



The Compassionate Friends NEWSLETTER

Manhattan Newsletter

FALL 2016 Vol. XXVIII No. 3

I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL...

My life went off the rails in 1993. At the time I was entering middle age, had enjoyed a successful career, and continued on what seemed a prosperous trajectory. I had been married for 29 interesting years and had the most fabulous son who was about to enter adulthood; handsome, smart, educated, healthy and wise (for a 22 year old). I often voiced my gratitude to the fates for my good fortune. Big mistake. They heard me - and offended by my hubris - they smacked me down like a bug that had landed blissfully in their unsullied world.

It was August 8th. Visiting with my sister in California, she and I had spent a glorious summer day in Carmel, returning home exhausted and settling in with my brother-in-law to watch a movie when the phone rang. Unaware that my life as I knew it was about to end, my sister and I continued watching while he went to answer the phone. It was 9PM. Midnight in New York .

Unbeknownst to me, while my sister and I were romping around Carmel during the afternoon, my husband had called looking for me. (It was 1993 - no cell phones). When my brother-in-law took the call, Phil was forced to tell him the news but asked that he not tell me, saying he would call me that evening. He waited until midnight in New York so that I could have one last day....Thus, greeted normally when we returned from our fun day, I had no clue that anything was amiss. That Peter had been dead for 24 hours. When the phone rang at 9PM,

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SURVIVING SURVIVOR'S GUILT

by Nora Yood

Becoming a mother was the most defining, overwhelming, and sought after role in my life. Once a mother, I stopped thinking of myself as separate from my children. My psyche was never totally free of concern for them. But motherhood was not natural, easy, stress free. I am a worrier anticipating danger looming in the most benign places. I was anxious and insecure about establishing basic routines, an inconsistent disciplinarian, not as patient as I wanted to be, of little help with math homework. And yes, I admit it, I compared myself to other parents, and I felt lacking. There are many comic and serious examinations about kids guilty toward their mom. I was a mom guilty toward her kids. It was if I missed the memo specifying what to/not to do in far too many situations. I acknowledged that I would never be accepted into the Parental Parthenon. Knowing in my head perfection in childrearing to be impossible did little to buffer my confidence about knowing how to navigate my brood's safe landing into a happy, secure future. Normal maternal neurosis? When my son died, it seemed like a validation of my worst apprehensions.

Perhaps it is a matter of hindsight, but David's premature death felt like an indictment of me as a mother. How could it not? Survivor's guilt is a well-established phenomenon surrounding the loss of a

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TELEPHONE FRIENDS - When you're having the kind of day that you feel only another bereaved parent or sibling can understand, we are willing to listen and share with you. Don't hesitate to call our Manhattan Chapter phone for meeting information (212) 217-9647. However, if you need to speak with someone please call one of the following volunteers: Jacquie Mitchell (eves) (347) 414-1780jacquienytcf@verizon.net .

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MEETINGS are always the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.
Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church,
55th and 5th Avenue. Enter at 7 West 55th street.
We start PROMPTLY at 7:00PM.

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. We are a group of bereaved parents who are seeking support in our grief or are able to give it. Among us, your religion, your race, your politics, your job or social standing are not important. We care about your grief –the tragedy that each of us has shared– and how we can grow through it, not back to the person we were but to the person we can become.

loved one. When a parent outlives a child, the culpability quotient ratchets up exponentially. My child died after an unsuccessful battle fighting addiction, so my sense of self-blame is augmented by shame and societal stigma. Yet I have discovered members of my community of bereaved parents, regardless of the nature of the tragedy that resulted in burying a son or daughter, suffer remorse. Repeating mantras of how we as parents cannot control the fate of our children, how we loved our children and tried our very best to provide them with everything they needed to thrive, how there can never be a satisfactory justification for their premature deaths, how stuff happens, how life's value cannot be measured in years alone, that our beloved children's lives mattered are never really lost to us--all offer cold comfort. Survivor's guilt is one of the relics of despair packed in a suitcase of grieving – my permanent baggage.

This year will mark the ninth anniversary of my son's death, a few weeks after his thirtieth birthday. The trauma of his loss has not lessened. The way it is expressed has changed. During the early months, I could not of process the truth that David was no longer physically present. He appeared everywhere: at the holiday table; in the lanky stride of the tall, slim, young men who passed me on the street; sitting next to me on the couch, watching his favorite sitcom; whenever I cooked the foods he loved. I had a recurrent dream that he and I were discussing options for his future. He followed my advice and had become a successful adult. I jumped up out of my sleep—it was so vivid — awaking to the nightmare of reality. The accrued anxieties of decades of motherhood could not stave off the ultimate disaster that was my deepest, unarticulated fear. How could I still be alive when my child was not? Dreaming I was actively involved in advising and guiding my son was a way of holding on to the fantasy that I still could rescue him, if only I were a good enough mother. Letting go the guilt meant letting go of my son, and I wasn't ready to do that. With time, I accepted that David was no longer inhabited the world of time and space, but I also realized that did not mean he did no longer existed. Ultimately, I came to understand that he would always be in my heart and mind, always a part in my life.

Finally relinquishing the pernicious myth perfect parenting, I soon embarked on another self -defeating standard of measurement. I began, once again, to compare myself to other parents -- parents who also lost their children. And once again, the comparison showed me to be deficient. I noticed the way many parents became energized in various causes in response to the loss of their children. Some became involved in political, social, and research endeavors as a way of transform their pain into a positive outlet. Others organized fundraisers, foundations, support groups, retreats. Many initiated programs in schools and religious organizations, helped pass legislation, wrote books, adopted children. Sadly, I was not capable of such admirable and worthy endeavors. It was effort enough for me to make it through the week, one day at a time. I feared that I was an inferior bereaved parent, unable to fulfill the mission of somehow redeeming my child's tragic death. I was experiencing a different form of survivor's guilt. How was I supposed to justify the rest of my life?

Life could not go on as before. As if that were ever possible! Thus began the next phase in the evolution of grieving. I try in small and personal ways to honor my son's life, but I understand now that I must discover my own path of sustaining myself and embracing the future which respects my own strengths and values. This effort will be an ongoing challenge. There is no perfect path of bereavement behavior, no magic balm that will ever heal the wound of caused by the loss of a child. I can respect, admire, and support the good work of other parents without denigrating my own efforts. I will continue to explore ways to share my experiences and learn from others who have sustained devastating losses. Whatever I do, I must accept the fact that I cannot bring my child back from the dead. But I can continue to find ways to affirm his life, recall the sweetness of his youth, cultivate relationships that reflect his passions, and find comfort in the love that transcends even death.

A LOVE GIFT *is a donation given in memory of a child who has died, or sometimes as a memorial to a relative or friend. It can be in honor of a happy event that you would like to acknowledge. Your contributions can be in any amount, are tax deductible and are a source of income for our chapter that helps us to reach out to bereaved parents and siblings through books, programs, meetings and this newsletter. In this issue we want to thank and acknowledge the following for their generous support of our chapter and especially, our newsletter. Note, on advice from our National office, because of concerns about identity theft we have changed our format and eliminated years from birth dates and anniversary dates.*



- Dick & Mary Auletta** In loving memory of their daughter **Kellie Anne Auletta**, forever 39
- Lynn & Mitch Baumeister** In loving memory of their son **Matthew Baumeister**, forever 19
- Claudette Hannibel** In loving memory of her son **Troy Myers**, forever 33
- Judith Koppersmith** In loving memory of her daughter **Anya Gabriela Koppersmith**, forever 21
- Irma Schubert** In loving memory of her son **William Edward Schubert**, forever 34
- Ervine & Noah Kimerling** In loving memory of their son **Sean Kimerling**, forever 37
- Peggy Lang** In loving memory of her son **David Lang Barek**, forever 19
- Marie & Phil Levine** In loving memory of their son **Peter Adam Levine**, forever 22
- Jacquie & John Mitchell & Kristopher Mitchell** In loving memory of their sons and brothers **Kareem Anthony Edwards-Mitchell** forever 15 and **Kevin John Mitchell**, forever 12
- Angela Young** In loving memory of her son **Jonathan Young**, forever 15
- Tom & Eleanor Ashton** In loving memory of their daughter **Amber**, forever 34
- Rosina Mensah** In loving memory of her son **Kofi A. Mensah, Jr.**, forever 21
- Lynne Rosenthal** In loving memory of her son **Alan Rosenthal**, forever 44



MEMORIES

The certain special memories
That follow me each day,
Cast your shadow in my life
In a certain way.
Sometimes the blowing wind
Or the lyrics of a song,

Make me stop and think of you
Sometimes all day long
Memories are good to have
To share and keep in my heart,
Just knowing that you're still inside
Makes sure we'll never part.

~Collette Covington, Lake Charles, LA

PROMISES, PROMISES

by Lisa Kaplan Friedman

I am starting to get Facebook notifications in advance of my birthday. Yes, I put my real birthday on the personal information page. I also put my complete address and my phone number, but that was before my son graciously intervened, saying: For God's sake, remove that info immediately. He explained how nefarious types could toy with my data, incarcerated felons might look at my house in Google Earth, for what reason I don't know. I removed everything except my birthday. I like how the home page floods with birthday greetings from friends and followers.

But this year, every time I log in to Facebook I am reminded that this marks the first time in all my 56 years that I will not hear my sister's voice on my birthday.

I don't really care about my birthday. I like getting cards and gifts, of course. And Facebook messages. My sister did not do Facebook. She called. Sometimes she called to chastise me: "I am calling to tell you that I am not talking to you. Ever again. You told Mom that I have a cold. She is calling me every 15 minutes to ask how I am." Often, she called me to thank me for taking such good care of our mother as my father died slowly, slowly.

We had a normal sister relationship which means we exasperated each other and loved each other. We fought, we disagreed, we helped each other. We promised a lot of things.

When we were younger, I used to call my sister when I was contemplating radical change. "Let's talk about the beautification of Lisa Kaplan," I'd say, using my unmarried name. No matter what she was doing, she'd blurt out the same response: "Don't do it!" She'd coached me through some very ill conceived upgrades including a swath of green hair long before bright hair color was popular, and a third ear piercing expertly botched by a friend who punctured my lobe with a safety pin sterilized in off-brand gin.

We got older. I had kids. She did not. When I got sick, she drove six hours to my house to take over. After the birth of my second son, I had pneumonia so my sister arrived as my replacement. She entertained my two year old and babied the newborn. She made dinner for my husband and berated me for the disheveled condition of my kitchen cabinets. "How can you function in that kitchen?" she'd sit on my bed and challenge my system of un-order. "Your refrigerator is totally disorganized. Your spices are all over the place. I'll bet you didn't know you have three jars of cumin?" I placated her with our shared phrase of affection. "Fuck off," which made us both laugh.

During that visit, she got a stomach flu, and we quarantined ourselves on different floors of the house. When she'd recovered a little bit, she stood in my bedroom doorway holding a tray. Her face was shades of grey. "I brought soup," she said. "I'll try not to

throw up on you, if you promise not to cough on me."

Deal.

She pissed me off. She was stubborn, she argued. She was infuriating. "You're killing me here," I moaned to her. "That's the goal," she'd say.

We talked without talking. I knew what her silence said, and she knew mine.

When our father died, she was emotionally wobbly. She was full of guilt and dread and other things that, I suppose, I don't even know about. We talked daily, mostly about our mother whom I'd started to rate as hurricanes. "She's a category three today." Which meant, bad, but don't fly down. Category four was the worst. "Promise me," I demanded of her. "Promise me you won't leave me."

She soothed me with her older sister voice and swore: "I promise."

Last year, on my wedding anniversary, we talked for a long time.

She always remembered to call on our anniversary. I put the phone on speaker because I was busy fixing my face before going out to dinner. She yammered on, talking about her garden and her car trouble and her intentions. She always had a lot of intentions. Next year, we are moving to Florida. Next winter, we are building a second bathroom. She said she was going to harvest her blueberries and would send me a jar of blueberry jam. "It will turn your teeth blue," she said.

"Just what I need," I replied. "Blue teeth."

"It might be an improvement!" She joked.

After we'd hung up the phone, she left me. She left us. She left.

I don't know how to have a birthday without her. I am holding my breath to find out if I survive. Her absence is always present, but this week it billows like weighty storm clouds. That's where she is, I think. In the cloud.

My birthday will be jam packed with activity. My husband is taking me on a sailing trip and we have oodles of tasks to tackle, which means I will no time to think. I will be busy provisioning and planning and plotting. In the back of my head though, I will always be listening for the phone to ring.

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Siblings - *We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends. We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters. Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us. Sometimes we will need the support of our friends. At other times we need our families to be there. Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be. We cannot be our dead brother or sister, however a special part of them lives on with us. When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak. Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life. Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends©*

SIBLINGS

If I could speak to all the bereaved siblings out there, I'd say: I know that you're frightened and maybe feel anger and guilt, for those are normal feelings at times like these. I know that it isn't fair, but some of life isn't. It's hard to accept that fact, isn't it? I know you may even resent having some special time in your life interfered with by your parents prolonged grieving. Be patient. There will be better days. I know you may be sorry you said or did some things that involved your dead sister or brother. Sibling rivalry is a normal and natural thing. All of us do and say things we wish we hadn't. That's a part of being human. Forgive yourself for being human and try to remember the good times too.

If you're older, I know you find it difficult to share the pain you're feeling with your parents because you can see they are having a hard time. Your impulse is to protect them and that includes from your own pain. Sometimes you become the parent and they, the child. Do you realize that, if you do too good a job of disguising your grief, your parents may misunderstand and think, instead, you aren't grieving at all? Share some parts, at least, with them if you can. It is better for you and for them to release your feelings than to bottle them up and pretend everything is okay.

I know you become discouraged after a while when you find you aren't able to make your parents "better". It isn't a failure on your part that this is true. Try to accept the fact that it takes much time

and grief work before they can be better. They, and you, have lost someone very important and it isn't possible for them or you to put it all behind and go on as though nothing has changed. You see, everything has changed. All of the crying and unhappiness you are seeing is necessary for them to go through before they can reach the other side of the grief process where it is less painful.

I know you begin to wonder if your dead sibling was your parents' favorite child – and if you really matter at all. Oh! You do! Had it been you, or any of your brothers and sisters, it would be the same, for this is the way it is when any child dies. It may take some time before you parents can show it in obvious ways, but you are one of the major reasons they struggle so to regain some equilibrium in their lives. You are Important!

I know you wonder sometimes if you and your parents are remembering the same person since they only seem to remember him or her as being a perfect angel with no faults. You, on the other hand, may remember some qualities that weren't so saintly. When you are remembering your sibling, bring up some of the irritating things he or she used to do so that everybody can remember him or her as he or she really was – a human being complete with good and bad. It's hard to live with the memory of a saint, isn't it?

I know it may be bothersome if you feel your parents are overly concerned for your safety now.

They may tend to overprotect, but you need to understand that they now know that bad things do indeed, happen to good people and their security is shattered. Just a simple thoughtful act like calling if you're going to be later than expected can easily help them at this time and make them less anxious.

Holidays and birthdays will be more mindful than fun in the beginning. Try to understand if old traditions are put aside right now and don't demand everything exactly as it used to be. Given time, you and your family will work out just how you want or need to observe special family occasions and there will be enjoyable times in your home again. They just may have to be observed in different ways than before.

I know you need to hear that your family will survive this tragedy. Your parents may need that same assurance. Those of us who have had the necessary time for our adjustments do offer you and your family that assurance. It will never be the same, but you will come to value each other in ways not previously thought of. Now is the time for your family to be pulling together, not apart. A loving family will survive. Try to share and communicate your feelings. If you can't talk with your parents, find somebody who cares and who can listen. Both you and your parents need to recover in an emotionally healthy way.

It Will Be Better. Write that down.

Mary Clecky, TCF
Wake County, NC

FIVE YEARS

The other night, my husband and I were discussing our “new” life. We do this often as we continue in our fifth year without Marc, not so much to try to make sense of all this but rather to encourage ourselves to move forward in as positive a way as we can.

Norm asked me why it was that we find it difficult to be back in our old circle of friends. We know they would be happy to see us. We know it is our decision not to go. I said it’s because we cannot talk about Marc and so much else about our life as it now is. I said that superficial conversation leaves me cold. Norm summed it up by saying that, once you decide to spend your time and your effort on a regular basis with new friends who have also lost children, there is not enough energy left to deal with the niceties required to conduct social life on an ongoing basis as we all used to know it. He’s right. When you boil it all down, that is the answer. It is an answer that contains many complexities.

Our friends are still good people, and we still see them from time to time. But we are not as interested, if at all, in most of what gets talked about. People do not say what is really in their hearts. We have shared with them our deepest despair. They talk about the stock market. I tell them of my small miracles. They talk of weddings and graduations. I talk of my children. They clam up. It sure is different. These are

not bad people. These are scared people. If it could happen to me, it could happen to them. They have heard enough, and I know that they hurt, too. But not the way I do. I am so much better than I was but not where they are- and I never will be: my life more or less intact, my family together. This seems to be a barrier too steep to climb, or it takes too much effort from both sides. I suppose I am jealous and perhaps sometimes irreverent about their concerns.

They seem inconsequential to me now; they would not have before. They haven’t changed; I have. I have taken that left turn on the new road. Now my life goes in a different direction. I can’t go back. I must, with much effort, build a new life that will be rewarding, happy and as fulfilling as possible. I do that with my new friends- the compassionate friends who have stood by my side for all these years.

I like my new life; surely not so well as my old life, but I like it. It is beginning to be comfortable, although there are times on this new road when I do not easily know where to turn. It is as they say, “the road less traveled”, but it is still a worthwhile and satisfactory road that is filled with the unexpected blessings of many new friends and relationships! Yes, I have accepted that fork in the road, it just sometimes remains a little bumpy.

Toby Eisenberg, TCF San Diego, CA

THE PLACE OF WHY

I’m in the place of Why?
Looking for answers that won’t come,
For life does not always have a reason
that we can touch.

I’m in a place called Why?
Feeling a spirit enveloping my soul...
The ancestors reaching out comforting
my aching heart.

Where are you?
I saw you disappear...
to a place I do not know
but perhaps will find,
when I too am elevated\
to a higher ground.

Here I am in the place of Why?
Nothing is clear but the dust I stand in
while you went off to a new frontier.

Which road is my tomorrow
and is the answer to be found?
Perhaps I must accept
it was your time.

You did your life’s work so quickly,
and told tales while leaving messages
for us to discover.

I will try to wear my Why gallantly
as you stand vigil.

I need your spirit to give me strength.
While I know you are in peace,
wipe my tears.

~Pat Travis Rosenberg

From her book, *Flying Through Clouds*

A THOUSAND WAYS TO GRIEVE

I'm an active griever. By active, I mean that during those first few months following my loss, I devoured every book on grief I could get my hands on. I poured out my agony in my writing, attended grief seminars, went through photo albums and I searched the internet for helpful sites. I cried and fumed and spent long hours talking to anyone who would listen.

My husband simply withdrew and grieved in silence. Though we lived in the same house, grieved the same loss, and shared a life together, we were apart in our grief. We all have our own ideas on how to grieve and we're quick to judge those who don't conform to our way of thinking. When Prince Charles wore a blue suit to Princess Diana's funeral, he was condemned by the press until it was learned it was his former wife's favorite.

A friend of mine was criticized for wearing a pair of red strap, high heeled shoes to her husband's funeral, the same shoes she wore on the day they met.

If we are to grieve in harmony with those around us, we must give up the notion that grief can be expressed in limited ways. I once thought that grief manifested itself only in tears and depression. But I've seen what others whose vision is greater than mine have accomplished in the name of grief. Candy Lightner, the founder of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, is a good example.

Resolve to make peace with someone who grieves in ways that seem odd to you. Try expressing your grief in a new way: write a poem or song, start a journal, buy your loved one a gift and send it to someone you know who would love and appreciate the gesture. Wear something outlandish. Buy a bouquet of balloons in your loved ones favorite color. Laugh at something that would make your loved one laugh.

Tears, depression and sadness are all acceptable ways to show grief. So are blue suits and red shoes.

Margaret Brownley,
Bereavement Magazine, March/April 2000

I LOST MY CHILD TODAY

I lost my child today
People came to weep and cry,
As I just sat and stared, dry-eyed.
They struggled to find words to say
To try and make the pain go away.
I walked the floor in disbelief,
I lost my child today.

I lost my child last month.
Most of the people went away,
Some still call and some still stay.
I wait to wake up from this dream,
This can't be real, I want to scream.
Yet everything is locked inside.
God help me, I want to die.
I lost my child last month.

I lost my child last year.
Now people who had come, have gone.
I sit and struggle all day long
To bear the pain so deep inside.
And now my friends just questions, Why?
Why does this mother not move on?
Just sits and sings the same old song.
Good heavens, it has been so long.
I lost my child last year.

Time has not moved on for me.
The numbness it has disappeared.
My eyes have now cried many tears.
I see the look upon your face.
"You must move on and leave this place".
Yet, I am trapped right here in time.
The song's the same as is the rhyme.
I lost my child..... today.....

Netta Wilson

I reluctantly went to the phone when my brother-in-law interrupted the movie to tell me that Phil was calling. Looking back on that moment, remembering that he knew what was about to happen.....

I'm recalling this now as I anticipate the 23rd summer since that fateful day. Though I don't remember all the details of subsequent days, I remember vividly what I felt that day as my mind shattered and I watched myself from a distance that only an out-of-body experience could provide. The disbelief, confusion and physical pain that sent me screaming and flailing about remain a memory that can be recalled at will. The hopelessness - and later, the sense that my entire life to that point had been a waste. The future I had anticipated was gone in a flash and with it went the hope that my own life would have mattered. My son Peter was my whole reason for being. Without him, I believed all was lost.

Thinking I was singularly devastated, I was only mildly comforted at my first TCF meeting. Introduced to parents who were only one or two years ahead of me, I actually thought they were probably "over it". Ha! Amazing looking back, that I could even have thought that. Then again, I had lost Peter - the mostest, best, biggest, wonderfulest, most amazing son ever! My grief could never be survived. I returned again and again. Meeting after meeting I railed at the heavens, sharing my anguish with other newly bereaved parents who, like me, believed they were singularly devastated.

In time, I began to realize that the pain of losing a child weighs the same to each and every newly bereaved parent - no matter the age, the size, the circumstances. As my fellow travelers and I shared our experiences and tried to articulate a sensibility that has no language, I recognized how universal this particular grief is - and how unsettling it is to be unable to describe it. We never stop trying and sometimes our metaphors come close.

One day one of my compassionate friends came up to me at a meeting and thanked me for something I said. They told me how it had helped them and how they had shared what I said with many of the people in their support system. Later, reflecting on that conversation I felt a glimmer of - dare I say it - hope? I had helped someone! I had been journaling since the beginning. Maybe I could share what I was feeling by sharing my writing. My healing began then.

As bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings, we are all comfortable with each other because we really

know what it feels like. We don't have to try desperately to describe this pain, anguish and confusion to each other. We know exactly how it feels. No mindless attempts to comfort can be found here. Only validation. Like survivors of a distant war, we are trenchmates... we know what it feels like to have our world blow up. We know what it feels like to be surrounded by family and friends who cannot imagine what we are suffering or how we are forever changed. We know what it feels like to re-enter an unknowing world. We know what it feels like to be submerged in a world of expectations - a world that expects us to move on, put the past behind us, give up our future plans and reinvent ourselves on short notice, or at least return to them as the people we once were.

Yes, I do know how you feel. As time has worked it's magic on me and softened the constant ache and replaced it with breathtaking longing - I continue to reach out to new travelers who 's path leads to our world. I try to assure them that they won't forget, they are not alone, time is their friend - they will survive. Eventually we all learn how to live the rest of our lives with our absent children forever present in our broken hearts.

Marie Levine, June 2016



GRIEF: WHEN DOES IT STOP HURTING

By Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Anna Quindlen

Grief reminds one of the few things that has the power to silence us. It is a whisper in the world and a clamor within. More than sex, more than faith, even more than its usher death, grief is unspoken, publicly ignored except for those moments at the funeral, that are over too quickly, or the conversations among those of us who recognize in one another a kindred chasm deep in the center of who we are.

Maybe we do not speak of it because death will mark all of us sooner or later. Maybe it is unspoken because grief is only the first part of it. After a time it becomes something less sharp, but larger, to a more enduring thing called loss. Perhaps that is why this is the least explored passage: because it has no end.

The world loves closure, loves a thing that can, as they say, be gotten through. This is why it comes as a great surprise to find that loss is forever, that two decades after the event there are those occasions when something in you cries out at the continual presence of an absence. The landscape of all our lives becomes as full of craters as the surface of the moon. We are defined by who we have lost.

WHY WE STILL GO TO TCF
“Are you still involved with that group?
Aren’t you over it yet? Why do you go?”

These are questions I often hear now that it has been more than seven years since Mark died. I suspect you hear them too. There are easy answers. But not everyone understands, unless you have been here. Here are ten I can think of:

1. Because we never want the world to forget our child so what we do we do in his or her name.
2. Because when we reach out to help someone else, we also help ourselves.
3. Because someone was there for us when we needed it most; now the best way to say thank you is to pass it on by being there for others.
4. Because it is the one thing we do that can bring something positive out of tragedy.
5. Because we have found in TCF better friends and closer bonds than we ever thought possible. Here we can cry and hug people even if we don’t know their last name or what they do for a living. And it doesn’t matter.
6. Because few people are qualified to walk up to a newly bereaved family and say “I know how you feel.” And because we can, we must.
7. Because sometimes we need to talk too, and to remember and to share. We are further along than many around us, but we never forget.
8. Because many of us believe that one day we will meet our dead child or brother or sister again, and she or he will ask, “So what did you do with your life after I left?” and we will have an answer.
9. Because our presence might help newly bereaved families understand that they will survive and laugh again.
10. Because we love cold coffee, cookies and hard metal chairs.

~ **Richard Edler**, TCF South Bay/LA, CA
In memory of my son **Mark Edler**

“ The sorrow for the dead is the only sorrow from which we refuse to be divorced. Every other wound we seek to heal - every other affliction to forget. But this wound we consider it a duty to keep open - this affliction we cherish and brood over in solitude. ”

Washington Irving
1783 - 1859

BULLETIN * BULLETIN* BULLETIN
2016 Candle Lighting - Photo Notice!

This year the TCF World Wide Candle Lighting©, always the second Sunday in December, will take place on **December 11th**. As in previous years, we are developing a continuous slide presentation of all our children, brothers and sisters, and grandchildren gone too soon.

If you want your loved one to be included in this beautiful memorial, you must submit your photos before November 20th to:
photosmtcf@gmail.com

We suggest you send two photos - a young/toddler photo and a recent photo. Be sure to indicate your child’s full name, birthday and anniversary date.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CHAT SCHEDULE

Go to: www.compassionatefriends.org, and click on CHAT. Times are Eastern Standard Time.

EDT	9:00-10:00AM	8:00-9:00PM	9:00-10:00PM	10:00-11:00PM
MON			General Bereavement Issues & Grandparents/Stepparents	General Bereavement Issues & Men's Chat
TUE			General Bereavement Issues, Bereavement over 2 years & Pregnancy Loss/Infant Death	General Bereavement Issues & Pregnancy Loss/Infant Death
WED	Newly Bereaved		September 11 Families & Siblings	General Bereavement Issues
THU		No Surviving Children	General Bereavement Issues & Siblings	General Bereavement Issues
FRI		Suicide	Special Needs Children	General Bereavement Issues
SAT				General Bereavement & Siblings
SUN	Siblings		General Bereavement Issues & Siblings	General Bereavement Issues & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends National Office
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www.compassionatefriends.org
email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

We Need Not Walk Alone
TCF National Magazine
1 yr. subscription \$20

Deadline for Newsletter article submissions:
Fall: August 1st Spring/Summer: April 1st
Winter: February 2nd Holiday: October 1st

Mark Your Calendars!
Our next Chapter meetings are Tuesdays:
SEP 13 OCT 11 NOV 8 DEC 13 JAN 10
SEP 27 OCT 25 NOV 22 DEC 20* JAN 24
*Note change. Church closed on 27th.

OUR COMPASSIONATE FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS

Babylon	1st Friday	(516) 795-8644	Medford	2nd Friday	(631) 738-0809
Bronx	2nd Tuesday	(914) 714-4885	Rockville Centre	2nd Friday	(516) 766-4682
Brookhaven	2nd Friday	(631) 738-0809	Rockland County	3rd Tuesday	(845) 398-9762
Broroklyn	3rd Wednesday	(917) 952-9751	Staten Island	2nd and 4th Thursday	(718) 983-0377
Flushing	3rd Friday	(718) 746-5010	Syosset (Plainview)	3rd Friday	(718) 767-0904
Manhasset	3rd Tuesday	(516) 466-2480	Twin Forks/Hamptons	3rd Friday	(631) 653-9444
Marine Park, Bklyn	3rd Friday	(718) 605-1545	White Plains	1st Thursday	(914) 381-3389
			HOT LINE		(516) 781-4173



The Compassionate Friends

P.O. Box 86,
New York, NY 10159-0086