



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.

January-February 2015



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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 20th February 17th

The **Tuesday** afternoon meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month at St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Milford parish center at 17 Winter St. **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 27th February 24th

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. ©2015

Weather Cancellation

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

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



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

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

Secretary

* Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

* Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

Webmaster

* Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

Librarian

Ed Motuzas 508/473/4239

Newsletter

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Senior Advisors

* Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

Steering Committee *

Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
 Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
 Linda Teres 508/620-0613
 Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
 Judith Cherrington 508/473-4087
 Carol Cotter 774/219-7774

The chapter address is:

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

Chapter Web Page
www.tcfmetrowest.com

Regional Coordinator
 Tom Morse
 66 Atwood Avenue
 Middleboro, MA 02346
 Phone (508) 572-3038
tjmorse521@gmail.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

TRIBUTES, GIFTS AND DONATIONS

There are no dues or fees to belong to *The Compassionate Friends*. Just as our chapter is run entirely by volunteers, your voluntary, tax-deductible donations enable us to send information to newly bereaved parents, purchase pamphlets and books, contribute to the national chapter and meet other chapter expenses.

THANK YOU to the friends who help keep our chapter going with their contributions.

Love Gifts

Mr. & Mrs. Robert King in loving memory of their daughter *Caren King Firth* on her anniversary January 26th.

Mr. & Mrs. David Holland in loving memory of their son *Kevin Holland* on his anniversary December 14th.

Mrs. Minerva Ciccarelli in loving memory of her daughter *Cynthia Zottoli* on her birthday February 8th.

Mrs. Nancy Carpenter in loving memory of her son *James S. Carpenter VI* on his birthday December 25th.

Mr. & Mrs. Bert Stuchins in loving memory of their son *Alan R. Stuchins* on his anniversary November 5th.





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
ELAINE HUDSON-McAULIFFE
JUSTIN BAILEY
SCOTT A. LAMONT
CHRISTOPHER D. DILORENZO
EVAN M. RODRIGUES
KAITLYN B. SCHLEGEL
JONATHAN BRET LOVEJOY
KEVIN S. JOHNSON
CAREN KING FIRTH

February

DANIEL J. SCOTT JR.
MATTHEW SHEA
SHAWN P. MARKS
JEFFREY CHERRINGTON
KAITLYN KENNEDY

Birthdays

January

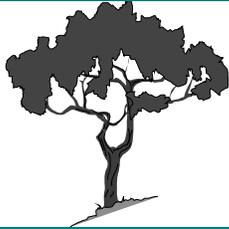
KELSEY MULKERRINS
PETER BARTLETT STUART
CHRIS GRIFFITHS

February

CHRISTOPHER MARC DULLEA
LEA M. SIEBERT
CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI
RICHARD J. LaJOIE
JACKI PAULINE BRAMBERG
MATTHEW SHEA
CYNTHIA A. RENAUD
STACEY ANN MAHONEY
MICHAEL J. PAULHUS

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Go Green



Green goes with everything

To our wonderful e-mail subscribers, Thank You! By receiving your newsletter in this format, you are saving trees (to make paper), chemicals (to produce ink), money (for postage), and waste products from printing and from newsletters that are only printed if you need the hard copy. Our chapter and the world appreciates your generosity.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



THE SIBLING CORNER



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

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

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

Compassionate Siblings

I had a prayer answered today, one I'd like to share.
I found I'm not alone in my grief, I found someone to care!
I've been in pain for quite awhile, but kept it deep inside,
But now I know there are people in whom I can confide.

They'll let me cry or scream or yell, and they know just how I feel;
You see they also know that pain and know it's very real
Each one has suffered a loss, one like I have known;
Yet now we stand together.
This unique group of siblings is bonded, you might say,
And strength to carry on is for what each one must pray.

One by one we keep going, although painful it might be,
And the emptiness we feel, many will never see;
Because we choose what face to show the world and courage keeps us going,
We have a constant ache inside, no matter what the outside is showing.

And whether it takes me a year or two, time is all that can heal;
So I've been sent some "Compassionate siblings"
Who know just how I feel.

Bless those who need to be understood when tears come and go without warning.

May we help heal the wounds so deep that are hurting all the hearts left empty by the death of a sibling.

Stacy Gilliam
TCF, N. Oklahoma City, Ok

It's the Music that Bonds the Soul

The room you once lived in
Doesn't look the same.
The people who used to call you
Never mention your name.

The car you used to drive
They may not make anymore;
And all the things you treasured
Are boxed behind closed doors.

The clothes you set the trends by
Are surely out of date.
The people you owed money to
Have wiped away the slate.

Things leave changed and changed
Since you went away.
But some things remain the same
Each and every day.

Like the aching in my heart,
A scar that just won't heal.
Or the way a special song
Can change the way I feel.

Brother, you must know that the music bonds us and will keep us close;
Because secretly I know in my heart
It's the music you miss the most.

So let the world keep turning,
Time can take its toll.
As long as the music is playing
You'll be dancing in my soul.





THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



New Year a Time to Search for ‘Ray of Hope’

*Be my ray of hope, be my ray of laughter.
Be my song to sing that guides me on my way.
Be the arms that hold me.
Be the love that enfolds me, be my light,
Be my ray of hope today.
...Paul Alexander, songwriter*

*Inside of me are all the answers.
Everything I need to know
Lives inside of me.
Come behold my miracle,
Come and hear my story.
Come and paint a memory with me.
... Paul Alexander*

Snowflakes drift silently to earth.

A new year has dawned. The revelry of the old year has quieted and the holiday hustle and bustle has ended

As bereaved parents, for many of us, this will be our first full year without our children. For others, the upcoming year will be another thread in the garment of life. A thread connecting the memories of our old life with the hope for “recovery” in our new life.

How often our thoughts wander back to another day and time when we were happy and full of the vitality that makes up life, a time when our child made our life complete and worth living.

Though three years have passed since becoming a bereaved parent, I still think about my children every day of my life. As I sat watching the ball atop Times Square descend, my thoughts jumped back to a time when my children lay safely in their beds as we brought a new year into existence.

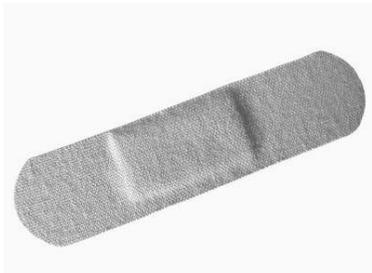
Does *this* new year bring with it a time when we will hurt less, when there will be a new ray of hope? Or does it bring even more heartache because of the sadness and loneliness we find difficult to leave behind?

The answers lie deep within each of us. How we approach this new year will make the difference.

Can we be kind to ourselves? Just because others place demands on us to do whatever they feel will help us does not mean they are right. They have not walked in our shoes. We can say ‘NO!’

Can we enjoy life again? Though we cannot be physically with our children, they would want us to enjoy living . . . and yes, they would want us to love again!

Can we help parents who are more newly bereaved to clear the same hurdles that seemed so insurmountable to us such a short while ago? By reaching out to others and making their burdens a little lighter, we are helping our own open wounds to heal.



Wayne Loder
TCF Lakes Area, MI

“Ray of Hope” by Paul Alexander on the CD “The Best of Paul” at www.griefsong.com (Paul wrote LIGHT A CANDLE which has been used at many TCF candle lighting programs). Permission to use excerpts from “Ray of Hope” granted by Paul Alexander.

And Then There Were Two.....

Ten years ago my son and his wife were blessed with identical triplet daughters. The girls were all tiny, and the prognosis was solid for two of them. Caitlin, Julia and Lauren were born on the 18th of April. It started out as a happy day. Todd was in the delivery room, camera in hand, as each girl was placed in an incubator. First out of the delivery room was Lauren, content but tiny. After about 25 minutes Julia was ushered out in her little portable incubator. We waited a very long time for Caitlin. Finally she was brought out, many nurses and doctors surrounded her incubator. I stood near the elevator and waited for them. I looked at her...hand respirator for breathing, intravenous lines, blue in color, and tears streamed down my face. “Are you a relative?” one of the nurses asked. I told them I was a grandmother. “Would you like to look at her for a few seconds?” The nurse could see my sorrow. All eyes avoided mine. I looked at Caitlin and knew, I just knew, this would not end well.

Todd came out to the hall, still wearing scrubs. He was happy and beaming, but expressed concern about Caitlin. I nodded. He asked me if I’d seen her. I nodded again. He told me they had taken her to a corner of the delivery room and spent a long time with her. I nodded again. “It’s not good, is it Mom?” he asked. I shook my head and hugged him. I told him how beautiful they all were and that the other two were healthy despite their size.



Todd spent some time with his wife, then proceeded to visit his three daughters. When he got to the neonatal ICU he knew that he would be staying there. We all scrubbed and went to see the babies.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

We touched their little feet. But we weren't allowed to see Caitlin. Only Todd was allowed in her area. My son stayed in the neonatal ICU with Caitlin. He got to know the nurses and doctors and other parents while he was visiting with Julia who was also in level 1. I left the hospital about 10:30 p.m. Todd remained in the neonatal unit with Caitlin.

The next morning I awoke to a phone call from Todd. He'd spent the night with Caitlin. She was still hand bagged, a nurse was manually pumping air into her lungs. He thought she had a chance. He would stay with her, he said. About 11 a.m. he called and we talked. He hadn't eaten anything, and I asked what he would like as I was driving down to the hospital. "You don't have to do that, Mom," he said. But I knew I had to be there. I arrived with the special food he'd requested and we sat in the visitors' lounge outside the neonatal area. Todd was hungry and exhausted. We talked. "I don't know what I'll do if she dies, Mom," he cried. I cried, too. I knew what was coming and I knew it would be soon. I told him that if she were meant to live, she would live. He didn't want to accept that.

We walked to his wife's room for a quick visit and the phone rang. The family needed to return immediately to the neonatal ICU. Todd pushed his wife's wheelchair, her mother and I walked silently through the tunnels. The long walk was punctuated by the clicking of heels on the concrete floor. The tunnel echoed. None of us said anything. There were no words. This was the worst time.

We arrived at the neonatal unit and were immediately ushered into a special room. A nurse was still providing manual respiration for Caitlin. The doctors said it was hopeless and this couldn't continue. Her heart and lungs were not developed. Todd reached over and touched his tiny daughter, tears rolling down his face onto her little blanket. His heart was broken. Caitlin was disconnected from the tubes and the manual respiration was stopped. Todd's wife held Caitlin and then Todd held her. I stood behind my son, hand on his shoulder, watching him as he suffered this unimaginable and immense pain. Pain that I couldn't cure. Todd asked if I wanted to hold her. I said, "you hold her, she knows your voice. I'll hold her later."

Caitlin's little cap fell off. Her eyes were closed, her mouth a tiny rosebud with lips slightly parted. I touched her arm and head. "She's gone, Sweetheart", I whispered. The nurse came over, checked vitals and confirmed a grandmother's intuition. I hugged Todd and told him that this was the worst pain he would ever endure. He wept and his body shook from shock, pain and exhaustion. We lingered for a while, looking at the baby whose life was never meant to be.

Finally, all left the room but me. Caitlin was peacefully wrapped in her little blanket, a beautiful child whose time had come. I touched her sweet face and tiny hands. Her soul was gone, but her fight for life both before and after her birth touched my Irish heart.

Later Todd told his son, "Caitlin didn't make it, Buddy." His son crawled up on his lap and patted Todd's head and arm. There were no words. We were all devastated.

Now it is I who weep for my lost child. Todd was killed December 19, 2002, and his pain is now my pain. The proud father of five, a man whose life was so extraordinary, whose attitude was so upbeat, whose love for his children was so deep and profound, whose accomplishments were so significant, was now gone. I like to think that he has joined Caitlin and together they are happy.

Thinking of that day, 10 years ago, brings tears to my eyes. I love my son more than life. I couldn't imagine his pain. Now I live his pain. My only child was ripped from my life. Life isn't fair, life isn't equitable. There is no reason. It just is. I no longer have to keep it together for my son as I did on April 19, 1995. I no longer try. If I have a bad day, that's the way it is. If my friends don't like my tears or my sorrow, there's nothing to be said. If others don't like the ways I choose to memorialize and remember my child, that's fine. Those who know me, really know me, understand that my pain is deep and it is forever. My tears are pure and cleansing. Life will never be as good as it was. The love for my child is real. He lives on in my heart. He is my inspiration to go on, to keep on living, to make the best of what I am given. For that is what he did. I keep him in my heart, he is one special son.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In Memory of Todd Mennen and Caitlin
Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

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)



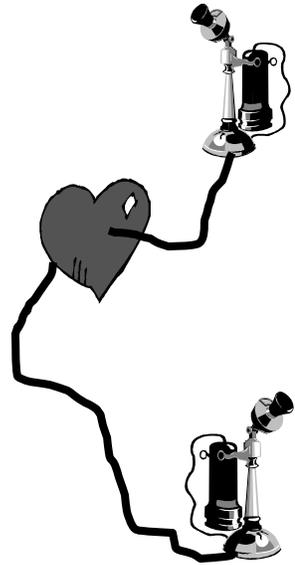
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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
- 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.

The Grief of a Parent Who Has Lost an Infant

To experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should the child be stillborn, or die hours, days or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for parents. No parent ever expects to outlive his child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to his parents. The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant.

1. Shame and Guilt - Especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. "Other women have live, normal babies, why can't I?" Should an infant die months after birth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.

2. No Memories - Parents may only have "souvenirs of the occasion" (birth certificate, I.D. bracelet) by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few belongings, but they still feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.

3. Loneliness in Grief - It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is newborn, they may give the impression you are grieving unnecessarily, they hope you can "forget this baby" and "have another one."

4. Neglected Fathers - Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby, too.



5. Mothers vs. Fathers - Since the mother has bonded with her child during the pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father's, who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife's grief is so profound and so prolonged.

Claire McGaughey and Sue Shelley
TCF St. Louis, MO

Despair and Hope

I find myself thinking a great deal about despair. I think about it often enough that I actually looked it up. It means "to lose hope."

I don't have a great deal of previous experience with despair. But now I belong to a new group. This group knows a great deal about despair. My previous group really didn't.

When I try to think of times I've felt despair before, it mostly takes me back to much younger days and failed romances. In the scheme of things, those problems (and others) no longer seem worthy of despair.

(continued on next page)



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?

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Fold & Tape

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

Fold & Tape



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



COPING

January is a reflective month. Ice ponds reflect the leaden sky, and the heart reflects the emptiness of a frozen spirit. When will we begin to thaw? When will we feel like we're making some progress in this place of icicles and cold sheets sunless days and long, empty nights? Will we ever be happy again? Will I ever be ME again? January is also the month for making promises, commitments, and resolutions (resolutions are FANCY promises). We begin our new year with high hopes, strong wills, and long lists of things that will be different this year. To celebrate my commitment to a **new me**, I bought a jogging suit, expensive shoes, timer, pulse meter, and M&M dispenser (you've got to have some motivation). **THIS YEAR WILL BE DIFFERENT!**

We also spend some time looking back over the road we've traveled, and sometimes we wonder if we have made any progress at all. In the beginning, we misplace car keys, checkbooks, toothbrushes, relatives, and important stuff like the TV Guide. We had to begin making lists of everything. We simply couldn't remember anything. I couldn't remember my address, social security number, zip code, or my mother-in-law's birthday. (I never could remember that.) I even started making lists of my lists! I knew I was going to be all right when I first discovered I could remember that I had made a list.

You know you're making progress when you can coordinate an entire outfit again. Shoes, belts, ties, purses, even sweaters and jackets often got left, simply because when we were hurting so terribly, we couldn't think about what to wear. Many of us didn't even know that panty hose were on backwards, or the tie was crooked. If you are wearing matched shoes right now, then you are making progress.

You are making progress when you no longer choke when you say your loved one's name. When you can walk down the cereal aisle in the supermarket and not dissolve into tears, progress is being made. When you can enjoy baking HIS favorite cookies or pie or cake again, you are on your way. When the photographs come back out once more and you can wander through the scrapbooks again, letting the smiles peek through the tears, then hope is returning. When memories, for the most part, bring comfort and warmth instead of emptiness and pain, *January grows shorter*. When you begin to understand that putting away your loved one's things does NOT mean putting him out of your life, then your step becomes lighter.



Progress occurs when you completely understand that your loved one DIED, but the love you share between you can never be destroyed. Hope begins to return when you can hear laughter again, and some of that laughter is your own. Recovery is possible once unrealistic hopes for a lost future are given up, grieved for, and moved beyond. Perhaps it is not so much saying good-bye to our loved one as it is saying farewell to the old us and the life we shared.

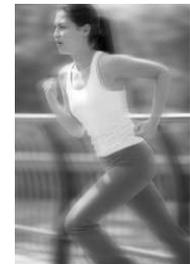
Making progress through grief doesn't mean that you no longer miss your loved one. He is part of your life forever, but his role in your life changes. Our lifestyle and habits change to reflect a different family landscape.



Now as you look back, it is amazing to see the life fabric, no longer ripped apart with a gaping hole, but mended with tiny stitches, left perhaps a bit lumpy (like lots of us), but patched with time, effort and love. Old threads and new threads have blended together and have been re-woven into a pattern not quite the same as we had originally planned. It is a tapestry of love, given and received, remembered and shared. Life can become good and whole and complete once again, not when we try to fill up the empty spaces left by loved ones no longer within hug's reach, but when we realize that love creates new spaces in the heart and expands the spirit and deepens the joy of simply being alive. The renewed energy and love we feel as winter turns into spring becomes the memorial to our loved one...not the grave markers we decorate, not the books we write, not the speeches we give, but the LOVE we share and pass on.

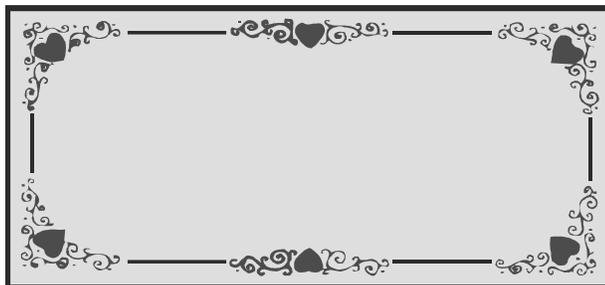
You know you are making progress when all of this begins to make some sense (save this column to read later!). When the shoes match and the car keys are found and the list of lists grows shorter, then you are making progress. Then the laughter can return, and with that magical sound comes the healing of the hurt and the shedding of the Band-Aid, because the heart is learning to sing again.

January...the month to check on our progress, to make new commitments, and to start jogging.



**Darcie Sims
TCF Enid, OK**

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Milford, MA*

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.”*