



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

August 2021 ISSUE

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☺ Regular Meetings Are Back! ☺

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

TCF will resume in person meetings at The Neighborhood Church on **Wednesday, Aug. 4th** at 7:00 PM. If you are more comfortable meeting virtually, Leo will stream from the church and you can participate on Zoom. **(Please note the new night.)**

LOCATION: **The Neighborhood Church**
415 Paseo Del Mar, Palos Verdes Estates CA 90274
(South of Torrance Beach)

DIRECTIONS: Pacific Coast Hwy. to Palos Verdes Blvd. → Palos Verdes Blvd. becomes Palos Verdes Drive West. Veer Right. → Go to Via Corta (stop sign just past Malaga Cove Plaza). Turn right. → Go down hill to Arroyo (stop sign). Turn right. → Continue down hill to end of street. → Turn left on Paseo Del Mar. → Meetings are held at the west end of the church.

--Please remember to park in the church parking lot and not on the street.--

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.

"Feelings Of Guilt?" is the topic for the Aug. 4th meeting.
See page 15 to request the **NEW LINK** for Zoom meetings.

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

For a free Picture Button of your child, call Kristy at (310) 938-2409.

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

Chapter Co-Leaders:
**We need a Co-leader
Could that be you?**
Lori Galloway (760) 521-0096
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Welcome Back! We are pleased to announce that regular in person meetings will resume on **Wednesday August 4th at 7:00 PM.** (Please note: We are going back to

Wednesday nights for all future meetings.)

As we gather for the in-person meetings, The Neighborhood Church asks that we:

- Observe masking recommendation from the LA County Health Department that is in place at the time of the meeting. This has been and can be more strict than what the CDC recommends. For example, the Health Department now strongly recommends masks indoors for all people regardless of vaccination status. Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated people would need to wear masks indoors at all times.

- Observe social distancing as much as possible. Reduce the amount of person-to-person contact where possible. We are aware that this may be difficult given the nature of our group, but if there is any opportunity to make the meeting safer, that would be appreciated

- Use provided sanitizing wipes/spray to wipe down hard surfaces in the Parlor when we are finished.

- Follow posted or verbal instructions regarding entry/exit pathways.

We have assured the church that TCF will comply with their request to follow Covid-19 safety protocols but realize there are those who are not yet comfortable in a group setting. As a result, the Wednesday meeting will also be streamed via Zoom if technically feasible. E-mail Leo at liccica79@gmail.com for the new link. The benefit of meeting with other bereaved parents and discussing the many conflicting emotions that occur after the death of a child is priceless. We hope you will attend either online or in person and see how beneficial TCF can be.

This month we will start the meeting with “Feelings of Guilt?” No matter how our child died, guilt is a universal feeling most bereaved family members feel. Real or imagined, we all would like to be able to change things, and with the finality of death, we can’t change the outcome... so we need to put guilt in it’s place.

Not Guilt, Regret

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children from harm. So, when anything

happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn’t we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, either of anger or left unspoken, haunt us.

Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty of that. If we never intended harm to ever come to our child, the correct name for our emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there, but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate. If that name doesn’t feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt—we feel regret.

–Kitty Sanders, Nashville, TN, Survivors of Suicide Group

Falsely Placed Guilt

Aileen was convinced Isaac’s death was her fault. She thought she must have done something absolutely horrible to have caused him to die. Cause and effect when all we have is the affect of death. She could not deal with the reality that it just happened. And no one was responsible. No one to blame. Can’t convict a bacteria which is what did kill him. So she blamed herself.

“I’m his mother. I should have protected him. I should have been able to save him. Mothers take care of their children. Not let them die.” Or “I’m to blame. I must have done something so terrible that my son died. I’m to blame. I should have gone to the City. I could have saved him. Taken him to the hospital and saved him. I failed him. It is my fault. My fault.” She would keep over and over.

She could not accept the reality that it was meningitis that killed him. Not her. That even though she was his mother and mothers are powerful, they are weak too. Feeble in the face of a real killer. She could not accept that his death could be so arbitrary. So pointless.

Mothers give birth. Not bury their children. Mothers nurture, buy clothes, enjoy their children. Not pick out coffins. They wrap their children in cocoons of safety, not shrouds. They make sense out of life. Not deal with the senselessness of death.

Aileen could not stop blaming herself for what she did not do. She could not protect her son. Not fight off meningitis. Not keep him alive. So

she blamed herself for what she saw as a failure. She did not take comfort in the reality that she did what she could. When Isaac called her at 4:16 in the afternoon, she calmed him down. Made him feel hopeful. Made him believe his mother's appropriate belief that he had the flu. She made his last minutes calm and secure in her love. Her warmth. Her adoration of her son. He felt her through the phone and felt better. To the point that he ordered some food to be delivered. She was his mother and gave him everything she could.

She was and is a superb mother. She wrapped him in her affection. Gave him security. She could not keep him alive but she gave him a last vision of hope and love. She was not a villain here. She was a hero who now because she could not save the world from the unseeable, unfightable foe of death blamed herself.

To this day she still holds herself accountable for not being able to save him. Like mothers everywhere, they feel they are real super heroes in their children's' lives. But even Superwoman cannot win over meningitis or one of the so many causes of our children's deaths. She is not to blame. They are not to blame but we will never convince them of that. She was and is after all, his mother.

--Neal Raisman, TCF Central Ohio Chapter
Columbus, OH

Clouds

On a Sunday in May she arrived at Church early enough to read the program. The sermon's title was "The Cloud Appreciation Society."

An intake of breath and she was transported to the day when her son, now dead, was caught up in clouds.

The memory began with frantic knocking.
—Brian is hurt. He ran into a car, his friend shouted.
—Where is he?

—Around the corner. His face is all bloody.

She hurtled out the front door. Rounding the corner, she saw his bike against a car off to the side of the road. Her ten year old son was crumpled on the street, blood streaming from his head and face. She cradled him in her arms.

A man stood at the curb. —What happened?
Why did you hit him? she shouted.

—He crashed into a parked car. I came along just

as it happened.

An emergency vehicle careened around the corner. The medics were efficient. They stanchied the blood flowing from a scalp wound, cleansed his face and applied a bandage to the oozing gash on his forehead. A cold pack placed on his lip completed their ministrations. No bones were broken. No irreparable damage was done. The reason for this collision? Brian said simply, —I was looking at the clouds.

Throughout his remaining 25 years that capacity to be so enthralled, so caught up, so intense in whatever he was doing or thinking, never left him. Some of his passions, of course, were fleeting — like playing football on the 7th grade team. Computers and electronic games on the other hand, ah, these were passions. At age 12, the youngest he was able to, he got a paper route to earn enough to buy a computer on which to play electronic games. At 15 ½ years old, the youngest he could, he got a job at Dairy Queen. He had a car to buy and, always, more games.

His dream was to fly. Big Bend Community College in Moses Lake, Washington, was the answer. There he earned his AA degree in aeronautics and small plane pilots' license. He loved to talk about the clouds he so frequently flew in. They fascinated him both scientifically and from a meteorological point of view. Clouds also fed into his passions for science fiction and for fantasy.

He learned to be scrupulously exact in preparations for a flight. Other aspects of his life had gaps and tears. Sadly, he couldn't continue flying after graduation. Prohibitive costs. Creatively, as was his nature, he found different ways to fly. In winter, he flung himself down the mountain on his snow board. In warm weather, he watched his golf ball fly 300 yards through the air. To the end, he had many unrealized soaring thoughts, plans and adventures.

At age 35, he appeared to his mother a well-grown man whose life was graced with a fiance he loved and friends he cared for. She thought her worries about his lack of focus, his impulsivity, his rashness were over. Without warning he killed himself November 1, 2008.

The opening hymn, "For the Beauty of the Earth, abruptly brought her back to the present. It had been the opening hymn of his memorial service. Tears cascaded from her eyes. When would it not hurt? When would she not feel the stabbing pain?

In the two and a half years since his death, she had wept, railed, shouted and been silent in her



grief. Nothing took the pain away. What helped was to talk about him. She did that – a lot with her husband who so loved him; a little with her daughter who had an ambivalent relationship with him; frequently with trusted friends who knew him as a child; a bit with friends who did not know him.

She did not feel guilty about his death. The guilt started when she went for a day, then two, without thinking about him. How could she forget? Those who knew about such things reminded her that she could not forget. After a time of insanity, she believed them.

The hymn finished. She dried her eyes, listened to the sermon about clouds and remembered.

--Gean Dindia, TCF, Seattle-King County Chapter, WA In loving memory of my son, Brian

Welcome...The Classroom for Learning to Live Again

Many of us are very aware of classrooms at this time of the year as the new school year begins for our children and young people of all ages. For some, the experience is not one they look forward to with pleasure, and it means the end of the carefree, unscheduled days of the summer. There was no need in their lives for continuous disciplined thinking and living. There were happy vacations, lots of swimming in a pool, picnics, and lots of baseball playing – all requiring lots of running and yelling, and of course the quiet lazy times when they could read about their special interests, work on hobbies, or just do nothing.

Now they are required to settle down into a set schedule and routine of doing what they may not especially enjoy at school, in the classroom and at home. They must adjust to the confinement of sitting behind a desk for a specific time and to the need to concentrate for long periods of time on courses that are required for their education, but in which they have no special interest and which they may not even be able to comprehend. So, they must discipline their thinking, or they will be disciplined with extra work, low or failing grades, seemingly unfair, demanding teachers, and with questioning parents.

We can liken this setting somewhat, but in a much more intense way, to bereaved parents as they attempt to pick up the pieces of their lives after their child has died, and attempt to make some sense out

of it all. Our happy carefree summer was the time before we experienced this most crushing loss, no matter how large or numerous our problems may have been in reality. Compared to this loss, all other problems simply fade away as if they never existed. And now, at least for a time, we are faced with the belief that there can never be any more summers. We must learn to climb out of this abyss. For those who have accomplished this, they report that this education is the most difficult work anyone will ever do.

We can imagine that we are in a classroom. Here, we are encouraged because we learn that all the other students are bereaved parents. So, the first step upward is when we learn that we are not alone, that there are those around us who do

understand, and who really do know how it feels and how painful it really is. Next, we discover that there are no teachers to tell us what is right and what is wrong. Instead, there are guides to assure us they and others more advanced than we are, have also had the same thoughts and feelings, or similar ones. This assurance that we are not "cracking up" gives us the

confidence we need to climb up several more steps.

At this point, we find that it is becoming easier to concentrate on at least some of the simple daily tasks, such as grocery shopping or planning and preparing a meal or making a special dessert the family hasn't had for so long. Seeing their approval and appreciation gives us the power to discipline ourselves to try even harder because we see and feel that we have made a lot of progress with this "course" which we are required to "pass".

It doesn't matter if, during our most difficult periods, we slip back down a few steps. Because by this time, we have climbed the steps of concentrations and disciplines. We have the assurance that there are many hands reaching out to us and voices encouraging us, assuring us that we are almost there. However it is always necessary for each one of us to take each step by himself. Finally, we just know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that if others did it and they believe in us, then we can do it, too. So no matter at what step you are in the "course" in this classroom, you can receive the help, the assurance, and the encouragement you may need to "graduate". Then you may help the many others who every day are just beginning and are just entering this classroom.



For you the first step may be to come to our meeting where you can meet and talk with the other "students" who are still struggling at various levels with the same "course" that you are. Even if you don't need us, we need you. Take that first big step and come to the meetings... you will get the help you need.

--Reprinted from the Bereaved Parents USA of Tri County, MO Newsletter

She Would Have Wanted It That Way

On a warm Friday afternoon, at the tender age of six, pretty little Jacqueline died. She was the apple of her parents' eyes. Always knowing how to smile shyly up at her Daddy's grim face, she escaped many a stem lecture with her sweet charm. Jacqueline usually got her own way. Her mother loved to clothe her in frilly dresses, with her long, dark hair pulled back and secured with matching hair accessories. And then the three of them would go for walks in the neighborhood, holding hands, uniting their family.

Yes, she was a beautiful girl. An only child, she was adored and loved by all around her. Her friendly smile came easily, and her eyes twinkled when she spoke. It was always easy to give in to her. And, she usually got what she wanted. When she died, her parents' hearts broke in two.

On a beautiful spring morning, those who loved this little girl, and those who would miss her in their lives, gathered together around the cemetery to say farewell. They linked hands and united in their grief for this tiny life taken so early from them. And then they went their separate ways, ignoring the grieving parents. Little Jacqueline would not have wanted it that way.

Jacqueline's parents went home to an empty house. The laughter was gone. The warmth had seeped out. The bitterness began. They didn't go for walks. They didn't hold hands anymore. They were no longer a united family. Little Jacqueline would not have wanted it that way.

After a few months, Jacqueline's father moved out. He and his wife were not speaking anymore. Their grief had taken hold of them and became the priority in each of their lives. Each suffered the loss of their only child, yet they mourned separately, differently,

angrily. Soon their grief turned into something more. Something they could not handle together. Alone, the little girl's parents still grieved.

But, now there was another loss to mourn. The loss of their love for each other. They missed the strength they had always found holding each others hands, warm and reassuring. But they were stubborn. And so they mourned alone. Little Jacqueline would not have wanted it that way.



On Fridays, Jacqueline's mother visited the cemetery. She always left a flower on the grave. One day when she arrived, someone had already put a flower there. She added her own next to it, crossing them at the stems. From then on, there were two flowers left on little Jacqueline's grave.

A few weeks later, on a warm Friday afternoon, Jacqueline's mother arrived at the cemetery expecting to see a flower on the grave. She was disappointed when she did not find one, thinking that someone had already forgotten her little girl. Kneeling, her tears fell easily, as they always did. She put her face in her hands and thought about her little girl, and wondered what had happened to her happy little family.

When she opened her eyes, she found another flower had been added to hers, their stems crossed in unity. As she looked up, her husband stood next to her, his hand outstretched toward her. She reached up and placed her hand in his, and she felt the strength returning. She felt the warmth and reassurance back in his hands.

Jacqueline's parents found the path back to each other. They learned sometimes to grieve alone. But, what they really learned was that they needed each other. Because, no one else really understood. Because when she lived, they meant everything to their little girl. Because, now that she had died, they meant everything to each other. But mostly, because little Jacqueline would have wanted it that way.

--Cathy Heider TCF, Algona, Iowa

"When one of your loved ones goes out of your life, you think what he might have done with a few more years. And you wonder what you are going to do with the rest of your's. Then one day, because there is a world to be lived in, you find yourself part of it, trying to accomplish something — something he did not have time enough to do. And, perhaps, that is the reason for it all. I hope so."

-- Joe Kennedy, Sr., whose three sons and a daughter had died prematurely, in a letter to a friend who had a son die

But Your Son WANTED to Die - Mine Didn't

I cringed as once again I heard this remark, repeated so often since Warren took his life 3-1/2 years ago. Even now, when I thought I had steeled myself to the harsh meaning of the words, they still left me hurt and demolished. Is it all that simple? Could anyone 'feeling good' just choose to die like that...if they knew the pain and suffering that then engulfs their surviving family?

How can I explain why he died when I do not know myself? How can I make anyone understand his emotional pain, increasingly obvious to us, so skillfully masked from others? Our son was so handsome, intelligent and sensitive. It is still incredible that he shot himself one morning after returning from the hospital 'cured' of his terrible depression. Our beautiful first-born baby grew into a perfect son, but somewhere, somehow, our masterpiece had a flaw as cruel and as tenacious as any disease that strikes any other young person.

So, until research proves otherwise, we have to go along with the words of Professor Erwin Ringel that "Suicide Cannot Really Be Chosen - since an intense and overwhelming inner compulsion renders any free choice null and void."

--Maureen Hargreaves TCF Melbourne, Australia

My Little Angel

You've just walked on ahead of me
And I've got to understand
You must release the ones you love
And let go of their hand.
I try and cope the best I can
But I'm missing you so much
If I could only see you
And once more feel your touch.
Yes, you've just walked on ahead of me
Don't worry I'll be fine
But now and then I swear I feel
Your tiny hand slip into mine.
God Took Him To His Loving Home
God saw him getting tired, a cure was not to be.
He wrapped him in his loving arms and whispered
'Come with me.'
He suffered much in silence, his spirit did not bend.

He faced his pain with courage, until the very end.
He tried so hard to stay with us but his fight was not in vain,
God took him to His loving home and freed him from the pain.

--Anonymous

**LESSONS
LEARNED**

Seasoned Greivers...

Five Lessons Grief Teaches

Twenty-two years of grief changes a lot of things. I am a new person every day. I never expected to survive my daughter's death. For months after, I prayed to die. More than once, I considered taking my own life, though I could not leave all I love here.

There is no good way or time to lose a child. When someone you love dies, everything unnecessary falls away. I have learned to see grief as a spiritual practice, and it has taught me to see life in new ways.

TRUTH: telling it and living it

My daughter Hannah died of cancer at the age of three. This is the first true moment in my human story. Everything I am begins with this. The truth of Hannah's death is fierce and unrelenting. I cannot change it, but I can change the way I live with it. When Hannah died, my life entered a "no drama" zone. I only had time and energy for the few things that mattered. I lost my politeness and learned to tell the truth. I let the phone ring and stopped reading fiction.

Pretending not to grieve does not make our children less dead. When tears are not seen as weakness, sorrow becomes a wise teacher. I also see now that truth is mutable. Truth changes as we change, and it waits until we are ready to see it.

JOY: finding it in the darkest places

For a long time after Hannah's death, I was afraid to laugh or smile. I didn't want to betray her suffering by feeling happy. As time passed, this feeling lifted. I smiled more and cried less. I noticed signs and synchronicities that reminded me of Hannah.

Joy is fleeting when grief makes a home in your life. I learned to find it in the darkest places. Saying 'yes' in the moment reveals unexpected happiness. I rarely make plans ahead of time now, as I can't be certain how I will feel.

This way of seeing allows us to release the need for everything to be perfect. Joy is the possibility of

happiness in every moment, the feeling that we are right where we need to be.

FAITH: from “my will be done” to “thy will be done”

Three months after Hannah’s death, I stood by the side of a road, prepared to take my own life. I was not afraid of death, no matter what happens Hannah is already there. As a truck approached, I suddenly became aware of my lungs breathing. I forgot about the truck and focused on my breath. I realized that something in me is still choosing life. I stayed alive to find out why.

There are no words to describe the space left absent when a child dies. The love you feel has nowhere to go. The longer your child is gone, the more you miss them. This missing becomes a part of you.

In my grief, I began to explore other religions and belief systems, hungry for validation of life after death. The God I believe in now is not the God that I grew up with. Though Christianity remains the first language of my faith, I now see threads of truth connecting many understandings. For me, God is a force of a thousand names and one love. Hannah’s spirit lives on as part of everything.

Strange comfort, this holding of everything in one place; yet I see an intelligence beyond imagining which orchestrates life and nature. While it is painful to accept Hannah’s death, I also see her life making a difference in this world. Someone once described the earth as the planet for slow-learners. Faith trusts and breathes when it’s all we can do.

COMPASSION: from specialness to belonging

I do not know why Hannah died and other children didn’t. At first, I felt a sense of specialness. No one could know the depth of my pain. For a while, I didn’t want to speak with anyone unless they had lost a child. Gradually, I began to connect with other people.

Forgiveness is key throughout the journey of grief: forgiveness of those who live and of those who die. As I learn to forgive myself, I find it easier to forgive others. Our intent in harnessing grief makes transformation possible. ‘Grief’ shares the same root as ‘grave’, ‘gravity’, and ‘gravitation’. It is a force with weight and heft. Once engaged, it can be redirected.

When Hannah was first diagnosed, one of her doctors gave us good advice. He said, “Remember,

no matter what happens, make the best decision you can with the information you have AT THAT TIME.” Of course, we would change things if we knew then what we know now. There is no solace in blaming ourselves and others for not knowing. Although I sometimes have less patience for other people and their problems, I see each of us is a unique lens in a shared experience. Compassion softens our gaze and allows us to appreciate new perspectives. When we reach beyond our specialness, we realize we are not alone.

WONDER: from needing to know to letting go

There was a house in our little town which was painted pink from top to bottom. Hannah loved this house. In the last year of her life, each time we passed it, she would say, “That’s where I am going to live!”

A year and a half after Hannah’s death, my daughter Madeleine was born. One day, when Madeleine was almost three-years old, we were driving to the grocery store. Suddenly Madeleine started shrieking from the back seat, I turned to see what was happening and saw her pointing to the pink house. “Mommy,” she exclaimed, “That’s the house where Hannah

and I played in heaven before I was born!”

I had no idea how she knew, and in that moment I didn’t need to. Hannah’s death opened me to realms I never knew existed. Having watched my father and my daughter take their last breaths, I remember a peaceful presence entering the room. This energy called life is where I feel our children’s presence is, and their spirits still make themselves known.

--Maria Hasten Maria Hasten is a lecturer and author of *HANNAH’S GIFT: Lessons From A Life Fully Lived* (Bantam 2002) and *Unraveled* (Harmony Books 2005). She has been a keynote speaker for past TCF national conferences and was the opening keynote speaker for the 2020 TCF virtual conference. Additionally, she has been featured on the Today Show and Dr. Phil. Her first book, *HANNAH’S GIFT*, the story of her daughter’s life and death from cancer, is being made into a full-length feature film and is translated in 16 languages. Reprinted with permission from the National TCF website

“My tears are not a sign of weakness or a lack of hope or faith. They are symbols of the depth of my loss and, I am told, a sign that I am recovering.”

--Marcia Davis



Newly Bereaved...

In the Beginning

In the beginning we hurt so bad
 We can't think straight.
 Our days and nights run together,
 As we cry out for relief
 From the pain that has
 Seemed to swallow us whole.
 That pain now accompanies us everywhere.
 There is no place to hide.
 It has taken over our life.
 It knows our name.
 It knows where we live.
 It knows that our loved one has died
 And so do we
 Sort of but not really.
 We are still looking for them
 To walk in the door,
 To say our name,
 To reach over and give us a hug.
 With every day that passes
 Our longing for them grows.
 We do not want to believe that
 They died and are not coming back.
 That reality chases us relentlessly,
 Until one day their empty chair
 Speaks louder than our denial,
 And the wall begins to break
 Where we have hidden our heart.
 --Deb Kosmer TCF, Portland, OR

Friends And Family...**How Can You Survive?**

You stood there staring
 with your eyes open wide
 when I told you my only child had died. Then I heard
 that question again today and those thoughtless
 words that take my breath away, "I could not go on
 living had my child died." "How can you stand it,
 how can you survive?" You seemed not to notice the
 hard painful lump that had settled in my throat
 despite my brave front. I tried to speak, but my
 mouth was bone dry. All I could do was just stand
 there and stifle my cry. Then you turned in silence
 and I followed your lead. Wiping tears off my face as
 I struggled to breathe.

How do I answer these questions you ask?
 Should I tell you the truth and then wait for your
 gasp? I've been told by other parents who have also



lost a child that they have heard these words before
 and cannot believe the guile of those who think life
 simply stops because you're left to bear the greatest
 tragedy of all, lost hopes and bleak despair. Yet
 perhaps you do not realize the pain you have just
 caused so once more I will answer in hope to give
 you pause.

I would have gladly died, exchanging my life for
 his. Willing myself into my son's broken body, for
 weeks I prayed for this. When he took his last
 breath, I was left alone in this place to live one day
 at a time and remember his sweet face.

You ask me how I stand it; how I managed to
 survive? How I can stand to go on living when my
 only child has died? The answer is so simple; I'm
 amazed you cannot see that the answer you seek
 does not lie with me. The Lord in His wisdom makes
 me draw breath each day. I do not know His
 reason, I do not know His way. I wake each
 morning with my son's death on my mind. Living
 only for heaven to hold the child I called mine. This
 is how I stand it; the only reply I can give I did not
 die, I did not survive, and I did not want to live.

So when next you see a parent grieving for their
 child take care to be gentle and just offer us a smile.
 For our numbers are great and our hearts have been
 broken. We need only your love with your arms
 wide open.

--In memory of Eric. Eric was killed in a car accident with his
 best friend. Nancy, Alive Alone, October, 1998

Helpful Hint...

"Those of us who are further down the road of grief
 encourage the more newly bereaved to know how
 necessary it is to put their needs first now. For
 awhile, allow yourself to be selfish and to be vocal, if
 necessary, about your right to take care of you and
 do the things that comfort you before you consider
 others."

--Mary Cleckley TCF Atlanta GA

Welcome...**Forever Entwined**

Losing a child to death is statistically improbable,
 yet all parents harbor the concept as their worst fear,
 the stuff of nightmares, cold sweats and anxiety.
 But when our children die, the anxiety of that
 possibility pales against the soul wrenching horror of
 the reality. At first we freeze in time as our focus is
 on the primal ... breathe, drink water.

After the initial shock has ceased to control our every moment, we seek answers. Can I get through this? Do I want to get through this? How have others managed to continue living after their child has died? I have disconnected from my friends and even my family. I don't want to go forward ... the pain is too intense. Death would be a mercy. Life is no longer a joy.

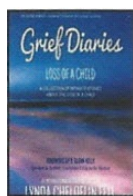
My heart is broken. I will never see my child again. If we are fortunate enough to find a Compassionate Friends Group, we meet people who have taken this nightmare journey and survived.

Your first meeting is the most difficult. At my first meeting, the only word I could say was my son's name. Later, we tell our story to those who have experienced the death of their child and find that talking to kindred souls can be cathartic. If we persevere and continue to attend meetings, get to know other parents, participate in the group discussions, cry with others and smile at the memories of their child ... we begin the healing process.

—Excerpt from an article by Annette Mennen Baldwin
Katy, Texas, TCF

Editor's Note: As fellow bereaved parents, we recognize these thoughts and feelings. We welcome you to join our chapter of TCF and see for yourself how helpful it is to have each other to lean on.

Book Review...



Grief Diaries-Loss of a Child. A deeply intimate collection of stories by parents around the world who have all waked in your shoes. Consider this book one of your bereavement tools, and pull it out whenever you need. For no matter the age, the circumstance, or number of days since your beloved child's passing, the stories contained within this book offer company, comfort and hope, and are a treasured reminder that none of us walk this journey alone. Code: GDLB

I Had A Dream

I had a dream the other night
it was a miracle, you see.
I rocked you in my favorite chair
and held you close to me.
I sang to you a lullaby
so sweet and clear and fair;
but then awoke, I called your name,
And knew you were not there.



As darkness then engulfed me,
I started to softly cry,
I love you so, my baby,
why did you have to die?
I pray for sleep to come again,
and hope that I will see
another dream just like before,
with my son held next to me.
--Author unknown

Grief, You and Me

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

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

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

Sometimes
I just let go completely
and fall into you
head first, heart first,
defenseless before your gigantic tsunami of ache.
Pummeled and tumbling in directionless white water
I cry out
Grief, you are much bigger than me
taller, stronger, fiercer,
you will outlive me, exhaust me, overpower me!
Will I ever find my way back to up?
where is the air?
which way is air, and sun, and life?

Sometimes I wonder
will we someday merge
as old married couples who
no longer having distinct identities, you and me.
Maybe you will seep into my bones
and we will just grow older and sweeter together
--Nadine Gregg TCF Santa Cruz, CA
In Memory of Lucian



Our Children Remembered



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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Our Children Remembered



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 Kropman
Born: 12/88 Died: 3/12
Parents: Brenda & Greg Kropman

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

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

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 Matich
Born: 5/02 Died: 7/18
Parents: Mike & Shirley Matich
Grandmother: Dorothy Matich

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 Murphy
Born: 5/92 Died: 3/18
Mother: Deborah Murphy

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

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

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

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

**Our Children Remembered**

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

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

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

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

Quintana Dantas De Oliveria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* For corrections or to add
your child to the Our Children
Remembered section of the
newsletter, call Lynn at (310)
963-4646 and leave a
message.

Birthday Tributes...



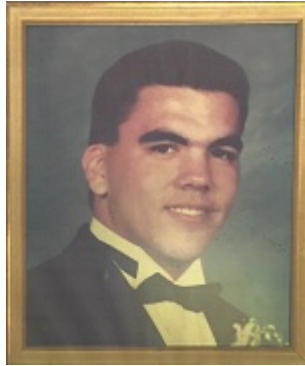
In honor of your child's birthday, we welcome you to submit a birthday tribute. Though your child is no longer here to buy a present for, think of this as a birthday present about your child. This tribute is an opportunity to share your child with us all. (We thank you for any birthday donations that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

www.tcsbla.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.

A Birthday Tribute to:

Damion Mendoza
July 1976 - June 1992



Damion was born 1976 (a bicentennial baby). He was our first child together. He was a great son, smart, good athlete, helpful, strong, good looking, funny, compassionate and a great family leader.

Damion attended St. Catherine Catholic school through the 8th grade and Bishop Montgomery High School. He mastered Spanish as he somehow was able to convert English parts of speech along with Spanish. He would often correct the teacher on the assignments that the class was given. The teacher remembers this well. He would often let the teacher know if something wasn't correct. They called him "Damion the Brain".

In June of 1992 we are sad to say that at 15-years-old, Damion passed away at the hands of a known gang member. We were forced to have his services on his 16th birthday in 1992.

Damion was an organ donor, and in doing so, enhanced and/or saved the lives of others that he didn't know.

Although it's been 29 years, it is still fresh in our hearts. We still continue to reflect on things that Damion would do or how he would handle a situation.

These days his mom, my beautiful wife, Carlene and mother to our other children, has joined him in heaven. We are sure that she was welcomed by Damion's beautiful smile and his great bear hugs. They are together again!

We would like to thank our family, friends, neighbors, people that we didn't even know for all of their love and support throughout the years. We would also like to recognize The Compassionate Friends, a local group for helping us put our lives

back together and allowing us to help others along the way.

We will always remember Damion and cherish the 15+ years we had with him. We celebrate his birthday each year and honor his life every day. He is never forgotten and is always with us in spirit and lives in our hearts through our memories of him.

Thank you, Paul Mendoza, Damion's Dad

For Siblings...



More On Surviving Siblings

I gained a greater understanding of how powerful guilt can be for surviving siblings observing my son Michel after the death of his sister, Kristen. As parents, it is our role to support, nurture, and protect. This is not the role of siblings, yet it gets twisted into their grief as well. As a result, it is common for brothers and sisters to feel that they failed in some way. Siblings may often believe there must have been something they could have done to prevent the death. And sadly, it is not uncommon for siblings to believe they caused the death by wishing ill thoughts on their sister or brother during a disagreement or fight. This can have unfortunate repercussions if the sibling dies. Well-intentioned people may add to the confusion by making statements like, "You need to be strong for your parents," adding an unnecessary burden for the child to now care for us. Michel also heard, "God must have needed Krissie." causing him to fear that God may want him too.

Survival guilt is also common. Not only do parents believe they shouldn't outlive their children, but brothers and sisters often feel guilty for being alive and enjoying life. They may believe as well that they need to be the perfect child to make up for the loss. This is a real complication of grief. As parents, we need to be aware of this and reassure them that they don't need to make up for anything, nor can they. We might want to tell them that the greatest gift they can give us is to be their own person and live life to the fullest.

When death lands on the doorstep of our surviving children at a tender age it most likely becomes their threshold into adulthood for understanding death can demand adult sized answers. I definitely noticed this with my son who was only nine when his sister died suddenly. He became a quieter, more serious boy. The innocence of his childhood was left behind when he realized his sister, his buddy, was gone forever.

Watching our surviving children come to terms with death of this magnitude, I've always felt, is the

double-edged sword of the bereaved parent. We are wrestling with our own grief and the endless questions with answers that don't come easily, making us, once again, feel as helpless as we did when our child died. Being open and honest with our children and their struggle and keeping the channels of communication open, can actually bring us closer to them. We can heal together.
--by Carol Kearns, PhD Marin County CA

For Grandparents...



Gone Three Years, but She'll Never Be Forgotten

I had gone to bed early. It could be any day now and a grandma needs her rest. My daughter's words pierced my dream, "Mom, it's Nathan, it's time." This is where I was supposed to grab a few clothes and head out the door to their home just 15 minutes away.

That's what I was supposed to do. But when you've just woken up and you're scared to death, your body doesn't always cooperate. But to better understand my fear, let me back up about six months or so.

We learned something new. I was watching my grandkids, guaranteed to put a smile on my face. First, it was just Jude, then he was followed by Charlie and then Ruthie came into our lives. And now, we were to welcome still another little one. But this one was a miracle from day one. As I waited for my daughter-in-law to come bounding in the house with details about her OB visit, I played with the others who call me, "Grandma."

I heard the back door open and waited for the report, but one look at her face told me something was wrong. Just how wrong I would find out momentarily. Over the course of weeks, we learned terms we had never heard before, terms we wish we still didn't know. Trisomy 18. A chromosomal disorder. Sometimes referred to as an incompatibility with life. What? There's such a thing? Yes, and so I decided I would pray. I could do nothing about the prognosis which was terminal. I could do nothing about the heaviness of the situation but, I could pray.

And pray I did. I stormed heaven. And yes, there were times I crossed over from a petition to pleading. I remember it, and it happened more often than not.

How do you have joy when you're told that your granddaughter will live and then die? I searched frantically for the answer to that. I couldn't find it. I

tried to do what I do with movies that don't end the way I want them to. I tried to write a new ending, except...You can't write the ending to a story you didn't write.

Back to that phone call which finally got me into the car and over to my son's house. What I didn't know at the time is that he called again and left a message. A recorded message I cannot erase. Some recordings can never be erased. "Mom, Heather's water broke. We're in crisis mode now. I'm hoping you will be here any minute, but I don't know what I'll do if you're not..."

Finally there...My daughter and I got to their house. We found Heather in the van, Nathan about to jump in as soon as he apologized for having to leave things as they were. Fortunately, the kids were all asleep. We knew we would have to follow suit because kids get up early, it's just a fact. Finally I laid down, hoping to close my eyes a little before they all opened theirs. And about 5:00 am my sleep was interrupted.

"Mom, would you bring the kids to meet their sister?" I remember dressing the kids on that January morning. And riding to the hospital. I didn't know what I'd see. I'd wipe a tear away, thankful the kids were still half asleep. We got there and I knew the drill. The kids would go in first, they would all bond for a while and when it was my turn, I would meet the new little one. It never got old. When they were done visiting they joined their other grandparents while I slipped into the room.

My turn... And there she was. This one I had stormed heaven for. This little miracle who was not supposed to even make it to her birth. But no one told her. And not only did she defy what was written in books, but she continued to do so. She learned things, she laughed, she eventually drank from a sippie cup. She made raspberry sounds like her siblings before her. And she was a reality. Olivia Jane Peterson.

But she still had Trisomy 18. She would sometimes stop breathing and she gave her parents a number of scares.

What I learned later was that she was not even expected to make it through her birth. But she did. She got to come home and hospice was involved from that first day. Celebrations, in the beginning, every week were celebrated, then it became every month and at 1 year, we all praised God for the miracle we got to meet and love.

When Livie was 14 months old she got sick. And so many people prayed and she recovered. But when she got sick again, her little body could not fight it. And though thousands joined us in prayer, Livie took her last breath here and her first in

heaven.

Now I would go to their house and the heaviness was all around. It didn't matter that we knew she was terminal. Because she had defied so many things, we willed ourselves into believing she would continue to do so. I remember when Charlie who was six at the time explained why they named her Olivia. "Because it has the word "live" in it. We want her to live." - And we did.

She's been gone three years now. But the spot I reserved in my heart is still there. No one can take it. Not even her precious baby brother, Benjamin, who was born 18 months ago. No one can take her place. And that's as it should be.

I miss Livie. When a baby dies, you not only miss the little bit you got to know about them, you miss all you didn't know. All the things you didn't get to do. A baby's death is heartbreaking. Not only because you miss them, but because you watch everyone else who misses them. Like her sister, Ruthie, who aches to see her, "Grandma, what will I do when Livie falls out of heaven and I can't catch her with my arms?"

Love never dies. When someone stops breathing, their life as we know it ends. But let me tell you what doesn't end. Love. The love you had is still there. It will always be there. You grieve, it's one way you express that love. Albeit not our best choice. And you take your love and store it away for the day you'll step into heaven and see the ones you've lost.

I've gone through a lot of emotions since Livie has been gone. Sometimes my heart feels fragile. But I know the one who allowed her to be with us and I am eternally grateful.

Yes, she had Trisomy 18. And yes, she died. But we did get to meet her. To hold her and to instantly love her. One day, we'll see her again. And I'll thank God in person for letting us have Livie. She's been gone, but she'll never be forgotten. That's how love is.

-Anne Peterson Anne is a poet, speaker and published author of 14 books. Anne is well acquainted with grief having lost her parents, 3 siblings, and most recently her baby granddaughter. She wants those who are hurting to know they are not alone. Sign up for her newsletter at www.annpeterson.com and receive her free eBook, "Helping Someone in Grief: 17 Things You Need to Know."

Good-bye

It's August again,
Different than last.

A hot blanket covers the earth.

Blood red roses droop over your casket.

With weak limbs I stand.

Misty eyes gaze at you,

My only brother,

Lying prepared for earth.

Today we were to go hiking,

Explore the vast countryside,

Just you and I.

Tomorrow we would try golf, or maybe just talk.

You told me yesterday of your pride in me

That I might strive for more.

"But it is you I follow," I say.

And we broke through the barrier, declaring us true friends.

To say good-bye is to remember this, and smile.

And if I look, I will find them—

Memories that smother the good-bye,

And let me cling to your life.

--Laura W., TCF Champaign, IL



From Our Members...

Surviving the Waves of Grief

(A person asks online for advice on how to deal with grief: "My friend just died. I don't know what to do.") A lot of people responded, but this old guy's incredible comment stood out from the rest:

"Alright, here goes. I'm old. What that means is that I've survived (so far) and a lot of people I've known and loved did not. I've lost friends, best friends, acquaintances, co-workers, grandparents, mom, relatives, teachers, mentors, students, neighbors, and a host of other folks. I have no children, and I can't imagine the pain it must be to lose a child. But here's my two cents.

I wish I could say you get used to people dying. I never did. I don't want to. It tears a hold through me whenever somebody I love dies, no matter the circumstances. But I don't want it to "not matter." I don't want it to be something that just passes. My scars are a testament to the love and the relationship that I had for and with that person. And if the scar is deep, so was the love. So be it. Scars are a testament to life. Scars are a testament that I can love deeply and live deeply and be cut, or even gouged, and that I can heal and continue to live and continue to love. And the scar tissue is stronger than the original flesh ever was. Scars are a testament to life. Scars are only ugly to people who can't see.

As for grief, you'll find it comes in waves. When the ship is first wrecked, you're drowning, with the

wreckage all around you. Everything floating around you reminds you of the beauty and the magnificence of the ship that was, and is no more. And all you do is float. You find some piece of the wreckage and you hang on for a while. Maybe it's some physical thing. Maybe it's a happy memory of a photograph. Maybe it's a person who is also floating. For a while, all you can do is float. Stay alive.

In the beginning, the waves are 100 feet tall and crash over you without mercy. They come 10 seconds apart and you don't even give you time to catch your breath. All you can do is hang on and float. After a while, maybe weeks, maybe months, you'll find the waves are still 100 feet tall, but they come further apart. When they come, they still crash all over you and wipe you out. But in between, you can breathe, you can function.

You never know what's going to trigger the grief. It might be a song, a picture, a street intersection, the smell of a cup of coffee. It can be just about anything... and the wave comes crashing. But in between waves, there is life. Somewhere down the line, and it's different for everybody, you find that the waves are only 80 feet tall. Or 50 feet tall. And while they still come, they come further apart. You can see them coming. An anniversary, a birthday, or Christmas, or landing at O'Hare. You can see it coming, for the most part, and prepare yourself.

And when it washes over you, you know that somehow you will, again, come out the other side. Soaking wet, sputtering, still hanging on to some tiny piece of the wreckage, but you'll come out.

Take it from an old guy. The waves never stop coming, and somehow you don't really want them to. But you learn that you'll survive them. And other waves will come. And you'll survive them too. If you're lucky, you'll have lots of scars from lots of loves. And lots of shipwrecks."

--North Providence, RI 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... Everyone needs to get the **New Zoom Link** for the Wednesday meetings. We will be holding our next Zoom meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 4th @ 7:00 p.m. We will be having virtual meetings **along** with Zoom meetings for the near future. We send out emails reminders to our members with invitation information.

Email us to be added to the list. You can contact the Zoom hosts, Leo & Connie Licciardone at (310) 283-6739 or Conniestar58@gmail.com, or Leo at Liccica79@gmail.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: Aug. 1st for Sept. 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 Kristy at (310) 938-2409. You can mail her a photo for each button you would like (color photo copies work great) and she 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.tcf-sbla.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.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
survivorsof suicide.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 LEADER: Lori Galloway
 CHAPTER ZOOM HOSTS: Connie & Leo Liccaridone
 NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines
 PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks
 TREASURER: Ken Konopasek
 WEBSITE: Leo Liccaridone

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

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
 7AM 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 for August. Please consider donating to our chapter to ensure that TCF will be available to help bereaved families.

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 _____

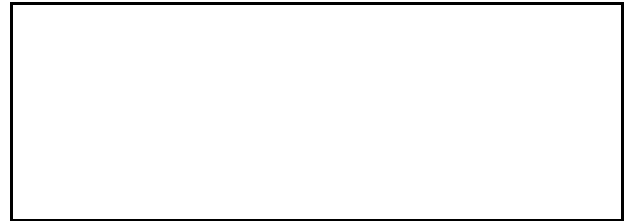
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue.

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

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August 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.