



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



NEWSLETTER

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information to help others be supportive.

January-February 2010

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YOU ARE INVITED

The Compassionate Friends - Metrowest Chapter meets twice a month. Evenings on the third Tuesday from 7:30 to 9:30 pm in the library of St. Mary's Parish Center, Route 16, Washington St., Holliston. The parish center is located between the church and the rectory. Our next two meetings will be on: **January 19th February 16th**

The **Tuesday** afternoon meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month next to St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Milford at the parish center. **Please call Ed or Joan Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 by the last Monday or earlier if you plan to attend.**

Directions....On Route 16 (Main St.) going north through downtown Milford (Main St.) at Tedeschi's Market on the left, take a left at the lights onto Winter St. The parish center is the last building before the church. Going south on Route 16 (East Main St.) after Sacred Heart Church on the left, bear right on Main St., continue past Dunkin' Donuts on the right, proceed to the next set of lights and take a right onto Winter St. There is parking on both sides of the street. Look for Compassionate Friends signs to meeting room. Our next two meetings will be on:

January 26th February 23rd

WHO ARE WE?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings.

Our primary purpose is to assist the bereaved in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings for those who wish to understand. Our objective is to help members of the community, including family, friends, employers, co-workers, and professionals to be supportive.

Meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. No dues or fees are required to belong to the Metrowest Chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

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. ©2010

Weather Cancellation

In the event of inclement weather on meeting days or nights, if in doubt call:

**Ed or Joan Motuzas at
(508) 473-4239**



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

- * Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239
- * Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Secretary

- * Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

- * Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

Webmaster

- * Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

Librarian

- Ed Motuzas 508/473/4239

Newsletter

- Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Senior Advisors

- * Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

Steering Committee *

- Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
- Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
- Linda Teres 508/620-0613
- Carmela Bergman 508/359-8902
- Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
- Judith Cherrington 508/473-4087

The chapter address is:

The Compassionate Friends
Metrowest Chapter
26 Simmons Dr.
Milford, MA 01757-1265

Regional Coordinator

Rick Mirabile
11 Ridgewood Crossing
Hingham, MA 02043
Phone (781) 740-1135
Email: Rmirabile@comcast.net

The Compassionate Friends has a national office that supports and coordinates chapter activities. The national office can be reached as follows:

The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Voice Toll Free (877) 969-0010
Fax (630) 990-0246
Web Page: www.compassionatefriends.org

TRIBUTES, GIFTS AND DONATIONS

There are no dues or fees to belong to *The Compassionate Friends*. Just as our chapter is run entirely by volunteers, your voluntary, tax-deductible donations enable us to send information to newly bereaved parents, purchase pamphlets and books, contribute to the national chapter and meet other chapter expenses.

THANK YOU to the friends who help keep our chapter going with their contributions.

Love Gifts

Ms. Anita Mastromatteo in loving memory of her daughter **Lisa Mastromatteo**.

Mr. & Mrs. David Holland in loving memory of their son **Kevin Holland**.

Mrs. Minerva Ciccarella in loving memory of her daughter **Cynthia Zottoli**.

Mr. & Mrs. Arnold Wolfson in loving memory of their daughter **Donna Ann Wolfson** on her anniversary November 30th.

Mr. & Mrs. John McVey in loving memory of their son **2nd, Lt. U.S.M.C. Ian Thomas McVey** on his birthday November 26th.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert King in loving memory of their daughter **Caren King-Firth** on her birthday October 27th and her anniversary January 26th.

Mr. & Mrs. Burton Stuchins in loving memory of their son **Alan R. Stuchins** on his anniversary November 5th.

Mrs. Irene Linny in loving memory of her daughter **Elizabeth Ann (Betsy) Stickley**.

Other Area TCF Chapters

MA/CT Border Towns Chapter.
Chapter Leaders: Paul & Anne Mathieu
(508) 248-7144.....ampm@charter.net

South Shore Chapter.
Chapter Leaders: Rob Tyrrell
(781) 883-6599.....robtyrrell@comcast.net
Martha Berman
(781) 337-8649.....mmartha1@comcast.net

Worcester Chapter
Chapter Leader: Linda Schafer
(508) 393-4448.....capecodlinda23@verizon.net

Central Middlesex Chapter.
Chapter Leader: Carol Gray-Cole
(781) 444-1091.....cgc603@aol.com



Our Children Remembered

As a regular feature, the newsletter acknowledges anniversaries of the deaths of our children/siblings and their birthdays. This issue covers the months of January and February. If information about your loved one is missing, incorrect or our chapter files are in error, please send the correct data, including your name, address, and telephone number, the name of your loved one and the birthday and date and cause of death to the newsletter editor, Ed Motuzas, 26 Simmons Dr., Milford, MA 01757-1265.

Anniversaries

January

ROY RANDALL
MICHAEL CHINAPPI
DANIEL COLUMBO
DONALD ROY SANBORN
CHARLES PHILLIPS
CAREN L. FIRTH
LANDAN JAMES ZIMMERMAN

February

ELIZABETH CASEY
SHAWN P. MARKS
JEFFREY CHERRINGTON
KEVIN WASHBURN
KAITLYN KENNEDY

Birthdays

January

KELSEY MULKERRINS
LAURA SWYMER – SHANAHAN
BRYAN PLUNKETT
PATRICK J. COOLE
LANDAN JAMES ZIMMERMAN
JASON BOGHOSIAN

February

LEA M. SIEBERT
CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI
DAVID PELLETIER
ASHLEY MORGAN MAHONEY
PAUL DALEY
BEATRICE ELIZABETH HUDSON
BETH ANNE BAUER
MICHAEL J. PAULHUS



CHAPTER TID-BITS

Al Kennedy has graciously volunteered to make up picture buttons of our loved ones. The buttons are 2 1/4 inch diameter. If you have a photo of your child, you can e-mail it as an attachment to aksound@comcast.net or bring it to the next meeting. Al has a tool that will cut out the 2 1/4 inch diameter picture to fit it in the button. The circle is an approx. diameter of the button. A special thanks to *Al Kennedy*.





The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



THE SIBLING CORNER



This page is dedicated to siblings together adjusting to grief thru encouragement & sharing

"Siblings Walking Together." 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.

ALAN'S ROOM

After my twin brother Alan passed away I was constantly looking for ways to keep his memory alive. Soon after the funeral I helped design the gravestone. When the first anniversary neared I started the scholarship his friends had long promised.

I often worried that besides having his name on a cemetery stone that Alan would be forgotten. I wanted his nieces and nephews to be able to know him. Alan, a Philadelphia resident, worked full time for the Philadelphia Corporation for the Aging doing public relations. He also was a freelance writer and volunteered for many arts and AIDS organizations.

With another brother married we had an empty room, which I wanted to be about Alan. The room includes articles that he wrote and articles about him, posters for projects he promoted and some he helped design. Above the double windows are Playbills for shows he promoted, each listing his name. One had a post-it note "Save this, this is my first"; I saved them all.

Included are interviews with Phyllis Diller, Lucie Arnaz and a Diana Ross biographer. An article, with his picture, at a Special Olympics event he coordinated, publicized and wrote about is also displayed. One project he developed was the "Senior Great American Smokeout". All of the Philadelphia nursing homes participated on the same day the American Cancer Society had their annual "smokeout". At the time of his death the project was nominated for an award.

The one item I am most proud of is the press release announcing his last job. He was asked to write his own press release. He once said he couldn't believe he got paid for a job he loved so much!

The room, 130 square feet, contains 55 framed items, which tell of Alan's career, interests, and love of life. His nieces and nephews will get to know their uncle, Who, as his oldest brother said, did more in his thirty years then 95% of us do over an entire lifetime.

Daniel Yoffee

Dealing with Grief: A Sibling Viewpoint

Two things happened to me on January 11, 1992. I lost my brother to death, and I lost my parents to grief. My dad, the one who seemed to always have the answer to my questions, the "rock" in the family, the one whose job was to fix everything, completely lost it. The fear, anger, and shock in his eyes when told that my brother had died are engraved into my memory. He fell limp in the arms of my mother and me in the emergency room at UCLA medical center. This was the first time I had ever seen my parents lose control. At that moment our roles switched.

"I'll take them," I said to the nurse as she handed me a bag labeled "EDLER." It was the personal belongings of my brother. I quietly took them and placed them in my car. For the next three months, I seemed to make many of the decisions. It was not a courageous leader rising up to the occasion. I was the least common denominator. My parents, although they tried, could not help me. They were trying to deal with the tremendous grief themselves.

For this reason, I put off dealing with Mark's death for many months. I cried and felt sad, but never addressed the issue. My friends were concerned and asked how I was doing. But no one, unless you have been there, really wants to hear the true answers.



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Mark was the only other person in the world who was a combination of my mom and dad. My friends could not relate nor would I want them to. I would never wish this upon anyone. But this left me alone to deal with it and I chose to put it off.

After three months I met a gentleman at a family retreat with a group of which my dad was a part. Kevin had lost his brother to suicide about nine months earlier. He was farther along in his “coping” than I was. I could talk to him about Mark, mention Mark’s name and share stories without making the whole room uncomfortable about the subject.

I saw someone who was dealing with it and it gave me hope. There is a certain vocabulary that you learn after going through this that no book, no story, and no amount of explanation can do justice. I don’t talk about certain things with my friends because I do not have the time or energy to explain (or try to explain) the many feelings I am having. Kevin understood. He had the vocabulary.

This was the first step into healing. I came to grips with the reality of my new life—different than the one before, but there was no going back. At this point, I went on autopilot. I remember many events of the three years following the death. My girlfriend and I broke up. My parents changed houses. I went through the many firsts, but just kept moving forward. I was not depressed, however. My lows were not very low. But my highs were not very high.

I became involved with The Compassionate Friends sibling group of our local chapter in the third year. I did it half out of responsibility to my parents and half out of the knowledge that if I was running the meeting, then I was in control of how much sharing I needed to put into it. Kind of a control thing. To my surprise the meetings have become so beneficial to my healing that I am surprised at myself. By sharing with others, I feel that I help them and in turn myself. Many feelings, thoughts, or emotions that I may have thought were just mine, I have found are universal with others. After three years I began to come “out of the valley.” I can only say that by looking back. Hindsight has allowed me to see my steps of healing. I stepped into the role of being strong for our family because I felt that was best. Many others I have talked to mention a similar reaction. Your parents are barely able to deal with their own grief. The last thing you want to do is bring more pain on them, so, you don’t share with your parents.

Last July at The Compassionate Friends conference, many parents walked up to me and asked, “How do I know if my son (daughter) is dealing with this? I am concerned since they do not tell me anything.”

“You don’t know,” I answered, “and neither do I, but unless you see something obviously dangerous, they are dealing with it in their own way at their own speed and you may not be a part of their grieving.”

I now have a different outlook on life. It is precious. I feel that in my new life I am closer to my parents. Each one of us has to live our lives 1/3 better in Mark’s memory. I value my friends and time more. I can handle stress much better. Just think of the alternative. I have become a better person by helping others. I like the new person I have become. ***I would trade it all in a second!***

***Rick Edler
TCF, LA/South Bay, CA***

Letting Go of the Pain

A few weeks or a few months, after your child has died, you’ll probably find yourself in a situation where you find yourself laughing or having a good time, then you say STOP laughing or having a good time and think to yourself, “How can I dare laugh or have any fun, now my child has died and I hurt so bad?” We’ve all had this feeling in the early stages of our grief.

I urge you newly bereaved, PLEASE don’t feel guilty about enjoying the happiness that comes from “LIFE”. When you find yourself laughing and enjoying something in life, it doesn’t mean that you have forgotten your dead child...it just means that you are “letting go” of some of the pain. All of our lives there will be tears and all of our lives there should be laughter.

When people used to say to me, “You must put it behind you and let go of your child and start living again,” I wondered what they meant by “IT”. I would get very angry. How dare those people think that I could ever “let go” of my child, or even want to...but after a while I realized that I don’t have to “let go” of my child in order to live again. I just have to “let go of the pain” that his death caused. His LIFE will always be part of me, and so will his death; I’ll never forget him. But I don’t have to keep the grief and pain with me always...So if you see me cry...I’m “letting go” of some pain. And when you see me laughing or having a good time, I’m living life again.

***Verna Smith
TCF, Fort Worth, TX***



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



The Guilt That Came Late

My adult daughter Christina and I loved each other very much. Except we had many mother/daughter issues. I was always old school and she was always a free spirit type of person.

My daughter died on December 1, 2005, at the early age of 36. Three months later I attended my first Compassionate Friends meeting. I learned that what I was feeling was intense grief after my child Christina died. Once I became comfortable with the group and I understood what the grieving process was I would reflect on Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*. It describes, in five discrete stages, a process by which people deal with grief. **Denial** — "I feel fine." **Anger** — "Why me? "It's not fair." **Bargaining** — "I'll do anything for a few more years with Christina." **Depression** — "I'm so sad, why bother with anything?" "What's the point?"; "I miss my daughter, why go on?" **Acceptance** — "It's going to be okay."

Guilt was not a stage, but it would become a major speed bump in my process of healing. One day as I was going through some of Christina's things I came upon a poem that Christina wrote many years ago, it reads.....

Reflection

By Christina Marie Rossetti

I looked in the mirror, and what did I see?
A scared little girl looking back at me.
Scared and frightened, so unsure of herself.
She is not very happy with what she sees.
A tight black shirt, and some faded Lee's.
Her mother just looks at her with concern.
Hoping that one day she will learn...
How to dress, how to talk,
How to dance, and how to walk.
A beautiful girl isn't what I see.
Somebody different...Not the real me.
But one day I'll look in the mirror and see,
A beautifully different, new kind of me.



Now, I'm dealing with the "Could have," "Would have," and "Should have" aspects of my grieving process. I know it's just another stage of my grief work and I'll get through it.

By Marilyn Rosetti
TCF, Metrowest Chapter, Holliston, MA

You and Me Against The World

When I was pregnant with my son, I moved to Newport News, VA, with my then 20-year old husband who was in the US Navy. Times were tough. He was on-board ship more often than not, even though the ship was in dry dock for repairs. We rented a squalid three-room apartment for \$80 per month. My first glimpse of German roaches came in the middle of the night when I flipped on the kitchen light.

As time progressed, I felt my baby moving, yet I gained no weight. There wasn't much to eat, and when there was no food in the house, I would go hungry. Then came a time when the money was gone long before the month. My husband stayed on-board ship. I was left alone to fend for myself.

After four days of not eating, I decided I had to do something. I walked to the little market that was a few blocks from the apartment. I talked to the owner and told him about my problem. I offered to write a check on an account that was closed or write an IOU. I simply needed to eat. The storeowner pulled out a cart and told me to select what I wanted. I was so relieved and so thankful. I bought food to last for a week for myself and returned to the manager. I wrote him a check on my closed checking account and he put the groceries in the cart and told me to bring it back when I walked tomorrow. His words were kind; he didn't want me to feel humiliated. I called my dad collect on the walk back. That night I sang to my unborn child and told him we were going to be fine.

A week later my husband returned home; he had been paid. He walked me to the store, but he waited outside. He was very self-conscious about having a pregnant wife and somewhat embarrassed by my actions. I went in, gave the store manager the money I owed him and thanked him once again. He seemed surprised that I had repaid him.

"Did you call your dad?" he asked me. I told him I had called my dad and he had sent a credit card for us to use to drive me back home. He was visibly relieved. Then the store manager told me to take care of my baby. He saw my husband standing outside and observed that I would be the one to raise and provide for this child.

It was at this moment that I realized that it was my child and me against the world and would remain that way until he was grown and able to take care of himself. I looked at the boy I had married and wondered what on earth I was thinking. I lost all respect for him in that brief moment. That respect never returned.

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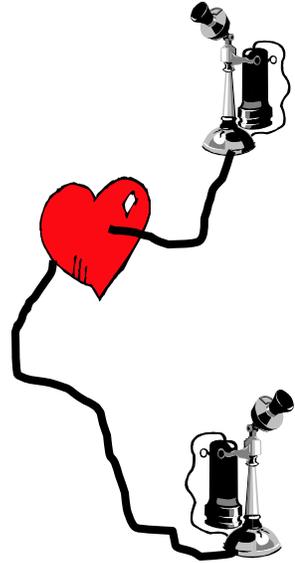
The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



Phone Friends

Sometimes it helps to just be able to talk to someone; maybe at a time when pain or stress seems too much to bear. We maintain a list of Telephone Friends; people who are willing to listen, to commiserate, to give whatever support they can. In a time of need, feel free to call one of our Telephone Friends.

- Ed & Joan Motuzas, ...**Scott**, age 31, Kidney and Liver Failure,(508)473-4239
- Janice Parmenter,**Tyler**, age 29, Chronic Addiction,(508)528-5715
- Judy Daubney,**Clifford**, age 27, Suicide,(508)529-6942.
- Linda Teres,.....**Russell**, age 19, Automobile Accident,(508)620-0613
- Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)881-2111
- Judith Cherrington,...**Jeffrey**, age 48, Cancer,(508)473-4087
- Gloria Rabinowitz.....**Gianna Rose Therese**, Still Born.....(774)287-6497
- Sandra Richiazzi.....**Bryan C. Plunkett**, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106



It is always useful to have more Telephone Friends; individuals who are willing to provide support and comfort via the telephone. The chapter provides guidance for those who want to help. When you listen and talk to the bereaved, you make a difference. A longer list of Telephone Friends increases the likelihood that someone will be available when needed. Call Ed Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 if you would like to be a Telephone Friend.

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Grandma Wanna-Be

When I returned to the home of my childhood, I was a skinny little rag, dark circles under my eyes, exhausted and weak. The next day I went to my OB. He was outraged that I weighed less than when I got pregnant. He insisted that I eat, eat, eat. I accommodated him. My boy-husband returned to Norfolk and was deployed to somewhere. I gained plenty of weight. And on May 17, 1967, my doctor delivered my 9 lb 2 oz baby boy via Caesarean section. Todd had a heart abnormality that haunted him for his entire childhood. I always felt it was caused by the lack of nourishment. I divorced my husband, went to college, worked hard in a man's world and never forgot that it was my child and me against the world. When Todd was nine I married a man who gave my son love and the best example of what a husband and father should be.

But that single experience of a 19-year-old mother-to-be shaped who I became and who I am to this day. It also shaped who my only child became—a sensitive, caring man who set goals, achieved them and loved and lived with all his heart. We were very close throughout his life. I miss him. It's lonely being just me against the world.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX
March 17, 2006

Last fall, my son Darick and his wife, Jenny, announced that we would be grandparents this summer. At 47, I no longer had a desire to raise another child of my own and was already a self-confessed “grandma wanna-be.” Their news made my heart dance. My joy, however, was turned to anger when the pregnancy ended in miscarriage.

As a grandma wanna-be with that first grandchild on the way, I was picturing myself baby-sitting and cooing my way to old age with this child and those to follow cuddled around me. I bought patterns for sewing baby clothes and books filled with baby projects. Would the new parents want the crib my children had slept in? If not, where would I set it up for those visits to Grandma's house? My thoughts were overflowing with being a grandma.

After a one o'clock a.m. call from Darick, I knew that Jenny was probably miscarrying. My knees hit the floor and I sobbed my prayers. “Please, God, don't let this child die, too!” I implored. When it was confirmed that this child would never be born, all of my happy imaginings were replaced by anger. The raging thoughts of a protective mother quickly replaced those of the grandma-to-be.

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The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



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In September of 1994 our only daughter, 13-year-old Melissa died in a car accident. Our sons Darick and Wade, were also in the car. At 15 and 11, respectively, they were devastated emotionally though they had only minor physical injuries. We have all worked hard at living without Melissa, but some days it seems that there is a dark cloud hanging over us determined to block the sunshine from our lives. Darick blamed himself for the accident. He put himself in a world of self-induced guilt, a place from which we sometimes wondered if he would ever return. Retrieving his soul has been a long and arduous journey, Jenny beside him every step of the way. I knew immediately upon hearing the baby was lost that he would somehow go back there, which he did. In his mind, Melissa's and his baby's deaths were connected by his feelings of helplessness in the face of tragedy. The fact that this could happen, placing him back in that hell, made my blood boil. Those beautiful children had been through enough! Why couldn't Darick and Jenny have just this one blessing free of heartache?

Many people reminded me of all the medical reasons for miscarriage, making it sound like some grand act of mercy. They said that the baby was very likely genetically damaged and, if brought to term and live birth, it may have been afflicted with any number of maladies. I know they were trying to make me feel better, and it is likely they were right, but their words only made me angrier. There didn't have to be anything wrong with this baby! my mind screamed. Babies are carried to term and born every day. Why did this one have to be damaged? Darick and Jenny needed this joy. And we were already grieving the loss of the grandchildren Melissa would never deliver. Wasn't that enough?

I did not feel guilty or sorry for my anger. I have learned through grieving for Melissa that anger is a natural part of grief. Until now, I simply felt that it was unfinished business. I needed time to come to a place of peace in the face of another child lost to us.

When Melissa died, as deep as my grief was, I rejoiced in the lives of my sons. The fact that they survived that accident was declared a miracle, and it spun a web of protection around my broken heart. Then, in the summer of 2001, Wade was in another accident. The fact that he walked away from it only sore and bruised was declared another miracle. I remember the gratitude and grace I felt when I wrapped my arms around him and sobbed for the words I could not speak.

That memory began to emerge as my initial anger over being denied our first grandchild lost some of its steam. My gratitude for lives saved began to spin around in my head, seeking domination over the anger for lives lost. As much as I wanted to let go of the anger and embrace gratitude, I just couldn't find the resolution I sought.

Until now. It is summer again, 2002. Wade was in a third accident, this time escaping the rolled vehicle only seconds before it burst into flame within sight of where Melissa had died. When I arrived at the scene I walked past the incinerated mass of metal. Again, I could not speak, but only held Wade until I could peel my arms from his healthy, whole self. I was calm and in control until later that night when I was alone. The mash of emotions in my head and heart were too great to hold inside. I was in my car so I opened the roof, cranked up the music, and sobbed for twenty miles. The mother of Melissa grieved yet again. The grandmother of an unborn child also grieved as the mother of Darick fought for rights to her anger. The mother of Wade wailed prayers of thanks. From this tangle of emotions, one truth emerged: As long as I choose to embrace the miracles around me, my heart will dance. Whether in the slow dance of grief or skipping to the beat as I cuddle and coo with grandbabies yet to come, hope and joy will emerge in the rhythms of the dance.

*By JoAnne Rademacher,
TCF, Minot, ND*

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them.

- Let's not try to imagine the future. Just take one day at a time.
- Allow yourself time to cry, both alone, and with your loved ones.
- Don't shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
- Try to be realistic about your expectations, of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. Each of us is an entity, therefore different. So how can there be perfect understanding?
- When a good day comes, relish it. Don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last. It will come again and multiply.
- Take care of your health. Even though the mind will not care, a sick body will only compound troubles. Drink lots of water and take stress-type multi-vitamins. Rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body heal, as well as your mind.
- Share your feelings with other Compassionate Friends and let them share with you. As you find you are caring about the pain of others, you are starting to come out of your shell, a very healthy sign.

I know following these won't be easy but what has been? It's worth a try, don't you think? Nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

*Mary Ehmann
TCF, Valley Forge, PA*



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST UPDATE (THIS PAGE WILL BE PRINTED EVERY OTHER EDITION)

We continue to update our mailing list. We want everyone who reads our newsletter to receive it; however, mailing costs make this update necessary. We want to send it where it is being read. Your donations allow us to print and mail this newsletter and to reach out to hundreds of parents and siblings.

Please fill out this form now if you wish to be added to or removed from our mailing list. This form should be filled out annually. If we don't hear from you in a year's time you will be notified through the newsletter that your name will be removed from our mailing list unless we hear from you.

If you are able to make a donation at this time, it will be gratefully received. Please mail to address below.

PLEASE FILL OUT THIS FORM AND RETURN IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

I (do___) (do not___) wish to continue receiving the TCF newsletter.

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(Donation included___) Make checks payable to "The Compassionate Friends" or TCF

If there are any errors in spelling or other information in this newsletter, please call it to my attention so that I may correct it. Please use this page to send back information, reverse side is addressed for your convenience.

Mail to: TCF Metrowest, 26 Simmons Dr., Milford, MA 01757-1265

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The Compassionate Friends
Metrowest Chapter
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The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



Trade - Offs in the Death of a Child

Have you ever thought about the fact that each type of loss, as compared against another, carries with it equalizing factors? It would have been easier, you may think, if he or she had died in some other way at some other age. We need to explore that thought.

Parents whose children have a terminal illness must cope with those long months of having hopes and then having them dashed, maybe, many times. They have to watch their child go downhill on a daily basis for a long time (and any length of time seems a long time when your child is dying). Even though they may be exhausted, they still somehow must try to keep the remaining family on an even keel.

The stress of a long-term illness takes its toll. By necessity the day's schedule must be built around the needs of a dying child, and what does one do with all that time when the need is no longer there? They are cast adrift with no anchor and have the hard task ahead of them of restructuring their time and life. Difficult times, and yet, those moments (even if they never gave up hope) gave them the opportunity to fulfill as many dreams as was possible; gave them time to make sure the relationship was a good one; gave people time to say goodbye and "I Love You." You see how the equalizers work? *There's a trade-off.*

On the other hand, parents whose children die suddenly, whether by an acute sudden illness, accident, murder, or suicide, have no advance warning; no time to prepare.

There's the sudden and unexpected amputation of a piece of their life without the benefit of anesthesia. The shock of that puts cotton where the brain used to be. With no warning, the parents have to live forevermore with whatever their relationship with their child was at the time.

Good or bad, it is frozen at that place, with no opportunity to indulge in a longed-for anything. They, too, have the void when the child is no longer there to be parented. Their child may have died alone or with strangers. It is difficult to deal with not having been there. There is fertile ground for the "what ifs" and the "if onlys." There is no time for an "I'm sorry," "I Love You" or "Goodbye." Their experience differs in that these parents haven't had to go through a long-term illness and death and all the pain and stress that involves. *Another trade-off.*

Is it harder, you wonder, to lose a small child or one who is so totally dependent upon you and who may be so young that his or her being is still a wonder to you?

Or, is it harder to lose one maybe more independent, but who has been a part of your life for so long you can't remember when he or she wasn't there?

Is there really a choice? If the child was young, all or part of the dreams and hoped-for experiences of watching a child grow and mature are gone.

You wonder what kind of person would have developed in this child. You grieve for what was and for what might have been.

If the child was older, maybe even an adult, you have been through more of the growing up process and already knew more about what your older child's potential was. In this case, you grieve for what was and for all that had and could have been.

If we all wrote down on a piece of paper the way, age and circumstance of our loss and pinned each one to a line, like clothes to dry, I suspect we would, after reading them all, gather up our own circumstance and take it back.

It is not important whether or not I have had your exact experience in the way and age your child died; it is, however, important that I take the time to comprehend what you have been through so that I can better support and understand your pain.

In the years ahead, let's spend more time understanding and less time comparing, for, you see, even with trade-offs, there is no good age or way for a child to die. There are just different ways and ages, and all of them hard.

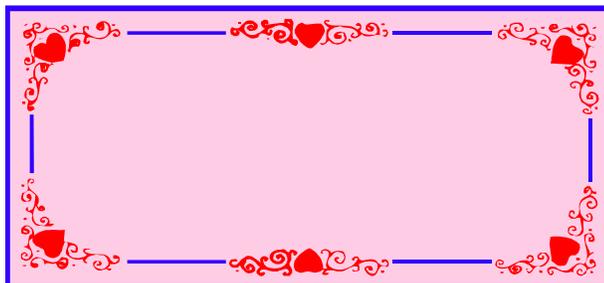
*By Mary Cleckley
TCF, Atlanta, GA*

JANUARY

January is the month when we reflect on the past year and look to the future. Many of us have traditionally made resolutions — this is the year we will stop smoking, lose weight, organize those closets, improve our lives. But for bereaved parents, the New Year's promise is less enticing, and the resolutions feel hollow and trivial. All the things that once seemed so important fade as we realize this is a year our child will not and a year we must move forward without them. It's hard to think about the future when it is the past we wish to embrace, the past when our loved one was alive. But moving forward doesn't mean forgetting — it means moving with memory, carrying our love for our children with us into 1998, allowing their banner to follow our path as we continue to rebuild our lives. The only resolution we need make is a simple one: I will survive this year. As you face this new year, remember, you are not alone, TCF is here. May we be nourished by memories and the knowledge that their love lives on through us all.

*By Mary Clark
TCF, Sugar Land / SW Houston, TX*

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TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person - or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.



TO OUR OLD MEMBERS

*We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. **THINK BACK...** what would it have been like for you if there had not been any “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief, and encourage you? It was from them you heard, “your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer.”*