



The Compassionate Friends
Manhattan Chapter
 Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Our next meetings...
June 9 & 23
July 14 & 28
Aug 11 & 25
Sept 8 & 22

Manhattan Chapter Newsletter **Spring/Summer 2020**

Apocalypse Now?

by Marie Levine

It feels like the apocalypse. Having lived through what I always considered the worst life could possibly offer, now we have a global pandemic – not the first ever– but the first in the lifetimes of the current human race. Another life altering moment.

As I physically isolate myself from the world I listen to the reports, the statistics of those taken ill and those losing their battle to survive, and I weep. I weep for those dying alone and those forced to survive alone, without the support of friends and families and hugs and visits and their accompanying tears. I remember how important that was for me. How could I have survived the loss of my son without the love that accompanied me on my grievous journey? How might I have been able to manage becoming a widow without the friends who rallied around and assured me I was not alone? How are all of our neighbors and friends, brought down by this scourge, going to manage without our loving physical embrace? It is an additional anxiety causing puzzlement. We, a community of already grievously wounded souls must now of necessity become stoics. We must stand six feet away, forbidden to hold and comfort our suffering friends. We must compassion from a distance.

In our heads we know that this too shall pass. Ultimately, everything does. But somehow, the knowing doesn't seem to lighten the anxiety. We feel not only our own vulnerability but everyone's. We wonder, if we follow all the guidelines and still contract the illness – will it be our fault? Will we have done something wrong or irresponsible? I say we – but in truth, it is my mind that plays these deadly games. I am convinced if I get sick it will be my fault. I am certainly not afraid of dying. After all, so much awaits me on the other side. But I have spent all the years since Peter left determined to live as long as possible so I can keep his memory alive, understanding (cont'd page 4)

Surviving a Child on Mother's Day

by Erma Bombeck

If you're looking for an answer this Mother's Day to why God reclaimed your child, I don't know. I only know that thousands of mothers out there today desperately need an answer as to why they were permitted to go through the elation of carrying a child and then lose it to miscarriage, accident, violence, suicide, disease or drugs.

Motherhood isn't just a series of contractions; it's a state of mind. From the moment we know life is inside us, we feel a responsibility to protect and defend that human being. It's a promise we can't keep. We beat ourselves to death over that pledge. "If I hadn't worked through the eighth month." "If I had taken him/her to the doctor when he had a fever." "If I hadn't let him use the car that night." "If I hadn't been so naïve, I'd have noticed he was on drugs or needed help with depression."

The longer I live, the more convinced I become that surviving changes us. After the bitterness, the anger, the guilt and despair are tempered by time, we look at life differently. While I was writing my book: "I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise," I talked with mothers who had lost a child to cancer. Every single one said that death gave their lives new meaning and purpose.

And who do you think prepared them for the rough, lonely road that they had to travel? – their dying child. They pointed their mothers toward the future and told them to keep going. The children had already accepted what their mothers were fighting to reject. Even those children who died a sudden death are able to spiritually touch their parents and help them live on. The children in the bombed-out nursery in Oklahoma City have touched many lives. Workers who had probably given their kids (cont'd page 4)

TELEPHONE FRIENDS: When you are having the kind of day you feel only another bereaved parent or sibling can understand, we are willing to listen and share with you. Don't hesitate to call our Manhattan Chapter phone for meeting information **(917) 300 3706**. To speak with someone please call one of the following volunteers; Jacquie Mitchell (eves) (347) 414-1780 jacquienytcf@gmail.com and for siblings, Jordon Ferber (917) 837-7752, beatniknudnik@yahoo.com

TCF MANHATTAN CHAPTER email: tcfmanhattan@gmail.com
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 "Our Children" editor: **Dan Zweig:** danzweigtcf@gmail.com
 Newsletter Editor: **Marie Levine** marielevine2@verizon.net

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MEETINGS are always the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month
WE MEET USING ZOOM AT 7:00pm—sign on at 6:45pm
 Soon as possible, we hope to return in person to the
 Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church
 55th Street and Fifth Ave (enter at 7 West 55th St.)

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. We are a group seeking support in our grief or are able to give it. Among us your religion, your race, your politics, your job or social standing are not important. We care about your grief—the tragedy that each of us have shared—and how we can grow through it, not back to the person we were, but to the person we can become.

Happy Father's Day

You never stop being a Dad

June 21, 2020

The Best Thing I Ever Did

By Dan Zweig

I never really thought seriously about being a father. Seemed it would only get in the way of other interests, career, hobbies, community interests, going out, whatever. I always felt like I could take it or leave it...the being a father thing. Then I met Sally. Sally was seriously interested in being a parent – and parenting with me. And I was seriously interested in Sally. So to make a long story short, Take it or leave it became take it and I was off on my parenting journey with Sally.

And an exciting journey it was. From the start it wasn't easy. First we knew we needed to adopt and we had to prepare. Make a resume, get cleared by social workers, advertise, find a birth mother looking to place a newborn baby, and work with her through her pregnancy. We couldn't just go home and turn down the lights. And we got lucky and found Ginger. And Ginger made Ben.

I had no clue what being a parent was like. Probably all of us find out how much work it is – much more than I could have imagined. But you just do it – you're responsible for this little life. But that's just the start of what I had no clue about. I had no idea of the love I would feel raising a child. How much more you could feel by giving love to a child. How much more you get back. I think of Ben and I can literally feel the love. It keeps me going when I miss him. Eight years, almost nine now – and I miss him every day. But now I can remember and feel the love, and not just the hurt. And it keeps me going.

We made it through almost 17 years. It didn't start easy. We thought Ben was gone before he was born. We were visiting Ginger six weeks before Arizona Ben was due and she began to bleed heavily – we figured this adoption – this baby was done for. After rushing to the hospital, we waited and the doctor came with the news. We had given up on the baby. We just wanted to hear that Ginger was ok. Well the doctor's news was that we would be parents in an hour or two. Not six weeks hence, an hour or two. First miracle – we adopted and got to assist in our son's birth.

I had no idea how much love there would be raising Ben. How much to give and how much to get as he grew up. And despite my ambivalence at the start, I loved being a Dad – I really loved being a dad.

Then at 15, Ben was diagnosed with leukemia, AML for those unfortunate enough to know what that is. After a year and a half fight to cure it, his promising progress all went wrong suddenly and Ben was gone. With all that love, and a year and a half where we lived with him and fought with him 24/7 to beat that leukemia, I don't know how we got through the hurt we felt after his death.

One big way was I found The Compassionate Friends and found others who had found their way to be able to get over the immeasurable pain and impossible to cope with loss. My Compassionate Friends told me it would get better; it just took time. Ok, you don't 'get over' it, but you can learn to live with it and find a life going forward.

(Cont'd next column)

A Virtual National Conference

The Compassionate Friends National Conference held each summer for more than four decades is one of the most rewarding experiences a bereaved parent or sibling can go to. I've been to six now and each one has been terrific.

There are generally scores of interesting and informative workshops keyed to the unique particular needs and circumstances of members that really hit the mark. The workshops are given by seasoned grievers who know those circumstances well. They've lived them.

There are also wonderful keynote presentations on special topics which are always moving. And it's a chance to spend three days in an environment where everyone 'gets it', something I generally cannot find at home. I cannot begin to tell you how wonderful that is every year.

For 2020, an in-person conference is not possible to hold, but The Compassionate Friends will be organizing a Virtual National Conference on July 31st – August 2nd. We expect the informative workshops to be available online, we expect there will be moving keynote presentations, and given the reduced expense of not needing to pay for a hotel and flights to the physical location, we expect many more people will be able to attend and benefit from what the conference has to offer.

In the virtual environment, it should be possible to hold more workshops and sessions – we are pretty much free of room size constraints and scheduling constraints for popular workshops should be easier to solve. I also look forward to having more of our chapter members being able to attend.

Save the dates everyone – July 31st – August 2nd - I will. I look forward to seeing you at the conference. Stay tuned as we hear more about what will actually be happening at the 2020 event.

Best Thing (Cont'd from left column)

With the pain of Ben's death, I questioned whether it had all been worth it. Now that the pain of his loss has subsided somewhat, I can feel the love I had raising him and loving him and having him love me. And without question, my almost 17 years with Ben were the best years of my life. And he's still with me whenever I think about him.

So as Father's Day approaches, I'll think of Ben coming over and giving me a giant hug and I'll feel the love. And despite his life cut way too short, it was totally worth it. I know that raising Ben and loving Ben is the best thing I ever did.

TCF SIBLING TUESDAYS

Siblings in the Manhattan Chapter meet every Tuesday of the month.

With Jordon Ferber - Sibling Leader

TUESDAYS AT 7:00PM

www.compassionatefriends.nyc



ANNOUNCING TCF'S FIRST VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

A Message from The Compassionate Friends CEO

A THREE DAY CONFERENCE

FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2020 TO SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2020

Since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, with concerns for gathering in a large conference, we have been working diligently to evaluate and develop a safer and meaningfully rewarding *virtual* national conference. And we've done it.

TCF's Virtual Conference will provide an important opportunity for our community to connect in a way that is feasible right now. It also offers the opportunity for many people to attend who may not have been able to do so in the past for a variety of reasons.

The three-day conference will include:

- Keynote Speakers
- 70 plus workshop choices
- Sibling Sunday
- Candle Lighting Ceremony
- Sharing Circles
- Silent Auction
- Entertainment
- Additional regular conference activities that are suitable for a virtual environment

Additional information:

- The conference will take place on a Zoom platform with an online registration system.
- Registration fees for the three-day event will be \$65 per person (early bird registration) and \$85 per person after July 17th, 2020.
- Information about the TCF Walk to Remember along with more conference details will be shared in the coming weeks.
- Training and orientation will be offered prior to the conference for attendees who may need some extra technology support in order to participate.

Although we would all love to be together in person, we can still connect, support, and gather as a community through a virtual event. We will continue to navigate this new environment we're in and we hope you will join us!

Registration will open soon, and we will make an announcement with a registration link provided when that happens. For now, please save the dates and look forward to connecting virtually with your TCF family through an enriching and inspiring virtual event.

Sincerely,

Shari O'Loughlin

CEO, The Compassionate Friends

Apocalypse...

(cont'd from page 1)

that as long as I live, Peter will live. So dying now would kill us both – again.

But wait. These are the musings of a semi-isolated woman. In truth I am one of the lucky ones no matter what happens. I'm hunkered down at my house in the country. I can go out to my backyard and putter in the garden as it comes back to life. During the past two decades I have created a surrogate family. I'm fortunate to have these young people who call, worry about me and make sure I have whatever I need. I live in the age of Facetime and Zoom. I have learned that the cocktail hour also works on my iphone.

We keep hearing that "we are all in this together." As compassionate friends, we know this is true. Our motto has always been "we need not walk alone". Now more than ever it is a comfort to have each other. Be safe my dear friends. This too shall pass.

Marie Levine

Editor, TCF Manhattan and Twin Forks, NY

marielevine2@verizon.net

Surviving

(cont'd from page 1)

a mechanical pat on the head without thinking that morning were making calls home during the day to their children to say, "I love you." Joy and life abound for millions of mothers on Mother's Day. It's also a day of appreciation and respect. I can think of no mothers who deserve it more than those who had to give a child back. In the face of misery they ask, "Why me?" but there is no answer. Maybe they are the instruments who are left behind to perpetuate the lives that were lost and appreciate the times they had with their children. They are the ones who help pick up the pieces when tragedy occurs and others have lost their children.

Erma Bombeck

Adrift...

Everything is beautiful and I am so sad.

This is how the heart makes a duet of

wonder and grief. The light spraying

through the lace of the fern is as delicate

as the fibers of memory forming their web

around the knot in my throat. The breeze

makes the birds move from branch to branch

as this ache makes me look for those I've lost

in the next room, in the next song, in the laugh

of the next stranger. In the very center, under

it all, what we have that no one can take

away and all that we've lost face each other.

It is there that I'm adrift, feeling punctured

by a holiness that exists inside everything.

I am so sad and everything is beautiful.

Inside the Miracle: Enduring Suffering,

Approaching Wholeness –

~ Mark Nepo ~

Gifts of Love

A Love Gift is a donation given in memory of a child who has died, or sometimes a memorial to a relative or friend. It can be in honor of a happy event that you would like to acknowledge, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapter.

All TCF chapters are totally dependent on funds from our families. We DO NOT receive funds from our National Office. Everything we need to operate our local chapters is paid directly from our local resources and our local family contributions. Thank you to all who can contribute and support this chapter. Please see 'Making a Contribution' below:

Passing the Basket – During normal times, we raise needed funds at each meeting by passing a basket for voluntary contributions. In this time without in person meetings, the Manhattan Chapter is going without the resources we usually get from the basket passed during our meetings. We are so glad to be able to hold the online meetings, and if you are able to, once a month or whenever you are able to, please help and make a 'Basket' contribution to help our organization.

Making a contribution –

Easiest way – online – use a credit card securely with Paypal – Click this link: [Please donate here](#)

Or you may mail a check to The Compassionate Friends, c/o Sally Petrick, 945 West End Ave Apt 2B, New York, NY 10025. Please make your check payable to The Compassionate Friends – Manhattan Chapter. We need and appreciate your support.

Making Mother's and Father's Day Special

by Elaine Stillwell

Rockville Centre, NY

Here are a few hints to help you through these days after the loss of a child:

- 1) Pamper yourself-this is a special day in your life. You are a parent forever and your child is your child forever.
- 2) Do what you need to do-what helps you. Grieve your way.
- 3) Be with those who surround you with love, not demands or advice.
- 4) Plan ahead-do things that make you feel good or give you a moment's peace.
- 5) Start new rituals to make new memories.
- 6) Share your thoughts with family members; decide together what the day should include. (If you are alone, find a good friend.)
- 7) Include deceased children in the day-through prayer, lighting a candle, telling stories about them, looking through pictures, planting flowers or a garden, doing a good deed, writing about them, making their favorite recipe.
- 8) Join with another bereaved family to honor this day and have mutual support.
- 9) Start a garden or add to a special garden in memory of your child.
- 10) Use this day to plant spring flowers so you can always see your child in each bloom and each bouquet that you cut.
- 11) Visit the cemetery if that helps your heart on this day.
- 12) Plant a flower or shrub that will come to bloom this time of year.
- 13) Do something special for someone else or something special in your child's name (helping Cancer Care, MADD, Scouting, a nursing home, etc.)
- 14) Listen to music that makes your heart feel good.
- 15) Cook some favorite recipes that your child enjoyed or cooked for you.
- 16) Buy a present for yourself from your child and enjoy the comfort it brings you.
- 17) Write a poem or article in memory of your child, sharing memories or whatever has helped you.
- 18) Attend a family gathering of relatives - their love and support can give you a lift on this day.
- 19) Make a booklet of favorite poems that help your heart, and give copies to dear relatives and friends in memory of your child.
- 20) Take part in a special church ceremony honoring Mother's Day and Father's Day.
- 21) Pray to your child-talking is the best medicine and prayer is simply talking.
- 22) Set aside some special time to grieve, unloading all the frustration and sadness that can envelop you on such a day giving you time to meditate alone.
- 23) Write a letter to your child, telling what's in your heart (perhaps some unfinished business or some new blessing that has enriched your life).
- 24) Allow the tears to flow- crying is healing and allows a release for your feelings.
- 25) Think of a way to "share your child with the world"-making sure his or her memory lives on through scholarships, writing, good deeds.
- 26) Give and get plenty of hugs.

A Message to My Wife

The years of our marriage are few when measured against a lifetime. We have encountered joy and shared confidence in our future. We have known hope's ending and have borne the death of dreams. We have, together, been diminished. Even minor aspirations have eluded our grasp in the cruel shadow of the loss of our child. Yet, we still share our lives, and though the brightness we once knew has fled, we have grown enough to sense a return of laughter – an uplifting to shatter the dimness, to remind us that tomorrow will come and dreams may again be born.

Don Hackett, TCF Hingham, MA

"No man can possibly know what life means, what the word means, what anything means, until he has a child and loves it. And then, the whole universe changes and nothing will ever again seem exactly as it seemed before."

~ Lafcadio Hearne

TCF SIBLING CHAT

This chat is available for adult and teen siblings to share concerns and feelings

WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY EVENINGS
9 PM

www.compassionatefriends.org

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CHAT SCHEDULE. Go to www.compassionatefriends.org . Click on CHAT. Times are ET				The Compassionate Friends National Office P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 Toll Free (877) 969-0010 www.compassionatefriends.org email:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org	
ET	10:00-11AM	8:00 – 9:00PM	9:00 – 10:00PM	WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE <i>TCF National Magazine</i> 1 yr. subscription \$20	
MON	General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings	MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Our next Chapter meetings are Tuesdays: JUN 9 JUL 14 AUG 11 SEP 8 JUN 23 JUL 28 AUG 25 SEP 22	
TUE		Loss to Substance Related Causes	Bereaved less than 2 yrs Bereaved more than 2 yrs	Deadline for Newsletter article submissions: Fall: August 1st Spring/Summer: April 1st Winter: February 2nd Holiday: October 1 st	
WED	General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings	MAKE A DONATION Click here to Donate to the Manhattan Chapter	
THU		No Surviving Children	General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		
FRI	General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings	Loss to Substance Related Causes Pregnancy/Infant Loss	General Bereavement Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		
SAT			General Bereavement Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		
SUN		Suicide Loss	General Bereavement Issues Parents/Grandparents/Siblings		

OUR COMPASSIONATE FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS

Babylon	1st Friday	(516) 795-8644	Rockville Centre	2nd Friday	(516) 766-4682
Bronx	2nd Tuesday	(914) 714-4885	Rockland County	3rd Tuesday	(845) 398-9762
Brookhaven	2nd Friday	(631) 738-0809	SmithPoint/Mastic	2nd Thursday	(631) 281-9004
Brooklyn	3rd Wednesday	(917) 952-9751	Staten Island	2nd & 4th Thurs.	(718) 983-0377
Flushing	3rd Friday	(718) 746-5010	Syosset (Plainview)	3rd Friday	(718) 767-0904
Manhasset	3rd Tuesday	(516) 466-2480	Twin Forks/Hamptons	3rd Friday	(646) 894-0317
Marine Park, Bklyn	3rd Friday	(718) 605-1545	White Plains	1st Thursday	(914) 381-3389
Medford	2nd Friday	(631) 738-0809			

PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS

Click below for National Website's Listing of groups.

24/7 PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS

<u>TCF – Loss of a Child</u>	<u>TCF – Loss of a Grandchild</u>
<u>TCF – Loss of a Stepchild</u>	<u>TCF – Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren</u>
<u>TCF – Loss of an Only Child/All Your Children</u>	<u>TCF – Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Loss of an Infant Grandchild</u>
<u>TCF – Multiple Losses</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Long-term Illness</u>
<u>TCF – Daughterless Mothers</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Cancer</u>
<u>TCF – Men in Grief</u>	<u>TCF – Loss After Withdrawing Life Support</u>
<u>TCF – Bereaved LGBTQ Parents with Loss of a Child</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Mental Illness</u>
<u>TCF – Bereaved Parents with Grandchild Visitation Issues</u>	<u>TCF – Sudden Death</u>
<u>TCF – Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Suicide</u>
<u>TCF – Infant and Toddler Loss</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Homicide</u>
<u>TCF – Loss of a Child 4 -12 Years Old</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to Substance Related Causes</u>
<u>TCF – Loss of a Child 13-19 Years Old</u>	<u>TCF – Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver</u>
<u>TCF – Loss of an Adult Child</u>	<u>TCF – Grieving with Faith and Hope</u>
	<u>TCF – Reading Your Way Through Grief</u>

The Compassionate Friends
c/o Sally Petrick - Treasurer
945 West End Ave Apt 2B
New York, NY 10025

Making a Donation—Now Online

Many of us are grateful for what Compassionate Friends has done for them and want to lend their support, even those who do not currently attend our meetings. You can still mail a check to the address to the left or donate online.

[Click here to Donate to the Manhattan Chapter](#)