



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Jan. 2024 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be Jan. 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, Jan 4th meeting will start with "Putting The Pain Behind Us In The New Year."

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. most Fridays. All are invited. Please call (310) 963-4646 to let us know you are coming for the reservation.

For a free Picture Button of your child, call Connie at (310) 292-5381.

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The Thursday, Jan 4th meeting will start with "Putting The Pain Behind Us In The New Year."

If it were only that simple. With hard work and self reflections we come to "terms" with our pain and learn to "adjust" to our loss. As one learns to live with the loss, the tragedy, the waste and the gaping hole left in your heart after the loss of a child, we slowly replace pain with soft memories. Talking with TCF members and finding out what helped them replaces some of the pain with hope for the future, and gives me hope that my grief will be less raw, less painful, and hopefully soon, left behind. Join us as we explore ways to put part of the pain behind us in the upcoming year.



As we put the holidays behind us, with its duality of joys yet deeper ache and longing, let us determine ways to find

good in the new year. By "good" I mean whatever it is you are most lacking. For some it is simply peace. For another it is rest for a battered soul. Yet to another it may be the ability to laugh again or even to believe that there can be happy moments.

Ring in the new year has come to symbolize the future and all the promise it holds. A new start, a new dream, goals and many hopes. For the bereaved parent the one thing it will not hold, it will never hold, is the presence of our deceased child. And that alone makes facing it a difficult task. My wish for all of us is the belief that life can and will be good again. I wish for us to have a renewed sense of purpose as many of us lose our way, and sometimes even the will to go on.

Nature offers us some meaningful symbolism. Look at the rose, it too bears a duality. The stunning beauty of a bloom with lush and velvety petals yet just below lies harsh and painful thorns. Interesting to note that you cannot have one without the other. If you clip a rose from a bush you receive the beautiful flower along with the prickly painful stem. How like life is that. Rich experiences, memorable moments and crushing trials. Can we determine to emulate nature's process and allow our hearts to reopen, one petal at a time, until the sun is felt upon our soul? Oh yes, the rain will come ... but can we learn to dance in the rain?

It is my New Years wish to us all.

-- Michelle Thomason, TCF, Portland, OR

Wishes for Bereaved Families for the New Year

- To the newly bereaved, we wish you patience – patience with yourselves in the painful weeks, months, and even years ahead.
 - To the bereaved siblings, we wish you and your parents a new understanding of each other's needs and the beginning of good communication.
 - To those of you who are single parents, we wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone, with your loss.
 - To those of you who are plagued with guilt, we wish you the reassurance that you did the very best you could under the circumstances and that your child knew that.
 - To those of you who have suffered multiple losses, those who have experienced the death of more than one child – we wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once again.
 - To those of you who are deeply depressed, we wish you the first steps out of the "valley of the shadow".
 - To those experiencing marital difficulties after the death of your child, we wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.
 - To all fathers, we wish you the ability to express your grief, to move beyond society's conditioning, to cry.
 - To those with few memories of your child, perhaps because you suffered through a stillbirth, a miscarriage, or infant death, we wish you the sure knowledge that your child is a person and that your grief is real.
 - To those of you who have experienced the death of an only child or of all your children, we offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.
 - To those of you unable to cry, we wish you healing tears.
 - To those of you who are tired, exhausted from grieving, we wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.
 - To all others with special needs, that we have not mentioned, we wish you the understanding you need and the assurance that you are loved.
- Joe Rousseau, Former TCF National President

Ring in 2024 with Hope Not Just "Another"

Another birthday. Another year on their date of death. Another holiday. Another New Year. There is a keen awareness when "another" is looming. The awareness can be worse than "another" itself. The days and weeks leading up to "another" can be distressing. These days and weeks start a season of additional grieving. We grieve our loss but also grieve that there is yet "another."

It's as if our grief has a rewind mechanism. The grieving is not the same as the first days, weeks, or months but it sometimes can be as intense. The uncertainty of how I will feel on "another" leaves me sometimes feeling nauseous. It is as if I'm on a merry-go-round of agony and heartache.

There's internal pressure that I should not feel as badly as I did on the previous "another." But "another" seems to be taking me farther away from my loved one. "Another" seems to purposefully try to dim my memories.

There's external pressure placed that "another" should not even be significant anymore. "Another" to outside others must surely mean I am somehow less affected by this forever loss. Life does not stop to let me fully prepare for "another."

"Another" does not come alone. It sometimes brings its partners of sleeplessness, irritability, and impatience. Though many have tried to escape "another," it cannot be escaped no matter how hard one tries. "Another" unnecessarily reminds me of my forever, unending loss.

If there's anything I am certain of with "another" it is that I am not alone. I know all my Compassionate Friends are going through the same thing on their "another's." I know they understand "another" and that "We need not walk alone."

"Another" New Year is upon us. There are thousands of families walking this journey alone. You can help bring hope to others. You can let them know that they in fact, are not alone. You have the power to help other moms, dads, grandmas, grandpas, brothers, and sisters know hope can return to their lives. The Compassionate Friends needs you to help others face "another."

--Author Unknown

Rebuilding Your Life One Piece at a Time

Death, especially unexpected death, changes one's life in ways that cannot be anticipated. With the death of someone close, one's world is forever changed.

One analogy I have found myself using with clients is the following: If you were to imagine the day before your loved one died, there was an intact picture of your life. The picture may not have been perfect, but it was there and it made sense. There was a beginning, a middle and an expected end. With death comes the destruction of that picture. It is as if the picture is taken out of your hands, smashed to the ground in a thousand pieces and then some of the most treasured pieces are forever taken away.

The challenge with grief is to then take all of those pieces which are left and attempt to make a new picture. The picture of the life you once had is impossible to recreate, as much as one may try, it cannot be recreated with pieces missing. A new picture must be assembled with the pieces that are left and with new pieces that are picked up along the way.

The process of putting the pieces back together is one that often feels chaotic and confusing. It may sometimes be surprising to find out how much thinking is involved in the grief process, thoughts bounce around trying to connect what was with what is. It is an endless struggle to make sense out of what seems to be incomprehensible. With each piece, the bereaved, through trial and error, find where each piece belongs or even if it belongs at all. This process is different for every person and does not adhere to any kind of time line. This (what feels like endless) thinking is the work that grief demands; it is the creation of a new picture of your life created one piece at a time.

-- Stephanie Elson TCF Chapter North Shore – Boston, Massachusetts

Coping

January is a reflective month. Ice ponds reflect the leaden sky, and the heart reflects the emptiness of a frozen spirit. When will we begin to thaw? When will we feel like we're making some progress in this place of icicles and cold sheets,



sunless days and long, empty nights? Will we ever be happy again? Will I ever be ME again?

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

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

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

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

Progress occurs when you completely understand that your loved one DIED, but the love you share between you can never be destroyed.

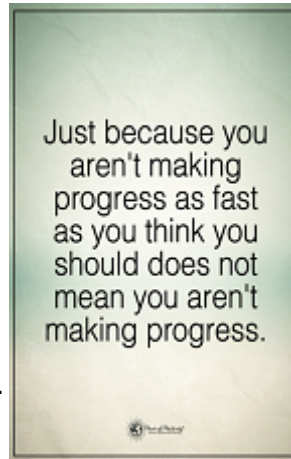
Hope begins to return when you can hear laughter again—and some of that laughter is your own.

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

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

Life can become good and whole and complete

once again, not when we try to fill up the empty spaces left by loved ones no longer within hug's reach, but when we realize that love creates new spaces in the heart and expands the spirit and deepens the joy of simply being alive. The renewed energy and love we feel as winter turns into spring becomes the memorial to our loved one...not the grave markers we decorate, not the books we write, not the speeches we give, but the LOVE we share and



pass on.

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

January...the month to check on our progress, to make new commitments—and to start jogging.
--Darcie Sims TCF Enid, OK

Do You Know

Do you know what I've learned, that the

deepest, truest healing offered by The Compassionate Friends comes not in the first few years, but later.

Do you know that just when you think there is no more to gain by coming to meetings, something you will say or do will help another and another ... and exponentially, through your opened heart, there can flow riches, gifts beyond imagining?

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

--Genesse Bourdeau Gentry TCF/Marin Co., CA

It Doesn't Take Much

I am closing in on six years since my son Jordan died. Most days, I function productively. I have a "to-do" list (as I always have), I interact with the world in a reasonably coherent manner, and I like to think I help a few other people along the way. I know my dog is well cared for and I hope my husband and daughter think I have attended to them as best I can with whatever energy still resides within me.

Today, I had to go to the pharmacy to pick up the "solution" one needs in order to prepare for a colonoscopy. Even though I am well past the age when one is supposed to undergo that procedure on a regular basis, it is a procedure I have not been willing to endure it in the last six years. Prior to the death of my son, I was a compliant patient any doctor would appreciate. I am less so these days. My approach to my medical care is highlighted by apathy.

Then my grief counselor died of colon cancer at the age of 59. His widow wrote a passionate, eloquent plea for people to get colonoscopies. So, I consider this one I'm getting to be the "John Anderson Memorial Colonoscopy." And, as much as I loved John and appreciated him, I am not enthusiastic.

How could it be that the line in the pharmacy put me face to face with one of those round yellow Cheerio dispensers? The ones where a segment



of the lid flips open so a child can reach in without spilling all the contents. They can't be more than about five inches in diameter. I haven't seen one of those in decades. I had no idea they are still made or sold. They seem to be such an antique.

For years, it was an indispensable accessory to my days. I packed it in diaper bags. I made sure it was in the stroller. I always had it in the car so it could easily be passed to a child in the car seat. It didn't just house Cheerios. There were raisins, too. And goldfish. Maybe some nuts. If I was feeling indulgent, there may have been M&Ms. Sort of a trail mix. But that little Cheerios container went everywhere with us for many years. It soothed many moments of grumpiness. It tided us over until meal time. It distracted fits of boredom for long car rides. And, today, I found myself eye-to-eye with that artifact from my days of happiness as a mom.

Those eyes that stared at the Cheerios dispenser were eyes flooded with tears by the time I got to the head of the line at the pharmacy. Tearful eyes on a day when I thought I was handling things fairly well. Sometimes it doesn't take much...

--Peggi Johnson TCF Piedmont, VA

– One –

It was only 1 second, one thought, one decision, one action in a lifetime of seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions. It was so fast, so permanent, so irreversible, so hopeless. This moment, this thought, this decision, this action do not define him, do not honor him, do not immortalize him. It is the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that define him, that honor him, that immortalize him.

I remember my brother in all of the other seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that preceded this one. I remember him coming home from the hospital, lip synching in the basement, falling out of the tree, biking across campus, coming home from school, from boot camp, from war... I remember him hiking, and skiing, and running, and laughing, and crying. I remember how safe I always felt when he was around. I knew he would take care, protect, defend.

I don't remember exactly when my brother became an amazing human being – I just looked at

him one day and knew he was. I knew that nothing would make him change his mind about me. He was without judgment, without prejudice, without preconception. I knew my brother because we talked and he listened. I respected my brother most for his humanity – for being so sensitive, so vulnerable, so honest. I loved my brother for sharing the load when it was too hard for someone he loved to carry alone. I knew my brother because he left so much of him in me.

I trusted and respected my brother's decisions in the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, I have to trust and respect this one decision the same. I honor my brother by honoring myself. I do not dwell in that one moment, instead I celebrate and cherish all of the others. In that 1 second, one thought, one decision, one action, I found the strength he had given me and I will not let him down. I will not let that one moment be the only one.

--Michele Mallory

July 23

I knew this journey was going to be the most challenging and emotional when it started with me walking out of labor and delivery without my daughter in my arms. For most of us here, our journeys started with a walk like that. Or perhaps it was when I held my daughter for the first and last time. She was so small but so perfect. My mind could not wrap itself around the fact she was gone. My journey continued with more challenges that to this day can take my breath away.

Signing my name over “mother of deceased” or bringing her home finally...her ashes that is. She stayed with us for a few days before we gave her back to God and nature by scattering her ashes over the Marin Headlands in San Francisco.

The next step in my journey was a service with a small group of friends and family. What would this look like? How do you have a service for someone who came 4 months early, 4 months too soon. We passed out prayers, sayings and quotes to attempt to capture what was in our hearts.

What was next in our journey? What was going on in my heart during the sleepless nights and many decisions that had to be made was, “what was my role as Zoey’s mother? I can’t change her diaper, feed her or teach her how to walk.” What is



my role as her mother? I have come to realize it is to make sure that she is remembered. Whether I do that by saying I have three children instead of two, or by creating shadow boxes, ornaments or buying angels, or if it is sharing her story with a large group of strangers. God granted me the honor of sharing Zoey Grace’s story. In her short 5 months of life in my womb, she has impacted many.

She has shown Greg and me that we are loved, exposed my heart and soul in its most raw form, and brought me closer to my husband. She has taught me to be grateful for everyday that I get to spend with my children. I thank Jesus for her life. She has allowed me to connect with other families who have gone through similar experiences. We were so grateful for Sharing Parents that helped carry and grow our connection, and ultimately work through our grief.

So my journey continues without her, our second daughter, Aurora’s little sister, and our guardian angel up above.

To this day, we don’t know why we lost our Zoey Grace, but God has taken something so painful and uses it and redeems it so that Zoey’s memory and our journey will continue.

--Kourtney Flagg

Newly Bereaved...

Grief and the Healing Process

When a child dies, no matter what their age or the cause of death, grief lasts far longer than society in general recognizes. The death of your child is an unacceptable tragedy and it can take a long time before you regain any sense of normality in your life.

Grieving is hard work, you will be experiencing emotions on a deeper level than you have ever done before. You will feel more physically tired than usual. You may feel helpless, hopeless, and unable to concentrate or handle your usual day to day routine. Loss of appetite and sleeplessness can make this worse, leaving you feeling out of control and confused. These are all normal reactions to grief.

Crying is an acceptable and healthy expression of grief for ALL family members and helps to release built up tensions. Tears do help in the healing process. The amount of tears, however, is not the measure of the depth of love.

Guilt is a normal part of grief, surfacing in thoughts and feelings of 'if only'. In order to resolve this guilt try to express and share these feelings and learn to forgive yourself.

Anger is another common grief reaction, anger at professionals, life, God and even your child. Like any other emotion anger needs to be expressed and shared in a healthy acceptable manner. Talking these feelings over with a trusted person can help.

Family relationships are changed by the death of a child. Each person grieves in their own way and in their own time. Be sensitive to the fact that your partner may grieve in a different way to you. Some people grieve openly, others privately and alone. Surviving brothers and sisters may also withdraw or show aggressive behavior. Their school work may suffer from an inability to concentrate. Be as patient and loving as you can.

After a child's death, parents often challenge and examine their faith or philosophy of life. Some people find their faith helps them to accept the unacceptable, others do not. Try to find a caring non-judgmental member of your faith to discuss this with.

A parent may feel they have nothing to live for and many think about release from the intense pain. Be assured that parents often feel this way, but in time the intense pain does lessen and a sense of purpose and meaning does return. Talk to someone you trust, and if these feelings persist you may find professional counseling helpful.

Avoid hasty decisions. During the early months of grieving it would be unwise to make any major irreversible decisions such as moving from your house, changing your job or dealing with your child's belongings.

Take time to consider how you may feel later about this decision. Allow your family and friends to help. Most people are unsure of what is helpful and may need you to take the initiative and tell them what you want. Give them the opportunity to get close and be of help if they wish to.

While it is normal to feel afraid for the safety of other family members, especially surviving children, try to minimize the desire to over protect them. Allow time to feel sad and reflective.

Medication is best taken sparingly and only under the management of your doctor. Special days, such as birthdays, anniversaries, family days, can be very difficult. Often the lead up to these days can be worse than the day itself. It is helpful

to plan new rituals and ways to remember your child on these 'special' days.

You, your family and friends can support each other by talking about your child, helping each other, sharing memories and feelings in an open non-judgmental way.

It may be helpful to keep a journal and write about your feelings and thoughts, and/or write a letter to your child who has died.

It is important to take care of yourself. Grief work is the hardest work you will ever do. Take time for things that may help you relieve some of the stress in your life. Many people find gardening or walking a great help, other suggestions include meditation, swimming, massage etc. Find something that suits you.

Attending a grief support group can be helpful. You will meet others who understand. As you tell your story you will share an understanding of the heart that goes deeper than words. Their survival is reassuring proof that you too will survive

Remember that, as long as it harms neither yourself nor others, there is no right or wrong way to grieve, no timetable for grief. We are unique individuals and we express our love and our pain uniquely.

Above all, give yourself time. It takes time to open your heart and mind to healing; to choose to survive.

Seasoned Grievors...

Remember When

Remember when:

- you cried at the mention of her name
- you could not bear to look at her picture
- watching home movies are too heart-wrenching to even consider
- everything you saw reminded you of her....and it hurt so bad
- you dreaded going to sleep for fear of dreaming of her
- you dreaded waking up
- you dreaded-----life
- you wanted to go where she was

How about now?

- you can talk about her without crying
- you love to meet anyone who remembers her
- you love to hear them say her name
- you can laugh at the funny things she said

*Little by little,
we let go of loss...
but never
of love. ♥*

- you have picture albums of her, and you love to share them
- you love watching those movies [they are tears of joy]
- you love to dream of her
- you pray to dream of her
- you even went through her hope chest—and lived to tell about it

There is no time limit on grief. You have your way, and I have mine. I can truly say after all these years, I am better. And I feel confident in telling you, "You will get better, too." My best advice as a "seasoned griever": don't try to do it alone. Let other bereaved parents help you. It helps you, and it helps them. You will find unbelievable compassion among those who have been through what you are going through. They can help, and in time, so can you.

Cherish the days between "remember when" and "how about now." Make a list similar to mine. You have come much further than you think. God bless you.

--Sam Smith, TCF, Tyler, Texas



Friends And Family...

A Wish List from Bereaved Parents to Help Friends & Family Support Them

1. I wish my child hadn't died. I wish I had her back.
2. I wish you wouldn't be afraid to speak my child's name. My child lived and was very important to me. I need to hear that he was important to you also.
3. If I cry and get emotional when you talk about my child, I wish you knew it isn't because you have hurt me. My child's death is the cause of my tears. You have talked about my child, and you have allowed me to share my grief. I thank you for both.
4. I wish you wouldn't "kill" me again by removing her pictures, artwork, or other remembrances from your home.
5. Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn't shy away from me. I need you now more than ever.
6. I need diversions, so I do want to hear about you; but I also want you to hear about me. I might be sad and I might cry, but I wish you would let me talk about my child, my favorite topic of the day.
7. I know that you think of and pray for me often. I also know that my child's death pains you too. I

wish you would let me know those things through a phone call, a card or note, or a real big hug.

8. I wish you wouldn't expect my grief to be over in six months. These first months are traumatic for me, but I wish you could understand that my grief will never be over. I will live with the death of my child until the day I die.

9. I am working very hard on my recovery, but I wish you could understand that I will never fully recover. I will always miss my child and I will always grieve that he is dead.

10. I wish you wouldn't expect me "not to think about it" or to "be happy". Neither will happen for a very long time, so don't frustrate yourself.

11. I don't want to have a "pity party", but I do wish you would let me grieve. I must hurt before I can heal.

12. I wish you understood how my life has shattered. I know it is miserable for you to be around me when I'm feeling miserable. Please be as patient with me as I am with you.

13. When I say, "I'm doing okay", I wish you could understand that I don't "feel" okay and that I struggle daily.

14. I wish you knew that all of the grief reactions I'm having are very normal. Depression, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and overwhelming sadness are all to be expected. So, please excuse me when I'm quiet and withdrawn or irritable and cranky.

15. Your advice to "take one day at a time" is excellent advice. However, a day is too much and too fast for me right now. I wish you could understand that I'm doing good to handle an hour at a time.

16. Please excuse me if I seem rude, certainly it is not my intent. Sometimes the world around me goes too fast and I need to get off. When I walk away, I wish you would let me find a quiet place to spend time alone.

17. I wish you understood that grief changes people. When my child died, a big part of me died with her. I am not the same person I was before my child died, and I will never be that person again.

18. I wish very much that you could understand my loss and my grief, my silence and my tears, my void and my pain. BUT I pray that you will never understand.

--by helpwithgrief.org 7July 2022 Central Indiana Chapter Newsletter

Helpful Hint...



Suggestions for a New Year

I will try not to expect so much understanding from others who have not walked the same path.

I will be kind to myself—in health, appearance and time to be alone.

I will try to remember that I owe it to myself to try to enjoy life.

I will try to be more considerate of my spouse, children and parents. They too are coping and deserve my help.

I resolve in memory of my child to help someone else. For I know in doing this, my child will live on through me.

~ TCF, Mobile, AL

Book In Review...



How Long Will The Pain Last? Every bereaved parent wants to know by Charlene Cole. After doing a survey for TCF, she decided to write a book to share her findings with others. These stories combined create a perspective on the death of a child in every different way. Its like having a support group at your fingertips.

Welcome...



Attending your first meeting can be hard. We know this and it is always difficult for us to say "welcome" because we are sorry for your loss and understand your pain. However, we are glad you found us. We cannot take away your pain, but we can offer our friendship, compassion, support, and hope. We ask that you try to attend **at least three meetings** before you make up your mind, if TCF will help. Engaging with other bereaved parents and finding out what has helped them will help you in your own grief. With TCF, you'll have a chance to meet others who are facing their grief from the loss of their child and you'll discover a special bond that occurs when you are with others who truly understand the depths of having a child die.

–TCF South Bay/LA, CA

"You must give up the life you planned in order to have the life that is waiting for you"
-- Joseph Campbell

The New Year

The new year comes when all the world is ready for changes, resolutions - great beginnings. For us, to whom that stroke of midnight means a missing child remembered, for us the new years comes more like another darkness.

But let us not forget that this may be the year when love and hope and courage find each other somewhere in the darkness to lift their voice and speak:
let there be light.

--Sascha Wagner

Getting Better

My tears feel warm on my cheeks now...not burning hot.

Is this a sign I'm "Getting Better?"

When I cry now I am most often alone—in the car, or in the shower, or sometimes taking a walk. I do not cry in public or feel as much panic...
Is this a sign I'm "Getting Better?"

I sleep the night through sometimes...and awaken without tears... for awhile...

They come now while I'm brushing my teeth...
Or making coffee...

And always gone before I say "Good Morning"
Is this a sign I'm Getting Better?"

I am able to hug again...

And laugh and read and eat...

Is this a sign I'm "Getting Better?"

Yes, I think so... but when does the pain end?

Perhaps when I no longer ask

Is this a sign I'm "Getting Better?"

~Shirley Blakely Curle

TCF Little Rock, AR

Compassionate Tears

I cried in my car, and was ignored

I cried in church, and was pitied.

I cried at work, and was shunned.

I cried at home, and was hushed.

I cried at The Compassionate Friends,

And others shared their tissues and tears.

--Nona Walser TCF Greenville, SC



Toy 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grandmother: Dorothy Match

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lilly Parker
Born: 12/15 Died: 1/17
Mother: Nicole Kawagish
Father: J.D. Parker

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

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

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

Lindsay Nicole Pollack
Born: 6/94 Died: 11/23
Mother: Daphne Carroll-
Pollack

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* 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.

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

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

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

Birthday Tributes...



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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

Sorry, no tributes were submitted this month.

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

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

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

For Siblings...



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

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

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

Meaningful Location

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

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

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

My younger sister died in a car accident. At first, I was drawn to the spot where the accident happened and my heart would race. Overwhelming sadness would grip me and I would just cry. Then one day, as I was approaching the area, I

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

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

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

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

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

remember how my sister used to make these funny sounds and, in particular, as a car would pass, she would make the sound like in “The Jetsons” as the cars passed each other. I laughed as I remembered her silly sense of humor and, in that moment, I knew I could pass by this spot and remember how she could make me laugh. I held onto that and it made it a little easier each time.

-- Denise Nathan

The Empty Chair: Seven Lessons Gained in Sibling Loss



I never meant to become any sort of expert in sibling loss. That’s not a path anyone would willingly choose for themselves. Back in high school, I remember standing in the funeral home at my friend’s wake. After hugging his mom and sister, I stood there thinking to myself, how will they live through this?

A few years later, I learned the hard way. I was living on the other side of the world when I got a phone call from my mom on Mother’s Day telling me that my brother Warren died. It was unexpected, tragic, and I was all alone. I couldn’t get a flight out of Tokyo until the next day and in those grueling, confusing and lonely moments I realized that the truth is, you just do. You just live through it.

In the days and years that followed it was a crash course in living life without my brother. I quickly learned that there were no books, no articles, no nothing. Nothing that could help me learn how to cope, know how to feel, or what to expect. No one really talked about the “leftover kid.”

The truth is, when my brother first passed away I felt like it was all about my parents. Often I found myself and others focusing on the sadness and grief that my mom and dad must have been feeling. Sibling grief wasn’t a thing, or at least that’s what Google and the self-help section of the bookstore told me at the time. I was so wrong.

Our brothers and sisters are the first real relationships we have outside of our parents. He was my big brother—my first friend and the first person I learned to play with, share with, and laugh with. He was the first person who picked on me, fought with me and taught me forgiveness. A life without him was never in sight. And I think that’s the hardest thing to get over.

It’s been ten years now, and I have learned a

lot during those years. Ten years is a pretty long haul for someone who never thought they’d make it past day one as a freshly deemed 21-year-old only child. Since then I’ve been lucky enough to develop beautiful friendships with a few dear friends who also lost their siblings. They feel pretty lost and alone sometimes too. Why doesn’t anyone talk about this?

Somehow I made it this far. Maybe not easily, perhaps not always graciously, but I am here. And if you’re reading this, you are here too. It’s my hope that these lessons I’ve learned can help in your darkest days to find the silver lining. Even if it’s just a small glimmering glimpse of hope, you can find comfort knowing that those we love continue to be our life’s teacher long after they’re gone.

You don’t have to be the super kid. For some reason, especially in the beginning, you feel like you have to take on everything and suddenly save the world. Your world is your family, and you feel like you have to save your parents. I have learned that you can’t save them; they are living and breathing just like you and me, and there is no saving. There is only being. The best thing you can do for your family is to be you, do things that make you feel alive and be present. Find happiness and help others. That’s what they hope to pass on to you, and that’s the fire in you. The best thing you can be will always be you.

Parents are human. We spend our whole lives putting our parents on a pedestal. But as we get older and go through our own hardships, we come to see our parents as human. Coping with losing a child is something I hope I never experience in my lifetime, and when I look back on what my parents went through I remember the ups and downs of it all. There were times I could see they were grieving and coping in their own way, then grieving together, and now being stronger than I’ve seen them in years. I think losing a child can make or break a marriage, and I’m so grateful that my parents have pushed through all of this and have gained a deeper respect for each other in the process. They are my strength, my rock, and my inspiration.

Life goes on. Sometimes it feels tragic to think about, but life really does go on. It’s hard to imagine life without the people we love and how wrong it is that he or she will not be on the sidelines cheering for us as we move through life. My brother didn’t get to see me graduate college,

he never knew the career I built for myself, and he'll never be at my wedding or see me have kids. I'll never be Aunt Amanda to his children, he won't be there to comfort me when the day comes that I have to say goodbye to my parents. This choose-your-own-adventure of missed milestones can be heartbreakingly overwhelming at times. But life does go on.

I have friends that never knew him. I have a boyfriend who never met him. I've lived in one of the world's biggest cities; I've lived in a teeny tiny cabin in the woods. I wonder what he'd be like, what he'd be doing, where he'd be living. I wonder what he'd think of me. I carry this sense of wonder with me in everything I do, but it's my way of keeping him with me while living a life I know he'd be proud of.

There is no such thing as closure. The empty chair will always be there. In our family, we are reminded of it every time we have dinner at the kitchen table and every time the three of us go out to dinner and get seated at a table for four. Something and someone is always missing. But now I look at that chair and think to myself all I've learned, all I've gained, and how far we've all come. You will always be stronger than you think.

Be vulnerable and live your truth. We need each other. In a time where we are carefully curating our life one filter at a time, it's easy to forgo our authentic self for the one we think the world wants to see. But it's our true authentic self who can make a real connection and impact others. That's the stuff that matters.

Being vulnerable is scary, sure. But want to know what's scarier? Sacrificing our story for the doubters and critics. We are our experiences, and every piece of us was born from something that happened to us along the way. Tucking away the gifts we have to share in exchange for a false self is no way to live. The best relationships I've developed were cultivated in openness, sharing the good, the bad and the ugly. This vulnerability makes us human and reminds us that we are not alone in our journey. We all have a story to share.

Make time for the people who matter. Every one of us has the same 24 hours in a day, the same seven days a week, the same 365 days a year. It's up to us how we spend this currency of our lives. We can either feel sorry for ourselves or feel grateful for all the people in our life. We can keep feeding quarters into the meter of our false

selves or spend it on the things that matter. The people that love you love you. They love the real you, the you you've always been, the you that you're continuously improving, and the you that you will become. Spend your time wisely.

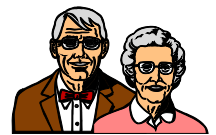
Anything can happen, anything happens all of the time. Life is short, life is scary, and life is beautiful. Through loss, we are shown firsthand how all of it can go away in a split second. Perhaps the greatest gift and struggle I've dealt with is wanting to live every second. It's beautiful and paralyzing all at the same time. Sometimes this gift of knowing how delicate life is can start to feel too real. It makes you feel stuck, anxious, and scared of losing everyone you love. Sometimes I hold on too tight and worry too much. Afraid to pick up the phone at times, fearful of bad news on the other end. I've even found myself trying to beat this game of life, to somehow solve it all and keep the people I love around me forever.

But in the end, you choose to live and beautiful things begin to happen. Every morning we wake up is a gift, every step we take outside, every breath we take, every smile we share with a stranger, every time we catch up with an old friend. Beauty is all around us.

Vulnerability, kindness, and sharing our story is so necessary. Being you is the best gift you can give to yourself and the people you love, and as time goes on, you'll realize that the superness was inside of you all along.

—Amanda Wormann

For Grandparents...



What I Wanted

I wanted to hold your sticky little hand as we walk through the park. To hear you squeal as I push you high on the swing and to hear you say "One more time, Grammy" as I caught you at the bottom of the slide.

I wanted to watch you splash in the wading pool in my back yard and to lay on our backs in the cool summer grass and talk about the shapes that clouds make. I wanted to lift you from the tub and wrap you in a towel holding you close as I pat you dry and hear you beg for one more bedtime story before I turn off the light .

I wanted to sing to you songs of joy in the morning, action songs during the day, soft lullabies

full of love as darkness falls and of course Alice's Restaurant at Thanksgiving.

I wanted to watch you grow from baby to little girl to young lady. To see you dressed up for your first prom. To comfort you after your first heartbreak. To cry with joy on your wedding day. I wanted you so much.

--Nina Bennett - Grandmother

From Our Members...

This following article really touched a cord in me. I hadn't realized how we are constantly learning how to adapt to our loss in everything we do. Submitted by Linda Curtis

Transition in Grief

It is good to speak of our children, to recall the wonderful memories of their lives. It is good to honor our children with ritual, ceremony, prayer, and thanksgiving for the gift that will always be our child. It is good to celebrate the life of our child, to cherish our time with them. It is also wise to acknowledge that by honoring our child in these ways, we are doing our grief work. This work also involves pushing, pulling, and dragging ourselves through the purgatorial fog that transcends our every thought after our child dies. The grief is overwhelming; the process of grief work is demanding, punishing, and often harsh. Either we stay in one place, "stuck" in our grief, or we reach out and help ourselves. There are no other choices.

The loss of our child to death is the most traumatic event of our adult lives. We have lost the future, and we have lost an immense piece of ourselves when our child died. We must work to rebuild ourselves. Rebuild ourselves for a new life; a life without our child sharing this physical plane with us.

But as we share our child with others, speak of the life that no longer is, celebrate that life in ritual, ceremony, and memories shared, we are doing our grief work. At first it is difficult. The throat swells, the breathing is shallow, and the words are so difficult to find. But we pursue, for we do not want the memory of our child to be erased. We carry our child forward into the future; we see the world for two now. We cherish this new journey that we take for our child and ourselves. This effort is our child's legacy. Our child will live

as long as we live...through our words, actions, thoughts, memories, and memorial efforts. And as we do these things that are good, we find the burden lifts ever so slightly. Days, weeks, months, and then years pass. At some point we realize that we, too, have transitioned. Our subconscious mind has accepted the worst that life can give, and we have emerged as different people cherishing the goodness that is always our precious child.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF Katy, TX

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 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: Jan. first for Feb. 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, 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 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

goodgriefresources.com

bereavedparentsusa.org

healingafterloss.org

survivorsofsuicide.com

taps.org (military death)

save.org (suicide/depression)

pomc.com (families of murder victims)

grasphelp.org (substance abuse deaths)

www.facebook.com/TheUglyShoesClub (Suicide)

Griefwords.com (for grandparents)



childloss.com

griefwatch.dom

opentohope.com

webhealing.com

alivealone.org

angelmoms.com

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

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Connie & Leo Licciardone

Sandra & Eddie Myricks

Jarmo & Bonnie Mantyla

Lori Galloway

Crystal Henning

Lynn Vines

Kristy Mueller

Kitty Edler

Susan Kass

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

Save The Date: July 12, 2024 - July 14, 2024 The 47th TCF National Conference will take place in New Orleans, LA from July 12th to 14th, 2024 More info to come.

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.

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

In loving memory of Phillip R. Sandoval, July 1984 - June 2016. I would like to thank this chapter for saving my sanity and for helping me get through my grief.

Valerie Desjardin (mother)

In loving memory of Tamara Lynette Boyd, December 1965 - December 2000.

Gloria Jones (mother)

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

**When making a donation, please make checks payable to:
The Compassionate Friends South Bay/L.A. Chpt.**

**Mail to: The Compassionate Friends So Bay/ L.A. Chapter
P.O. Box 11171, Torrance, CA 90510-1171**

In loving memory of _____

Birth date _____ Death date _____ From _____

Tribute _____

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

The Compassionate Friends
South Bay/L.A., CA Chapter
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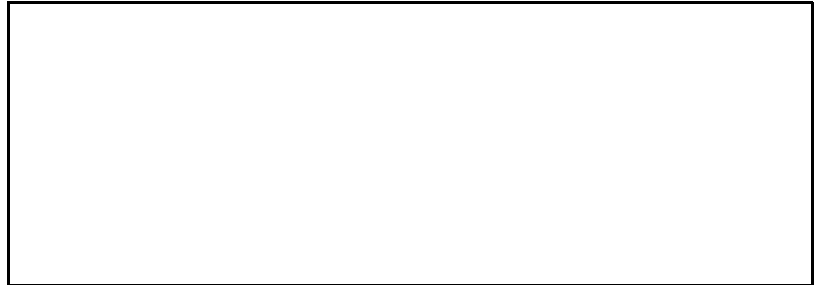
When You Lose a Child

When you lose a child your whole world is shattered
Your hopes and dreams are crushed
Your heart is broken
Your life is forever changed
You feel as though you will
Never again find a moment of happiness
And then one day you finally do smile again
But suddenly you feel guilty
As if you are somehow forgetting your angel
And then you realize it was your precious child
who gave you that smile just to say "I love you"

Author Unknown

Facebook/MyChildDidExist

– Return Service Requested –



January 2024

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.