



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.

May-June 2019



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Vol. 24 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 21st & June 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 the Town Hall on the right 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.

May 28th & June 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. ©2018

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 508/366-2085
Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
Wendy Bruno 508/429-7998

The chapter address is:

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

Regional Coordinator
Dennis Gravelle
638 Pleasant St.
Leominster, MA 01453-6222
Phone (978) 537-2736
dgtcf@aol.com

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

Mrs. Phyllis Holihan in loving memory of her son **Richard Edward Jones** on his anniversary April 2nd.

Mrs. Maria Peniche in loving memory of her son **Manual (Manny) Peniche** "always loved, never forgotten."

Roberta Arena in loving memory of her son **Michael J. Smith** on his anniversary June 11th.

Irene Richards in loving memory of her daughter **Deanna Kelsey Richards** "Every day is one day closer to you."

Mr. Donald DiLorenzo in loving memory of his son **Christopher D. DiLorenzo**.

Mr. & Mrs. Carl Catarina in loving memory of their daughter **Olivia Marie Catarina**. "Always loved and never forgotten".

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Contois in loving memory of their son **Shawn P. Contois** on his anniversary March 10th.

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

Betty Myers in loving memory of her son who is always missed. **William Bruce Tagoe** on his anniversary July 6th.

Save a tree

To all that receive this newsletter via snail mail. If you would like to get your newsletter a week earlier thru e-mail please send your name and e-mail address to: headly@comcast.net. This would save a tree and reduce postal cost.





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, 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

JACOB TYLER JOHNSON
BETSY CHICK-GRANT
COREY S. VAUTIER
ADAM SCOTT COLE
LEA M. SIEBERT
JENNIFER T. GARDNER
LISA RANDALL

June

CHRISTOPHER MARC DULLEA
JONATHAN (JAKE) STEELE MORAN
MICHAEL JOSEPH SMITH
ALEX DAVID STOLICNY
RUSSELL J. TERES
IAN GREENBLATT

Birthdays

May

MATTHEW C. ZONGHETTI
MONICA MICHELLE CURRAN
KATHLEEN ANN STETSON
MICHAEL VINCENT TYNAN
ALEX DAVID STOLICNY

June

AUSTIN MILES CASWELL
SCOTT MOTUZAS
JUSTIN MAYER
STEVEN GRILLO
NICHOLAS L. BOUDREAU
MOLLY ELIZABETH ANDERSON
PAUL FERRIER Jr.



My apologies to Mr. & Mrs. Carl Catarina for
omitting their daughter's name,
Olivia Marie Catarina on her
Birthday in the January / February issue



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.

A Sibling Dies

by © L. Nicole Dean

For Don

It is January first. My heart twinkles once again because the holidays are over. How can a season of light bring so much dark? Thirty years ago, on Christmas morning, my brother died in our home by suicide in a very violent manner. He was 23; my other brother was 24; and I was 19 years old. Our family of five was irretrievably shattered. Don, my brother who died, was so much a part of us. He brought so much joy in his living and then so much pain in his dying. Who am I to grieve him still? The memories well up every December like a deep dark night unbidden. Anger, sadness, rejection, guilt become my Christmas ornaments. "Give me back my family, give me back my Christmas, you creep. Give me back your laughter," I want to shout at him. Who am I to miss him? Who am I to rage when he was the one in the grips of a pain so untenable that he could not speak of it, but only act upon it? Who am I to cry? Well, I'm entitled. I'm a survivor after all. One doesn't get there on a water slide, if you know what I mean. When Christmas rolls around, I do my dance with grief once again. Some years, it's a waltz; other years a tango. It doesn't seem to matter if it's two, twenty or thirty years since my brother died, I get out my dancing shoes. I don't go looking for pain like some wacky masochist. It finds me. Some years I announce - around November 25th, "I'm over this." I act accordingly.

I shop for Christmas Cards and don't go near my dancing shoes. It doesn't matter. They find me. It's not like I didn't have therapy. I've had dance therapy, art therapy, regular therapy, travel therapy, friendship therapy, biofeedback/hypnosis therapy, creampuff therapy, swimming therapy, forgiveness therapy, spiritual community therapy, law school therapy . . . Law School therapy? The fun had to end somewhere.

Seriously, losing a sibling is heart wrenching and no laughing matter. It took me ten or fifteen years to truly laugh again, let alone make light of myself. That just happened this year. No doubt, because I am writing of it, rather than speaking of it, which I rarely do. It feels safer to write.

Other than to therapists, I've spoken of his death to three people in thirty years. Who could understand, I felt, and why diminish his being or expose myself? I adored my brother Don - he made me laugh like a monkey. I adore both my brothers; as a child they were my world. Not very healthy perhaps, but it worked for me. Home life was chaotic and quite frightening because my father was more than a little nuts. My mother's energy was spent containing his insanity and keeping our bodies and souls together. She was part steel, part angora. We never spoke of Don after his death. The community ostracized us; my father took a trip down devil's lane, and my mother mourned my brother until the day she died. I'm sad to say that we never had Don's picture in our home again, because the pain was too severe. It seems we could not get past it. We went to our separate corners and quietly mourned. It was different years ago; so much remained hidden. Self-healing groups were non-existent, shrinks were stigmas, and the Catholic Church unforgiving. I couldn't save him. I was the last person he talked with on Christmas Eve. For months, I barely spoke and relived the shock daily. I ate a lot. Death by mashed potatoes. That was sure to bring him back. I retreated into a private world for several years where if I wasn't dead, I'd sure like to be. This is grief. And it does soften over time.

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It softens like water softens rock, in its flowing, gentle, rushing, mysterious way. It softens like a sweet whisper of a memory that lulls you to sleep, knowing that love knits the bones of despair together, tighter, stronger, more curious, more delicious than ever before. Knowing that the fires of your being burn the cross of despair. Knowing that the chamber of the heart is strong beyond measure and can take it and transform the pain into joy.

Joy for having known this person, for a day or ten years or two months. Joy for having the courage to be. For knowing yourself in many garments. For taking a risk to love anyone again: a neighbor, a friend, a cat, a lover, a stranger, yourself. The broken heart opens and mends itself. In the middle of the night, when no one is there but many are listening. Joy seeps into me. After all, I'm entitled. I'm a survivor.

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The Roller Coaster

As a child I enjoyed the thrill of the roller coaster: gliding up the giant track, reaching the top with a momentary anticipation and the thrill of the quick dropping roll to the bottom of the track. The deep turns, first to the right and then to the left were designed to heighten the anticipation of the next climb and drop. In my childhood mind, these curves, climbs and drops were an isolated experience, temporary and fun. The ride would end.

A few months after my son's death, I dreamed of the roller coaster. But this time it wasn't fun. It was a nightmare of fear, anxiety and pain; I was so paralyzed that I couldn't breathe. That dream was the simple symbolism of life since my son died.

Now I ride a different sort of roller coaster. The climb to the top is a slow, difficult rise to normalcy. The rapid descent to the bottom is yet another terrible setback. I hang onto the bar of sanity on the curves, first one way, then another. I really want to stop this ride, but it is forever. This ride won't end.

Today I recalled that roller coaster dream, in all its vivid detail, and I compare it to the roller coaster that is my life now. Are the highs lower and the lows higher? Are the curves softening? Yes, I believe they are. It's been two years and two months since Todd died. I still weep. Tiny tears still fall unexpectedly. I still have anxiety. I still feel as if the earth has dropped from under me. I still miss talking with my son. I miss seeing him. I ache for that special hug that only my child can give. Yes, I miss my only child very much. My heart has been shattered, my definition of myself has been altered and my loneliness is incomprehensible. But something has changed on the roller coaster of this life.

That something is, of course, me. I work through my grief in many, many ways. I have consciously shifted the paradigms of my life. I have learned to evaluate people from a different perspective. I have become so sensitive to the pain of other parents that I feel it as if it were my own. I have stopped anticipating how I will handle stressful events, anniversaries, birthdays, holidays. I have learned to live without being a part of my grandchildren's lives. I have learned to keep negative energy and negative people at a far distance. I have learned that a routine provides necessary structure. I have learned to live in the moment, to take joy in simple things, to talk openly about my child's life and to acknowledge the things I cannot change.

As time moves forward, I will continue to accept what is given and give what I can. I know the roller coaster will level out eventually. For as long as I live, I will keep my child with me, in my heart. That's all I can do as I ride this changing roller coaster that is now my life.

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

Five things a Firefighter/Medic Wants you to Know

Moms and Dads, can I talk to you for a minute? I was too busy during the emergency, and afterward, well, you both had more important matters to attend to. It doesn't matter whether you live in the Pacific Northwest or Florida, Maine or Kansas City. If your child was taken from you suddenly, there was probably someone like me in attendance who fights fire and delivers medical aid for a living. Chances are they've struggled with the same feelings I struggle with. Here are five things I'd like to tell you. It's my hope that something I say will make your struggle through grief a little easier to manage.

#1 - Your Child Was Not "Just Another Patient"

Perhaps you assume that because I've seen thousands of patients in my career, I wouldn't remember your son or daughter. Not true! Only the loss of a fellow firefighter affects us more profoundly than a child's death. When I lose a child in the line of duty, I don't leave the experience at the station. Your child's face comes home with me. I see him when I'm fishing, working in my garage, or just drifting off to sleep. I can still recall vividly the hour I spent with a little girl from a car accident almost fourteen years ago. She has a permanent place in my memory, just like your little one.

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(It's the inability to come to terms with these memories that drives many a firefighter from his or her career. Those of us who are old-timers in emergency medicine have learned to deal with the tragic cruelties of life we must face. Some exercise vigorously. Others, like me, write about our experiences. Sadly, there are some who are unable to cope with the pain and turn to drugs or alcohol.)

#2 - I Did More Than Provide Medical Care

When I am fighting to save a child, I talk to them. It doesn't make any difference whether they're responding or not. I reassure and attempt to comfort them. If they're awake and very young, I give them a stuffed animal to hold. I do one other thing. I tell them that their mom and dad love them very much. I do this because several years ago, a mother told me "I would've given anything to tell my son I loved him just one last time." Since then, I try to tell every child that you, their parents, love them very much.

#3 - I Struggle With Feelings of Failure and Inadequacy

When a firefighter/paramedic loses a child, he or she may struggle with personal feelings of failure. So often we repeatedly ask ourselves "what if" questions. "What if I'd been at a closer station? What if I'd arrived five minutes sooner? What if I'd tried another course of treatment?" It's these feelings of inadequacy that often keep a medic from approaching the parents of his patient. If a firefighter seems to be avoiding eye contact, he likely is not only struggling with his emotions, but possibly struggling with the feeling that he has failed. It's a common occurrence, despite the fact the medic may have performed flawlessly.

#4 - I Grieve With You

Macho as we'd like to portray ourselves, we are by nature a group of men and women sincerely touched by the sorrow and suffering of others. That's one of the reasons we are drawn to the fire service in the first place. We have a deep, burning drive to make a difference, to alter tragedy in the making if we possibly can. Maybe it's because we feel we have an image to uphold. Whatever the reason, we firefighters tend to be good at holding our grief in check until we are alone. We present a tough-as-steel facade and inevitably do our crying in the station's hose tower or the compressor room where no one can hear us.

#5 - I'm Available to Answer Questions

So often there are procedures or treatments you may not understand. They are almost always done for a very good reason, and with your child's best interest in mind. Almost without exception, the firefighters and medics who fought to save your child would be happy to answer any questions you may have. We also need to be informed when we unknowingly make comments that hurt or offend.

I won't make the mistake of telling you I know how you feel. I can try to imagine your pain, but I'm sure I could never know how it really feels unless I'd lost one of my children. I can tell you that I, and all my fellow fighters, do care. It is the chance that we will save the next victim of tragedy that keeps us doing what we're doing in the face of so much sorrow. We wish for you strength and peace on your journey.



Aaron Espy, firefighter/paramedic

Aaron Espy is a Firefighter/Paramedic in Kitsap County, Washington. A professional firefighter since 1980 he is also a freelance writer and poet.

Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national publication of The Compassionate Friends.

PLEASE BE GENTLE

Please be gentle with me for I am grieving. The sea I swim is a lonely one, and the shore seems miles away. Waves of despair numb my soul as I struggle through each day.

My heart is heavy with sorrow, I want to shout and scream and repeatedly ask, "Why?" At times, my grief overwhelms me, and I weep bitterly, so great is my loss.

Please don't turn away or tell me to move on with my life. I must embrace my pain before I can begin to heal. Companion me through my tears and sit with me in loving silence. Honor where I am in my journey, not where you think I should be.

Listen patiently to my story. I may need to tell it over and over again. It's how I begin to grasp the enormity of my loss. Nurture me through the weeks and months ahead. Forgive me when I seem distant and inconsolable. A small flame still burns within my heart, and shared memories may trigger both laughter and tears. I need your support and understanding. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. I must find my own path.

Please, will you walk beside me?

Jill Englar
TCF, Westminster, MD

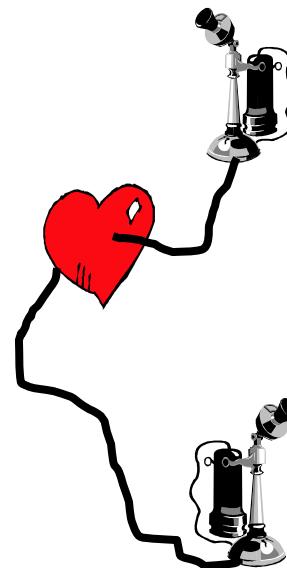
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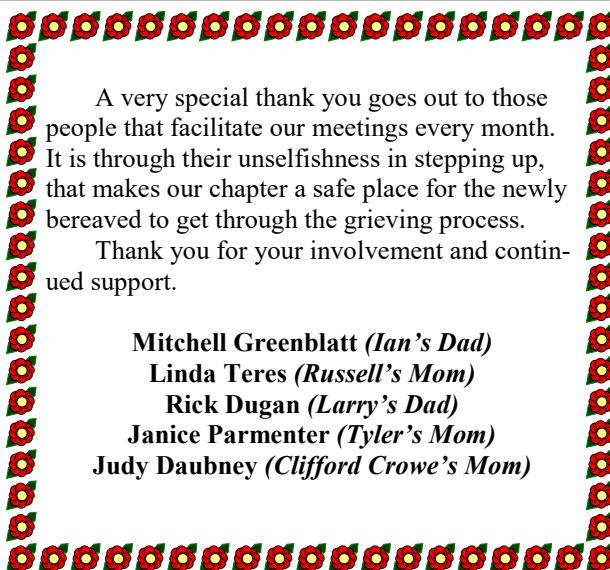
Phone Friends

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)366-2085
Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)881-2111
Sandra Richiazz.....**Bryan**, age 17, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106
Sarah Commerford....**Timothy**, age 21, Homicide.....(508)429-9230



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.



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)

Mind Games

Mind Games, it can happen anywhere, anytime.

Driving along the highway, I think: just suppose I turn my head quickly, will you suddenly be sitting next to me? Will you be humming along to a song that was a particular favorite of yours? I swear I can hear you. I want so much to hear you singing loudly and a bit off-key again.

Or perhaps I'm in the supermarket and I see someone with long, blond hair, is it you? My heart thumps. I want so badly for it to be you. People glance at me strangely and I realize I'm standing in the middle of the aisle weeping.

Even the special foods you loved can reduce me to tears. I'm tempted to buy your favorites and prepare them for when you come home for supper.

At night when I climb into bed, I scrunch over toward the middle, this gives you room to sit next to me the way you would after coming home from a late date.



My senses are alive with you. I can smell your special perfume and feel your long, slender fingers with the pearl ring Daddy gave you for graduation. I can hear your laughter. I will you to stay with me until I fall asleep.

Then there are the times when I consciously call out your name in the silence of the house. My mind knows there will be no response, but in my heart I hear you answer me and for that split moment you are there at the top of the stairs as surely as I am at the bottom. Barbara...Barbara...Barbara...Your name is a litany.

I suppose that behavior could be considered quite strange. What does one make of it? Weeping in supermarkets, calling to one who is not there. Oh, but in that fraction of a second when one feels one's loved one close, that feeling, although bittersweet, soothes and comforts a splintered heart.

Mind games...it can happen anywhere, anytime.

Bunny Placco
TCF, Greater Providence, RI

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



How Can Your Heart Forget?

I have read many accounts of the devastating losses which ensue when you become a bereaved parent. Just about every single one of these accounts mentions that people you thought would be there for you after the death of your child may not be.

All the bereaved parents I know personally can immediately identify the friend or family member who abandoned them in their grief. Clearly, it is not a unique experience.

In some cases, the abandonment may occur virtually as soon as the funeral is over, if they even show up for the funeral. In other situations, it may be after the community mourning rituals are concluded.

In my experience, it has been a more drip by drip kind of water torture thing. More of a waning, a fading. No big bang. An ending that is harder to figure out.

But at some point, you realize that the phone doesn't ring, the emails have ceased (or have become so banal that you cannot even imagine yourself replying to such drivel), and the personal contact has evaporated.

In your bereavement, if you find it unbearable to participate in weddings, baby showers, cocktail parties, holiday celebrations, etc., it becomes obvious, over time, that quieter, less boisterous alternatives, like coffee or lunch dates or walks with the dogs or movie matinees, have not been offered. You may still receive the invitations to the traditional social settings, those with a fairly broad guest list - but not personal, intimate substitutions.

So the contact fades away. You find yourself trying to figure out when you were last together. Was it last year? Two years ago? Just when did I previously see this person I once considered a close friend? Was it lunch? Coffee? What was it? When was it?



The relationship is clearly over. You know it must be over. But *how* could it be over? Weren't you friends for forty years? Didn't you share vacations and many rites of passage? Didn't you consult with each other about child rearing and diets and which books to read? Didn't you visit in every home each of you ever occupied? Didn't you go to their parents' funerals? Don't you *still* use their recipes?

But now, nothing.

So, you are not stupid. You know it has happened to you too. You didn't think it would, but it has. You have become alienated from people who mattered deeply to you.

You realize that you can't check the mailbox yet again or wait for the phone to ring or wonder when you'll be invited to one of those substitute things you might be able to manage.

You know that wishing for it makes no sense. Your brain, with the cognitive abilities that remain, has figured it out: it is over. They are gone.

But, how do you make your heart forget? How do you make your heart forget all that history, those tender images of so much shared? How do you make your heart forget?

You need to make your heart forget. You know you need to. But how?

And how do *their* hearts forget?

**Peggi Johnson
TCF, Piedmont Chapter, VA**

The Simple Do's and Don'ts of Compassion

I received an email one day that caused me to think about how challenged we are when it comes to communicating condolences to a grieving parent, grandparent or sibling. It doesn't take much to figure out that many of us (having lost a child or not) are often challenged by how to really comfort or assist a grieving person. I have lost my son yet I often feel I can't find the right thing to say or do to comfort another grieving parent. The email read that people shouldn't say, 'How are you?' but rather to ask about a specific area: 'Is your health better?' or 'Are you getting out more?' something particular rather than an open-ended question." I couldn't agree more...I'm of the philosophy, if they asked, they must want to know. The advice continued to say, don't just offer empty words of encouragement, find out what is really going on in another person's life, and keep track of how he or she is progressing through the struggle; That is some serious advice!

After our son died and during his struggle to live, our friends and family showered us with love and support. There are things though that I will never forget, our friends and Wyatt's friends driving to Shands Hospital to sit with us, paying for hotel rooms, bringing us food, truly supporting us daily. I will never forget, after Wyatt died, a friend came over and said not one word, he walked in the door and held me in a tight hug and wept with me, he hurt for me, for us, for Wyatt. The mother of one of Wyatt's friends, whom I'd never met, stopped by a few weeks after Wyatt's death just to give me a hug, to say she was thinking about us and that she was sorry for all that was lost. Dear friends of ours came to our home for six weeks every night and sat in the dark, loneliness of our childless home. They held us up when we could not stand alone. Another friend calls every week still, to chat, catch up, check on me to tell me she cares. The things I remember are not so complicated, but what I know is they were actions more than words.

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I often feel very alone in this journey, but I will never forget that their actions held me up when all I wanted was close the door to life. There are some things about the death of a child that even compassion will not heal. The absence will always remain, but there are things that may bring a healing balm, if only briefly. So, with this I began to think, what do our Compassionate Friends think, what did they experience that was supportive and helpful, what was painful or even hurtful. What can we share with the people of our community on how to better communicate, better share their heartfelt sympathies, and better help us as we traverse this life without our child or our children. So we asked, and here are some suggestions and the rationale of course:

Don't tell me to call you if I need something, because I will not.

Make specific offers to help: i.e. I am going to the store, what can I pick up for you? Can I take the kids to the park on Saturday afternoon? I will be bringing dinner on Monday for the family does everyone like Spaghetti? May I take Tommy to his skating lessons on Wednesday? Will you be home on Sunday afternoon? I'd like to come over and mow the lawn for you. It's a nice day outside, let's go for a walk.

Don't think time is a miracle.

Stay in touch with the grieving parents just to let them know you haven't forgotten their loss and that you have them in your prayers. No one wants to feel their tragedy can be so easily "put to the side" and forgotten when it is (was) such a dominating presence in their own lives.

Don't let the child's death be the only topic of discussion.

It's ok and helpful to be uplifting and to include other topics that are happy, and still make it known that you care.

Don't talk "around the hurt" as if it never happened.

This loss is a part of the parent's life, it's ok to discuss it in a plain and thoughtful way.

Don't discuss the details of a child's death in front of the parent as if they are not there.

The parent is fully aware of their child's death, include them in the conversation, parents can often offer insight.

Don't use clichés that minimize the nature of a child's death.

Avoid comments such as, "he shot himself in the head with that dumb answer" when in the presence of a parent who lost a child to a gunshot wound.

Don't say, "You can try again for another baby" or "you're young, why don't you have another baby."

Parents are grieving the death of a unique, wonderful and loved child, it is *that* child they miss and long for. Grieve the loss of their child with them and leave the future to them.

Don't say "at least" about anything, ever, as in:

At least they didn't suffer (maybe, but my child is dead), At least you have your memories (yes, but I want my child), At least you have other children (yes, but I want the child I lost), It was just her time to go or "It was meant to be" (While some believe there is a purpose to every action or maybe a universal plan others do not.)

What seemed to be most compelling of the responses received was the, to do list, it's short, but concise:

Do act normal, don't try so hard *not* to talk about the child (as if he or she had never existed).

In describing a visit from a person who brought food and visited quite a while, one Compassionate Friend recalled that they never once mentioned her child. She expressed how this made her feel by saying her daughter, "was and is a real person, just because she changed addresses doesn't mean we can't talk about her."

Do share your favorite memory.

Parents often enjoy hearing people share their favorite memory. When those memories are memorialized in writing and the person shares what they loved or appreciated about the child, things that made them laugh or smile, it can be read again later and cherished as memories shared by others.

Do show you care and spend time in fellowship.

Do offer to clean their house, mow their lawn, take the kids somewhere, babysit or bring dinner. Many of the things people do on autopilot are unimportant or incomprehensible to a parent who is trying to plan a funeral or is in the depths of grieving.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Do Give Hugs, Real hugs.

They are powerful. Here is what one mom said about “real hugs” that people gave her, “it was like I could draw strength from them and I would feel a moment or two of peacefulness or connection that they might not understand my pain but they understood I needed them.”

The Compassionate Fiends is a self-help support organization for families who are grieving the death of a child of any age, from any cause. There are no dues or fees and all bereaved family members are welcome.

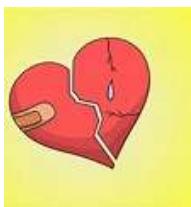
About the author: Marian Lambeth is the co-leader of the Tallahassee, Florida Chapter of the Compassionate Friends. On January 1, 2010, Marian and Jim Lambeth's only child, Wyatt, died following an industrial accident. Since Wyatt's death, Marian has found comfort and support through the friendships and bonds of her compassionate friends. She is most grateful for their heartfelt contributions to this article.

Broken Heart Syndrome

One afternoon, I was channel surfing looking for something to watch when I came across the Oprah Winfrey Channel. She was interviewing a woman named Madonna Badger. On Christmas Day, 2011, Madonna’s 7 year old twins, a boy and a girl, her 9 year old daughter and her parents all died in a horrific house fire. She spoke of the unrelenting grief and sorrow she has suffered in the years since. I was riveted to the television screen as she recanted her story. As she talked, she coined a phrase that I had never heard of before to describe her pain, “Broken Heart Syndrome.” It is a temporary condition that is brought on by extreme stressful situations, such as the death of someone deeply loved.

I thought, finally there is a label for the intense pain and suffering that those who grieve feel! Broken Heart Syndrome is an identifiable condition brought on by stressful situations, such as the death of a loved one. Broken Heart Syndrome is also called *Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy*.

Broken Heart Syndrome manifests as a temporary disruption of the heart’s normal pumping function or with even more forceful contractions, while the remainder of the heart functions normally. Symptoms can include chest pain and shortness of breath. It effects more women than men. It is attributed to a reaction to a surge 10 of stress hormones.



After my daughter died, I suffered with intense bouts of pain on the outer left muscular wall of my upper torso. An EKG revealed no abnormalities. Seven years later, I still never know when this pain might reoccur. I have however connected my episodes with certain stressors, such as; my child’s birth and death dates, holidays and special occasions.

Although doctors are just now learning about this condition, the good news is that broken heart syndrome is treatable and the discomfort should abate with time. If you think you might be suffering from broken heart syndrome, you should discuss it with your physician. Let us all take care of our own hearts this Valentine’s Day.

*Janet Reyes
TCF, Alamo Area Chapter, TX*

A Time for Every Purpose under Heaven

Mother’s Day has its traditions, but sometimes, for reasons we can’t even imagine, those traditions may be altered. I’d like to share, if I may, one mother’s story: He came home



from school as usual and sat down at the counter. “We had the neatest discussion in school today,” he said.

“The last Confederate War veteran died in 1959. It’s so awesome to think he fought a war with a rifle packed with gunpowder and lived to see atomic weapons. He fought a war with cannons and lived to see the ICBM. It would be so awesome to be born in a special time like that. No matter how long I lived I would never see changes like that.”

“No,” said his mother, “but there are always changes we now can’t imagine. And you’re only talking about technological changes. Think of all the other kinds of changes there are.”

“I know, but historically, that was still an extra special time,” he went on.

“But there are different ways of being born in special times,” his mother said. “Remember the time I took you and your brothers and your great grandpa to Fernbank to see Haley’s Comet? It was the first time for you and the second time for your great grandpa? You were only three, but I explained to all of you that only people born in special periods or ‘pockets of time’ were able to see it twice. Neither Dad and I nor your grandparents or children could do that. And someday, you and both of your brothers could see it a second time along with your great grandchildren and then someday, they with theirs. In terms of time, I think that’s pretty special. Special time doesn’t have to be in one fell swoop where you witness consecutive events all in a row.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Special time can come in those little “pockets” that allow you to see events in a circular way, weaving your past in with your future along with your own family. Considering when that Confederate War veteran was born, you know he wasn’t able to do that.”

He looked at his mother and nodded, his big brown eyes intense with thought as though he liked what she’d said. You could almost see him envisioning the return of the comet, anticipating that special time.

A few hours later he headed out to his car. The car he’d spent two years working for at his after school job at Dunkin’ Donuts. “I’m going out with Matt and Doug. I might spend the night at Matt’s. I’ll call and let you know.” Those were the last words his mother heard as he walked out the door.

A few minutes after midnight his parents looked at the clock. He should have called by now. He was always good about that. He must be having fun and lost track of time. Surely he’ll call soon. About 12:20 the doorbell rang. Four policemen asked to come in.

“Do you have a son who drives a Nissan 240X?” began the questioning. “Yes,” his parents replied.

After a few more questions concerning his physical appearance, one of the policemen knelt before the boy’s mother, took her hand and said, “I’m the police chaplain. Your son was in a car accident and did not survive.”

“No matter how long I lived I would never see changes like that.”

“No, but there are always changes we now can’t imagine.”

That’s just one mother’s story. Such things don’t happen every day. But changes do happen all the time over which we have no control. My Mother’s Day wish for everybody is that just in case some change you now can’t imagine leaves your mother to live out her life with one final memory of you, that it will be a time to fondly remember.

**Susan Larson
TCF, Atlanta, GA**

For David

It's impossible to explain the pain you have when you lose someone so dear! Your life stops! And when it starts again, it is with a huge gap. Your life as you knew it will never be the same, for you and anyone that knows you. There are many firsts, the birthdays, the holidays; how to answer the questions of strangers, how many children do you have?

As I was thinking about the last 7 1/2 years without you in our lives, I discover that there is a void in my memory. I remember that the days and months ran together.

I remember wondering if my life will ever again be like those who move through their days as if nothing devastating has ever happened to them. I notice that I have lost the ability to focus, even today my attention span isn't as good as it used to be. I still feel the pain and the void when I'm counting seating for a family get together; I look forward to my dreams in hopes that you will be there!

The only thing that comes to my mind when trying to compare this pain to a life experience is when you skid and fall, and keep sliding. You badly scrape and cut a knee or an elbow or both. The pain is so unbearable. It's hard to move without it hurting. Your body goes into shock. When it finally starts scabbing over and healing, the slightest movement can open the wound back up; it oozes and it seeps, and you ask if this misery will ever stop! And then the healing process starts all over again.

Finally, the scab is gone, but a scar remains. At first, the scar is red and very tender until it gets used to being there. Then it becomes taught and tight! Then, one day when someone points out the scar you say, yes, it's a reminder of a very painful accident. I see it every day, but now I am able to bend it without pain.

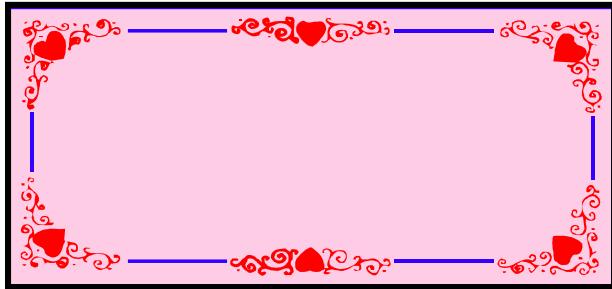
Some days when the weather changes it becomes harder to bend. It's gets stiff and hurts; it's a fresh reminder of the day I hurt it. But most days I live with it just as it is; it is now a part of me. I remember how painful it was; I remember the scab. But now, I see the scar, and sometimes it even makes me smile.

David, I know you are in a beautiful place with many that have gone before and after you. I see you helping others, laughing, loving, and saving a place for us. I am thankful for your life and the many blessings you still give us. I am thankful to God that you are no longer suffering and in pain, and most days, I feel joy in my heart because I know that you are happy! Your father and I love you now and forever!

**Jill Eagleston
TCF, Southlake, TX
In Memory of our son, David Eagleston**



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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."