often been a brutal winter. While gazing at the mountains of snow piled high in my front yard and the foot long icicles hanging from my roof, it is hard to imagine that spring will ever come. We have endured bitter cold winds that have chilled us to the bone and treacherous roads that we have cautiously traveled. The days have been long and dark and often free of sunlight. No matter how long you have been a native of the Upper Midwest, I know we all will be glad when it comes to an end.

However, as I described these thoughts about winter, I felt as if I was describing the days of my early grief. At that point, I did not believe that a day would ever come when I would thaw from the chill that had overtaken my body and mind. The bleakness of my existence during those early months after Nina died is almost frightening to remember; it is so difficult to even conceive of that much pain. I was anesthetized from some of its cruelty by the protective blanket of numbness that blessedly shielded me from the gale force of such overpowering sorrow. How could I ever feel spring in my heart again?

Spring had always been my favorite season. The air had a certain freshness to it that I would drink in. Simply put, it always made me feel happy and light of heart. Spring was our reward for surviving the freezing winter months that preceded it. It brought a smile to my face and a bounce to my step. However, it was the spring of the year where my heart was irretrievably broken. It was during this exquisite season of warm, lilac scented breezes and sun-kissed mornings where my sweet daughter Nina's life would end.

I wondered if my thoughts about spring would ever be the same. Rather than anticipate with gladness the coming of spring, I dreaded it with the knowledge that it contained the anniversary of her death. The smell of the air and the look to the sky that I once found exhilarating now brought me back to my darkest day. I know that anyone, who has lost a loved one to death, no matter the season, understands.

Will spring come again to your life? In the almost six years since Nina died, has it come to mine? Looking back at my description of the winter of "my

early grief", I know that I have come a long way from that time of desolation. I have found, especially after the first two years, that with each subsequent spring, I have rediscovered some of the pleasure I used to feel. I have learned that just because I have found things to feel joyful about again; it doesn't mean I am dishonoring my daughter's memory. I now take her along with me in my mind and my heart. I try to retrieve memories of the dandelion bouquets she so carefully gathered and presented to me, the rides to the park in the Radio Flyer, our talks while sunning on the deck, and, of course, shopping for spring clothes! Her favorite pastime!

I will always feel tenseness, apprehension and sadness as May 11th draws near, but I no longer hold it against spring.

It is a slow, difficult journey, this grief pathway we travel. It is as treacherous as the roads we maneuvered following the winter storms, never knowing when we will hit an icy patch on the road and be thrown into a tailspin. Yet, we must travel it if we are to find any measure of peace and healing. Please be patient with yourself as you are working hard to survive this winter in your heart. Trust that spring, though a much different one than the one we knew before our beloved child died, will come again.

With gentle thoughts, Cathy
--Cathy L. Seehuetter TCF St. Paul, MN
In Memory of my daughter, Nina

Newly Bereaved...

Listen

When I ask you to listen to me
And you start giving me advice,
You have not done what I asked.
When I ask you to listen to me
And you begin to tell me how I should feel
You are trampling on my feelings.
When I ask you to listen to me
And you feel you have to do something to solve my
problems,
You have failed me, strange as that may seem.
Listen! All I ask is that you listen;
Not talk, nor do – just hear me.
And I can do for myself – I'm not helpless
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.
When you do something for me, that I can
and need to do for myself,

You contribute to my fear and weakness.
 But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel
 what I feel,
 No matter how irrational
 Then I quit trying to convince you
 And can get about the business of understanding
 What's behind this irrational feeling.
 When that's clear,
 The answers are obvious and I don't need advice.
 Irrational feelings make sense when we
 Understand what's behind them.
 Perhaps that's why prayer works sometimes for
 some people;
 Because God is mute, and doesn't give advice to try
 to 'fix' things,
 He/She just listens, and lets you work it out for
 yourself.
 So please listen, and just hear me, and if you want
 to talk,
 Wait a minute for your turn,
 And I'll listen to you.

Source: <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/mhcarer/docs/articlelisten/pdf> (October 2009 Newsletter Family Bereavement Support Services Royal Children's Hospital)

Friends And Family...



After I've Lost My Child Please!

A guide for those wishing to help the newly bereaved.

Don't ignore me, because you are uncomfortable with the subject of death. It makes me wonder if what happened means nothing to you.

Acknowledge my pain, and, please, don't expect me to be "over this" in a month or maybe even a year or two. Losing a child is one of the most difficult of all life's experiences, and the depth of my grief will shock even me as it returns in waves, over and over again, long after everyone else may have forgotten.

Be aware, that holidays and the time around the anniversaries of my child's birth and death may be particularly difficult and painful for me to cope with.

If you haven't been able to call for a long time, tell me that you are sorry, and that you haven't known what to say, but don't say you've been too busy. This has been a momentous event in my life, and it hurts to hear that it has been so low on your priority lists that you couldn't even spare me a five or ten minute call.

If you invite me for a meal (and please do), in the midst of my grief expect me to talk about my loss. It's all I'm thinking about anyway, and I need to talk about it. Small talk neither interests nor helps me.

Don't change the subject, if I should start crying. Tears, and talking about my child's death are the healthiest ways for me to release this intense emotion.

Telling me that So-and-So's situation must have been harder to bear won't make mine easier. It only makes me feel that you don't understand, or can't acknowledge, the extent of my pain.

Don't expect that because my child "is in the presence of the Lord" that is all that should matter, that I should not be hurting. I may believe that and be thankful for it, but my arms ache to hold my child here. I miss the physical contact so much.

Telling me that I must be a special person for God to send me such a heavy burden, and that "Gods will is best", implies that God did this purposely. I may believe that His will is best too, but I don't believe that everything that happens (including my child's death or anyone being killed by a drunken driver for instance) is God's will.

Don't remind me that I'm so lucky to have the other children. I am, and I know it, but my pain is excruciating for this child, and having others doesn't seem to take that pain away.

No matter how bad I look, please don't say, "You look terrible." I feel like a total failure right now, so I don't need to be told that I look awful.

Remember, my child to me is a very special and unique person, who can never be replaced.

Don't say, "I know how you feel, I lost my mother." It is not the same. We all expect our parents to die one day, after they've had a full life, but I am grieving intensely for all the might-have-beens of my child's short life.

When you ask my husband how I am doing, please don't forget to ask him how he is feeling too. He has also lost a child, and if you ignore his hurt it says to him that his pain shouldn't exist, or that it doesn't matter.

Don't ignore any surviving children. Remember they are hurting very deeply but may not be able to express their true feelings.

If I snap at you for saying any of these things please forgive me and try to understand that it comes from my intense pain.

Hug me, tell me you care, and that you are sorry this happened, even if you don't understand the depth of my pain.

Be available to me, often if you can, and let me talk and cry without judging me. Saying, "Don't cry," or, "Don't be angry," is like saying, "Don't be thirsty." My feelings are part of a normal grief response, and I will work through them more quickly and easily if you are not judgmental.

Just love me, and I will always remember you as a true friend.

--Elsie Sieben

Helpful Hint...



Points to Ponder

"I don't think I'm getting any better." I have heard those words from virtually every bereaved parent I have ever talked to. Bereaved parents don't see their own grief improve because they are with it 24 hours per day. Answer the following questions to see if you are getting better:

1. Have I gotten through one hour with out crying?
2. Have I gotten through the morning without screaming?
3. Have I slept at least two hours without waking?
4. Have I caught myself smiling instead of crying when I think of my child?

We have to remember to take our grief one step at a time. If you answered "yes" to at least one question you are making progress - you have just taken another step.

--Pam Duke TCF. San Antonio, TX

Welcome...



When a drunk driver killed my daughter, Allison, at age 19, it was a monumental effort to just breathe much less think my mind and body could survive. I was so dysfunctional that I lived every day in just my pajamas. Going to my first support group meeting of The Compassionate Friends, I pulled a pair of jeans and sweatshirt over my pajamas.

I listened as each parent spoke of their child and their grief I heard those whose child died months ago and those whose child died years ago. These were living, breathing people in the same room with me and not just names and stories in a newspaper or book.

It's 14 years later and, on occasion, I'll wear a pair of pajamas under my clothes when I go to a meeting just to remind myself of where I was and how far I've come in this journey that I share to help

others.

--Barbara Reboratti, Allison's mom
TCF Quakertown Chapter Pennsylvania



Book Review...

Her Light Still Shines A Beloved Daughter's Story and Her Mother's Grief Journey by Coralease Cox Ruff, PhD, RN. This written memorial serves as a model for other bereaved parents and as a compass that identifies landmarks and coping strategies along a mother's grief. Learn to keep your child's memory alive on your journey towards healing and feel the warmth of your child's shining light forever.

Code: HLSO Price: \$19.95 www.centering.org

I Wonder

I gaze out of the kitchen window to the always-empty playground and I wonder.... Does it ask where did the beautiful girl go who spent hours playing on me?

When the wind blows and the swings move I wonder.... Do the swings miss holding you and hearing your laughs?

I look at the empty still unmade bed and I wonder.... Does the bed miss you and your curly hair against the Winnie the Pooh pillowcase?

I see the stuffed animals on the bed and I wonder.... Are they lonely and do they miss your arms around them and your all night hug?

I sit across from your chair in the living room and I wonder.... Does it hope that the footsteps it hears belong to 12-year-old girl who snuggled in it?

I touch the things in your playroom where the dust has gathered and I wonder.... Do they hope it's the fingers of the aspiring singer and piano player, missing your touch?

I hear the sounds of the waterfall spilling into the pond and I wonder.... Do the fish see one face and ask where's the pretty one?

I see myself in the mirror and I wonder.... Does anyone still miss you the way I do?

-- Garrett Tollenger, Daddy of Ashley Greater Baltimore TCF (Note: I had forgotten that I had written this. Looking back, I remember these moments. So many things about my journey have changed since then. The main thing is that my heart has healed allowing me to find a new direction. But one thing hasn't... I still miss Ashley and I know I always will.)

He Only Took My Hand

Last night while I was trying to sleep,
 My son's voice I did hear
 I opened my eyes and looked around
 but he did not appear.
 He said "mom you've go to listen,
 You've go to understand
 God didn't take me from you, Mom
 He only took my hand.
 When I called out in pain that night,
 The instant that I died,
 He reached down and took my hand,
 And pulled me to his side.
 He pulled me up and saved me
 From the misery and pain
 My body was hurt so badly inside,
 I could never be the same.
 My search is really over now,
 I've found happiness within,
 All the answers to my empty dreams
 And all that might have been.
 I love you and miss you so,
 And I'll always be nearby.
 My body's gone forever,
 But my spirit will never die!
 And so, you must go on now,
 Live one day at a time.
 Just understand –
 God did not take me from you,
 He only took my hand.
 I see our family every day.
 I play, laugh and sing a lot.
 I hear you when you pray.
 Please don't be mad at God you see...
 He loves me, too.
 Even though your not with me,
 I'm really still with you...
 --Author unknown



Written sometime in 2010....

I feel a tiredness.
 It's from my endless search.
 Every day is a continuation...
 ...of something – I just don't know what.
 The loss of a part of your heart – your soul...
 ...You lose your mind.

Sometimes, I think I'm kinda crazy.
 My thoughts are so scattered.
 I can focus when I have to – but,
 The rest of the time I jump from thought to thought

What's next? – What feels a little better?
 What feels worse? – What to avoid?
 Where to go? – What to do? – How to care?

It's like a conscious state of sleep.
 Your soul goes to sleep.
 It feels like it died.
 I wonder when it'll wake up.
 It's a scary world without a caring soul to guide you.

I guess I'm numb....
maybe that's safer than feeling.
 It hurts too intensely...
through your heart, your bones, your flesh.
 Pain that can't be imagined...
 ...and on the other side....
well...I don't know.
 I'll let you know when I get there.

Fast forward to 2016...The raw pain of Megan's death has lifted. I no longer ache in my whole being, though I still miss my sweet girl, Megz. It has been a difficult journey, with many twists and turns. I am healing. It is on-going. Life has many blessings to offer....

--Joanne Eisenstadt Mom of Megan Estey

"Listening can turn grief into growth. We do not take grief away from people; we simply help them walk through it – by talking it out. They need to talk to be a good listener. A good listener is a walking, touching personal intensive care unit."
 --Comforting Those Who Grieve: A Guide for Helping Others by Doug Manning, from a chapter entitled "Listen"

Someday

Someday, it won't hurt so bad and I'll be able to smile again.
 Someday, the tears won't flow quite as freely whenever I think of what might have been.
 Someday, the answers to "why" and "what if" won't be quite as important.
 Someday, I'll be able to use what your death has taught me to help others with their grief.
 Someday, I'll be healed enough to celebrate your life as much as I now dwell on your death.
 And someday, maybe tomorrow, I'll learn to accept the things I cannot change. . .
 But for today . . . I think I'll just be sad.
 --Steven L Channing, TCF Winnipeg, MB



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

Frank Christopher Castania
Born: 8/94 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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joel Draper
Born: 1/84 Died: 5/2004
Mother: Tracy Solis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kirk Nicholas 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quintana Dantas De Oliveria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jacqueline Marie Taylor
Born: 1/83 Died: 7/11
Mother Jennifer Flynn

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* 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...



How Does It Feel? What's It Like?

It's like:

A hole with no bottom

A hill with no top

A road with no bend

A night with no end

It's as if it's not happened

It's as if it's not true

It's as if it's a dream

Yet a numbness seeps through

There's a feeling of emptiness

A gap to be filled

There's a feeling of loneliness

That cannot be stilled

They say times a healer

How long will it take?

I can't see it ending

It's a permanent ache

Life has no meaning

Yet it has to go on

I find it so hard

There's a feeling of emptiness

There's a feeling of loneliness

To feel so alone

No one will ever know

The depths of my sorrow

I just have to trust

There'll be a better tomorrow

May God give me strength

To keep on going

To get through this pain to

Feel real again

I'll never get over it

Of that I am sure

But I'll give time a chance

And hope for a cure.

Time's without end

Love is too

I'll never forget you

I'll always miss you

--Stella Kelly (after the death of her brother)

Submitted by Pat King TCF Seattle WA

Ashley

When I think of Ashley, I think of all the good times. And some of the stupid little fights that we had. Maybe those fights used to feel dumb but now I miss them. I love and will always hang on to the good times.

My biggest fear is that I will forget her. If I don't think I'm going to remember, I dig out old memories. I think of her death sometimes as we're sledding down a hill, which is our life, and the sled is getting faster to the end of her life, or the bottom of the hill, but my sled isn't going as fast as hers. I know she can see me, but I can't see her. I hear her calling my name, but no words are coming out of my mouth to call her. This is how I sometimes feel.

--Hannah Childs, NE Baltimore TCF newsletter

For Grandparents...



Living in a Fantasy

I took my granddaughter shopping today. It was a special outing for just the two of us. We went to the toy section of a large department store. We were in luck, there was no one there--no other shoppers, and the sales lady had stepped out.

I lifted my 15-month-old darling out of her stroller and set it aside. Then I began to slowly walk her through the aisles and show her toys. After a while I let go of her hand and said, "You may look, my sweet; go find a special toy for Grandma to buy for you." She stood for a minute and then began to pick up the toys that attracted her. I just followed and watched. She picked up things here and there, a doll was hugged, a toy truck was pushed across the floor. Around the displays she went in silent wonder, lifting and looking and dropping--mainly on the floor. She shook a box, blowing on a whistle made her laugh, and she tried to work a top until a colorful pull toy was noticed. She dashed over, gave it a few turns around the store, and then spied the shelves

above. She stood and thought a few seconds, then shoved some things over and climbed up on the lower shelf.

I watched with pride at her ingenuity and daring as she snared the treasures from the higher shelf and tried them out. A tall wire basket of brightly colored balls caught her eye and she went over, stood on tiptoe but could not reach the balls inside. Without a backward look to me for help, she simply caught hold of the top and turned the basket over, spilling its rainbow of colors across the floor. She picked up a red one and tossed it. What fun we are having, both in wonderlands of our own.

Too soon the saleslady returned, only to stop just inside the door and laugh at the shambles we'd made of her formerly neat displays. What a sight we must have been trundling around knee deep in toys. As the nice lady and I picked up and sorted out the mess, Grandma's little angel dragged a teddy bear around by one ear. We purchased Ted the Bear and some toys whose boxes were too badly mangled, for toddlers sometimes sit down quick.

With our bags secured to the back of M'Lady's carriage, filled with satisfaction, we strolled away from my fantasy— a fantasy much like those of other people like me. People whose children die too soon. People whose grandchildren won't be born. People who know what they are missing. People who are lonely. My granddaughter is only a fantasy. She's the dark-haired, button-eyed daughter my son won't have. She's one of the memories I'll have to miss. And if this makes you cry, it does me too.

--Faye Harden, TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

From Our Members...



Poem from the Heart

Let no man say they are gone,
although physically absent,
they remain with us forever.

They live on in us

and are as much a part of our
lives as any living child.

They became a part of us
the moment we knew a child was to be born.

And every day thereafter,
they have been an
influence on our lives.

Their suffering has been our suffering,
and their joys have been our joys.

The smiles they wore are still undimmed,
and their goodness bright as gold,
not dulled by time or distance
but forever filling our hearts and minds.

We are so much richer
for having been blessed with their lives
for whatever time we had together.

We are strengthened
through their having endured the hardships
accompanying their illness with such valor.

They are with their Lord now
and yet are not gone from us.

Their lives are our lives,
and while we live

they shall continue to live,
safe and secure within our hearts.

Urging us on when we falter,
and laughing with us

when the world shines round about.

No, they are not gone.

They live within.

--Alice Longwell, TCF Greenville, SC

Submitted by Linda Curtis

Do you have a favorite poem, saying, picture, etc.? Sharing it does two things. First, it helps you in your journey toward resolving your grief. And second, by sharing, it helps others realize they are not alone. Please send any favorite to me, so we can include it in our newsletter. 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.

ZOOM... We will be holding our next Zoom meeting on Thursday, March 4th @ 7:00 p.m. We will be having virtual meetings until we can meet in person. We send out emails to our members with invitation information. If you didn't get it, please message me and I will add you to the list. You can click on the link in the e-mail to join the meeting. Or contact the Zoom hosts, Leo & Connie for help at (310) 536-9305 or ConnieStar58@gmail.com, or Leo at Liccica79@gmail.com. We hope to see you.

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: March 1st for April 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, call Ken at (310) 544-6690. You can mail him a photo for each button you would like (color photo copies work great) 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.)



Our Website... Leo Licciardone 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.**

- Lori Galloway(chapter leader).....(760) 521-0096
- Linda Zelik (former leader).....(310) 370-1645
- Mary Sankus.....(310) 648-4878
- Kitty Edler.....(310) 541-8221
- Richard Leach (grandchild).....(310) 833-5213
- Joey Vines (sibling).....(424)488-9695
- Nancy Garcia (Spanish speaking)....(310) 406-5163

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

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Staples for their help in printing our newsletters each

month and to The Neighborhood Church for the use of their facilities for our meetings.

CHAPTER OFFICERS:

CHAPTER LEADER: Lori Galloway

CHAPTER ZOOM HOSTS: Connie & Leo Liccaridone

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

National Office Information:

Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter: TCF National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters. We encourage everyone use the valuable information it holds to help you in your grief. To receive TCF's e-newsletter, sign up for it online by visiting TCF national website at <http://compassionatefriends.org> and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.

The National Office of TCF has an ongoing support group for parents and siblings online. For a complete schedule and to register for Online Support, visit <http://compassionatefriends.org> and follow the directions to register. There is also a closed group chat room for specific topics that you need to register for.

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. **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--

6:45 PM PST: First-Time Chatter Orientation

7 AM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings (open depending on monitor availability)

7 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

TUESDAY--

5:45 PM PST: First-Time Chatter Orientation

5 PM PST: Loss to Substance Related Causes

6 PM PST: Bereaved Less than Two Years

6 PM PST: Bereaved More than Two Years

WEDNESDAY--

5:45 PM PST: First-Time Chatter Orientation

7 AM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

THURSDAY--

5:45 PM PST: First-Time Chatter Orientation

5 PM PST: No Surviving Children

6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

FRIDAY--

7 AM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

(open depending on moderator availability)

5 PM PST: Loss to Substance Related Causes

5 PM PST: Pregnancy/Infant Loss

6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

SATURDAY--

6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

SUNDAY--

5 PM PST: Suicide Loss

6 PM PST: Parents/Grandparents/Siblings



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 P.O. Box 11171 Torrance CA 90510

No donations were received this month.
Please consider giving a donation in your loved one's name.

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 _____ From _____
Tribute _____

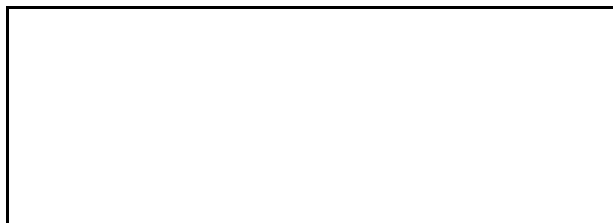
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue.

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March 2021

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

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

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.

We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.

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

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

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

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

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love

to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.

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