



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

September, 2017 Newsletter



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



Welcome...The Classroom for Learning to Live Again

Many of us are very aware of classrooms at this time of the year as the new school year begins for our children and young people of all ages. For some, the experience is not one they look forward to with pleasure, and it means the end of the carefree, unscheduled days of the summer. There was no need in their lives for continuous disciplined thinking and living. There were happy vacations, lots of swimming in a pool, picnics, and lots of baseball playing --- all requiring lots of running and yelling, and of course the quiet lazy times when they could read about their special interests, work on hobbies, or just do nothing.

Now they are required to settle down into a set schedule and routine of doing what they may not especially enjoy at school, in the classroom and at home. They must adjust to the confinement of sitting behind a desk for a specific time and to the need to concentrate for long periods of time on courses that are required for their education, but in which they have no special interest and which they may not even be able to comprehend. So, they must discipline their thinking, or they will be disciplined with extra work, low or failing grades, seemingly unfair, demanding teachers, and with questioning parents.

We can liken this setting somewhat, but in a much more intense way, to bereaved parents as they attempt to pick up the pieces of their lives after their child has died, and attempt to make some sense out of it all. Our happy carefree summer was the time before we experienced this most crushing loss, no matter how large or numerous our problems may have been in reality. Compared to this loss, all other problems simply fade away as if they never existed. And now, at least for a time, we are faced with the belief that there can never be any more summers. We must learn to climb out of this abyss. For those who have accomplished this, they report that this education is the most difficult work anyone will ever do.

We can imagine that we are in a classroom. Here, we are encouraged because we learn that all the other students are bereaved parents. So, the first step upward is when we learn that we are not alone, that

there are those around us who do understand, and who really do know how it feels and how painful it really is. Next, we discover that there are no teachers to tell us what is right and what is wrong. Instead, there are guides to assure us they and others more advanced than we are, have also had the same thoughts and feelings, or similar ones. This assurance that we are not "cracking up" gives us the confidence we need to climb up several more steps.

At this point, we find that it is becoming easier to concentrate on at least some of the simple daily tasks, such as grocery shopping or planning and preparing a meal or making a special dessert the family hasn't had for so long. Seeing their approval and appreciation gives us the power to discipline ourselves to try even harder because we see and feel that we have made a lot of progress with this "course" which we are required to "pass".

It doesn't matter if, during our most difficult periods, we slip back down a few steps. Because by this time, we have climbed the steps of concentrations and disciplines. We have the assurance that there are many hands reaching out to us and voices encouraging us, assuring us that we are almost there. However it is always necessary for each one of us to take each step by himself. Finally, we just know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that if others did it and they believe in us, then we can do it, too. So no matter at what step you are in the "course" in this classroom, you can receive the help, the assurance, and the encouragement you may need to "graduate". Then you may help the many others who every day are just beginning and are just entering this classroom.

For you the first step may be to come to our meeting where you can meet and talk with the other "students" who are still struggling at various levels with the same "course" that you are. Even if you don't need us, we need you. Take that first big step and come to the meetings... you will get the help you need.

Reprinted from the --Bereaved Parents USA of Tri County, MO Newsletter



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 Alana Anderson
for her donation
in memory of Amy Fry-Pitzen
and in honor of Timmothy Pitzen

"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.

ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING DECEMBER 10

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 21st annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WWCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of

the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

The Compassionate Friends and allied organizations are joined by local bereavement groups, churches, funeral homes, hospitals, hospices, children's gardens, schools, cemeteries, and community centers. Services have ranged in size from just a few people to nearly a thousand.

Every year you are invited to post a message in the Remembrance Book which will be available, during the event, at TCF's national website.



Meetings

Northern Illinois Chapter TCF
September 21 - 7:30 p.m.
Millburn Congregational Church
Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45, Millburn, IL
Open discussion

Waukegan meeting
October 5 - 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



OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

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>Shannon McCarty</i>	Sept 5	Daughter of Kevin McCarty & Pat Hayes
<i>Mary Margaret (Maggie) Miles</i>	Sept 5	Daughter of Jim & Mary Lou Miles
<i>Anthony Alexander Sosa</i>	Sept 16	Son of Yvette Sosa
<i>José De Jesús Hernández</i>	Sept 24	Son of Jesús and Virginia Hernández
<i>Eduardo Chavez-Nuño</i>	Sept 27	Son of Maria Del Carmen Nuño
<i>Donette Klawonn</i>	Sept 30	Daughter of Raymond & Dorothy Klawonn
<i>Tony Trejo</i>	Sept 30	Son of Martina Williamson Brother of Victor Trejo
<i>Levi Nichols</i>	October 4	Son of Bambi Nichols
<i>Mark Sailors</i>	October 9	Son of Michelle Sailors
<i>Marleea Gerfen</i>	October 12	Daughter of Marsha & Lee Bell
<i>Alexandria (Alex) Scarbro</i>	October 15	Daughter of David Scarbro
<i>Brian Keough</i>	October 20	Son of Kathleen Keough
<i>Kelly Klawonn</i>	October 23	Son of Raymond & Dorothy Klawonn
<i>Alyssa Burnstine</i>	October 23	Granddaughter of Judi & Stan Veoukas
<i>Aaron R Moore</i>	October 24	Son of Rob & Sherry Moore
<i>John "Jake" Mosansky</i>	October 31	Son of Darlene & John Mosansky Sister of Veronica Steif

ANNIVERSARIES

<i>Brian Scott Ludlow</i>	Sept 1	Son of Ronald & Karen Zaylik
<i>Levi Nichols</i>	Sept 5	Son of Bambi Nichols
<i>Anthony Alexander Sosa</i>	Sept 12	Son of Yvette Sosa
<i>Marleea Gerfen</i>	Sept 13	Daughter of Marsha & Lee Bell
<i>Brian Scott Engle</i>	Sept 13	Son of Louise Engle
<i>Heidi Anne Herrmann</i>	Sept 14	Daughter of Bonnie Brackus
<i>Sharon Beth Gray</i>	October 4	Daughter of Pam Gray
<i>Mark Sailors</i>	October 10	Son of Michelle Sailors
<i>Kerrin Fleming</i>	October 21	Daughter of Barbara Fleming

Sharing Some Parting Thoughts

By Alan Pedersen

It seems as though lately I have been on an extended farewell writing tour. In June, I wrote my final column as the Executive Director for *We Need Not Walk Alone*, our TCF online magazine. Last month, I penned my final article for our national newsletter, and this is my farewell column for our Chapter Leadership Newsletter.

On September 25th, our new Executive Director, Debbie Rambis will begin her journey leading this incredible organization. I am very excited for all of you who will benefit from the compassionate heart, and tremendous business and TCF experience Tony's mom will bring to this position. The Compassionate Friends will be in very good hands.

It has been an incredible ride and my distinct honor for nearly four years to work with you, the amazing leaders of TCF. You've inspired me every day with your willingness to reach out and help others while grieving your own loss. Without a doubt, you are the heart and soul of our mission and the glue that holds our organization together.

I wish I could leave you with some exceptional bit of wisdom, sage advice or a golden nugget of truth to remember me by. Unfortunately, I have no divinely inspired message or inspirational quote. However, I leave TCF a much wiser man with a more keen understanding and sense of purpose than when I arrived. Why? Not because of me or anything I have done, but because of you and the lessons you have taught me.

So, what I will SHARE with you are what I consider to be the most important things I have learned from you.

SHARE the road – You have allowed me to witness up close and personally experience the healing and comfort that comes from not walking the journey alone. Grief is lonely, and by example you have shown me and all of our TCF members that we do not have to walk through our pain on our own.

SHARE the load – Healing begins with helping, and never is that more evident than throughout our organization. We need not walk alone and we need not work alone either. Two broken hearts are always stronger than one. Chapter leadership teams have proven this to me by the amazing teamwork they display in carrying out the many duties and responsibilities required to get the job done for all who

need us. When we offer the opportunity for our members to help, we offer them the opportunity to heal.

SHARE the hope – Serving as our Executive Director, you have instilled in me the importance of making sure that, in all that we do, we must always offer hope. Our organization plays such an important role in our society because many of those who walk through our doors for the first time feel hopeless. We offer hope when we validate the feelings of others who have experienced a similar loss. We offer hope by sharing our stories and facing our challenges together. We offer hope by reminding all who walk through our doors that love does not die when someone you love dies.

My final thought is that I hope each of you know how much your efforts on behalf of TCF are appreciated. Thanks for all you have given to me; I do not possess the words to adequately express my sincere gratitude. I am not one for goodbyes as I would much rather tell you that I look forward to seeing you soon. I am excited to return to my roots connecting with you as I once again travel this great country speaking, presenting workshops, and performing music meant to comfort all those who grieve. Here is how you can contact me via email: Alanpedersen2010@gmail.com

Telephone (720) 218-6238.

Blessings and thanks for the honor of serving as your Executive Director,

Alan

When we are struggling through the night, falling prey to the beasts of guilt and regret, drowning in a river of tears, finally succumbing to exhaustion, we cannot be expected to believe in the beauty of the coming dawn. Somewhere in our past, we knew morning to be night's faithful follower, but for now, that understanding will have to force its way through the menacing darkness and back to us again.

From *Safe Passages* by Molly Fumia



Sibling Grief - Certain Words

By Scott Mastley, Duluth, GA

My mother paged me while I was at work this afternoon, and I called her at home. She asked if I would like to go see a movie. Her question triggered many thought waves. I wanted to go with her, to be

with her, but I couldn't just leave work. I wish I could have protected her from the loneliness. She was having a rough day like me, and I needed to talk. How was dad at work? Was he struggling to perform like me? Did he have to concentrate to finish anything?

I regret not doing what is most important. I should have talked with my boss and left work to be with my mother when she wanted to spend time with me. I feel great sympathy for my parents, but I have to admit that I don't grieve with them. We don't grieve together. We talk about it, but we usually grieve on our own. I'm guilty of trying to protect them in the same way that my friends try to protect me.

My parents say, "We are here for you. Call us when you need us."

I say, "I know. I will."

They say, "You haven't. You know we think about it every day, all the time. We can talk about it."

I say, "I don't want to be depressing."

They say, "You can be depressing with us. It is depressing."

I say, "I know. I know. I'm here for you too. I just don't want to come out there and cry. I want to be positive."

I think about how I always say "it referring to the car accident, to Chris, death. I should say him." I say "it" because the accident took his life; it was the turning point. I am really talking about Chris, his life, and his absence. I'm tired of thinking about the accident, picturing the scene, remembering Chris, last words, and imagining him

as he arrived at the hospital. These things are too painful. It is hard to say that Chris died or that he is dead. If I say that he died, in my mind, it implies that he was sick or weak and that he could not sustain himself any longer. He was vibrant and healthy and full of life. The life didn't leave him on its own; it was knocked out of him in a car accident.

I know that there are people who are walking along the street when they suddenly die. They were also vibrant and full of life. This is just an example of one of our little struggles. I hear surviving siblings say, "My brother was killed in a car accident. A tumor killed my sister. My little brother lost his life to an accidental drug overdose. My big sister didn't make it through surgery." We generally prefer to say that something is responsible for taking the life of our sibling. Saying that he died on a Monday doesn't place accountability for his death on any event. If the event had not occurred, our siblings would still be here, so we feel a need to mention the event in connection with the death.

It is difficult to say that my brother is dead. It is shocking to hear myself say it. The word is final and leaves no questions. It lets you know that Chris is gone forever. He's not going to show up later in the evening. He is not going to call. He is not going to write a letter. He is dead. I hate to say it. He did die and he is dead, but I squirm when I say it like that. It is so matter of fact.

~reprinted with permission
www.survivingasibling.com

~reprinted from TCF Atlanta June/July/August
2003 Newsletter

<http://www.tcfatlanta.org/JuneJulyAug2003.html>

Grief

By Annamaria Hemingway

How can we define what it means to enter the dark underworld of grief? We can use words such as pain, anguish, misery, shock, loss, and fear, but language itself cannot articulate the complex set of emotions that are experienced during a time of great loss. How is it possible to describe a metaphorical tidal wave that throws you onto the shore of a deserted island with no compass or adequate provisions, and leaves you stumbling, lost, and confused as you try to find your bearings? How can one give voice to the way the ice-cold arms of grief wrap themselves around you and penetrate your deepest defenses, leaving you shivering and numb? Grief is a land of shadows that speaks its own universal language ^ the language of suffering and sorrow that embodies the enormity of loss."

For every individual, "little" deaths can be experienced in every day life. The loss of a relationship, a job, or a cherished dream can bring great heartache, but none can equal the devastation of the death of a loved one. Nothing can remind us more of our impermanence in earthly existence, and that we have no control over the forces of nature that govern our own unique destiny.

Less than a hundred years ago, it was impossible to escape the reality of death and loss as epidemics of childhood diseases, shorter life spans and limited medical knowledge resulted in death and dying as being a part of everyday life. Support for those in the grieving process was offered by family members and the community.

Grief was acknowledged as an integral part of life and those in the mourning process openly displayed symbols of their grieving, as demonstrated in the Victorian and Edwardian eras when a black arm band or wearing "mourning" clothing for a certain period of time were a part of the rituals of grief.

In contemporary Western cultures, the disintegration of the family unit and local communities, combined with advancements in health care and a longer life span have resulted in society adopting the concept of ignoring death, the dying and the bereaved. This approach leads to fear and alienation and leaves us traumatized and feeling alone when the inescapability of death that can claim those of any age or circumstance touches our lives. Grief has its own timetable and is unique to each individual. When we enter the dark abyss of grief, the world we thought we knew becomes an alien planet, and life has no meaning. Time freezes and becomes suspended in a series of flashbacks that replay past cherished memories. They are entangled with an ache so deep that it threatens to submerge you. Often

feelings of guilt accompany the loss, guilt for all the things unspoken, and all the things left undone.

Even the world of dreams offers no respite for the pain that invades our psyche, rarely sleeps, and leaves us tossing and turning through so many dark nights of the soul. Our only companion is often fear, an uninvited guest that accompanies the floods of tears that prick their way through hollow, smarting eyes.

Grief reflects not just something or someone that has been lost from the outer world, but can also mirror a similar death in the inner world of the individual, as hope and faith become victims to the ravages of some invisible force that silences the voice of God or a higher power, which surely has abandoned and deserted us.

The author, C.S. Lewis, described his own similar feelings in a diary that he wrote following the death of his beloved wife. These writings were later published in the book "A Grief Observed," in which Lewis recounts his painful journey and his struggle to reconcile the death of his wife to his strong religious convictions. He commented: No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid at other times it feels like being mildly drunk of concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. What does everything matter now?

C.S. Lewis eventually emerged through the stages of grief and loss to find that his religious beliefs had strengthened and that he had become a radically changed person through his profound experience.

Grief has a timeless quality and although the pain will lessen, the memory of a great loss becomes forever etched within our deepest being. Rather than trying to escape or ignoring the inevitability of grief touching our lives, we can become strengthened through understanding that grief, like love, ultimately has the power to transform and can offer us the chance to learn what it

(Continued on page 7)

Autumn Tears



We look back on September and we realize that somehow we made it through those dreaded first days of school.

Whether it was the anticipation or the actual days that were the worst, we survived. We used our

faith, our support systems or just plain hard work and made it over yet another hurdle. We watched small children heading for their first day of kindergarten, listened to excited teenagers talk of high school and heard stories of children leaving home to attend post-secondary school. Somehow we rode the waves of grief and found ourselves ashore again.

As these waves subside new ones will build as we head into the holidays that speak of, and to, children. Halloween will soon approach and for some, painful memories. Thanksgiving arrives to exemplify family and togetherness and Christmas looms ahead. These special days are forever reminders of our loss – the costumes we'll never sew, the empty chair at turkey dinner, the fun and magic we'll never share with someone we love. Forever reminders that our child has died.

To survive when these events and anniversary days come around let's find time to think of the good memories we have – the announcement of our long awaited pregnancy at Thanksgiving dinner, the look of excitement on our son's first Halloween night, the vision of our daughter helping prepare the turkey dinner. These holidays will always be reminders that our child died. Let us also make them reminders that our child lived! They left us memories more precious than any others to hold and celebrate!

By Penny Young, TCF Powell River, British Columbia

(Grief continued from page 7)

means to be most authentically human.

The Buddhist scriptures illustrate this teaching in the story of a woman who came from a poor family, and was looked upon with contempt by her husband's relatives. When she gave birth to a son, their disdain changed to respect. However, a few years later, the

son died, and the woman became distraught with grief.

She searched everywhere for a cure that would bring her dead son back to life, but could find none. In her despair, she visited the Buddha, to see if he could help her. The Buddha told her to go back to her community and collect a mustard seed from a household where there had been no death. The woman searched for days, believing that if she could fulfill the Buddha's request, her son would be returned to her. But she eventually returned to the Buddha empty-handed, and realized there was no cure for death; it was an irrevocable part of life that everyone had to experience. As he lay on his deathbed, the Buddha reminded his followers of the impermanence of life, and how all things would eventually decay and perish. He encouraged people to accept death as a motivating force that provides a foundation for living life consciously and well.

Grief is the most painful experience we can suffer in this lifetime. It is a deeply emotional struggle to become reconciled to the reality of loss. No conciliatory words or advice can make it any less agonizing. The hand of grief will change your life forever but for those in the grieving process, perhaps some comfort may be gained from the notion that grief can enable an inner strength to emerge in each of us, and can ultimately make us more fully conscious human beings.

Author of Practicing Conscious Living and Dying:
Stories of the Eternal Continuum of Consciousness

~reprinted from MissFoundation July/August newsletter

<http://missfoundation.org/newsletter/vol11/JulAug2007.pdf>

www.missfoundation.org

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 Vicki Szech, 31023 Prairie Ridge Road, Green Oaks, IL 60048 or call 847-573-1055 or send an email to vszech@comcast.net.**

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

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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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