



The Compassionate Friends
Manhattan Chapter
 Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Our next meetings...
March 10 & 24
April 14 & 28
May 12 & 26

Manhattan Chapter Newsletter **Winter 2020**

I spend a lot of time these days revisiting my past. I'm glad I recorded so much of what I was feeling. So much has changed...so much hasn't...this, from 2003.

The Echoes of My Mind

by Marie Levine

As I write this, on a bright, beautiful crisp clear winter day after Christmas...clean white snow covers the ground. It was a very stormy Christmas Day. We spent the day going through old papers, clearing out closets, tossing out bits and pieces no longer relevant to our lives. Then, without warning, in an old brief case tucked away in a corner, an envelope of photographs. Forgotten until now, there we are, three of us, sitting on the grass enjoying a picnic lunch on a beautiful Spring day up at Syracuse University. A dozen beautiful pictures of us with our indelible son.

The hundreds of pictures of Peter that have surrounded me these past nine years are almost worn out from my searching and longing. No new, recent photographs are in my future. All that I have now, is what we had. And we are lucky. Peter died shortly after his graduation from Syracuse, so we have loads of pictures taken that day.

Now suddenly, we have new (old) pictures. Fresh, un-stared at, un-cried over, un-treasured (yet) photos. They are a treasure trove and they remind me once again of all we have lost. For we have not only lost our son and our expected future. We have lost a whole community of relatives and friends and associates who we would ordinarily have shared the joy of these pictures with. But to share them now will only serve to re-ignite the sadness (dare I say pity?) that everyone felt for us. Do I really want to show these photos and instead of seeing smiles on the faces of the viewers, know instinctively what they are thinking?

(con't page 6)

Five Lessons Grief Teaches

by Maria Housden

Twenty-two years of grief changes a lot of things. I am a new person every day. I never expected to survive my daughter's death. For months after, I prayed to die. More than once, I considered taking my own life, though I could not leave all I love here.

There is no good way or time to lose a child. When someone you love dies, everything unnecessary falls away. I have learned to see grief as a spiritual practice, and it has taught me to see life in new ways.

TRUTH: telling it and living it

My daughter Hannah died of cancer at the age of three. This is the first true moment in my human story. Everything I am begins with this. The truth of Hannah's death is fierce and unrelenting. I cannot change it, but I can change the way I live with it.

When Hannah died, my life entered a "no drama" zone. I only had time and energy for the few things that mattered. I lost my politeness and learned to tell the truth. I let the phone ring and stopped reading fiction.

Pretending not to grieve does not make our children less dead. When tears are not seen as weakness, sorrow becomes a wise teacher. I also see now that truth is mutable. Truth changes as we change, and it waits until we are ready to see it.

JOY: finding it in the darkest places

(con't page 7)

TELEPHONE FRIENDS: When you are having the kind of day 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 **(917) 300 3706**. To speak with someone please call one of the following volunteers; Jacquie Mitchell (eves) (347) 414-1780 jacquienytcf@gmail.com and for siblings, Jordon Ferber (917) 837-7752, beatniknudnik@yahoo.com

TCF MANHATTAN CHAPTER email: tcfmanhattan@gmail.com
 TCF MANHATTAN website: www.compassionatefriends.nyc
 CO-CHAPTER LEADERS: **Dan Zweig:** danzweigtcf@gmail.com
Jordon Ferber: beatniknudnik@yahoo.com
 "Our Children" editor: **Dan Zweig:** danzweigtcf@gmail.com
 Newsletter Editor: **Marie Levine** marielevine2@verizon.net

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MEETINGS are always the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month
 Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church
 55th Street and Fifth Ave (enter at 7 West 55th St.)
WE START PROMPTLY AT 6:45pm

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. We are a group 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 have shared—and how we can grow through it, not back to the person we were, but to the person we can become.

SIBLINGS

GRIEVING THE DEATH OF A BROTHER OR SISTER

Somehow we take for granted that our brothers and sisters will always be there as companions and friends. When a sibling dies, it feels wrong, out of sync, confusing. This may help you begin to explore and resolve some of the unique aspects of your grief:

Honor your own grief. Grief is different for each person, depending on past experiences with loss, coping skills, age and sex, mental and physical health, the circumstances of the death, and perhaps, most significantly, the nature of the relationship with the deceased person. Only you know how deeply you feel the loss of this person who shared your history and knew you so well.

Respect your feelings. You might have to resume your normal daily routine soon after the funeral. But inside you may be feeling anything but normal, with many of the mixed up emotions that grief can bring. Talk about such feelings to a grief support group or write a letter to the deceased person or to God so that you can express your grief safely.

Find healthy ways to keep your sibling's memory alive. Coping with the death of a beloved sibling startles us with a reminder of our own mortality and often stirs up unfinished spiritual business. You may feel a need to assess what your life has been about, evaluate your life goals, and prioritize your commitments and relationships in a new way.

Saying good-bye to a loved one is never easy. But these thoughts from playwright Robert Anderson may help: ***“Death ends a life, not a relationship. Let go of the pain and allow the memories to remain.”***

Care notes by Kathlyn Miller, lovingly lifted from

TCF SIBLING CHAT

This chat is available for adult and teen siblings to share concerns and feelings

WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY EVENINGS

9 PM

www.compassionatefriends.org

SOMETIMES

Sometimes something clicks
And with a tear
Remembrance of the pain
And the loneliness
Flood the heart

Sometimes something clicks,
And with a smile
Remembrance of the love
And the laughter
Flood the senses

And there are times
When nothing clicks at all,
And a voice echoes
Through the emptiness
And numbness
Never finding the person
Who used to fill that space.

And sometimes
The most special time of all,
A feeling ripples through your
Body, heart and soul
That tells you
That person never left you
And he's right there with you
Through it all.

*Hold on to what is good
Even if it is a handful of earth.
Hold onto what you believe
Even if it is a tree which stands
by itself.
Hold on to what you must do
Even if it is a long way from here.
Hold on to life
Even when it is easier letting go.
Hold on to my hand
Even when I have gone away
from you.*

Native American Prayer
From the TCF York, PA newsletter

A Love Gift is a donation given in memory of a child who has died, or sometimes 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, grandparents and siblings through books, programs and this newsletter. We want to thank the following for their generous support of our chapter and especially, our newsletter.

Ibelka Cruz	In memory of her daughter Casey Cruz , 9/23 – 1/14, forever 18
Denise Kranz & Charles Katz	In memory of their son David Kranz , 5/6 – 3/19, forever 34
Barbara & Burt Sulzer	In memory of their son Philip Sulzer , 1/17 – 5/7, forever 58
Barbara & Ben Denihan	In memory of their son Charlie Denihan , 5/2 – 3/16, forever 28
Leslie Kandell	In memory of her daughter Elinor Blume , 3/10 – 7/7, forever 41 and in appreciation of Marie Levine
Evelyn Rabi	In memory of her daughter Yvonne Ajakie , 1/21 – 7/20, forever 23
Peggy Lang	In memory of her son David Lang Berek , 3/18 – 12/25, forever 19
Barbara Russell	In memory of her daughter Blakely Russell Kay , 2/20 – 6/7, forever 25
Patty Tyler-Owens	In memory of her granddaughter, Angelina Patrice Wills , 3/9 – 6/17, forever 20
Marie Jones	In memory of her daughter, Laurie Nichols , 8/7 – 2/17, forever 49
Ron & Ronnie Moore	In memory of their son Jonathan Moore , 1/12 – 12/21, forever 30
Marilyn Maras	In memory of her son George D. Maras , 5/1 – 12/13, forever 39
Valerie Preston	In memory of her son, Marcus Preston , 2/28 – 4/1, forever 17
Carol Gertz	In memory of her daughter Alison Gertz , 2/27 – 8/8, forever 27
Christine Lakomy	In memory of her son Daniel C. Ling , 11/1 – 4/15, forever 53 and her grandson, Daniel J. Ling , 3/1 – 8/31, forever 18

~daily message from Healing After Loss by Martha Whitmore Hickman

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

What a truckload of responsibility and potential pain we take on when we love another human being; all the dangers of misunderstanding, of betrayal, of indifference, and ultimately, of loss.

To more than balance those dangers, we feel the possibility of life made rich through sharing experiences with another - of physical and spiritual warmth and communion, of enriched understanding and common achievement, of a stay against loneliness and isolation.

Most of us have no trouble opting for love.

But then, to have invested so much of our life's energy in the life of a loved one - and then to find that loved one gone! Is it any wonder we are, for a time, laid low?

But the love we have shared helps form the strength to deal with loss. The hope and joy we have known help us believe in the possibility of hope and joy again.

And the intensity of grief (Which will moderate, though we may find that hard to believe) mirrors the intensity of shared love, which will continue to beam through our life, to illumine and nourish all that we do and are.

Love never ends. Never.

Echoes...

(con't from page 1)

No. I think not. I realize now that after all the years I am comfortable with my current relationships with all these people. I no longer dread the pitying stares of my neighbors. There are no more pitying stares. My remaining family thinks I'm "over it". My friends are happy to have me "back". The pictures of Peter that are everywhere in our home, are barely noticed if at all by visitors. I no longer feel like a poster child for the art of "grieving well."

But there they are. A whole new memory in living color. Ours to savor. A particularly wonderful Christmas present from Peter. Tucked away until the time was right. In the photos he is the same boy/man I remember so vividly. He hasn't changed a bit.

We are at a difficult time in our lives once again. We've managed to weather the weddings of our friends children. Now, we must delight in the expansion of their families as they have grandchild after grandchild. I wish I didn't find it all so painful. But there it is.

And once again, it is a new year. Another threshold crossed. As Peter fades into a more distant memory for most, I want desperately to keep his memory fresh and alive. It is a daunting task in a world he hasn't inhabited for so long. I am reminded of a poem I read some time ago. The words echo the thoughts in so many of our minds...

Marie Levine
2003

"Remembering"

By Elizabeth Dent

*Go ahead and mention my child,
The one that died, you know.
Don't worry about hurting me further.
The depth of my pain doesn't show.
Don't worry about making me cry.
I'm already crying inside.
Help me to heal by releasing
the tears that I try to hide.
I'm hurt when you just keep silent
pretending he didn't exist.
I'd rather you mention my child
knowing that he has been missed.
You may ask me how I'm doing,
I may say "pretty good" or "fine"
But healing is something ongoing.
I feel it will take a lifetime.*

I Forgive...

By Debbie Ortega

I've heard advice for the bereaved that forgiveness is an important part of "healing. I've worked hard at that elusive 'forgiveness' and came to the realization today that I am actually able to forgive quite a lot.

I forgive myself for not forgiving the people that caused my daughter's death. Some things are just not "forgivable", and she would understand.

I forgive others for sharing their "miracles" with me, not understanding how cruelly this attacks my heart, as I wonder where my daughter's miracle was.

I forgive others for not understanding me. I don't understand anything anymore, so I can't expect others to understand me either.

I forgive myself for not being able to do all the things I used to be able to do. I don't function as well as I used to and that's okay.

I forgive others for continuing to live in that other world where I once lived with my daughter. It's a good world and I miss it a lot.

I forgive myself for no longer fitting onto that world and not always being able to fake it. I am different now.

I forgive others for avoiding me. They don't know what to say and, quite frankly, that leaves me with nothing to say to them either.

I forgive my daughter for leaving me. She loved life and she loved me. I believe she loves me still.

This is probably not what people mean when they say we need to "forgive" but it's the best I can do. It's enough that I can do anything at all, and maybe they will forgive me as well.

Debbie Ortega's 21-year old daughter Angela, died in September 2007. In memory of her daughter, Debbie is currently the editor of the TCF Central Valley, Tracy California chapter newsletter

Reprinted with permission for We Need Not Walk Alone, Autumn 2009

Five Lessons

(con't from page 1)

As time passed, this feeling lifted. I smiled more and cried less. I noticed signs and synchronicities that reminded me of Hannah. Joy is fleeting when grief makes a home in your life. I learned to find it in the darkest places. Saying 'yes' in the moment reveals unexpected happiness. I rarely make plans ahead of time now, as I can't be certain how I will feel.

This way of seeing allows us to release the need for everything to be perfect. Joy is the possibility of happiness in every moment, the feeling that we are right where we need to be.

FAITH: from "my will be done" to "thy will be done"

Three months after Hannah's death, I stood by the side of a road, prepared to take my own life. I was not afraid of death, no matter what happens Hannah is already there. As a truck approached, I suddenly became aware of my lungs breathing. I forgot about the truck and focused on my breath. I realized that something in me is still choosing life. I stayed alive to find out why.

There are no words to describe the space left absent when a child dies. The love you feel has nowhere to go. The longer your child is gone, the more you miss them. This missing becomes a part of you.

In my grief, I began to explore other religions and belief systems, hungry for validation of life after death. The God I believe in now is not the God that I grew up with. Though Christianity remains the first language of my faith, I now see threads of truth connecting many understandings. For me, God is a force of a thousand names and one love. Hannah's spirit lives on as part of everything.

Strange comfort, this holding of everything in one place; yet I see an intelligence beyond imagining which orchestrates life and nature. While it is painful to accept Hannah's death, I also see her life making a difference in this world. Someone once described the earth as the planet for slow-learners. Faith trusts and breathes when it's all we can do

COMPASSION: from specialness to belonging

I do not know why Hannah died and other children didn't. At first, I felt a sense of specialness. No one could know the depth of my pain. For a while, I didn't want to speak with anyone unless they had lost a child. Gradually, I began to connect with other people.

Forgiveness is key throughout the journey of grief: forgiveness of those who live and of those who die. As I learn to forgive myself, I find it easier to forgive others. Our intent in harnessing grief makes transformation possible. 'Grief' shares the same root as 'grave', 'gravity', and 'gravitation'. It is a force with weight and heft. Once engaged, it can be redirected.

When Hannah was first diagnosed, one of her doctors gave us good advice. He said, "Remember, no matter what happens, make the best decision you can with the information you have AT THAT TIME." Of course, we would change things if we

knew then what we know now. There is no solace in blaming ourselves and others for not knowing.

Although I sometimes have less patience for other people and their problems, I see each of us is a unique lens in a shared experience. Compassion softens our gaze and allows us to appreciate new perspectives. When we reach beyond our specialness, we realize we are not alone.

WONDER: from needing to know to letting go

There was a house in our little town which was painted pink from top to bottom. Hannah loved this house. In the last year of her life, each time we passed it, she would say, "That's where I am going to live!"

A year and a half after Hannah's death, my daughter Madelaine was born. One day, when Madelaine was almost three-years old, we were driving to the grocery store. Suddenly Madelaine started shrieking from the back seat, I turned to see what was happening and saw her pointing to the pink house. "Mommy," she exclaimed, "That's the house where Hannah and I played in heaven before I was born!"

I had no idea how she knew, and in that moment I didn't need to. Hannah's death opened me to realms I never knew existed. Having watched my Father and my daughter take their last breaths, I remember a peaceful presence entering the room. This energy called life is where I feel our children's presence is, and their spirits still make themselves known.

[Maria Housden](#)

Maria Housden is a lecturer and author of HANNAH'S GIFT: Lessons From A Life Fully Lived (Bantam 2002) and Unraveled (Harmony Books 2005). She has been featured on the Today Show and Dr. Phil. Her first book, HANNAH'S GIFT, the story of her daughter's life and death from cancer, is being made into a full-length feature film and is translated in 16 languages.

The Doctor and the Soul

By Viktor Frankl

That time runs out before one's life's work is completed by no means makes it worthless. The fragmentary quality of life does not detract from its meaning. It is not from the length of it that we ever draw conclusions as to life's meaningfulness. We cannot, after all, judge a biography by its length, by the number of pages in it; we must judge by the richness of its contents. The exuberant life of one who has died young certainly has more content and meaning than the existence of some long-lived dullard.

Sometimes the "unfinished" are among the most beautiful symphonies.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CHAT SCHEDULE. Go to www.compassionatefriends.org . Click on CHAT. Times are ET				The Compassionate Friends National Office P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 Toll Free (877) 969-0010 www.compassionatefriends.org email:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org	
ET	10:00-11AM	8:00 – 9:00PM	9:00 – 10:00PM	WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE <i>TCF National Magazine</i> 1 yr. subscription \$20	
MON	General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings	MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Our next Chapter meetings are Tuesdays: MAR 10 APR 14 MAY 12 JUN 9 MAR 24 APR 28 MAY 26 JUN 23	
TUE		Loss to Substance Related Causes	Bereaved less than 2 yrs Bereaved more than 2 yrs	Deadline for Newsletter article submissions: Fall: August 1st Spring/Summer: April 1st Winter: February 2nd Holiday: October 1 st	
WED	General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings	MAKE A DONATION Click here to Donate to the Manhattan Chapter	
THU		No Surviving Children	General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		
FRI	General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings	Loss to Substance Related Causes Pregnancy/Infant Loss	General Bereavement Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		
SAT			General Bereavement Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		
SUN		Suicide Loss	General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		

OUR COMPASSIONATE FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS

Babylon	1st Friday	(516) 795-8644	Rockville Centre	2nd Friday	(516) 766-4682
Bronx	2nd Tuesday	(914) 714-4885	Rockland County	3rd Tuesday	(845) 398-9762
Brookhaven	2nd Friday	(631) 738-0809	SmithPoint/Mastic	2nd Thursday	(631) 281-9004
Brooklyn	3rd Wednesday	(917) 952-9751	Staten Island	2nd & 4th Thursd.	(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	(646) 894-0317
Marine Park, Bklyn	3rd Friday	(718) 605-1545	White Plains	1st Thursday	(914) 381-3389
Medford	2nd Friday	(631) 738-0809			

PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS

Click below for National Website's Listing of groups.

24/7 PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS

<u>TCF – Loss of a Child</u>	<u>TCF – Loss of a Grandchild</u>
<u>TCF – Loss of a Stepchild</u>	<u>TCF – Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren</u>
<u>TCF – Loss of an Only Child/All Your Children</u>	<u>TCF – Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Loss of an Infant Grandchild</u>
<u>TCF – Multiple Losses</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Long-term Illness</u>
<u>TCF – Daughterless Mothers</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Cancer</u>
<u>TCF – Men in Grief</u>	<u>TCF – Loss After Withdrawing Life Support</u>
<u>TCF – Bereaved LGBTQ Parents with Loss of a Child</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Mental Illness</u>
<u>TCF – Bereaved Parents with Grandchild Visitation Issues</u>	<u>TCF – Sudden Death</u>
<u>TCF – Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Suicide</u>
<u>TCF – Infant and Toddler Loss</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Homicide</u>
<u>TCF – Loss of a Child 4 -12 Years Old</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Substance Related Causes</u>
<u>TCF – Loss of a Child 13-19 Years Old</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver</u>
<u>TCF – Loss of an Adult Child</u>	<u>TCF – Grieving with Faith and Hope</u>
	<u>TCF – Reading Your Way Through Grief</u>

The Compassionate Friends
P.O.Box 1948
Madison Square Station
New York, NY 11959

Making a Donation—Now Online

Many of us are grateful for what Compassionate Friends has done for them and want to lend their support, even those who do not currently attend our meetings. You can still mail a check to the address to the left or donate online.

[Click here to Donate to the Manhattan Chapter](#)