



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.

November - December 2022



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Vol. 27 Issue 6

YOU ARE INVITED

The Compassionate Friends - Metrowest Chapter meets twice a month. Evenings on the third Tuesday from 7:00 to 8:30 P.M. in the conference room at The Milford Senior Center located at 60 North Bow St. Milford.

November 15th. & December (See chapter Notes)

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 weekend or earlier if you plan to attend.**

Directions....On Route 16, 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.

November 29th. & December 27th.

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. ©2020

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 Advisor

*Rick Dugan 508/877-1363

Steering Committee *

Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
Linda Teres 508/366-2085
Mitchell Greenblatt 857/225-7135
Wendy Bruno 508/429-7998
Carol Cotter 774/219-7774

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
dennisg@tcf.email.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, National Office
48660 Pontiac Trail #930808
Wixom MI 48393-7736
Toll-Free (877) 969-0010

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.

Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Fox in loving memory of their son **Maxwell A. Lavenskie**. "Forever loved & always missed".

Mrs. Maria Peniche in loving memory of her son **Manuel (Manny) Peniche** "Always loved, forever missed".

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Thompson in loving memory of their son **Brett E. Thompson**. "Forever missed & always loved".

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Lowell in loving memory of their son and brother **Christopher Scott Lowell**. "Every day is One day closer to you".

Mrs. Nancy Carpenter in loving memory of her son **James S. Carpenter VI**.

Mrs. Jennifer Bingham in loving memory of her son **Owen Patrick Bingham**.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Eldridge in loving memory of their son **Kevin R. Edridge**, "Loved forever and never forgotten".

Mrs. Joan Hennigan in loving memory of her son **Dennis M. Hennigan** on his anniversary November 23rd. "Always in my heart, forever missed and my undying love. Till we meet again".

Chapter Notes

Our chapter again is planning a Candle Light Ceremony and a social event on Sunday December 11th, in place of our regular meeting on the third Tuesday of the month. There will be a cut-off date of November 15th. We will not accept add-on's after the November 15th. date. All checks are to be made out to "TCF Metrowest". The Restaurant has set a limit of Twenty Five people for a sit down dinner. Option #2 is a buffet dinner. Please, send check along with form sent as the attachment to the e-mail notice sent out in early October. If (possible) no cash. Send check and attachment to Ed Motuzas, 26 Simmons Dr. Milford Ma. 01757-1265. The cost will be \$35.00 per person. If you have any questions, please call Ed Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 or e-mail me at headly@comcast.net.



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, November and December. 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.

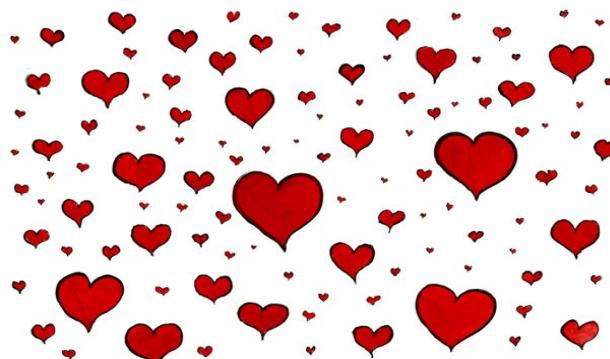
Anniversaries

November

AKIF S. QUTAB
ALAN R. STUCHINS
SEAN P. COTTER
TIMOTHY JOHN KOVALCHIK
CHRISTOPHER JAMES LOUGHREN
CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI
DENNIS HENNIGAN
MANUEL (MANNY) PENICHE

December

WILLIAM COCCI
LARRY DUGAN
STEVEN GRILLO
AARON STEVEN GRAY
JAMES S. CARPENTER VI
PATRICK WALKER EVENS
JOSHUA T. KINGSLEY
CHRISTOPHER ROBERT MURPHY
ELISSA DAON
CASEY REUTER DURKIN
RYAN MICHAEL GAUDET
SEAN M. THERRIEN
MICHAEL D. DOW
JED PATRICK HICKSON



Birthdays

November

JOHN GARVEY
DIXON BERGMAN
KEVIN R. ELDREDGE
TIMOTHY JOSEPH COTE
WILLIAM COCCI
JACOB NORMAN LANGE
NICHOLAS J. FREEL
SEAN MICHAEL REARDON
ISAAC QUINN BASTIAN

December

MICHAEL P. GEEHAN
CHRISTOPHER ROBERT MURPHY
MARC R. PEARLMAN
BRETT COHEN
JAMES S. CARPENTER VI
RYAN ROBERT DeFOREST

Softly...may peace replace heartache and cherished memories remain with you always on your child's birthday.



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 BEACH

I walked along the beach today
With thoughts of how we used to play,
That long road trip in Dad's green Ford
Mom kept trying to keep us from feeling
bored.

But the end result was always the best
When at Grandpa's house we came to rest.

Remember how we used to say...

"Can we please go to the beach today?"

Our best times together we found down there, Just two
little kids without a care. Flying colorful kites so high,
and building sand castles in the sky. And those secret
messages we would send, Hey Chris... who thought
those days would ever end?

I walked along the beach today
With thoughts of how we used to play,
I wrote you a message in the sand
With hopes you could read it from a far
away land.

"I miss you brother, did you have to go?" It did say,
but the ocean's waves slowly washed it away.

"He's gone now" - said a voice from above. But Chris
- You will live forever through my memories and love.

*Dedicated to my little brother
Christopher Joseph Prescott
Darlene Prescott, TCF, Valley Forge, PA*

REFLECTIONS

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations: that life really isn't always fair or predictable; that sometimes even my best still isn't good enough; and that from the day of her death, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness.

Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts. As a result of my sister's death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor and to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss.

I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the rough times. But most of all I have been given the gift of time - time to heal and time to replace those painful memories of death with priceless memories of my sister's life.

*Cathy Schanberger
TCF sibling*

REMEMBERING YOU

I cried a tear the day you died, and then many more.
And now I think of the times we had and smile. And
soon I'll think of the times we had and start to laugh a
little too.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from page 4)

Later I'll think of the times we had and remember you as my great, funny, crazy older brother that you are. Yet I still have to keep on going with the little smile I have and think of you.

But I always think that someday soon I'll laugh a little too.

**Brandy Mallett
TCF, Gardner, MA**

We Are You

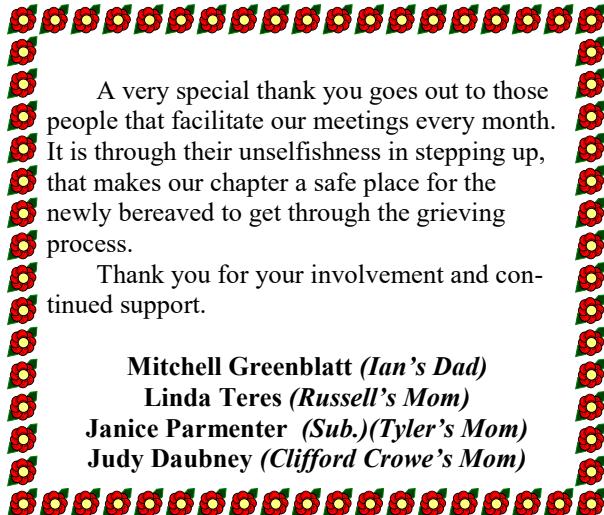
We are your organization. We are you. No better, no smarter, not more experienced, just fellow bereaved parents. Among our group are homemakers, bankers, teachers, office workers, physicians, policemen, accountants, in short the whole human spectrum. Just people, just grieving parents who are trying to help themselves and others. No pat answers, no glib replies, no religion, no colors, no judgments. We are you. You may not know us, but you know us all so well. Say nothing or say a lot. No barriers, no requirements, only the promise that whether you listen or lead, you will find genuine understanding and shared experiences. No need to spill your guts or bare your soul; just come to a meeting and realize that you are truly not alone in your grief and loneliness, in your anger and "craziness" pain. We are you.

**Linsey Maddox
TCF, Bryan, TX**

GRIEF AS PART OF HEALING

The person who resists grieving may successfully ward off intense pain. Still, a nagging ache will likely take its place. Denied feelings of grief will be expressed in hidden ways. A low-grade crisis can then endure for many years: moodiness, irritability, restlessness, nervousness, abuse of alcohol and other drugs, conflicts in relations with others, physical ailments, accident proneness, reckless spending, or general dissatisfaction and disappointment with life. Grief doesn't go away just because it is ignored. **Healing involves being willing to hurt more now in order to hurt much less later.**

**Ann Kaiser Stearns
“Living Through Personal Crisis”**



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)
Janice Parmenter (Sub.) (Tyler's Mom)
Judy Daubney (Clifford Crowe's Mom)**

TO BEREAVED GRANDPARENTS

I am powerless. I am helpless. I am frustrated. I sit here and cry with her. She cries for her daughter and I cry for mine. I cannot help her. I can't reach inside and take her broken heart. I must watch her suffer day after day and see her desolation.



I listen to her tell me over and over how she misses Emily, how she wants her back. I can't bring Emily back for her. I can't buy her an even better Emily than she had, like I bought her an even better toy when she was a child. I can't kiss the hurt and make it go away. I can't even kiss a small part of it away. There's no band-aid large enough to cover her bleeding heart.

I used to listen to her talk about a boyfriend and tell her it would be okay, and know in my heart that in two weeks she wouldn't even think of him. Can I tell her it will be okay in years when I know it will never be okay, that she will carry this pain of "what might have been" in her deepest heart for the rest of her life?

I see this young woman, my child, who was once carefree and fun-loving and bubbling with life, slumped in a chair with eyes full of agony. Where is my power now? Where is my mother's bag of tricks that will make it all better? Why can't I join her in the aloneness of her grief? As tight as my arms wrap around her, I can't reach that aloneness.

Where are the magic words that will give her comfort? What chapter in Dr. Spock tells me how to do this? He has told me everything else I needed to know. Where are the answers? I should have them. I'm the mother.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from page 5)

I know, someday she'll find happiness again, that her life will have meaning again. I can hold out hope for her someday, but what about now? This minute? This hour? This day?

I can give her my love and my prayers and my care and my concern. I could give her my life. But even that won't help.

**By Margaret Gerner, TCF
From the Lake Livingston newsletter**

The SCAR

To lose a loved one is to be wounded deep within the soul,

The wound will heal, but the scar will remain.
The scar is not upon the body but upon the heart.
To touch the scar is to recall the image of the loved one.

To touch the scar is to experience the love that still remains in him and is eternally sheltered in you.

**Jim Rosemary
Huntington, W. Va. Chapter, TCF**

THE MAGIC OF YOU

"What can I do to get better?" This is the question most often asked by newly bereaved parents, as if the right actions could work a miracle. They are seeking easy rules, methods, or steps of healing.

But there are none. There are no special words, no miraculous systems, no magic wand to take the pain away. There is only time, hard work, and compassionate support. Grief is a process which must be allowed to function thoroughly in order for healing to take place. There are no shortcuts. Attempts to ease the process such as through alcohol or drugs, often end either in disaster or in complicating the process.

There is no magic. There is only you, the bereaved person, who must decide yourself to work within the process to resolve your grief.

No one else can do it for you, but others can help by supporting your grief rather than searching for magic words to wish it away. Others can help within the Compassionate Friends by providing models of healed parents who are willing to listen and to share.

You can help yourself by being patient with grief instead of searching for easy methods. You can help yourself by learning about the grief process. You can help yourself by sharing your story with others and by listening to their stories.

You can help yourself by reaching out to others, for helping others is the source of your own healing.

Magic pills, wands, or incantations? There are none. Look to yourself. The Compassionate Friends can help, but you alone determine the progress of your grief. The magic of healing is within yourself.

**Marcia Alig
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter**

A NOTE ABOUT WINTER

Winter will shortly be upon us, bringing with it many fluctuating emotions. Winter is a time of bareness and coldness that often leaves us feeling the same way. It seems as if the joy and warmth of spring and summer is fading away and the dreariness of winter is strong upon us. But winter doesn't have to be cold and barren if we don't want it to. We can overcome the dread of winter in many ways. We can still have the joy and warmth of spring and summer though the world around us is bare and cold.

We can warm our hearts and have the joy we deserve by reflecting on the precious and loving moments with our children. Though we may feel sadness, those memories can fill us with an unending flood of warmth and love. They can warm us and bring us joy even on the bitterest cold days and nights.

Talking with and reaching out to other bereaved parents can also bring us relief and joy. We can share memories of our children, our feelings, and find release from our dreary moments. We don't have to be cold and barren if we don't want to, the choice is ours.

Just as winter fades away and God once again whispers the promise of a rose, so will our pain and despair lessen and pass, and we will once again have contentment, peace, and joy in our lives. Sadness may drift in once in a while, but we can overcome it and let the sunshine of our being and joy come abounding through. So during this winter, let us hold on to the promise of that springtime rose. If we reflect upon the beautiful times we had with our children and reach out to others, we will have that promise of that rose and along with it, a lessening sense of pain and sorrow.

**Deborah Wells
TCF, Baltimore Chapter**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST

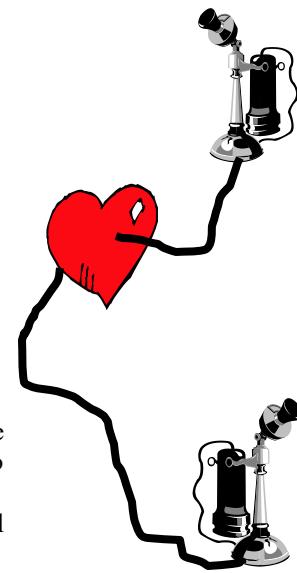


Phone Friends

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)366-2085
Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,.....(508)653-0541

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.



After All These Years For That I Am Thankful

It doesn't seem to get any better, but it doesn't get any worse either. **For that, I am thankful.**

There are no more pictures to be taken, but there are memories to be cherished. **For that, I am thankful.** There is a missing chair at the table, but the circle of family gathers close. **For that, I am thankful.**

The turkey is smaller, but there is still stuffing. **For that, I am thankful.**

The days are shorter, but the nights are softer. **For that, I am thankful.**

The pain is still there, but it lasts only moments. **For that, I am thankful.**

The calendar still turns, the holidays still appear and they still cost too much. And I am still here. **For that, I am thankful.**

The room is still empty, the soul still aches, but the heart remembers. **For that, I am thankful.**

The guests still come, the dishes pile up, but the dishwasher works. **For that, I am thankful.**

The name is still missing, the words still unspoken, but the silence is shared. **For that, I am thankful.**

The snow still falls, the sled still waits, and the spirit still wants to. **For that, I am thankful.**

The stillness remains, but the sadness is smaller. **For that, I am thankful.**

The moment is gone, but the love is forever.

For THAT, I am blessed.

For THAT, I am grateful...

Love was once (and still is) a part of my being... for THAT I am living. I am living for THAT **I am thankful.**

GRATITUDE: The Key to Happiness

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude. I did not come upon this insight, I learned it from Dennis Prager, a wonderful and gifted man who is both author and talk show host for KABC radio in Los Angeles. I give him all the credit. But I have thought a lot about this idea after my son, Mark, died five years ago tomorrow.

At first, I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during a Compassionate Friends meeting.

These were people who seemed to have somehow re-entered the land of the living. How dare they greet each other with hugs? How dare they laugh? How dare they appear normal when their children have died? But over the last five years I have learned three valuable lessons:

Life goes on and we must too.

Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that it is 11:00 in the morning and we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt. But then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget. But we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life. We choose to enjoy friends again. We choose to go out to dinner again. We choose to laugh again. I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us. It does not bring our child back It only makes us miserable without end.

by Darcie Sims

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from page 7)

Become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost.

I see people in our chapter meetings every month who have gone through “every parent’s nightmare” and want no part of life again. But I ask that these compassionate friends also think about the ways they have been blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize: Health, other children, a loving family, a career they enjoy, financial security, life in a free country, a faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse who they love. Nobody has it all. But compared to most of the world, we have a lot. The life we now lead will be better than it would have been. That does not make our child’s death a good thing. It just means that our child’s life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be better because our child lived, and we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don’t “sweat the small stuff.” We know what matters because we know what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt, because we, too, have been there. We “know how they feel.”

When Words Become Gifts

On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Erik and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said, "I saw your name tag—are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation, "Yes, I am!" With those three, almost magical, words this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was saying David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom but I better not say anything, she said something. Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a classmate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared.

Acknowledging that I'm still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am, and always will be, Erik and David's mom.

The fourth gift was permission to share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven't been any truly easy, carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most "doable" way for me to go on.

Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me. As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing more than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters most to us.

The real treasure comes when others introduce our children's names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the meaningful legacy that our sons and daughters have left to us and to the world.

*By Nita Aasen
TCF, St. Peter, MI*

Other Area TCF Chapters

- Heart MA/CT Border Towns Chapter (Dudley, Webster areas)
Heart Chapter Co- Leaders: Paul & Anne Mathieu
(508) 248-7144.....ampm1259@charter.net
 - Heart Worcester Chapter
Heart Chapter Co-Leaders: Kathy Snay (508) 347-0981
Heart kathysnay@gmail.com
Heart Susan Powerspower7881@msn.com
 - Heart Central Middlesex Chapter (Needham, Concord)
Heart Chapter Leader: Carol Gray-Cole
(781) 444-1091.....cgc603@aol.com
 - Heart North Central Mass.Chapter (Westminster,
Heart Gardner, Fitchburg areas)
Heart Chapter phone line: (978) 786-5014
Heart Chapter Co-Leaders: Denise Whitney...
Heart dwhitney@acton.ma.gov
Heart Chapter Co-Leader: Carolann Picnacik...
Heart carolanppicnacik@gmail.com

CHANUKAH

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



A FATHER RETURNS TO WORK

After Kathy died, I, of course, went back to work. Some of my co-workers made the stop at my desk to express their sympathy. I know I turned them off, as my pain and my denial were so great. I could not talk about what had happened and how I felt. I thanked them. Although nobody ever talked to me about it, that was okay as my pain was such, I thought, I could not bear to talk. I threw myself into my work and on occasion was confused because I could not make the kind of decisions I had been making for years. I never made the connection that this inability to concentrate was part of my grief and was normal.



Lunch was the worst time. My habit was to eat with my associates, but often in the middle of the meal I would just have to get up and walk away. Although nobody ever said anything to me about this odd behavior, I do thank them at least for their tolerance. Slowly I readjusted (I thought) and in time (a long time) I was able to perform well again.

But I never really grieved until I found THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS and it was here that people helped me to talk. It was almost twelve years before I found TCF as there was no such organization in 1967. My friends, let TCF help you...don't wait twelve years to talk!

**Bill Errnatinger
TCF, Baltimore, MD**

Progress Check

It's usually around this time of year, when summer is nearly over and fall is around the corner, that I like to take a close look at the progress of my recovery.

Maybe it's the seemingly endless "back-to-school" sales that suddenly end, or the return of the yellow school busses with children carrying lunch boxes that causes me to feel a need to take a look. This is one of those times of year that some of us find difficult to deal with, and checking where we stand during rough times is always a good idea, especially if it helps us find areas in which we can improve. As a possible bonus we may even find areas of real progress that may boost our awareness of the positive steps we have made. It usually is difficult to notice the steps we make, particularly early in recovery, unless we make a concerted effort to notice them.

So the first step should be to look closely at your beliefs concerning what you will find. If you believe your recovery is going poorly, it probably is, or it's likely not going as well as it could.

We tend to see what we believe we will see and we tend to miss what we believe is not there. Dr. Wayne Dyer's book, *You'll See it When You Believe it*, covers this topic very well and I recommend it along with any of his other books as excellent recovery reading material. The quality of our recoveries, as well as our lives, is determined by what we believe.

If you develop an attitude of positive expectation about your recovery you will begin to see your progress more easily. What you

need to do is adopt a belief that you *can* find something positive about your recovery no matter how small the positive may be if you look closely enough. The trick is to convince yourself that noticing the smallest of positives is

worth the trouble. It is worth the trouble, your life depends on it. Noticing the smallest of positives can enable you to make a necessary positive mental attitude shift that is required for good recovery.

Having a positive mental attitude is not the same thing as positive thinking. It doesn't mean that you pretend that everything is okay when it isn't. Positive mental attitude means that no matter how bad things are we can at least learn something of value from even the most horrible things that happen to us.

I'll use an extreme example to make my point. Early in recovery the very best positive we may be able to come up with is, "well, at least I believe there is hope that someday I will feel better than I do now." Admittedly, when our child has died, even this small positive may be difficult to believe, but let's say you do believe it, or you're willing to believe that you will *someday* believe it.

As weak as this positive may seem to you it still is strong enough to begin the process of causing a positive mental attitude shift. The shift will be small and probably not noticeable to you, but it will nevertheless occur. With this shift you will be more likely to notice other positives, for example, you are reading this newsletter and are therefore obviously taking a positive step to see if this article has some value to you in your recovery.

Even if it didn't, the fact that you are reading it alone is a positive recovery step if you choose to see it as such. We often choose to see our small steps as insignificant.

This judgment alone is enough to slow our recoveries to a crawl. Each step no matter how small is required to complete the journey. The sooner you accept even the smallest recovery step and celebrate each and every one as it occurs, the sooner you will benefit to the greatest extent each step offers.

**HEALING IS AN ART.
IT TAKES TIME.
IT TAKES PRACTICE.
IT TAKES LOVE.**

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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So how do you do this? There are several ways. My favorite is to ask three questions. Early tomorrow morning, as soon after awaking as you remember, ask yourself the question, "What can I do today to improve the quality of my life?" It doesn't matter what you come up with, but be sure you keep it simple - make sure it's something you can easily do. Tomorrow evening ask yourself, "How did I do?" Write your answer in a notebook or journal. Then answer the question, "No matter how small, what positive recovery steps have I taken today?" Do this every day for at least ten days. Each day come up with different answers. At the end of ten days you will know if it is beneficial to your recovery to continue. If so, by all means do so. If not, you may find it helpful to do a progress check on your recovery by asking yourself these questions for a few days every month or so. Give it a try, you'll only know if it's a positive for you if you do.

*By Pat Akery
TCF, Medford, OR*

DEATH OF A CHILD: WHAT'S IT LIKE AT 10 YEARS?

January 11, 2002 ... Ten years? Sometimes it seems like yesterday. Sometimes it seems like it never happened. Most of the time it is somewhere in between.

By Richard Edler

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Rich Edler, 58, past president of TCF's national board, author of *Into the Valley and Out Again* and treasured friend to many in TCF's extended family, died suddenly and unexpectedly on February 16, 2002. He had completed this article for *We Need Not Walk Alone*, TCF's national magazine, just over a month earlier.*

It has been 10 years today since Mark died. When I wrote *Into the Valley and Out Again*, I chronicled first one day, then one week, then the first month and year. Now it is 10. Here are my thoughts:

The hurt never goes away. We never forget. We never get over it. We don't want to. We hurt so much because we loved so much. But the focus on death and the event fades and the warmth of good memories replaces it.

Oh, we can still go back there in an instant. Back to the call, the moment, the good-bye. Back to the night that will forever separate our life between "before" and "after." But we now go back less and less. Time helps a lot.

I have fewer friends. Better friends, mind you, but fewer. I am out of the circle now. My Rolodex is cold. My networking, which used to be razor sharp, has atrophied.

My power lunches have become tuna fish sandwiches. But the amazing thing is how much I don't care. I miss some special people so I go out of my way to stay in touch. And that is enough.

I have new and different priorities. I move through life a little slower, a little more tuned to life around me, and to life gone too soon. I brake for sunsets. I hurt for the people who share this walk with me. Since Mark died, hundreds and then thousands of children have died. I feel for them and for their families in a way I could never have understood before. I value people more than things, moments more than milestones, and I no longer equate what I do with who I am. I am not having the life I expected to have. I recall an old saying, "Man plans ... God laughs." Dennis Prager, an author and Los Angeles radio talk-show host, said that unhappiness equals image minus reality. What he meant is that you are unhappy when your image of where you should be is dramatically different from where you really are.

When a child dies, the reality of the life we are going to have is altered forever. I am no longer going to be Mark's dad. I am no longer going to join him at UCLA football games. I am no longer going to be a grandfather to the children he will never have. If that gap between image and reality is a recipe for unhappiness, well, then the reverse is also true. If you "solve" the equation of happiness, happiness equals image matched closely with reality. So I have had to change my image to match the new reality.

I like my new life better. This makes me feel guilty because I would trade my life in an instant if I could have Mark back. But I really do like the person I have become since Mark died. I don't even know that person from 10 years ago. Back then my life purpose was to run a large advertising agency. Today, it is to give back in gratitude for the joy of the life I have been given. I want to make Mark proud. I want to be a blessing to others. And I want to enjoy the journey, too. I still have a grief that goes unspoken. Who will listen at 10 years? Yes, I still miss Mark. But I miss him quietly and silently. I grieve for his loss; for the loss of the person he would have become (he would be 28 now, but instead is forever 18); and also for the loss of the life I would be having if he were here.

I have an overwhelming sense of gratitude. I have been blessed beyond measure. I have a surviving son who has given me more joy than I could imagine any parent having ... and now a beautiful daughter-in-law, and a granddaughter. Gratitude is one of the most helpful and healing things you can do on your grief journey. And with gratitude comes thanks. So in gratitude, Kitty and I made a list this week of the people who were there for us when we needed them most.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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These are the people who dropped everything in their lives on a moment's phone call and rushed to our side. These are the people with whom we are joined forever, and who, no matter how far they drift, or what unimportant spats we might have, will always have a special place in our heart. You make your own list. Then find those people wherever they are, and say thank you.

I choose joy over sadness. If there is one overriding thought in these years, including 10 TCF conferences in a row, it is simply this: Grief is inevitable; misery is optional. It does no good to sit in a hole. It does no good for the loss of one life to lead to the loss of two.

Grief and Marriage

When our son was killed, I remember thinking through the haze of pain that this most horrifying of life experiences would somehow bring us closer. Sharing the loss of a child created and loved by both of us for twenty years would surely deepen the bond between us. I was in for a surprise.

We clung almost blindly to each other until the shock began to give way to ugly reality. As we each moved to our individual pattern of grieving, differences began to emerge. I felt like a time bomb about to explode. I needed desperately to talk about our son. My husband refused to verbalize his feelings and became angry at my overtures. I stopped trying to communicate.

This was beyond my comprehension. Where was my helpmate, my best friend? I felt rejected, unloved and terribly alone. Anger overwhelmed me as I bitterly realized that I wasn't going to be able to share my grieving with the person who meant the most to me in the world. I knew that many marriages fail after the death of a child. Dear God, how could we possibly survive an additional tragedy?

We attended a few Compassionate Friends meetings, and then I continued alone. The gentle acceptance of others who had lost children permitted me to talk or cry without guilt. Our problem was definitely not unique; many other parents expressed similar frustrations. So many couples experience marital difficulties after the death of a child that it is now considered the norm. We weren't going crazy; and just because our grieving styles were different didn't mean that our whole marriage would fall apart. My anger began to dissipate as I slowly faced the fact that I had been placing unrealistic expectations on my husband. Hurting at least as much as I, he simply could not meet my needs for support.

Much later, the knowledge that support had been there all along from my friends, if I had only asked for it, saddened me. I had to admit that I simply had been too proud to reveal myself as a suffering person in need of help.

I will be forever grateful to Compassionate Friends for being there with loving, open arms. We began to have some honest discussions, agreeing that we needed each other's nurturing in order to survive and find meaning in life. We learned to respect each other's feelings. We tried to please each other in little ways: a hug, a special meal, anything that expressed caring. Patience with each other smoothed over many rough moments. Time spent alone together was very healing. It took a conscious decision from both of us to try harder. Some days, we didn't have any energy left when grief was particularly painful. It wasn't always easy as we couldn't talk about our son for a long time. As I look back, I see that ignorance of grief and the impact it can have on a marriage was the basis for our problems. But in retrospect, how could we possibly have been prepared for the onslaught of paralyzing emotions that overwhelmed us? Anguish of this intensity can reveal a spouse you've never seen before. Deeply wounded, both of you will be inevitably changed from the experience of losing a child. Back then, understanding these simple facts would have immeasurably helped us.

*Pat Retzloff
TCF, Oshkosh, WI*

WHITE DOVE

I disguised myself as a Dove, so dazzling white it blinds the eyes of understanding – also, dazzles the devil so he cannot see or harm the dove on its journey of Faith.

The white dove, being securely anchored on the great wings of the strong, confident eagle, soars up through the wilderness of the jungle's turbulent winds and stormy clouds to the safety of a cleft in the rocks.

There the dove settled himself in the darkness of its chambers, silently waiting, listening, making love sounds, cooing and yearning for the beloved with a heart filled with love.

The wise eagle knew the little white dove was special so he waited patiently outside the cleft for the little white dove to continue his journey.

In the darkness of the night the little white dove covered with the garment of Faith, perched him-self on the wings of the eagle and soared up to the Garden of Peace and Tranquility to be happy forever.

*In memory of our son Peter Fortier
TCF Chapter, So. Maine*





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tion helps to make this event truly a heartwarming and newsworthy event. vice you provide. National publicity is planned and your chapter's participation you to make the community aware of your existence and the valuable service all of our children who are no longer with us. This is a great outreach tool united as an organization in supporting this special day of remembrance for wide Candle Lighting Sunday, December 11th, to show the world that we are member chapters to plan and hold a memorial program during the Worldwide Lighting Sunday in memory of all children who have died.

The Compassionate Friends organization invites and encourages all CCF members--a 24-hour wave of light in memory of all children around the globe--on the second Sunday in December at 7 p.m. for one hour local time every year.

The Worldwide Candle Lighting®

