



The Compassionate Friends

Marin County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



January—February, 2024 ISSUE

Vol 45, No. 1

#1184

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

Chapter Leader:

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Facilitator:

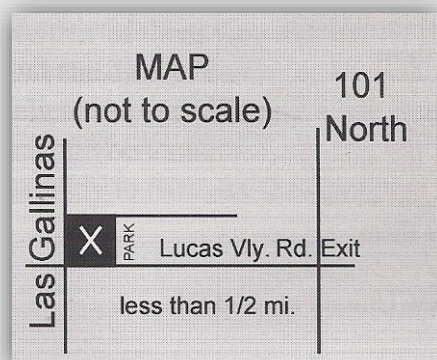
Mark Rosengarden

TCF Marin Monthly Meetings:

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

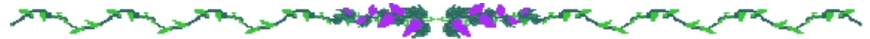
First time attendees are encouraged to arrive at 7:00 for orientation. All attendees arriving before 7:00 p.m. are asked to sign in and be seated in the lobby until the meeting room is ready. The TCF Newsletter and informational pamphlets will be displayed for attendees to browse.



FORWORD to this edition and note from the editor:

We are holding our usual monthly support meetings at the Hillside Church in Terra Linda.

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.



Resolutions

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better.

Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself—both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what our meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

This newsletter is another way you can become more involved in our chapter. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs.

Have a happier New Year! Pat Akery, TCF, Medford, OR



Meeting Calendar

Third Monday of the Month:

Monday, January 15, 2024
Monday, February 19, 2024
Monday, March 18, 2024
Monday, April 22, 2024



TCF RESOURCES:

The Compassionate Friends, Marin County Chapter:

P.O. Box 150935
San Rafael, CA 94915
www.tcfmarin.org
tcfmarin@gmail.com
<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
1,650.359.7928, cwhallum1@mac.com
Co Leaders: Meg Cunningham, Doug Cameron

TCF Sonoma County Chapter:

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

Northern CA Regional Coordinator:

Nancy Juracka
nancy_juracka@yahoo.com

TCF National Office:

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60533-3696
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
survivorsof suicide.com
griefspeaks.com
friendsforsurvival.org

Other Grief Counseling Resources:

By the Bay Health (formerly Hospice by the Bay) offers individual and group grief counseling. Free Monthly Grief Support Group for Bereaved Parents 1st Thursday 11a-12p. Pre-registration required.
· Marin and SF (415) 526-5699
· Sonoma (707) 931-7299
Email: griefsupport@bythebayhealth.org
Website: <https://bythebayhealth.org/>

North Bay Grief Recovery in San Rafael:

www.NorthBayGriefRecovery.com
Ph.: 1.415-250-3027
[LINK TO WEBSITE](#)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention:

www.afsp.org Ph.: 1.707.721.4062

Friends for Survival, Inc

www.friendsforsurvival.org
Ph.: 1.800.646.7322

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 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

Thinking and talking about death need not be morbid; they may be quite the opposite. Ignorance and fear of death overshadow life, while knowing and accepting death erases this shadow. —Lily Pincus

Life is eternal and love is immortal; And death is only a horizon, And a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. —Rossiter W. Raymond

“Everyone grieves in different ways. For some, it could take longer or shorter. I do know it never disappears. An ember still smolders inside me. Most days, I don't notice it, but, out of the blue, it'll flare to life.” — Maria V. Snyder, *Storm Glass*

We can endure much more than we think we can; all human experience testifies to that. All we need to do is learn not to be afraid of pain. Grit your teeth and let it hurt. Don't deny it, don't be overwhelmed by it. It will not last forever. One day, the pain will be gone and you will still be there. - Harold Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*

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 to Deal With Friends You Lose After the Death of a Child

True friends don't leave us. Circumstances and miles may separate good friends for years with the only contact being the annual holiday card. However, when finally together, close friends soon find that cozy place of their friendship. We often have different friends for different reasons. Some friends might be skiing or hiking friends, while others are for sharing plays, books, events or juicy intellectual conversations. Only a few fall into the category of a close deep friend where we can share profoundly of ourselves. These good friends don't abandon us after a crisis, especially after the death of our child.

Friendships are sometimes tricky, especially after a crisis. This can often be a sorting process of who your true friends really are. It is easy to have friends when times are good but what happens when the chips are down? We might instead discover that people we thought were close to were not the good friends we believed they were.

There can be many reasons for losing friends after we lose a child. Some are that they may think we are not moving fast enough through the grief process and therefore are no longer fun to be around. Dinner invitations may cease for concern of the gloom the bereaved may bring to event. Other friends may not know what to say and therefore avoid us. This unfortunately can be true in tragic death situations such as murder or suicide. At a time when the bereaved need people most, they may instead find themselves isolated.

Another reason, especially in the death of a child, is the inherent fear that surfaces in other parents. Their vulnerability in realizing they can't always protect their children from death, is too much to handle. I'm not justifying their behavior but pointing out reasons I've encountered in my 25 years as a therapist.

In my personal experience after Kristen's death, I had friends who let me know that I could call them no mat-

ter if it was in the middle of the night. I never had to because the comfort of knowing they were there for me was all I needed. These were my good friends. At the same time, I was conscious of others avoiding me. This once happened when I was at the grocery store and saw a person I thought was a friend notice me and turn her cart around to retreat down another aisle. I'm certain she didn't know I saw her do this. On the other hand, certain people, whom I had not counted among my closer friends, emerged and were there for me when I needed them most. In a crisis we learn so much about ourselves, and so much about others. A few good friends are worth more than a thousand others. You probably have discovered who they are.



I never got to say goodbye



*Wish I could go back to the day
When angels came and took you away
I wanted to hold your hand so tight
Kiss you gently and say goodnight
And then just before you had to go
I would tell you how much I love you so
I don't know how I don't know why
I never got the chance to say goodbye*

By

John F Connor



Our Children Remembered

January

Child	Dates	Bereaved
Peter Demetrius Alex		Bill & Pat Alex
John Christopher Alioto, Jr.		John Alioto
Eric Tyler Anderson		Bill & Liz Anderson
Daniel Zacharia Ashkenazy		Pamela Ashkenazy, 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		Michelle J. Maguire, Kristina Teplin
Kristopher Manuel Espinoza		Kristina Espinoza, Judy Duenas
Matthew Christopher Fields		Cathy Morocco
Basilio Nathan Garza Jr.		Renee Garza
Peter Alexander Helldoerfer		Kathleen Freitag, Peter Helldoerfer
Vincent Alfred Hinds		Henry & Ginny Hinds
Mina Hornor		Christa Kaufmann-Hornor
Jeffrey Scott Hubbard		Pamela Hubbard
Stefanie Helen Jacobs		Nanette Jacobs, Rob Jacobs
Myles Kawashima		Caroline Kawashima
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
Ryan Thomas Osorio		Roxanne Osorio
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 Wilhelm
Zachary Wilhelm		Karen Wilhelm
Malika Ziani		Phyllis Callahan

I have always believed, and I still believe, that whatever good or bad fortune may come our way we can always give it meaning and transform it into something of value.

Hermann Hesse

Our Children Remembered

February

Child	Dates	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
Jeffrey Scott Hubbard		Pamela Hubbard
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
James MacDonald		Christine MacDonald
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
David Arthur Ross		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
Richard Sielert		Diane Sielert
Dwayne Anthony Simón		Donna & Flennis Simón
Flennis Anthony Simón II		Donna & Flennis Simón
Andrew Phiip Swig		Maureen Swig
Brent Robert Taylor		Sherry & Robert Taylor
Brigham Robert Thompson		Elizaberth Thompson Mollner
Paul David Tompkins		Mimi Tompkins
Elizabeth Torlakson		Kathy Bodnar
Zachary Wilhelm		Karen Wilhelm

Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.

Buddha

There's No Such Thing As Recovery

No matter what the circumstances, a child's death is a traumatic life-changing experience. The path ahead is unknown. A bereaved parent may describe his or her loss as that of being catapulted into another world. Some bereaved parents may, in fact, experience disorientation, a disconnection from self—a feeling of being estranged from their physical body. Unfathomable grief resulting from an unimaginable ending to a child's life bears potential to temporarily yet dramatically destabilize a mother's or father's psychological health resulting in a sense of hopelessness, a state in which he or she cannot imagine living a life without their child.

The complexity of bereaved parents' unique experience begs the question of their equally unique need for support. Family, friends, clergy, and even grief counseling professionals, although well intended, may attempt to console the bereaved parent by attempting to reassure them that they will "get over" or "get through" their loss. For example, well-intentioned individuals may attempt to reassure that the bereaved parent will, in time, "recover" from his or her loss. Nevertheless, we know in our hearts, in our bodies, that with our child's death there is also an experienced death of our lives. Despite whatever well-meaning platitudes and explanations we may receive, through our pain and suffering, we come to know and understand our uniquely personal experience of losing a child.

Ten years ago I experienced the death of my beloved twenty-year-old son, Daniel. At the time of his death, Daniel was a sophomore in college at the University of California, San Diego. The horror of my story begins with a painful remembrance of feeling joy in my anticipation of Daniel's visit home from college. Our family planned to celebrate my forty-seventh birthday. The last time when I spoke with my son was on the eve of his death when he called to wish me a happy birthday. He sounded vibrant as he expressed excitement about the fraternity party he planned to attend later that evening.

Nothing could have prepared me for the horrific days and nights of utter immersion into inconsolable grief and suffering. A year or so after Daniel's death my pain seemed to worsen. Daniel was not ever coming home and I needed to come to grips with this stark reality. I sought professional help. I was reassured that "time" would heal, and that I would "recover." I looked to literature that spoke of grief and loss in general terms and defined bereavement as a finite experience of grief and loss that would pass through linear stages of grief in time. None of these explanations resonated with my reality. For instance, it was inconceivable to me to ever want to "get over" the loss of my son. Though well meaning, such platitudes left me feeling alone and alienated from others. I immersed myself in seeking an understanding of the disparity between what I was experiencing and what I was told I "should" be experiencing.

With the help of other bereaved parents, I have recreated a life that is rich with meaning and purpose. They have taught me this is an ongoing process and that I am not alone. I remain forever enormously grateful to The Compassionate Friends (TCF) who greeted me at my first meeting when I crawled through the doors utterly confused and distraught.

TCF has also afforded me the opportunity to hear other bereaved parents stories. TCF has given me the gift of friendships with other bereaved parents who understand my inconsolable and incomprehensible pain from which I shall not ever recover.

The Long View

A few weeks after my son Arthur died I met a nurse. She conducted an assessment for me for a procedure that I had scheduled months ahead of time. She ran down her list of routine questions. One of them was "Are you in pain now?"

Jess, my stepdaughter, was with me because she was my ride home after the procedure. We just looked at each other.

I hesitated and answered honestly, "Well, emotional pain," and then explained it. The nurse stopped and looked at both of us. She said soothing things that I don't remember. Then she said, "Someday, you will smile again, just not now."

She was right. That's the long view of it. At the time Jess and I had no idea that would happen again. Our fresh grief was way too huge and painful to imagine smiling again.

To the tender newer members of TCF I wish you a someday when you will smile again. You will feel a spark of joy. This will come again.

The Compassionate Friends support group anchored me from one month to the next. I met people who were further down the road than me who had experienced child loss. They smiled, even laughed and they were authentic. They were my role models.

Now as a TCF chapter co-leader, when I see a newer member spontaneously reach out to someone who is at their first or second TCF meeting, I breathe a sigh of relief for both of them. One is helping the other and both will feel that healing on their grief journeys. This is how we work and it works very well.

Monica Colberg

TCF Minneapolis, MN
In Memory of my son Art



Love Gifts

The following love gifts were received for January-February:

Donor/s: Becky Oken

Child: Joey Coati

Dates:

"Remembering you, my dear son, on your 52nd Birthday. Forever Love & Wonderful memories of your life."

Donor/s: Henry & Ginny Hinds

Child: Vincent Hinds

Dates:

To Start a New Year

If I can concentrate on the
moral and spiritual side of
the holidays
I can make it through.

If I can absorb the love and
warmth that was the
beginning
I can give love back.

If I can share the grief and
love that is in me
through these holidays
I can start a new year.

Tom Spray
TCF Ventura, CA

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

Touched By An Angel

by Maya Angelou

We, unaccustomed to courage
exiles from delight
live coiled in shells of loneliness
until love leaves its high holy temple
and comes into our sight
to liberate us into life.

Love arrives
and in its train come ecstasies
old memories of pleasure
ancient histories of pain.
Yet if we are bold,
love strikes away the chains of fear
from our souls.

We are weaned from our timidity
In the flush of love's light
we dare be brave
And suddenly we see
that love costs all we are
and will ever be.
Yet it is only love
which sets us free.

It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to
see the light.

Aristotle Onassis

There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or
the mirror that reflects it.

Edith Wharton

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.



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, 2024

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Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly



47TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

New Orleans, LA New Orleans, LA, United States

JULY 12, 2024 @ 8:00 AM - JULY 14, 2024 @ 1:00 PM



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