



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.

July - August 2009

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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: **July 21st August 18th**

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:

July 28th August 25th

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. ©2009

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

Mrs. Marilyn J. Rossetti in loving memory of her daughter **Christina M. Rossetti**.

Mrs. Flora A. Dumont in loving memory of her son **Robert F. Dumont Jr.**

Mrs. Patricia M. Dow in loving memory of her daughter **Michelle Nicholson**.

Jacque Mullins in loving memory of her son **Michael Weinstock** on his birthday July 23rd

Mr. & Mrs. Henry Slopek in loving memory of their daughter **Laurie Ann Slopek**.

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph P. Curran in loving memory of their son **Matthew M. Curran**.

Mrs. Jane Lacy in loving memory of her son **David C. Lacy**.

Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Chinappi in loving memory of their son **Michael Chinappi** on his birthday April 24th.

Mr. George Capadakis in loving memory of his son **Richard G. Capadakis** on his anniversary June 15th.

Mrs. Muriel McCloy in loving memory of her son **Joseph A. McCloy**.

Mr. & Mrs. Alan Kennedy in loving memory of their daughter **Kaitlyn Kennedy** on her birthday July 24th. "Happy 22nd birthday Kate, we love and miss you always. Love Mom, Dad & Jenn."

Mr. & Mrs. Arnold Wolfson in loving memory of their daughter **Donna Ann Wolfson** on her birthday June 4th.

Mr. & Mrs. Leo Boghosian in loving memory of their son **Jason Boghosian**.

Mrs. Viola M. Paulhus in loving memory of her son **Michael J. Paulhus**.

Mr. & Mrs. Sam Pasquantonio in loving memory of their son **David Pasquantonio**.

Mr. Thomas Nichols in loving memory of his daughter **Deborah Nichols-Weaver**.





The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



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 July and August. 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

July

PATRICK J. COOLE
DANA NICOLE THERRIEN
SCOTT F. MOTUZAS
NATHAN MILLER
2ND LT. USMC IAN THOMAS McVEY
DIXON BERGMAN
DOREEN MARIE ARSENEAU

August

DANIEL J. JOYCE
WILLIAM H. BARDOL JR.
BRYAN SCOT LA VOIE
DAVID P. RUSAKOVICH
ROBYN NELSON
DAVID PELLETIER
CYNTHIA (CINDY) COYLE

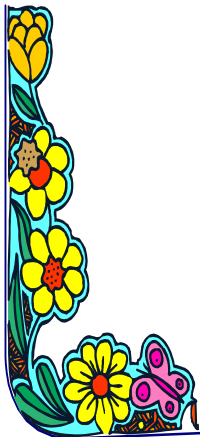
Birthdays

July

KAREN SWYMER- CLANCY
AMY M. TOOMEY
ROY RANDALL
DANA NICOLE THERRIEN
SHAWN P. MARKS
NICHOLAS ORIE VAN RYE
CHRISTOPHER SHEA
NATHAN MILLER
MICHAEL WEINSTOCK
KAITLYN KENNEDY
RICHARD G. CAPADAIS

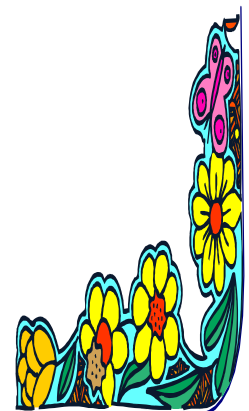
August

ANDREW BOISVERT
ANNA RAY RIVERA
CHRISTIAN ALBEE
MATHEAU VIRCA
JEFFREY CHERRINGTON
KEVIN HOLLAND
DAVID ALEXANDER SCHNEGG
MICHAEL VINAY BHATIA
CLIFFORD CROWE
DANIEL J. JOYCE
GREG BRUNO
DEBORAH NICHOLS-WEAVER
ELIZABETH CASEY
ROBYN NELSON



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.

Looking to the Light

It is difficult to articulate thoughts and feelings about a life-altering event such as the death of a brother. For a long time, the only thing I could do to find any solace was to read about the tragic experiences of others. I was often moved to tears, so strong was my identification with their anguish.

I never suffered from denial. My brother's death was always a very tangible thing. It was my grief. I owned it. In accepting it, I feel that the healing was somehow expedited. I don't mean to imply that I am now returned to the unaffected individual that existed prior to his death, that my acceptance of his death is now clear.

I don't think you ever "get over" such a loss. What happens is the incorporation of that loss into your daily life. In my case, that process brought a number of changes in attitude and priority which, as it turned out, were in my best interest. I had become centered on myself and my career to such an extent that I was armed against life's disappointments.

When meeting me, it became clear to others that "career" was what it was all about.

I keep pictures of my brother all around so that I can see him several times each day. In doing so, I am alternately both comforted and saddened. But mostly, I am comforted. I know he is in Heaven, and I believe he looks in on me and is aware of the magical events that have taken place in my life. When I look upward through my kitchen skylights, I can see him in my heart and I know he is near. I still shed my tears, for I miss him and will the remainder of my life.

Given a choice, I wish he had never become ill and that he hadn't ended his life. Today, some two years after his death, I can accept it and understand his choice. The love we feel for a loved one never has to leave us, even though our loved one has departed physically.

**Rhonda St. John
Grosse Pointe Woods, MI**

A Part of Me

You were not just my brother, but
You were my friend as well.
You were supposed to be here always
Or till the world came to an end.
I know that we argued and
Seemed to disagree,
But I could always count on you
To be there for me.
You may be gone from this world
I see,
But you will always be a part of me.

**Donna Montville
TCF, Gardner, MA**



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



WHO WAS THAT PERSON?

An eight year retrospective...

By Rich Edler

Who was that person? He looked like me. He talked like me. But I don't think I know him anymore.

Who was that person? He had so many friends. He was popular at cocktail parties and told good jokes. Today, he seeks out one person he can really talk to and that is enough. His telephone Rolodex is a lot smaller, but so much more important.

Who was that person? He had such different priorities. He skated over life, like an ice skater on a frozen pond. He never thought about how cold the water was. Now he has a totally new perspective on the world. He reaches out to people who hurt because he knows how they feel. He has been there. He has felt the ice water.

Who was that person? He had an orderly chronological sense of time. Now the world is divided forever into simply "before" and "after".

Who was that person? He used to rush through dinner or cut the family vacation short to get back to the office. Now he thinks back to the family times as the most wonderful times of his life. He knows what is irreplaceable.

Who was that person? He used to worry about so many imaginary troubles, most of which never happened anyway. Now he spends most of his time in the present. He appreciates today's sunset, daisies, simple things and good friends. He knows how precious each moment is.

Who was that person? He used to think about what he wanted to get out of life. Now he thinks about how grateful he is for the gifts he has had.

Who was that person? He used to measure his goals in terms of where he is going. Now he focuses more on what his life will have been about. He asks less and less why his child died, and more often: "Why did he live?"

Who was that person? He had never heard of The Compassionate Friends. Now they are his best friends. And he knows that by helping someone else through TCF, he also helps himself.

Who was that person? I don't think I know him anymore.

Rich and his wife Kitty are founding members of the South Bay/LA Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Son Mark died in 1992 and Rich's first book

"If I Knew Then What I Know Now" is dedicated to him. His following book, "Into the Valley and Out Again" is the story of a father's grief after the loss of his son and the changes in priorities and approaches to life that follow. Rich served on TCF's National Board of Directors for several years including as president of the board. He died in February of 2002. Kitty is the current president of TCF's National Board of Directors.

The Old Yellow Truck

Several weeks ago I sold my old, rusty yellow pickup truck. I placed an ad in the Baltimore Sunday paper which read: *For Sale, 1978 Toyota pickup truck, 119 K miles, as is \$450. Call.*

Someone called, paid me \$400, and drove away, all in the same day. I should have been happy to get rid of it; but instead I ended up feeling depressed. If I could have advertised the truck in our TCF Newsletter, the ad would have read:

For sale (regretfully) 1978 Toyota pickup truck used by college student when he was home for weekends or semester breaks. Provided safe transportation through a snowstorm on his last New Year's Eve. Four-speaker stereo radio with rock music stations preselected. Ash-tray clean except for old bank receipts. Truck used by father for hauling things while thinking about son. Priceless. Don't call.

It has been 18 months since my son died, and yet it is still difficult to part with certain things, even things that did not belong to him. This is a



problem with which we are all faced. What to keep? What to let go? The practical side of us says these things are no longer needed, so we should get rid of them. The heart says my son owned these things or used them; they bring back memories, so we should keep them.

There is not a right or wrong answer as to what we keep or what we let go. I reassure myself by noting that these memories of my son didn't leave with that old yellow truck. They will remain locked in my heart forever.

Gary Piepenbring
TCF, Penn-Maryland Line Chapter, MD



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



HURRYING HEALING

By Ellen Goodman

I don't remember when the words first began to echo in the hollow aftermath of loss. But now it seems that every public or private death, every moment of mourning is followed by a call for "healing," a cry for "closure."

Last month, driving home in my car just 24 hours after three Kentucky students were shot to death in a school prayer meeting, I heard a Paducah minister talk about "healing." The three teenagers had yet to be buried, and he said it was time to begin the healing process, as if there were an antibiotic to be applied at the first sign of pain among the survivors.

Weeks later, at a Christmas party, a man offered up a worried sigh about a widowed mutual friend. "It's been two years," he said, "and she still hasn't achieved closure." The words pegged her as an underachiever who failed the required course in Mourning 201, who wouldn't graduate with her grief class.

This vocabulary of "healing" and "closure" has spread across the post-mortem landscape like a nail across my blackboard. It comes with an intonation of sympathy but an accent of impatience. It suggests after all, that death is something to be dealt with, that loss is something to get over – according to a prescribed emotional timetable. It happened again when the Terry Nichols verdict came down. No sooner had the mixed counts of guilty and innocent been announced, than the usually jargon free Peter Jennings asked how it would help the "healing" for Oklahoma City. Assorted commentators and reporters asked the families whether they felt a sense of "closure."

The implicit expectation, even demand, was that the survivors of 168 deaths would traverse a similar emotional terrain and come to the finish line at the same designated time. Was two-and-a-half years too long to mourn a child blown up in a building?

It was the families themselves who set us straight with responses as personal and diverse as one young mother who said, "It's time to move on," and another who described her heart this way: "Sometimes I feel like it's bleeding."

In the Nichols sentencing trial last week, we got another rare sampling of raw grief. Laura Kennedy testified that in the wake of her son's death in 1995, "I have an emptiness inside of me that's there all the time."

Diane Leonard said that since her husband's death her life "has a huge hole that can't be mended." By the second day, however, the cameras had turned away, the microphones had turned a deaf ear, as if they had heard enough keening. Again, observers asked what effect a life-or-death sentence would have on, of course, "healing" and "closure."

I do not mean to suggest that the people who testified were "typical" mourners or the Oklahoma bombing a "typical" way of death. I mean to suggest that grief is always atypical – as individual as the death and the mourner.

The American way of dealing with it however has turned grieving into a set process with rules, stages, and of course deadlines. We have, in essence, tried to make a science of grief, to tuck messy emotions under neat clinical labels – like "survivor guilt" or "detachment."

Sometimes, we confuse sadness with depression, replace comfort with Prozac. We expect, maybe insist upon, an end to grief. Trauma, pain, detachment, acceptance in a year – time's up.

But in real lives, grief is a train that doesn't run on anyone else's schedule. Jimmie Holland at New York's Sloan-Kettering Hospital, who has studied the subject, knows that "normal grief may often be an ongoing lifelong process." Indeed, she says, "The expectation of healing becomes an added burden. We create a sense of failure. We hear people say, 'I can't seem to reach closure; I'm not doing it fast enough.'

Surely it is our own anxiety in the presence of pain, our own fear of loss and death, that makes us wish away another's grief or hide our own. But in every life, losses will accumulate like stones in a backpack. We will all be caught at times between remembrance and resilience.

So whatever our national passion for emotional efficiency, for quality-time parents and one-minute managers, there simply are no one-minute mourners.

Hearts heal faster from surgery than from loss. And when the center of someone's life has been blown out like the core of a building, is it any wonder if it takes so long even to find a door to close?

This column appeared originally in the January 4, 1998 issue of The Boston Globe. Ellen Goodman is a Globe columnist. © Copyright 1998 Globe Newspaper Company.



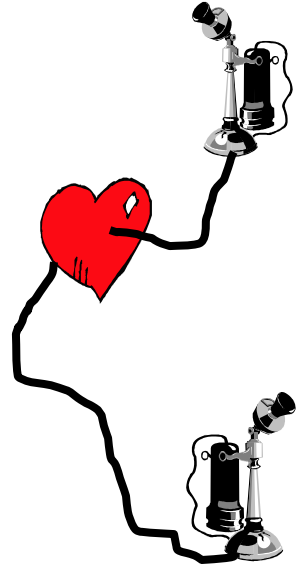
The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



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 19, Automobile Accident,.....(508)881-2111
- Judith Cherrington,....**Jeffrey**, age 48, Cancer,(508)473-4087



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.

I'm Still Counting

My son's favorite character on Sesame Street was 'The Count'. Todd would laugh and count and laugh some more whenever The Count would appear on PBS. "Come on, Mom," he would say, "count with me." So, I would join him and we would count together.

When my child died, I started counting hours. One hour since he died, two hours, then 24 hours, 36 hours, 96 hours. I started counting weeks, then months and finally years. I was totally focused on the moment that my son left this earth.

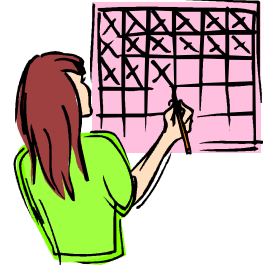
Now I count the years and months, weeks and days. While this may not sound like progress, it truly is a step back into life. Three years, seven months, one week and one day. I stopped adding the hours. Moreover, when people ask me about it, I generally say about 3 1/2 years. I try to keep it simple for outsiders who can't begin to understand.

Every month I dread the 19th. Another month is added to the time between my son's last breath and now. It's almost as if time might separate us, erase him from the memory of those who knew and loved him.

Despite my obsession with counting, I am moving forward in many ways. I think of my child each day, I honor his life each day, and I feel a real apprehension about his daughters each day. Their lives are horribly different from what they might have been if Todd had lived. Their values will be so jaded compared with his values; their experiences of personal growth are miniscule compared to what Todd would have given them.

I know I cannot change this. So along with this private obsession, there is a deep lingering sadness for my son's children and for opportunities lost.

In the meantime, I count years, months and days. I keep my unconditional love for my child in my heart and in my life. And I continue to reach out and become the person I am meant to be. And I'm still counting with Todd.



Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

TCF, Katy, TX

July 27, 2006

A very special thank you goes out to those people that facilitate our meetings every month. It is through their unselfishness in stepping up, that makes our chapter a safe place for the newly bereaved to get through the grieving process.

Thank you for your involvement and continued support.

Mitchell Greenblatt (Ian's Dad)
Linda Teres (Russell's Mom)
Rick Dugan (Larry's Dad)
Janice Parmenter (Tyler's Mom)
Judy Daubney (Clifford Crowe's Mom)



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



Names In Granite

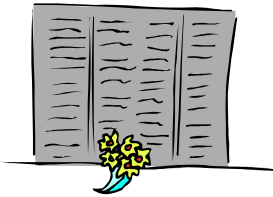
Living Life Is Still An Effort

Several years ago, on a visit to Washington, D.C., I visited the Vietnam War memorial. I knew a young man who died during the war and whose name appeared on the Memorial. I made a point of finding his name on the Wall; it was a moving experience for me. After I located his listing, I stood at the Memorial, reflecting on his life, his surviving child and wife, and thought about what this Memorial must mean to them.

This is a Memorial that was born in controversy. One veteran called it, "the black gash of shame." Another veteran thought the Memorial did little to lift the spirits of the men who fought in the Vietnam War. In fact, a second monument was built on the site to pacify those who expressed initial dissatisfaction. As years have passed, however, and millions have visited the Memorial, it has come to be a place of healing and peace.

People may wonder about its success as a tribute to the men and women who fought and died in Vietnam. But I don't. As a TCF chapter leader and editor of our chapter newsletter, I have come to understand the meaning of the Vietnam Memorial and its message to all of us.

We have a column in our newsletter titled, "That Their Light May Always Shine...Our Children Loved and Remembered." This column lists the day a child died, his/her name, and the child's parents. We call these "remembrance dates" rather than anniversary dates, thereby avoiding a word that connotes celebration and jubilation.



Occasionally and accidentally, I have omitted a child's name. Invariably, when this happens, I receive a phone call from a very distraught parent who wants to know why their child's name did not appear in the newsletter.

In fact, recently, a mother called to inform me that I had omitted her son's name. This child died five years ago. I asked why this error caused so much pain. She said, "When his name appears in the newsletter each year, it is the only time I ever see it in print. It is a sign to me that he lived and to anyone else that reads the newsletter. Maybe everyone else has forgotten that he lived, but I remember and the newsletter reminds others. Then I know I am his mother."

I understood, as never before, the importance of the written word, or as in this case, the written name. Any person who questions the impact of a black granite wall listing 58,132 names has never experienced the death of a child.

**Cissy Lowe Dickson
TCF, Houston Bay Area Chapter**

My husband's family held a reunion in July. We planned to attend and told the family to count on us. But when it came time to buy the tickets and make a commitment, I found I couldn't do it. I simply did not want to deal with the hassles of traveling, leaving home, getting out of my daily rhythm.

I am a different person since my child died. I am a different person than I was six months after my child died. And, I will be a different person in another year.

I find that I am evolving; my basic personality is still intact, most of my mind works well enough, my perception of life, love, people and events is probably heightened but fairly unchanged. Still I am a different person.

Now I work at living my life. I make myself do the things that I once took for granted....such as getting dressed each day, going to work, handling a number of responsibilities I have chosen to accept. I make myself laugh at silly jokes. Sometimes I even have to force myself to really listen to others. I am surprised when I laugh spontaneously, smile for no particular reason or say something "prophetic". What is going on here? Who am I? Why has the joy of life disappeared?

I believe I have found the answer to these questions and even to questions I haven't yet asked. It lies in the nature of losing one's child to death. Initially we work very hard to maintain sanity. Gradually we expand the boundaries of our lives. Carefully we add events, people, responsibilities and simple enjoyment. But our progress is measured in months and years, not days and weeks.

My awakening to this new reality came at a meeting of The Compassionate Friends. It has been rekindled at each meeting since then. I learn about myself by observing others. I note the change in their voice, their body language, their perspective. I see the sorrow in each parent. I see parents whose children have been gone for many years still weep openly and later talk about a special event they are planning. Then I see parents whose loss was recent yet they appear to be normal, controlled and sociable on many levels and they suddenly and mysteriously crumble before my eyes.

That's the journey. We set our own limits as to what is acceptable for us. Over time we shift from minimalist boundaries to a good representation of the person we once were. We have major setbacks: birthdays, holidays, death anniversaries. We have minor setbacks: a picture, a forgotten scent, a baby shoe, a poignant memory. We sob, we scream, we withdraw. But we do go on. With the help of our Compassionate Friends, we move forward and are supported when we suffer a setback.

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The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



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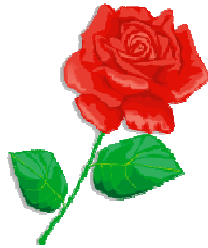
We each deal with the many facets of our grief. We learn from others. We teach others. We grow from the dialogue. Our kindred spirits bring questions, answers and peace.

Who am I today? A fairly well balanced mother of one beautiful child who no longer is alive. I am where I should be. When will I stop evolving? Probably never.

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

ROSEBUSH FULL OF BLOOMS

On a rosebush full of blooms, there is occasionally one rose more fragile than the rest. Nobody knows why. The rose receives the same amounts of rain and sun as its neighboring blooms: it receives the same amounts of food and water from the earth, of clipping and tending and gentle encouragement from the gardener. Its time on earth is neither more nor less significant than that of the other blooms alongside. It has all the necessary components to become what it is intended to be: a beautiful flower, fully open, spreading its petals and fragrance and color for the world to see.



But for some reason, once in a while, a single rose doesn't reach maturity. It's not the gardener's fault, nor the fault of the rose. So it is that sometimes, despite the best growing conditions, the best efforts of the gardener, the best possibilities for a glorious blooming season, a particularly fragile rose will share its growth for awhile, then fade and die. And the gardener and the rosebush and the earth and all around grieve.

We are never ready for a loss, not for the loss of a promising rosebud, whose life appears ready to unfold with brilliant color and fulfillment, in the midst of our grieving, we can remember the glimpses of color and fragrance and growth that was shared. We can love the fragile rose and the fragile soul for the valiant battles won and the blooming that was done. And as our own petals unfold, we can remember the softness and beauty of those who touched us along the way.

Ernestine Clark
TCF, Oklahoma City OK

WHERE ARE YOU?

I missed you yesterday
and looked for you
among the artifacts of your life -
your room with pictures,
the clothes that still carried your scent,
your favorite tools and books,
the tapes you loved to hear.

The very walls echoed your vitality
and carried faint memories of riotous laughter.
And so I sat there, comforted for a while,
but forced at last to confess
that although beautiful memories lingered
you were not there,
not then and not ever again.

If I could not find you yesterday,
where, then, can I look today?
Who can I talk to, implore, beg
to show me the way?
Where are the hidden doorways
to the signs and wonders
others claim to see?

My musings bring no answers
so I take a walk to clear my mind.
Ahead, I see children playing,
and their laughter floating on the wind
reminds me of your own carefree approach to life.
Their running mirrors your own abandon
and the way you always found joy in simple things.

Can this be the answer
to the riddle of finding you again?
Can it be that I will hear you
in every moment of laughter?
That I will see you
in the actions of a mischievous friend,
that I will feel you in every touch of compassion?

I've always heard
that if you seek, you will find.
Perhaps the corollary to that
is that you must seek in the right places.
I've been looking in the scrapbook
of all that used to be
and found only momentary solace.

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The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



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So let me look for you anew
in all the wonders and blessings of life.

I believe you are reflected there
with every expression of happiness and joy,
in every instance of fearless exploration
and with every act of unconditional love.

*In loving memory of Lance Porter Hopkins
July 20, 1975 – November 30, 1999
Harold Hopkins, January, 2001*

My Secret

Within days of my son's tragic death in a helicopter crash, it became my sad duty to remove his belongings from his apartment. In the numbing fog of shock and denial, I sifted through every drawer, cabinet, and closet. The wrenching decisions of what to do with his clothes, his video tapes, even his toothbrush, made my head swim.

Although I gave away many of the things to his roommate, other friends and family, and to "Goodwill," I kept the "special" things for myself, school yearbooks, pictures, certain articles of clothing, and his collection of crazy T-shirts. I put this strange assortment of things in his footlocker, a remnant of his boarding school days.

What I didn't tell anyone was that I never laundered the T-shirts I found in the dirty clothes hamper. I just folded them and put them in the footlocker with a my other memories. And from time to time during those first months of agonizing pain, I would sit on the floor, open the footlocker and sort through the treasured remnants of a life that had been such a large part of mine.

Then I would take the unwashed T-shirts and bury my face in them, inhaling the combined scents of his cologne, deodorant, and perspiration, mixed with the wetness of my tears. It made me feel, for just a moment that he wasn't really so far away. "What a perverse thing to do!" I thought. I'm sure no one else would understand my doing such a thing, they would surely think I'd gone off the "deep end." So I never told anyone about this strange behavior, and the odd comfort it gave to me.

Months later at a National Conference, I heard a speaker tell hundreds of bereaved parents assembled about a mother whose son had died suddenly and how she had refused to wash the soiled shirt he had been wearing, but found comfort in holding it close to her and smelling it. "My gosh," I thought, "maybe I'm not so crazy after all."

Since this experience I have discovered this is not as uncommon as I had once thought. The scents of a loved one are as much a part of them as the sound of a voice, the touch of a hand, or the tenderness of a kiss.

There is nothing "perverse" in wanting to cling to these precious memories. Memories are what remain after the death of our child and there is comfort to be found in them.

Carole Ragland

TCF, Houston-West Chapter 10

THE GRIEF OF MENTAL ILLNESS

I know now that my daughter, Laurie was mentally ill. I did not understand the meaning of this 20 years ago when her depression and "strange" behavior preceded a suicide attempt while in college. Despite all the help we could get for her, she succeeded in completing suicide five years later, at the age of 25, in 1980.

Her psychiatrist then agreed to talk to me, he said, with tears in his eyes, she had been a serious schizophrenic patient. For reasons of patient confidentiality, I was not privy to this information earlier. WHY couldn't I have learned about this before it was too late?

The grief I felt as a bereaved parent was compounded by the truth of her illness. There is a stigma with mental illness. Society has been slow to understand and to accept mental illness. There is grief with mental illness, for the loss of the child that we wanted to be normal. Why did this have to happen to my child?

Was this my fault? Guilt rears its ugly head. Why didn't I see the early signs that she needed help? I felt anger, wanting to blame others for what happened. I was frustrated, with the professionals who could not/did not "fix it." I was disillusioned with the public and private mental health system and its limited resources for the mentally ill and their families. Laurie fell between the cracks and is gone.

Thirteen years later I have come to terms with her suicide. I know now there are many reasons for mental illness, most of which are beyond my control. Mental illness is a disease. It can be the result of genetics, a chemical imbalance in the brain, or a nutritional deficiency/allergy, NOT bad parenting.

I have learned that in grief and in loss, most people want to, need to "talk about it." The magic of sharing feelings and experiences with others who understand (because they've been there), is a healing process. For me, The Compassionate Friends, a national peer support organization for bereaved parents and siblings, has provided this outlet on a local and national level. I have also participated in a local chapter of The Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and have learned so much more about mental illness through sharing with others who are coping with this stigma and grief. The National Alliance for Mentally Ill slogan in 1991 was "the most shocking thing about mental illness is how little people understand it." How true! How sad!

After Laurie's suicide, initially the most therapeutic healing for me was to publish a book of her writings, material I found expressing her thoughts, visions and frustrations from the ages of 15 to 25. This actual documentation of a mentally ill young person is poetic, loving, humorous, depressing and spiritual. Perhaps her words will help others to see and understand this disease.



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



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Her words express intuitive insights in a most articulate way, despite the message of helplessness and hopelessness. As a bereaved parent I felt a strong motivation to perpetuate the memory of Laurie in a positive way. Public education, and acceptance of mental illness as a disease is helping to change attitudes. We are learning to be more open and honest about it. We are learning to cope and go on with our lives.

Maybe it was the mother in me, but I never thought I would lose her. Now through the grief and later understanding of this disease, I have found a new purpose in my life. Reaching out to help others caught in the quagmire of grief, from mental illness, from suicide, from the death of a child, through support groups and writings, in turn has been a healing process for me too. I know that Laurie's 25 years on this earth have made a difference.

***Carol Katz
TCF, Lower Cape Cod, MA***

Looking Back on a Difficult Time

July 29th was the seventh anniversary of Chad's, death. I am writing to share my thoughts and actions, as I once again pondered life, without my third born son.

I knew, when I turned over the page of the calendar, that July held tragic memories for our family, but wasn't thinking "sad" because we have all reinvested in life and have once again felt joy and laughter. Therefore, it surprised me as the 29th grew closer and closer that feelings of fragility crept back into my body and my eyes burned with held back tears. I grew "grouchy" and found fault with my husband at the slightest infraction. I was constantly exhausted even though my schedule wasn't overly stressful. It wasn't until one of my Compassionate Friends invited Roger and me to a movie with her and her husband, that I realized how hard I was fighting against what my body and subconscious was experiencing.

We went to see a show whose plot allowed me, and half of the audience, to cry openly. It was there that I set free the deep feelings that I had been trying to stuff down all month. There in the dark, with my husband, my friend and her husband, I didn't have to hold back any more. As I cried for those dying on the screen, I cried for my son, cried for the children he didn't have, for the fiancée he left behind, for his brothers, sister, and father who miss him so, and I cried for me and all mothers who have had sons and daughters die.

This experience allowed me to bring front and center what I had been holding inside all month. I decided to ask my prof. for the day off, Roger decided to take the day off of work, and we made plans to take care of ourselves on Chad's anniversary.

The days preceding the anniversary, I was contacted by telephone and sent cards and gifts by my dear Compassionate Friends, and on July 29th my husband and I went to the cemetery and paid honor to our son through ritual, flowers, 'nilla candles, and tears. We then drove to Camano Island and spent the day on the beach gazing out into the azure blue sound, remembering stories about him, and looking for heart shaped rocks to place at the foot of the tree we planted in his memory.

Why am I sharing this with you? Because I am so thankful that Compassionate Friends was recommended to me when my Chad died. It was there that I learned about the grief process, where I learned it was okay to cry and cry and cry. It was there that I was given the opportunity to process what I was thinking and feeling at chapter meetings, where I began remembering Chad, and all children, in ritual. It was at TCF meetings where I got permission to go ahead and take as long as I needed, where I got loving support to grieve my son, and where I met the people who have traveled these long seven years with me and whom I know will be there seven, no seventy years in the future.

These are my Compassionate Friends, bereaved parents, like myself, like yourself who will go the extra mile for another mom or dad, who will be there for the duration, and who will never question my tears and say, "Gee, I thought you'd be over it by now."

My hope is that you, too, have developed your own support system of Compassionate Friends and others who will be there for you. If this is not the case, I invite you with the utmost sincerity to come to a TCF meeting and meet the parents who attend. I realize support groups are not for everyone, and I realize not everyone will bond with everyone. But I do know that The Compassionate Friends organization will be there for you as long as you desire and beyond.

***Sue Anderson
TCF, Seattle, WA***

The only cure for grief is to grieve.
Emotions in grief are as different as snowflakes or fingerprints.

Each person mourns in a different way
There is no timetable for recovery.

Rabbi Earl Grollman

2009 National Conference Information Announced

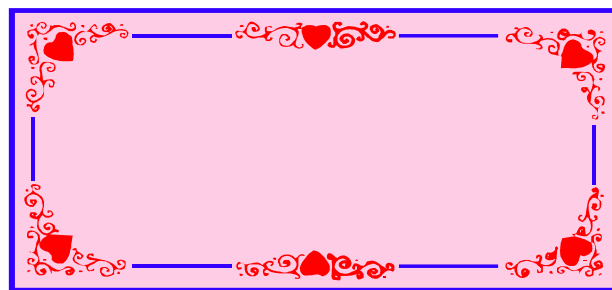
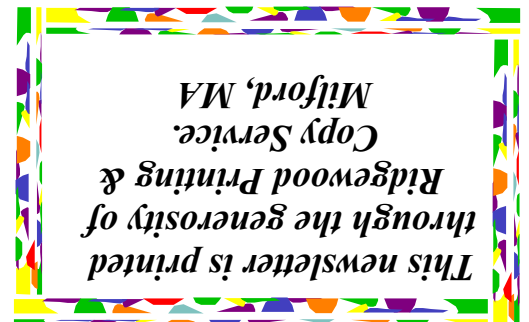
Two speakers have been announced for the 2009 TCF National Conference in Portland August 7-9, 2009. Plus, early reservation for those wishing to stay at the Doubletree Hotel Portland, site of the 32nd national TCF conference, is now open.

Speaking at the conference will be Reg and Maggie Green and Michele Longo Eder. Reg and Maggie are the parents of Nicholas Green, the seven-year-old American boy who was shot by highway bandits in Italy in 1994. Their decision to donate his organs to seven Italians became a major news story around the world, spawning thousands of organ donations in Italy (a country where organ donations were virtually unheard of before Nicholas' death) and around the world. This remarkable story was made into a CBS movie of the week called *The Nicholas Effect*.

Michele Longo Eder is author of *Salt in our Blood—The memoir of a Fisherman's Wife*. Michele, an accomplished lawyer, started journaling what daily life was like for her while her husband and sons were commercial fishing off the coasts of Oregon, Washington, and northern California. Never did she dream that her journaling would include the account of a personal tragedy that struck just before Christmas 2001.

Reservations for those attending TCF's national conference are now being accepted by the Doubletree Hotel Portland where the conference will be held. TCF has negotiated for a large block of rooms at a special price for those attending the conference. Rate is \$129 per room per night in several different configurations.

As always, we suggest that you make reservations early to avoid disappointment. They may be reserved online at the national conference page at www.compassionatefriends.org. You may also call the Doubletree Hotel at 1-503-281-6111 and receive the negotiated price, but you must identify yourself as attending The Compassionate Friends National Conference. The rooms are available at this special rate for those staying the nights of August 5-August 9. Last day for reservations, if rooms are still available, will be July 4.



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