



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

March, 2018 Newsletter

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



Chapter Leader Notes



THE CAUSE and THE ANTIDOTE

We become parents as optimists. We expect a change in priorities and lifestyle with parenthood. We even expect that it will bring joy and heartache, happiness and pain, contentment and conflict. We have faith that as parents, we will be able to navigate parenthood in spite of an uncertain and unpredictable world.

As parents, we open our hearts and we are rewarded with the deepest, richest love that can exist between human beings. Sometimes, our hearts are so filled with love as we guide and observe our children growing that we cry . . . moments that cause tears of joy, a human expression of overwhelming love.

Then the unimaginable happens. Our child dies. The loss of that person, to whom our lives were devoted and our hearts had grown wide to accommodate the love, is suddenly absent.

A sudden or even expected death creates a gaping hole that seems impossible to heal. Our tears of joy become tears of grief. Grief becomes our strange and constant companion. It overtakes our lives and makes us question our sanity. We know we must go on but we don't necessarily know how.

Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D., a prolific author on grief, reminds us that to grieve is to sustain our connection with love, not just to suffering. He wrote: "You see, love and grief are two sides of the same precious coin. One does not and cannot exist without the other. They are the yin and yang of our lives . . . Grief is predicated on our capacity to give and receive love. Some people choose not to love and so never grieve. If we allow ourselves the grace that comes

with love, however, we must allow ourselves the grace that is required to mourn."

Wolfelt also said that "to mourn your loss is required if you are to befriend the love you have been granted. To honor your grief is not self-destructive or harmful, it is life-sustaining and life-giving, and it ultimately leads you back to love again. In this way, **love is both the cause and the antidote.**"

Lisa Unger wrote that "Grief is not linear. It's not a slow progression forward toward healing . . . a terrible back-and-forth from devastated to okay until finally there are more okay patches and fewer devastated ones."

The Compassionate Friends wish each of us space, time and grace to heal. Remember that to cry is to heal. To grieve is to heal. We now must learn to live with the love that was left behind.

Peace and grace,
Toni



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 Joann Reece
for her donation
In memory of Timothy Joseph Reece

"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.

Meetings

Northern Illinois Chapter TCF
March 15th - 7:30 p.m.
Millburn Congregational Church
Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45, Millburn, IL
Open discussion

Waukegan meeting
April 5th
- 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

Steps Through Grief

by Lesley Schroeder after the passing of Mark



We lost our son Mark at the age of 17 when he drowned after a small plane crash. In the first four months of grief I remember wishing that someone would give me a list of things I could do to feel more in control, more able to keep on living. As his girlfriend, Penny said, we would all like it if there was a pill that could take grief away but there isn't. It's a slow heartbreaking process where you inch forward and then stumble backwards.

The process is different for each person but there are certain things that do help make it a little more bearable. I offer those steps and ideas here in the hope that they will be a blessing to you.

You feel you want to die: So did I for a long time. So did every bereaved mother I have ever spoken to. No matter how much you love your husband and your surviving children, you become totally obsessed with the child you lost. It's as if your entire identity and future is bound up with his. All you want to do is be with your child. He is all you think about most of the time. Feelings of wanting to die will slowly get less if you just have courage to live five minutes by five minutes. I realized that if I killed myself it would negate all that Mark and our family stood for, it would make it impossible to continue his legacy and be brave like he was. So I tried. Every day I tried and I am still here. Put yourself first: This is the one time in your life when you should indulge yourself totally. For at least the first 6 months you should not do anything you don't want to do. No is a nice short word. Use it. Simply say no when you don't want to do something. After the first month when you are back at work and trying to cope with all your normal responsibilities at home, it is very important to have time alone. You can play music, meditate, cry, watch videos and look at photographs of your beautiful child, read. Do whatever you feel like doing. And definitely try and meditate even if it's hard going. Just do it a little every day and see how you get on.

Exercise: It's the last thing you want to do but try. Walking your pain out helps and walking on the beach in particular, is very healing. Do physical
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OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN MARCH & APRIL

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

Kyle Glueck	March 4	Son of Dolores Krason
Elizabeth Mary Foresta	March 8	Daughter of Al & Mary Foresta
Justin Perez	March 9	Son of Traci & Carlos Perez Brother of Samantha (Perez) Przybylski
David Sloop	March 9	Son of Charron Sloop
Rusty Anderson	March 11	Son of Forest & Christine Anderson
David Spannraft	March 18	Son of Elizabeth & Dan Spannraft
Adam Rubin	March 28	Son of Linda Rubin Brother of Nicole Rubin
Lea Ann (Heise) Knuth	April 2	Daughter of Leslie & Shirley Heise
Michael Sean Gaede	April 8	Son of Maureen Gaede
Mike Reardon	April 10	Son of Sonia & Jim Reardon
Scott Ewing	April 11	Son of Alan & Renee Ewing
Qua'Shawn Wade	April 12	Son of June Andrejewski
Alyssa Carranza	April 15	Daughter of Luz Barrera Granddaughter of Angel & Raquel Gasco
Jammi Hui	April 25	Daughter of William & Joyce Hui
Sean Jones	April 26	Son of Octavine Jones
Timothy Reece	April 27	Son of Joanne Pihoda-Reece

ANNIVERSARIES

Edgar O Villareal	March 1	Son of Guadalupe Villareal
Jeremy Govekar	March 2	Son of Maggie McGaughey
John "Jake" Mosansky	March 12	Son of Darlene & John Mosansky Sister of Veronica Steif
Blake Logan Palmer	March 13	Son of Amber & Brian Palmer Grandson of Lois Cooper Grandson of Gina Palmer
Roderick Young	March 27	Son of Scarlet Austin Grandson of "Charlie" Johnson
José De Jesús Hernández	April 1	Son of Jesús & Virginia Hernández
Mathew Tisch	April 10	Son of William & Barbara Tisch
Stephanie Andrea Zamarron	April 11	Daughter of Vicky Zamarron & Juan Mungula Granddaughter of Alejandra Rodriquez & Cédar Rojas
Daniel Wang	April 13	Son of Millie Yu
Shannon McCarty	April 18	Daughter of Kevin McCarty & Pat Hays
Westley Banks	April 19	Son of Susan Banks
David Nesheim	April 24	Brother of Toni Nesheim
Lisa Rosemann	April 25	Daughter of Pat & Craig Rosemann
Edward G Davis III	April 28	Son of Edward G Davis Jr.
Timothy Reece	April 29	Son of Joanne Pihoda-Reece
Anne Thomson	April 30	Daughter of Nancy & Tom Thomson

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

HUMOR AND SURVIVAL

By Mary Cleckley
BP/USA Member at Large

Recently, my daughter paid me one of the highest compliments a bereaved parent can hope to receive. Having made a change in her primary care physician, her new doctor was taking her history and he reached the place where he inquired about her parents' health. He started with me, and my daughter just started laughing and said, "You're not going to believe her history." With that she ran off my litany of woes, both past and present. Her doctor asked if I had gone out looking for things to happen to me. She said she assured him that wasn't the case and she added, "In spite of all of it, she has never lost her sense of humor." Now, I consider that a compliment because I'm sure there were times she couldn't have said that.

I tell you this because, when one of our children dies, we seem to lose other things, as well. One of them seems to be our sense of humor. We are hard put to find things that tickle our funny bone. Life becomes tedious and surviving becomes a deadly serious business. After a few months, when something strikes you as humorous and you laugh, you'll find that the old devil guilt makes his presence known.

If this happened to just a few bereaved parents, you would probably think it was somehow warranted guilt but how do you account for it happening to practically every bereaved parent? Most of us were good parents who never intentionally did anything that warranted the feeling of guilt, except maybe loving our children too much.

Next time you're tempted to laugh, go ahead! Laugh long and hard. You'll feel better after you do, for, eventually, you come to realize that laughing does not mean you're "all over" your child's death. It just means you needed some relief from all that pain that comes with grieving. Those of us who allow humor to become a part of our lives again survive better. If someone nearby hears you laughing and attributes it to problems with your mental health, just tell them that that's mental health, all right, but it's no problem!

(Borrowed from A JOURNEY TOGETHER
NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA VOLUME VII NO. 2,
SPRING 2002 (April, May and June))

SPRING; HOPE OR MORE PAIN

Margaret Gerner
BP/USA - St. Louis, MO



Here it comes! Spring! Flowers blooming, weather warming, the cold of winter is behind us. We're coming up out of our pain. Right? Wrong!

My six-year-old son, Arthur, was killed by an automobile on Friday, May 28, 1971. The Easter before was the last time we were together as a complete family. For years after, spring, and especially the Easter season, began, again, the realization that we were no longer a complete family, and never would be again. Each year brought a new year of pain.

When the first spring came after Arthur was killed, I thought I would be better. Buds popped out, and my sadness was deeper. Easter came, and my pain was no less. The temperature rose, but the coldness in my heart never left.

Many more springs came - and none of them brought the relief I prayed for. For me, the hope and renewal that was supposed to be a part of spring was a lie.

Ironically though, the beginning of the resolution of

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my grief began in the spring of 1978. My grief, which by this time had become prolonged and distorted, created a number of other problems in my life. Among them was the deterioration of my marriage.

We began seeing a marriage counselor. I couldn't believe it when he told me that it was not only acceptable, but necessary, to face Arthur's death and talk about the pain and emotions I had been encouraged to suppress all these years.

Mine is a long story of struggle and determination, of steps and missteps and pain and sadness and loss. But it's also a long story of change and growth. The beginning of the resolution of my grief may have started then, but it didn't all happen in spring. It took place over many seasons.

Various seasons are significant for all of us. The Christmas holidays may be significant for you. The middle of June may be significant for someone else. A colorful fall may be significant for another. But, for some reason, we are led to believe that spring will bring a lessening of our pain. This is not true. Spring is simply a time of year. It's a date. It's a season. It's symbolic. But, spring is not magic.

Yes, it holds promises, but those promises are only brought to fruition when we work at them. Spring can be the impetus for change. The changes that take place in nature can cause us to do what we need to do to resolve our grief. The beauty of spring can be the factor that encourages us to find beauty in our lives again. Yes, we see growth and change and renewal all around us in spring. But it won't happen for us unless we make it happen.

In early grief, we hardly see spring come. We are so immersed in our pain and desolation that it is hard to see anything. Just as winter comes before spring, dark, painful grief work comes before we begin to see the light of comfortable life again. Don't expect to sidestep the healthy, albeit painful, normal, and long process of grief. Don't endow a season with magic to make changes in you.

Hard, painful grief work is what will get you to the other side of your child's death, not a date on the calendar.

(Borrowed from A JOURNEY TOGETHER NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA VOLUME VII NO. 2, SPRING 2002 (April, May and June))

SPRING MAGIC FOR YOU



Mary Cleckley,
Georgia BP/USA Member at
Large

As I sit and admire the beautiful and lush growth of the trees this spring, I feel renewed. The long and arduous winter we had all over the country had made me wonder if, indeed, the trees would be able to perform their magic this year. A late spring freeze, after many trees had budded out, had hurt. Some trees were also showing the results of a storm. In the woods back of my home, the tops of several oaks were broken by the intense winds. The damage is obvious. The still hanging dead limbs and leaves stand out by comparison to the chartreuse color of the new leaves.

We have learned from past experiences that the pines, so plentiful in the South, are particularly vulnerable to the forces of nature. We are accustomed to the wind and ice storms taking the tops out of many of them. However it was a surprise when the storm didn't affect the pines but, instead, it took the tops out of many oaks. The oaks are sturdy and, as a rule, can stand much of what nature has to offer. They are dependable and deep rooted.

Does what happened to the trees not remind you of what happens to a bereaved family after the death of a child? It takes even the "oaks" among us and tears the heart out of us, leaving us damaged. For a long time, the damage done is obvious: our limbs are not necessarily broken, but our hearts surely are. The most dependable and sturdy among us are brought to our knees and it

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activity that you enjoy. Hiking on weekends in nature is excellent; walking around a beautiful golf course is good. Anything that gets you out of the house and into nature helps.

Try joining a yoga class if you can.

Ask for help: It so often seems that it is the special children who are taken early from our world. Special children have special parents. As a special parent you are most probably the one who takes care of others and solves all the problems. Now it's your turn to accept help. People want to do things for you. Phone them up and ask. Let them show you love in practical ways when you need it most.

Journal: Keep a journal of your thoughts. You will have flashes of incredible clarity in the midst of your sadness. Write them down and date them. For at least two years you will often feel you are making little progress but if you go back to something you wrote in the first six weeks, or the first six months, you will realize just how far you have come.

Cry: Weep, sob and scream! There is a reason we have tears. When you start crying you may feel like you can't face another 10 minutes. After about 30 minutes of intense crying you will slowly feel a sense of release, a feeling of pain subsiding a little. William Frey did some interesting research where he found that tears caused by sadness contain more protein than tears caused by irritation like when you are cutting an onion and your eyes tear. According to Frey emotionally based tears contain high levels of cortisol. Cortisol is the primary hormone released during stressful situations. This suggests that we release toxins from our system when we cry and it is a good reason to let it all out.

Record your dreams: Many bereaved parents say that they begin to have very intense dreams after their child dies. You will find that your own sense of spiritual things expands enormously, no matter whether you were religious before your child died or not. You might sense things intuitively that before you wouldn't have paid attention to. You might have strange visions and vivid dreams. Write them all down. Keep a dream book and a pen next to your bed and slowly get used to waking yourself after a dream so that you can draw them or describe them in words. There is so much we can learn from dreams.

It is my personal belief that dreamtime is the easiest time for your child to connect with you. I ask Mark to come to me in dreams. Every night before I go to sleep I tell him that I love him and I thank him for loving me.

Be Grateful: For what? You may well ask. A spirit of gratitude helps us heal. Be grateful for the small child who curls up on your lap, the shop assistant who smiles at you, the dog that licks your hand, the friends that care, the food you eat, the stunning sunset as you drive home, your legs that work, your heart that pumps; the warmth of a hug, the young people who come and visit. If you have other children take special time to be grateful for them. If you have a husband or wife try and make time to look at them, really look at them, hold their faces and kiss them and be grateful that you have them. In the beginning, when the only person you want is your child who has died, you often won't feel like doing this but do it anyway. Love is a decision. Decide to continue loving those who didn't die.

Touch: When we are in the worst emotional pain, touch is very important. Often people won't know how to approach you, it takes courage for them to walk up to you and talk. When they do, reach forward and hug them, or squeeze their hand and thank them. Massage is also very good. If you are a friend reading this, take your grieving friend for a good, deep massage once a week for the first few months if you can.

Reach Out to others: No is a very good word. It is important to set boundaries to be very clear about what you are able to deal with at each point of your grief journey. But this does not mean you should not reach out. A lot of people have taken the time to be kind to you, or written beautiful sympathy letters, brought food, done so many things. Take the time to write and thank them. It will bless them and it will bless you. It will also help you to stay a more connected with your community and feel less isolated in your grief.

Reach out to your child's friends. It will hurt like hell the first time you see them all together and your child is not among them but young people have an extraordinary capacity to show their love and they want to honor their friend and care for you. So allow them to do that. Involve them in making decisions like how to celebrate your child's birthday and the anniversary of his death. If you



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cut yourself off from them, they will not be able to share the stories that will bring lightness to your heart, they won't tell you about their dreams and the signs they get. Open up, and let them, your child chose them because he knew they would be there for you when he left.

There will be so many milestones that will hurt. When they all pass their high school exams, your child's name will not be there but celebrate with them. Congratulate them and try to enter into their success. Then there will be all the 21st birthday parties. Make it known that you will not be hurt by attending, it will be hard for you but you would like to be invited. You do not have to lose the love and joy of all the beautiful children that have been in your life for years, the children you watched grow to adulthood.

Also reach out to other parents who lose a child, even if you do not know them. If you hear of someone in your community who loses a child, write a note, send a book or go and visit. It will mean the world to them that you came. A visit from a parent who has been bereaved for a longer time gives the mourning parent hope that they can carry on, that they do have a life beyond the death of their child. So go, reach out. I remember going to the home of Lisa, another mom from Hillcrest High who had just lost her son Jarryd in a tragic accident. I was terribly afraid of saying the wrong thing or intruding but I needn't have worried, all I had to do was hold her and listen. She appreciated it deeply and now she does the same for others. She is a very special lady.

Don't let others tell you how you should mourn: Mourning is an intensely personal process. Husbands and wives mourn differently, children mourn differently; friends mourn differently. It's okay. You have no idea how you will feel from one hour to the next so let the mourning take its course and don't judge yourself.

In the beginning I didn't want to take tranquilizers or sleeping tablets so I used wine to take the edge off my pain, to blur it so that I could look at Mark's photographs and his video and force myself to read the police reports. Now I have control over my alcohol intake but it took a long time. My point here is that any form of medication or drugs should be seen as a short-term aid to coping, not a way of life.

Don't let other people criticize you for coping in your own way but do listen if they are very close to you and suggest that your behavior is overboard if it continues after the first two years.

Generally the people who help the most are those who just listen and love and are kind. Seek them out and avoid the rest. Especially avoid friends and even some

family members who urge you to start "snapping out of your grief, - they simply have no clue.

Don't let anyone make you feel bad because you light a candle for your child every day. Don't let anyone remove your child's photograph from the middle of the Christmas dinner table because they don't want to be confronted with it. The mere fact that you got out of bed for Christmas means that you are brave and they should be applauding you! It's your home, it's your choice and it's your child so you do what works for you.



Don't let someone suggest that you are creating a shrine when you display your child's sports gear and photographs in a corner of your lounge or create a memorial **one feels bad for forgetting the exact date and they are able to plan to visit or do something special for you on that day.**

Remember your own dreams: Before your child was born, before you knew his name and his face, you had your own dreams. Recall them; act on them, live them. Try pursuing an interest you have never got around to before. Try new activities. Your child will look down at you from the soul world and praise you for never giving up; for doing all you can to make your life beautiful, for making your life count, just as his did.

You can continue to live meaningfully. You won't believe this is possible in the beginning but if you just try to get through each day with love, you will slowly find yourself becoming more integrated again, in many ways you will be a more beautiful person than before. Slowly, you will begin to incorporate the best parts of your child into yourself, you will feel his presence with you far more often and you will live his legacy. This is possible because I have a broken heart but I am still here. I live. I have been where you are and I know. Much love and strength to each heartbroken person reading this.

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 Way, Winthrop Harbor, IL. 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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