



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Bluegrass Chapter Newsletter

“We need not walk alone.”

www.tcfbluegrass.org

P.O. Box 647, Nicholasville, Kentucky 40340

March/April 2013

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Bluegrass Chapter

The Compassionate Friends

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(859) 576-7680

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.

Jim Sims

(859) 858-8288

(859) 797-2168

Mary Camp

(859) 737-0180

Suzie McDonald

(859) 576-7680

Janie Fields

(859) 881-1991

We welcome you with Compassion, Love and Hope

It is always difficult to say, “Welcome” to people 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 if they are 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.

Love Gifts

A Thoughtful Way to Remember

Love Gifts are a beautiful and loving way to remember a loved one. Through Love Gifts, we are able to reach out to others with our brochures and newsletters as well as obtain books and other information for our library. We truly appreciate every Love Gift, donation and sponsorship. Our Chapter work is done by volunteers and these donations help us reach out in many ways, including the preparation and mailing of the newsletter.

In Memory of:

Keith Gadbois by his father George Gadbois

Bobby Wayne Covert by his mother Carmen Covert

Keely Hollingsworth by her parents Berkeley & Patty Hollingsworth

Sheryl Adams by her grandmother Ann Adams

Refreshments

Some of us like to remember our child's birthday or the anniversary of his or her death by bringing a cake or cookies to the meeting that month. We would appreciate having you bring a special treat to any meeting. You may also want to bring and share a picture of your child.

Thank you!

Meeting Information

Lexington

First Tuesday of Every Month

6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m.

Hospice of the Bluegrass

2321 Alexandria Drive

Lexington, Kentucky

Winchester

Third Tuesday of Every Month

7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.

Hospice East

417 Shoppers Drive

Winchester, Kentucky

The Compassionate Friends National Office

P.O. Box 3696

Oak Brook, IL 60522

(877) 969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered

March Birthdates

3/1 **John Martin Fay** Son of Mary Ann Fay
 3/1 **Ryan Jason Ross** Son of Mitzi and Rick Holbrook
 3/4 **Barclay (Bart) Knafl** Son of Karen and John Knafl
 3/7 **Kiah Nicole Milsom** Daughter of Lisa Scott
 3/8 **Robby Meeks** Son of Cindy and Rusty Meeks
 3/10 **Andy Jones** Son of Jean and Cal Jones
 3/10 **Victor Paul Basil** Son of Lorena Basil
 3/10 **Jesse Caldwell Higginbotham** Son of Rebecca Woloch and Jerome Higginbotham
 3/11 **Mark A. Romond** Son of Ed and Jan Romond
 3/11 **Melanie K. Laughlin** Daughter of Ernie & Brenda Laughlin
 3/12 **Laura Ann Lemieux** Daughter of Vincent and Jackie Lemieux
 3/14 **Eric Ritchey** Son of Lynn and Harley Ritchey
 3/15 **James "Jamie" Earl Flynt** Son of Suzie McDonald
 3/16 **Matthew Charles Estes** Son of Barry and Cheri Catron
 3/16 **Edward Charles Campherl** Son of Martha E. Stone
 3/16 **Jack Charles Bahm II** Son of Jack Bahm
 3/17 **Jayne Lynn Wawrzyniak** Daughter of Loretta Wawrzyniak
 3/19 **Doug Steinkuhl** Son of Gary and Barb Steinkuhl
 3/20 **Matthew Patterson** Son of John and Ann Patterson
 3/20 **Katherine "Kate" Tudor** Daughter of Suzanne Tudor & Lewis Perry
 3/20 **Emily Brook Howell** Daughter of Kathy Howell
 3/21 **Jackie Peel** Son of Carl and Pansy Peel
 3/28 **David Ryan Goldey** Son of George and Julia Goldey
 3/28 **Chip Cheek** Son of Betty Milton and Ercel Cheek
 3/29 **Andy McLaughlin** Son of Iris McLaughlin
 3/30 **Joshua Montgomery** Son of Jo Barnes and Eddie Montgomery
 3/31 **Michael Wallace** Son of Jack and Carolyn Wallace
 3/31 **Davey Allison Dunavant** Son of Anita and J. C. Harris
 3/31 **Brandon Lee Lorance** Son of Callie Lorance
 3/31 **Cynthia Duncan** Daughter of Davena Ridenhour Hagen

A Little Time for Spring

By: Sascha Wagner, Des Moines, IA

Find a little time for Spring.
 Even if your days are troubled.
 Let a little sunshine in -
 Let your memories be doubled.
 Take a little time to see
 All the things your child was seeing
 And your tears will help your heart
 Find a better time for being.

Silent Tears

John O'Donohue

Let the silent tears flow
 And when your eyes clear
 Perhaps you will glimpse
 How your eternal child
 Has become the unseen angel
 Who parents your heart
 And persuades the moon
 To send new gifts ashore

Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered

March Remembrances

- 3/1 **Addison Elise “Addie” Koch** Daughter of Charles and Katie Koch
3/1 **Donald Ray Bingham, Jr.** Son of Barbara Bingham
3/2 **Patrick McDonnell** Son of Anne and Bob McDonnell
3/2 **Jonathan Derek Perdue** Son of Donna and Chris Perdue
3/5 **Alexandra Scott** Daughter of Stuart & Melanie Scott
3/6 **Grant Casey Blethen** Son of Casey Grant Blethen
3/6 **Rachel Elaine Sutherland** Daughter of Elly and Alan Sutherland
3/7 **Stephen Booher** Son of Mary McCormick
3/7 **Zack Camp** Son of Mary Camp
3/7 **Brenna Jiwon Kihlman** Daughter of Dale and Shan Kihlman
3/8 **Shadanay Everett** Daughter of Tawana Everett
3/9 **Robin Lemaster Ratliff** Daughter of Jesse and Betty Lemaster
3/10 **Jeffrey Scott Wallace** Son of Lynn Wallace
3/11 **Randy Blake Johnson** Son of Randy and Doris Johnson
3/12 **Mitchell Allen Jaquish** Son of Ellie and Thomas Jaquish
3/12 **John Thomas Reynolds** Son of Joan & Richard Reynolds
3/12 **Christian “Chris” Ford Cash** Son of David Cash
3/13 **Glenn Cope** Son of Sheila Cope
3/13 **Charles Hayden “Chip” Lampe** Son of Betsy Lampe
3/13 **Benton (Ben) Warner Blanton, III** Son of B. W. Blanton, Jr.
3/13 **Brian Philpot** Son of Mitch and Dee Philpot
3/13 **Cole Brian Gilliam** Son of Joan B. Gilliam
3/13 **Emily Brook Howell** Daughter of Kathy Howell
3/15 **Amy Jeanine Click** Daughter of Kathy and Steven Click
3/17 **Darius Xavier Jerome Young** Son of Deborah Young
3/20 **Lauren Elizabeth Stokley** Daughter of Jackie Webb
3/20 **Robert (Robbie) Lewis Byrd II** Son of Beverly and Bobby Byrd
3/21 **Amanda Williams** Daughter of Donna Riley
3/21 **Bobby Sherman Parsons** Son of Anna McKinney
3/23 **Scott Carter Jeffers** Son of Susan Jeffers
3/24 **Joshua Montgomery** Son of Jo Barnes and Eddie Montgomery
3/25 **David Wayne Meade** Son of Sue & Fred Meade, Brother of Susan Bayes
3/29 **Matthew Patterson** Son of John and Ann Patterson
3/30 **Victor M. Martina** Son of Don and Judy Martina
3/30 **Erica “Shi” Richie** Daughter of Carol Scott
3/30 **Kimberly Varney** Daughter of Judy and Lewis Varney
3/31 **Mark Anthony Bishop** Son of Marlene and Mark Bishop

If we have omitted your child, misspelled your child's name, or listed incorrect dates, please accept our apologies and call Janie Fields at (859) 881-1991 to correct the information. Call any of our telephone friends if you are having a hard time on these days. We truly understand your pain; for we, too, remember our own children.

Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered

April Birth dates

- 4/2 **John Thomas Reynolds** Son of Joan & Richard Reynolds
 4/4 **Alexandra Scott** Daughter of Stuart & Melanie Scott
 4/5 **Kelly Renee Powell** Daughter of Cecil and Barbara Powell
 4/5 **Michael R. Lucas** Son of Anne and Ed Lucas
 4/8 **Annemarie Timm** Daughter of Helen and Charles Timm
 4/9 **Anthony Eugene Gay** Son of Larry and Gayle Gay
 4/11 **Sean Robert Wright** Son of Sherry Conway & Mark Wright
 4/13 **Tony R. Applegate** Son of Dolly Wallace Bellemey
 4/13 **Jason Davis** Son of Curt Davis
 4/15 **Colin Spencer** Son of Stephanie Spencer
 4/15 **Jeonna McDaniel** Daughter of Jennifer Sebastian
 4/20 **Ivy Britton Freeman** Daughter of Kevin and Cindy Freeman
 4/22 **Bobby Wayne Covert II** Son of Carman Covert
 4/22 **Brenna Jiwon Kihlman** Daughter of Dale and Shan Kihlman
 4/24 **James Edward Auberry** Son of James Auberry
 4/24 **Glenn Ray Carter** Son of Angela Carter
 4/28 **Katie Lynn Brandenburg** Daughter of Michael & Gennie Brandenburg
 4/28 **Jeremy Daegan Hicks** Son of Joe and Sheila Hicks
 4/29 **Bridget Elizabeth Kolles** Daughter of Greg & Mary Ellen Kolles
 4/29 **Christina Leigh Kolles** Daughter of Greg & Mary Ellen Kolles
 4/30 **Kevin Wayne Gardner** Son of Doug and Vicky Gardner

"JAMIE"



Because of you, I love a little more,
 Because of you, I take time to give an extra kiss goodbye.
 Because of you, I listen to your favorite songs when I'm driving alone.
 Because of you, there may be dust on the window sill, and I don't care.
 Because of you, I have special new friends.
 Because of you, I live today, before I worry about tomorrow.
 Because of you, I don't give up quite as fast.
 Because of you, now I can help or listen more.
 Because of you, I treat everyone equal, rich or poor.
 Because of you, I have become buddies with some very special motorcyclist, and
 so have some of my special friends.
 Because of you, I'm more compassionate.
 Because of you, today, I am me.

Mom and Chase

Our Children Forever Loved and Remembered

April Remembrances

- 4/1 **Ash Valic Coffey** Son of Stacy M. Coffey
4/2 **Cody McClure Speer** Son of Lin and Mark Simmons
4/10 **Andy Jones** Son of Jean and Cal Jones
4/15 **Jennifer Podgorski** Daughter of Monique Podgorski
4/15 **Bill Varney** Son of Judy Varney
4/16 **Daryl Clinton Barnes** Son of Vada and Mike Barnes
4/16 **Deana Mari Sea** Daughter of Darrell and Jean Sea
4/16 **Brian Jason Hardin** Son of Richard and Sue Hardin
4/17 **William Henry "Bill" Sanders** Son of Barbara Sanders
4/19 **Jesse Caldwell Higginbotham** Son of Jerome Higginbotham & Rebecca Woloch
4/19 **Kara Elizabeth Horton** Daughter of Carole Mull
4/19 **A. Daniel Morris** Son of James and Marie Morris
4/18 **James Michael Farris** Son of Hulda Farris
4/19 **John Andy Girdler** Son of Ella Girdler
4/20 **Madeline Violet Benton** Daughter of Amy & Tony Benton
4/21 **Shari Eldot** Daughter of Roz Eldot
4/22 **Ron Jones** Son of Mel and Jeanette Jones
4/23 **Weston "Ashe" Marlowe** Son of Brandi & Wesley Marlowe
4/24 **Trista Erin Lane Hail** Daughter of Bill and Debbie Lane
4/25 **Robin Ricci Kuniff** Daughter of Norma Forston
4/26 **John Thomas Parks** Son of Rosemary Parks
4/27 **Joshua Scott Barker** Son of Deborah Barker
4/27 **Lisa Jean Johnson** Daughter of Sam and Doris Strader
4/28 **Mark Robert Bartella** Son of John and Brenda Peterson

Frankfort, KY Chapter of The Compassionate Friends presents:

Conference for anyone touched by the death of a child

"Walking Towards Stars of Hope"

April 5 & 6th, 2013

Keynote Speaker:

Cathy Seehuetter

Cathy has conducted workshops for the national conference, former member of the National Board of Directors, Chapter Leader, Regional Coordinator, Chair of the national conference held in Minneapolis, published writer in several books including, "Chicken Soup for the Soul", will join us in Frankfort at our Regional Conference

Visit www.thecompassionatefriendsfrankfortky.com

For registration and more information

Frankfort, KY Chapter of The Compassionate Friends presents:

Conference for anyone touched by the death of a child

"Walking Towards Stars of Hope"

April 5 & 6th, 2013

Keynote Speaker:

Alan Pedersen

Alan Pedersen, well known for being a singer/songwriter/bereaved parent and also a member of The Compassionate Friends National Board of Directors will join us in

Frankfort at our Regional Conference

Visit www.thecompassionatefriendsfrankfortky.com

For registration and more information

Daisy Snowflakes

The most amazing miracle happened to me today and it came from my son Jamie. I was at work and decided to go outside and take a little break from all of the chaos going on inside of the office. A co-worker went along with me as she too needed a break. As we were standing there it had started to snow ever so lightly. For some reason I noticed that she had a tiny daisy on the side of her t-shirt and thought that it was a piece of confetti. As I brushed it off, I discovered that it was a snowflake in the shape of a perfect daisy. I couldn't help but



to stand there and stretch my arms out and watch the snowflakes land on my coat of black so softly and that they were all different sizes of snowflakes that were shaped into perfect daises. My first and only thought was that of my precious, beautiful son Jamie was trying to communicate to me thru something we both loved. Daises and snowflakes. I believe in the deepest part of my heart and soul that Jamie was standing there with me and letting me know in the only way he knew how, that he is still here with me. I ask Lacey to get her phone and take a picture of what was happening, but unbelievably, neither she nor I had a phone with us to get a picture of this spectacular experience. I asked Lacey repeatedly if she was seeing what I was seeing and she assured me that she was, but I have decided that I didn't care if she saw what I saw because I was seeing what Jamie wanted me to see and that was him letting me know that he is forever with me and standing by my side thru this journey. I wish my son a beautiful birthday in heaven and to visit me often.

Thank-you Jamie
Forever remembered and loved:
Mom

When I Was There

When I was there with you and lived my life as your son/daughter, I knew you loved me with all your heart, I felt it from day one. I never once regretted having chosen you for my mom and although our time together was short, please don't stay sad. You see, when I was with you I learned so very much and I took with me to my other life all my memories of your love. I share it with the other kids I've met since I've arrived, we all have memories of those special times. Please never doubt that we're alive, we are busy helping others and giving of your time. I see sometimes when you think of me you are sad that I am gone, but remember that I'm still with you, you just can't see me tag along. I go with you on your travels and yes, that's me in your dreams at night, I still look the same just maybe a little more handsome/beautiful in this light. Here, there is no sadness, Mom, only joy, love and peace. Here is where I'll wait, until you can come and live with me. In my world now, there is no rush, things just happen day by day, so take your time and enjoy life, have a little fun, it really is okay and when you make your journey to this place where we're all one, remember, I'll be waiting and I'll always be your son/daughter.



Loss

I am here among friends,
smiling at their humor
and making plans for tomorrow.
But there is another person,
lying curled in the corner,
crying out in unbelievable pain.
This, too, is me.
I am doing my household chores,
and routine is familiar and satisfying,
a gesture toward a need for living.
But there is another person,
lying in bed,
willing her mind a blank;
not wanting to think: or be.
This, too, is me.
I look at a lovely spring day,
a view of a world of growth and change,
a world only God could make.
But that other person stares through tears
with unseeing eyes,
knowing there is no God.
That, too, is me.
I am surrounded by my family,
a gathering of love and joy
and tenderness,
of cherished moments and warm hugs.
But another person is there,
whose arms and heart ache
for one she can never hold and comfort.
That, too, is me.



Hope By: Rev. Simon Stephens, TCF Founder

It is the gift of HOPE
which reigns supreme
in the attributes of The
Compassionate Friends.
HOPE that all is not

lost,
HOPE that life can still be worth living and
meaningful,
HOPE that the pain of loss will become less
acute, and above all else, the HOPE that we do
not walk alone, and that we are understood.
The gift of HOPE is the greatest gift
that we can give to those who mourn.

Easter and Passover

The Easter and Passover seasons are upon us.
They are special family times that make it more
obvious that one is missing. Some parents are
struggling with what they believe anymore. The
pretty new dresses and hats don't seem to
matter as much as they did. There are more
important things on our minds now. We are
facing the renewal of life all around us-and yet
the missing child's life is not renewable. We
hurt because life is going on and his or hers is
not.

These are normal reactions for some when
grief is fresh, for the changing of seasons is a
poignant time for many. Those of us who have
had the necessary time with to convey to those
who have not that it won't always be this
painful. When your grief softens (and it will), so
will many of the hurtful responses. Get out in
the sunshine, go for a walk, smell the fragrance
of the flowers and allow the warmth of the
season to permeate your being. It just may
make your day a little lighter, and a lighter day
is worth trying for.



Letter to Newly Bereaved Parents**By: Sarina Baptista**

"You will survive this. It might feel like you won't right now, but you will." Those were the words told to me by a lady at my son's viewing. I later learned that her 4-year-old son died about 9 years prior. You never would have known it. I asked her in the following weeks, "Are you happy? I mean really happy?" She knew what I meant. You feel like there will never be another happy day, another smile, another joy. She said, "Yes, I am. Of course there are days when I am not, but most of the time now, I am."

I hung onto those words with all my hope and strength. I knew that she had been heaven sent and that she would lead me to happiness again, or at the very least, to a day when I could smile at my other children, who so desperately needed me.

I am now over five years on this journey. I can say with a full heart that I am happy again. I have found joy again. This happened not by running away from my grief, but by falling into it. I had to fall into that deep darkness, just as Steven Curtis Chapman writes, "So deep and dark that I could barely breathe." I tried to escape it, but it just made it worse. So I succumbed. I learned fairly quickly that by succumbing to it, giving in, as horrible and frightening as it was to be in that pit, I was not there alone. There were many others there with me -- other family who had met J.T. when he passed from here to heaven, the many angels who hold us up when we feel like we just cannot take another breath, and, of course, God. God was there in that pit too. I didn't recognize it was him until much later, but now looking back, I know he was there holding my head above the muck.

I cannot explain it very well, but I keep trying because I really want other parents to understand this. It is only by truly BEING in your grief that you are able to rise above it. I found that each time I would feel that wave come over me, I would just let go and let it carry me wherever it may. Sooner and sooner, I was carried to the top of the pit, able to climb out and breathe again. We humans don't like to be "uncomfortable." We don't like to be in pain. Losing a child blows that all out of the water. There's nowhere else for us to go. We HAVE to be in the pain. Try not to run from it, escape it, numb it or postpone it. It will just come back again. You must deal with it.

I've learned so much since J.T. left, and I wanted to share it with you. I AM on the other side of that pain. I DID survive, and I DID make it. You can, too. Life will never be the same without your child here, but you CAN make a new life, a new normal, and truly function.

Be easy on yourself. Don't expect ANYTHING from yourself for at least a year. Do what you can for your other children, as much as you can give, but don't feel guilty about not being able to engage with them or stop their hurt. It just doesn't work that way. Their grieving is different than yours and they may need professional help down the road. I put both of my children into grief counseling -- one was fine and we stopped the counseling, the other one is still going and probably will for some time. You will know what and when to do that. The biggest thing is to not think it's your responsibility. You have a lot to deal with yourself.

Take all the help you can get right now. I had people offering to clean my bathrooms. Ordinarily, I would have said no. But, it made that person feel like they were helping me, and it was not the time for pride, so I took them up on their offer. Take the help. It makes others feel like they are doing something for you.

I want you to also know something very important. Our children do bring us signs that they are OK. Watch for them, but try to not obsess on them. Sometimes, grieving parents try to look too hard and then miss the obvious ones, like a butterfly landing on your shoulder, or pennies and feathers in random places in the house. You might hear "Mom" spoken in your child's voice, look around and no one is there. That really is him, and he wants you to know he's OK. They are not truly gone, as I have learned in depth since J.T. left. And they will not leave us. Right now, it is your child's job to see you through this,

Continued on Page 9...

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and he will. So take the signs and hold them in your heart. Know they are real. Don't second guess yourself. These gifts will get you through those tough nights when everyone leaves and goes back to their normal lives.

In the beginning, I had to have someone come sit with me at night. I called them my "mommy sitters." I was terrified to have the house quiet. I would have panic attacks, and I never had them before. I had plenty of them those first few months. Don't think you are being "weak" or not dealing with things if you have to have someone come over to talk with you, or just watch the kids while you have a meltdown. It is part of this wilderness we are in now. There are no rights and there are no wrongs. Don't judge yourself thinking you should be done by now, or why this again? It just is.

I wanted to say a couple of things about siblings. I received so much advice on what to do and what not to do with my children as far as "letting them see you cry" or "keeping them from the pain." I learned some very important things. First, you do need to let them see you cry initially. I found, though, that after the first month, they kept trying to comfort me and wanted to take away my grief. Definitely not something a child should have to do. So I spent more time at the cemetery without them. It's a great place to scream, yell, beat the ground, throw things, etc., but not have the kids see it. I don't want to say to hide your grief from them, because they know more than we think they do. But I did have to limit it. Your children might be different. You will know what is best -- go with your instincts and forget what everyone else says.

Whether we wanted it or not, we are on this road. There are many of us on this road and we hold onto each other with all our strength. We are all at different stages of this journey. There are many who feel they are helping by sharing their story with you, but you may find it just brings you down. It's OK to limit that kind of support. They mean well, but sometimes it would leave me more depressed than when I came in! Do what you feel is right.

You are loved. You are loved by many in your community, by your child, by God. You did not do anything to deserve this -- it is not a punishment. I know this for a fact. There is meaning in this, even though you cannot find it right now, know it is there. You may find that meaning one day, or you may not. But it has nothing to do with judgment, condemnation, past sins, etc. I hope you know that. You are loved, and you are never alone. In the depth of the pain, I know you will feel that hand reach down to you, those arms holding you, just like I did. Hang onto that love, and know that it is real.

My family and I are praying for you, with all our hearts.



Renewal

Spring! Not just the warmth. Though that is surely welcome, even in this southern state.

Spring! Not just the fresh breeze though that is pleasant also. In contrast to the winter wind.

Spring! Not just the flowers though they perk the spirits. After drabness of past months.

Spring! Not just the new growth after the dormancy of plants, the death of last year's growth.

Spring! A reminder to me that even out of death comes a rebirth of spirit!

Angels are Forever By Alan Pedersen From his first CD

Our children are our angels,
They live with us
as long as we keep their memory
alive
by living our lives in honor
of all they meant to us
and continue to mean to us
as we transition from
a physical “earth” relationship
in flesh and blood
to a spiritual “heart relationship
that transcends time and space.
They lift us up,
they light the way.
Angels walk beside us everyday.
With tender hands they catch us
when we fall.
They teach us love and understanding
are the greatest gifts of all.
Angels are forever I know without
a doubt.
They shine with an eternal flame that
never will go out.
We hold them and we love them
wishing they could always stay.
Angels are forever, but sometimes they
fly away.
I loved her eyes,
I adored her smile.
She was my angel for a little while.
There must have been important work
to do.
Now I lean on the love she left behind
to get me through.
So, if you have an angel,
thank God every night
that you’ve been blessed with happiness
and hold your angel tight.
Angels are forever.



What the caterpillar thinks is the end of
the world, the butterfly knows
is only the beginning.

It’s OK to do strange things, anything
that gives your heart a sense of peace,
as long as you don’t hurt someone.
Whether you’re running down the
beach, standing in the shower, or riding
in your car screaming at the top of your
lungs. Releasing balloons with notes
attached, talking to an empty chair,
wearing their clothes, baking a cake
for their birthday, signing their name
on cards, decorating their grave with
things they loved, or collecting angels in
their memory — it’s OK.

No excuses are necessary. You have
learned to do what your heart needs,
and that is a big step.

By Elaine E. Stillwell, M.A., M.S.



Hard Times**Dennis Klass, Ph.D., Former Advisor to BP/USA****From A Journey Together Volume XII No. 1 Winter 2007**

How to hold on and how to let go...How to lose and how to keep...these are hard problems for the bereaved parent. We want to keep the child in our life, we want to remember the child, we want to save those parts of our life which are tied to the child. Yet, at the same time, we know that the child is dead – things cannot be as they were before. The memories of good times now bring pain; the memories of the bad times raise guilt and feelings of powerlessness.

The end of the grief process is a resolution of this tension between holding on and letting go. We can remember and be sad; we can remember and be happy; we can remember and just be. But it takes a long time for such a resolution to happen and while we are in the process, we find ourselves pulled to one side and then to the other.

Sometimes we want to leave the room exactly as it was. Other times we want to put everything away so nothing reminds us of the child.

Sometimes we want to talk over and over again about the events of the death; other times we want to avoid the topic altogether.

Sometimes, when all we have left of our child is our sadness, we don't want to give up our grief for fear of giving up on our child.

All that is a normal process. We go through it at any death. When our parent dies, the problem is how to hold onto our childhood and youth and yet give up our childhood and youth. So, we find ourselves keeping a bit of our parents in ourselves by becoming a little more like them. I was once talking about this in a class when, suddenly, a woman blurted out, “So that's why I wanted to use the good china so much a year after she died.” It is a lot harder to give up the child and keep the child at the same time because, when our parents die, we have to lose and keep our past. When our child dies, we have to lose and keep our future.

In our grandparent's day, losing a child was an expected part of life. But it is not in our time. Few of us ever knew anyone else to whom it happened. So we have few models. Each of us seems to have to find out our own way for ourselves. It is a hard and lonely journey. But the experience of others who have gone down this valley is that there is a resolution at the end. We can hold on and let go. If we can, for a moment, share with others on the same journey, we can help others find directions and let them help us.

That is what Bereaved Parents is all about.

Interaction with Spouses

Bereavement is a lonely place, even within a close marriage. No two people are alike. Each of us grieves in a unique manner. We often seek support from our spouse, the other person bearing a burden equal to our own. We often feel anger and abandonment when that support is not forthcoming. We sometimes feel our spouse is not even grieving or did not love the child as we did. This situation can become extremely stressful for both partners and the marriage. In light of failed marriage statistics among bereaved couples, grief is a time to be non-judgmental toward our spouses. It is extremely important for each to give the other “permission” to grieve in his or her own way, regardless of how it may differ from our own. It is wise to remember that we love our spouses, but considerable recovery time may be needed for each to grieve in a private and unique way. Judgments do not help when dealing with another person whose battered emotions are as frail as our own.