



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG
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JANUARY -
FEBRUARY 2019

TCF MONTHLY

MEETINGS

ALBANY

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

SNOWFLAKES

Every snowflake is unique and has its own individual design. There are beautiful patterns in each flake, and even the tiniest of flakes have their own markings. These patterns change again and again - even after the snowflake touches the ground. Each snowflake is a cause for wonder; each flake is one of a kind. No two are exactly alike.

Like the snowflake, our beautiful children are each unique and special - some we only dreamed about and some danced upon the earth. They filled our lives with wonder and transformed our world. We held them too briefly, but we will hold them in our hearts forever. We shall remember them always.

At this time of remembering, it may help to reflect upon how our lives have been enriched by the love we had given and the love we received from our children. Our children leave treasures behind that time will never take away.

*By: Denise Falzone
Lovingly lifted from TCF Kansas City*

Remember Me

To the living, I am gone,
To the sorrowful, I will never
return,

To the angry, I was cheated.
But to the happy, I am at peace,
And to the faithful, I have never
left.

I cannot speak, but I can be
heard.

So as you stand upon a shore,
Gazing at the beautiful sea,
Remember me.

Remember me in your heart,
your thoughts and your
memories
of the times we cried, the times
we fought,
the times we laughed.
For if you always think of me,
I will never be gone from your
side.

*By: Dana Herman,
In memory of Jessica Marie
TCF, MO-KAN Region*



LOVE GIFTS

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.

*And so I bring
her flowers,
She'll see them
from above,
For though I
cannot see her,
my heart can
feel her love.*

Jessica Bryan

Excerpt, BPUUSA, August, GA

**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR
THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
February 20, 2019**

In loving memory of **THOMAS J. PERSICO** on the 22nd 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

In loving memory of my son, **LARRY SHORTSLEEVE**, who has been gone 43 years (December 1975).

Love you forever, Mom

In memory of **JASMINE JOHNSON** on
New Year's morning, 2007

Your last holiday wish on this earth was to
hear "Silent Night"
on the piano

Christmas night, at the Boston Ronald
McDonald House.

That sweet memory is with me the first
morning of each new year,
As my heart smiles & cries at the same time.
Aunt Dale



BITTERSWEET MEMORIES

One of the most precious things to a parent who has lost a child is the memories. Without them, it would be as if their child never was. With them, it is so bittersweet that it can make a parent laugh and cry, rejoice and anguish, touch the sweetness to the lips and taste the salt from the tears.

Memories keep the heart from crushing under the weight of sorrow. They give a parent the chance to be with their child again. They can walk through their memories like they were a movie. When the memories are so vivid, you can almost feel them, touch them, hug them, and kiss them. It is so bittersweet when the reality comes and you realize it is just a memory, a thought, and you are reminded of what you have lost.

If you asked a parent if they would give up the memories so they did not have to feel the pain of knowing their child is gone, they would tell you no. As painful as it may be, not having the memories or feeling their presence, is just as unbearable as losing them.

There is no happy place to go to, but there is a place to be with your child. You know before you step into that realm that it will be painful, but you know that it will be joyful too.

So as we let the memories take us to a time that our child was safe with us, just rest a while until it is time to go and the next time try not to think of what is gone but what is still in your heart and will always be.

By Vickie Van Antwerp

Lovingly Lifted from We Need Not Walk Alone, National Magazine of TCF
Winter/Spring 2010-2011

I Awoke New Year's Day

I awoke New Year's Day with the first thought of realizing and dreading that in just one month and three days, Todd would be dead for two years! How could that be possible? A part of me still insists that I can peek into his room and see his tousled head above the rumpled covers, sleeping off the late New Year's Eve bash, waking to watch the ball games while I make our traditional New Year's Good Luck Dinner. Of course, it wasn't that way last year, and this year didn't bring a change. I did manage to make a New Year's Dinner this year, though, but I elected to take in a movie in lieu of hearing the ball games. Enough is enough! It starts with Halloween, through Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, and then the anniversary of his death. The countdown is nearing -- an end for another year -- God help me! That's a plea, a prayer, a hope.

New Year's resolutions? I hear my friends resolving to lose weight, stop smoking, be better organized. My problems aren't that specific. I'll make my resolutions one day at a time -- to survive that day the best way I can. Hoping that when nightfall comes, I will have felt that extra bit of strength to make it through times when the pain cuts through like a knife.

I've come far this year...we talk about him with ease now. His name does not bring the choking rage of tears...his memories have become precious. And most of the time I carry the pain well; when it begins to stalk me now, like an animal with its prey, I search frantically in my memory bank for the sound of his laughter and the warmth of his love. It always seems to be very near, hovering over me like a protective coating, and I whisper, "Son, I love you, please know that I love you." And he knows. That simply is all. All there ever was, and all there ever will be -- LOVE. It has more dimensions now than before his death. It reaches farther than an earthly plane, and it encompasses a broader horizon. But it all began with the gift of my firstborn, Todd. And the true understanding of its strength came with the death of my firstborn, Todd. He gave me love. He gave me all.

And to all my Compassionate Friends, I wish you each day of the New Year a sense of peace, contentment, and a new-found happiness, the courage to rebuild your shattered lives, and the belief that it is possible...knowing love is forever, separation is never totally complete.

- Brenda Holland, Piedmont TCF Chapter,
Concord, NC

GUILT TRIP

GUILT is what we face as we measure our performance against our new ideal standards. Our new value system measures parental abilities based upon a short term view, rather than the long term outlook we took when our children were with us.

GUILT is what we face when we consider what could have been if we could have taken that extra time to answer our children's questions more fully. It is that awful standard we use when we remember the selfish episodes when we took time for ourselves or other activities rather than play the game or spend more time with our precious children.

GUILT is the awful result that we face when we realize that we can never take back or undo any hurt we inflicted by our harsh words or unkind deeds. We forget that we are human and are entitled to make mistakes. Entitlement to deficiencies doesn't erase or reduce the ache you feel in your heart.

GUILT is the crutch we use to punish ourselves. We feel responsible for our inability to protect our precious children who were entrusted to us. Our

proclaimed failure as a parent in our fundamental responsibility to provide protection spells guilt.

GUILT is something we should give up!!! We need to realize that most of our kids turned out pretty good, so we must not have been such awful parents. We must remind ourselves that guilt will not lessen our grief. Grief can only be decreased by time and work. We should evaluate our performance as we feel our children would have judged us. I am sure our children forgave our prior errors and continued to love us. If only they could tell us how they feel about us, our guilt would subside—at least until some event overpowers us and reminds us of our incomprehensible loss.

GUILT then is something we must learn to live with. It is our feeble way of trying to exercise control where we are totally helpless. It is our way of rebelling emotionally against the facts that we simply do not accept.

Reezin Swilley, Atlanta GA
Lovingly Lifted from Bereaved Parents of the USA
Western NY Chapter

I'll Never Have The Chance Again

Ever since the day you left my world
The rain has been falling hard from the sky
Just like the tears that fall from my eyes, when I think about what happened.

Alyssa was one of the best girls ever
We had so many great times together, like listening to music
I'd go over her house, and her brother would go to mine
Talking all night long, about what was happening in her high school
And about what was happening in my middle school

I'll never have the chance again.



I considered her a sister
I loved how she would hang out with me, since I was 5 years younger than her.

I'll never have the chance again.

Every time I would say something
She would go "Keelieeeeeee!", but most of all
I loved how I could look up to her knowing when I got older
I wanted to be just like her!

I'll never have the chance again.

One of my favorite memories that always makes me smile is when I was at Alyssa's house
and Alyssa was rushing to get ready and looking for her missing shoe,
her dog, Brandy, would be in the closet chewing on her shoe.
Alyssa would go crazy and laughed hysterically.

I'll never have the chance again.

Alyssa was beautiful, caring, nice, and funny
She was one of those popular dream Barbie dolls every little girl wanted to be
She had the looks, personality, and last but not least, an amazing heart

Since she has passed away
Passed away to heaven
I want her to know
That I miss her as much as I love her.
Every step I take, every move I make
I'll be missing Alyssa
She'll always be in my heart
A special memory that will never be forgot

By Keelie Forbes 1-22-05

Written in memory of Alyssa Bouchey two days after Alyssa's death

Keelie was 12 years old

Dealing With Grief: A Sibling Viewpoint

*By: Rick Edler, Los Angeles,
South Bay, CA*

Two things happened to me on January 11, 1992. I lost my brother to death, and I lost my parents to grief. My Dad, the one who seemed to always have the answers to my questions, the "rock" in the family, the one whose job was to fix everything, completely lost it. The fear, anger and shock in his eyes when told that my brother had died, is engraved into my memory. He fell limp in the arms of my mother and me in the emergency room at UCLA Medical Center. This was the first time I had seen my parents lose control. At that moment our roles switched.

"I'll take them," I said to the nurse as she handed me a bag labeled "Edler." It was the personal belongings of my brother. I quietly took them and placed them in my car. For the next three months, I seemed to make many of the decisions. I was not a courageous leader rising up to the occasion. I was the least common denominator. My parents, although they tried, could not help me. They were trying to deal with the tremendous grief themselves.

For this reason, I put off dealing with Mark's death for many months. I cried and felt sad, but never addressed the issue. My friends were concerned and asked how I was doing. But no one, unless you have been there, really wants to hear the true answers. Mark was the only other person in the world who was a combination of my mom and dad. My friends could not relate nor would I want them to. I would never wish this on anyone. But this left me alone to deal with it and I chose to put it off.

After three months, I met a gentleman at a family retreat with a group of which my dad was a part. Kevin had lost his brother to suicide about nine months earlier. He was farther along in his "coping" than I was. I could talk to him about Mark, mention Mark's name and share stories without making the whole room uncomfortable about the subject. I saw someone who was dealing with it and it gave me hope. There is a certain vocabulary that you learn after going through this that no book, no story and no amount of explanation can do justice. I don't talk about certain things with my friends because I do not have the time or energy to explain (or try to explain) the many feelings I am having. Kevin understood. He had the vocabulary.

This was the first step into healing. I came to grips with the reality of my new life -- different than the one before, but there was no going back. At this point, I

went on auto-pilot. I remember many events of the three years following the death. My girlfriend and I broke up. My parents changed houses. I went through the many firsts, but just kept moving forward. I was not depressed, however. My lows were not very low, but my highs were not very high.

I became involved with The Compassionate Friends Sibling Division of our local chapter in the third year. I did it half out of responsibility to my parents and half out of the knowledge that if I was running the meeting, then I was in control of how much sharing I needed to put into it. Kind of a control thing. To my surprise, the meetings have become so beneficial to my healing that I am surprised at myself. By sharing with others, I feel that I help them and in turn, myself. Many feelings, thoughts or emotions that I thought were just mine, I have found are universal with others. After three years, I began to come "out of the valley." I can only say that by looking back, hindsight has allowed me to see my steps of healing. I stepped into the role of being strong for our family because I felt that was best. Many others I have talked to mention a similar reaction. Your parents are barely able to deal with their own grief. The last thing you want to do is bring more pain on them, so you don't share with your parents.

Last July at the Compassionate Friends conference, many parents walked up to me and asked, "How do I know if my son (daughter) is dealing with this? I am concerned since they do not tell me anything." "You don't know" I answered, "and neither do I, but unless you see something obviously dangerous, they are dealing with it in their own way at their own speed, and you may not be a part of their grieving."

I now have a different outlook on life. It is precious. I feel that in my new life, I am closer to my parents. Each one of us has to live our lives one-third better in Mark's memory. I value my friends and time more. I can handle stress much better. Just think of the alternative. I have become a better person by helping others. I like the new person I have become. I would trade it all in a second.

*Loving lifted from TCF MO-KAN Region
January 2005*

Thoughts on Valentine's Day

"How sad this day must be for you."
I read it in their eyes,
As if there is no more love between us
- you and I.
How wrong they are!
They do not understand the bond
between a parent and a child.
I do not have to see your face
to remember your sweet smile.
I do not have to hold you,
although if I could, I would.
I do not have to hear your voice.
Our love is understood.
Every day I think of you.
My thoughts are full of memories.
I realize that love does not end
with death's painful goodbye.
I await with hope
until we can say hello again
- you and I

Karen Powell, TCF Box Elder, Utah

I Will Love You

As long as I can dream,
As long as I can think,
As long as I have a memory...
I will love you.

As long as I have eyes to see,
and ears to hear,
and lips to speak...
I will love you.

As long as I have a heart to feel,
a soul stirring within me,
an imagination to hold you...
I will love you.

As long as there is time,
As long as there is love,
As long as I have a breath
to speak your name...

Because I love you more than anything...in
the world.

*Daniel Haughian, Coeur d'Alene
TCF Chapter*

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.

*Dedicated to the memory of
Jeanne & Karolyn
Arlene Burroughs*



Evolution

In the beginning, I walked around wringing my hands constantly like Lady MacBeth. Now I still wring them but only on her anniversary, during the hours leading up to her death and upon hearing tragic news.

In the beginning, the videotape in my heart played the events of the days before and after her death again and again. I was powerless to stop it. Now, I can frequently turn it off, by consciously thinking of other things.

In the beginning, on Tuesdays leading up to 12:25 p.m., I tensely counted the minutes. Now, Tuesday is usually just an ordinary day.

In the beginning, everything that belonged or related to her was sacred. When the earrings she had given me fell out, I was frantic. Now, if they were lost, I would be very sad but I could cope. I have also reached the point where I am able to donate many of the things she owned.

In the beginning, it was hard to think or talk about anything but her death. Now, I have reinvested in life, have other topics of conversation, and actually find much of life enjoyable.

In the beginning, I cried when I passed her favorite foods in the supermarket. Now, there is a pang but the tears no longer flow.

In the beginning, I was sure that I was crazy. Now, although I still question my sanity at times, I usually accept the fact

that my thoughts and feelings are normal for bereaved parents, even if the rest of the world does not agree.

In the beginning, there were many things I wouldn't do. Now, I do some of them but still avoid others. Perhaps in my continued evolution, I will decide that those things are possible too.

If you are at the beginning, take heart. Someday, when the time is right and you have worked through much of your grief, you too will look back to the beginning and realize that life, even without your child, is bearable. There is evolution.

*By Stephanie Hesse
TCF Rockland County, NY
North Palm Beach County, FL*





Leadership

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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.



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