



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS LEXINGTON—BLUEGRASS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

207 RINEY B WAY
NICHOLASVILLE, KY 40356

"We need not walk alone "

www.tcfbluegrass.org

PAGE I

MARCH 2008

Telephone Friends—
sometimes it helps to be able
to talk to someone who un-
derstands. The following be-
reaved parents are willing to
provide support and comfort:

JIM SIMS: (859) 858-8288 /
(859) 797-2168

ANNE AND BOB McDON-
NELL: (859) 278-8965

MONIQUE PODGORSKI: (859)
381-8256

CONNIE KOTZBAUER: (859)
273-3645

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 newslet-
ter, 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 of-
fering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings. The pri-
mary purpose is to assist them in the positive resolution of the grief experi-
ence 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 ac-
knowledge 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

March— Stephanie M. *Ask-It Basket, Part Two!*

(Members will anonymously write a question on a piece of paper and add it to the basket.
Questions will be selected from the basket and discussed by the group).

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 meet-
ing 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 meet-
ings. 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.

Ann Milton Adams, grandmother of **Sherilyn Annette Adams** (November 14, 2007)

Mary Treadway, mother of **Robert Allen (Robbie) Joseph, II** (December 14, 2005)



Just as despair can come to one only from other human beings, hope, too,
can be given to one only by other human beings. ~Elie Weisel

National News and Notes

(This information is abbreviated from our February issue. Additional details on the National Conference can be found at

www.compassionatefriends.org

Nashville, Tennessee, known as the home of country music, will be the host city for the 31st national conference of The Compassionate Friends July 18-20, 2008.

The 2008 conference will have special guest speakers and entertainers, more than 100 workshops covering most aspects of grief following the death of a



child, and many additional activities including the ninth annual two-mile Walk to Remember at 8 a.m. Sunday July, 20. A pre-conference day for professionals will be Thursday, July 17. Among the keynote speakers will be Joe and Iris Lawley,

founding parents of The Compassionate Friends, who will fly all the way from England for what may be one of their final TCF speaking engagements outside of their home country.

The conference will be held at the Sheraton Music City Hotel and a room rate of \$124 (plus tax) is now

available for guests attending the conference. You can take advantage of this rate by calling 888-627-7060. Please mention that you are with The Compassionate Friends.

You may also register online at compassionatefriends.org. As always it is suggested that you register early to avoid disappointment. This rate will be available through June 20, 2008 (or until the room block has been filled). The beautiful Sheraton Music City Hotel, which recently completed a multi-million dollar renovation, is located at 777 McGavock Pike, Nashville, TN.

Local News and Notes

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF FRANKFORT 2008 CONFERENCE

“FROM THIS DAY FORWARD”

March 28-29, 2008 First Christian Church Frankfort, KY

Conference Fee ~ \$45.00 per person, includes light breakfast pastries, catered box lunch, and a Memory Walk at Cove Springs Children’s Memorial Garden on Friday, March 28 at 1:00 p.m.

Opening Ceremony on Friday evening, March 28 at 6:30 p.m. will include a Candle Light Program honoring all of our children that have died. Alan Pedersen, bereaved parent from Englewood, Colorado, will be performing.

Guest Speakers

Pat Loder ~ Executive Director, TCF National Organization

Alan Pedersen ~ Distinguished Singer/Songwriter

Elaine Edden Stillwell, M.S. ~ Former Regional Director, Author

Charlie Walton ~ Author of “Packing for the Big Trip” and “When There Are No Words”

Sandy Goodman ~ Author of “Love Never Dies”

Registration form available online at: <http://www.geocities.com/frankfortkytcf/>



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 if you have any books you’d like to donate. 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 when 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. Our own healing happens when we are reaching out to others.



From our Chapter Leader

Why We Come To Meetings?

When I lost my son in November of 2004, I desperately wanted to understand what had just happened to me. I began searching on the internet that same night. I wanted to identify people, books, organizations, etc. to help me cope with this unbearable situation. I found a lot of information and I also found The Compassionate Friends. I also realize that this is not everyone's path to our group.

What I have to come to realize is that not one of us, has the same path through the grief process to get through the loss of our sons and daughters. As our credo states: "we come from all walks of life and many different circumstances". The causes of our children's' passing is as different as night and day. However, we all need to remember to respect those differences.

We have one common bond that unites us...we have lost our beloved child/children. Regardless of how that happened, it is most important that we respect each other in our views, beliefs, etc. Sure, they are not going to be the same and maybe we will not agree...but that is OK. When the rest of the world alienates us, the last place we should feel that way is at our TCF monthly meetings.

In closing I want to let you know that you should not take a personal offense to anything said during our meetings just because you may not agree. We all have different values, beliefs, and opinions, but the love for our children unites us.

Stephanie M.



Our "updated" website

The Bluegrass Chapter of TCF has a new website located at www.tcfbluegrass.org. We are hopeful that the information available will prove valuable not only to our current members but also to our community, locally and globally – with resources for both the bereaved and those who wish to be of assistance to the bereaved.

Our Chapter is offering to host a one-page online memorial for our members children to be included on our website. You may chose from several banners and font styles, submit three photos (digital if possible, please) as well as text to include. To have a page designed please email information to rwolochxxx@gmail.com with "Children" in the subject line.

A template is available for viewing at www.tcfbluegrass.org/childrentemplate.html with some suggestions on items you might wish to include. The page layout is being provided free of charge by Rebecca in honor of Jesse who patiently (for the most part!) taught her a little web design and some HTML. :) <3



"Those who leave us in the springtime of their lives will greet us again someday in a land where springtime is eternal." I will always cry sometimes, because I miss him. But I will always laugh sometimes.....because I knew him.

Jo Hepburn, June 1994, TCF Bluegrass, for her son Jon

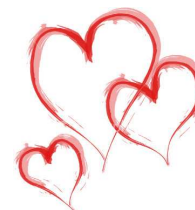
March Birth Dates

- 3/1/69 **John Martin Fay** 8/6/92 Son of Mary Ann Fay
 3/1/71 **Ryan Jason Ross** 7/31/95 Son of Mitzi and Rick Holbrook
 3/4/68 **Barclay (Bart) Knafel** 7/3/89 Son of Karen and John Knafel
 3/8/80 **Robby Meeks** 8/00 Son of Cindy and Rusty Meeks
 3/10/90 **Jesse Caldwell Higginbotham** 4/19/07 Son of Rebecca Woloch and Jerome Higginbotham
 3/10/58 **Andy Jones** 4/10/87 Son of Jean and Cal Jones
 3/10/36 **Victor Paul Basil** 12/2/98 Son of Lorena Basil
 3/11/75 **Mark A. Romond** 5/22/82 Son of Ed and Jan Romond
 3/12/95 **Laura Ann Lemieux** 3/28/02 Daughter of Vincent and Jackie Lemieux
 3/14/76 **Eric Ritchey** 1/1/96 Son of Lynn and Harley Ritchey
 3/15/72 **James "Jamie" Earl Flynt** 2/5/07 Son of Suzie McDonald
 3/16/76 **Matthew Charles Estes** 7/17/98 Son of Barry and Cheri Catron
 3/16/69 **Edward Charles Campherl** 6/27/96 Son of Martha E. Stone
 3/16/70 **Jack Charles Bahm II** 2/18/88 Son of Jack Bahm
 3/19/72 **Doug Steinkuhl** 7/3/91 Son of Gary and Barb Steinkuhl
 3/20/92 **Matthew Patterson** 3/29/94 Son of John and Ann Patterson
 3/21/72 **Jackie Peel** 7/30/90 Son of Carl and Pansy Peel
 3/28/88 **David Ryan Goldey** 1/7/97 Son of George and Julia Goldey
 3/28/75 **Chip Cheek** 9/29/91 Son of Betty Milton and Ercel Cheek
 3/29/60 **Andy McLaughlin** 7/6/79 Son of Iris McLaughlin
 3/30/88 **Joshua Montgomery** 3/24/91 Son of Jo Barnes and Eddie Montgomery
 3/31/61 **Michael Wallace** 8/9/87 Son of Jack and Carolyn Wallace
 3/31/92 **Davey Allison Dunavant** 6/28/01 Son of Anita and J. C. Harris
 3/31/73 **Brandon Lee Lorange** 2/21/02 Son of Callie Lorange



March Remembrances

- 3/1/94 **Donald Ray Bingham, Jr.** (Born) 6/11/93 Son of Barbara Bingham
 3/2/95 **Patrick McDonnell** (Born) 11/11/77 Son of Anne and Bob McDonnell
 3/2/90 **Jonathan Derek Perdue** (Born) 9/25/72 Son of Donna and Chris Perdue
 3/6/00 **Grant Casey Blethen** (Born) 3/3/81 Son of Casey Grant Blethen
 3/6/04 **Rachel Elaine Sutherland** (Born) 8/16/85 Daughter of Elly and Alan Sutherland
 3/7/95 **Stephen Booher** (Born) 5/23/78 Son of Mary McCormick
 3/7/04 **Zack Camp** (Born) 12/13/89 Son of Mary Camp
 3/7/02 **Brenna Jiwon Kihlman** (Born) 4/22/75 Daughter of Dale and Shan Kihlman
 3/9/91 **Robin Lemaster Ratliff** (Born) 12/26/57 Daughter of Jesse and Betty Lemaster
 3/10/07 **Jeffrey Scott Wallace** (Born) 8/29/67 Son of Lynn Wallace
 3/11/99 **Randy Blake Johnson** (Born) 11/8/69 Son of Randy and Doris Johnson
 3/12/06 **Mitchell Allen Jaquish** (Born) 5/6/57 Son of Ellie and Thomas Jaquish
 3/13/91 **Glenn Cope** (Born) 2/8/75 Son of Sheila Cope
 3/13/05 **Charles Hayden "Chip" Lampe** (Born) 7/25/82 Son of Betsy Lampe
 3/13/97 **Benton (Ben) Warner Blanton, III** (Born) 12/19/70 Son of B. W. Blanton, Jr.
 3/13/97 **Brian Philpot** Son of Mitch and Dee Philpot
 3/13/86 **Cole Brian Gilliam** (Born) 1/15/65 Son of Joan B. Gilliam
 3/15/91 **Amy Jeanine Click** (Born) 5/18/79 Daughter of Kathy and Steven Click
 3/17/99 **Darius Xavier Jerome Young** (Born) 6/28/80 Son of Deborah Young
 3/20/03 **Lauren Elizabeth Stokley** (Born) 9/7/92 Daughter of Jackie Webb
 3/20/91 **Robert (Robbie) Lewis Byrd II** (Born) 12/14/71 Son of Beverly and Bobby Byrd
 3/21/91 **Amanda Williams** (Born) 11/23/82 Daughter of Donna Riley
 3/21/05 **Bobby Sherman Parsons** (Born) 2/17/76 Son of Anna McKinney
 3/23/02 **Scott Carter Jeffers** (Born) 7/3/78 Son of Susan Jeffers
 3/24/91 **Joshua Montgomery** (Born) 3/30/88 Son of Jo Barnes and Eddie Montgomery
 3/29/94 **Matthew Patterson** (Born) 3/20/92 Son of John and Ann Patterson
 3/30/99 **Victor M. Martina** (Born) 6/3/74 Son of Don and Judy Martina
 3/30/05 **Erica "Shi" Richie** (Born) 12/30/88 Daughter of Carol Scott
 3/30/84 **Kimberly Varney** (Born) 5/10/68 Daughter of Judy and Lewis Varney



What Jesse taught me: CTRL+S by Rebecca Woloch, TCF Bluegrass

My friend Mary forgot her billfold on the counter of a convenience store and didn't realize it until the next day. By the time she revisited the store it was of course, long gone. In that wallet were pictures of her son Robbie, the son she lost in 2004. Those photographs can't be reproduced or replaced. Mary has yet another loss to bear.

I am amazed and dismayed by the continued hardships we grapple with in addition to the devastation of having lost a child. I think we should be granted blanket immunity – we don't *deserve* any other bad things happening to us. But somehow they do.

Now Jesse pretty much had an answer to everything and 99.9% of the time that included technology. So I thought about Mary and wondered what we can do to protect our precious mementos. And I heard Jesse saying: "Hit SAVE, Mom. CTRL+S".

This is what Jesse taught me:

- **Backup:** take an hour or two to save files, photos and emails on your computer. Burn them to CD's or DVD's. External hard drives are small enough to fit in your pocket and offer the storage space to hold huge amounts of data. Flash or Thumb Drives are cheap – a 4GB travel drive at Staples will run less than \$35 - just plug the device in then drag and drop your files to be copied.
- **Store stuff online:** More than once Jesse salvaged a potential bad grade due to forgetfulness by having saved homework online at GoogleDocs. There are numerous websites that allow you to upload and store photos online for free (www.picasa.google.com, www.photobucket.com, www.flickr.com). These sites offer plenty of file space as well as the option to have your albums viewable either publicly or kept private.
- **Go Digital:** Have your photos scanned by someone or learn to do it yourself. All-in-one devices while still tending towards cumbersome have become a lot easier for the novice to use. I just purchased a Canon Lide90 flat-bed scanner (\$69.99 with free shipping from www.NewEgg.com). This portable scanner runs on USB and requires nothing more than placing your photo on the scanner glass and pressing the button marked "scan". There's also an option to scan documents into PDF (portable document format), creating an image that converts it into a format that is viewable on multiple platforms

Jesse urged – nay, insisted — that I continually learn some new technology and not be intimidated by it. If you are apprehensive or consider yourself less than tech-savvy, find a teenager in your family or neighborhood. Contact the nearest high school's STLP (Student Technology Leadership Program) and ask the director if he/she has a student who will help. Countless times I transported Jesse to someone's house to work on a computer. Countless times we stood in the doorway at home to a neighbor pleading: "Jesse, help!" These kids are phenomenal – offer them a few bucks and let them teach you.

While I can't fathom anything worse than this horrible grief journey, I think there is something that could make it a lot harder – losing my precious physical memories of Jesse. Hit "CTRL+S". <3

("CTRL+S" is a shortcut for the function "save" - holding down the Ctrl key while simultaneously pressing the letter S is a faster, more efficient way to save documents on your computer and is especially useful while editing)



Smile, smile hard

Smile, smile hard for your life before you is fleeting
Every emotion every pain fading into a blissful nothing.
Your body is tingling, your senses have left, this reality has faded and you just want some rest.
Smile for they've come for you! You can see them I know and you know it's time to go.
Smile for you're not scared, you know how much you're loved and that you'll never be forgotten. The tingling is leaving it's going into everything. You take

your last breath and your eyes gently close.
Smile for you know all the answers and you have no more worries.
Smile, smile hard for I know you'd tell me not to cry, but when I heard the news it hit me like a sharp knife, I still feel like it's not real, I can't believe that I'm never going to hear your sweet voice again.
Smile, smile hard for I got to have a grandma and I had time to learn and get your love.

Smile for you were young til the day you died.
You always were happy even when you were down and you had the brightest spirit that I've seen around.
Smile, smile hard because I'll always remember you for the way you were, the nicest great-grandma in the whole-wide world.



by Sarah Fine, in memory of
her great-grandmother
Ana Pauline Busby

Grief of Grandparents

I am powerless, I am helpless, I am frustrated, I sit here and cry with her. She cries for her daughter and I cry for mine. I cannot help her. I can't reach inside and take her broken heart. I must watch her suffer day after day and see her desolation.

I listen to her tell me over and over how she misses Emily, how she wants her back. I can't bring Emily back for her. I can't buy her an even better Emily than she had like I bought her an even better toy when she was a child. I can't kiss the hurt and make it go away. I can't even kiss a small part of it away. There is no band-aid large enough to cover her bleeding heart.

I used to listen to her talk about a boyfriend and tell her it would be okay, and know in my heart that in two weeks she wouldn't even think of him. Can I tell her it'll be okay in two years when I know it will never be okay, that she will carry this pain of "what might have been" in her deepest heart for the rest of her life?

I see this young woman, my child, who was once carefree and fun-loving and bubbling with life, slumped in a chair with eyes full

of agony. Where is my power now? Where is my mother's bag of tricks that will make it all better? Why can't I join her in the aloneness of her grief? As tight as my arms wrap around her, I can't reach that aloneness.

Where are the magic words that will give her comfort? What chapter in Dr. Spock tells me how to do this? He has told me everything else I needed to know. Where are the answers? I should have them. I'm a mother.

I know that someday she'll find happiness again, that her life will have meaning again. I can hold out hope for her someday, but what about now? This minute? This hour? This day?

I can give her my love and my prayers and my care and my concern. I could give her my life. But even that won't help.

*Written by Margaret Gerner,
Bereaved Grandparent, St. Louis,
MO Chapter, The Compassionate
Friends*



Helpful websites:

www.griefnet.org
www.goodgriefresources.com
www.thebereavementjourney.com
www.nationalshareoffice.com
www.survivorsofsuicide.com
www.thecompassionatefriends.org
www.griefwatch.com
www.journeyofhearts.org
www.lexinfertility.com
www.bereavedparentsusa.org
www.healingheart.net

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

**"Who better to soften
the wound of another
than he who has
suffered the wound himself?"
- Thomas Jefferson**

March

It is March. What a strange time of the year. One day spring, and the next day it is winter again. And yesterday, when the wind picked up some forgotten leaves and whirled them around my feet, I felt as if fall was in the air.

I've never liked March very much. Maybe it reminds me too much of my own life, my own grief process. One day up and the next day down. Many times up and down all in one day!

I felt as if I could never enjoy the good days, because I knew a bad day would follow. Just like March,

never trust the sunshine and warmth because tomorrow a bitter wind will blow and clouds will darken the sky.

Sometimes I would even rush through a happy moment just to get it over with, just to hurry on to the grief. Or even borrow tomorrow's grief to avoid today's joy. Why trust the happiness when I know that I will be crying soon? Close the windows, block out today's sun because it will probably rain tomorrow. How long did I live like that? Years. For years I hid from March's sunshine. I can't tell you when I real-

ized that I could live one moment at a time and accept what was in that moment. If I am crying and in pain, okay; that is what is in this moment. On the other hand, if I am smiling and cheerful, that is what is in that moment.

If the sun shines today, throw off your coat and enjoy it. Yes, tomorrow you may have to put the coat back on, but that is tomorrow. Today's sunshine is a gift, accept it and enjoy the warmth. March, what a strange time of my life.

BJ, TCF Bloomington, IN



Grief across Cultures by Marilyn Williams: Chaplain, Memorial Hospital Chattanooga

Many of us would prefer to ignore the reality that death is part of the cycle of life and grief spares no one. Yet I would suggest that how we deal with loss and grief have a great impact on our level of wellness. Wellness and wholeness relates to the capacity to seek harmony in the midst of chaos; and loss and death can be among the most chaotic events we will experience as human beings. Indeed grief is a natural response to the fact that life has changed and will never be the same again. Death can strip us of illusions of control and provide us with lessons in helplessness, humility, and survival. Grief is the process by which we can learn, grow, and heal until once again we find a sense of harmony and equilibrium. Becoming comfortable with grief and allowing others to grieve contributes to wellness.

Do not expect others to react as you do.

In dealing with grief, it is important to remember that grief is highly personal. Some people will cry easily, others will become angry, some will want to be alone, and others will want to be with someone all the time. The most essential thing you can do for one, who is grieving, is to just be with them. Don't try to find the magic words to erase their pain or try to make him or her to feel better. Don't be afraid to talk about the deceased and share your stories and memories.

Rituals of mourning have evolved in all cultures and religions as ways to channel our grief, to symbolize letting go, to remind us of the continuity and stability of life and human community. The rituals reinforce beliefs about life and death as well as to honor the deceased. We can learn much about grief in the diversity of the rituals, traditions, and even behaviors to express grief. For example, the

Catholic Christian will often find comfort in the very formal scriptural readings and prayers of the commendation of the dying and prayers for the dead or rosary services. The emotionally expressive funerals of African-American Protestant Christians provide the means for accepting the reality of death and letting go of grief in that tradition. A Jew may find *Shiva*, the seven-day period immediately following burial when mourners stay home and community members come to pray and offer condolences, to be a means of confronting their grief while being supported by community.

Regardless of our cultural and religious differences in mourning and own unique individual response to grief, our communities are powerful support groups to draw upon.



Another Death - How Much Can a Family Take?

After three family members died in a row I thought I knew a lot about multiple losses. I never suspected, even for a second, that life had more to teach me. Last week my former son-in-law, the father of my twin grandchildren, died in a car crash. I can hardly believe he died the same way my daughter died.

When I heard about the fourth death in the family my mind zapped back to the first stage of grief -- shock and disbelief. I was overcome with grief and sobbed for my daughter, father-in-law, brother, former son-in-law, my grandkids, and myself. Then I stopped sobbing. In fact, my mind raced forward to the final stage of grief -- acceptance.

Judith R. Bernstein, PhD, writes about the stages of grief in her book, "When A Bough Breaks." Many researchers believe the stages of grief that Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross identified, she notes, but "all agree that these stages are completely flexible and there is no such thing as orderly progression." I understand her point, indeed, I lived it.

To go from disbelief to acceptance in two days was amazing. How did I do this? I may never fully understand the process, but I think I it happened because I have studied grief, have the experience that comes with age, and good coping skills. One coping skill is sticking to a routine as much as possible.

I am trying to get my grandkids to stick to their routine. We had planned to have Thanksgiving dinner with the extended family and the kids wanted to do this. Twenty-three family members gathered around various tables and I saw them "close ranks" to help the kids. But the kids wonder, friends wonder, and we wonder why both of their parents died.

As I have done before, I turned to Rabbi Harold Kushner's book, "When Bad Things Happen to Good People." Nobody knows why four family members died in nine months, but if you believe Rabbi Kushner, bad things happen randomly. "They do not happen for any good reason which would cause us to accept them willingly," he writes. "But we can give them a meaning."

cont'd, page 8 "Another"

(cont'd) Another Death - How Much Can a Family Take?

I am giving new meaning to life by caring for my grandkids. This care includes healthy meals, clean laundry, shopping service, taxi service, attending concerts and sports events, and listening. When my grandkids share their thoughts with me I listen as though their lives depend on each word.

I am giving new meaning to life by writing about my losses. During the last week I discovered something important about myself. One of the reasons writers do what they do is to gain understanding. I thought I was writing about multiple losses to recover. Now I realize I am writing about multiple losses to survive.

If you have suffered multiple losses I hope you give new meaning to your life. You may find meaning in caring for children, grandkids, or a remaining parent. Donating to a religious community or a health organization may also give your life new meaning. I have been humbled by the kindness of family, friends, and strangers. Their kindness has brought new meaning to my life.

This moment in time -- my grandkids' high school and college years -- will define my life. I will care for my grandkids until I take my last breath. Despite the pain of multiple losses I feel blessed. Multiple losses have taught me that every moment is precious and I will not waste a single one.

Copyright 2007 by Harriet Hodgson www.harriethodgson.com

Facing Sudden Loss by Judy Tatelbaum, MSW, Hospice Foundation of America

Of all the experiences we confront in life, the toughest to face is the sudden, unexpected loss of someone we love. Loss in itself is painful enough, but sudden loss is shocking. The shock doubles our pain and intensifies our grief.

Even if on some level we understand that no one lives forever, actually losing people we love is unimaginable. When we know someone we love has a fatal disease or when we have nursed a loved one who is very ill, we have a chance to begin to prepare for their loss -- at least a little. However, the unexpected death of a loved one - regardless of how that loved one dies - can leave us stunned, lost, and overwhelmed with pain. We may not know where to begin to cope.

Sudden loss gives us no chance to prepare. It is not unusual that we feel cheated by a sudden death, cheated of a chance to say the last words we would have liked to say or to do some last act that would have had meaning to us--like a hug, a kiss, a walk hand in hand. Missing out from having a way of saying some kind of goodbye can leave us feeling especially bereft for weeks or even months. Feeling cheated in this way can add to our grief, anguish and despair.

Besides our feeling cheated by it, sudden loss can make the world

feel shaky or less safe. This is a natural response to any unexpected and traumatic event. When we feel as if someone we love is suddenly "yanked" out of our lives, we are left feeling that the world isn't a safe place. We may then become fearful and uncertain, or angry and frustrated. This loss can negatively color our view of life, but hopefully only temporarily.

When we face a sudden loss, all at once we have three overwhelming tasks to deal with: Our grief over the loss of our loved one, the absence of this special person from our daily lives, and the changes in our lives that are caused by this loss. Each is a big task to take on, and each will become a part of our mourning and healing process.

Although it may be hard to imagine at the moment, we must remember that people do recover from sudden losses, and that we too can ultimately move through this terrible pain and begin to heal.

It helps to bear in mind that emotional pain isn't constant, and that we don't have to grieve forever. We will love forever, whether our loved ones are with us in body or not, but we do not need to grieve to honor that love. We can just love.

In talking to many people who have suffered sudden loss, I have

learned that there are several important, possibly universal, ways to help yourself heal:

Love yourself and take special care of yourself through your grief.

Do your mourning now. Being strong and brave is important, but I always tell those I counsel to never miss an opportunity to cry. That is not self-indulgent, but simply sensible and honest in dealing with your emotions.

Expressing your feelings will help you heal, as feelings expressed disappear. Feelings repressed don't. So give vent to your feelings.

Get support from other people--counselors and support groups like widow's groups, bereavement groups, compassionate friends, or suicide survivors. You may find them through a hospice, your church, or a community or social service agency.

You will not only help yourself, but you may also help another and that can be a great source of strength, joy and recovery.

And, most of all, trust that the person you loved and lost would want you to recover from losing them, and would want you to remember and honor them by living a fulfilling life.



Please See Me Through My Tears by Kelly Osmont

You asked, "How am I doing?"
As I told you, tears came to my eyes...

and you looked away and quickly began to talk again. All the attention you had given me drained away.

"How am I doing?" I do better when people listen, though I may shed a tear or two. This pain is indescribable. If you've never known it you cannot fully understand.

Yet I need you.
When you look away,
When I'm ignored,
I am again alone with it
Your attention means more than you can ever know.

Really, tears are not a bad sign, you know!

They're nature's way of helping me to heal...

They relieve some of the stress of sadness.

I know you fear that asking how

I'm doing brings me sadness
...but you're wrong.
The memory of my loved one's death will always be with me,
Only a thought away.
My tears make my pain more visible to you, but you did not
give me the pain...it was already there.

When I cry, could it be that you feel helpless, not knowing
what to do?

You are not helpless,
And you don't need to do a thing but be there.

When I feel your permission to allow my tears to flow,
you've helped me
You need not speak. Your silence as I cry is all I need.

Be patient...do not fear.

Listening with your heart to "how I am doing"

relieves the pain,
for when the tears can freely come and go, I feel lighter.

Talking to you releases what I've been wanting to say aloud,

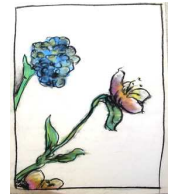
clearing space
for a touch of joy in my life.

I'll cry for a minute or two...
and then I'll wipe my eyes,
and sometimes you'll even find I'm laughing later.

When I hold back the tears, my throat grows tight,
my chest aches, my stomach knots...

because I'm trying to protect you from my tears.
Then we both hurt...me, because my pain is held inside,
a shield against our closeness...and you,
because suddenly we're distant.

So please, take my hand and see me through my tears...
then we can be close again.



If Only They Knew...

If only they knew that when I speak of him, I am not being morbid. I am not denying his death, I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For 26 years he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded and loved; this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief.

If only they knew that when I sit quietly, apparently content with my own company, I am not self-indulgently unhappy, dwelling on things which cannot be changed; I am with him, I am seeing his face, hearing his voice, remembering his laughter, recalling his excitement and joy in life. Please allow me this time with him as I do not begrudge you your time with your children.

If only they knew that when I sometimes weep quietly, it's not in self pity for what I have lost; I weep for what he has lost, for the life he loved, for the music which filled his very being, ... for the poetry which moved him to tears, for the beauty about him that daily fed his soul, for the exhilaration and excitement of flying the skies, of searching for his God in the vast space of the universe. For all that he loved and lost, I cry.

If only they knew the feeling of deep grief, the emptiness, the dull pain, the endlessness of death, if only they understood the insanity of the platitudes so freely spoken: "time heals...you'll get over it," "it was for the best... God takes only the best," and realized that these are more an insult than a com-

fort, that the warm and compassionate touch of another means so much more.

If only they knew that we will not find true peace and tranquility until we try to stand in the shoes of others. If only they knew that we will not be understood until we learn to understand compassionately, and we will not be heard until we learn to listen with hearts as well as minds.

Jan McNess, TCF—Victoria, Australia



Grief changes shape, but it never ends.
— Keanu Reeves

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. The following love gifts have been donated to our chapter in memory of the following:

- ♥ Given in loving memory of **Dean Sizemore** son of Carl and Shelby Sizemore.
- ♥ Given in loving memory of **James “Jamie” Earl Flynt** son of Suzie McDonald.
- ♥ Given in loving memory of **Joe Frank Banks** son of Barbara Kinne
- ♥ Given in loving memory of **Jeff Sims** son of Jim Sims

Please send love gifts to David Fields, 207 Riney B Way, Nicholasville, KY 40356. Please remember, if given in memory of your child, to include

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



A Change to the TCF Bluegrass Newsletter

Beginning in February, a new MONTHLY format was introduced for our TCF Bluegrass Newsletter. The monthly edition will be sent to you via email as well as being posted online at our website at www.tcfbluegrass.org. A quarterly newsletter containing excerpts from the monthlies will be mailed to any member who would like to receive it in print. We strongly encourage those with internet access to consider unsubscribing from the mailed edition. To unsubscribe from the print edition, send an email to Janie at Butterfly-mom@alltel.net. Please mark the subject line “print unsubscribe”. You will still continue to receive the email newsletter every month! Additionally, if you know of someone who

REMEMBER: To have your child included on “Our Children” webpage, please contact webmaster Keith at tcfbluegrass@yahoo.com. Corrections to Birth Dates and Remembrances should be sent to Rebecca at rwolochxxx@gmail.com.

In next month’s newsletter we will be adding a “**Book Review**” feature. We encourage all of our readers to consider contributing a review on a book you found helpful or informative. For more information, contact Rebecca at rwolochxxx@gmail or at 254-3148.



The “Gift of Life”

“Do you want to donate Melissa’s organs?” Even though our family knew the answer, we were not ready to face the question.

To the medical staff, she was Melissa. To us she is Missy. She had a beautiful smile, freckles, 22 years old, a student at ECU, daughter, little sister, aunt, grandchild, niece, cousin, friend and the list goes on and on. To the families of those who were recipients of her selfless act of being an organ donor, she was honestly a miracle. Missy was giving in life and continues to give in death.

If you have never been faced with this decision, you may ask if it was an easy decision for our family. Well, there is no easy answer. Yes, we knew Missy had signed her driver’s license, I had signed as a witness. She told us she

wanted to donate her organs, she was a regular blood donor and on the National Bone Marrow Registry. It was difficult because at that moment, we wanted to just cover her with warm blankets and bring life back to her. We wanted our miracle, not to give miracles. By donating her organs, we were admitting her life as we knew it was over.

Do we regret donating her organs? NO. Missy gave sight to a person through the gift of her corneas. Missy gave new hope to burn victims, through tissue that can be used in skin grafts. Missy lives on. We do not have her with us physically, but others do. That makes it easier for us in some ways.

*by Lisa G. Fields, for her sister-in-law,
Melissa Dawn “Missy” Fields*



NATIVE AMERICAN PRAYER

I give you this one thought to keep-
I am with you still - I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on the snow,
I am the sunlight on the ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift, uplifting rush
of the quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not think of me as gone -
I am with you still - in each new dawn.