



# *The Compassionate Friends* of Northwest Houston Supporting Family After a Child Dies

*Welcome to The Compassionate Friends. We are sorry for the reason you are here, but are glad that you found us. You Need Not Walk Alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.*

**NOVEMBER 2016**

**HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

[www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org](http://www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org)

Cypress Creek Christian Church Community Center  
6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room 20  
Spring, Texas 77379

**We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.**

**(Our next meeting is Tuesday, Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>)**

We are located between Stuebner-Airline and Kuykendahl, about 2 miles North of FM 1960 West. The Community Center is located behind the church, between the courthouse and Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the church/community center parking lot. Follow the posted signs to our meeting room.

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## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

### **To the Newly Bereaved**

As the years pass, we see new members come into the 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 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 a long 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.





**Lighting a candle, cherishing a birth.....**

## **NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

1951-Pamela Ann Roberson, Daughter of Doris & Dale Hockstra  
2005-Carson Hayes Gurgonus, Son of Amber Gurgonus  
1976-Bryan Belveal , Son of Linda Belveal  
1974-Michael Shrum , Son of Mike & Melva Shrum  
1980-Michael Brent Police, Son of Jack & Sally Police  
1984-Phillip Matthew Terrell, Son of Phillip & Mary Jo Terrell  
1968-Jenny Nolan Burgess, Daughter of Jenelle Chamberlain  
1998-Samantha Alonso, Daughter of Joanna Alonso  
1985-Alan Jerome Austin, Son of Rhonda Austin  
2004-Brett Collins, Son of Bill & Geri Collins  
1978-Shelly Vick Hopkins, Daughter of Brandon & Paula Lansford  
1985-Erin Johnson, Daughter of Rebecca Johnson  
2012-George Milo Morfin, Jr., Son of Diana Abidin  
1988- Katrina Martinez, Daughter of Amy Kohl  
1991- Devyn Sloterdijk, Son of Janet Sloterdijk  
2004- Lhwhyh Yshrhah, Son of Taneshia Carey  
1985- Adam Kujawa, Son of Larry and Sara Kujawa  
2014 -Luke Curry, Son of Lynsy Curry  
1989- Kellie Martin, Daughter of Denise Martin



***Today I celebrate the life you lived and the blessing that you were to me  
during your time on Earth. I remember you. I feel you.***

***I know you exist in my heart and elsewhere.***

***I love you.***

***Today, in your honor,***

***I celebrate Life.***



**Lighting a candle, remembering a life**

## **NOVEMBER ANGEL DATES**

2010- Trace Thornton, Son of Nina Thornton  
2007- Garrett Conrad Ford, Son of Leigh Heard  
2009- Makaylin Angel, Daughter of Jennifer Edwards  
2005- Ava Helena Wallheimer, Daughter of Angela Wallheimer  
2007- Kate Bronstein, Daughter of Pat Bronstein  
2008- Melissa Ellen Blackbird, Daughter of Will & Pam Blackbird  
2008- Charles James Booth, Son of Mary Booth  
2005- Ryan Matthews, Son of Frances Matthews  
11/19 Jonathon Kuta, Son of Larry & Terri Kuta  
2009- Lance Anderson, Son of John & Dianna Brumley  
2009- Phillip Matthew Terrell, Son of Phillip & Mary Jo Terrell  
2007- Megan Kathleen Ratliff, Daughter of Ann & Garvon Ratliff  
2011- Nancy Lizabeth Gonzalez, Daughter of Dulce Gonzalez  
2010- Kristen Roberts, Daughter of Tom & Geneva Montgomery  
2012-George Milo Morfin, Jr., Son of Diana Abidin  
2014 -Kristi Whitehorn Hill, Daughter of Susan Whitehorn  
2014 - April Ann Ulrich, Daughter of Doug & Josette Tharp  
2015- Baron Neelley, Son of Bo & Allison Neeley  
2015- Sean Weinstein, Son of Steve & Sherry Weinstein  
2015- Creighton Heslop, Son of Barry & Kris Heslop  
2015- Marc Pournier, Son of Jolena Pournier  
2014- Jamie Leonard, Son of Carrie Newman



### ***My Angel Day***

*Yes Mom, this is my Angel Day  
From my earthly life, I know I left quite soon  
But only to enter my greatest reward in Glory  
Far beyond the moon*

*Today you'll perform your loving rituals  
And do your best to keep my memory aware  
Yes Mom, this ritual is for both of us  
For I am both here and there*

## CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is **Tuesday, November 8th** at 7pm.

Parents that have lost an infant, toddler, or have had a miscarriage or stillbirth will meet on **Thursday, November 10th**. Contact Julie Joiner 832-724-4299 for more information.

### Remembering Amy Kramberger

October 12, 2016

*Amy was the daughter of Nancy Thornton and the step daughter of Ken Thornton. I first met Amy at a Compassionate Friends meeting when she came with her mom. She was a vibrant, passionate and personable young lady with an idea of starting a sibling group in our chapter.*

*But oh how she missed her brother Jason who died in 2001. Jason and Amy were very close and his death profoundly affected Amy.*

*I can understand as I watched my daughter Erin go through lots of torment and anguish over the loss of her brother David. They grew up together, experienced life together, were friends and the loss of her sibling was devastating.*

*Nancy was active in the Dallas chapter of TCF and she was a big part of our chapter for several years before health issues took their toll. Nancy is now a twice bereaved parent.*

*Amy always spoke at our meetings and offered insight into sibling grief. She was a bright child who brought bright light to our meetings and to my life.*

*My thoughts and prayers go out to Nancy and Ken. When you are feeling up to it our chapter is here with comforting arms for you and Ken.*

*David Hendricks*

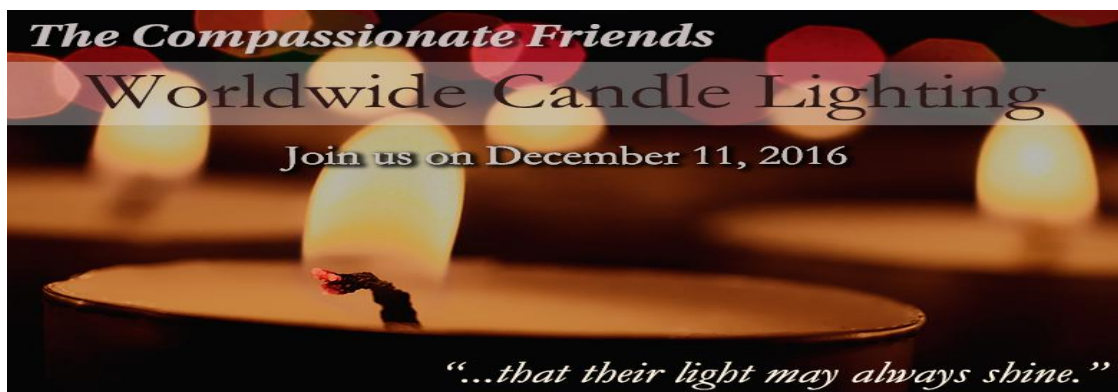
### Love Gifts – A Way to Remember

There are no dues to belong to Compassionate Friends, because we have already paid the ultimate price; the loss of our loved one(s). A Love Gift is a gift of money given in honor of a child, who has died, or a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help support our Chapter. Your gifts are tax deductible and are used to reach out to other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Your gifts support this newsletter, our TCF Library, and other Chapter expenses.

## The 20th TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting

The 20th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting will be held this year on **Sunday, December 11, 2016**. This is a very special and moving event, when bereaved families join together from around the world in memory of all children gone too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 20th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.



**Our Chapter will again celebrate our children's life by lighting a candle at 7:00pm as we join the wave of light that will cross the globe moving from one time zone to another. Bring your family for this sweet time of remembrance. Beth Crocker will again be our hostess. Beth and her husband Nick are twice bereaved parents and members of our chapter. Beth is also the Jersey Village Theater Director. For more information you can contact David Hendricks [dbhendricks@hotmail.com](mailto:dbhendricks@hotmail.com) or Linda Brewer [llbrewer67@hotmail.com](mailto:llbrewer67@hotmail.com) or 936-441-3840.**

**WHERE: Jersey Village High School  
7600 Solomon  
Houston, TX 77040  
(The high school is at Beltway 8 and Hwy 290)**

**WHEN: Sunday, December 11, 2016  
Starts at 6:45 pm (lighting of the candles at 7:00pm)**

**Food, sodas, coffee will be provided. There will be readings, performances and the candle lighting. A message board for you to leave your child a message will also be available and there will also be a balloon release. Please bring a picture of your child to display, (you can take the picture home when the program is finished).**



## Butterflies in November

Thanksgiving was Chad's favorite holiday. He loved the food and the football games without the hassle of all the Christmas going ons. I have so many memories of Thanksgivings past. I remember the last Thanksgiving we were together. Chad called me from Alabama and said he and Mandy were on their way to Atlanta and to please save him something to eat. I said "of course I will save you something to eat, but I thought you were eating with Mandy's family?" Chad said "Mom, I think they make their stuffing with "GRITS"....need I say more? Just save me some."

That really made me feel good. He loved my Southern Cornbread Dressing, Turkey, Ham, and all the fixins. We enjoyed so much just being together and preparing the dinner and enjoying the meal.

Chad died in September of 1996. Thanksgiving came way too fast. For those who have gone through their first Thanksgiving you know the feelings I am describing. Everything seems to go in slow motion with the inability to move forward....the heaviness and the physical and mental fatigue...the pain in your heart, the lump in your throat and the tears in your eyes. No, I did not want Thanksgiving to come this year or ever again. My daughter was away at school and I knew she would be coming home. My mother was struggling with lung cancer and I knew there would not be many more Thanksgivings with her. What do I do? I think we all decided that if we could just go through the motions it would be better than doing nothing and I think we all did it for each other.

I cried the whole time I was preparing the meal. I do not remember anything other than the tears. Several friends wanted to join us for Thanksgiving that year and they volunteered to bring a turkey and dessert. I readily accepted their offer.

We gathered together at noon, my husband said the blessing (which I really had a hard time with) and then I wanted to read a poem in Chad's memory. I asked everyone if they would bear with me as I read this. Several times I could not speak. The words would not come, but I was determined that I was going to read this poem. When I neared the end of the poem I felt the lump in my throat and I knew I was going to start crying out loud. As soon as I finished I got up from the table and left the room.

There was dead silence. No one spoke a word. Then I heard one of our friends say "Look at that butterfly. I can't believe there is a butterfly this time of year. And he looks as though he wants to come in. He is hitting himself against the glass door."

My tears turned from sadness to tears of joy. I knew that was Chad. I knew he had come to get some of my Cornbread Dressing. The only regret that I have is that I did not let him come in. I knew if I went back to the dining room and told my friends that was Chad they really would think I was crazy. If I had to do it over again....it wouldn't matter but at that time I had not gotten involved with TCF or did not know another bereaved parent....so to me my "crazy thoughts" were just that and I thought they probably were not normal.

We do not have butterflies in Atlanta in late November. I choose to believe it was a sign from my son. This will be our fifth Thanksgiving without him. The pain has softened. My tears do not come as often. The memories are sweeter. My heart is a little lighter. My love for my son is as strong as ever. I feel his presence in everything I do. I do not fear I will forget anymore. I know he is with me.

This Thanksgiving my plan is to make a LARGE pan of my southern cornbread dressing along with Chad's favorite Ham recipe and take these to the hospital to share with my daughter, who is an RN, and all the staff in the PICU at Children's Hospital–Egleston Campus and the parents who are spending Thanksgiving with their children in the Intensive Care Unit. For some, this will be their last Thanksgiving with their own children.

The staff at the Children's Hospital work very long and stressful hours. They are away from their own families on this holiday to take care of the children who are in the hospital. I feel this is a way I can help others and also include some precious memories of my Thanksgivings past with my own son and daughter. I am looking forward to this very much and I am thankful I can be with my daughter.

I wish for those of you who are facing your First Thanksgiving that you can read this and know that it will get better. You will find joy again. There is hope. The love will always remain and your child will always be with you. Of course, it is not like we hoped it would be but it can be good. Our children will always be a "present" part of our lives....they will not be forgotten.

I pray you find peace this holiday season. I pray your sorrows will soften and your memories bring smiles. I pray you will be able to enjoy your other family members. I pray you know you are not alone.

Jayne Newton  
TCF Atlanta, GA

In Memory of my son, Chad Gordon 5/21/72 - 9/3/96 and All Our Children



### *Thanksgiving Angel*

*If you are feeling just a little lonely on this Thanksgiving Day,  
Then I pray an angel of blessing will bring all my hugs your way.*

*May heaven shower into your soul, soft gifts from God above  
Sprinkling from His tender grace, bouquets of gentle love.*

*I pray on Thanksgiving Day, your heart will be touched*

*Beyond belief.*



## SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE

### JUSTIN ROSS HEINO

5/5/82 - 8/24/83

SUBMITTED BY: DARRYL HEINO

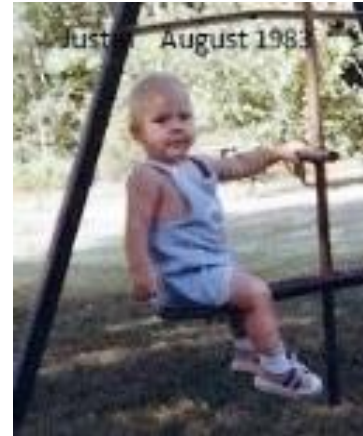
When our only child, our son Justin was 15 months old, we went to visit his dad's family in northern Wisconsin. Our blonde headed son had not yet met his grandparents, great grandparents, or all the aunts, uncles and cousins who lived up north. As we lived in southeast Texas, it was quite an adventure.

We spent the day traveling through 3 airports, and then the hour drive to his grandparents' home. The family had been alerted, and they gathered to meet the newest family member. First was a big party at the house with all the family present. As it was August, on the weekend was a local festival and bbq with friends and family from far and wide attending. Justin loved being the center of attention, and attention he received.

Next we traveled to visit all the family scattered across the countryside. We visited his great grandparent's farm where he played all day with cousins. We traveled to the lake cabin and swam where his dad spent summers as a child. We journeyed to the wild river where his dad tubed as a youth. We picnicked at the great lake where his dad loved to spend time on the beach.

Living in the largest city in Texas, being able to vacation in the rural countryside was a treat. Fresh air, no traffic and fall colors were incredible but short lived. Leaving after 2 weeks was hard to do, but we had to get back home to city life.

Just days after returning home, Justin laid down for an afternoon nap, and did not wake up. After a long and exhaustive investigation, no cause of death was found. As this was 1983, the term used for all non-diagnosed death in children was called Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). He was perfectly healthy but just died. In 2000, due in part to the statistical rarity, this diagnosis for children over 12 months old was changed to be called Sudden Unexplained Death in Children (SUDC).



We had just found out my wife was pregnant before he died, and Justin's sister would be born the following spring. She is called today our rainbow baby. Nicole was our hope for life after experiencing a tragedy no parent should endure.

She made her 1<sup>st</sup> visit north when she was about 3. She followed in her brother's footsteps and visited the places and people he had met. We would travel back to that North Country again with her over the years. She spent Christmas vacations with her grandparents in the snow. She canoed the rivers and swam in the lakes. She grew up and hunted with the guys at the family hunting camp. She became as comfortable in the Far North as the Deep South. She got to know her older brother from all of the pictures and stories told

over the years.

Over time, certain dates have taken on extraordinary significance. Dates of anniversaries, ages and deaths. When Nicole turned 15 months old, we were anxious to get past the age of her brother. We prayed that she would grow older, but we were not sure of it. When her daughter turned that age, that date still held huge importance. We know these dates are arbitrary, and those who are not bereaved parents would not understand, but to us they were great events in our lives.

This year her daughter made that first trip to the north. I accompanied the 2 of them this fall to visit family that had yet to meet her 2 year old cutie.

This recent trip to the countryside was one of those major occurrences. I watched as my granddaughter was the guest of honor at my parents' house, as family and friends came from far and wide to meet her. I was blessed to share my favorite childhood places with her, as I had done with my son and her mother. Our blonde headed toddler was running through the house and yard with cousins in tow, laughing and playing as her uncle had 33 years before. We traveled to the exact same sights and landmarks as we had done on that trip so long ago, and to say I was nostalgic would not be near enough. I was a very proud grandpa, and father, but nagging in my mind was how much my son would enjoy sharing these moments with his sister and niece. That trip with him was one of the last of my memories with him, and I refuse to let it fade over time. I hold onto it as securely as I hold his sister and my granddaughter. The anxiety of this vacation was not diminished until recently. We have been home a week now and my granddaughter is still here. That milestone has passed without incident.



I wanted to share these thoughts because even though it has been 33 years, the anxiety of these memories is real (and normal). I hadn't imagined it, as his mother, my parents, brother and sister felt it also. As parents, we cling tightly to all of the precious moments of our children. I refuse to let sadness and fear overshadow the happiness and joy they brought us.

I pray that you can hold close and cherish all the love that your children have shared with you, in person or in memories.

**Darryl Heino – father to:**  
**Justin Ross 5/5/82 - 8/24/83**  
**Nicole Renee 3/24/84 ...**  
**Unborn baby girl 5-12-85**  
**Grandfather to: Trinity Marie 4/24/2014 ...**

## November 11

**Veterans Day is November 11.** It falls on the same day every year. The origin of Veterans Day dates back to 1919. President Woodrow Wilson commemorated the end of World War I by recognizing Armistice Day. The date November 11 represents the end of the war – the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month.

In 1954, Congress changed the name from Armistice Day to Veterans Day. The date, November 11 remains the same. The day is a legal holiday celebrating the service of all military members. Veterans Day honors all military members living or dead regardless of whether or not they fought in a war.



### Let the Good Days Come

By Gordon Bolar – Surviving Father of Corporal Matthew Bolar

One of the things that someone said to me shortly after Matthew died in 2007 was this: “There will be some good days and there will be some bad days. Let the good days come and enjoy them.” I didn’t believe it at the time but it turned out to be true.

When I first heard these words in the wake of losing my son, I wasn’t the most optimistic person on the planet. But lately there have been some changes. To tell you why and how, I need to go back a few years.

When Matthew was eight years old, he tied balloons on his arms to jump off the monkey bars thinking he could fly. I suspected then that my son was an optimist. When he turned 12 and announced he was a New Orleans Saints fan-back in the nineties when they had never been to the playoffs or had a winning record-I strongly suspected that he was an optimist. And when Matt told me in 2005 he was going to Fort Benning to learn how to jump out of airplanes-with no balloons tied to his arms this time-all of my earlier suspicions of his optimism were confirmed!

My favorite picture of Matthew was taken at the NFC championship game in 2007. Matt had just returned from his first tour in Iraq and I got tickets to the game at Soldier Field. That snowy Sunday the Chicago Bears were easily victorious over his New Orleans Saints. The Bears went on to play in the Super Bowl, but on the way to the airport Matt said, “Dad, the Bears were the better team today, but I know someday the Saints will win the Super Bowl.”

Sometime later I put him on a plane at Midway Airport. That was the last time I ever saw him alive. He had volunteered to go back to Iraq for a second tour. When he got there he volunteered to drive down a road that few others wanted to drive. He was an optimist all the way, like so many of our soldiers. I

guess he had to be, to drive down that road and do what he did. He was killed on May 3, 2007, but the story doesn't end with Matthew's death on that road south of Baghdad.

Although I had poked fun at his allegiance to the New Orleans team, I became a die-hard New Orleans Saints fan in the season of 2009-10. Maybe I jumped on the bandwagon late, along with a lot of other people, but for me it wasn't really the Saints that I was rooting for.

Moments after the Saints won over the Colts in the Super Bowl, I watched as quarterback Drew Brees held his infant son aloft in victory. Balloons were released behind him. I felt Matthew's spirit of optimism at that moment in a way that I never thought possible. I am grateful that Matthew's life and his optimistic spirit touched my life and continues to touch it even today. I am grateful that I know what a good day is now. Sometimes there really are good days. We have to acknowledge them when they do come around, and hope they will come again.

I continue to think about what Matthew would have wanted for us. His legacy was that he embraced all of life, both in solemn duty and unrestrained joy. Given the example he set during his life, he would expect me and those he loved to do the same.



### **You're Just a Thought Away**

Distance takes us far apart  
And darkens my today,  
I have to keep remembering-  
You're just a thought away.  
When the world is too confusing,  
And times are hard to bear,  
I pull your precious meaning,  
Your bright spirit, from the air.  
And if I sometimes drift  
Into a lonely state of mind,  
I gather up the memories  
Of the days now left behind.  
And though you're not beside me,  
I can tap into my heart  
And draw upon the warmth and love  
That now lives while we're apart.  
And with these fond reflections  
On the times when you were near,  
I sense a little bit of what it's like to have you here...

*Bruce B. Wilmer TCF, Brisbane, Australia*



## THANKSGIVING

You may ask, “What do I have to be thankful for now that my child is dead?” After the death of a child, where is the joy in a day off from work? What pleasure can we derive from sitting around a table when someone is missing, and an uttered prayer of thanksgiving echoes hollow in our hearts?

Maybe we have been concentrating on the loss which has brought the overwhelming sorrow of death, and have forgotten the complete joy of life. When I remember laughing brown eyes, a mischievous grin, a scraped knee that Mommy could fix, a new word learned, even the memory of the realization that I had a baby boy, I have a great deal to be thankful for. I had 2 1/2 years of a dream come true, and I’m truly thankful I had my child.

Sure, the agony of grief, the anguish of losing my precious child to death, the torture of wanting to see that child grow and mature and the pain of never knowing, rips me up.

There is no Thanksgiving in entertaining these thoughts, so this month I am going to concentrate on the Living of my child, the Life that brought me so much joy. In this I am thankful that Evan was born, thankful that he lived, thankful that even for those short 30 months—I lived them too. Even so, as he lived once, I live now and want a productive life.

I am thankful I have come that far in my grief work to know I want to live and remember the good times without sorrow. And, I am thankful for my husband, who stood by me during the rough times. The husband who is the father of the child of our love. In him I have found my child, in our marriage I have found love, and that love taught us how to love that child. I am also thankful for you, my real friends—Compassionate Friends.

Edie Kaplan  
TCF Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
In Memory of my son, Evan



*As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.*

**John Fitzgerald Kennedy**

## What to Do With Anger

Anger is one of the most difficult emotions for me to express. Reared as a "proper" young lady, I was taught that anger was not becoming. Many of the women I have spoken to were similarly taught.

I found, however, I did not have the tools to deal with the deep anger that came shortly after the death of my daughter. My anger was spilling over to people who did not deserve it, or I vented excess anger by overreacting to some situations.

With the loving care and patience of several people, I developed some tools that helped me to express my anger. Rather than trying to suppress my angry feelings, I learned to release them in constructive ways. Hopefully, some of these coping techniques will be helpful to others.

**EXERCISE** - This is a great way to release anger, plus get into shape! I joined the YMCA, swam twice a week, did "Y's Ways to Fitness" three times a week, and walked three to five miles each day. At first, I was concerned about doing so much exercise because I have a very bad back, so I took it easy and worked my way up to my present routine. I always feel much better after a good workout, and I had the extra benefit of getting out of our home and back into society.

After my daughter's death, my life felt so out of control; but as I became more fit, I regained some control. This renewed strength aided in my recovery.

Exercise decreases stress levels and aids in controlling depression. Since grief can also make us more vulnerable to physical illness, exercising and taking care of our health is important. Even daily walking is good therapy.

**WRITING** - When the anger bubbled up in me, I would write. Many times I didn't know where to begin, so I just started by writing, "I am angry because. . ." "Soon, my thoughts were coming faster than I could write them down. After I had expressed my anger in writing, I often discovered that the sources of my anger were different than I had imagined. It usually sifted down to just being angry about my daughter's death. The technique of writing about your feelings is especially nice because you can just throw away or bum your words and the anger with them.

**PAINTING** - There is nothing like taking bright oils or acrylics and stroking them over an open canvass. I had not painted in over fifteen years, but I went up into the attic and got down the easel, brushes, and paints. I always felt better after a good painting session. Those times were very private for me and no one ever saw my creations, but they were helpful in expressing my anger.

**TALKING** - Sometimes I would call a good friend and just rant and rave. My friend was a very good and non-judgmental listener. She realized that most of what I said in anger I did not mean. She never gave advice or held me to my "anger" statements. She just lovingly listened. This technique calls for a careful choice of friends who can maintain confidentiality and are not afraid of anger. It is even more helpful if the friend has had a similar loss.

**ENERGY** - Convert anger into energy and use that energy to change the world. Angry with the limited support that mothers of children with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) had in their communities, I converted that anger into action. I joined several nationwide support groups and helped to bring their support into our community.

My anger was further converted into energy which I used to raise money for SMA research. I baked over 700 loaves of bread (a lot of anger there!) for a fundraiser. My friends saw my energies and joined in to help. Together, our efforts raised over \$6,000 in under

six weeks! This kind of energy can be contagious.

Reaching out to others can help in healing. If something good can come from our tragedies, it can add meaning to their deaths.

**EGGS** - Yes, eggs! When I just could not resolve my anger with any of the above techniques, I would take a dozen eggs and a black felt-tipped pen and go into the back yard. Writing the reason I was angry on the egg, I threw it at the back fence. At first, I thought this was a little crazy, but after throwing the first egg and watching it shatter, I felt so much better!

I always used just one word to describe my anger. It might be: Death, SMA (the disease my daughter died of), Husband, A friend's name, God. No one need know what you write on that egg! Afterward, the birds would have a treat eating the eggs; and listening to their happy noises while having their treat, eased my anger.

These are some of the techniques I used to express my anger. It is OK to be angry, and it is important to express, not suppress, anger. Suppressed anger can result in deep depression.

It is also all right to be angry with God. He is forgiving and understands our emotions. He would rather have us be angry with Him than shut Him out.

Penny A. Blaze  
New Canaan, CT



## Phone Friends

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All of the people on the following list are bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. They understand what you are going through and have all wished to be included in this list in the hope that anyone who needs to talk will reach out to them. They are willing to talk with you at any time you need their support. Some have listed the specific area in which they have personal experience but they do not intend to imply that that is the only topic they wish to talk about. We all have experienced this journey through grief and it encompasses much more than the specifics surrounding our individual loss. Having a compassionate person to listen when you are having a bad day or just need someone to reach out to when you feel overwhelmed can make the difference in getting through one more day. We have all been there and understand, please feel free to contact any one of us.

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