



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

TUCSON CHAPTER
P.O. BOX 30733
TUCSON, AZ 85751-0733
(520) 721-8042

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
P.O. BOX 3696
OAK BROOK IL 60522
Toll-free (877) 969-0010

Websites: *Chapter:* www.tucsontcf.org

National: www.compassionatefriends.org

January 2010

WALKING THIS VALLEY—Tucson Chapter VOL. 26, NO. 01

TUCSON CHAPTER MEETINGS

Catalina United Methodist Church
2700 E. Speedway Room H-232
7:00 —9:00 PM

January 13, 2010

January 27, 2010

February 10

February 24

FACING THE PUBLIC

In the first year after losing our child or sibling, we seem to be navigating in “un-charted waters.” The person we were is gone, and we are forever trying to figure out how to maneuver our “new” selves in this new reality.

Now we are always trying to determine what we should do in various situations: The simplest questions—“How are you?”; “How many children do you have?”; or telling a hostess at a restaurant how many will be seated at your table—can become emotional dilemmas.

How do we respond? As bereaved parents/siblings, we also have the challenges that relate to family members, friends, and the workplace at a time when we are most vulnerable. We keep asking ourselves: “How do I cope with this?”

You are not a alone. You will find that most group members have faced similar situations and share your frustrations.

This month, we will address these and other questions you may find difficult to handle.

*Suggested by Linda Cressner, Program Coordinator,
Los Angeles Chapter, TCF*

MY CIRCLE OF HEARTS

By Pat (www.missfoundation.org)

MISSING Angels Newsletter

July/August 2009

I was privileged to have nine children, of which only one remains. It has been a long winding road for thirty-four years.

Before I talk about losing my children and how I dealt with them, you need to know that I suffer from Compound Grief. This started when I was 16, after witnessing my cousin’s tragic death. This would set me up for how I would deal with grief for the next 38 years: I DIDN’T! It was much easier for me to stuff it under the rug and move on. I was very stoic, not allowing myself to feel the pain, the grief, the loss or the abandonment. I just went through the motions. I blocked out my emotions and feelings. I retreated into my intellect to hide from my feelings. I didn’t trust my feelings. I was afraid of them because they’re unstable. There has been such a tight lid on my mind that some of my emotions have never been allowed to develop. I feel that my mind has prevented me from feeling my emotions. My uncle was the undertaker who handled all my children’s deaths, but in my eyes at that time it was just seeing kids in boxes.

During a session with my therapist around 2006, I had a breakthrough! It was a major pivotal point for me that finally opened me up to be able to deal with all my children’s deaths. We did a ritual for each one of them to validate their short lives, to help me grieve, and to move on. All of which I have never done before.

So now we start to remove the lumps from under the rug.

1974...My daughter Teresa came into the world still-born.

1978...My son Christopher was born, only to die 7 months later from complications from pneumonia.

1980...My daughter Kathleen was born. She died 3

(Continued on page 4)

Welcome

All bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult siblings are welcome at our support group meetings. You will find a place of comfort, caring people, and most of all - HOPE. Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and much to gain. We urge you to give it a try. For many it is the first real step toward healing. Although it may seem overwhelming, we encourage you to come to several meetings to give yourself a chance to become comfortable. We are not professional counselors. We are bereaved families who want to help each other. Please join us as we heal together.

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Feel free to call **(520) 721-8042**. A member will contact you. We can put you in contact with members who have experienced similar losses: auto accidents, infant death, suicide, murder, unknown, etc.

Visit our WEBSITE at:
www.tucsontcf.org

Chapter Steering Committee

Chapter Co-Leaders:
Sal Cataudella & Kathie Davis

- Editors*.....Sam & Phyllis Turner
- Contributing Editors*.....Sara Moore & Caroline Dodge
- Outreach*.....Karen Bailey
- Corresponding Secretary*.....Pam Zarte
- Database Coordinator*.....Noelle Rohen
- New Attendee Coordinator* Cindy Walter
- Library*..... Guy Walter
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Facilitators: Noelle Rohen, Scott & Kathy Parfrey, Kevin Trapp, Maureen & Carl Luikart, Kathie Davis, Carol & Larry Tilton, Sam & Phyllis Turner, Audrey Kibble, Sal Cataudella

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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Chandler, AZ

If you would like someone to receive a copy of this newsletter, call (520) 721-8042.

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Bring Funeral Homes, 236 S. Scott Avenue Tucson, Arizona 85701 For partial underwriting our World Wide Candle Lighting Service.

TO OUR "COOKIE & TREAT PROVIDERS"

Or fruit or veggies:

(Two volunteers per meeting, please!)

Remember to sign the COOKIE SHEET.

January 13	Luikart	Sal Cataudella
January 27	Pam Owens	Carol Tilton

Feb 10:	Bev Waldenson	HELP!
Feb 24:	HELP!	HELP!

Love Gifts are a way of remembering your child and supporting your local Chapter.

Thank you to all who contribute and support . Checks should be made payable to The Compassionate Friends, Tucson Chapter, and mailed to **TCF, P.O. Box 30733, Tucson, AZ 85751.** (Please designate: RENT, PHONE, or PRINTING.)

Check with your employer how you can donate to The Compassionate Friends through non-profit payroll deduction.
Carl & Sue Snapp in memory of **Hal Personius**
Lorraine Richardson in memory of **Nikki S. Packard**

**What the caterpillar
calls the end,
the rest of the world
calls a butterfly.**

Lao Tzu

**THIS MIGHT HELP
BY
Sam & Phyllis Turner**

I finally saw my interview from ABC news after the candle lighting. The question (that you didn't hear) went something like this: "It must be exciting to see such a great turn-out."

That prompted my rather somber answer (part of which you heard): "None of us want to be here. Each candle represents the death of a child or sibling."

Thanks to Maureen, Carl, Kathie, Noelle, Kathy, Scott, Larry, Julee, all the readers and folks who helped with the candle lighting.

It may seem impossible, but, somehow, you made it through the holidays! For some, this was your first holiday season without your child.

We offer members our love and support. You will find that listening to the stories and participating in the small group sharing does help.

The meetings will be hard at first. They were for us, too. But Phyllis (wisely) said, "Will we feel any better if we stay home?"

After a few *months* we began to look forward to the sessions. By the end of the second year, we were volunteering our time.

"It takes *that* long?"

Yes...it takes a lifetime, I'm sorry to say.

Rather than wishing you a happy New Year, Phyllis and I wish you the strength, the fortitude to continue each day. We hope that small bits of your grief or anger will dissolve in the morning sunrise; that beauty will be found in each sunset; that love of life will once again visit you as you walk this valley.

**In love and light.
Sam and Phyllis Turner,
Rob's parents.**

**Happy New Year????
Betty Ewart, Editor
BP/USA Greenbrier Valley, WV**

Some of you are probably thinking, "How can I possibly have a happy new year?" The first year or two it is hard to face another year starting without our beloved child, grandchild or sibling. We may have somehow gotten through Christmas and all the festivities that it offered but another whole year??

We used to make resolutions – most of which were not kept or only kept for a few weeks. Now our best resolution is just to keep going for another year. A resolution to have a better year if not a happy one is a start. After a few years we begin to look to what we might do with the New Year that is offered us. This is a year that our loved one will never know but one we can make a part of his/her life. We often hear that it is not so much what happens to us as what we do about it.

Maybe this is the year to start a volunteer activity in memory of our loved one. Groups who work with abused children or needy children are always looking for someone with some love to give to a child who desperately needs it. How proud your child, grandchild or brother or sister would be to know that you are making another child's life easier in their name. And you will find that it gives you a reason to get up each day and maybe to even welcome a New Year.

**Friendship is born at that
Moment when one person says
To another,
"What!! You too?
I thought I was the only one!"
C.S. Lewis
(After the death of his wife)**

(Continued from page 1)

months later from SIDS.

1985...My son Nickolas came into the world. He died 8 months later from a brain aneurism, in my arms while I was feeding him.

1995...We welcomed our twins Michael and Martha into our hearts. They died shortly after their third birthday in a car accident. This also claimed my husband Tony's life.

My son Tony Jr. died on 9/11/2001 in the Twin Towers. He was 25 years old. This one was harder to deal with because they never recovered his body, so there was no real closure. It wasn't until 2006 that I finally was able to do a memorial service for him in New York. I buried his teddy bear to bring some kind of closure. I also attended the dedication of the 9/11 memorial here in Arizona. This was a major undertaking for me because I was finally able to feel the pain, the grief, the loss, the hurt. Hearing them call his name, the bag pipes and the F-16's fly over just brought it all home. I finally allowed myself to feel my grief for the first time.

The hardest one for me to deal with was the recent death of my son Andy, who died in August 2007 from complications stemming from 9/11. He was 32. What makes this one different is that I'm finally experiencing the grief as its happening and it hurts like hell. I got to spend some time with him in New York last summer, prior to his surgery to remove his lung and untimely death. Though I wasn't with him when he died, I had the opportunity to talk to him hours before he died, to let him know how proud I was of him, to give him my love and my blessing to let go. I finally experienced the whole death thing by staying in the moment and allowing myself to feel for the first time. This also brought closure - something I never had with any of my other children.

I hope my story will inspire and encourage you. I want you to know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. You can get through it in spite of all the detours along the way. You need to hold on just a little bit longer!

Believe me, I've had many detours as I make my way through the tunnel, but I'm finally beginning to see the light in the far distance (hope it's not the train). I just have to keep stepping out in faith knowing that someday I'll make it through! God has continuously held my hand and brought me through all of these trials. He's shown me how to "Turn my messes into blessings," something I am now working through in a grief ministry that I feel I've

been well qualified.

Yes, my soul cries for the ones I have lost.

I remember the times I shared...

The fun times, the quiet times, the sad times, and the thoughtful times.

Yes, my heart cries, for their lives cut short.

I remember what they gave...

The laughter, the tears, the hopes, & the fears.

Yes, I cry for the loss of my loved ones.

But I celebrate, for they have lived!

To all who have lost a child recently, my prayers are with you because it's the worst pain anyone can ever feel. But remember the fog does lift slowly and you will resume your life again, even though it will never be the same. May we remember them with love and joy and not so much pain. May we learn lessons from these experiences. Everyone says it takes time, but I've never been away from my kids this long before. Until we can be with our family again, may God grant us peace.

September 27, 2008 Seminar

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY CHILD'S THINGS?

Some of us keep our child's room just as it was before the death. We don't want anything touched or moved.

Some of us find solace in giving things away to close friends or relatives. Knowing that someone we love is wearing our child's clothes or playing with his toys brings us comfort.

Some of us find that we can deal with only a few items at a time: clothes one month; books another; toys, perhaps a few months later.

Don't rush into something you may regret, later.

Editor's note: *Yes: This advice has been in Walking This Valley before. But, unfortunately, new members may not have seen it.*

Have you visited the on-line **MEMORIAL PAGE?** We now have over thirty-seven names listed.

“Forever in my Heart” wristbands are in! They are \$3.00 each or two for \$5.00. If you are unable to come to meetings and would like to order some, send a check to:

The Compassionate Friends,
TUCSON CHAPTER
P.O. BOX 30733
TUCSON, AZ
85751-0733

WE GET LETTERS:

Thank you for remembering and including me in your newsletter. I will be lighting my candle on that day @ 7 p.m. The anniversary of Ronnie's death is just around the corner and I am starting to pull into myself. One moment I feel fine and the next I feel like someone kicked me in the stomach. I know that you and others who have lost a child know that feeling and somehow that helps. It helps knowing that I am not alone. Maybe next year I can join you at the candle lighting ceremony -- I would enjoy being with all of you.

You are always in my thoughts. Please take care and hold tight to each other especially now in the holiday season.

Love,

Karen

Dear Compassionate Friends:

When I first came to your meetings I didn't think that I would be able to smile again. I expected to never laugh either. As a matter of fact when I first caught myself laughing out loud, not only did I feel some guilt, I was surprised that I had not forgotten to make the sound of laughter.

Anyway, thank you for being there.

May God Bless you.

Sincerely,

Donna J. Watson

PS: My son Dellvon Watson passed on September 7, 2006, the absolutely worst day of my life!

Donna Watson,
Tucson TCF

Kristen GREEN, Marie GREEN, Ceddera GRIGGS, Janise ROBLES, Jose ROBLES, Merle STOLAR, Donna WATSON

Your name tags are ready at the sign-in table.

Hi Everyone,

The Candle lighting service was beautiful and so important for the newly bereaved families and for the old timers, like Dick and me. I was deeply moved by the readings, by Julee's angelic voice and the songs she sang, and especially by watching each person light their child's candle. Even though we couldn't hear all the voices, I know each person sent a message of love to their child as they lit their candle. And that is why we do what we do! Thank you for making my night so special and for sharing your love and support with the hundreds of grieving people in the audience.

Thank you Maureen (and I know Carl was right by her side) for organizing a beautiful service. So many people thanked me as they left the park and wanted me to pass along their gratitude to the people responsible. So I'm passing along 300+ thank yous to you Maureen!

Happy Holidays to all!
Kathie Davis

Dear TCF family,

I left in a hurry to attend the last few minutes of a dear friend's 50th wedding anniversary party, so I didn't have time to thank the many people that helped to put together this beautiful record breaking attendance program. Thank you. A special thank you to the volunteers that came from the Homicide Survivors. The hot chocolate was really appreciated.

Julee Gell was wonderful! She also came up with some great suggestions for helping us communicate. We hope she will join us next year. It takes a team of volunteers to set up a candle lighting event. We know that our efforts honor our children, and siblings. We are thankful for talented people.

Once again we all had an opportunity to light a candle and say the name of the one we love. It's a new tradition. We have our lifetime to practice remembering.

Maureen
Ken's Mom

Sibling Page

WHEN A BROTHER OR SISTER DIES

Looking Back, Moving Forward

By Claire Berman

Reviewed by Karen Snepp

For several years, author Claire Berman has written about the emotional dimensions of family relationships. Perhaps none of that writing was more personally relevant than her most recent book, *When a Brother or Sister Dies: Looking Back, Moving Forward*.

Berman's own sister Sybil died from heart disease, bringing great empathy to this well-constructed book. Through interviews with both professionals and other bereaved siblings, Berman covers a wide range of topics surrounding sibling grief.

The book is organized by grief-related topics, making it easy to pick up and read and sections most meaningful to the reader's situation. Included among the 15 chapters are discussions of the circumstances of the death (e.g., death by suicide), The family situation (e.g., difficult sibling relationships), and life following the sibling's death (e.g., support groups, rituals).

Berman's frequent incorporation of quotes from surviving siblings helps to normalize the reader's grief, much like hearing about someone else's experience during a TCF chapter meeting. It is likely that each reader will find a comforting or helpful quote in the book, such as this one in the chapter "The Rewards of Ritual," from a woman whose sister died two weeks before the family gathering for the Passover holiday:

Everyone in the family would be coming to my house for the holiday...and I knew it would be difficult. I had read something in a popular magazine

about kids writing on tablecloths...So I put down a tablecloth and some Sharpie permanent marker pens and I told my family that I wasn't setting the table until each of them wrote something.

In the same chapter, Berman shares her own family tradition of ending each Thanksgiving dinner with a rousing rendition of "Over the river and through the woods" because her sister Sybil had always requested that song.

In the chapter "Continuing the Connections," Berman writes about the many ways in which survivors stay connected to their siblings, including Larry, who kept one of his brother's favorite sweaters: When I wear David's sweater, I feel as if he still has his arm around my shoulder. A day doesn't go by without my thinking of him.

With its straightforward title and its coverage of so many topics relevant to adult bereaved siblings, *When a Brother or Sister Dies* would make a great addition to any TCF chapter resource library.

Karen Snepp is one of the many bereaved siblings interviewed for this book. Karen's brother Dave died from cancer in 1988 at the age of 32. A longtime TCF member and volunteer, she was TCF's national president from 1996 to 1998, the first and only sibling to serve in that capacity.

From: We Need Not Walk Alone, Autumn 2009; p. 11

NOTE: *When a Brother or Sister Dies* is on order for our Chapter library. Look for it. - ed.

**Grief only becomes
A tolerable and creative experience
When love enables it
To be shared with
Someone who really understands.**

*Rev. Simon Stephens
Founder of The Compassionate Friends*

I FORGIVE ...

By Debbie Ortega

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

- I forgive myself for not forgiving the people that caused my daughter's death. Some things are just not "forgivable," and she would understand.
- I forgive others for sharing their "miracles" with me, not understanding how cruelly this attacks my heart, as I wonder where my daughter's miracle was.
- I forgive others for not understanding me. I don't understand anything anymore, so I can't expect others to understand me either.
- I forgive myself for not being able to do all of the things I used to be able to do. I don't function as well as I used to, and that's okay.
- I forgive others for continuing to live in that other world where I once lived with my daughter. It's a good world, and I miss it a lot.
- I forgive myself for no longer fitting into that world and not always being able to fake it. I am different now.
- I forgive others for avoiding me. They don't know what to say and, quite frankly, that leaves me with nothing to say to them either.
- I forgive my daughter for leaving me. She loved life and she loved me. I believe she loves me still.

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

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

CONSIDERING LOSS

"There is loss and suffering every day on this planet we call Earth. If we allow ourselves to tune in to the "pain of global grief," we see that loss and grief are a natural part of the human condition. We lose "five minutes in traffic," we lose "the sun at the end of the day," we lose "our footing," and oops, I just lost my train of thought!"

Grief is the most available untapped emotional resource for personal transformation.

I experience a sense of purpose and find meaning doing the *Degriefing*© work in my sister Donna's honor.

It keeps her alive in my heart as her love and wisdom guide me from within."

Remembering your beautiful smile and with deep appreciation I thank you forever...

*Your loving Sister,
Lyn*

Lyn Prashant, MA, CT, CMT, is the Founder and Training Director of the process called "Degriefing©" Lyn is an internationally recognized professional grief counselor, engaging lecturer, published author, and therapeutic massage therapist/teacher specializing in transforming grief by using grief as "the most available untapped, emotional resource for personal transformation." Lyn was recently featured on the Open to Hope Foundation radio show, Healing the Grieving Heart on October 22, 2009, now available in archives at <http://www.voiceamericapd.com>. She teaches at the May Clinic, U.C. Berkeley, California Pacific Medical Center. She can be reached at www.degriefing.com.

THE TCF CREDO: We Need Not Walk Alone

We are *The Compassionate Friends*. We reach out to each other with love, understanding and hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds and relationships. We are young; we are old. Some of us are far along in our a grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of *The Compassionate Friends*, it is pain we will share just as we share with each other our love for our children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts and help each other grieve as well as to grow. **WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS!**

TCF MISSION

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.

OTHER TUCSON SUPPORT GROUPS

Listed are some local support groups besides *The Compassionate Friends*. In addition to these organizations, Tucson has a number of general grief support groups.

Information & Referral Services.....325-2111

Arizona SIDS Alliance.....800-597-SIDS

Survivors Of Suicide.....323-9373

Homicide Survivors, Inc740-5729

FOOTPRINTS - Pregnancy and Infant loss 873-6590

AGAST (Alliance of Grandparents,),888-774-7437

Tu Nidito/Children to Children322-9155

Alive Alone for (now) childless parents,

www.alivealone.org

MISS FOUNDATION www.missfoundation.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Tucson, AZ 85751-0733

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THE TUCSON CHAPTER



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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