



Chapter Co-Leaders:

Jim Sims & Stephanie M.

Treasurer & Newsletter Mailings:

David & Janie Fields

Newsletter Editor:

Rebecca Woloch

Telephone Friends—

sometimes it helps to be able to talk to someone who understands. The following bereaved parents are willing to provide support and comfort:

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The Bluegrass Chapter publishes all newsletters online:

www.tcfbluegrass.org

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a national, non-profit, self-help organization offering friendship, understanding and support to bereaved parents and their families. Our primary purpose is to assist in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of a child and to support grieving family members in their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

Additionally, we provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings to help others in our community to be supportive. If you are a bereaved parent, grandparent or adult sibling, we extend our hands in friendship and our hearts in understanding and invite you to join us at an upcoming monthly meeting.

Meeting Information

Lexington: Third Monday of Every Month — 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Hospice of the Bluegrass ▪ 2321 Alexandria Drive ▪ Lexington, KY

Winchester: First Tuesday of Every Month—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Hospice East ▪ 407 Shoppers Drive ▪ Winchester, KY

Meeting Format

Doors Open one half hour before meeting times to provide the opportunity to visit with old friends and acknowledge new ones. Be sure to check out the library. Please plan to arrive early so the meeting can begin on time

Upcoming Lexington Meetings

January 19th, facilitator: Mary
February 16th, facilitator: Stephanie
March 16th, facilitator: Janie and David

Steering Committee — meets on the first Monday of each month at 6:30pm at Hospice in Lexington. All are welcome to attend and participate.

We welcome you with compassion, love and hope

It is always difficult to say “welcome” to those coming to our meetings for the first time because we are so very sorry for the reason they came. For some, the first meeting or two can be rather overwhelming, especially for the newly bereaved. We hope that anyone feeling that way will return to at least a couple more of our meetings. Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings, regardless of the age at which their child died or the length of time that has passed since that day.



Bluegrass Chapter News

Worldwide Candle Lighting—Many of us gathered on December 14th in fellowship and to honor our children, that their light may always shine. Many thanks to the individuals who coordinated the event—from the wonderful pot luck dinner, to the reading of our children's names, it was a very special evening.

Frankfort Regional Conference—March 20th & 21st, 2009—"Coping When Good Bye is Forever" The TCF Frankfort Chapter's regional conference will include a variety of speakers and topics including:

From our Chapter Co-Leader

Another year is here! 2009 will mark Year Five for the number of years since we lost Jonathan. Looking back, I never thought I would make it this far. It seemed so far away, but now I am here and it seems like no time has passed. I am not really looking forward to this year because it is very bittersweet. I made it, but I made it. I feel some guilt about my life moving forward without

my child. But on the other hand, I am thankful that I have come out of the black tunnel. In 2004, the hurt was so encompassing and constant. There is still hurt today, but it is less intense. So, I know that I will have this continuous battle with my emotions throughout the year.

Since 2004, I have not made any resolutions other than to make it through the year. This year will be my first resolution in 4 years. I

Keeping Your Child's Memory Alive in journaling and writing, After Death Communications, Grief vs. Depression and How Do I Get through All the Firsts as well as many others. Please mark your calendar to attend this helpful event.

Additional information on the conference as well as the registration form are available on our website. Please follow the link on our home page at www.tcfbluegrass.org and click on "Special Events" for details.

resolve to say "No". I am constantly busy and that was a good thing in my early grief, but now I want to live in the moment. It is especially important to me now because my greatest fear is losing another child. So, I have decided to live in the moment with my surviving children, just in case....

Here is to another year, let's make it through it together.

Stephanie

Additional resources for coping with the holidays are available at www.tcfbluegrass.org/holidays.html

Love Gifts—There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. Some parents remember a birthday or anniversary date of their child, or a holiday with a love gift. The "Love Gifts" help with the mailing of the newsletter, maintaining and updating our library and meeting costs. Please send love gifts to David Fields, P.O. Box 647, Nicholasville, KY 40340. Please remember, if given in memory of your child, to include his/her full name. A **very special Thank You** to those who contribute love gifts to the basket during monthly meetings. We greatly appreciate your support!

A love gift was received in memory of **Jeff Sims** by Jim Sims & Sharon Sims



Our children— forever loved and remembered

January Birthdates

- 1/1/73 **Paul Travis Hickey** 11/21/99 Son of Al and Sandy Hickey
1/1/76 **A. Daniel Morris** 4/19/99 Son of James and Marie Morris
1/2/53 **Jim Albright** 9/7/87 Son of J. M. and Erna Albright
1/2/86 **Tyler Benjamin Johnston** 5/20/03 Son of Joe and Andi Johnston
1/3/60 **Wesley Thomas (Tom) Whitehouse** 1/9/03 Son of Betty Whitehouse
1/3/71 **John Andy Girdler** 4/19/94 Son of Ella Girdler
1/4/91 **Joseph Lewellyn Powell** 7/9/92 Son of Celia and David Powell
1/6/55 **Jeffrey Lynn Spradling** 10/11/07 Son of Wilma Cracraft
1/7/98 **Benjamin Steele Truitt** 8/4/01 Son of Charlotte Truitt
1/8/47 **David Kellemeier** 10/19/73 Son of Pat and Robert Kellemeier
1/10/58 **J. Randall "Rand" Rogers** 9/6/89 Son of Ron and Virginia Atwood
1/11/73 **Jason Lee Stephens** 10/16/92 Son of Bobby and Carolyn Stephens
1/12/88 **Crystal Ann Knafl** 2/24/91 Granddaughter of Karen and John Knafl
1/13/47 **Martha A. Moloney** 11/4/95 Daughter of Dorothy Moloney
1/14/73 **Donald Duncan** 10/26/93 Son of Donald and Diane Duncan
1/14/97 **Evan Scout Warren** 1/14/97 Son of Brian and Kellie Kozee Warren
1/15/65 **Cole Brian Gilliam** 3/13/86 Son of Joan B. Gilliam
1/16/55 **Larry Manuel** 9/9/78 Son of Betty and Jack Manuel
1/20/71 **Jerry Denver Ison** 2/13/01 Son of Genett Ison
1/21/66 **William (Billy) Allen Ransdell** 1/4/99 Son of Mack and Deedee Ransdell
1/21/66 **Robin Grace Dixon** 9/17/86 Daughter of Lenna and Letch Dixon
1/22/69 **Deana Marie Sea** 4/16/85 Daughter of Darrell and Jean Sea
1/22/97 **Jacob Scott Harrod** 5/11/97 Son of Mike and Cindy Harrod
1/27/99 **Weston "Ashe" Marlowe** 4/23/03 Son of Brandi and Wesley Marlowe
1/29/63 **David Julian Hunt** 11/29/83 Son of Gail Tomblin

January Remembrances

- 1/1/96 **Eric Ritchey** 3/14/76 (Born) Son of Lynn and Harley Ritchey
1/2/08 **Julie Ann Kirkpatrick** 6/6/40 Sister of Roy Stewart
1/4/84 **Mark Christopher Wills** 2/14/64 (Born) Son of John and Patricia Wills
1/4/02 **Michael Houston Finley** 9/29/68 (Born) Son of Katy Finley
1/5/02 **Ryan Christopher Harris** 12/23/83 (Born) Son of Larry and Patricia Harris
1/7/99 **Bart Taylor** 11/23/64 (Born) Son of Jack Taylor
1/7/97 **David Ryan Goldey** 3/28/88 (Born) Son of George and Julia Goldey
1/8/00 **David James Rison** 8/20/83 (Born) Son of Karla Scott and David Rison
1/9/95 **Angela M. Meece** 8/9/69 (Born) Daughter of Claude and Verna Meece
1/9/03 **Wesley Thomas (Tom) Whitehouse** 1/3/60 (Born) Son of Betty Whitehouse
1/9/00 **Mitch Baber** 5/12/82 (Born) Son of Steve and Kim Baber
1/9/88 **Donald Jeffrey Johnson** 3/30/64 (Born) Son of Barb and Don Johnson
1/14/97 **Evan Scout Warren** 1/14/97 Son of Brian and Kellie Kozee Warren

Continued, next page



Our children— forever loved and remembered

January Remembrances

- 1/16/04 **Jennifer Lee Toadvine** 8/31/84 (Born) Daughter of Ted and Cyndi Toadvine
1/17/99 **Howard Joseph "Jay" Crim** 5/23/74 Son of Becky & Keith LaVey and Howard B. Crim
1/18/00 **Neil Patrick Fouch** 11/5/99 (Born) Son of Jennifer Gray and Michael Fouch
1/17/99 **John Martin Robinson** 5/23/72 (Born) Son of Pat and Jim Robinson
1/19/98 **Andrew Clive Cloyd** 8/5/75 (Born) Son of Roxann Devereux and Richard Cloyd
1/20/07 **Nathan Winston Crim** 10/31/82 (Born) Son of Becky & Keith LeVey and Howard B. Crim
1/22/05 **Julian Vincent D. Regalado** 8/23/02 (Born) Son of Mary Frances & Ramon Regalado
1/22/99 **Corey Len Tackett** 8/28/69 (Born) Son of Sallie Jones
1/24/02 **Nathan Charles Stamper** 5/24/95 (Born) Son of Charlie and Missy Stamper
1/25/92 **Kevin Allen Flynn** 12/5/91 (Born) Son of Betty and Allen Flynn
1/26/91 **Geoffrey James Chapman** 7/3/63 (Born) Son of Maureen Chapman
1/26/08 **James Earl "Travis" Fryman** 8/9/82 Son of Rickey and Mavis Fryman
1/27/03 **Zachary P. Stanfield** 9/19/86 (Born) Son of Ron and Karen Stanfield
1/28/87 **Stacey Carol Sea** 8/123/73 (Born) Daughter of Darrell and Jean Sea
1/28/95 **Shannon D. Robinson** 12/5/78 (Born) Son of Dale and Teresa Robinson
1/29/85 **Ryan Gregory Yeiser** 7/25/76 (Born) Son of Greg (George) and Rita Yeiser

Excerpts from Dichotomies of Grieving:

The following paragraphs have been reprinted from the article, Dichotomies of Grieving by Diana deRegnier

"...parents often belabor which words to use in reference to our losses. There is no right or wrong, just decisions we each need to make for what is best of the worst for us. I usually say I have a son who has died. Some prefer euphemisms like departed, lost or passed. Others insist on no softening to the blow. I "have" a son who has died. Some say "had." Some are tormented by how to answer the question "How many children do you have?" Adrian is still my son; I am still his mother. Whether there is an afterlife, that remains true".

"...too often, loved ones who have died become forever identified by their exit rather than by their life:
"Oh, she was the one who drowned; he died of cancer at 10; oh, he was driving drunk at 18," ...

I want my son remembered as the little boy who offered to share his bottle with me when he was just an infant; ...Adrian was a talented artist, musician and writer, adored by teachers and school administrators as well as by peers..."

"Individuals in grief are forced to make choices about

how they will incorporate their loss into their lives.

Though they may never speak of their grief with you, they carry it until their death.

.... Each person's experience is unique, even in the same family; and each day changes."

"If you desire the confidence of a bereaved person, the best thing you can say is, 'I am here to listen if you care to talk.'

But with that, you will do yourself and them a disservice if you cannot listen and let go. If you need for their thoughts to be as you think they should be, both of you may feel uncomfortable, or worse, with the disclosure. Their experience may be completely different than what you expect. Their feelings may not be what you think yours would be. And then, tomorrow, they may feel very different, and so may you."

"I don't want to be better, wiser, kinder for knowing this pain. I am not grateful for these lessons. I flunk gratitude. Bring back ignorance, I beg."

"Though joy bores deep in my soul, opening my senses opens them all. To feel music lets in pain. Receiving my soul back into my body to dance and sing unleashes anguish I'd bound in numbness. And I am stuck in years of healing."



What Aida Taught Me: the "forever" of love

By Rebecca Woloch

During the last week of July I invited my friend Aida to spend a few days at my house, Jesse's home, to rest and recoup, to swim, to talk, to laugh and to cry. To regenerate and allow us to take care of her in some small way as she continued her battle with cancer. My dear friend Aida relinquished that fight on December 19, 2008.

I met Aida several weeks after she lost her son David who had just turned twenty on May 31, 2007. By June 15th he was gone. David was an organ donor, like Jesse and through our connection at the Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates, we became acquainted.

I remember the first time I spoke with Aida on the phone – she needed someone who could possibly understand this heartbreak, someone who would not judge her tears and we spent over an hour crying and talking and telling our stories. When I met her face-to-face, I was struck by a resemblance to my own mother – the mannerisms, her intelligence, the bright way she called us all "sweetheart" and the way she sat with her glasses perched on her nose, sometimes straight but most usually cock-eyed.

Just like my mom.

Amid the stories of little David and little Jesse and big David and big Jesse she heard the story of my mom and how I lost her in August of 2005. I learned of her life and upbringing and she of mine. We spent many hours on the phone and many more together – she became a regular overnight guest and would smile at me sweetly and say

"I'm going to my princess bed now" because the guest bedroom has a big tall bed that she adored.

Aida became friends with all the kids at the Dunbar Garden, all of Jesse's friends. No one ever parted company without an Aida hug and an Aida kiss. Even Jon, who has an aversion to demonstrative displays of affection. Some of them got nicknames, all of them received her unconditional love.

During that time in July – I remember an early morning and her telling me how she missed the sound of music. Her David had a huge sound system in his rather small room (he was an electrical genius) and since his death those monster speakers were all too quiet. So I asked her what music she wanted to hear. Hours later, having ceaselessly scoured Jesse's precious internets, the way he taught me, I presented her a collection of songs then hooked her to a headset and watched her dance and sing. Creedence Clearwater Revival, Santana, Hootie and the Blowfish and she cried when she heard that I had found the song "Blue Boy" by Judy Collins – who, like us, had lost her own son.

Like a pilgrim she traveled
To place her flowers
Before his granite grace
And she prayed aloud for love
To waken in his face

I remember Aida's tears that day but more so I remember the way she swayed and smiled – earbuds attached to a laptop and her sitting at my kitchen table, dancing in her chair. At that moment I wanted to trade her places – to absorb her cancer and allow her continue the life she still found such beauty in. She never lost

sight of that beauty and so often tried to remind me of it.

I don't want to live here without Jesse and I know Aida didn't want to live without David but her spirit was so much stronger than mine. She loved life – she loved people, she seemed to just love everyone. I am sad for myself that she is gone but I cannot cry for her – I know she no longer suffers from the pain of losing her son. I know she no longer suffers from the pain of her cancer. I haven't found a rhyme or reason to this life but I did see laughter and hope and love in Aida Fine's. I am still astounded by her strength – and I hope she's somewhere there now sitting with her son and maybe Jesse too – telling them both how loved they are and will forever be.

<3

Aida Fine, August 12, 1947 -
December 19, 2008





Life without my noisy boy

By Claire Prosser

Claire Prosser's teenage son died suddenly of an undiagnosed heart condition. Here, she explains what helps her cope - and what not to say to a grieving parent.

We're invisible. You can't tell just by looking at us. There isn't even a name for parents who have lost children.

And there is certainly no easy answer to a question that used to be harmless: "How many children do you have?"

I'm still working on that one. At the moment I say: "Two, but one died a year ago."

So how do you cope when your child dies? And, as in my case - when it happens completely out of the blue? One minute I had a cheerful, talkative 14-year-old son called Tom, the next he was dead, from an undiagnosed heart condition.

At first we simply clung together - me, my husband Paul and our 13-year-old daughter Ellen. There was a deluge of post, e-mails, texts, endless knocking at the front door.

Then I looked on the internet and found myself immersed in the utter misery that is parents dealing with the death of a child. I read heart-rending personal stories and looked at chatrooms until my head was bursting.

The next thing I tried was books. Most were American with dubious titles like *A Broken Heart Still Beats* and *I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye*.

A friend gave me *The Bereaved Parent* by Harriet Sarnoff Schiff. Its easy-to-read chapters show their age in the treats it suggests, like a new eye shadow or giving your husband a Scotch after cooking his dinner.

But it pretty much tells it like it is, in chapters headed Bereavement and Marriage, Bereavement and Grieving, Bereavement and... the rest of your life.

The British books that stood out were Michael Rosen's *Sad Book* and his memoir, *Carrying the Elephant*, both of which refer to the death of his 18-year-old son from meningitis. Both spoke to the very core of me.

But, like my son, I'm a people person and sensed from the beginning that I would need the support of others. I quickly learnt that some of my friends were to cry

with, others to laugh with, still others just for listening. Only a very small few could supply the lot - and what a big ask from me.

I've also found comfort - and Tom - in unexpected places. One of my friends introduced me to a healing masseuse, whom I have seen regularly throughout the year. She helps me relax but also connect with my son in a way I hadn't imagined. He feels very close when I am with her.

A silent hug

Another friend took me singing at Questors, my local theatre. Our exuberant teacher, Vanessa, explained that singing helped express the emotions churning away inside.

Most of all, a silent hug has said more than any words, certainly more than some of the things people have chosen to say, such as: "We all think it could have been me." (But it wasn't.)

And "I think of it first thing at night and last thing in the morning." (Only then, lucky you.)

And "Are you feeling any better?"

We soon realized that we couldn't do it all on our own. It was a relief to find that there was an organization that could help us - CRY, or Cardiac Risk in the Young.

They campaign to raise awareness of sudden death in young people from heart conditions, and also offer bereavement counseling which I have found helpful.

And they organize an annual event walking over London's bridges to raise awareness. We were joined on a sunny July day by about 140 family and friends.

I was impressed to see so many of Tom's teenage friends turn up bright and early on a Sunday morning. But seeing them is bittersweet, as they are at an age when they change rapidly, and it reminds me again of the life our son has lost.

The house is still too quiet: I haven't yet learnt to cope without that noisy boy of mine crashing through the door, throwing his school bag down and shouting out hello.

The memories of the life Tom enjoyed are what sustain us. We will be dealing with his loss for the rest of our lives but I will always hear him in my head urging me to laugh and carry on.



You Can Help A Grieving Heart

by Alice J. Wisler

Oh, we talk about the best cold medications and if cherry cough syrup tastes better to kids than orange. We can recommend preschools and sneakers. But the hardest part of parenting is the least often discussed. The roughest aspect of being a parent is losing a child.

Then we clam up. We don't want to hear. We are threatened. If her child died, mine could too. What can we do when parenting goes beyond the normal expectations? "What do I say?" friends ask me with a look of agony in their eyes. "I feel so helpless. I can't empathize, I haven't had a child die."

You can help. You don't have to stand there with a blank stare or excuse yourself from the conversation. You can be informed so that you will be able to reach out to a friend who has lost a child.

"Jump into the midst of things and do something," says Ronald Knapp author of the book, [Beyond Endurance: When A Child Dies](#). Traditionally there are the sympathy cards and hot casseroles brought over to the bereaved's home. But it doesn't end there. That is only the beginning of reaching out to your friend or relative who has recently experienced the death of a child at any age.

Here are 15 tips you can learn to make you an effective and compassionate friend to your friend in pain:

1. Listen. When you ask your friend, "How are you doing today?" wait to hear the answer.
2. Cry with her. She may cry also, but your tears don't make her cry. She cries when no one else is around and within her heart are the daily tears no one sees.
3. Don't use clichés. Avoid lines like, "It will get better." "Be grateful you have other children." "You're young, you can have another baby." "He was sick and it is good he is no longer suffering." There will never be a phrase invented that makes it all right that a child died.
4. Help with the care of the surviving children. Offer to take them to the park, your house for a meal, to church. Say "May I please take Billy to the park today? Is four okay with you?" Don't give the line, "If you need me, call me." Your bereaved friend may not feel comfortable with asking for help.
5. Say your friend's child's name. Even if she cries, these are tears that heal. Acknowledging that the child lived and has not been forgotten is a wonderful balm to a broken heart.
6. Give to the memorial fund. Find out what it is and give,

today, next year and the next.

7. Some mothers start to collect items that bring comfort after a child dies; find out what it is your friend is collecting and buy one for her. My son liked watermelons and we have many stories of watermelons and him. Therefore my house now has assorted watermelon mementos—a tea pot, kitchen towel and soap dispenser. Many mothers find solace in rainbows, butterflies and angels.

8. Send a card (I'm thinking of you is fine) but stay away from sappy sympathy ones.

9. Go to the grave. Take flowers, a balloon or a toy. How honored your friend will be to see what you have left there the next time she visits the cemetery.

10. Don't use religion as a 'brush away' for pain. Stay clear of words that don't help like, "It was God's will."

11. Don't judge her. You don't know what she is going through each day, you can not know of the intense pain unless you have had a child die.

12. Stay in touch. Call to hear how she is coping. Suggest getting together, but if she isn't up for it, give her space.

13. Read a book on grief, focusing on the parts that give you ideas on how to be a source of comfort for your bereaved friend.

14. Know she has a hole in her heart, a missing piece due to the death of her child. Holes like these never heal so accept this truth and don't expect her to 'get over' this loss.

15. Remember that with the death of her child, a part of her died—old beliefs, ideals, etc. Her life has been forever changed. Let her know your love for her as well as God's love for her is still the same.

Even as you participate in the suggestions above, you will still feel uncomfortable. It has been three years since the death of my four-year-old, Daniel, and even now when I meet a newly-bereaved mother, I am uncomfortable. Talking of the untimely death of a child is never easy for anyone. However, avoiding reality does not bring healing. You will provide many gifts of comfort along the way when you actively decide to help your grieving friend. When my friends and family acknowledge all four of my children, the three on this earth and the one in Heaven, I am honored. Each time it is as though a ray of warm sunlight has touched my soul.

About the author: Alice J. Wisler writes for various bereavement publications. Her recent book, *Slices of Sunlight, A Cookbook of Memories: Remembrances of the Children We Held*, stresses the importance of recalling those children's lives who have died through recipes and food-related stories.



Jottings from Jo

By Jo Hepburn

So a new year faces us. My feeling is that we will pass on what we have found. We need much help, much in the way of volunteering from you. Any suggestions, any offerings of help are welcome. I talk a lot about the feelings I have. There are many who would quickly add that I just talk a lot! So be it, it is my way. I respect other ways.

Someone asked me recently why I do this and I felt defensive about it because she does not realize what we are or what we do. I hope she never has to know, but if she should ever need us would things be different? After thinking on our conversation, I was angry, a good healthy emotion. I do it because I love people, because I have been loved by people. And because it helps me to make the road

a bit easier for someone who is feeling pain. I do it for a little boy, who made life laugh, who had so much to offer to living, and still must have a purpose in being. He would have been a big boy now, he was growing fast when he died, and his meaning to life does not have to stop, because I am still left here. I do it because I need the friendship, the love, the fellowship of feeling, caring people, who love and care with depth. I feel the need of walking the miles left to go with people of this sort. I feel hope, healing, healthy emotions happening and I want to share them. Let's!

Originally published in the TCF Bluegrass Newsletter of January 1981

So What Does A New Year Mean?

By Pat Schwiebert R.N.

In simplistic terms when life was uncomplicated by grief it meant starting over...a clean slate...making resolutions to clean up our act. Some of us like the feeling of getting a fresh start and forgetting the past. We like believing that, during this next year, things will be better.

But when we are grieving, our tendency is to stand at the threshold of a new year looking back rather than forward. We fear that to walk through that door into a new year means leaving our lost loved one behind. To move on seems like an act of betrayal of or abandonment of the one we love. There may also be a fear of forgetting, or maybe a fear of letting go. We experience a contradiction: we want to feel better, but at what cost?

Remember, January 1, 2002 is just another day. It has no meaning or power except the meaning we choose to give to it. Acknowledging our special needs as grieving persons, we can choose to make softer resolutions for the new year—resolutions that can still be challenging, yet are not unrealistic. Why not frame your New Year's resolutions in terms of hope for a gentler year; for gaining control of your emotions, for better understanding of the

grief process and what we can learn about ourselves as we journey thru it? Why not resolve to enter into a future that can be good, even though it lacks all that we might desire, and offers a hope that we will be at peace with sorrow and enjoy life even though we grieve.

We've learned a lot this past year. We have experienced corporate, public grief, following the September 11 attacks. And we have experienced personal grief. We know we are not the only ones who grieve, though sometimes we have felt all alone. And still we survive, even though at times we questioned if the struggle was worth it. We have tasted the bitterness of loss but have not allowed it to destroy us. And together we will rise out of the ashes of grief and say YES to life. None of us can do it alone. We need each other to lean on and celebrate our newness.

Our hope for those in the throes of fresh grief is that someday your days will again bring you more joy... more music...more laughter...more gratitude...more friends...more surprises...more memories.



Stop Telling Me How Wrong I Am

by *Connie Small*

Having never been down this road I now travel, I have been unsure of how this grieving process goes. It's the hardest road I've ever walked. To make it even harder, are the "well-meaning" people who feel it is their duty to tell me how to grieve.

In particular, it's the "good Christians" who are causing my grief to multiply. I write about being angry at God. The next thing I know, I have so many comments and emails in response, that I feel myself sinking deeper into this pit of depression. I find it amazing that I am able to sink to depths lower than I thought I'd ever go in the first place.

I have fought the sadness. I have fought the depression. I have struggled to understand the denial. I have tried so hard to keep my anger in check. I have written letters with such rage, that my fingers hurt from typing. Then I have clicked on 'delete' instead of 'send,' so as to "conform" to societal "norms" by hiding my grief.

No more.

Dealing with my anger at God has been extremely difficult for me. Not only have I raged at Him, but I have not been able to pray to Him for comfort. Before Cassy died, I never dreamed my faith could have been shaken from its firm moorings. Not me. Never.

That was before.

This is now. I am angry at God. I will not talk to Him. I have asked Him for what I believe He has the capability to do and He has NOT answered me. So, for now at least, I will remain angry at Him. I also believe this is something that is between me and God. I do NOT need someone who has not lost a child, to tell me how wrong I am for being angry at God. Here are just a few quotes I have received. These all came in one afternoon.

From "L," who hopes to not offend, but to offer comfort...

"I hope I don't offend you by wriing to tell you how sad I feel for you on the loss of your daughter...but Connie...Cassy was God's daughter...He loaned her to you for 20 years to nurture and love. Yes, it breaks the heart to lose her but how can you be mad at a loving God that loved you enough to loan her to you and how can you be mad at a loving God that wanted to take her home...away from murder, rape, physical abuse or any number of things that could happen here. She is home with her Lord...safe and loved...be grateful for that and for the 20 beautiful years you had with her...and look what you have to look forward to in heaven even more?"

I want to ask these two, "What part about my not being able to talk God, do you not understand?"

From "K.:"

"Connie: Talk to God he is waiting with open arms to hear your voice"

From "M.:"

"Please never doubt God. Read footprint prayer and know you are in the grieving time...God loves you, He will help you if you just ask him. It's hard to understand why we lose a love one but God loves us all so very much and we can have a beautiful life when we trust in Him. Go to church and tell a pastor how you feel. Don't hold it in..."

What I can't understand, is why I can't be left alone to grieve in my own way? I am going through the worst time of my life as it is. I do not need to be told I am "doing it all wrong" on top of that. I have heard it many times. "Everyone grieves in their own way." The key word here is "own." It isn't "Everyone grieves in other people's ways." Even someone who has lost their 20-year-old daughter in the same way I lost my Cassy, will not, cannot, grieve the same way I grieve. THEIR daughter was not MY daughter. MY relationship with my child is not THEIR relationship with their daughter. No one can grieve like some-

one else. We couldn't even if we wanted to, because each of us is unique.

Feelings are just that. Feelings. They are neither right or wrong. If someone were to cut in line in front of me at the store, I might get angry. That's not a wrong way to feel. But if I were to pull out a gun and shoot that person, that would be wrong. It isn't the feeling that's right or wrong...it's the action taken as a result of that feeling.

For those of you who read that I am angry at God, I beg of you, please let me alone to deal with it myself. If you hear of someone else who is angry at God, please, leave them alone. You may very well have the best of intentions, but trust me, I don't want to hear that I am wrong for my way of grieving and no one else does either. Before you judge someone for their anger or beliefs, remember this: "Judge not, lest ye be judged."

I want to say a special thanks to the others who wrote. To those who said, "I can understand what you are saying, I've been there!"

"How refreshing to hear someone speak honestly about their "down time" with God. I, too, have gone through similar phases in my life..."

"Don't you worry, God will wait on you to recover. He is the one who has all the time in world, you know."

"I know too how angry we get at God. I couldn't go to church or talk to Him or sing like I had always loved..."

"I just had to tell you my heart goes out to you and yours. I understand 'not talking to God.'"

Thankfully, those words came the same afternoon. Those are the words that comfort me. Those words helped me to feel that I was "normal." Those words eased my guilt and shame. Thank you so very much.

About the author: I was blessed by God with six children. Two were taken back by Him when they were born. Three live and have given me precious grandchildren. The last, my baby, my special angel, was called back by the Lord on November 6, 2000.



National News

For over three decades The Compassionate Friends has held national conferences. In 2009 the conference will be held in Portland, Oregon on August 7th—9th. At each conference, there are many activities, but you decide what is right for you. There are more than 100 workshops. Many areas of grief are covered by the workshops. There are workshops for bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. And there will be many workshops for those who have no surviving children. You'll find a hospitality room, a reflection room, the Butterfly Boutique, and a complete bookstore.

Also in 2009 the 5th International Gathering will be held from May 6th to 9th in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Gathering will provide the opportunity to "continue building bridges of love without borders" and commemorates the 40th year since the founding of The Compassionate Friends in Coventry England.

Additional information is available by visiting the national website at www.compassionatefriends.org.

Winchester Meetings—In our continuing efforts to reach out to others in the Bluegrass community, our local chapter is hosting additional monthly meetings in Winchester. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, January 6th from 7pm to 9 pm at Hospice East located at 407 Shoppers Drive, Winchester, Kentucky. Meetings will be held on the first Tuesday of each month in this same location.

Library Books —Please remember to return all borrowed books. Many books were donated in memory of a child. If you can't come to the meetings to return the books, please call or email Jim or Mary at (859) 858-8288, (859) 797-2168, or TheCamps@adelphia.net. Put **Library Books** in the subject line, and include the book name and author, your name and phone number. Our Library is a great resource for our members, friends and families. Be sure to come to our monthly meetings early enough to browse our selection and borrow a book. Please keep our library in mind and contact Mary with your donations.

To Our Long-time Members: We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting new parents arrive with a fresh hurt and frightened eyes. I remember how we felt at our first meeting. Think back...what would it have been like for you if there had not been any "oldies" to welcome you, share your grief, and encourage you? It was from them you heard, "your pain will not always be this bad: it really does get softer". They were the ones who wanted to really listen when you talked about your child. Can you be an "oldie" for someone else? By helping someone else, you help yourself and share your child with someone who never got to know them. Come out and share with newly bereaved parents to help them help each other. Our own healing happens when we are reaching out to others.

A Change to the TCF Bluegrass Newsletter—Our monthly newsletter is sent to members and friends via email and posted online at our website at www.tcfbluegrass.org. A quarterly newsletter containing excerpts from the monthly editions is mailed to any member who would like to receive it. We strongly encourage those with internet access to unsubscribe from the mailed edition saving resources and funds as well as being ecologically minded. To unsubscribe from the print edition, please send an email to Janie at Butterflymom@alltel.net. To sign up for the email edition, drop a note to Jim at KyWildcat1@alltel.net. Additionally, if you know of someone who would appreciate receiving our online newsletter, please let Jim know. Corrections, additions and submissions to the TCF Bluegrass newsletter should be sent to Rebecca Woloch, rwoloch@insightbb.com