



Save the Date!

The Compassionate
Friends'

Worldwide Candle Lighting



Sunday, December 8, 2013

Visit their website for locations
and more information

www.compassionatefriends.org

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Please contact us at
1-800-336-6475
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assistance to you.

Another Perspective

FALL 2013

Quarterly readings for Families and Friends from the Sudden Infant and Child Death Resource Center.

Dear Friend,

As the days are getting shorter and the nights are getting cooler, we want to remind you that you are still in our thoughts.

It is our wish that you find these articles to be helpful as you continue along the path of grief. The loss of a child is not something that you "get over". Rather, it is something that becomes a part of you. What you do with that part is an individual decision.

~The Staff of the Sudden Infant and Child Death Resource Center

Anniversaries & Birthdays...

Remember When They Were Happy?

By Fran Morgan

"I woke up crying in the middle of the night. *Sobbing!*" The bereaved mother was anticipating the ninth anniversary of her son's death the following week. I had spoken with her the day before; she hadn't mentioned it. She *did* mention that she didn't feel well and was too sick to even go to Sunday Mass.

Subconsciously, in our sleep, our greatest heartache predominates at the anniversary time of the death. We discussed how, on awakening in the days before "the day," we look outside and see the *exact* same weather. Nature, in all its wondrous glory, can plummet our emotions when our memory is triggered. In my friend's journey of grief, she has done "all the right things." She has cried, cried and cried—she has talked, talked and talked about her son— and prayed, prayed and prayed. Yesterday, this lady who seems to be a pillar of strength all through the year, spent the day in bed. "Allergies", she said.

At other times, she goes regularly to the cemetery, places flowers and seasonal remembrances on her boy's grave, speaks of him in conversations with friends and family, comforts other bereaved parents, has an attitude of gratitude for her husband, family, home and friends. She can laugh and has joy in her life. She did her grief work in the first year and in the years that followed. She always allows herself to cry, to let the pain of missing him have its way with her.

What is it about the anniversaries and birthdays of our children that makes us go two steps back (or 222 steps back!). Why do we get plunged back to that worst time of our lives? Often, physically our bodies give out. Sometimes, something seems to happen to our immune system—we catch cold—virus—flu—have accidents. Nothing soothes us.

Often, it is not the actual anniversary or birthday that brings the renewed sorrow, it can be the time before or the time after. "Next Thursday" begins the sad mantra. Our mental calendar revolves around the time we heard our worst news, the wake, the funeral, the burial. The clock in our brain goes back to the time our hearts broke with agony, and stops at that point in time. Each excruciating second is re-lived. Unbearable pain surfaces again. We become fragile, vulnerable, almost helpless as we lose our confidence in anything that resembles recovery.



**Today I
remembered
not only
who I lost,
but also
who I had.
And it was
wonderful,
rich and
sweet.**

This August, it will be twenty-eight years for my husband and me since our precious son Peter died. Most of the time I feel that God, His love, the love of family and friends, and time have healed us. But, as sure as death and taxes, I know that when summer begins there will be times when I will feel the sun on my face and wonder how it can shine when Peter is gone. August's heat will blanket me once again with suffocating remembrances of the day when our emotional earthquake hit... when the sad eyes of loved ones told the irrevocable news. Film clips in my mind will bring it all back. Without a hint of logic, I will wish I could see him just once more...*just once, Lord!* There will be times when I will be like the little girl who has lost her wonderful doll. Adult reasoning won't help me to understand *"why!"* All I will know is *"I want him back!"* We have heard of the phenomenon called "the phantom limb." For a long time after a person loses a limb, he feels overpowering, excruciating pain, even though the limb is gone. Think about it.

It isn't ever that I purposely anticipate the anniversary and thereby bring the sorrow on myself. Sometimes I will come through the anniversary without dredging it all up. I do well. Sometimes I will feel all the love of the dear ones whom God sends to me; angels on earth. Sometimes I won't. Knowing that we've experienced it many times before, and that we bounce back when that time passes is knowledge that sustains and helps me. Pearl S. Buck said, "There is an alchemy in sorrow. It can be transmuted into wisdom, which, if it does not bring joy, can yet bring happiness."

Life is not all about feeling happy all the time. It is about acceptance. Accepting that we can be laid low at certain times, that we aren't going crazy, that we are not depressed personalities, but that abysmal sorrow recurs in those special times, *and* that we can live through it. The fact that we can even laugh again and choose joy in our lives is a wonderful thing to know about ourselves. We do not have to be ashamed when it happens. It is what it is. Our beloved children are worth crying for, even after all these years. Throughout the year, anniversaries of the deaths and birthdays of my mother, father, brother, aunt, nephew, in-laws and close friends occur. I remember them poignantly and fondly, but I've never been thrown back in time or experienced the re-living of the sorrow that I have for my son. Is it the legacy of the bereaved parent? Mama always said, "God fits our back to the burden." That is my prayer for you and for me.

Bereavement Guidelines for the Loss of a Child

If you think you are going insane, **THAT'S NORMAL.**

If all you can do is cry, **THAT'S NORMAL.**

If you have trouble with the most minor decisions, **THAT'S NORMAL.**

If you can't taste your food or have any semblance of an appetite, **THAT'S NORMAL.**

If you have feelings of rage, denial and depression, **THAT'S NORMAL.**

If your friends dwindle away and you feel like you have the plague, **THAT'S NORMAL.**

If your blood boils and the hair in your nose curls when someone tells you, "It was God's will", **THAT'S NORMAL.**

If you can't talk about it but can smash dishes, shred old phone books, and kick the garbage can down the lane, **THAT'S NORMAL.**

If you can share your story, your feelings with an understanding listener or another bereaved parent, **THAT'S A BEGINNING.**

If you can get a glimmer of your child's life rather than his death, **THAT'S WONDERFUL.**

If you can remember your child with a smile, **THAT'S HEALING.**

If you can find your mirrors have become windows and you are able to reach out to other bereaved parents, **THAT'S GROWING.**

Be kind to yourselves, and patient... healing takes time.