



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

April 2022 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be April 7th, the first ***Thursday***
of the month at 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION:

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

DIRECTIONS: Pacific Coast Hwy. to Palos Verdes Blvd. → Palos Verdes Blvd. becomes Palos Verdes Drive West. Veer Right. → Go to Via Corta (stop sign just past Malaga Cove Plaza). Turn right. → Go down hill to Arroyo (stop sign). Turn right. → Continue down hill to end of street. → Turn left on Paseo Del Mar. → 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 ***Thursday***, April 7th meeting will start with "Our Personal Struggle Through Grief."

To participate in our Zoom meetings, contact Leo at (310) 283-6739 or Liccia79@gmail.com for the link.

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 Connie at (310) 292-5381.

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The **Thursday, April 7th** meeting will start with **“Our Personal Struggle Through Grief.”**

Everyone struggles to find answers after the death of a child. We are exhausted with the lack sleep, of energy, and the overwhelming pain and confusion that consumes us in the beginning. On our grief journey we will have many thoughts to overcome. By examining our feelings and trying to figure out how to survive our grief, we eventually come to terms with our loss. Some of us may grapple with certain parts of our grief longer than other parts, but the soul searching and struggle is what eventually quells the pain of our loss. The following articles share some of the common things that we may individually battle with on our grief path.

Journey

This journey of the bereaved, especially the bereaved parent, is unlike other battles we face. It is both an outward battle, as well as an internal battle.

Pain and challenges come from external sources, places, rooms, pictures, comments, etc. as well as from within. To say we do battle mentally is a huge understatement. The years of collected memories, moments, sounds and laughter are stored in countless files in our mind.

To close our eyes is to turn on the recordings. Eyes open is to see the tangible and physical reminders that our child once lived. Eyes closed is to experience the view from an anguished heart. Both are brutal.

One of the most difficult aspects of grief, for me, is that the path truly must be walked alone. Others can and do support us, in part, but no one looks through the unique lens we do. Actions taken in an attempt to “help” us often hurt us. Words given, well meaning, often isolate us further.

There is no blame, for how can one possibly know the endless and varied nuances of grief we now live with, except for those who’ve walked this path. Yes, people may say we have shut ourselves off, or have become “too private”, but often we didn’t start out that way. We are quickly advised how to feel, what to do, and when to do it! Shame sets in, guilt sets in, and we withdraw. Though it is a lonely place, it truly is the place where we must find our inner strength and begin to rebuild.



Rebuild our broken heart and soul. No one knows, including us, the exact stones needed to form the path on which we use to go forward. It is also a place of discovery. It is in those times where the tears fall, the heart rages against the injustice and the anguish pours out that we begin to find ourselves. Yes, the night feels horrific, but the morning comes, and we realize we are still breathing. It is this very battle we do alone, and in the darkest night, that allows for a new dawn.

Grief is work. Hard work. We must face it, feel it, let it break us and then we must get up and put ourselves back together again. Oh there will be more nights and darkness, but we’ll come to trust that the sun will rise again. In time, and with the backing of Compassionate Friends, we can not only survive, but thrive. Your life may just be the inspiration that saves another.

-- Michelle Thomason, In loving memory of her son, Michael Thomason

Playing the Blame Game

Don’t should on yourself -- Anonymous.
Or others. --Aaron Pueschel

Have you seen the movie, War Games? If you have, recall that final scene. The clock on the WOPR is ticking down to world annihilation. David, the teenage computer whiz, is locked into grim battle against Joshua, the computer. They are involved in a simulated game of Global Thermo Nuclear Warfare. The game is imaginary but the consequences are deadly. David asks Joshua to engage in Tic Tac Toe. Will Joshua learn the lesson of Tic Tac Toe in time to save the world?

The huge screens at NORAD go crazy with defense strategies and results, all the same in the end, world annihilation. Still the clock keeps ticking. The games whiz by like a blur on Joshua’s computer screen. The Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles are beginning to launch. Global holocaust is imminent! Zero hour hits!! A pause. Nothing happens. Joshua’s computer voice breaks the silence, “Strange game. The best move is not to play the game at all. How about a game of chess?” The world is saved. Joshua learned the winning strategy for Global Thermo Nuclear Warfare. Don’t play the game.

After a son or daughter dies, surviving family members can be sucked into a game like Tic Tac Toe, or Global Thermo Nuclear Warfare. So often its results are very tragic also. It is the Blame

Game. Child loss leaves families with overpowering feelings of helplessness, despair, anxiety, outrage, and hurt. The pain is so immense, family members feel the need to strike out at each other. Placing blame is a normal reaction after child loss.

While blaming others is a normal reaction, I am learning to use one word with a lot of caution. It is should. I think about stories from the Old West with the folklore on the shootouts. Think about it. So many of those shootouts ended in much bloodshed. There weren't any winners.

Now replace shoot with should. Homes of grieving families can be places of shouldouts", where in place of loaded guns, people point loaded fingers. Think of these words as bullets. "You should have been a better father." "You should have been a better mother."

The loaded finger also creates self inflicted wounds. Ever say something like this, "I should have paid more attention to who Susie's friends were," or, "I should have recognized the danger signals when Billy was reaching out for help." All of these reactions are to be expected.

Whenever I have wanted to fix the blame for Carl's death on someone, I have found it worthwhile to take a step back and analyze what fuels my desire to fix blame. Often my blame is fueled by anger. Anger, which is a normal response to a youngster's passing. This starts to take a bit of the edge off. Also, I am so thankful that when I have been at my lowest, even my angriest, I have found trusted friends to talk to. These friends, some of whom are parents experienced in child loss, give me healthy perspectives to look at my feelings.

What about when the finger of blame is pointed at me by someone else? Usually, it is someone I love deeply. What do I do? My immediate response is to load my finger, point, and shoot, or should back at them. Off course, that accomplishes absolutely nothing except to turn the circumstances into something even more horrific. My late father-in-law would talk to me in his gentle, indirect way. Hold steady. Evaluate the situation. He would remind me that the person pointing the finger at me was hurting because they loved Carl too. He gave me a perspective on the other person's feelings while validating my own feelings.

Blame is not necessarily negative. Remember, the root of blame is often anger. Anger can be the catalyst for grieving families to bring about positive

changes. It fuels the desire to bring about something good from something bad. Anger was, for me, an ingredient in getting TCF started here in Visalia.

There's fixing the blame, and then there's playing the Blame Game. Fixing the blame for a child's death is normal and later subsides. Playing the Blame Game is different. The winning strategy for the Blame Game is simple. Don't play it. Nobody wins. Everyone loses. Pause. Take a step back. Analyze what fuels the desire to place blame of your child's death on someone or you. Find a trusted friend to talk to. You will be glad you did.

Be good to yourself. Aaron.

--Aaron Pueschel In Memory of my son, Carl



Pity Party

I feel that every day I engage in a battle with my very own personal adversary. It plagues me and pursues me relentlessly. It has many tricks. It's a master at the "sneak attack." My adversary's name is Self-Pity.

I know the mistakes I'm making in this daily battle. I am supposed to ask "Why not me?" instead of "Why me?" I'm supposed to focus on the things and people I have and not on what I have lost. But there's a significant gap between knowing in my head what I'm supposed to do and actually being able to do it.

My most effective defense against it is to focus on people who are enduring a similar loss; I hold them in my heart and mind. I am grateful that because of The Compassionate Friends, they have names and faces and are real to me. I also try to remember those who inspire me by the way they endure different challenges, such as serious illness or financial misfortunes. However, this perspective takes effort and energy. Energy is in short supply for me.

I try not to give in to it, my Self-Pity beast. It's hard when my son's friends and classmates are graduating from college and have photos of their celebrations all over Facebook (note to self: it is not a good idea to look at Facebook).

I don't understand why it's called a "pity party." It sure doesn't feel like a party. It feels like a war.
--Peggi Johnson TCF Arlington, VA

Death During Or Following Conflict

A little discussed problem for many bereaved parents is the state of their relationship with their child in the day or hours preceding the child's death. This problem is not unique to those of us who have had either our only child or all our children die.

Most frequently the issue revolves around argument, anger or harsh words between parent and children as the last contact before death. It is small wonder that this should weigh heavily. None of us would willingly choose such an unpleasant permanent parting. Yet, it is not entirely uncommon, as my own situation may illustrate.

Olin, our seventeen year old son and only child was working in the dining room and kitchen of a summer camp a few miles down the road from home. On the day of his death, July 6th, I suddenly realized it was 8:AM and rushed to his room to get him up. Unfortunately, he had been out somewhat late the night before and had assured me that this would be no problem for working the next day. Thus, I yelled at him to get up, only to be assured by him that he had time. That seemed farfetched and I was verbally forceful in requiring him to get up and leave for work. Our dialogue was heated and senseless, my own portion being a good example of a parent's unreasonable demand (so I discovered from Olin's employer)

I was troubled throughout the morning and resolved to apologize that evening and straighten out the needless tension of the morning. But such was not to be, for at noon he was dead, and never again would we meet in life.

It took many months of soul searching with much time spent in the abyss of depression and despair, before I could come to terms with the conflict which seemed to cloud the loving nature of our relationship. I finally came to understand that the years of our contact as father and son, the genuine love we shared, was the true measure of our care and concern for one another. It was not the first time one of us had been unreasonable or argued.

Had he lived, we likely would have had other, similar struggles, for such is normally a part of human association. Indeed, it is only in loving we shared the closeness that enabled the intensity of

parent-child disagreements.

Olin was a teenage boy seeing a growing measure of independence, albeit with the security of a strong and loving home base. And I was a parent trying to learn how to let go and still keep him safe. Such is a usual time of passage between parents and kids. This is not to make light of such a time, for in the best of circumstances it is difficult to deal with in a constructive manner.

When children die in the midst of turmoil like this, it is only reasonable to expect a deepening of torment and guilt. For all of us, it is wise to accept that the love between parent and child, before, during and after the teenage years, keeps both vulnerable to disagreement or conflict.

I finally came to understand that, had the situation been reversed, and I had died, Olin would feel a greater intensity of that same type of remorse and guilt. Like me, Olin would finally be forced to examine our years together, to remember other conflicts, and recall the constancy of the love and care with which all were ultimately resolved. I believe he would come to realize that I did not doubt his love, that a petty argument had no power to devastate what love had built between us.

So at last I did still the guilt of our final parting, realizing that the bond of love was the bulwark of our relationship, thus rendering it impervious to smallness and pettiness. We love our children and try to do what is right for them. But, we are human, without qualities of infinite foresight or insight. In spite of our intentions, we make mistakes. We feel the same emotions our children feel, and even though we strive to be more mature, we do not always succeed. In our loving, we make errors in parenting just as our youngsters, in their loving, make errors too.

Olin knew I loved him. He knew before, during, and beyond death. This I firmly believe, after walking the deep valleys of my guilt and anguish. was resolved, I urge you to examine your relationship with your son or daughter in all its expression during all the time you had together. I know you will feel again and see again the love. Know that your child saw and felt the love, too. Remember, whatever your final words, you parted in love. In that same love you remain. And many of us firmly believe that it is in that love, ultimately, that you will meet again.

--Don Hackett, TCF Hingham, MA



Easter And Grief Work

The Easter message of Resurrection should be especially comforting to bereaved parents because of its promise that our children live, and if they do, we shall surely be reunited in some form with them in an afterlife. However, particularly in the first years after Tricia's death, I did not find much joy in singing "Hallelujah." I felt God knew about His Son, and while I tried not to begrudge Him that, I had no such positive reassurances about my daughter.

When people told me "God is a Bereaved Parent, too," I often thought that He made the plan for Jesus' life, but I didn't know the overall plan for Tricia's. God would be more in my position of anguish, sadness, and disappointment if Jesus had decided to say, "No, I believe I do want this cup taken from Me." Then God's plans would've been thwarted just as I felt mine were. So I didn't get much comfort from God's bereavement. After all, God at the time of Jesus' death was a Spirit Being and Jesus was an Earth Being. Jesus' death once more put Him on a spiritual plane, thus reuniting Him with His Father. I wished the reverse could be true for me.

Knowing what I believed about life after death became very important after Tricia died. Had she completed, according to some cosmic plan, what she came to this earth to do and therefore was given an opportunity to leave? So began my quest for my "Easter" victory. It's been a long trek which had to reconcile my traditional church upbringing of blind believing with what became a new spiritual concept of Easter. Please note I don't say religious concept. I do believe after much reading, reasoning, and searching that Tricia lives and that one day in some form I will be reunited with her. Through memories of her and our mutual love and respect for each other I am already reunited with her, transcending the physical limitations of this earthly plane. My mind and heart can take me to her whenever I choose.

I also intuitively sense that at times she reaches out and touches me and her earth family. I wore her amethyst birth stone ring to her brother's wedding in February, felt she was there with us, felt her love surround her family. For the newly bereaved, happy occasions are so often tinged with almost unbearable sadness and tears. After

fourteen years, Tricia's presence at her brother's wedding brought no tears to my eyes. I felt she was delighted, laughing her clear tinkling laugh, at some of the frantic antics that went on in order to get that wedding held and concluded.

My husband sometimes accuses me of being a heretic. Possibly I am when it comes to accepting what I was taught to believe before I reached the age of reason and agony. I do know I am more integrated spiritually since I doubted, disputed, and at least partially resolved what I perceived as conflicts between the way life is and the way my religious beliefs had explained it to me.

Each bereaved parent will eventually untangle the mystery of his own spiritually if he desires to do that. Certainly the

bereaved should give themselves license to question and reach out for the Hallelujah of Easter morning. It's there!

--Elizabeth B. Estes TCF, Augusta GA



Try to Imagine

I try to imagine
 what your grief is like,
 And then you show me.
 I imagine a storm,
 You show me a hurricane.
 I imagine a river of tears,
 You show me a flood.
 I imagine emptiness,
 You show me endless expanse of the universe.
 I tried to imagine, but I could not understand ~
 Until you showed me.
 --By Aaron Espy

Peace

Today is the one year anniversary of the day my son realized he could no longer live. I know this because he told us so in the writings he left behind. It is not the anniversary of his death. What I remember of the day is that it was not unlike any other. There were no family fights or friend drama. There were no failed tests or poor academic projects. It was just a day like today.

That week was just like any other as well. Tom attended high school and college classes, and we worked, going through our days just as we always

do. But Tom found a way to spend special time with each of us before he left. He and L.J. spent Monday night playing music together. I tried to record it, but it was not perfect, so I deleted the file that night. Tuesday night he and I made his favorite meal together, pasta with hot sausage red sauce. Then, we played a complicated computer game which consisted of me pushing random buttons to fend off the bad guys while he worked his magic on the most powerful villains. We played for a few hours, until my hands hurt and I could not see straight from all of the blurred images on the television. He played the music he loved and told me which was his favorite song. I listened to it through his ears, but cannot remember the song name. That night, he peeked his head in our room, and played with the light switch, turning it on and closing the door behind him with a mischievous grin. He spent the next few days with his father, doing the things they loved to do together, including gaming with a great bunch of folks on Friday night. He spent Saturday and Sunday at our house, doing homework, playing on the computer, and listening to music.

That Sunday, as I cooked in the kitchen and talked casually with him, he wrote his final farewell to us. We had no idea of his pain, his plan, or our future. In his note, he told us that past week had been the happiest he could remember because he was able to live during that time without fear and anxiety of the future. So a part of me is at peace, if that's possible, because he was able to spend his final hours free from his demons. But how I wish, in that week, he had found the strength to fight through the darkness and tell us of his inner war. How I wish I had seen past his armored wall into his soul, so I could pull him through to the light of our love. I wish we could have shown him how many people appreciated him and were impacted by him, and how many would have stood by his side as he fought his undiagnosed illness so he could win his battle with a full army. I wish...

I miss him every hour of every day. I miss his humor, his intelligence, his presence, his thoughtfulness and his soul. Someone recently responded on one of my posts that maybe Tom misses me, too. I hope he is beside me as I write, and can feel the outpouring of whatever is stronger than love, that I have for him. I pray that through

his death, he found the peace he could not find in life.

--Kimberly Starr TCF Facebook Loss to Suicide Group In Memory of my son Tom

Inviting Others to Share

As a little girl I remember telling my grandmother that I wanted to have identical twin girls someday. She smiled, and said, "They are so cute, but it's very rare to have identical twins." Still I quietly held the dream in my heart. I grew up, got married, and had a daughter, a heartbreaking miscarriage, and then another daughter. On the 2-year anniversary of my first loss, I learned I was expecting twins, and a few weeks later, I learned they were identical twin girls. I felt like I was living in a fairytale.

It's been nearly six years since my identical twin daughters, Everleigh Grace and Annabelle Rose, were born sleeping. My dream was shattered. Friends and family offered platitudes, prayers, and comments that were well-meaning, but utterly unhelpful. Most were uncomfortable with my grief struggling to look into my swollen, blood shot eyes and just be present with me.

In the direct aftermath, I couldn't leave my house. I had already been so disappointed by others' discomfort surrounding my losses that I didn't want questions and comments to come up after church or during a trip to the grocery store with my living children. "Will you try for a boy?" some would ask. "Your girls are so adorable. Will you have any more?" Before loss, questions of this kind delighted me. I enjoyed talking about my children and my dreams for our family. After loss, the questions stirred anger, longing and sorrow. In the early days it was difficult to know how to respond.

I have a deep need to tell my children's stories, so at some point along the way I decided to answer kindly, but honestly when questions arose. I would offer a response like, "I'm not sure what's next. My journey into motherhood has been more difficult than I thought it would be," or "I always dreamed of having more children, but it's not been an easy journey for me, so I'm not sure." I have found these responses often open the door for dialogue. My hope in doing so is that others sense



my invitation to share their own stories freely, and that they would hear mine.

It's always a risk, but it's one I've decided to take almost every time.

I don't share the sacred details with strangers. I have a handful of friends who know my whole journey, and a good therapist who holds my babies' stories with great care and kindness. Several of the women in my M.E.N.D. group have heard my three children's stories so many times they could recite the stories themselves. I know their children's names and their stories also. I like that there are places like M.E.N.D. where the really difficult details can be spoken and held by others. I will forever share when given the opportunity, and I hope others feel my invitation to share their own stories.

-- Tiffany Marshall, M.E.N.D.—Tulsa

Seasoned Greivers...

Something I Wrote

You can usually tell by the tone of my writing what sort of day I am having. Good, bad or indifferent. Happy, sad, or reflective.

Mostly lately I have been in a very reflective mood. I sit and think about the things I have been, and am still, going through. I wonder a lot about how different my life could have been if certain events had not taken place.

I wish that my life had not had so many tragic moments but I think I can honestly say that I don't regret the changes these events have made in my life. I certainly wish that most of them had never happened but I am learning to live with the person I have become and I mostly quite like this new me.

The emotional pain will never entirely go away. There are spiritual wounds that will never heal this side of heaven. I don't feel 'lucky' that my life is so changed, but I can, at times like this, embrace that change and be thankful for the gifts it has brought into my life.

I may be less tolerant of what I see as trivial problems, in my own life and the lives of those around me, but I 'feel' deeper and I 'love' deeper. I have gained more compassion and empathy.

I am learning to be more patient. I find infinite pleasure in the smallest of God's gifts. A sunset or

a rainbow can move me deeply. Music and stories carry me further into a life of love than they ever have before. Talking to friends and making new ones. Deeper, richer friendships because I am no longer the shallow know it all I once thought I was.

I do 'know' a lot now. I know not to take loving relationships for granted. I know that good health is truly a blessing. I know that small things can be vitally important but that the 'small stuff' is not worth stressing over. I know that love is what makes the world go round and that the world can come to a jarring halt when that love is taken away from you. And then I know that love is never lost. Not for long. You might think it has been lost but really you only misplace it for a while. Until you start to work through your grief, then you realize it's been there all along. The painful emotions just covered it up for a little while.

When my Lissa died, I thought that my life had come to an end. And I was right in a way. My old life ended that night and a new life began. I'm still not sure where this new life will take me. I'm still getting used to the changes. I don't know if my life will even continue to follow the path it is on, but I trust that God knows what He is doing with me and that He has enough love and strength for the both of us when my own seems to disappear in a fog of grief.

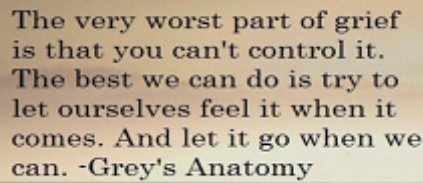
My grief journey is not over. It will probably only end with my own death. I have lost so many and so much already in this life and there are sure to be more losses in the future but each will bring its change. Hopefully, the change will be for the better.

I think that the important thing is to recognize the need and reasons for the changes we all go through. If you never know pain, how can you be sympathetic? If you never experience grief, how can you empathize? Loss teaches us to be compassionate. It shows us that we have great reserves of strength that we can call on when it's needed. If you never know love, how can you give and accept love? Even when love causes great pain, it is there, it is real and it is eternal.
--Deb Gates TCF Victoria Queensland AU

Newly Bereaved...

What I Wanted To Say Today

I wrote a note to the mom of a 22 year old girl who died. I wanted to say don't believe



The very worst part of grief is that you can't control it. The best we can do is try to let ourselves feel it when it comes. And let it go when we can. -Grey's Anatomy

those other cards, the ones that say "time heals" and "God only takes the best" and "may your sorrows be lessened." You'll only be disappointed. I wanted to say this is the most heart-wrenching, chest crushing, breath stealing tragedy on earth. I wanted to tell her there will be days she wants to die, and friends who will not understand some of the things she does or says.

I wanted to tell her she will still feel her daughter's presence at times, sometimes so strongly that it is as if she is dancing just at the edge of whatever activity is going on. And other times she might not feel her presence at all. I wanted to tell her that her life will not go back, that she will never be the same, because a piece of her left with her daughter. And that even though the pain does not go away, somehow her soul will eventually make enough room so she can hold it all—the grief, the pain, the joy and the love. I wanted to tell her... but I didn't. Instead, I wrote—I'm sending love, for words are pointless right now. And that is the truth.

--Susi Costello Charlotte NC

Friends and Family...

Our Child's Birthday

Many bereaved parents begin to have trouble as the time of their child's birthday grows near. Even those whose child has died a number of years ago. The ache that is in their heart is always there and the yearning for their child is never more strong than around the time of their child's birth.

The greatest gift you could give to a parent who has lost a child is to listen intently as they reminisce and share memories of their child. Call a special friend who has lost a child on that child's birthday and encourage them to talk about him or her. Or better yet, invite your friend to coffee or lunch so you can look into their eyes and they can feel your compassion and empathy.

Many parents relish the opportunity to share pictures of their child with others. If your friend likes doing this, ask that they bring photos, a scrapbook or mementos of their child. It will help to spark fond memories of a happier time.

Make your list ahead of time. Ask your friend questions in order to draw them out such as; do you remember how you felt when you were

anticipating the birth of your child? How did you feel when they were born? How did you come to pick your child's name? What was your child like as a baby? How old was your child when they took their first step? What was their first word? Do you remember your child's first day at school? What was their favorite color? What was their personality like? Did your child take after someone in your family? Did your child have a beloved pet? Did your child enjoy a special hobby or activity? Do you have any stories to recant about a memorable family vacation or gathering? What was their favorite holiday? Did your child have a favorite book, song or movie? Do you remember any heartwarming or funny stories about your child? The list could go on and on.

Just stop and think about it for a moment. You can also make your own list and give it to a trusted family member or confidant to ask you when it's time for your child's birthday. The point is to draw the parent out. Try and get your friend to remember the beautiful sweet story that was their child's life and not to focus only on their passing.

Once they get started they will recall wonderful things that were once forgotten. A child's death is only a small moment of time in their short lives. Remembering a child's life in this way can be a very cathartic and healing experience for a parent whose child has died. As bereaved parents, we know all too well that most of the people in our lives do not want us to speak of our child. I can't think of a better gift to give to another parent who is like we are than to talk about, honor and celebrate the life of their child.

--Janet G. Reyes TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

Helpful Hint...



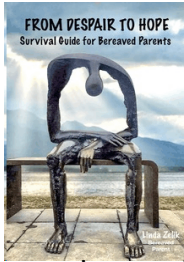
Excerpt from "How to Survive the Loss of a Child"

"Through grief, we become wiser, more understanding, more compassionate. Now, more than ever, we can see that the hope of grief lives in the lessons that are there for us; lessons that challenge us to live more authentically; lessons that offer us everyday the opportunity to participate in the adventure of life; and, most important, lessons that encourage us to share our love, our talents, and our special gifts with all who might need them."

-- Catherine M Sanders PhD



Book Review...



From Despair to Hope, Survival Guide for Bereaved Parents

A well-written comprehensive guide for dealing with the grief of losing a child. Linda Zelik gives practical suggestions and personal

experiences in an easy to use format to help bereaved families cope with this most devastating life experience. I highly recommend it.”

--Kitty Edler, bereaved mother, co-founder of the South Bay L.A. Chapter and Former TCF Board of Directors President.

Available in paperback or Ebook at Amazon.com

Welcome...

Strange Words Welcome New Members

I am always amazed at the instant empathy we each feel as new members come to their first meeting. We have the strangest welcome for these parents: “We are so sorry you have to be here.”

In other organizations the questions are probing: where did you go to school, where do you work, where do you live? All designed to “size up” the newcomer, put him or her in the proper perspective of a neatly ordered world. For us, this information is meaningless. We know the world isn’t neat and orderly; we discovered that when we lost our children. We care about you, the newly bereaved parent, whose life was tossed into a cosmic blender when your child died. We care because we are you. We have been here a while, in this purgatory of pain. We have learned to live our lives in a different way, to place value on understanding and hope, the intangibles of the purest meanings of life. We have learned to value each other, to reach out and talk, to wait patiently during the silences needed to form thoughts. We listen intently as you quietly say your child’s name, tell your child’s story, speak of your heartbreak.

Yes, this is a different kind of welcome. But it is the most deeply sincere welcome we will ever receive. We are kindred souls, you and I. Each of us lives in the “after death” world of losing our child. Each of us has learned gradually that the hope we have attained has made life better, lessened the pain, and moderated the isolation, tears, emotional devastation and pure mayhem that once overtook

us. Each of us has learned this slowly, in our own time and in our own way.

Each month new parents who have suffered the most horrific loss that a human can endure are welcomed into our group. We reach out, we listen with our hearts and we remember.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF, Katy, TX
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

Let Me Walk Beside You

Let me walk beside you
My heart's not made of stone
I understand how you feel
You do not walk alone.
I know the pain you carry
I know what you're going through
I have walked in your shoes
I am here for you.
I want you to mention your child
Even though they're not here to touch
They will always be with you
Because you loved them so much.
Their memories will live forever
They will never go away
They're always here beside you
Each and every day.
You'll talk about your child forever
They meant the world to you
They want you to go on
To do the things you used to do.
Their spirit is always around you
They feel all the love you give
They send you signs to let you know
That in your heart they live.
They know you love them dearly
As you mention their name each day
They are listening to every word
They will never go away.
Your child walks with angels
In Heaven up above
They are watching over you
Always sending you their love.
Always carry them with you
And one day you will be
Standing there beside them
Again for you to see
Let me walk beside you
I'll be there till the end
Because your hurt is with me
I am your Compassionate Friend.
--Jack and Dee Heil

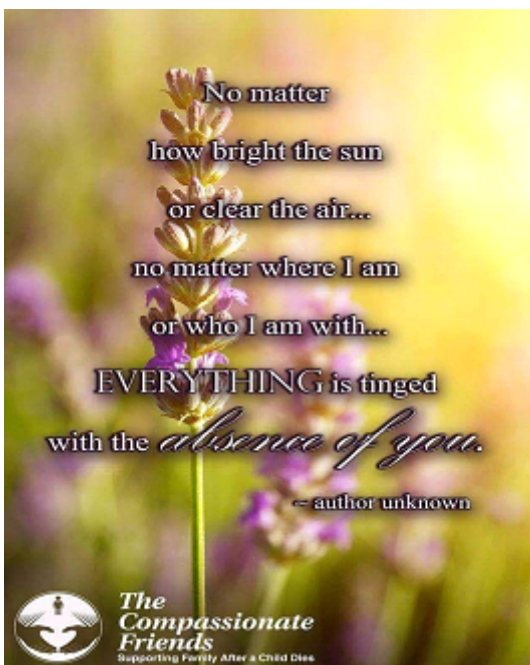
A Little Farther Down the Road

I know those tears you're crying
 I've been there in your shoes
 You feel like there's no use trying
 Like there's nothing left to lose.
 You take one small step forward
 Then move two steps back
 You may not see it now
 But it won't always be like that.

A little farther down the road
 You'll see the sun again.
 A little farther down the road
 You'll look back at where you've been.
 You'll see how far you've come since then
 It's a well used road I know
 A little farther down the road
 The strength will come to go.
 --Author unknown

Imagine

Imagine for a moment a mobile; all the shapes are of different weights and design. But they hang together harmoniously; each catching the sunlight and creating a melodious rhythm in the wind. Now snip one of the pieces; there is chaos, each of the remaining pieces smash into one another, and what was a melodious sound is now a clanging almost wailing in the wind. When a child is snatched by death from a family the results are the same, multiplied innumerable times. --Stephan Barrett

**It Will Be Another Birthday Without You**

The sun will shine
 roses bloom, geese fly
 throughout the sky
 stocks will trade,
 the weatherman predict
 politicians debate
 It'll seem like another day
 just a day, same 24 hours
 not a special holiday
 But to this mother
 who will stand at the grave
 lifting balloons into the sky
 serving angel food cupcakes
 with rainbow icing
 coated with tears
 fluctuating between emotions:
 the grief over death
 the celebration over birth
 For this mother
 It will be yet
 Another birthday without you.
 Alice J. Wisler In loving memory of son, Daniel

My Memories of You

My memories are precious,
 My memories of you.
 I treasure them dearly;
 I keep them hidden from view.
 In the vault of my mind,
 With no lock and no key,
 It cannot be opened
 By anyone but me.
 I take them out
 From time to time
 To polish and clean them,
 Keep them fresh in my mind.
 To keep you here near me,
 And to never forget
 How valuable they are
 To me, and yet
 I still feel so poor,
 So alone and deprived
 Because you're no longer among us,
 You're no longer alive.
 So I cry to myself,
 As I lay down to sleep,
 And I still cling to you
 Through the memories I keep.
 --By Dale Willett



Our Children Remembered



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

Josus Isaac Alvarez
Born: 3/04 Died: 6/07
Mother: Elizabeth Eenteno

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 Albarez

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

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

Cheianne 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 Trillegi & 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

Shawn Eric Fillion
Born: 12/82 Died: 8/21
Mother: Lise Fillion

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

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

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



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

Kathryn Anne Kelly
Born: 12/72 Died: 1/91
Parents: Dick & Timmy Kelly

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

Robert Andrew Mead
Born: 5/65 Died: 4/11
Mother: Carol Mead

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

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

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

Nicole Marie Megaloudis
Born: 10/84 Died: 2/04
Mother: Gail Megaloudis-Rongen

Bishop Michael Hernandez
Born: 3/98 Died: 6/21
Father: John Hernandez

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

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

Shawn Mellen
Born: 05/81 Died: 8/99
Godmother: Rose Sarukian

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

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

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

Damion Mendoza
Born: 7/76 Died: 6/92
Parents: Carlene & Paul Mendoza

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

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

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

Christopher Metsker
Born: 11/94 Died: 3/18
Parents: Justin & Tara Metsker

Sarah Jade Hurley
Born: 6/97 Died: 5/17
Father: Tim Hurley
Grandmother: Laurie Hurley

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

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

Blanca Isabel Meza
Born: 9/21 Died: 9/21
Mother: Angela Azurdin-Meza

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

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

Jesse Robert Martinez
Born: 1/89 Died: 9/21
Father: Harry Martinez

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

Steven Ishikawa
Born: 9/75 Died: 4/17
Mother: Miki Ishikawa

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

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

Steven Douglas Millar
Born: 2/70 Died: 10/00
Parents: David & Suzanne Millar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jason Christopher Jenkins
Born: 4/86 Died: 11/20
Parents: Alvin & Caprice Jenkins

Emma Nicole Lerner
Born: 11/99 Died: 7/06
Mother: Nancy Lerner

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

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

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

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

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

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

Emily Matilda Kass
Born: 6/95 Died: 3/06
Mother: Susan Kass

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

Kirk Nicholas Mc Nulty
Born: 7/84 Died: 2/14
Mother: Elaine Mc Nulty

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

Jillian Nicole Katnic
Born: 3/87 Died: 10/18
Mother: Debbie Hughes

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

Jeremy Stewert Mead
Born: 10/61 Died: 11/14
Mother: Carol Mead

Douglas Drennen Kay
Born: 3/72 Died: 9/06
Parents: Diane & Steve Kay



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

Christopher Murphy
Born: 11/92 Died: 4/18
Mother: Deborah Murphy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Our Children Remembered



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

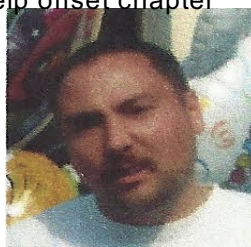
* For corrections or to add your child to the Our Children Remembered section of the newsletter, call Lynn at (310) 963-4646 and leave a message.

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.)

A Birthday Tribute to: Edward W. Myricks III April 1972 -Oct 2011

Another birthday for our beloved



son. We're getting older, but you will always remain strong, young and handsome. Forever 39. Don't forget to mark the path for us when it's our time to be with you. We love and miss you, so very much.

Love, Mom & Dad

A Birthday Tribute to: Joseph E. Licciardone April 1994 – March 2016



Joseph, you were a genuinely happy and kind soul passionate about soccer, playing the drums for friends, grooving to alt rock/reggae music, and just hanging out. We miss you dearly at our many family gatherings and you'd be amazed at how those little nieces and nephews, who'd climb on you with glee, have grown. As you matured while finishing college, you grew happier about life and your future. Sitting on cloud nine, you smiled broadly as family and friends sang Happy Birthday. That smile during your 21st and ultimately last birthday, is embedded deeply in our memories.

As written on the memorial bench at the Point Vicente Interpretive Center garden, Eyes and smile readily shared passions and love with all. We love you and sense you in the beautiful amber sunsets. Your heartbeat rests but your drums beat on forever.

We love you, Joseph.

Connie, Leo Licciardone and family

For Siblings...

Do You Have Any Siblings?



I don't feel the warm rush of panic flood my chest when I'm asked this question anymore, though I've never quite gotten used to it. As a middle-aged mom, I don't actually hear it as much anymore. When I'm getting to know someone new, our inquiries tend to center around kids or jobs or news. So when someone asked me recently, I was caught off guard.

We were at my mom's doctor appointment. My mind flitted around from the fire alarm that had delayed her appointment by a half hour to my mom's health to the stubborn disbelief that I was sitting there instead of my dad, who died a year and a half ago.

"Do you have any grandchildren?" the doctor

asked my mother. My mom told him about my children. Then, before I could even see the question hurtling toward me, the doctor turned and asked me: "Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

The question sat between us, ripe and waiting. "No," I said. I shook my head, glanced at my feet. For a moment, I wondered: If the doctor had asked my mom if she had other children, would she have answered the same? Or would she have told the truth?

In the early years after my brother's death, the question haunted me. As a twenty something at the time, I heard it often. Do you have any brothers or sisters? If I said, no, I don't have a brother, I felt like I wasn't honoring my younger brother, Will, who died at 21 from substance abuse. Saying no also felt inherently dishonest. It painted an untrue picture — I had not been raised as an only child. I'd been Will's sister since I was three; I could barely remember being unbrothered. But if I said, yes, I had a brother, I'd have to also say that he died. Otherwise, they might ask where my brother lived, and if I answered, "In a box in my parent's liquor cabinet," things would get weird.

Dropping death into polite small talk almost always turns awkward. We don't learn how to speak about topics like death and grief and overdoses in school — we learn it either by being thrust into the bog of it or by having an unusually open and curious heart.

At some point, I decided on a loose rule for dealing with the inevitable question. If someone I was unlikely to have any type of consequential future relationship with — for instance, a hair stylist in a town I didn't live in — asked me if I had siblings, I'd say no and try to pivot the conversation to safer ground. If it was someone I might be edging closer to, like a neighbor or a new friend, I'd tell the truth: I had a younger brother, and he died.

The harder, more painful question now is the internal one that pulses just beneath the surface. No one has asked me it; I doubt anyone will. It's deeper and more crushing. Am I still a sister? It's been nearly 22 years now since my brother died. He's been gone for longer than he was here. And while the brutal loss doesn't haunt me every moment like it did in those early months, it remains etched on my heart. It continues to evolve, just like our relationship would've. Should've.

A year and a half ago, when my dad was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer and my mom and I sat at his bedside, I sometimes imagined a third chair with us, my brother filling it. In the loneliness of my dad's illness and death, I felt the stark pain of my missing brother rush over me again,

the wide reminder of all the awful and beautiful thresholds he should've been here for.

Sometimes I wonder if acquaintances ever see my posts on social media and wonder why I'm still writing about my brother's death all these years later. Why I keep dredging it up, running my fingers through the silt. Maybe I'd tell them it's because I can still summon up those metallic early months after Will died, the vast loneliness of searching for books to accompany me in my grief and finding more literature on pet loss than on sibling loss.

David Kessler, an expert in grief who worked with death and dying guru Elizabeth Kubler Ross, has posited that there's an often overlooked sixth stage of grief — meaning making. My interpretation of this sixth stage is that by taking some of the love I have for Will and alchemizing it into words that might help other grieving siblings, my love for him has somewhere meaningful and tangible to go.

I often receive messages from people who are wading through the raw and murky days after a sibling has died. I'm always touched by these, always grateful. I usually say a little prayer for them, for the missing galaxy of their lost sister or brother, for all the future they feel robbed of.

And I also say a thank you — to my brother, to the universe, to some unseen power — for allowing me the opportunity to extend my hand, to peer back at all the milestones I've crossed and continue to cross without my brother. Because in these moments of quiet connection, in these slivers of mentorship, I still feel like a sister.

--Lynn Shattuck TCF We Need Not Walk Alone, Autumn/Winter 2021

For Grandparents...



A Grandma's Perfect Love

Are you growing up in heaven?
Do you laugh and play and run?
Is it like a perfect playground?
Are you having lots of fun?
Do you know we love you dearly,
And miss you so each day?
Will we ever know the reason
Why you didn't get to stay?
I was thrilled to be your grandma;
I had a grandma plan.
I saw your life before you,
As only grandmas can.
I'd have spoiled you, little sweetie,
But in a way that's good.
You'd know a grandma's perfect love,
Like every baby should.

We only had a tiny cup
Of time to spend with you.
We fell in love with all our hearts,
And know you loved us, too.
So save a swing for grandma
On that playground up above.
I'm saving something special, too -
A grandma's perfect love.
-- Connie Ayres TCF, Flint, MI

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 and share, 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: April 1st for May 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 Connie at (310) 292-5381. 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 Lori 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. 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 if you want it 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.



- Connie & Leo Liccidone (chapter co-leaders)....(310) 292-5381
- Bonnie & Jarmo Mantyla (chapter co-leaders)...(310) 530-8489
- Lori Galloway(760) 521-0096
- Linda Zelik.....(310) 370-1645
- Mary Sankus.....(310) 648-4878
- 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 Rick Mogil (310) 895-2326 or 24 hrs: (310) 391-1253

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
- childloss.com
- griefwatch.dom
- opentohope.com

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

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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

CHAPTER OFFICERS:

CHAPTER CO-LEADERS: Leo & Connie Liccardone and Jarmo & Bonnie Mantoya

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Connie & Leo Liccardone

Sandra & Eddie Myricks

Jarmo & Bonnie Mantyla

Lori Galloway

Crystal Henning

Lynn Vines

Kristy Mueller

Kitty Edler

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 Dominique Oliver, May 1985 - March 2002 and Brandon Armstrong, July 1995 - July 1995.

Love, Mom

With sincere gratitude and deep appreciation, we acknowledge the generosity of the previous individuals and companies. Your tax deductible donation, given, in memory of your loved one enables us to reach bereaved parents with telephone calls and information, and they also help defray newsletter and mailing costs. Please help us reach out to others in this difficult time. Indicate any special tribute you wish printed in our newsletter.

When making a donation, please make checks payable to:
The Compassionate Friends South Bay/L.A. Chpt.
Mail to: The Compassionate Friends So Bay/ L.A. Chapter
P.O. Box 11171, Torrance, CA 90510-1171

In loving memory of _____

Birth date _____ Death date _____ From _____

Tribute _____



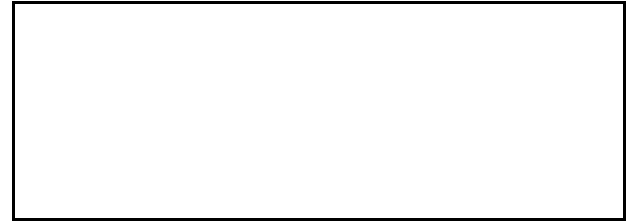
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue.

The Compassionate Friends
South Bay L.A., CA Chapter
P.O. Box 11171
Torrance, CA 9050

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April 2022

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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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