



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Nov. 2021 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be November 3rd, the first
Wednesday of the month at 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION:

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

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

The Wed., Nov. 3rd meeting will start with "Thankful vs. Thankless, My Child Is Dead..."

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.

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The Wednesday, Nov. 3rd meeting will start with “Thankful vs. Thankless, My Child Is Dead...”

With the loss of any loved one, families have to make adjustments. But the all consuming pain and the shock of each holiday we move through makes it almost impossible for a newly bereaved parent. You may think, “What do I have to be thankful for... my child is dead?” The painful reminders of past Thanksgivings now compete with an empty chair and that anticipation most likely will turn to dread those first few years. Thanksgiving looms and the desire or dread both exemplify family and togetherness. Our emotions just aren’t ready for this onslaught and uncertainty. This month we will start the meeting with sharing how to handle our feelings as we face the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. Together, let us begin to understand that “thankless” and “thankful” are both on this road of grief with each of us. Let us find and hold onto the few slivers of things we still have to be thankful for and expound on the things we can hope for in the future. Past Thanksgivings or even the anticipation of their first Thanksgiving will always bring reminders that our child died. Let us also make them reminders that our child lived! They left us love and memories more precious than any others, to hold and celebrate!

How Can I Be Thankful?

“How can I possibly be thankful for anything anymore?” The thought raced through my head before the first Thanksgiving after the recent death of my 4-year-old daughter, Margareta. The anticipation of the first big family holiday in the aftermath of Margareta’s death was overwhelming.

I discussed my anxiety with my grief counselor. What should I do? Should I accept my brother’s invitation to Thanksgiving dinner? What if I burst into tears at the table? Worse yet, what if I developed a full-blown panic attack? And there was *no way* I was going to participate in the Thanksgiving tradition of going around the table saying what we were thankful for. NOTHING! There was nothing I was thankful for. In fact, I was the absolute opposite of thankful. And why not? My daughter was dead and never coming back.

My counselor gave me helpful suggestions. I could let my brother know I preferred a small gathering over a big one. She said I should request that we not say what we were thankful for that year.



She also suggested I sit in a chair closest to a door where I could quietly excuse myself and leave if I started to panic or cry. The advice alleviated some of my anxiety, and the first Thanksgiving was fairly uneventful. I managed to get through it unscathed.

Years after her death, I’m much better at dealing with holidays. But they’re still painful reminders that for the rest of my life, my daughter will remain missing from all our family events. After that first year, our family often opted for non-traditional Thanksgiving venues. We’ve taken our other children skiing or to amusement parks. In those cases, “Thanksgiving” dinner was eaten unceremoniously at restaurants. More recently, we’re able to have smaller celebrations with family.

The holidays get easier to handle as each year passes. My gaping wound has closed over the years, but the scar of my broken heart will last forever. Intense pain has been replaced by a quiet longing for my daughter. Rather than focusing on the devastating pain of her death, I’ve learned to focus instead on her beautiful life. And for that, I now know that I have A LOT to be thankful for. Though I’ll always miss her at Thanksgiving celebrations, one of the things I am most thankful for are my wonderful memories of Margareta and the joy she brought to our lives.

-- Maria Kubitz TCF South Bay/L.A., CA
In loving memory of Margareta Sol Kubitz

Thanksgiving Marks The Beginning Of Holiday Madness And Sadness

In our society we have turned the holidays into a never ending round of parties, shopping, cooking, preparations for guests or travel and stress, lots and lots of stress. It begins in October with the not so subtle reminders from our friendly retail stores. Most of us dread this time of year because as members of Compassionate Friends, we have one more item on our list and it invariably is at the top.....my child is gone.....how can I handle the holidays?

This will be my third Thanksgiving without my son. We had 35 wonderful Thanksgiving celebrations together, and now it’s just me. My only child is gone, my grandchildren now live solely in their mother’s world. I am not a part of that world. But I am learning to cope with this reality. I am learning that I can hold on to the traditions that don’t cause me sadness and let go of those that do. As bereaved parents we fall into a unique category. As humans we accept that the loss of parents, spouses, aunts, uncles, siblings, friends and acquaintances is

inevitable. But never, never, were we taught or conditioned to the idea that our children would or could precede us in death. The very notion of this shook us to our core.

Now we have lost our child to death. Nobody prepared us for this mind numbing loss. The rules have been broken. We have no coping skills. Our friends usually can't help. Our families try, but until one endures a loss of this magnitude, the ability to fully comprehend the never ending rounds of sadness is simply not there.

We do have a support system.....we can choose to participate or simply be there, in the moment, at our Compassionate Friends meetings. Here we find our most meaningful and helpful connection with other parents.....parents who are walking the road we now walk. These bereaved parents are here to help us on this unfamiliar road. They cannot answer every question because the answers don't exist to most questions. When will this pain end? When will life go back to "normal"? There are different types of pain and new kinds of normal. We gather each month to help each other, to lean on each other, to find hope in each other's ability to function. From this meeting of kindred souls we do derive some solace, some peace and some hope.

I have watched the newly bereaved, raw in their sadness when they first attend a meeting. As the months move forward, I begin to see a change in these parents. Each changes in a different way, for each experiences their loss and their grief process in a different way. Some changes aren't apparent for months, even a year or two. Learning that we are not alone in the grievous burden of our loss is comforting. Learning that others have developed ways to cope with the holidays, the birthdays, the death anniversaries and other special occasions gives us the hope that we, too, will one day feel comfortable in our new "normal."

I have chosen to accept this group of gentle, kind and compassionate friends as an integral part of my life. The first holidays were horrible. I learned that I had to do what I felt was right. I learned to let go of the expectations of others and live in the moment. Even if I plan to do something and change my mind, I feel no guilt. I learned that those who truly love me understand. I have found that I am truly becoming myself....my new self. It is a slow process. There are setbacks. Holidays are extremely difficult for every parent who has lost a child.....it matters not how long ago our child died. The pain is fresh, new and raw at this time of year. This is the season for leaning on our compassionate friends, for asking

questions, expressing fears, anxieties, doubts, depression and anger and for finding the comfort, hope and understanding that each of us so desperately seeks.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF, Katy, TX

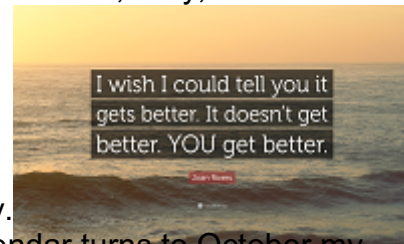
Getting "Better"

As I write this, the fourth anniversary of my son's death is days away. Every year when the calendar turns to October my thoughts turn to all the "lasts" we experienced with Chris—our last Parents' Weekend, our last family celebration, his last visit home, our last hug good-bye. October is painful; it represents the moment in history that divides my life into the "before" and "after."

Life "before" was good, our family was happy, the future was bright. Life "after" had been a struggle to survive unspeakable pain, reestablish a new normal, and face a future that is littered with shattered dreams, assumptions, and expectations. The person I am now barely resembles who I was four years ago. I have gained an acute awareness of suffering and a heightened sense of empathy yet I have lost the ability to dream, the luxury of lightheartedness, and what it feels like to experience joy. The best of times I have a tenuous peace with sorrow; in my worst moments I am consumed by a profound sense of emptiness. At all times I ache with missing him, an ache I expect will never cease. How could anything or anyone fill his place in my heart, my mind, my soul? It is his space, his and mine; it is sacred.

And yet, as I recently admitted to a select few, I have begun to feel "better." Better does not mean I am "moving on" without Chris, that I am "getting over" the loss, or that I am regaining my former self. For me, better means learning to coexist with the sorrow and letting go of the "why?" There isn't an answer to the why that could possibly satisfy me that could make me say, "Oh, so that's why he died. Now I understand. I'm okay with that." Learning to live with mystery is akin to admitting that there is little in this life that we actually control; the only thing we do control is how we react to life's experiences.

In the case of losing a child, the option to choose is very slow in coming because the shock is disabling and prolonged. Eventually the opportunity to choose comes, but it is not easy or simple or even obvious. To choose to let go of the blackness is a choice that needs to be made each and every



day—consciously, actively, and repeatedly.

Feeling better is a journey not an endpoint. I will never stop loving Chris; never love him less than completely and wholeheartedly. For the rest of my life I will regret that he is not here to share, to love, to experience, to be. Despite all the pain and heartache, I thank God every single day that I had him for 21 years. I wanted more—for him, for me, for my husband and girls, for everyone who loves him. It was not to be. I am grateful for what I had. Perhaps that is what “better” is all about.

--Sue Dudek (We Need Not Walk Alone, Summer 2009)



A Story Of Hope

Shortly after Nina died, I remember well-meaning friends talking to me about hope. My reply was usually, "What was there to have hope about?" The only thing I prayed and hoped for was that my daughter would come back again, that the accident that took her life had never happened. Since that wasn't possible, what was the point of having hope?

Our lives have been turned upside down and we feel so out of control. We feel like we have failed – that the one thing we as good parents had tried to do was to keep our children out of harm's way. We made sure that we locked away poisons, that they got their immunizations on time, that they buckled their seat belts; when older we taught them about the dangers of drugs and unprotected sex—all the things that we hoped would ensure their safety and well-being. And still they died. How could that be?

With the knowledge of our total loss of control, we look for something to cling to that will help pull us out of the valley. I desperately sought out things that I could be hopeful for; I needed something that let me know that my daughter's life went on...that at 15 ½ years old she didn't just stop "being".

Many of you have heard my story of what I call the "miracle pictures". I told my story and brought the pictures with me to share at a Compassionate Friend's meeting about a year ago. But for those who haven't heard it, I would like to share that story, because if anything brings with it a message of hope that our children live on, I think it is this story. We were vacationing in Florida when the unthinkable occurred. We were driving back from a day at Daytona Beach en route to my celebratory birthday dinner. Just a mile from our destination a drunk driver fell asleep at the wheel, crossed the median,

and hit the side of the car where my beloved Nina was sitting. She was killed instantly. As we know, all too well in each of our own circumstances, the next few weeks were a blur. But the one thing that I remember, and was obsessed with, were the pictures that had been taken that day before the horrific accident that took my daughter's life. Shortly before we left the beach that day, only hours before the accident, Nina had handed the camera to her brother, Dan, and asked him to take a picture of the two of us together. It was the last picture taken that day. In the days following her death, I repeatedly cried out, "I need that picture" to anyone who would listen. They could only helplessly turn away knowing I was asking the impossible.

In our conversations with the highway Patrolman who was in charge of the accident, we repeatedly asked if the pictures were found yet. The officer said that the trunk of the car where I had put the camera that day had been demolished and that it would take "nothing short of a miracle" to have survived the impact. For brevity's sake, I won't go into all the details, but I will tell you that three weeks after the accident, Corporal Gordon Jennings of the Florida Highway Patrol sent me a package. He had listened to this mother's hopeful plea that someone look for the camera, though he knew in his heart he'd never find it. Even so, he walked that stretch of freeway and came upon a drainage ditch, looked down and saw the flattened cardboard disposable camera covered in water with a tire track mark over it! It had been immersed in water for weeks and run over by a lawn tractor! He took the compressed camera to Walgreen's and asked them if they could try to salvage any of the pictures. Remarkably, 7 of the 24 pictures that had been taken had survived.

And one of those pictures was the last one of mother and daughter together, her head on my shoulder, arm around me, smiling her dazzling smile. The watermarks seemed to split as they stretched toward the picture of the two of us on the beach—it was as if the waters had parted to allow the picture of the two of us to remain intact!

I had read in a past newsletter that the people who put together the Chicken Soup for the Soul books were looking for stories from bereaved parents. I felt this was such a hopeful story that I wanted to share it with as many people as possible. Even though I didn't expect it to be published, I felt I had nothing to lose. Amazingly, the story about the day my beloved Nina died and the "miracle pictures" was accepted and will be in the Chicken Soup for the Christian Family Soul, to be released in

book-stores in late March of 2000.

I believe those pictures were a gift from Nina so that I could share this story of hope with all of you, to let you know that our lost loved ones are still very much with us. They don't always show themselves in such obvious ways, but they are with us.

-- Cathy Seehuetter TCF, St. Paul, MN

I wanted to spend the rest of my life with you; but instead, I am deeply honored knowing that you spent the rest of your life with me. --Forever Young

Suicide

The day I came to fear
 Today it's been one year
 The anniversary is here
 He is gone never to return
 Emotions on fire my heart can't re-learn
 to face this world without him
 I take one step then another
 I lost a son, they lost a brother
 We grieve separately in four corners of the earth
 I think of him endlessly, the day I gave birth
 His first smile, learning to crawl, to walk and to run
 The way his blue eyes reflected the sun
 His beauty, his laughter his pain
 How cute he looked walking home in the rain
 In his little yellow raincoat
 I'll never know why this happened to him
 To our family his friends and to me
 I have been told he needed to be free
 To feel peaceful, this place was not meant
 For his life is over, my eternity spent without him
 For now my heart bleeds
 --Ellen Hansen, TCF Honolulu, In loving memory of
 her son Daniel "Danny" Malcolm Hansen



Parents of Infants -- on Losing a Baby

Unlike parents who have had an older child die, our memories are few, and for some people, even non-existent. Those of us who have had a baby die have found it common for some people not to recognize the loss as being as tragic as the death of an older child. Maybe it is just as tragic, maybe it isn't. For most parents who have lost a baby, the tragedy is felt as intensely as can be. For many parents who lose a baby, there is nothing else with which to compare their loss. It is just like we who have lost a child (at no matter what the age) feel that no one can understand the way we feel unless they too have lost a child.

Those of us who have not lost an older child have nothing else to compare the loss of our baby with, just as those who have lost an older child cannot completely understand our feelings upon losing a baby.

The death of an infant is often times considered "unfortunate" but so many feel that it can be remedied with the birth of another child. Some people find it difficult to understand the love, hope and the future that has been lost with the death of a "much looked forward to" baby.

In my own situation, I have found that the words of consolation most often given to me are things like, "You're young, you can have other babies..." or "It's so much better that you were never able to hold her and love her." And things like, "It's over with, forget it, put it all behind you..." The truth of the matter for me, at least, was yes, I could have more babies, but it did not matter how many children I could have in the future, I still had lost Jessica. She was the baby daughter I had wanted and tried to have for eight years. Upon her death, all my hopes and dreams and my happiness I felt, were gone. The daughter I had looked so forward to holding and loving and spending time with was gone. Yes, since her death I have been blessed with the birth of two children, a son and another daughter. I give thanks daily for their health and loving presence. But, just as another child could never take their place, nor have they replaced Jessica.

Was it really better that I never got to hold her? I think not. If only I had been able to hold that blessed little angel in my arms, if only for one short moment, I would be better able to cope with my loss. If I had been able to see her (even though she was already dead) I would have had a memory to hold on to the rest of my life. Learn to love her? I already loved her. Any mother who carries a child knows love for that child even though it is still unborn. I loved her. I knew her. I knew that she would become quiet and still when I spoke softly to her, I knew she would react with somewhat violent kicking when surrounded by loud noises. I knew her while she was yet inside me. She was real. I loved her. I can never forget about her. I never want to. I still wonder what she would have grown to be like, what she would have grown to look like. Would she have been fair and active like my son Justin, or would she have been dark and quietly composed like Ashlee? I think about these things even after four years. I expect to think about them for the rest of my life.

I wonder what it would have been like around here with three children, close in age, playing

together. I wonder what it would have been like with three children to love. I wonder... I guess for a parent of a baby who dies, the wonderings are the worst. We just do not know. We have no memories to cherish.

I am not trying to make a comparison with the loss of a child who lived to be older. I cannot compare things which I do not know about. I just know that a parent who loses a baby feels grief, and loss, and pain and hurt. To grieve is to grieve, to feel the pain and loss is to feel the pain and loss, to miss a child is to miss a child. Of course, there are, as in everything, various degrees of feelings and to each parent his or her child was special and the feelings still go deep and the loss is still felt, no matter what age a child is lost.

--Deby Amos TCF Anniston, Alabama

Seasoned Greivers...

10 Years...How Can It Be Possible?

This Sept. 22, 2007 marks the 10th anniversary of the day James made the decision that ended his life, and in turn, also changed our lives forever. It just seems impossible that it's been ten years since that day when we were faced with the most painful unimaginable, grief, sorrow and despair we have ever endured.

When we went to our first TCF meeting in November, it seemed that we would never find the kind of hope and level of acceptance that some parents, further down the road, had seemed to achieve. Truly, I never thought I would live a year without my son. The heartache was utterly unbearable, the sadness was a gut-wrenching pain that would leave me physically doubled over. I thought for sure I would die of a broken heart, and many nights I would wonder if I would wake up the following morning, but much to my surprise, and sometimes dismay, I did.

My husband and I continued to attend TCF for a couple months until we learned that couples grieve differently, and while I had found a source of comfort and understanding that I needed, it wasn't the right place for my husband. Another lesson that we had to learn was that it is okay for couples to grieve differently, in spite of the fact that we, as parents, were both suffering the same loss, the death of our only child.

Month after month I willingly went to TCF

meetings, even though sometimes it was difficult as I drove there, once again realizing that attending a meeting was another jolt of reality that where I was going was a place where I fit in and that because James died, I belonged to such a group. I listened to other parents and when I heard seasoned bereaved parents talk calmly without crying, I thought "that will never be me". My world as I knew it was over and trying to rebuild a life seemed impossible, and I really didn't even care about tomorrows anymore either. Just making it through each day, one day at a time, took all the physical and emotional strength I could muster. It was quite a surprise to me when the first anniversary came to be and I was still alive. I was convinced that people could die of a broken heart, but it didn't happen to me. I knew that I was alive and I had to live; I had to care about myself and the life I had left. It has been ten long years of rediscovering how to enjoy life, learning coping skills, having to compensate and compromise with what I've got and what and whom I don't have. Dealing with all the grief issues, handling all the constant questions, being haunted by the what if's, should be's and supposed to be's, the many why's, gradually subsided to a level that didn't deplete my emotional energy on a daily basis.

In these ten years I've learned more than I ever wish I had to and I constantly wish I could have learned these lessons from another way. I'd give anything to have James back but it will never happen. We won't be reunited again here on earth; every day brings me one day closer to seeing James again in our eternal life. In the meantime, my husband and I have overcome so many obstacles that it truly seems a miracle that we are alive, still married, and seemingly mostly normal adults (at least to most people) while living a life that is just not the way it's supposed to be. Of course we dreamed of the day we'd see James graduate from high school, that we could support his college and career choices, that we'd dance at his wedding and rejoice when he would become a daddy and we would be proud grandparents. Instead so many dreams are left unfulfilled and we watch friends and relatives life paths follow "the way it's supposed to be."

There's always an ache when it's someone else's wedding and someone else's grandchild, but that's just the way it is. We are blessed with the many wonderful memories of the 14 years and 2 months that we had with James, and we try not to focus on the sadness and bitterness that we can no longer create more memories.

For those who are beginning their journey, I wish



I could say that it gets better. Some days are better than others. Sometimes it gets easier and the pain is not so sharp. There are still the triggers that bring up tears. Holidays are not the same and never will be. I've learned that what works for me and how I feel and how to deal with a situation is what I need to do, no matter what people tell me I should do or how I should feel. Their "shoulds" are a burden I don't need. Figuring out what I'm capable of and what's right for a particular circumstance in my world that seems so wrong without James, guides me in the direction for hope and healing.

Not a day goes by that I don't think of James. Every morning when I wake up he's the first person I think of, no matter where I am, at home or away. I think of what he would say in a certain situation, what he would do, where he would be now, all the wonderings fill my thoughts daily.

There have been many many moments of healing, comforts and support over the past ten years, as well as tons of anguish, pain, guilt, sorrows and regrets. Compassionate Friends is now a place where I help others, instead of being the one who needs help. Reaching out to other families in the school where I work has given me an outlet to help others, in memory of James. My husband continues to volunteer with Scouts and has worked with so many teenagers, in memory of James. We've been host parents to five foreign exchange students and our lives have been enriched.

Our marriage has had more than its share of rocky times, but we've endured and recently celebrated our 29th anniversary. We can't help James anymore, but we can help ourselves and help others, in his memory. We know now how important it is to have patience, kindness, compassion, sensitivity, and thoughtfulness toward each other and to friends and family. We treasure each and every day because we know how precious life is. James taught us so much with his life and with his untimely death and those are lessons we can't turn our backs on. His life was important, made a difference and we remember him every day, miss him every day and love him every single day. We validate his life by living our lives to the fullest for all three of us.

So on this tenth anniversary, although we are filled with sadness as we remember and relive the tragic moments of that terrible day, we know we have to be proud of ourselves and how far we've come and we thank James for coming into our lives, being the terrific son that he was and we celebrate his life, on his anniversary and every day. He is

forever young, forever loved, forever missed and forever remembered.

-- Meg Avery, James' mom

Lawrenceville GA

Newly Bereaved...

You Are Not Alone

When your child has died, suddenly it seems like all meaning has been drained from your life. When you wake in the morning, it's difficult to get out of bed, much less live a "normal" life. All that was right with the world now seems wrong and you're wondering when, or if, you'll ever feel better. We've been there ourselves and understand some of the pain you are feeling right now.

We are truly glad that you have found us but profoundly saddened by the reason. We know that you are trying to find your way in a bewildering experience for which no one can truly be prepared. When you're newly bereaved, suddenly you find yourself on an emotional roller-coaster where you have no idea what to expect next. Here are thoughts on some of what you may be experiencing or feeling (many of these will apply to bereaved siblings and grandparents):

Psychological

- Your memory has suddenly become clouded. You're shrouded in forgetfulness. You'll be driving down the road and not know where you are or remember where you're going. As you walk, you may find yourself involved in "little accidents" because you're in a haze.
- You fear that you are going crazy.
- You find there's a videotape that constantly plays in an endless loop in your mind, running through what happened.
- You find your belief system is shaken and you try to sort out what this means to your faith.
- Placing impossible deadlines on yourself, you go back to work, but find that your mind wanders and it's difficult to function efficiently or, some days, at all. Others wonder when you'll be over "it," not understanding that you'll never be the same person you were before your child died—and the passage of time will not make you so.
- You find yourself reading the same paragraph over and over again trying to understand what someone else has written.

Emotional

- You rail against the injustice of not being allowed



the choice to die instead of your child.

- You find yourself filled with anger, whether it be at your partner, a person you believe is responsible for your child's death, God, yourself, and even your child for dying.
- You yearn to have five minutes, an hour, a day back with your child so you can tell your child of your love or thoughts left unsaid.
- Guilt becomes a powerful companion as you blame yourself for the death of your child. Rationally you know that you were not to blame—you most certainly would have saved your child if you'd been given the chance.
- You feel great sadness and depression as you wrestle with the idea that everything important to you has been taken from you. Your future has been ruined and nothing can ever make it right.

Physical

- Either you can't sleep at all or you sleep all the time. You feel physical exhaustion even when you have slept.
- You no longer care about your health and taking care of yourself—it just doesn't seem that important anymore.
- You're feeling anxiety and great discomfort—you're told they're panic attacks.
- The tears come when you least expect them.
- Your appetite is either gone or you find yourself overeating.

Family & Social

- If you have surviving children, you find yourself suddenly overprotective, not wanting to allow them out of your sight. Yet you feel like a bad parent because it's so difficult to focus on their needs when you're hurting so bad yourself.
- You find that your remaining family at home grieves the loss differently and you search for a common ground which seems difficult to find.
- You've been told by well-meaning people, even professionals, that 70-80-90 percent of all couples divorce after their child dies. You are relieved to find that new studies show a much lower divorce rate, from 12-16%, believed to be caused by the "shared experience" aspect of the situation.
- Old friends seem to fade away as you learn they cannot comprehend the extent or length of your grief.
- Things you liked to do which seemed so important before now seem meaningless.
- Others say you'll someday find "closure", not understanding that closure never applies when it is the death of your child.
- Fleeting thoughts of pleasurable activities bring

about feelings of guilt. If your child can't have fun, how can you do anything that brings you enjoyment?

- New friends come into your life who understand some of your grief because they've been there themselves.

Finding the "New Me"

When you're newly bereaved, you don't see how you can put one foot in front of the other, much less survive this loss. You'll never "recover" from your loss nor will you ever find that elusive "closure" they talk of on TV—but eventually you will find the "new me". You will never be the same person you were before your child died. It may be hard to believe now, but in time and with the hard work of grieving (and there's no way around it), you will one day think about the good memories of when your child lived rather than the bad memories of how your child died. You will even smile and, yes, laugh again someday—as hard to believe as that may seem. When the newly bereaved come to a meeting of The Compassionate Friends, you will be able to listen and learn from others who are further down the grief road than you. They will have made it through that first birthday, first death anniversary, first holiday, and so many other firsts that you have not yet reached.

You will learn coping skills from other bereaved parents who, like you, never thought they'd survive. There are no strangers at TCF meetings—only friends you have not yet met. Even though you are newly bereaved and the road is long, we invite you to walk with us for as long as the journey takes.

--compassionatefriends.org USA website

Friends and Family...

Say Their Names...

The time of concern is over. No longer are we asked how we are doing. Never are the names of our children mentioned to us. A curtain descends. The moment has passed. Lives slip from frequent recall. There are exceptions: close and compassionate friends, sensitive and loving family. For most, the drama is over. The spotlight is off. Applause is silent. But for us the play will never end. The effects on us are timeless.

Say their names to us. On the stage of our lives they have been both lead and supporting actors. Do not tiptoe around the greatest event of our lives.

Mention my child's name
and I may cry...

Don't mention my child's
name and it will break my
heart...

www.grievinggumdrops.com

Love does not die. Their names are written on our lives. The sounds of their voices replay within our minds.

You feel they are dead. We feel they are of the dead and still they live. They ghostwalk our souls, beckoning in future welcome. You say they were our children. We say they are. Say their names to us and say their names again. It hurts to bury their memory in silence. What they were in flesh lies buried miles away. What they are in spirit stirs within us always. They are of our past, but they are part of our now. They are our hope for the future. You say not to remind us. How little you understand we cannot forget. We would not if we could. We understand you, but feel pain in being forced to do so. We forgive you, because you cannot know. And we would forgive you anyway. We accept how you see us, but understand that you see us not at all. We strive not to judge you, for yesterday we were like you. We love you; will make no expectations toward you. But we wish you could understand that we dwell both in flesh and in spirit.

The mystery is that you do too, but know it not. We do not ask you to walk this road. The ascent is steep and the burden heavy. We walk it not by choice. We would rather walk with them in flesh, looking not to spirit roads beyond. We are what we have to be. What we have lost you cannot feel. What we have gained you cannot see. And we would not have you. Say their names, for they are alive in us. They and we will meet again, though in many ways we have never parted. They and their lives play light songs on our minds, sunrises and sunsets on our dreams. They are real and shadow, were and are. Say their names to us and say their names again. They are our children and we love them as we always did. Say Their Names!

--From "Say Olin to Say Good-bye"

by, Don Hackett



Helpful Hint...

Surviving Profound Loss

Close death left me heartbroken and spiraling deeper downward,
The world I once knew and any contentment crashed down around me,
It was so hard to go on day after day; I was often at risk of imploding,
Living on the edge and often at risk of falling off,
My life became a long, painful trek though the darkness.

Trying to keep some semblance of hope alive, I stumbled on towards the light,
I never got over the loss and never will, but carry it with me always,
But to survive the death of my child I focus on the welfare of our children,
I write, work in the garden and bushwalk in nature, this is my therapy,
It gives me the solace and inner peace I desperately need to move on.
In these bad times we all need to find special places and interests to help us,
Things to concentrate our minds on to keep us going, sane and constructive,
To help us cope after such profound loss and to take steps on the slow journey of grief,
To learn to live on, even with the gaping hole in the heart that will not fill,
Because we are loved and needed here still.
--Steven Katsineris. The Compassionate Friends Victoria Queensland AU

Book Review...



Grieving Dads: To the Brink and Back, Is a collection of candid stories from grieving dads that were interviews over a two year period. The book offers insight from fellow members of, in the haunting words of one dad, "this terrible, terrible club," which consists of men who have experienced the death of a child. This book is a collection of survival stories by men who have survived the worst possible loss and lived to tell the tale. They are real stories that pull no punches and are told with brutal honesty. Men that have shared their deepest and darkest moments. Available from The Centering Corp. 1-866-218-0101

Welcome...



A Special Message To Our New Compassionate Friends

If you are new to our chapter and have recently attended your first Compassionate Friends meeting, you may have left feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained; or you may have felt a great sense of relief knowing that you found an environment of support and understanding. Your reactions may be varied. Each of us remembers how difficult it was to walk through the meeting room doors for the first time. With the heavy load of grief

that you are carrying, you may feel that you cannot bear to hear about all the pain that is shared at meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return.

We would like to let you know that these feelings are common to all of our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who "know how you feel". Please give us at least three tries before you decide whether or not the meetings are for you. You will find a network of caring and support which will help you as you travel this journey of grief and assuredly find hope along the way. We truly care and want you to know that you need not walk alone.
-- The Compassionate Friends National Office

Holiday Healing

It's been almost two years now, another holiday season rolls around.
The second Thanksgiving without you is this week. It's just a stupid day, a day where people eat Turkey and watch football, why should I care? There is no one to visit me this year; there is no one here who cares.
The numbness is creeping in.
The pain so deep, I can't breathe, I can't think, I can't stand it.
All day long I think of you, but why?
Why is today any different than any other day?
Is it holiday traditions lost?
Is it knowing millions of parents everywhere will be with their children this week but I won't be with you?
Is it remembering the closeness and laughter on this day throughout the years?
Why do the tears fill my eyes and my heart hurt so?
Maybe somewhere deep down inside I am asking myself what am I thankful for
and this question is so very hard since you are gone.
When someone first told me to be thankful for the years I spent with you
Or to be thankful I had you in my life
I wanted to punch them and scream leave me alone you don't understand!
But now I understand because I am eternally grateful for those years.
Today almost two years since you left this place, my second Thanksgiving without you here I am thankful for all the love we shared.
I am thankful for the gift of Motherhood you each gave me, the greatest gift of all.
On the good days now, which two years since you

left this place there are more good days than not, but on the good days, I can't begin to count how many things I am thankful for.

But if I had to pick just one thing on Thursday as I say my prayers, I would have to say I am most grateful for each day I spend with both of you tucked safely in my heart!

--Deana L. Martin In Memory of my children,
Amanda Suzanne Mills and Logan Robert Mills

The Photo Album of My Mind

The photo album of my mind,
Holds treasured thoughts of you,
And I can almost see again
The things we used to do.
I hear your voice, I see your smile,
I feel you close to me.
The photo album of my mind
Shows how we used to be.
Time may have changed us through the years.
But I will always find,
You're just as I remember in
The album of my mind.
And, as I turn page after page,
Such precious scenes I see,
The photo album of my mind
Is very dear to me.
It holds the pictures of our past,
Like reels of film unwind,
I cherish all those photos in
The album of my mind.
-- Jeanne Losey, Shelbyville, IN



Hope

My heart has been broken.
My soul has been crushed.
My mind has gone to depths I never knew existed.
Places where only God,
In His most infinite Love, could understand.
And even He could not console me at times.
But I am here on earth,
For whatever reason I still do not know:
And I have hope that, in time,
God will show me the way
And give rhyme to my reason.
So I wait in hope for a future
And a new beginning.
--Kathleen Leeper TCF Valley Forge, PA



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

Sean Michael Denhart
Born: 3/88 Died: 12/20
Mother: Janna Denhart

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

**Our Children Remembered**

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

Taylor X. Hyland
Born: 8/06 Died: 7/20
Mother: Tessa Hyland

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

Margareta Sol Kubitz
Born: 9/05 Died: 9/09
Parents: Maria & Bill Kubitz

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

Joshua Lozon
Born: 6/91 Died: 6/21
Mother: Tracey Gentile

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

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

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

Kirk 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

Mathew Scott Mikelson
Born: 44/77 Died: 4/20
Mother: Dorothy Mikelson

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

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

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

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

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

Dominic 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our Children Remembered

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...



A Birthday Tribute to: Richard Lee Luthe Nov. 1976 - Jan 1998



Lost

I lost something today.
Something I can never replace
I lost something I thought I could never lose
Something that meant more than anything
I lost somebody today
Somebody who isn't coming back
I lost somebody who was very special
Somebody who I called a dear friend
I lost a piece of my heart today
A piece of my heart that is vital to life
I lost a piece of my heart I will always miss
A piece of my heart I can never replace
I lost my friend today
My friend was too young to die
I lost my friend who I dearly loved
My friend will never be forgotten
I lost Richie Luthe today
Richie Luthe will remain in our hearts
I lost Richie Luthe way too soon
Richie Luthe, I know you're in Heaven
I found my guardian angel today
My guardian angel will always protect me
I found my guardian angel in my old friend
My guardian angel will love me always
In loving memory of Richie Luthe
We Love You,

Heather Snell



For Siblings...

Reflection on Thanksgiving

By the time this is published, I've celebrated ten Thanksgivings without my brother. For the first few years, maybe the first five, celebrating a holiday without my brother felt the same as every day. I remember explaining to people that it didn't matter if it were Christmas, or Thanksgiving, or his birthday, I missed him every day, those days were no different. But the last few years, holidays have become increasingly difficult.

And that is the paradox. Because after all this time everyone assumes I've come to deal with holidays. They believe that I've processed my grief enough, and holidays, while hard, are not unbearable. But that isn't true.

I feel like I'm regressing. That I'm feeling the pain of my brother's absence on holidays, after all this time, whereas I didn't really feel it so deeply when he first died.

Growing up we never had a large Thanksgiving dinner - just our grandparents, parents, and us (my brother and me). Our house, heated by the warmth of the stove, crackling with the pops of turkey fat cooking, and filled with the aroma of sage, grease, and yeast, was where we gathered each year to celebrate family.

As I write this, I realize that I can't remember the last Thanksgiving I had with my brother. In fact I can't remember any Thanksgiving with my brother. I try. I try really hard. I press my eyes closed and try to think of home. The smell, our dining room table, food, my parent's face. It's like a big black void.

I can't remember. My deepest fear is realized; I've somehow forgotten a memory of my brother. And then, I place my feet firmly on the floor. I take a few deep breaths, and remind myself that I've come this far. I reassure myself that forgetting memories does not mean I'm forgetting him.

Forgetting his place at our Thanksgiving table does not erase facts: for twenty one years my brother existed, and for twenty years we celebrated Thanksgiving together. And then a small memory of him filling his plate with food, covering it all with gravy to my great disgust appears. And then another memory, one that has been retold for years in my family, my brother still in a highchair insisting on eating the whole turkey leg - barely able to grasp it, and gnawing on it with his tiny teeth. And then all

throughout the rest of his life his request was always a turkey leg.

My Thanksgivings can never really be whole. There is always a piece missing. I have to remember that missing piece. And after ten years, I have to forgive myself for still being so deeply sad that my brother Brian won't be joining me for Thanksgiving dinner.
--Amanda Greenwood

For Siblings During The Holiday Season

It's hard being a survivor of a brother or a sister who has died. We often forget to validate our own grief, as we struggle to comfort those around us. Sometimes we set aside our own grief so that we may help those around us— searching, perhaps, for some semblance of normalcy in a situation that is anything but normal.

The guilt of all that we experience as grieving siblings can be overwhelming: guilt for being a survivor, for crying, for not crying, for being angry at ourselves, at our parents, at our deceased sibling for leaving us so soon.

Twenty-two years after my brother's death, I still get mired in guilt, particularly at the holidays (this year in particular, because it is my first away from my parents). I have walked away from my role in the support system.

Twenty-two years later I still come down hard on myself for not being there for them. I forget to be there for myself. I never shared with my parents, or with anyone, that I was fiercely upset because our holidays were tense and seemingly full of hopelessness. I never told my mother, a decade into her grief, that her crying every Christmas in church made me feel as if I had never quite caught up to her grief.

When I was in profound moments of loneliness and grief with that stinging feeling, that I wanted to die too, I never told anyone. I felt I wasn't doing a good enough job of being a daughter, a sister, of grieving and living. And while keeping so much bottled up may seem the appropriate way to handle your own grief, I found there was no freedom in withholding.

Holidays are tricky, trying, and tragic times for all of us. They remind us of a brighter past, and a future without a loved one. Guilt seems to attach to every imaginable emotion. Why can't we be happier? Why aren't we grateful for what we have? Why are we so angry? Why can't we get out of bed in the morning? Why does life seem so hard to tackle, let alone the holidays?

When I let go of guilt, I allow myself the chance to feel the emotion. Scary though that it is, I allow

myself to get out from under the terrible pressure [that says I must] say the right thing, or meet someone else's expectations of how I should be acting and reacting to tough times. In short, I stop beating myself up.

Parents and children, without question, grieve differently. Just as we differ on what amount of sweets we think we should be able to consume, the clothes we wear, the careers we choose, the way we drive, it is natural to grieve differently. It's nothing we should -though often we do - feel guilty about. Be good to, rather than hard on, yourselves this holiday season.

--Jennifer Lewandowski, TCF Portland OR

For Grandparents...



Grandparent to Grandparent: What advice would you share with a newly bereaved grandparent?

As I pondered this question my initial response was, "I have no advice" because when you are experiencing the horror and pain of losing a grandchild there is no path that seems to lead in the direction that you wish that you could go. So many times the prayers and wishes are that the power greater than we, should reverse their decision and take us instead. Take us and allow the precious little one the opportunity to remain on this earth and fulfill our child's hopes and dreams. But we know deep in our hearts that this is not possible.

So I would say to each and every grandparent who is in pain, "build the foundation for memories" ! It is something that we do so very well. Grandparents bring to the extended family, love, hope and joy, but most important strength! Our children are looking to us for guidance and support. Talk about the missing angel and the beautiful times no matter how short they were. Bring identity to the "grandbaby" that will last through eternity with friends and family members and others that we touch. Also remember that regardless of how uncomfortable the outside world is about the mention of the name or the feelings attached, it's okay!

Seek out peace, poetry, anything of beauty that will allow you to attach to the beauty of the child that died. Music is one of the things that allowed me to cry when my stubborn strong image was refusing! Crying cleanses some of the pain and brings with it some peace. Don't punish yourself; don't second-guess about what you could have done differently to change the current situation. Just remember that neither you nor your child had control. Each of us

will deal with the grief as our minds will allow and no one has the right to tell you to "get over it, get on with your life"! You will never get over it; you will only learn to put it into perspective as that hole in your heart the size of the Grand Canyon begins to mend.

--Pamela, Handprints/ Summer 2001 Newsletter

From Our Members...

My Sister, Emma

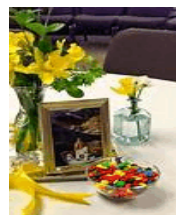
It's been four years since we lost her.
Do I still feel the pain? Of course.
But when I think of her,
I think of the smiles, jokes, games,
Even the fights.
It's been a long time since we lost her.
And the ache is starting to fade.
This isn't because I'm forgetting her,
It's because I realized that being sad isn't going to help.
Why think of the bad,
When all we need is to think of the good.
It hasn't been long since we lost her.
But it feels like forever.
I know that four years isn't long
And there will be many more years to come without her.
I'm still getting used to not waking up on Saturdays
and not seeing you in your bed.
Asleep with a teddy bear.
Or you coming home from school
With your little pink backpack.
And this is why the ache is fading.
It will never leave.
But if I continue to think about the good,
Then my joy and love can overshadow my sadness.
--Joey Fisher TCF South Bay/L.A., CA

Do you have a favorite article, 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.

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.

Flash Zoom Meetings ... are called on short notice, and are of shorter duration. The intent is to check in on each other, nothing more. The goal is to meet weekly but if it occurs every other week that's ok. If you are interested in joining, contact Leo at (310) 283-6739.



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: Nov. 1st for Dec. birthdays). If you miss the deadline, call Lynn at (310) 963-4646 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 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.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.

Other Grief Support Websites...

thetearsfoundation.org
 goodgriefresources.com
 bereavedparentsusa.org
 healingafterloss.org
 survivorsofselfharm.com
 taps.org (military death)
 save.org (suicide/depression)
 pomc.com (families of murder victims)
 grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)
 www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)
 Griefwords.com (for grandparents)



childloss.com
 griefwatch.dom
 opentohope.com
 webhealing.com
 alivealone.org
 angelmoms.com

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.

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 CHAPTER ZOOM HOSTS: Connie & Leo Liccaridone
 NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines
 PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks
 TREASURER: Kristy 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. When making a donation, please make checks payable to The South Bay/L.A. chapter.

Mail to: The South Bay/LA chapter of Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance CA 90510

In loving memory of all our children. While we wish you were here to celebrate Thanksgiving together as a family, we are grateful we were blessed to have you in our lives. We love you and wish you all a peaceful Thanksgiving.
TCFSBLA

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 _____

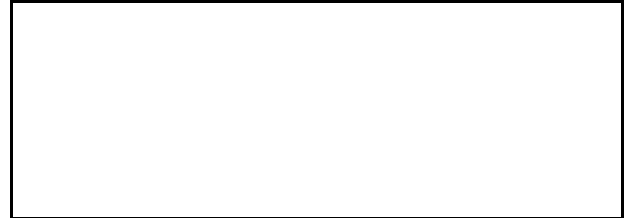
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue

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