

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Saint Paul, Minnesota Chapter Newsletter

No. 620

7884 Irish Avenue South, Cottage Grove, MN 55016 651-459-9341

Nov/Dec/Jan. 2008

E-mail address (St. Paul Chapter) peachy3536@comcast.net

The Compassionate Friends National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522 Phone No. (Toll free) 877-969-0010

The Saint Paul Chapter of The
Compassionate Friends
Meets on the second Thursday of
each month at
Beaver Lake Lutheran Church
2280 Stillwater Avenue;
Maplewood, Minnesota
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

For initial contact and meeting
information call Linda at
763-862-5179

The Compassionate Friends National
Web Site is located at
www.compassionatefriends.org

TCF St. Paul Chapter Web Site at
tcfstpaul.org

*MEETING TOPICS:

*The following meetings include
General Sharing & Discussion to
also include the following topics:

Nov 8: "Handling the Holidays".
Speaker Brenda Demotte, grief
psychologist will be with us.

*****Dec. 9:** TCF Worldwide Candle
Lighting/Annual Remembrance
Program (see enclosed flyer)

Dec. 14: Holiday Issues

Jan. 10: Open Discussion

Steering Committee Meeting: Please
call 651-459-9341 if you are
interested in helping with the work
of the chapter and need further info
and meeting date, time and place.

*"There are two ways of spreading
light: to be the candle or the mirror
that reflects it." -- Edith Wharton*
The Compassionate Friends, Inc. is a
mutual assistance, self-help
organization offering friendship,

understanding, and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, as it is to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with the feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child.

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

The Compassionate Friends' vision is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not The Compassionate Friends will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.

TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE "GRIEF ROAD"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK - what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

INFORMATION REGARDING OUR MEETINGS

PLEASE don't stay away from a meeting because the topic scheduled does not interest you. We are here to discuss whatever is on your mind; we do not stay on the topic only. This is YOUR group and we are here for each other. You do not have to talk at meetings. We welcome your participation in our group but it is not a requirement. Coming to listen to the others is okay too. Remember also that our meeting is open to adult siblings, grandparents, or adult family members such as aunts or uncles.

We Need Not Walk Alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

ST. PAUL CHAPTER INFORMATION

Chapter Coordinators/Steering Committee: Cathy Seehuetter, Jan Navarro, Debbie Halfen, Lyle Lindberg, Dave Esberg, Denise Bjerke
Newsletter Editor: Cathy Seehuetter
Mailing and Folding: Susan Rogge
Chapter Webmaster: Dave Esberg (tcfstpaul.org)
Treasurer: Lyle Lindberg
Librarian: Jan Navarro
Remembrance Cards: Kathy Lesnau
1st Contact: Linda Bergan
Outreach: Karen Gorz
Hospitality: Kim ZumMallen
TELEPHONE FRIENDS: Please call the following phone friends if you need someone to talk with:

ACCIDENTAL/SUDDEN DEATH

Cathy.....651-459-9341

ILLNESS

Jeanne.....651-330-7613

SUICIDE

Dave (Cell phone) 612-747-8225

ONLY CHILD

Kathy.....651-426-2446

INFANT LOSS

Lori.....952-229-4630

CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Lois.....651-777-2342

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS

MINNEAPOLIS: Meets the 3rd Monday of every month at Calvary Lutheran Church, 7520 Golden Valley Road in Golden Valley. Contact Carol Hawk at 763-542-8528.

RICHFIELD: Meets the 2nd Monday of every month at Hope Presbyterian Church, 7132 Portland Ave. So. For directions or more information, call Chris or Bob Lewis at 612-825-6500.

ST. CROIX VALLEY: Meets the 1st Thursday of every month at United Methodist Church, 1401 Laurel Avenue, Hudson, WI. For more information, call Ron or Kathy Felsch at 651-439-3290.

APPLE VALLEY: For meeting times and location, please call Shirley Doering at 952-432-5955

Chapter Website

For continually updated information regarding our chapter and other TCF news, see our chapter website at tcfstpaul.org.

Someday...

*Someday your memories will be rich and full,
As well as sad and bittersweet.*

*Someday the holidays will bring special meaning
Because you love your person who died,
And you care for yourself and your family.
May you're someday come soon.*

--Missy Lowery--

SUPPORT GROUPS AND NEWSLETTERS

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NATIONAL OFFICE

TCF.....toll free: 877-969-0010

E-mail: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

SUICIDE

Survivors of Suicide612-922-5830

Suicide Awareness.....952-946-7998

Or 1-800-511-SAVE

Crisis Hotline.....1-800-784-2433

PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN

St. Paul Chapter.....651-484-0336

E-mail: pomcmn@isd.net

National number..... (Toll free)(888) 818-

POMC

OTHER NEWSLETTERS

Alive Alone: Loss of an only child. There may be a minimal charge.

Kay Bevington
11115 Dull Robinson Road
Van Wert, OH 45891

The Compassionate Friends. National newsletter published four times per year. Cost is a donation of \$20 or more. This publication is for siblings and grandparents also.

TCF
PO Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522

Parents of Murdered Children. This "survivors" newsletter is issued three times a year and costs \$10. POMC helps survivors deal with their grief and the justice system. Write to:

Parents of Murdered Children
MN HOPE Chapter
PO Box 516
Circle Pines, MN 55014

Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education:

SA/VE
9001 E. Bloomington Freeway
Suite 150
Minneapolis, MN 55420
888-511-SAVE
www.SAVE.org

Newsletter

My sincerest apologizes for the tardiness of this newsletter. Due to circumstances beyond control, it was not possible to get it to you any sooner.

Our Children Remembered

The light of life never goes out.

Birthday and anniversary remembrances to the following children and their families:

LOVED...MISSED...REMEMBERED ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS AND ALWAYS

November

11-03-06 Katie Marie, daughter of Carrie & Rick Wilson
11-05-69 Jesse Buchanan, son of Carol & Gary Malek
11-06-86 Bobby, son of Donna & Greg, brother of Sherilynn & Brent Land
11-13-70 Todd, son of Shirley & Don Terhell
11-15-80 Brenda, daughter of Dave Esberg
11-15-03 Austin, son of Lori & Jim Kale

December

12-03-96 Brittney, daughter of Jeri & Tom Diaz
12-08-68 Debbie Folsom, daughter of Mary Lou & Dave Linn
12-13-70 Christopher, son of Mary Warner
12-15-84 Tommy, son of Tom & Carol Nace
12-16-88 Angela, daughter of Theresa & Jim Klover, granddaughter of Mardell & Dick Cavanaugh

January

1-01-67 Sandie Ann, daughter of Susan Rogge
1-02-87 Alex, son of Glenn & Cindy Johnson
1-03-79 Phillip, son of Jan & Phil Navarro
1-06-69 Todd, son of Judith Ryan
1-07-86 David, son of Charlene Danielson-Nelson
1-08-03 Jack, son of Karen & Kurt Erickson
1-08-83 Jeffrey, son of Arvid Nielsen
1-14-72 Tom, Jr, son of Laura & Tom Burbach
1-14-84 Matt, son of Susan Taylor

11-20-68 Jody Rosenberg, son of Ruth Krause
11-20-71 Scott, son of Jeri & Terry McMahon
11-21-89 Mathew Crowe, son of Katie Vener, grandson of Kathie Fleming
11-25-73 Ian, son of Nancy & John Price
11-29-81 Kyle, son of Karen & Ken Hannemann, & brother of Kristin

12-20-83 Derek, son of Linda Bergan
12-26-84 Ryan Clagherty, son of Cori
12-28-89 Robert, son of Janice & Mark Baird
12-31-87 Hannah Rose, daughter of Kim & Carl ZumMallen, niece of Wileen Tibbetts

1-15-74 Chris, son of Mary Jo & Ken Peterson
1-16-78 Kelly, son of Barb & Mitch Carmody
1-17-69 Shelly Buchanan, daughter of Carol & Gary Malek
1-21-84 Michael, son of David & Marcia Preller
1-21-79 Brandon, son of Halleigh Hall
1-26-69 Tammy Malcolm, daughter of Mary Lou O'Connor
1-26-79 Cory, son of Jim & Sandy, brother of Charity Helmen
1-31-03 Lawson Michael Rios, grandson of Linda Bergan

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN...IN OUR HEARTS ALWAYS... REMEMBERED ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR DEATH

November

11-02-97 Indrani Thoreson, daughter of Georgia Skare
11-04-99 John, son of Mary Ann Pojar
11-04-05 Larry, son of Russ & Marsha Williams
11-04-06 Jesse, son of Sandy & Cliff Romberg
11-06-03 Nicholas, son of Colette & Jim Carlson
11-08-05 Eli, son of Randy & Therese Meyer
11-11-02 Erik, son of Doug & Christy Spindler

December

12-01-97 Phillip, son of Jan & Phil Navarro
12-01-87 Kelly, son of Mitch & Barb Carmody
12-01-03 Austin, son of Lori & Jim Kale
12-13-05 Jack, son of Kurt & Karen Erickson
12-14-03 Rita, daughter of Karen Gorz

January

1-07-86 David, son of Charlene Danielson-Nelson
1-08-04 Danette Payne, daughter of Diane Nelson
1-09-05 Kenneth, son of Gregg Erlandson
1-09-03 Alex, son of Cindy & Glenn Johnson
1-10-87 Rick, son of Delores Walker
1-15-98 Becky, daughter of Jeanne Hayes
1-16-96 Mathew Crowe, son of Katie Vener, grandson of Kathie Fleming

11-13-03 Devon Jenson, niece of Kristine Lambert, granddaughter of Linda Jenson
11-18-06 Graeme Grothe, son of Hannah Lieder
11-19-06 Shauna Lee Chute Skogman, daughter of Brenda Skogman
11-22-05 Andy, son of Dick Peterson & Valerie O'Neill
11-24-93 Chris, son of Mary Jo & Ken Peterson

12-15-94 Marissa Marie, daughter of Nancy Bauer
12-18-95 Jared, son of Grace & James Kuznia
12-21-93 Derek, son of Linda Bergan
12-22-97 Heather Kay, daughter of Kim & Linda Sanborn
12-28-06 Katie Marie, daughter of Rick & Carrie Wilson
12-29-01 Kellie Jo, daughter of Kerri Melquist

1-19-05 Matt, son of Susan Taylor
1-19-99 Michael, son of Tom & Wendy Langer, brother of Jim
1-24-06 Angela, daughter of Jim & Theresa Klover, and granddaughter of Mardell & Dick Cavanaugh
1-25-06 Brittney, daughter of Terry & Jeri Diaz
1-26-07 Cory, son of Jim & Sandy, brother of Charity Helmen
1-29-06 Germain, daughter of Laurel Vigeant

"LOVE GIFTS" are tax-deductible donations given in memory of our children or other loved ones by family, friends, or other caring people who wish to help with the work of the St. Paul Chapter. Our chapter is self-supporting and donations are our only means of existence. We gratefully accept these gifts with the knowledge that our children are warmly remembered. **'Love Gifts' were given in loving memory by the following:**

- Tom and Laura Burbach, son Thomas, Jr.
- Nancy Price, son Ian
- Brenda Skogman, daughter Shauna Lee Chute Skogman
- Mary O'Connor, daughters Tammy Marie Malcolm and Kathy Jo Whitehead
- Joannie Kemling, children Kellie Kaye and Mitchell John
- Greg and Donna Land, son Bobby
- Barb and Dave Deters, daughter Kerri Braun
- Don and Shirley Terhell, son Todd
- Cori Claughtery, son Ryan
- Linda & Mark Triplet, son Adam

BOOK REVIEW

- Teen Grief Relief – Parenting with Understanding, Support and Guidance by Dr. Heidi Horsley and Dr. Gloria Horsley. Dr. Gloria Horsley donated this book to our chapter. This book is to help your teen grieve in a healthy way. Teenage grief is hard, lonely and painful. Parents want to know: How can I help? *Teen Grief Relief* provides both parents and teens with the help they need. Shared here are teen stories, feelings, techniques, references and resources for use in not only surviving but thriving after the painful loss of a family member or close personal friend.

SUBMIT A MESSAGE TO REMEMBRANCE BOOK DECEMBER 9 DURING THE WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

Every year, tens of thousands of families participate in some way in The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting, whether by attending a formal service or simply lighting a candle informally in their homes with family and friends. An additional way that you can be a part of this meaningful event is by submitting a message that day to be posted to the TCF's online Remembrance Book at www.compassionatefriends.org. The message can be about a special child you are remembering, a Worldwide Candle Lighting event you've attended, or anything you wish to share relating to the death of a child. You can include a favorite poem, if you wish.

Last year more than 2100 messages were received, representing every state, Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico, as well as two dozen countries around the globe. **Argentina, Australia, Bahamas, Canada, Chile, China, Cost Rica, Finland, France, Germany, Guam, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Qatar, Scotland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, and the United Kingdom.** Some of the messages were written in the native language of the sender.

Remember, messages can only be placed in the Remembrance Book December 9.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

"Creating Ripples of Hope in the Waters of Grief": Exploring ways of bringing hope and peace back into our lives after the death of a loved one

Northeast Wisconsin Regional TCF Conference
March 7-9, 2008
Comfort Suites Hotel
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Keynote Speaker, Paul Alexander, nationally recognized bereavement counselor, certified social worker, singer, and songwriter--composer of the popular song, "Light a Candle."

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The 2008 TCF National Conference will be held in Nashville, Tennessee July 18-20, 2008. Info regarding the 2008 conference will be available in January 2008.

THANKFULNESS

For those newly bereaved, in particular, holidays like Thanksgiving, make us wonder how we can possibly find anything to be thankful for. Those of us who remember those first few holiday seasons totally understand those feelings. I do believe, however, that we can find thankfulness in our badly bruised hearts for anyone who has helped us along the grief road. Whether they were family or friends, professionals or otherwise, we are truly thankful for their shoulder to cry on, a hand to hold, a listening ear, and the time that they spent letting us talk about our child/sibling/grandchild (and talk and talk and talk...). We also will never forget those people who also walk the same pathway as we (our Compassionate Friends) do and spoke of their own experiences with grief; in sharing with us we found that we were truly not alone.

We are EXTREMELY thankful for our TCF volunteers, people like Linda Bergan, who might be your first contact with TCF; Rita Gorz, who sends out packets of info about our chapter; Kathy Lesnau, who makes beautiful cards in remembrance of our child's birthday and anniversary of their death; Alan Pederson, who was with us at this year's balloon release and shared his words of hope and music from the heart so beautifully; Mitch Carmody, whose talents in speaking and signing at our special events add so much; Tami Briggs and Michelle Marie, (harpist and soloist respectively), who share their gifts at our candle lighting each year; Beaver Lake Lutheran for generously giving us a welcoming place to meet; and last but not least, members of our Steering Committee (see page 2 of this newsletter), who give of themselves unselfishly, and without their hard work and guidance we would not have meetings, our annual candle lighting and balloon release programs, newsletter, and much more. We will all keep each other close in our hearts over this holiday season. Thank you everyone!

THE GIFT OF THE TCF WORLD WIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

(Published by Living with Loss Magazine, PO Box 61, Montrose, CO 81402, 888-604-4673 (HOPE), from the Winter 2006 Edition, Volume 20 No. 4)

May 11, 1995: 45 years after I had taken my first breath of life would now sadly and incomprehensibly mark my precious daughter's last. Blisteringly hot day six of our family vacation in Orlando on a freeway many hundreds of miles from our home in Minnesota, an alcohol-impaired driver fell asleep at the wheel crashing into the side of the car where Nina was seated thereby ending the promising life of my vibrantly beautiful 15-year-old daughter, killing her instantly. A week that began in joyful family togetherness ended in unspeakable tragedy.

Brokenhearted, we returned home to begin the daunting task of learning to live without Nina. We catatonically walked through the mind-numbing chore of making arrangements for our daughter's funeral, our house filled with people aiding us however they could. But soon after the service, the silence in our home was deafening. My son wondered aloud where everyone had gone. Though hard to conceive that the sun still rose and set every day; that people continued to work, breathe, laugh and love, I undoubtedly knew the answer to his question; they had returned to the normalcy of their untainted existence while our lives felt irreparably shattered.

While others had gone back to the "real world", even in the midst of my cavernous grief I knew I had to preserve Nina's memory; I needed to find others who also desired their loved ones not be forgotten, realizing that it had to be another bereaved parent. I also needed reassurance there was hope that the raw pain of my loss would not continue forever, and that I was not alone on this most difficult of journeys. Thankfully, the funeral director in our city led me to The Compassionate Friends (TCF), a self-help group for bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents. There I found the support and understanding that I so desperately craved, along with many distinctive, creative ways from seasoned grievers to ensure that Nina would be forever remembered.

This became particularly important as I neared the first Christmas without Nina. They showed me I could bring her into the holiday season she loved so much by attending our chapter's annual holiday candle lighting. A few short years later, I became involved in chapter leadership. During that time, the TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting (WCL) came into existence and culminated into what is believed to be the world's largest candle lighting. Held the second Sunday of December at 7:00 p.m. in each time zone around the world candles are lit for one hour. As the candles burn down in one time zone, they are lit in the next, creating a virtual 24-hour wave of light around the globe.

The past few years I have been the MC for our chapter's program in conjunction with the WCL. From my vantage point, I

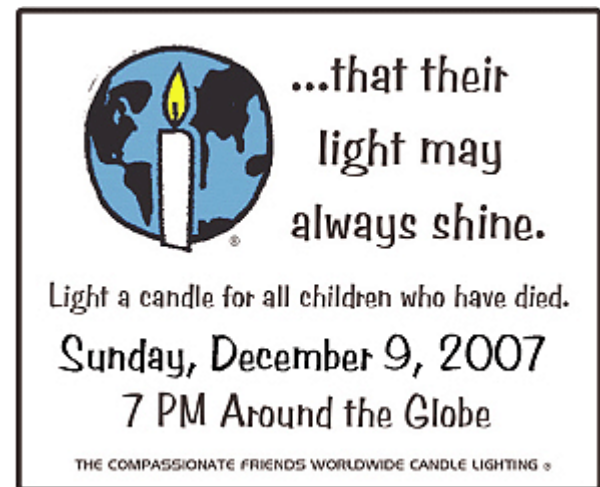
clearly see each tear-stained face. Though the room is dimly lit in the beginning, as each flame is lit for a child gone too soon, the room gradually becomes bathed in a warm and peaceful glow. The candles are held proudly aloft in a show of fortitude and solidarity, with the belief that our children look down and see our lights of love and hope lifted heavenward, signifying that though gone is the life, never is their light.

The TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting is the gift I give myself (and Nina) each holiday season, and many family members and friends gift me with their presence at the chapter event or light a candle at 7 p.m. in remembrance of Nina. For all of us whose precious children have died it is a beautiful and special way to ensure forevermore "...that their light may always shine."

With gentle thoughts over the holiday season, and always,

Cathy L. Seehuetter

TCF/St. Paul Chapter



**2007 TCF WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING ANNUAL
ST. PAUL CHAPTER REMEMBRANCE
PROGRAM DECEMBER 9, 2007 @ 6:30 P.M.**

BEAVER LAKE LUTHERAN CHURCH

This is a very special event shared with family and friends as we come together in love to remember our children, siblings and grandchildren at the holiday season. Our program begins at 6:30 with music and readings so that all our candles will be lit with others in our time zone at 7:00 p.m. More information on our chapter candle lighting to follow. We truly hope to see you there!

IMPORTANT REMINDER: We are having a slide show presentation of our children's pictures. Send a copy of picture to Marlene Keyser in a .jpg file to marlenek@faithfl.org or mail it to her at 1885 Quebec Street, Centerville, MN 55038 no later than **NOVEMBER 30**. I hope you will send pictures for this - it will be an especially beautiful addition to our program.

Making It Through The Holidays

Both the Sacramento and Yolo Compassionate Friends discussed the upcoming holidays at their October chapter meetings. Prior to the death of a child, most holidays are intended to be a time of joy, community, gift giving, and thankfulness. When a family loses a child, holidays often become challenging times to "get through". Helpful information shared by a Hospice counselor and the chapter members included:

Setting Limits for Yourself

It's okay to say no, when you don't feel up to something. It's okay to say yes, too. "Look to simplify rather than overwhelm yourself. Do only as much as you can manage emotionally and physically."

Express Your Feelings

Sharing your feelings with those close to you regarding the upcoming holidays often helps. Writing feelings down through journaling, simple note taking, listening to special music, and creating art that expresses feelings have been helpful for many people.

Making Plans

Planning in advance often helps to lessen the pressure on grieving families and individuals as the holidays approach. A plan can be as sophisticated or simple as you choose. Giving yourself permission to change plans at the last minute is important, too. Sometimes you might plan to go to Aunt Sal's for Thanksgiving, and then find yourself not feeling up to it. It's okay to change your mind. One professional speaker offered suggestions regarding holiday gatherings, including replying to invitations "We would like to come, and we'll try to, but we're not really sure how we'll feel on that day", giving yourself permission to leave early, it's okay to order out, it's okay to plan something totally different.

Ask For What You Need

Oftentimes people want to help, but don't know how to. Communicate what you need. Ask for help with entertaining, shopping, cooking, and cleaning.

Resist Isolation

While in grief, oftentimes we do not feel up to being around large groups. Sometimes we find that the support and enjoyment of being with people who love you can help to nourish and heal.

Avoiding the Holiday?

While avoiding the holiday sounds like an interesting idea, the holiday won't care! Every time you leave the house between now and first of the year, you will likely see some holiday reminder. A speaker suggested that "It often feels better to at least acknowledge your loss and your loved one in some special and meaningful way" than to try to skip the holiday entirely.

Breaking Traditions

Especially in the first years, traditions that emphasize the absence of your child may not be appropriate. If you do keep with traditions allow for changes, such as location or guest list.

New Traditions

Creating new rituals has been healing for many families. Involving family and friends may help their grief, too. Saving a place at the table for the child who has died, mentioning the child's name, taking a moment to acknowledge their absence, sharing a memory, lighting a candle in their memory, and visiting the grave site sometime during the day are just a few ideas that families have shared as helpful.

It's Okay to Change Things, and It's Okay To Change Back

What feels right the first or second year, may not in subsequent years. Many families find that deviating from their traditional holiday events is appropriate early on, but that returning to tradition is right for them several years down the line. It's okay to change things... temporarily or permanently. I know that I wanted to be away for Thanksgiving the year that my son died, so I went to a place that was warm, where no turkey was served, and there were beaches. For several years, my daughter-in-law did the holiday cooking. This year will be the 6th Thanksgiving without my son, Max. This is the first year that our family will return to our traditional gathering at my house, with me cooking.

Submitted by Cecilia Gabrielli,

Yolo Compassionate Friends and Sacramento Valley TCF
Handling Friends and Relatives

Relatives and friends can be very uncomfortable with your grief, and, therefore, may try to persuade you to do things for which you are not ready. They may tell you that you "should feel better" or that you "shouldn't talk about it." Only you know what is good for you; consequently, you should do only what you find comfortable, even if it means not seeing some people for a while.

Other people may have set a timetable on how long your grief should last. Coping with the death of a child takes years, not weeks or months, and, unless you have had a child die, it's impossible to understand. Stick up for yourself; it is difficult when you are not sure of anything. You know how you feel, so don't let anyone tell you how to act, think, or feel.

Tell your relatives and friends what you want them to do. If you want to be remembered at anniversaries and holidays and they are remiss, let them know how it makes you feel. Also, share with them that you want your child to be mentioned in conversations. You may cry, but let them know it is normal and they are not the cause of your crying. Let them know it is better for you to cry than for them not to mention your child, which would cause you to grieve silently.

ALIVE ALONE
TCF Western Australia

Holiday Colors

The colors of the holiday season, for me, used to be green and red with shiny accents of silver and gold. These colors and twinkling lights permeated my street, my home, and every store where I shopped. They also filled me with joyous anticipation and made me smile.

Then my son died, and although those colors were still in my environment, all I could see was the blue of depression, and the purple from the bruising weight of my loss. I had the opposite of anticipation - the desire to hide from or skip the holidays completely.

The year before he died, my son gave me a digital camera for Christmas. We went outside, at night, to take pictures of my house, and the neighbor's houses with their lights and many lawn decorations. "You've got to get with the program, Mama Jean," he said pointing out that my home had plenty of lights, but no decorations on the lawn.

So the first holiday season without my son, to honor his memory and his wishes, I did decorate. And I bought a lighted angel and a Christmas tree for my front lawn. I went to my nephew's holiday gathering; I watched his children joyously open presents. But I had no joy, and I didn't invite any family or friends to my decorated home. I did acknowledge my son and my loss by writing out cards to him

for each holiday, and sending balloons aloft on a very grey day. I did not bake cookies, I did not bake cookies, I did not send out cards, and I flew to my brothers, in Denver, to spend New Years Eve.

So I survived that year with a combination of tradition and escape. Despite the decorating, and the visiting I forced myself to do, the colors of those holidays were the colors of his absence, deep purple and blue.

Two more holiday seasons have passed - each slightly less painful. The blue of depression was just as deep but not there all the time. The bruising purple was slowly becoming a memory, but crushing when it surfaced. I purchased a wreath for my door and another lighted tree for my lawn.

In an article from the summer 2006 edition of "We Need Not Walk Alone," grief educator Dr. Alan Wolfelt says, "Depression has gotten a bad name in today's society." He considers it a necessary part of the grieving process because, "It slows your body down." Have those painful blue and purple days, when my mind and body slowed, given some of my grief a chance to process and heal?

The last stage before acceptance, listed by Kubler-Ross, is depression. However, those stages were intended for anticipatory grief - not for the loss of a child. Dr. Wolfelt, speaking to bereaved parents, also said that, "Grief and mourning do not come in predictable stages; they are more like waves, and sometimes a tsunami comes... times when you see something or smell something and you're right there again." This resembles my experience during the past three holiday seasons.

As I write this I am in a pretty good place. I have many more good hours than bad - sometimes weeks pass before the pain returns briefly. I am hoping that this year the colors and smells will remind me of the joys of holidays past when my family was whole. I have survived three seasons. I know I will survive the fourth. I have hopes that the holiday colors this year will be less purple and blue. I have hopes there will be no tsunami. And I have plans to bake cookies, and purchase another decoration for my lawn. Perhaps a reindeer?

- Jean Limongello, in memory of her son Anthony
TCF/Pasco County, FL



DEAR FAMILY & FRIENDS...

The holidays can be especially sad, lonely times for those who are reeling from the death of a beloved child. After years of establishing family traditions, the celebration just doesn't seem to be as important. We had 25 years worth of family Christmas card photos, mailed proudly every year and then framed in groupings and hung on the wall during the holiday season. Since our son Peter's sudden death two years ago, we haven't been able to take them down from the wall and we haven't been able to send another family photo Christmas greeting. Any photo at this time would have too big a hole.

I most acutely felt the absence of Peter in getting together with extended family over the holidays. Though I know they mean well and they only want us to be happy again as soon as possible, they hurt us by not mentioning the son we've lost. Just after the first Christmas without Peter and before the first birthday after his death, his twenty-fifth, I felt compelled to reach out to family and try to tell them again explicitly how they could help us in keeping his memory alive. I enclosed a couple of photos of Peter. Though I did not get more than a couple of responses, I felt better for the trying.

Dear Extended Family of Peter,

Christmas is over. We made it. Now we await his birthday, the anniversary of his death, other Christmases, weddings, other funerals. We sincerely thank you for your greetings and gifts though we did not send any to you this year.

You have asked what you can do to help us. As you know, grief does not end. You surely must miss him too. After all, you knew him when he was a baby in arms, had gangly legs and arms, funny teeth, stupid antics. You can help us by talking about Peter, with us or among yourselves, saying his name aloud, sharing any thoughts and memories (and dreams if you've been lucky enough to have them) which may creep into your daily life, at any time, month to month, this year or next. Peter is ever present in OUR minds. We will not forget him. You will NOT make us feel bad or sad if you mention him or his death. In fact, talking about him helps us enormously.

We realize Peter was no more special than your special loved ones. He was devilish and sometimes selfish, as well as generous and often fun. But he met a very tragic, untimely death, which was wholly undeserved, and we have months if not years ahead of us of court proceedings in which to try to seek some justice. Please feel free to ask questions.

Nothing will bring Peter back. But talking and sharing help us remember him and memories are all we have! We need you desperately. You are among our remaining special loved ones.

With loving gratitude,
Mary and Mark

Peter Mark Westra, age 24, died on July 8, 2001. He is survived by his parents, Mary (the author of this article) and Mark, who live in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. This article was printed in *We Need Not Walk Alone* -TCF National Publication.

SORROW IS NOT FOREVER—LOVE IS

So often one attempts to face the whole future at once. But we will not live that period all at once, only day by day. Don't try to face 20 years. Face today. When that has been achieved, face tomorrow. You will find more and more ways in which you can cope. The Chinese have a saying that a journey of a 1000 miles starts with a single step. There is no way you can take the 15th or the 200th step before you have taken the first.

It can be difficult to face going out again and resuming your regular activities. It can take more courage to face little things than the big things in life. Going out shopping for groceries for the first time can become an ordeal. Making the change more complete could help. Try a different store, a different day or time, and go with a friend. When it seems very hard what to decide to do first, maybe it's not very important where you start as long as you start. Choose a simple task and get started.

Once you've begun it will be far easier to set your priorities and you will have gained confidence for already having achieved something.

--*The Facts of Death* by Michael A. Simpson

REMEMBER YOUR CHILD DURING THE HOLIDAYS

We generally associate the December holidays with festive decorations, gift giving, and the laughter of little children. For a parent who has lost a child, just the word holiday can cause great emotional pain. It is difficult to walk into a store and be bombarded with all of the reminders of children. The toys, holiday clothes, colorful children's gift wrap, and the holiday music being sung by young children all bring on waves of grief that are difficult to bear.

Often parents who have lost a child find themselves falling into a depression around holiday season time. It would be far easier to avoid the holidays than to face the season without the joy of your precious child. With some planning prior to the holiday season, the pain of loss can be softened somewhat.

At some point, though, it becomes necessary to face the reality of the holiday season as being very different. Parents need ways to remember their child during this time of the year. By doing something special, parents will find it a bit easier and far more healing to face the otherwise empty holiday season.

It is quite healing to remember your child by lighting a candle in memory of your little one. The candle can be placed on a decorated table in a special place in your home where you will feel your child is still very close to you. There are many types of memory candles one can buy, and you can place small mementos of your child on the table with the candle. This might be painful to see at first, but it will also create an atmosphere for healing.

Remember your child by placing a special ornament on the tree. There are many stores that will do creative engraving, which you might find to be a desirable option for you. Have a special phrase or saying engraved along with the date of your child's birth and death. The keepsake ornament will become treasured all the days of your life.

Remember your child by creating a memory box that can be shared with others during the holidays. Use your imagination as to what you want to place in the memory box. You can even decorate the memory box together as a special time of gathering the family together to remember.

Many parents find it very healing to hang a stocking with their child's name on it by the fireplace mantle. Fill the stocking with some small gifts that were memorable of your child. Also, it might be very healing to write a letter or poem to your child and place it in the stocking. During a family meal, have someone read the letter, then place it in the memory box you've created. Each year a letter can be added. This will one day become a family treasure.

If you have some sewing ability, a wonderful way of remembering your child is to create a small quilt from some of your child's clothes. This quilt will be cherished for years to come, as it will remain a priceless remembrance of your special child.

As you think of ways to remember your child during the holidays, do things that will be healing to your heart. Remember—there is no right or wrong way to remember. Do those things that are healing specifically to you! By remembering and including your child in the holiday, you will promote an atmosphere of healing and hope.

- *Written by Clara Hinton*

GIVING THANKS

I cannot hold your hands today,
I cannot see you smile.
I cannot hear your voices now,
my children, who are gone.

But I recall your faces still,
the songs, the talks, the sighs.
And story times, and winter walks,
and sharing secret things.

I know you helped my mind to live
beyond your time with me.
You gave me clearer eyes to see,
you gave me finer ears to hear,
what living means, what dying means,
my children, who are gone.

So here it is, Thanksgiving Day,
and you are not with me.
And while I weep a mother's tears,
I thank you for the gifts you were,
and all the gifts you gave to me,
my children, who are gone.

- *Sascha Wagner*
From *Wintersun*

FIRST HOLIDAY

We lit a candle today,
To fill the empty place
Where you should be
But aren't...
I stood with my hands cupping the
flame...
And felt the heat...
the energy...
Empty space between fire and flesh
Nothing visible
Nothing to see...
And yet I knew it was there-
The energy touched my skin.
And so it was with you today.
Nothing visible-nothing to see.
And yet I knew you were here.
Your energy touched my heart.

- *Sandy Goodman, @2006*

PLEASE ASK

Someone asked me about you today.
It's been so long since anyone has
done that.
It felt so good to talk about you,
To share my memories of you,
To simply say your name out loud.
She asked me if I minded talking
about
What happened to you...
Or would it be too painful to speak of
it.
I told her I think of it every day
And speaking about it helps me to
release
the tormented thoughts whirling
around in my head.
She said she never realized the pain
would last this long...
She apologized for not asking sooner.
I told her, "Thanks for asking."
I don't know if it was curiosity
or concern that made her ask,
but told her, "Please do it again
sometime...
soon."

- Barbara Taylor Hudson
Kansas City Chapter, POMC

FIRST CHRISTMAS

It can't possibly be Christmas
without her being here.
Yet the world is singing round me,
joyful tidings and good cheer.

Though I try to put on armor
and brave the sights and sounds,
a few moments worth of shopping,
and the tears are spilling down.

I pray for strength to do it,
find a path through holidays,
look for shortcuts, good ideas,
some directions through the maze.

Then I find at last the answer:
I'll include her symbolically.
And the giving becomes perfect;
her love's flowing down, through me.

- Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
From Stars in the Deepest Night -
After the Death of a Child

I don't know why.
I'll never know why.
I don't have to know why.
I don't like it.
I don't have to like it.
What I have to do is make a choice
about my living.
What I do want to do is accept it and
go on living.
The choice is mine.
I can go on living, valuing every
moment
in a way I never did before,
or I can be destroyed by it and,
in turn, destroy others.
I thought I was immortal.
That my family and my children were
also.
That tragedy happened only to
others.
But I know now that life is tenuous
and valuable.
So I am choosing to go on living,
making the most of the time I have,
valuing my family and friends
in a way never possible before.

- from the book, *My Son, My Son*, by
Iris Bolton, whose son Mitch died by
suicide.

FIRST THANKSGIVING

The thought of being thankful
fills my heart with dread.
They'll all be feigning gladness,
not a word about her said.
These heavy shrouds of blackness
enveloping my soul,
pervasive, throat-catching,
writhe in me, and coil.
I must, I must acknowledge,
just express her name,
so all sitting at the table,
know I'm thankful that she came.
Though she's gone from us forever
and we mourn to see her face,
not one minute of her living,
would her death ever replace.
So I stop the cheerful gathering,
though my voice quivers, quakes,
make a toast to all her living.
That small tribute's all it takes.

- Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
from Stars in the Deepest Night -
After the Death of a Child

HEAVENLY SNOW

I thought you might like to know
And I have it on good authority,
That in heaven there is snow.
God, Himself, ordered it to be.
Snow swept by gentle winds,
That drifts by the stirring,
Of gossamer angels' wings,
That sound like kittens purring.
Snow forever crystal clean,
Just waiting to be molded
By little angel hands unseen
By those whose arms they once
enfolded.
Snow angels are a common sight
And snowmen of every size...
They're all there beyond the light,
Where nothing ever dies.
Where our angels play,
There is no pain or tears.
Only joy fills their days,
Only laughter fills their ears.
High above the azure skies
A glorious wonderland gleams.
This beautiful Heavenly spot...
Created to fulfill our angels' dreams.

- Jacquelyn M. Comeaux Copyright
2001

A FLICKER IN THE DISTANCE

In this time of grief,
when the darkness is so great,
and your heart is aching so,
you feel that it may break.
Remember that in this darkness
there is a candle's light
a flicker in the distance
small but intensely bright.
That tiny little glow
that seems so far away
will grow brighter and brighter
with each passing day.
Time does not heal, as they say,
but it tends to numb
the ache we feel inside our heart
when that darkness comes.
In time your heart will feel lighter
and the memories won't bring such
pain,
the tears won't flow as often
and you will find laughter again.
So keep your eye on that distant glow
to see how far you came...
Because at the end of the darkness
that flicker becomes a flame.

- Jacquelyn M. Comeaux.
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For Siblings - The Importance of Self-Care

One of the most notable characteristics of bereaved siblings is their ability to help others who are grieving. In research studies, this particular characteristic is mentioned again and again. However, bereaved siblings are often unable to help themselves with their own grief. One of the patterns of dynamics that is often seen in bereaved siblings is as follows. The surviving siblings have been so hurt and become so vulnerable that they cannot tolerate their own feelings. They would like to disown their own vulnerability. So they *project* their feelings on to others who are grieving, and then take care of the other person.

If this dynamic is operating in your life, you need to work on self-care. Withdrawing the projection from others, and accepting your own vulnerability is not easy, but is essential for healing. In order to take care of yourself, you have to know yourself and know what your needs are. Sometimes we spend more time trying to get someone else to take care of us than we do in actively caring for ourselves. First, you must learn what your needs are. Everyone knows about needs--we know that babies need love and attention as well as food. Needs do not go away when we become adults. Some of the needs that we all share are: needs for food, security, love, acceptance, beauty, order, appreciation, and self-expression. Get to know yourself and what it takes to make you happy.

Connect with other bereaved siblings: Connecting with others by reading about or sharing experiences is an essential part of your healing. At the moment you learn that your brother or sister is going to die or has died, you begin to form a special place within you to put this experience and keep it away from the rest of your life. This "trauma membrane" keeps others away from your pain and your experience. Other bereaved siblings can often get inside this trauma membrane when no one else can. Once you open this part of yourself to another person whom you trust, healing can begin.

From The Sibling Connection-

<http://www.counselingstlouis.net/healing.html>

HOLIDAY SUGGESTIONS FROM TCF OF ATLANTA

I began a tradition after that first dreadful Christmas blur of hanging my daughter's stocking up along with the rest of the family. Then each year I do something special in her memory... like take a name from an "Angel Tree" at the mall or wherever and buy a gift for a needy child in her memory. I put the angel note in her stocking. I make a donation to the Salvation Army to help feed the hungry and homeless at Christmas and I put their acknowledgment in her stocking, things like that. As the years are passing, her stocking is filling up with good deeds done in her memory and things I know she would appreciate knowing were done in her name, my beloved "Carissa". It helps refocus the heartbreak of missing her into something positive and helpful.

- *Debby, mom to angel Carissa*

The last two Christmases I signed my Christmas cards "In Memory Of Melanie". This year I have a butterfly stamp that I stamped each card with in red and then with green ink I wrote "Melanie" across the butterfly and then under the butterfly I wrote "In Heaven". I will always include Melanie in all my holiday, birthday and greeting cards, even if it is just a butterfly stamped upon the page with her initials, she will be included.

- *Kathy, Melanie's Mom ^j^*

We also put up a tree at Kelley's grave every Christmas and decorate it also, with the help of friends and family that put an ornament on the tree each year. This year we have to get a bigger tree, because we have so many ornaments now! It makes us feel so good to see that others still remember Kelley and us at such a difficult time of the year by leaving an ornament or decoration at Kelley's grave.

Angel Hugs, Diana - Kelley's Mom

My nephew, Alex Corn, (18) was killed in a car accident January 31, 1996. He was like a son to me. My brother, Lowell (Alex's dad) died by suicide July 1, 1999. After Alex died, I decorated a "Memory Tree" and have continued to do so every Christmas since 1996. Now, I will do the same for my sweet, loving brother.

I decorate the tree with cards, pictures of Alex, baby shoes, hand prints, angels, gifts, doves from the funeral/floral arrangements, little handmade ornaments given to me by Alex....anything personal I have received or collected over the years from him. Of course, I decorate with lights...lots of lights, which make the "memories" stand out. The tree topper is a huge bow with the last picture of Alex attached to it. The tree gives me great comfort each time I pass by it and it's a reminder to my friends and visitors that YES, this person lived, YES, this person was loved deeply and YES, this person made a difference in my life and his life counted as much as anyone's.... and the memories live on.

~shared by Martha Corn Grogan

Last year I remembered just how much Chris loved and enjoyed the story of the Little Drummer Boy as a small child and in his high school years. I found cards with the drummer boy on them and included just how this was one of Chris' favorite Christmas stories and I told the recipient I wished they had people in their lives that brought them as much happiness as Chris had brought to ours in his short lifetime. (19)

- Carol Schuh, Mom to Christopher

I always sign my angel's name on any card I send. I write Alyssa "in spirit". I lost my daughter in June to SIDS.

- *Lindsey, Alyssa's mom*

I sign my son's Ryan's name to some cards. I can't bear to leave his name off of them either. I put a halo over his name.

~Karen, Ryan's Mom

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS/ST PAUL CHAPTER
7884 IRISH AVENUE SOUTH
COTTAGE GROVE, MN 55016-2072

PLEASE FORWARD



Please circle the appropriate relationship:

Parent	Sibling	Grandparent	Relative	Friend	Professional
Parent (s) name: _____			Child/Children's Name(s) _____		
Address: _____			Birth Date(s) _____		
City: _____			Death Date(s): _____		
State: _____ Zip: _____			Home phone: _____		
			E-mail address: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Permission is given to include my child(ren), sibling or grandchild on the Remembrance page in the St. Paul Chapter newsletter and Chapter Website.			<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to enclose a donation to the St. Paul Chapter of The Compassionate Friends in memory of _____		

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