



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.

May - June 2011

© 2011 The Compassionate Friends, All rights Reserved Vol. 16 Issue 3

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:

May 17th June 21st :

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:

May 31st June 28th

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. ©2011

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

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. William Bardol Sr. In loving memory of their son **William Bardol Jr.** on his birthday, March 7th. "We, miss you, **Billy.**"

Mrs. Constance McDonough in loving memory of her daughter **Joan M. Peters.**

Mrs. Virginia Lombard in loving memory of her son **Robert L. Lombard Jr.** on his anniversary May 27th.

Mr. & Mrs. Paul Gentilotti in loving memory of their son **Kris Daniel Gentilotti** on his anniversary April 17th.

Mr. & Mrs. George Swymer in loving memory of their two daughters **Karen Swymer-Shanahan and Laura Swymer-Clancy.**

Mr. & Mrs. Burton Stuchins in loving memory of their son **Alan R. Stuchins** on his birthday March 2nd.



He Weeps

He weeps as never before,
 Clinging to things his son adored.
 Can no longer look upon his face of flesh.
 Only pictures fill every empty space.
 No exchange of words by voice.
 Just thoughts, wishes and prayers convey
 As he kneels with tears to touch his son's grave.
 He'll never need his Dad's help again,
 We'll have to trust the Lord will fill in.

Sharon Anderson
TCF, Pleasanton, KS



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 May and June. 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

May

- COREY S. VAUTIER
- BEATRICE ELIZABETH HUDSON
- SHAUN LAMPILA
- JOHANY NADEAU
- JORDANA L. CASSIDY
- TODD M. CARSON
- RUTH A. ROMANS-BELITSOS
- MICHAEL WEINSTOCK
- LISA RANDALL
- ROBERT F. DUMONT JR.
- ROBERT L. LOMBARD Jr.
- DOLORES ROSE BERGERON
- MICHAEL PATRICK MURPHY

June

- DAVID PASQUANTONIO
- NEVAN MAHESH
- MATTHEW PISAPIA
- MICHAEL HEARNS
- RICHARD G. CAPADAIS
- DWAYNE V. BILLINGSLEY JR.
- RUSSELL J. TERES
- LAURIE SLOPEK
- MAJ. ROBERT M. RANERI
- IAN GREENBLATT

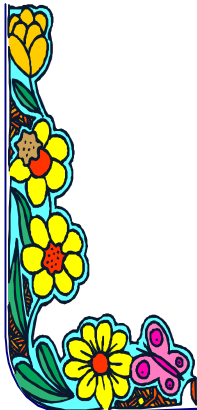
Birthdays

May

- COLIN M. DORAN
- BRUCE F. BENNETT
- MAJ. ROBERT M. RANERI
- WILLIAM C. LEWIS
- SCOTT W. RUTH
- ELIZABETH MARTIN
- BRIAN JAMES MOORE
- BRIANNA KIRBY
- SHAUN LAMPILA
- MICHAEL PATRICK MURPHY
- BRIAN PATRICK MARKEE
- DOUGLAS C. CURTISS
- CINDY CABRAL-BEATSON
- CHARLES PHILLIPS

June

- DONNA ANN WOLFSON
- NEVAN MAHESH
- CHARLES E. PATTON
- SCOTT MOTUZAS
- DAVID PASQUANTONIO
- JUSTIN MAYER
- STEVEN GRILLO



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.

THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED

On February 3, 1959, parents would lose children, siblings would lose brothers, sisters and grandchildren would die. This was the day a plane crash took the lives of singers J.P. Richardson (The Big Bopper), 28, Buddy Holly, 22 and Ritchie Valens, 17. Since all three were so prominent at the time, February 3, 1959, became known as "The Day The Music Died."

At the time of his death Ritchie Valens was a young man with superstar potential who, even though he was still in his first year as a recording artist, had already made a name for himself in the music industry.

Growing up music would become a large part of my twin brother Alan's life. His interest in "The Wizard of Oz" would lead to an admiration of Judy Garland and in time Liza Minelli. He had seen many of Liza's concerts often sending her mail-grams of well wishes much to my mother's disapproval. It was her fear that he would get arrested for harassment. We would travel often to other concerts as well including Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, Diana Ross, Whitney Houston, Kenny G and even Gianni. Alan's interest in music and the arts began in high school with the artistic productions. After graduation from Temple University he would become entrenched in the Philadelphia cultural scene. Much of his free time was spent volunteering for arts, dance and theatre organizations. His name would be listed in the credits of many artistic productions. He, like Ritchie Valens, was just starting to realize his dreams. Then came June 25, 1992. Alan had died of an AIDS-related brain tumor that had started not more than two months earlier. This was-for me-the day the music died. Don McLean immortalized the February 1959 tragedy with his 1972 hit "American Pie", a song that took Alan and me years to understand and memorize.

I would mark my personal tragedy by constantly changing the radio station. So much that I thought I would break the buttons. A break-up song would remind me too much of my loss. While in a friend's car I had him turn off the radio rather than risk crying. Then one day a few years later, upon leaving the cemetery, on the radio I heard Whitney Houston's "The Greatest Love of All". Alan and I had recorded an awful rendition at a Hershey, PA amusement park recording studio. We agreed that no one else would hear the dreadful outcome. I switched stations twice only to hear the song two more times. It was my reflection that Alan was telling me to enjoy the music once again. To take pleasure in life and to do what we enjoyed doing together. I hear Alan's voice saying the words inscribed on Ritchie Valens' grave "Come On, Let's Go."

*Daniel Yoffee
Past TCF Board of Directors
Sibling Representative*

Get Well Soon

I know our loss is very great
but I'm sure many people can relate

I know it's hard to say good-bye
don't hold back your tears! It's ok to cry

Just hold my hand and we will stand up high

We will gather strength from one another
hugging and holding each other

We will find each other and
together we will be once again, a family

*By Alyssa Flora, age 13
In memory of her brother Bryson, age 9*



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Anticipating Mother's Day

Before we lost our children to death, Mother's Day was a happy time. We each reflect back on Mother's Days past.....gifts, cards, special memories and one day set aside to acknowledge the best in our relationship with our treasured children.

With the death of our child, this dynamic was forever transfigured. Now, instead of looking forward to this day, we grasp at anything that will keep our minds away from it. Yet the anxiety still creeps into our minds and hearts; our stomachs churn and tears fill our eyes at the most inopportune moments. The dreadful countdown begins in late April and lasts for nearly three weeks.

This is the fifth Mother's Day I have endured since the death of my son. Each year I have the same, desperate anxiety, yet each year the day is a bit easier to handle. Each year the anticipation is far worse than the day itself, "borrowing trouble" as my dad would say. Since my son is my only child, I do not have the comfort of other children nor do I have the need to put on a happy face. Instead, I am able to choose what I will do without feeling the burden of guilt.

While my first Mother's Day was filled with tears, subsequent Mother's Days have been more subdued.

The choice to embrace or ignore Mother's Day is yours alone. Many bereaved mothers adopt a new perspective which honors their child and still gives normalcy to their family. Mother's Day is bittersweet for us. The pain is part of the love that we will feel for our children for eternity. We wouldn't trade one treasured moment for a cosmic reduction of our pain.

Some of us plan the day carefully. Some of us just "go with the flow." Some of us weep; some of us work. Some of us read, some of us revel in this special moment set aside just for mothers. Each of us makes a choice that is based on our own truth.

The day itself is not nearly as overwhelming as the buildup of anxiety and sadness which precedes it. I have found this to be true of all holidays, birthdays, death anniversaries and special occasions. I am trying to live in the moment. When the moment of Mother's Day happens, I will decide what I should do. I refuse to let others pressure me. I refuse to become maudlin over greeting card commercials and heart-grabbing point-of-purchase marketing efforts. I will not be manipulated by the agenda of others.

But on Mother's Day, as on each day of the year, I will think of my son, remembering the child he was and the man he became. I will honor his life by doing the best I can with what is left of my life. I will remain in the moment and treasure my memories. And for this mother, that is enough.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

***In memory of my son, Todd Mennen 5
TCF, Katy, TX***

A STEPPARENT'S THOUGHTS

I am a bereaved stepparent, *Stepfather* to be exact. Robin Ann Craney, my stepdaughter, was killed at the hands of a drunk driver on June 8, 2001. She was 17 years old.

I have a son named Greg. His Mom remarried so I saw him on weekends, did the trips, and long summer visits as many divorced parents do. I did not get the chance to be a part of his life and see him every day. I got to hear about his activities and accomplishments all after the fact. When you marry someone with kids, you get another chance.

After several months of dating my (now) wife Cindy, I finally met her kids, Chris and Robin. Robin was almost 7 years old at the time. I remember that first meeting clearly because she wasn't feeling so good. She ended up getting sick and had to go home. What a first meeting that was!

After that, I became totally involved in the lives and activities of both of the children. I remember one of those nights well! Cindy and I attended parent-teacher conferences for both kids, a Cub Scout Pack Meeting and a Girl Scout Brownie Meeting...not bad for a single guy, who had been unmarried for 13 years!

Over the years, I got to know Robin's likes, dislikes, and all of her friends, and she had a lot of friends! I attended and participated in all of Robin's activities, supporting her in her many endeavors, including gymnastics (her favorite). I was there when she had migraine headaches, running her to the doctor when her Mother couldn't, encouraging her, supporting her – all the things Dads do for their kids. I want to tell you in no uncertain terms, being a stepparent is so much harder. You get the responsibility and, often times it seems, none of the respect. "Mom said I could so I don't have to listen to you" or "You can't tell me what to do, you are not my dad" and so forth. I tolerated and dealt with her emotional outbursts when she became incensed at anything (sometimes it seemed everything) during the teen years. All *Dads* know how trying those times can be!

Now I am a bereaved stepparent...the one in a kind of "no man's land." I am not biologically connected to Robin; I sometimes feel like an outsider around people who were once a family, Mother, Father, Son, and Daughter. Many of our friends have worried about Cindy and Chris. They often ask me "How is Cindy doing?" or "Is Chris OK?" Although I knew and lived with Robin for 10 years, very few ask, "How are *you* doing?" I am only the stepparent. The idea that this tragedy cannot be as devastating to me as it is to Robin's "real family" is incomprehensible.

(continued on next page)



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

One definition for the word father is "father figure: one often of particular power or influence who serves as an emotional substitute for a father." This is what I was for Robin. She loved to push my buttons, but that was part of our relationship, as frustrating as it could be. Robin is the only daughter I will ever have. I was every bit a father to her. I love her and I miss her.

We, the stepparents of children who have died, grieve for our children too. Only society puts the "Step" in the name. Parent is still the biggest part of who we are. We hurt because they were our children too, often without the support and understanding that is demonstrated towards the biologically connected parents. These beautiful children with whom we developed emotional bonds are now gone out of our lives; and we, too, endure the same feelings of loss and sadness.

*Tony Cinocco
In memory of Robin Ann Craney
TCF, Denver, CO*

WHY AM I SO ANGRY?

Bill Ermatinger has been active in the Compassionate Friends since 1978. A former National Board member, current Regional Coordinator and former Penn-Line, MD, Chapter Leader, Bill has led the workshop on anger and guilt at the National Conference for the past several years. His daughter Kathy died in 1967 as a result of a mislabeled prescription. It was not until 12 years later, however, that he became active in TCF. Melvin Winer, also a member of the Penn-Line Chapter, frequently writes for his local chapter newsletter. Bill and Mel collaborated on the following article, drawing from Bill's presentation at the National Conference and their individual grief experiences. Mel has also included insight from his still fresh grief after the death of his son Andy from cancer.

"I am so consumed with anger, sometimes I think I might explode. I wasn't an angry person before my child died. Where does this anger come from?"

"I know we did everything we could to help our child survive. So did the doctors. But if I really feel that way, why do I feel such a failure and so guilty now?"

These statements are frequently voiced by bereaved parents to each other or at TCF chapter meetings. Most of us, until we experience it ourselves, are not aware of the significant role that anger and guilt play in the grieving process. For bereaved parents, therefore, when they first experience the intensity of these emotions, it not only comes as a shock but frequently symbolizes a failure to handle grief in a socially acceptable manner, after all, anger and guilt are feelings that frequently make those around us uncomfortable, friends and family members are often at a loss as to how to respond to these emotions.

This article is about anger and guilt and how and why these two emotions play such a significant role in our grief experience,

Regardless of the circumstances of our child's death, for most of us, anger and guilt are a part of our grieving. We may not always be able to label these emotions or to acknowledge them, but they are there and we must deal with them. Failure to do so often results in our experiencing worse physical and emotional problems later on.

Whether we acknowledge it or not, most of us are angry about our child's death. Determining who we are angry at and what we are angry about is the first step in dealing with these emotions. In some instances, this anger is directed at a real target or person, for instance, anger directed at a drunk driver who caused a fatal accident, or in Bill's case, a pharmacist who made a mistake in his daughter's prescription. In other instances, anger is displaced; there is no definite target or person, but we want to believe that someone can be held accountable or responsible for our child's death. In Mel's case, there was no drunk driver or pharmacist to blame, so Mel directed his anger towards the doctors who failed to save his son, and beyond that, at God.

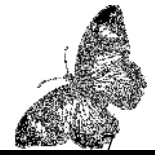
Many of us are uncomfortable with the intensity of the anger and guilt we feel. These emotions are unpleasant to experience; they challenge our ability to keep ourselves in control when our feelings seem out of control. Often we try to talk ourselves out of experiencing these feelings. For instance, we may try to control our temper by pushing the anger inside and repressing it,

Sometimes we try to forget and just let bygones be bygones. Or we try to keep busy all the time and not give ourselves the opportunity to cope with our anger. Showing a happy face to the world is another way of not dealing with our emotions. Finally, there are drugs and alcohol; they will surely mask our feelings.

Not facing our anger merely delays the inevitable. Eventually anger finds a way to surface. Therefore, we have to find ways to cope with these intense feelings. Obviously Bill could not shoot the pharmacist, and Mel could not burn the hospital down because of his rage directed at the medical profession. For some, physical activity is an effective way of coping; jogging, playing sports, and walking provide a sense of physical well being. Not everyone, however, is able to engage in these physical activities. Another way of coping with anger is to talk or write about it. Find someone to talk to. A Compassionate Friends meeting is a safe place to express overwhelming feelings. Another effective way is to write about them. Writing allows us to bring our feelings to the surface in a nonthreatening way. Keep a journal that no one will ever see, and reread it from time to time. You may discover that you are making progress by getting in touch with feelings of several months ago and realizing they are less intense now.



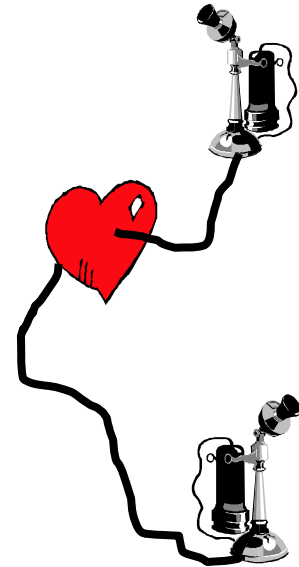
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Phone Friends

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

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



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

(continued from last page)

Write letters to the source of your anger. You don't have to mail them (and you probably shouldn't), but writing allows you to confront your anger directly. Shortly after Andy died, Mel received a letter from the American Cancer Society requesting a donation. The letter was part of a mass mailing and was designed to alert people about the dangers of cancer. Mel felt the letter's wording was insensitive to those who had experienced cancer firsthand. Therefore, he wrote a response to the Society expressing his anger. This was also an effective way for him to express his anger at the disease that took his son's life.

Another way of coping with anger is to understand what is causing it. This understanding does not mean that we accept what happened, but only that we understand and accept our helplessness to have prevented it. Bill finally accepted that the pharmacist made a mistake because he was in a hurry; he knows the pharmacist did not purposely mislabel the drug. Mel is still coping with his anger at the doctor's failure to save his son's life, although he knows that they did their best. Another unsettling aspect of experiencing intense anger is when we realize that it is directed at God. We question why God allows young people to die and forces their parents to experience this agony. Mel's son was a young, healthy college student who died from a disease that seemed to come out of nowhere. Out of his outrage and sense of the injustice, Mel felt compelled to express his anger at God, even though it may have offended some people.

Finally, it is important to understand whom we may really be angry at. As difficult as it may be to admit, many of us are angry at our child who has died as well as at ourselves for failing to prevent his death. We may be angry that the child has left us and we feel abandoned. We are angry at ourselves because we couldn't keep our child safe from harm. We are angry because we are alone, our child is dead, and our lives have changed forever.

Anger directed at our child is a feeling we cannot control. It can surface at any time and does not diminish our love in any way. In fact, it emphasized our love because we are really angry that our children are not here to share their lives with us. For many this anger subsides over time. Some parents have found comfort in writing about how they feel, expressing their anger that their child has left them alone, that they love and miss their child, that their lives can never be the same because their child has died.

Another inevitable and complex emotion that bereaved parents must deal with is guilt. Guilt is a culturally produced emotion, and we impose it upon ourselves because of our expectation that we are competent, responsible, and loving parents, and thus should be able to keep our children safe. Guilt derives from a sense that we did something wrong. We feel we should have been able to do something to save our child's life, and when we couldn't, we failed in our parental role of protector.

Bill felt guilty because he gave Kathy the medicine. He felt that he should have done something sooner and that he didn't recognize the problem in time.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

Mel and his wife question whether Andy received the best treatment and whether they should have taken him for surgery sooner. Compounding this sense of guilt are family and friends who offer suggestions or point out what should have been done. We know as parents we did the very best we could to save our child's life. We should understand that much of the guilt we feel comes from a sense of hopelessness or a feeling of failure or an inability to control events that we feel we should have been able to control. Many parents have also expressed feeling guilty about surviving their child and trying to get on with their lives. Mel finds that occasionally he feels guilty when he does something he enjoys or even experiences a light-hearted moment and laughs. Mel knows Andy wanted his family to recover from his death and not always to be sad. When Mel experiences these feelings, he reminds himself of how Andy felt.



By trying to understand these emotions, we can begin to deal with them. Compounding our feeling that we let our child down is the fact that our child is no longer here to forgive us for what we feel is our failure. Many parents have found practical and active ways to cope with these intense and complex emotions. Some become active in causes or make a donation to honor their child's memory. Some get involved in organizations such as TCF to help others. Some parents become active in anti-drunk-driving programs or anti-handgun programs, or support medical research programs. Most parents, finally, come to understand the anger and guilt they have experienced. They discover these gut-wrenching emotions subside over time. They may also experience a certain sense of satisfaction in knowing that their involvement in TCF or other self-help efforts has not only been a way to cope with their grief, but also a meaningful way to honor their child's memory.

Anger and guilt are a part of grief, and each of us will experience these feelings differently. For some, these feelings will last for years, while for others, anger and guilt will be fleeting as other emotions dominate. As our grief softens over time and we come to understand and accept its complexity, perhaps, in the end, we should not be surprised at the intensity of our feelings. After all, they are only a minute reflection of the intensity of our love.

"Getting on With Life", What Does It Mean?

Of all the statements and spiritual platitudes quoted at me since my son Daniel's death, the phrase that I hear most frequently makes me squirm the most. "You have got to get on with your life." Recently I quit squirming long enough to ponder the meaning behind this phrase that is usually said to the bereaved in the form of a command. Exactly what does this phrase mean? What are people implying when they say it?

I was pregnant when Daniel died, and three months later I gave birth to a baby girl. Wasn't that getting on with life? I nurtured my three children, took them to school, the park and birthday parties. Now wasn't that going on with life? I even cooked dinner at least four times a week!

At first after Daniel's death, I would have liked to literally stop my life and be buried next to my son, but I kept existing. Like a plastic bag tossed about by the wind, I was fluttering, being carried by the events of life. Seasons came and went. In the spring, I planted marigolds and tomato vines. In the autumn, I jumped in fallen leaves with my children. I continued; I am still continuing to live.

Now I may be bereaved, but I am by no means a fool. As I ponder the meaning behind "getting on with life," I know exactly what those who say this have in mind. "Forget your dead child. Quit grieving. You make me uncomfortable!" Getting on with life means don't acknowledge August 25, Daniel's birthday, anymore. Forget how he slid down the snowy bank in the recycle bin, sang in the van and ate Gummy Bears. Forget he had cancer, suffered and died at only age four. Don't see the empty chair at the dinner table, don't cry, just live!

Some who are more "religious" would like to believe that a bereaved parent can claim, "My child is safe and happy in heaven. Therefore, why should I yearn for him?" Perhaps I pose a threat to certain types because I have let it be known I question God. I weep. I have been angry. I miss my Daniel. Maybe old friends feel if they hang around me too long I might convince them that a few of their illusions about life are just that, illusions. As my cries of anguish are heard, there are those who can only think how to make me be quiet. To stop my heartfelt yearnings, they say quite sternly, "You must get on with your life."

I am living. I do move on with life with Daniel in my mind and in my heart, although he is not physically here as I continue to live and to love. To sever his memory totally from my life would cause destruction and damage that would ruin me. To push Daniel out of my life and not be able to freely mention his name or write and speak about who he was on earth would only bring more pain to my life. I'd shrivel up.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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

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

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

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

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

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(Parent / Sibling / Grandparent___) (professional___)

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

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

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

CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

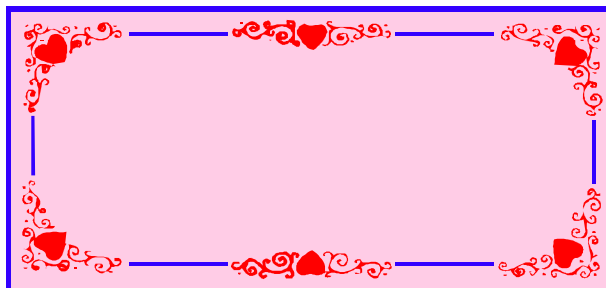
PLEASE ADVISE US OF ADDRESS CHANGES TO INSURE YOUR RECEIVING THE NEWSLETTER, THEY ARE NOT FORWARDED BY THE POST OFFICE.

Fold & Tape _____

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

Fold & Tape _____

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



Compassionate Friends national conferences have always been a great healing experience for bereaved families and TCF's 34th National Conference July 15-17, 2011 in Minneapolis/St. Paul Minnesota will be no exception. With the motto "Shining Stars – Guiding Hope," the conference is now open for early registration.

Our members can register for the conference online or by downloading a conference registration brochure from the national website. If you don't have Internet access, you can also call the National Office Toll Free at 877-969-0010 to be sent the registration brochure.

This conference, which is anticipating 1200 to attend, will feature keynote speakers: David Morrell, bereaved parent and grandparent, author of the poignant *Fireflies*, although perhaps best known for creating Rambo (adopted to the big screen with Sylvester Stallone); Carol Kearns, bereaved parent and psychologist, author of the book *Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare*; Mary Rondeau Westra who recently published her memoir *After the Death of My Son*; and Mitch Carmody bereaved parent and sibling, author of *Letters to my Son* and presenter of the popular TCF workshop "Whispers of Love, Songs from Our Children."

Besides great speakers, the conference will feature more than 100 workshops covering most areas of grief after the death of a child, including workshops for those with no remaining children, and also a complete program for bereaved siblings. Sharing sessions, a Reflection Room, Hospitality Suites, Butterfly Boutique, and a complete bookstore will be available at the conference, as well as an orientation for first-timers. There will be Friday afternoon and Saturday evening banquets culminating with a remembrance candle lighting at the close of the Saturday banquet. Special entertainment provided free Friday evening is the comedy "How to talk Minnesotan The Musical," the longest running stage play in the state.

Sunday, the twelfth annual Compassionate Friends two-mile Walk to Remember® begins at 8 a.m. Sunday and up to 1200 are expected to walk, carrying as many as 15,000 names of children being remembered (names can be submitted online to be carried in the Walk).

Early conference registration is \$85 for adults ages 18 and up, and \$35 for siblings ages 9-17 and full-time college students. Early registration ends June 10 at which point there is an increase in registration costs. Walk to Remember early registration is \$20.

Reservations are also being accepted for the host hotel, the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Minneapolis South. Online reservation is available, as well as by contacting the hotel directly. Special conference rates are available until June 1, subject to availability.

For full information, visit TCF's National Website at www.compassionatefriends.org and go to "TCF 2011 National Conference – Minneapolis" under News & Events