



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



JANUARY—FEBRUARY, 2021 ISSUE

Vol 42, No. 1

#1184

This issue of the TCF Marin Newsletter is sponsored by love gifts from our members.

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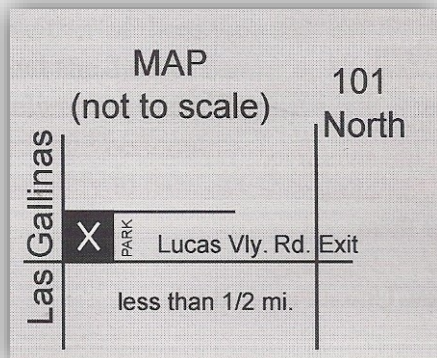
Mark Rosengarden

TCF Marin Monthly Meetings: **Meetings are being held via ZOOM**

Group meetings are normally held on the third Monday of the month from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Hillside Church at Lucas Valley.

2000 Las Gallinas Avenue
(at Lucas Valley Road)
San Rafael, CA

First time attendees are encouraged to arrive at 7:00 for orientation. All attendees arriving before 7:00 p.m. are asked to sign in and be seated in the lobby until the meeting room is ready. The TCF Newsletter and informational pamphlets will be displayed for attendees to browse.



FORWARD to this edition:

We sincerely regret not being able to hold our usual monthly support meetings due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the mandatory shelter-in-place quarantine. Please know that we ARE here to help you in your times of need. Please reach out to us by email at tcf-marin@gmail.com or check our website for more up to date contact information. Monthly meetings are being presented online via ZOOM.

Please let us know if you are not receiving periodic email information or if your email address is not on our contact list. We will add you to the list. Thank you for your continuing support at this trying time.



What Should I Expect?

When a grieving family member first attends a TCF meeting, they may be so full of emotional pain that they can only sit and listen. To talk might require more emotional composure and energy than they currently possess. Others, fresh in their grief and quite possibly still residing in shock, might choose to talk non-stop; others may choose to hide their tears and actually find ways to joke about life. All of those ways are considered normal and acceptable. But, either way, talking or listening, laughing or crying, dialogue with other families who know and understand what you are going through will eventually be of extraordinary benefit.

Sometimes parents attend a couple meetings of The Compassionate Friends hoping for a ninety-minute miracle. Then when the pain remains, or actually becomes more intense as it surfaces, they decide not to attend any more meetings, where painful memories might evoke tears. Sometimes the newly bereaved just don't have enough physical energy to attend a meeting. They struggle just to make it through the day. Others assume the mistaken belief that if you just don't dwell on it, it will get better with time. These parents may try to force the grief down deep inside, and some people carry the unexpressed pain inside for years, where it continues



Meeting Calendar

Third Monday of the Month:

Monday, January 18, 2021
Monday, February 15, 2021
Monday, March 15, 2021
Monday, April 19, 2021



TCF RESOURCES:

The Compassionate Friends, Marin County Chapter

P.O. Box 150935
San Rafael, CA 94915
www.tcfmarin.org
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/36595597804>
Info: Eileen Rusky (415) 457-3123

TCF San Francisco and Peninsula Chapter

Meets: 2nd Wednesday
Taraval Police Sta. 2345, 24th Ave
Contact: Audre Hallum
650.359.7928, cwhallum1@mac.com
Co Leaders: Meg Cunningham, Doug Cameron

TCF Sonoma County Chapter

tcf.sonomacounty@gmail.com
(707) 490-8640

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Phone: (630) 990-0010
Toll Free: (877) 969-0010
Fax: (630) 990-0246
Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org
www.compassionatefriends.org

Additional Support Sites

opentohope.com
survivorsofsuicide.com
griefspeaks.com

Other Grief Counseling Resources

Hospice by the Bay offers individual and group grief counseling.
Free monthly drop in 1st Thursday 11am-12pm 17 E. Sir Francis Drake, Larkspur.
Marin and SF (415) 526-5699
Sonoma (707) 931-7299
Email: griefsupport@hbthb.org
Website: www.hospicebythebay.org

North Bay Grief Recovery in San Rafael

www.NorthBayGriefRecovery.com
Ph.: 415-250-3027

[LINK TO WEBSITE](#)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.afsp.org Ph.: 707.721.4062

to simmer and fester until it manifests in serious physical consequences.

Unresolved grief does not go away. It can be eased or masked for a time with drugs, and often a parent turns to tranquilizers, anti-depressants, or other medicinal chemicals with unknown risk, seeking permanent relief from the emotional devastation. But true healing occurs through a long process involving time, love and understanding of others, and by acknowledging, discussing and ultimately learning to accept all the feelings and experiences which surrounded your loss.

It takes inordinate courage to confront the Demon of Death and the loss of a child. It also requires a certain amount of love and care for your fellow human beings to continue to share with other newly bereaved. But ultimately, when we decide to walk this walk with The Compassionate Friends, the love and support we offer to one another—as together we travel the road to healing—brings comfort, strength, understanding and finally, a newfound sense of purpose in our life. We are not alone, and by truly caring for one another we can help each other go way beyond “just surviving, or “getting over it”. We are truly sorry for your loss and we extend ourselves to you with compassion and love.

Sharon Steffke © June, 1998 TCF Downriver One Heart Chapter, MI

Journaling to Heal

Each time I look back over my grief journey, I remember the important role that journaling played in my first and second years of grief. Hand-written entries, some sentences, sometimes just a few words describing my emotions, helped me to define where I was in my daily life. As I review the tear-stained pages, I am reminded of the deep, deep pain and the catharsis of the journal. Whether I was angry, in pain, deeply depressed or just too exhausted to think, I wrote a few words, maybe even a few lines each day. I saw it as my connection to my son.

As time progressed, my journaling became writing and eventually I returned to the computer and began forming coherent thoughts and sentences, with subjects and messages to my child, myself and to others. But the process started with the healing of the journal. I learned to be very honest with myself in my journal because I never shared it with anyone. I didn't put on a mask or rationalize in my journal, as no one else would be reading it. I was completely candid, and I soon recognized my weaknesses, regrets, strengths and successes. Pure honesty and great insight were achieved in my journal's conversation with myself.

Grief therapists recommend journaling to bereaved parents quite frequently. Some people are able to find an outlet for their daily roller coaster of emotions through journaling. Some seek answers and others seek questions. Many parents feel they are connecting with their child through their journal. There are as many reasons to journal as there are types of journals.

While journaling may not be for everyone, we encourage each of you to at least attempt it for a week. Give it your best effort. If, as some have found, it offers you nothing and is a chore, not a treasured time, then stop and seek other forms of outlet. But if, as many have found, it offers you a place for your thoughts, your messages, your self-revelation and self-evaluation as well as a refuge from the world, then by all means, continue to journal.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen



Carol's Corner

by Carol Kearns, PhD
author of "Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare"



Columns for The Compassionate Friends

I have found great solace volunteering for The Compassionate Friends, a hard-working group that supports families seeking "the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child" (www.compassionatefriends.org). My columns discuss topics of continuing concern in the Marin County CA newsletter. Please visit my newly updated website at www.carolKearns.com. - Carol

How Many Children Do You Say You Have?

What was once an easy question becomes very difficult after the death of a child. This is especially true in the first few years following our child's death. To answer you have one child when you once said two, not only feels like a betrayal to our deceased child (and ourselves) but is yet another reminder of how much life has changed. There is no right or wrong response. We must answer this question in a way that works for us.

I have learned over the years to protect myself when asked this. My response now completely depends on the circumstance. Many times I don't feel like dealing with the reaction to this well intentioned question when it is learned my child has died. Usually the response is shock, dismay and/or discomfort. Whatever it might be, I now choose when I want to share that my daughter has died. "I have a 38 year old son, Michel, and a daughter, Kristen, who died when she was seven."

Part of our healing process is to take care of our feelings and appreciate how new many of these feelings are for us. The grieving process can become easier if we check in with ourselves on a regular basis, try to identify our feelings and learn the best way to process them.

Our response may be new and surprising in many situations we face after our child's death. We are learning about ourselves in a new and extremely stressful situation. This is why we must protect ourselves. I might often respond to the question of how many children I have by saying, "I have one child, my son Michel." My daughter is buried in my heart and never far from me. I know I will always have two children. It doesn't matter to me if others do.



Finding Meaning In Our Grief

After the death of a child, when we are in the depths of grief, it is hard to believe we will ever be happy again. We are overwhelmed by what used to be the simplest of tasks, yet we still have to function. Life continues on never missing a beat. There is no magic wand and there are no magical words for surviving grief. As we each find our own way, we must be patient and gentle with ourselves.

Grief can focus us inward. It is only when we start to look outside of ourselves that the healing can begin. In trying to accept my daughter Kristen's death, I realized loving always brings the potential for suffering. But what other choice is there? Not to love or to have someone to love is to me a greater suffering. We must not allow the love we have for our deceased child to keep us from the love we have for our spouse, surviving children, and other loved ones. We must instead, allow our love for them to carry us forward. Through them we can begin a new life.

In order to cope with suffering, which is a natural part of life, we each need to search out that which is personally meaningful. This is the greatest challenge after our child has died, but until we do, we will not be free from the pain. What helped me after Kristen's death was connecting with other bereaved parents. I didn't care what their degrees were. I knew that they knew what I was going through and seeing how they rebuilt their lives gave me hope to do the same. This is another reason why The Compassionate Friends, Parents of Murdered Children, Survivors of Suicide, Help After Neonatal Death (HAND), and Sudden Infant Death (SIDS) organizations help on an ongoing basis. We can all learn from and be there for each other as we repair our shattered dreams.

I have completed my memoir, *Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare: How My Daughter's Death Has Taught Me the Meaning of Life*. May our beloved children who died much too soon never be forgotten.

Our Children Remembered, January, 2021

<i>Child</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Bereaved</i>
Peter Demitrius Alex		Bill & Pat Alex
John Christopher Alioto, Jr.		John Alioto
Eric Tyler Anderson		Bill & Liz Anderson
Daniel Zacharia Ashkenazy		Pamela & Dan Ashkenazy
John Charles Berges		Mary Berges
Jonathan Eugene Brilliant		Girija & Larry Brilliant
Christopher Abram Bruce		Mike & Louise Bruce
Laura Alicia Bruce		Mike & Louise Bruce
Daniel Keith Cracchold		Linda Winslow
Misty Dollwet		Ronald & Joan Crook
Nina Embervine		Barbara McNeil
Adam Teplin Emmott		Kristina Teplin, Michelle J. Maguire
Kristopher Manuel Espinoza		Kristina Espinoza, Judy Duenas
Matthew Christopher Fields		Cathy Morocco
Basilio Nathan Garza Jr.		Renee Garza
Peter Alexander Helldoerfer		Peter Helldoerfer, Kathleen Freitag
Vincent Alfred Hinds		Henry & Ginny Hinds
Mina Hornor		Christa Kaufmann-Hornor
Stefanie Helen Jacobs		Nanette Jacobs
John Nicholas Klingel		John & Karen Klingel
Dylan Clarke Krings		Randy & Sioux Krings
Trey Lagomarsino		Mike Baxman & Susan Kim
James Scott Lambert		Linda Hicken
Trevor London Leopold		Michelle & Jeff Leopold
Mathew Gary Luce		Alice Clary, Christie Clary
Marci Eilene Meyring		Gary & Natalie Meyring
Brian David Mixsell		Bill, Sandy & Belinda Mixsell
Michael Patrick O'Riordan		Mary O'Riordan
Eli Thomas Olaeta		Lonnie Olaeta
Luke Benjamin Pedemonte		Richard and Therese Pedemonte
Lindsey Opal Quinby		Paul Quinby, Jean Quinby Reiss
Anna Elizabeth Russell		Lorene Jackson
Ruby Salkeld		Cathie Merkel
Dennis Howard Schonborn		Felicia Schonborn
Kyle Aaron Scourbys		Bill & Kimberly Scourbys
Dwayne Anthony Simón		Donna & Flennis Simón
Julian Ali Thomas		Fariba Thomas
Karl Ingemar Thunstrom		Avghi & Bert Thunstrom
Adrian Rodolfo Valderrama		Rosa Sandoval & Rodolfo Valderrama
Gregory Brian Wilhelm		Patricia & Roger Wilhelm
Malika Ziani		Phyllis Callahan

Our Children Remembered, February, 2021
Dates

Child

Bereaved

Maraina Lee Arik	Rich & Linda Arik
Cailin Faith Baldes	Diana Baldes
Tobias M. Biedul	Charles Feeney & Holly Biedul
Kevin Connor Bledsoe	AnnMarie Bledsoe
Jacob Westley Brumbaugh	Mark & Deborah Brumbaugh
Joey Burger	Bob & Darlene Burger
Max Hart Chappell	Jeanne Vukasovich
Joey Ciatti	Becky Oken
Lisa Danielle Clark	Julie & Bruce Clark, Lucy Martinez
Michael Anthony Dollwet	Ronald & Joan Crook
Debra Lynn Ferrua	Ronald & Joan Crook
Matthew Christopher Fields	Cathy Morocco
Matthew Finzen	Barbara & Fritz Finzen
Lori Ann Elizabeth Gentry	Genesse & Bill Gentry
Pamela Dawn Heaster	Ila Benavidez-Heaster
Dana John Hudson	Diana Hudson
Chris Leach	Marcie & Don Leach
Ruth Dasha Goldie Levy	Shary Levy, Arthur Levy
Sabrina Elizabeth Lew	Teri Miller
Laura Catherine Maatz	Russell & Marcia Lizza
Marco Antonio Joseph Martinez	Samuel Martinez & Brenda Bloomfield
Christopher J. Murphy, Jr.	Tina Smith
Michael Patrick O'Riordan	Mary O'Riordan
Alexander Rayburn	Mindee & Steve Rayburn
Justin Daniel Reynolds	Carole Bonnici
David Arthur Ross	Arthur & Joan Ross
Warren James Ruehle	Kate & Glenn Ruehle
Theodore "Teddy" James Russell	Anne & Tim Russell
Michael Kevin Sadler	Kathy Miles
Colin Edward Schreck	Daly & David Schreck, Lesley & Ireland Cannan
Richard Sielert	Diane Sielert
Dwayne Anthony Simón	Donna & Flennis Simón
Flennis Anthony Simón II	Donna & Flennis Simón
Andrew Phiip Swig	Maureen Swig
Brigham Robert Thompson Thompson	Elizaberth Thompson Mollner
Elizabeth Torlakson	Kathy Bodnar

Most of us have far more courage than we ever dreamed we possessed. Dale Carnegie

No farewell words were spoken, no time to say goodbye, you were gone before we knew it, and only God knows why. - Author Unknown

Love Gifts

Love Gifts are "messages" published in our newsletter that honor children who have died. We are grateful to parents, grandparents and others who, by their Love Gifts donations, allow us to offer resources such as the Annual Candle Lighting Event, the newsletter, books, brochures and pamphlets at no cost to assist bereaved families. They also allow us

to provide information to professionals and others who impact the lives and feelings of the bereaved. The donation amount is your choice.

The following love gift was received too late for the November/ December newsletter.

Donor/s: Brad & Genie Foon
Child: Neel Thomas Foon
Dates:

"As we approach Thanksgiving we are grateful for all the joy & laughter you brought into our lives. Loving you always. Mom & Dad."

The following love gifts were received for January and February.

Donor/s: Becky Oken
Child: Joey Ciatti
Dates:

"Happy 50th birthday to my beloved son. Forever young in my memory & heart."

Donor/s: Diane Sielert
Child: Richard Sielert
Dates:

"You are always with me."

Donor/s: Daly & David Schreck
Child: Colin Edward Schreck
Dates:

"Colin - You live within us and beside us every day With our love. Mother & Dad, Chris, Lesley & Ireland, Ireland David & Michaelanne Daly"

Donor/s: Carrie Spiegel
Child: Philip Spiegel
Dates:

"Forever in my heart."

"In times of grief and sorrow I will hold you and rock you and take your grief and make it my own. When you cry I cry and when you hurt I hurt. And together we will try to hold back the floods of tears and despair and make it through the potholed street of life"
— Nicholas Sparks, The Notebook

"It is the capacity to feel consuming grief and pain and despair that also allows me to embrace love and joy and beauty with my whole heart. I must let it all in."
— Anna White, Mended: Thoughts on Life, Love, and Leaps of Faith

"I Shall Look At The World Through Tears. Perhaps I Shall See Things That, Dry-Eyed, I Could Not See". -
--Nicholas Wolterstorff.

Deadlines for Love Gift information for Newsletters:

Jan/Feb issue Dec. 15 Jul/Aug issue Jun. 15
Mar/Apr issue Feb. 15 Sep/Oct issue Aug. 15
May/Jun issue Apr. 15 Nov/Dec issue Oct. 15

Love Gift Form:

Child's name _____ Donor's name _____

Child's Birthdate & Anniversary Date _____

Newsletter month _____

Message _____

Include your name, address and phone # if not on check in case of questions:

Mail the information above along with your donation (check) made payable to TCF/Marin
to: TCF/Marin c/o Love Gifts, P.O. Box 150935, San Rafael, CA 94915.

Broken Heart Syndrome

One afternoon, I was channel surfing looking for something to watch when I came across the Oprah Winfrey Channel. She was interviewing a woman named Madonna Badger. On Christmas Day, 2011, Madonna's 7 year old twins, a boy and a girl, her 9 year old daughter and her parents all died in a horrific house fire. She spoke of the unrelenting grief and sorrow she has suffered in the years since. I was riveted to the television screen as she recanted her story. As she talked, she coined a phrase that I had never heard of before to describe her pain, "*Broken Heart Syndrome*." It is a temporary condition that is brought on by extreme stressful situations, such as the death of someone deeply loved.

I thought, finally there is a label for the intense pain and suffering that those who grieve feel! Broken Heart Syndrome is an identifiable condition brought on by stressful situations, such as the death of a loved one. Broken Heart Syndrome is also called *takotsubo cardiomyopathy*. Broken Heart Syndrome manifests as a temporary disruption of the heart's normal pumping function or with even more forceful contractions, while the remainder of the heart functions normally. Symptoms can include chest pain and shortness of breath. It affects more women than men. It is attributed to a reaction to a surge of stress hormones.

After my daughter died, I suffered with intense bouts of pain on the outer left muscular wall of my upper torso. An EKG revealed no abnormalities. Seven years later, I still never know when this pain might reoccur. I have however connected my episodes with certain stressors, such as; my child's birth and death dates, holidays and special occasions.

Although doctors are just now learning about this condition, the good news is that broken heart syndrome is treatable and the discomfort should abate with time. If you think you might be suffering from broken heart syndrome, you should discuss it with your physician.

Let us all take care of our own hearts this Valentine's Day.

Janet Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

An excerpt from "*A Fitting Tribute*"

Judy Gradford
TCF Rochester, NY

Today I come to bury my grief
Tomorrow may we rejoice that you have lived and loved us
Erecting a monument of joy in life's celebration
Singing a eulogy of love for the broken-hearted,
Lighting an eternal flame of hope for those in despair.
In your loving memory let us seek to perfect the world
And in so doing, perfect ourselves.



Communicating with My Child

Eighteen months ago, I dedicated a bench to Philip. It's in a space Philip would like, out in the natural world, with abundant wildlife and wonderful views across hills and sea.

I go there often to spend time alone with my beloved son. I sit on the bench, look at the vistas, and remember our family as it used to be. I talk to Philip. I make him promises; I ask for his guidance. I muse on what his life would be like now. I tell him how deeply I love him, how missing him gets harder with each passing year. I tell him about his brothers, about his sister-in-law and his little nephew, both of whom he never met. I tell him how important he is to us. I tell him that we will never forget him, that though our lives are five years past his death, we still think of him all the time and want him with us. I tell him that I am having a terribly hard time accepting that he has died, and that I am doing the best I can.

I have no idea if I am communicating with a Philip who has survived death or with myself, who hopes he has. Sometimes I think I feel an impatient nudge, a sort of, "Get on with it, Mom, it's not what you think" message. Sometimes I feel his arms around me in compassionate understanding. Sometimes I don't feel any response at all.

I am grateful for these private times with my child. Whether he lives on in some other sphere—and how I hope he does!—or whether he resides only in our deepest hearts, there is an honoring of him in these conversations, a recognition of his existence and its importance, that matters very much to me.

I believe that we all need to find our individual ways of keeping the channels to our children open. My conversations with Philip may seem odd to some people, but they are right for me. I encourage you to honor your own private ways of communicating with your beautiful child, whatever they are. If you are searching for the channel that will work for you, consider what some other bereaved parents have found helpful: poetry, painting, journal writing, hiking in the natural world, daydreaming, music, meditation, lighting candles, wearing a deceased child's clothing, sitting in his/her room, playing a sport she/he loved, among many, many others. May the time spent in private dialogue with your child bring you peace-filled moments, a renewed sense of connection, and strength to continue the difficult journey we are all on.

Kitty Reeve
TCF Marin County and San Francisco Chapters, CA
In Memory of my son, Philip

An excerpt from "*Grief*"
Kristina Susana
TCF Marin

And grief is not something that you complete.
But rather you endure.





The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

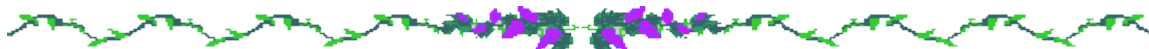
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The Compassionate Friends, Marin County Chapter
P. O. Box 150935
San Rafael, CA 94915

JAN—FEB, 2021

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Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly



A Painless Way to Support our TCF Chapter

TCF Marin survives largely on generous love gifts throughout the year and at the Candle Lighting Ceremony in December. But there is another way to support TCF-MC that is easy and painless. That is, whenever you purchase something from Amazon, if you do so through Amazon Smile, .5% of the purchase price of selected items will be sent to TCF-MC automatically.

It's easy, it places no additional economic burden on you or your family and, when enough of us participate, it will add up and TCF-MC will be stronger and be able to provide more services.

It's simple. Here's how to do it.

To shop at AmazonSmile simply (1) go to smile.amazon.com. (If you have one, you can use the same account on [Amazon.com](https://amazon.com) and [AmazonSmile](https://amazonSmile). Your shopping cart, Wish List and other account settings are also the same.) (2) On your first visit to AmazonSmile, smile.amazon.com, (3) just select TCF-MC to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. AmazonSmile will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation. Eligible products are marked “Eligible for AmazonSmile donation” on their product detail pages.

