



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Rim Country Chapter

Rim Country Chapter
P.O. Box 3482
Payson, AZ 85547
(928) 978-1492

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

October/November 2009

RIM COUNTRY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

VOL. 3 NO. 10

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.

Payson, Arizona

Meeting Information

2nd Tuesday of the month -
6:30 PM—8:00 PM
Ponderosa Baptist Church
1800 N. Beeline Hwy
(Just South of Home Depot
& the Roundabout)

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CHAPTER NEWS

It's hard to believe that November is already here! Our annual candlelight ceremony is just over a month away. We've been considering holding the event indoors since the last two years have been incredibly cold at the park. I would really like to get everyone's input before we schedule or make any changes to the event. We don't want to make a change if everyone likes the venue (even in the cold). An option is to have a more intimate candlelight service indoors, probably at our regular meeting place where we would have a program. Please shoot me a quick email at:

info@rimcountrytcf.org with any thoughts about this important remembrance service.

This year really got away. We did manage to have highway cleanup day but were not able to schedule our butterfly release & picnic. Next year, we will put together some more solid event plans. If you are interested in helping to plan some of our events, please let us know.

Our meeting this month is on **Tuesday, November 10th**. I believe that we have a conflict with our regular meeting place so please look for a sign on the front or side door for exact meeting location. We will most likely be in the small building just behind (to the west of) our regular spot.

Remembering our precious children,

Bill



Death leaves a Heartache

No one can Heal

Love leaves a Memory

No one can Steal

From a Headstone in Ireland

Submitted by Connie Vallone in memory of her son Chuck

Thanksgiving, grief, gratitude and time

By Greg Hughes

Funny how eight years ago can feel like yesterday. My son died the day before Thanksgiving so many years ago, and while much has happened and changed in my life in the intervening time, there's a slice of me that was sort of put on hold, almost like one dimension of time has just stood still while another kept on moving along. I miss Brian, but I am thankful for the time we had together.

So, Thanksgiving is always a bit of a tough time for me. Each year, however, I try my best to remember what the day is all about and to reflect on the things in life for which I am truly grateful, and there are many. Last year I said many of the same things I'll say here, but that's what it's all about really - reflecting, changing and growing.

Not too terribly long ago some friends of mine impressed upon me the importance of taking on an "attitude of gratitude" in life. What they meant - at least in part - was that the place where you focus your mind is pretty much where you'll end up and that being grateful for what you have - rather than obsessed with what you don't have - is a positive thing to do. For the most part I think they're right. This time of year I tend to think about a lot of things, some difficult and some pleasant. But every year I try to take some Thanksgiving time to remember that even though life is crazy and time is often too short, there are so many things in life for which I am grateful and give thanks.

Life's not perfect, and from the depths of the situations and experiences that substantially change us - often things that we would never wish to have happen again - we are destined to learn and grow, and hopefully to become better people in the end. I know I have experienced that over the years, and my life is quite different as a result.

Sometimes we learn and grow quickly, other times a little too slowly. I still make mistakes. Fear is a great motivator, one that can be leveraged for good or bad. Best to try for good.

But this is supposed to be about what I am thankful for. About gratitude.

I am thankful for my friends, my family, my good career, my home, my dog. I am grateful for talented surgeons and for the people in my life who have cared enough to stop their lives and take care of me when I was truly in need. I sometimes wish I was better to those who have been so good to me. I truly appreciate them, and am thankful they are a part of my life.

There are many people in this world better than me, and a few of those good people I have the privilege to know personally. I am thankful for them, even if I don't or can't always show it when it counts. I only hope in the future I can be more much more worthy of their qualities. Finally, I am grateful for my life, the people in it, the goods and the bads, and for the possibilities of the future, whatever they may be. I've been very fortunate in many, many ways, and am truly thankful for that. As they say, "with all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world."

Yes, it is.

Listen

Listen gentle people, and hear my truest needs...I hear you stumbling for words.

Relax; There are no words...I hear you remembering a funny story about my loved one and looking embarrassed because you are laughing. Share with me. Let me laugh. It gives me something to hold onto in the middle of the night when I feel only pain. Be happy yourself...and let me be me...

On days when I can laugh, I will.
On days when I can speak of my loved one,
I need you to share my memories..
you don't have to give me answers, for I will
learn to live without them.

You don't have to pretend that my loved one never existed, thinking I would forget if you do. Let me speak his name, and you speak it too. He is always a part of who I am. If you take that from me, I will be less than who I am.

From Want to Help, But I Don't Know How
by Jacqueline Rogers

This Year

This year I am back to a familiar place
A place where I would rather forget this holiday
It feels so bogus
Dysfunction haunts the depths of my soul

No matter how hard we try
Cannot create and honor a tradition
We've cooked, big Martha Stewart meals with
friends
Small meals for just two
But it just never remains true

My mind ruminates on
the sorrow
the loss
what will never be
that familiar grief

By Benjamin

How to Know if You've Found a "Healthy" Support Group By Dr. Alan D Wofelt PhD

Not all support groups will be helpful to you. Sometimes the group dynamic becomes unhealthy for one reason or another. Look for the following signs of a healthy support group.

1. Group members acknowledge that each person's grief is unique. They respect and accept both what members have in common and what is unique to each member.
2. Group members understand that grief is not a disease, but is a normal process without a specific timetable.
3. All group members are made to feel free to talk about their grief. However, if some decide to listen without sharing, their preference is respected.
4. Group members understand the difference between actively listening to what another person is saying and expressing their own grief. They make every effort not to interrupt when someone else is speaking.
5. Group members respect others' right to confidentiality. Thoughts, feelings and experiences shared in the group are not made public.
6. Each group member is allowed equal time to speak; one or two people do not monopolize the group's time.
7. Group members don't give advice to each other unless it is asked for.

Group members recognize that thoughts and feelings are neither right, nor wrong. They listen with empathy to the thoughts and feelings of others without trying to change them.

Assessing Your Progress By Dr. Alan D Wofelt PhD

Your grief journey will not be quick and easy. Often it will feel like you are moving backwards, not ahead. But to reconcile your grief, you must ultimately continue moving forward.

Following are six of the central needs bereaved people must meet if they are to reconcile their grief. You will probably jump around in random fashion while working on these six needs. Sometimes you will be working on more than one at a time.

The important thing is to realize that in one fashion or another, you too must be making progress in meeting these needs if you are to heal.

1. Acknowledge the reality of the death.

Whether the death was sudden or anticipated, acknowledging the full reality of the loss may take weeks or months. You may move back and forth between protesting and encountering the reality of the death. You may discover yourself replaying events surround the death and confronting memories, both good and bad. It's as if each time you talk it out, the event is a little more real.

2. Move toward the pain of the loss.

Expressing your thoughts and feelings about the death with all of their intensity is a difficult but important need. You will probably discover that you need to "dose" yourself when experiencing your pain. In other words, you cannot or should not try to do this all at once.

3. Continue the relationship with the person who died through memory.

Embracing your memories-both happy and sad-can be a very slow and, at times, painful process that occurs in small steps. But remembering the past makes hoping for the future possible.

4. Develop a new self-identity.

Part of your self-identity comes from the relationships you have created with other people. When someone with whom you have a relationship dies, your self-identity naturally changes. Many people discover that as they move forward in their grief journey, they ultimately find that some aspects of their self-identities have been positively changed. You may feel more confident, for example, or more open to life's challenges.

5. Search for meaning.

When someone loved dies, you naturally question the meaning and purpose of life. Coming to terms with those questions is another need you must meet if you are to progress in your grief journey. Move at your own pace as you recognize that allowing yourself to hurt and find ongoing meaning in your life will blend into each other, with the former overtaking the latter as healing occurs.

6. Continue to receive support from others.

You will never stop needing the love and support of others because you never "get over" your grief. As you learn to reconcile your grief, however, you will need help less intensely and less often. So, while you probably won't need to see a counselor forever, you will always need your friends and family members to listen and support you in your continuing grief journey. Support groups can be another long-term helping resource.

Dear Friends, I think one of the hardest things to get use to after the death of a child it not hearing your child's name being said by anyone. After the initial shock of the first couple of weeks where everyone is reminiscing there seems to come the silence. That terrible, painful, silence where no one is saying your child's name.

It is as though people have forgotten them immediately after they have gone. It is the worst feeling in the world. You want to shout to the world, why can't you talk about my child, why won't you say my child's name. It is something that I have never gotten use to and never will. How do you tell everyone that it is ok to talk about your child? When Kirk died I asked the counselor at our high school if he would help me get the kids to write stories about Kirk at his web site. He did take a letter around to the senior class, but failed to tell them what was going on.

He passed it out without explanation because at the time our high school was of the impression that to talk about death, to mention our child's name, would not be good for the kids. Here was a class that had faced the death of 3 kids that they knew in a short amount of time and no one wanted to talk about it.

I have since made it clear that I would not let that happen again and am working toward having a written policy in our school district that would address the death of a child and try to help comfort the parents. It hasn't been easy, but not being able to mention my child's name has been a hard thing to accept. So accept it I won't.

There are so many ways to keep your child's memory alive. Here are a few suggestions that have been given to me that I would like to pass on to you. I will not say that some of these will be easy to do. Some of these will be harder to do than others, but still for the most part doable.

1. Donate books to your local library or your school library with the name of you child inside.
2. Plant a tree with a plaque. Many parks and schools will allow you to plant trees in memory of loved ones.
3. Give a scholarship to a group or organization that your child was involved in.

There are so many ways to keep you child's name out in the real world. Don't be afraid to try different ways of doing it. Don't feel like you are pathetic or crazy.

When a person is famous we find all kinds of ways to keep their name on peoples lips. Why shouldn't we be able to do it for the people we love.

Jim Balthazor,
Kirk's Dad

How to Deal with the Unbearable Grief of Losing a Child

By Randy Gilbert

The loss of a child is something most parents cannot even bear to contemplate. It is such a horrible thought that most people do not envision it. They feel everything will follow the normal path of everyday life. Their children will grow to adulthood and go on to live happy lives of their own.

Cathy James, who lost her daughter in an accident says, 'The one thing I would hope if nobody does anything else is, please know that you will see joy. You will see joy again. There is help out there. Your child was absolutely a gift. If you had to do it all over again, you would have that child over again, because of how much you love them. You would still do it all again and have the pain, because you had the love.' Cathy and Frank James live every parent's greatest fear. Every day they grieve the loss of their 17-year-old daughter, Valerie. Their journey of grief led them to write a book explaining strategies they used to deal with the emotional pain of their loss. They are committed to helping one parent at a time cope with the aching loss of a child. Using their proactive strategies will assist those suffering from a devastating loss, coping in the days to come:

- Do not try to rush the grief journey. Let it be in your own time. Everyone is different and grieves in his or her own way.
- Find what works for you.

Do something special to honor your lost child. Make it a monthly or yearly project. Get the other members of your family together and coordinate it. It can be anything that makes you feel closer to your child: scholarships, memory gardens, scrapbooks, gift baskets to your child's friends. Parents can do a number of things to keep their child's memory alive.

Move forward. Find ways for you and your family to adjust to the loss.

- Rearrange the seating at your dinner table so that the empty chair will not always be a reminder that a family member is missing. Do the same thing with the family car. Sit in a different place than you normally do.
- Physical activity helps. Whether it is walking, biking, swimming, or just walking the mall, the activity helps you cope as each day passes.
- Helping others is the best way to heal yourself. Get involved in a selfless project. The satisfaction and gratitude you receive from helping others will soothe you.
- Attend a grieving organization meeting. They are located in almost every state. They lend support and walk beside you in grief, because they have lost children also.

Sometimes the days will feel just too hard to get through, but with the help of your family, it will get easier. Develop a family plan; establish catch phrases or code words to use. If you or a family member realizes that the situation is emotionally unbearable, mention the code word and leave the situation. Once each member of the family hears the code word, you all turn and walk away, no arguments, no forcing, and no questions. You are going to have good days and bad days. The love you have for your lost child will always be there. It never goes away. However, realize that you will experience joy again. Do the best you can. Your grieving journey will teach you what is important in life: love, concern for others, caring for others, and doing things without the possibility of benefit to help others. Through all these things, you will learn about hope, joy, and the things that are of real value.

Follow these proactive strategies to cope with the loss of a child. There is no right or wrong method to learn to cope, and there is no timeline to follow. Take your time; do not burden yourself with self-doubt about what should be normal. You will find your way, feeling hope and joy in your life again.

It was only a dream
(reprinted because I love this)

I came home one night and headed to our bedroom. Things did not seem quite right. It was not as I had left it! I had no fear of anything and just walked in the room. I remember making the bed that morning, and yet it was undone now. It appeared as if someone was sleeping on the far side, (not my side) which I took special note of. As I looked at the foot of the bed, I saw what I thought were feet moving!

I still remember my curiousness and still unafraid of what was going on. So I walked around the side of the bed and looked towards the pillow. I saw my son (Dalton William) peeking out of the covers. I think back now and remember how he always liked to have his blanket over his head in the early morning, even at the breakfast table. I was so excited to see him – I couldn't hold my excitement. I reached out to him and him out to me. I was so happy; I asked him where he had been and how he was.

He told me he was ok and just kept smiling HIS smile. Then we hugged. Oh how special that was, to hug him again and feel his WARMTH, not cold. I can close my eyes still and remember that feeling. This dream has given me so much comfort lately. I only wish it were real!

When I woke up that morning, I couldn't wait to tell my husband, Bill. I just wanted him to know what I had experienced that night. I only wish we could all have these wonderful dreams that help to brighten the day as mine did.

Marilyn Knauss
Payson, Arizona
In memory of Dalton William
My son

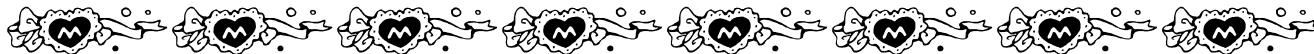
To the Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into our chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know- because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends – that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that first step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel." We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.

Karen Schendel
TCF- Houston, TX



LOVE GIFTS AND DONATIONS

A love gift is to **"REMEMBER THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN."** Since TCF has no membership dues, we rely upon tax-deductible donations for funds to pay the chapters expenses: printing and mailing of our newsletter, books for our lending libraries, our phone message line and information packets sent to newly bereaved families and professionals in the community. Books donated for our libraries and volunteer work for your chapter also qualify as "love gifts." Make your checks payable to The Compassionate Friends and mail to: PO Box 3482 Payson Arizona 85547. **Love gifts received prior to the 23rd of each month will appear in the following month's newsletter.**

MEMORY PAGE

If you wish to have your child remembered on our Memory Page, please complete the form below and Mail to PO Box 3482, Payson Arizona 85547

PARENT(S) NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

PHONE _____

CHILD'S NAME _____ M or F (circle)

DATE OF BIRTH _____ DATE OF DEATH _____

Enclosed is a love gift in memory of my child to help defray costs of the Rim Country Chapter:

_____ \$5 _____ \$10 _____ \$25 _____ Other **THANKS!!!!**

The anniversary of your child's birth and death are often extremely painful days. We ask that you keep in your thoughts the parents who are observing such days. In this newsletter is the memory page update. If you haven't sent one in yet, please take a moment to fill it out and send it in. We would like to share your memory days with you.

Our children ... always loved, missed, remembered ...

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER MEMORY PAGE

- CHARLES EDWIN VALLONE... Son of Paul & Connie Vallone**
- JAMES GILLEN GRAHAM... Son of Robert Graham**
- SLADE DAVID GIBSON... Son of Slade & Becky Gibson**
- LEON MICHAEL VALENCIA... Grandson of Brad & Kristin Croak**
- ROBERT E COTTON... Son of Bonnie Cotton**
- AARON GAAL... Son of Kirby & Karen Gaal**
- AARON KELLY GARDNER... Son of MaryAnn Gardner**
- KENNETH CHARLES HARTNELL... Son of Ben & Laura Hartnell**
- WILLIAM FRANK MANNING... Son of Patricia Irvin**
- JOSHUA G OAKLAND... Son of Jim Oakland**

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER LOVE GIFTS

- JIMMY HARRIS.... Son of LQ Harris III**
- KENNETH CHARLES HARTNELL... Son of Ben & Laura Hartnell**
- CHARLES EDWIN VALLONE... Son of Paul & Connie Vallone**
- SLADE DAVID GIBSON... Son of Slade & Becky Gibson**



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***We Need not Walk Alone.....
We are The Compassionate Friends.***

E-mail us at info@rimcountrytcf.org or call us at 928-978-1492 if you would like to submit articles, be added to or removed from this newsletter mail list or to correct information.

Newsletter printing & mailing donated by Able Steel Fabricators in memory of Cory James Clark

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

**We need not walk alone...
We are The Compassionate
Friends.**

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope. Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us.

Your pain becomes my pain just 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. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source for strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in a 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. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and 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.