



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

February 2021 Newsletter



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



Chapter Leader Notes from Susan

My daughter, Marlyls, was 19 when we lost her brother, Westley. She was in her freshman year at the University of Dayton. Westley's older brother, Landan, rode the train from Chicago to Gurnee that very sad morning. We then drove to Champaign, IL to meet with the police. This is where Westley died. And from there we drove to Dayton to pick up Marlyls and then drive home to Gurnee. It's been a little over 3 ½ years for our family and we miss Westley in so many ways.

Marlyls shared this poem with me and she thought it was a good message to share with our Compassionate Friends Group. It's ok to Nurture yourself. Give yourself time to grieve, rest, heal, reflect, and work toward enjoying life again – celebrating the life that you have – be it an altered life.

We all deserve peace and healing. May this winter may be your time to find peace with your memories.

Dear Grievors,
There are those who do not know
And who cannot know
This deep pain.
They are afraid of it.
They may tell you to "move on".
They may tell you it's not "normal" to grieve this long.
They may tell you it's part of "God's plan".
Your shattering makes them uneasy.
Vulnerable.
Some may avoid you,
Others may pity you.
But this is your grief.
No one else's. Yours.
You have earned every single tear you shed.
Your emotions are yours,
Even on days
You'd wish them gone.
Don't let anyone take grief from you.
Through the grief – and the love-

Hold your head high,
Even when you are suffering most.
Perhaps, especially, when you are suffering most.
Surround yourself with loving others.
Give yourself time to feel.
Because grief work is not for the faint of heart.
And one day, suffering endured
Will become compassion expressed.

Dr. Joanne Cacciatore - founder of the MISS Foundation.
Originally posted in January or 2015

Wishing you a gentle, winter season.

Susan



Thoughts on Winter

January, February, so cold, so crisp, so leaf less. Beginning a NEW year, and NEW beginning. You never lived in this year and that is new. Sometimes new is painful. January is also the month of resolutions and the only resolution we must make is that we must learn to live without our child. What a profound sadness that is! To love them so deeply, so passionately, so completely, only to have us part.

My child, did I ever tell you enough how much I loved you? I've wondered. Do we tell those we love how very much their life has meant to us? Probably we do not. Somehow, we arrogantly believe that time goes on forever. It does. It's just that people do not. We fail to recognize how entirely too brief some lives can be. You were not supposed to die. Death is reserved for others. How could you disappoint me? Didn't you know that I had such plans for you? I didn't want to face my own mortality. How cruel life was, using you to

(Continued on page 2)



GIFTS OF LOVE

A love gift is a gift of money or of time given to the Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter of the passionate 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.

"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.



PICTURES FROM THE HEART

Since we have lost our children, part of what remains of them are pictures from the heart, which are those mental images we hold so dear. For some of us these pictures are memories of what had been, and for others these pictures are dreams of what might have been. And for some of us these pictures are a little of both. For us, dreams and memories are really the same. It is the dimension where our children now reside.

In a sense, dreams are nothing more than memories of the future, because we remember our children by the dreams we had for them; and memories are nothing more than dreams of the past, because to remember them is certainly to dream of them. I believe it is incorrect to think that someone will not hurt as much because they only had their child for a little while or to think that someone

will not hurt as much because their child had the chance to grow up. In these dreams and memories, these pictures from the heart, all of our children are infants and all of our children have grown up. The sadness and pain comes from the broken heart, the memories and the dreams from the pieces that remain.

Kenneth Hensley
TCF, Nashville, TN

(Thoughts on Winter continued from page 1)

prove to me that we do indeed come to an end.

I don't want to accept your death, but what choice have I left? Oh, I'll mend, although mending sometimes means forgetting. I cannot put you aside, but already memories of you are fading. You know what I like best. When I'm given little tidbits of your life by those who knew you. What a bittersweet delight. Each piece of my jigsaw puzzle will eventually fit together. You will be the only missing piece.

-Dorothy Worrell, TCF, Palo Alto, CA

"The broken will always be able to love harder than most.

Once you have been in the dark, you learn to appreciate everything that shines."

- Zachry K. Douglas



OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED FEBRUARY & MARCH

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

Kevin Pomianek	February 4	Son of Brenda & Eugene Pomianek
Jeff Wagner	February 4	Son of Mary Wagner
Aaron Barrera	February 6	Son of Tammie & Ernie Barrera
Micah Musich	February 10	Son of Heather Musich
Kal-El O Sexton	February 13	Son of Derry Sexton
Roderick Young	February 13	Son of Scarlet Austin
		Grandson of "Charlie" Johnson
Heather Donnelly	February 26	Daughter of Daniel Donnelly
Megan Candice Grace	February 24	Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace
Anne Thomson	February 25	Daughter of Nancy & Tom Thomson
Camden Frisby	March 1	Son of Kris Frisby
Griffin Schumow	March 2	Son of Jeff & Krista Schumow
Kyle Glueck	March 4	Son of Dolores Krason
Justin Perez	March 9	Son of Traci & Carlos Perez
		Brother of Samantha (Perez) Przybylski
David Sloop	March 9	Son of Charron Sloop
Rusty Anderson	March 11	Son of Forest & Christine Anderson
David Spannraft	March 18	Son of Elizabeth & Dan Spannraft
Adam Rubin	March 28	Son of Linda Rubin
		Brother of Nicole Rubin

ANNIVERSARIES

Susan Nesheim Allbee	February 5	Sister of Toni Nesheim
Micah Gerald Musich	February 10	Son of Heather Musich
Darien Wilson	February 11	Son of Tammy & Tim Olvera
Douglas Ramsay	February 12	Son of Carlene Ramsay
Rafael Villanveva	February 12	Son of Victoria Villanveva
Michael Stice	February 13	Son of Dora & Gary Stice
Kelly Klawonn	February 14	Son of Ray & Dorothy Klawonn
Ashley Seay	February 18	Daughter of Mike and Shannon Seay
		Granddaughter of Dennis & Georgene Manley
Mitchell Carlson	February 19	Son of Tina VanderMeer
		Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong
Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles	February 19	Daughter of Jim & Mary Lou Miles
Zachary Taylor	February 24	Son of Mike Taylor & Karen Adams-Taylor
Edgar Villareal	March 1	Oziel & Guadalupe Villareal
Jeremy Govekar	March 2	Son of Maggie McGaughey
Rasheed Mariano	March 5	Son of Joan Mariano
John "Jake" Mosansky	March 12	Son of Darlene & John Mosansky
		Sister of Veronica Steif
Blake Logan Palmer	March 13	Son of Amber & Brian Palmer
		Grandson of Lois Cooper
		Grandson of Gina Palmer
Taylor Rydahl	March 14	Son of Carol & Keith Rydahl
Roderick Young	March 27	Son of Scarlet Austin
		Grandson of "Charlie" Johnson
Marc Hawkinson	March 28	Son of Mary Kay Clark

STIGMA WRITES ME A LETTER

Anne Moss Rogers <https://annemoss.com/> will be a keynote speaker at our 2020 National Gathering Conference in St. Louis, MO August 7-10

Hi Anne Moss,

I hear you are fighting me. So, how's that going? Sort of like taking salt out of the ocean by the teaspoon, isn't it?

I admire that you have the audacity to take me on. People are so set in their ways, so invested in their fundamental black and white belief system, I won't fall easily.

Denial is part of my charm, judgment so crucial to my success and shame is where I thrive. I flourish in an environment where people react only to the latest crisis and then forget it two weeks later. This culture is perfect for me!

People will hold onto "no way it will happen to me," with everything they have. Until they lose someone they love. Until it hits them in the face like a train wreck. In fact, thanks to me, that opiate epidemic has been able to seep insidiously into our culture and take the lives of tens of thousands. Suicide rates have tripled since 1999!

Why hasn't anyone invested in solutions? Because I make it so easy to turn your head and I give you an excuse to be apathetic. So easy to write it off as bad parenting or weakness or character. Compassion cannot thrive in an environment where there is no understanding. I block all of that and more. Parents are still oblivious. Not my kid! Most of those drug events people have are so sparsely attended, you'd think you were presenting on the topic of retreading tires. All of that is my doing.

And the events for suicide? Not unless someone has just died do they even think about venturing out. Way too busy to talk about death! Yuk. There is pasta to eat and craft beer to drink. Can't worry about someone who was feeling selfish, right? I have the ability to keep that belief system cemented in their minds. You think you can undo all that?

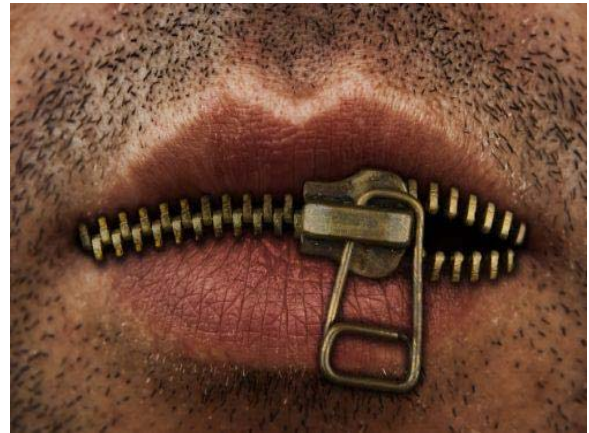


Photo credit. youmatter.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

This addiction disease is so bad, people are selling their kids into human trafficking to buy more heroin. Kids as young as 10 dying of overdose. Parents losing 3 or more children to addiction. Teens taking one single pill for the first time in their lives and dying on the spot. Yet, most still say it's the result of bad parenting, poor choices, and insatiable thirst for partying. All thanks to me.

I'm not outa style yet! I am in vogue, baby. This is as good as a witch hunt and I thought I rocked back then! Best of luck lady. You have a loooong way to go.

Sincerely,

Stigma

Anne Moss Rogers book: "The funniest, most popular kid in school, Charles Aubrey Rogers suffered from depression and later addiction, then ultimately died by suicide. *Diary of a Broken Mind* focuses on the relatable story of what led to his suicide at age twenty and answers the why behind his addiction and this cause of death, revealed through a mother's story and years of Charles' published and unpublished song lyrics. The closing chapters focus on hope and healing and how the author found her purpose and forgave herself. *Diary of a Broken Mind* is a poignant and powerful story written with telling detail and searing honesty and hope. It is an inside look at the issues of depression, addiction, and suicide affecting so many families. It is a book that won't easily be forgotten. Anne and her late son, Charles, bring tragedy, hope and healing through the pages of *Diary of a Broken Mind*."

(Lovingly borrowed from A JOURNEY TOGETHER, National Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA, Winter 2020)

What to Do if You Are Grieving

by Heather Bass

Many people can feel rudderless during the grieving process, not only because they are experiencing new and challenging emotions, but also because there is no rulebook for how to act or feel. Although there is no one way to feel, there are resources to help people move forward.

1 SUPPORT

Instead of trying to be alone, seek out support from friends and family. If you feel a tendency toward social isolation, identify one or two people you feel comfortable around even when you aren't feeling well, and try to spend time with them.

Seek support from a grief counselor or therapist. Professionals can help you understand what you are experiencing and give advice on coping with your feelings.

Look for support groups for people going through similar events. Camaraderie is integral to validating your own experience instead of feeling alone in it.

2 SELF CARE

Prioritize eating and sleeping. Sometimes grief is so consuming that we forget the importance of these most basic acts.

Make time for physical exercise. Whatever your fitness level, try to get outdoors and spend time in nature. Exercise releases endorphins and clears the mind. Nature has an incredible way of helping us feel centered and in touch with something larger than ourselves.

It may seem silly at this time but pamper your body. Schedule regular massages, hair treatments or pedicures. Not only is it important to remind yourself of what it feels like to be cared

for and to feel good physically, but body treatment helps process emotions so they can be released through the body.

3 SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES

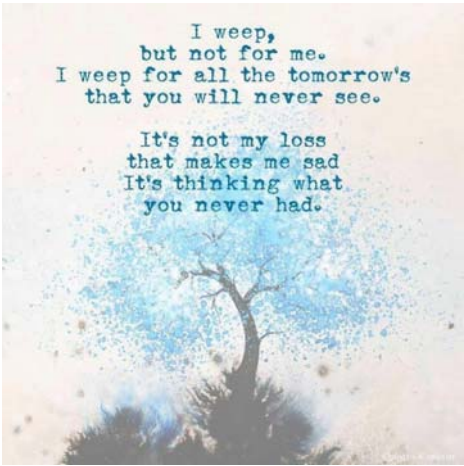
Write a list of things you love to do. In periods of grief people often feel scattered and forget what activities bring them joy.

Prioritize expressive activities such as art projects, crafts or woodworking. It can be therapeutic to create something new and beautiful at a time of loss, whether it is a painting, an old car you are repairing or something else.

Consult friends and therapists before returning to work. Eventually it will be very healthy for you to reengage in your previous behaviors to keep your mind active and your sense of self-worth strong.

(Loving borrowed from **A JOURNEY TOGETHER**, National Newsletter of the Bereaved

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I weep,
but not for me.
I weep for all the tomorrow's
that you will never see.

It's not my loss
that makes me sad
It's thinking what
you never had.

SA, Winter 2019)

Looking Back... the Awesome Power of Hope

About the Author Nan Zastrow: *Wings was created as a ministry of hope by Nan and Gary Zastrow after the death of their son, Chad Zastrow. On April 16, 1993, Chad died as a result of suicide. Nan is the author of five books, a quarterly online grief eLetter and dozens of articles published in various resources. Since 2003, Nan regularly publishes articles in "Grief Digest Magazine". Visit the website at: www.wingsgrief.org or the Wings Facebook page.*

There is a quote that states "Don't look back. You aren't going that way." That's good advice for many circumstances in our lives. However, sometimes looking back is also a way to understand how far you've come; the accomplishments you've made especially under duress; and the power of "Hope" in becoming someone different than planned.

In 2018, Wings celebrated its 25th anniversary of the non-profit organization. It was a year of looking back and remembering, not with sadness, but rather with surprise and profound gratefulness for the support of family, friends, community, and even strangers as we traveled this journey after the death of our son, Chad, in April 1993. Looking back reminds us of the feeling that we didn't think we could do it (move forward). Looking back reminds of the challenges, the emotional hard work, and the victories won!

Please bear with me while I regress and summarize a fraction of what we've learned.

Remembering the beginning:

Spring forced its way into Wisconsin in an unusual way in April 1993. It strangely marked the day with headline news. "Blizzard." It was Easter-time...a time when the sun typically began warming the earth and tulips emerged. Outside my window a cherry tree with long, thin branches swayed in the wind. The branches loaded with spring buds supported dozens of plastic Easter eggs in bright colors suspended from ribbons. The sudden freezing rain and blizzard coated the branches heavily with ice causing them to strain

and bend unbearably against the frozen weight. This bizarre scene mocked the event that had just unfolded...the death of our 21-year-old son, Chad, as the result of suicide. We tried to shake the icy chill that numbed our minds and bodies. How could this be happening to us? Ten weeks later, Chad's fiancé took her life too.

In an instance, our lives changed forever. Sometimes who we were meant to be is changed by a memory from our darkest moment. Memories triggered by traumatic events change the way we think, act, and respond to future events. They can create either negative or positive reactions going forward. In most cases, we make a choice. What we become tomorrow is molded by how we process the event, when the numbness subsides. Our son's death, our darkest moment, became a turning point that changed who we were and created a life much different than we ever imagined.

My husband, Gary, my daughter, and I were left to survive an unimaginable absence in our lives. When life seemed almost perfect, suddenly we were challenged beyond the limits of our human understanding.

Here are a few of the challenges:

Faith. Our faith wavered with unanswered questions and triggered a new search for meaning.

We lived with a stigma-related death in a time when death by suicide was silent.

We challenged the statistics. So many people quoted the statistics about divorce among parents who lost a child. We wanted to show, by example, that the death of a child can also forge an unbreakable bond of communication, love, and marital commitment.

Lack of knowledge about grief, unavailable resources (the Internet was newly born).

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(Looking Back... the Awesome Power of Hope continued from page 6)

Community resources were few. We struggled to learn what we needed to help us heal.

Learning how loss of a sibling would affect our daughter with an intellectual disability and provide for her future needs.

Returning to the workplace, managing productivity, dealing with inquisitive questions from coworkers, and finding motivation to excel when it didn't seem important anymore.

Accepting that this death was something we could not control. We struggled with shudda, wudda, cudda feelings of guilt until we realized that some things in life are not to be understood, but rather accepted.

Restructuring family traditions long-term. Recognizing that this loss changed the way we practiced our traditions, and filled the gap created by death.

Loss of dreams. Seeing family and friends living out their dreams through the lives of their children and grandchildren. Then, realizing we would never have the opportunity to experience the same.

Finding purpose. Purpose equals "future." Without a vision of the future, there is no such thing as purpose.

How we healed our pain:

Here are my short answers to some of the items above that paved our path to healing.

First, we let God in. After a brief period of anger and frustration with a loving God, we realized there is nothing stronger than faith to get you through.

Stopping the silence about suicide became a passion. So often suicide is misunderstood and overjudged. We speak publicly about this and other related taboo deaths.

Remembering who our son was, not how he died is our focus. Guilt implies "intent". We adopted a "no fault" judgment regarding Chad's death. We instinctively knew, without a doubt, that Chad did not intend to hurt us. Putting guilt aside was a simple choice.

Continued education and learning about grief. This became a lifelong pursuit to help us deal with our own loss as well as help others.

Providing educational opportunities to help people deal with uncertainty and live with a society that sometimes minimizes the impact of grief on someone's life.

Building a "different" life with different "dreams" and grasping joy wherever we could find it. Living in the present moment and not taking it for granted.

Creating "purpose" through our grief ministry allowed us to see a brighter future.

Our way to defeat the pain was to never forget. We'll never forget our darkest moment, but there are lessons to be learned from all life experiences. We still selfishly surrender to moments of sadness and tears. It is our legacy. However, choosing to be better rather than bitter was the right choice. The memory of our grief lives as our daily companion, but it is the healing that reigns. The dark moments become grayer and the sun shines brighter fading the pain of loss so we can live meaningful lives.

We will forever be amazed at the surprises that unfold because we are exactly where we are meant to be.

God directs our paths. Our pursuit for peace evolved through action. Choosing to heal grief can challenge your life temporarily, but it will likely change your life forever. One nanosecond in time changed our lives forever. Looking forward is the key to surviving loss but looking back is a requirement for discovering and acknowledging the awesome power of HOPE!



(Loving borrowed from A JOURNEY TOGETHER, National Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA, Winter 2020)

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 Tammie Barrera, 821 Roberts Road, Winthrop Harbor, IL. 60096**

We welcome your comments and/or items submitted for use in the newsletter. Short articles, poems, or book reviews are always appreciated. Please include the 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**, Shari O'Loughlin, CEO 48660 Pontiac Trail #930808 Wixom, MI 48393 Phone: 630-990-0010 or Toll free 877-969-0010

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.

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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

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

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