



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

Post Office 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

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www.compassionatefriends.org

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Our Next Sharing Sessions

Thurs. July 13, 2023 **

Thurs. August 10, 2023

Thurs. September 14, 2023

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"

*****Weather permitting, 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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HARD TIMES

How to hold on and how to let go... How to lose and how to keep... Those are hard problems for the bereaved parent. We want to keep the child in our life, we want to remember the child; we want to save those parts of our life which are tied to the child. Yet, at the same time, we know that the child is dead – things cannot be as they were before. The memories of good times now bring pain; the memories of bad times raise guilt and a feeling of powerlessness. The end of the grief process is a resolution of this tension between holding on and letting go. At the end of the process, strange as it may sound now, we can keep our relationship with the child and separate ourselves from the child. We can remember and be sad; we can remember and be happy; we can remember and just be. But it takes a long time for such a resolution to happen and while we are in the process, we find ourselves pulled to one side and then the other. Sometimes we want to leave the room exactly as it was. Other times we want to put everything away so nothing reminds us of the child. Sometimes we want to talk over and over again about the events of the death. Other times we want to avoid the topic altogether. Sometimes when all we have left of our child is our sadness, we don't want to give up our grief for fear of giving up our child. All that is a normal process. We go through it at any death. When our parent dies the problem is how to hold on to our childhood and youth and yet give up our childhood and youth. So, we find ourselves keeping a bit of our parents in ourselves by becoming a little more like them.

I was once talking about this in class when suddenly a woman blurted out, "So that's why I wanted to use the good china so much a year after she died." It's a lot

harder to give up the child and keep the child at the same time, because when our parent dies we have to lose and keep our past. When our child dies, we have to lose and keep our future...in our grandparents'day, losing a child was an expected part of life. But it is not in our time. Few of us even knew anyone else to whom it happened. So we have few models. Each of us seems to have to find our own way for ourselves. It is a hard and lonely journey. But the experience of others who have one down this valley is that there is a resolution at the end. We can hold on and let go. If we can for a moment share with others on the same journey, we can help others find direction and let them help us...That is what The Compassionate Friends is all about.

Dennis Klass, Ph.D.

TCF, St. Louis, MO

**THE HEART HATH
ITS OWN MEMORY,
LIKE THE MIND.
AND IN IT ARE
ENSHRINED THE
PRECIOUS
KEEPSAKES, INTO
WHICH IS
WROUGHT THE
GIVER'S LOVING
THOUGHT.**

~H.W. LONGFELLOW

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

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

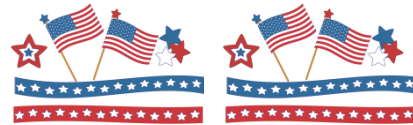
We know how difficult the first meetings can be.

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!

**“Don’t let death cast ugly shadows,
but rather warm memories of the
loving times you shared.
LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY.”**

~Darcie Sims

The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixer of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again.

~ Simon Stepehns, Founder of TCF

The Surviving Children

Being a parent is never easy. When one’s child dies, it is even more difficult being parents to the children who survive. In those first days and weeks, shock may cause us to make decisions (or allow others to make them) that we will later regret. We may wish later that we had included the children more, that we had not permitted ourselves to be isolated from them, that we had explained differently.

Most of us never expect to face this situation, so we have never thought through in advance what the best course would be.

At some point in our grief, we do become more sensitive to these “forgotten grievers” who have lost a brother or sister. They are having struggles of their own. The first thing to remember is that everything going on with our other children is not caused by the death. They are still, through it all,

growing up, going through the various developmental stages that have always concerned parents. Any special problems they had before will not have magically disappeared. Just as we proclaim repeatedly that there is no one way for a parent to grieve so each child has his own style and timetable for everything, and we cannot control these. We can only try to understand and help when we can. We cannot make it “go away” any more than we can make any of the other harsh realities of life go away.

The very foundation of life has been shaken. The home, so sheltering and safe, has been invaded by forces our surviving children do not understand and parents who seemed all-powerful and all-wise may have been reduced to quavering, uncertain robots. Probably for the first time, death, whatever that is – has claimed someone who is not old.

Worse, if there has been the usual quota of sibling rivalry and squabbling, the child may be afraid that he has caused the death by being “bad”, or by wishing there were no such bothersome person to have to share with or “take a back seat to.”

Just as every child is different, every relationship is different. Feelings toward an older brother or sister who was protector, teacher, idol, and those toward a younger one who may have been a sometime responsibility, hanger-on, biggest fan, are not the same. They may have been best friends or rivals who didn’t get along very well. Their responses to the death will be as varied as our own.

A child’s place in the family system is changed. The second oldest finds himself.
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suddenly the big brother. The buffer between the others may be gone. Most difficult of all, a child may have become an "only child." Any child younger than the one who died has to go through the scary years of being the same age. Similar symptoms and situations are so frightening. Brothers and sisters often do look and behave much alike, and these resemblances can be a source of discomfort or of pride. There may be efforts to exaggerate these, to replace the missing child, to make things the way they used to be.

What can we as parents do to help? Most of all, our children need reassurance and honesty. They need to know they are loved and that the family and the home will continue. They need all the facts they can understand. Part of this honesty requires that they know of your grief. By your actions, you can teach them it is okay to cry (even fathers!), it is okay to admit you are angry at "life" for being this way, that you too are confused about "why."

Maintaining a "stiff upper lip" in front of the children only encourages them to suppress their feelings.

Try to be available when they want to talk, but be prepared for the possibility that they may not want to talk with you about their feelings. Many children hold back because they are afraid they might make you cry. You can try explaining that you are not worried about that, but they may still prefer to talk to someone else. They may be ashamed of some common reactions such as feelings of anger, guilt, jealousy, even relief. Perhaps you can help them find someone they can talk to comfortably. They may have already found such a person without you realizing it.

Be honest in the way you remember the child who has died. It is tempting to reminisce about only the good and wonderful qualities, but was this really a saint? Surely not. Recall, and talk about the not-so good and wonderful things too. Be sure you are remembering a real child, for everyone's sake. A saint is hard to live up to. Talking with other parents at a meeting of The Compassionate Friends can give you practical suggestions about things that have worked for other families. You will hear ideas you may not have thought of. Some will have received help from caring professionals and you may decide to consult someone too. When you recognize your family is what others are saying, you may decide that you and your children are really doing pretty well hurting and healing together and that it just takes longer than you thought it would.

By Ronnie Peterson

TCF, Star Lake, N.Y.

Remembrance

In the light of day
I wake with thoughts of you.

In the dark of night
I sleep with thoughts of you.

Is it grief or disbelief?

Evan Fillmore
TCF, Ambler, PA

Birthday Remembrances

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



JULY BIRTHDAYS

Kelly Marie Ondrasek - Nicholas Winfield -

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Michael Hokanson-Dion - Sean Mathieu -
Kelly Sanders - Michael Sprouse

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Ryan Marsan - Robin Tyler

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 - Casey Bulger - Zachary Jeneral
- Brendon Lange - Andrew Lauder - Sean
Seaver

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

None

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Joseph Doucette - Nicholas Winfield -

The Aftermath of Suicide (A Sibling's Viewpoint)

I had never experienced the death of a close loved one before my brother died. When David died, my world came crashing down around me, shattering me into a million pieces. My brother and I were close, but I had no suspicion that he was contemplating suicide and had been for a long time. The night my sister called to tell me he was dead is etched into my memory forever. If I shut my eyes, I can go back to that time and place almost three years ago and still hear her voice. It is a very painful memory and one that I don't call up, but it is there, nonetheless. The overwhelming feelings of shock, disbelief, numbness, despair and sadness are very vivid. At the same time, I was outraged at what he had done to us, to me. How dare he do this? I couldn't even begin to guess how many times I said, "I can't believe this is happening". The first six months was a confusing and emotionally draining period for me. I was obsessed with wanting to have answers, especially from him. I read many books on suicide and finally, after reading Iris Bolton's book, "My Son, My Son", I came to realize that what she said was true: You can ask why a million times, but you finally have to let it go, because the person you need the answers from is not here to give them to you. If only for the sake of your own sanity, you have to stop asking, "Why?" Our family drew closer together from this tragedy, and it made me more aware of how much I value and love them. I also had the support of a good friend who was willing to spend hours talking and crying with me. I still get very angry at my brother for changing our lives so irrevocably. That anger inevitably turns to sadness. I cannot see his smiling face, or hear his laughter, or watch him grow into adulthood. Yes, I had dreams of him too. He was an intelligent, warm, sensitive and caring young man, and

I was eager to see what direction his life would take. I can't help but wonder what he would be like today. I miss him very much. I will never agree with his solution, but it was his choice to make and I have to learn to live with it. I am absolutely certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that I will be with him again. Only then will I get answers to my questions. I have no choice but to wait until that time.

By Nicki Wright

TCF, MO-DAN, KS

We survive the unthinkable.

We survive for others.

And then, very slowly we survive for ourselves.

Because only through the good we do for others in her name will the beauty of the spirit, mind and body that was our daughter live forever.

Ray Lokoff
TCF, Valley Forge, PA

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.

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Friends

**A self-help organization offering friendship,
understanding, and hope to bereaved families.**