



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



THIS MONTH:

AUGUST 2015 ISSUE

This Month: *Book Review*—by Sharon Austray

Newsletter Editor: Crys Kelly

SUMMERTIME MEMORIES

Summertime is a happy time for most people in this country: vacations, holidays, family reunions, days relaxing at the pool, evenings in the backyard talking with family and friends, the smell of a fresh rain, the long days, the cooling nights, fresh mown grass and flowers that bloom profusely.

Despite Houston's heat, summer has become a treasured time for me. My son was a child of summer. Born in May, he loved the summer sun on his face and the wind in his hair as he first rode a tricycle, then a bicycle, then drove a car. Those were wonderful times for him. The summer solstice on June 21 was a favorite day for us both. Since the summer solstice is the longest day of the year, Todd particularly loved to watch the sunrise and sunset. I found myself doing that again this year. As I looked at the sun directly overhead at noon (1:00 pm DST), I made the comment that this is the one perfectly balanced day of the year. Later as I watched a beautiful solstice sunset, I remarked to my husband about the light...the gorgeous light. I was seeing Todd in that light. He was

laughing, chasing lightening bugs, running and spinning and turning, filled with the joy of summer. He was happy.

I listened to the neighbors' children playing, and I thought about all the wonderful summer days I had spent with my son. I am thankful that I had that time. I am thankful that my child was a son of summer. He found much joy in nature, in the outdoors, in activities that took him out of the ordinary and into the sublime.

That's how it is for bereaved parents. We eventually come to a place where we realize that our joyful memories have overtaken the pain of the loss of our child to death. We wouldn't trade the time we shared with our children for anything or any other experience. We have many relationships in our lives, but the unique nature of the parent-child relationship is so special, so deep, so life changing, that we endure and even embrace the pain because we had, for that time in our lives, a rela-

tionship of pure love and pure joy with our child. There is no way to measure the depth, width or volume of a parent's love. It exceeds every other human relationship. Yes, we miss them terribly. We weep silently into our pillows at night. We light candles,



take flowers to the cemetery, wear their favorite colors, treasure pictures of our children and keep them forever in our hearts. This is a big part of life for every bereaved parent.

Somehow, on the summer solstice, I felt my child's presence in the light of the day and the beautiful rose color of the solstice sunset. I could hear his voice, see his smile and feel his emotions. Peace slips into our hearts in extraordinary ways.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

TCF, Katy, TX

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Jeff & Marty Martin

Jerry & Sharon Austray

Charles & Genie Dean

Each Person's

grief journey

is as *unique* as
a fingerprint.



Earl Grollman

Need to Talk?

Listed below are parents, grandparents and siblings who have walked where you are today.

If you are having a difficult day and just want to talk, please call.

Addiction

Helen (817) 431-6964

Auto

Jeff & Marty (817) 475-9141

Grandchild/

Multiple Loss

Lydia (817) 829-3801

Drowning

Debi (817) 270-3275

Drowning (Young Child)

Stacy (817) 656-7540
or (817) 845-3433

Long Term Illness

Marty (817) 636-5645

Homicide (Only Child)

Steve (817) 914-8689
sjroberts1216@hotmail.com

Suicide (Only Child)

Joy (817) 453-2227

Siblings

Cheryl (817) 624-7043
lopezgregg@aol.com

Premature Infant(s)

Amy (817) 944-1710
amyltor12@hotmail.com



Middle of the night calls

Liz (817) 726-3999

MOVING ON?

Several years after the death of our daughter, we finally made the decision to move to a new house. A new house our daughter never lived in and never will. We left an old house where she lived her entire four short years. A house where she spent countless hours playing, eating, sleeping, dressing up, making mischief, making us laugh...the list goes on. But it was also the house where she died. It was the house seared in our memories on that horrible day where our lives changed forever in a way we wish we could just figure out how to undo. As I prepared to move, I had to face a lot of memories and choices.

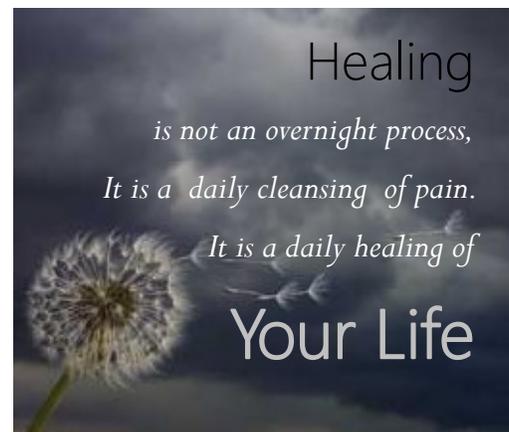
Before being faced with moving, I kept everything my daughter had touched, wore, played with, etc. Some were kept in bins kept under my bed or in closets. Some were displayed prominently. Some were just left as they were before she died. But as I packed, I was faced with the question of what to do with these things? Do I keep her things until I'm dead and then let my other kids deal with the question of what to do? Do I get rid of all of it, knowing that these are just things and none of it will bring her back?

The truth is, they are just things – but they are things that can have significant memories attached to them. Some more than others. For example, a pair of plain pants she wore a handful of times are just pants. But the dresses or shirts she loved and wore over and over are special. So are the clothes that have very specific memories attached to them or are featured in treasured photographs. The toys she barely played with are just toys, but the toys and books and puzzles that occupied her for hours day after day are ones that meant something to her, and mean something to me as well. So I came to terms with the reality of keeping what still held precious memories for me, and donating the rest.

Packing the house also brought with it a mix of anticipation and anxiety. I didn't know what "new" things of hers I would come across as I pulled out neglected boxes or cleaned out long forgotten drawers. Would finding these things bring floods of emotion and make me cry, or would finding something new that she created - such as a drawing - lead me to a new treasure that I can cherish forever? Finding hair from her first haircut took my breath away and turned my stomach into knots. How could I have been so careless as to keep it in a random place where it could have easily been thrown away? Finding her faded, broken sunglasses in the yard brought back memories of her wearing them upside-down and a cute photograph of us together. I kept the hair, of course, but in the end let go of the broken sunglasses. My memories are enough.

Moving to a new house was a lot of work. Do I miss the old house? No. Will I keep the memories? Yes. We may have "moved on" to a new house without our daughter, but we will never leave behind our love and precious memories of her.

Maria Kubitz
TCF Contra Costa County, CA



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Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org **Website:** www.compassionatefriends.org The website contains links to TCF's national and regional conferences, brochures, e-newsletter, online support community, *We Need Not Walk Alone* magazine, "Healing the Grieving Heart" and "The Open to Hope Show" radio program archives, webinars, chapter websites, and other resources. **Regional Coordinator:** Bill Campbell 972-935-0673 jobill@sbcglobal.net

Facebook: The Compassionate Friends/USA **In Spanish:** Los Amigos Compasivos/USA **Twitter:** Text follow TCFofUSA to 40404

THE BEST KIND OF FRIEND

When your child dies, this is what the best kind of friend says to herself. This is her inner dialogue.

"It's too huge. It's too awful. It's too terrible. She doesn't deserve this. It should never have happened to her."

"I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do. I don't know how to help her."

"But, I will be here for her. I will be here. I will be present. That is my resolve. Whatever the storm, whatever she thinks, whatever she says, however she behaves, I will be here."

"I will hear her. I will learn. I will not judge. I will just be present."

"When I make a mistake and say something the wrong way or do something inappropriate because I don't yet understand these newly discovered rules of grief etiquette, I will not get discouraged."



"And I will stay. I will stay for as

long as she has breath. I will stay."

"When she cries, I will honor her tears. When she screams, I will listen. When she rejects all that I knew she once believed in, I will respect it. When she tries to explain, I will endeavor to understand."

"When – and if - she can smile, I will smile with her. When –and if - she ventures out, I will be by her side. When – and if – she strives to accomplish something meaningful, I will encourage her."

"I will protect her. I will defend her. She is my friend, she needs me, and she is worth it."

"I will be here."

I am the best kind of friend. I am what she needs. I am what she must have to survive.

Peggi Johnson
TCF Piedmont, VA

COMING MEETING

The Grieving Garden: *Living With the Death of a Child*, co-authored by Suzanne Redfern and Susan K. Gilbert. Hampton Roads will be presented by Sharon.

Ultimately, this book shows that comfort, healing, and even growth are possible after the death of a child.

As grieving parents, Redfern and Gilbert, along with 20 others, fill a void in the literature of child loss that both discovered after the death of a daughter; having "devoured every grief-related bit of writing," they found no relief for their escalating isolation: "what I needed wasn't information, but company." Unadorned by "expert" commentary, Redfern and Gilbert address directly the personal experience of living out "a parent's worst fear" with the voices of those who have.

"This important book shines new light on the turmoil created by the loss of a child, and on its potential for personal transformation. Moving and evocative."

The Reverend Scotty McLellan
Dean of Religious Life, Stanford University

GRIEF ENDS

Grief is a most peculiar thing, we're so helpless in the face of it. It's like a window that will simply open of its own accord. The room grows cold and we can do nothing but shiver. But it opens a little less each time and a little less; and one day we wonder what has become of it.

Memories of a Geisha
Arthur Golden

REFRESHMENTS

Please sign up on our website if you would like to bring refreshments for one of our monthly meetings. We have four openings each month. Thank YOU!



LOVE GIFTS



Love Gifts are a thoughtful way to remember our precious children and can be made **ONLINE** on our website or by sending your donation to: Steve Roberts

P.O. Box 734
Euless, TX 76039



THINKING

Thinking of you
As you remember him
today
Your Love for him
Will always stay

Thinking of you,
As you heart aches for
him.
Knowing your pain
Will always stay within.

Thinking of you
I want to say,
The pain gets lighter,
But will never go away

Thinking of you,
My special, dear friend,
I will be here for you,
My arms to lend.

Thing of you,
Today, especially so,
I just wanted
To make sure you know!

Sharon H. Ellington
Chapter Leader
NOKCTCF

Visit our website for
more Online Grief
Resources





**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Fort Worth Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

WWW.THECOMPASSIONATEFRIENDSFW.COM



August 2015

Fort Worth Chapter Meeting

**We meet the 2nd Tuesday
of every month.**

Meeting Time: 7 P.M.—9 P.M.

This Month's Program

Book Review by Sharon Austry

Refreshments

Please sign up on our website and you are always welcome to bring something to share.

~ Paper Goods and Drinks are provided ~

ARBORLAWN UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH—ROOM 271
5001 Briarhaven Rd., Fort Worth

A Special Message

To those of you who are newly bereaved and receiving our newsletter for the first time, we warmly welcome you to The Compassionate Friends. We are a self-help organization of parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the death of a loved one. We offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, support materials and loving telephone listeners. Please do not be afraid to come to a gathering.

Every other person in the room has lost a child, grandchild or sibling. They come because they feel the need to be with someone else who understands. We know it takes courage to attend that first gathering, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from others who have experienced

the grief that you have now. Nothing is asked of you. There are no dues or fees and you do not have to speak. There is a special feeling at meetings of **The Compassionate Friends**.