



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 2017



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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 17th & February 21st

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 weekend 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 31st & February 28th

WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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

The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace, but whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends. ©2017

Weather Cancellation

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

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



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

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

Secretary

- * Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

- * Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

Webmaster

- * Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

Librarian

- Ed Motuzas 508/473/4239

Newsletter

- Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Senior Advisors

- * Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

Steering Committee *

- Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
- Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
- Linda Teres 508/366-2085
- Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
- 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. Alan Kennedy in loving memory of their daughter **Kaitlyn E. Kennedy** on her anniversary February 22nd. "We love you and miss you always. Love Mom and Dad."

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Dubis in loving memory of Patricia's mother **Dorothy A. Pisapia**.

Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Sicuso in loving memory of **Dorothy A. Pisapia**.

Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Scott in loving memory of their son **Daniel J. Scott Jr.** on his anniversary February 9th.

Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Goulding in loving memory of **Dorothy A. Pisapia**.

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

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

Mr. & Mrs. Charles Painton in loving memory of their daughter **Heidi Ann Richer** on her anniversary December 14th.

Mr. & Mrs. Gary Anderson in loving memory of their children **Timothy M. Anderson** on his anniversary December 13th, and **Kimberly Anne Tanner**.

Mr. & Mrs. John McKinnon in loving memory of their friend **Dorothy A. Pisapia**.

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Mackay in loving memory of their friend **Dorothy A. Pisapia**.

Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Shasta in loving memory of their friend **Dorothy A. Pisapia**.

Mrs. Phyllis Curran in loving memory of her daughter **Monica Michelle Curran**.

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Baisley in loving memory of their only child **Stacey Ann Mahoney** on her birthday February 20th. And her anniversary March 21st. "The hardest things was letting you go to heaven and be with God and family. But Dad and I will join you when God wishes. You are our angel" love Dad and Mom.



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
- CHRISTOPHER D. DiLORENZO
- EVAN M. RODRIGUES
- JONATHAN BRET LOVEJOY
- KEVIN S. JOHNSON
- CAREN KING FIRTH

February

- MICHAEL F. McDANIEL Jr
- NICHOLAS DANIEL PENZA
- VICTORIA VIVEIROS
- DANIEL J. SCOTT Jr.
- JORDAN C. MESNER
- MATTHEW SHEA
- SHAWN P. MARKS
- JEFFREY CHERRINGTON
- JAMIESON MATTHEW ROBERGE
- JASON MURRELL
- KAITLYN KENNEDY
- JOSEPH LEE LaBRADOR
- KIMBERLEE KANE

Birthdays

January

- KELSEY MULKERRINS
- SAMANTHA AMY MICHAUD
- KIMBERLEE KANE
- CHRIS GRIFFITHS
- DANICA SCHNAIBLE
- MICHAEL F. McDANIEL Jr.
- JUSTIN MICHAEL MOFFI
- THOMAS J. JOHNSON Jr.
- PATRICK THOMAS SIBLEY

February

- CHRISTOPHER MARC DULLEA
- LEA M. SIEBERT
- MATTHEW DENICE
- CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI
- MATTHEW SHEA
- DANIEL BARRINGTON
- DENNIS NIELD
- TERRIE SCHOUMAKER
- STACEY ANN MAHONEY
- CHRISTOPHER D. DiLORENZO
- MICHAEL JAY ANDERSON
- MICHAEL J. PAULHUS
- ANDREW DELPRETE





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 following letter, signed "Sibling", appeared in the Louisville, KY newsletter. It is a poignant expression of love and pain that is typical of siblings' reactions. It is hoped that, for those of you with teenagers, it will offer clues leading to freer communications and sharing of feelings.

Dear Parents of "Compassionate Friends":

I am writing to let you know how I feel and maybe how some of the other siblings feel. There have been times when my parents start really getting extra down about my brother. I usually leave the room. I feel that no matter how hard I try, I will say or do something that will hurt them more, or that they won't understand what I'm really trying to say. They already feel enough pain. I really love them and I understand enough about how they hurt, but I'm just not good at saying what I feel. It seems like it never sounds right. I also hold my emotions back from them. I always hear it is best to let it out, and I do, but not in front of my parents. I'm afraid they might try to hold their emotions back in front of me, so I won't get upset. I've had rough times for the past couple of years, and I'm still having hard times, so I'm always afraid they will hold back if they see me getting upset. I know that would just hurt them more when they try to hold it back. I love to talk about the good times my brother and I had, but I'd just rather be alone when I cry for him. Just once in a while my sister and I can talk about him, but that's the only person I can really talk to. I hope and pray with all my heart that my parents will understand, but I just can't talk to them. I miss my brother a lot, more than I think they really realize. I love and care for them too much to go and upset them even more. Maybe I'm wrong, but please parents, understand how I feel. May we always be close.

Please Don't Discount Sibling Grief

I have come to think of sibling grief as "discounted grief." Why? Because siblings appear to be an emotional bargain in most people's eyes. People worry so much about the bereaved parents that they invest very little attention in the grieving sibling.

My personal "favorite" line said to siblings is, "You be sure and take care of your parents." I wanted to know who was supposed to take care of me, I knew I couldn't.

The grief of siblings may differ from that of a parent, but it ought not be discounted. People need to realize that while it is obviously painful for parents to have lost a child, it is also painful for the sibling, who has not only lost a sister or brother, but an irreplaceable friend.

While dealing with this double loss, he or she must confront yet another factor. The loss of a brother or sister is frequently the surviving sibling's first experience with the death of any young person. Young people feel they will live forever. A strong dose of mortality in the form of a sibling death is very hard to take.

The feelings of siblings are also often discounted when decisions are being made on things ranging from a funeral plan to flower selections. Parents need to listen to surviving siblings who usually know a lot about the tastes and preferences of the deceased.

Drawing on the knowledge that surviving siblings have about supposedly trivial things, such as favorite clothes or music, can serve two purposes when planning funeral or memorial services. First, their input helps ensure that the deceased receives the type of service he or she would have liked. Second, their inclusion in the planning lets them know they are still an important part of the family.

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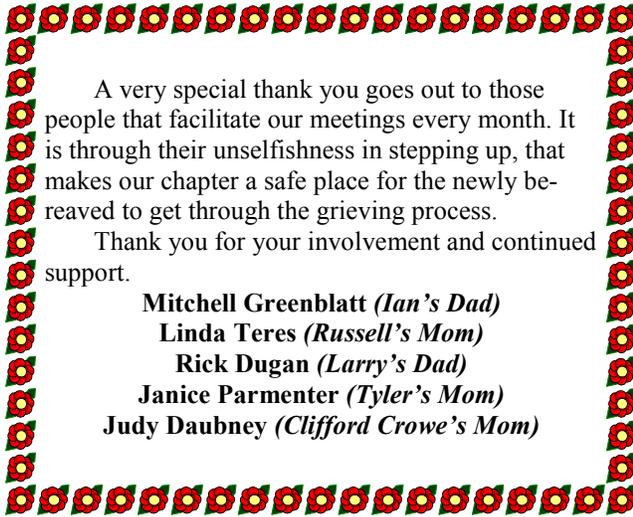
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I realize that people are unaware that they are discounting sibling grief. But then, that's why I'm writing this, so people will know.

Jane Machado
TCF, Tulare, CA



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)

Remembering The Laughter

A few days ago I was in a store, and a one-year-old boy started laughing. At first he giggled, then he let the pure joy of life take him, and he started laughing uncontrollably. Magically, he got the hiccups which caused him to laugh even more. As I listened to this happy child, laughing for the joy of life, I felt a tear of happiness roll down my cheek. The sheer joy and laughter of this child reminded me of another time and another place when my son would laugh uncontrollably.

Todd was a happy baby, and a happier toddler. As a baby he grinned at me each time I caught his eye. If I continued to look at him and smile or make a silly noise, he would start laughing. He'd laugh uncontrollably. My Irish grandmother told me that Todd smiled in his sleep because he could still see the angels. I'll never forget that.

As Todd grew older, his happy disposition became one of his most endearing qualities. When he was three he started going to pre-school. This was a great experience for him....laughing with other children. He was so happy at that pre-school that when he was ready for first grade, he didn't want to leave. "What if I can't laugh and smile in first grade, Mom?" he asked one day. I told him that he would have to pick and choose the times to laugh and smile. But the payoff, I told him, was that he was going to learn to read big boy books. He was so happy about that possibility that he quietly smiled all the way home.

By the end of second grade, Todd had learned to control the giggles and laughter. But he was always ready with a quick smile and that special look of joy in his eyes. As he got older, he lost some of that luster. Life does that. It saddened me to see so much seriousness in my child. I asked him one day if he was unhappy. "No, I'm happy," he said. "It's just that a lot of people don't like that."

That was when we had "the talk." I explained that the expectations of others were not important. I went into great detail about who he inherently was and why he must cling to that with everything he had. He seemed to understand. He was now in fourth grade, and teachers, principals, teachers' aides and friends' parents would occasionally try to impress upon him how serious life was. "Enjoy it," I told him. And he did.

The next day he took off a tennis shoe and threw it through the transom above the classroom door. His teacher was not amused. She called me. I said I would talk to him. That evening I asked him what possessed him to throw his tennis shoe through the open transom. I wasn't angry; I was curious. "Well, Mom, you know how it is when something pops into your head and the more you think about it, the funnier it gets?" I said that I'd experienced that more than a few times in my life. "Well, that's what happened. I looked at the window above the door, and I looked at my tennis shoe. I started feeling really tickly in my stomach. I had to do it, Mom. I just had to do it. It was so funny. I laughed and laughed. The teacher got mad. But she gets mad if we're all just sitting there. I smiled all day. I'm still smiling. You said I should be myself. She's going to quit teaching this year. She doesn't really like kids."

"Do you think you might have helped that process along?" I asked. "No, she told us in September. I'm always nice to her. I'm never rude."

That explained why she was so surprised that Todd would do this. He was such a gentle, kind child. I knew this teacher. She was a bit odd. As it turned out, she left teaching at the end of that year. There was a lot more going on with her than one tennis shoe through a transom.

"You told me to hang on to who I am. That's who I am, Mom. I'm not the class clown. I'm just happy." Another moment for "the talk", I thought. No, I'm going to share my son's happiness. I asked how he knew that he could get the shoe through the transom. "Oh, I visioned' it", he said. "Just like you said...vision' it and you can do it." I told him not to disrupt any class again, and he agreed that he wouldn't. The teacher was pleased that the behavior had been addressed. That was that.

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Years later, I asked him what he remembered about fourth grade. The shoe through the transom and the teacher who quit were his memories of that year. I asked if he still got that tickly feeling in his stomach as an adult. With a smile on his face and eyes that brightened my heart, he said, "Sure, Mom. Don't you?"

Yes, I still do. And I am so glad that my baby boy was able to laugh for 35 years, even on the last day of his life. The angels are surely smiling now with Todd in their presence. How could they not?

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

Seasons

The change of seasons is difficult. It reminds me that I must change if I am to live again. We can become stuck in our grief, full of self-pity and overwhelmed with pain. I do not believe our children would want us to live the rest of our lives in pain and misery. It is so easy to fall into the "black pit" and never have the strength or courage to crawl out, because crawl out we must...on our bellies.

We are different now, with different priorities and goals. We must find a new purpose for going on, and we must accept the changes in our lives, including ourselves, for we are different now. We cannot go backward, though there are times we yearn to. We must go forward. If we don't, we stay stuck at the point our world changed. I used to say "ended."

Change is difficult. To accept the loss of our child is the most difficult of all. Our comfort comes from believing that the love we share will go on for all eternity and that we will be reunited again, and each day brings us closer. We must learn to live again, love again, feel joy and peace again, or our survival will be without value to ourselves or others.



Renee Little
TCF, Fort Collins, CO



February

In February we celebrate the birth of George Washington and Abe Lincoln. Lent begins. We wonder if the groundhog will see his shadow, and we have Valentine's Day. Candy, flowers and cards are often exchanged.

Many cards are given and received between parents and children as a way of showing love for one another. Valentine's Day is another holiday on which bereaved parents remember the drawings, cards and gifts received from their deceased children.



Take time out to be good to yourself. Perhaps you could remember your child with a special flower, or could do something kind in your child's memory for someone in need. Most of all, take time to tell your living children and your spouse or someone special how fortunate you are to have them and how much they mean to you.

Lorraine Bauman
TCF, Fairmont, MN

As the Holiday Season Ends

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways, they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this New Year shouldn't be better.

Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself, both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in your chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

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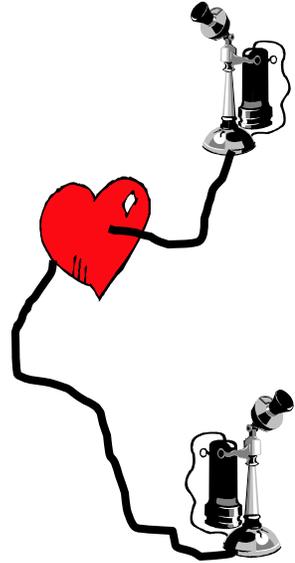
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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
- 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.

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If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

The newsletter is another way you can become involved in your chapter. Let us know by contributing poems or stories. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs. Have a Happier New Year!

Pat Akery
TCF, Medford, OR

Gone From My Sight
by Hendry Van Dyke

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength. I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other.

Then someone at my side says, "There, she is gone!" Gone where?

Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and she is just as able to bear her load of living freight to her destined port.



Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says, "There, she is gone!" there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout: "Here she comes!"

And that is dying.

Submitted by Vicki Otto
TCF, Tucson, AZ

*(a nearly identical piece appeared in another chapter's newsletter, attributed to H. Scott Holland)

** (yet another nearly identical piece was quoted in a story in the AZ. Daily Star as having been found on the body of an American Jewish soldier, Col. David Marcus, who helped form the first army of the state of Israel. No author was given.)

The Reconciliation of Grief

WHAT IS GRIEF? WHAT IS MOURNING?

Grief is an internal experience. For some, it is an inside emptiness - a fear - panic - loneliness - anger - guilt - longing - depression. When asked this question recently, someone said, "Grief is Love - with no place to go."

Mourning is a bit different. Mourning is "grief" which is expressed to the outside world. It is the process where I "work through" my grief by outwardly expressing my internal feelings.



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Grief alone, without mourning, is dangerous and destructive to the human system. By taking part in a support group – by sharing what you are experiencing now and what it is like for you – you begin or continue a healthy process of mourning.

GROWING UP, HOW DID WE LEARN TO MOURN?

All our lives, most of us have been taught how to acquire, not how to lose. There has been no course called LOSS 101. No wonder it is strange and painful. Many mourn their grief as they witnessed some role model (perhaps a parent, movie or national personality) handle his or her grief.

As young people we may have heard these messages: “Don’t feel bad, don’t cry.” (Message – *Bury your feelings.*)

“You lost your toy! Well, just be good, and Santa will bring another.” (Message: *Everything is replaceable.*)

“Now! You just keep your feelings to yourself.” (Message: *Don’t trust; it isn’t safe to share your feelings.*)

While growing up, what messages did you receive about how to appropriately express feelings and experience loss?

GRIEF RECONCILIATION – WHAT IS IT?

Intellectually, you know you really don’t recover from your grief in the sense that everything is restored to the way it was before. You know how unlikely it is that life will ever “be the same,” yet at the beginning it is so difficult to accept. You are beginning a process – a process of “reconciliation” where you learn to become more and more adapted to a new, and changed, way of living.

There are a number of tasks ahead as you proceed with your individual and unique process of reconciliation:

You learn to effectively experience, and express outside of yourself, the reality of the death.

You allow yourself to fully embrace the pain of the loss, while learning how to assure that you are nurtured physically, emotionally and spiritually.

You learn to convert your relationship with the person who died from one of interactive presence to one of appropriate memory.

You learn to develop a new self-identity based on a life without the person who died.

You begin to relate the experience of the death to a context of new meaning in your life.

You develop a lasting network of support to help you through the process.

If you are at an early stage of this process, be patient and take it one moment at a time. Trust that it does get better. Learning to find the path for your personal reconciliation process is what support groups are all about.

Alan B. Taplow

This article was adapted from a handout prepared by Mr. Taplow, of Plainfield, New Jersey, for use with his Bereavement Support Group. He created it from material from The Grief Recovery Handbook, by John W. James and Frank Cherry, and writings on Reconciliation Needs of the Mourner, by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.



Other Area TCF Chapters

MA/CT Border Towns Chapter (Dudley, Webster areas)

Chapter Leaders: Paul & Anne Mathieu
(508) 248-7144.....ampm1259@charter.net

South Shore Chapter (Hingham, Weymouth areas)
Chapter Leader Martha Berman
(781) 337-8649.....mmartha1@comcast.net

Worcester Chapter
Chapter Co-Leaders: Lisa Holbrook
(774) 482-3073.....sixholes@charter.net
Mary Vautier....
(508) 393-7348.....mjvautier@msn.com

Central Middlesex Chapter (Needham, Concord)
Chapter Leader: Carol Gray-Cole
(781) 444-1091.....cgc603@aol.com



Empathy and Brain Pain Relief

One of the many lessons we can learn from a death is to reserve our opinions until we have walked in another person’s shoes. Despite this, many people react almost instinctively to reduce their own pain caused by the empathy they feel as they listen to the story of the tragic death of a child, sibling, partner, or other beloved person.

Reading this, you might be saying, “I don’t judge anymore. The death of my child or sibling has taught me to accept.” This article is written with caring and concern to shed some light on an area that few people talk about. Let me begin by telling a story.

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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.
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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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I have worked with hundreds of bereaved parents for more than two decades. For five years I was a clinician with the University School of Nursing parent Bereavement project in which we worked with more than 100 parents in small groups for a 10 week period in the early months following the death of their child by accident, suicide, or homicide. By the end of the project I had heard what seemed to be every imaginable story of horrendous death.

I wasn't prepared for my reaction to the following story which I have modified to protect the confidentiality of those involved.

Sitting with a group of seven parents, I listened to a father describe the death of his son in a freeway auto accident. I sat, as did the parents, empathetically listening to a story of monumental tragic proportions, watching this man struggling to express the details of his son's final moments. It was a scene not unlike many I had experienced over the past 20 years, but the pain was no less excruciating. Then I heard this father say, "... and he had alcohol problems."

At that instant, I remember feeling a shift in my response to his story, almost a relief. And I caught myself saying in my head something like, "Oh, I see." And then catching myself and saying, "I see? What am I doing? This father is describing the death of his son and I'm feeling somewhat relieved?" It was as if a part of my brain was trying to ease my pain by saying, "He had alcohol problems, *that's* it. *That* explains how this senseless tragedy could have taken place." For a moment the senseless seemed to make at least some sense.

If our brain could speak to us during the exact moment that a fellow human being is crying, telling the story of the loss of their child, and describing the intense pain of grief, it might say something like, "My God, this is terrible. I can't take all this pain. *Do* something to make it not hurt so much." I believe our response to this plea of our wounded brain is to make a desperate attempt to reduce the pain and try to make *some* sense of this. I like to call this: "Brain Pain Relief."

Bob Baugher, Ph.D.
Des Moines, Washington

Bob Baugher is a psychologist and certified death educator who teaches a course in psychology and death education at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington. He is co-author of several books including *A Guide for the Bereaved Survivor* and *A Guide to Understanding Guilt During Bereavement*.

A Word About Closure

I don't use the word "closure" anymore. For years I thought it was a good way to express what happens to us at various times during our grief journey. I would often tell about the importance of viewing the loved one by saying viewing gives reality and closure.

I live in Oklahoma City. The general feeling here was that the survivors of the bombing would find closure when the trial was over. The ending of the trial was supposed to be some kind of magical day that would bring relief to the pain. The survivors walked out of the courtroom saying, "Don't mention the word closure to us. This does not close anything."

Closure conjures up the idea of healing or moving past. It sounds like some magic moment that happens and the grieving is over. A moment that closes the door to a bad time in our lives and we do not have to think about it anymore. I no longer think there are any magic moments in grief. Grief is a process, a long slow process. There are events that are memorable, but they don't take the pain away. There are times of healing, but the process must still go on.

Closure also sounds like getting well. We do not "get well." A chunk has been bitten out of our hearts and it is not going to grow back. We do not get well. We move toward turning the corner in the way we cope. We live again, but we live again because we learn to cope with the chunk of our hearts that is gone.

We don't have closure. We have times of growing reality. Reality does not come all at once. We must gradually come to grips with our loss. We go through a time of "real but not real." We know it has happened, but we still think it is a dream and we will soon awaken. Reality develops gradually through many experiences.

It grows in those times when we face a little bit more of our loss, and reality becomes more vivid. Viewing a loved one, the funeral, the first visit to the cemetery, cleaning out the closets, cleaning out the room, all of these are steps toward reality and toward coping.

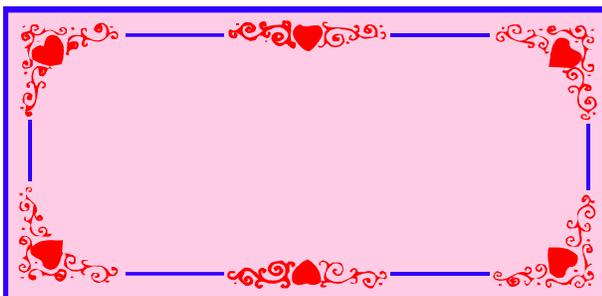
They are not some final step. They are not the closing of a door nor opening of a new door. They are just tiny steps toward deciding to live again and learning to cope.



Doug Manning
Author of

"Please Don't Take my Grief Away"

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Address Correction Requested

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.”*