



The Compassionate Friends

South Bay/LA Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A NEWSLETTER FOR BEREAVED PARENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

December 2024 ISSUE

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

OUR NEXT MEETING

**will be December 5th, the first
Thursday of the month at 7:00 P.M.**

LOCATION:

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

DIRECTIONS: Pacific Coast Hwy. to Palos Verdes Blvd. → Palos Verdes Blvd. becomes Palos Verdes Drive West. Veer Right. → Go to Via Corta (stop sign just past Malaga Cove Plaza). Turn right. → Go down hill to Arroyo (stop sign). Turn right. → Continue down hill to end of street. → Turn left on Paseo Del Mar. → Park In EAST lot. Follow path to back patio. Meetings are held at the **EAST** end of the church. ****New meeting room is 101 classroom. Follow signs. Last door, first floor.)**
--Please remember to park in the EAST 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 Dec. 5th meeting will start with **"Coping With December."** Also, **The World Wide Candle Lighting Event** is Sun. Dec 8th at Leo & Connie's house at 6pm.

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 Denny's Restaurant, 3060 Sepulveda BL, Torrance at 1 pm, most Fridays. All are invited. Please call (310) 963-4646 to let us know you are coming.

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

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The Dec 5th meeting will start with “Coping With December.” As the holidays approach, most bereaved families feel anxiety, apprehension and a little bit of fear. The past is gone along with our beautiful children. We live in the now, the new reality, of holidays without our children. How will I get through this we wonder. How can I help those around me cope while I’m still in pain myself? Do I even have the energy for what is to come these next few weeks? We invite you to join us as we share ways we found helpful to get through December, after the death of a child.

Sunday, December 8th is the 28th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on December 8th, 2024 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of people commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon. This creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone, as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died and will never be forgotten.

Connie & Leo will be holding our chapter’s WW Candlelight Event at their home this year from 6-8pm, Sun. Dec 8th. Friends and family are invited to join as we honor and remember our departed children. Candles will be provided. We ask that each family bring a picture of their child to hold during the lighting and a finger food to share. Their address is 5350 W. 137th Place, Hawthorne CA. Please RSVP to let us know you are coming at (310) 963-4646. We hope to see you.

Just Remember

Holidays are clearly some of the roughest terrains we navigate after a loss. Finding meaning in the loss is as individual as we are. We often say a part of us died with them, but finding meaning is also realizing a part of them still lives within us. What is vitally important is that we be present for the loss in whatever form the holidays do or don’t take.

These holidays are part of the grieving journey that we must fully feel. They are usually very sad, but sometimes we may catch ourselves doing okay, and we may even have a brief moment of laughter.

Now more than ever, be gentle with yourself. Don’t do more than you want, and don’t do anything that does not serve your soul, your loss, or the meaning that still lives within you.

-- David Kessler Father of David
<https://grief.com/grief-the-holidays/>

Helping Yourself Through the Holidays

The stores and malls are already filled with many of the signs and sounds of the holidays. Each year the frenzies of buying and selling seem to begin earlier and earlier. The merchants want to get as much possible out of this time of the year, so the world is bombarded with the “sights and sounds” of the season.

Most individuals look forward with a certain amount of anticipation to Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, and Christmas. The one who has lost a sibling or a child this past year or even years before looks to this time of the year with great dread and even fear. They wish, in a way, that they could go to bed on November 1st and wake up on January 2nd of next year.

The first holidays after the death of a loved one may be especially difficult for the survivors. If you or someone you know is facing the holiday season and dreading feelings of emptiness, there are a number of things you can do to cope. Don’t be afraid to grieve, if you need to, and set aside time to be alone if you want. You can also relive the happy memories by talking about your loved one to those who care.

It has been suggested that people do what they want to do, whether that means staying home, going to religious services or visiting family or friends. If you seem to enjoy this time or a special event, don’t feel guilty. Experiencing joy is giving and receiving. This doesn’t mean that you have forgotten your child or sibling or that you loved him or her any less.

The griever enters this time of the year with a number of questions about their grief. They have a number of fears and concerns. Let’s look at some of them so we can get a better understanding of what the griever sees in most cases:

First, there is the anticipation of the pain of the holidays—The pain of facing “the first” holiday



without that very special child or sibling. Then there is the fear and pain of other people being happy and joyous when you are not and are very alone. We live in a family society and while everyone else will be with family, you will be alone or missing a family member! Solution--try to plan ahead and be with someone and spend the day or a few days with those you love. Don't make it a taboo to talk about your loved one, and balance your time with others with some time alone for yourself.

Second, the fear of preparation for the holidays— Grief is very tiring and taxing. It drains those who are grieving. The holidays are also a very busy and tiring time, as we all know—the sending of cards, the buying, wrapping, cooking, and giving of gifts. The holiday parties and even the special holiday music and programs seem to make the griever not have any energy at all. They want to be alone and not involved.

Solution— No one says that you have to do any of those things. If it makes you feel good to cook and bake and buy— do so— if it doesn't, don't. Don't allow others to put you into their mold. If you decide to do things—make a plan and work it. Send out a few cards a day—buy a gift at a time, and not all at once. Pace yourself—don't over do it! It is most important that you don't impose things on yourself that you can't do.

You might want to use special ways to memorialize your love one. Suggestions may be:

- Give a gift in memory of your child, brother, or sister.
- Attend a special memorial service and pay respect to those you love and miss.
- Make a special ornament and hang it on a tree in memory of your loved one.
- Do for others and it will make you feel good.
- Organize your shopping with a specific list and a budget.
- Divide responsibilities for meals, decorating, or wrapping with your family.
- Take time for others— contact your local churches or charities for information about serving food to the homeless or collecting gifts for needy children. This may be especially helpful if you're away from loved ones during the holidays.
- Take time for yourself—enjoy the holiday season as best you can. The purpose of the season is to create happiness. And if you are happy, those around you will be, too!
- Be careful of "should"—it is better to do what is most helpful for you and your family. If a situation

looks especially difficult over the holidays, try not to get involved.

And don't forget: ***Anticipation of any holiday is so much worse than the actual holiday.***

Keep a balance in your life and remember that you are loved.

--Dr. Lee Drake, Ph.D. Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.

10 Tips for Living with the Holidays this Year

1. Remind yourself that you will survive. You will.
2. Think about what will bring you the most peace this holiday season.
 - a. Keeping all traditions intact?
 - b. Tweaking some traditions a bit and adding new ones?
 - c. Throwing out all the old traditions and starting new ones?
 - d. Flying to the Caribbean and completely skipping the holidays this year? It's okay to do that.
3. Don't expect anyone to mention your child by name. *Believe it or not*, that's your job. People will look to you to determine whether or not it's safe to talk about the person that died. A few subtle ways to do that:
 - a. Serve/bring your child's favorite dish to the holiday get-together – talk about it!
 - b. Bring a favorite picture – pass it around. Work it into the dining table centerpiece.
 - c. Bring a favorite memento – a book, a poem, a toy, a video, an article of clothing - share it after dinner.
 - d. Have your child's favorite music playing in the background – tell the story!
4. Plan a special evening for close family and friends when you REMEMBER. Ask everyone to bring a favorite photo and write down a special memory. Set time aside to sit in a circle and share the photos and memories.
5. Remember that it's okay – it's even healthy – to cry.
6. It's okay to stay in bed...you will get out, when you are ready and able.
7. It's also okay to smile or even laugh, a bit. You're not being disloyal.
8. Buy yourself a gift. Wrap it. Write a note – to you – from your beloved child.
9. Buy someone less fortunate than you a gift.
10. Light a candle. --Tom Zuba, www.tomzuba.com.



Grief Doesn't Take a Holiday

In the quiet I hear the echo of your absence. In the stillness, in the silence, my heart aches with emptiness. Loss is so loud. Oh, loss is so loud. Sometimes it is all I can hear.

Grief doesn't take a holiday. Loss can be even darker during the holiday months. It can change the lens through which you see and feel everything. Twinkling lights seem as though they have dimmed and the sparkle has dulled. The music has quieted. The joy, hope, and magic of the season feel out of reach.

Grief doesn't take a holiday. I hope that however it presents itself to you this season, you are able to sit with it and feel it, that you are able to take a step back from the things you need to and bravely step forward toward whatever your heart is ready for.

It's okay if traditions look different and your heart hurts. It's okay if you welcome back the old traditions you have stayed away from. It's okay if you bravely add new ones. This holiday can look however you need it to look. There's no rule-book here.

And I pray that, like a gentle and unexpected friend, you will welcome this holiday season and find moments of comfort and harmony. I hope you find reminders of your loved one sprinkled everywhere throughout this season. Even amidst your grief and pain, I hope you will open your heart, if only a little, to feel moments of joy, peace, and love.

-- Liz Newman Support for Bereaved Parents

This is the season of life,
we remember the light they
brought into our lives:

The light of their laughter
The light of their wit and
intelligence

The light of their love

May the time not be distant when the memory of
these lights will illumine our hearts and minds and
erase the darkness.

--Stephanie Hesse TCF Rockland County, NY



One Moment in Time

As bereaved parents, we have a line of demarcation in our lives. This line is like no other. Other people define their lives by that one big

career step, move or degree. But in other people's lives, things are different. We are not like other people. We experienced a clearly defined moment in time when everything changed. The tectonic plates of our lives shifted at one moment on one date of one year. Nothing will ever be the same.

We definitively mark the time before and after our child died. Life was different before our child died. It was easy; it was filled with promises of tomorrow, accomplishments, setbacks, goals set and achieved and happiness that abounds in the natural order of life. But our basic assumptions were shattered and our world turned inside out at that one moment in time when our child died.

Can we ever feel as optimistic about life as we did before that moment in time? Will we ever again believe that one day we will feel balanced, optimistic and serene? We certainly can, and most parents certainly do. As you read the articles in this month's newsletter about the journey through grief, consider the gentle optimism that presents itself in these parents' words. Each of these parents has walked this lonely road. Each has come through the darkest, rockiest valley into a gauzy sort of light which gradually crystallized into a true sunshine as time moved forward.

How did they do it? Insight is offered in these parents' stories. We must do our grief work, face our demons and stand them down. We must talk with others, set limits on what we will tolerate, and hold our line. We must seek counseling, attend seminars, attend TCF meetings or other offerings that give us the support of parents who have lost a child or help us in acquiring skills to cope with our pain and loss.

We must take grief breaks in the beginning and for the first year or two. We must take care of ourselves physically, mentally, and emotionally. But most of all we must keep our child with us as we complete our life's journey. How we choose to complete our journey is unique.

The common denominator that all of us share is the need to find a precious flicker of hope which we can nurture and coax to a radiant glow. We all find it in different ways and at different times on our grief journey. But, rest assured, we all find it. I call it "my little light."

One day you will feel the burden lifting. You will laugh about things your child said or did. That moment will gently envelop you. There is hope. Let your little light glimmer and then glow.

--Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF Katy, TX

Father's Role In The Loss Of A Child

While many fathers may put on an outward display of strength, inside they are as heartbroken as any parent would be over the loss of a child. They experience the same stages of grief as anyone else, even if they do not always express it. Society often focuses on the mother, but fathers also need support while being allowed to grieve on their terms.

How Men Grieve— While women are generally open with their emotions, men often keep theirs bottled up. A father may not outwardly show any sadness over the loss of his child, either because of societal pressure to be strong or the feeling that he must be there to support his wife.

Grieving Silently— Many men have been taught that they should not share their emotions or reach out for support. They are raised to be strong in times of trouble, thus they often grieve silently. This does not mean he is not grieving - it just means he is doing it differently.

Grieving Physically— Men often express their grief physically. A grieving father may throw himself into work or projects around the house, or he may take up a hobby to keep himself occupied and avoid dealing with his emotions. He may turn to physical activity, such as playing basketball or going to the gym, to get the anger out. He may avoid contact with his wife because he doesn't know how to deal with her emotions on top of his. Whatever form his grief takes, a father must be allowed to process his feelings in his own way.

Helping a Grieving Father— Society often neglects to care for the grieving father, showering all its support on the mother. Yet fathers need support as well, and he may not wish to turn to his wife for support, who is working through her grief. If you know a father who has recently lost a child, here are some suggestions for helping him work through his grief:

- Be supportive: He may need help with funeral arrangements, including driving him to the funeral home, picking out a casket or selecting flowers.
- Don't pressure him: If the father refuses to talk about his child's death, don't try to force the issue. Let him know that if he needs to talk, you'll be there to listen.
- Listen: When he is ready to start talking, just



listen. Tell him how sorry you are for his loss. Use his child's name. Do not throw clichés at him, such as "Your child is in a better place", or "Now you have an angel to look after you". Not only are these not helpful, but it may make him feel that expressing his emotions is making you uncomfortable, which may cause him to stop talking about his grief.

- Help him with daily tasks: Find out what needs to be done, show up and just do it. If you ask if he needs anything, he will likely say no. Tell him you will be at his house at a specific date and time to do the laundry or mow the lawn, or that you are dropping off dinner. If he has other children, offer to take them to the movies or the park to give him and his spouse some time alone.
- Invite him out: He may decline, but keep inviting him. Even if he never accepts, sometimes just knowing the invitation is there and that somebody cares is enough to get through a bad day. Often friends fade away after the loss of a child because they don't know what to say. He needs to know that you will not abandon him.

Support— If you know someone who has lost a child, or if you are a father who has lost a child, take time to get some help. There are many organizations devoted to helping parents through the loss of a child, and many have local chapters with support groups for mothers, fathers, and both parents. Many of these organizations also have online forums specifically for fathers to go and talk about their grief with other men who have been through the same experience.

-- Amy Newman Center for Loss in Multiple Birth Path Towards Healing

Room for Step-parents

Eighteen years ago, I accompanied my new husband through the untimely death and funeral of his only son. Every day during that dark time, I consoled myself, knowing I wasn't going through anything compared to my husband and the rest of the family. I'd been part of their family for only two years and no matter how much I cared for my step-son, I was "just" a step-mother.

Grief is not to be compared, though. It's a private aching of an individual heart. My heart hurt because I'd never see my bright and kind step-son again, but watching the suffering of my new family multiplied my sadness. I found myself teary-eyed and moody.

My first contact with Compassionate Friends came in the form of a telephone call from the mothers' group leader. Immediately she assured me that I belonged with their group. My voice quivered while we talked on the phone, but the compassionate atmosphere of that first meeting gave me consolation.

The TCF national website states "The death of a stepchild sets into motion complex issues that vary from family to family for many different reasons. The length and quality of the marriage and the nature of the biological parent-child relationship play a primary role in the grief that follows. A stepparent may have parented this child for many years and invested as much time and love as any biological parent. On the other hand, there may not have been the necessary time or opportunity to bond with the child."

I highly recommend any grieving step-parent to avail themselves of The Compassionate Friends. Your grief is real because you, too, lost someone you love. There's relief in being able to tell your unique story to a group of accepting people, who know first-hand the ache of heart you might be experiencing.

--Laura Rankin

Eastside WA, TCF

Tears on Their Shoulders

Thank God for friends. Can you imagine your life without your close friends? I have never been one to have a great many friends. I know many people who I care for and love, but there are only a few people that I consider close friends. A true friendship goes far beyond just knowing and caring for someone. A true friend is a person you feel comfortable sharing your deepest feelings with. A true friend is one who does not mind a few of your tears on their shoulder.

Since the death of my daughter, I have had the opportunity to meet and talk with many other bereaved parents. There are far more of us than most people realize—far more than I ever realized until I became one. The grief of losing any loved one is hard to overcome. The grief of losing a child is the hardest to overcome. In fact, I dare say that we never overcome it. We simply learn to deal with it. If we are blessed to know the truths of Jesus, we deal with our grief by leaning on Him, and by trusting that we will see our children again. (For those who do not know Jesus, I have no idea how they ever deal with their grief.)



One of our greatest gifts as bereaved parents is close, understanding friends. Most of us find that developing friendships with other bereaved parents gives us more comfort than any other relationship. Hopefully, our friendship with our spouse will deepen and give us that comfort; but I have found that does not always happen. I am sure there are psychological reasons why bereaved husbands and wives cannot always be as comforting to each other as we wish we could, but I know it is true in many cases. Perhaps it is because we are trying so hard to be strong for each other that we hold back some of our emotions. I suppose every couple is different, depending on their personalities and situations. The point is, very often we are not as comfortable sharing or expressing our grief with our spouse as we are with a special friend. I would really like to hear other bereaved parents' points of view and opinions about this subject.

The point of this writing is the importance of loving friendships. I have talked to so many bereaved parents who state that they just do not have anyone that they feel comfortable talking to about their grief. It is not that they do not have friends and relatives, they just don't have any that they can or will share their feelings with. They feel isolated and alone in their grief, and to me that would be unbearable. That is one of the many reasons that I am so happy to have found The Compassionate Friend's.

Through T.C.F., I have met people that I consider true friends—friends that never mind a few tears on their shoulders—friends that I never mind feeling their tears on my shoulder. In my opinion, a good cry with a friend that has gone through the loss of a child—a friend who knows how it feels—is more healing than anything else I can imagine. Thank God for counselors and therapists, but without understanding friends with loving shoulders to cry on, I believe we miss out on deep, healing grief relief.

We miss our children. Our lives are forever changed without them. There is a void in our souls that nothing can fill, and in many ways we don't want it filled. But we do want relief, and true friends that don't mind our tears on their shoulders are one of our greatest sources of that relief. May the Lord lead you to that special friend, a compassionate friend, with whom you can share your deepest thoughts and feelings, one who will always offer you a shoulder to cry on when you need it. May you offer your shoulder to someone in need as well. There is blessed healing to be found with loving

friends who are happy to allow tears on their shoulders.

--Dr. Sam Smith, Butterfly Ministry, TCF Tyler, TX

“The Wilderness of Suicide Grief: Finding Your Way”

How do you find your way out of the wilderness of your grief? You don't have to dwell there forever, do you? The good news is that no, you don't have to dwell there forever. If you can follow the trail markers on your journey through the wilderness, you will find your way out. But just as with any significant experience in your life, the wilderness will always live inside you and be part of who you are.

-- Alan. D Wolfelt, Ph.D.



This Side Of Grief

Recently, I was talking to my husband about something not-so-nice. He will listen and nod and offer wonderful commentary, preferably commentary that aligns with how I had been passionately pleading my case. Often discourse that challenges me to think in ways I may not have been. But sometimes I'm not looking for even that.

Sometimes, Husband, I'm talking out loud, as if to myself, about things that aren't allowed to be talked about. And I do it with you because I can be anything with you: you lost your child alongside me, and you know everything I say even when I am not saying it. You know this ugly side of Grief.

This time, however, I was divulging in a cringe-worthy discussion about how the picture of a baby that was sent to me does not make me smile, does not make me happy...Makes me irritable. Makes me sad. Makes me turn the phone off quicker than I turned it on.

Related: I'm Sorry I Can't Like Your Baby
I'm not always happy when I'm shown this baby or those children. Sweet or funny photographs of children don't make me feel good. Then, I feel bad for not feeling good. Then, I'm forced to look at the picture again to try to feel happy for said-baby. Then, the cycle continues on and on and on...

It seems cruel, maybe abnormal. One might say, 'How unmotherly of you!' But, I'm not: unmotherly nor happy. That picture that is shared showing her chubby cheeks that fold over onto her chubbier, pouty, red lips. Her button nose. Her

crystal blue eyes and bleach-blond, pin-straight hair.

That picture that was sent with his tiny, chubby hands that have dimples where knuckles should be. Hands that haven't quite mastered the pincer grasp, trying to put a toy in his wet, drooling mouth as he gazes off towards the voice of his father.

With his tummy, round and protruding. With such a warm, endearing smile. Whose joyful laugh breaks hearts and crushes even the most serious-natured. With the rolls in his thighs! Oh, the rolls!

As she toddles away, her full diaper, hanging unabashedly off her rear end. With his skin that is like porcelain and her innocence while she sleeps, closed-mouthed and quietly, rapidly breathing as babies do.

These babies are your babies — not mine. Oh, but how I picture mine! With that wet mouth and those dimples, waddling away. I see mine in yours, and it tears me apart. I wish I could change that full diaper.

Perhaps you scoff and tell me to be careful what I wish for, but I long for my son and everything that would have come with him, full diapers and runny noses abound. I understand you share out of pride, love, and joy. Wonder and amazement at your brilliant and gifted baby are what prompt you to share him and her with the world.

I understand this because I too felt awe and wonder at my baby's body, at his beautiful face, at the strength in the power of the love that I felt as I held him so close to my chest after I delivered him. His lifeless body void of breath and cries, weighing so heavily on my heart. But to share with you his ruby red lips and his eyes that are forever closed is not the same. It's different.

It brings sadness and tear-filled emojis and pity for my heartache. Who wants to bring us all down like that? She asked ironically as she picked herself up from being down.

There is a girl, a fellow bereaved mother, whom I have only met once but who is allowing me to talk, to listen, to respond to her with love, and to express my need for love. I am so grateful for her. She reached out to me because someone had reminded her recently that she should reach out to other grieving parents.

Friendships from Loss: An Unexpected Bond
And here I am, reaching out. I am grateful for the friend and the husband who allow me to talk about the taboo topic of not wanting to look at pictures of your beautiful children that you proudly share with me.

I'll never share my first born's first wobbly steps or his slobbery kisses. At this stage, I'm only able to share this ugly side of Grief, the sad side that doesn't allow even a sweet baby's face to feel better. This Grief rears its ugly head at any time and brings with it shaming thoughts and nasty feelings. I know that it is uncomfortable to read that a loved baby is not loved by all and at all times. It's uncomfortable for me, too.

Somewhere beneath the envy, and as the foundation for every step along this arduous path, is great love. I love your baby; I love my baby. I just need time.

– author unknown

Newly Bereaved...

Handling the Holidays



The holiday season can be a time when the PAST and the PRESENT collide. We try to recapture what we once had or blot out bad memories. We try to ignore the empty chair. It is a time of short days and longer nights, of icy winds, cold hands and empty hearts.

While most of the world seems to be addressing holiday greeting cards and planning holiday menus, the bereaved are struggling with other concerns: How long does grief last? Will the holidays always be THIS AWFUL? How many stockings do we hang? What do we do with the empty place at the table? What is there to be thankful for THIS year? There must be light SOMEWHERE! No matter how shattered your life, how fragmented your dreams, there must be hope somewhere!

Our loved ones have DIED. We did not lose them or the love we share. Practice thinking and then saying, "My loved one died," not, "I lost my loved one." Our loved ones are still and always will be a part of us. WE cannot lose their love. Sometimes, especially in the early months and even years of grief, all we can remember is the pain and horribleness of our loved one's death.

Pain seems to overshadow everything. At first, all I could remember were the awful things. I kept track of all the things I didn't have any more and made mental lists of the things I would never know or experience. Joy had been buried one afternoon in late fall and there was to be no light for us...ever again. But, as I LIVED through those memories, I discovered that the pain of this darkness could change its intensity and its depth.

Slowly, gently, as I allowed them to, those painful memories faded and were replaced, in time, with memories of his smile, his life days not his death days. I began to remember that my loved one lived.... not just that he died! His light had given birth to our happiness and once I acknowledged the darkness, the light could begin to peek through!

So, in this season of little light... be patient with yourself. Know that hardly anyone is as happy as you think they might be. We all have our hurts to bear. Do what you can this season and let it be enough.

--Lovingly Lifted from TCF, South Suburban IL Chapter www.tcfchicago.org
<http://www.griefinc.com/griefinc/default.htm>

Seasoned Greivers...

Giving Myself Permission

It has been nearly five years since my only child died, but this will be my sixth Christmas without his unique enthusiasm, anticipation and happiness at the prospect of the holiday season. After two rocky attempts to handle the holiday season, I gave myself permission to do what I wanted to do. I am not accountable to anyone for my ups and downs at the holidays.

Last year was easier than the previous year and that year was easier than the one before. But there is a reason for this: in talking with other members of our Compassionate Friends chapter, I realized that I owe no explanations. Therefore, I make it easy on myself and on those who love me.

Instead of getting caught up in the commercialism of the holiday, I contemplate the true meaning of the season and initiate activities that have little to do with the season. I intentionally avoid Christmas because it is, simply, too painful for me.

Others in our Compassionate Friends group have returned to their normal celebrations with children and extended family. Some have modified their traditions; a few have chosen to take a trip and escape the holiday memories entirely.

We give ourselves permission to handle this time of year in a way that is most soothing to us. If we do not do this, we suffer setback after setback in our grief. We often make small concessions for others in our family, of course. But are we really in the spirit? Probably not. Does it really matter?

Probably not.

Each year I now put a wreath on our front door. I buy a gift for an underprivileged child and include a card that is signed with my son's name. I send gift cards to those who I am morally obliged to remember and buy small gifts for friends and family who truly appreciate the thought and effort I have made. That's my Christmas now. I have given myself permission to handle it in the only way that keeps serenity, peace and hope in my heart.

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

Trying to Find Purpose Again

After losing my daughter, Kendra, suddenly at age 20 to a heart condition, it was often hard to find a good reason to get up out of bed, let alone get out the door and join the living. What I thought was so important before no longer provided as much meaning to me. Sure, I had my son and wife to provide reasons to continue on, but not having my daughter with us created a hole so deep it was hard to get out of it.

Volunteering at The Compassionate Friends has been a good way for me to honor Kendra and help others in the process. I started out assisting at some of the special events and now I am more involved as a Steering Committee member. I have even spoken in front of our chapter members and talked about things that help me process my grief in hopes it will give others even the smallest nuggets to assist processing their grief a little easier. These experiences have given me the added benefit of talking freely about my girl.

Speaking in front of the group may not be up your alley as it can be scary; however, there are many other ways that you can help out within the chapter or in other settings. Like me, you may learn that in the process of helping others, you end up helping yourself and finding purpose in your life again while honoring your loved one.

--Tom Lindfors, Steering Committee Member

Looking Forward...

Grieve One Day At A Time

It takes time and practice to get good at living with loss. It will always feel surreal and alien. It will always sting like peroxide poured out onto scraped skin. But like any physical training goes, when you



started you could only run so far and now when you look behind you, you can see that you can run farther now and even further tomorrow.

Grief is a daily journey, but the confusion lies in the idea of working towards getting over it, past it and putting it behind you. That is not necessarily what is needed. There are many losses you can grieve fully and put behind you; a loss of a job, a relationship, a possession or opportunity. These losses can be and should be worked fully through as dwelling on this type of loss can spiral you into depression and loss of self-worth.

Losing a loved one does not compare to a recoverable form of grief. You don't recover, you don't get over it, you don't get past it or put it behind you....but, and this is a big but, you need to learn how to live with it. Notice it, but don't dwell on it. Like your eye color, this loss has become a part of your physical and mental being. Not to be worn like a chip on your shoulder, but rather a limp that, while at times, inconvenient and painful, will not prevent you from going where you need to go and reaching your full potential.

Grieving is as much of a physical process as it is a mental one and yes painful. Very painful. Who wants to stay in a place of pain and torment? But how do you recover from the unrecoverable? Get past what cannot be gotten past? One day at a time. Acknowledge that your goal is not to get over it, but rather to live with it, and that is okay. Only take on what you can easily manage in your daily affairs to prevent from becoming easily overwhelmed. Stop and check out, whenever needed, to reset yourself mentally. Do not push yourself to the point of exasperation and anxiety induced panic. Be open to change, welcome it, everything is changing and will continue to do so as you move around and get to know your grief. Don't take it personally that people do not understand. In fact, quietly allow yourself to rejoice in the fact that they don't. This mind shift will keep you in a positive place and prevent perpetual frustration. Forgive yourself for the inevitable mistakes you will make along the way and be forgiving to others for theirs. You are already holding on to enough painful feelings to allow for the bitterness of 'unforgiveness' to weigh you down even more. But most of all, I repeat, take it one day at a time and take it easy on yourself. You are, even on your worst days, doing the best you can and will continue to be better.

--Reprinted from *Hope In The Storm*

Friends And Family...**Please See Me Through My Tears**

You asked, "How are you doing?" As I told you, tears came to my eyes...and you looked away and quickly began to talk again. All the attention you had given me drained away.

"How am I doing?"...I can do better when people listen, though I may shed a tear or two. This pain is indescribable. If you've never known it you cannot fully understand. Yet I need you. When you look away, when I'm ignored, I am again alone with it.

Your attention means more than you can ever know. Really, tears are not a bad sign, you know! They're nature's way of helping me heal... They relieve some of the stress of sadness. I know you fear that asking how I'm doing brings me sadness... but you're wrong. The memory of my loved one's death will always be with me, only a thought away. My tears make my pain more visible to you, but you did not give me the pain...it was already there.

When I cry, could it be that you feel helpless, not knowing what to do? You are not helpless, and you don't need to do a thing but be there. When I feel your permission to allow my tears to flow, you've helped me. You need not speak. Your silence as I cry is all I need. Be patient...do not fear.

Listening with your heart to "how I am doing" relieves the pain, for when the tears can freely come and go, I feel lighter. Talking to you releases what I've been wanting to say aloud, clearing space for a touch of joy in my life.

I'll cry for a minute or two...and then I'll wipe my eyes, and sometime you'll even find I'm laughing later. When I hold back the tears, my throat grows tight, my chest aches, my stomach knots... because I'm trying to protect you from my tears. Then we both hurt...me, because my pain is held inside, a shield against our closeness...and you, because suddenly we're distant.

So please, take my hand and see me through my tears... then we can be close again.
--Kelly Osmont

**Welcome...**

As members of The Compassionate Friends, we understand what you are experiencing. Like you, we have also lost a dearly beloved child. We share your pain, and while every journey through grief is

unique, we are here to support you. We welcome you to attend our meetings and see for yourself how helpful they can be.

**Helpful Hint...**

There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept, don't want to know but have to learn, and people we can't live without but have to let go. ~ author unknown

**'Twas the Night Before Christmas...
...for bereaved parents**

'Twas the night before Christmas and I dreaded the days
That I knew I was facing – the holiday craze.
The stores were all filled with holiday lights,
In hopes of drawing customers by day and by night.
As others were making their holiday plans,
My heart was breaking – I couldn't understand.
I lost my dear child a few years before,
And I knew what my holiday had in store.
When out of nowhere, there arose such a sound,
I sprang to my feet, and looking around,
away to the window I flew like a flash,
tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The sight that I saw took my breath away,
and my tears turned to smiles in the light of the day.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
but a cluster of butterflies fluttering near.
With beauty and grace they performed a dance,
I knew in a moment this wasn't by chance.
The hope that they gave me was a sign from above.
That my child was still near me and that I was loved.
The message they brought was my holiday gift.
And I cried when I saw them in spite of myself.
As I knelt closer to get a better view
one allowed me to pet it – as if it knew –
that I needed the touch of its fragile wings,
to help me get through the holiday scene.
In the days that followed I carried the thought
of the message the butterflies left in my heart –
that no matter what happens or what days lie
ahead,
our children are with us – they are not really dead.
Yes, the message of butterflies still rings in my ears,
A message of hope – a message so dear.
And I imagined they sang as they flew out of sight.
"to all bereaved parents – we love you tonight!"
--Faye McCord, TCF Jackson MS



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

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

Brandon Armstrong
Miscarried: July 1995
Mother: Cheryl Stephens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brian Daniel Edelman
Born: 5/86 Died: 8/23
Father: Ray Edelman

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
Brunns

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

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

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

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



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

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

Shawn Eric Fillion
Born: 12/82 Died: 8/21
Mother: Lise Fillion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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: 4/77 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

David Reade
Born: 4/72 Died: 9/23
Brother of Bobby Reade

Ronald Reade II
Born: 9/69 to 8/23
Brother of Bobby Reade

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

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

Christian Saylor
Born: 10/90 Died: 10/24
Parents: Jeff & Coco
Saylor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Julie Catherine Thomas
Born: 1/80 Died: 9/2023
Mother: Mary Thomas

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

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

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

Mark T. Vasquez
Born: 5/75 Died: 5/11
Parents: Manuel & Blanca
Vasquez Jr.

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

Adam Michael Wechsler
Born: 3/2003 Died: 11/23
Father: Zach Wechsler

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

Ryan Yorty
Born: 4/81 Died: 5/84
Mother: Denise Gonzales

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.

For Siblings...



Days in the Valley

An early morning phone call brought news that irreversibly changed my life. My parents called to tell me my younger brother had been killed in a car accident. They wept as I spoke to them. I had never heard my Dad cry before. Numbly, I hung up the phone. I didn't cry. There was no time for tears. Flight plans had to be made, clothes packed. I had to think clearly and act quickly.

The 100-mile trip to the airport seemed especially long and dark as I drove alone that morning. Later, aboard the plane, I looked out the window and tried to comprehend what had happened. Maybe it wasn't him I thought. Maybe they got him mixed up with someone else. I dreaded the scene that awaited me at home, yet I couldn't get there quickly enough. I longed to comfort Mom and Dad, to be with them.

Arriving in Des Moines, I was met by relatives. At last I could let myself cry. When I reached my parents' home I was relieved to finally grieve with them, but a terrible pain was burrowing deep within as the reality of what happened began to sink in.

Funeral arrangements were made. People gave their condolences. Stacks of cards arrived daily. The pain remained. I sensed God's presence as friends and family gathered. Words meant nothing, but those who came and cried with us were the ones who gave comfort. They didn't quote bible verses. They didn't try to explain why it happened. They just hugged us and cried.

For almost a year, I replayed again and again those events as if they had been stored on videotape. Every sight, every sound, every pain was as vivid as if it had happened the day before. Time has numbed the pain and faded the "tapes" to some degree, but my life will never be the same. There will always be a hole in our family that cannot be filled. I see life differently now. I've learned things that have made me more mature. Tragic

loss demands finding something meaningful in it or retreating onto bitterness. When I said goodbye to my brother, I never dreamed it would be the last time I would see him.

Words left unsaid echoed in my mind for many months. Now, taking time to say things I used to put off is more important. Treating each opportunity to be with friends or loved ones as if it might be the last time I will see them gives me the incentive to resolve conflicts and say the things that need to be said. Problems and disagreements are never insurmountable.

Experts say the grieving process should end with the acceptance of death. Instead of accepting my brother's death, however, I have only acknowledged it. Death, like an unwanted visitor, doesn't have to be catered to, but it does have to be acknowledged for the healing to begin. I can't say I understand why my brother was killed, but God has given me the strength to go on. Though at times it appeared that there was no way out of the valley, time has brought me renewed strength. Time does not heal all wounds, but it does bandage those it cannot heal.

-- Rick Bunkofske, TCF, North Central Iowa chapter

For Grandparents...



Grieving the Death of a Grandchild

You can get through the grief of losing your grandchild, but you'll never get over it. The void created by their death is one that can never be filled by anyone else. In time, you'll learn to move forward with your life, and the pain will ease.

Try and surround yourself with friends and family to help you through your loss. There's hope in tomorrow that you will get past the intense pain of your grief and suffering.

--Dr. Alejandra Vasquez, Certified Grief Counselor

From Our Members...



My Daughter's Friends

The Christmas cards I mailed this year reminded my heart once again that nothing in our world stands still, unchanged. It seemed to me a very brave milestone those Christmas cards, hand-written and stamped. It may be that you share my sentiment and you will hear "Yes! I know!" from within. My Daughter's Friends are different now.

They have grown and changed and live full lives.
 Some have created the next generation
 with names like Foster and Birdie and Sloane.
 Some have a permanent grown-up residence
 and no longer share the address of their parents.
 Mill Grove Road. Thistle Drive. Desert Rose Cove.
 Each card written brought heartwarming
 memories and a precious face to mind.
 I hoped as I wrote those cards
 that My Daughter's Friends will know
 I too am moving forward through life
 watching with them to see what comes next.
 That I think on their futures as well as the past.
 And should they ever find and read
 this reflection from my heart,
 I pray that they will see that more
 than ever could have been before
 I love them for who and what they have become.
 I love them for themselves.
 Not only as My Daughter's Friends.
 --Carol Thompson, TCF Tyler, TX
 Always Remembering Sarah

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: Dec. first for Jan. 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.



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 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 (chpt. co-leader).....(310) 292-5381
Bonnie Mantyla (chapter co-leader).....(310) 530-8489
Lori Galloway.....(760) 521-0096
Linda Zelik.....(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
M.A.D.D..org



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

Marilyn Nemeth

Bill Matasso

Nancy Lerner

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.

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.



Save The Date...

The 48th National Compassionate Friends Conference will take place in Bellevue Washington from July 11th to 13th, 2025. More information to come so please watch the TCF

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

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www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/online-support/

MONDAY

7 AM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

7 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

TUESDAY

5 PM PST

Loss to Substance Related Causes

6 PM PST

Bereaved More than Three Years

6 PM PST

Bereaved Less than Three Years

WEDNESDAY

6 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

THURSDAY

5 PM PST

No Surviving Children 0

6 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

6 PM PST

Grieved Siblings

FRIDAY

7 AM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

5 PM PST

Pregnancy/Infant Loss

6 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

SATURDAY

6 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings

SUNDAY

5 PM PST

Suicide Loss

6 PM PST

Parents/Grandparents/Siblings



DONATIONS TO THE SOUTH BAY/L.A. CHAPTER OF THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



The Compassionate Friends is a totally self-supporting organization. Our chapter is run entirely by volunteers, but we do have operating costs. Your tax deductible donation is what keeps our chapter going. When making a donation, please make checks payable to

The 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 Eric Douglas Vines, July, 1978 to July 1991. Thinking about all the Christmas decorations and how you loved to get them out the minute the Thanksgiving dinner dishes were done. To heck with Black Friday getting in the way of your preparations. You loved to decorate and did more and more as you got older. Oh how I treasure those memories. I will be thinking of you and missing your beautiful smile as you proudly took in your finished work. It will never be the same with you gone, but now I can smile without the tears and know I will see you again one day.
Love, Mom

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

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

In loving memory of _____

Birth date _____ Death date _____ From _____

Tribute _____

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

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December 2024

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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.