



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *South Bay/LA Chapter*

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

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

AUG. 2023 ISSUE

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

**OUR NEXT MEETING**  
will be Aug 3rd the first ***Thursday***  
of the month at 7:00 P.M.

#### **LOCATION:**

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

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

**--Please remember to park in the church parking lot and not on the street.--**

#### **The Compassionate Friends Mission Statement...**

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

The Thursday, Aug. 3rd meeting will start with "How we handle things people say after the loss of a child."

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 Friends group takes place at Hoff's Hut's outdoor patio dining area (Crenshaw & 237<sup>th</sup> St in Torrance) at 1 PM. most Fridays. All are invited. Please call (310) 963-4646 to let us know you are coming for the reservation.

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**The Thursday, Aug. 3rd meeting will start with “How we handle things people say after the loss of a child.”** Things people say make it impossible to NOT think and question our beliefs, religions, faiths and everyday values. We are forced to learn to curb our anger when hearing the phrases and quotes spewed without thinking. After the initial shock of some comments, we reflect and try to imagine what and why things were said versus what someone meant to say when trying to comfort us. We may come to the conclusion they were trying to justify how they look at life, it just plain “came out wrong”, what their faith and beliefs have taught them, and/or if the hurtful comment reflects their true personality. All these things we mull over when we are already overwhelmed with questions dealing with our child’s death... Questions we strive to answer so we can find comfort and peace in our “new normal”. Please join us as we share how we handled questions and comments from others and how we have found our own answers to some of the million of questions the death of our child has raised.

### Things That 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 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



## The Trouble with Condolences

Carol Smith is the author of *Crossing the River: Seven Stories That Saved My Life*, a Memoir about coming to terms with the loss of her son Christopher.

“What’s the worst thing someone ever said to you?” I’ve gotten this question so many times in the twenty-seven years since I lost my son Christopher. Newly bereaved parents often asked it in disbelief after well-meaning friends and relatives said exactly the wrong thing at the wrong time. Older grievers, like me, sometimes asked it in solidarity when we recognized our common grief. For me, the answer to that question was: “At least you had him for seven years.”

When I heard “at least you had him,” the translation in my head was “you’re being ungrateful for the seven years you had.” What I heard in my head was you’re not entitled to be sad because he wasn’t supposed to live in the first place or, at the very least, you had seven years to prepare for this. You’re never prepared. There were other miscues. I sometimes heard variations on this theme: “If I lost my child, it would kill me.” What I heard was, if you are still standing, your grief must not be so bad. Intrusive questions were just as hard.

I am not alone in this. Each of us has our own horror stories. They’re in a better place; you can have another baby; you’re not given more than you can handle. None of these are the comfort they’re intended to be. I have said all the wrong things myself to others who are grieving, words I immediately regretted flying out of my mouth. There are reasons we say these things, even when we should know better.

What happened? People who ask, “What happened?” are really trying to build a case for why it can’t happen to them. Same with its corollary:

“Everything happens for a reason.” If there’s no reason – that’s an intolerable thought. What they are really saying is, I can’t permit you to grieve because it means I might have to grieve someday too. They’re afraid. I understand that. I’m afraid, too.

You’re so strong. When people say, “You’re so strong,” or some other version meant as a compliment about how well you’re “handling it” or how successful you’ve been at “moving on,” they are indirectly admitting their own fear and insecurity that they are not up to the task of consoling you. This makes them feel powerless in a way that also makes them feel vulnerable. It’s a weird rationale, but people reach for it. It must have happened to you because you can “handle it.”

I know just how you feel. When people say “I know just how you feel. My (fill in the blank) just died,” they are also saying, I don’t want this horrible thing that happened to take you away from me. They want their own experience to cleave you to them. They may also be sending up a subconscious flare that the news of your loss has triggered old losses for them as well. They seek comfort from you in the moment you need comfort from them.

It’s gotten easier over time to stand back and be able to consider what lies behind the words people say. I no longer get the hot flash of anger when people say the “wrong” thing to me. I try to remember to be grateful people tried, no matter what gets said, and to recognize it takes courage on their part to say something to begin with. The truth is, there is no one right thing to say. What’s comforting to one person may not be to another. Not only that – what’s comforting one day, may not be the next.

All these years later, I don’t remember the exact words people used during the acute stages of my grief, but I do remember their faces and the fact they tried to comfort me when I was most in need. It’s worse to say nothing at all.

-- Carole Smith

## Mourning Is My Mode

Today I realized that I have become a shell of the person I once was. What would my child think of this? I am alone, my only child is gone, yet I know he would not be pleased with the way I have isolated myself, wrapped in invisible crepe, sheltered by a mental wall. This is not the mom he

knew. I am someone different now. What am I to do with this? I feel like a lonely, mourning swan, swimming endlessly from shore to shore. I have no direction, I want no direction, I just keep moving with no purpose. I must get a grip on myself. I know my motions must take on some meaning. I look to others for help. Yet I realize that if I do not reach out and help myself, I will crash on the rocks with the raging tide.

I decide I will add one new thing, one new event, one new person or one new writing to each day. I will reach out to others. I will force myself to move slowly back into life. I will spend some time with my family. I will enjoy their children. I will mentor a child. I will start putting my thoughts into a written form.

I begin to do these things. I feel better. I attend another meeting of the parents who have lost their children. I feel as if I do belong here. It has been four months since my son died. I am overwhelmed.

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

## WHY ME? - The Unanswerable Question

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?"

They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"Why me?" is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the

"Why me?" will answer itself.

- Polly Moore TCF Nashville, TN

## "I must reconcile courage and surrender in equal measure." [Charlton Heston]

Let's look at the concepts of "courage" and "surrender" in the context of the loss of a child. "Surrender" carries connotations of giving up, of failure, of cowardice. Certainly there are many times during mourning when we succumb to all that, and more. We are drained, at times quite dysfunctional as we grapple with the shock of loss and the aftershocks of trying to find acceptance of that reality and the very real need to continue to live while we might be longing to die too.

Surrender is not always negative though. To surrender, for example, to your yearning for rest and solitude, or to open up your heart and mind, or to walk a different road from your familiar paths, is healthy and sensible.

When surrender means self-preservation it can only be good, for you must now consider your wishes and requirements through your days and nights of living with and, eventually, recovering from sorrow. That impulse to mourn fully and not to allow social constraints to restrict your grieving takes courage as does every day's routines, every step taken to progress beyond the pain of now towards the promise of a happier later.

We tend to equate courage with stupendous acts of bravery, but often fail to acknowledge that the hesitant moves to regaining a balance in our lives are as valiant. To venture into shops again, to return to work, to just continue daily living when everything seems so disturbed takes enormous strength of character and will.

There are no ribbons or medals or commendations for those who tread that long and arduous grief road, unless we count a gradual development of a renewed equilibrium as our recognition and reward.

Much love Rosemary Dirmeik

--Taken from the book String of Pearls and reprinted in TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

## Gifts From Amy

I recently had to take part in the one-year anniversary of my precious daughter Amy's death, a day that we as parents never want to take part in. I was distressed as it really sank in that this was





real and very final. Last year at this time I had been in such a state of shock that now, looking back, I began to realize the daze I was in for several months. This year I was in no such daze—the pain was all too real.

What could I do with this day? How could I make it through? In my pain I remembered one of the first things I had said when Amy died. I had expressed thankfulness for all the things she had taught me by being in my life. As I thought of this now, I began to write down all the many things. Soon I found I was taking my list a step further and listing all the things I had learned since Amy's death, I began to see my list as a list of gifts from Amy.

Before Amy's death I had thought of myself as a religious person, going to church, believing in God, even knowing several Bible verses by heart. I was wrong. I have only now begun to see the difference in religious and spiritual. Only now, after Amy's death, have I embarked on my very own spiritual path. What greater gift could my child have left me!

I took my list and put it in a box, wrapped it up and tied it with a bow. I put the box in my closet. This time next year I will open the box and celebrate all the wonderful gifts my daughter has given to me. And I'm sure I will add more as the years go by.

--Suzanne Owens TCF, West Columbia, SC

## 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

## On The Horizon

It has been so good to get back to the high school and start preparing for the new school year. The experience always brings with it a feeling of renewal and hope for what the year holds. But the week has also brought with it a range of strong, mixed, and surprising emotions.

Our professional development meeting on Wednesday was the first time I have had to publicly introduce myself and talk about my family since we lost Tom. I guess I knew this situation would come up at some point, but I had not given any thought to how to handle it or how I might react. While fighting to hold back tears, I simply said, "My family consists of my husband, L.J., and my two sons, Tim and Tom. Tim will be a senior at EWU this year." I did not have to say anything more about Tom, because of course, all of the faculty present (except for a few newbies) know the rest of the details. Fortunately, I was able to wait until the next break to fall apart instead of crying in front of my whole group.

The experience made me realize I have to figure out how to deal with this type of situation. Tom will always be my son, and I will always want to acknowledge that. So finding a graceful way of doing so without losing emotional control and without making others uncomfortable is something I am going to have to work on. How bizarre that what was once so easy to talk about now is something I have to plan an approach to.

Yesterday during a break on our second day of professional development, I felt moved to tell one of Tom's teachers, that Tom appreciated and respected him and enjoyed his class. I had held it together well for most of the day, but at that moment, I lost it. This man, with whom I have never really spoken before, physically embraced me and told me how much he enjoyed having both my boys as students. It was such a generous and



gracious gesture which moves me to tears again as I share it.

Late yesterday, while prepping for my first week of class, I found an assignment Tom completed when he was a student of mine a few years ago. It was so good to see his handwriting and read his words which so beautifully reflect his personality. But then the waterworks started, and they were the heaviest they have been in a while. It was the uncontrollable, trying to catch my breath, sobbing wails of unfathomable loss.

Those jags are incredibly draining physically and emotionally, leading to sinuses so swollen that yesterday I could not get the spray decongestant applicator into my nose.

One of my friends pointed out that Prosser High School holds an affiliation for me beyond my teaching job, because it is where Tom spent so much of his time. She reassured me it makes perfect sense I am struggling, having so many shared experiences there with him. She helped me understand the institution and this group of amazing people who so selflessly propped me up during my first few months of loss, represent a huge piece of Tom as well. I was so very grateful for her gentle guidance to that perspective.

Her encouragement led me to reflect upon the patience and grace others continue to show me. They reference the impact my writing is having. They smile at and hug me. They listen intently when I tell stories about Tom. They quietly hand me tissues to blow my nose and wipe the tears away. They tell me it is good to see me instead of asking how I am. They hold my hands and tell me we can cry together. They tell me they love me.

This tragedy has brought so many amazing, generous, and caring people into my life. It has created a network of friends with whom I likely would have never connected at this level. L.J. and I used to consider picking up and moving elsewhere when the boys graduated from high school. Now I cannot imagine ever leaving here.

How ironic my most tremendous life loss has brought with it such amazing gifts as well. I must admit, however, in addition to the emotional lows and the occasional moments of uplifting joy and hope, a new emotion is rising in my heart. Fear.

I fear Tom will be forgotten by his friends as they move on in life, and they will not remember his sense of humor, his willingness to help others, his intelligence, his smile, or the sound of his voice. And I fear as I continue to grieve and heal, people

will forget my feelings of loss. I fear folks will stop sending me pictures they stumble upon of him or telling me stories of his helpfulness or generosity. I fear people will stop remembering I lost a piece of myself when he died and start to lose patience when I fall apart at things which seem insignificant. I fear the cards, emails, FB posts, and texts will fade away. I fear people's grace will wain when the sadness behind my eyes and smile is not quite so pronounced, and they see me occasionally but wholeheartedly smiling or laughing.

Every day still brings tears to my eyes. But some days also now bring joy. One does not strip the other away. Please do not forget my son or how losing him has forever changed me.

--Kimberly Starr      TCF Facebook Loss to Suicide



### “Can I hear the baby’s heartbeat?”

These were the last words my wife, Kourtney, said before an avalanche of sadness and disappearing expectations settled over our life. Kourtney

had gone in for a regular ultrasound to determine the gender of our unmet child growing in her body. Instead, she was notified that the baby’s heart had stopped beating and any potential for this life we were anxiously expecting had ceased. I was at work and raced home to embrace my emotionally crumbling wife, and the small baby she still cradled in her womb.

We both fell to the floor and cried together. Kourtney had experienced crippling morning sickness that required taking time off work and getting regular infusions of fluids. She had just moved into the second trimester and was starting to feel better. By all accounts, we had a healthy baby and were well on our way to growing our family even more. However, the news of the “fetal demise” introduced us to the truly sacred mystery of what goes on in the womb of a pregnant woman. It is a place of glorious and terrifying mystery with the power to bring both earth-shattering joy and heartbreaking sadness.

We chose to induce the birthing process so we could find out the gender of our child and give him or her a name and officially make them a part of our family. This also brought some frustration, as issues beyond our control at the hospital caused us to wait almost a week before we could go in and

begin the inducement process. For that week, my wife carried close to her heart the tiny body of the first member of our family welcomed into eternity. Life and death both held together behind the veil of her womb.

On a Tuesday night we were finally admitted. After many rounds of drugs to induce labor, on Wednesday night, we met our tiny, eternally sleeping, fragile, but still beautifully formed daughter. We named her Zoey Grace. Zoey comes from the Greek word meaning life. We chose this because even in the sadness of death, we still believe deep in our hearts that this little girl was once a living and active part of our family. Grace because, well...we have needed double portions of grace during this whole experience.  
--Greg Flagg

## Newly Bereaved...

### Grief: A Lifelong Process

When my son was killed, I was certain that I would die. My life went on autopilot, my heart was broken, my will to live was gone and I could see no meaning in the world. Six months later I was still in a bad place. I could not vary from a routine, I became angry very easily, I rarely laughed, and I didn't communicate with many people. On the first anniversary of my son's death, I was a zombie. I dreaded the day. I remembered the last conversation; I went over his death in my mind a thousand times. I started asking myself what if I had done this or that would my child still be alive? I felt a misplaced guilt that was sadistically hammered home by the wrongful death lawsuit of my former daughter-in law and her accompanying attitude that can only be described as purely malevolent. My husband, who was driving the vehicle when my son was killed, spent hours in self-recrimination, hours with attorneys doing depositions, hours quietly sobbing, and my response was that we had to buck up. We had no choice.

I hardened on the exterior, but inside I was broken into pieces. I continued to go to Compassionate Friends meetings, became active in our chapter and read books on grief, death, dying and coping strategies. I leaned heavily on my Compassionate Friends as I endured the pain of losing my son and any possibility of a normal

relationship with his children. I know the excruciating pain of intentional cruelty and the radiant warmth of compassion.

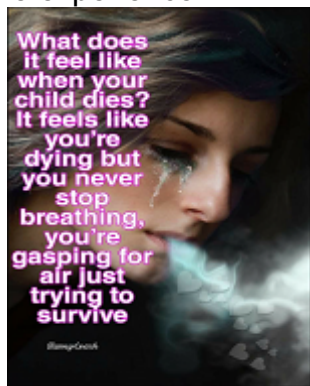
Eighteen months after my son was killed, I decided that I had to quantify my progress. I began to soften, to give positive reinforcement to those around me. I reached out to others. I stopped thinking of the negatives within myself and began searching for the positives. I began taking down my emotional wall and allowed some people inside. It has been 3 years and 3 months since Todd was killed and, in hindsight, I can see the progress I have made. Initially each step was difficult. Now I move forward much like an amputee, progress is steady, but it is slow. I will never be the same again. A part of me has been confiscated by death.

This is my reality. I can laugh now, I can enjoy other people, I can see the beauty in each child I meet, each sunrise and each day. But I can also see and acknowledge the ugly side of this world. There is much cruelty in our world. There is much sadness. Some days I focus on the beauty and joy and some days I look at the cruelty and ugliness. But the choice is mine to make. If I have a day that is good, it is because I have willed it to be so. If I have a bad day, I have also chosen this. For I have discovered that grief is a lifelong journey. Our children are with us forever.

I close my eyes and see my son. I dream of him at night; our conversations are very interesting, very reassuring. He is with me. And because I always told him that the world is what you make of it, then I must also tell myself the same thing. My world is what I make of it. Yes, I still grieve. I still miss my child. To hear his voice would be a gift worth more than my life. But I have my memories, memories of raising a beautiful son who became an exceptional man. Our time together was the most meaningful experience of my life. I knew it then; I know it now.

There is a void in my life that will never be filled. My world was never perfect. It certainly will never be perfect. Each day I ask myself what kind of day I want this to be. Sometimes I want it to be a bad day. My sadness overwhelms me, and I choose to exorcize it with a bad day. I have the right to have a bad day: my only child is dead. But these days I usually want it to be a good day, the kind of day my son would have enjoyed.

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





## Seasoned Grievers...

### We Integrate

We don't "get over" the death of our child, we integrate it. Webster says to integrate means to "take into a whole, to unify." We make the experience of our child's death an integral part of the whole of our lives. When I was a kid I loved to swing. There was a park not too far from our home, and whenever I could, I'd go there and swing for hours. At this moment I can almost feel the exhilaration of swinging in the air. I can visualize how the sky looked through the tree on the upward flight, the thrill of the downward arc and the sight of how far off the ground I was when the swing took me high on the other side. I never "got over" the thrill of swinging. I integrated it. Today, the sight of a swing brings back this part of my childhood.

There have been other experiences in my life, both happy and sad, that are brought back to me by similar experience. This is what it means to integrate our child's death into our lives. Though the joy of swinging as a small child will never be as great as it was when I was ten, the sight of a swing will always affect me. And though the pain of my son's death is not as great after these many years, for the rest of my life many things will remind me that he died.

Before our child died, when we heard of the death of a child, we felt sorry for a time, but we were affected very little by it because we had no personal experience with a child's death to add to this knowledge. But now, when we hear of a child's death, we are immediately brought back to the pain we felt. We do not remain in that pain for any length of time, but because we had this experience in our past, it is part of the whole of our experiences. We are more affected by it than a person who has not had that experience. I think when people talk of "getting over" our child's death, they mean getting over the outward manifestations of grief.

Certainly, if we have worked through our grief, in the years after our child has died, we will not cry constantly, we will not have the need to express our anger or guilt, we will be able to function as we did before he/she died, but we will not be "over" the feeling that our family is no longer complete. These, and many other thoughts, will stay with us as long as we live. They become a part of the

whole of us. The experience of our child's death and the years of grief that follow will be integrated with our other experiences, and just as every other experience we have had will affect our feelings, thoughts and behavior, so will the death of our child.

--Margaret Gerner



### Welcome...

#### You're Not Alone

At first you are numb-  
Family and friends, they do care,  
But when you can feel again  
Family and friends are not there.

It may take them weeks,  
It will take you years  
To get through the pain  
That still brings you to tears.

So you cry, and then you search.  
You pray and you plan  
To find answers to questions  
They don't understand.

It takes someone special  
To help ease that pain  
Someone who will listen  
Because theirs is the same.

In this room full of people  
You have never known-  
In this room there's compassion  
And you're not alone!

--Tonie Mason TCF Northeast GA

Editor's Note: Come try a couple of meetings and see for yourself how beneficial they can be. Each one is different and can be very helpful. We invite you to attend a meeting and see how listening to the "experiences" of other bereaved parents can help.--L.V.



### Book In Review...

***Creating A New Normal...After the Death of a Child*** by Sandy Fox. A guide to coping and informational skills for bereaved parents, family members, friends, therapists and grief related organizations. (2010) In this 285 page book, the



author provides over a hundred essays on grief related topics varying from "Celebrating a Loved One's Life Through Art" to "Getting Through the Holidays." Many of the essays come from the author's blog, [www.survivinggrief.blogspot.com](http://www.survivinggrief.blogspot.com).

### Is That You?

Is That You?

The falling star in the night

So pure, so bright.

Is That You?

The breeze gently blowing through my hair

Telling me that you are still there.

Is That You?

The golden ball rising in the East

Bringing hope that with a new day,

The sorrow will ease

Is That You?

Setting in the West

Bringing a night of peace and rest.

Is That You?

Who dries my tears

As I gaze towards my future fears.

Is That You?

That makes me smile at life's irony

That other people often cannot see.

Is That You?

That gives me strength to carry on

Even though you are gone.

Is That You?

Yes. It is you.

You are with me always.

--submitted in memory of Marni Dean

Lovingly lifted from TCF/Vancouver Island WA

### Valley of the Butterflies

There is a green, sun-drenched valley— light

With the scent of clover and lilacs—

Where the butterflies dance.

Leaping and swooping, they reflect colors

Of every hue and dimension.

There are monarchs and skippers,

Swallowtails and delicate spring azures.

Each dances its unique pattern

Of flits, circles, and dives,

Stretching its fragile wings toward the clouds

Or brushing its feet on the succulent grass.

There are no roads, paths, or gates

To broach the valley's entrance,

Yet it is visited often in thoughts and dreams.



Every parent who has sent forth a child

And vainly waited for its return

Comes seeking in the valley of the butterflies,

And there finds a beautiful spirit,

Stretching its wings to the clouds and brushing

its feet on the grass,

Dancing in swoops, flits, and dives,

Drying its dewy wings in the warm sunshine of

forever.

--Marcia F. Alig, TCF Mercer Area Chapter, NJ

### A Name for My Pain

I have given a name to my pain—

it's called "Longing."

I long for what was,

and what might have been

I long for his touch and smell of sweat;

I long to hold him one more time.

I long to look on his beautiful face

and impress it upon my memories and heart.

I long to return to the day before

and protect him from his death.

I long to take his place,

so he may live and have sons too.

I long for time to pass much faster,

so my longing and pain will lessen.

Will they?

--June Williams-Muecke

TCF Houston West, TX

### Why Didn't The World Stop That Day?

Why didn't the world stop that day?

It seemed so disrespectful, that life should keep going,

Not missing a single beat, when Scott's world

Stopped long enough for him to step off.

Even while we mourned his loss,

People bustled through shopping malls,

Shouted curses at befuddled drivers

On busy city streets,

And even laughed out loud -

As if they could enjoy themselves on this solemn day.

They filled shopping carts in grocery stores,

As if they could count on another day.

Spinning,

Spinning,

The world keeps spinning,

Today, I'm dizzy from all the spinning.

--By Kathleen Evans San Diego, California TCF



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

Cheiann Jayda Berry  
Born: 12/01 Died: 7/16  
Mother: Kristina Berry

Sam Boldissar  
Born: 10/91 Died: 3/17  
Parents: Jeeri & Frank  
Boldissar

Alex James Bonstein  
Born: 11/91 Died: 7/16  
Mother: Cynthia Sanchez

Tamara Lynette Boyd  
Born: 12/65 Died: 12/00  
Parents: Gloria & Gayle Jones

William Joseph Britton III  
Born: 3/62 Died: 7/85  
Mother: Jean Anne Britton

Larry Broks Jr.  
Born: 7/88 Died: 9/17  
Mother: Thessia Carpenter

Scott Vincent Buehler  
Born: 3/80 Died: 2/08  
Mother: Elizabeth Buehler  
Miller

Julian Burns  
Born: 12/18 Died: 1/19  
Parents: Daniel & Marta Burns

Frank Christopher Castania  
Born: 8/94 Died: 7/05  
Parents: Frank & Debbie  
Castania, Grandparents:  
Richard & Ann Leach

Vanessa Roseann Castania  
Born: 2/97 Died: 7/05  
Parents: Frank & Debbie  
Castania, Grandparents:  
Richard & Ann Leach

Carina Chandiramani  
Born: 5/86 Died: 9/18  
Mother: Norma Chandiramani

Blair Chapin  
Born: 4/82 Died: 5/18  
Sister: Elizabeth Chapin

Michael Edward Clapp  
Born: 2/93 Died: 4/18  
Mother: Patti Clapp

John Francis Cleary  
Born: 12/74 Died: 8/93  
Mother: Pauline Cleary Basil

Matthew Hales Clifford  
Born: 1/80 Died: 3/15  
Parents: Bob & Melissa  
Clifford

Aaron Christopher Cochran  
Born: 11/90 Died: 9/12  
Mother: Julia Carr

Tiffany Lamb Corkins  
Born: 7/70 Died 8/05  
Mother: Nancy Lamb

Hannah Elizabeth Cortez  
Born: 9/92 Died: 7/13  
Parents: Rafael & Shari  
Cortez

Mike Sebastian Cortez  
Born: 5/97 Died: 6/17  
Mother: Rita Cortez

Scott Curry  
Born: 8/59 Died: 7/08  
Mother: Marilyn Nemeth

Michael N. Daffin  
Born: 2/85 Died: 4/17  
Parents: Michael & Diana  
Daffin

Daniel Elijah Day  
Born: 4/93 Died: 5/16  
Mother: Kristen Day

Michael David Deboe  
Born: 12/75 Died: 5/09  
Parents: Dave & Judy Deboe

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

Luke Edward Devlin  
Born: 12/07 Died: 12/07  
Parents: Jacqueline & Tom  
Devlin

Allison Jeanine Kirkbride  
Dewart  
Born: 10/87 Died: 1/06  
Parents: Z & Michael Dewart

Ryan Dobie  
Born: 7/92 Died: 2/19  
Parents: Linda & Douglas  
Dobie

Michael John Dornbach  
Born: 7/60 Died: 10/17  
Parents: Maria Triliegi &  
Edward Dornbach

Wayne Douglas  
Born: 9/71 Died: 1/10  
Mother: Marie Galli

Ramsay Downie, II  
Born: 2/64 Died: 10/99  
Parents: Ramsay & Sally  
Downie

Joel Draper  
Born: 1/84 Died: 5/2004  
Mother: Tracy Solis

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 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

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

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: 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.

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

### 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.

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

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

Sorry, no tributes were submitted this month

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

### For Siblings...



### For My Sister

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

Sisters are special from young ones to old. God gave me a sister more precious than gold. We shared many secrets, the same mom and dad, we shared lots of good times, don't think of the bad. Our memories we'll cherish, with love without end, I'm glad you're my sister, I'm glad you're my friend.  
~ Author Unknown

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

## THE LOSS OF A LIFETIME....

Anonymously written

When I was 24, my younger brother, who was my only sibling, died. The day the phone rang and I heard my mom say dark, foreign words like coroner, needle, heroin, autopsy, was the most impactful day of my life. In the thickness of shock, I didn't realize that the rest of my life would be measured in before and after. Before, when my family was intact. After, when I would somehow learn to live without the person I was supposed to get a lifetime with.

"Be strong for your parents," said blurs of people at Will's memorial service. I nodded, but inside me, something twisted. I stood in a daze as people streamed by, offering their awkward words and hugs. 'Be strong for your parents?' I thought. I was barely breathing. I was barely standing here. Strong was the last thing I felt.

In the early months after Will's death at 21, I existed in a heavy fog. Nothing was as I knew it. I'd abandoned the little life I'd started in Maine and landed back in Alaska where my parents were, where my brother and I had grown up. My friends were living their lives — going to college, working, falling in and out of love and lust.

Meanwhile, my life had stopped. My childhood home was filled with the cloying scent of flowers just starting to die. It struck me then how terrible it was that we send flowers to the grieving — here you go, another reminder that nothing is permanent, that everything lovely will be lost.

My brother's absence was heavy in the house. Though he had died in Seattle, his room was scattered with relics: the bed he had slept in for so many years, his big flannel shirts hanging like shadows in the closets, a handful of videos and books. Memories pinned to each corner.

Having always taken comfort in words, I scoured the internet for a book for someone like me — an adult whose (barely) adult brother had died. What I found was unimpressive: There were more books on losing a pet than losing a brother or sister. A few books existed for surviving children after a death in the family, but they were for small children. One memoir documented a sister's grief following her brother's death, but it was out of print.

What did it mean that there were no handbooks for me? That people asked me to be strong in the face of the biggest loss I'd ever experienced or imagined? At times I felt like I didn't deserve to feel so shattered, especially in the shadow of my parents' immense loss.

A few months later, I started attending a local grief group. I sat in a circle with a few widows and widowers, a woman whose daughter had died, and a woman whose mother had died. I was younger than any of them by at least 30 years, but I could relate to their shares: "I feel like I'm going crazy." "I'm so damned angry right now." "I can't sleep at night." Though the losses were different, the feelings were the same.

So much was lost: My parents, who would never be the same. Their pain was almost visible, as if a piece of their bodies had been cut out. I had lost myself, too, or at least the version of me that was unscathed by tragedy: an innocent version, who walked around in some parallel universe where her brother was still alive, ignorant to the incredible fortune of an entirely alive family.

My brother, my past. Will's big blue eyes. His loud laugh. He was the co-keeper of my childhood. The person who was supposed to walk with me longer than anyone else in this life. The only other person who knew what it was like to grow up with our particular parents, in our particular home.

The future. I cried for the nephews and nieces I would never have. I cried for my own faceless potential children who would never know my brother. How would I explain him? How would I ensure that his essence wasn't lost, that he wasn't just a figure in old photographs, a handful of stories? And I had to have children someday, right? I was the only person who could make my parents the grandparents they always assumed

they'd be. And all the hard times ahead when my brother wouldn't be by my side. When my parents began to age. When my grandparents died. There would be no one to share these dark milestones. And so I had to stay alive. Burden of needing to stay healthy, to stay safe, to stay close.

I felt like our family had been a four-legged table, and one leg had suddenly been torn off. The remaining three of us wobbled and teetered. We felt the missing leg like an amputee, each morning waking to the horrible fact that Will was gone.

I wrote letters to my brother in those early months and years. At first, memories blazed through my head and I used the letters to capture them before they flitted away, gone forever: my brother walking towards me when he visited me in Maine, the sun splattering his cheeks, turning him golden. The time I taught him to make snow angels in the front yard of our childhood home, our bulkily clad limbs sliding in synchronicity under icy stars. My tiny hand on my mom's belly, feeling my brother kick. Later, I wrote the letters when I needed to cry — when the grief sat coiled and waiting in my chest, needing to be let out, released. I couldn't find the words of other bereaved sisters or brothers to bring me comfort, so I created my own.

One day, when I was lost in my sadness, my mom said, "You won't always feel like this. You'll have a family of your own. You'll move on." This seemed impossible in my 24-year-old skin. I couldn't imagine this potential future my mom spoke of, this predicted family. But very, very slowly, I began putting my life back together. I finished college. I made the difficult decision to leave home again and move back to Maine. I met my husband and after several years, we had two children. Our son has my brother's big blue eyes and his love of music. Our daughter possesses the lighthearted spirit my brother had at the same age. The sibling love between them is palpable; they spat and giggle, they dance and huddle. Though sometimes adult siblings aren't able to close the distance between them, all those shared experiences and time and space and relationships matter. They tether us, they twine our stories together. I pray that my children remain close as they grow, and that they enjoy a long lifetime





together.

After nearly 15 years, the sharp shock and grief I felt in those early months and years are gone. It took years for the pain to fade, for the words "your brother is dead" to stop pounding in my head — but they did. Will's absence is mostly a dull hurt, the ghost of an old broken bone that aches when it rains. I feel it more on holidays and anniversaries, when someone else close to me dies. I'll always wish he was still here. I'll always wonder what he would look like and what he'd be doing if he was still alive — at 36. At 50. At 75. I move on and through. Perhaps I am even strong, like those well-meaning mourners at my brother's memorial asked me to be. But my brother's loss will remain with me for my whole life — just like he was supposed to.

--Gratefully lifted from TCF Queensland Chapter newsletter

## Tomorrow

Tomorrow,  
I'll try to understand her,  
Try to understand the excitement behind  
Those piercing black eyes.  
Try to understand her zeal for life,  
Tireless energy, and love for others.  
Tomorrow,  
I'll sit down beside her and get to know  
This sister of mine.  
I'll get to know the skinny little girl  
I grew up with and shared a bedroom with  
For all our teen years.  
Tomorrow,  
We'll share secrets together  
We'll go for long walks,  
We'll just sit together for hours and laugh.  
Tomorrow,  
I'll ask her about her boyfriends,  
I'll ask her about her girlfriends,  
I'll even ask what her favorite subject is in school.  
Today?  
I'm too busy,  
I have too much to do,  
She's getting on my nerves.  
Today,  
She's borrow my precious clothes, ruining them.  
Today,  
She's using up all the gas in my car.  
Today,  
She's asking stupid questions

I just don't feel like answering.  
Today,  
I'm too tired.  
But tomorrow,  
I'll tell her how much I love her,  
I'll hug her and tell her she's pretty,  
I'll tell her I'm glad I have a sister . . . tomorrow.  
Tomorrow  
Has finally come and she is gone.  
~written by Cindy, Kathi's sister  
Taken from a book written by Kathi's mother  
called "18, No Time To Waste."



## For Grandparents...

I found a picture of you  
One that I had not seen in a while  
I held it gently in my hands  
Lost for a moment in your smile  
I found a card from you  
Written in your own special way  
I held it gently in my hands  
Lost for a moment in that day  
Memories, sweet gifts from you  
To allow my heart a breath  
To let me be lost for a moment  
To remember life not just death  
—author unknown



## From Our Members...

### A Stepparent's Story

My wife, Kathleen, knew George, but not well. He had been living on the Mainland when we got together, and they never had much chance to get to know each other. When George was killed in a motorcycle accident just before he turned 19, his mother and I came together immediately, in trying to cope with our tragic loss. In the still-dark morning hours following his death, we lay together wordlessly in George's bed with our younger son Konti for a few hours of fitful sleep. Upon awakening, we began to make the painful phone calls to friends and relatives. Later that day, still numb, but with the support of friends who had rushed to George's and his mother's home, we began planning his memorial service. Kathleen remained at our own home, alone.

The isolation she (much later) told me she had been feeling at the time is said to be not

uncommon for a stepparent when the biological parents are brought together by the death of a child. "It was a terrible time for me, too," she told me. "The sense of isolation was so severe, and I had to be so patient and so tolerant for a very long time."

In the four years since George's death, there have been times she has felt excluded—"shut out," as she puts it—when I'd withdraw in my grief, unable to talk to her. She has also worried about my relationship with Konti. Can I talk to him about George? Am I trying? When she feels the time is right, she lets me know what she is feeling. But patience and tolerance—again—are what have served her, and our relationship, so well.

Something else has happened in the past four years that I was not conscious of at first: She has formed her own relationship with George. Sometimes she plays the music she knows he liked. She cuts and places fresh flowers by his picture. She turns the light illuminating it on and off each day. "Maybe it's because I was an only child," she told me when I asked her about this recently. "When I was little, I had to be creative in making relationships."

The circumstances of stepparents can be vastly different, from the relationship with the child to the relationship with the other biological parent. The national office of The Compassionate Friends has produced a brochure, "The Grief of Stepparents." Please call or drop a note to our local chapter if you would like a copy.

-- David Pellegrin TCF Honolulu, HI

In Memory of my son, George

--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, the people and topics change and need to talk or share fluctuates between each meeting. 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: July 1st for August 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 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](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, sibling or grandchild 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

**Other Grief Support Websites...**

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

**A Special Thanks to:**

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

**Chapter Officers:**

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

CHAPTER ZOOM HOSTS: Connie & Leo Licciardone

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lynn Vines

PROOFREADER: Sandra Myricks

TREASURER: Kristy Konopasek

WEBSITE: Leo Licciardone

**Steering Committee Members:**

Linda & Joe Zelik

Marilyn Nemeth

Bill Matasso

Lori Galloway

Crystal Henning

Lynn Vines

Nancy Lerner

Connie & Leo Licciardone

Sandra & Eddie Myricks

Jarmo & Bonnie Mantyla

Kristy Mueller

Kitty Edler

Susan Kass

**National Office Information:**

Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter: TCF National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters. We encourage everyone use the valuable information it holds to help you in your grief. To receive TCF's e-newsletter, sign up for it online by visiting TCF national website at <http://compassionatefriends.org>. and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.

**The National Office of TCF** has an ongoing support group for parents and siblings online. For a complete schedule and to register for Online Support, visit <http://compassionatefriends.org> and follow the directions to register. There is also a closed group chat 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)





# 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.

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

In loving memory of Dominique Oliver, May 1985 - March 2002 and Brandon Armstrong, July 1995 - July 1995.

Love Mom

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

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

In loving memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date \_\_\_\_\_ Death date \_\_\_\_\_ From \_\_\_\_\_

Tribute \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

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.

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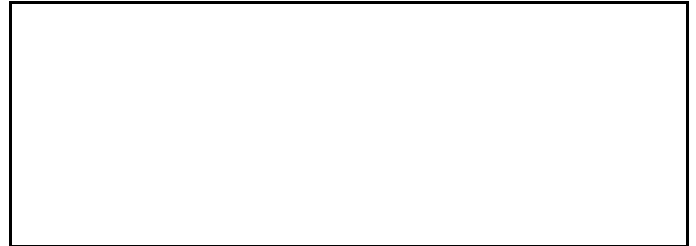
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August 2023

## 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.