



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

**SOUTH SHORE CHAPTER HINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**FALL 2008**

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

**MEETINGS** at St. Paul's Parish House, 20 Fearing Road, Hingham (across the street from Citizen's Bank) at 7:30 PM on First and Third Mondays of the month.

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**SAVE THE DATE**

More details will be in the next newsletter



**PHONE FRIENDS**

If you are having a bad day, or need someone to talk to, call a friend below

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**FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITY**

Margarita's restaurant has given our chapter the opportunity to participate in their monthly Full Moon Madness evening. On Tuesday 10/14, Thursday 11/13 and Friday 12/12, our chapter will receive a portion of the lounge receipts generated at Margaritas restaurant, 765 Bridge St. Weymouth, MA. The event takes place from 4PM -1AM. **It is only the food and beverages purchased in the lounge that will benefit TCF and it is only the Weymouth location that we are participating in.** The lounge does have a food menu in addition to drinks. They will also have information about TCF available. For further info call the restaurant (781-331-0303) or Martha Berman (781-337-8649). Please join us and bring your friends. It is a great opportunity for our chapter and enables us to continue to reach out to the many bereaved families in this area.

### FROM THE EDITOR

*Summer has passed quickly and I hope you enjoyed some warmth in body and spirit. Every season brings us new challenges as we face more milestones that our children will miss.. The start of school is always a vivid reminder of times past whether or not our child attended school. In our house it was always a time to get back to a certain order, especially since my wife is a teacher. Initially with the loss of a child chaos reigns and there is loss of control and no order. As time passes our life will adjust to a new "normal" and we will begin to feel that we have gained some control.*

*For bereaved parents it is very difficult if not impossible to pick a season that is "easier" or "harder" than another for each one contains "special days" that will intensify our grief. Even after many years of these cycles, one cannot predict what the effect of a given experience will mean to a bereaved parent. One year Halloween may come and go without so much as a second thought and the next year it may result in an unexplainable setback where our grief surfaces with a vengeance Thus continues the roller coaster ride we are all part of. It is why, when newly bereaved are looking for answers to the question of how one survives a given day, all we can tell them is what our experience has been like, knowing that their experience may turn out to be very different.*

*Bereaved parents seem to begin anticipating and fearing the holiday season as soon as summer has passed. It is not at all surprising given the amount of advertising that starts so early. Halloween ushers in the start of what most consider the most difficult 2 months of the year. After nearly 12 years I still find it difficult to think of another holiday season approaching. I know we will survive but none the less I would much prefer not to have to endure it. It often takes years to figure out what approach to any of the special days will work for a given individual. If this time of year finds you beginning to anticipate the next couple of months with fear, just remember that each day is only 24 hours, the anticipation is usually worse than the actual day, and that you have the many waiting to walk with you*

*Peace,  
Rick Mirabile*

### **SEPTEMBER AND A NEW SCHOOL YEAR**

#### **TO MOST PEOPLE IT MEANS:**

Kids out from underfoot, caps on  
Buying a new lunch box, new clothes  
And the usual school supplies  
Fixing breakfast and trying to get it eaten  
Getting to a school bus on time

#### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO A MOTHER WHO HAS LOST A CHILD?**

Watching other children filled with excitement  
A little boy who should be in kindergarten  
A brother who must go off to school himself  
A teacher who must reach out to a class,  
When her little one won't be in school this year  
A mother sending two children off,  
when there should be three.



#### **WHAT DO I DO WITH MY CHILD'S THINGS?**

This is a problem that faces all bereaved parents. We discuss it from time to time at our meetings. Some of us keep the child's room just as it was before the death. We don't want anything touched or removed. Some find solace in giving things away to close friends or relatives. Knowing someone we love is wearing our child's clothes, or playing with his or her toys, brings us comfort. Some of us find we can deal with only a few items at a time: clothes, one month; books, another; perhaps toys, a few months later. Some of us find that, as time goes on and we would have gotten rid of the things anyway, it becomes easier. For instance, after awhile we realize that if the child were still alive, he or she would have outgrown clothes. Then it's easier to give them away. Or your child would have graduated from college this year, and therefore would no longer use the study desk or clock radio. We can give these things away in the normal time sequence. The important thing is not to let others rush us into doing something before we are ready and not to let ourselves feel guilty about the amount of time it takes us to make decisions. When the time is right and the decision is right for us, we'll know what to do.

*TCF Honolulu, Hawaii*



## THE GRIEF OF OLDER PARENTS

It is difficult for society to understand the complexity of the loss of a child, no matter the age. Probably the two least understood

losses are those at either end of the spectrum: the unsuccessful pregnancy, stillbirth or death shortly after birth, and the loss of an adult child. In the first case, they wonder why you grieve for someone they feel you didn't know, and in the second case they think that because the son or daughter no longer lives at home and was no longer a part of your everyday life, with a family of his or her own, perhaps, that the pain of the death shouldn't be so bad. They seem not to understand that your children are a part of your life, for all of your life, no matter how far away they may be.

Someone has reminded us that we do not love our children any more because they have lived long enough for the parents to watch them grow and develop. It is also important to realize that the older children aren't loved any less. You continue to love them and to develop new relationships with them. It is frustrating for older parents to have poured all that time, effort and love into rearing and shaping a child, to have done a good job and had the time to see the end result; to have been able to love and enjoy the decent, worthwhile adult who has emerged, and who is now a part of two relationships, that of parent/child and friend/friend, and now to have lost both of those relationships.

Even if the older child had turned out to be not all the parents had hoped for, who has caused unhappiness with, for example, his alcoholism, the parents are still very much involved in this child's problems and escapades. Worrying about him and being a part of his support system becomes a way of life, and if this child dies, suddenly they are at a loss for a center in their life. They love him, no matter what his shortcomings are, and they grieve for his loss as well.

As parents age, role reversals often develop between them and their children. After years of being responsible, in-charge people, as they go from "What will happen to my children if something happens to me?" to "What will happen to me if something happens to my children?" The child becomes a large part of the older parents; security blanket, and they rely on them for comfort. The parents are reassured, thinking that when either of them dies, a child will be there to care for the one who is left. Imagine a situation where the mother, who is widowed and in her 60's or 70's, and who now relies on her son, in his 40's or 50's, to help with her financial decisions, the upkeep of her home, any problems she may have with her car, among other things. If she has health problems, he will see that she gets the proper medical care and financial assistance if he is able. He may have assured her of a place in his home should the need arise.

Suddenly this child dies. Fear and insecurity become a real part of the mother's life, as though she were a helpless, young child, who parents have died.

Some adult children never leave home. Older, retired parents now find their daily life revolves around the routine comings and goings of this adult child. When he dies, the parents are cast adrift with no anchor, just as surely as parents of younger terminally ill children, after the death. What do you do with all of your time now that the hub of your universe is no longer there? All reasons for functioning seem to disappear.

If there are grandchildren left from this adult child who dies, the grandparents now have to try to maintain a good relationship with the surviving in-law, with the hope that efforts on the part of the son-in-law or daughter-in-law to begin a new life won't include cutting off all relationship with the old life.

Keeping in touch, but not intruding, can be tricky, particularly if there was not an especially good relationship between the grandparents and the in-law before the death. If the grandparents are denied access to their grandchildren, that is another great loss for them. Most parents, no matter what age, will tell you they would have gladly taken their child's place in death, but older parents have inordinate amounts of "survivor guilt" to deal with. "What right do they, who have lived a long, full life, have to be alive when their child is dead?" It should be me," they will tell you with great sadness.

A large part of survival after the death of a child is being able to motivate yourself to reinvest in life. If you aren't able to accomplish this after an appropriate length of time, you don't fare as well as those who can. If most of your life is behind you, as is the case of older parents, they have other losses of family and friends staring them in the face, as well as having to deal with their own mortality. Some of these parents, with age, aren't as mobile as they once were, so it is difficult for them to take advantage of any new interests that are available to them in their effort to survive. Motivation, then, though not impossible, certainly becomes more difficult. Older parents, like younger parents, are told that time will heal. The older parents answer, "But I don't have that much time." Therein lies the larger part of the problem of adjustment and reinvestment.

As you begin to understand the enormity of the loss of older parents, it is once again brought home that there is no good way or ago to lose a child-just different ways and different ages and all of them are hard.

By: Mary Cleckley, Atlanta, GA

## THE CHOICE TO HEAL

By Alvin C. Johnson, Jr.

Several years ago it became apparent to me that I was stuck in “recovering” from my son’s death. Nicholas contracted leukemia in 1986 and battled the disease for nearly three years. Before his death in 1989

Seven years later, in 1996 it seemed there was no place for me to go with the continued feelings of grief—feelings which included sadness, frustration, and guilt. This was not my daily experience, but it came on periodically and occasionally crippled my ability to engage in life and work. While this was taking place I was also studying about family emotional systems process with Rabbi Ed Friedman and so I presented him with this problem. His immediate response was to suggest that I enter more deeply into my family, and somewhere in my family I would find the direction to move so I would no longer be stuck in my grief.

Armed with this conviction, my wife and I headed to Florida in March of 1996 for several days of golf and fun with my parents. In the seven years since Nicholas had died, no one in our circle of family and friends took his death as hard as my parents. They continuously called Zachary, our second son, “Nicholas” and struggled to move forward, themselves, with this tragic loss. My decision was made; I’d talk to my Dad. So on the golf course one day, enjoying the beautiful sunshine and warm temperatures, I shared my struggle with him and asked how he dealt with Nick’s death. His answer surprised me, but also became the cornerstone on which I continue to deal with Nick’s death today. “Son,” he said, “I get up each morning, sit down at my desk, and open the drawer where I have a picture of Nick. I say, ‘you bugger.’ I think of how much I miss him, how grateful I am for him, and then I give him into God’s hands...every day.” His comment afforded me one of those moments in grief recovery where insight leads to deeper healing.

The first insight was this: I was stuck because I held to the belief that grieving has a finish line while we are alive. In reality, the only end to the pain we feel over the death of our children is our own death. The intensity subsides over time, as do other characteristics of grieving, but there is no day on which we can say we are done grieving the death of our children. While we hold to the joyful memories of our children who died, we also hold to the pain of the loss that comes from the fact that they died. Efforts to live outside that pain prove futile and frustrating. Even when you and I have worked our way through the pain to the “other side,” the path we traveled leaves a clear road mark and an indelible imprint on our psychological, intellectual, emotional and spiritual memory.

There is no going back—but there is no finish line either. The experience, with all its emotional components, remains with us all our lives. So, instead of looking for a finish line, I adopted my dad’s strategy and looked at recovery from Nick’s death as a 24-hour experience. There was no knowing what I’d be like

three days, three months or three years from then. In fact, the future looked overwhelming. Instead, I started putting Nick in God’s keeping for another day—and only one day. As I gave Nick to God, so I gave my grief to God, thereby inviting healing. Whether God is or is not in the equation for you, the key for me was realizing recovery was a 24-hour experience and when broken into daily bites became manageable.

The second insight was this: I was stuck because of holding to the belief that acceptance meant that the experience of Nicholas would make rational sense. It didn’t then and it doesn’t now. Nearly 11 years later, the death of a child still does not make sense to me. But the reality of children dying isn’t for me to understand: it is for me to accept. Acceptance does not mean there is a rational explanation for why a child dies nor that I must like the reality. It simply means that the death of a child is a part of life and a part of my life. Acceptance means that the events of this fine boy’s life actually did take place and I was a participant and witness to them. Acceptance means that life has moved on and will continue to move on with or without me. Acceptance means that no, time does not stop when our world comes shattering down from the death of a child. Oh that it would, but it does not. Acceptance is looking back and embracing what happened in order to look forward and move on.

The third insight was this: the fact the picture was in a place that my dad visited every day inspired me to keep pictures of Nicholas in a place where I would remember him every day . . . and enjoy remembering him. We can keep our departed children close through the wonder of photography and other items that remind us of them. My dad struck a unique balance between those who set aside large spaces for remembrance and those who set aside no space for remembrance at all. If needed, he knew where to go in his house to be close to Nick and, therefore, to a package of complete memories. Nick had and still has a place in his emotional and spiritual home. This is highlighted daily by being able to look at his picture. Not only does Nick have a physical space, but also a space in memory. We become unstuck when we structure the means to keep the memory of our departed children close. This varies from person to person, but keeping physical reminders nearby encourages us to keep emotional, spiritual and mental image memories nearby and accessible as well.

The fourth insight was this: gratitude for the life of Nicholas helped muster movement against the forces of being stuck in grief. John Claypool tells a story in his book *Mending the Heart* about the time in his life six weeks after the death of his daughter from leukemia. He could not sleep, got up and went to read the story in Genesis 22 about Abraham and Isaac. As he read the commentary he was amazed to learn that this story of Abraham and Isaac was a story of God reminding Abraham of the gift he had received and from whom the gift came. Claypool says that from that night forward he came to see his daughter’s life, though shorter than he wished, as a gift which

### *Choice to heal-continued from page 5*

he did not deserve and for which he desired to give gratitude. Gratitude is difficult in the midst of feeling cheated and deprived by death. However, gratitude overcomes tremendous pain and can move even the most stuck bereaved parent to new places of recovery and joy.

The final insight was this: healing and recovery call for us to make a decision, to answer the question, "Do I want to get better or not?" One can argue that grief recovery is more complicated than answering this question. But grief recovery concerns the direction we point ourselves day in and day out. If we wish to get better we need to encourage ourselves and point ourselves that way every day; we need to surround ourselves with bereaved parents who have healed and found meaning in life again; we need to realize that no one can point us towards the healing we desire except ourselves. Ironically, the times in our lives when we least feel like making decisions are the times when we need to make them: Seek healing? Stay stuck? Recover? Die ourselves? Sometimes it does come to such simple decisions as these.

When I studied churches that had experienced trauma, those that recovered had one principle characteristic in common: someone stood up and, from a position of leadership said, "We are going to heal and grow from this experience and embrace a new future." Most often the leader said this before knowing what direction recovery would go nor whom would help. They sought, as best they could, to point the ship in a direction that gave them the best chance of re-engaging life; choosing to get better.

Of all the insights given to me by my dad that day, this last one continues to be the most effective. Grief stays with us for a lifetime . . . as long as we have our minds we cannot escape from the experience of what took place. However, each day we can point ourselves towards the vision we hold of recovery and have the faith that one day we will get there.

*Fr. Alvin Johnson has served as an Episcopal Priest for over 20 years. In 1989 he and his wife Vickie became bereaved parents when their first child, Nicholas, died after a long battle with leukemia. Nicholas is survived by a sister Hannah and a brother Zachary. Fr. Johnson currently serves as Rector of St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Barrington, Illinois. He has received his Doctor of Ministry degree in Congregational Studies focusing on the comparisons between how congregations and families recover from trauma. Fr. Johnson has spoken often at Compassionate Friends meetings and was a keynote speaker at the 23rd national TCF conference held in Chicago.*

*We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of  
The Compassionate Friends. ©2000

## **STEPS TO MAKING PROGRESS**

### **ALLOW YOURSELF**

To be imperfect  
Whatever brings you pleasure and a little peace  
To remember your child in whatever way you feel appropriate

### **FORCE YOURSELF**

To keep communication open  
To accept offers of help from family and friends  
To go through the old routines again  
To really listen to your spouse and children  
To try an activity that you use to enjoy

### **CONVINCE YOURSELF**

That every member of the family will and should grieve differently  
That you won't feel dead inside forever  
That confusion about intimacy with your spouse is normal

### **LET YOURSELF**

Off the hook for problems  
Feel the anger  
Feel whatever it is you feel about God  
Treasure your special friends

### **TEACH YOURSELF**

To establish small goals  
Everything you can learn about grief  
To ignore well intentioned, unhelpful comments of others  
To let go of the moment of your child's death  
To embrace the memories of your child

### **TALK TO YOURSELF**

To change the negative ways you think  
About everything

### **FORGIVE YOURSELF**

For not being the most perfect parent  
For all the things you did or did not do

### **FIND YOURSELF**

Now that you have changed into a different person  
Without relying on drugs, alcohol, etc.  
By relying on positive techniques

### **INDULGE YOURSELF**

By being selfish and doing something just for you because you deserve it

### **EXPRESS YOURSELF**

By talking out your feelings  
In a safe atmosphere such as TCF  
Through a new activity

### **FORGET YOURSELF AND GIVE OF YOURSELF**

By seeking out other bereaved parents and others in trouble  
By concentrating on others in pain  
To discover that *We Need Not Walk Alone*  
As a tribute to your friends

®TCF Inc.

## JUST FOR TODAY

Vicki Tushingam

*Just for today* I will try to live through the next 24 hours and not expect to get over my child's death, but instead to learn to live with it one day at a time.

*Just for today* I will remember my child's life, not his death, and bask in the comfort of all those treasured days and moments we shared.

*Just for today* I will forgive all the family and friends who didn't help or comfort me the way I needed them to. They truly did not know how.

*Just for today* I will smile no matter how much I hurt on the inside, for maybe if I smile a little, my heart will soften and I will begin to heal.

*Just for today* I will reach out to comfort a relative or friend of my child, for they are hurting too, and perhaps we can comfort each other.

*Just for today* I will free myself from my self-inflicted burden of guilt, for deep in my heart I know if there were anything in this world I could have done to save my child from death, I would have done it.

*Just for today* I will honor my child's memory by doing something with another child because I know it would have made my child proud.

*Just for today* I will offer my hand in friendship to another bereaved parent, for I do know how they feel.

*Just for today* when my heart feels like breaking, I will stop and remember that grief is the price we pay for loving and the only reason I hurt is because I had the privilege of loving so much.

*Just for today* I will not compare myself with others. I am fortunate to be who I am and to have had my child for as long as I did.

*Just for today* I will allow myself to be happy, for I know that I am not deserting him by living on.

*Just for today* I will accept that I did not die when my child did, my life did go on, and I am the only one who can make that life worthwhile once more.

## AFTER OCTOBER

*And if there be a perfect month,  
for me, it is October...  
With days and nights like laughing fauns,  
with mornings bright and sober.  
When wind will dance in sudden glee  
to do the autumn-sweeping  
Or cloud and fog and wistful rain  
can move a heart to weeping.  
And in October You were born,  
four days before November...  
And four years later you were gone,  
my little son, my only son,  
I love you.  
and remember. . .*

Sascha



## HALLOWEEN

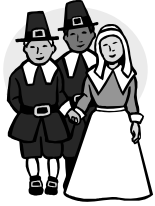
*It is here, this day of merriment and children's  
pleasure.  
Gremlins and goblins and ghosties at the door  
of your house.  
And the other children come to the door of  
your mind.  
Faces out of the past, small ghosts with sweet,  
painted faces.  
They do not shout. Those children who no  
longer march laughing on cold Halloween night  
They stand at the door of your mind- and you  
will let them in, so that you can give them the  
small gifts of Halloween - a smile and a tear.*

From WINTERSUN  
Sascha

## FIRST FAMILY GRIEF

We still miss our Robin. At times Bar and I each find ourselves vividly recalling the beauty and charm of our little girl. Time has not dulled these happy memories at all. *-George Bush, bereaved father*

The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I truly wondered if my own heart and spirit would ever heal... I soon learned that I could help myself best by helping others. It wasn't until Robin died that I truly threw myself into volunteer work. That precious little girl left our family a great legacy: I know George and I care more for every living person because of her. We learned firsthand the importance of reaching out to help because others had reached out to us during that crucial time *- Barbara Bush, bereaved mother*



## AND FOR THIS I GIVE THANKS



I am acutely aware that autumn is here. As I write this, the air coming through my window is crisper and the leaves are taking on the golden and scarlet hues of the season. The shorts and tee shirts, which were the summer mainstay of the neighborhood children, are being replaced by sweats and flannels. Pumpkins are replacing pink flamingos as lawn ornaments. The beauty of nature is at its most spectacular. It is unmistakably here, welcome or not...

This will be my fifth autumn, to be followed by my fifth holiday season without my daughter Nina. I find that I am far enough along in my grief to find memories to smile about now, but still close enough to remember those first few years and the piercing stab of pain in my heart that went along with them. Halloween, with memories of the costume party she threw when she was 10 years old, the major production she made out of what she would wear as a trick-or-treater, and as she got older, her enjoyment in passing out candy to neighborhood goblins. Then came Thanksgiving, one of my favorites. I liked the idea of family and friends gathering together with no other purposes other than eating until you nearly exploded and being thankful for each other and the blessings of the past year. No presents required, just the joy of family togetherness - and the knowledge that my children were here, all of them. On that first Thanksgiving the empty chair and place at the table seemed to scream out at me that someone precious was missing. And the message of this particular holiday was thankfulness? What on earth could I ever find to be thankful for?

Some TCF parents have memories of being unable to choke down any morsel of food because they were continually trying to choke back tears that first Thanksgiving. Just wanting to curl up in a ball, pull the covers over their heads, and wake up some time in January after the last remnants of the holidays were cleared away. In all honesty, I cannot tell you even one detail of that first one: where I spent it, who was present, where I was, if I cried all day. I remember nothing.

I do remember three months after Nina had died, though. On a visit to my neurologist I tearfully told him of my depression over her death. His response to me was "Why don't you count your blessings rather than your sorrows? Think happy thoughts and maybe you won't feel so sad." I, of course, asked him if he had ever lost a child. He had not obviously. Only someone uneducated in the school of grief would say something like that.

Almost five Thanksgiving's later, have I found reasons to be thankful? I asked myself this question and decided to put pen to paper. I was surprised to say the list was quite lengthy, so I will only share a few of them. I am thankful for:

- My loving family, and the welcomed joyful additions in the last few years.

- My memory, because now the painful memories are, more often than not, replaced with the beautiful memories of the past, and they were such beautiful memories.

- My life, for whom else will keep Nina's memory alive? Of course, my family, but they have lives, as they should. I am the self-appointed keeper of my daughter's memory.

- Nina. The joy of loving her, the privilege of being her mother. Though I wish it had been much longer, I wouldn't trade those 15 ½ years for anything. - Smiling a genuine smile, laughing a hardy laugh, and finding my sense of humor again. I sincerely believe that Nina likes to hear me laugh and that she would want me to find humor in life again

. - My sight, because I commented (for the first time in five autumns) on the magnificent colors of the autumn foliage and the grandness of Minnesota's most sumptuous season. I didn't think I'd ever notice again. But I did.

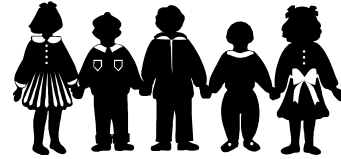
- The Compassionate Friends, who showed me there is life after the death of a child; who allowed me to express my emotions, listened patiently, understood my pain, and welcomed me into their hearts. They helped salvage what remained of my sanity and I will be eternally grateful

. - The opportunity to give back, through TCF meetings and this newsletter. To bring hope to the newly bereaved in the knowledge that it won't always hurt this bad, and that you will make it with the love and support of family and your Compassionate Friends. And, that there will come a time that you too will find things to be thankful for again.

I am told, by those who know, that peace and acceptance are that light we are searching for at the end of the tunnel. Though I find myself still looking for it at times, those further down the grief road have reassured me it will come. Maybe not this Thanksgiving or next, but that it will. And I believe them.

Cathy Seehuetter (Nina's mom) ST. Paul, MN TCF

# Siblings



## Ten Healing Rights for Grieving Children

By Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

*Dr. Wolfelt is a clinical thanatologist and director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition, in Fort Collins, Colorado. This article is reprinted with permission from Bereavement Magazine, 8133 Telegraph Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920-7169, [719] 282-1850.*

**Author's note: This "bill of rights" for grieving children is intended to empower them to help themselves heal – and to help direct the adults in their lives to be supportive as well.**

Someone you love has died. You are probably having many hurtful and scary thoughts and feelings right now. Together those thoughts and feelings are called grief, which is a normal (though really difficult) thing everyone goes through after someone they love has died.

The following ten rights will help you understand your grief and eventually feel better about life again. Use the ideas that make sense to you. Post this list on your refrigerator or on your bedroom door or wall. Re-reading it often will help you stay on track as you move toward healing from your loss. You might also ask the grown-ups in your life to read this list so they will remember to help you in the best way they can.

- 1. I have the right to have my own unique feelings about the death.** I may feel mad, sad, or lonely. I may feel scared or relieved. I may feel numb or sometimes not anything at all. No one will feel exactly like I do.
- 2. I have the right to talk about my grief whenever I feel like talking.** When I need to talk, I will find someone who will listen to me and love me. When I don't want to talk about it, that's okay, too.
- 3. I have the right to show my feelings of grief in my own way.** When they are hurting, some kids like to play so they'll feel better for awhile. I can play or laugh, too. I might also get mad and scream. This does not mean I am bad, it just means I have scary feelings that I need help with.
- 4. I have the right to need other people to help me with my grief, especially grown-ups who care about me.** Mostly I need them to pay attention to what I am feeling and saying and to love me no matter what.
- 5. I have the right to get upset about normal, everyday problems.** I might feel grumpy and have trouble getting along with others sometimes.
- 6. I have the right to have "griefbursts."** Griefbursts are sudden, unexpected feelings of sadness that just hit me sometimes – even long after the death. These feelings can be very strong and even scary. When this happens, I might feel afraid to be alone.

**7. I have the right to use my beliefs about my God to help me deal with my feelings of grief.** Praying might make me feel better and somehow closer to the person who died.

**8. I have the right to try to figure out why the person I loved died.** But it's okay if I don't find an answer. "Why" questions about life and death are the hardest questions in the world.

**9. I have the right to think and talk about my memories of the person who died.** Sometimes those memories will be happy, and sometimes they might be sad. Either way, these memories help me keep alive my love for the person who died.

**10. I have the right to move toward and feel my grief and, over time, to heal.** I'll go on to live a happy life, but the life and death of the person who died will always be a part of me. I'll always miss this special person.

### Reflections

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations: that life isn't always fair or predictable; that sometimes even my best still isn't good enough; and that from the day of her death, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness. Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts. As a result of my sister's death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor and to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss. I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the rough times. But most of all, I have been given the gift of time – time to heal and time to replace those painful memories of death with priceless memories of my sister's life.

Cathy Schanberger from  
***This Healing Journey -  
An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings***  
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## WHEN SOMEONE TAKES HIS OWN LIFE

by Norman Vincent Peale

In many ways, this seems the most tragic form of death. Certainly it can entail more shock and grief for those who are left behind than any other. And often the stigma of suicide is what rests most heavily on those left behind.....

And my heart goes out to those who are left behind, because I know that they suffer terribly. Children in particular are left under a cloud of differentness all the more terrifying because it can never be fully explained or lifted. The immediate family of the victim is left wide open to tidal waves of guilt: "What did I fail to do that I should have done? What did I do that was wrong?" To such grieving persons I can only say,

Lift up your heads and your hearts. Surely you did your best. And surely the loved one who is gone did his best, for as long as he could. Remember, now, that his battles and torments are over. Do not judge him, and do not presume to fathom the mind of God where this one of His child is concerned."

A few years ago, when a young man died by his own hand, a service for him was conducted by his pastor, the Rev. Weston Stevens. What he said that day expresses far more eloquently than I can, the message that I'm trying to convey. Here are some of his words: "Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage and his strength. At last these adversaries overwhelmed him. And it appeared that he had lost the war. But did he? I see a host of victories that he has won!

For one thing, he has won our admiration, because even if he lost the war, we give him credit for his bravery on the battlefield. And we give him credit for the courage and pride and hope that he used as his weapons as long as he could. We shall remember not his death, but his daily victories gained through his kindnesses and thoughtfulness, through his love for family and friends, for animals and books and music, for all things beautiful, lovely and honorable. We shall remember not his last day of defeat, but we shall remember the many days that he was victorious over overwhelming odds. We shall remember not the years we thought he had left, but the intensity with which he lived the years that he had. Only God knows what this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul. But our consolation is that God does know, and understands.

## NOT A MATTER OF CHOICE

Our son Keith was 29 years old when he decided to end his life by suicide in 1999. *Suicide* is a frightening word, and it is not only ignorance but fear and stigma that keep people from understanding why someone would take their life. In a way it is easier to think that a person made a "choice," freeing us from knowing the truth.

The word *choice* continues to perpetuate the stigma of suicide. The definition of *choice* is "the freedom in choosing, both in the way one chooses and in the number of possibilities from which to choose." In a presuicidal state, an individual is overwhelmed in a given situation. They suffer extreme mental anguish and a painful sense of hopelessness. Their sense of judgment is distorted, and they usually do not have the ability to make 'choices' or options. They usually want to kill the pain rather than themselves.

Suicidal people may be unable to restrain themselves from acting on feelings or impulses. The strong impulse to end the pain is often due to depletion of the chemical called serotonin. It is a chemical within the brain that helps control impulsive behavior.

There is no suffering greater than that which drives people to suicide. Suicide defines the moment in which mental pain exceeds the human capacity to bear it. It represents the abandonment of hope," say John T. Maltzberger, M.D., past president of the American Society of Suicidology, practicing psychiatrist and teacher at Harvard Medical School.

Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in the USA and the second leading causes of death for those ages 25-34. About 30,000 of the 65,000 Americans who attempt suicide each year die, Suicide is almost always the result of depression, an illness of the brain.

We can only imagine the horrible mental torture our son Keith endured. Depression is one of the most terrible and pervasive illnesses of our day. In 1999 the Surgeon General of the United States listed suicide as a national public crisis. We live in a world where people hang on to old stereotypes. In order to stop future loss of lives by suicide, we must make certain to take advantage of any opportunity to encourage greater awareness. In that goal, we can make great strides to ensure that these stereotypes cease to persist

Carol Loehr, TCF Heart of Florida

Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*

### LOVE GIFTS

A love gift is a living memorial to our child. Usually given on anniversaries, holidays etc. but any contributions would be welcome at any time. Since there is no charge for newsletters and meetings, we solely depend on donations to purchase books, brochures and keep the chapter running. They are tax deductible. **A wonderful way to remember your child is to sponsor either the printing or mailing costs of a newsletter. If you are interested please contact either Rick Mirabile or Martha Berman.**

#### In Memory Of

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dates \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Message \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Mail to  
Compassionate Friends  
147 North Street  
Hingham, MA 02043

### **PAINFUL PLEASURE**

*It hurts so much to remember  
But to relive those moments again  
Is the closest I come to pleasure  
Yet it's not very different from pain*

*Then why hold so hard to memories  
That are painful and make me upset?  
If I let myself stop hurting  
I'm afraid that I will forget*

Richard Dew from Rachael's Cry

*The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face us with the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.*  
—Henri Nouwen

### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Sara Marmo, mother of **Michael Joseph Marmo**  
Ilona Quinn, grandmother of **Brian MacIver**  
David & Sally Porter, parents of **Gregory Kelly Porter**  
John Feeney, father of **Christina Mary Feeney**  
Amy Moore, mother of **Tracy Harriette Davidson**

**We thank the following individuals for their support. It is deeply appreciated.**

James & Joan Carlton, in loving memory of **John W. Terrio**

Eleanor Burns, in loving memory of **Mark T. Burns**—“We love and miss you more each day, Love Mom, Lyn, Brenda & Colman

Mr. & Mrs. James Spataro, in loving memory of **Angel Spataro**

Kathryn Lysakowski, in loving memory of **Garrett Lysakowski, Patricia Lynch and Mark Lysakowski**—“My three angels”

Gilda Peruzzi, in loving memory of **Vincent Peruzzi** on his fourth anniversary (8/13/08)



### **What A Strange Time Is Autumn**

*What a strange time is autumn  
More than a season  
Autumn can be like a mood.  
Softness and warmth and abundance  
Drift from the sky like a smile  
And you remember the seasons  
before the children died*

*They do seem far away sometimes,  
Those seasons, now.  
But not the children— they are always here  
In this strange time, this autumn  
When the softness  
And the warmth  
And the abundance  
Of unseen children  
Drift from the sky like a smile*

Sascha

**SOUTH SHORE CHAPTER  
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS  
147 NORTH STREET  
HINGHAM, MA. 02043**

***TO OUR NEW MEMBERS***

*Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether it will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you will find just the right person—or just the right words said that will help you in your grief.*



***TO OUR OLD MEMBERS***

*We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK...what it would have been like for you if there had been no “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief, and encourage you? It was from them that you heard “your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer”*