



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

May 2023 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be May 4th, 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, May 4th meeting will start with "Managing Special Days like Mother's Day and Father's Day without my child."

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

The TCF Friends 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, May 4th meeting will start with “Managing Special Days Like Mother’s Day and Father’s Day without my child.” As a parent we can feel rewarded for our efforts on Mother’s/Father’s day. We can also feel punished on those days because the deep, raw, pain of our loss often surfaces once again. It doesn’t matter how old the loss, we acknowledge it and remember. This month we will start the meeting with “special days” and the various pitfalls they can bring. Please join us as we share how we now face these days and how much easier they become with planning, time, and acknowledgment of our feelings.

The following article is from Whats My Grief, an online grief support group. This letter is written by one bereaved mother, who combined the sharing of one hundred different bereaved mothers.

Dear Friend,

I miss my child every day. This grief of mine will never leave me, and honestly, why should it? I love my child more than I ever could have imagined, and yes, I do mean present tense “love”. It is excruciating knowing that my child will never return to my arms. However, a mother’s love for her child doesn’t require physical presence; this can be proven by the fact that most mothers love their children well before they are even born. I will love my child forever, and therefore, I will grieve my child forever. This is just how it goes. I know it’s difficult for some people to understand my ongoing grief, I guess because they want me to “get better” or return to “normal.” However, I actually am normal. I’m just different now. I believe those who say they want to support me on difficult days like Mother’s Day, but part of this is accepting me as a grieving mother who will always love her deceased child. Again, this is just how it goes.

My grief is like the weather. Some days it’s calm, quiet, maybe even a little sunny. Other days it’s a devastating storm that makes me feel angry, exhausted, raw, and empty. I wake up in the morning and wonder – “Am I even alive at all? And if so, how am I supposed to make it through this day?” This is why, when you ask me how I feel about Mother’s Day, all I can say is that it depends. Of course, I’m going to try my best to cope with the day, but while you’re hoping that your Mother’s Day picnic doesn’t get spoiled by actual rain, I’ll be praying that the grief storms stay at bay.



Like many things in a grieving mother’s life, Mother’s Day is bittersweet to the nth degree. On the one hand, I feel immense joy because I was blessed with my child and I feel gratitude for every moment I was given with them. On the other hand, the pain of missing my child – my greatest happiness, my life’s purpose, and my best friend – is intense. Bereaved mothers live with so many of these confusing contrasts. They are like undercurrents that tug at and toss about our hearts and minds.

I am the mother of a child who is not alive. Perhaps a child who you’ve never met. You can’t ask me about their school year, or how they’re liking piano lessons, or whether they’ve chosen a major in college. In my mind, I’ve imagined my child doing all these things. People don’t realize that I grieve each of my child’s milestones, knowing they didn’t get the opportunity to experience these special days. Most people don’t know how to validate my child’s place in the world or my ongoing role as my child’s mother. This is a difficult concept for others to grasp. Heck, sometimes even I grapple with the answers to questions like “Do you have children?” and “How many?” I know many bereaved mothers, like me, long for these questions to have straightforward answers. Sadly, mothers who have experienced the death of their only child may even wonder whether they get to call themselves a mother at all in broader society. So, in addition to the pain of grief, these mothers have to cope with a sense of being left out, forgotten, and ignored. Can you imagine how that might feel?

I think it must be like being stabbed through the heart and when you turn to others for help they say “What blood?” “What knife?” Then, for mothers who have surviving children, there is this gem of a comment – “Don’t forget, you’re lucky to have other children.” Please let me assure you, a mother does not forget any of her children. This mother loves each and every one of her unique and special children in unique and special ways, but one of her children has died and so her love for this child looks a little untraditional. Mothers do not have a finite amount of love to be shifted, divided, and spread around depending on the number of children they have on this Earth. So please be careful with your comments, because it’s difficult enough for grieving mothers who often feel torn between feeling joy and happiness for their living children and grief for the child who has died.

All that said, you asked me what it's like to grieve a child on Mother's Day, so here's what I have to say: This day will forever be hard for me. I live with an emptiness that no one can fill; so I may be sad, I may be unsociable, and I may need to take a break to be by myself in a quiet place. Whatever shape my grief takes on this day, please allow me to feel the way I feel and please follow my lead. Beyond that, acknowledge me as a mother. It makes me feel forgotten and as though my child has been forgotten when people act as though my child never existed. Also, I can sense that people feel uncomfortable talking about my child and I constantly feel like the elephant in the room, but it doesn't have to be this way. Honestly, I find it really comforting when someone talks about my child. I love hearing their name spoken out loud! I love hearing stories about them. Maybe you know a story I've never heard, or maybe I've heard it a hundred times before, but it really doesn't matter to me. Your acknowledgment alone is one of the greatest Mother's Day gifts you could give me.

I guess while I'm offering my two cents, I also have something to say to my fellow bereaved mothers. No one has it all figured out, but I've learned a few lessons along the way. If you're worried about Mother's Day, you're not alone. Try not to get overwhelmed or wrapped up in anxiety. You may actually find that the anticipation of the day is worse than the day itself. You may want to plan a whole day of activities just to stay busy, or you may feel like doing nothing at all. There is no "right" way to handle Mother's Day – but do try to plan ahead a little. You may want to reach out to others who are struggling with the day and, if you can, it always helps to face the day with people who love and support you. Whatever you do, believe you will make it through the day. With time, the grief storms will grow smaller and less frequent and you will find a little more balance and room to breathe. Believe you will be okay and have hope that in the future you will find yourself in a place where you can grieve and celebrate on Mother's Day all at the same time. Let's take care of each other.

– Eleanor Haley, Co-founder of "*Whats Your Grief*"
whatsyourgrief.com What's Your Grief? is a place for grief articles, courses, creativity, sharing, community & more.

We were put on the earth to love them for as long as WE live... Not for as long as THEY lived.

--Alan Pederson



Helping a Father Through Father's Day

Father's Day has become a traditional holiday celebrated by many with gifts, cards, family gatherings, and perhaps even a special dinner out just for daddy. Stores begin advertising for Father's Day weeks in advance of the actual holiday. The scenes in advertisements and cards always depict a loving father with a child snuggled close to that special man called daddy. Many fathers, however, have experienced the devastation of losing a child, and there seems to be an almost nonexistent recognition of the fact that fathers suffer from feelings of lost dreams, loneliness, failure, and loss of identity when a child has died. Very rarely are comments of support made to the father in a family when a child has died. For some reason, our society seems to be more in tune to the feelings of the pain a mother experiences during child loss. Fathers are somehow expected to be stronger emotionally, and they are expected to heal much sooner.

What can be done to show support on Father's Day to a father who has experienced the deep pain of losing a child? Probably the most appreciated gesture of support would be to acknowledge the fact that the father is still a father even though his child is no longer living on this earth. Refer to him as a father, and express your genuine sorrow for his loss. Fathers who have lost a child as early as miscarriage should certainly be included among the group of grieving fathers. Often, fathers of miscarried babies are never given any recognition of being a father.

Finding a Father's Day card specifically for fathers who have lost a child can be next to impossible. If you cannot find a card with an appropriate verse, choose a blank card and write your own message from the heart. "Sharing in your sorrow this Father's Day" or "Blessings to you this Father's Day as God watches over your heavenly angel" will show a tremendous amount of compassion and support to a father who is grieving the loss of a child on Father's Day.

Recognize the fact that fathers go through emotional upheavals during the grief of child loss. Fathers grieve differently than mothers, so they might not want a lot of special treatment on

Father's Day. Men are generally less apt to talk about their feelings of hurt and loss than women, but those feelings are still there and need to be recognized. Father's Day without a child can be just as emotionally heartbreaking for a father as Mother's Day is for a mother without her child. We need to be sensitive to the needs of fathers, too!

Special holidays stir up many different emotions for fathers, and Father's Day is a particularly difficult holiday to go through following the loss of a child. With help and support from family and friends, a father can move forward in his grief. By letting a father know that he has not been forgotten on Father's Day, you will validate his identity as a father, and you will allow him the special privilege of once again being called that most cherished name of all—daddy.

Finally, find some way to validate the fact that a father is still a father even though his child is not living. Fathers are by nature "fixers" and the loss of a child is one loss that cannot be fixed. This fact is often very hard for a man to accept. By giving a card and a personal word on Father's Day, you will help validate to the father that he is still honored among that special group of men called fathers on Father's Day. Validation of fatherhood on Father's Day is one more step forward in this process we call grief.

--Clara Hinton Brief Encounters Online Newsletter-www.briefencounters.org

Mothers Day and Graduation

After my daughter Kyra died on November 14 of 2004, one of my first thoughts was I am no longer a mother, because Kyra was my only child. It didn't take me long to realize that that was not true; I am and always will be Kyra's mom. As I have walked my grief journey I have found myself referring to grief as labor. It then came to me that for me, losing Kyra was like giving birth in reverse. I experienced intense emotional and physical pain that I wondered if I could endure, similar to the physical pain of labor, only in grief it lasts for weeks, months and years. It took my breath away, brought me to my knees and often I found myself crying out in anguish and anger, like child birth.

It has been over a year and a half since Kyra died and I have felt a break in the pain. It has started back up recently due to graduation but I know it will ease some after May. Some women

experience false labor leading up to the birth of their child. I think that those intense pains that come from out of nowhere and last only a short time is something that I will forever experience. I now realize that in letting go of her death, I can embrace and carry her spirit with me always. So, I liken grief to giving birth in reverse.

I go from Mother's day to Graduation, because Kyra would have graduated from High School at the end of May. Graduation was something I knew would be hard for me to endure without her here, alive and being part of the celebration. I thought about what Kyra graduating would mean to me and it didn't take me long to come up with, it was going to be my day to celebrate.

Kyra was an intelligent child with a low attention span, a need to talk, and lower than I would have liked motivation. It was a frustration that her teachers and I shared. So, homework time was a challenge and I used motivational charts, rewards and even punishment. But, I quickly found that you can't force someone to be motivated and went back to encouraging. I knew that she would come around and become motivated and I started seeing it her Junior year, the year she died. I thought that graduation would be the reward for all the long nights and constantly trying to encourage and

motivate. Well, it's not to be and I had to decide how will I endure graduation. I began to think about all she is missing. I believe in Heaven so I don't believe she is missing any joy or good times, because I believe she is now experiencing indescribable joy and unimaginable good times.

The reality of what she is missing is, she is missing misery, pain, frustration, disappointment, a broken heart, grief, hopelessness and agony. And I am missing her incredible, joy and zest for life, her strong faith, beautiful smile and her wonderful heart.

As I close I remember when I was pregnant with Kyra, I took two helpings of food because I said I'm eating for two. Now I will try my best to live life to the fullest and be all that I can because now I'm living for two. Just as her living made me want to be a better person, her dying will make me a better person if I allow it, because I now carry her with me. I will strive to do and see life the way she would have if she could have stayed here longer.

-- Julie Short, TCF/Southeastern IL
In Memory of my daughter, Kyra



Can Memorial Day Be Both a Day of Celebration and Remembrance?



The stores are also crowded with people preparing for activities to celebrate the beginning of summer. The roads leading to area beaches are backlogged with traffic. Cookouts and family fun activities are planned. The department stores are advertising great Memorial Day sales on summer gear. Our local newspapers have published special sections to list weekend nightlife, music, and arts events.

I read an article recently by one who strongly opposes celebrating summer festivities on a day designed for solemn remembrance. The writer questions, "When did we begin to make this a day of fun?" Since childhood, my family combined the two, visiting the cemetery to pay respects in the morning and continuing the day by celebrating the beginning of summer with family and friends. I agree that we should pay special tribute to those who paid the price for our freedom. We should also support the military families who've lost loved ones. Oftentimes, their grief journey encompasses so much more than we recognize, such as moving away from the military families that they have always known.

If you know families or friends who have experienced loss (military and non-military), consider reaching out and offering support this Memorial Day weekend and beyond. A telephone call to say "I'm thinking of you" just might brighten someone's day.

Since we are all unique individuals, and there is no right or wrong way to grieve, there is no right or wrong way to remember, honor, and celebrate. Follow your heart and do what feels right for you this Memorial Day weekend. As always, I encourage you to cherish the memories and embrace the future.

--Nora Carpenter, Posted on the National Compassionate Friends Website

We All Think About It

How old is your child? Do you miss him or her for the child they were or the child they would now be?

Isn't it confusing when you see a child 3 years

old? He reminds you of your little Timmy; same color hair, same build, same mischievous grin. You think of your son and you miss his sweet little arms around your neck. Then you realize Timmy wouldn't look or act like this anymore; he wouldn't be 3, Timmy would be 8 now. Not climbing on your lap, but climbing trees. Not a toddler, but a little man.

You wonder how he would look, what his voice would sound like, who his friends would be. Would he be a Cub Scout, or playing soccer? Then your mind swoops back to reality, the little boy that reminded you of Timmy is gone. You're glad you noticed him, it feels good to think of Timmy. But there's confusion in your thoughts about him also. Of course the pain mixed with the warmth of his memory is confusing enough. But that reoccurring wondering about what your child would have been like today, is even more confusing. And you're wondering if you should even think about it... he's not 8... and he's not 3. He's in heaven and he's not here.

But he's in our memory and he's in your heart and it's OK to remember him as he was ... at 3. It's OK to think of him as he would be ... at 8. It's OK to think over this confusing feeling of the loss of both of the Timmys' you miss. The toddler at 3, and the boy at 8.

It's OK to think about it. We all think about it.
--Connie Miles, TCF St. Louis, MO

Signs After Suicide: The Red Butterfly

Shortly after noon, I went into Arlyn's bedroom to get a few things to take with me. I was preparing to drive about three miles out into the country, to Woodhaven Road. I stood and gazed around her room for a few minutes; it was full of Arlyn, but it seemed so empty. I picked up a folder with some of the poems she had written. Her words. Her thoughts. Her feelings. I held it under my arm securely while I searched for something else. A Cabbage Patch doll, the dress she was christened in, a blue ribbon she had won for baking a sponge cake when she was ten years old. They were all things that meant something to Arlyn, but I left them alone.

In moving my hands across the top of her dresser, I knocked over a small picture frame. I stood it upright; it held a photo of Arlyn with bright red hair and a happy grin. She was three years old when I had made the Raggedy Ann costume using

a mop for a wig. She had flopped around the house for days practicing a Raggedy Ann walk. I smiled at the memory and picked it up to take with me. This was all I needed.

I got into the car, checking to make sure I had not forgotten to put the lawn chair in the trunk. Then slowly, I drove three miles out to the country to a place that drew me to it with an awful, yet irresistible force. To a place on Woodhaven Road.

A few minutes later, I parked the car beside a small stream. I checked my watch; I was early. The rickety wooden bridge which crossed the stream seemed to blend in with the trees and undergrowth surrounding it. There were no other man-made structures in sight.

My eyes tried to follow several small yellow butterflies as they bobbed up and down in this otherwise still picture. I placed the lawn chair on the side of the narrow dirt road, a few feet from the two wooden crosses that announced to the world that this was a place where a death had occurred.

I held on to the folder of writings and the small framed photo as I sat heavily down in the chair. I suddenly realized that I had placed the chair on the exact spot where my daughter's body had fallen when her life stopped. I briefly stiffened and thought about moving, but then, I didn't. A morbid need to connect with her held me there.

I opened the folder and picked up a sheet of paper with Arlyn's handwriting on it. I read:



"The scent of death
Surrounds me
And I am overwhelmed
By it's beauty."

I shook my head; I could not understand. It was terribly hot, much like it was the day Arlyn died. I sat quietly wondering what she had thought during those final moments, wondering if she has been afraid, wondering.

I looked down and continued to read. I felt a dull pain in my chest. Her hands had written the words I was staring at, but her heart had felt them. After a while, I looked up and stared at the yellow butterflies blankly. Then, I glanced at my watch and saw that it was almost – that time. If Arlyn's spirit was to come, it would be now. So I began to talk. At first, I spoke casually. "How are you doing, Arlyn? What's it like up there? Are you with Mammaw and Grandpap and Lori? Have you played your guitar for them?" I waited, but Arlyn

did not reply.

I felt myself growing more anxious, so I began to ask harder questions, pausing after each to listen for a reply. "Arlyn, do you miss us? When you pulled the trigger, did you have any idea of how badly your death would hurt your dad and me? Did you know how much I loved you?" Then, as a post-script, I asked her if she'd seen her young cousin, Adam, who was killed the day before, and I asked her to take Adam under her wings.

Again, I closed my eyes and waited. And waited. Nothing happened. I felt so sad. Finally, I decided I had to try one more time to persuade Arlyn to reply. I would ask for a sign that she was here. She'd been gone four years; I had waited long enough.

I opened my eyes and looked around. As I searched for a sign, I realized I would not know a sign if I saw one. What does a sign look like? Is it a blinking light? A crash of thunder? The image of a face in the clouds? What would I look for? Then, I spotted two yellow butterflies in the woods behind the crosses. This type of butterfly is common in south Georgia at this time of year. It seems that they only come in yellow. I glanced down at the Raggedy Ann photo that was smiling up with me. The red mop wig almost looked like wings surrounding her face.

I smiled to myself then, and I spoke loudly into the trees. I said, "Arlyn, if you hear me, I need a sign! Will you send me a sign to let me know you're okay? Will you send me a red butterfly if you know how much I love you and how badly I miss you? A red butterfly, Arlyn. Please!"

By then, the tears spilling down my cheeks were making their own small stream. I closed my eyes. I felt the stillness, until a cool breeze brushed past. I shivered. When I opened my eyes again, I saw the two crosses still standing in front of me. The only thing different was that the yellow butterflies in the woods behind them had left. I sighed. I was so disappointed that I had just passed another milestone date without a sign from Arlyn. I felt myself sinking.

I was a reluctant traveler on this road. Sometimes, it seemed too hard to go on. Sometimes, I wanted to give up and join her. I missed her so much. A moment or so later, I caught a red flicker in the corner of my eye to the right, over the stream. I turned and saw a large red butterfly come up from under the bridge. Slowly, it flew towards me, bobbing up and down as if it were

on a sea of gently rippling water. As the butterfly flew closer, I held my breath. The trees behind it faded out, creating a hazy background, accenting the brightness of its red wings. To my amazement, it fluttered close to me. Then, it flew all the way around the two crosses that bore Arlyn's name. Not once but twice. Twice, the red butterfly encircled those crosses while I sat there spellbound, so close I could have touched it. It hovered a moment, and then it swooped through the air, heading off into the woods behind the crosses and out of sight.

Was it a coincidence that the red butterfly just happened to fly by as I was hoping for a sign from Arlyn? Was it really a sign from her? If it was a sign, what did it mean? I do not know if it was a coincidence or not; I have visited the place on Woodhaven Road many times in the past four years. The only butterflies I remember seeing there before were yellow.

A sign is something that may suggest the presence of someone who is missing. To me, that butterfly was a sign from Arlyn, because there is no logical explanation for its appearance otherwise. So, what does it mean? I believe it was a sign that the spirit lives on after death, and that the soul of my precious Arlyn is at peace. I believe the red butterfly was Arlyn's way of letting me know that she knows the depth of my love for her, and the pain of my sadness. I also believe that she sent me this sign so I would know that she is with me always.

This knowledge does not erase the fact I miss her, but it does help me move into the future. I feel an inner calmness that was missing before. I believe I have a mission to accomplish while I am here, so I now understand that the spirit of my child will provide the wings to lift me up. Most important, though, the red butterfly proved to me that love is eternal. It does not die when the body dies. Hearts and souls that are joined on earth are united forever.

--Karyl Chastain Beal, Columbia, TN Masters in Education, Certified Thanatologist, Support group facilitator

Whatever Sparks Joy

We typically think of the winter holidays as being the tough ones, but these next few months have the potential to stir memories, provoke "what could have been" thoughts, and heighten our heartache. Some occasions that immediately

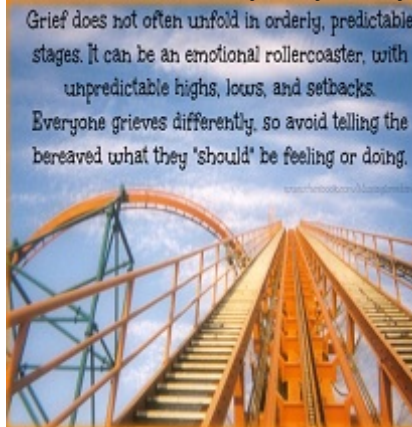
come to my mind...Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Last Day of School, Graduation, Father's Day, Weddings, Vacations, 4th of July and...(insert your own significant occasion/event). My husband, John, and I would add May Day, Carson's May 1st birthday, to this long list.

Memories of, or longing for, a carefully crafted Mother's or Father's Day card, Kindergarten graduation, watching your child walk down the aisle or across a stage, postcards from summer camp, sharing stories of the one that got away, cheering from the bleachers, or oohing and ahing spectacular fireworks at dusk, can make our loved one's absence more pronounced. Because we greatly love them, we greatly miss them.

Planning ahead and not letting these days abruptly overwhelm us may help us feel more in control of our feelings and how we choose to express them. We can honor our child, grandchild, or sibling by including them in a way we are comfortable. Perhaps we can encourage others to share special memories with us. Memories shared are memories preserved. Doing an activity they enjoyed might bring us a glimmer of joy.

Carson loved fireworks, so it seemed fitting his first memorial birthday celebration would include a fountain of fireworks. We weren't quite prepared for how loud and bright fireworks can seem in the quiet of a cemetery, against a starry sky. That "yikes" moment ignited a spark of joy for friends and family gathered and put fireworks on our future "must do" list. There's nothing wrong or disrespectful with sharing a smile, or even a laugh, while celebrating our child's life.

--Gloria Jordan, Carson's Mom TCF Minneapolis, MN Our May Day Baby's 3rd Birthday



Newly Bereaved...

"The Roller Coaster Of Grief"

Early Grief mimics a dark roller coaster stalled on the bottom track. Seemingly we are half crazed, with no

hope of coming back. But eventually, the seconds, minutes, hours do move into days. We begin the healing process attempting to find our own way. Struggling, we crawl up the tracks striving

cautiously to make the hill. Only to lose our balance, sliding backward to the bottom of the track, still.

The word, indescribable, marks this early road of horrific grief. As we continue to live our life in total disbelief.

We have stalled, lingering and are imprisoned at the bottom of the track, but in time, our eyes will see more clearly, the possibility of coming back.

Journeying onward in our grief, we tend to sway on the track somewhat. But we are in denial, the acceptance of our loved one's death is not.

Exhausted to a point of pure insanity as we live through the horror of our nightmare. Over and over, we make this one and only statement, "It just isn't fair."

Swinging this way and that as we spin and whirl around. But no relief or peace for our ongoing suffering to be found.

Months do finally and surely flow quietly and sadly into years. We now have often faced those demons of our worst fears.

And we no longer remain stalled at the bottom of the track. This long roller coaster ride has assuredly brought us back.

But forever is our grief and pain; thus never to have a choice, until our life on earth is over, and glorious eternity shall be fulfilled.

--Dianna Jacobs In memory of my daughter, my best friend, Kanda Michelle Jacobs

Seasoned Grievers...

Making Progress

The day you died,
my spirit sought to turn away from life;
It could not face the pain
that pierced its being like a knife.
I wanted to go with you.
Why should my life go on?
I found no earthly reason
to arise and greet the dawn.
I could not find a purpose;

How pointless it all seemed.
Reality seemed distant.
Was my life a bitter dream?
I seemed to be suspended
in a tiny piece of time;
Simply going through the motions
like an actor or a mime.

Then, bit by bit, as I endured
each never-ending day,
I learned to smile and laugh again
in a tenuous kind of way.
And now, although I miss you more
than any words could tell,
No longer am I mired in
a brutal, needless hell.
I know I cannot escape
my sadness and my pain.
But I need not give it power
to dominate again.



Once again I notice rainbows,
the stars adrift in space,
a flower's perfumed beauty,
and the sunshine on my face.
I need not search so desperately
to find some subtle meaning,
some purpose in the hours enclosed
between daybreak and evening.
I find delight recaptured
in hearing, touching, seeing;
Once more I've come to know
the peaceful joy of being.
--Peggy Kociscin Albuquerque, NM

For Friends & Family...

Our Mothers and Loss: a Changing Relationship

I love my mother, and we get along well, but when it comes to my pregnancy losses and struggles with infertility, well... Let's just say we're not on the same page.

My mother never struggled to get pregnant. She never had a loss. So even if she was grieving the death of her grandsons, she just was never able to relate to me. She did not know what to say. She could not express her own grief. She never even looked at them.

It was my mother who tried to comfort me by

saying: "At least they weren't born severely disabled. That would have been hard." She repeated it many times. And so the death of my boys didn't just change how I felt about "being" a mother. It changed my relationship with my own mother.

Mother's Day is such a difficult time for us bereaved parents. If we have no living children, we ache for them and for the public acknowledgment that we too are mothers. If we have living children, we still mourn the ones that are not here and think about how different things might have been. If we have lost our own mothers, there is that grief compounded on top. If we have a mother but are estranged from her, that brings its own special heartache.

As Mother's Day approaches, what can I do to build a bridge with my mother? Can I ask her about how the loss of Nate and Sam changed her feelings about being a grandmother? Can I tell her she doesn't have to stay strong for me, even though I am her child? For while she does not know what it is like to be a bereaved mom, I too do not know what it is like to be a bereaved grandma. If we take time to listen to one another, really listen, perhaps we can heal what has broken between us.
--Amanda Ross-White

Helpful Hint...



"Communication is not only what you say, but how it is perceived by the person listening. Communication is also what you don't say as you interact. Judging each other's words and deeds by using your intuition or making guesses is dangerous. When you are in doubt, don't assume, instead check it out - ask. Make communication a priority, even during difficult times. This could be the key to saving your marriage and strengthening your love for each other."

--by Sherokee Isle and Tim Nelson from their book, *Couple Communication After a Baby Dies*

Book In Review...



Hello From Heaven, by Bill & Judy Guggenheim. After death communications confirm that life and love are eternal. Uplifting messages from those who continue to exist in a life beyond physical death.

Welcome...



As members of The Compassionate Friends, we understand what you are experiencing. Like you, we have also lost a dearly beloved child. We share your pain, and while every journey through loss is unique, we are here to support you as you travel this road of grief.

Their Song of Love

Remembering on this Mother's Day the melody your child etched in your heart.

The sweet song of love that only your child could place there. As this special day brings their song to you, may the warmth of their eternal love fill your heart once again, For their song is never ending.

Patty Erdman
TCF Longview, WA

At First

At first my very name was grief.
My eyes saw only grief, my thoughts were grief.
And everything I touched was turned to grief.

But now I own the light of memories. My eyes can see you, and my thoughts can know you for what you really are; more than a young life lost, more than a radiance gone into night.

Today you have become a gift beyond my grief, a treasure to my world – though you have left my world and me behind.

--Sascha

"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: 1/22
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 Guerrev
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

Steven Thomas Pack
Born: 8/91 Died: 3/20
Parents: Tom & Lisa Pack

Lilly Parker
Born: 12/15 Died: 1/17
Parents: J.D. Parker &
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: 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

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



Our Children Remembered



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

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

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

Christopher Zuchero
Born: 5/85 - Died: 5/22
Parents: Mike & Shelly Rudeen

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

* 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...

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

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

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



Dear Eddie,

It is so very hard to put into words how we feel in our hearts. The only one consolation is that someday we'll all be together again and I feel in my heart that we will never let you out of our sight again.

We love and miss you so very much son, Mom & Dad

For Siblings...



My Sudden-Onset Only Child Syndrome

I was just a month past my second birthday when my brother Frank was born, and I cannot remember a time when I did not define myself as an older sister to a younger brother. Together with our parents we epitomized the 1970s nuclear family for which restaurant booths and mid-size sedans were tailor-made.

From an early age, the assumption that my brother would always be there was so ingrained that I was not even cognizant of it as a thought. It was kind of like the assumption that I would continue breathing. Then, last June, my brother was killed instantly when a drunk driver traveling on the wrong side of the highway hit his car head-on. All of a sudden, my assumption was thrown out the window, and I became an only child at the age of 48.

It's one thing to be an only child from the day you are born – to have all of the attention, shoulder all the expectations, receive all the accolades and all the criticism, all the gifts and all the burdens. When it's all you know, I imagine you become accustomed to it. But it's another thing entirely to have only-child status thrust upon you out of nowhere, as in hey, as of right now, you are on your own.

I have begun referring to my state of affairs as Sudden Onset Only Child Syndrome. We could call it SOOCS. (Sorry, I was hoping for a classier acronym, but this is the one that appeared.)

My brother and I were a crackerjack parent-relations team. Because I live closer to my parents, I took on the regular in-person-visitor role. He lived further away, but with his marketing savvy he advised them

on personal business choices like investments and home purchases. Frank and I spoke often on the phone about work, family, and life issues. Each of us had produced three grandchildren, so we were even on that score. We were truly friends, and we really cared about each other and about our parents. It was almost too good to be true, although it was that good, and it was true.

Now I'm the only game in town, with no teammate to float ideas to, to consult for advice, or shift responsibility to when I am running low on time or energy. I've got all the gifts and the burdens when I'd so much rather share them. I was playing a great game of catch, but now when I throw balls they drop, bounce, and roll slowly to a halt in the grass. The balls I toss are strewn about the field, and the balls I hang on to are piling up in my arms.

It's a mess – but this mess is my life now. So I talk on the phone with my parents, and visit them, and do fun things together, and sit and cry with them, and sort through mail, and lift heavy things, and help them organize the apartment to which they've just moved. I look over their new will, which has only my name in places where mine and my brother's used to be. Together my parents and I move about like a collective amputee, turning to the phantom limb of my brother, continually confused to find him not there. We still avoid putting raw onions on things because he didn't like them. We talk to his wife and children first, and only, instead of getting the overview from him before he passes the phone to them for color commentary. We buy the wine he liked but there's always some left over.

Going through my parents' furniture with them the other day, I realized I won't even have the chance to fake-fight over family antiques and heirlooms. I am reluctantly considering taking the one antique he wanted – a side table that, when opened, reveals a circle of green felt on which Frank and I used to play poker with my grandparents when we slept over on New Year's Eve. I don't want this table, because to take it confirms that my brother is not here to claim it. But because I know he loved it, I cannot let go of it. And yes, the irony is not lost on me. I've been dealt a rotten hand, but at least I seem to have a card table. I'll get a SOOCS support group poker game going. I'll gather some experienced, lifelong only children to give me advice on how to play this hand. And then I'll hope for a little guidance, and maybe some luck, from my shadow partner.

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All the Things I Miss

I sometimes think about all the things I miss about my brother. There are a lot—some painful, some I never would have believed at the time that I would miss. And I find that what I miss the most are the things that should have been.

I bought my first car the year he would have turned sixteen. He should have been here to ask to borrow the keys—not that I would have given them to him—but he should have been here to ask.

He should have been a senior this year, getting ready to face a world with no more summer vacations and deciding what to do with his life. All the things that should be: He should be here when I fall in love to tease me and give his opinion of the man I choose. He should be here when I have a child to be godparent and uncle, friend and confidant. He should be here to get married and have kids of his own so that I can be an aunt and a sister-in-law. He should be here to celebrate when things are good and to commiserate when things are bad.

My brother was my friend and my foe in a way that only little brothers can be. And as I sit here and think about my brother, what I think the most is he should be here. I love and miss you little brother.

-- Shannon Odessa Stiener, Lowell, IN

For Grandparents...



10 Challenges Grieving Grandparents Face

1. Their grief is often unacknowledged. As mentioned above, grandparent grief is often overlooked or unacknowledged. This tendency is not intentional or malicious, but it does make the grief journey harder for grandparents. Grief that is unacknowledged or overlooked by society or groups of people is called disenfranchised grief. Often those whose grief is disenfranchised have a hard time sharing their thoughts and emotions because they feel that their grief is out of place or doesn't help the situation. While grandparents often feel helpless, angry, and heartbroken over the loss of a grandchild, they may feel less able to openly express their feelings because they are not the primary mourners.
2. They may not receive the support they need.

Because grandparents are not the primary mourners, they don't often receive the support they need during a time of loss. Friends may rally around the child's immediate family and bring casseroles and condolences, but is anyone offering the same type of support to the grandparents? Unfortunately, the answer is commonly no. And while there are generalized grief support groups, it's hard to find a support group that specifically addresses grandparent grief.

3. They may feel unable to share their feelings. As a matriarch or patriarch of the family, it's natural to want to show a strong, loving face to family, especially to a grieving adult child and their spouse and children. Because a grandparent may feel the need to offer support to their grieving child and doesn't want to add any additional burden, they may push aside their own feelings of grief in favor of offering support and assistance. While offering practical help to their grieving child is good, it can sometimes be at the expense of their own grief journey. There's a delicate balance to find between helping and healing.

4. They may deal with family splintering. The death of a child can put a lot of stress and strain on a marriage. While it doesn't happen often, there are cases when a marriage is unable to survive the death of a child and a whole new set of challenges are introduced. Not only is the immediate family adjusting to separated life, the grandparents must also learn how to adjust to this new lifestyle. They may not be able to see their living grandchildren as often as they did before, which may complicate the grief they feel over the grandchild who has died. Instead of being able to enjoy their living grandchildren, they are pushed even further to the outskirts, their grief and needs overlooked and unacknowledged.

5. They may have to take on a parenting role. Depending on proximity and the closeness of relationship, grandparents may be asked to step in to help with siblings while the parents deal with the effects of losing a child. In some ways, this is a blessing. Grandparents can spend time with their living grandchildren and further cement those precious relationships. On the other hand, with less energy reserves, grandparents may have difficulty finding the time and mental/emotional energy to process through their own emotions of grief. Every bit of energy goes toward keeping the family afloat.

It's important to note that parents will also feel this strain as they grieve the loss of their child.



They will be torn between responsibilities to living children, jobs, friends, family, extracurricular activities, and more. A hybrid option is likely best—parents and grandparents (with other friends and family) helping each other along the way and alternating babysitting to give each person the breaks they need.

6. They may feel helpless in the face of their child's pain. First and foremost, a grandparent is a parent themselves. Their own child is in deep pain, and there's nothing they can do about it. They want to help, to fix, to prevent pain, but in this case, there's often a sense of helplessness. Some grandparents may feel depressed at their lack of ability to help and may experience additional stress because they are concerned about the mental and emotional well-being of their child.

7. Their health may suffer. For particularly elderly grandparents, health and wellness are a concern during times of grief. Because young people are often physically healthy, they don't think too much about the physical difficulties of grief. However,

for elderly grandparents, deep grief can lead to not eating, sleeping poorly, socializing less, and not functioning as well. It's best to keep a loving eye on grandparents whose health is not the best and keep a lookout for potential declines.

8. They don't have as much energy.

As mentioned earlier, grandparents may not have as much energy as they used to. Their pace of life is already slowing down a little and energy levels are decreasing. Grief is hard mentally, physically, and emotionally, so it may take grandparents a little more time and effort to grieve. While they do have more life experience and have likely lost loved ones before, the loss of a child is especially difficult at any age.

9. They deal with a loss of legacy.

Both parents and grandparents expect a child to outlive them, so when that doesn't happen, there's a sense that a legacy has been lost. This feeling can be especially potent if the grandparents only have one grandchild. Whether the grandchild is two, ten, or 25, they must deal with the loss of what could have been – what should have been.

10. They may deal with feelings of guilt. Some grandparents may feel guilty after the loss of a grandchild. Having lived a long life themselves, they may struggle to make sense of what has happened. Questions like, "Why couldn't it have been me?" may pass through their minds. While this feeling is natural and normal following a loss, guilt is often misplaced and can lead to grieving

complications.

-- FuneralBasics.com

Prior Conferences...

Almost 3 years after losing my almost 18 year old son Brayden, I am still searching. I was skeptical about attending TCF National Conference but went anyway. I don't like crowds or big hotels but I was in one. I didn't want to see Bray's picture with the 1200+ pictures that loving parents wore in memory of their cherished children. Not wanting him to be left out, I wore it anyway.

It was surreal walking down the long hallway of the hotel in the morning to catch the elevator to attend classes to learn how to live again because Brayden had died. My legs felt similar to the first steps I took after Bray passed away; weightless, weak, like I was floating. But I kept walking and breathing and it got better.

I attended helping sessions put on mostly by parents who had lost children themselves and wanted to help me and others in dealing with this monster called grief. One session gave me researched and proven suggestions on how to heal. Another gave me hope that my child is alive in spirit. Another taught it is OK to be angry but it's what I do with the anger that matters. One session of a panel of siblings that had lost a brother or sister confirmed that I was doing the right things with my surviving son Daniel. Yeah! One reminded us of how guilt can "zap our energy/strength" and "empty our tank" if we let it, and by sitting with and listening to others we can help them and ourselves.

I totally related to a father giving a session called "Love, Laughter, and Power Grieving" because both of our sons had loved to play football. He caught my attention immediately and everything he said resonated with me...feeling guilty because we are still here. "Every damn thing" his younger child does, his deceased son will miss.

We will never "get over it." He suggested taking some power back, that tears = love and are good. His tears were sorrowful but now flow from acts of love for his son/people remembering him. He said to find something that "will allow you to build and be creative." He works as a comedian and said his humor has saved him. I believe it!

My heart broke many times over as I cried for strangers as I looked into their eyes and listened to their stories. I met loving, supportive, and inspirational people. A mother and her daughter

walked me to a classroom, another asked me to join her table at lunch, another told me I was doing well. We are all searching for what we lost/loved, but can't have. We will ALWAYS love our children and we have to find purpose again or we will literally die. Not truly living is dying too. The Compassionate Friends lets us know we are worthy and deserving of life/love and having a future; even if we never fully feel that way or believe it ourselves.

--Jeanne Thornbury, TCF Cincinnati North Chpt.

The Compassionate Friends National Conference 2023... Our conference is a place for bereaved families to find community and hope, while learning and sharing with others. Lifelong friendships are often made at the conference



through meeting others who truly understand the painful loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. This eagerly anticipated event will take place in Denver, Colorado, during the weekend of July 7-9, 2023. Call (877) 969-0010 or Register online at

www.compassionatefriends.org

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 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: April 1st for May birthdays). If you miss the deadline, call Lynn at (310) 963-4646 and let me know. I will try to fit them in. Otherwise they will appear in the following month's issue.



Get Your Photo Buttons... Photo buttons are a perfect way to share your child, grandchild or sibling with others at 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 if you include your name. 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.

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) 963-4646 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.

Other Grief Support Websites...

thetearsfoundation.org	childloss.com
goodgriefresources.com	griefwatch.dom
bereavedparentsusa.org	opentohope.com
healingafterloss.org	webhealing.com
survivorsofsuicide.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:

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 NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines
 PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks
 TREASURER: Kristy Konopasek
 WEBSITE: Leo Licciardone

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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 follow 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




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 Compassionate Friends South Bay/L.A. chapter.

**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 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.

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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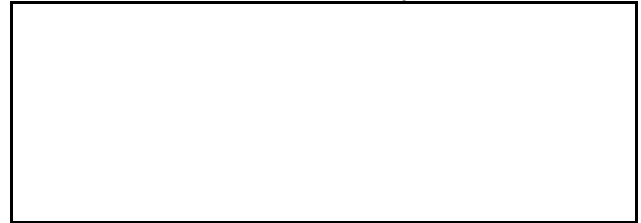


We are each unique on our grief journey,
and we will each mark this
Mother's Day in a different way.
Whatever your choice might be,
make it your day...your day to celebrate
the eternal bond between mother and child.
There is nothing more beautiful.

— Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/Katy, TX
in memory of her son, Todd Mennen



– Return Service Requested –



May 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.