



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.

January - February 2011

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YOU ARE INVITED

The Compassionate Friends - Metrowest Chapter meets twice a month. Evenings on the third Tuesday from 7:30 to 9:30 pm in the library of St. Mary's Parish Center, Route 16, Washington St., Holliston. The parish center is located between the church and the rectory. Our next two meetings will be on: **January 18th February 15th**

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:
January 25th February 22nd

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

WHO ARE WE?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings.

Our primary purpose is to assist the bereaved in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings for those who wish to understand. Our objective is to help members of the community, including family, friends, employers, co-workers, and professionals to be supportive.

Meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. No dues or fees are required to belong to the Metrowest Chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

Weather Cancellation

In the event of inclement weather on meeting days or nights, if in doubt call:

**Ed or Joan Motuzas at
(508) 473-4239**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

* Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239
 * Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Secretary

* Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

* Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

Webmaster

* Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

Librarian

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Newsletter

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Senior Advisors

* Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

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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
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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

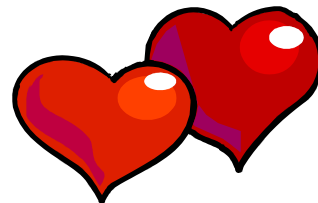
TRIBUTES, GIFTS AND DONATIONS

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. Beverly Marks in loving memory of her son **Shawn P. Marks** on his anniversary February 15th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert King in loving memory of their daughter **Caren King-Firth** on her anniversary January 26th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Earl Pearlman in loving memory of their son **Marc R. Pearlman** on his birthday December 14th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Burton J. Stuchins in loving memory of their son **Alan R. Stuchins**.
 Mrs. Joan Hennigan in loving memory of her beloved son **Dennis M. Hennigan**, who is always missed and forever loved.
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Shea in loving memory of their son **Christopher Shea** on his anniversary March 31st.
 Mrs. Dorothy Pisapia in loving memory of her son **Matthew Pisapia**.
 Mr. & Mrs. John McVey in loving memory of their son **2nd Lt. Ian Thomas McVey** on his birthday November 26th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Bergeron in loving memory of their daughter **Dolores R. Bergeron**.
 Mr. Harvey Humphrey in loving memory of his son **William Benjamin Humphrey**.
 Mr. & Mrs. Rick Dugan in loving memory of their son **Larry Dugan** on his anniversary December 5th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Leo A. Pelletier in loving memory of their son **David Pelletier**.



Better Days Are Coming





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 January and February. 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
January*

- ROY RANDALL
- MICHAEL CHINAPPI
- BRIAN JAMES MOORE
- CHRISTOPHER MESZAROS
- CHARLES PHILLIPS
- CAREN L. FIRTH
- CHARLES E. PATTON

*Birthdays
January*

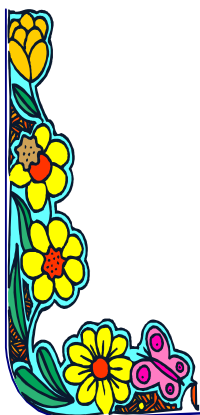
- KELSEY MULKERRINS
- LAURA SWYMER-SHANAHAN
- BRYAN PLUNKETT
- RUTH A. ROMANS-BELITSOS
- KRISTIN E. GRACI
- JASON BOGHOSIAN

February

- BRIAN PATRICK MARKEE
- COLIN M. DORAN
- ELIZABETH CASEY
- SHAWN P. MARKS
- JEFFREY CHERRINGTON
- KEVIN WASHBURN
- KAITLYN KENNEDY
- MICHAEL D. DUPONT

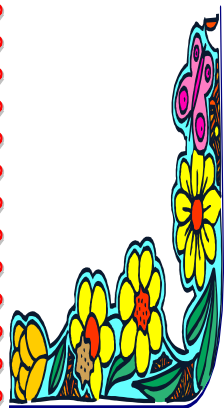
February

- CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI
- ASHLEY MORGAN MAHONEY
- BEATRICE ELIZABETH HUDSON
- MICHAEL J. PAULHUS



CHAPTER TID-BITS

Al Kennedy has graciously volunteered to make up picture buttons of our loved ones. The buttons are 2 1/4 inch diameter. If you have a photo of your child, you can e-mail it as an attachment to aksound@comcast.net or bring it to the next meeting. Al has a tool that will cut out the 2 1/4 inch diameter picture to fit it in the button. The circle is an approx. diameter of the button. A special thanks to *Al Kennedy*.





THE SIBLING CORNER



This page is dedicated to siblings together adjusting to grief thru encouragement & sharing

"Siblings Walking Together." We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends. We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters. Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us. Sometimes we will need the support of our friends. At other times we need our families to be there. Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be. We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak. Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life. Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

Awake

(Birds, crickets. Wind in the trees. I finally hear these things)

For two years I was asleep. Asleep, like the long shadows outside my cloudy house, where the sounds of laughter fell silent against the drenched walls. My senses were frozen: no taste, smell, feeling, or noise could penetrate the safe, bulletproof wall I built around myself. My life had become a perpetual winter. Numbness was all I felt. Smells, like flowers blooming in the spring, freshly-cut grass in the summer, apple pie cooking in the oven in the fall, and the smell of the newly decorated Christmas tree in the winter, were lost. I would stare out the bleeding windows, into the grey sunlight. Every day was the same as the day before. I was on a train speeding blankly through a storm; everything outside the window was a dark blur. I kept my head low, and dove forward into daily life, never really understanding what was going on around me. The storm lasted two years, and finally the sun breached the clouds. I no longer saw the flashing lights. I no longer heard the piercing sound of the heart monitor as her heart fell silent. I no longer felt the coldness of her skin and the rough hospital sheet. Instead, I began to see her smile. I saw the way her eyes would glow and widen when she smiled or laughed. I saw the look she made every time I hugged her spontaneously; rolling her eyes in a look of annoyance, but a smile appearing, erasing any of her unconvincing pretenses. I saw my sister. For the first time, I heard myself laugh. The curtains opened and allowed light and color to fill my life.

It took two years to realize that after every freeze there is a thaw, after every winter there is a spring, after every ending there is a beginning. I found the glue to piece my life back together. I realized that even though the puzzle that connected my sister and me together was broken, it could still work.

A piece would always be missing, but the other half was capable of functioning and having fun. The grey shadows disappeared, and sunlight took its place. The occasional shadow would emerge, but I found ways to fight the shadows off and stay happy by keeping the warmth and light of the sun visible and strong. The numbness, like Novocain, wore off and I was able to realize that even though this huge part of my life was missing, everything would be ok, and things would get better. I found hope and strength.

My sister's death has been painful, but also encouraging. I have transformed into a person I am proud of. I have found who I am, and much of this has to do with the growth I experienced after her death. I have developed a sense of self and confidence, none of which I had before my sister died. This change and self-realization though, wasn't something that happened in a day. Slowly, I began to wake up. It could have been a number of events that spurred this change; whether it was excelling in school, getting my first horse, or celebrating traditions we had halted after her death, I realized things will get better, and everything will work out. I can't put a finger on what was the actual cause of this transformation. It happened gradually. I began to realize that there were plenty of things to look forward to, and it was possible to be happy and keep her in my heart. I also realized that even though she died, I still had an entire life to live. I decided to live this life for her. For the both of us. I will never have late night conversations under the covers with my sister, or sing incredibly ridiculous songs at the top of our lungs, but it will be these memories that carry me through life. No matter what happens in life, things will always get better, they may never be the same, but it will get better.

***Amanda Geisinger
Mt. Vernon, N.H.***



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Myths and Their Impact on Grief and Marriage

By Therese Rando, Ph.D

The Adverse Impact of Myths About Grief

Society maintains a number of inappropriate and unrealistic myths, stereotypes and standards for mourners in general. These not only do not help bereaved individuals, they actually hurt them. False expectations are established against which mourners and their caregivers evaluate grief responses, and pathology may be interpreted mistakenly when reactions depart from them. Consequently, mourners may feel guilt and failure, perceive something to be wrong with themselves, or assume they are going crazy when such expectations are unmet, despite their being totally unrealistic to begin with! Additionally, mourners may not receive the necessary assistance they require, since those in a position to give it often are laboring under the same misconceptions as well. They do not have an accurate picture of what mourners require and experience.

Clearly, these myths are quite dangerous, and this is why it is important to educate both the general public and professionals about the realities of bereavement. Hopefully this will result in more appropriate expectations, accurate knowledge, compassionate understanding, and a lessening of unnecessary pain for those who mourn the loss of a loved one.

Unfortunately, the population of bereaved individuals most subject to inappropriate expectations and the negative effects of misinformation are bereaved parents. This is because they must endure all of what mourners in general must cope with, AND THEN SOME. Without question the death of a child is such a unique loss that bereavement after it fails to be explained by the general conceptualizations we have about grief and mourning. In fact, bereaved parents are predisposed to be exceptionally vulnerable to "unresolved grief" and to misdiagnoses of pathology as a result. This is because there are a number of factors inherent in losing a child which are known to promote a failure to grieve, to complicate healthy mourning, or to lead directly to pathological responses. It becomes evident that what has been associated with "abnormal" or "pathological" grief in other mourners is part and parcel of the bereavement experience following the death of a child. The aspects that accompany this particular loss are the very same ones that in any other type of loss predispose a mourner to problems. Is no wonder why so many bereaved parents have been misdiagnosed as having pathological grief or chronic mourning. For this reason, it is absolutely imperative to develop a new model of parental mourning, and to identify new criteria what does constitute unhealthy grief in this special population.

However, society is not the only group which contributes to the pain of bereaved parents by its unrealistic expectations, bereaved parents do this to themselves as well. One of the prime areas in which this is found is in the marital relationship. Far too many times, bereaved parents tend to underestimate or overestimate the impact of the death of their child on their marriage. The remainder of this article is devoted to delineating some of the myths about the impact of grief on marriage in the hope that bereaved parents will become more realistic in their expectations of themselves and their mates, and decrease the amount of avoidable distress they experience when misinformation prevails.

Myths About the Impact of Grief on the Marriages of Bereaved Parents

(1) As the same child has died, each parent experiences the same loss. Each individual mourns the relationship and person that has been lost. As parents, each of us has experienced our child differently and had a unique relationship with that child. Therefore, both bereaved parents are mourning different losses, and these will be what will influence what one misses and when one misses it (e.g., one parent may miss the opportunity to talk with the child after school, while the other especially may miss watching football games on Sunday).

(2) Spouses will tend to be more similar than dissimilar in their grief. At latest count, people grieve according to 32 different sets of factors, each of which is highly idiosyncratic, as individualistic as a fingerprint. Spouses are no more alike necessarily in their mourning than are strangers. Loving one another, or living in the same house, does not make individuals respond to loss similarly. Some of the major factors contributing to differences between parents include: type and quality of the relationship with the child; sex-role conditioning; personality and coping behaviors; past experiences with loss; social, cultural, and religious backgrounds; social support received; reliance on drugs and alcohol; and physical health. Spouses will have to give each other wide latitude for their differing experiences of grief.

(3) Once a couple can learn to manage their grief, they will be back to themselves again. A major loss always changes the bereaved somewhat. Parts of us dies when someone we love very much dies. Most of us continue on, but we are altered by the impact of the loss and the adaptations to it that have been required of us. We not only will have to learn to relate in a new way to our deceased child (i.e., we still can have a relationship with that child, but it must be a different type now that he or she is dead).

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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We also must learn how to relate to the rest of the world, including our spouse, in new ways to accommodate the changes in us occasioned by the loss. Especially during the long period of acute grief, in which the absence of our child painfully teaches us repeatedly that he or she is gone, it may be very difficult to relate to our spouse because of our pain and distress. Our communication with each other may have deteriorated; our sexual relationship may not be what it once was or it may have disappeared entirely. It is not abnormal for this to continue for a lengthy period of time. Couples who are successful in managing to weather this crisis together: (1) keep the communication open as much as possible; (2) recognize their distress and the changes in themselves, and work to express both in the healthiest possible fashions; (3) insure their expectations of one another are appropriate and give each other permission to grieve individually as necessary; and (4) find ways slowly to integrate all of the changes into the marriage.

(4) If a parent and couple are "healthy," the mourning will last longer than most people expect — up to a few years. The duration of mourning varies according to the particular loss, its circumstances, the mourner, and the conditions surrounding the mourner. Nevertheless, it is now known that mourning a beloved person may take years of acute grief and that the long-term mourning process takes much longer, with some aspects of mourning never being entirely finished; i.e., there always may occur subsequent experiences which can trigger in us temporary upsurges in grief for our child (e.g. when his brother gets married and he is not there or when it is Thanksgiving and her place is empty at the table). It constitutes neither pathological nor unresolved grief, nor does it mean that acute mourning still persists. Bereaved parents must recognize that mourning the loss of any major person, especially a child, will mean continuing throughout the rest of life to encounter times when the pain of the loss is brought back and the absence made more acute at that moment, which causes a temporary upsurge in grief. As long as this doesn't interfere too long with your continuing to move adaptively into the new life without your loved one, such reactions need not be incompatible with healthy adaptation for the rest of your life.

(5) Parental grief declines over time in a steadily decreasing fashion. Like all types of grief, parental grief fluctuates much more than society expects. In the case of the bereaved couple, parents initially may be more similar in their grief and then, from two to five years after the death, grow further apart before coming closer together again. It is suggested that this is because a mother's grief often increases for several years after the two-year point following the death, while the father's tends to decrease.

Therefore for a period of time they become more discrepant from one another. It is important to realize this so that if it occurs you can be aware of it and act to manage its disruptive effects on you and your spouse.

(6) Parents who lose children usually end up with a divorce. Despite the prevalence of the belief, it is positively untrue that parents whose child dies inevitably are headed for a divorce. The death of a child places an enormous strain on a relationship, but it has *not* been proven to destroy it. In fact, Dennis Klass' study of TCF parents suggests that it is precisely because parents who survive their grief (i.e., as a result of the positive growth that can come from loss) no longer wish to remain in unhealthy relationships, and this is one reason for divorces following a child's death. When parents do divorce, more often than not it is due to their having had significant problems before the child died, and the death only brought the long-term issues to a head. Although there is no question that the loss of a child and the ensuing grief does stress a marriage, do not think you must end up with a divorce. Some parents actually become closer after their child's death.

(7) Loss only brings pain and devastation. Despite the agony of losing their child and the long-term effects of such a loss, many bereaved parents have worked enormously hard to develop some positive gains out of their loss (e.g., beginning support groups, reordering their priorities, developing better family communication, establishing closer relationships, etc.) While they never would have chosen to lose their child to achieve these gains, they are determined to choose healthy responses to it. You can do this as well.

Summary: Myths hurt all bereaved parents. The more accurate information you have, the better prepared you will be not only to encounter the vicissitudes of parental grief, but to minimize the negative effects of such misinformation.

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

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



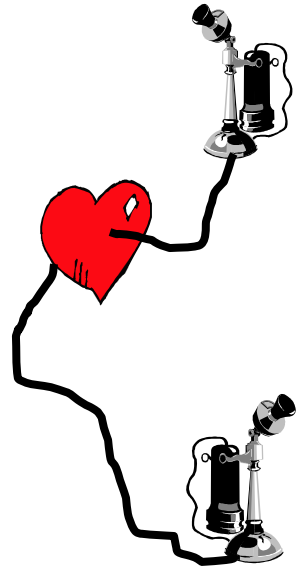
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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.

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. 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.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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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. 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.

What does do good is doing good. To decide to lead the second part of your life differently and better than you would have before ...in your child's name. When we do that ... when we do one small act of kindness we never would have done before ... when we reach out to other bereaved parents because we can and because we have been there ... then the world is changed in some small way for the better, and then the actions we take become a living tribute to our child's life. And then that child is never entirely gone. And that, my fellow compassionate friends, is how it looks at 10 years for me.

Blessings Inside Sorrow

There are blessings inside sorrow, or so I have been told. I am not sure I always agree. At times I can see the gifts I have been given. Love ... without measure.. fills my heart when I think of you. But I loved you then too, when you were in my arms, not in my heart. And I miss you now. The emptiness you left can never be filled, not by any blessings I might receive from sorrow.

And yet, still, I wonder. Are there blessings? Would I have known how much I cared for you.. for your brothers, for your Dad, were it not for your coming, and so suddenly, softly, leaving, without a good-bye? Would I treasure the life I have remaining if it weren't for your loss? Certainly I loved, and treasured before you left, but hasn't my sorrow caused me to express that love and to treasure more highly those around me? I KNOW I can't take for granted that they will always be.

In the aftermath of losing you, when life lay crumbled around me...still was there not a glimmer of hope? That life would go on, and, somehow, we would survive, and build on the ashes of our broken hearts. Building somehow in spite of our pain. Mixing the cement of our love with tears, we bound ourselves together even more tightly than ever before. And our love grows stronger. And we have not forgotten.

What a bitter lesson! And still, the emptiness will never be filled. There yet remains a hole in my heart... and in all our hearts. Dear son, we will never forget you. The blessings inside our sorrow will never fill the hole you left in the fabric of our lives. It remains open, a testament that you mattered, and that your coming and soft going made a difference. And in that difference lies the blessing inside our sorrow. We were blessed to have held you for a time, even though you could not stay. And even through our tears, we smile at the memories. And we know that you are not completely gone. You shadow our lives, affecting them in big ways and small. And though I would trade these blessings in a minute just to have you back in my arms, I am indeed grateful for the blessings inside sorrow.

— *In memory of Joey (2/25/99)*

By Lisa Sculley

TCF, Jacksonville/Orange Park Chapter

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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.
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Fold & Tape



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



SYMBOLS

We are fast approaching Valentine's Day, filled with symbols of love ... hearts and roses. As a young school-girl, I can remember wishing I would get a valentine from someone special. My friends and I would count how many valentines we had received, feeling certain that the more you received, the more it indicated your popularity.

As I grew older, I was thrilled when I received flowers from that special someone. Surely this was, true love. As a married woman, Valentine's Day was always special. Glen and I usually went out to dinner, and I often received flowers or a special gift that said, I love you! While those gifts were much appreciated, I would be hard pressed now to tell you what we did or what I received.

However, one Valentine's Day will stay frozen in my memory forever, February 14, 1983. Glen took my arm and steadied me as I walked into a mortuary to view the body of our 17 year old son Nathan, who had been killed by a drunken driver on February 10. We had ordered a spray of seventeen red roses to be placed on his casket. When I ordered those flowers, I was stunned to discover how high priced roses are on Valentine's Day! At first, I had decided I would be content with carnations. Then the florist saw in my eyes how much I wanted my last gift to my son to be the very best...red, long stemmed roses. The florist promised she would provide us with roses, regardless of how little we could afford to pay.



That afternoon, I drank in every detail of my boy, his hair, the bruise on his face, the National Honor Society pin on his lapel, those wonderful, strong hands. Then I pulled myself together for a very special appointment. I was the Academic Counselor at Nathan's high school, and we had arranged a special viewing for the students prior to the general visitation. I watched as young girls brought beautiful bouquets of red roses they had received from their boyfriends, but now they were placing them below our son's casket. Their final act of love for a very dear friend.

It has taken me a long time to be able to actually celebrate Valentine's Day in a normal fashion. In fact, I guess I never will be able to do that. Valentine's Day is no longer a superficial type of holiday where I just send cards or give candy or flowers without much deliberation beforehand. The symbols are still there; I just see them differently now:

THE ROSE: A symbol of love that cannot be separated by death. THE HEART: Broken, bruised, and bandaged, but not defeated.

And now, there's one more symbol: The HAND: As we offer our hands to each other in friendship, in understanding, in strength, we are saying:



WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE, WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS!

May your Valentine's Day be filled with roses that will encourage your broken heart and give you strength to offer a helping hand to others who are grieving.

*By Marilyn Heavilin
TCF, Redlands, CA*

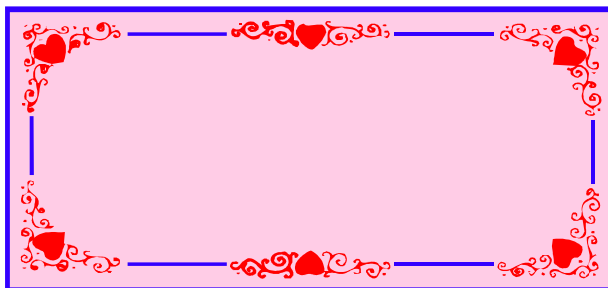
But You're Absolutely Normal !

Grief is a normal reaction to loss, and it shows up in many ways you might not expect. If you've...

- been angry with doctors or nurses for not doing enough,
 - been sleeping too much or not enough,
 - noticed a change in appetite,
 - felt no one understands what you're going through,
 - felt friends should call more or call less or leave you alone or invite you along more often,
 - bought things you didn't need,
 - considered selling everything and moving,
 - had headaches, upset stomachs, weakness, lethargy, more aches and pains,
 - been unbearable, lonely, and depressed,
 - been crabby,
 - cried for no apparent reason,
 - found yourself obsessed with thoughts of the deceased,
 - been forgetful, confused, uncharacteristically absentminded,
 - panicked over little things,
 - felt guilty about things you have or haven't done,
 - gone to the store every day,
 - forgotten why you went somewhere,
 - called friends and talked for a long time,
 - called friends and wanted to hang up after only a brief conversation,
 - not wanted to attend social functions you usually enjoyed,
 - found yourself unable to concentrate on written material,
 - been unable to remember what you just read,
- ...you're normal. These are all common reactions to grief. They take up to two years (or more) to pass completely, but they will pass. You'll never forget the person who has died, but your life will again become normal, even if it is never exactly the same. Take care of yourself. You will heal in time.

*Joanne Bonelli
TCF, Greater Boise Area, Idaho*

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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.”*