**ANOTHER YEAR**

This is another year just beginning – afresh with new days, new opportunities, new challenges. It occurs to me, however, that it is a very difficult task to keep from concentrating on past years and the sadness we endure just because it is a new year and the calendar has flipped the page.

Moving on to a brighter tomorrow and letting go of the pain of yesterday is a gradual process. We cross that threshold one step at a time – a small step, at first, faltering and stumbling – but somehow getting there. With patience, effort and persistence, once again we will be able to celebrate life as the year stretches on before us, putting behind us our sadness, our guilt, our failures and our pain.

We will be able to smile again. We will be able to remember our precious children in life rather than death. We will recognize in our days many little blessings and will be able to share our joys with others.

~ Alice Weening, TCF, Cincinnati, OH ~

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**LOVE AND HOPE**

Kerry Marston, TCF, Grand Junction, CO

On a cold winter day the sun went out
Grief walked in to stay
I turned away from the unwanted guest
And bid him be on his way.

Grief was merciless, he brought his friends,
Loneliness, Fear and Despair.
They walk these rooms unceasingly
In the somber cloaks they wear.

Every so often now, Love pays a call
She always has Hope by her side
I welcome Love as well as Hope
For I thought surely they had died.

Love counsels Grief in a most gentle way
Bids him be still for a while
Then Love walks with me through memory’s hall
And for a time…I can smile.

---

**JANUARY WARMTH**

Pat Dodge, Sacramento Valley, CA

Like a tree in winter
which has lost its leaves,
we look ahead to spring
for new growth and warmth
of the sun to heal the pain in our heart.

Let us make January a time
To reach out to each other
And give that warmth from our hearts,
And in return,
We will all show new growth.

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**GRIEF**

Verne Smith, TCF, Ft. Worth, TX

GRIEF: is sometimes silent. Like snowflakes falling on a dark winter’s night … but never peaceful or serene or pretty like the pure white snow. When grief is silent, the tears seem to turn to ice, like the snowflakes, before they reach our eyes.

GRIEF: is sometimes raging. Like a monstrous thunderstorm… with all its fury and lots of lightning striking our hearts at every angle. When grief is raging, the tears come in torrents, like the rain, and flood our soul.

GRIEF: whether it be silent or raging . . . HURTS.
The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a non-profit mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings provide an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, but to support bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings in the positive resolution of the grief feelings and issues that revolve around the death of their loved one and support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work. Try to attend three times before deciding if TCF is right for you.

TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE “GRIEF ROAD”

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK – what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF ‘veterans’ to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, “your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!”

INFORMATION REGARDING OUR MEETINGS

PLEASE come to a meeting. We are here to discuss whatever is on your mind. This is YOUR group and we are here for each other. You do not have to talk at meetings. We welcome your participation in our group, but it is not a requirement. Coming to listen to the other members is okay, too. Our meetings are open to parents, grandparents, adult siblings, or adult family members such as aunts and uncles.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

This group belongs to you and cannot survive without assistance. You can help with refreshments, setting up before a meeting, sending out reminders for the next meeting, providing input, help with the newsletter, send thank-you notes, becoming a facilitator, volunteering to help with Chapter activities or serve on the board.

Part of getting better, sometimes is being there to assist others, too, through this journey.

If you’d like to help, please contact us.

Chapter Co-Leaders: Mike McLeod: 206-369-7366 and Marge Tomlinson: tcfmarge@aol.com

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Seattle-King County Chapter Phone: 206-241-1139 (TCF Line)
Seattle-King County Chapter Mailing Address: P. O. Box 66896 Seattle, WA 98166-0896
Seattle-King County Chapter Website: www.tcfseattle.org

Phone Support: Having a rough moment? Need someone to talk to? Call Robyn at 360-259-8006

Western Washington Regional Coordinator: Jacqueline Russell 360-457-7395
TCF National Office Phone: 877-969-0010
TCF National Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3696 Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
TCF National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

TCF Online Support - Please visit the National website to get the session schedule for the following groups:
- Parents / Grandparents
- Pregnancy / Infant Loss
- Survivors of Suicide
- Siblings
- No Surviving Children
- Men Only

“Our loved ones are still and always will be a part of us. They are threads in our fabric and we cannot lose their love.” - Darcie Sims

I can complain because rose bushes have thorns or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses. - author unknown
Our Chapter’s Sharing Group Location:

FEDERAL WAY

~2nd Wednesday evening of each month~
January 13, February 10, March 10, April 14, May 12,
June 9, July 14, August 11
6:30pm – 8:00pm

St. Francis Hospital
34515 9th Ave. So.
Federal Way, WA 98003

Ask at the information desk in the main lobby for directions to the meeting room.

Chapter Planning Meeting

Saturday, Jan. 30, 2010
2:00pm – 4:30pm
(in the St. Francis Hospital Executive Dining Room)

Come help us plan meetings & activities for 2010!

We need YOU, your suggestions and ideas!

Helping others is one of the keys to our own healing!

There are lots of opportunities and ways to help the chapter and to support other grieving parents. Please join us at this meeting so we can continue to be there for other bereaved parents!

Sharing Group Facilitator Training

with Dr. Bob Baugher

Saturday, Feb. 20, 2010
9:30am – 3:00pm (tentative)
(St. Francis Hospital Executive Dining Room)

The attendance at our TCF meetings has tripled this past year! We need more facilitators! Please consider helping. Contact Marge at tcfmarge@aol.com or 206-241-1139.

Facilitators are ordinary bereaved parents offering hope and a caring heart to other bereaved parents. In the workshop we’ll learn how be good listeners and how to lead the sharing group. We’ll get information on handling difficult situations and discover the value of having TWO-facilitators in each small sharing group. WE NEED YOU!

SEASONED GRIEF

Eva Lager, TCF, Perth, Western Australia

There used to be a point to summing up a year just past, not as a personal accomplishment, but as a reflection. Leaving previous hurts behind was welcomed and the sensible thing to do. I thought I was getting wiser as I was getting older.

But death changed everything, without permission. Resolutions, made sincerely, broken quickly, offended my need to hold on to the past, to rewind life, fast backwards, so I could capture what I had lost.

Still, time went on, regardless of my pleas. And when exhaustion set in, as eventually it must, I understood there would be another future, not the one I thought I had the right to expect but one where I dared carry hope in my heart again.

(Reprinted from We Need Not Walk Alone, national magazine of TCF)

The Wounded Heart

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the last to enter the realm of Bereaved Parents. But for now – right now - it is Our Hearts that are freshly wounded and Our Hearts in need of mending.

Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss; to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt, and anger; and to release their well of tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life.

A wounded heart not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony, will be as an abscess- to swell and undermine – erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed.

The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

- Nancy Green, TCF, Livonia, MI
The Deafening Silence

Dear TCF friends,

A few days after Christmas I received an email from a bereaved mom who was struggling to understand her friends’ and family’s behavior over the holidays. She gave permission to use her note hoping it will help others to know that they are not alone. At her request, identifying names were omitted.

“Hi, Marge. This is [bereaved mom’s name.] I only met you once at a meeting at St. Francis. I hope you don’t mind my emailing you. I don’t expect any reply - it’s not urgent. This is my third Christmas without my son. I have amazing friends and family, but only ONE person [a friend] from TCF said ANYTHING ABOUT [my son] this holiday season. I guess I’m supposed to “be done” or “be over it”? ?? I feel angry for the first time. Not quite sure what would help. I don’t want to make anyone feel bad. They have their own lives. I said something to my husband and daughter and it didn’t go that well. They apologized and then dropped it! Well, thanks for listening.”

[signed with bereaved mom’s name]

I wrote back to this hurting mom.

Dear [bereaved mom],

Your pain, sadness and anger are familiar to many bereaved parents. We will always feel the hole in our hearts and our lives after our child dies. Gifts beyond measure are when we are given the opportunity to hear our child’s name spoken and when others acknowledge our grief and share with us that they miss our beloved child, too. But as time passes, these gifts are offered less and less.

Unfortunately, those who no longer openly acknowledge the grief and our child’s absence usually are not aware of how painful it is to us when those ‘gifts’ are no longer given. I don’t think it is because they no longer care or have forgotten about our child. I think it is because they have no idea how precious those acknowledgments are to us. We need to educate them. Yes, sometimes there are those who DO think we should be over ‘it’ after a couple of years, but they have no idea of what it really is like to be in our shoes.

One of the things we can do to keep those ‘gifts’ coming is to make opportunities for the conversations to keep happening. I’ve heard of many ideas to help make our child’s name ‘mentionable’ during the holidays…or any other time of the year! Some bereaved parents ask family and friends to write notes to/about our child and drop them in the child’s Christmas stocking or other designated place such as a special bowl. Then the notes are read aloud when everyone is gathered at the dinner table. Another way to get a conversation started is to ask friends and family to share a funny or memorable story about our child. The stories are so healing. Another method is for each person to choose one word to describe your child and then explain why.

Other bereaved parents light a special candle in remembrance and make it known what the significance is for that specific candle on the mantle or dinner table centerpiece. I have a friend whose family has made it a tradition to make a toast to those who are not at the holiday meal…whether it is because of death or circumstance that they can’t be there… and those ‘absentees’ are mentioned by name.

Those are just a few ideas that come to mind, but the bottom line is that it is up to us bereaved parents to set the stage and make sure that our friends and family know that it is ok to talk about our children. One bereaved mom realized this early on and specifically gave ‘permission’ to her friends and family to talk about her son. She explained how precious it was to her and once they knew, some of the tension was relieved. But there will always be those who think that if they say something it will remind us of our child and make us feel sad (as if we’d forgotten about our child!). It is those folks who haven’t a clue what we are feeling. And sometimes, yes, there are those who have gone on with their lives and haven’t been as supportive as they once were…assuming that you, too, were ‘going on’ with your life.

You mention that you tried to talk to your husband and daughter. I think us moms have a greater need to talk than most dads. And siblings grieve differently than their parents. We women work thru our feelings by talking and hearing others talk about their feelings. Men typically talk less and go in their ‘cave’ and work on their grief inside their heads and hearts or by intense physical activity. It’s just one more of the many differences between men and women!

I’m glad you emailed me, but am sorry that I can’t ‘fix’ this for you. I wish I had a magic wand to wave and take away your anger and sadness. (…and to ‘fix’ those ‘clods’ who seem so insensitive!!)

I do care and want you to know that you are not alone in how you feel. So many parents express similar feelings of anger and betrayal. I have a feeling that this will be just one of many topics discussed at our next meeting, Jan. 13th. I hope you’ll be there to share your experience.

Sending a big caring hug to you!

Marge

So, dear TCF friends, especially those who are struggling to understand the deafening and painful silence you may have experienced during the holidays, please know that you are not alone! Make the opportunity soon to discuss with your family and friends what happened during the holidays, how you felt and what you need. Then be pro-active the next time a special family-time comes around by having a plan in place that gives your friends and family the opportunity to talk freely about your precious child!

- Marge Tomlinson, TCF, Seattle King County Chapter Co-Leader

“Grief is a sacred time, where we can rearrange our fragments into a new definition of wholeness.”

- Stephanie Ericsson, Living Enrichment Center, Wilsonville, OR
We've barely made it through the holidays of December and January, and now the stores are filled with hearts and flowers and candy, all of it in celebration of the gift of love. But February 14 can be a difficult day for those of us who are grieving, and for some it will be the first Valentine's Day since our precious Valentine died. For us there is no celebration; there is only grief.

Sometimes, for fear of "letting go," we may find ourselves "holding on" to our pain as a way of remembering those we love. Letting go of what used to be is not an act of disloyalty, and it does not mean forgetting our loved ones who have died. Letting go means leaving behind the sorrow and pain of grief and choosing to go on, taking with us only those memories and experiences that enhance our ability to grow and expand our capacity for happiness.

If our memories are painful and unpleasant, they can be hurtful and destructive. If they create longing and hold us to the past, they can interfere with our willingness to move forward in our grief journey. But it doesn't have to be that way. We can choose which parts of life we shared that we wish to keep and which parts we wish to leave behind. We can soothe our pain by thinking of happy as well as sad memories. The happiness we experienced with our loved ones belongs to us forever.

If we decide to do so, we can choose to embrace Valentine's Day as a special day on which to commemorate our loved ones and to celebrate our love for them. Death ends a life, but it does not end the relationship we have with our loved ones who have died. The bonds of love are never severed by death, and the love we shared will never die either. For Valentine's Day this year, we can find a way to honor our loved ones, to remember them and to show them that our love is eternal.

We can build a piece of "memory time" into that particular day, or we can pack the entire day with meaning. Think of it this way: It's much easier to cope with memories we've chosen than to have them take us by surprise. Whether we are facing Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, an anniversary or birthday, or any other special day of our own choosing, we can immerse ourselves in the healing power of remembrance. We can go to a special place, read aloud, or listen to a favorite song. We can celebrate what once was and is no more.

Personal grief rituals are those loving activities that help us remember our loved ones, and give us a sense of connectedness, healing and peace. Creating and practicing personal grief rituals can also help us release painful situations and unpleasant memories, freeing us to make our memories a positive influence in our lives.

What follows are just a few examples of personal grief rituals. (See Memorials ~ Funerals ~ Rituals page on my Grief Healing website - www.selfhealingexpressions.com ). The ideas are as unique and as varied as the people who invented them; think of ways that you can adapt them and make them your own. You are limited only by your own imagination.

- If you're a writer, write. It could be an article, an anecdote, a story, a poem, a song, a letter, an obituary or an eulogy. If you don't want to write for someone else, keep a private journal and write about your feelings as you journey through your grief.
- Buy a very special candle, decorate it and light it in honor of your loved one.
- Purchase a book - perhaps a children's book - on coping with the loss of a loved one, and donate it to your local library or school. Ask the librarian to place it on the front cover inscribed "In memory of [your loved one's name]."
- Plant a tree, bush, shrub, garden or flower bed as a permanent growing memorial to your beloved. Mark the site with a memorial plaque, marker, bench or statue.
- Memorialize your beloved in cyberspace by lighting a virtual candle at http://www.gratefulness.org/candles.
- Write a special note, letter, poem, wish or prayer to your beloved, go outside, attach the paper to a balloon and let it go - or place it in a vase and burn it, and watch the smoke rise heavenward.
- If you are harboring bad feelings or regrets, gather symbols to represent those hurtful or painful situations, events, or feelings from your past, place them in a container and hold a private burial or burning ceremony, saying goodbye and releasing them as you do so.
- Ask relatives, friends, co-workers and neighbors to gather their contributions, and put together a scrapbook or box of memories containing mementoes, letters and photographs of your loved one.
- Celebrate the life of your loved one by continuing favorite traditions or eating favorite foods.
- Select a Valentine card that you wish your beloved would have picked for you, and mail it to yourself.
- Give yourself a gift from your loved one that you always wished he or she would have given you, and think of your beloved whenever you use it or wear it.

Copyright © 2006. Used with permission. Marty Tousley is a certified hospice bereavement counselor and the creator and instructor of the Self-Healing Expressions course The First Year of Grief: Help for the Journey. Visit http://www.selfhealingexpressions.com/course_overview_8.shtml for more information. If interested in publishing this article, please email contact@selfhealingexpressions.com. All rights reserved.
In Memory of …

WADE BENNETT KING
June 1989 – June 1999
“We miss you and love you always – Mom & Dad”
from Mary and Frank King

In Memory of …

SHAUGHN MARIE BRESINA
Feb. 1973 – Nov. 2004
“Shaughn, you are forever in my heart & thoughts.
I love you always. Mom”
from Rosemary Bresina

In Memory of …

BRUCE JAY DUVALL
May 1967 – May 1989
“You are always in our hearts – Mom & Dad”
from Duane and Linda DuVall

In Memory of …

DENISE MIELCARZ
April 1987 – June 1986
“Denise Forever 19. Your spirit is always close and so free. It brings us comfort knowing you will never leave us and we will never forget you. Forever love, Mom & Dad”
from Beryl & Frank Mielcarz

In Memory of …

MATTHEW NICKELL
July 1958 – August 1987
MONTY NICKELL
March 1960 – January 2004
“My two sons. I love you, I love you.”
from Judith Hitchcock

In Memory of …

JENNY
1972 - 1981
TODD
1961 – 1993
NIKKI
1974 – 2006
“In memory of all our children.”
from Dick Burnham & Karen Burnham

In Memory of …

KEITH P. LARSEN
“You’re our shining star, love you & miss you every day.
– Mom, Dad & Shannon
from Ron & Erin Larsen

In Memory of …

DONALD McFADDEN
MARK McFADDEN
Jan. 1958 – April 2008
“We have such sad hearts since you both left. Your family loves you and will always miss you.”
from Sharon Wiles

In Memory of …

KRIS CASSINGHAM
April 1972 – Sept. 2008
“We dearly miss you and your gentle spirit.”
from Terry and Cathryne Cassingham

In Memory of …

JOHN PILLON
– my son who died from cancer at age 24
“Your newsletters have been a wonderful part of my healing. I have kept them to re-read. Thank you to all who contribute. May God bless this organization.”
from Cynthia Thompson

In Memory of …

JOHN
– our beloved son
Feb. 1968 – July 2002
“Forever Dad and Mom”
from Ken and Barbara Pietz

In Memory of …

“…our son.”
from Darrell & Theresa Hilde

In Memory of …

RICH JOHNSON, my son
March 1971 – Feb. 2007
CLAUDIA BLAIR-GILLUM, my sister
SANDRA GENGLER, my sister
SHERYL, my friend
“Thanks, guys, for watching over me!”
from Norah Ann Johnson

In Memory of …

KENNY BRISBY
“In loving memory of our precious son.”
from Dave and Shelly McSweyn

The McSweyn’s donated some grief books to share with other bereaved parents and enclosed this note:

In Memory of …

AMBER WILLIAMS
from Kevin Williams and family

Thank you to Robyn & Steve Rohwedder

Thank you for the anonymous gifts received in memory of your children.

Thank you to all who give to TCF! Our chapter relies on your donations!
Love Gifts help bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. Your generosity allows TCF to continue printing and mailing newsletters, purchasing brochures, pay the phone bill, buying postage and to cover the many expenses to help grieving families in our community.

TCF is an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
• All gifts are tax deductible.
• Ask your employer if they participate in a “Gift Matching” program. You may be able to double the value of your gift through this program.
• For our chapter to be a recipient of United Way funds you MUST specify The Compassionate Friends (TCF) of Seattle-King County when you fill out the United Way form at your workplace.

With Love, We Remember Them …
TCF asks for donations in memory of our children who have died. Our chapter is funded solely through donations; therefore we sincerely appreciate your support. Please help us help others by making a LOVE GIFT today.

Love Gift Form

Love gifts are tax-deductible donations made to the Seattle-King County Chapter of TCF in memory of your beloved child, sibling, grandchild or loved one.

Send checks and forms to: Seattle – King County TCF
Love Gifts
P.O. Box 66896
Seattle, WA 98166-0896

Your name:________________________________________
Address:_________________________________________ City_________________ State______ Zip

Phone Number (if we have any questions):_____________________

Amount Enclosed:_____________________________________

In memory of (name of child):______________________________

Date of Birth:_____________________________________

Date of Death:_____________________________________

Special Message:_____________________________________

Send checks and forms to: Seattle – King County TCF
Love Gifts
P.O. Box 66896
Seattle, WA 98166-0896

WHEN SOMEONE GRIEVES

What do you say to someone who is grieving? ("Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?" probably tops the list of the kinds of conversation starters that should be avoided.) And actually, there are a lot of ways we can go wrong here – saying something that isn’t appreciated by one who hurts. Even when we are trying to comfort.

But chances are, we have been, or will be, put in the position of trying to comfort someone who is experiencing a painful loss. That is an important role we all play from time to time. So, what do you say to someone who is grieving?

I often remember a story told by Joseph Bayly when I struggle to say the “right thing” to someone who is hurting. Mr. Bayly lost three children to death over the course of several years. He wrote a book called VIEW FROM A HEARSE, in which he talks about his grief. He says this about comforting those who grieve:

"I was sitting, torn by grief. Someone came and talked to me of God's dealings, of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He said things I knew were true. I was unmoved, except to wish he would go away. He finally did. Someone else came and sat beside me. He didn't talk. He didn't ask leading questions. He just sat with me for an hour or more, listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, left. I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go,"

I have found Joseph Bayly's experience to be excruciatingly typical. Both men wanted to help. Both men cared. But only one truly comforted. The difference was that one tried to make him feel better, while the other just let him feel. One tried to say the right things. The other listened. One told him it would be all right. The other shared his pain.

When put in the difficult position of comforting someone in emotional pain, sometimes what needs to be said can be said best with a soft touch or a listening ear. No words. And though at times the quieter approach has felt inadequate to me, I have come to realize that it can make a bigger difference than I may ever know. -Steve Goodier, http://www.lifesupportsystem.com

Our stories may be different but inside we’re all the same, struggling to find new meaning, trying to ease our pain.

With courage we face tomorrow and try to understand though death has left its sorrow we honor our children’s memories by learning to live again.

- Debbie Dickinson, TCF, Naperville, I
January &
February 2010

Save the Date!
Seabeck Retreat
June 4-6, 2010

Save The Date ~ MARK YOUR CALENDAR ~ Save The Date
Seattle-King County TCF
SEABECK ANNUAL RETREAT
at Seabeck Conference Center, Seabeck, WA
June 4-6, 2010
Cost: $195.00
(Includes two nights lodging and six meals)
Registration forms will be available in March.

Save The Date ~ MARK YOUR CALENDAR ~ Save The Date
TCF 33rd National Conference
"Reflections of Love, Visions of Hope"
July 2-4, 2010
Arlington, Virginia
For more information: www.compassionatefriends.org

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