



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

January 2020 Newsletter



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



New Year's Wishes For Bereaved Parents

To the newly bereaved: We wish you patience - patience with yourselves in the painful weeks, months, even years ahead.

To the bereaved sibling: We wish you and your parents a new understanding of each other's needs and the beginnings of good communication.

To those who are single parents: We wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone with your loss.

To those experiencing marital difficulties after the death of your child: We wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.

To those who have suffered the death of more than one child: We wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once again.

To those of you who have experienced the death of an only child or of all your children: We offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.

To those of you who are plagued with guilt: We wish you the reassurances that you did the very best you could under the circumstances, and that your child knew that.

To those of you who are deeply depressed: We wish you the first steps out of the "Valley of the Shadow".

To all fathers and those of you unable to cry: We wish you healing tears and the ability to express your grief.

To those of you who are exhausted from grieving: We wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.

To all others with special needs that we have not mentioned: We wish you the understanding you need and the assurance that you are loved.

From a speech by Former TCF President, Joe Rousseau.
Taken from the January, 1999, TCF Houston-West chapter newsletter

I've Learned

By Nancy Ludt Huntington Beach, California

Editor's Note: When Nancy Ludt asked the families of the Huntington Beach, Calif., Bereaved Parent Support Group what they had learned since the death of their child, she reported that their comments were "moving and eye-opening," and she offered to share these pearls of wisdom with us. No two comments she received were alike, and "the names of the contributors were left out because this is a group effort, and we can all benefit from this list." While these "lessons" are from bereaved parents, they can easily apply also to almost any other kind of bereavement, as well.

I've learned:

- To take one day at a time.
- Not to say, "if only," "I should have," etc.
- To appreciate what I've got and not moan about what I "don't got."
- To appreciate life and not take it for granted.
- If today is bleak, tomorrow can be better.
- To appreciate the moments when I can laugh.
- That without my support group, I would be lost.
- How very much I need my "new" friends.
- How much I treasure and love my daughter's friends.
- Not to take my health for granted.
- What is trivial.
- That if my energy level is low, I don't push myself.

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Meetings

Lake Villa Meeting
Northern Illinois Chapter TCF
January 16 - 7:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.
 Millburn Congregational Church
 19073 W Old Grass Lake Rd
 (Corner of Old Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45
 Lake Villa, IL 60046

Holy Family Church
February 6
7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
 450 Keller Street, Waukegan, IL 60085
 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

Open Discussion

(I've Learned continued from page 1)

- The importance of exercise.
- That grief is not time-bound.
- That no one grieves like me; everybody grieves differently.
- That the pain never goes away, but it does get "softer."
- That no one can comfort me the way Jesus can.
- To allow the grief, pain and loss to become a part of me.
- That there is a reason to keep on living (and loving).
- That joy does return...only in a different way.
- To turn "it" over to the Lord.
- That someday we will be together again.
- Not to let Satan steal my happiness.
- To ride "the wave" of denial, anger, depression and acceptance.
- To accept that I may never know why.
- It's okay to say, "No."
- Not to blame people when they don't understand.
- The ability to face adversity (courage).
- To be strong and resolute.
- The importance of support and encouragement.
- That there is friendship and family, OR, family and friendship!
- That to lose a child is the "ultimate tragedy."
- That I need others who have been there to help me through this journey.
- That love never dies.
- That time is an ally.
- That every moment really matters.
- That eventually you do want to go on and live again.



- That I must create a "new normal" for myself.
- That my daughter's love of life continues to give me the strength to go on.
- That I must re-invest the energy I gave to my child into something/someone else.
- That over time, I have more control over my grief.
- That I will always have tears on my heart.
- That it is so important to keep my daughter's name and memory.
- That only in the articulation of grief does it diminish.
- That making new traditions helps.
- How the soft glow of a candle helps to warm my heart again and bring my daughter near.
- That it doesn't matter how our children died, just that they have.
- That over time, the cemetery brings peace and solitude...not just tears.
- How the pain and grief I feel one day isn't necessarily the way I will feel the next day.
- That some of the things I thought I'd never do again since my daughter died – I have.
- That I can laugh again and not feel guilty.
- That along with all the pain and despair, joy and happiness have found a place in my life again.
- People who have not lost a child can't possibly understand what I went through.
- That not only does one lose a child, but they can also lose their belief system, some family members and some friends in the process.
- Our society is deficient in death education and really doesn't know how to respond to the grieving person.
- Some people want to see and be around "happy" people and only have so much to give for those who are grieving.
- Everyone grieves differently, and there is no "right" or "wrong" way to grieve.
- There is no time frame for "getting on with your life" after the death of your child.
- Strangers can give more than some relatives.
- You don't always have until tomorrow.

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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

| | | |
|--|--------------------|--|
| <i>Mitchell Carlsons</i> | January 1 | Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong |
| <i>Andrew Naydihor</i> | Januray 1 | Son of Kelly Kozel |
| <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 | Son of Debie Eposito |
| <i>Nathan Enright</i> | January 7 | Son of Martin Boyle |
| <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 |
| <i>Ana Sofia Camacho</i> | February 2 | Daughter of Lucero & Carlos Camacho |
| <i>Kevin Pomianek</i> | February 4 | Son of Brenda & Eugene Pomianek |
| <i>Aaron Barrera</i> | February 6 | Son of Tammie & Ernie Barrera |
| <i>Roderick Young</i> | February 13 | Son of Scarlet Austin Grandson of "Charlie" Johnson |
| <i>Heather Donnelly</i> | February 26 | Daughter of Daniel Donnelly |
| <i>Megan Candice Grace</i> | February 24 | Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace |
| <i>Anne Thomson</i> | February 25 | Daughter of Nancy & Tom Thomson |

ANNIVERSARIES

| | | |
|--|--------------------|--|
| <i>Rachel Elizabeth Szech</i> | January 2 | Daughter of Chester & Vicki Szech |
| <i>Chris Houchin</i> | January 5 | Son of Scott Houchin & Heather McDonald |
| <i>Lea Ann Knuth</i> | January 16 | Daughter of Leslie & Shirley Heise |
| <i>Joey Frase</i> | January 20 | Son of Cathy Frase |
| <i>Jacob Randall</i> | January 21 | Son of Lauri Randall |
| <i>Eric Wiatr</i> | January 21 | Son of Debbie Eposito |
| <i>Alyssa Carranza</i> | January 22 | Daughter of Luz Barrera Granddaughter of Angel & Raquel Gasco |
| <i>Reneé Rochelle Powell</i> | January 30 | Daughter of Terry & Jeanette Powell |
| <i>Michael Sean Gaede</i> | January 31 | Son of Maureen Gaede |
| <i>Jeff Wagner</i> | February 4 | Son of Mary Wagner |
| <i>Susan Nesheim Allbee</i> | February 5 | Sister of Toni Nesheim |
| <i>Micah Gerald Musich</i> | February 10 | Son of Heather Musich |
| <i>Darien Wilson</i> | February 11 | Son of Tammy & Tim Olvera |
| <i>Douglas Ramsay</i> | February 12 | Son of Carlene Ramsay |
| <i>Rafael Villanveva</i> | February 12 | Son of Victoria Villanveva |
| <i>Michael Stice</i> | February 13 | Son of Dora & Gary Stice |
| <i>Kelly Klawonn</i> | February 14 | Son of Ray & Dorothy Klawonn |
| <i>Ashley Seay</i> | February 18 | Daughter of Mike and Shannon Seay Granddaughter of Dennis & Georgene Manley |
| <i>Mitchell Carlson</i> | February 19 | Son of Tina VanderMeer Grandson of Cheryl Armstrong |
| <i>Mary Margaret "Maggie" Miles</i> | February 19 | Daughter of Jim & Mary Lou Miles |
| <i>Zachary Taylor</i> | February 24 | Son of Mike Taylor & Karen Adams-Taylor |

Revealing Life Without You on New Years

As we grow older, I am consistently reminded of how much I lost when the boys died. I knew at the onset it would be difficult. But nothing prepared me for what I am learning now. And from talking to others, I am not the only one learning these horrible lessons.

When we have our children, we plan for their future and schooling. We plan for their health care, childcare, teen years and even the college funds. Possibly even their weddings. But, we do not think of really long term as in our own health and what they will mean to us at that time in our lives.

We know there will be graduations, proms, driving lessons. We know they will look to us to guide them in their religious and spiritual decisions.

Not once did I ever think to myself, I would need or want my boys involved in my being taken care of in my old age. Nor did I think of them as someone who would come and help with the things myself and my husband could no longer accomplish. Our old age has taken its toll on us both.

But until this year I had no idea how helpless we would feel not having them to call upon to just plain help us in the physical things we cannot accomplish. Like carrying things in to our home. I realized this when a friend was talking to me on the phone and said her son had come over to help carry the firewood in for her husband. Now to those of you who still have children and can do that. You probably like us never thought what you would do if they were not there. We certainly didn't. We are facing that part of our lives now. The simple every day things people never put into perspective.

So this year as you and your family celebrate this New Year look around you and see if someone in your life has no one there to assist them in their elderly years. Yes! if only for carrying groceries and heavy objects into the house. See if in the name of our angels you can give the gift of help. In many cases it will cost you nothing. Except maybe a little bit of your time. In our society today we require payment for such tasks. Our standards are everyone is in a hurry. Our society does not take time to understand the elderly. It is not

until we are faced with it that our reality comes crashing in.

So please take this time of year to look at those you see in your everyday lives and ask. Are you able to

offer help? I am certain our angels would sing praise for us if we can offer just one moment in a person's life.

I wish each of you Happy New Year. I wish each of you faith, hope, peace, love and sharing. God Bless You

By Pat McDougle @2007
BRATMUS@aol.com <BRATMUS@aol.com>
 In Loving Memory of My Son's Kevin & Kurt



Sunrises and Sunsets

Each life is lived in neat and tidy segments of time - weeks, months, years, sunrises and sunsets, births and death. There is nothing that happens to us that cannot be placed in a specific framework of organized time. Spring, summer, winter and fall not only measure the seasons of the year but the ages of our lives as well. The very young are in the spring-time of their lives the very old are in the winter of their years. Sunrises are beginnings. Sunsets are endings. During the progression of time, we keep mental ledgers where we record the passing of time by our successes, mistakes made, love given and received, and if we are lucky, we live long and our sunsets are bright and beautiful and welcome when we are full of time and memories.

But there are sunsets that are not so fulfilled when the evening comes prematurely to a child of ours, and we are plunged into darkness in the middle of our day. Then there is only night, pain and confusion to measure and only what might- have-beens to tally. Every scrap of memory is salvaged to being a spark of warmth to the coldness of the night to come. Each failure in our ledger is magnified and mixed with guilt and unanswerable questions. When memories are painful, we may even replace them with a more acceptable unreality to armor our hearts and minds until the time when we can accept the harshness of what has been, and we're again

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strong enough to begin again never the same, but sustained by our faith and the healing of time.

But when the child's sunrise and sunset have been compressed into a few minutes or hours, the lack of memories can be equally as hurtful. There are no memories of a beloved face, no remembered first or last, not even a remembrance of some irritating habit to tuck into our battered hearts only the vacuum created when the mind has been geared to expect so much and is rewarded with only empty arms and blank pages in a baby book.

And so, if you should find yourself measuring your pain against another's, remember this: if you have memories and if your memories are beautiful, you have a gift that is the most worthy of all. For when your morning finally comes after the darkness has lifted, you can look back and see that the darkness was not as complete as you thought. For there in the darkness will wink and glimmer the light of your memories like fireflies on a summer night.

Judy Dickey
TCF, Greenwood, IN

For The New Year

Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them.

- 1) Let's not try to imagine the future - take one day at a time.
- 2) Allow yourself time to cry, both alone, and with your loved ones.
- 3) Don't shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
- 4) Try to be realistic about your expectations of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. Each of us is an entity, therefore different. So how can there be perfect understanding?
- 5) When a good day comes, relish it – don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last. It WILL come again and multiply.
- 6) Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles. Drink lots of water and take stress type multiple vitamins; rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body heal, as well as your mind.

7) Share your feelings with other Compassionate Friends (or other groups you may choose) and let them share with you. As you find you are caring about the pain of others, you are starting to come out of your shell - a very healthy sign.

I know following these suggestions won't be easy. But it's worth a try, don't you think? Nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

Mary Ehmann,
TCF, Valley Forge, PA

~reprinted from Arlington, DC,
Leesburg, Prince William, and
Burke-Springfield-Fairfax Virginia
Chapters January 2008 Newsletter
New Year's Wishes For Bereaved



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

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(What is New about the New Year? Continued from page 5)

left. We feel regrets about hugs not given, letters not written, "I love you" 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

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 lightning 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 solidly spiritual. I have gone through Dante's seven circles, walls and gates of hell and emerged as the 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

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(I've Learned continued from page 2)

- The world does not stop when your child dies.
- Being among nature helps to bring some softness to my heart and brings my daughter closer to me.
- That as unbelievable as it is to me, I have come to reconcile my daughter's death. A "settling" has taken place within myself.
- You don't have to have money to be rich.
- A broken heart will mend...almost.
- We are all connected and need each other in such a special way.
- Many times we are touching lives and helping each other in time and space that we don't even realize.
- The support of family and friends is invaluable.
- The phone becomes an object of anxiety sometimes. (Child's death notified by phone.)
- That "normalizing" the sense of being totally insane is helpful.
- There may be difficulty when people say we are "coping so well."
- After three years, I don't want to talk about the loss of my son a lot, although he is rarely absent from my consciousness.
- It may help to focus on the very small things, because you will not be able to make sense of the larger picture.
- To attempt to feel comfort in the warmth or scent of a cup of hot tea in my hands, the smell of a flower, the proximity of someone who cared.
- The daily searing pain gets less raw, and sometimes I can have moments of joy.
- To watch the sunset every day.
- My son will always be alive as long as I am also alive.
- I can smile when I remember him.
- I had to go with my feelings and trust in our love.
- It takes years of baby-stepping and falling.
- To be humble, grateful and a little more selfish, aware, honest and looking forward to my life, rather than living my son's death.
- What I would give for just ONE more day!
- It feels awfully good typing this into the computer.

Bereavement Magazine (March/April 2000). Reprinted with permission from Bereavement Publications, Inc. and Living With Loss Magazine 888-604-4673.

(Another Year Without My Child continued from page 6)

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 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.

Now the healing process has completed its circle. I am here for those parents who need me. Strangely this helps me to heal as well. I reach out to others who are new to the process of grief, and I tell them that there is hope.

One day the sunrise will again be beautiful and you will find peace within yourself. You will remember your child's life, you will honor your child's life and you will forever be changed by your child's death. But always, always, your child will remain in your heart. This is my truth to all who wish to know. Lean on us, for we have been where you are today. We will walk with you on your journey toward hope, peace and resolution. It is in this place that the healing will begin.

This is a new year.



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

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.

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