

The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

July, 2013 Newsletter

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



Chapter Leader Notes from Toni

VACATIONS AND GRIEVING

Summer is here and vacations are on the minds of everyone. We have memories of wonderful, fun-filled trips with our families or even memories of vacations gone wrong that usually turn into funny stories later in life. Vacations hold the promise of fun and good memories and re-instilling the closeness of family.

What of vacations now? Is it possible to take trips after the death of your lively, beautiful, talented and occasionally wild & crazy child and still enjoy it? Is it possible to pile the rest of the family into the car or on to an airplane and head out for a good time away from home, to share new experiences and leave behind the hum drum of your daily routine? Will being away from home bring some relief from the stress and fatigue of your grief or will it make you more anxious and upset to be away from your home and the things around you that represent your "lost" child?

Some parents find relief from their grief by leaving home for a while to visit other family, go to past vacation spots that their child loved, or go to a completely new location that has no memory of your child. Some parents leave home to embrace their grief, contemplate their loss and experience the depth of their sorrow while others will take a trip to try to get out from under the weight of the grief that surrounds them and gain some rest for what they know will be a long, emotional journey of bereavement.

All of the choices are good choices. Only you can decide what is right for you and your family.

Simply, remember to be realistic and be careful not to set unrealistic expectations of what a vacation will do for you or for your family. As you know, grief brings fatigue and low energy levels so be careful when planning activities. Allow time to replenish yourself and the family. Remember, grief travels with you.

Once you have made the decision and gone on a vacation, that is one step that is behind you. The next vacation should be easier. Future trips will get better and new

lovely, funny memories will find root in your mind and heart.

We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey.
- Koji Mizushima

As long as I can I will look at this world for both of us.

As long as I can I will laugh with the birds,

I will sing with the flowers,

I will pray to the stars, for both of us.

- Sascha

Meetings

July 18, 2013 - 7:30 p.m.

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

Waukegan meeting

September 5, 2013 - 7:00 p.m.

Holy Family Church
450 Keller Street, Waukegan, IL
Open discussion

Grief changes us. It's not a matter of being changed for the better or worse...it just changes us. The beauty in life is always there. We just have to look up to find it.



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 Terry & Jeanette Powell
for their donation in
loving memory of their daughter,
Renee' Powell**

"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.

A GRIEF SHARED

Lynda Boucugnani-Whitehead, Ph.D.

This will not be the typical article you often see in a professional publication. There will be no references to scholarly works, no discussion of what has been gleaned from years of research, no statistics, no methodology. Rather, this will be a story from the heart, one that I hope may help psychologists first understand, and then do what they do best. I had the inspiration to write this article just a week or so before the tragedy in New York. In my frame of reference, following the horror at the World Trade Center and Pentagon and in Pennsylvania, perhaps this is divine inspiration - this is something I just have to do.

What is it like to live through such a profound grief, to have your whole life changed in an instant, to have much of your future taken away, and to find yourself in a world that you don't recognize? We have all had at least a taste of this, as Americans, our lives have been changed by these events. There is a loss of a sense of security and for what we thought our future would be. But what about those people who have sustained a more profound and excruciating loss - the loss of a loved one who was treasured and so much a part of the fabric of your very life. What is it like to have that person taken away so abruptly, to one minute have that loved one beside you as a part of your dream, and the next to have that love ripped away from you? What do psychologists and other helping professionals need

to know in order to help those who have sustained such a loss?

This story is very personal for me and, therefore, somewhat difficult to tell. As many of you know, my daughter, Maria-Victoria, was killed in an automobile accident just three blocks from my home as her brother was driving her home from school. A speeding driver ran through a red light and smashed into their car killing Maria-Victoria instantly. She was 13 years old. It was a normal day, bright and sunshiny and my life was going along as normal. My daughter was a beautiful, intelligent and accomplished person known for her extraordinary kindness and compassion for others. She was innocence and pure love blossoming into a leader of others and she was building the confidence that could have taken her very, very far in this life. In one second she was here, in one second she was not. The fifth anniversary of her death was just 2 days after the New York tragedy.

Within a few months of her passing, I joined a group called Compassionate Friends, which is a self-help group for parents who have lost children. It was a very good move. It is said that the most profound loss a person can have is the loss of a child - I can tell you that this is the truth. However, for those who have not lost children, the most profound loss is the one they have experienced or are experiencing at the present time. Those of us in this group frequently lament about how ill-equipped others who have not experienced such pain and grief are in dealing with it. Ministers are often the focus of such discussions for example and we have often discussed how we can let others, especially professionals, know how it really is - what helps and sometimes, more importantly, what doesn't help. This is the purpose of this story - this Dialogue - to let my fellow psychologists know some things that in the future will help them be able to help. It is based on my own personal experiences as well as the numerous Compassionate Friends who have come into my life.

You have all heard or read about the stages of grief. The work that was done in this area by pioneers such as Elizabeth Kubler-Ross is very valuable in understanding the emotions of grief. Some

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OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN JULY & AUGUST

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

Bryan Casaca Martinez	July 2	Son of Alesley Martinez
Michael Stice	July 4	Son of Dora & Gary Stice
Renee' Rochelle Powell	July 7	Daughter of Terry & Jeanette Powell
Liam Budill	July 7	Son of Joe and Amanda Budill
Brian Scott Ludlow	July 19	Son of Ronald & Karen Zaylik
Roberto Gonzalez	July 25	Son of Celia & Javier Gonzalez
Elizabeth (Liz) Willding	July 27	Daughter of Gigi Willding
Steven Anthony Sostre	July 31	Son of Jorge Sostre
Kylie Rayne Albeck	August 10	Child of Shaun & Katie Albeck
Andrew Perkins	August 12	Son of Richard & Thelma Perkins
Karli Brooke Weidenhagen	August 17	Daughter of Jim & Adrienne Weidenhagen
Andrew Muno	August 18	Son of Darlene & Bart Muno
Roger Alan Segebarth	August 19	Son of Rueben & Joanne Segebarth
Ashley Seay	August 25	Daughter of Mike and Shannon Seay Granddaughter of Dennis & Georgene Manley
Josh Summers	August 27	Son of Tina Carlson Grandson of Larry & Cheryl Armstrong
Roman Gabriel Cano	August 28	Son of Simona & Daniel Rhodes
Nicole Parfill	August 30	Daughter of Robin Parfill

ANNIVERSARIES

Eric Friedle	June 2	Son of Dennis & Diane Friedle
Bryan Cantafio	June 26	Son of Jerry Cantafio
Russell Twiehaus	July 2	Son of Christine Twiehaus
Anna Smith Miller	July 6	Daughter of Carol Semple
Elizabeth (Liz) Willding	July 14	Daughter of Gigi Willding
Rogelio Lopez Jr	July 17	Son of Angelina & Rogelio Lopez
Johnny Garcia	July 22	Son of Tomas & Minerva Garcia
Brian Keough	August 2	Son of Kathleen Keough
Jammi Shonlei Hui	August 5	Daughter of William & Joyce Hui
Pressley Suzanne McHugh	August 5	Daughter of Shawn & Kari McHugh
Sandra Elena Varela	August 5	Daughter of Sandra Meggs
Kylie Rayne Albeck	August 10	Child of Shaun & Katie Albeck
Noah-Dean Saunders	August 12	Son of Paula Jaimez
David Spannraft	August 12	Son of Elizabeth & Dan Spannraft
Barry J Grazier	August 13	Son of Robert & Mary Ann Grazier
Raphael E Vidal	August 20	Son of Raphael & Mirtha Vidal
David Sloop	August 21	Son of Charron Sloop
Ryan James Nichols	August 22	Son of Jackie & Jim Nichols
Michael Lee Brandon Hamilton Frederick	August 25	Son of Jan Frederick Grandson of Sharon Frederick
Justin Cody Ortega	August 31	Son of Susie Meggs

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

My Journey So Far

Lee Ann Hutson, President BP/USA

Our son, Greg, age 13, died by suicide in September of 2005. The following May, I was online looking for grief information. I found the Bereaved Parents of the USA website, I read about the National Gathering being held in St Louis the following July. I shared the information with my husband and in no time we were signed up. Little did we know what that weekend would bring to us.

We had no idea what we were walking into. There were so many people. They had on shirts and buttons with pictures of their kids and they were laughing. We had to be in the wrong place.

We registered at the Bereaved Parents table, got a welcome bag and headed to our room. We spent the evening reading through the Program Guide. WOW. Are they going to answer all of our questions? So many workshops were being offered, how were we to choose which ones to go to, there was not the time to go to all of them. We knew we would attend all of the suicide workshops.

The next morning we put on our nametags, pinned on our buttons with Greg's picture and headed downstairs to the dining room for breakfast. As we approached the dining room there was a long line. I don't remember Daryl and I even speaking to each other, just looking in amazement, so many people. I thought to myself, all of these parents have had children die. We found a couple of seats at a table that already had six people sitting at it. I sit looking at each of their nametags and pictures. To this day, I truly believe we were put at that table for a reason. Every couple at the table had a child die within the last 12 months. We all immediately felt connected.

Stories of our children were shared. We were sitting in a room with 400 other people who knew exactly how I felt. It was a huge relief; this lonely burden had been lifted off our shoulders. We could feel what we needed to feel and not have to explain ourselves. These people get it.

During the four hour drive home, we reflected on everything we had learned, with the most important being, you do not have to do this alone. Sharing, talking and listening had helped in our healing.

We knew we had to bring something to our rural community, for other bereaved parents.



We held our first BP/USA support group meeting the following October. Not knowing what to expect, we had a full room. As we watched the bereaved parents come into the room, we could see the sadness on their faces and the tired in their eyes. They each looked at us, hoping we had the answers. They had come with heart in hand. Their eyes were saying "Can you mend it? Can you make the hurt go away?" By the end of the evening, those tired eyes were glistening with twinkles of hope.

Never in a million years would I have thought I could have survived this long without seeing Greg. I remember thinking on Sept 19th 2005, just how was I going to make it to the 20th. Then it was a week, then a month. Next thing you know it had been a year. With the help of our family, friends and other bereaved parents, we heal. Attending National Gatherings and beginning our BP group, we continue to heal and now help others do the same.

During the first year after Greg's death, I would have never dreamed I would have been able to start a support group for others, be a part of the BP/USA BOD and still be helping other bereaved families eight years later.

So here I am on my journey. What to do next? It is a daily question. I find it humbling when people say thank you for doing what I am doing to help others. All I am doing is listening. I share the sadness. I share kind words. I am just there. I grieve with them.

Let this 2013 National Gathering be your glisten of hope, just as the 2006 was mine.

Borrowed from "A Journey Together" Volume XVIII No. 3 Summer National Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents of the USA www.bereavedparentsusa.org.

(A Grief Shared continued from page 2)

professionals may feel that they can help people with grief because they have studied these stages and know the sequence by heart. Throw it all away. People who have sustained profound loss do not want to hear about the stages of grief - it's almost an insult. They do want to know that what they are feeling is normal, that they are not "crazy", that others have felt or done the same things.

There is no sequence of grief - it is a constant, evolving journey with many diversions into emotional peaks and valleys along the way. It is a journey and it is never over.

It is true that at the time of the event you are in a state of shock and numbness. In my case after a telephone call, I made my way to the accident site. It was eerily quiet with cars backed up in four different directions at the intersection, so that I had to drive on the wrong side of the road to get there. When I got to the scene I was no longer within myself, I must have dissociated. I felt like I was observing everything as if I was in a movie. The people in all the cars were watching me. I imagined they were saying "that's the mother". I was aware that I was playing this "role". I imagine that many of the relatives looking for loved ones in New York must have felt this way too. At the hospital I was placed in a special room - meant to be a comfort but cut off from others. It did allow me to get out of the movie. What helped? Friends coming to be with me. You need to hold and touch people - you need them to hold you and just "be there" for you. What didn't help? Waiting hours to be told whether my children were alive or dead. I already knew in my heart and soul that Maria-Victoria was gone from this life but to have a doctor finally come in and say in a cool and dispassionate manner that "your daughter is deceased" made me angry. A simple "I'm so sorry", a touch on the hand and some semblance of compassion would have endeared this doctor to me for life. Why is that so hard to do?

We are blessed with this state of shock that comes almost immediately after suffering a traumatic loss. It allows us to do the things we have to do. For many of us this is very, very important. I needed to make sure that Maria-Victoria had a wonderful, up-lifting funeral service that told the world about the wonderfulness of my little girl. I needed to write an obituary that would touch the hearts of Atlanta. I needed to comfort her teachers and students at her school, thereby comforting myself. I needed to be there for the hundreds of people who came to show they cared. Some people criticized the news coverage in New York of friends and relatives showing flyers of their missing loved ones saying it was exploitation. I spoke to them through my TV set saying - "you just don't get it - they need to do this - they need to let others know about the one they love - they need to feel like they are doing something

to take care of them."

What helped me so much in the initial weeks after the accident were touches from the hearts of other people. I savored all the cards, the incredible amount of food from individuals and whole schools, letters and phone calls from people I had never met who were touched by my daughter's story and the physical presence of people I was close to. Such heartfelt gestures give life when life has gone out of your existence.

There is a time when you have to go back to work and start to live this new life. I was fortunate to have such a wonderful, supportive staff that literally carried me through that first year. Others are not so fortunate. Some have to go back to work just days after the funeral and are expected to perform as if nothing has happened. When a traumatic loss has struck you, you are amazed and perhaps a little bit angry that the world has gone on. You say to yourself, "how can these normal things still go on - how can people laugh - don't they know the world has ended?" You think to yourself that you will never laugh again, that you will never feel joy again - it's incomprehensible to think that you could.

During that first year (time will vary among folks) you are literally "out of your mind". Believe it or not, there is actually a "physical pain", usually in your heart and chest area and all over your body at times, experienced by many that is excruciating and you think will never go away. Mine lasted about 2 months and then just floated away. It was a relief to say goodbye to that constant companion. You are "out of your mind" because you think about your loved one constantly - probably a million times a day it certainly seems. That doesn't leave much room for concentration and memory. Those who have experienced such loss need to know that this is perfectly normal. It is perfectly normal to put the iron in the refrigerator. At work if you don't have support, you will certainly not be able to function like you used to. You may be able to do some things on "automatic pilot" but this is not the time to be making major decisions and you - and the business you work for - need to give you leeway for your memory lapses and perhaps loss of drive. Every day is a struggle just to

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(A Grief Shared continued from page 5)

get up and live. Every day you get up and live is an accomplishment. So be supportive and tolerant - make it a point to know about these cognitive disturbances, help the person you are helping to understand them. And - if you can - help their employers to know what to expect and how to give support.

There is no timetable for grief. It is highly offensive to the grief-stricken to hear things like, "you need to move on", or to receive messages that you are expected to be back to normal and "over it" in a certain time frame. I once had a principal come up to me about three months after Maria-Victoria died and say, "well, have you gotten over the death of your lovely daughter?" I swear this is true. My response was, rather curtly, "I will never get over it". This kind-hearted man had no clue about how much that remark hurt. Let me tell you that you never get over it. You are a changed, different person from the one you were before the death of your loved one. We don't want to get over it because that suggests that we can somehow let that love go. That brings me to the dreaded "C" word. A word hated by the bereaved and one especially pertinent to those people who have loved ones missing in New York. The dreaded C word "closure". I hate that word. I am offended by that word. Most of the bereaved I know hate it too. There is no such thing as closure - you never get over it and quit expecting us to do it. People need to learn to say something else to describe people who need to have something happen before they can continue with their personal grief. Something like "relief from uncertainty" is more like it.

There is usually a lot of support and attention paid to the bereaved at the time of the loss and for a short time afterward. But after a while that support fades and contacts drop off. Many, if not all, of my Compassionate Friends report that this is a time when you know who your real friends are. Sometimes people don't know what to say and so avoid you. Especially in cases where children have died, people avoid you because they think it might be "contagious". If this most horrendous of nightmares happens to you, it could happen to me. I don't want to think about that so I'll stay away from you. You may be shaking your head in disbelief, but it is true. Many find that family members are the least helpful. They do not want to bring it up because they think it will cause pain to you - but especially to them.

If you remember one thing from this story, remember what is in this paragraph. The most precious words a person who has lost a loved one can hear are their loved one's name. Say it over and over again. It will not bring pain - it has great potential to bring joy and to heal. MARIA-VICTORIA, MARIA-VICTORIA - hearing

her name always lightens my heart. In the beginning, people need to tell their story - over and over again. Your job is to listen, to give a hug or show that you feel for them. It was important for those missing loved ones in New York or for those who knew their loved one had died, to "tell their story". This is a part of the grief process, and a way to validate the strength of their continuing love for their loved one. It is a way to honor them and, most importantly, to assure that they will not be forgotten. That is the greatest fear of those of us who have lost our children (and probably for other bereaved persons as well). We do not want our loved ones to be forgotten. You are doing the bereaved a wonderful favor when you bring up their loved one's name and when you reminisce about something that they did or something special about them. It is a very, very special gift and so easy to give.

There can come a time when the bereaved person starts to refrain from bringing up their loved one's name or talking about them because they are afraid of making the other person uncomfortable. A lot of people don't know what to say and so they say nothing. You quickly learn who you can trust and who you can't to spill your heart to. People are afraid that what they might say will sound awkward or mistakenly think it will bring pain. This then can be misinterpreted by the bereaved person as a sign that you don't care. Never say "I know just how you feel" because you don't - you have no idea. Never say, "I don't know how you do it - if it was me I'd just die". My goodness, that implies that I must not have loved my child enough because I didn't die. What helps? A hug and saying "I think about you often" - Just a heartfelt hug - "I was thinking about Maria-Victoria today" - "I know this is a hard time for you" - "I am so sorry".

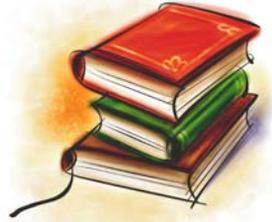
I went to see a therapist for about a year after Maria-Victoria died. What I liked about her the most was that she told me at the beginning that she knew very little about dealing with grief but felt that she was going to learn a lot by our time together. She did learn a lot and I got a chance to tell my story, to process how my life had changed and to run through ideas about how to redefine my life and redefine my relationship with my daughter. In essence, in the long term that is what we,

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Book Review

Wave

Sonali Deraniyagal
Alfred A. Knopf, 2013



Ms. Deraniyagal is a survivor of the Sri Lanka Tsunami. The only survivor in her family. The great wave claimed her husband, their two small sons, and her parents. She spends no time preparing her reader with what we know is coming, but rather, hits us on page one, unprepared, much as she and her family vacationing in a beach front hotel were hit with the onslaught of the mighty Indian Ocean.

In the ensuing six years we journey with her as she progresses through the grief, constantly looking back at the happy life so violently wrenched from her grip. Our author tells us about her life before, in remembrances, that are as hard to read, as all bereaved parents will understand, as they must have been to write. She tries to imagine what her boys would be doing today. "When the girls speak, my heart listens in fear of being blown apart by the knowledge of what would have been. When I project on my own what the boys would be doing now, my thoughts can be as nebulous as I want them to be. Not so with the girls' chatter, no fog to veil what they say." She rails at life continuing: "And everywhere, on bare ground and between cracks in the floors [where the hotel had stood], tiny pink and white flowers that flourish along the seashore forced their way up. Mini mal, or graveyard flowers, they are called. I resented this renewal. How dare you heal."

It will be clear, if you are a veteran on this journey, that Ms. Deraniyagal has not yet reached a place of inner peace. But we marvel at how far she has come and hope she finds it. (Continued on page 9)

We welcome your comments and/or items submitted for use in the newsletter. Short articles, poems, or book reviews are always welcome. 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

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Regional Coordinator, Mary Seibert PH: 773-721-7810 nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

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 847-223-7353 tonin@sbcglobal.net Rachel Salomonson Age 18 – Auto accident

TREASURER Forest Anderson 847-838-0567 forest.anderson@att.net Rusty Anderson Age 15 – Osteosarcoma

SECRETARY Jenny & Rick Selle 847-249-4776 jennyselle@yahoo.com Lila Ruffolo Age 24 – Auto Accident

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 Mary Foresta 847-986-4133 Elizabeth Foresta Age 11 – Septic Shock, Heart/Lung failure

PUBLICITY Kari McHugh 262-862-6880 ksmchugh@hotmail.com Pressley McHugh Age 46 days Hypoplastic left heart syndrome

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

Mary Ann Grazier 847-336-0539 Barry Grazier Age 27 – Auto Accident

Maggie McGaughey 224-406-6644 maggiieg00@hotmail.com Jeremy Govekar Age 22 – Hit by train

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

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 _____

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. 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.

Hope and Healing Workshop:

Workshops:

The Myths & Mysteries of Grief – Darcie Sims

The 5 H's of Grief – Alan Pedersen

Does Grief Come One Size Fits All? – Darcie Sims

Family Style Dinner Evening "Hope and Healing" Concert – Alan Pedersen & Darcie Sims

Registration forms can be downloaded at:

www.doorcountytcf.org/events.html

Questions? Contact Carol at 920-743-3476 or

rmoellen@doorpi.net

Alan Pedersen's website is www.angelsacrosstheusa.com

Darcie Sims' website is www.GriefInc.com