



# The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

January, 2019 Newsletter



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

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## Chapter Leader Notes



### Think Happy Revelation not Resolution

It is a New Year.

A new year is usually an event that grieving people do not look forward to or celebrate. It means that we have moved that much further away from the event that caused us to never see or touch our child or sibling again. Parties and making resolutions seem frivolous and meaningless to the bereaved. We don't need any more self-inflicted pressure by setting goals or deadlines to which we would have difficulty adhering to.

I will pass along a moment that I had recently with a gift catalog that came in the mail. I was flipping through the pages and a photo caught my eye. It was of a super soft blanket with big flowers and big letters that read "**I think I'll just be happy today**". I read it over and over again. Wow. You can do that? **Just** think about happiness and it will happen? Is that even true? Have I been in and out of despondent grief when I could've just **thought** my way out of it?

My jaded self-thought was that the platitude was way too simplistic. Yet, there was also something so charming and comforting about the super soft blanket labeled with happiness that I started thinking about how nice it would be to wrap up in it and just think happy thoughts. The saying was so abundant with optimism that I started thinking of the possibility of mentally lifting myself out of grief through active thought – changing the internal dialogue with a positive thought at the beginning of the day. Surely, others have tried it and either succeeded or failed.

Currently, I think about living for my deceased daughter as well as myself. I have days to spend that my daughter and brother and sister, all of whom left this world too soon, don't have. How many times have we, as grieving parents and siblings, thought – "just one more day" – let me

spend just one more day with my loved one. I painfully appreciate the fact that they were robbed of all of their days.

The super soft blanket with the "I think I'll just be happy today" on it started a whole internal dialogue for me about how I want to go forward in 2019. No resolutions just a revelation that I need to be happy (or close to it) in order to carry-on for my loved ones, those living and dead.

I acknowledge that I am a long-time griever (13 yrs for my daughter) who has had more time to reach this point of acceptance and make the decision to live for others. Everyone processes their grief and finds personal strategies to accept, adjust and try to make a new and different life. I think about a life lived. I think about lives appreciated.

As for me, I just have to order the 'super soft blanket of happiness' and see if it will work for me. It has already caused me to think about happiness and trying to make each of my grim days seem a little better. Any little thing that helps to get us through the day may be worth the effort of trying. It may be watching old movies, writing poetry or a journal, getting a new pet, taking long walks or leaving big tips for friendly servers.

Of course, one person's super soft blanket may be another person's rough and itchy horse hair-afghan. We need to remember that we are all unique in our grief and unique in what will ease our pain. There is no single solution.

Over the years, each of us will find many "blankets" to help us through the days and months ahead. Some we can order through a catalog and some we will have to discover on our own as we are making this journey through grief.

Wishing all of my Compassionate Friends, a comforting 2019.

*Toni*

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### Hope

**Smiles from the threshold of the year to come,  
Whispering 'it will be happier' . . .**

**–Alfred Tennyson**

## Meetings

### Northern Illinois Chapter TCF

January 17

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

### Waukegan meeting

February 7

– 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

### WHEN WINTER COMES

By Glenda Fulton Davis

When winter comes into our lives  
With its uncertain sound  
To strip us of our warmth and joy,  
Our petals on the ground,  
We may be tempted to give up;  
To fold beneath life's storm  
We may be tempted to forsake  
The hope which keeps us warm.  
But, we must learn to stand up tall;  
To always face the sun,  
And patiently await the day  
When winter's work is done.  
For winter winds will cease to howl,  
The snows will melt away.  
Then we shall see the beauty of  
Another summer's day.  
And we will have renewed our strength  
When summer's wind first blows,

For God will whisper once again  
The promise of a rose.

~reprinted from St. Louis Chapter of Be-  
reaved Parents Newsletter Novem-  
ber/December 2006

42ND TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE



RINGS OUT IN  
PHILADELPHIA

JULY 19-21, 2019

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

Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves. Join us as together we remember and share the everlasting love we have for our precious children, siblings and grandchildren.

The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia, on July 19-21, 2019. "Hope Rings in Philadelphia" is the theme of next year's event, which promises more of this year's great National Conference experience. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

- Choose to attend over a hundred different workshops and sharing sessions, given by professionals and also individuals just like you.
- Take advantage of "Healing Haven" to receive free personal services such as a massage.
- Craft items to commemorate the love for your family member in the "Crafty Corner".
- Step away for a quiet moment of pause in the "Reflection Room".
- Explore the TCF Marketplace offering items for purchase that are meaningful to all on the grief journey together.



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

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

<b>Mitchell Carlson's</b>	<b>January 1</b>	Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong
<b>Andrew Naydihor</b>	<b>Januray 1</b>	Son of Kelly Kozel
<b>Anna Smith Miller</b>	<b>January 3</b>	Daughter of Carol Smith
<b>Michael Curtis</b>	<b>January 4</b>	Son of Sonya Curtis
<b>Eric Wiatr</b>	<b>January 5</b>	Son of Debie Eposito
<b>Nathan Enright</b>	<b>January 7</b>	Son of Martin Boyle
<b>Michael Lee Brandon Frederick</b>	<b>January 13</b>	Son of Jan Frederick
<b>Hamilton</b>		Grandson of Sharon Frederick
<b>Matthew Tisch</b>	<b>January 17</b>	Son of William & Barbara Tisch
<b>Brain Scott Engle</b>	<b>January 19</b>	Son of Louise Engle
<b>Justin Cody Ortega</b>	<b>January 20</b>	Son of Susie Meggs
<b>Keegan Cray</b>	<b>January 21</b>	Son of Kristin & Ken Willis
<b>Sandra Elena Varela</b>	<b>January 31</b>	Daughter of Sandra Prez
<b>Kevin Pomianek</b>	<b>February 4</b>	Son of Brenda & Eugene Pomianek
<b>Aaron Barrera</b>	<b>February 6</b>	Son of Tammie & Ernie Barrera
<b>Roderick Young</b>	<b>February 13</b>	Son of Scarlet Austin
		Grandson of "Charlie" Johnson
<b>Heather Donnelly</b>	<b>February 26</b>	Daughter of Daniel Donnelly
<b>Megan Candice Grace</b>	<b>February 24</b>	Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace
<b>Anne Thomson</b>	<b>February 25</b>	Daughter of Nancy & Tom Thomson

### ANNIVERSARIES

<b>Rachel Elizabeth Szech</b>	<b>January 2</b>	Daughter of Chester & Vicki Szech
<b>Chris Houchin</b>	<b>January 5</b>	Son of Scott Houchin & Heather McDonald
<b>Lea Ann (Heise) Knuth</b>	<b>January 16</b>	Daughter of Leslie & Shirley Heise
<b>Joey Frase</b>	<b>January 20</b>	Son of Cathy Frase
<b>Jacob Randall</b>	<b>January 21</b>	Son of Lauri Randall
<b>Eric Wiatr</b>	<b>January 21</b>	Son of Debbie Eposito
<b>Alyssa Carranza</b>	<b>January 22</b>	Daughter of Luz Barrera
		Granddaughter of Angel & Raquel Gasco
<b>Reneé Rochelle Powell</b>	<b>January 30</b>	Daughter of Terry & Jeanette Powell
<b>Michael Sean Gaede</b>	<b>January 31</b>	Son of Maureen Gaede
<b>Susan Nesheim Allbee</b>	<b>February 5</b>	Sister of Toni Nesheim
<b>Darien Wilson</b>	<b>February 11</b>	Son of Tammy & Tim Olvera
<b>Douglas Ramsay</b>	<b>February 12</b>	Son of Carlene Ramsay
<b>Rafael Villanveva</b>	<b>February 12</b>	Son of Victoria Villanveva
<b>Michael Stice</b>	<b>February 13</b>	Son of Dora & Gary Stice
<b>Kelly Klawonn</b>	<b>February 14</b>	Son of Ray & Dorothy Klawonn
<b>Ashley Seay</b>	<b>February 18</b>	Daughter of Mike and Shannon Seay
		Granddaughter of Dennis & Georgene Manley
<b>Mitchell Carlson</b>	<b>February 19</b>	Son of Tina VanderMeer
		Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong
<b>Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles</b>	<b>February 19</b>	Daughter of Jim & Mary Lou Miles
<b>Zachary Taylor</b>	<b>February 24</b>	Son of Mike Taylor & Karen Adams-Taylor



## The Holidays are Behind Us

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of both, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there among all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also a thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out at the winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb - a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard, our throats tight from tears shed or unshed, our chests banded tightly by our mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too, in our searchings, find places of warmth and change and love and growth deep within. Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be armed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope or of new acceptance or of new understanding or of new love. These are the new roots, born of our love for our child, that are forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

~Marie Andres TCF So. MD Chap., MD



## What is New about the New Year?

There is a lot of silliness about ringing in the New Year, and I have never been able to enter into the spirit with noisemakers, funny hats and loud hurrahs. Since the death of my son, I especially find myself wondering what this is all about. I think some

of the partying and celebrating are motivated by a deep desire for a new start in our lives; a desire to leave behind some of the problems, sorrows, worries and pain of the year just ending. The short, sunless days and long, dark nights make us want something to cheer us. So we give the New Year's Eve party a try. But it really doesn't work for most of us; we see now that we are just the same and the heaviness in our hearts, as we continue with the struggle to cope with the loss of our child, remains with us. Can we find new ways to live our lives in the New Year?

I'd like to suggest a few things we can try. Let's make an effort to find new friends. A good place to start this is at Compassionate Friends meetings. Here you are with a group of people who care about each other in special ways. We understand the pain and anger, the confusion and the inertia suffered by bereaved parents. In the New Year, let's also find new ways to be close to the family that we have left. We feel regrets about hugs not given, letters not written, "I love yous" not said often enough. We can do all these things now. We can establish new memories with the family we have right now. Another way to move into this New Year with a better feeling is to think about what we can do for others, because that is truly a way to help ourselves, too. If we can reach out to other sorrowing families, give a gift of our time, a note of love, a listening ear, or a shoulder to lean on, we'll grow stronger ourselves.

For those parents who are suffering the deep pain of the newly bereaved, none of the things I've mentioned may be possible yet. For you, I hold out the hope that soon your days will be just a bit better, your sorrow a little lighter, your tears healing, your friends strengthening and your memories filled more with the good times and less with the unhappiness of your grief.

Dory Rooker  
TCF, Upper Valley, VT



## 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



## Winters of Our Lives

By Mary Wildman ~ TCF, Madison County, IL

Someone has said that it is in the winter, when the trees have dropped their leaves, "revealing the diversity and uniqueness of each ridge and valley" ~ when the hills bare their innermost selves ~ that we get to know them ~ what is really out there. And so it is with people. Most of the time we wear our masks. But it is during the difficult times, during the winters of our lives, that there is the strong need to shed our masks and be able to reveal the hurting and turmoil that is really there. "It is in these moments that friendships are formed and

we experience one another as few others ever will." So it is among The Compassionate Friends! WE CARE



## Thoughts on Winter

January, February, so cold, so crisp, so leafless. 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 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



## Another Year Without My Child

*By Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of her son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, Texas  
January 2007*

It's a new year and I am marking it, for the fifth time, without my child. Last month was the fourth anniversary of his death. This is one more milestone in the journey of a bereaved parent. The New Year brings the promise of new adventures, happiness and prosperity to others. To bereaved parents it adds another dimension to our loss. It also brings the opportunity to look at where we are and how far we have come.

I remember the first New Year's Day without my son. What an empty, hollow feeling I had on January 1, 2003. My world had ended, the shock was still systemic in my mind and body, and I counted the days since he last walked, talked and laughed on this earthly plane, dwelling on the passing of days, hours and minutes since the moment of his death. I was frozen.

Looking back at that time, I recall just how the pain felt; unlike other pain, the pain of losing a child is never forgotten. I feel the familiar jolt that rocked my mind and body each time I awoke to remember that my son had died. I remember the misery of slogging through endless, meaningless days. I remember the tears, the second-guessing, the anger, and the guilt.... I remember it all. I still bounce in and out of those emotions; this will never end. It has moderated greatly, but it never ends.

Now I am more focused on my son's life. Details about his life spring into my mind.... happy times, maturing times, good times and funny times. I remember it all with the clarity that only a mother can possess. And so, that is how I will begin this new year.... remembering the life of my child but never forgetting the loss.

I am a different person than I was before my son died. I feel as though a lightening bolt struck me on the day of his death, and now I perceive the world from a different vantage point. I have simplified my life from what it once was.

I have many new friends who share the experience of losing a child; I have permanently removed old friends from my life who simply couldn't accept my grief and were fearful of talking about my child. I have a new understanding of the problems that other parents face... problems that a mother of one never has to address. I have become more sol-

idly spiritual. I have gone

through Dante's unique person I should have been all along. People change. Bereaved parents change a great deal.

I no longer dread each new day. I no longer weep silently every night. I no longer ache from head to foot with the pain of losing my child. I read, I write, I stay active in the community. I work in my small business, doing what I want to do and what I must do. I go to museums, to movies, to stage plays. I listen to music, watch television and work in my home and yard.

Amazingly, my word recall and memory are returning. Forgetting names, events, people, destinations and other critical factors of daily life was something I dealt with for over three and half years. I thought I had lost my mind until I started talking to other parents. I have begun doing memorization exercises...something I probably should have done three years ago. I am learning that the journey through grief lasts for a lifetime. Each stage is different, each sudden, poignant memory is paralyzing and each new day brings an opportunity to evaluate progress.

Much has changed during the past four years. Much will change throughout my life. Each of us experiences the loss of our child at the deepest level of our psyches. Yet each of us comes to this place with a different set of experiences and a unique genetic composition. I cannot compare myself to others. I can only mark my tiny steps forward with a sense of wonder at the resiliency of the human mind and spirit while simultaneously accepting that I am not in control...at any moment a flash of the past might bring me to my knees. I have learned to go with it.

I have found hope for the future. It certainly isn't the future I had envisioned. There will be no late night talks with my son, no holidays or birthdays shared, no participation in my son's children's lives, no cards, no handmade gifts. That door was closed by lawsuit happy former in-laws who have no standing in

(Continued on page 7)



## Carrying Memories Into The New Year

With the church bells' ringing  
the new year enters  
echoing the days of yesteryear  
memories of happiness  
the smiles of our children  
the sunlight within each face  
Who will remember these dear ones  
far from our yearning arms  
Who remembers all they were  
the way she danced, the hat he wore  
With the old year gone, will they  
no longer be known?

We will remember them, each one  
We will hold them in our hearts  
as we carry memories  
into this new year.

We will allow the memories to  
make us laugh, to make us sing.  
Their lives will fill the air  
as the church bells ring.

---Alice J. Wisler

~reprinted with permission from Tributes, January 1, 2002

<http://www.tcfatlanta.org/JanFeb2002.html>

## This Season Of Grief

It hits like the first blast of winter.  
Icy fingers spreading within, numbing, the mind, heart  
and soul.  
Shrouding us in a protective haze..  
Seeing, but not seeing  
Knowing, but not knowing  
Here in this season of grief.

The first hint of spring arrives, and the tiny seeds, well  
planted, begin to stir.  
They take root and begin their journey of growth,

spreading throughout.  
So begins the seeing and knowing this season of grief.  
The heat of the summer brings with it the storms.  
The raging, the floods, the calm before.  
All that was growing is entangled with weeds  
Slowly suffocating all that it needs  
Here in this season of grief.

The coolness of autumn settles within  
Silently taking all that had lived.  
The garden lies empty, barren and cold.  
No place to hide..  
For now we must know  
Now we must see  
That we have become this season of grief

The spring bursts upon us  
The untended garden no more  
For we have come through the winter  
We let grow all the seeds  
We weathered the storms and let ourselves bleed  
For we began a new garden without even knowing  
The scars on our soul no longer openly showing

One day we look back and sigh with relief...  
For we have survived this season of grief.

by: Kathie Simensen © 1997

From Parents of Suicides submitted by Karyl,  
mother of Arlyn 9-02  
From parents of suicide website 9-02

(Another Year Without My Child continued from page 6)

my life today. I have crawled through the minefields and dodged the bullets of some pretty mentally unbalanced people and survived. I have faced the abyss of losing my only child while enduring the cruelest of sniping, the worst of intentionally inflicted pain. I did none of this with grace and finesse....I merely got through it. I survived. I became stronger by letting go of my anger. I found hope by remembering the goodness that is my son and by leaning on friends who had lost their children. These friends were there for me when I so desperately needed the comfort of kindred souls: Compassionate Friends who reached out to me gave me the glimmer of hope when all seemed forever lost and living was almost intolerable.

**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** [Julyson2@gmail.com](mailto:Julyson2@gmail.com)

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](mailto: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](http://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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