



The Compassionate Friends

Santa Clarita Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

March-April 2024

Volume 25, No. 2



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS is a self-help, nonprofit organization offering friendship, understanding and hope to families grieving the death of a child of any age, from any cause. When a child dies, at age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides personal comfort, hope, support to every family experiencing the death of a son, daughter, brother, sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family. The butterfly signifies a new life for our lost children and a different life for ourselves. It is a symbol of hope, rebirth, regeneration and beauty.

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TheCompassionateFriendsofSantaClaritaCA

Website: www.compassionatefriends-scv.org

MEETINGS

We have one meeting a month. They are usually held on the 1st Thursday of each month. The next two meetings are:

March 7, 2024

April 4, 2024

TIME: **7:00 PM**

MEETING **Bethlehem SCV**

PLACE: **27265 Luther Dr. Room 5 (Second Driveway & through the gate)
Canyon Country, CA 91351**



FOR INFORMATION OR FOR A LOVING LISENER, PLEASE CALL:

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Linda Stout (Facebook Manager)

Joanne Campos (Remembrance Secretary)

Steve Crittenden (Webmaster)

Jeanne Crittenden (Button & Angel Board Manager)



Just Spring?

This is no ordinary spring at all.
It dances on with unbecoming weather:
now more like winter than December was,
and then again as soft as early summer.

This is no ordinary spring at all.
It meets your heart with unexpected dangers:
now with the loneliest of memories,
and then again with unforgotten laughter.

This is no ordinary spring at all.
This is like life itself, a changing season.
Accept the wintertime of grief and then
reach for the hope of summer and of healing.

~Sasha Wagner

From her book "For You From Sascha"

*Behind each dark flower of sorrow
waits a memory of the
blessings you shared.*

~Sascha Wagner

From her Book: "The Sorrow & The Light"



The Color of Grief

"Color doesn't occur in the world," Diane Ackerman tells us, "but in the mind." Colors are brightest when we are in love or feel joy or happiness. If we are depressed or grieving, we see the world in black and white or shades of gray. One widow friend said she knew she was on the road to recover when the first thing she noticed one morning was a bright red rose outside her window.

Colors affect our emotions. Certain colors even stimulate our appetites, and that's why restaurants are often painted in shades of red or orange. The color red has also been proven to make us physically stronger. Green or blue are soothing colors: pink is thought to be nurturing. Black, the color we most readily associate with grief, is the color that is hardest to find in its purest form. Black is not really a color but a combination of many colors. Black is a winter color because it best absorbs heat from the sun. I like to think that black also absorbs the caring feeling of others. Perhaps this is why we wear it at funerals and when we're feeling depressed or vulnerable. Sometimes, though, black can be a sad reminder that all is not right with our world.

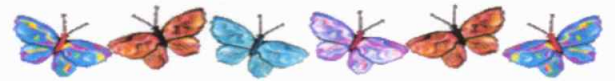
So why, then do we surround ourselves in black when we grieve? Is it because the rainbow of colors that make up the color black best expresses the many emotions we feel? The anger? The sadness? The loneliness? Or is it because we seek to protect ourselves from what suddenly seems like a hostile world, much like Mother Nature uses black as camouflage to protect wildlife? Do we wear black to express our emotions or is it a cry for help? Does black protect and warm us, or do we use it as a shield?

Look around. How bright are the colors in your world? Has the time come to don the colors of love and happiness; to surround ourselves with colors that celebrate the lasting gifts our loved ones left us? Paint your nails a bold red - as a reminder of your fortitude. Snuggle up in a baby blanket pink. Buy a yellow rose, a symbol of courage. Take a walk on lush green grass. Treat yourself to a box of crayons and invite a child to help you break them in. Wear your loved one's favorite color. Wear the color you think best represents recovery and hope. Shed the mantle of grief, and you'll find a world of rainbows waiting for you.

*~Margaret Brownly
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Bereaved Magazine
Lovingly Lifted from South Suburban Chapter
Aug 2009, Vol IX, #8 Newsletter*

*"Tears are the jewels of remembrance,
sad but glistening with the
beauty of the past."*

~James A. Peterson



The Strength of Butterflies

They didn't want to change. Their lives were full. The caterpillars crawled happily through the green leaves, played and rested in the sun, and ate their fill. Yet, through the darkness and quiet mystery, they did change. Their luminous beauty now lights the skies, their colors are vibrant, their airy flight is delightful.

They didn't want to change. Their lives were full. They laughed and worked and sang and played; our children loved their lives. Yet, through darkness and quite mystery, they did change. Beyond our own imaginings they now live indescribable harmony and perfect joy. Their new lives are a color invisible to us, but it is the color of eternity.

We didn't want to change. Our lives were full. We cared and nurtured and disciplined and laughed and mothered and fathered; we loved their lives and them. Yet, through the darkness and quiet mystery, we have changed. Though fragile in our forever - longing for them, we are gifted with growing strength of spirit called HOPE. We are a resilient and enduring new color as well, held close to our children by unbreakable threads of love that keep us tethered for awhile yet between earth and heaven.

~Mary Sue Zercher, TCF Marietta, GA



March Winds

He raced against the wind as if his life depended upon it.
Eyes bright, cheeks glowing from the still almost chilly March wind.

Throwing me a smile now and then to make sure I was watching.

I was, and when I caught a smile I applauded.

His effort so great for one small boy
I don't remember now if his kite ever flew - sometimes,
In spite of heroic efforts, they don't.

But I remember the day

The nip in the air

His cheeks glowing

His fresh, clean smell

My afternoon of playing catch

With his smiles...

I remember every year when March winds begin to blow.
Even if he had not died long after the age of flying kites,
I still would remember.

Maybe if he were still here,

Teaching his own small boy

The delicate art of flying kites

And catching his own smiles,

It wouldn't hurt so much

When March winds begin to blow.

*~From Songs from the Edge of Faye Harden
Lovingly lifted from TCF Tucson Chapter
Newsletter, Vol 14, No: 4*

Chapter News

Meeting Topics & Info

Mar 7 - Meeting, "The 5 Stages of Grief"

April 4 - Meeting, "Healing Flowers" - Planting & Sharing Our Love. Our grief process helped by nature, butterflies and gardening.
Please bring a 4" potted flower to be used in a plant exchange at the end of our meeting.



47th TCF National Conference July 12 - July 14, 2024 New Orleans, LA

The TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope & support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild.

Some of the conference highlights include, a Candle Lighting Program, Sharing Sessions, Keynote Addresses, and a Walk to Remember on Sunday morning.

This year's conference will be held at the New Orleans Marriott. Reservations can now be made online at TCF's dedicated reservation link. The discounted room rate is \$144 per night plus applicable taxes and fees. Please note that each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms.

Please go to TCF's National's website for the link and further info, www.compassionatefriends.org.



Companion Sojourners

The dictionary defines the word "sojourn" as temporary place where one may stop, rest, visit, dwell, abide and lodge. The Compassionate Friends is an organization of fellow sojourners. At our monthly meetings we stop for a while to find respite from a world that does not understand what it means to lose a child. We find a safe dwelling where there are others who are just like us. We don't need to have any special skills to be a sojourner.

As bereaved parents we instinctively reach out to one another. Those of us who have been on our journey for a while are drawn to comfort the others who have more recently embarked on their path of grief. We don't need to say any special words. A discerning look, a listening ear, or a gentle touch can be calm the other person needs to give them a moment's solace. We are companion sojourners, wounded healers and compassionate friends.

~Janet Reyes
TCF Alamo-Area Chapter, TX

Welcome New Members



Attending your first meeting takes courage and it is always hard to say "welcome" because we are so very sorry for the reason which made you eligible for our membership in TCF. However, we are glad you found us! We cannot take away your pain but we can offer our friendship and support. Do try and to attend at least 3 meetings so you have a chance to meet others who are bereaved and discover that special acceptance that occurs with new friends who truly understand.

New to our chapter are:

Lisa Grose, Mother of Keith

Lora Wyatt, Mother of Amber

Helpful Hint...

"So what do we do? Give ourselves **TIME** - to hurt, to grieve, to cry. **TIME** to choke, to scream. **TIME** to be "crazy" and **TIME** to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress through grief against anyone else's. Be your own timekeeper."

~Darcie D. Sims



A Little Farther Down the Road

I know those tears you're crying
I've been there in your shoes
You feel like there's no use trying
Like there's nothing left to lose.
You take one small step forward
Then move two steps back
You may not see it now
But it won't always be like that.

A little farther down the road
You'll see the sun again.
A little farther down the road
You'll look back at where you've been.
You'll see how far you've come since then
It's a well used road I know
A little farther down the road
The strength will come to go.

~Alan Pedersen
Past National TCF Executive



A Time for Renewal

Spring has wrapped us in the glory of floral bounty with flowers, blooming bushes and trees and wild bluebonnets hinting at a renewal. In the gentle rains we have received a sweet cleansing of the spirit. It is spring that gives us hope for the future. As the season changes, we sense the cloak of our grief lifting in tiny increments. Yes, it is uplifting. For those of us who are newly bereaved parents or siblings, discovering a bit of lightness in our grief mantle is so very welcome.

And that is how our grief will be for the rest of our lives. No epiphanies, no giant steps, just a slight lifting each day, a microscopic rebirth of ourselves and a step further into our lives after the death of our child. There are setbacks, of course. The pain is agony in the first year...brain pain, soul searing pain, physical pain, anxiety and much more seem to rule our days. But each day is a tiny step forward into hope.

To enhance our grief journey we must do grief work. Just as the gardener tends to the soil, fertilizes, gently stimulates tender roots and removes weeds from the flower bed, we must tend to our grief on a daily basis. Throwing out the negative...the guilt, the anger, the anxiety and adding the positive by seeking our solace in our journals, reading, movie choices, spirituality, friendships kept and friendships left behind. In the garden of our psyche, our grief must be tended as if everyday is the first day of spring.

And so it is that with springtime comes a reminder of renewal and the grief work we must do to obtain that renewal of spring. Day by day we change; month by month we make note of that change. One day we are able to see the blossoming of our renewal as we move forward in life with our precious children in our hearts.

*~Annette Mennen Baldwin
TCF Katy, TX*

In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen

*"We cannot prevent the birds of sorrow
from flying around our heads,
but we must keep them from building
nests in our hair."*



~Chinese Proverb



Easter and Passover



This is the month for celebrating Easter and Passover, family holidays, and family gatherings. Again, as bereaved parents, especially if we are newly bereaved parents, we pause and must make a decision as to how and if we are going to proceed as we have in former years, before the death of our children. For both holidays, there is the "children's hour" so to speak. For Easter, there have always been the Easter parade, Easter eggs, and the Easter bunny. For Passover, there have been matzoh, the Seder with recitation of the Four Questions and the participation of the youngest child.

So again, what to do? Both Easter & Passover are holidays in which children are strongly involved. To see that empty chair at the table, to know that the missing child is no longer with us, can be devastating, especially after the first or second anniversaries of the death. As with the other holidays, Christmas, Chanukah, Thanksgiving, there are no pat answers, no magic formulas. If you can, talk about your child during the holidays. At our home we have made it a ritual to remember our son at the beginning of the Passover Seder.

Please handle these holidays any way you can. There are no rules. **DO IT YOUR WAY.**

*~David Ziv
TCF Bucksmont, PA*



I Am Spring

I am the beginning.
I am budding promise.
I spill cleansing tears of life
from cloudy vessels
creating muddy puddles
where single cell creatures abide
and splashing children play.

I am new green growth.
I softly flow from winter's barren hand.
On gentle breeze I fly - embracing sorrow.
With compassion, we feather nests
where winged voices sing winter-spring duets.
As frozen ice transforms to playful stream
I whisper truth - life is change.

I am spring.
I bless long, dark wintry days.
I crown mankind's pain
with starry skies
in deepest night
lighting solitary paths from sorrow to joy
as the wheel of life turns 'round and 'round.

*~Carol Clum
(written after attending a workshop presented by
John Fox, author of "Finding What You Didn't Lose"
& "Poetic Medicine")*



When Will The Pain End?

When I look back over my grief journey, I marvel at how far I have come and yet at how poignant and permanent the loss of my son will always be for me. How can this dichotomy exist within one person's mind?

The horror of the news of my son's death, the shock that slammed my mind into numbness, the unremembered conversations, the platitudes that followed the memorial service and the first two months of living in a complete fog of disbelief are very vivid in my mind. The horror is too real to forget. The six months of melancholy, miserable mourning are forever locked in my mind. The pure physical pain, the piercing jolts when I momentarily thought of something beyond my child's death was mercilessly slammed back into the finality of death's amputation of my son's smile, laughter and physical presence on this earth are etched for eternity in my soul. My mind simply couldn't accept that Todd was gone from this plane. The first anniversary of his death was a horrifying day worsened by a very bleak and foreshadowing conversation with my son's widow. Life would be much different for my husband and me from this point forward. There were no bridges to the past. She made that clear. I was inconsolable from the impact of her wicked words.

But I made it through the first and second years with help from my Compassionate Friends Chapter. I could cry and scream about the injustice of my loss and all that followed, and each parent understood. Eventually I had told my story enough times to enough people that I subconsciously accepted Todd's death and all the changes in my life that followed.

At some point in my second year of grief I began reaching out to others. Helping others, seeing their pain, hearing their tearful words, had become cathartic for me. The more I helped, the more I was helped.

Yes, my son is still with me in my heart and in my memories. The movies of his life play in my mind almost daily. I have made new friends. I have walked away from old acquaintances. I have learned to separate the meaningful from the meaningless. And I have learned that I will always feel the pain of my son's death, yet I must always move forward into hope. Each day brings more hope as I accomplish another piece of my lifelong grief work.

So dichotomy exists within me. In my heart, mind and soul, my child will live forever. The memories of the full measure of each day of his life are there to give me peace and solace. Yet, the brutal pain of my son's death is there, too. Unlike any other love in life, a parent's love is unconditional and transcends all. There is peace in knowing that. The pain doesn't end. It simply reshapes itself into a quiet, soft ache that gives us a gentle, often tearful, reminder that our child will always be with us. And perhaps that is as it should be.

*~Annett Mennen Baldwin
TCF Katy, TX
In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen*

I Wonder

When did sadness stop covering everything?
I don't know.
It must have first been for moments, then maybe hours, days eventually.
Then for a long time
no longer ever-present,
but just below the surface
waiting for a thought to trigger it.
Now I live with more joy than sadness
but even now
sadness surfaces
unexpectedly
as the dark shape of loss
stirs the cauldron
and tears are added to the soup of
life,
salty still,
but not as bitter
or overpowering,
adding an important flavor
to the whole of me.

*~Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
From: Catching the Light—Coming Back to
Life After the Death of a Child*

Love Gifts



A Love Gift is a wonderful way to remember your child, grandchild, or sibling's birthday or angel dates or just to say I love you. What better way than to have their photo included in our newsletter along with a special memory, thought or message, article or poem from you.

If anyone would like to make a donation in memory of their child, grandchild, or sibling you may give it to Alice or Diane at our meeting or mail it to Alice at 27949 Park Meadow Dr., Canyon Country, 91387. You can also email the info to TCF.SCV@gmail.com Love gifts should be received by the 10th of the month to be placed in the up-coming newsletter. **But remember our newsletter is bi-monthly.** What a special way to share and remember your loved one!

Our chapter exists solely on voluntary, tax deductible donations. We thank you in advance for any donations you may be able to give or send. Your donations help to pay the expenses of our newsletter, purchase books & brochures, coffee & refreshments, new member's packets, our rental space and other miscellaneous supplies. They also fund our annual Balloon Release and Candle Lighting programs. We sincerely appreciate your support!

"Forever In Our Hearts"

Our Children/Grandchildren/Siblings



Loved and Missed on Their Birthdays

March

April

Name	Date	Member	Name	Date	Member
Timothy Renolds	3/17	Tom & Alice Renolds	Bradley McBurney	4/22	Tammy Gauld
Michael Rodriguez	3/7	Debbie DiCorrado	Walter Rodriguez	4/25	Carole Rodriguez
Jeanene Sykes	3/2	Ted Sykes	Reese Stout	4/30	Linda Stout
Melissa Matters	3/26	Kirk & Dianne Mueller	Kevin Rickhoff	4/30	Nancy Rickhoff
Colleen Brown	3/17	Keith & Lin Brown	Jacob Kaplan	4/1	Michael & Robyn
Bailey Haney	3/28	Myra Kulick	Emily Mogg	4/16	Jeffrey & Tracey
Kali Stanfiled <small>Grandchild</small>	3/30	Nika Johnson	Emily Mogg <small>Grandchild</small>	4/16	Gary & Sandy
Jax Markley	3/26	Matt & Daisy Markley	Erica Thomas	4/13	Lisa Monsour



Lovingly Remembered on Their Angel Dates

March

April

Name	Date	Member	Name	Date	Member
Brianna Smith	3/30	David & Laurie Millard	Sammy Thomas <small>Grandchild</small>	4/10	Kay & Dave Thomas
Nicholas Colley	3/28	Scott & Jade Colley	Michael Arvizu	4/22	Robert & Juanita
Aiden Lopez	3/26	Cesar & Jessica Lopez			
Aiden Lopez <small>Grandchild</small>	3/26	Carmen Smith			
Melissa VanDyke	3/27	Doris Van Dyke			
Brian DeCaro	3/25	Mary Yancey			
Kali Stanfiled <small>Grandchild</small>	3/30	Nika Johnson			
Monique Gutierrez <small>Grandchild</small>	3/24	Irene Frenes			
Keith Drynan	3/10	Lisa Grose			

Griever's Progress

To my great surprise, there came a time, when something inside started to accept my ability to continue living. That is when healing may have become self-perpetuating. I can't recall when I first caught myself thinking "How on earth did I manage to survive?" It was more than a rhetorical question.

Once I became aware of one or the other facet of my survival and healing, I felt a need not only to respect life again, but also to appreciate my own courage (at least sometimes). While I still have very dark times, these are not so frequent now, and I do cope with them better. Perhaps I have learned to expect life to be tragic from time to time, therefore I seem to be more prepared for the slings and arrows....

Today I understand that striving for perpetual inner peace is not necessarily a sign of spiritual strength. In trying to avoid painful grieving - through reason or through faith - one may also miss the deepest awareness of one's humanity.

*~Sascha Wagner
From: Wintersun*