

A non-profit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the loss of a child

**MONTHLY MEETING
INFORMATION**

**3rd Tuesday of the month
7:30 P.M.**

555 Northgate Dr.

First floor

**Terra Linda, San Rafael
(across the street from Sears)**

Directions exit Freitas Parkway west from 101. Make 1st available left turn, then another immediate left. Follow past the Northgate Shopping Center to a right on Northgate Dr. For more info, call Genesse Gentry at 415/457-3123. Please call prior to your first meeting, so that you might meet with the facilitator before the meeting begins.



Alternate site in San Francisco:

Parents: Community Meeting Room/Taravel Police Station at 2345-24th Ave. (near Taravel) in S.F. on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm. For information, call Audre at 650/359-7928 or alhallum@comcast.net.

Adult Siblings: Not meeting as a group at this time. Former Co-facilitators Elise Noland at eliseln@yahoo.com and Caitlin Fager at cfager@gmail.com are available for your questions and concerns.

Trails of Tears to Healing Hearts:
A Review of the 2007 Conference in Oklahoma

It is at the urging of our Chapter Leader (Solano County, CA) that I made the opportunity to go to a TCF National Conference happen.

I will forever be grateful to her and have come away from this event with a lighter heart and a hope for what the future holds for me. I am in the first two years of bereavement after losing my youngest son, David. As you well know, these first two years have been the toughest I ever want to experience.

To go from the extreme pain of the initial loss to the numbness which followed for that first year into the reality of the second year and the acceptance of the finality of this loss. I felt that the future held no life in it, no hope, no love. Although I have been to the monthly chapter meetings, have experienced two December Candle lighting events (which now replace all Christmas traditions I can no longer enjoy), and have met some wonderful new friends, this conference has helped me towards those necessary steps that may help me to get on with the rest of my life without David in it.



From the first to the last moments of my experience at this event, I was surrounded in love, understanding, and acceptance. TCF surpassed itself with its organization of every thing to make an environment that was comfortable, safe and reassuring for us first timers and newly bereaved parents. There were fellow parents-in-grief who had volunteered their time to be on hand to be sure we found our workshops, were ready to answer any questions and were there to support and share the tears that were always just under the surface. We truly Never Walked Alone this weekend.

There were so many workshops on a variety of subjects related to our new life as it is; it was difficult picking the ones I wanted. In the workshop "The first Two Years" I learned that I was not alone in what I had and still am experiencing. In the workshop "Long Term", I learned that there is hope ahead for the future and that the severity of these intense emotions will soften. I also learned that I could put things in place so that David will never be forgotten. In another workshop, I learned about the difference between the old "Normal" and the "New Normal" that is now my future. I can see the sense in whom I have become and what I can do to go on, rebuilding on the shattered dreams. While at this conference I no longer felt the strain of being around people who don't "Get It". I was among fellow parents-in-grief, who shared

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Vesta Thompson
Solano County, CA
TCF Chapter

*Little by little, step by
step
I learned that I didn't
need
to hold onto the death
to remember the life*

*What a joyous
discovery!*

*South Suburban Chi-
cago TCF Chapter
August Newsletter*

Conference, cont'd. from p. 1

opportunities to "tell David's story" and to share my feelings, thoughts, and pain and not feel uncomfortable.

The Opening Ceremonies, the Friday banquet luncheon, the Saturday evening dinner, and the Closing ceremonies offered speakers and music artists, all of whom were fellow parents-in-grief who had found words to express their stories of grief and give their messages of hope. The opportunity to meet and listen to the Founding Father of TCF, Father Stephens, was incredible. The Candle Lighting ceremony held on Saturday evening was especially moving for me, for when I began crying there was someone to hold me and share my tears. The Walk to Remember was a truly unforgettable experience. It was like being in one very large group hug walking those 2 miles with a finish where we fell into each other's arms for hugs for our accomplishment and shared tears. We all experienced miracles along this route: from a heart in a shop window which was formed by condensation and appeared to have cracks in it; to the bombing site memorial with its green lawns, water features, and 169 bronze chairs, large and small; to the care and concern of the police officers blocking the street for our march. The closing ceremony brought us all together and gave us completion after three days of intense feelings and exhaustive trials. Here again, the speaker, another parent in grief who had lost his only daughter in the Oklahoma bombing, shared his story and message of hope, and the closing music sent us on our way.

Please, join us next year when the TCF National conference is held from July 18 thru 20, 2008 in Nashville, Tennessee. You will be in store for the most wonderful and healing experience since you entered this "New Normal" life. See you there.

~ Vesta Thompson, David's Mom, Solano County, CA Chapter

Not Afraid To Go There, Even If Your Are Afraid To Go There

Before Christmas, I had a conversation with one of my dear friends. We talked about what healing might be. I said that I thought healing for me was not being afraid of going there. Going there is the process of going back to the event, the issues and emotions surrounding the death of your child. It is not about dwelling on them or living in the past. It is not about being consumed by them. It is simply acknowledging them when they come up in our daily lives.

You know how when we were little and went to the beach, we ran from the waves as they came upon the shore. It was a little scary and if we had someone bigger than we were who stood by us when the waves came, we stood with them and held tight as the waves washed over us. Then, we were not afraid. And we let the waves come and wash over us. Going there is like standing still and letting the wave of what ever it is, wash over us. At first, you might just get your toes wet. Let the wave wash over your feet. Then brush against your ankles, and then your legs. It sounds simple, but it takes practice and listening to your heart.

Almost eight years have passed since Jake's death. I have gained a lot of experience listening to my heart and standing in the waves. There is an issue surrounding my son's death that is still a very hard place for me to go to. And that is the fact that he was an alcoholic and all the painful issues surrounding that. At work, I was asked to help write a grant for tobacco education. I thought, "No sweat". The curriculum they wanted to write into the grant is called, "Project Alert". It is a substance abuse prevention program, including information and issues about alcohol as well as tobacco. I felt myself wanting to run as this wave came toward me. I didn't even want to get my feet wet. I argued with myself, "Why do I have to go there? I would be very happy the rest of my life if I never had to go there; if I just ran small grief groups and never dealt with the alcohol issue". I was afraid, afraid of that darn pain. And I out ran the wave, not even getting my toes wet.

The interesting thing about all this is that these issues keep coming up like the waves of the ocean that keep slapping onto shore. Yesterday, as I walked the dogs down to the spring, the alcohol issue came up again in my thinking. This time, I became curious about

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Q. *Can the death of a child cause PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder)?*

A. “ABSOLUTELY!” The essential feature of this disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor. What could be more extreme for parents than the death of their child? This is the greatest nightmare of any parent.

In this article I will identify the criteria needed to make this diagnosis and in the next newsletter, I will address ways parents can be helped. For grieving parents, PTSD can be especially severe when the death of their child was of human design, as in murder or suicide. This disorder can occur at any age including childhood and can develop in individuals without any predisposing conditions.

The bible for mental health clinicians is the DSM-IV. The criteria that validates this diagnosis in a bereaved parent is:

A. (1) The death of one’s child as experienced by the parent is considered a traumatic event and (2) due to the death, the parent has experienced intense fear, helplessness, or horror. In children this may be expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior.

B. The trauma of the death is persistently reexperienced in one (or more) of the following ways: (1) Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event. In young children, repetitive play may occur where themes or aspects of the death are acted out. (2) Distressing dreams and with children this may occur without recognizable content. (3) Flashbacks of the event including a sense of reliving the experience. (4) Intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that resemble the death. (5) Physiological reactivity when exposed to these cues.

C. Avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and a general numbing of responsiveness that wasn’t experienced before the child’s death that includes three or more of the following: (1) Avoidance of thoughts, feelings or conversations associated with death. (2) Avoidance of activities, places or people associated. (3) Inability to recall an important aspect of the death. (4) Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities. (5) Feelings of detachment or estrangement (6) A restricted range of affect (e.g. unable to have loving feelings). (7) A sense of a foreshortened future.

D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal that includes two or more of the following: (1) Sleep difficulties. (2) Irritability or anger outbursts. (3) Difficulty concentrating. (4) Hypervigilance. (5) Exaggerated startle response.

E. Duration of the disturbances in B, C, and D last more than one month.

F. The disturbances cause significant distress in areas of functioning from social to career.

Not Afraid *cont’d. from p. 2*

why I was running. And I stopped and faced the wave. I thought about all the hard times with Jake. And I cried. And I said, “This is really painful; this really hurts.” And I thought about all of us family members who share this pain, and then I thought about all the alcoholics who share this pain, also. And I wished for no one else to suffer with this pain. And as I thought that, a light bulb went off. What would Jake want me to do? Would he want me to speak out about our experiences? And I just let that settle back into my heart, knowing that when the time is right, I will speak out willingly and not be afraid.

Going there and finding meaning in those issues is, for me, what healing is all about. It happens, not always in a flash of lightning, but in getting your feet wet a little at a time. If you were always afraid of the waves, you could never turn around and see the beauty of the ocean.

Your Compassionate Friend, *Robin Correll, Editor, So. Humboldt, CA TCF Chapter*

Have a Question for Carol's Corner?

Email your questions to
clkearns@comcast.net.

Endowment

Hope gives us vision for regaining the tenderness of memories.

Hope carries us through to survival and healing. Hope offers us courage for acceptance and overcoming.

Hope gives us new spirit and new laughter.

Hope is among the greatest gifts to be found in time of sorrow.

But hope cannot restore on earth what is lost to death.

Hope can only go forward and make us new. Give space to hope in your life.

*Sascha
From LARGO, Fall 2001*

• • • • • CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS • • • • •

Chapter Leader/No. CA Regional Coordinator:

Genesse Gentry
21 Shemran Ct.
Fairfax, CA 94930
415/457-3123

Marin TCF website:
www.tcfmarin.org

Talk with a Friend

When you want someone to talk with, the following people will welcome your call:
Judith Billings..... 707/452-1116 (afternoons)
Ed Garvey 650/756/8010 (suicide loss)
Sallee Kiilerich.... 415/897-6849
Natalie Meyring .. 415/383-4084 (sibling loss)
Diana deRegnier.. 415/383-1703 (suicide loss/call 9am-8pm)

TCF National Website
www.compassionatefriends.org

TCF National Office
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60533-3696
Phone: 630/990/0010
Toll Free: 877/969/0010
Fax: 630/990/0246
Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Additional Support Sites
Inlovingmemoryonline.org
Healingafterloss.org
Bereavedparents.com
childloss.com
survivorsofsuicide.com

Men's Chat Room
TCF website on Mondays from 9-10 central time.

Other Bereaved Parent Resources
The Center for Attitudinal Healing in Sausalito
(415) 331-6161, ext. 106.

Coming to a TCF meeting for the first time???

We recognize all too well that it takes courage to come to the first meeting, whether you are a bereaved parent of one month or 5 years. You are welcome to bring a friend or relative for moral support if you wish. You will find that it is all right to cry or to laugh, to share how you feel or just listen. You are welcome to come late and leave early. We recommend that you attend 2-3 meetings before deciding if TCF is not for you. Each meeting is as varied as the attendees and the topic.

You will meet parents in both early and late stages of the grief process. Longtime members are present at meetings to help new members process their tremendous losses in their lives, and to show that some time down the road of grief, they too will be able to function and grow and learn how to live with these losses. It is best if you contact TCF prior to your first meeting at 415-457-3123 so we will know you are coming.

Marin TCF Meeting Calendar

Tues., Sept. 18th - It's back-to-school time, but not for our children. Times of transitions, just like the change of seasons, can be especially difficult for bereaved parents. Our children's friends move on, but our children do not. As painful as that may be at times, our children's friends can also be a great source of comfort as they remember our children and help keep their memory alive...bittersweet. We'll talk about transitional times and how the love and support of friends help to get us through.

Tues., Oct. 21st - "Things People Say": You know, you've all heard them, those tidy phrases that are intended to explain it all and make it better. Some are easier to shrug off than others and some are down right maddening and can affect a relationship. We'll talk about these experiences and what we can do to make it better for ourselves.

Meeting Note: *While meeting topics are outlined in the newsletter, they are simply a guideline. Just as grief is unpredictable, so are our emotions on any given day. Our discussions are also open to the current needs of the members in attendance.*



TCF Members after a June walk in Novato

IMPORTANT NOTE: As mentioned in the previous newsletter, there have been times in the past when the walking group disbanded due to lack of a leader. Unfortunately, this appears to be one of those times. If you would be interested in starting up the walking group and/or taking responsibility for a walk, email mlhubal@yahoo.com or gbgentry@aol.com.

At this year's Conference in Oklahoma, quilts were raffled as a fundraiser. Our very own Cecile Noland (pictured on the far left above) contributed squares in memory of her daughter Amanda and other TCF Marin children. Thank you, Cecile. We heard that the quilts were just beautiful!

Check out our newly refurbished website at: tcfmarin.org

Volunteer Opportunities in the Marin Chapter

Walk Leader: Contribute to members' health and well-being and organize walks once a month. Select a spot, notify the newsletter editor and Walk members via email, and have fun!



Newsletter Editor: Express your creativity and interest in print!

This opportunity not only helps others in their grief process, but will benefit the editor as well. No need to have graphic skills!

Just a word processing program and a desire to "give back" to TCF Marin for all you've received are needed. Please contact Genesse Gentry at **457-3123** or gbgentry@aol.com

In Memoriam Program

TCF Marin's main source of funding the newsletters, the meetings, the Candle Lighting and other TCF expenses has always been the Love Gifts sent in by TCF members, their friends and families in memory of our children. We think it's possible that people might like to donate money in memory of friends and family members (other than our children). These will be mentioned in the newsletter under the title *In Memoriam*. (This is separate from a Love Gift donation.)

Send *In Memoriam* donation information (with check payable to TCF/Marin) to:
TCF/Marin Newsletter Editor, 254 Butterfield Dr., Novato, CA 94945.



Falling for You....

....while leaves fall, the river drifts by and friends sit, speaking of loved ones lost to suicide. Like the river, conversation drifts. Some smile at memories shared. Others cry tears of regret, anger, guilt, despair; tears for what could have been, but is no more.

Through the years, this group of friends has learned that words fall short of describing sorrow. And so we sit silently, watching the....

....falling leaves....falling tears....falling for you....

....until the time comes to fall in line and drift toward a table adorned with recently fired clay shapes. At an earlier gathering, I molded soft gray clay then impressed it with words and symbols of your life. Although I don't speak of it, I know that yours is not the only life interrupted. My life is also damaged, diminished, in danger of falling apart in oh so many ways. This small group shares space with those we miss and love, both living and dead; in this, my child's birth and death season. How I long to see you float free with the....

....falling leaves....falling tears....falling for you....

....and I long to connect again with you but my plea falls on deaf ears. I'm left with the task of creating your wind chime. A year ago, on your birthday, leaves fell as I stamped the soft clay heart with musical notes, falling stars, hovering doves and the words "treasured memories." Now the clay has cured and along the holes in the edge of the stamped heart, I tie other clay shapes with lengths of string – my heartstrings. I add an anchor, a porcelain leaf inscribed with the words "falling in love." The pieces fall in place like....

....falling leaves....falling tears....falling for you....

....and then I playfully brush my fingers through your wind chime; fingers that long to run through your hair. The chime whispers your name but its music can never fill my heart like the sound of your voice. Fall – a time for friends to make wind chimes and memories. A time for....falling leaves....falling tears....falling eternally for you.

~ Carol Clum, TCF Medford Oregon, TCF website

Candle Lighting DVDs Info

The **2006 DVD of Our Children, (with photos)** is available by mailing a check for \$20 to the address below. Include your address along with your payment. DVDs will be shipped via USPS First Class Mail within 5 days of receipt of payment.

Digital Video Dimensions
attn: 2006 TCF DVD
273 Crest Rd., Novato,
CA 94945

The **2006 Candle Lighting Service DVD** is available for a \$10 donation at the TCF meetings or by contacting Diana DeRegnier at healing_spirit@comcast.net.

**IT WILL BE ANOTHER
BIRTHDAY WITHOUT YOU**

*The sun will shine
roses bloom, geese fly
throughout the sky
stocks will trade,
the weatherman predict
politicians debate
it'll seem like another day
just a day, same 24 hours
not a special holiday
But to this mother
who will stand at the grave
lifting balloons into the sky
serving angelfood cupcakes
with rainbow icing
coated with tears
fluctuating between emotions:
the grief over death
the celebration over birth
For this mother
it will be yet
another birthday without you.
In Memory of Daniel
~ Alice J. Wisler
TCF, Wake County NC*



A New Plaque for Children's Memorial!!!

Karen Klingel is chairing the committee for the new plaque project at the Greenbrae Memorial Site. For an info/application form to have your child's name memorialized, email tcfed@comcast.net. Karen will be returning from her summer venture this fall.

"Of all the sad sights in the world
The downfall of an Autumn leaf
Is greivous and suggesteth grief;
Who thought when Spring was fresh unfurled
Of this? When Spring-twigs gleamed imperaled

Who thought of frost that nips the world?"

~ Christina Rossetti from *A Rumor of Angels*



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
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254 Butterfield Dr.
Novato, CA 94945

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