



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS LEXINGTON—BLUEGRASS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 647
NICHOLASVILLE, KY 40340

"We need not walk alone "

www.tcfbluegrass.org

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OCTOBER 2008

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

SUZIE McDONALD: (859)
576-7680

MONIQUE PODGORSKI:
(859) 381-8256

Note—we encourage our members to write and share their experiences and memories. If you would like to submit original poems or articles to be included in the newsletter, please email them to: rwoloch@insightbb.com and put **SUBMISSION** in the subject line.



CHAPTER CO-LEADERS:

Treasurer and Newsletter Mailings:
Newsletter Editor:
Hospitality:

JIM SIMS & STEPHANIE M.

David & Janie Fields
Rebecca Woloch
Karla S.

• WELCOME •

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings. The primary purpose is to assist them in the positive resolution of the grief experience upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health. The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings. The objective is to help those in their community, including family, friends, employers, and co-workers and professionals, to be supportive.

MEETING INFORMATION

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

MEETING FORMAT

6:00 p.m.—Doors Open. This is a good time to visit with old friends and acknowledge new ones. Be sure to check out the library.
6:30 p.m.—Meeting Begins. Please plan to arrive early so the meeting can begin on time.

MEETING TOPICS

OCTOBER—Screening of the movie "Space Between Breaths" during our regular meeting. Due to length of film, please be seated by 6:30pm.
NOVEMBER—topic will be "Coping with Holidays"

STEERING COMMITTEE— meets on the first Monday of each month at 6:30pm at Hospice. All are welcome to attend and participate.

Bluegrass Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Regional Coordinator:

Karen Cantrell
(502) 320-6438

The Compassionate Friends National Office

▪ P.O. Box 3696 ▪ Oak
Brook, IL 60522 ▪
(877) 969-0010

compassionatefriends.org

WE WELCOME YOU WITH COMPASSION, LOVE, & 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.

Patty Murphy, mother of **Fred "Lance" L. Murphy III** (6/23/08)

Stacy Hoskins, sister of **Fred "Lance" L. Murphy III** (6/23/08)

Richard and Sue Hardin, parents of **Brian Jason Hardin** (4/16/08)

Lisa Scott, mother of **Kiah Nicole Milsom** (7/25/08)

Carmen Geraci

National News and Notes



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting, held annually the second Sunday in December, this year December 14, unites family and friends around the globe as they light candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any

cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, creating a virtual wave of light, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memories of children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries. Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift from TCF to the bereavement community, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten. The Worldwide Candle Lighting started in the United States in 1997

as a small Internet observance but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. The 2007 Worldwide Candle Lighting saw information on services received from 24 countries outside the United States. Joining TCF last year were chapters of several bereavement organizations including MISS, Twinless Twins, MADD, Parents of Murdered Children, and BPUSA and services were held in all 50 states plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico.

The Bluegrass Chapter will again be hosting this event in Lexington, additional details will be available in November.

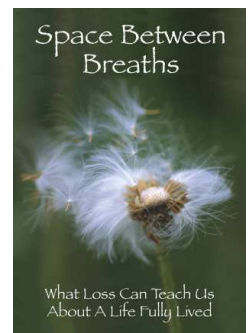
Local News and Notes



The date for the **TCF BLUEGRASS YARD SALE** has been changed due to a scheduling conflict and will now be held on **October 18th** from 9am to 2pm at South Elkhorn Christian Church. We encourage your friends and family to pitch in to help. Please contact Suzie McDonald by email at catholic20@msn.com or by phone at 576-7680 with donated items or to help with this event. Remember, proceeds help us reach out to help other families as well as to maintain our current programs! Please mark your calendars and help spread the word to make this a successful event!

Space Between Breaths

The Compassionate Friends of Frankfort invites you to attend a screening of the documentary "Space Between Breaths" on Saturday, October 11, 2008 at 5:30pm at Franklin County High school in Frankfort. Who are we? What really matters? Is it possible to find true happiness after a great loss? The answers to some of life's most important questions are explored in this film, which looks at the potential in grief and to the ways it can become a motivational, transformational force in our lives. Featuring conversations with parents who have lost a child, including those whose loved ones died at Columbine, on September 11th, and a mother whose son was one of the first U.S. soldiers to die in Iraq, **SPACE BETWEEN BREATHS** offers an inspired and healing perspective on loss which will transform the way you live and love. **TCF Bluegrass will also be showing the film at its October 20th meeting at 6:30pm!**



Hospice of the Bluegrass invites you to participate in **Grief Support Night**. This free program offers support groups for those who have experienced the death of a loved one. Children's groups are divided by age. These groups provide a safe place for children and adolescents to share their feelings with peers, come to understand that their grief reactions are normal, and develop healthy skills to cope with their grief. Adult groups include child loss, young widowed persons, and a general loss group. Dinner is provided at 6 p.m. with groups running from 6:30-8 p.m. Sessions run for eight weeks and are offered several times each year. The next session will begin **October 2, 2008**. For more information, or to register for this session, please contact the Center for Grief and Education at 859-277-2700 or 800-876-6005 or e-mail testapp@hospicebg.org.

From our Chapter Leader by Co-chapter leader, Jim Sims

There are some very exciting events scheduled for this month as noted in the local chapter news and events section. We're increasing our regular meetings to 2 per month. On Tuesday, October 7 we will have our first meeting in Winchester followed by our October 20th meeting in Lexington. We're showing the wonderful documentary "Space Between Breaths" at that meeting and everyone including friends and family are encouraged to attend. Finally, our second annual Yard Sale is scheduled for October 18. Please revisit the news and events for specific details on all of these events.

However, my focus is directed primarily toward our Bluegrass chapter members who have, thankfully, progressed to a point at which the "need" to attend monthly meetings is not as important as it once was.

In recent months we have had a significant number of newly bereaved come to our meetings for the first time. I'm extremely

pleased that they have chosen to seek the understanding, hope and support that Compassionate Friends has to offer. However, I've become concerned that we are not offering and providing the full measure of support that is so important to them, the support that they need, the support that they deserve. My concern is prompted because those coming for the first or second times and others that are in the first year of grief have outnumbered the more experienced members at some meetings by a 2 to 1 margin. So while they are able to bond and share common experiences with others at a similar stage, we as a group are not fully providing a basic fundamental of TCF - *As seasoned grievors reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward, and both are helped to heal.* We, as seasoned grievors, have insight and experiences to share. We can assure them that their confusion, forgetfulness, fatigue, sleeplessness, anxiety and depression is

typical and normal. We provide a tangible example that it doesn't always hurt so bad, life can be full again and measures of happiness can be found. But when our numbers are small, we are short-changing them by not providing a wide variety of our hard earned experiences and we're not providing enough positive examples to fully encourage and inspire them. We don't give them as much hope as could be possible.

So I'm challenging all of us to recall how and what the "veterans" gave to us, how seeing that someone had "survived" 4 or 7 or more than 10 years encouraged us to believe that it was possible, and how their caring concern, their words and hugs helped us "get to tomorrow". I'm asking all of us if we've given back as much as we've gotten. I'm asking all of us to come to some more meetings - to help those that are desperately seeking our support.

Jim



Winchester Meetings

In our continuing efforts to reach out to the Bluegrass community, our local chapter will be hosting additional monthly meetings in Winchester. The first meeting will be held on **Tuesday, October 7th** from 7pm to 9 pm at Hospice East located at 407 Shoppers Drive, Winchester, Kentucky. Additional meetings will be held on the first Tuesday of each month in this same location. Please click [here](#) for driving directions and additional information. This information is also available on our website at www.tcfbluegrass.org.

Our Newsletter is going green! The TCF Bluegrass Newsletter is moving towards a more environmentally friendly and cost effective delivery. Each month we post our newsletter online at www.tcfbluegrass.org/newsletter.html. If you have internet access PLEASE unsubscribe from the printed edition of our newsletter by emailing a note to Janie at Butterflymom@alltel.net and "cc" the request to Jim at KyWildcat1@alltel.net so that he can add you to the email notification list. The newsletter is posted the first of each month on our website.



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.

OCTOBER Birth Dates

10/6/53	<i>Jan Cecile Richardson</i>	6/9/99	Daughter of Jim and Jean Richardson
10/7/70	<i>Renee Peterson</i>	12/28/77	Daughter of Roy and Juanita Peterson
10/8/81	<i>Fred "Lance" L. Murphy III</i>	6/23/08	Son of Patty Murphy
10/8/91	<i>Clay Warren Burton</i>	12/19/97	Son of Jim and Dottie Burton
10/12/79	<i>Tiffany Creech</i>	12/29/79	Daughter of Jim and Karen Rice
10/13/82	<i>Nathan Winston Crim</i>	1/20/07	Son of Becky & Keith LaVey & Howard B. Crim
10/14/75	<i>John Blair Potter</i>	7/12/90	Son of Susan and James Potter
10/15/06	<i>Addison Elise "Addie" Koch</i>	3/1/08	Daughter of Charles and Katie Koch
10/23/84	<i>Brandon James Moore</i>	4/8/06	Son of Jane Moore
10/25/70	<i>Joe Collins Hisle IV</i>	2/22/07	Son of Barbara and Joe Hisle
10/29/77	<i>Shawn Wade Kirby</i>	8/17/95	Son of Tommy and Teresa Kirby
10/30/77	<i>Joe Frank Banks</i>	7/17/01	Son of Barbara Kinne
10/31/70	<i>Jennifer Podgorski</i>	4/15/91	Daughter of Monique Podgorski

**OCTOBER Remembrances**

10/1/88	<i>Taran Ray Thomas</i>	(Born) 7/5/70	Son of John and Keila Thomas
10/2/98	<i>Brian J. Bergin</i>	(Born) 2/3/80	Son of Robert and Sherry Lowry
10/2/98	<i>Victor Paul Basil</i>	(Born) 3/10/36	Son of Lorena Basil
10/5/01	<i>Jeffrey Todd Sims</i>	(Born) 9/18/64	Son of Jim & Sharon Sims and Priscilla Sims
10/7/95	<i>Larry Crawford, Jr.</i>	(Born) 7/18/75	Son of Evelyn Dee Crawford
10/9/93	<i>David Davis</i>	(Born) 8/16/64	Son of Curt Davis
10/11/07	<i>Jeffrey Lynn Spradling</i>	(Born) 1/6/55	Son of Wilma Cracraft
10/11/92	<i>Christopher James Mink</i>	(Born) 10/23/75	Son of Janice and James Mink
10/17/04	<i>Bobby Lee Grimm</i>	(Born) 11/27/86	Son of Brenda and Peter Grimm
10/17/07	<i>Ivy Britton Freeman</i>	(Born) 4/20/97	Daughter of Kevin and Cindy Freeman
10/19/05	<i>Kristi Mildred Wainscott</i>	(Born) 8/18/74	Daughter of Robert and Janet Smith
10/26/93	<i>Donald Duncan</i>	(Born) 1/14/73	Son of Donald and Diane Duncan
10/26/97	<i>Christopher Perry Adkins</i>	(Born) 8/11/67	Son of Linda Brooks
10/29/94	<i>Bessie Renee Root</i>	(Born) 12/28/79	Daughter of Patricia Root
10/30/02	<i>Gary James Travis Burke</i>	(Born) 6/12/83	Son of Bonnie Burke
10/30/02	<i>Gary James Travis Burke</i>	(Born) 6/12/83	Nephew of Addie Waugh



"There's no tragedy in life like the death of a child, things never get back to the way they were."

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower

What Jesse taught me: ICHC by Rebecca Woloch, TCF Bluegrass

Jesse taught me lolcats. Most evenings sitting around the kitchen table with our dueling laptops he'd ask if I'd seen the latest at www.icanhascheezburger.com.

Even if I had it didn't matter – we'd huddle over the screen together and laugh at the funny cat pictures and the funny comments – many of which I just didn't understand and he'd have to explain – some new net lingo, some vague reference to something only a techie would know, something Jesse understood because he was all over that place called the internet.

We "lollod" a lot. And we'd plot how we were going to take pictures of his cat "Slashdot" and submit them. We never got around to that.

The power of laughter is amazing but it's really hard to laugh when your source of joy is gone. I didn't revisit that website for many, many months and when I did, I cried.

A few months after Jesse's accident a friend called in desperation. A stray cat that she'd been tending at work had kittens and she needed to place them before

the raccoons did. So I took the one named "King" – he was scruffy, had watery eyes and well, wasn't really the cutest thing you'd see on ICHC. But in retrospect, he probably saved what little was left of my life. He needed me. Sitting beneath my kitchen chair he'd mew until I picked him up and petted him into naptime. I spent many hours just rubbing his fur, I spent many hours crying with him in my lap and not once did he look at me in judgment that I needed to learn to cope.

I've learned this – and Jesse didn't teach me – sometimes animals are better at compassion than humans. They don't look away when you approach, they don't forget about you, they don't tell you everything will be okay, they don't care if you scream and they never tire of hearing the name Jesse.

Slashdot's connection to Jesse is tenable – when she sits outside his bedroom door waiting for me to open it so she can go sleep on his bottom bunk bed like she always did when he was here, I am reminded of that. When both she and King seem to be seeing something moving through the house that I can't see, I wonder and

stare. One day sobbing at the computer I loudly played a recording of Jesse's voice and Slashdot came running. She jumped up onto the computer desk. She placed her paws on the laptop. She remembered that voice and was looking for Jesse. She remembered that kid who talked his mom into keeping her.

Jesse would laugh that his mom has become the "crazy cat lady" but some days it's the best I can do – to sit and watch and pet and wonder. King and Slashdot are best friends now – they greet each other with "kitteh kisses." That would make Jesse lol I know. Some days I can even lol too.

<3



About suffering they were never wrong,
The old masters how well they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or
opening a window or just
Walking dully along

- *w.h. auden*



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.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900 - 1944) had this beautiful thought: "Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away."

Jottings from Jo by Jo Hepburn, TCF Bluegrass Newsletter of October 1981)

The season is changing again and I'm glad. I love the fall colors. The cold rainy days do not depress me (Could be because they bring others down on my level?). The state of my grief seems to be about where it will stay and I can live with it. That does happen. We have come to an understanding, the new me and the old me. I miss the old one, she was more fun, the newer one is more where I'll be from now on. There is a depth of understanding others, a depth of understanding myself. And it is comfortable usually, even with constant missing of Jon.

I see so much of myself in the newer parents and the raw gaping wound is not forgotten. It doesn't heal completely, but is less raw. The lashing out at God and society is remembered. We have to scream at something. The hurt must be ex-

pressed or it poisons. If it spills over loudly, we are working on it. If we try to keep it in it corrodes the inside of us. So we scream, even scream silently sometimes, but it helps to scream to a friend. If we have friends who can listen and stay on we are lucky—if they fade away we haven't lost enough to matter for there are others to hurt with who'll walk beside us and hold on tight. And we need someone holding on tight.

It's an unbearable place we are, yet we learn to bear it. We do somehow, but it helps to do it not alone.

October is a month of change and so are our moods. The bright blue weather comes through some as I begin to remember happy times more often than the horror. There are still dark gray days too, but they don't panic me any more.

Many times the tears flow when something reminds me hurtfully. But usually the memories are clear and precious—and I feel him not so far away—busy always—he was not a child for eternal Rest, but a child of eternal excitement. Eternally fourteen someone said once—beautiful, busy, blessed. I do not love him less because I cannot touch him—maybe I love him more because I know where he is.

Autumn

In the fall
When amber leaves are shed
Softly—silently,
Like tears that wait to flow
I watch and grieve.

My heart beats sadly
In the fall,
Tis then I miss you
Most of all.



*Lily de Lauder,
TCF Van Nuys, CA*

Photographs by Carolyn Wallace, TCF Bluegrass, October 1988

Photographs surround me.
A picture of you, forever held in time.
Glimpses of the past,
Another time...

baby, childhood, birthday parties, first day of school,
family gatherings, holidays, Christmas cards, football,
prom, vacations, naval academy, parades, graduation,
wedding, honeymoon...

Photographs in every room,
A collage in the kitchen,
Groups in the living room,
In our bedroom...

so they are the first thing I see in the morning,
and the last thing I see at night

At my desk,
All reminders of you ... so handsome, healthy and happy.
Photographs are not enough, I want more.
I want you back with us as before.
But photographs are all I have.

"In loving memory of Mike"

Helpful websites:

www.griefnet.org
www.goodgriefresources.com
www.thebereavementjourney.com
www.nationalsshareoffice.com
www.survivorsof suicide.com
www.thecompassionatefriends.org
www.griefwatch.com
www.journeyof hearts.org
www.lexinfertility.com
www.bereavedparentsusa.org
www.healingheart.net
www.missfoundation.org
www.growthhouse.org
www.childrenofdome.com
www.spacebetweenbreaths.com

Please let us know if you've found a helpful website you'd like to share.

Thankful vs Thankless by Mary Cleckey, TCF Atlanta

This is the time of year when many bereaved parents start saying out loud what newly bereaved parents have been thinking about for weeks and weeks - "I 'm really dreading the holidays"

And why not? When your grief is so new, you haven't had the necessary time to accept life as it is for you now.

On the other hand, there are those of us who have had the necessary time and the proper support who are able to observe the holidays in a less painful way. We have kept some of the old traditions that warm our hearts and thrown out those that are either too painful or meaningless now. We're different now, doing different things because losing a child forces you into that position if you are to sur-

vive in an emotionally healthy way.

The words thankful and thankless follow one another in my dictionary: so close together in a book yet so far apart in meaning. When you think about it, the differences between the two words are full and less. Though those of us who have had more time do, like the more newly bereaved, have less in the way of family, our lives still do have a fullness because we have learned to be thankful and appreciate that which we have left in the way of people and memories - more so than we ever thought possible.

As you approach this Thanksgiving, if you haven't yet been able to make your adjustment, I hope you will feel what you must for

now because whatever you are feeling is okay. It isn't until you have reached the place in your grief where the ability to make good choices returns to your life that you can make some important changes in how you approach the holidays.

I hope the transition from thankless to thankful will be soon in coming for you, for that will mean some peace has returned to your life.

Above all I do wish you peace during this holiday season. I wish you more of the same in the new year.



Crazy Mom

by Jennifer Widener

Ok, so call me crazy.
No one says it to my face
But I see it in their eyes.
"It's been too long."
"She should be over it by now,
This girl needs some help."
No, I'll be okay, eventually.
This is another new phase,
Grieving the loss of the dream.
She died before age 3,
Sweet 16 came and passed,
Crazy Mom had a birthday party.
Concerned friends
Worried glances
Offers of help
Thanks to all,
I'll be okay.
I'm just a crazy Mom,
Grieving.

Love by Fay Harden, TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

Why when I know you are not there am I drawn to the place where your body lies? Why am I filled with such peace and strength while I tend your own small piece of real estate – to clip the grass around the monument we made for you – to take away the weathered flowers and replace them with new ones – to housekeep in a motherly fashion the only way I can for you now. Why is my muddled mind seemingly soothed and wrinkles that were causing distress, leaving me in peace temporarily – can it only be that this is the last physical place than can be yours? It is your place, your earthly temple housing your earthly body. A shrine of sorts for you. Purchased, constructed and tended now so lovingly by we who loved you so in life and love you now in death.



Photo by Katherine Shaw of her son Tevis' grave
www.flickr.com/kwshaw

"Believe, when you are most unhappy, that there is something for you to do in the world. So long as you can sweeten another's pain, life is not in vain." ~ Helen Keller

We're Only Human by Cathy Seehuetter, ST. Paul, MN TC

'Guilt Days': There is neither rhyme nor reason to when they will occur, even eight and a half years after my daughter Nina's death. I had one just the other day. I suppose it didn't help that it was a dreary stereotypical Minnesota day in February with depressingly gray skies and temperatures outside registering teeth-chattering, sub-zero cold with just enough snow fall to make venturing out problematic. These surroundings made it quite easy, even without any apparent good reason, to plummet into a "blue funk". My state of mind then heads in a negative direction ultimately sliding into a bottomless pit of senseless guilt.

In my experience with my friends who are bereaved parents, most admit that they experience this same phenomenon. I don't think there is anyone among us who can say after the death of their child that they don't regret something that they did or didn't do, said or didn't say to that child while they were living. It doesn't matter that the reasons for our feelings of guilt may be unfounded or even seem foolish, the fact remains that we have them. For example, on birthdays or holidays where I would customarily give a gift, if inexplicably I recall the "toy cash register incident," I am guaranteed an instant "guilt day". In explanation, year after year Nina requested a toy cash register for a present; even to an age that I thought was unreasonable to want such a thing. For some reason, unbeknownst to even me, in my eyes it was a silly gift; something that she couldn't possibly really want or even use once she got it. Needless to say, I never bought it for her. I can tell you, though, that even to this day when I walk through the toy department and I see a toy cash register I feel a deep sadness and tears come to my eyes because I didn't buy her the so-called "silly" present that she obviously really wanted. Just innocently strolling through a toy department and seeing a toy cash register can begin a domino

effect of guilt feelings, a chain reaction of remembering even the tiniest self-perceived slight or any incident that I wish I could take back where Nina is concerned. Such as the time she wanted me to give her a ride to Girl Scouts, which was only four blocks away from our house. I had a migraine headache and could barely lift my head off the pillow and therefore couldn't give her one. So she hopped on her bike and about a block from our house hit a bump in the road and was thrown over the handlebars breaking her collarbone! Even though I know realistically that I couldn't have done anything different considering the circumstances, when I am in the throes of a 'guilt day', the thought of that particular occurrence can send me in a downward spiral of culpability. In actuality, chances are pretty good that if my daughter were alive today and I brought up these two happenings from the past she would probably tell me that I was correct in thinking she would have tired quickly of the toy cash register, and that she knows I couldn't physically have driven her to Girl Scouts with a migraine; that she never blamed me for the collarbone fracture in the first place. But because our child who died cannot give us confirmation that they understood our reasoning and that our actions were 'okay' with them, we are left to wonder what they were thinking and feeling regarding the particular situation that makes us feel guilty. Therefore, when we are having a 'guilt day' our tendency is to blow it out of proportion and thereby imagine the worst.

Expressing those feelings of guilt to a trusted friend or family member can be helpful. Talking about your feelings may also help you to let some of it go. That person may even remind you of something you had forgotten about on those days when you are sucked into a vortex of guilt and rendered incapable of remembering any of the positives. For example, a dear friend reminded me one time when I was bushwhacked by a "guilt day"- of something she

thought was extra special I had done for my daughter; something that she thought went above and beyond the call of duty as a mother. Nina had called me from school to sweetly beg me to pick up a Valentine's gift for her boyfriend. One of the gifts was glow-in-the-dark stars like she had on her bedroom ceiling. She told me where to get them (a specialty store at a mall about 30 minutes away). I could tell by her voice how important it was to her, so I dropped everything and off I went to the mall. Little did I know that it would take three trips to three separate malls in different parts of town before I found a store that had any left in stock! Luckily, I made it home just minutes before she and her boyfriend arrived. I recall her exquisite smile and hugs of genuine thanks for my efforts. I remembered how gloriously radiant and pleased she looked when she came upstairs to show me the red shirt with the Tweety-Bird (her favorite) insignia on the turtleneck collar that her boyfriend had given her. Thankfully my friend steered me in the direction of these happy memories and positive reflections of Nina's last Valentine's Day and thereby broke the cycle of more negative thinking.

I believe that no one is harder on themselves than bereaved parents. Even as irrational as it is, we feel that we failed as our children's guardians, that we should have been super-human and able to protect them from cancer, drunk drivers, criminals, drugs, depression, congenital illnesses, and a host of other unspeakable evils with the potential to take away their precious lives.

The bottom line is that we are not invincible or perfect; we are only human. We did the best that we could with what we had to deal with at the time. Our children know this; they love and forgive us for our own humanness and associated imperfections, and I believe would want us to forgive ourselves as well.



Only Surviving Siblings: Am I an Only Child Now? ~By Daniel Yoffee

In families with only two children, the siblings often look out for and protect each other, which makes the loss of one even more difficult for the surviving child. The brothers and/or sisters looked forward to a long and enjoyable future, never thinking that they would be separated. There was the assumption that the siblings would grow old together, reminiscing about the past. Not only are there the intense sadness and feelings of total devastation, but the surviving sibling may feel a huge sense of responsibility for the future care of the parents. While both siblings are alive, there might not be much thought about the loss of a parent, as they believe they will always be there to help each other make decisions when the time comes—that they would always go

through everything together.

Another concern is that the surviving sibling won't have any family to rely on to remember the past. With the loss of a sibling, we are left an immense grief and a "new reality" that we never wanted, never asked for. The anguish and loneliness are overwhelming. Those who have no surviving siblings to share their thoughts, feelings, memories, and pain are left to deal with a wider range of issues. Bereaved parents often have a hard time with the question "How many children do you have?" Many only surviving siblings also have a hard time dealing with similar issues. They may not be up to explaining what happened. It often depends on the relationship to the

person asking. The best choice is to answer whichever way is easier emotionally. Another question surviving siblings often ask themselves is "Am I an only child now?" The sibling who has died will always be their brother or sister, but they may want to spare themselves the pain of people's reactions to hearing of the death (or just the pain of having to say it, which is hard enough). It is so difficult to process the fact that this one person, who shared the past, will not be a part of their future. It's good to remember that no matter how the question is answered, we will always be an older or younger brother or sister.



One of those days by Judy TCF, Vic. Australia

**Editors note:
A "doona" is
Australian slang
for a quilt or
blanket*



It was one of those days often referred to as 'a doona day' by bereaved parents and I didn't particularly want to be anywhere but at home with my poor old thoughts.

The phone rang. It was Trish. Her son Tim and my boy had gone to kinder together ages ago. She was always cheery and she always made me laugh. That was when there seemed to be many more things to laugh about.....

'Judy, Judy, I must speak to you. Something horrible has happened', she said. My heart sank. 'Is it Tim?', I asked.

Trish didn't want to talk over the phone and we organized to meet in a local café. In twenty minutes time I met my ashen-faced

friend. She clutched me urgently and sat me down.

'You can't imagine what I've been through. Judy, what is the worst thing that could happen to your son? She asked.

I was stuck for words, Didn't she know! Had she forgotten! Didn't she know what I would think about such a question! I struggled against the hurt. How could she - such a good friend, one who had shown such care at the time of our family's great loss - how could she ask such a question? Didn't she understand that my family was suffering the greatest loss of all.

She kept clutching me as she insisted I guess exactly what this 'worst thing' was.

I had gathered, not to my surprise, that Tim was certainly alive. I feebly suggested he may be ill or a dreadful accident may have occurred. No, he hadn't caused an accident nor was he in jail. He hadn't gambled away money, lost his job or even his

driving license.

To shorten the story I eventually discovered that Tim had secretly married overseas and his new wife and her family were not at all to Trish's liking. Not a bit.

I tried not to show my relief at this and muttered that I could think of worse things.

'I nearly died when I heard', she told me.

Tim was alive and well and had found the love of his life. Marvelous. He was alive.

It was hard to sit and listen to Trish's troubles. It should be, and so often is, lovely to sit and talk with friends. Instead I felt a great grey tiredness come over me, and with it that 'loneliness in a crowd' that I am sure all the bereaved will relate to.

I wanted to be at home, where when I walk in the door I am greeted by a photo of my smiling boy. I wanted to flop onto the bed and cover myself with the doona and wait for time to pass.

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 love gift was received from **Monique Podgorski** in memory of her daughter **Jennifer**.

A very special **Thank You** to those who contribute love gifts to the basket during monthly meetings. We greatly appreciate your support!



REMEMBER: To have your child included on “Our Children” webpage, or to send corrections or additions to Birth Dates or Remembrances, please contact our webmaster Rebecca Woloch at rwolochxxx@gmail.com.

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 will be mailed to any member who would like to receive it in print. 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.

Our “**Book Review**” column is open to any member who’d like to contribute. If you would like to submit a review on a book you found helpful or informative for publication in our newsletter, please email Rebecca at rwolochxxx@gmail.com or call 254-3148.



NORMAL by Nina Bennett

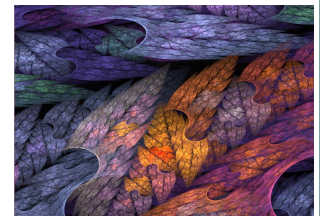
Bereaved grandparents frequently report frustration with the expectation that they should return to normal quickly after the death of a grandchild. What friends, co-workers, and even extended family don’t seem to understand is that normal will never be the same. We are profoundly changed when a grandchild dies. We approach life differently than before. Many of us find our religious faith challenged, and comments regarding God’s plan or our grandchild being in a better place anger rather than comfort us. Friendships dissolve when people can’t accept that our grief is debilitating. The intensity of our grief, which is a reflection of the depth of our love, alarms people. Friends might avoid us because of their own discomfort with our grief. Family members may even make critical comments about getting over the loss.

Our fast-paced society permits no time for mourning. Look at company policies on bereavement leave. Most companies offer one day for the death of a grandchild.

One day off, and then we are supposed to function as though nothing happened.

Unfortunately, we also start to doubt ourselves. We worry that we are doing something wrong when we can’t bounce back and return to normal, to life as it was before our grandchild died. Burying a grandchild is not normal. Seeing our bereaved child in pain that we cannot alleviate is not normal. Normal has to be redefined, and the process is gradual. A new normal will evolve, one that takes into account our changed family and our desire that our grandchild not be forgotten.

So the next time somebody questions when you are going to get back to normal, look them straight in the eye and tell them normal is a setting on a washing machine.



“Grief knits two hearts in closer bonds than happiness ever can, and common sufferings are far stronger links than common joys.”

~ Alphonse de Lamartine