



REINVESTMENTS — WHAT HAS HELPED ME IN MY GRIEF JOURNEY

Newly bereaved parents are always asking me if “it” will ever get better. I know from my journey through grief that the road is always changing. Sometimes it looks smooth and straight when all of a sudden a hairpin curve leaps in front of me without warning. Sometimes I have to maneuver through pothole after pothole.

Now I feel that I am at a fork in the road. I have choices to make on how I am going to travel this grief journey. For me the answer was obvious. With the death of my only child, I felt limited recourse. I was no longer a “practicing” parent. I would never be a grandparent. The only thing left for me to do was to help other parents who found themselves in this perilous situation.

I remember the first evening at the funeral home where my precious child was in state. The first person I went up to and hugged was a high school friend’s mother, whose own child had died eighteen years ago. I remember saying to her, “Now I know what you went through.” It is true. Only another parent whose child has died can truly understand the magnitude of the pain we all go through as bereaved parents.

The road is different for each parent. Everyone will deal with their grief in a different manner. There are many ways that parents can reinvest in life after the death of their child. This is what helped me.

Liz Hodge
TCF, Southgate MI

The Wounded Heart

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the last, to enter the realm of Bereaved Parents. But for now right now it is OUR HEARTS that are freshly wounded and OUR HEARTS in need of mending.

Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss; to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt, and anger; and to release their well of tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life.

A wounded heart, not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony, will be as an abscess to swell and undermine, erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed.

The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

Nancy Green
TCF, Livonia MI



When Words Become Gifts

On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Eric and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said "I saw your name tag – are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation, "Yes, I am!" With those three, almost magical, words this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was saying David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom but I better not say anything, she said something. Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a classmate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared. Acknowledging that I'm still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am, and always will be, Erik and David's mom.

The fourth gift was permission to share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven't been any truly, easy, carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most "doable" way for me to go on. Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me. As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing more than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters most to us.

The real treasure comes when others introduce our children's names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the meaningful legacy that our sons and daughters have left to us and to the world.

Nita Aasen
In Memory of my sons, Erik and David Aasen
St. Peter, MN

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Shared by Pat Loomis, in loving memory of son Matt Loomis
TCF, Rochester NY

JUST FLOW WITH THE SEASON AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

We're well into November and it's almost time to take the "January pill". After Tricia died I decided I'd invent a pill you could take the week before Thanksgiving and when you came to, it would be January! I'm still working on the invention. In the meantime, I know many of you are already dreading the approaching holidays.

The true spirit and meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas are not necessarily exemplified by some of our "traditions". You are re-evaluating many aspects of your life so let this also apply to the coming holidays. You will not always feel as you do now. You will find joy in holiday activities, but maybe not in all the things you once thought so very important.

Flow with the season and with your sadness, knowing strength will come as you work with what you can do without overtaxing yourself. Resolve to be as generous with your energy as you can and as selfish as you have to be to protect the emerging person you will become as a result of your loss. This person can be truly beautiful and loving because of what you have learned through grief.

You will miss your child; no magic potion can wipe the pain away. Enjoy what you can—you deserve some pleasure. And may some measure of peace overtake you before this year ends.

**Elizabeth B. Estes, In memory of Tricia
TCF, Augusta GA**

On a Night in December

As days moved on towards winter,
and trees were going bare,
we were faced with shopping malls
where carols filled the air.

And thoughts all turned to loved ones,
those present, and those not.
For us, whose lives were drained of light,
it was solace that we sought.

And so began a journey
of candles round the earth
bringing light to darkness
and honoring the worth
of children held so dear to us
but never to grow old,
whose lives filled our life tapestries,
with threads of finest gold.

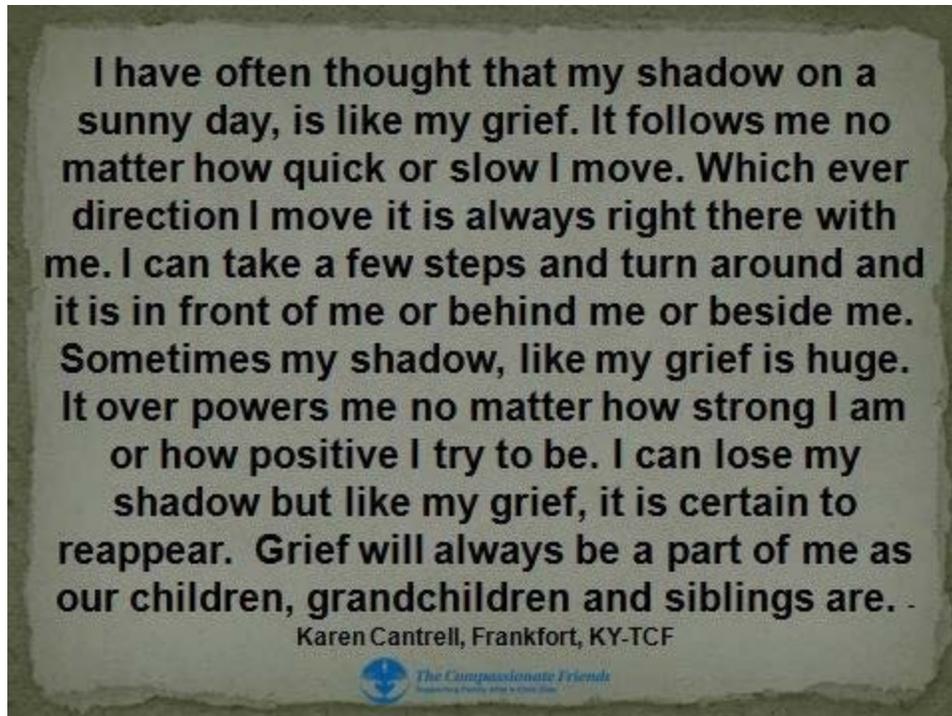
Now we gather on this night
and watch the candles burn
see their pictures, say their names
one by one, in turn.

And our children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters
for whom we gather here
let us know, in the candles glow,
that they are always near.

Their light will still surround us;
their love will always flow.
As we leave may we remember, that this is ever so.

**Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
From Catching the Light**
Written for TCF Marin's Candle Lighting Service





*Shared by Pat Loomis, in loving memory of son Matt Loomis
TCF, Rochester NY*

The Other Season

Look to the season of your memories –
it fills the weather of your life
with mildness.

It turns to laughter what your
mind remembers:
the sound of words, invented new
for singing,
discovery of all-important secrets.

Look to the season of your memories –
it sets an ordinary past to music.

It changes ordinary tears to treasure.
It gives your faded pictures
shape and color:
the touch of eyes, a walk
in foggy twilight.

Look to the season of your memories –
How rich you were, and be how rich again.

Look to the season of your memories:
mourn and recall the child you love,
until you lose yourself
to find yourself.

The Poems of Sascha Wagner

We want to share this support group information:

Face 2 Face Friendship Group, Rochester NY. face2facerochester.com Providing support & hope to families coping with miscarriage, stillbirth, & infant loss.

Bereaved Parents. Bereavedparentsusa.org A national non-profit self-help group that offers support, understanding, compassion, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents, & siblings. Shared by Pat Loomis.

Alive Alone. Alivealone.org. Support for now childless parents. Shared by National TCF.

“Healing the Grieving Heart” Web Radio Show. Compassionatefriends.org (left side of the home page, link to “Healing the Grieving Heart”). Live shows are at 11:00 am on Thursdays. The archived shows are available 24 hours per day.

Many thanks to Pat Wheeler for the donation of all the supplies from the WNY TCF Chapter

Love Gifts

*Carol Fogarassy, in loving memory of son Matthew Fogarassy
Maureen Toombs, in loving memory of daughter Rachael Marie Toombs Lassiter
Alice Torres, in loving memory of son Ricardo Bernabeu, Jr.*

*Support for the meeting on September 27th was donated by
Beck Price, in loving memory of son Joshua Daniel Price*

*Support for the meeting on October 11th was donated by
Bonnie Corbett, in loving memory of daughter Kelly Lynne Forest*

*Support for the meeting on October 25th was donated by
Ed & Colleen Dobrowski, in loving memory of son Jason Dobrowski*



Upcoming Event:***The Compassionate Friends Rochester Chapter Candlelighting Ceremony***

Tuesday, December 13, 2016 7:00 pm First Unitarian Church of Rochester (our TCF Chapter location) 220 Winton Road South Rochester, New York

Dedicated to all our children "that their light may always shine"

Meeting Location:

First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Road South
Rochester, New York

Meeting Days :

Tuesday the 8th & Tuesday the 22nd (November)

Tuesday the 13th **Candlelighting Program**
& Tuesday the 27th (December)

7:00 P.M. to 7:15 P.M. - social

7:15 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. – meeting

Contacts:

Mary Ann Dobbins 585-872-0566

TCF Regional Coordinator:

Jacque Edwards-Mitchell 718-451-0814

TCF National :

877-969-0010 or

www.compassionatefriends.org

Send newsletter inputs or web comments to:

Joan Carafos, jcarafos@photikon.com

If you would like to contribute to our Compassionate Friends Chapter, please forward your Love Gifts and Donations to:
The Compassionate Friends of Rochester
C/O 3446 Rush Mendon Road Honeoye Falls, NY 14472
Please make checks payable to: The Compassionate Friends of Rochester, New York

Sincere Thanks!

To receive this newsletter via e-mail, please contact
Alice Torres at alice3970@gmail.com

***Welcome New Friends***

At nearly every meeting we welcome new members to our group, always with mixed emotions. We are glad you found us, but we are so sorry for the circumstances that bring us together. We understand your pain; we hope our unconditional friendship and understanding will help you through your grief.

Attending a meeting for the first two or three times takes courage, but for many it is the first real step toward healing. It may seem overwhelming, so we encourage you to come to several meetings to give yourself a chance to become comfortable.

Rochester Chapter TCF Mission:

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family. Adopted 2-25-12

Our Children Remembered
November 2016
Birthdays and Remembrance Days

Birthday



Katie Lyn Fields	November	1
Lisa Ann Rupp	November	5
Justin Adam Rifenberg	November	5
Christopher Robert Crawford	November	7
Michael Matthew Brown	November	20
Terah Lee Gates	November	21
Joshua Lee Prescott	November	24
Andrew Clay Parkhurst	November	27
Grant Matthew Lintala	November	28

Remembrance Day

Slade Gerstner	November	1
Stephanie Anne Oliva	November	4
Alexander K. Ketchek	November	8
Graham Wilson Smith	November	13
Greta Elinor Lindboom	November	14
Richard Marrion Nelson	November	16
Jeffery James Yates	November	22
Everett Patrick Hong	November	25
Terah Lee Gates	November	25



Our Children Remembered
December 2016
Birthdays and Remembrance Days

Birthday



Richard John Tanner	December	2
Richard Marrion Nelson	December	6
Matthew R. Loomis	December	7
Brian Charles Oster	December	7
Taylor Leigh Allen	December	9
Christian Patrick Lester	December	11
Peggy Jane O'Neill	December	13
Alexander Ryan Fitzpatrick	December	14
Melissa Ann Harris	December	15
Joel Ayite Ajavon	December	16
Michael David Mueller	December	19
Elaine Marie Liddell	December	21
Matthew James Straton	December	23
Clarence L. Ross, II	December	23
Shawn Patrick Viola	December	29

Remembrance Day

Douglas M. Slocum	December	2
Nate Riley	December	7
Christopher "Chris" D. Fitzgerald	December	7
Steven L. Britt	December	7
Jennifer Lynn McNeil	December	7
Tristan Foley Hanna	December	10
Ethan Emerson Price	December	16
Taylor Leigh Allen	December	22
Matthew Gabe Fogarassy	December	22
Joel C. Stuhler	December	24
Elaine Marie Liddell	December	30



Surviving the Holidays

The holidays are among the most difficult times for bereaved families grieving the death of a child. Below are some helpful suggestions that may aid you in surviving the holidays:

1. Call a family meeting and discuss your plans for the holiday season, understanding that it would be unusual for you not to feel emotionally, physically and psychologically drained. Don't set your expectations too high or you may find yourself disappointed.
2. Well intending friends and family may want to include you in their plans, believing it is best for you to 'get away' from grieving your loss. They do not understand that you cannot escape the grief that you feel. There is no obligation to say 'yes'. Only participate if you truly want to.
3. Try to take care of your health. It's important that you eat and drink properly, exercise and get plenty of rest.
4. Take time to do the things you as a person want to do. You may want time alone to reflect or to write your thoughts.
5. Consider eliminating such things as the festive decorations, cooking and baking you may normally enjoy. People will understand if you're not in a merry or joyous mood or simply don't have the energy. You may try placing an electric candle in your window in memory of your child. Don't feel obligated to send out holiday cards.
6. If it is necessary for you to buy gifts, consider ordering them over the internet or by phone. Most who are bereaved find it draining to go out and fight through crowded stores bustling with holiday cheer.
7. Many families that are in mourning may use the money they would have spent on gifts for their child to buy gifts for a child who would not be able to celebrate the holidays otherwise.
8. It is not unusual for you to want to include your child during the season. You may want to do something like: Ask friends and relatives who knew your child to send you a story about your child that you may not have known; ask friends and relatives to create an ornament or remembrance of some type that reminds them of your child so that you can place it around the house or on a holiday tree. If it was your tradition, include placing a stocking with those of other children in your house, even if you do not fill it like the others—this is a symbolic gesture in memory of your child.
9. If you have other children who normally celebrate the holidays, you may consider continuing to do so to create some sense of normalcy in the house and so they will not feel forgotten.
10. Consider attending a Compassionate Friends meeting or a memorial event such as The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting. Most families find some comfort by being with others who have experienced a similar loss.
11. Remember that the anticipation of a holiday is often worse than the holiday itself.
12. Be kind to yourself, and remember it is okay to cry.

From the Compassionate Friends website, www.compassionatefriends.org

Shared by MaryAnn Dobbins, in loving memory of granddaughter Colleen Josephine Dobbins