



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG

JANUARY—FEBRUARY 2022

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER

ZOOM MEETING

Please contact Kathleen Kelleher at
Kathleen.Kelleher17@gmail.com or
518-439-1114 for instructions on how
to join the Zoom meetings.

OTHER LOCAL CHAPTERS

Due to the Coronavirus, many chapters have ceased in-person meetings, but may be holding virtual meetings. Please call your local chapter to inquire about meetings.

SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

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SCHENECTADY CHAPTER

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GREENE COUNTY CHAPTER

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Remnants

Glimpses of you everywhere
often catch me unaware.
Telltale remnants of the past,
carefree days that couldn't last.
Echoes of a joyous laugh,
comic books; a photograph.
Calliopes and carousels,
haunting songs weave mystic
spells.
Relics from the past will wane,
But in my heart,
You'll still remain.

- Lily De Lauder

All the presents put away,
The brave face that I put on
I can now toss away.

I surround myself in memories
That had been neatly put away,
And allow myself to feel
What I couldn't this holiday.

The grief is overwhelming,
The tears they freely flow
And I really feel the sadness
Of how I miss you so.

Terri Romer,
Mom to Ashley
Greenville, SC

New Year Wishes

Where there is pain,
let there be softening.
Where there is bitterness,
let there be acceptance.
Where there is silence,
let there be communication.

Where there is loneliness,
let there be friendship.
Where there is despair,
let there be hope.

- Ruth Eisemar
TCF, Louisville, KY

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.

Call for Submissions

Anyone wishing to submit an original poem or story for publication in our newsletter can do so by sending the writing to Debbie Bouchey at alyssabob@yahoo.com

Please remember that editing may occur and not all submissions are guaranteed to be printed.



LOVE GIFT

Living on in our hearts.

Please consider sending a Love Gift to honor your child and to help support our chapter and newsletter.

In loving memory of **CHRISTOPHER BASCOM**, my beloved grandson.

Love, Grandma Newport



A love gift received from John Anraalte

One year ago today,

I thought my life was going okay,
I had a beautiful daughter to make me laugh,
And a handsome son who would do whatever I asked.
I had what some would call a rich man's family,
With a white picket fence and a dog named Brandy.
Then my daughter was taken away,
On a cold and snowy winter day.
Now my life will never be the same,
So many dreams went up in flames.
But I must go on in spite of all this,
And cherish the memories that I still have left.
I will make her proud to have a Mom,
One that makes sure her memory lives on.
Each day that I live will be one step closer,
To a reunion in heaven of a Mother and her Daughter.



**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR
THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
February 20, 2022**

*By Debbie Bouchey
In loving memory of her daughter, Alyssa
TCF Albany, NY Chapter*

LIVE NOW

THE HOLIDAYS ARE OVER! We have survived one more hurdle. Now a whole year faces us. 365 days. It's rather frightening, isn't it? Would it be less frightening if I suggested you have only one day to face: It's true. ALL YOU HAVE TO FACE IS TODAY - THIS 24 HOURS. There isn't much we can't do if we only have to do it for 24 hours. Even the torment of our grief can be handled for 24 hours. We can get through the next 365 days one day at a time. In order to take one day at a time, we must learn to keep ourselves in the NOW. When our minds start wandering back to yesterday and the painful yesterdays before that, we need to make very effort to consider that yesterday, with its pains, hurts, and yes, even its mistakes, is gone now and there is absolutely nothing we can do about it. When our minds wander to tomorrow and we begin to panic at the thoughts of another day of torment, we can block out those thoughts too. We can bring ourselves back to the NOW by paying strict attention to what is going on in the immediate present. What if our responsibilities right now won't allow us to give in to our pain? Our other children need our attention or our job demands our attention? Then we must focus ourselves only on what we have to do at that moment. We can only think of one thing at a time. What if we are having one of those moments of enjoying ourselves? Then we should enjoy. We deserve it. Emotionally we have been battered. It is essential to have a few moments of relief occasionally. By laughing and having a few forgetful seconds, surely we aren't really betraying our child. And what if we are just having a crazy, mixed up, hurting, enjoying, crying, laughing, getting things done in the morning, getting nothing done in the afternoon kind of day? So what! Maybe the next 24 hours will be different. By concentrating on the NOW, we add up the minutes and the hours. Eventually we complete a day. Days become weeks, then months. Then one day we realize, GEE, I'm feeling a little bit better! By taking one day at a time, living in the present, I guarantee that life will take on meaning once again.

- Margaret Gerner BP/USA
St. Louis, MO Chapter

SNOWFLAKES

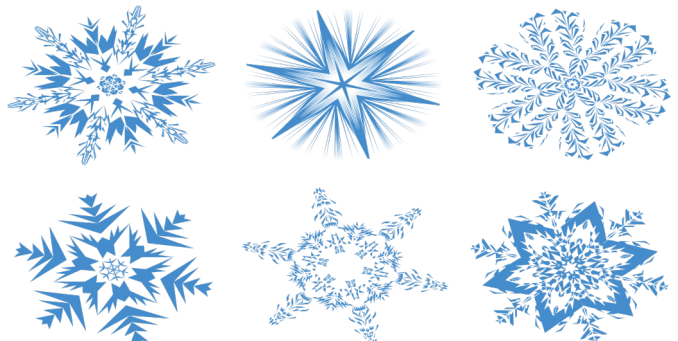
It finally feels like wintertime outside...the air has a chill and there's a chance for snow. My daughter, who is a young adult, is just like a little kid waiting for the snow. She tells me it's her favorite time of the year.

For me, I prefer to bask in the summer sunshine. Since my son died, I often feel like it's wintertime all year long. I feel chilled to the soul. I want to stay home and snuggle in bed and ignore the rest of the world. I want to eat chicken soup and chili...comfort food for a cold day. I want to grumble and grouch at the world. So I prefer the warmth and sunshine as I hope to get rid of some of that wintertime feeling.

Yesterday my daughter reminded me that every snowflake is unique, even though we can't see the difference. She continued to say that snowflakes are like our grief. Everyone grieves differently and, therefore, our grief is unique. What looks like it's the same to everyone who has not experienced the loss of a child, is really something very special and unique to each one of us. And...sometimes it comes in light flurries or huge drifts, sometimes it lasts for days...or only minutes. Sometimes we're able to plan ahead and other times it takes us by surprise.

Now, when the snow falls, I will be reminded that I am unique, as is my daughter and my son. I may even go outside and let the beauty of the snow fall around me.

By: Carol Tomaszewski
Anne Arundel Chapter BP/USA
Annapolis, MD



HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE?

BY: MARY CLECKLEY, BEREAVED MOTHER

Lawrenceville, GA

Shortly after my son died, I realized that this question was going to be bothersome. Each time someone asked me about the number of children, I struggled with the answer. I soon decided I was not going to let this become a problem. I thought about how I felt about my choices of answers and chose the one that met my needs in the beginning. I had a surviving daughter, but I knew for me to say “one” would seem a denial on my part that my son had lived, and that wasn’t right for me.

In the beginning, when I still needed to tell people that my son had died, I would tell in detail about his accident when the question about how many children came my way. As the months passed and I had told the story enough times, I found that it wasn’t necessary to go into detail any more. My needs had changed, and I rethought my answer.

Now, when I am asked how many children I have, I answer, “I had two children. The criteria I used in determining if I go any further is whether the person asking is going to be a continuing part of my life. If so, they need to know about my son, and I tell them. Otherwise, we will be constantly dancing around that fact. Better, I think, to have it out in the open. It then loses its ability to interfere with the relationship.

If, on the other hand, the person asking is simply passing through my life, then I feel no need to go any further than, “I had two children.” Seldom does anyone catch the had instead of have, and pursue it. If they do, or if they ask follow up questions about ages or professions, I tell them first that my 26 year old son was killed in an accident. Then I tell them about my daughter who is alive and doing well. This gives them a choice. They can either acknowledge my son’s death and ask questions, or they can ignore that and ask about my daughter. I am comfortable either way. If they are embarrassed, I see that as their problem. Just to show you how different we all are, however, my husband feels comfortable answering, “We have one child.” That is what is right for him and is what he should say.

You decide what is right for you - then say it. That way you defuse that powerful question and it loses its ability to traumatize. Don’t let it be a problem

PEOPLE THINK

People think we’re fine, you know.

They say, “Oh, siblings heal so fast.”

But they don’t know the empty feelings,
or our longing for the past.

People think we’re fine, you know.

“Look, how they’ve resumed their lives,” they say.

But they don’t know of our troubled hearts

or the loneliness from day to day.

People think we’re fine you know.

“See how they’re getting over it?”
they surmise.

But they don’t know that

we’ve learned to laugh and smile,
only to complete our broken heart’s disguise.

-Mary Mathews, TCF Ft. Lauderdale

BALCONY AND BASEMENT PEOPLE

By: Traci Cooley

Bereaved Mother, Tampa Florida

Shortly after my daughter Malena died, I started a home based business to keep busy. During the course of this business venture, I was able to attend the company's annual convention. These conventions are geared toward encouraging and motivating the sales teams to sell, sell, and sell. There are workshops and motivational speakers all pushing you into "expanding your business". As I sat through many of these speakers, most of what they said I related to surviving the death of my precious daughter rather than expanding my business.



Three years later, one of the workshops I attended that weekend keeps popping into my head as my grief process extends past what the world finds "comfortable". The workshop was called "Balcony People and Basement People". I have spent days and weeks applying this to the people I have encountered during my bereavement. I continually seek Balcony people and I avoid those I consider Basement people. Basement people are people who constantly pull you down or discourage you.

Basement people in our grieving process can and do cause us much hurt and distraction. Basement people are the people who do not wish to hear about your child, they do not want to talk about your hurt or actively help you go through the grief process. Basement people are also people who say ugly or uneducated things about your loss such as "Aren't you over that by now?"

Basement people criticize your bereavement or question every method you chose in dealing with your loss. Basement people make everything about them and their feelings; disregarding the fact that it is your child who died. Basement people can cause a lot of hurt (often, unintended) to you during your bereavement process.

Balcony people are the people who pull you forward and along the road of grief. Balcony people come beside you and cry with you, spend time listening to you talk of your child and tell you stories they remember, too.

Balcony people encourage you to seek ways to heal and process your loss. They understand that the way you chose to deal with the death of your beloved child may not be their way but it is what is good for you.

Balcony people understand when you do not want them around but

stand by just in case you change your mind. Balcony people cook or clean for you because you just do not have the energy or they do not comment when the house is a little (or a lot) messier than it used to be. Balcony people understand that you will never be the "old" you and help you to find the "new" you who will emerge through the grief and loss you have sustained. Take the time to identify the Balcony people and Basement people in your life. Spend most of your time with the Balcony people and try to limit the time with Basement people; if possible. Balcony people pull you up, cheer you on, encourage you and take care of you when you most need it. Basement people pull you down, criticize and find fault in what you do. Balcony people and Basement people; we all have them in our lives. It is our choice of who we allow to be part of our bereavement process and our lives. I choose my Balcony people.



Leadership

Albany Co-Leader: Jan Messina 518-396-9914

Albany Co-Leader: Kathleen Kelleher
518-439-1114

Saratoga Springs Leader: Gabby Gravelle
518-596-4275

Newsletter Editor: Debbie Bouchey
518-435-5321 or

DebbieBouchey24@outlook.com

Regional Coordinator:

Al Visconti: 518-225-5851

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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www.compassionatefriends.org

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