



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

May 2024 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING
will be May 2nd, the first ***Thursday***
of the month at 7:00 P.M.

LOCATION:

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

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

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

The Compassionate Friends Mission Statement...

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

The Thursday, May 2nd meeting will start with "Balancing The Sacred Past."

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, May 2nd meeting will start** with “Balancing The Sacred Past.” Parents do not stop loving a child simply because the child has died. Your child has died, but you did not lose the love you shared. Even though death has occurred, that love never goes away. Sometimes we need to focus on that fact to get through our loss. We need to balance ways to remember with love, but look ahead to our lives with our children not physically here. Perhaps we need to examine our perspective on life and find ways to go on while acknowledging the past and the present. We invite you to join us as we share ways to accommodate our grief while we rebuild our lives.

The Sacred Task

Sometimes, life is about perspective, about the lens with which we view our stories and our circumstances. In the world of parents who have outlived their children, we have to learn quickly about perspective. In order to truly keep living after the breath has left our children’s lungs, we are forced to choose the lens with which we’ll see their life, their story, and our lives and our stories when everything is seemingly broken.

This world of parents who have outlived their children - it’s both a heartbreaking and extraordinary world. In it, you are in the presence of warriors, of men and women who have been given one of the most sacred tasks and missions. You are in the presence of men and women who were chosen, not chosen for pain, but chosen to be the only people in the world to parent their precious children.

Parenthood, in and of itself, is a sacred task. It’s true. But parenting a child, parenting children, when you can no longer reach out and touch their faces, hold them in your arms, watch them grow, that is one of the greatest, most sacred tasks you can be given.

Out of every person in this world, you were chosen to be their parent. Out of every person in this world, you are the ones who were chosen to know them, better than anyone, to be theirs, to have your souls tied together for eternity. Out of every person in this world, it was you, it is you, and it always will be you.

We can choose to view our circumstances strictly through the lens of sorrow, of sadness, of pain, or we can look at it through a different lens, one that acknowledges the pain but doesn’t see

exclusively through it. It notices the broken places, but it holds fiercely to hope. It aches and it hurts at times, but it holds ever more tightly to purpose, to good, to redemption.

You, your children, and their stories did not end. They continue to be written every single day that breath is held in your lungs. This is your sacred task. Their story is not over. We carry them. But listen here: your story, my story, our stories are not over either. No matter how much you wished you could have stopped breathing when the breath left their lungs, no matter how hopeless your life seems, no matter how deep down in the pit anxiety

or depression or PTSD have taken you. No matter how weak, how small, how fragile you may feel, you are not. You are brave. You are fierce. You have been given a sacred task, and you are the person for the job. Your story is far, far, far from over.

Few people in this world meet someone who so intricately and radically changes their lives simply by entering it. Few people have their lives split into such a powerful before and after. And while it may be so easy to look at our before and after through the lens of deep pain and sorrow, you have been given a sacred gift: to know a love so pure, so raw, that it extends across world, through time, and death cannot even touch it. You’ve been given a sacred gift, a second chance, an invitation to never be the same from this point forward simply because they existed, you were chosen to be theirs, and you are tied together, eternally, your love a force greater than life itself.

You are theirs. They are yours. For eternity. Press on.

--Lexi Behrndt “A Journey Together” BPUSA

Between Now and Then

There are moments which mark your life. Moments when you realize nothing will ever be the same and time is divided into two parts, before this, and after this. We all know this moment in our lives, that line that designates before and after. It seems like an eternity ago, it seems like a moment ago, one breath away. It is now the pivotal moment in my life, where I measure the then and now.

My grief has not been transformed into some meaningful nugget of wisdom, but I have learned much wisdom, as I have learned to integrate grief into my life. These bits of wisdom were passed



from others who had walked with grief longer. Early on, I asked someone how I would get through the years ahead, acknowledging my son's birthday, the holidays, the ordinary days. She said I would get through them by taking baby steps, focusing on the day, the moment, the breath in front of me. I and my family have traveled these past seven years by taking baby steps.

Some say that time heals and that grief changes, but I have found that instead, it is my response to grief that has changed. My arms still ache to give him a hug, my heart yearns for his physical presence, and grief can still knock me to my knees, but now, I get up faster, as my grief carrying "muscles" are stronger. I am able to predict what moments are going to be challenging and find space and time to be with that grief filled moment. The days when I feel capable of accomplishing tasks while grieving, outnumber the days, when I just want to stay curled up on the couch. I can plant the tomatoes, weed the garden and can those tomatoes in the fall, while still grieving.

As I become more familiar with grief, I am also more aware of the resiliency that lies within me and from that resiliency, I feel strength to live with my life as it is. Perhaps the aspect of this which surprises me the most is, that I do feel joy. Joy is felt when I experience a beautiful sunset, a formation of spectacular clouds, time with my daughters, or when I discover a penny or other connection to my son. As time passes, and as I find balance in carrying my grief, I am also learning that joy and sorrow sit side by side and there is room in my heart for both. We grieve deeply, we love deeper still.

As you take your own baby steps, becoming familiar with grief in your life, you too will discover the resiliency that lies within. Someday, you will find room in your heart for both your sorrow and your joy. As Mitch states in his poem, "you will learn to weave together unraveled threads on the loom of a falling star."

--Kim Bodeau, Chippewa Falls WI

The Shifting Power of Grief

Grief continues to shift on me. Maybe it's the month. May. Mother's Day. My daughter Dharma's birthday. It's a lot. But I woke up a couple of days ago from a dream. My daughter was saying, "Mom, grief is sad, grief is painful, but grief is

empowering. Stop wasting your power." I woke up feeling "Why was she saying this to me?"

But I thought about it. At some point in the grieving process grief can become empowering. I feel it sometimes, myself. I wonder if any of you do, too. I have lived through the worst thing that could ever happen to me. I lost my one and only child. And I'm still here. I have found some ways to move Dharma forward in this life. I have found kind and wonderful people to support and who support me, and slowly, but surely, I feel a couple of very stubborn, strong legs beginning to hold me up. I know myself in a new way now. I have been forced to live the worst thing that can happen to a parent, and life isn't letting me go.

So I am acknowledging my strength. No one can tell me how to be, if they have not survived this. I am more comfortable in my skin than I think I have ever been, because I no longer question myself. I know I am doing what is right for me and what is right for my daughter. I am two years and almost 3 months into this journey. I will continue to walk this path.

I know I won't feel like this every day. I know I won't feel like this every hour of every day. I let myself cry when I need and scream when I need. I have a deep respect for the grief process and what it is teaching me about life and about death.

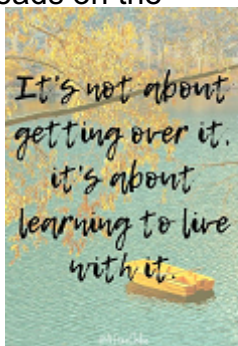
Would I trade this to have my daughter back? If you have to ask, you are not grieving. I'd give anything for that. But nothing I do will change the fact that Dharma is gone. So I am going to respect where I am and learn from it. My daughter expects that from me.

-- Jeannine Horan, Mom of Dharma
TCF Chapter White Plains, New York

Gone Too Soon

As I think about Mother's Day this year I become very nostalgic. Every spring during my elementary school days, I looked forward to the day the order form for our plants for Mother's Day came from our local florist. I always ordered pansies for my mom, the ones with purple and yellow or yellow and brown. I could hardly wait for the delivery day to come, so that I could present them to my mother. She always received them with much surprise and appreciation, as if it were a gift she had never received before or even expected.

As a child, Mother's Day was an important occasion to my family. My dad always insisted we



wear the traditional carnations: white if one's mother was deceased, red if still living. He would make a special trip to the florist to purchase them. We would attend church, and then drive to a nearby city for lunch.

I remember clearly my first Mother's Day being "the mom." Our Anna was only about three weeks old, so I had a very limited idea of what it really meant to be "the mom." But I do remember being treated like a queen and enjoying every minute of it.

Over the next several years as we raised our two daughters, my husband continued to affirm the women of our family. On Mother's Day he always bought roses for each of his girls. Anna would get a yellow one. Debbie would get a peach colored one. The red roses were for me. When the girls were young I would receive and treasure their hand-made cards. As they grew into young adults, their choices in purchased cards were just as significant.

Every year as Mother's Day approached, we looked forward again to spending the day together as a family. We would attend church, go out for my favorite brunch, have lots of conversation, fill our bellies to the max, laugh until we cried, be silly, make memories. That was before...

Then the unthinkable happened. Our daughter, Anna, died. How could those special days of love and togetherness, laughter and fun become among the most dreaded days a mother must face? How could those days that we had once anticipated with joy and excitement bring such unbelievable heartache and confusion, loneliness and tears?

During those first few years we were simply lost. This was new, undesired, and certainly not requested, territory that we had been forced to enter. What were we supposed to do? How were we supposed to act? I just wanted to run away or stay in bed with the sheets over my head. The traditions we had come to love and enjoy became intensely painful.

It became an impossible task to attend church services or go out for brunch. Seeing families enjoying their togetherness pierced my heart with an endless ache. My tear-filled eyes burned at the thought of being surrounded by "intact" families. Feelings of anger and resentment overwhelmed my heart. On the inside I wanted to lash out at all those mothers and fathers who were surrounded by all of their children and those sisters and brothers who had no clue what it would be like to lose a sibling. As the day drew to a close I felt

tremendous relief that it was over. Exhausted, I would lay silently with my head on my pillow as quiet tears lulled me to sleep.

The feelings that I have shared are not uncommon in the early years of grief with those who have experienced the death of a child, grandchild or sibling. If you or someone you care about has experienced the death of a child, I offer some suggestions from those who have been there to help you to make it through this time.

Realize this day is full of potential for a multitude of feelings to sneak up on you and catch you by surprise. Especially during those early years, do whatever works for you. This may be a time of being in "survival mode." Trying to please everyone else can cause undo stress.

If you have surviving children who want to honor you, communicate your feelings to them. Let them know that while you are grieving the death of their brother or sister, you still love them. Try to keep things simple and uncomplicated. Visit the cemetery.

You may choose to pretend the day just does not exist and do something completely unrelated to Mother's Day. Clean the house, take a nap, get out of town. One of my Compassionate Friends spends Mother's Day at Home Depot. No one bothers her there or mentions Mother's Day.

Have a good cry. If you have trouble crying, just stop by a card shop and read a card or two. Maybe even buy the card that you believe your child would give you. Go to the recycle bin and break glass into the proper receptacle.

Know that the days before the holiday may be worse than the actual day. As with all holidays, be reassured that what you do this year does not have to be what you do next year. As my Compassionate Friends and I have found, with proper grief work over time, the intensity of our feelings has softened. This will happen for you, as well. In the meantime, be gentle with yourself. And remember, "you need not walk alone."

--Paula Funk



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

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

Serendipity and a Mother's Day Card

March and April are restless months for me as the May date of my son's death approaches. I wonder now at the timing of a spring cleaning chore that I tackled in mid-March. Was it serendipity, a happy accident, or something more? Mitch Carmody taught me to think "Definitely, something more!"

I needed something to do one day in early spring. I settled on cleaning a drawer full of old papers. Half way through the chore I found a Mother's Day card that my son Art made in 5th grade. He wrote a long letter with no periods. That was his writing style at the time. It read like a stream of consciousness from a 10-year-old boy. The letter was pasted on green construction paper, folded, with his school photo on top.

Art wrote that he knew my love for him would continue even if I died. Those were unusual words for him. I reread that sentence many times. Who knew it would be vice-versa ten years later? In hindsight, I believe he was telling me that we would continue our relationship despite a death between us.

I was in job-seeking mode at the time that he wrote the card. The rest of the letter was a persuasive argument to shift my career into sports writing. He thought I was a good writer. (I used periods.) He would help me with the sports stuff since he was good in sports and I would need that, he wrote. It was hilarious! It made me cry. I shared it with my stepdaughter, Jessica, Art's sibling.

For many years after Art's death I shut down on Mother's Day. Grief was too strong. Today I view things differently. My stepdaughter Jessica grew up knowing me. She is an extraordinary mother and daughter. My son-in-law Brandon is by far much more than I ever anticipated. They are enormously supportive for each other and for me. I am a grandmother now for their two children, a boy and a girl.

For these reasons I will celebrate Mother's Day. There is one more reason to celebrate. I received a Mother's Day card. It was a gift that I had forgotten long ago and found again on a restless spring day. My son is still with me, still nudging me, still sending me gifts with love.

--Monica Colberg, TCF Minneapolis MN

What Is Left?

When a child dies, you ask, among other questions, what is left? A beautiful, sensitive, intelligent son has chosen to end his life. What can be left after such a crushing blow?

Others will point out that you have a spouse, other children or grandchildren, perhaps relatives and friends. They are all left. Perhaps you have a career that is left. And yet how meaningless all of those are to a bereaved parent, to one who is suffering the most devastating loss of all. So you continue to search for what it is that is left. You read books on bereavement scarcely remembering what you have read; you attend meetings, talk with others who have suffered a loss like yours. If you are fortunate you have one or two good friends who, while they cannot fully understand, are there to love and listen. Perhaps there is a therapist who guides you in your search for an answer. But for a long while everything you read or hear has little meaning and certainly cannot provide the answer to your question. Or can it?

Does all that you have read and heard and experienced finally come together and answer the questions of what is left? For me it does. The answer was 13 months in coming, but how clear it seems now. I am left. That's it! I am left and I have been left with the love of Scott. It is a new love, it is different, more intense, it is undemanding, it need not be reciprocated, there are no strings attached. I love this love of Scott's. It warms me and comforts me. It is a wonderful love, but I cannot keep it. It would be wrong to do so; this love is too precious to keep to myself.

I am left with love to spare and love to share. It will never run out. He will always be with me to replenish it. I have found my answer! I am left to share Scott's love with you.

--Betty Stevens TCF Baltimore, MD
In Memory of my son, Scott

I Can't Touch Him

I sensed something wrong
A strong urge to check
I ran towards his room
The small kitchen table and chairs topple about
I go to his cradle
I know...I can't touch him



I place my hand a few inches from him
 I am frozen, I can't touch him
 Our friend tries desperately to revive him
 Sirens. Lights. The ambulance
 The ambulance is leaving with him
 We race to follow
 No time to get my shoes
 Barefoot and Embarrassed
 The hospital. Cold. Quiet. So quiet
 Except, the clock on the wall
 Ticking so loud. Tick, Tick, Tick
 Time stands still
 Two large steel doors open
 The words come out "Your Baby has expired"
 God, No. I can't do this
 Help me. Please help me God
 Tears are blinding me
 Did I fall asleep?
 In the morning light, I find myself awake
 For one split second, everything is okay
 And then it is not...
 The realization. The realization is unbearable
 I can't breathe
 God, No. I can't do this
 The worst day of my life begins
 I CAN'T EVER TOUCH HIM AGAIN
 --Your Mom, Bonnie Yvette Marchand

Newly Bereaved...

A Letter To My Co-Workers



Dear Compassionate Friends, I wrote this letter for my co-workers and posted it in the office where everyone would see it, because I found that although everybody had been extremely kind and generous during Laurie's last brief illness, some of them didn't seem to know how to deal with me or what to say after she died. The idea for the letter and some of its contents are from a book on grief work by Bob Deits. (*Life After Loss: A Personal Guide Dealing With Death, Divorce, Job Change and Relocation.*)

Dear friends and co-workers:

I want to thank all of you for your kindness and support during the last few months. I have experienced a loss that is devastating to me. It will take time, perhaps years, for me to work through the grief I am having because of the loss of my daughter, Laurie. Although Laurie was our oldest child, she was the child of my third pregnancy, so she was very much wanted by the time I gave birth to her. She was also the child who was most like

me, both in appearance and personality. Perhaps because of this, I actually feel I have lost a part of myself. I would gladly have given my life in exchange for hers, had I had that option.

I will cry more than usual for some time. My tears are not a sign of weakness or a lack of hope or faith. They are symbols of the depth of my loss and, I am told, a sign that I am recovering. I find that I become angry without there seeming to be a reason for it. My emotions are all heightened by the stress of grief. Please be forgiving if I seem irrational or unfriendly at times.

I need your understanding and your friendship more than anything else. If you don't know what to say, just touch me or give me a hug to let me know you care. Do not be afraid to mention Laurie's name – she is gone from this life but she will never be gone from my memory or my heart. And please don't hesitate to call me – it is reassuring to hear from supportive friends.

If you, by chance, have had an experience of loss that seems anything like mine, please share it with me. You will not make me feel worse. And if I get emotional or tear up – you are not making me cry – I am crying inside all the time anyway!

This loss is the worst thing that could happen to me. But, I will get through it somehow and I will live again. I will not always feel as I do now – I will laugh again.

Thank you all for caring about me. Your concern is a gift I will always treasure.

Sincerely, Marcia

--Marcia Davis In memory of Laurie
 TCF, Contra Costa County, CA

Seasoned Greivers....

Helpful Insights To Self-Care In Grief

I have just passed the 26th year of missing my son, Adam. He was a pilot and died while giving a lesson to a student. He had an engine problem and could not survive when they landed. Adam was only 23 and married just three short months. He was the kind of kid that every-one loved the moment they met him.

I would like to share some insights that I have learned over the past years and hope there is something that helps you on your grief journey. First, I learned that I wasn't crazy when I couldn't remember the smallest things that first year, and beyond. I called it "cotton brain." What helped me

was to start writing in a journal. When sleep wouldn't come, I would write to Adam. I poured out my heart about how much I missed him, how angry I was that the plane failed to perform to keep him safe. I told him about my day, all the insignificant things that I would have told him if he were sitting next to me. And most of all, I told him over and over that I loved him and missed him.

Another thing was to acknowledge my grief, give myself grace to grieve my huge loss. I could not worry about what others thought if I showed my sorrow. I had to let go of the "advice" I received from others. I also found that some of my friends were not able to handle being around someone so sad, so they left. I needed to find new friends that "got it." The Compassionate Friends was a particularly valuable resource.

A friend that had a couple of years into grieving the death of her daughter gave us invaluable advice. She told me, "You can't lean on a broken fence when you and Mark (my husband) are broken." That is when we began looking for a grief counselor to help us navigate through our grief rather than expect help from each other. I highly recommend doing the same. It is a huge relief to be able to share anything in your heart with someone and not be judged, but instead just be listened to. Not everyone finds the one that will work for them right away. I think that if the first one does not work out, keep looking until you find one that does, like trying on a pair of shoes! You rarely find the right ones that fit with the first pair you try on.

Soon I realized how important it was to take care of myself, not only mentally but physically too. In those first months I could have cared less about my well-being. But I knew from resources that I read that if I did not, I could become a statistic that affects so many because of the impaired immune system. Illness can be one, also accidents increase causing some nasty physical consequences, sometimes for a lifetime. Did you know that when we experience a death of a loved one, it is a brain injury? Because of this, we do not think rationally when it comes to taking care of ourselves; however, our traumatized brain needs us to. Going for a walk is a great stress reliever or take some "me" time to just sit outside and listen to the birds. It can give a much-needed break for your mind and body. And sometimes we just need to have a good cry. It releases the tension that builds up.

Another significant help is to laugh. It is natural to feel like we should not because we are somehow not missing our kids if we do, but it is not at all the truth. Nothing could make us miss them any less. Try tuning in to a classic Carol Burnett show. It's so good for the soul to laugh even for a moment. I learned I needed laughter as much as feeling the grief of missing Adam to have healthy healing.

And my final insight and the most important one for me was to not only look at my loss, but also count the blessings that our beautiful children left us. The most wonderful way to honor them is to go on living. To say their names and to share our stories. If we do that, we could be helping another hurting heart because we "get it." I look back at those first entries in my journal and see how far I have come and know that although I did not believe I would survive, I did! I miss my son and always will, but I have found joy in life again. I can talk about Adam now and smile at the precious memories that we shared.

--Linda Triplett, Reprinted from The Compassionate Friends website

Looking Forward...

Some Days Are Just Hard

Losing a child is indescribably painful. As any bereaved parent will tell you, the death of a child leaves a huge line running through our lives with "before and after" etched forever in our memories. Days that were previously filled with promise and vitality suddenly seem empty and hopeless. Gradually, we come to accept that our lives will never return to what they once were and that some days are just hard.

In October 2010, we lost our previously healthy 21-year-old son, Matthew, to a form of virulent strep. What initially masked itself as a severe case of pneumonia was, in fact, a form of strep that attacked his bicuspid aortic heart valve, necessitating valve replacement surgery. But when they actually went in, they found the damage was far more extensive than they thought. And while Matthew survived the surgery (mostly due to his youth), he never regained consciousness. He spent the last week of his life in a coma before he died on October 22nd.

Before that ill-fated day in October, I had never known such sadness and hurt. As anyone who has lost a child will tell you, the pain is simultaneously



acute and chronic. It's so piercing and constant you can hardly breathe; it's as if a cement block has been permanently placed on your chest. You don't think it will ever go away. Grieving becomes a way of coping with the tremendous loss that now makes up your life. And while the jagged edges of my own grief have begun to smooth out a bit, I also know that it will always be with me and forever define my family.

One thing I've come to accept over the past two and a half years is that some days are just hard. During the first year, I came to fully expect that every day would be hard. Those early days slogged by at a surreal pace. Grief was ever-present and seemed to hold time at bay. As we approached the first anniversary of Matthew's death in 2011, things shifted a bit, time picked up, and the acute days of grieving became less frequent, although the chronic grief remains.

Now I notice that there's no anticipating when grief will sneak up and wash over me like a rogue wave. It just happens. It can be a song, a special place, a type of food, or just a memory that suddenly slides into my subconscious, and all I can think about is the tremendous hole that now fills my life. I can be having coffee with a friend and laughing one minute and find my eyes filling with tears the next. And that's okay. In fact, it just brings Matthew closer to me for that moment.

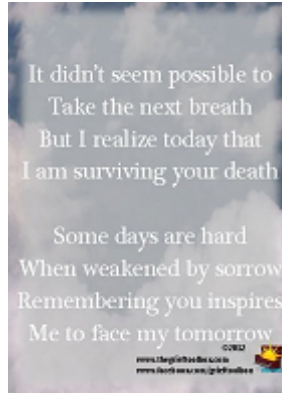
I think for bereaved parents, our grief lies just below the surface. Even when I'm laughing or absorbed in a conversation, if you were to scratch me just a little bit, my grief would come bubbling up. I've come to view grief not as the enemy, but rather as an emotion that I now can acknowledge and move into. I know eventually, she'll go back under and I'll just carry her around with me, hidden from other's view, but always there.

In the movie "Rabbit Hole", there's a scene between Nicole Kidman (Becca) and her mother, Dianne Wiest (Nat), that stayed with me long after the closing credits. Becca and Nat are bereaved parents, and while Becca sees their circumstances as completely different (her four-year-old son was killed in an accident, while her brother died of a drug overdose), she and her mother now share the commonality of being bereaved mothers. Does it ever go away?

Nat: No, I don't think it does. Not for me, it hasn't, and that's going on 11 years. It changes, though.

Becca: How?

Nat: I don't know ... the weight of it, I guess. At some point, it becomes bearable. It turns into something that you can crawl out from under and... carry around like a brick in your pocket. And you... you even forget it, for a while. But then you reach in for whatever reason and—there it is. Oh, right, that.



Which could be awful—but not all the time. It's kind of ... not that you like it exactly, but it's what you have instead of your son, so you don't want to let go of it either. So you carry it around. And it doesn't go away, which is ...

Becca: What?

Nat: Fine ... actually.

This exchange sums up, for me, how so many of us carry the grief of losing our beloved children with us. I bring this up to remind people that for those of us who have lost a child, our grief is present, even if you don't see it. It doesn't go away, even with the passage of time. It doesn't go away even if we seem "better." With time the intense pain subsides, but our grief, like our love, is always there. And that's okay.

The beauty of the human spirit is that we have a remarkable ability to continue on, even in the most adverse of conditions. But we will always mourn our children. We don't want them to be forgotten. Ever.

Our memories of them are all we have. Since Matthew died, I've learned that you do begin to put your life back together again, bit-by-bit, piece-by-piece. Its form is different, but it is still a life. It continues to have shape and meaning. And part of that new shape is formed by the memory of your loved one. That memory is present all the time, looking over your shoulder, helping you restructure this new reality.

Grief is transformational. My grief has changed me in ways I'm only just beginning to understand. I am more mindful of things, big and small, happy and sad. I don't take anything for granted. I've learned to embrace the paradox of unfathomable loss and profound gratitude for living. I continue to feel Matthew's presence as we all rebuild our lives without his physical body here.

Some days are just hard. Some days grief rises up and reminds me that she's still there. She reminds me that grieving Matthew will always be a pivotal part of my life. That's okay. I also know that I will move through it and feel better soon. I know

that life continues on, almost with a renewed sense of purpose.

And for that I'm grateful. I've come to embrace yet another paradox of life, knowing that our hearts can be both full and broken at the same time.

--Robin Gaphni, Mother of Matthew

TCF Chapter Kitsap County, Washington

Robin writes a blog called "Grief & Gratitude" at www.griefgratitude.com



Friends And Family...

Thoughts, Late at Night...

Silent tears... We go through life with a broken heart, though most days you will see us smile. We get through those days knowing it is just one more day closer to seeing them again.

We still laugh, we still play with other children, ours or our friends'. We still live, yet the spark in our eyes is gone, the joy inside has left.

Some days, we venture out, some days we just don't. And sometimes when we do, reality hits hard so we turn around and run back to safety. We can be strong but mostly because we have no choice.

If asked how we are, we will usually say OK just so we can escape. Escape more questions or unwanted advice about how it is time to move on. We are afraid and we panic at the thought of forgetting a little more each day, their voice, their smell, the way they kissed us, the way they felt in our arms, how it sounded when they said our name and even their favorite food.

You might see us walking through graves at all hours of the day and night. You might hear us talk to a picture on the wall, or a box sitting on a shelf. Remember to never question why we do this, it is not an easy thing. To go sit on our children's grave to share our day with them, or lie in their bed, reading their favorite book, knowing they will never be there again to turn the next page before we are done saying the last word.

See, we don't really want to go on without them, we just don't. They are our hearts, our souls. They make the sunshine and the rain fall. They send us snow kisses and flower petals in the wind. They paint rainbows and sunsets. They bring us butterflies and lady bugs. They always have, just now, they do it from Heaven.

Heaven is where our children had to go so they could be free. But we are left behind. And now we

go through life with our broken hearts, though most days you will see us smile. But remember, next time when you see us smile as you go about your day, remember that at night, as you go to bed and close your eyes, silent tears roll down our cheeks as we cry ourselves to sleep one more time.

--Mimi Avery, Julian's mom (Forever 4), TCF Fort Worth, TX

Helpful Hint...



Life After Loss

Shortly after my son, Patrick died I read the book "Life After Loss" by Bob Diets. I found in it three short sentences that became a helpful, regular part of my life for several months because they gave me comfort and courage when I would re-read them. I kept a copy in my wallet and on my bathroom mirror so they were readily available when I was feeling especially low.

They are as follows:

- I will not always feel as I do now.
- I am doing okay...grief will not destroy me.
- I will survive this experience just as others have before me.

It has been more than four years since Patrick's death. I no longer carry the message in my wallet or post it on the mirror. (I have kept a copy to share with others). I tell myself this must mean I am doing better, getting stronger. Some days, some moments, I feel better by inches rather than miles, but for me, there is life after loss.

-- Jill Fraley

Welcome...



I'm Here

I cannot ease your aching heart,
 Not take your pain away,
 But let ME stay and take your hand
 And walk with you today!
 I will listen when you need to talk;
 I will wipe away your tears
 I will share your worries when they come;
 I will help you face your fears.
 I am here and I will stand by you,
 Each hill you have to climb,
 So take my hand, let's face the world;
 Live one day at a time!
 You're not alone, for I'm still here.

I will go that extra mile
And when things are a little easier,
I'll help you learn to smile!

--By Jeanne Losey

Editor's Note: Every bereaved parent brings their own pain and story to the meetings. By being there for each other and listening and offering suggestions, it eases everyone's pain. What you have found helpful in your grief may be just the information another bereaved parent who is struggling with their own pain needs to hear. We invite you to attend the meetings and see for yourself how helpful they can be.

Book In Review...



The Grief Case – A man's Guide to Healing and Moving Forward in Grief by R. Glenn Kelly. If you lost a loved one, then you have been handed a Griefcase. It is filled with painful heavy emotions and will be with you for the rest of your life. Use the methods inside to learn how to lighten your burden and your heart to move forward through grief to find your new normal.

There Will Come a Day

There will come a day when
the tears of sorrow will softly flow
into tears of remembrance...
and your heart will begin
to heal itself...
and grieving will be interrupted
by episodes of joy
and you will hear the whispers of hope.
There will come a day when
you will welcome
the tears of remembrance...
as a sun-shower of the soul...
a turning of the tide...
a promise of peace.
There will come a day when
you will smile and laugh and
tell your story without tears
as you remember.

-- TCF Chapter Bronx, New York

"When I grieve, when I stand by others as they grieve, even in the midst of seemingly unbearable sorrow, grief becomes a way to honor life—a way to cling to every fleeting, precious moment of joy." -
--Cortney Davis

Like The Butterfly

It fluttered above my head
Weightless in the soft breeze.
I reached up my hand
It lit on my finger.
Waving glistening wings gently.
It looked at me for timeless moments.
I smiled, reaching deep and
Finding all those cherished memories.
As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,
I knew we had said hello once more.
--Leslie Lanford TCF North Platte, NE



Lessons from My Son

After you were born
my life became a challenge
Seeing your poised big sister
who did everything right
you escaped out of your crib
knocked the houseplants over
decorated a closet wall
with a bright blue marker.

You didn't hesitate to scare me
at eight months pregnant
waddling like a beached whale
with a trip to get stitches
when you fell in the bathtub
telling jokes and laughing
as the doctor sewed your chin
naming the stitches 'my itches'.

I can still see those bright eyes
the excitement over a frog,
picking green tomatoes,
covered in birthday cake,
drinking pool water,
climbing a pecan tree,
kissing a neighbor's puppy
and running naked down the cul-de-sac.

From you I learned the art of patience,
the joy of mothering a son,
that there are never enough
hours for cuddling and reading.
You taught me well
although you were so young.
And within my heart,
I will always hold my gratitude for you.
-- Alice J. Wisler TCF Wake County, NC



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

Connor Aslay
Born: 5/99 Died: 7/18
Mother: Erin Aslay

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

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

Mark Edler
Born: 11/73 Died: 1/92
Parents: Kitty & Rich Edler

Jeremiah Bell
Born: 1/88 Died: 6/15
Mother: Angela Alvarez

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

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

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

Scott Berkovitz
Born: 5/88 Died: 1/16
Parents: Carl Berkovitz &
Maria Moore

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

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

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

Noah Bernstein
Born: 6/87 Died: 2/17
Mother: Beth Bernstein

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jeffery Mark Engleman
Born: 6/61 Died: 2/10
Parents: Janette & Laszlo
Engelman

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

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

Nicolas Frank DiMario
Born: 9/89 Died: 9/22
Father: Frank DiMario

Richard Paul Engelman
Born: 02/66 Died: 03/95
Parents: Janette & Laszlo
Engelman

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

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

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

Cody Jarod Esphorst
Born: 3/02 Died: 7/19
Parents: Jesse & Julie
Esphorst

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

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

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

Jesse Eric Esphorst
Born: 9/00 Died: 3/17
Parents: Jesse & Julie
Esphorst

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

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

Chidinma Ezeani
Born: 8/89 Died: 10/19
Mother: Ifeoma Ezeani

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



Robert Justin Fields
Born: 1/00 Died: 1/22
Parents: Loree & Bob
Fields

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

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

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 Kroppman
Born: 12/88 Died: 3/12
Parents: Brenda & Greg
Kroppman

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 Lauthere
Born: 9/74 Died: 3/96
Parents: Larry & Chris
Lauthere

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

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

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



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

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

**OUR**

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

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

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

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

CHILDREN

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

REMEMBERED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Birthday
Tributes...**

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

Sorry, no tributes were
submitted this month.

For Siblings...**Second Anniversary**

Yes, I'm an adult over 40
 And Tom, little brother, was 25
 When he died returning from his bar exam.
 So what? Does grief have an end age?
 Does someone 40 plus not die too
 losing a sweet small playmate?
 I see him learning to roller skate
 I'm running beside the bike;
 First game of the Cardinals' season
 And, scared, in the stands,
 A "gorilla" running wild.
 Sleepy, at a drive-in, running around the zoo.
 All that, and as an adult, I knew him too.
 At graduations,
 Proud in his own pad
 Pouring Spanish champagne.
 Tireless breaking wood feeding a hungry campfire
 Cooking eggs for all, sharing dreams.
 This sibling remembers and grieves.
 --Jeanne Brady TCF Olathe, KS

Questions/Answers from Bereaved Siblings

All of a sudden I burst into tears and cannot control crying.

You have the freedom to cry when you need to. Crying is a normal reaction. You may feel embarrassed, but most people will react with sympathy and wish for themselves that they could cry freely. Crying is a natural outlet to grieving.

Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.

At some time everyone is angry at the person who died. Anger does not mean you loved them less; it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.

I can't concentrate. I can't think and I can't remember anything. I think I am losing my mind.
 You are not losing your mind, although it may feel that way. Your mind is probably overloaded. Not only do you have to go through your daily routine, but your mind is flooded with thoughts and feelings for your brother or sister. This is temporary; your

memory and concentration will return over time.

I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying. I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy. Am I?

Some grieving people experience intense dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings you have during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.

I feel so guilty for the way I yelled at my brother. We would fight about the silliest things. I'll never be able to tell him how sorry I am.

Brothers and sisters in every family quarrel and don't apologize after every argument. Even though you fought, you still loved your brother and he loved you.

Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.

This is truly one of the most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents. Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another.

--This Healing Journey an Anthology for Bereaved Siblings

For Grandparents...**A Grandfathers Wish**

I wish I could have taken you to a ball game today
 But such a tragic event occurred unnecessarily
 and took that dream away
 You see the years you lived were just a mere short
 six months coupled with some days
 You would have worn your team's favorite shirt and
 hat while watching all the plays
 A hot dog or two with the smell of popcorn and
 peanuts would fill the air
 The sound of the roaring crowd, a foul ball that
 you caught, would bring us some good cheer
 I wish I could have taken you camping, swimming
 and fishing from our little boat
 The great big smile you'd display from a fish you
 caught now is just remote
 No stories to tell your children
 of the life that you once led
 Is now a never ending battle
 that every grandparent dreads
 You see no Papa ever believes his grandson

will go before him because it's not a natural thing
I say love them dearly while you can
as we don't know what life will bring
Miss you Brendonite, Papa Kyle
—author unknown



From Our Members...

The Compassionate Friends National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone's wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program.

A national conference of The Compassionate Friends is unlike any other conference you may ever attend. It is a place where you can go and know that you truly are not alone as you travel your grief journey. Every person attends for the same reason: a child/grandchild/sibling has died. It is a place where "friendship, understanding and hope" are more than just words.

You'll find a friendly, warm, safe atmosphere surrounded by compassionate people. It's a weekend of hopeful and healing activities. At each conference there are many activities for parents, grandparents, and siblings, but you decide what is right for you. There are almost 100 workshops, sharing sessions and craft activities which gives you time for intentional grieving and learning. Many areas of grief are covered by the workshops. Interesting and well-known speakers address the Opening and Closing Sessions and the banquets. A special candle lighting ceremony concludes the Saturday evening banquet. A Walk to Remember closes the conference on Sunday.

While I was apprehensive about attending my first conference, I am so glad I went. It became a yearly event for many years. Looking back, I think it made it easier to understand and predict things that would come up later, from hearing about them even when they did not apply to me yet. I strongly recommend giving it a try.

--Carol Olson, South Bay/LA, CA

The Compassionate Friends 47th National Conference...

Will take place July 12th to 14th,
2024 in New Orleans, LA For more information contact
www.compassionatefriends.org



Welcome New Members... We welcome our new members to our chapter of TCF. We're sorry you have a need to be with us, but we hope you feel you have found a safe place to share your grief and will return. It often takes a few meetings to feel at ease in a group setting. Please try attending three meetings before deciding if TCF is for you. Each meeting is different, 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: May first for June 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.Livealone.org
- Survivors of Suicide: Support Group for families that have lost someone to suicide. Contact Rick Mogil (310) 895-2326 or 24 hrs: (310) 391-1253
- Our House/Bereavement House: Support groups in LA & So. Bay (310) 475-0299 Also Spanish Support Group, Loren Delgado 310-231-3196.
- Pathways Hospice: Bereavement support and sibling group. Bill Hoy (562) 531-3031
- New Hope Grief Support Community:

Grief support and education groups for adults and children. Long Beach, CA 90808, (562) 429-0075
 Providence Trinity Care Hospice and the Gathering Place: Various bereavement support groups including support for loss of a child, support group for children 5-8, 9-12, and teens. (310) 546-6407

Torrance Memorial Bereavement Services: (310) 325-9110 Weekly grief support.

The Lazarus Circle: Monthly grief support. Meets third Thurs of each month, 6-7:15 at First Lutheran Church, 2900 W. Carson St. Torrance

Share Pregnancy & Infant Loss: Contact: Megan Heddlesten (800) 821-6819

Walk with Sally: Cancer loss bereavement & art therapy for children- Monica Fyfe (310) 378-5843

Camp Comfort Zone: Year round Bereavement Camp for Children www.comfortzonecamp.org (310) 483-8313.

Other Grief Support Websites...

thetearsfoundation.org	childloss.com
goodgriefresources.com	griefwatch.dom
bereavedparentsusa.org	opentohope.com
healingafterloss.org	webhealing.com
survivorsofsuicide.com	alivelone.org
taps.org (military death)	angelmoms.com
save.org (suicide/depression)	M.A.D.D..org
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 Mueller

WEBSITE: Leo Licciardone

Steering Committee Members:

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

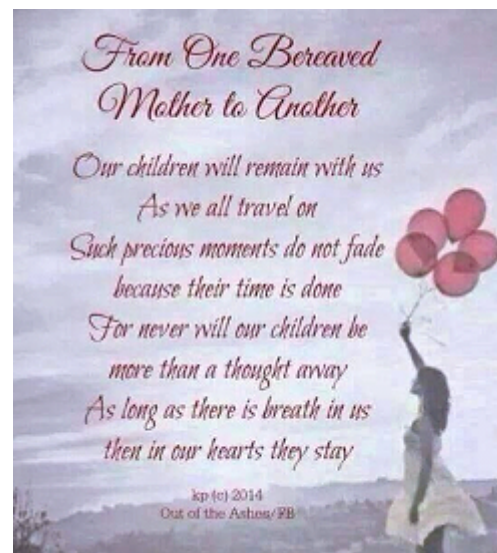
National Office Information: Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter: TCF National Office publishes a monthly

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

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

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

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

In loving memory of _____

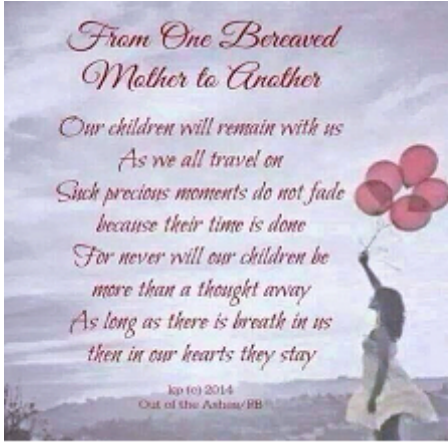
Birth date _____ Death date _____ From _____

Tribute _____

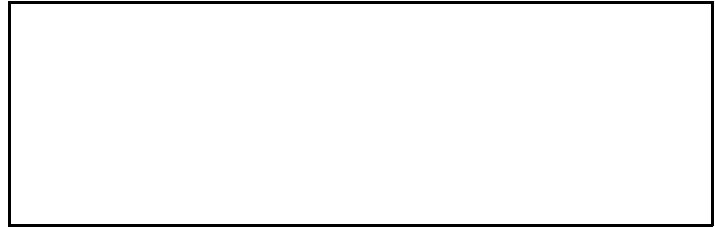
We are always working a month in advance...To include your donation in the next newsletter, we must receive it by the first of the month, other wise it will appear in the following issue.

The Compassionate Friends
South Bay/L.A., CA Chapter
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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.

We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers.

Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace.

But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.

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If you no longer wish to receive this mailing, need corrections, or have a new address, please contact us.