



The Compassionate Friends

MA/CT Border Towns Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

P.O. Box 481,
Charlton, MA 01507

NEWSLETTER

YOU ARE INVITED

The Compassionate Friends are here for you. Our mission is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

Our chapter meets the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua Church 22 Dudley Hill Road, Dudley, MA

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National Web Page:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Our Next Sharing Sessions

Thurs. July 14, 2022 **
Thurs. August 11, 2022
Thurs. September 8, 2022

You are always welcome to join us, even if it's been awhile since you've been to a meeting. If you are newly bereaved, feel free to bring a supportive friend or relative.

Share your feelings, or say nothing and just listen; but please come.

"You need not walk alone"

*****Our July meeting will be held out on the church lawn. For your comfort, please bring a chair and, if your able, a small snack to share with the group. Please join us for an evening of music and memories. If the weather does not cooperate, we will simply move indoors.***



TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Sometimes it helps to talk with someone who understands your pain. If you're having a bad day, please call one of us.

"You Need Not Walk Alone!"

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When Someone Takes His Own Life

(Excerpt from *The Healing of Sorrow*
By Norman Vincent Peale)

A few days ago, when a young man died by his own hand, a service for him was conducted by his pastor, the Rev. Warren Stevens. What he said that day expresses, far more eloquently than I can, the message that I'm trying to convey. Here are some of his words:

"Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage and strength. At last these adversaries overwhelmed him. And it appeared that he lost the war. But did he? I see a host of victories that he has won!

For one thing- he has won our admiration – because even if he lost the war, we give him credit for his bravery on the battle field. And we give him credit for the courage and pride and hope that he used as his weapons as long as he could. We shall remember not his death, but his daily victories gained through his kindness and thoughtfulness, through his family and friends, for animals and books and music, for all the things beautiful, lovely and honorable. We shall remember the many days that he was victorious over overwhelming odds. We shall remember not the years we thought he had left, but the intensity with which he lived the years he had!

Only God knows what this child of his suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul. But our consolation is that God does know, and understands!"

A Solitary Journey

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

~Helen Steiner Rice

After the death of a child, it becomes crystal clear. We humans are capable of enduring much more than we can ever imagine. Knowing that doesn't make grief one bit easier. The painful truth is that we simply do what we must do. We do the unthinkable - day after day.

~ Carol Clum

LOVE GIFTS

What is a "love gift"? A love gift is a very thoughtful way of remembering your child (at special times such as birthday, anniversary, or at any time), with a donation to your local chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

With your donations, we are able to reach out to other bereaved families, purchase pamphlets, cover printing and postage costs. Tax deductible donations may be brought in to a meeting or sent to:

***The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 481, Charlton, Ma. 01507***



Thank you for love gifts received from:

Martha Clarke in loving memory of her son Zachary Jeneral

Lorraine Belleville in loving memory of her grandson Samuel Tharp

NOTE: *When making a donation in memory of your child/grandchild or sibling, please feel free to include a personal message. I would be happy to include it in the newsletter.*

New Members

We know how difficult the first meetings can be.

We hope you found comfort and understanding in the company of other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings who truly understand your grief.

Please come again and allow us to help you on this painful journey.

We Need Not Walk Alone

FOURTH OF JULY



Each year on the 4th of July, we celebrate the birth of a great nation – a nation of people “united” in a dream. It was through hope, determination and a bonded strength that the people of America strived to achieve their dream of freedom to be a free nation.

Nothing however, is achieved without a strong will. We, too, as bereaved parents are fighting a battle to be free – free of the pain that has become a part of our waking days. We want to be happy. We want to be able to enjoy life again. You are one of those proud Americans. Refuse to give up. Fight for your dreams. There is peace to be found in freedom!

**Written by a member of TCF,
Homdel, NJ Chapter**

MY OLD FRIEND GRIEF

My old friend Grief is back. He comes to visit me once in a while to remind me that I am still a broken man. Surely there has been much healing since my son died six years ago, and surely I have adjusted to a world without him. But the truth is we never completely heal, we never totally adjust. Such is the nature of loss that no matter how much time has passed and no matter how much life has been experienced, the heart of the bereaved will never be the same. It is as though a part of us also dies with the person we lose through death. We will be all right, but we will never be the same. And so my old friend Grief drops in to say hello. Sometimes he enters through the door of my memory. I'll hear a certain song or smell a certain fragrance; I'll look at certain pictures and I'll remember how it used to be. Sometimes it brings a smile to my face, sometimes a tear. One may say that such remembering is not healthy, that we ought not to dwell on thoughts that make us sad. Yet the opposite is true. Grief revisited is Grief acknowledged, and Grief confronted is Grief resolved. But if Grief is resolved, why do we still feel a sense of loss on anniversaries and holidays and even when we least expect it? Why do we feel a lump in the throat even six years after the loss? It is because healing does not mean forgetting and because moving on with life does not mean that we don't take a part of our lost love with us. Of course, the intensity of the pain decreases over time if we allow Grief to visit us from time to time. But if the intensity remains or if our life is still dysfunctional years after our loss, we are stuck and in need of professional help to get unstuck. Sometimes my old friend Grief sneaks up on me. I'll feel an unexplained but profound sadness that clings to me for days. Then I'll recognize the grief and cry a little, and then I can go on. It's as though the ones we have lost are determined not to be forgotten. My old friend Grief doesn't get in the way of living. He just wants to come along and chat sometimes. Grief has taught me a few things about living that I would not have learned on my own. He has taught me that if I try to deny the reality of

a major loss in my life, I end up having to deny life altogether. He has taught me that although the pain of loss is great, I must confront it and experience it fully or risk emotional paralysis. Old Grief has taught me that I can survive even great loss, and although my world is different, it is still my world and I must live in it. He has taught me that when I let go, I can flourish again in season and bring forth the good fruit that comes, not in spite of my loss, but because of it. My old friend Grief has taught me that the loss of a loved one does not mean the loss of love. Love is stronger than separation and longer than the permanence of death. My old friend Grief may leave me for a while, but he'll be back again to remind me to confront my new reality and to gain through loss and pain.

Adolfo Quezada

TCF, Grand Junction, CO (Reprinted by permission of the author)

Grief can awaken us to new values and new and deeper appreciations. Grief can cause us to reprioritize things in our lives, to recognize what's really important and put it first. Grief can heighten our gratitude as we cease taking the gifts life bestows on us for granted. Grief can give us the wisdom of being with death. Grief can make death the companion on our left who guides us and gives us advice. None of this growth makes the loss good and worthwhile, but it is the good that comes out of the bad.

Roger Bertschhausen

Out of the Ashes / FB

Birthday Remembrances

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



JULY BIRTHDAYS

Nicholas Aja - Ryan Bahosh - Emily Blouin -
John Judzynski - Jason Miner - Kelly Marie
Ondrasek - Hannah Marie Rabitor - Oliver
Tombeno - Ryan Townsend - Nicholas
Winfield - Ryan Wm. Woods

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Daniel Cording - Jesse James Davis - Noah
Desilet - Michael Hokanson-Dion - Edward
Masterson Jr. - Sean Mathieu - Dylan Riel -
Kelly Sanders - Adam Schulze - Niles
Alexander Scott Seary - Michael Sprouse -

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Samantha Deiter — Peter Diani Jr. - Amanda
Martin - Kaylie Piekarczyk - Connor Michael
Tibbets - Sean Patrick Toomey - Robin Tyler
- Scott Vancelette

*We do our best to accurately list birthday and
anniversary dates. If you notice an error, please let
me know so I can make the correction.*

In Memory of our Children

***As long as we live,
our children too shall live,
for they are part of us
in our memories.***



JULY ANNIVERSARIES

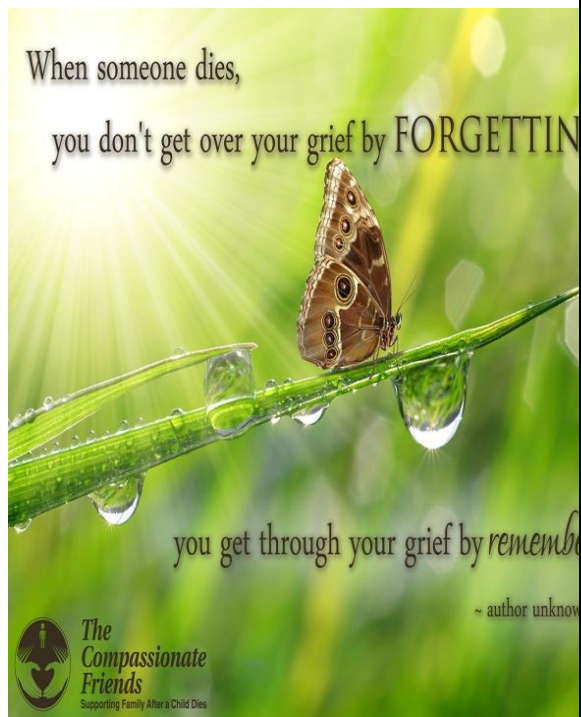
Jane Baron - Ashley Bates – Casey Bulger -
Paul Comptois – Zachary Jeneral - Steven
Lamontagne – Brendon Lange – Andrew
Lauder – Sean Seaver – Sean Patrick Toomey

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

Kevin Dabrowski – Nicholaus Gayewski –
Tyler James Marsh – Adam Schulze

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Jesse James Davis – Joseph Doucette –
Katherine Kaiser – Anthony Monopoli – Erin
Williamson – Nicholas Winfield -



The Sacred Task

Sometimes, life is about perspective, about the lens with which we view our stories and our circumstances.

In the world of parents who have outlived their children, we have to learn quickly about perspective. In order to truly keep living after the breath has left our children's lungs, we are forced to choose the lens with which we'll see their life, their story, and our lives and our stories when everything is seemingly broken.

This world of parents who have outlived their children, it's both a heartbreaking and extraordinary world.

In it, you are in the presence of warriors, of men and women who have been given one of the most sacred tasks and missions. You are in the presence of men and women who were chosen, not chosen for pain, but chosen to be the only people in the world to parent their precious children. Parenthood, in and of itself, is a sacred task. It's true.

But parenting a child, parenting children, when you can no longer reach out and touch their faces, hold them in your arms, watch them grow, that is one of the greatest, most sacred tasks you can be given.

Out of every person in this world, you were chosen to be their parent. Out of every person in this world, you are the ones who were chosen to know them, better than anyone, to be theirs, to have your souls tied together for eternity. Out of every person in this world, it was you, it is you, and always will be you.

We can choose to view our circumstances strictly through the lens of sorrow, of sadness, of pain, or we can look at it through a different lens, one that acknowledges the pain but doesn't see exclusively through it. It notices the broken places, but it holds fiercely to hope. It aches and it hurts at times, but it holds ever more tightly to purpose, to good, to redemption.

You, your children their stories did not end. They continue to be written every single day that breath is held in your lungs. His is your sacred task.

Their story is not over. We carry them. But listen here: your story, my story, our stories are not over either. No matter how much you wished you could have stopped breathing when the breath left their lungs, no matter how hopeless your life seems, no matter how deep down in the pit anxiety or depression or PTSD have taken you. No matter how weak, how small, how fragile you may feel, you are not.

You are brave. You are fierce. You have been given a sacred task, and you are the person for the job. Your story is far, far, far from over.

Few people in this world meet someone who so intricately and radically changes their lives simply by entering it. Few people have their lives split into such a powerful

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before and after. And while it may be so easy to look at our before and afters through the lens of deep pain and sorrow, you have been given a sacred gift: to know a love so pure, so raw, that it extends across world, through time, and death cannot even touch it. You've been given a sacred gift, a second chance, an invitation to never be the same from this point forward simply because they existed, you were chosen to be theirs, and you are tied together, eternally, your love a force greater than life itself.

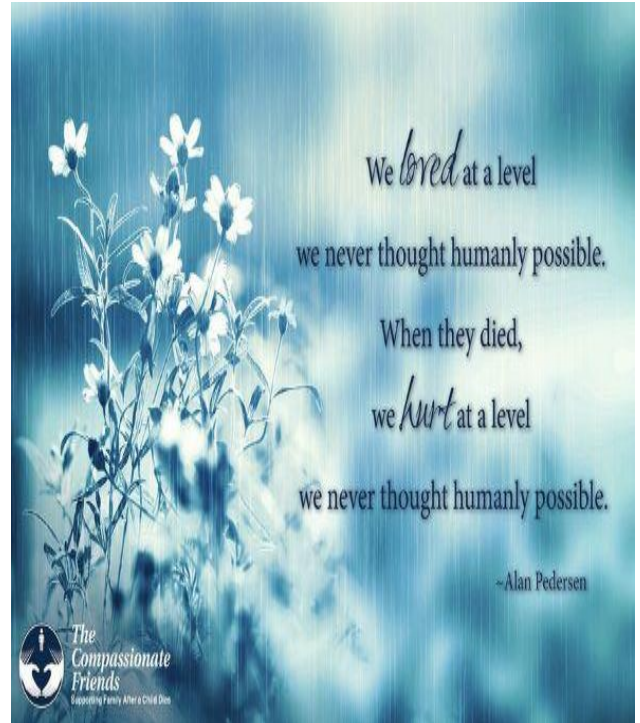
You are theirs. They are yours. For eternity. Press on.

*Written by Lexi Behrndt
November, 2016*

Love and Hope

**On a cold winter day, the sun went out,
Grief walked in to stay.
I turned away from the unwanted guest
And bid him be on his way.
Grief was merciless, he brought his
friends,
Loneliness, Fear and Despair.
They walk these rooms, unceasingly,
In the somber cloaks they wear.
Every so often now, Love pays a call
She always has Hope by her side.
I welcome Love as well as Hope,
For I thought surely they had died.
Love counsels Grief in a most gentle way,
Bids him be still for awhile.
Then Love walks with me through
memory's hall,
And for a time I can smile.**

*In Loving memory of her son Michael
Kerry Marston*



WHAT IS NORMAL

AFTER YOUR CHILD DIES?

Normal is having tears waiting behind every smile when you realize someone important is missing from all the important events in your family's life.

Normal is feeling like you can't sit another minute without getting up and screaming, because you just don't like to sit through anything anymore.

Normal is not sleeping very well because a thousand what ifs and why didn't I's go through your head constantly.

Normal is continuously reliving that horrible day of learning of your child's death through your eyes and mind, holding your head to make it go away.

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Normal is every happy event in your life always being backed up with sadness lurking close behind, because of the hole in your heart.

Normal is telling the story of your child's death .

Normal is my heart warming, and yet sinking at the sight of something special my child loved. Thinking how she would love it, but how she is not here to enjoy it.

Normal is having some people afraid to mention my child.

Normal is making sure that others do remember her.

Normal is after the funeral is over everyone else goes on with their lives, but we continue to grieve our loss forever.

Normal is seeing other families who are "whole" and thinking of how lucky they are. And thinking back on memories of when we were a whole family and knowing that it will never be that way again because our family chain was broken.

Normal is weeks, months, and years after the initial shock, the grieving gets worse, not better because with every passing day, you miss them more.

Normal is not listening to people compare anything in their life to this loss, unless they too have lost a child. Nothing compares. Nothing.

Losing a parent is horrible, but having to bury your own child is unnatural... a complete nightmare that you never wake up from.

Normal is realizing that you do cry every day.

Normal is sitting at the computer crying, sharing how you feel with chat buddies who have also lost a child.

Normal is not wanting to hear that my child is in a better place because although I know she is in heaven, I will never understand why my beautiful child was taken from this earth. It makes absolutely no sense to this grieving mother.

Normal is being too tired to care if you paid the bills, cleaned the house, did the laundry or if there is any food... too tired to even get ready to go to the doctor to find out why you're so tired.

Normal is asking God why he took your child's life instead of yours.

Normal is knowing you will never get over this loss, not in a day nor a million years.

Normal is learning to lie to everyone you meet and telling them you are fine. You lie because it makes others uncomfortable if you cry.

You've learned it's easier to lie to them than to tell them the truth that you still feel empty and it's probably never going to get any better— ever.

::: Author Unknown :::

Prayer of the Grieving Parent

*Lord God, from whom all good things come,
hear the gratitude within my sorrow.
For I cherished my child's time on earth,
and I rejoice in the gift of that precious life.
Fill my soul with strength and peace,
help me to spend the remainder of my time on earth according to Your
will.
Ease my pain with the certainty
that my beloved child is held safely in Your loving arms.
Leave me not to solitude but surround me with the comfort of others.
Release me from despair and guide me towards hope.
Console me with the grace that gives meaning to suffering.
Gladden my heart with the promise that someday I will join my child in
the glory of heaven with You, Almighty God.*

Amen

Written by Becky Adams
Ma/Ct Border Towns Chapter





The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share 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.