



A Self-Help Non-Profit Organization for Families Who Are Grieving the Death of a Child

"Triggers That Call Their Name"

by Mitch Carmody

On the day my son died Dec. 1st 1987, something shifted in my soul, something deep inside my being got rewired. As a newly bereaved parent you anticipate that the affects and symptoms of shock will eventually wear off as reality arm wrestles for control of our conscious thought. Shock eventually turns to a functioning numbness and we struggle to survive each day knowing that our child is dead, and that this is for real. The first year anniversary date looms in the future like threatening clouds in the distance. It seems every thought is imbued with thoughts of our child. How will I ever I survive this?

More anniversary dates, holidays, birthdays, special days will come and pass, each with their sting of pain. As we move through the years, our directed conscious thought eventually does seem to return to a somewhat functional level and for all intents and purposes it appears we have healed and moved on (He is doing so much better; I am so glad he is moving on with his life; I don't know how he does it). Fortunate people that have never lost a child, have no idea of the turbidity of emotions that lay roiling beneath the surface of our everyday persona that we wear. The emotions are always there and can be activated by our own directed thought or by unconscious reaction of stimuli that I call 'sense triggers'. Every one of our 6 senses can trigger thoughts of our child.

Since the day my son Kelly died I have felt a mille-second off with the rest of the world. I feel at a subconscious level in my interaction with the world, like I am continually watching a movie with dubbed in dialogue, my mind often wandering to thoughts of my son. It has been 17 years and I am feeling joy again in my life but my thoughts always stray to Kelly. This is not directed thought nor is it subconscious thought either,

his name, his image, our journey, and the pain of his loss all flashes by in a millisecond of time through my conscious thought... even at I write these words.

To others we may appear normal and even be engaged in intent conversation, driving, walking, at work, at play, in line at the movies. We carry on our normal routine day as best we can the rest of our lives. We do our jobs and pay the bills. But underneath that 'normal routine' persona there are still receptors for hundreds of triggers that bombard our psyche forever more; a part of the nature of our new universe. Unnoticeable to most, people have no idea how often our thoughts stray to our child. It's a wonder we have short term memory loss and depend on Post-it notes to survive. Right beneath the surface of our external expression we have thoughts of our child hundreds of times a day. From the moment we wake up there will be triggers that bring to mind our children.

I have not kept my son's name hidden away like some dark secret, nor have I built a shrine in his memory. I always keep him by my side. Even though we are in two different spheres of existence we still experience a common journey together. I strive to keep Kelly in my conscious thought by the way I live my life. That is by choice.

I also feel it is important to recognize how often we do think of our child without conscious directed thought. I feel all of our 6 senses have been reprogrammed and sensitized to recognize anything of our child's life and death. Immediately our thought synapses start firing thoughts of our child into our active consciousness. In the early years of our grief journey these "triggers" are hair triggers and they can initiate tears, anger and even gut wrenching agony in seconds. The first few years are raw survival and everything is a trigger.

What are these triggers?

Almost everything in life.



**A Self-help Non-Profit Support Organization for Families Who
Are Grieving the Death of a Child**

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help international organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings. We meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:45 P.M. at the Grand Strand Senior Center. The next meetings will be May 6 and June 3. If you are reading this newsletter for the first time you may find it very difficult to come and share your grief. Please know that there will be others present who are ready to listen and understand what you are going through. Try it. It may help.

You need not walk alone.

The chapter newsletter is normally published every other month and mailed to those in their first year of grief. We hope that it brings comfort to those who read it. If you wish to remain on the mailing list after that period you may do so by attending a meeting or sending a love donation. The distribution of the chapter newsletter is solely dependent upon love gifts.

SIBLING CREDO

We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters.

Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us.

Sometimes we will need the support of our friends.

At other times we need our families to be there.

Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be.

We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed.

We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak.

Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life. Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as

Surviving Siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

OUR CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other 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....But whatever hope we bring to this gathering of the Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share just as we will 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, the anger as well as the peace, the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone.

We are the Compassionate Friends.

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Waccamaw Chapter News

A MOMENT WITH MARIE

Sometimes I think that these two months are even worse emotionally than Thanksgiving and Christmas. The special days that are set aside these two months are the time that the joy of being a parent is exploited by merchants, but even more greatly celebrated by families to honor the position that the two people in the life/lives of the person that we miss so greatly.

These are definitely "trigger" months in our lives. Some of us are mourning the life of our only child and there is no longer anyone to bring "wet, sloppy" kisses except from their childhood memories, and some of those dear ones left no children behind to carry on that tradition.

May each of us find solace and comfort in realizing that our lives are much richer for having had our loved one in our lives.

My prayer is that each of us may find joy in the life of the one that we miss so much.

As Tennyson so aptly said:

I feel it when I sorrow most;

Tis better to have loved and lost, Than never to have loved at all.

Please

If you would like your child(ren)'s name Acknowledged in the newsletter, Make sure that you have filled out the form on Page 7 We regret that we are unable to publish His/her name without written permission.

"There Is No Word"

They call a man a widower,
When he has lost his wife.
The woman is a widow,
When her man does lose his life.
And orphan is the word,
Perhaps for most of us one day.
For it is normal - losing,
Mom & Dad along the way.
But you can look both high and low,
And then look far and wide,
And never find a word for one,
Who's had a child who died.
--Ken Falk, TCF Northwestern CT

ATTENTION

If you're not recycling your ink cartridges - please bring them to the meetings. They're worth \$3.00 at Office Max towards the purchase of mailing labels, envelopes, etc.

Give them to Jane Alirie. Thanks for your participation.

I Wrote Your Name.

I wrote your name on a piece of paper, but by accident I threw it away.

I wrote your name on my hand, but it washed away.

I wrote your name in the sand, but the waves whispered it away.

I wrote your name in my heart, and forever it will stay.

Anonymous

Messenger of God

O, little butterfly,
Messenger of God
When I see you in the sky,
I cannot help but nod.
You bring me respite
From grief and despair
Every time I see you
Sailing through the air.
You renew my faith
In all God's wondrous plan
And I know it's all in Faith
Not in what I understand.

~Kathryn Poland (4/12/01)

Five Years Ago

Monday afternoon the telephone jingled.
I picked up the phone, no one was there.
While at the phone I deleted the old messages.
One from you: Happy Mother's Day Mom!
Little did I know.
That I was deleting your last message.
Five years ago

~Jane Alirie~ Ross' Mom Waccamaw TCF

You need not walk alone...

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• **The sense of touch:** Touching the silky hem of a baby blanket, the rough leather feel of hunting boots, Terri cloth jammies, the slimy skin of a frog, the warm forehead of a sick child, the cold wind of winter storm, the hard feel of vinyl on a tightly clenched steering wheel, the scalding burn of cocoa too hot, and endless more can evoke their name.

• **The sense of smell:** The smell of a child coming it out of the cold, the smell of hard work emitted off an old denim jacket, the scent of hairspray , strong perfume or baby powder in the air, their favorite meal cooking from someone else's stove, the smell of a fresh cut Christmas tree, bananas, chocolate, bubblegum, car grease, burning popcorn, burning leaves, drifting sulphur from fireworks, fresh caught fish, fragrant flowers, zillions of olfactory triggers that can evoke our child's name.

• **The sense of sight:** The sight of any child or person their age or that resembles them at anytime in their life, or even how they might appear if they would have aged. The sight of a hospital, driving by a cemetery, sighting a hearse, a funeral procession, a flower spray, a sunset, a sunrise, a road side marker, a billboard, a red Volkswagen, a Harley, or a school bus. Television shows, movies, a lunch box on the counter, a puppy, a tabby cat, a turkey, a penny on the sidewalk, again countless triggers launched when our eyes are open.

• **The sense of hearing:** Hearing a siren, a telephone ring late at night, a baby's cry, brakes screeching, the ding-ding of heart monitor, the overhead announcement of a Code Blue. Pomp and Circumstance played in June, the Pacheobel Canon in D, Amazing grace, My Country 'Tis of Thee. "Good night sweetie", "I love you pumpkin", "get home early", "is dinner ready?", "where are my shoes"? Hearing terms such cancer, malignant, SIDS, SADS, AIDS, tumor, aneurism, blood work, test results, MRI, CT scan, Spinal tap, prednisone, police report, overdose, suicide, and murder. Hearing "there's been a bad accident", "good evening it's the 6 o'clock news, Christmas carols at the mall, or someone whistling down the hall. Every word, every sound you hear can be a trigger.

• **The sense of taste:** A Dairy Queen blizzard, the taste of tears, warm Kool-Aid, soggy cheerios, the taste of fear, hamburgers, lasagna, grilled cheese sandwiches dipped in tomato soup, Spaghetios, movie theater popcorn, Chicken McNuggets, or cherry Jell-O. Every taste a potential to trigger a memory of your child.

• **The 6th sense or psychic sense:** You may have vivid dreams of your child, you hear your child, you smell your child, you feel your child, and you can even taste their tears. Call it a dream, a vision, a hallucination, a visitation, a psychic connection, a messenger, connecting experience, ADC, or an Angel hug. For you they are a valid experience. When you hear your porch chimes and feel the breeze caress your warm face on an unusually calm and hot summer day, or hear on the radio Neil Diamond singing Turn on your Heartlight, our soul hears their name. When you see the dragonfly land on your shoulder, the butterfly on your hand, or smell her perfume in the car, or his cologne on the breeze, our soul hears their name. We feel and experience a brief moment of our child. And we relish the visit and thank God for the gift.

We shall all experience the triggers of the 5 senses unless physical limitations prevent us from doing, and our child will always be in our thoughts without our real control. Not everyone will have a profound experience of the sixth sense but it is rather unusual if you do not. Sometime the signs are just not recognized, trivialized, hidden or ignored. But our children do reach out to us. They reach out to us not out of fear or loneliness, but out of compassion for our aching heart, they feel its anguish, they taste our tears and hear our screams, and they comfort us when we need it the most.

We have we been taught by our society to be afraid of ghosts and to be frightened of things we cannot explain. Society has mystified and carnivalized experiences of the supernatural into a Hollywood experience to entertain and frighten little children. The reality of a true experience of the supernatural is scoffed at, yet every major religion of the world is based on experiences of the supernatural.

A connection to our loved one who has died is real, how it happens, as varied as we are. Seemingly real manifestations of our child can be discernable to one or all of our senses courtesy of our 6th sense and our profound love. Our senses have been heightened to an increased level of awareness to the presence of our beloved child around us. Thoughts of our child who has died will bombard our brain 24/7 for the rest of our lives. Is that really a bad thing?

As you move through the years in your bereavement process you find out there is no pat answers in processing grief, especially in child loss. The journey is as individual as we are and

*People will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel.*

~~ **Maya Angelou**

Conclusion from Page 5

you do not get over it, you learn to live with it. I accept that, as well as accepting every trigger no matter how painful, that keeps me closer to my son. We cannot run from our thoughts so we learn to live with them, even encourage them, and that's fine with me. I will just buy lots of Post-it notes and the world will just have to get used to me being just a millisecond off...

Love and light
Mitch Carmody 12-12-04

The Coping Hours

Did you ever hear of a nightmare
That occurred in the midst of day?
Webster must have named it wrong
It just doesn't happen that way.

It might be while I'm driving
Or watching some TV
Looking at your picture when
This shock grabs hold of me.

Sleep is such a short time
While the coping hours are long
Day in, day out, I sort it out
Somehow this all seems wrong.

So nightmares aren't for nighttime
It's for the light of day I fear
The ever-constant reality
Is the fact that you're not here.

Ellen Schick

To Honor You

To honor you, I get up everyday and take a breath.
And start another day without you in it.
To honor you, I laugh and love with those who knew your smile
And the way your eyes twinkled with mischief and secret knowledge.
To honor you, I take the time to appreciate everyone I love,
I know now there is no guarantee of days or hours spent in their presence.
To honor you, I listen to music you would have liked,
And sing at the top of my lungs, with the windows rolled down.
To honor you, I take chances, say what I feel, hold nothing back,
Risk making a fool of myself, dance every dance.

You were my light, my heart, my gift of love, from the very highest source.

So everyday, I vow to make a difference, share a smile, live, laugh and love.

Now I live for us both, so all I do, I do to honor you.

Connie F. Kiefer Byrd

In Loving Memory of Jordan Alexander Kiefer

8/24/88 – 12/13/05

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www.bereavedparentsusa.org

Apple Cart

Dad, why do you think that you have to protect Mom?

She's going to cry anyway.

But it hurts more, when you don't upset the apple cart.

So, upset the apple cart!

And together put the apples back in the cart

~Jane Alirie~ Ross' Mom Waccamaw TCF

" the only NORMAL is on a washing machine."

~Jenny Tier, Waccamaw Chapter TCF~

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED

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<u>CHILD'SNAME</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>BIRTHDATE</u>
Thomas A.Chase	son of Tom & Debbie Chase	05/02/77
Jon Ray Dagley	son of Aileen & Alton Brockett	05/23/63
Jeffrey Robert Bird	son of Robert & Jean Bird	05/26/51
Jami Beth Webb	daughter of Doug & Trish Mullin	06/05/77
Keith Shapiro	son of Marie Peeling	06/10/74
Sandra Kathleen Bell	daughter of Kathy Rinaldi	06/23/87
William "Billy" McWatters III	son of Adele McWatters	06/26/50

LOVE GIFTS
 A Love Gift is a gift of money to Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child who has died, but can also be from individuals to honor a relative or close friend., a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well—or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of The Compassionate Friends.
 The distribution of the chapter newsletter is solely dependent upon love gifts.
 If you would like to have your child's name added to our list, we request that you complete & return the form below. A love gift is not required, but please consider one as a memorial to your child.

<u>CHILD'SNAME</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE OF LOSS</u>
Ross Wayne Alirie	son of Wayne & Jane Alirie	05/12/03
Jon Ray Dagley	son of Aileen & Alton Brockett	05/23/07
Francis "Frank" Kitson	son of Douglas & Sandy Kitson	05/25/07
Sarah Jayne Otte	daughter of Earl & Doris Otte	06/07/06
Joseph Thomas Isaac III	son of Joe & Cheryl Isaac	06/08/94
Mamdooh Fikri Saleh	son of Daisy Saleh	06/13/07
Jeremy Ruth Cox	daughter of Vonda Cox	06/21/04

Memorial Love Gifts
 The following gifts have been received since the last newsletter
 A brick has been added in loving memory to The Wall of Love on our website:www.tcfmyrtlebeach.com

Bill & Peggy Kinney in memory of Light Kinney
 Lewis & Sharon Richards in memory of Darryl Shurow
 Joe & Barbara Tindall in memory of Joey Tindall
 Wayne & Jane Alirie in memory of Ross Alirie
 Foster & Carolyn Bethea in memory of Trissie Fetter
 Bob & Marie Peeling in memory of Keith Shapiro

As stated before if you have previously donated a love gift, you do not need to complete the form. We will continue your child's name in our active file. Please accept our apologies if we include or omit a name in error. Let us know so that we may make the necessary correction.

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____
LOVE GIFT ENCLOSED: \$ _____ **IN MEMORY OF:** _____
CHILD'S NAME _____
BIRTHDATE: _____ **DATE OF LOSS:** _____



Please include my child(ren) as listed above in "Our Children Remembered" list as published in the newsletter. **YES** **NO**
 Return this form to Jane Alirie, Secretary/Treasurer, 706 Bonnie Drive, Myrtle Beach, SC 29588



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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P.O. Box 2893

Myrtle Beach, SC 29578

WHAT TO DO, WHAT TO DO?

Rabbi Earl A. Grollman said, "Time may heal. It may help to dull your pain. But the medicine of time, taken by itself, is not sure. Time is neutral. What helps is what you do with time."

In the early days after the death of a child you may be so numb that it is all you can do to get out of bed in the morning. You toss and turn unable to sleep or you sleep for hours or days.

You can stumble through your days unaware what is happening around you. Eating is not something you can or want to do.

If you have other children it will effect how you function or not, depending on their ages.

Eventually you will begin to want to join the world but may have a hard time in certain situations and you may have to retreat back to the safety of your "cocoon"

Be kind to yourself. Don't let others tell you " isn't it time you got over "it" and moved on with life?" You have to take all the time to grieve and begin to heal that is necessary. Each person is different, even spouses grieve differently.

When you begin to get comfortable in your world, your changed world, you can begin to think of how you want people to remember your child.

This may be a time for you to join a support group. Compassionate Friends is where you can talk about your child. You can celebrate their birthday. You can show pictures of your child. It is a place where no one has the answers but they are willing to share what has worked for them and what hasn't. It is a place where we do not judge or tell you that you are wrong in what you are doing. We are there to hold your hand, to offer love and support, to listen to your story. Someone said you have to tell your story at least 100 times. Your family and friends may not be able to listen 100 times but your Compassionate Friends will. Why?

Because we have been there and someone listened to us so it is our turn to give back what has been given to us. This is what we do. This is what we do with time.

Our children, grandchildren and siblings will never be forgotten as long as we share them with others. We can set up scholarships, plant memorial gardens, purchase benches engraved with their names, start a foundation to support a cause or disease connected with their death, volunteer our time with a charity, help other children with one on one mentoring and many more ways.

As we travel this painful road we can reach out to other bereaved people with love and hope....that is what to do. HUGS, Betty Farrel, Sarah Louise's Nana bcfnana@aol.com Arlington , VA Chapter TCF