



7 Things I Have Learned Since the Loss of My Child

Child loss is a loss like no other. One often misunderstood by many. If you love a bereaved parent or know someone who does, remember that even his or her “good” days are harder than you could ever imagine. Compassion and love, not advice, are needed. If you’d like an inside look into why the loss of a child is a grief that lasts a lifetime, here is what I’ve learned in my seven years of trekking through the unimaginable.

1) Love never dies.

There will never come a day, hour, minute or second I stop loving or thinking about my son. Just as parents of living children unconditionally love their children always and forever, so do bereaved parents. I want to say and hear his name just the same as non-bereaved parents do. I want to speak about my deceased children as normally and naturally as you speak of your living ones.

I love my child just as much as you love yours— the only difference is mine lives in heaven and talking about about him is unfortunately quite taboo in our culture. I hope to change that. Our culture isn’t so great about hearing about children gone too soon, but that doesn’t stop me from saying my son’s name and sharing his love and light everywhere I go. Just because it might make you uncomfortable, doesn’t make him matter any less. My son’s life was cut irreversibly short, but his love lives on forever. And ever.

2) Bereaved parents share an unspeakable bond.

In my seven years navigating the world as a bereaved parent, I am continually struck by the power of the bond between bereaved parents. Strangers become kindreds in mere seconds—a look, a glance, a knowing of the heart connects us,

even if we’ve never met before. No matter our circumstances, who we are, or how different we are, there is no greater bond than the connection between parents who understand the agony of enduring the death of a child. It’s a pain we suffer for a lifetime, and unfortunately only those who have walked the path of child loss understand the depth and breadth of both the pain and the love we carry.



3) I will grieve for a lifetime.

Period. The end. There is no “moving on,” or “getting over it.” There is no bow, no fix, no solution to my heartache. There is no end to the ways I will grieve and for how long I will grieve. There is no glue for my broken heart, no elixir for my pain, no going back in time. For as long as I breathe, I will grieve and ache and love my son with all my heart and soul. There will never come a time where I won’t think about who my son would be, what he would look like, and how he would be woven perfectly into the tapestry of my family. I wish people could understand that grief lasts forever because love lasts forever; that the loss of a child is not one finite event, it is a continuous loss that unfolds minute by minute



Birthday Remembrances

We celebrate the day they were born and hold them in our hearts forever.

February

Elizabeth Thomas Argentieri
Matthew Arsenault
Michael Bradley
Donald Anthony Capasso
Daniel John Coleman
PFC Kyle Joseph Coutu
Gary E. DeMoura

Karl Greaves
Matthew George Iavarone
Ronan David Jordan
John Anthony Koczan
Jay Lawrence
Jennifer Leigh Lesperance
Shane Mandeville

Ashley Miller
Michael Pelliccia
Brent Douglas Sheldon
Emma Elizabeth Soares
Sam Oliver Stein
Jonathan Blake Waxler
Rebeckha Lynn Whitefield

March

Angelo James Argentieri
Tom Orazio Argentieri Jr.
Linda Marie Caito
Peter Collins
Alexandria Marie Curtis
Rebecca Eisen
Servulo J. Gonsalves

Rebecca Greene
Thomas P. Kenney
Thomas P. Lewis
Jeffrey S. Monica
Lauren Rose Norwood
Brendan Matthew O'Connell
Roberti

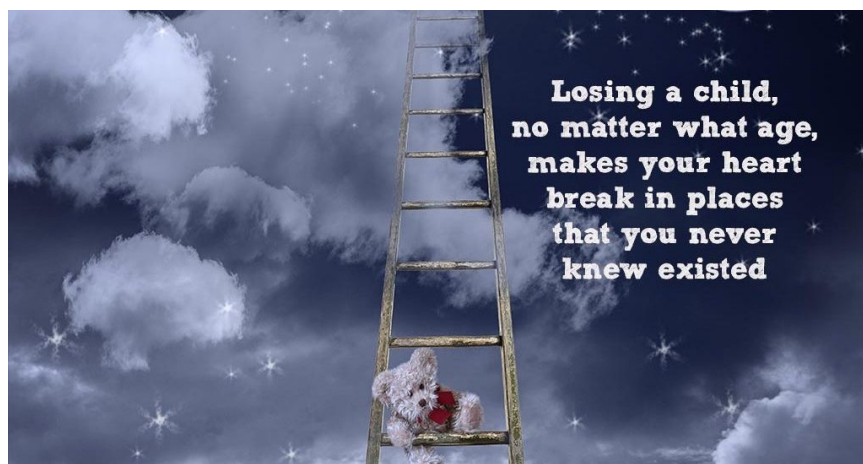
Nicole M. Reinert
Alexandria M. Saker
Patricia Lynn Salera
Angela Rose Sbardella
Jeffrey Stephen Shank
Julianne Smith
Travis Stovall

April

Patrick Avitabile
Jason David Bates
Michael Bolivar
Louie Capodilupo
Anthony Stephen Casale
Anthony Michael D'Arezzo

Allison DeAngelus
Gabrielle Dinsmore
Brian Gault
Stephen Hallisey
Donald LaMotte
Keeley Lynch

David Roger Monica
Gregory "Josh" Montigny
Joshua Smith
Brian Squadrito



In Memory of Our Children

As long as we live, our children too shall live, for they are part of us in our memories. We lovingly remember the following children on Their Anniversary.



February

Elizabeth Thomas Argentieri
Christine Marie Bernier
Derrick Blair
Taniya Bonilla
Christopher Robert Boone
PFC Kyle Joseph Coutu
Gregory S. Earley

Alex Flanagan
Dwight Furey
Donna Lamb
Jay Lawrence
Ashley Miller
Lorie Okerholm
Jeffrey Stephen Shank

Julianne Smith
Travis Stovall
Craig Robert Valliere
Samantha Walsh
Conor Alexis Young

March

Natalie Joy Adamo
Melissa E. Allin
Nicholas Baccari
Linda Marie Caito
Gabrielle Dinsmore
Servulo J. Gonsalves

Karl Greaves
Stephen Hallisey
Benjamin Lavigne
Jennifer Leigh Lesperance
Christopher J. Meehan
Olivia Paone

Monika Krystyna Prus
Brendan Matthew O'Connell
Roberti
Alfred "A.D." Silvia, III
Beau Wennermark

April

Erin Allen
Matthew Arsenault
Nathaniel Robert Asselin
Michael Barry
Alison Bowman
Connie Lee Bradley
Donald K. Bradley
Michael Bradley
Kyle Cabral

Luigi Civitelli
David D. DeMoura
Gary E. DeMoura
Traci L. DeMoura
Erika Hall
Roger Hobbs
Donald LaMotte
Christopher Mark Leahey
Keeley Lynch

Jamie Mayer
Martha Noble
Nathan Parker
Marissa Salabert
Patricia Lynn Salera
Matthew K. Serio
Joshua Smith

over the course of a lifetime. Every missed birthday, holiday, milestone—should-be back-to-school school years and graduations; weddings that will never be; grandchildren that should have been but will never be born—an entire generation of people are irrevocably altered forever. This is why grief lasts forever. The ripple effect lasts forever. The bleeding never stops.

4) It's a club I can never leave, but is filled with the most shining souls I've ever known.

This crappy club called child loss is a club I never wanted to join, and one I can never leave, yet is filled with some of the best people I've ever known. And yet we all wish we could jump ship—that we could have met another way—any other way but this. Alas, these shining souls are the most beautiful, compassionate, grounded, loving, movers, shakers and healers I have ever had the honor of knowing. They are life-changers, game-changers, relentless survivors and thrivers. Warrior moms and dads who redefine the word brave.

Every day loss parents move mountains in honor of their children gone too soon. They start movements, change laws, spearhead crusades of tireless activism. Why? In the hope that even just one parent could be spared from joining the club. If you've ever wondered who some of the greatest world changers are, hang out with a few bereaved parents and watch how they live, see what they do in a day, a week, a lifetime. Watch how they alchemize their grief into a force to be reckoned with, watch how they turn tragedy into transformation, loss into legacy.

Love is the most powerful force on earth, and the love between a bereaved parent and his/her child is a lifeforce to behold. Get to know a bereaved parent. You'll be thankful you did.



5) The empty chair/room/space never becomes less empty.

Empty chair, empty room, empty space in every family picture. Empty, vacant, forever gone for this lifetime. Empty spaces that should be full, everywhere we go. There is and will always be a missing space in our lives, our families, a forever-hole-in-our-hearts. Time does not make the space less empty. Neither do platitudes, clichés or well-wishes for us to “move on,” or “stop dwelling,” from well intentioned friends or family. Nothing does. No matter how you look at it, empty is still empty. Missing is still missing. Gone is still gone. The problem is nothing can fill it. Minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, month after

month, year after heartbreaking year the empty space remains. The empty space of our missing child(ren) lasts a lifetime. And so we rightfully miss them forever. Help us by holding the space of that truth for us.

6) No matter how long it's been, holidays never become easier without my son.

Never, ever. Have you ever wondered why every holiday season is like torture for a

bereaved parent? Even if it's been 5, 10, or 25 years later? It's because they really, truly are. Imagine if you had to live every holiday without one or more of your precious children. Imagine how that might feel for you. It would be easier to lose an arm, a leg or two— anything— than to live without your flesh and blood, without the beat of your heart. Almost anything would be easier than living without one of more of your precious children. That is why holidays are always and forever hard for bereaved parents. Don't wonder why or even try to understand. Know you don't have to understand in order to be a supportive presence. Consider supporting and loving some bereaved parents this holiday season. It will be the best gift you could ever give them.



A Love Gift is a living memorial to your child. Usually given on birthdays, anniversaries of their deaths, holidays, or just to remember. Our thanks to the following for their generous donations.

Nicole Meredith Reinert – We talk about you every day. We miss you always, forever in our Hearts, Mom & Dad

Thomas Lewis – Love you forever, Mom and Dad

Alexander Gonsalves Veiga – Happy New Year my dear son, Love, Mom

Justin Marron – The years pass, but my love is forever, Mom

Matthew George Iavarone – Always in our thoughts, forever in our hearts, Love, Mom and Dad

Jeffrey and David Monica – Our love for you both is eternal, Love always, Mom and Dad

Stephanie Karbowski – In memory of you, Norma Salisbury

Diana Elizabeth Clavin-Vallee – Forever in our hearts, Love, Dad and Paula

In memory of Philip Mello

Luigi Civitelli – Forever remembered, Love, Auntie Carmen

Luigi Civitelli – Miss you and Love you forever, Mom and Dad

Brandi Lyn Burgess – Forever in my heart, Love, Mom

In memory of Rebecca – Love, Joan Hopkins

Ryan Jennings – Forever in our Hearts

Thank You for your donations in memory of Our Children.

Still Here

The Compassionate Friends

Several months ago, our Chapter embarked on a new adventure by creating a podcast titled *Still Here*, which supports parents and family members who have lost a child. This meaningful endeavor is hosted by TCF member Bob Houghtaling with administrative support from Elaine Arts, and each month features a guest who shares their grief experience.

Still Here creates connections with those looking to learn more about TCF, while also offering support to individuals who cannot make it to meetings. You can listen to the podcasts any time from the *Still Here* digital library on our website at www.tcfprovidence.com/still-here.

Moving forward, if you have any ideas regarding future topics and guests please feel free to contact Elaine Arts at elainearts@icloud.com. We are truly excited to be offering this valuable program. Thank you for all of your kind support. See you soon!

7) Because I know deep sorrow, I also know unspeakable joy.

Though I will grieve the death of my son forever and then some, it does not mean my life is lacking happiness and joy. Quite the contrary, in fact, though it took awhile to get there. It is not either/or, it's both/and. My life is more rich now. I live from a deeper place. I love deeper still. Because I grieve I also know a joy like no other. The joy I experience now is far deeper and more intense than the joy I experienced before my loss. Such is the alchemy of grief.

Because I've clawed my way from the depth of unimaginable pain, suffering and sorrow, again and again—when the joy comes, however and whenever it does—it is a joy that reverberates through every pore of my skin and every bone in my body. I feel all of it, deeply: the love, the grief, the joy, the pain. I embrace and thank every morsel of it. My life now is more rich and vibrant and full,

not despite my loss, but because of it. In grief there are gifts, sometimes many. These gifts don't in any way make it all "worth" it, but I am grateful beyond words for each and every gift that comes my way. I bow my head to each one and say thank you, thank you, thank you. Because there is nothing—and I mean absolutely nothing—I take for granted. Living life in this way gives me greater joy than I've ever known possible.

I have my son to thank for that. Being his mom is the best gift I've ever been given.

Even death can't take that away.

Chapter Updates

New Treasurer – We would like to welcome Kevin Sbardella who has kindly agreed to take on the duties of Chapter Treasurer. All TCF Chapter Love Gifts should be mailed to Kevin at the address provided on the Love Gifts form. Thank you, Kevin!

Clerical Help Needed – Lucille is asking for volunteers to help with typing mailing labels for our newsletter and other mailings. Label sheets and address information will be provided. Please email Lucille at lcvalliere49@gmail.com if you can lend a helping hand! Thank you!



Love Gift Donation

For TCF Chapter Expenses



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

In Loving Memory Of _____

Love Gift \$ _____ Message _____

Your donation is tax-deductible and will be posted in our Newsletter.

Please make your check payable to: **TCF Providence Chapter.**

Please send donations to our Chapter Treasurer: Kevin Sbardella
133 Fieldstone Lane
Fall River, MA 02720

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Sponsor a Newsletter

We are pleased to offer our members the opportunity to sponsor a newsletter. We will feature your child's story and photo on the front page of our newsletter when you make a donation. This offers members another way to share their child with our group, as well as to help offset the cost of producing and mailing our newsletter. We are offering up to two sponsorships per newsletter. Your story can be any length up to 500 words and can include 1-3 photos. **If you would like to see your child featured in a future issue, please contact Lucille at (401) 231-9229 or lcvalliere49@gmail.com.**

Sometimes I start to worry,
I might forget your face,
and memories I've kept inside,
might somehow get erased.
And then I just remind myself
this love can never die.
our hearts were knit together,
forever—you and I.

Anne Peterson



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Greater Providence Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

10 Dail Drive
North Providence, RI 02911
tcfprovidence.com



Upcoming Events

All meetings take place on the second Monday of each month and begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Central Congregational Church, 296 Angell St. in Providence, RI. Note: due to construction, please enter on the Angell St. side of the building. Please note: New members can arrive early, between 6:15 and 6:30.

- **March 13**
- **April 10**
- **May 8**
- **June 12**

