



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.

March-April 2012

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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: **March 20th April 17th**

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:
March 27th April 24th

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. ©2012

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.

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
 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

Chapter Web Page
www.tcfmetrowest.com

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

Mr. & Mrs. Mitchell Greenblatt in loving memory of their son **Ian Greenblatt** on his birthday March 3rd.
 Mr. & Mrs. William Bardol in loving memory of their son **William H. Bardol Jr.** on his birthday March 7th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Jackman and Jennifer in loving memory of their daughter and sister **Alicia D. Jackman** on her anniversary March 8th. Also Pamela Jackman in loving memory of her brother **Douglas C. Curtiss**.
 Ms. Lynn Waugh in loving memory of her daughter **Kelsey Mulkerrins** on her anniversary April 18th.
 Mrs. Virginia Noonan in loving memory of her daughter **Susan A. Quinlivan**.
 Mrs. Nancy Carpenter in loving memory of her son **James S. Carpenter IV**.
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Boudreau in loving memory of their son **Nicholas L. Boudreau** on his anniversary March 4th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Rick Dugan in loving memory of their son **Larry Dugan** on his birthday April 6th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert King in loving memory of their daughter **Caron King-Firth**.
 Mrs. Dorothy Pisapia in loving memory of her son **Matthew Pisapia**.
 Mr. Robert Hudson in loving memory of his sisters **Beatrice Elizabeth Hudson** and **Rita Hudson-Carney** on her birthday March 25th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Eldredge in loving memory of their son **Kevin R. Eldredge** on his anniversary March 24th.
 Mrs. Carol A. Booth in loving memory of her son **William C. Lewis** on his anniversary March 2nd.





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 March and April. 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

Birthdays

March

March

RUSSELL D. HUNTINGTON
WILLIAM C. LEWIS
NICHOLAS L. BOUDREAU
ALICIA D. JACKMAN
KEVIN R. ELDREDGE
MICHAEL J. PAULHUS
TYLER PARMENTER
CHRISTOPHER SHEA

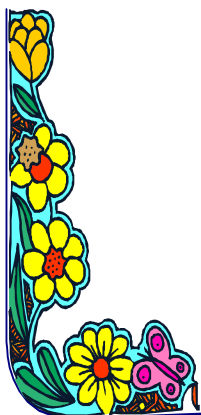
ALAN R. STUCHINS
IAN GREENBLATT
WAYNE A. FRYE
MICHAEL HEBDEN
MICHAEL HEARNS
WILLIAM H. BARDOL JR.
ANDREW B. MILLINER
SHAWNA JEAN LARASSA
MICHAEL D. DUPONT
KEVIN WASHBURN
CHRISTOPHER J. MITRANO
RITA HUDSON-CARNEY
LISA MASTROMATTEO

April

April

CHRISTOPHER J. MITRANO
KRISTIN E. GRACI
CHRISTIAN ALBEE
BENJAMIN GIOVANGELO
KRIS DANIEL GENTILOTTI
EMMA FRANCES DALTON
KELSEY MULKERRINS
FRANK W. TOPHAM
JUSTIN MAYER
KAREN SWYMER – SHANAHAN

LARRY DUGAN
BENJAMIN GIOVANGELO
LAURIE SLOPEK
DOLORES ROSE BERGERON
MICHAEL CHINAPPI



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 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.

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. 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.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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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

In Memory of my brother, Mark

My Child Died Today

I double over from the pain in my midsection and heart. I sob. I cannot breathe. I count the minutes since my child was alive. Shock freezes my body, paralyzes my mind and permeates my soul. My sense of reality is now the deepest fog. I know I will not survive this. I am ready to die. I think I am dreaming, and I will wake up. My child will be here. But I am awake. My child is dead. My child has died. A primal scream begins deep within me and rushes upward, piercing the early morning air. I know I will perish, and I look forward to a quick end. Can I live without my child? Do I want to live?

My mantra becomes breathe deeply, hold and exhale. This is my only reality. I feel that I am fading into the fog. I force myself to drink water. I cannot eat. My mind wanders and then returns to this place; I am physically jolted into my body each time I grasp the finality of my child's death. The people around me are a blur. I aimlessly pace the floor. I cannot remain still. Anxiety has conquered my mind. I cannot think, talk, communicate, understand or comprehend. What are they saying? Why do I care? Where is my child? I want to be with my child. I must be with my child. Somebody medicates me. I fall into dreamless and fitful sleep, sliding, sinking, falling.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

Demon Depression

On November 3, 1994 my life changed forever.

Depression pulled the trigger that took our daughter's life. There were no apparent signs. (I now know there were many signs that she was in trouble.) We knew she was sad. She lost her beloved husband to cancer on March 3, 1994. He was her third husband and the only one who really loved her. The other two had left her for someone else after ten years of marriage. Her husband died a terrible death; seventy-eight days in the hospice room. Donna was at his side day and night. On the day he died she had gone home to feed their cat. She blamed herself that she wasn't there to say goodbye. He had been in a coma for days. Donna went through all the motions. She went back to work as Weekday Early Education Director of our church. Everyone did all they could to ease her loss. She was loved by all who knew her. We were proud that she was doing so well. How little we knew.

Depression is a silent killer waiting in the dark. Depression is not a weakness, it is not a sin; it is an illness. It hides like a thief in the night stealing treasures from the heart. There is no joy behind a quiet smile, only a resolve. Depression wears many faces. Donna could never hurt anyone. She loved her family, her church, her God. Depression was the killer here. We love her, and God loves and understands her. I know she is at peace with Him. We will see her again in a far better place. But, oh how we miss her now.

We who are not depressed dare not judge those who are. If we are not walking in their shoes, we can't know their pain. If you know someone who is hurting for whatever reason, be alert. Often they are wearing a mask for the world to see. There is help if depression is known in time. Time is the key. Each day that passes, the tunnel vision goes deeper. At some point, they can't be reached. That happened to Donna. The doctor told us he had no idea she was that depressed. As I said, there were no signs. But we didn't know they were signs. She didn't eat much (she was never a big eater). She wore the same clothes a lot (she never liked to shop). She ate lots of candy bars (she loved chocolate). More than likely there was a chemical imbalance (her doctor said).

Donna was (is) our only child. How do we go on without her? The only answer I know is our memories and our hope in a loving God who sees all and understands each of His children.

SHADES OF YOU

What is a 'friend'?

It is shades of you;

The one who holds your hand

Your loyalty and grace

As you walk in shadows,

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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God's love coming through.
 Of Life's shifting sand.
 "What is a 'friend'?"
 "What is a 'friend'?"
 A smile in the dark;
 Especially one like you;
 When sadness consumes,
 Who never fails to ask
 No song from the lark.
 Is there something I can do?

Thank you, Compassionate Friends for caring. The above poem is for good friends.

Gladys Case
In memory of our daughter, Donna
TCF, Baltimore Chapter

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY CHILD'S THINGS?

This is a problem that faces all bereaved parents. We discuss it from time to time at our meetings. Some of us keep the child's room just as it was before the death. We don't want anything touched or moved. Some of us find solace in giving things away to close friends or relatives. Knowing that someone we love is wearing our child's clothes or playing with his or her toys brings us comfort. Some of us find we can deal with only a few items at a time: clothes one month; books another; perhaps toys a few months later.

Some of us find that, as time goes on and we would have gotten rid of the things anyway, it becomes easier. For instance, after a while we realize that if the child were still alive, he/she would have outgrown the clothes. Then it's easier to give them away. Or he would have graduated from college this year and therefore would no longer use the study desk or clock radio. We can give these things away in the normal time sequence.

The important thing is not to let others rush us into doing something before we are ready and not to let ourselves feel guilty about the amount of time it takes us to make decisions. When the time is right and the decision is right for us, we'll know what to do.

Nancy Mower
TCF, Honolulu, HI

SURVIVING THE UNTHINKABLE

I vividly remember April 19, 1995. My daughter Nina had heard on the news that something horrible had just occurred in Oklahoma City. She told me that a federal office building had been bombed, killing many people, many of them very young children. As the scene replayed itself on every station, Nina and I knelt in front of the television. We held hands and were motionless and hushed except for the sound of our occasional choking sobs. As we watched the horrific scene and the victims' loved ones in their shock and grief, I distinctly remember my reaction. After saying a silent prayer that I would never have to bury my children first, I looked at my daughter through teary eyes and said aloud, "Those poor parents! I can't even imagine! I know that I could never survive losing any of you."

Little did I know those words that I had spoken to Nina would come back to haunt me. That only three weeks after the Oklahoma City tragedy my own beautiful 15 1/2 year old daughter, my Nina with the captivating smile, would be killed suddenly and violently, far away from home, on a Florida freeway while on our family vacation. From that moment on, our lives changed completely. She would not be here to see her sisters become mothers and enjoy being aunt to her nephews, or watch with pride at her brother's graduation. A piece of the family puzzle would be forever missing. As my son Dan gazed out the plane window on the agonizing flight back to Minnesota, he turned to look at me with deep sorrow in his eyes and said, "Mom, what will we ever do without Nina?" That one sentence said it all. I truthfully answered back, "I have no idea."

And so the nightmare began, for my family, just as it has for all of you. We were harshly and unexpectedly propelled into the same horror as those left behind in Oklahoma City. We were left behind to try to answer the unanswerable and pick up the pieces of our shattered world changed in a fleeting second.

We have lost our children from many different causes, all of them life altering. I am quite confident that you felt as I did...that we would never survive the loss of our child. It was unthinkable, for no human being could ever withstand the force of such unbearable pain. However, if you are reading this right now, that means that, somehow, you have survived. I am quite confident that you sit back and wonder how you ever did. But, like me, you had been directed to The Compassionate Friends, whether through a caring friend who asked that we send you the newsletter or you heard about TCF from a professional. You may have even taken the initiative yourself.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST

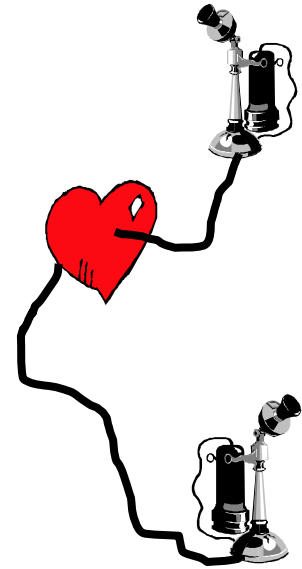


Phone Friends

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**, age 17, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106
- Linda Schafer.....**Kimberly Ann**, age 16, Now Childless,.....(508)393-4448

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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Whether you attend our meetings or read the newsletter as your contact to other bereaved parents, you already took the first giant step. It was a step that said no matter how much easier it would have seemed to refuse to go on, you had made that commitment toward survival, toward learning to cope with the pain and finding ways to live again. It isn't an easy road to travel, as it is fraught with roadblocks along the way.

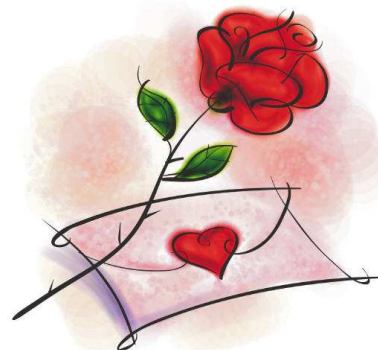
The first time I noticed I must be progressing was when I realized that I had made it through half a day without crying. For those who have not lost a child, this may not seem like much of an accomplishment. But to me, it was one that at one time seemed insurmountable. If you really look closely, I think that you too will find that you have made progress, no matter how tiny the steps may seem. The grieving process is a long one. Try not to be impatient with yourself if you thought you were making progress only to find you have slipped backwards a little. It is a lifelong process, because we have loved our children so deeply, and therefore we need to be patient with ourselves. The ultimate heartbreak does not begin to heal overnight.

It will be seven years April 19th since the Oklahoma City bombing. Sadly, since that time, we have seen additional tragedies that have taken the lives of more children such as TWA Flight 800, the school shootings in Kentucky, Oregon, and Littleton, and the unspeakable horror of September 11th. Each of us cried along with those parents who were just beginning the same painful journey that we know all too well.

I wish I could say that another tragedy such as this would never occur, or that I would never again see the shock and emptiness in another bereaved parent's eyes as they walk into a meeting or their cries of despair on the other end of the phone, but I know that is impossible. Yet, I can say with certainty that those who have thus far survived the unthinkable will be there for the newcomers who walk through those doors. We will cling to each other and reach out with understanding and compassion and hope--through all those tiny steps, whether forward or backward. Somehow, we will survive--together.

With gentle thoughts,

Cathy L. Seehuetter
TCF, St. Paul, MN
In Memory of my daughter, Nina





THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Sharing a Private Grief

The other day someone said to me, "My grief is too private to share." I think we all feel that way sometimes. We are saying two things when we say that. First, "You could not possibly know how I feel." And, second, we are saying, "I hurt so much, I'm not about to tell you of my anguish and leave myself open to your judgment of my feelings." We have to protect ourselves, but, in protecting our privacy, are we forgetting anything? Is it possible that our friends are not judging us and that in not giving voice to our sorrow we are closing the door of the healing love that may be in store for us?

It is possible that our friends don't know what to say to us. People have no trouble wishing us, "Happy Birthday," and, "Get well soon," and, "Have a good day," and meaning it. But it is hard for people to express their sorrow, often because they are afraid of hurting us. That they don't express their grief isolates us. Sometimes we have to encourage others to address the issues closest to our hearts, for our own protection.

***Pat Ryan
TCF, Silverdale, WA***

To the Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into the chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life, perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know – because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends – that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try; you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away.

It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel." We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.

***Karen Schendel
TCF, Houston, TX***

Ways I Know That Life Goes On

I know my life is moving forward because...

Today I moved the waterproof mascara to the back of my makeup drawer.
I didn't make any mistakes at work all day.
I slept all night through.
I remember her smile...and smile.
I drove home and didn't expect to see my little girl greeting me at the door.
I remembered where I left my car keys.
Someone asked me today if we were going to have another child, and I didn't get angry and change the subject.
The first holidays have passed, and I'm still here.
I haven't taken a pill to help me sleep in 12 days.
We've started talking about another baby.
The knife in my stomach eases up sometimes.
Morgan's baby brother is due in July; she's finally going to be a big sister!
It's June 23rd, the day after Morgan's second birthday; I guess I made it through.
Our little boy was born today, and I cried tears of joy not sadness.
He has his sister's little pudgy nose.

***Kimberly L. Rhodus
Bereaved Parent of Morgan Louise Hope
Rhodus
June 22,1996 to February 25,1998***





THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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)

WHAT I NEED

TIME ~ Time alone; and time with others whom I can trust and who will listen when I need to talk. Months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings which go along with loss.

REST ~ I may need extra amounts of things I needed before. Relaxation, exercise, nourishment, diversion, hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a cause to work for, to help others, any of these may give me a lift. Grief is an emotionally exhausting process. I need to replenish myself – to follow what feels healing and what connects me to the people and things I love.

SECURITY ~ I need to reduce, or find help for financial or other stresses in my life. I need to allow myself to be close to ones I can trust. It helps when I allow myself to get back into a routine, and to do things at my own pace.

HOPE ~ I find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered and that time does help, gives me hope that sometime in the future my grief will be less raw and less painful.

CARING ~ I try to allow myself to accept the expressions of caring from others, even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative also suffering from the same loss often brings me a feeling of closeness with that person.

GOALS ~ It often feels that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month, helps me get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a good rule of thumb. At first, my enjoyment of these things just isn't the same.

I know this is normal. As time passes, I will need to work on some longer range goals to give some structure and direction to my life. It is OK to get some guidance or counseling to help with this.

SMALL PLEASURES ~ I no longer underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food - all are small steps toward regaining my pleasure in life itself.

BACK-SLIDING ~ Sometimes after a period of feeling good, I find myself back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair or anger. Intellectually, I know this is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. I'm told, this is because as humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and the meaning of death all at once. So, I give myself permission to let it in a little at a time.

DRUGS? ~ Drugs are not always helpful. Sometimes, even medication intended to help me get through periods of shock may prolong and delay the necessary process of grieving. I cannot prevent or cure grief. The only way OUT is THROUGH.

Ian Taplow

Adapted by Alan Taplow from Judy Tatelbaum's book, "The Courage to Grieve".

Grief is Timeless

Six years. Has it been that long? Hasn't it been longer? Grief has no time line. The days melt into each other. The sun continues to rise and set. The months come and go. The seasons change. The years mount one on top of the other. How can this be? Don't they know that my son died? Six years ago today his day began but his life ended. At 23 years old he had plans, dreams, goals and a future. He possessed a portion of my future that unfortunately went with him. As a parent I had hopes and dreams for him.

My job of parenting was done. It was his time to spread his wings and soar. I had done all I could. We had weathered the colicky nights together. Many miles were put on the car as I, like many young mothers, drove around at 3:00 a.m. to soothe him. It wasn't about me losing sleep. It was about protecting and caring for my child. It was inherent and instinctual. The fevers, the chicken pox, the flu were tended to. Trips to the doctors were countless.

Before I knew it school days were upon us. The first day of Kindergarten was traumatic for me as I couldn't imagine letting go of my child. Who would care for him and love him during those 4 hours at school? Well, as it turned out...ME.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

We walked hand in hand down the hall reading the names on the door to see where he would be each day when he wasn't in my care. I led him into the classroom where we met his young, smiling teacher. He picked out a desk and I helped him unpack his new backpack. We carefully placed his brilliant, unused Crayolas, unopened bottle of glue and blunt scissors in his desk. How could I leave this child of mine with these strangers? They didn't know that he had trouble pronouncing his "R's". Who would cut the crust off his sandwich? They didn't know him. I stayed until it became obvious that these miniature desks and chairs were meant for the 5-year-old kindergarteners and not the parents. Determined that I could do this, I walked out. I turned once to wave and took about a dozen steps back towards my empty, quiet house. But what harm would it do to walk back by and peek in? I did this about half a dozen times. Each time Rick would wave. Finally the teacher came to the door and asked if there was anything she could do for me. After a brief discussion it was decided that she would absolutely need an aide to hand out papers, wipe noses, and just be there for good measure. I became a regular at the school. For each year of his elementary career I was there. Watching this little miracle of mine learn his way in the world filled me with such joy!

I have been forced to find my way after Rick drowned in a tragic accident at the young age of 23. He loved what he did and where he lived. He woke up daily to nature at its finest but raw and untamed. This is what he had dreamed of as a perfect career. I worried but had refrained from interfering as this was what letting go was all about. Wasn't this all going according to plan? Hadn't we covered all the bases? Maybe not. But if I had known how it would play out would I have done things differently? No. His childhood and my years of motherhood were played out exactly as they should have. They were the best years of my life. I have such wonderful memories of my beautiful son. He was the best of me and the best of my husband. We created a miracle and I wouldn't trade that. No, I wouldn't have missed the dance.

I live with great grief but thankfully not guilt because I did the absolute best I could and I am certain that he knew we loved him every day of his life. He had a short life but a good one. He was one of the happiest people I have ever known. He taught me as much as I taught him. He is a blessing to me. No, I wouldn't have missed the dance.

Dana Rogers
Mother of Rick Rogers
TCF, Galveston Co. Chapter



Other Area TCF Chapters

- ♥ MA/CT Border Towns Chapter (Dudley, Webster areas)
- ♥ Chapter Leaders: Paul & Anne Mathieu
- ♥ (508) 248-7144.....ampm1259@charter.net
- ♥ South Shore Chapter (Hingham, Weymouth areas)
- ♥ Chapter Leader: Martha Berman
- ♥ (781) 337-8649.....mmartha1@comcast.net
- ♥ Worcester Chapter
- ♥ Chapter Leader: Phyllis Simas
- ♥ (508) 845-1462...mrspbs1@verizon.net
- ♥ Central Middlesex Chapter (Needham, Concord)
- ♥ Chapter Leader: Carol Gray-Cole
- ♥ (781) 444-1091.....cgc603@aol.com



A Word About Closure

I don't use the word "closure" anymore. For years I thought it was a good way to express what happens to us at various times during our grief journey. I would often tell about the importance of viewing the loved one by saying viewing gives reality and closure.

I live in Oklahoma City. The general feeling here was that the survivors of the bombing would find closure when the trial was over. The ending of the trial was supposed to be some kind of magical day that would bring relief to the pain. The survivors walked out of the courtroom saying, "Don't mention the word closure to us. This does not close anything."

Closure conjures up the idea of healing or moving past. It sounds like some magic moment that happens and the grieving is over. A moment that closes the door to a bad time in our lives and we do not have to think about it anymore. I no longer think there are any magic moments in grief. Grief is a process, a long slow process. There are events that are memorable, but they don't take the pain away. There are times of healing, but the process must still go on.

Closure also sounds like getting well. We do not "get well." A chunk has been bitten out of our hearts and it is not going to grow back. We do not get well. We move toward turning the corner in the way we cope. We live again, but we live again because we learn to cope with the chunk of our hearts that is gone.

We don't have closure. We have times of growing reality. Reality does not come all at once. We must gradually come to grips with our loss. We go through a time of "real but not real."



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



We know it has happened, but we still think it is a dream and we will soon awaken. Reality develops gradually through many experiences.

It grows in those times when we face a little bit more of our loss, and reality becomes more vivid. Viewing a loved one, the funeral, the first visit to the cemetery, cleaning out the closets, cleaning out the room, all of these are steps toward reality and toward coping.

They are not some final step. They are not the closing of a door nor opening of a new door. They are just tiny steps toward deciding to live again and learning to cope.

Doug Manning
Author of
“Please Don’t Take my Grief Away”

Shrines

People have amassed shrines for years. In Prague there is a wall dedicated to John Lennon; flowers and photos adorn the gates of Princess Diana’s home in London; an eternal flame shines for the Unknown Soldier; Shinto shrines celebrate wind, rain, mountains, trees and rivers; we bury our dead and mark the grave with a headstone...we want a marker of those things valuable and important to us. That is how we feel about our dead children; we don’t want our children to be forgotten, we must remember them, others must remember them.

My son’s boots are my shrine to him.

His boots are the only thing left from his accident. They sit there, worn but whole, and I see him, I think of him, I remember him, I love him. His boots do that for me...they create an instant recall of him, his person, his character, his life.

Don’t tell me to put the boots away, don’t tell me that it is unhealthy to hold on to things that recall his memory...it is the purpose of the shrine, and yes, I want to remember my son. I want you to remember my son. He had value. He had purpose. He was good and right...recall that gift every time you see his boots. Revel in his glory, laugh with him, smile with him, embrace his life and take him with you, his memory is valuable, he is valuable. Say his name.

Marian Lambeth
TCF, Tallahassee, FL
In Memory of my son Wyatt Lambeth



I Said I Could Not Do It, But I Did!

Exactly 8:05 a.m., Friday, July 9, 1971, was the last time I looked at my eight-year-old daughter with her eyes open. I walked beside her as they rolled her down the hall to the elevator that would take her down to the operating room for her simple, routine tonsillectomy.

At exactly 1:30 that afternoon, I was told she was dead. I said then I could not live a day without her. I just could not do it.

BUT I DID

During the drive home, I said I would never be able to walk in that house without her.

BUT I DID

As I walked in that empty house, someone quickly ran and shut her door, the door to her room where she kept all the things she loved. The room where she played and slept. I said I could never go in there again. I said I could not do it.

BUT I DID

When they said, “Come, let’s go to the funeral, the Rosary, the Mass,” I said I could not do it.

BUT I DID

For months that followed, I just knew my life would never be the same, and it wasn’t. All the things I said I could not do did get done. All the life I said I could not live did get lived. Differently, but I did live. Now comes today, 16 years later. I have to admit, I had to look it up to be sure. Sixteen years! Palmer Ann would have been 24 years old. I had to stop and think about that, too.

I stood before her portrait today and stared a long, long time, and yes, I remembered the pain with total recall of July 9, 1971. I reached out, touching what’s left of my memory of her and I offered up a prayer of thanksgiving to God, a prayer of gratitude, for giving me such a beautiful eight years with a lovely daughter, and most of all, the opportunity to be able to stand there and realize that I had said I could not do it, but I did.

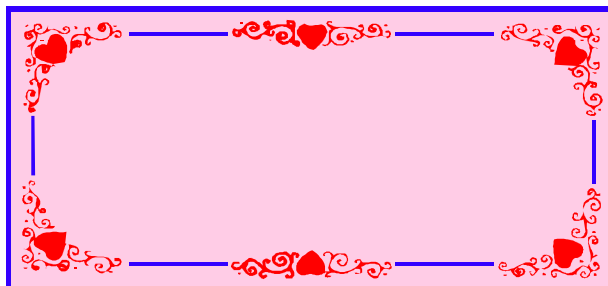
YES I DID

And each month when I come to a Compassionate Friends meeting with you, the new member, I share the pain that I know you are feeling, that hopelessness of the future. I smile to myself, because inside I know a secret, you will be okay. You will touch again, love again, laugh again, and live again. After all, I said I could not do it, but I did and...

YOU WILL, TOO!

Betz Crump
TCF, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

The Compassionate Friends
Metrowest Chapter
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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.”*