



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Nov. 2022 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be Nov. 3rd, 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, Nov. 3rd meeting will start with "Ways To Face Thanksgiving Without Your Child's Presence".

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

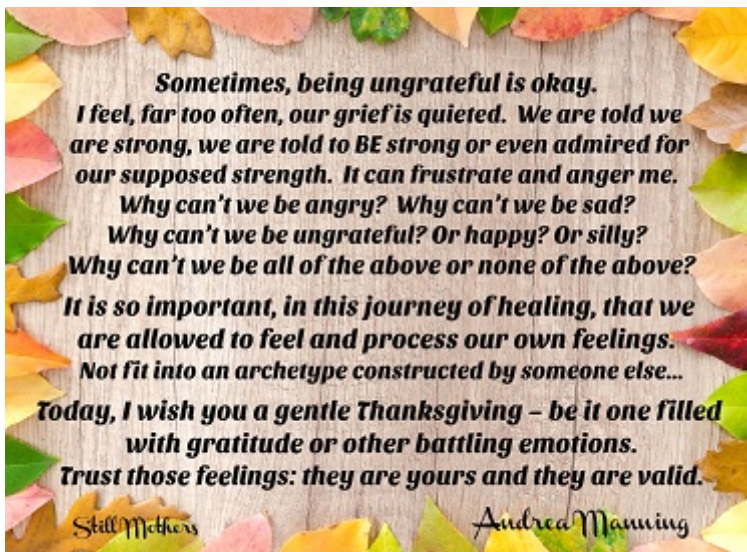
The TCF Sharing group takes place at Hoff's Hut's outdoor patio dining area (Crenshaw & 237th St in Torrance) at 1 PM. every Friday. All are invited. Please call (310) 963-4646 to let us know you are coming for the reservation.

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The **Thursday, Nov 3rd meeting will start with “Ways To Face Thanksgiving Without Your Child’s Presence.”** Even though we may not be feeling thankful after the loss of a child, Thanksgiving is still a holiday we must confront. Sometimes in our grief we need help in figuring out how to adjust to accommodate our friends and family members. While planning what to do, we have to remember that we still have choices. From ignoring it, running away, to trying to put on a brave face for others, or just remembering past years, we can become fixated on our pain and what we have lost, rather than recognizing that we still have things to be thankful for. While it’s true that the holidays will never be the same as they were before the loss of our children, with time and adjustments we will incorporate holidays back into our “new normal” life. There is no magic way to avoid the pain we will face when we’re newly bereaved, but the following articles may help. Please join us at this month’s meeting as we discuss some of the “Hows,” “Whys,” and “Ways” to get through the upcoming Thanksgiving events in our own time frames and in our own individual ways.



Thanksgiving

I remember –
the inability to chew or swallow that first Thanksgiving after Linda died; the choke-backed tears, the sick heart, the hollowness, the painful memories of Thanksgivings past and the blessed relief sleep brought to my pain.
I remember –
the busyness of working as a volunteer that second and third Thanksgiving after Linda died; the good

feeling it gave me of “running away” from it all, and the blessed relief sleep brought to my pain.
I remember –
the inability to prepare any of her favorite foods that fourth Thanksgiving after Linda died; the tears that fell at the smell of turkey cooking, the parade, football games, the emptiness, the incomplete family, and the blessed relief sleep brought to my pain.
I remember –
awakening with a lightness and joy in my heart that fifth Thanksgiving after Linda died; the thankfulness for having my remaining family together, the beautiful memories of past Thanksgivings, the “wholeness” of me and the blessed relief peace brought to my pain.
--Priscilla J. Norton, TCF, Pawtucket, RI

Thanksgiving

You may ask, “What do I have to be thankful for now that my child is dead?” After the death of a child, where is the joy in a day off from work? What pleasure can we derive from sitting around a table when someone is missing, and an uttered prayer of thanksgiving echoes hollow in our hearts?

Maybe we have been concentrating on the loss which has brought the overwhelming sorrow of death, and have forgotten the complete joy of life. When I remember laughing brown eyes, a mischievous grin, a scraped knee that Mommy could fix, a new word learned, even the memory of the realization that I had a baby boy, I have a great deal to be thankful for. I had 1 ½ years of a dream come true, and I’m truly thankful I had my child.

Sure, the agony of grief, the anguish of losing my precious child to death, the torture of wanting to see that child grow and mature and the pain of never knowing, rips me up. There is no Thanksgiving in entertaining these thoughts, so this month I am going to concentrate on the Living of my child. The Life that brought me so much joy. In this I am thankful that Evan was born, thankful that he lived, thankful that even for those short 30 months—I lived them too.

Even so, as he lived once, I live now and want a productive life. I am thankful I have come that far in my grief work to know I want to live and remember the good times without sorrow. And, I am thankful for my husband, who stood by me during the rough times. The husband who is the father of the child of our love. In him I have found

my child, in our marriage I have found love, and that love taught us how to love that child. I am also thankful for you, my real friends—Compassionate Friends.

--Edie Kaplan TCF, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Holiday Reflection

Since we cannot ignore it or make it go away, we can deal with the situation by making specific plans with our families. We can assess priorities. We can make changes. We can decide what traditions to uphold and which to set aside this year. We can choose to openly acknowledge our grief for our children, siblings and grandchildren.

We can think about some very special gifts. To ourselves we can grant the gift of acceptance by realizing that our grief is a necessary healing process. To our families, we can extend the gift of empathy by remembering that they, too, hurt. To our missing loved ones, we can bestow the gift of homage by determining to work through grief so that we may live life to the fullest.

--Candy McLaughlin TCF Minneapolis, MN

Seasoned Grieving

The Monday before Thanksgiving my emotions pulled a surprise attack. Cold sunny weather provided a Texas-perfect backdrop for Thanksgiving week, with Monday marking the first official day of preparation. Dinner would be at my sister-in-law and brother's this year. I was thankful for the contributing duties of mashed potatoes, fresh green beans and cranberry relish.

Organization brings comfort; I was working on my week's list. Then my heart wandered back to The Thanksgivings before, anticipating events that had once shaped our family holiday, traditions that my mind logically knew could never be.

It seemed as if I had to teach myself all over again. Sarah would not breeze in the door, home from college on Wednesday night. We would not huddle up to watch Texas Tech football and the Dallas Cowboys or attend worship services. I would not make a big pot of potato soup for her homecoming, hear the excited chatter of her arriving friends, or go for Mexican food the Friday after. Sarah would be almost 35 now but I could not move my years past her 24 years of life. She

was now the way I had always thought of President Kennedy after 1963, frozen solidly in time. Forever Young.

I encouraged myself. I am working to move forward, reviving my interests, creating a "new life." I appreciate my loving friends and family and am grateful for the tremendous healing power of a struggling faith. Writing through the days helps me to focus. I have learned who to trust with my thoughts and when to lock up.

Thinking back before Sarah died, it is true that until I had experienced the loss of my own child, I was incapable of understanding the depths of such pain. I was sympathetic but not empathetic. This insight allows me to forego or lower my expectations of other people and to better control hurt, anger and disappointment. Most importantly, I have learned that rich healing takes place when hurting people extend themselves to others who struggle in grief. Listening, sharing with honesty, encouraging. These gifts of truth and service honor the memory of our precious children and continue their legacy.

But this Monday before Thanksgiving I'm crying. I miss my girl. It's hard to envision the years ahead having lost the most vital part of my life. I am not ashamed of my sorrow or my tears or worry that I'm not "making progress." What parent does not think on his or her son or daughter whether they are alive or have passed on? These thoughts cannot be shut off like a water faucet. I have given myself the right to set the standards of my very personal grief, to measure my path using my own yardstick. I have mastered an essential lesson. "Do the next thing."

I recall the words of my friend, Pat, whose daughter Stephanie passed away years ago, when we were talking one day about our hopes for again experiencing life's purest joy. "I'll die happy with a broken heart." This week there are beans to snap.
--Carol Thompson of Tyler, Texas is the mother of Sarah Kathryn Thompson who died in a 2005 pedestrian hit-and-run. Carol is a member of The Compassionate Friends chapter which serves East Texans, and finds healing in writing about the everyday-life aspects of living with grief after the death.

A Child's Death Changes Everything

A child's death not only changes a parent forever, it also permanently alters a couple's marriage. As individuals you must each deal with the confusion and pain that you are



experiencing. As a couple you must face these changes and not allow it to separate you.

In a sense, you each have become something of a stranger to yourself and each other. And in the process, your marriage cannot be what it was before. It is the marriage of two people who have shared a very heavy loss. You are two people who have seen each other grieving, of two people who have gone through the relationship struggles couples experience when a child dies.

Beginners after a Child's Death

You become new people, with no sense of whether you can or should return to being your old selves. You are likely to be beginners at dealing with the kind of grief parents feel, and beginners at coming to terms, as a couple, with whatever is going on in your life as individuals and as a couple. For quite awhile, grief is likely to sap you and your partner of energy to solve problems. You will find it difficult to talk about things, to think things through well, and to come to terms with what has happened. For weeks, months, or even years, you may feel that you are in some kind of holding pattern, just trying to do the bare minimum to get along.

You Become Different People

Also, your child's death makes you different from most people you know. Although several million American couples have lost a child, you may not know anyone whose experiences can be a resource to you. In fact, your friends, relatives, neighbors, coworkers, and the people in your religious congregation, may not be able or willing to help beyond the first outpouring of sympathy. Most will never have had a similar experience and most, even if they care for you deeply, will not be very comfortable with you.

Added to all this, grieving can make your couple relationship difficult. Being down so much, being needy and looking at everything in new ways after a child dies, it is easy for you and your spouse to see many negatives in each other. You may see many negatives in each other and in your marriage that may have been ignored or were not present in the past. So in addition to dealing with the loss of a child, you may have to deal with how to change your marital relationship, or even with the possible loss of your marriage.

Work Together in Grief

Dealing wisely with your relationship will help

head off or minimize difficulties. If you can work together on your relationship, you may have success at backing away from bickering, blaming, and hurt feelings. You may have success dealing with communication difficulties, disappointments, and other issues that can undermine your relationship. And you may be able to offer support, help, and understanding for each other.

Parenting together is a shared journey, and dealing with a child's death is as well. In bereavement, the couple journey will be hard. But it does not have to end in disaster.

You'll Grieve Differently

You will find that you and your spouse will not grieve the same way. You differ in biology, personality, upbringing, current responsibilities, the relationship you had with the child, and life experiences. Even if those things didn't guarantee that you and your partner will mourn in your own way, women and men differ in numerous ways that will show up in how you deal with your child's death.

In some couples, one partner believes how and when the other grieves is wrong, or one partner's grief make the other feel uncomfortable. If over a long period, you let such differences upset you or if your differences lead to conflict, they can be a wedge that pushes the two of you far apart.

Spouses have different paces into and through various parts of grieving. One partner might have stronger feelings or a certain feeling soon after the loss, while the other might feel those things later. To some parents, there seems to be a route to travel, and they talk about being farther or less far along than their partner.

Different Wants

In some couples there seems to be turn-taking in emotional control. When one partner is deep in grief, the other controls his or her emotions enough to do the basics. Perhaps that spouse says things that are meant to be soothing and supportive.

The one who wants more conversation might decide to wait it out, but might still feel angry that the partner will not talk. Also, just as the spouse who wants to talk finds the other's silence frustrating and infuriating, the spouse who wants to talk less can be irritated by the other's pressure to talk.

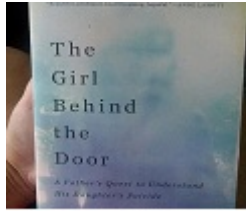
The main point is that you should expect and



tolerate differences between you and your partner. Doing so is not likely to make the grieving process any easier. However, it should help you and your spouse to maintain a stronger couple relationship as you deal with the death of your child.

-- marriageemissions.com from TCF7July 2022
Central Indiana Chapter Newsletter

Eight Years Later: My Five Stages Of Grief By John Brooks, author of "The Girl Behind the Door"



The Swiss psychiatrist, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, wrote in her 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*, about the various stages of grief that the bereaved know all too well. I'm sure many of us have heard this from our shrinks or bereavement groups. As I reflect back on the eight years since my 17-year-old daughter Casey's suicide, my journey tracks remarkably closely to Kübler-Ross' own writing working with the terminally ill.

It all started one weekend in January, 2008. My wife Erika and I had a big fight with Casey over her mouthiness, rudeness and defiance. Parents fight with their teens, right? At one point Casey locked herself in my home office crying and yelling at me. "I'm going to go live on the streets and you'll never see me again!" she screamed.

"Good!" I yelled back out of sheer frustration. I left her behind in a puddle of tears. Drama queen, I thought. Later that night I passed Casey sitting on the living room sofa, watching TV, pounding away on her laptop. We just glared at each other. And that's the last time I saw her.

I awoke the next morning to a note on her desk: The car is parked at the Golden Gate Bridge. I'm sorry. At about dawn that morning, she took our car, drove to the Golden Gate Bridge and jumped. She was never found. The life we once knew, all of our hopes and dreams for the future were gone, a firestorm, earthquake, catastrophic power failure.

When the police officer gave us the news from the Bridge Patrol I wanted to go to sleep that day and never wake up. Every loss is tragic, but suicide sits apart from other types of loss. Even the language around suicide is different. One "commits" suicide as if it were a crime. The suicide victim and survivors left behind are cloaked in shame, scorn and stigma. I couldn't imagine outliving my daughter for even one minute. In my wildest dreams I never thought I'd be here eight years later.

Instead I stumbled through Kübler-Ross' stages of grief, just barely. First came denial. In the days, weeks and months following Casey's suicide, Erika and I were in a fog. They hadn't recovered her body so maybe this was a hoax, a prank to scare us. Maybe the girl on the Bridge Patrol video wasn't her. We couldn't look at it. Now I wish we had but it's too late.

Maybe she was holed up somewhere, in hiding with a friend. But her friends swore up and down they knew nothing; we believed them. I had a dream of her walking in through our front door, dirty from the streets, with her friends Roxanne, Maryse and Max in tow. But she didn't.

Next came anger. I was a rage-aholic, angry at God, the universe and everyone around me who had their kids and could find nothing more than empty platitudes: we're sorry for your loss, you're in our thoughts and prayers, she's in a better place. I wasn't pleasant to be around, and lost friends, neighbors, parishioners and co-workers. Family relations were strained. Sometimes grief isn't very pretty, and the bereaved are not very loveable when they are in their lowest, darkest moment.

Bargaining and depression came hand in hand with anger, although I never fully understood Kübler-Ross' stage of bargaining. I lost my job in the 2009 financial meltdown, and found some relief that I didn't have to drag myself into work anymore. I was a useless zombie anyway and didn't much care about work, money, status or stuff. Our Casey was everything to us. So I sat at home trying to drink myself to death – vodka. I felt undeserving of any kind of happiness. By that time a year had passed since Casey's suicide, and many clueless but well-meaning people urged me to get over it and move on, that familiar and infuriating platitude for the bereaved. You don't get over this; rather, you adapt to a new normal. And what would I have moved on to anyway? I had to cling to my grief because to let go would be disloyal to my Casey. My grief was all I had left of her.

Fast forward seven years and I am now in the stage Kübler-Ross calls acceptance but I prefer resignation. I'm past denial, anger and vodka. I let go of the army of therapists and anti-depressants. I'm resigned to a life no one would want, but am making the best of it. Erika and I downsized and moved to a smaller home in the Bay Area. We joined the fight for a suicide barrier on the Golden Gate Bridge, and let go of people we thought were friends in favor of others with bigger hearts. I

speak and work in the Marin County school district, and published a book (Scribner). The Girl Behind The Door is my search for answers to Casey's suicide. It won two literary awards.

When I'm asked today, "How are you?" I can't bring myself to say good or better ... not yet. Each year that passes means my Casey drifts further and further away. She becomes a distant memory I can only connect with through photos and videos. But every year is also slightly less unbearable. I'm getting control of my anger, not reacting to every slight or insensitive remark as a rallying cry to war. I'm working on rediscovering some sense of purpose. And that's a huge step in the right direction considering where we began this awful journey.

-- John Brooks

Tiny Little Footprints



Little footprints on a paper,
 Tiny footprints stamped on white.
 No smiling pictures of your bath time,
 No running or flying a kite.
 Such sparse memories I have of you,
 Sweet, beautiful, babies mine.
 No keepsake rattles or no bronzed shoes,
 No treasures for me to find.
 Just tiny little footprints,
 That I look at every day,
 My memories of two little boys,
 That the Angels took away.
 We will make a million memories,
 When Daddy and I get there,
 Oh wait, we'll make it two million,
 After all, you are a pair.

--Marilyn Rollins TCF Lake-Porter County, IN
 In Memory of Reece and Andersen, sons of Mike
 and Kathy Williams

Newly Bereaved...

If Only's

All the little words and deeds,
 seemed so unimportant at the time
 Now come rushing back, playing havoc in our
 mind.
 Taunting us with feelings that we didn't do enough
 Words left unspoken, undone deeds and other
 countless stuff.
 The weight of guilt is heavy, and threatens to wear

us down

As it parades through our minds, never making a
 sound.

Replays of times we wish that we could redo
 All the things we would say, all the deeds we would
 do.

But we can not bring it back, correct the wrongs we
 think we've done

As we slowly replay them in our minds,
 over and over one by one.

Guilt is a poison that tears us apart

Leaving us empty with an aching hurting heart.

If our child were here I know what they would say
 "Mom, Dad don't do this, don't let guilt have it's
 way.

You did the very best you could, you truly gave
 your all

So don't let guilt rob you, don't for it's lies do fall.
 All you did you did with love, and your best at the
 time

So don't let guilt steal that, don't let it haunt your
 mind".

But we are but human, and never satisfied
 And good is never good enough no matter how we
 try.

There will always be hindsight,
 things we wished we'd done

And guilt is always waiting
 to point out each and every one.

We must not let guilt consume us,
 get a foothold in our mind

For it is poison to us, and treats us so unkind.

For love should have no regrets, no sorrow to look
 back on

Love is the greatest gift we have to give,
 so guilt does not belong.

--TCF Atlanta newsletter

Seasoned Grievors...

Looking to the Light

It is difficult to articulate thoughts and feelings
 about a life-altering event such as the death of a
 brother. For a long time, the only thing I could do
 to find any solace was to read about the tragic
 experiences of others. I was often moved to tears,
 so strong was my identification with their anguish.
 I never suffered from denial. My brother's death
 was always a very tangible thing. It was my grief. I
 owned it. In accepting it, I feel that the healing was
 somehow expedited.

I don't mean to imply that I am now returned to the unaffected individual that existed prior to his death, that my acceptance of his death is now clear. I don't think you ever "get over" such a loss. What happens is that incorporation of that loss into your daily life.

In my case, that process brought a number of changes in attitude and priority which, as it turned out, were in my best interest. I had become centered on myself and my career to such an extent that I was armed against life's disappointments. When meeting me, it became clear to others that "career" was what was all about.

I keep pictures of my brother all around so that I can see him several times each day. In doing so, I am alternately both comforted and saddened. But mostly, I am comforted. I know he is in heaven and I believe he looks in on me and is aware of the magical events that have taken place in my life. When I look upward through my kitchen skylights, I can see the sky and the top of the big old elm in the lights. I talk to him in my heart and I know he is near.

I still shed my tears, for I miss him and will the remainder of my life. Given a choice, I wish he had never become ill and that he hadn't ended his life. Today, some ten years after his death, I can accept it and understand his choice.

The love we feel for a loved one never has to leave us, even though our loved one has departed physically.

--Rhonda St. John, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI

For Friends & Family...

7 Things Bereaved Parents Want You To Know



I am part of the Bereaved Parents Club. It's a club that no one chooses to be a part of. One that, unfortunately, has too many members and continues to grow. My membership tells the world that I somehow survived every parent's worst nightmare, the death of my child.

What I have learned is that bereaved parents have an instant bond. Regardless of when you became a member of the club, you immediately understand each other. Feel the same things. Understand the journey that is grief. Here is a list of what we wish the rest of the world knew.

1. Talk About Him – I will not crumble and cry at the mere mention of his name. It's quite the opposite. I love to hear someone say his name. It means they are thinking about him too. They remember him. I spend a good majority of my day thinking about him. When someone takes the time to ask me about him (or what happened), talk about him, or mention him it brings great joy to my heart! My greatest fear exists when everyone stops talking about him.

2. It Never Gets Easier – Grief has no end. People say time heals. Eventually it will get easier. It is just not the case. There are constant reminders that he is not here. It doesn't matter how much time passes, I will never feel at peace with it. I will never get over it. I will never move on.

This is a lifelong journey that I bear because I loved him and miss him so deeply. Please don't judge my timetable or disinterest in moving on.

3. I Have Changed – I am a very different person than I was before he died. People don't believe me when I tell them that, but it is true. My priorities have changed. My views on life, afterlife, faith have all changed. I am on a new journey. Finding out who I am now. The things I used to want are meaningless. The things I was willing to put up with in my life are no longer tolerated. Life is short.

4. Don't Censor Yourself – I know I make you nervous. It is obvious in the way you think about what you are going to say (or not say) around me. The terrified look on your face when you accidentally say something like, "I could have died". You're not quite sure what to say because you don't want to hurt me, remind me of my pain, or make me cry. I get it. However, I promise you that it's OK. I have not forgotten my son died so nothing you say will make that wound worse. I will not immediately start crying because you made a joke that included the word death. Believe it or not, I still say those things. Please don't feel nervous around me and worry about saying something stupid. I know you mean no harm.

5. Grief Is Hidden – Most people will never know how I'm really doing. While I blog about it or post something on Facebook, I'm only sharing part of it. When you see me, I will smile and laugh. My life will appear normal. Like I am living. In reality, I'm exhausted. Emotionally and physically drained from just trying to hold it all together.

Sometimes I'm really struggling, broken even. It is rare that we show that reality. Until you've been through it, you just don't understand it. That is not meant to be offensive. It's just the truth.

When most people ask how I am doing, I give one of my planned responses. Believe me, we spend time thinking about how to answer common questions we get.

6. Please Just Listen – When we do talk about how I'm doing, just listen and be supportive. I'm not looking for anyone to try and fix me or make suggestions about what I should do. I usually just want someone to listen and say, "Yeah, that sucks!" Unless I begin to completely withdraw from society and no longer take care of my other kids, please let me grieve as I want. The things I'm going through are normal. Not everything warrants a shrink or medication. If it does, I will know when it is time and it will be on my own terms.

7. Please Take The Lead – Chances are, I will not call you if I need anything. Even if you extend the invitation, it's just not something I will do. Initiating plans, making phone calls, sending texts. These are things that may not happen as we'd like. The best of intentions exist on my end. However, I may need your help in this area. I do appreciate hearing from you. Even if I'm not the one initiating, know that it isn't due to lack of interest.

My intention with these posts is to help normalize grief and discussion around child loss. It impacts so many people. If nothing else, I hope to help people navigate uncomfortable situations and know how to better support others dealing with child loss (regardless of how long ago it was).
-- www.justplayinghouse.com by Emily Graham

Helpful Hint...



Memories ... tender, loving, bittersweet, they can never be taken from you. Nothing can detract from the joy and the beauty you and your loved one share. Your love for the person and his or her love for you cannot be altered by time or circumstance, the memories are yours to keep. Yesterday has ended, though you store it in the treasure house of the past.

And tomorrow? How can you face the awesome problems and challenges? It is as far beyond your mastery as your ability to control yesterday. Journey one day at a time. Don't try to solve all the problems of your life at once. Each day's survival is a triumph.

-- Rabbi Earl Grollman

Welcome...

Do You Know



Do you know what I've learned, that the deepest, truest healing offered by The Compassionate Friends comes not in the first few years, but later. Do you know that just when you think there is no more to gain by coming to meetings, something you will say or do will help another and another ... and exponentially, through your opened heart, there can flow riches, gifts beyond imagining?

Do you know that TCF's truest alchemy lies not in what we can get but what we can give? That by turning grief's dark energy and inner absorption out-wards towards the Hope of helping others we can regain a sense of purpose, honor our beloved children, and take them with us as we do? All this...if only you stay on – or come back – to help those more newly bereaved, sharing your own unique path through grief and learning, along with others, what you did not know you know.

--Genesse Bourdeau Gentry TCF/Marin Co., CA
--Editor's Note: We welcome you to our chapter of TCF. Please try to attend three meetings and decide for yourself how helpful and safe you will feel talking to other bereaved parents who truly understand what you are going through.

Book in Review...



I just finished reading the book Living With Loss, Healing With Hope by Rabbi Earl A. Grollman and wanted to share. This last paragraph says so much!

"Death has led you to the edge of an abyss of desolation. It has threatened to overwhelm you with despair and meaninglessness.

Now you must begin to build a bridge - across the abyss through those things that count the most - memory, family, friendship, and love.

"We don't have closure. We have times of growing reality. Reality does not come all at once. We must gradually come to grips with our loss. We go through a time of "real but not real." We know it has happened, but we still think it is a dream and we will soon awaken. Reality develops gradually through many experiences." —Doug Manning (Available in our chapter's library)

Where You Are...

Are my tears holding you back, is my pain holding you down, do you yearn to fly... to be free?
 But you are no longer here...
 I hope you are where you need to be to fulfill your destiny and not hold back to appease my sadness...
 In actual time, on this plane... it has been a long time...
 in my heart time has stopped... you were here just a short while ago... in whatever plane and space your spirit dwells, I desire nothing but peace for you...
 I set you free from a place of deep love... a place of gratitude for having chosen me as your mother during your brief stay this time around...
 I see you in my mind, I feel you in my heart... that will never, never change...
 I will know, when the time is right, where you are...
 I imagine that will come to be when I leave this place I know as life...
 Until then...
 Mama
 By Kitty Forstner, TCF Marin County Chapter

Thanksgiving

The time draws near
 And the calendar says
 Thanksgiving is really here.
 Time to reflect and time to gather
 Thoughts of what to be thankful of.
 Thankful? I think not.
 My life is not full these days
 And to be thankful is beyond my grasp.
 But to give thanks? This, I believe, can be done.
 Searching my soul deep within
 Reasons to give thanks surface to the edge
 Yes, I give thanks
 For the memories of yesterdays,
 The love, the laughter, the joy of each day when James was with us
 The trials and tribulations of being an active parent,
 The rewards and the challenges of raising a child,
 The days of blissful ignorance when I thought tragedy would never visit our home,
 The days when life was normal, even though I took it all for granted.
 For the treasures of today,
 The sunrise, sunset, the changing of the seasons,
 The new found friends along this journey I

reluctantly travel
 The tried and true friends who stand by me still,
 The strong and everlasting love of my husband
 The warmth of wet kisses from my canine companion and feline friend,
 The encouragement and support, compassion and caring I give and receive as I survive and help others survive.
 For the hopes and possibilities of a peaceful tomorrow
 With faith, love, and perseverance as I struggle to move on
 With James in my heart forevermore, spiritually guiding me with his new presence,
 With sorrow and reluctance, each new day,
 To yet, somehow, be open and loving,
 Not to forsake what I've learned
 Because of what I've lost.
 You see, it's not about keeping up with the Jones' having an SUV or two in the garage or the newest, most improved, latest and greatest new gadgets, not even being up to date with state of the art technology –
 It's about love – it's about the gifts of yesterday, blended with the blessings of today to make meaning for tomorrow.
 --Meg Avery TCF Lawrenceville, Ga

Your Pup and I

Your old pup sleeps before the fire,
 Muzzle resting on outstretched paws.
 He twitches with a little yelp,
 Reaching to a dream gone bad that he can't help.
 A sound from outside jerks his head alert,
 Ears listening intently,
 Radar in search of your special step.
 Not hearing the sound that he wants, he looks hurt.
 His head goes down with a sigh.
 He looks to me with mournful eyes.
 I declare I think that dog sometimes cries...
 He, like I, never dreamed you'd be the first to die.
 He misses you as badly as I.
 Even old pups want to know why...
 And they grieve, like us, for one last good-bye,
 And tonight I joined him as he cried.
 --Fay Harden, TCF Tuscaloosa, AL





Our Children Remembered



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

Josue
Born: 3/04 Died: 6/07
Mother: Elizabeth Centeno

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

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

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

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

Bettina Mia Embry
Born: 8/65 Died: 4/22
Parents: Larry & Elena Bruns

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

Robert Justin Fields
Born: 1/00 Died: 1/00
Parents: Loree & Bob Fields

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

Bryce Patrick Fisher
Born: 10/86 Died: 8/21
Mother: Nancy Goodson

Miles Andrew Gallas
Born: 2/89 Died: 3/21
Mother: Denise Gallas

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

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

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



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

John Paul Mc Nicholas
Born: 12/89 Died: 11/20
Parents: John & Leeann Mc Nicholas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jesse Hernandez
Born: 2/90 Died: 11/22
Mother: Joann 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

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

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

Reyna Joanne Monje
Born 9/98 Died: 4/21
Mother: Debbie Trutanich

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



Our Children Remembered



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: 11/92 Died: 4/18
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

Natalie Rose Nevarez
Born: 5/90 Died: 11/14
Parents: Gregg and Alison Nevarez

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jamie Taus
Born: 5/85 Died: 5/21
Sister: Jackie Taus
Mother: Susan Taus

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

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

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

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

**Our Children****Remembered**

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

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

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

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

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

* 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.

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

Birthday Tributes...

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

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.

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

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

—Sorry, no tributes were submitted this month.—

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

For Siblings...

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

The Courage to Let Life Go On

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

“Courage is not the absence of fear and pain but the affirmation of life despite fear and pain.”

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

~ Earl Grollman

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

“Life goes on.” I have often heard this sentence, said perhaps to console me, or perhaps as a way to put an end to conversation about loss and death. Of course life goes on, no matter how shattered our lives are by the loss of someone we love so dearly. Life doesn't ask whether we want to go along. We want the world to stop turning because of our loss.

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

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

Days turn onto nights, again and again, and this is how we arrived at

this day. Suddenly another month, another year has gone by, although we all probably asked ourselves how we would be able to go on living. It just happens. We do not die because of the pain. We keep on living and I still wonder how this can be.

I do not want life to go on, but to stop it right here, or better yet, to turn back to the day when I lost my sister and baby niece. I do not want the changes life brings. Each change seems to increase the distance between the life I knew with them and the life I live today. I cannot ask my sister's opinion about the new things that happen. I cannot share them with her, tell her about them, laugh or cry with her about them. Changes make me aware that in fact life does go on, without her.

My birthdays make me sad because they change the difference in age... my sister was always four years older than I was. Sometimes I feel guilty that I live on. I smell, I breathe, touch feel, see and experience life, while my sister and her daughter were ripped away from it. My sister and I never talked about death or losing each other, but if we had, I am sure we both would have said that we could not imagine life without one another. If it had been me, my sister would have been forced to do exactly the same; go on living despite the agony, just because there is no choice.

Before I lost them, I trusted life to be good. I believed in fairness; if we are good, life will spare us tragedies and besides, these tragedies only happen to other people, those I do not know, those I read about in the papers, distant, easy to forget about. I lost this sense of security and trust in life. I now find that

living takes courage. Life becomes meaningful through love and friendship, but loving is what makes us vulnerable.

Daring to invite love into our lives means to increase vulnerability to the threats that seem to be around every corner. Instead of asking "why us?" I often find myself asking "why not us?" Tragedy hits good and bad people for no reason. It seems the world is just random and unpredictable. Just because I am a good person and I already lost so much does not mean I will be spared more pain.

Life goes on and because it does, with all the good and bad things that happen to us, it scares me to live and particularly to love. What if more happens? The fear is paralyzing. I pray to God, to my sister and my niece to protect us, although I know they don't have the power to prevent other things from happening. What then can I ask them for? Courage I guess.

Courage to let life go on, to give myself a chance that new and good things will happen to me that will add JOY to my life.

-- Britta Nielsen, TCF Manhattan

Big Part of Me

You're my big brother,
the one who's always there.
But because I've never met you,
no one realizes how much I care.
God called you back home,
before I was even alive.
How could he let this happen,
when you were only five?
My love for you is unconditional,
though we've never met.
When I think about never meeting,
I can't help but get upset.
You give me courage,
and help me to stay strong.
You give me the confidence to keep going,
when my days seem way to long.
And even when I don't show it,
and no one else can see.
You're always on my mind,
you're a big part of me.

--by Natasha B. McFadden

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...



What I Wish More People Understood About Losing A Child

Four and half years after the death of my oldest son, I finally went to a grief support group for parents who have lost children. I went to support a friend who recently lost her son. I'm not sure I would've gone except that when I was in her shoes, four years ago, I wish I would've had a friend to go with me. Losing a child is the loneliest, most desolate journey a person can take and the only people who can come close to appreciating it are those who share the experience.

The meeting was a local chapter of The Compassionate Friends, an organization solely dedicated to providing support for those who have lost children, grandchildren or siblings. The facilitator was a tall gentleman who had lost his 17 year old son eight years ago. He opened the meeting by saying that dues to belong to the club are more than anyone would ever want to pay. Well, he couldn't be more correct: no one wants to belong to this group.

The group of incredible survivors included parents whose children had been killed by drunk drivers, murdered, accidental overdose, alcoholism, suicide and freak accidents. The children's ages ranged from 6-38 years old. When hearing the stories, I had a visceral reaction to being part of this "club," but was also humbled by the greatness of these mothers and fathers. Most of what I share in this article came from this meeting, but also from my own experience of having lost a child and being four years into that lifelong journey of healing from deep grief. The following five tips can be your compass to help you navigate how to give support to grieving parents on a sacred journey they never wanted to take.

1. Remember our children. The loss of children is a pain all bereaved parents share, and it is a degree of suffering that is impossible to grasp without experiencing it first hand. Often, when we know someone else is experiencing grief, our discomfort keeps us from approaching it head on. But we want the world to remember our child or children, no matter how young or old our child was.

If you see something that reminds you of my child, tell me. If you are reminded at the holidays or on his birthday that I am missing my son, please

tell me you remember him. And when I speak his name or relive memories relive them with me, don't shrink away. If you never met my son, don't be afraid to ask about him. One of my greatest joys is talking about Brandon.

2. Accept that you can't "fix" us. An out-of-order death such as child loss breaks a person (especially a parent) in a way that is not fixable or solvable — ever! We will learn to pick up the pieces and move forward, but our lives will never be the same.

Every grieving parent must find a way to continue to live with loss, and it's a solitary journey. We appreciate your support and hope you can be patient with us as we find our way.

Please: don't tell us it's time to get back to life, that's it's been long enough, or that time heals all wounds. We welcome your support and love, and we know sometimes it's hard to watch, but our sense of brokenness isn't going to go away. It is something to observe, recognize, accept.

3. Know that there are at least two days a year we need a time out. We still count birthdays and fantasize what our child would be like if he/she were still living. Birthdays are especially hard for us. Our hearts ache to celebrate our child's arrival into this world, but we are left becoming intensely aware of the hole in our hearts instead. Some parents create rituals or have parties while others prefer solitude. Either way, we are likely going to need time to process the marking of another year without our child.

Then there's the anniversary of the date our child became an angel. This is a remarkable process similar to a parent of a newborn, first counting the days, then months then the one year anniversary, marking the time on the other side of that crevasse in our lives. No matter how many years go by, the anniversary date of when our child died brings back deeply emotional memories and painful feelings (particularly if there is trauma associated with the child's death). The days leading up to that day can feel like impending doom or like it's hard to breathe. We may or may not share with you what's happening.

This is where the process of remembrance will help. If you have heard me speak of my child or supported me in remembering him/her, you will be able to put the pieces together and know when these tough days are approaching.

4. Realize that we struggle every day with happiness. It's an ongoing battle to balance

the pain and guilt of outliving your child with the desire to live in a way that honors them and their time on this earth.

I remember going on a family cruise eighteen months after Brandon died. On the first day, I stood at the back of the ship and bawled that I wasn't sharing this experience with him. Then I had to steady myself, and recognize that I was also creating memories with my surviving sons, and enjoying the time with them in the present moment.

As bereaved parents, we are constantly balancing holding grief in one hand and a happy life after loss in the other. You might observe this when you are with us at a wedding, graduation or other milestone celebration. Don't walk away — witness it with us and be part of our process.

5. Accept the fact that our loss might make you uncomfortable. Our loss is unnatural, out-of-order; it challenges your sense of safety. You may not know what to say or do, and you're afraid you might make us lose it. We've learned all of this as part of what we're learning about grief. We will never forget our child. And in fact, our loss is always right under the surface of other emotions, even happiness. We would rather lose it because you spoke his/her name and remembered our child, than try and shield ourselves from the pain and live in denial.

--By Paula Stephens Western Australia

Submitted by Linda Curtis

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. To participate in our Zoom meetings, contact Leo at (310) 283-6739 or Liccias79@gmail.com for the link.

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 our 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. We also welcome "book reviews". If you have read a book which was helpful on your grief journey, please let us know. Send book reviews and other articles or poems for submission to the newsletter to Lynntcf@aol.com Also, a friendly reminder, if you have books at home you have checked out and are finished reading them, please remember to return them to our library.



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 to be listed in the newsletter. (Just a Hint: If you plan to leave money 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 Licciardone (chapter co-leader).(310) 292-5381
 Bonnie Mantyla (chapter co-leader).....(310) 530-8489
 Lori Galloway.....(760) 521-0096
 Linda Zelik.....(310) 370-1645
 Mary Sankus.....(310) 648-4878

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	childloss.com
goodgriefresources.com	griefwatch.dom
bereavedparentsusa.org	opentohope.com
healingafterloss.org	webhealing.com
survivorsof suicide.com	alivealone.org
taps.org (military death)	angelmoms.com
save.org (suicide/depression)	
pomc.com (families of murder victims)	
grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)	
www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)	
Griefwords.com (for grandparents)	

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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

CHAPTER OFFICERS:

CHAPTER CO-LEADERS: Leo & Connie Licciardone and Jarmo & Bonnie Mantoya
 CHAPTER ZOOM HOSTS: Connie & Leo Licciardone
 NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines
 PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks
 TREASURER: Kristy Konopasek
 WEBSITE: Leo Licciardone



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Linda & Joe Zelik	Lori Galloway
Marilyn Nemeth	Crystal Henning
Bill Matasso	Lynn Vines
Nancy Lerner	Kristy Mueller
Connie & Leo Licciardone	Kitty Edler
Sandra & Eddie Myricks	Susan Kass
Jarmo & Bonnie Mantyla	

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 Jason Jenkins, October 1986 - November 2020. To our beloved son—
Forever in Our Hearts.

Love Mom & Dad

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 _____

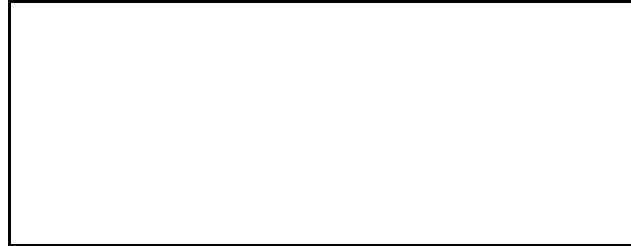
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue.

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