



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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JANUARY & FEBRUARY
2017

TCF MONTHLY

MEETINGS

ALBANY

Next Meeting - Sept. 20th
7:30 pm
3rd Tuesday every month
Westminster Presbyterian Church
85 Chestnut St., Albany
Jan Messina 439-0346
Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114

SARATOGA

1st Tuesday of every month- 7:30 pm
Wesley Health Center Care
Activities Room, Lawrence St.
Gabby Gravelle 596-4275

SCHENECTADY

1st Wednesday every month
St. Kateri Library, 1803 Union St.
John Powers 399-2492
JoAnn Bomeisl 372-8215

MID-HUDSON VALLEY

2nd Wednesday every month
Chris Yurchuk
845-691-2111

GREENE COUNTY

2nd Wednesday every month
United Methodist Church
Woodland Ave., Catskill
Judy 622-4023



TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Having a bad day? Need someone to talk to? Want information about the next meeting? Help is just a phone call away

Jan Messina 439-0346

Gabby Gravelle 596-4275

Helen Connors 226-0557

A Valentine Wish

How I wish I could bring your child back to you for Valentine's Day -- 24 hours you could spend telling your child of your love. But, alas, we are doomed to spend another Valentine's Day without our beloved children.

Others who have not lost a child tend to take for granted these very special days. A card that says, "I love you, Mom and Dad" should be carefully folded and saved in a special place. All too many parents consider these cards to be renewable commodities. "There's no need to save this one -- we'll always get another one next year." For many of us the memories remain of those Valentine's Days gone by. Because our child's love remains with us, our child will never truly be gone.

This year on Valentine's Day, let us shed tears of joy that we had even a short time with our child -- for that time, no matter how short, can never be taken from us.

*Wayne Loder
Lakes Area TCF, MI*

My Special Valentine

A touch of your hand,
A smile on your face,
Another time, another place.
You were my girl, I was your mom.
Together we met the world head on.
Death cannot dim the memories
So fine.
Your place is there,
This world is mine,
But you will always be,
My Special Valentine!

*Arlene
TCF Pikes Peak, CO*

Falling Apart

I seem to be falling apart.
My attention span can be measured in seconds.

My patience, in minutes.
I cry at the drop of a hat.
I forget things constantly.

The morning toast burns daily.

I forget to sign the checks.
Half of everything in the house is misplaced.

Anxiety and restlessness are my constant companions.

Rainy days seem extra dreary,
Sunny days seem an outrage.

Other people's pain and frustration seem insignificant.

Laughing, happy people seem out of place in my world.

It has become routine to feel half crazy.

I am normal, I am told.

I am a newly grieving parent.

*Eloise Cole
TCF Phoenix, AR*

A Beginning

One day you wake up and realize you must have survived it because you are still here, alive and breathing. But you don't remember the infinitely small steps and decisions you took to get there. Your only awareness is that you have shed miles of tears on what seems to be an endless road of sorrow. One day, one glorious day, you wake up and feel your skin tingle again and you forget just for an instant that, your heart is broken...and it is a beginning.

*Susan Borrowman
TCF Kingston, ON*

This newsletter is made possible by donations through love gifts. Love gifts are a way that we can honor our children throughout the year, on their birthday, anniversary of their death or during the holidays. Please consider giving a love gift in memory of your children. Love gifts can be made in any dollar amount and mailed to Debbie Bouchey, 26 Berkshire Drive, East Greenbush, NY 12061.

Our newsletter is also available on our website. If you no longer want to receive the newsletter by regular mail, please send an e-mail to alyssabob@yahoo.com

LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER: FEBRUARY 20, 2017



LOVE GIFTS

Living on in our hearts.

In loving memory of JIM LANDERS, (Feb. 1980-June 2011). Love, Mom & Dad (JoAnn & Joe Landers)

In memory of THOMAS J. PERSICO on the 20th anniversary of his death on January 6th. The memory of your bright smile lives on. You are always in our thoughts and forever in our hearts. Love, Your Family

TOMMY GALARNEAU - To my son, Tom, remembering your special day - January 11 - Never to be Forgotten - Love you always. Your Mom , Brother Don, Niece Margaret Irene Galarneau.

In loving memory of our STEPHANIE, and all the warmth and joy she brought to all who knew her. Forever in our hearts! (The Bomeisl family)

In loving memory of ALYSSA REGINA BOUCHEY on her 12th anniversary in heaven. You are my heart and my soul and I smile every time I think of you. Miss you dearly. Love, Mom

In loving memory of JASMINE JOHNSON on New Year's Morning. Fall butterflies & autumn candlelight with Rosie's Love & Albany Med; pink sunsets anytime. Your legacy of strength is carried on the shoulders of young lives walking in your footprints today, on that same path. My heart is broken forever, held together in fragile form by the love we shared. New Year's morning, always gray, until the next pink sunset; then I smile, remembering the joys we shared, and how much you liked pink.

Aunt Dale



GIFTS OF THE NEW YEAR

Faith that, in spite of the pain of today, I can and will learn to go on, one step at a time, one day at a time, learning to once again truly enjoy the little (and bigger) things that come my way.

Patience when I'm having a bad day, when I seem to take two steps backward and only one forward in learning to cope with the death of my child.

Laughter, which someone said is the best medicine. I believe laughter is a positive source of healing. When I feel good laughing at some silly little thing that comes along, I know another little part of me has

healed.

Time. If nothing else, the new year offers the gift of time -- time to heal, to learn to cope, to put some wholeness back into lives that seem hopelessly broken.

Won't you join me in opening these gifts? You see, they aren't just mine to receive; they are gifts to be shared by all. You need only reach out and accept them. Each of these gifts can help us go on with our lives.

May the new year bring you all of these gifts and many blessings, but most especially, **may you receive the gift of peace**.

Audry Cain, TCF Western New York

NOT EVEN A FEATHER

BY DEB ROBINSON

PAGE 3

Backing out of the garage, I check the big rock that we laid down to protect the killdeer eggs. Oh no, where are they, and where is she? Frantically, I threw the truck into park and jumped out. There was nothing left behind the rock but a tiny indentation where the perfect little eggs had been tended to by their mom. Not even a feather. They can't just disappear!...I guess they can. I bent over to touch the little gravelly nursery and was surprised at how rough and cold the stones were. That poor bird worked so hard to keep those baby bird eggs safe. She just wanted to give them the best chance that she possibly could. That kind of devotion doesn't come along every day. It's so lonely being on high alert when it seems some people get to go to bed at night and just assume that all will be well in the morning. Poor little thing probably stayed awake all night trying to keep her eggs safe!

I could've told her that it doesn't matter how much we stay awake or how diligently on guard...it doesn't always work. You just end up exhausted...exhausted. Strange as it seems, we really don't have much control as we "flap our wings" and take on the world. Other people don't seem to have to work so hard to raise and keep their children. *Okay, deep breath Deb, you are not a bird. I sure do talk to myself a lot lately, but it seems* safer than telling people that I went into a crying fit because some lowly bird eggs and their mama were missing! Yikes, I scare myself sometimes.

When we saw her flailing wings and heard her squawks a few weeks ago, it took two of us to finally spot four perfect eggs. For weeks we watched her sit during 90 degree days, 40 degree nights, high winds, heavy rain, and even thunderstorms. It seemed she'd blow away as the wind whipped around her...but still she sat. There was a perfect view through the front window to see her chewing out other birds, squirrels, the mail carrier, and anything that dared to come near her precious eggs.

I wonder if I did everything I could've to save Brian...He took all of my energy, time, and love. I really would try it again, but that's not a choice I get to have. Maybe if I'd moved him in with us and monitored him really, really closely...I still wonder what would've happened if he'd gone to live in a group home with more supervision. Possibly, that would've been the perfect situation to get him back on track. Maybe, just maybe, if he could've stayed at the VA hospital for, like a whole year, the routine would've retrained him to...to what? To not overdose, to not seek drugs when he had lost control over that part of his brain, or maybe to stop having seizures that racked his body like an internal



earthquake? I guess no one has that kind of control over someone else. No, not even a mother who felt that being his mom was who she was meant to be. A love so intense that it could physically hurt!

I was probably overly protective when he was a little boy, but I wanted to do it right and watch him grow to be happy. I absolutely loved being his mom. When Brian left for basic training ten days before his eighteenth birthday, I held my breath. I tried not to let my anxiety and worry seep into him, but he knew me so well.

"Mom, what's wrong? You don't sound happy. Come on, you can tell me. Is Dad okay? You're not sick, are you? Maybe you could use one of those power naps you're so good at! Yeah, that's probably what you need! Gotta go, I love you, Mama."

These phone calls made me work even harder to keep my voice cheerful so that he wasn't distracted going into combat. Sometimes, as I look back, it feels like every breath and action I took were to protect him. Oh, maybe I was too protective, and he didn't learn to fend for himself. No, I think moms just do that. My mom did.

Heading out one last time to check for any sign of the killdeer or her precious, perfect little eggs, I sat down on the rock that we thought would protect the little family. It can all go away with no warning. You don't have to see or hear anything, and it's all just gone. It really makes no sense that something that loved, protected, and nurtured can just...poof! Even if I understood how it could happen; I am still stumped about why? Little birds should not be gone. Brian should still be calling.

Deborah Robinson lost her only child on February 15th, 2012. She is a retired para-pro, and lives with her fiancé, David Block, in Deckerville, Michigan. Deborah became widowed when her husband died from an Agent Orange-related cancer after serving in Vietnam. Her son, Brian, suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder following two deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. He died from an accidental prescription drug overdose at age 27.

Lovingly lifted from We Need Not Walk Alone. The National Magazine of The Compassionate Friends. Winter 2012/Spring 2013



GETTING UNSTUCK: Finding Hope Through Grief

By Beth Marshall

Every day I drive by a quaint antique shop. It might be my imagination, but it appears to be the same charming furniture outside every single day.

The death of someone you care about deeply is one of life's most difficult challenges. It's easy to fall into a rut of doing the same things day after day, leaving you lonely and feeling stuck in the sorrow. If you're struggling to move forward, would you consider trying something different to help break through the intense sadness? Hopefully, one of these ideas will help:

- **Remember.** Memories of your loved one's life are treasured gifts to keep close in your heart. Take some time to record memorable stories and save photos in a notebook or journal. Remembering happier times is a beautiful way to honor the person you're missing, and allow some light into a painful season of life.
- **Get Help.** People who have been where you are now can be a great source of hope and encouragement. It might take a few visits to know if a support group is a good fit for you, but don't give up. A caring group or maybe professional grief counseling will provide a safe place to process traumatic loss.
- **Find Hope.** Regardless of your religious beliefs, deep sorrow often draws us to seek spiritual help. In my darkest season of loss, I realized I was drowning in the sadness. When I finally called for help, a friend offered to pray when I couldn't find the words. Admitting your inability to cope and allowing someone to be strong for you can be a powerful turning point toward healing. Dr. Gloria Horsley, executive director of the Open to Hope Foundation, puts it beautifully: **"If you have lost hope, we invite you to lean on ours until you find your own."** You don't have to go through grief alone.

Show and Tell

We sit in a circle of metal folding chairs,
Bereaved parents,
Caressing our children in our hearts,
Our stomachs clutching.

Bereaved parents, waiting our turn,
To tell of our beautiful children,
Lives cut short by death.
Death which came in many guises,
But claimed them all.

Bereaved parents, choking out the names of our sons
and daughters,
Reliving the painful circumstances of death,
Expressing our anger and helplessness,
Remembering our child's uniqueness,
Experiencing the joy they brought us,
If the grief is not still too fresh.

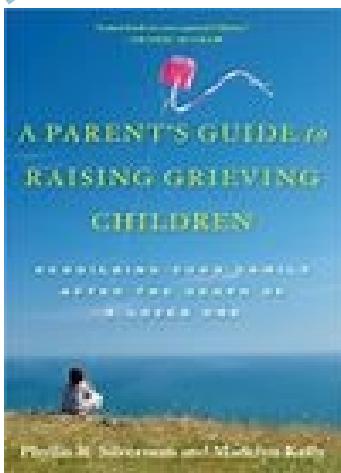
Bereaved parents, tenderly touching the circling photos,
Profoundly struck by the extraordinary beauty of
All the children.
Soft chubby babies whose smiles fill our hearts,
Adventurous toddlers who call us to play,
Lively youngsters who continue to trust us,
Questioning teenagers who teach us not to judge,
Fine young adults who let us glimpse the possibilities,
Our beloved children.

One of us with tears in his voice,
A bereaved parent,
Asks us to stand and make a circle of hands,
In silence we communicate our unspeakable grief,
We share the legacy of our children's deaths,
The understanding of what it is to love.

♦ *Betty Berlehner
TCF Houston-West, TX*

*Beth Marshall is the author of *A Time to Heal: A Grief Journal* and a guest writer for *Open to Hope*, <http://www.opentohope.com>, and *The Grief Toolbox*, <http://thegrieftoolbox.com>. To find more encouragement, please visit <https://atimetoh healjournal.com>*

*Lovingly lifted from *We Need Not Walk Alone. The National Magazine of The Compassionate Friends*. Winter 2012/Spring 2013*



A Parent's Guide to Raising Grieving Children: Rebuilding Your Family After the Death of a Loved One.
-By Dr. Phyllis Silverman and Madelyn Kelly
-Reviewed by Dr. Heidi Horsley

Are you raising grieving children? Do you wonder if they'll be okay? If so, you are not alone! One of the biggest questions my parents had after my brother died was how to help their three surviving daughters cope after the loss of their only brother. I wish that this groundbreaking book, *A Parent's Guide to Raising Grieving Children*, had been available to my parents at that time. Filled with invaluable information, this book is a must-have for anyone who wants to help their children not only survive, but thrive after loss.

A Parent's Guide to Raising Grieving Children offers valuable information about how your child's age impacts their ability to understand death, where to get help for your children, and how to handle your teenager's emotions. Filled with personal anecdotes and compelling stories, children share their darkest memories, their saddest thoughts, and their emerging hopes.

This book is written by two experts all too familiar with the world of grief and loss. Madelyn Kelly's life took a tragic turn after her husband, Michael, a journalist, was killed in the Iraq War. Concerned for her two young sons, Madelyn went looking for ways to help them and came across Phyllis's research. Eventually, the two met and the idea for this book was formed.

Dr. Phyllis Silverman is also no stranger to grief and loss, she has been working with thousands of grieving parents and children for decades. Her understanding concerning the impact of grief on children comes from

her many years of research, as the project director of the Harvard Child Bereavement Study. From start to finish, this book is all about helping parents raise grieving children.

As the executive director for the Open to Hope Foundation and co-host of the Open to Hope radio program, I highly recommend this book. Dr. Phyllis Silverman is one of the most respected leaders in the field of grief and loss today. She is not only academically gifted, but she cares deeply about grieving parents and their children and has devoted her life to helping people find hope after loss. Madelyn Kelly is a gifted writer and is the best breed of expert. She has walked this journey with her own grieving children and made it, and she knows you can, too. It is an honor to recommend this book not only to bereaved parents and children, but to professionals and students who are working with grieving children. After reading *A Parent's Guide to Raising Grieving Children*, you will feel better equipped to help your children honor, remember, and incorporate their deceased family member into their lives in new ways.

The authors of this groundbreaking book are both outstanding in their own right. Dr. Phyllis Silverman has received many awards for her work and is recognized internationally as a leader in the field of bereavement. She is the co-principal investigator of the pioneering Harvard Child Bereavement Study, and her books include *Widow to Widow: How the Bereaved Help Each Other* and *Never Too Young to Know: Death in Children's Lives*.

Madelyn Kelly is a writer and television news producer, and the mother of two sons. Her husband, the writer/columnist/editor Michael Kelly, was the first American journalist to be killed in the Iraq War, in 2003. She edited a compilation of his work. *Things Worth Fighting For: Collected Writings*.

Dr. Heidi Horsley, PSYD, LMSW, MS is a bereaved sibling, as well as a psychologist.

This Book Review was originally published in *We Need Not Walk Alone*. The National Magazine of The Compassionate Friends. Winter 2012/Spring 2013.

*When one day at a time seems too long,
Try just one minute at a time*



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TCF's MISSION: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.



TCF's VISION: That everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

The Compassionate Friends
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