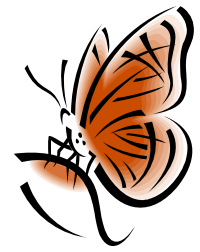




The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

December, 2017 Newsletter



A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents



Healing is not on a timetable

I heard someone say, grief isn't a life sentence, it's a life passage. It's the one common human experience we all have at one time or another. But, we didn't expect it to be the death of a child, did we? If you're reading this, it's likely you've lost a child or been affected by the loss of a child. You're now discovering grieving this loss is the hardest thing you've ever done.

I know, because suddenly, without warning, my life changed. My beautiful 16-year old son came home from school complaining of a headache and a fever. The doctor diagnosed him with the flu. But it wasn't. Sometime during the night, my boy was taken from me forever. I found him the next morning in his bed, lifeless. The misdiagnosis was actually a swift and deadly form of bacterial meningitis.

Have you ever felt such incredible emotion as losing your child? It's feared by all parents and an unimaginable loss. Unimaginable, until it happens to you. People refer to it as "the worst that can happen," and that's exactly what it feels like.

In the years following my son's death, I discovered, no matter how great my loss, or how deep my grief, the world does not stop.

In the years following my son's death, I discovered, no matter how great my loss, or how deep my grief, the world does not stop. In fact, it intensifies.

I remember thinking... how can I ever be happy again? I felt as though my pain was visible to others, and I would forever be wearing grief as a mask and a tagline..."I'm Sandy Peckinpah and I've lost a child."

Then a friend gave me a journal and said, "Write. Just write." The first blank page was so difficult. I could only put down one sentence, "My son died and my life will never be the same." The next day, I

wrote a paragraph, and each day after that I found words came more easily. My journal became my safe haven to empty the well of my sorrow, pouring tears of ink onto paper. And for a little while, I could let my emotions rest.

I *had* to survive this. I had three living children who needed a whole mother. I was not willing to sacrifice my role in their lives by succumbing to paralyzing grief. I kept writing. Words pulled me and pushed me. As weeks went on, I'd read back over the journal entries. I began to see something remarkable... I'd survived another day, another week, another month; and I was growing stronger. I'd see words of hope illuminating my way.

There's no magic secret to the journal. Just pick up a pen and begin with one word or sentence. Keep writing. Healing is not on a timetable. In fact, time doesn't fix this kind of loss. Healing comes from actively pursuing life again. After awhile, you'll look back on your words and not recognize the person you once were. You'll see how strong you really are.

Healing is not on a timetable. In fact, time doesn't fix this kind of loss.

I used to believe the cliché "everything happens for a reason," but with this kind of tragedy, it seems to be reversed. When a tragedy like this happens, it can be the starting place to give it reason and relevance. When you recognize this, it's the moment your grieving will shift.

Imagine that. What would it feel like? I used to fantasize and picture my life without the pain by writing out that very question, *What would it be like to feel peace around Garrett's death?* I would visualize myself without the veil of sorrow and allow the comfort of happiness to flow in. And for a brief moment, I *could* feel it. As time went on, I was able to reach that peaceful feeling more frequently. I had the power within the pages of my journal to compartmentalize my sorrow. Once you're aware of what it feels like, you'll be able to access it more easily.

(Continued on page 5)



GIFTS OF LOVE

A love gift is a gift of money or of time given to the Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter of the Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child who has died, but donations can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of your chapters. Love gifts are acknowledged each month in the newsletter.

Thanks to Barbara Fleming
For sponsoring the newsletter
In memory of her daughter
Kerrin Lee Fleming

"Gifts of Love" in remembering our children and siblings help to pay for Newsletters, Postage, Books for our Lending Libraries and Resources, Memorial Services, Candle Lightings, Telephone and Outreach, and Dues to the National TCF Office. Thank you.



ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING DECEMBER 10, 6:30 PM

Millburn Congregational Church
Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45, Millburn, IL

Meetings

Northern Illinois Chapter TCF
December 16 - 7:30 p.m.
Millburn Congregational Church
Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45, Millburn, IL
Open discussion

Waukegan meeting
January 4
- 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Holy Family Church
450 Keller Street, Waukegan, IL
Meeting in Room 4
Open discussion

Enter by church office then down the hall to
Room 4 on right.

"Tenemos un cuarto nuevo para las reuniones- Salon
4. Entre por la oficina de la iglesia y sigue en el pasillo
al Salon

Holidays 2007

Is it just me, or are you tired of all the holiday advertising on television too? Frankly, I'm starting to get tired of watching the seemingly happy families seated around a big table enjoying a large holiday meal or the families seated around a Christmas tree opening gifts. No, I haven't turned into the Grinch, it's just that things are different after you lose a child, and it just seems like the ads shove happy, happy holidays in your face.



I was reading an article in the Jackson, Mississippi TFC newsletter called "Don't Be Fooled Again" by Ken Nottingham. Ken makes an excellent point. The advertisements show make believe families played by actors to make you feel good about buying the sponsor's product. There's nothing wrong with that, he says, unless you expect your own holidays to be as magical as the ones on TV. Let's face it; Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas can be tough times for bereaved parents, and especially for the newly bereaved. And I'll add this thought-wouldn't it be interesting to know if the actors portraying the happy families on the advertisements actually have that happiness in real life?

Years ago, I used to do some occasional, taped, radio interviews for a local radio station. I did quite a few interviews with a clinical psychologist and I believe it was him who pointed out that the holidays can be sad for certain people. At that time, about 25 years ago, I didn't fully comprehend what he meant. Now I do. We can't expect advertisers to accommodate us, but it would be nice if at least some of our friends understood and showed us that they did.

Maybe the answer, as Ken says (and I agree with him), is to relax and take things as they come.

(continued on page 4)



OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN DECEMBER & JANUARY

Each month we remember the children who are sadly missed. Please take a few moments, place them in your thoughts, and remember them on their day together with their parents. None of us ever forget our special days and messages that say "I care" help us to get through them. Our children's lives will go on, as long as we remember them and celebrate their lives.

BIRTHDAYS

<i>Joey Frase</i>	December 11	Son of Cathy Frase
<i>Anthony Clemente</i>	December 12	Son of Becky Wolf
<i>Ryan James Nichols</i>	December 12	Son of Jackie & Jim Nichols
<i>Daniel Wang</i>	December 15	Son of Millie Yu
<i>Kerrin Fleming</i>	December 16	Daughter of Barbara Fleming
<i>Zack A Maslanich</i>	December 18	Son of Karen Zimmerman
<i>Mark Yates</i>	December 20	Son of Linda Hegg
<i>Barry J Grazier</i>	December 22	Son of Robert & Mary Ann Grazier
<i>Raphael E Vidal</i>	December 24	Son of Raphael & Mirtha Vidal
<i>Mitchell Carlson's</i>	January 1	Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong
<i>Anna Smith Miller</i>	January 3	Daughter of Carol Smith
<i>Michael Curtis</i>	January 4	Son of Sonya Curtis
<i>Eric Wiatr</i>	January 5	Debbie Exposito
<i>Michael Lee Brandon Frederick Hamilton</i>	January 13	Son of Jan Frederick Grandson of Sharon Frederick
<i>Matthew Tisch</i>	January 17	Son of William & Barbara Tisch
<i>Brain Scott Engle</i>	January 19	Son of Louise Engle
<i>Justin Cody Ortega</i>	January 20	Son of Susie Meggs
<i>Keegan Cray</i>	January 21	Son of Kristin & Ken Willis
<i>Sandra Elena Varela</i>	January 31	Daughter of Sandra Prez

ANNIVERSARIES

<i>Mike Reardon</i>	December 6	Son of Sonia & Jim Reardon
<i>Alyssa Burnstine</i>	December 6	Granddaughter of Judi & Stan Veoukas
<i>Mitchell Rodefer</i>	December 6	Son of Dennis & Susan Rodefer
<i>Andrew Muno</i>	December 15	Son of Darlene Muno
<i>Scott Ewing</i>	December 16	Son of Alan & Renee Ewing
<i>Rachel Elizabeth Szech</i>	January 2	Daughter of Chester & Vicki Szech
<i>Lea Ann (Heise) Knuth</i>	January 16	Daughter of Leslie & Shirley Heise
<i>Joey Frase</i>	January 20	Son of Cathy Frase
<i>Eric Wiatr</i>	January 21	Debbie Exposito
<i>Alyssa Carranza</i>	January 22	Daughter of Luz Barrera
<i>Reneé Rochelle Powell</i>	January 30	Granddaughter of Angel & Raquel Gasco
<i>Michael Sean Gaede</i>	January 31	Daughter of Terry & Jeanette Powell Son of Maureen Gaede

Please let me know if I have omitted a child, misspelled a name or have published an incorrect date. I know how important it is to bereaved families to have their children remembered.

vszech@comcast.net - 847-573-1055

(Holiday 2007 continued from page 2)

So, take it easy and treat the holidays as just another day. Things may work out better for you. And while it's on my mind, society makes such a big thing out of the holidays - we're supposed to be happy, spread cheer, buy gifts, say nice things to each other, show an interest in our fellow man, etc. I have just one question - why can't we do those nice things in January, or March, or September or any day of the year??

Written by David Haddock

Clinton, Mississippi

In loving memory of Bonnie Catherine Haddock (02/06/1985-08/13/2002)

haddockdavid@bellsouth.net

The Gift We Give Ourselves



Six Christmases later, I think I have run the gamut of emotions. Of course, the first two Christmases after my daughter Nina died were pretty much a blur. I do remember the first one; so desperately trying to go through the motions and determined that my family would have as unchanged a Christmas as possible. I would momentarily lapse into my grief stupor, only to pick myself up by the bootstraps and zombie-like, plod onward toward my goal to "normalize" an anything-but-normal Christmas.

Nina adored the holidays. She could scarcely wait for the day after Thanksgiving so we could pull out the holiday music tapes, get out the cookie press so she could make her favorite Spritz cookies, and decorate her daybed frame with tiny Christmas lights. Therefore, I was positive that Nina would want us to go on with Christmas as if the numbing and life-altering tragedy that had befallen our family had never occurred. I had convinced myself that it is what she would have wanted so out came the Christmas tree and all the ornaments. Shopping commenced as usual, plowing my way through crowds of cheerful people, full of the spirit of the season. I wouldn't allow myself to see that I didn't belong amongst them - at least that year. Eventually, the charade took its toll and I paid for it for weeks afterwards. Then again how could any of us know how we should feel that first Christmas, or what we should or shouldn't do during the holidays after our child died? For most of us, we had never experienced the death of a child before. There are no step-by-step rulebooks on how to grieve. And even if there were, each of our children is unique and therefore so is our grief.

That second Christmas I didn't have enough energy to even run on empty. I felt drained and barely made it through necessary day-to-day tasks. The Christmas tree made it out of the box that year, but sat undecorated in the middle of the living room floor. Only when my son asked about five days before Christmas, if we could either put some lights on it and sit it in its cus-

tomary corner, or just put it away that Christmas did I make an effort to do anything with it at all. That year I didn't attempt to sugarcoat my emotional state of mind I didn't pretend that everything was "normal."

If possible, we would cut out November, December and January 1st out of our calendars--just close our eyes and wish it away. But since we can't, we have to do the next best thing--we need to give ourselves a gift this holiday season. And in doing this, we give our family and friends a gift as well. That gift is taking care of us through this trying holiday season, to do what feels right to us.

We can try to spare ourselves any unnecessary stress. That could mean doing away with the old family traditions and making some new ones. It could mean having Christmas dinner at a restaurant. That gift to us might be to go away for the holidays; for others that may be just staying home and doing nothing. Maybe a relative or family friend could help with any preparations or gift buying that we feel we might want to do this year. Possibly they could involve any surviving siblings in their holiday happenings so that they too feel like they are participating in something for the holidays. So often our family and friends feel helpless and desperately want to find some way to assist us and this is one way that they can. ~from the TCF Chapter in Tuscaloosa, Alabama said "No matter how many people or how many presents, the pulsating void that seems too large for your heart to hold keeps on drawing your attention back to the child who is missing. As others laugh and play, your thoughts fly away - to Christmases past or a snowy cemetery. Give me a special gift this year.. . let me weep."

(Continued on page 5)

(The Gift We Give continued from page 4)



The friendship and understanding of other bereaved parents is one of the most helpful gifts we can give ourselves. Other bereaved parents will let us reminisce of happier Christmases' past; will allow us to speak our child's name without hesitation; and will let us cry and not be uncomfortable with our tears. It is so consoling to be able to share your feelings with someone who understands that, for us, grief does have a place in our holiday. In turn, by being a listening ear for them we have given them a gift as well.

When I think back, I am not sure if I found comfort in hearing that the holidays would get easier in time. I think I was so preoccupied (and with good reason) with the fact that my Nina was gone and the holidays would never be the same. But I have learned to know what I can and cannot handle. I have learned how to say, "I just can't do that this year". I have learned that, although I couldn't imagine it then, with each passing year the holidays have become a little easier to deal with. And I absolutely believe that Nina does understand my need to alter Christmas since she died. That she would want me to change what I need to in order to get through the holidays. Nina would want me, as all of our children would want us, to be gentle with ourselves and to take care of our tender hearts. That gift we give ourselves is also a gift we give to them what they would want for us: for us to find as much peace in whatever way that we possibly can.

We have many new TCF members this year who will be facing that first Christmas without their child I will, as I know all of us will, keep them all close in our thoughts and hearts these next two months.

With love, peace and gentle thoughts this holiday season,
Cathy L. Seehuetter St. Paul, MN - TCF
peachy3536@comcast.net

(Healing is Not on a Timetable continued from page 1)

It's been decades since my beautiful son left this earth and sometimes tears still surprise me. But the work of healing has brought me a harmonious blend of resolution and comfort as my heart joyfully connects with the sweet ballad of his memories. Healing doesn't mean you'll never feel the sadness. It means you'll be able to have memories without attaching intense despair.

My child's loss taught me to love harder and appreciate every single day.

Use your journal as your safe place, and you'll begin to form a new relationship with your child, telling stories, and feeling the joy you once had when they were alive.

I now look at the life of my son and marvel at his 16 years, 3 months, and 10 days. He was the first to call me *mom*. His death was the birth of my new life... learning how to live with his loss, and recognizing who I am because of it. I chose resilience and my journal was a big part of helping me rise up.

My child's loss taught me to love harder and appreciate every single day. It taught me to reach out to others and begin sharing my story in hopes it could reassure other wounded parents there *is* life after loss.

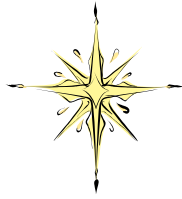
As the years go by, I've learned a mother's love never diminishes; in fact, my love for my son has grown, just as it would have if he was still alive. I am still his mother. No child dies without a legacy and a purpose for those that are left behind. It's up to you, his mother, his father. Honor your child by healing. They wouldn't want it any other way.

Sandy Peckinpah, Contributor

Author, Speaker, Focus on Resilience, Certified Grief Recovery Specialist®

An Open Letter To Parents Who Have Lost A Child
Sandy Peckinpah is a writer and author of 4 books and a blog. She's a frequent broadcaster on Livestream, Periscope.tv. Her broadcasts focus on inspiring people to recognize their own stories of life, loss, and triumph. Her newest book, How to Survive the Worst that Can Happen, is a parent's guide to healing after the loss of a child. It's based on her own experience in the tragic loss of her 16 year old son. It has won 9 book awards, the most recent being the Readers' Favorite Silver Award for 2015. In writing and in speaking, Sandy shares her compelling story, her amazing real life cast of characters, and her passion for helping people rise up through life's difficult times and transition to be motivated, successful, and happy.





Rusty Anderson
Amy Jo Baldwin - Westley Banks
Aaron Barrera - Nick Barris
Joshua Bowman - Alyssa Burnstine
Roman Gabriel Cano - Mitchell Carlson
Alyssa Carranza - Amanda Cecchi - Anthony Clemente
Robert Corbett - Keegan Cray - Michael Curtis
Erin Dinklenburg - Brian Scott Engel - Scott Ewing
Kerrin Fleming - Elizabeth Mary Foresta - Joey Frase
Michael Lee Brandon Hamilton Frederick - Amy Fry-Pitzen
Michael Gaede - Marleea Gerfen - Kyle Glueck - Jeremy M Govekar
Megan Candice Grace - Sharon Beth Gray
Barry J Grazier - James Grazier - Heidi Hermann
José De Jesús Hernandez - Jammi Shonlei Hui
Sean Jones - Brian Keough - Donette Klawonn - Kelly Klawonn
Lea Anne (Heise) Knoth - Adam Michael Laufer - Brian Scott Ludlow
Shannon McCarty - Pressley Suzanne McHugh - Zach Maslanich
Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles - Anna Smith Miller - Aaron R. Moore
John "Jake" Mosansky - Andrew Muno
Ryan James Nichols - Eduardo Chavez-Nuño
Justin Cody Ortega - Blake Logan Palmer - Nicole Parfitt
Justin Perez - Andrew C Perkins - Kevin Pomianek
Reneé Rochelle Powell - Douglas Ramsay - Mike Reardon
Timothy Reece - Sven Christian Reinhard - Mitchell Rodefer
Lisa Roseman - Adam Rubin - Lila Ruffolo - Mark Sailor
Rachel Salomonson - Alexandria (Alex) Scarbro - Ashley Seay - David Sloop
Anthony Sosa - David Spannraft - Michael Stice - Josh Summers
Rachel Elizabeth Szech - Zachary Taylor - Anne Thomson - John Thumel
Matthew Tisch - Tony Trejo - Sandra Varela - Raphael Vidal - Ravael Vallanvrva
Edgar O Villareal - Qua'Shawn Wade - Daniel Wang - Eric Wiatr - Darien Wilson
Lindsay Wilczynski
Liz Wilding
Lauren Wood
Mark Yates
Roderick Young
Stephanie Zamarron

DEALING WITH HOLIDAY HEARTACHE IN A SEASON OF JOY

~ Alice J. Wisler



Christmas decorations in September and holiday music in October were not what my friend Alexandra needed. Alexandra's 6-year-old died four months ago, and her heart is still raw. She's been wondering how she'll cope without her daughter over the holidays -- just last year a time of joy and celebration.

Years ago, I anticipated the holidays would be tough. I'd wake on those cold mornings after Daniel died in February 1997 and be grateful it was still months until his August birthday and even more months until Christmas. I dreaded living both days without my son. As those who had lost loved ones let me know, you have to live through it.

Christmas came. I did live through it. It continues to happen, as do the other significant days of the year. Here are 11 tips I've used and continue to use to survive the holidays. Some are my own suggestions and some are borrowed from the many who walk the path of grief.

1. Know you will survive. It will not be easy, but others have done it and you will, too.
2. Find someone you can talk to or meet with during the holiday season. Perhaps this person can give you helpful ideas that have worked for her.
3. Don't think you have to do the "traditional" activities of years past. Your energy level is low. If no one in your household minds, skip putting up the tree or spending hours making holiday cookies.
4. Spend the holidays with those who will let you talk about your loved one. You will need to recall memories, if you choose to do so. Your stories about your loved one are wonderful legacies. Tell them boldly again and again.
5. If going into the mall or stores brings too much pain, shop for gifts online or through mail-order catalogs. Thinking everyone is happily shopping at the malls while your heart is crushed is terribly tough.

6. Getting away from the house worked for my family. The first Christmas without Daniel we went to a nearby town and lived in the Embassy Suites. The kids enjoyed the indoor pool and breakfast buffets.

7. Create something to give to those who have helped you throughout the year. I made some very simple tree ornaments with "In Memory of Daniel" stamped on them and gave them to friends that first Christmas.

8. Decorate the grave. Sometimes being busy with decorating the grave gives a feeling of doing something for a child we can no longer hold.

9. Do something in memory of your loved one. Donate to a charity. Volunteer. My oldest daughter Rachel and I volunteered at the Hospice Tree of Remembrance and shared memories of Daniel as we spent this time together.

10. If your bereavement support group has a special candle-lighting service, attend it. Doing something in memory of your loved one with others who understand the pain can be therapeutic.

11. Spend time reflecting on what the season is about. Everyone around you may be frantic with attending parties, services, shopping and visiting relatives. Give yourself permission to excuse yourself from them. Light a candle in your favorite scent. Record some thoughts in a journal. One day you will wake up and it will be January 2. The holidays will have ended. You will have made it.

If you are like me, you will find that surviving the tinsel has made you stronger, and although you may cry, somewhere within you, you will feel that core of new steel.

(Alice J. Wisler is the author of the new novel, "Rain Song." Visit her Web site for more articles:

<http://www.alicewisler.com>)

Printed in THE DURHAM NEWS, 11/8/08

Alice J. Wisler

wisler@mindspring.com

Rain Song, the new novel, with a past
How Sweet It Is, arriving May 2009

You are invited: <http://www.alicewisler.com>

LOVE GIFTS

Enclosed in a check in the amount of _____ to be used as follows (check all that apply):

In loving memory of _____

In honor of _____

Sponsor the newsletter for _____ (month) (\$25 pays ½ monthly cost)

Pay for a book for the chapter's Lending Library _____

Check here to keep receiving the newsletter _____

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that in order for your child to be included in the "special days" list each month in the newsletter, you must fill out this form that gives us permission to list this information. If you are making a donation please make the check payable to **The Compassionate Friends**. Return to Vicki Szech, 31023 Prairie Ridge Road, Green Oaks, IL 60048 or call 847-573-1055 or send an email to vszech@comcast.net.

We welcome your comments and/or items submitted for use in the newsletter. Short articles, poems, or book reviews are always appreciated. Please include author of any written works. Send your items for the newsletter to Vicki Szech at vszech@comcast.net or 31023 Prairie Ridge Road, Libertyville, IL 60048.

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families. Its' mission is to assist them in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others to be supportive

TCF National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522 3696 - PH 877-969-0010 - Fax: 630-990-0246

The Compassionate Friends home page can be found at www.compassionatefriends.org

There are seven TCF Internet chat sessions weekly. To participate, visit the TCF home page and select the "Chat" button.

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP Toni Nesheim 847-204-7585 tnesheim@sbcglobal.net Rachel Salomonson Age 19 – Auto accident

TREASURER Tammie Barrera 847-872-9684 Julyson2@gmail.com Aaron Barrera Age 29 – Auto accident due to Diabetes

SECRETARY Bambi Nichols 262-220-9323 lcbtsec@aol.com Levi Nichols Age 19 - Accidental death

REMEMBRANCE SECRETARY Thelma Perkins 262-279-6178 Andrew C Perkins Age 17 – Auto Accident

LIBRARIAN Kathleen Rettinger 847-922-7456 Alexander Rettinger Age 18 – Of suicide

NEWSLETTER EDITOR Vicki Szech 847-573-1055 vszech@comcast.net Rachel Szech Age 16 – Horseback-riding Accident

NEWSLETTER PRINTING & MAILING Mike Thumel 224-715-8420 mthumel@hotmail.com & Laura Thumel 224-715-2354 lthumel@hotmail.com John Thumel Age 22 – Auto Accident

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STEERING COMMITTEE Marilyn Grace 847-395-8597 grace.marilyn@gmail.com Megan Grace Age 15 – Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

Charon Sloop 847-623-2264 charronsloop@AOL.com David Sloop Age 33 – Motor Cycles accident

Mirtha Vidal 847-293-1658 mirthavidal1213@yahoo.com & Raphael Vidal rvidal1027@yahoo.com,

Raphael, age 17, suicide