



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

June 2019 Newsletter



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

It's June

It might have been her wedding.

It was supposed to be his graduation day; his friends are there - he is not. You had always planned to take them to Disneyland, but it is too late for that, now.



When they died, they took some of your future as well; they took your dreams for them. They left a hole in your life, and you will never feel completely whole again.

Should you accept those invitations to weddings and graduations? Only you know what is comfortable for you...

Give yourself all the room you need, no matter what anyone else says. Perhaps this year, you will want to send a card or gift instead of attending the event.

A couple in our chapter went to their son's friends wedding reception and skipped the wedding ceremony, which would have been too painful for them. One mom said she left a graduation with mixed emotions. She ached for her son's place in line, getting his diploma; but she also felt honored to have been invited by her son's friend and proud when they brought her flowers "for Jim," and she loved hearing all the stories about her son that they shared.

What you have left is the love you feel for them, the memories that they left you - these will always be a part of you. In this way, they are a part of your future.

This is a very sad and difficult time for you, so do something nice for yourself today. Isn't that what your child would have wanted?

--L.E. Skagit Chapter, Mount Vernon, WA
~reprinted from South LA/Bay June 2001 Newsletter

Father's Day

Sunday is Father's Day, and I feel awkward about it.

On a cold morning in January, our son, David, was born. And I became a father. Before that cold day ended our son was dead. Was I a father still?

I had dreams for him,
hopes for him,
love for him, as any father would.
I grieved for him, longed for him,
missed him achingly
as only a father could.
Did the grieving and the longing and the missing achingly
make me a father still,
though I no longer had the relationship
or the function?

Father's Day is coming ☐
I am feeling confused and awkward about it.

Today is Sunday, Father's Day.
A friend approaches me and says,
"Today must be terribly hard for you."
Then he gives me a hug,
a heartfelt embrace and says,
"I'll be thinking of you today.
Happy Father's Day."

Suddenly, the awkwardness and confusion is gone.
I am a father.
I will always be one.

Jim Nelson
In loving memory of David.
Lovingly lifted from Rich Township TCF NL 6/1999



Meetings

Lake Villa Meeting Northern Illinois Chapter TCF June 20

7:30 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.
Millburn Congregational Church
19073 W Grass Lake Rd
(Corner of Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45
Lake Villa, IL 60046
Open Discussion

There will be no meeting in July

Holy Family Church
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



42ND NATIONAL CONFERENCE

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.

OF LOVED ONES

By Roy Peterson - A Dear Friend of BP/USA

Absolutely nothing can be as painful as the death of a loved one and our journeys through the valley of the shadow of death leave us little room to do anything other than mourn.

However, somehow we do reach that plateau, that point, that place in time where we resolve to renew our lives, to seek to put everything into perspective. Marlo Thomas (when remembering her father, Danny) said, "it's just not enough to survive—you have to thrive! It doesn't matter whether you are freshly bereaved or whether it happened years ago and you are just coming to terms with the death."

Memories are part of our awesome job of survival and part of healing and restoring ourselves. Our loved ones have died and our lives have been changed—in ways we hardly ever imagined as possible. "Why?" people ask! "Why do you bring back painful memories? For what purpose? Wouldn't it be better to avoid confusion and forego any need to understand why?"

Am I never again to acknowledge the life and death of someone so precious, so much a part of my waking and sleeping life? How could I not remember? And, even though remembering is disruptive, a loss without memories cannot be possible.

Each month, each week and each day brings us the chance to put that loss in perspective. We need to grab each chance to build memories to help relieve the pain, or at least to change its level of intensity. We believe that whatever pain we bring to gatherings is pain that we share, just as we share with each other our love for our children. Memorial services are such emotional and satisfying activities because they allow us to face and remember our losses; us to reorder our lives. The healing that occurs is an important aspect of the restoration of our inner selves.

Eventually it is possible to realize that our loved ones were normal. They were good,

(Continued on page 4)

MEMORIES





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

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>Edgar O Villareal</i>	June 2	Son of Guadalupe Villareal
<i>Westley Banks</i>	June 6	Son of Susan Banks
<i>Robert William Corbett</i>	June 6	Son of Mary Ann & Robert Corbett
<i>Edward G Davis III</i>	June 8	Son of Edward G Davis Jr.
<i>James (Jim) Grazier</i>	June 9	Son of Robert & Mary Ann Grazier
<i>Brandon Reif</i>	June 10	Son of Marcy Reif
<i>Lila Ruffolo</i>	June 12	Daughter of Jenny & Rick Selle
<i>Pressley Suzanne McHugh</i>	June 20	Daughter of Kari McHugh
<i>Michael Stice</i>	July 4	Son of Dora & Gary Stice
<i>Renee' Rochelle Powell</i>	July 7	Daughter of Terry & Jeanette Powell
<i>Joshua William Bowman</i>	July 18	Son of Robin Bray Nephew of Kimberlee Christensen
<i>Brian Scott Ludlow</i>	July 19	Son of Ronald & Karen Zaylik
<i>Robert William Corbett</i>	July 20	Son of Mary Ellen & Robert Corbett
<i>Elizabeth (Liz) Willding</i>	July 27	Daughter of Gigi Wilding
<i>Darien Wilson</i>	July 27	Son of Tammy and Tim Olvera

ANNIVERSARIES

<i>Marcia Castillo</i>	June 8	Daughter of Sissy & Arthur Castillo
<i>Robert Corbett</i>	June 30	Son of Mary Ellen & Robert Corbett
<i>Justin Perez</i>	July 4	Son of Traci & Carlos Perez Brother of Samantha (Perez) Przybylski
<i>Anna Smith Miller</i>	July 6	Daughter of Carol Smith
<i>Elizabeth (Liz) Willding</i>	July 14	Daughter of Gigi Wilding
<i>Amy Jo Baldwin</i>	July 17	Daughter of Mike & Sheila Baldwin
<i>Eduardo Chavez-Nuño</i>	July 23	Son of Maria Del Carmen Nuño
<i>Qua'Shawn Wade</i>	July 24	Son of June Andrejewski
<i>John Thumel</i>	July 26	Son of Laura & Mike Thumel

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

MEMORIES OF LOVED ONES continued from page 2)

indifferent, full of mischief, ambitious or on the road to success or failure. In realizing that they were normal, we start down memory lane. We discover memories lost in the fog of our grief. We unearth long buried treasures.

How awful it must be to be robbed of memories! Not to recall our loved ones as they were would be life's worst blow. Somehow we must reach a place where our love and memories are liberated from the painful emotions linked with the deaths of our loved ones. It is in that liberation that we find an awakening to new possibilities, to new understandings and to growth. As we acknowledge that healing and restoration are occurring, a path out of the depths of despair opens. It is then that we can say, "even though our loved ones died—our love for and memories of them will never go away."

A Grief Journey in Review

As I write this I am listening to Johnny Horton singing "Whispering Pines." This is a melancholy song, yet a sweet one. It reminded me of the day that my son died and the journey I have taken since then.

Todd was in a car accident in mid-December, almost on the winter solstice. He died on December 19. This is significant to me. I was raised in the cold, snowy part of the country. My son was returning from that area when the accident that took his life occurred. I remember recounting the events second by second when my son died. I remember how Todd disliked the shortened daylight of winter. How ironic that his death came on what was nearly the shortest day of the year.

We have just passed summer solstice. Todd has been gone for over 4 ½ years. I still miss him, and I think about him each day. I am a different person since my son died. My life has changed dramatically. The cast of characters in my life has changed somewhat. Solitude has become an important part of living for me. I no longer weep endlessly and fall asleep from exhaustion. I no longer walk the floor at night. The periods of manic rearranging of my house have slowed to something approaching normal for me.

Somewhere on this horrible journey of grief my subconscious mind accepted the fact that I will never see Todd again. I have accepted his death. I am rarely jolted by the sudden thought that Todd is not on this plane. My beautiful child, the baby who grew to be such a special man, is gone. This is part of who I am now. I now keep Todd in my heart. I talk about him with strangers as if he were still alive. With those who know

me, I speak of the loss of my only child with quiet acceptance, and I share the many joys of my child's life.

Life has begun to improve. I am even thinking of a vacation next year. I am making more plans than I have in over four years. I have accepted what I cannot change. This is a milestone for me, because I have always been able to change the variables, to make things right, to bring back normalcy. But I won't be able to change the fact that my son has died.

Along the way I have had moments of epiphany, only brief ones, but epiphanies of various sorts. Most of the change has been gradual. Talking with other parents, reading, writing, listening to music, to radio programs, to speakers, going to seminars, watching movies, all of these efforts have helped me. But it was up to me to take those first steps. It was my choice to remove the crepe and add a colorful wreath to the front door. It was my choice to reach out for help and accept what those who shared my grief journey offered. Much has changed in my life since that first year of grief. Much will change in the future. I have learned that change is the essence of life. I have learned from wonderful people; I have learned from negative people as well. Each person who transcends my life has taught me something about grief, about living, about moving forward into the light.

I don't know where I will be in five years or ten years. I dream about my son. We often have great conversations in those dreams. Sometimes he is a small child, sometimes a grown man. When I awaken I feel as close to Todd as I will be on this earthly plane.

Shortly after the summer solstice this year, a strange thing happened. My grandson and his girlfriend came home early which was odd because they planned to be out late. I was reading and listening to a news show. "Don't freak out, Nanny," my grandson said. "We were in an accident. I just looked at him."

Then I asked if he was hurt. "No, but the guy who was driving jumped out of the truck and ran away. He was doing 80 mph in the rain. He hit a curb,

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Annual Gathering Conference

Join us August 2-4, 2019 for the Spirit of Love Bereaved Parents of the USA National Gathering in St. Louis, MO!

Make plans now to attend the 2019 BPUSA National Gathering August 2-4 at the Sheraton Clayton Plaza Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. Our Gathering theme is ***Spirit of Love*** reminding us as we face our own struggles, of the inspiration and hope our nation once found in the ***Spirit of St. Louis***. Please join us and feel the love as we remember our children together.

The Gathering Conference will be a three-day event with keynote speakers, workshops, meals, entertainment and memorial ceremonies all designed to help bereaved parents and their families understand that they are not alone in their grief. Our annual Gatherings have been praised as wonderfully meaningful experiences, life-changing in many ways. Participants come away feeling refreshed and revitalized, better informed about the grieving process, more aware of hope and promise and affirmed by meeting new friends who travel the same path.

The Sheraton Clayton Plaza Hotel is a modern hotel designed to accommodate gatherings like ours, including clean, comfortable rooms, spacious conference facilities, a modern fitness center (including a pool) and a first-class restaurant. The hotel is offering special room rates to Gathering attendees.

Known for its iconic arch, a must-see attraction, St. Louis is a vacation destination of national prominence, with many sightseeing adventures to enjoy. Plan a family vacation in conjunction with the Gathering. Spend some time remembering your child and then explore life on the Mississippi in this bustling, modern "Gateway to the West."

So, start making plans now to attend the BPUSA Gathering Conference and we'll meet you in St. Louis in August!

(A Grief Journey in Review continued from page 4)

fishtailed, braked and spun around twice. Then the truck smashed into a utility pole. Annalee hit her head on the door panel. I bounced around in the backseat. I didn't have a seat belt on. The EMTs had checked them out. I did the same. Then I sat down. I smiled at him. "What?" he said.

"What, what. What have you learned tonight?" I responded.

"I'm never riding with him again. I'm never riding with anyone who is drinking. I'm never riding with anyone who drives like a spaz or drinks," he said, summarizing the situation.

That was good. I smiled. Just shortly after summer solstice my grandson escaped death. The truck was a total loss. The driver was nowhere to be found. But Todd's son was alive, unhurt. His girlfriend was fine. I later confirmed with a deputy on the scene that it was a real miracle anyone walked away. Yet they did. They walked away from that mass of twisted steel and smashed plastic. I like to think that my son is still on this earthly plane in some form.

Watching, watching over his children. That's what he did in life. And so my journey continues. I no longer "freak out" about the unchangeable. My child would be glad to know this. "You're acting like Dad," my grandson said. "He was always cool."

"I guess I'm cool now. But there was a time." I've changed. My perspective is the unique one of a mother who has lost her only child. And the journey continues until I, too, meet the angel of death.

Annette Mennen
Baldwin
In memory of my
son,
Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX



Because

Because you can't feel me,
Doesn't mean I don't speak.
Because you can't see me,
Doesn't mean I'm gone.

Beth Oldani, bereaved sibling
TCF, Arlington Heights, IL

THE POWER OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photos capture moments in time.



these glossy pictures evokes emotions of happiness and joy.

There is a little girl with red bows in her curly brown hair leaning over to kiss her baby brother in the bassinet. A toddler sits on a rock with a fishing pole. Seeing

On any given day at the portrait studio, as the photographer, I can catch these moments with the click of the camera.

Some parents have clear ideas about what they want in a photo session. "Nothing frilly. Simple," many moms will tell me. I then provide them with a white or black background.

Others want to use a prop -- the tiny chair that has been in the family for generations or the blanket that belonged to a relative long gone. Some tell me, „You are the professional. Whatever you think will be best is fine.

The other day a family arrived at the studio with two young boys. The mom knew what she wanted in the photo -- the plastic bathtub.

The smallest son fit in the tub. The older boy sat next to the tub in a pair of shorts. Both boys had their shirts off to convey a real bathtub scene. I placed a towel here and a rubber ducky there.

Then I did my thing-- working on smiles and making sure the kids were looking at the camera. I felt we got some cute pictures.

Later, as the photos were viewed at the proofing station on a computer monitor, the mother said something that made things both clear and sad.

Why was the shirtless bathtub scene so vital to her?

"I wanted to get his chest," she said, her eyes on the monitor. "He's to have open heart surgery next month."

I gulped. And this young child would have a scar on his pure small chest. The mother was capturing the last of her son's flawless brown-skinned chest. I understood because I knew about scars. My son had one on his neck, where his malignant

tumor grew and where the knife from many surgeries had entered.

The next thing I knew I'd told this mother about my son Daniel.

I don't know why I was surprised at my tears. In the eight years since Daniel's death, hadn't I learned tears are never far?

All photographs are not created equally. The ones of this young child will be looked at in a different light than the ones of his younger brother. I know these things.

I cherish all the photos of my four children. But the ones of Daniel hold more for me. When I see them, there is no way I can fool myself. The ones of him are not just of a cute kid. They are of a child who never grew up, a child with his name on a tombstone. A child I wish I could bring into the studio today and tomorrow to make laugh and smile.

Looking at my photos of Daniel can be, of course, emotional.

A few days later a mother came to the studio with an infant. The mother asked if there would be any problem with taking pictures of her daughter. "She's blind," the mother said. The child's eyes were shut tight. My usual look over here didn't work although I mistakenly said it once.

Some parents don't like the photos of their kids. "That is not his good smile, they will say after the camera has snapped. "He has a smirk, a mother will explain, even though I think the child looks adorable. What if your eyes can't smile at all? This little girl's eyes were never seen in any of the pictures. Yet her mother ordered many of the photos.

Capturing the smiles and laughter is what I like to do. I also feel very humbled when during my shift I get to take the photos of the child who will soon lose her hair when the chemo treatments start, or of the preemie just out of the hospital.

Hopefully these pictures will last a long time and the children in them will grow up to be healthy and joyful.

A Father's Grief

By Rebekah Mitchell

"I'm so sorry!" "I'm so sorry!" I sobbed to Byron after Jonathan's death was confirmed. Between his own tears he asked me why I was apologizing to him. I felt as if I had failed him as a wife and as a mother to his children.

After Byron and I spent time alone with Jonathan, we wanted to share him with our family and friends who were waiting in an empty labor room down the hall. I was wheeled down there as Byron followed holding our tiny, lifeless bundle. One of my sisters says it is a sight she will never forget. I was very groggy during this sharing time, but I remember seeing Byron crying uncontrollably most of the night. In a drug-induced and shocked state, I tried to comfort Byron and tell him it was going to be okay.

Two days later my shock and painkillers wore off a little and I found that the role of comforting was reversed. Byron rarely left my side for the next several days but seldom did we grieve together. It seemed as if when one of us was having a hard time, the other would be the emotionally strong one.

Before long, we were home and attempting to get our lives back together. It seemed to me that Byron was having an easier time adjusting to the loss of Jonathan than I was. At times, I found myself enraged that he could get back to normal so quickly and continue his day-to-day activities when I was at home grieving over our precious baby.

What I didn't know was that he was burying his grief. Although his heart was torn in two when we lost our little boy, he was afraid that we were also going to lose the blissful family we once were. He wondered if we would ever truly be happy again and if our marriage would ever be the same. Because of these anxieties he subconsciously convinced himself that he had to get our family back on track before he would mourn the death of his son. It wasn't until two years after Jonathan's death that we realized this.

I am so thankful for my wonderful husband who has been my lifeline since the stillbirth of our baby. Except by the grace of God, I know I wouldn't have survived without Byron's love, compassion, and sensitivity. If you feel your husband is not grieving "right" or "enough," I hope you will find this article helpful. Encourage your spouse to read this also, and hopefully, he will realize that it's okay to have fears, express his emotions, and outwardly grieve the loss of his child.

A New Normal

I wanted my life to return to normal. Then I realized what I wanted was for my life to return to what it once was.

A year ago I found hope one night when I heard my wife and my youngest son laughing in our bedroom. I thought my life was returning to normal. I played cards with our youngest son after supper, with much fun and laughter. After a few cartoons, he and my wife were off to bed.

It was then that I realized my life was not returning to the normal that it was when Greg was alive, but changing to a new normal. I cannot return to what I once was, because all of the parts are no longer there. I have the choice, consciously, and subconsciously to carry on with my life, thus creating a new normal.

Hope lies in accepting what you now have, looking with joy, not sorrow, looking ahead with optimism not pessimism.

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~reprinted from Bereaved Parents USA website



http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/AP_Fathers.htm

Like the Butterfly

It fluttered there, above my head,
Weightless in the soft breeze
I reached up my hand,
It lit upon my finger.

Waving glistening wings gently,
It looked at me for timeless moments.
I smiled, reaching deep, and
Finding all those cherished memories

As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,
I knew we had said hello
Once more.

Lezlie Langfort-sibling
TCF, North Platte, NE

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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