



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *South Bay/LA Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Jan. 2023 ISSUE

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

**OUR NEXT MEETING**  
will be Jan 5th, 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, Jan 5th meeting will start with "Facing The New Year While Grieving."

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

The TCF Sharing group takes place at Hoff's Hut's outdoor patio dining area (Crenshaw & 237<sup>th</sup> 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.

South Bay/LA Chapter of TCF  
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The **Thursday, Jan 5<sup>th</sup> meeting will start with “Facing The New Year While Grieving.”** As the New Year arrives, some bereaved families may still be in tremendous pain, and can't stand the thought of a whole year ahead of them without their loved one. While other individuals may look at January as a time for new beginnings, letting go of the pain and rejoicing in the love they still feel for their child. The more newly bereaved may feel they will never be able to find peace with their loss and don't want to. Others may be in the stages where they're starting to see glimmers of hope and then become overwhelmed all over again. Maybe you are experiencing all these emotions and are at a loss as to how to move forward with your grief. Because we all fluctuate with our emotions, we need to examine where we are in our grief and start looking for new ways to replace some of the pain, and gain a sense of accepting our “new normal” instead of fighting it. The following articles touch on emotions we may be juggling and offer ideas for overcoming some of the painful feelings we may be experiencing. We welcome you to join us as we share with each other how we can face this new year.

## Seven Grief Strategies For The New Year



The old saying is true: “If there is an elephant in the room, introduce him.” No good purpose is served by denial, yet we are very good at it. And when it comes to facing the pain of our grief with eyes open, we often turn away instead. But when we have a psychological elephant in the room of our mind, we should acknowledge him, and plan a way to shrink him down to a manageable size then get him on his way. If we've had a loss recently, the new year provides a good opportunity for us to be honest about the pain of our grief and resolve in the months to come to be proactive and do the necessary grief work to begin addressing the elephant in the room.

1. *Write yourself a comforting and encouraging letter.* Imagine you had a friend for whom you cared deeply and imagine that friend just experienced the death of someone they love very much. You would want to help them, comfort them and encourage them. Now substitute yourself for that friend. You are worthy of being comforted and encouraged, too. Write yourself a letter saying the same things you would say to a good friend. Then,

read the letter, put it away for a few days, then read it again. Do this for a few months and then write yourself a second letter, and so on. This is an act of self-compassion, treating yourself as gently as you would treat someone else. Avoid thinking you are so ‘strong’ or ‘solid’ that you don't need help and tender compassion. That is a misunderstanding of strength and personal fortitude. Feeling intense sorrow and bereavement is not a sign of weakness; to the contrary, it is a sign of deep humanity and personal capacity to love.

2. *Buy a big calendar and use it.* One problem bereaved people face is the feeling that one day drags into the next, always the same. Grieving people also sometimes are pressured by well-meaning people into doing activities they really don't want to do. An ‘appointment calendar’ can solve both of those problems. Large calendars, like a desk calendar, give you room to write. As the New Year begins, sit down with the calendar, and start filling your days with appointments.

Appointments with whom? Most importantly, with yourself. Without taking yourself out of social circulation, you can pen in valuable “self-time.” The simple act of reserving time for yourself empowers you to breathe and reflect as the New Year unfolds. Appointments like “movie with me” or “Journaling with me” make it possible for you to always tell others, when asked to go somewhere or do something, “Let me check my calendar, I may have an appointment.” This way you can decline in a socially graceful way. If you want to accept someone's invitation, you can always break an appointment with yourself.

3. *Move your body, move your mind.* As you adjust to your life without the physical presence of your loved one who died, it's vital you get outside and move. Notice, I didn't say, “exercise,” since for some people that may sound daunting. There is no need to make it a big undertaking. Pick short, achievable goals, like a short hike, a walk around the block, a bike ride to the park. Keep these jaunts short, as this will give you a sense of accomplishment, and you will derive the physical and psychological benefits of having enlisted your body in your ongoing encounter with grief.

4. *Realize that you do not need to “understand” your grief right now.* When I coached Little League, I established the One Minute Rule. It was this: If anyone gets hit by a baseball, whatever the person hit by the ball says for the first minute after

being hit is OK. Screaming and accusations were common after being hit by the baseball, but everyone knew that you got a free pass for a minute. And they knew that after a minute the person had to be ready to move on. Well, bereaved people get a lot longer than a minute, or a month, or a year, to integrate their experience into the rest of their outlook on life. So don't feel anxiety about fully grasping what has happened to you.

Time will help clear your mind, and you will eventually be able to address your loss, the pain it has brought you, and the changes in your life that have ensued.

5. *Decide that in the New Year, you will begin to focus a bit more on others, as a part of your loved one's legacy.* This is a valuable change you can make in your life. We all need to get out of ourselves and focus on other people and their problems. Sometimes, this helps us gain a fresh perspective on our own life. As you do this, you will no doubt talk with new people, and when the opportunity presents itself tell them about your loved one who has died. You don't have to tell your loved one's life story or anything like that, just mention them in passing. You may feel more comfortable talking about your loved one with people who didn't know him or her, and it is valuable to begin to talk out loud-in the past tense-about your loved one. It may be shocking to hear yourself talk about them in the past tense, but it will help you integrate their death into your life.

6. *Listen to the music.* A recent study I saw asserted that sad people who listen to their favorite music that matches their mood report feeling better. Music is therapeutic and soothing.

Throughout history, music has been central to the expression of human values and sentiments. Make a short list of some songs of different types that you have always liked. Then go to youtube.com and listen to them or order them online. If you are not accustomed to doing that on a computer, ask a friend to do it for you. Just get the music playing so you can listen. As you do, let your mind take you where it will, and after a while I'll bet you'll feel relaxed and even renewed.

7. *Wishing you well.* As the New Year begins, write down what your loved one would want for you in the New Year. Trouble imagining what that might be? It's probably the same you would wish for your loved one, had you been the one that died. Make a list of a few states of mind, attitudes or

commodities that your loved one would want for you to attain as you move forward without them. For example, my husband would want me to look toward the future, and not be paralyzed by mourning. Or, my sister would want me to buy those expensive boots we used to talk about. Then, choose one of those outcomes and pursue it. Look back at your list after a few months, and check off the outlook or object you now have. Deliberately choose to achieve something your loved one would want you to have in this New Year. By doing so, you will honor their memory.

So often we think of grief as something that happens to us, instead of something we do. This is unfortunate, since passivity and inaction will not help us to engage the new reality of loss in our lives.

This is not to say that grief is a "problem" we can solve, or a "condition" we can make go away, but it is to say that we can be active participants in our emotional well being. By purposefully facing our sorrow, and calmly, carefully thinking about what we can do to help integrate our sorrow into our larger life, we can contribute to forging our new identity. And this is a powerful choice to make as a New Year and our new lives dawn.

--By Brad Stetson on the TCF Blog



### **New Year a Time to Search for "Ray of Hope"**

*Be my ray of hope, be my ray of laughter.*

*Be my song to sing that guides me on my way.*

*Be the arms that hold me.*

*Be the love that enfolds me, be my light,*

*Be my ray of hope today.*

...Paul Alexander, songwriter

Snowflakes drift silently to earth. A new year has dawned. The revelry of the old year has quieted and the holiday hustle and bustle has ended. As bereaved parents, for many of us, this will be our first full year without our children. For others, the upcoming year will be another thread in the garment of life. A thread connecting the memories of our old life with the hope for "recovery" in our new life.

How often our thoughts wander back to another day and time when we were happy and full of the



vitality that makes up life—a time when our child made our life complete and worth living.

Though three years have passed since becoming a bereaved parent, I still think about my children every day of my life. As I sat watching the ball atop Time Square descend, my thoughts jumped back to a time when my children lay safely in their beds as we brought a new year into existence.

Does *this* new year bring with it a time when we will hurt less—when there will be a new ray of hope? Or does it bring even more heartache because of the sadness and loneliness we find difficult to leave behind?

The answers lie deep within each of us. How we approach this new year will make the difference.

*Can we be kind to ourselves?* Just because others place demands on us to do whatever they feel will help us does not mean they are right. They have not walked in our shoes. We can say ‘NO!’

*Can we enjoy life again?* Though we cannot be physically with our children, they would want us to enjoy living . . . and yes, they would want us to love again!

*Can we help parents who are more newly bereaved to clear the same hurdles that seemed so insurmountable to us such a short while ago?* By reaching out to others and making their burdens a little lighter, we are helping our own open wounds to heal.

*“Inside of me are all the answers.*

*Everything I need to know*

*Lives inside of me.*

*Come behold my miracle,*

*Come and hear my story.*

*Come and paint a memory with me.” P. Alexander*

--Wayne Loder TCF Lakes Area, MI

*“Ray of Hope” by Paul Alexander on the CD “The Best of Paul” at [www.griefsong.com](http://www.griefsong.com) (Paul wrote LIGHT A CANDLE which has been used at many TCF candle lighting programs).*

Permission to use excerpts from “Ray of Hope” granted by

Paul Alexander.

## Coping

January is a reflective month. Ice ponds reflect the leaden sky, and the heart reflects the emptiness of a frozen spirit. When will we begin to thaw? When will we feel like we’re making some progress in this place of icicles and cold sheets’ sunless days and long, empty nights? Will we ever be happy again? Will I ever be ME again?



January is also the month for making promises, commitments, and resolutions (resolutions are FANCY promises). We begin our new year with high hopes, strong wills, and long lists of things that will be different this year. To celebrate my commitment to a new me, I bought a jogging suit, expensive shoes, timer, pulse meter, and M&M dispenser (you’ve got to have some motivation). THIS YEAR WILL BE DIFFERENT!

We also spend some time looking back over the road we’ve traveled, and sometimes we wonder if we have made any progress at all. In the beginning, we misplace car keys, checkbooks, toothbrushes, relatives, and important stuff like the TV Guide. We had to begin making lists of everything. We simply couldn’t remember anything. I couldn’t remember my address, social security number, zip code, or my mother-in-law’s birthday. (I never could remember that.) I even started making lists of my lists! I knew I was going to be all right when I first discovered I could remember that I had made a list.

You know you’re making progress when you can coordinate an entire outfit again. Shoes, belts, ties, purses, even sweaters and jackets often got left, simply because when we were hurting so terribly, we couldn’t think about what to wear. Many of us didn’t even know that panty hose were on backwards, or the tie was crooked. If you are wearing matched shoes right now, then you are making progress.

You are making progress when you no longer choke when you say your loved one’s name. When you can walk down the cereal aisle in the supermarket and not dissolve into tears, progress is being made. When you can enjoy baking HIS favorite cookies or pie or cake again, you are on your way. When the photographs come back out once more and you can wander through the scrapbooks again, letting the smiles peek through the tears, then hope is returning. When memories, for the most part, bring comfort and warmth instead of emptiness and pain, January grows shorter.

When you begin to understand that putting away your loved one’s things does NOT mean putting him out of your life, then your step becomes lighter.

Progress occurs when you completely understand that your loved one DIED, but the love you share between you can never be destroyed. Hope begins to return when you can hear laughter again—and some of that laughter is your own.

Recovery is possible once unrealistic hopes for a lost future are given up, grieved for, and moved beyond. Perhaps it is not so much saying good-bye to our loved one as it is saying farewell to the old us and the life we shared. Making progress through grief doesn't mean that you no longer miss your loved one. He is part of your life forever, but his role in your life changes. Our lifestyle and habits change to reflect a different family landscape.

Now as you look back, it is amazing to see the life fabric—no longer ripped apart with a gaping hole, but mended with tiny stitches, left perhaps a bit lumpy (like lots of us), but patched with time, effort and love. Old threads and new threads have blended together and have been re-woven into a pattern not quite the same as we had originally planned. It is a tapestry of love, given and received, remembered and shared.

Life can become good and whole and complete once again, not when we try to fill up the empty spaces left by loved ones no longer within hug's reach, but when we realize that love creates new spaces in the heart and expands the spirit and deepens the joy of simply being alive.

The renewed energy and love we feel as winter turns into spring becomes the memorial to our loved one...not the grave markers we decorate, not the books we write, not the speeches we give, but the LOVE we share and pass on.

You know you are making progress when all of this begins to make some sense (save this column to read later!). When the shoes match and the car keys are found and the list of lists grows shorter, then you are making progress. Then the laughter can return, and with that magical sound comes the healing of the hurt and the shedding of the Band-Aid, because the heart is learning to sing again.

January...the month to check on our progress, to make new commitments—and to start jogging.

-- Darcie Sims TCF Enid, OK

## 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

## I Don't Know Why

I'll never know why.

I don't have to know why.

I don't like it.

I don't have to like it.

What I have to do is make a choice about my living.

What I do want to do is accept it and go on living.

The choice is mine.

I can go on living, valuing every moment in a way I never did before,

or I can be destroyed by it and, in turn, destroy others.

I thought I was immortal.

That my family and my children were also.

That tragedy happened only to others.

But I know now that life is tenuous and valuable.

So I am choosing to go on living, making the most of the time I have,

valuing my family and friends

in a way never possible before

--Iris Bolton, from her book My Son, My Son

Her son, Mitch, died by suicide



## To the Mother Who Feels the Same Grief as Me...

Most of you I have never met, but yet we visit the same place every day. We walk down the same dark path. We cling to memories as if it's our life support. Our minds drift off to that same place, the place that temporarily distracts us from our grief. You are the one person who knows the way my stomach feels – the unhealed knot in the center of my gut. You know the hollowness in my heart. Your tears are the same shape as mine, and they roll off the cheek without warning. You smile just

like me. It's a smile that has been perfected so others would stop wondering about your state of health and when or if you would pull through this. Our deep exhale has been performed countless times, since the reminder to breathe is still needed.

Only you understand the box in the closet where we keep the little things – the items that most people wouldn't find a connection to. But we do. We can find that connection. Maybe it's a ribbon, a stone, or a piece of paper someone had written your child's name on. An article of clothing that was last worn as we try desperately to preserve their smell.

This isn't the same box with all the newborn items in it. This is a different box than the cutely decorated one that holds baby's blankets, hospital bands, old pacifiers and first haircut clippings. This box is kept much further back in the closet, almost hidden as if it is a secret.

You are the only one in the world who can look me in the eyes and say "I get it." Dear friend, how I wish you didn't get it. Like clockwork, I lie awake in my bed at night. I know you are probably doing the same. As lonely as I feel sometimes, I know you are feeling lonely too. As indescribable as my pain is, I know you understand. It's like a silent language that neither one of us wants to speak.

Our children's stories are most likely different. The paths that led us here are probably nothing alike. It's what happened in the after that forever bonds us now. It's the pain of burying our child that makes our scars the same and our paths cross. I wouldn't wish this feeling on anyone, but yet, to know you exist is somewhat of a selfish comfort for me. It's the only place where I can find acceptance – to know that someone out there is just like me.

I know with you that my tears aren't measured and my sadness is never judged. The length of time I grieve will never be rushed, all the wrong things will never be said, and you understand sometimes silence is enough.

My sadness will never make you uncomfortable because our words fit together like a puzzle. Even though I am a stranger, my heartache brings you to tears. You live with that forever emptiness too. So as I pray my nightly prayers, I always include you – the mother I'll never meet. You're the other person out there who shares my same grief. I hope you find some comfort in knowing you're not alone and there's someone out there like you.

-- Michelle Haxby

## Newly Bereaved...

### Understanding Grief When A Child Dies

Grief, with its many ups and downs, lasts far longer than society in general recognizes. Be patient with yourself. The period of time before one adjusts back to "normal" life after the loss of a child can be very long. Each person's grief is individual. You and your spouse will experience it and cope with it differently - so be prepared for this. Understanding that there will be big variations in your forms of grieving and behavior can make you much more understanding of each other.

#### *Emotional aspects of grieving:*

Crying is an acceptable and healthy expression of grief and releases built up tension for mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. Cry freely as you feel the need. Remember the old saying, "Tears wash the wounds of the soul."

Guilt, real or imagined, is a normal part of grief. It surfaces in thoughts and feelings of "if only". In order to resolve this guilt, learn to express and share these feelings and learn to forgive yourself. It may help to talk these feelings through with an understanding counselor.

Anger is another common reaction to loss. Anger, like guilt, needs expression and sharing in a healthy and acceptable manner. However, it often happens that we over-react and "blow our tops". If family and friends understand this might happen sometimes, they are more tolerant.

Parents may feel they have nothing to live for and may think about a release from this intense pain. Be assured that many parents feel this way but a sense of purpose and meaning does return. The intense pain does lessen. It becomes duller and eventually leaves a sadness tinged with many beautiful memories. Hope for this to happen one day.

#### *Physical aspects of grieving:*

Physical reactions to the death of a child may include loss of appetite or overeating, sleeplessness, and sexual difficulties. Parents may find that they have very little energy... are always tired and cannot concentrate. A balanced diet, rest and moderate exercise are especially important for





the whole family at this time.

Avoid the use of drugs and alcohol. Medication should be taken sparingly and only under the management of your physician. Many substances are addictive and can lead to chemical dependence. In addition, they may stop or delay the necessary grieving process.

Friends and relatives may be uncomfortable around you. They want to ease your pain but do not know how. Take the initiative and help them to learn how to be supportive to you. Talk about your child so that they know this is appropriate. Don't be too proud and self-reliant - give people the opportunity to get close to you and help you.

#### *Decision-making:*

Whenever possible, put off major decisions (changing residence, changing jobs etc.) for at least a year. Avoid making hasty decisions about your child's belongings. Do not allow others to take over or to rush you. You can do it little by little whenever you feel ready. It is often comforting to leave things as they are for a time.

#### *How can I help surviving siblings?*

Children are often the forgotten grievers within a family. They are experiencing many of the same emotions you are, so share thoughts and tears with them. Though this is a painful time, be sure they feel loved and included. Talk to them and cry with them around the kitchen table. Hold them physically and don't let them think they have to be strong for your sake.

#### *Special occasions:*

Holidays and anniversaries of your child's death and birth can be stressful times. Consider the feelings of the entire family in planning how to spend the day. Allow time and space for your own emotional needs. Sometimes the anticipation of the day is far worse than the day when it actually comes.

#### *How to face the future:*

A child's death often causes a parent to challenge and examine his faith or philosophy of life. Don't be disturbed if you are questioning old beliefs. Talk about it. For many, faith offers help to accept the unacceptable. This is the time for deep thinking, reading, and working out priorities. Nothing else will ever activate this side of your nature more profoundly.

When a child dies, parents begin a long journey in the process of bereavement. On this journey, the bereaved parents experience many different and shattering kinds of feelings... Disbelief,

sadness, deep anguish, loneliness, fear, jealousy, anger and regret. These feelings are all part of the emotional reactions of grief. Sometimes those feelings of grief may be so intense that parents do not understand what is happening. Some parents tend to keep feelings inside while others are able to express their grief easily and openly.

In experiencing the loss of a beloved child (the ultimate tragedy) because of the enormous emotional stress the loss places upon the parents, all sections of their lives will probably be affected and changed. The interaction between the bereaved person and his/her spouse, family, work, other children, religious faith, sex life... and even the everyday activities such as eating and sleeping will be affected.

These difficulties can be better coped with if the bereaved parent has someone to whom to turn who understands and has even experienced these difficulties personally.

--The Compassionate Friends South Australia

## Seasoned Grievers...

### Things That Happen For A Reason....

*Does everything  
HAPPEN FOR A REASON?*

We've all heard it before. All our lives, the phrase has been in the ether. "Everything happens for a reason." It is a phrase that really rankles me. Those of us traveling this road often complain to each other about the dumb things people say. It used to make me angry. But time has softened my attitude and I've become strangely forgiving. I've concluded that most of these cliches are offered in the spirit of helping...of wanting to offer solace... even though it's pretty dumb to think a cliché can offer anything to anyone who has suffered a loss as catastrophic as ours. One thing I'm sure of ... not everything happens for a reason.

Belief systems are another syndrome that used to bother me. Those who lean heavily on their belief in God and the afterlife used to annoy me. Time has also altered that view. It seems wonderful to me now that some people are so invested in their belief systems that it carries them along on the journey. I sometimes wish I could toss off all my pain and rejoice in the sense that my son has "gone home".

Home? Isn't that here with me and his father?

Isn't that here with his friends and family, living out the life he spent all of his earthly years growing through and learning about... always working toward living into adulthood and old age... finally experiencing everything he ultimately missed? Having gotten through his childhood and adolescence, didn't he deserve an adult life and some reward for his efforts?

I do harbor a belief that in some manner or form, life is a continuum. I never really believed that before, but when Peter died it was impossible to believe that so large a personality could have simply evaporated. There has to be more. I've been searching for the "more" for 15 years now.

No, in spite of the company I keep, for me this has been and continues to be a mostly solitary journey. Surrounded by compassionate friends who share many of my views, I continue to wonder about many of these things. For instance, I know that most people who have known me throughout these past 15 years think I'm "over it". Surely those I've met during these years have no idea that Peter is, even now, such a major part of my life. Had he lived I suspect I wouldn't think of him as much. But his absence has become even bigger than his presence. That could be because he was our only child. But maybe not. It just seems that I must deal every day with the ongoing lives of all my contemporaries... and the fact that I have nothing similar to share with them.

So I am often left wondering when I hear that "everything happens for a reason". I think of all I've learned since Peter died. All the children I've "met" posthumously. All the different ways they were taken from us. Was there a reason for all the mayhem, the pain, the suffering, the loss...? If there is a god, and he really needed our children, couldn't he have made the leaving less violent in some cases, less painful in others? Was there a reason for all the pain and torment?

Julien Barnes, the author, said recently that he doesn't believe in God, but he misses him. I miss him too. I miss having something to hang on to that would make this life more comprehensible. I miss finding the why in all this. I'm comforted to know that some of my friends with their very committed, strong belief systems are themselves comforted by those beliefs. I hang on to them and hope that they know something I don't know.

Meanwhile, I move ahead. I continue to share my experience as each year I learn more about it. I stay in the entry to this path to greet

those who stagger in so that I can catch them and try to assure them they will survive. I live as full a life as I can manage and offer myself as an example on how it is possible to recover, reinvent and renew yourself after such a calamity. Time, in its inexorable moving forward, has worked for me. I know that it can work for others and offer that hope. That's my belief system.

--Marie Levine



## For Friends & Family...

### Please Ask

Someone asked me about you today.  
It's been so long since anybody has done that.  
It felt so good to talk about you.  
To share my memories of you,  
To simply say your name out loud.  
She asked me if I minded talking about  
What happened to you...  
Or would it be too painful to speak of it.  
I told her I think of it every day  
And speaking about it helps me to release  
The tormented thoughts whirling around in my  
head.  
She said she never realized the pain  
Would last this long...  
She apologized for not asking sooner.  
I told her, "Thanks for asking."  
I don't know if it was curiosity  
Or concern that made her ask,  
But told her, "Please do it again sometime...  
Soon."

-- Barbara Taylor Hudson



### Helpful Hint...

"Grieving is a journey that teaches us how to love in a new way now that our loved one is no longer with us. Consciously remembering those who have died is the key that opens the heart, that allows us to love them in new ways."

--Tom Attig, The Heart of Grief

### Welcome...

### Where Can I Get Help?

It helps to become involved with a group of parents having similar experiences; sharing eases



loneliness and promotes the expression of your grief in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding. This is why parents worldwide find "The Compassionate Friends" so helpful. Bereaved parents and their families can find healing and hope for the future as they reorganize their lives in a positive way - but it doesn't happen overnight. We welcome you to join us and see for yourself how helpful meetings can be.  
 --Excerpts from The Compassionate Friends South Australia

## Book in Review...



*Into the Valley and Out Again* The Story of a father's Journey by Richard Edler. After the unexpected death of his son, Rich's life seemed to stop. The next few years were spent climbing out of the bottom of a valley he had not known existed before. It is a story about what is important in life, sorrow, faith, acceptance and rebirth. Available in our chapter's library.

## Sometimes

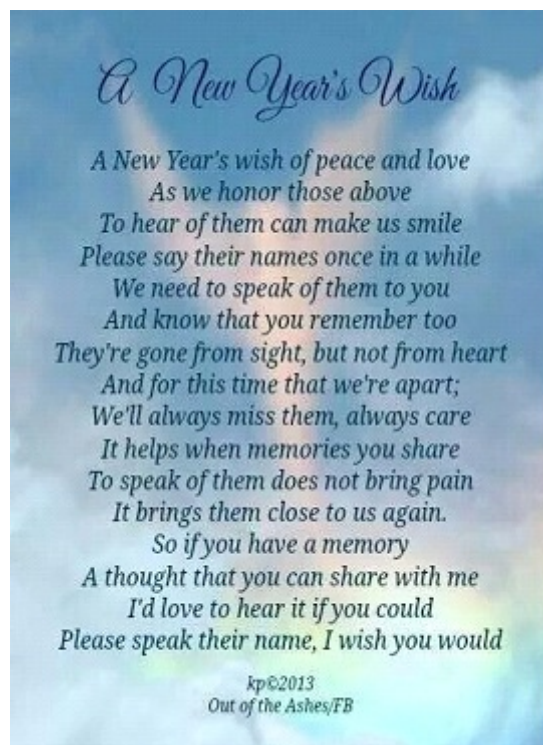
Sometimes something clicks,  
 and with a tear,  
 remembrance of the pain  
 and the loneliness  
 flood the heart.  
 Sometimes something clicks,  
 and with a smile  
 remembrance of the love  
 and the laughter  
 flood the senses.  
 And there are times  
 when nothing clicks at all,  
 and a voice echoes  
 through the emptiness  
 and numbness,  
 never finding the person  
 who used to fill that space.  
 And sometimes,  
 the most special time of all,  
 a feeling ripples through your  
 body, heart, and soul  
 that tells you  
 that person never left you  
 And he's right there with you  
 Through it all.

--Kirsten Hansen, TCF Kentfield, CA

## The Song Is the Same

Different are the circumstances  
 of our child's death,  
 Different are their names,  
 Different was their life and the length of it,  
 But their song was the same.  
 They lived for one brief moment in history,  
 Much too soon they were gone,  
 They left us here,  
 parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters,  
 To remember the gift of their life  
 and somehow go on.  
 Whatever the time that has passed for us,  
 Whatever the pain and grief that we claim,  
 We are all here together to remember our kids,  
 So your song becomes my song  
 and our song is the same.  
 --Barb Seth TCF Madison, WI

"Because I cannot hold you in my arms, I will envelope you in my heart.  
 Because I cannot hear your song, I will whisper your love into the world.  
 Because I cannot gaze into your eyes, I will tender your vision of compassion where it's most needed.  
 In every moment without you, I will do all I can to grace others with the beauty in your wake."  
 --Dr. Joanne Cacciatore



**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

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

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



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: Dorthy 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

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

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

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

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





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

Lilly Parker  
Born: 12/15 Died: 1/17  
Mother: Nicole Kawagish

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 Pulislich

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

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

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

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

Nicholas M Sinclair  
Born: 1/80 Died: 2/22  
Mother: Suzanne Sinclair

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Birthday Tributes...**

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

—Sorry, no tributes were submitted this month.—

**For Siblings...****Open Letter To Our Sibling**

Dear Sibling,

How can I possibly tell you how much I miss you? But of course you probably know - since you knew me better than anyone. No matter how much time passes, I still wish you were here to share our lives and the future I expected us to have together.

Even though we fought and at times neglected each other, I just assumed that you would always be there. That we'd grow old together and remember stories of growing up and laugh at each other as we looked and acted more like our parents. That we'd share our joys and setbacks, and adore each other's children.

Your death has rocked me harder than I could imagined, and I wondered if I'd survive. Ultimately, there are no answers to my

questions. There is no replacing you and there is no solace for my grief.

There is only the simple choice I make every day to live on in the honor of your memory and the love we shared. To strive to carry on the best of who you were. To cherish the brief time we have with others. To celebrate the opportunity to be alive. To have compassion for the pain of others as well as my own. To have the courage to love fully as I have loved you and to remember that you would want me to go on and find joy again.

You gave me so many gifts while you were alive and I continue to discover the gifts in this loss. I am so thankful you were born my sibling. I would not have traded our time together for anything. You are always with me because you are a part of me.

--Mary Lamourex TCF Marin County, CA

**My Friend**

At one time you were my world. As the years passed us by, you were my brother, my friend.

The older we grew, the closer we drew.

We lived our lives and suffered many sorrows together.

But to suffer this one alone, I just don't know.

You made your own rules, you conquered the world and more.

The world will forever be a little emptier, a little colder, and yet heaven is so much richer.

Blessed God, please watch over my friend

Until I can join him; we'll all join him soon.

I love you still my friend.

--Lori Boyle, TCF, Wellsville, NY

## For Grandparents...



### My Grandchild Died

Many months ago now my grandchild died, some days it feels as if it were yesterday, other days it seems a life time ago. I am told by my friends and some of my family that it is time I “moved on”. They tell me that I must put “it” behind me! It is not easy to smile back. It is not easy to tell them why I will never “get over it”. How can you explain the grief? One cannot do so and I hope they never learn from personal experience what it is like for a grandmother to lose a grandchild.

I used to think my heart had broken but I now know that is not true. If my heart had broken I would not be here. My “being” broke means, I feel as if I am a 3D jigsaw puzzle that broke into thousands of pieces the day my grandchild died. Slowly, through self help I have put that puzzle together. It is not perfect and regularly a piece, or sometimes a few pieces, slip out and remain out for some time. They can be put back in and need to be for me to live my life, but I find I have two pieces that will not fit back into that puzzle, no matter how I try.

Some days one piece almost fits; this is the grief for my grandchild. It will always be a new piece in my being. That grief will remain until the day I die. It is a piece of puzzle uniquely shaped from happy and sad memories, from an undying love, from so many emotions. I touch this piece of puzzle often, sometimes the grief it brings is so intense it is almost unbearable, other days it does not seem so bad. Some days touching it makes me smile. It is always in my thoughts and I feel it constantly, however I can place it in my pocket and know that it rests safely there. It is at peace so I have learnt not to struggle to try to make it fit.

The other piece is more difficult. It belongs to my child, the daughter I gave birth to, fed and nurtured, loved and cuddled. The daughter I watched grow from baby to adulthood. The daughter I helped shape into a wonderful human being. She too was part of my “being”, I understood her and we shared a history. We were mother and daughter. Now that piece has changed shape forever and does not even look like fitting in. Can I mold the shape to fit, no not yet. Will it ever fit back in?

I do not know. I understand that she has changed forever and I love her unconditionally but I wonder if I will ever get to know this new daughter. Is it possible to find that comfortable place I once shared with her? Can that natural mother daughter relationship be learned again now we are not child and adult? She has had to change to cope, she has been dealt the most terrible of tragedies, and her life has changed

forever. She lost a child. She has needed to find strength from her deepest self. She is grown up now, she no longer needs me to nurture her as a mother but I still need her as a daughter. I long for the day when I can feel her arms around me again and hear her say I, love you Mum from her heart. Maybe then that piece of puzzle will have days when it fits into my pocket comfortably too. It will always be a piece of my puzzle whose shape has changed but hopefully one which also becomes comfortable to hold.

Is this why they say a grandparent suffers a double grief when their grandchild dies? Maybe.

--Author wishes to remain anonymous

## From Our Members...



### A Portuguese Fishing Village Helped Me Journey From Grief Toward Hope

Sesimbra, Portugal, is a place with history. She's known grief and loss. Her cracked cobblestones are soaked with centuries of tears. History is seeped into her narrow, steep streets, but she doesn't mourn for those lost. She knows that death is part of life. Nothing surprises her. Nothing defeats her. She simply bears witness and remains.

When my grief was still too acute to feel, I went in search of a place to be alone—a refuge where I could hurt and heal, without hurting others. I was aimless and drifting when Sesimbra caught me in her nets and brought me to her shores. This small fishing village wrapped me in her warmth and held me close until I felt safe enough to let myself shatter. I was numbed by my son's death when I arrived, but grief soon crashed over me. My pain stormed and screamed and tore me to shreds. My anger would flare and I'd want to crush the universe and everything in it for being unfair and unfeeling. Without warning, guilt would smash me in the gut with a wallop, leaving me curled on the floor, breathless. I'd ask myself, endlessly: “Should I have...?” “Could I have...?” “Would it have made a difference?”

In its gentler moments, grief reminded me of times I shared with Tristan. I remembered his radiant grin, overflowing into a goofy belly laugh that washed us all clean. I smelled his young-man scent, distinctive through the mist of tobacco and Axe body wash. I tasted the love in his hand-rolled gnocchi, prepared specially for his grandma on her birthday. I was proud of his



gold medals, and black belts and sobriety fobs. I felt his solid warmth as he hugged me and said, "Love you, Mom," on his way out in the morning. I thought about his sensitive heart, fragile and fractured, so affected by the wounds of the world. So quick to self-blame. And self-harm. And I remembered how inspired I was by his bravery and strength as he fought to heal himself. I sifted through 22 years of priceless memories, good and bad, grateful for the sharp stab of each one of them. Alone, I immersed myself in pain, unresisting. It was the only way I knew to spend time with Tristan.

Sesimbra, like any place formed around mountains and ocean and sky, neither judged me nor coddled me. With infinite patience and loving indifference, she simply let me be. Sometimes, though, she whispered that there is still joy in the world. She greeted me each morning with a warm kiss of sunshine and her evening waves soothed me in gentle lullaby.

I walked to the market once a week to buy swordfish fillets, vegetables and fresh bread because, somehow, I still needed to eat. I braved the crowds and ignored vendors who held out cabbages or oranges for my inspection. I'd find the quieter stalls and, not knowing the language, point to items I wanted, trusting the vendors to give me correct change. The market was overwhelming—too many people and glassy-eyed fish on ice—so I never lingered. In and out, eyes down, get the job done.

Eventually, though, I began to notice the women behind the market stalls, laughing and gossiping with each other. I envied them a little bit.

In the afternoons, I'd nestle my feet deeply into the cool white sand and let the glistening ocean blind me. I'd hold my grief close, like a worry stone. At first, if I noticed people at all, they were simply part of the backdrop. But one day, I saw two small children laughing at the shoreline, searching for pebbles and shells, screeching as the waves lapped their feet, two tiny packages of overflowing joy. They reminded me of my granddaughter, Ava, who I suddenly missed terribly. I thought of Ava, back home, mourning her uncle as a three-year-old will, with questions and confidence on her way to the playground. I discovered a restaurant where I could sit on the patio, overlooking the ocean, eating mussels and

fresh bread, drinking sangria or sparkling water. Sometimes an orange tabby cat slept on the chair across from me, a perfect dinner companion.

The owner of the restaurant was a tiny, radiant woman about my age who spoke a bit of English. One day, she asked what brought me to Sesimbra. I told her about Tristan and my need to be alone. She listened without comment and then shared her own story of grief to let me know that she understood. That we were connected. And I was so grateful for that human connection.

One day, as I watched the gulls squabble on the water, I realized that life was all around me and I was still part of it, decades of sunrises and sunsets ahead of me. I thought back to when Tristan started his recovery journey and I started mine. To that moment when I realized that where there's life, there's hope. I remembered the freedom that hope brings, the joy of possibility. I couldn't hope for Tristan any more, but perhaps I could hope for myself. Maybe, I could hope to laugh again with my friends, like the ladies in the market. Or hope to lose myself in the innocent joy of decorating cupcakes with Ava one more time. Just maybe, I could hope to feel the fullness of human connection again.

As I sat on the beach with my back against the coolness of a stone wall, centuries old, I began to feel hope for my life after his death.

About a week before heading home to spend that first Christmas with my family, without Tristan,

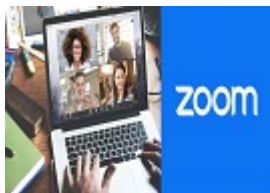


I watched the sun spread its crimson glow across the water and knew, with sudden certainty, that hope was something I was not willing to give up. Hope was a message I needed to carry. I have a story to tell and it's a story of hope. A story of how I finally discovered hope, after years of living in fear and ignorance of Tristan's

addiction. How I learned there was hope for him, for others who struggle, and for me. Hope that I could be okay, no matter what. And it's a story of how Tristan discovered hope, bright enough, at times, to dispel his shame and obsession, to light a pathway back to himself. Of how his hope was a life saving beacon for others who struggled. Hope is Tristan's legacy. And so, I began to write.

--Kathy Wagner, New Westminster, B.C.  
TCF Kamloops, B.C., Canada  
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 [Liccia79@gmail.com](mailto:Liccia79@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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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...**

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| <a href="http://thetearsfoundation.org">thetearsfoundation.org</a> | <a href="http://childloss.com">childloss.com</a>   |
| <a href="http://goodgriefresources.com">goodgriefresources.com</a> | <a href="http://griefwatch.dom">griefwatch.dom</a> |
| <a href="http://bereavedparentsusa.org">bereavedparentsusa.org</a> | <a href="http://opentohope.com">opentohope.com</a> |
| <a href="http://healingafterloss.org">healingafterloss.org</a>     | <a href="http://webhealing.com">webhealing.com</a> |
| <a href="http://survivorsofsuicide.com">survivorsofsuicide.com</a> | <a href="http://alivealone.org">alivealone.org</a> |
| <a href="http://taps.org">taps.org</a> (military death)            | <a href="http://angelmoms.com">angelmoms.com</a>   |
| <a href="http://save.org">save.org</a> (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 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](http://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 Nehemiah Valour Dykstra May 2009 - February 2021. Loved his family and Jesus. Asked everyone do you know Jesus? Wanted everyone to know Jesus. His love for us and our love for you Nehemiah is forever etched in our hearts, never to be forgotten.

Love from all your family

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 90510

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Some people may not understand why those grieving are reluctant to move into a new year. For them, they see a fresh year, a new season... But for the bereaved, it's moving into a new calendar year, which their loved one will never live in.

- Zoe Clark-Coates -  
ForeverMissed.com

-Return Service Requested-



January 2023

## Time Sensitive Material, Please Deliver Promptly



### 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.