



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

Meeting Site

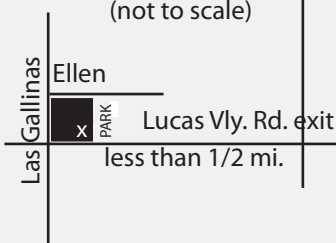
Lucas Valley Community Church Conference Room
2000 Las Gallinas at Lucas Valley Rd. in San Rafael
3rd Tuesdays of the month at 7:30 P.M. (7pm if first time)

Directions Exit 101 at Lucas Valley Rd. and go west. Turn right onto Las Gallinas and make an immediate right onto Ellen, then a right turn into the parking lot at the signage. The Conference Room is located in the first building next to the parking lot. For more info, call our TCF Hotline 415/457-3123. Please call prior to your first meeting, so that you might meet with the facilitator before the meeting begins.

MAP

101
North

(not to scale)



San Francisco Chapter:
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 more information, call Audre at 650/359-7928 or alhallum@comcast.net.



For nearly sixteen years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the sounds that marked his presence. Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of finding life once more.

He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong.

Life still had meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the years before his coming. Indeed, even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give it purpose and resolve.

Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process but I know that this is much easier to write than it is to experience.

I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unremitting pain that engulfed me in those early years. Working through them was the most demanding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years.

Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing. Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual.

These points included:

- Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.
- Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem unable to help us in our time of deep trouble and need. eath, but is often a portion of the human condition.

• The accepting, at last, the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.

• Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends, and surviving siblings, our love for whom seems shrouded behind the totality of our grief.

• Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through writing a book, planning trees, sustaining scholarships, or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention.

Continues on page 02



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 a 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 your
Halloween –
A smile and a tear.

By Sascha Wagner, From
her book "Wintersun"

Cont.

- A time comes for many to find new homes, jobs, and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives.
- Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us to grasp today and tomorrow with hope.
No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.
Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy, and his shortcomings live on in me.
No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life. Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.
Is this not our goal, to heal, to find strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

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A Word About Closure

I don't use the word "closure" anymore. For years I thought it was a good way to express what happens to us at various times during our grief journey. I would often tell about the importance of viewing the loved one by saying viewing gives reality and closure.

I live in Oklahoma City. The general feeling here was that the survivors of the bombing would find closure when the trial was over. The ending of the trial was supposed to be some kind of magical day that would bring relief to the pain. The survivors walked out of the courtroom saying, "Don't mention the word closure to us. This does not close anything."

Closure conjures up the idea of healing or moving past. It sounds like some magic moment that happens and the grieving is over. A moment that closes the door to a bad time in our lives and we do not have to think about it anymore. I no longer think there are any magic moments in grief. Grief is a process—a long slow process. There are events that are memorable, but they don't take the pain away. There are times of healing, but the process must still go on.

Closure also sounds like getting well. We do not "get well." A chunk has been bitten out of our hearts and it is not going to grow back. We do not get well. We move toward turning the corner in the way we cope. We live again, but we live again because we learn to cope with the chunk of our hearts that is gone.

We don't have closure. We have times of growing reality. Reality does not come all at once. We must gradually come to grips with our loss. We go through a time of "real but not real." We know it has happened, but we still think it is a dream and we will soon awaken. Reality develops gradually through many experiences.

It grows in those times when we face a little bit more of our loss, and reality becomes more vivid. Viewing a loved one, the funeral, the first visit to the cemetery, cleaning out the closets, cleaning out the room, all of these are steps toward reality and toward coping.

They are not some final step. They are not the closing of a door nor opening of a new door. They are just tiny steps toward deciding to live again and learning to cope.

Doug Manning

Author of "Please Don't Take my Grief Away"

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

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415/457-3123

No. CA Regional Coordinator:
Genesse Gentry
21 Shemran Ct.
Fairfax, CA 94930
415/457-2862

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.. 415/385-1008
(sibling loss)

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Toll Free: 877/969/0010
Fax: 630/990/0246
Email: [nationaloffice@
compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

TCF National Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org
offers supportive services and
chat rooms

Additional Support Sites
friendsforsurvival.org
opentohope.com
groww.org
Healingafterloss.org
Bereavedparents.com
childloss.com
survivorsofsuicide.com
inlovingmemoryonline.org

Neonatal Support:
Chris Lehr, LCSW, (415) 282-7330
www.HANDsupport.org.

Hospice by the Bay offers
individual and group grief
counseling.
Marin (415) 927-2273
SF (415) 626-5900
Sonoma (707) 935-7504



CHAPTER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Marin TCF Meeting Calendar

September 21,
October 19

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. Meetings are attended on a drop-in basis. Each meeting is different and unpredictable. As the meeting begins and people express their feelings topics will emerge. 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. Meetings are attended on a drop-in basis. Each meeting is different and unpredictable. As the meeting begins and people express their feelings topics will emerge. It is best if you contact TCF prior to your first meeting at 415-457-3123 so we can meet with you at 7pm before the meeting begins.

Visit www.compassionatefriends.org & www.tcfmarin.org
for information and support services.



Join Us on December 12, 2010 for *The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting*

The death of a child is devastating and it is important to the family that the child always be remembered. That is why members of the Marin Chapter of The Compassionate Friends (TCF) will participate in an annual worldwide event designed to honor the memories of all children, regardless of age, who have died. The chapter is joining Sunday, December 12, with hundreds of organized memorial services around the world for The Compassionate Friends 14th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, an event now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting in the world. Candles are lit at 7:00 pm local time, creating a virtual wave of light, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor children in a way that transcends ethnic, cultural, religious and political boundaries. The local candle lighting will be part of a special service held at Unity in Marin, 600 Palm Drive, Novato, CA (in the Hamilton area of Novato) and will feature music, poetry and a special DVD of our children. Please arrive by 6:45 pm as the event will start promptly at 7:00 pm. Please see page 07 for instructions on including your child's picture in the DVD presentation. You are also welcome to bring a framed photo of your child for display and food to share if you are so inclined for the reception following the service. If you choose to bring a food item, you are welcome to include a note saying, eg, "Snickerdoodles were Jim's favorite treat." Candles will be provided for the candle lighting.

We are very fortunate this year to offer you the opportunity to have a "button" made with your child's photo. If you want a button, or more than one for other family members, mail a photo by Dec 5th to Heinz Scheunenstuhel, 1849 Virginia Ave., Novato, CA 94945 or send it digitally to heinzs@yahoo.com. Please indicate how many buttons you would like. Your button(s) (and photo if you sent one) will be available at the Candle Lighting.

The National TCF website at www.compassionatefriends.org will also feature a Remembrance Book December 12th which, in a 24-hour-period normally receives thousands of tributes from family members and other caring individuals. You are welcome to honor your child in this way on the website.

Anyone wishing to volunteer to help with this event may contact Richard at 415-457-3123.



To submit a question or concern, please contact: clkearns@comcast.net

Carol has a very good website for bereaved parents: www.carolkearns.com

Adult Siblings Loss Group

Although this group is not presently active, Elise Noland and Caitlin Fager, past co-facilitators, are still available by phone or email for questions or concerns. Elise: eliseln@yahoo.com or Caitlin cfager@gmail.com.

Some of us after the death of our child, find words are inadequate when trying to describe our feelings. To say we feel devastated, empty, hollow, hopeless, helpless or desperate still may not get to the core of what we're experiencing. That said, I know several of you were non-poets before the death of your child, yet found words flowing from your heart after. These poems have allowed you to creatively or analogically describe your experience. They have not only helped you to heal, but they have helped others to understand. To reach beyond words, whether we are trying to explain to someone what we're feeling or to help ourselves heal by tapping into the depth of our grief, the creative process can be the answer.

Others, who have not been able to heal through poetry, have reached beyond words into other creative ways. Some, like me, have turned to painting as a way to reach these depths. The paintings can be as personal as a journal, never to be seen by anyone but the painter. One father I counseled who had never painted before tried this medium. Often, painting over and over on the same canvas, he would just splash on color. At other times he tried to be more specific. It didn't matter. Afterwards, he would often write in his journal.

If painting or poetry is not for you, there are many ways to be creative when grieving that can console us. A mother, whose thirteen-year-old daughter died in a biking accident, made a necklace out of her daughter's favorite colors and calls it her "Barbara" necklace. She gets great comfort, feeling closer to her daughter, when wearing it. Another mother, whose ten-month-old baby died, made a beautiful wall hanging with the help of a quilter out of some of her baby daughter's clothes. A friend of mine whose son committed suicide, found a harmonica in his son's room and now has taught himself to play. He feels an intimacy with his son when playing that soothes him. Another parent plays his son's guitar and feels like he has his arms around his son when cradling it. A mother, whose toddler died, embroidered her son's name on several pillowcases. This has helped her to feel closeness to him when she rests her cheek on the pillow.

Use your own creativity to find the right expression for you.

On another note, I joined Facebook in order to facilitate a conversation with other bereaved parents. You can go to my web site: www.carolkearns.com, and click on the Facebook icon under my book on the right hand side. I would love to have this interaction with you and hope you will take part.

My book "Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare: How My Daughter's Death Taught Me the Meaning of Life" is available on www.amazon.com. All profits will be donated to bereaved parents organizations.

Carol Kearns has been a member of the Marin chapter since her daughters death 30 years ago. For more information about Carol and her book, go to her website: www.carolkearns.com

Grief Support After the Death of a Child

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

The Compassionate Friends is a national nonprofit, self-help support organization that offers friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents & siblings. There is no religious affiliation & there are no membership dues or fees.

The secret of TCF's success is simple: As seasoned griever reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward and both are helped to heal. The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

In This Place

*Brave hearts, you are here. You have traveled
a dreadful distance. You have come,
seeking solace, understanding, hope,
threads to patch what death's so cruelly undone.*

*In this place you can relax and breathe . . .
the coats of others' expectations taken off.
Walk into these few hours as into an oasis
where draughts of love and memories can be quaffed.*

*In this place all names can be spoken;
in this place each one's story may be told.
We will not be discouraged by your sorrow;
in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.*

*Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting;
we do not count how many tears are shed.
Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage,
for the long and winding road that is ahead.*

*And those we love are pleased we are together.
They smile down on us, and bless this day,
glad for every tiny step we're taking
and send their light to guide us on our way.*

*Traveling with us as we journey onward,
sending strength for what the miles may bring,
they are a part of everything we do that matters -
in every dance we dance, and every song we sing.*

*Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
from Catching the Light –
Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child
Written for TCF Meeting or Conference First Timers*



Directions to the Children's Memorial

Take Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to Bon Air Road in Greenbrae. Park on Bon Air Road across from Marin General Hospital. Take the path across the marsh and footbridge towards Corte Madera Creek. Turn right at the multi-use path and walk 1/8 mile or less to a bench. Just before the bench is a dirt path going off to the right. Take the path into the site. Be sure to take a moment to sit on the bench or look up at Mt. Tam and enjoy the solitude, beauty and solace of this site.

2010 "Our Children Remembered" DVD

If you would like to include a photo of your child in the DVD for this year's Candle Lighting ceremony, please send your photo or digital photo (along with the name of your child) to Alan Kolsky by November 30th. For photo returns, please include a self-addressed envelope.

NOTE: It is not necessary to send another photo if your child has already been in a previous DVD unless you want to change the picture.

Video Dimensions
ATTN: 2010 TCF DVD
273 Crest Rd
Novato, CA 94945

Or: alan@
digitalvideodimensions
Questions: Alan Kolsky
415-893-9070