



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 2018

© 2018 The Compassionate Friends, All rights Reserved Vol. 23 Issue 1

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 16th & February 20th

The **Tuesday** afternoon meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month next to St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Milford at the parish center. ***Please call Ed or Joan Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 by the last weekend or earlier if you plan to attend.***

Directions....On Route 16 (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 30th & February 27th

WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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

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

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

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

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

We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends. ©2018

Weather Cancellation

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

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



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

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

Secretary

* Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

* Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

Webmaster

* Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

Librarian

Ed Motuzas 508/473/4239

Newsletter

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Senior Advisors

* Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

Steering Committee *

Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
 Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
 Linda Teres 508/366-2085
 Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
 Carol Cotter 774/219-7774

The chapter address is:

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

Regional Coordinator

T.B.D

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. Maria Peniche in loving memory of her son **Manuel (Manny) Peniche**.

Ms. Rose Belisle in loving memory of **All The Deceased Children** of the Metrowest Chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

Donna Horrigan in loving memory of **All The Deceased Children** of the Metrowest Chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

Mrs. Sheila Holland in loving memory of her son **Kevin Holland** on his anniversary December 14th.

Mr. & Mrs. Gary Anderson in loving memory of their son **Timothy Michael Anderson** on his anniversary December 13th, and their daughter **Kimberly Anne Tanner** on her anniversary August 28th.

Mr. & Mrs. Neil Dalcero in loving memory of their daughter **Joelle M. Shaver** on her anniversary December 16th.

Mr. & Mrs. Earl Pearlman in loving memory of their son **Marc R. Pearlman** on his birthday December 14th.

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

Mr. & Mrs. Brian Donovan in loving memory of their son **Andrew Joseph Donovan**.

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

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Marshall in loving memory of son **Steven "Chris" Marshall**.

Mr. & Mrs. Burt Stuchins and family in loving memory of their son and brother **Alan R. Stuchins** on his anniversary November 11th.

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Menz in loving memory of **all children of the Metrowest Chapter of T.C.F. gone to soon.**





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, 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

February

NICHOLAS DANIEL PENZA
DANIEL J. SCOTT Jr.
JAMIESON MATTHEW ROBERGE
KAITLYN KENNEDY
JOSEPH LEE LaBRADOR
KIMBERLEE KANE

Birthdays

January

KELSEY MULKERRINS
KIMBERLEE KANE
MANUEL (MANNY) PENICHE
DANICA SCHNAIBLE
THOMAS J. JOHNSON Jr.
PATRICK THOMAS SIBLEY

February

CHRISTOPHER MARC DULLEA
LEA M. SIEBERT
RAYMOND JOHN HOBSON
MATTHEW DENICE
CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI
STACEY ANN MAHONEY
CHRISTOPHER D. DiLORENZO
MICHAEL JAY ANDERSON
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 Surviving Children

Being a parent is never easy. When one's child dies, it is even more difficult being parents to the children who survive. In those first days and weeks, shock may cause us to make decisions (or allow others to make them) that we will later regret. We may wish later that we had included the children more, that we had not permitted ourselves to be isolated from them, that we had explained things differently.

Most of us never expect to face this situation, so we have never thought through in advance what the best course would be.

At some point in our grief, we do become more sensitive to these "forgotten grievers" who have lost a brother or sister. They are having struggles of their own. The first thing to remember is that everything going on with our other children is not caused by the death. They are still, through it all, growing up, going through the various developmental stages that have always concerned parents. Any special problems they had before will not have magically disappeared. Just as we proclaim repeatedly that there is no one way for a parent to grieve, so each child has his own style and timetable for everything, and we cannot control these. We can only try to understand and help when we can. We cannot make it "go away" any more than we can make any of the other harsh realities of life go away.

The very foundation of life has been shaken. The home, so sheltering and safe, has been invaded by forces our surviving children do not understand and parents, who seemed all-powerful and all-wise, may have been reduced to quivering, uncertain robots. Probably for the first time, death, whatever that is, has claimed someone who is not old.

Worse, if there has been the usual quota of sibling rivalry and squabbling, the child may be afraid that he has caused the death by being "bad," or by wishing there were no such bothersome person to have to share with or "take a back seat to."

Just as every child is different, every relationship is different. Feelings toward an older brother or sister who was protector, teacher, idol, and those toward a younger one who may have been a sometime responsibility, hanger-on, biggest fan, are not the same. They may have been best friends or rivals who didn't get along very well. Their responses to the death will be as varied as our own.

A child's place in the family system is changed. The second oldest finds himself suddenly the big brother. The buffer between the others may be gone. Most difficult of all, a child may have become an "only child." Any child younger than the one who died has to go through the scary years of being the same age. Similar symptoms and situations are so frightening. Brothers and sisters often do look and behave very much alike, and these resemblances can be a source of discomfort or of pride. There may be efforts to exaggerate these, to replace the missing child, to make things the way they used to be.

What can we as parents do to help? Most of all, our children need reassurance and honesty. They need to know they are loved and that the family and the home will continue. They need all the facts they can understand. Part of this honesty requires that they know of your grief. By your actions, you can teach them it is okay to cry (even fathers!), it is okay to admit you are angry at "life" for being this way, that you too are confused about "why." Maintaining a "stiff upper lip" in front of the children only encourages them to suppress their feelings.

(continued on next page)



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

Try to be available when they want to talk, but be prepared for the possibility that they may not want to talk with you about their feelings. Many children hold back because they are afraid they might make you cry. You can try explaining that you are not worried about that, but they may still prefer to talk to someone else. They may be ashamed of some common reactions such as feelings of anger, guilt, jealousy, even relief. Perhaps you can help them find someone they can talk to comfortably. They may have already found such a person without you realizing it.

Be honest in the way you remember the child who has died. It is tempting to reminisce about only the good and wonderful qualities, but was this really a saint? Surely not. Recall, and talk about, the not-so good and wonderful things too. Be sure you are remembering a real child, for everyone's sake. A saint is hard to live up to. Talking with other parents at a meeting of The Compassionate Friends can give you practical suggestions about things that have worked for other families. You will hear ideas you may not have thought of. Some will have received help from caring professionals and you may decide to consult someone too. When you recognize your family in what others are saying, you may decide that you and your children are really doing pretty well hurting and healing together and that it just takes longer than you thought it would.

***By Ronnie Peterson
TCF, Star Lake, NY***

The Sacred Task

Sometimes, life is about perspective, about the lens with which we view our stories and our circumstances.

In the world of parents who have outlived their children, we have to learn quickly about perspective. In order to truly keep living after the breath has left our children's lungs, we are forced to choose the lens with which we'll see their life, their story, and our lives and our stories when everything is seemingly broken.

This world of parents who have outlived their children, it's both a heartbreaking and extraordinary world.

In it, you are in the presence of warriors, of men and women who have been given one of the most sacred tasks and missions. You are in the presence of men and women who were chosen, not chosen for pain, but chosen to be the only people in the world to parent their precious children. Parenthood, in and of itself, is a sacred task. It's true.



But parenting a child, parenting children, when you can no longer reach out and touch their faces, hold them in your arms, watch them grow, that is one of the greatest, most sacred tasks you can be given.

Out of every person in this world, you were chosen to be their parent. Out of every person in this world, you are the ones who were chosen to know them, better than anyone, to be theirs, to have your souls tied together for eternity. Out of every person in this world, it was you, it is you, and it always will be you.

We can choose to view our circumstances strictly through the lens of sorrow, of sadness, of pain, or we can look at it through a different lens, one that acknowledges the pain but doesn't see exclusively through it. It notices the broken places, but it holds fiercely to hope. It aches and it hurts at times, but it holds ever more tightly to purpose, to good, to redemption.

You, your children, their stories did not end. They continue to be written every single day that breath is held in your lungs. This is your sacred task.

Their story is not over. We carry them. But listen here: your story, my story, our stories are not over either. No matter how much you wished you could have stopped breathing when the breath left their lungs, no matter how hopeless your life seems, no matter how deep down in the pit anxiety or depression or PTSD have taken you. No matter how weak, how small, how fragile you may feel, you are not.

You are brave. You are fierce. You have been given a sacred task, and you are the person for the job. Your story is far, far, far from over.

Few people in this world meet someone who so intricately and radically changes their lives simply by entering it. Few people have their lives split into such a powerful before and after. And while it may be so easy to look at our before and afters through the lens of deep pain and sorrow, you have been given a sacred gift: to know a love so pure, so raw, that it extends across world, through time, and death cannot even touch it. You've been given a sacred gift, a second chance, an invitation to never be the same from this point forward simply because they existed, you were chosen to be theirs, and you are tied together, eternally, your love a force greater than life itself.

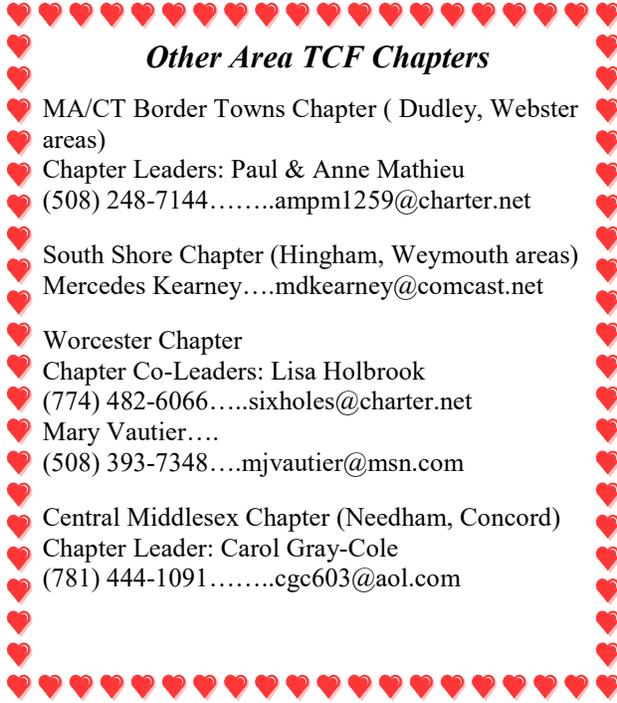


You are theirs. They are yours. For eternity. Press on.

*written by Lexi Behrndt
November 7, 2016*



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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)
Mercedes Kearney....mdkearney@comcast.net
- Worcester Chapter
Chapter Co-Leaders: Lisa Holbrook
(774) 482-6066.....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

Redefining The Five Stages Of Grief 6/6/17

When people ask me what I do and I reveal that I work as a grief counselor, they often recoil in horror, ushering forth a series of well-meaning exclamations. "Oh, isn't that hard?" "That seems so sad!" "I couldn't do that."

The truth is that I don't find it sad at all. When I talk to grieving people it's like looking at one of those negative image paintings, the deeper the grief, the more evidence of love I see.

Something else I see on a regular basis is confusion over Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's *The Five Stages of Grief*. Everyone seems to know what they are, denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, but most people find themselves at a loss when it comes to how to actually apply them to their grieving process.

The answer is simple, I tell them: The five stages are fluid. They are meant to be used as guideposts, as a framework, but not necessarily as a strict formula. You may go through some of them simultaneously, and others not at all. You may stay in one stage for years but move through other stages quickly. Everyone's journey of grief is different.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross herself says in the opening paragraph of *On Grief and Grieving*, "The stages have evolved since their introduction, and they have been very misunderstood over the past three decades. They were never meant to tuck messy emotions into neat packages. They are responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss. There is no typical loss."

I know that when I lost both of my parents within a seven-year time frame, all before I was age 25, I went through a multitude of emotions and reactions, all encapsulated within the five stages. When I sat down to write about the experience in my memoir, *The Rules of Inheritance*, I wanted to demonstrate just how malleable the five stages are, and so I used them as a framework for my story.

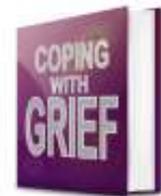
Initially I was going to write a more straightforward dissection of the five stages, but it finally occurred to me that the best way to demonstrate how interchangeable the stages are would be using my own experience as an example.



Breaking down my story this way helped me to understand the stages even better. Additionally, it led to another often-seen issue during the grieving process: the sense that one isn't grieving properly.

It seems that not only are people confused over how to use the stages of grief, but also they're confused about how to grieve in general. Over the years I've had people come to me with worries that they haven't grieved long enough, hard enough, that they have cried too much, or too little, or that their grief process is too different from someone who is experiencing a similar loss.

The bottom line is that there just isn't a right way to grieve, there's no easy way to heal, and there's certainly no time frame to adhere to. Yet without fail, the majority of people question the way they're going about it.



More often than not, this judgment on how to grieve comes not from you but from the people around you. It's been six months, a friend might say to you. After a year you have to move on, another might tell you.

Even the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* only allots two months in its current assessment of grief.

Most of these parameters come from people who have never truly grieved themselves. Sometimes they're self-imposed. We tend to be hardest on ourselves when we're vulnerable.

What's important is that mourners need to work to discover their own journey of grief. Only you know what path you need to take toward healing, and whether you accomplish this using every one of the five stages, shunning books about grief or never missing a session of your bereavement group, the key will consistently be to listen to yourself. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross herself reminds us: "Our grief is as individual as our lives."



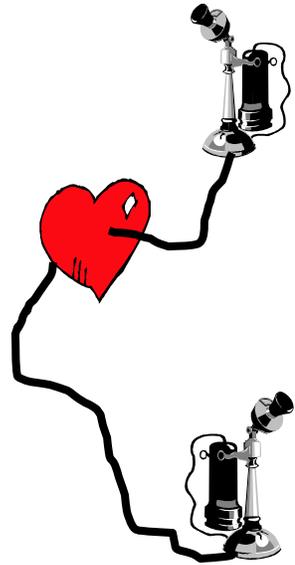
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Phone Friends

Sometimes it helps to just be able to talk to someone; maybe at a time when pain or stress seems too much to bear. We maintain a list of Telephone Friends; people who are willing to listen, to commiserate, to give whatever support they can. In a time of need, feel free to call one of our Telephone Friends.

Ed & Joan Motuzas, ...**Scott**, age 31, Kidney and Liver Failure,(508)473-4239
Janice Parmenter,**Tyler**, age 29, Chronic Addiction,(508)528-5715
Judy Daubney,**Clifford**, age 27, Suicide,(508)529-6942.
Linda Teres,.....**Russell**, age 19, Automobile Accident,(508)366-2085
Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)881-2111
Sandra Richiazzi.....**Bryan**, age 17, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106
Sarah Commerford....**Timothy**, age 21, Homicide.....(508)429-9230



It is always useful to have more Telephone Friends; individuals who are willing to provide support and comfort via the telephone. The chapter provides guidance for those who want to help. When you listen and talk to the bereaved, you make a difference. A longer list of Telephone Friends increases the likelihood that someone will be available when needed. Call Ed Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 if you would like to be a Telephone Friend.

Support Resources

TCF Online Chat Groups:

WWW.compassionatefriends.org/resources/online_Support.aspx

- For questions, please contact Diana Jorden, 925-432-3854, who moderates the general grief and suicide loss rooms on Friday nights and Sunday. TCF online offers several specialized chat rooms, all moderated by moms who have been in chat for at least 2 years or more. We offer a sibling-only chat, loss under 1 year, loss over 2 years, loss of only child, suicide survivor, infant/pregnancy loss, and every night (and Monday mornings) there is a general loss room open to parents, step and grand, and siblings.
- You can sign up for the online TCF National newsletter at www.compassionatefriends.org
- You can reach our TCF National Facebook page through the link on the same home page of our national website. You will be asked to join Facebook if you are not already a member, and we hope you'll find our Facebook page as interesting as do the more than 11,000 fans who have already found us!

Other Grief Support Websites

- agast.org - for grandparents
- alivealone.org
- aliveinmemory.org
- angelmoms.com
- babysteps.com
- bereavedparentsusa.org
- beyondindigo.com
- childloss.com
- goodgriefresources.com
- parmenter.org - children's bereavement
- griefhealingblog.com
- griefwatch.com
- GriefNet.org
- healingafterloss.org
- Jeff's Place-www.jeffsplacemetrowest.org
- opentohope.com
- pomc.com - families of murder victims
- save.org
- survivorsofsuicide.com
- Taps.org - military death
- webhealing.com
- Griefshare.org



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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*)

When Sadness Becomes Depression: Some Thoughts for Bereaved Parents

About a month after my son died, I went to visit my doctor for my annual checkup. He was aware that my son had died and was very concerned about my state of mind. He asked me how I felt, and I told him this was the worst trauma of my life and I was "in the hole" mentally. When he offered to write a prescription for an anti-depressant, I declined. Why did I do that?

I explained to my doctor that I was supposed to be depressed, disconnected, tearful, sad, angry, withdrawn and deeply hurt. That is expected in the initial stages of this grief process. I told him that if I had said, "Oh, I'm doing great. No problems. Just another little hiccup in life," that he probably would have had me in a straight jacket on the way to a mental hospital. "Wouldn't you think I was completely insane if said I was 'ok'?" He agreed and said that a loss of this magnitude was incomprehensible to him, and he was available day or night if I needed his help.

A year later when I went back for my annual physical, we had the same conversation. This time, though, I was in a different frame of mind. I wasn't depressed, I was simply very, very sad. Medications were not necessary.

However, I have met many, many bereaved parents who are unable to start seeing hope after six months, eight months and then a year. These parents are in a paralyzing fog of deep depression. Once we pass the one year mark, we are still devastated, but we are usually functioning on most levels, albeit without the joy that once was in our lives. Those parents who are still depressed, unable to motivate themselves, unable to function, continually tearful and withdrawn, are probably clinically depressed.

These deep, continuing depressions call for a medication to work on the physiological causes and a good grief counselor to work on the damage to your psyche. There is no shame in this; it is a matter of simple survival.

Here is a good description of depression and anxiety (both so very common to bereaved parents) from the DSM-Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association:

"A person is suffering from a major depressive episode if he or she experiences items number 1 or 2 from the list of symptoms below, along with any 4 others, continuously for more than 2 weeks:

1. Depressed mood with overwhelming feelings of sadness and grief
2. Apathy, loss of interest and pleasure in activities formerly enjoyed
3. Sleep problems, insomnia, early-morning waking, or oversleeping nearly every day
4. Decreased energy or fatigue
5. Noticeable changes in appetite and weight (significant weight loss or gain)
6. Inability to concentrate or think, or indecisiveness
7. Physical symptoms or restlessness or being physically slowed down
8. Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and helplessness
9. Recurrent thoughts of death and suicide, or a suicide attempt."

While the above are also symptoms of the initial grief for the bereaved parent in the early months, these symptoms should modify toward the end of the first year. If they do not, the "episode of depression" referenced above will become a never-ending way of life. Should this happen to you, address it now. Talk to your doctor and a counselor about your days and nights and feelings. Let them know what you feel...not what others want you to feel. You won't be pulling yourself up by the bootstraps on this one, gentle parent. You are unique in your grief. I have never seen any two parents grieve in the same way. I've often said that my odds of winning the lottery 20 times are better than my odds of seeing a bereaved couple who travel the grief road in exactly the same way.

It may surprise you to know that a substantial number of our members are seeing counselors and many are taking medications for depression and anxiety. This is the harsh reality of life after the death of our children. The shock and the overwhelming sense of loss do damage us both physically and psychologically. That's our truth and our reality. Not all parents experience this. But to deny that many of our members do experience depression and deep anxiety is to deny the very essence of our souls. Be honest with yourself.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

Be open to possibilities. There is hope. You see it in the eyes of those who have passed the third, fourth, fifth, tenth and even twentieth anniversary of their child's death. But many of these people were clinically depressed and wisely sought professional help. Do this for yourself. Depression is a roadblock to your grief work.

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

What Do I Do With My Child's Room?

I guess I put this off as long as I could. I am one of those bereaved parents who has never touched their child's room after they died. I have added things, but never subtracted. Basically, everything is in its place as she left it 6+ years ago. Everything that a normal 15-year-old would possess: posters and pictures of friends held to the wall by thumb tacks, playbills from the school musical she was in, dried corsages from school dances, stuffed animals won at the fair thrown haphazardly on her bed, teen magazines and CDs scattered here and there, my remaining links to the past, flashbacks before the loss of our innocence. One that really hurt was the note that she had left to herself that said, "Work at Perkins. May 14th from 7 - 3." Rather than my Nina excitedly, yet apprehensively going off to the second day of her first "real" job, my family and I were at the funeral home making the final arrangements for her funeral. Surreal and so sad.

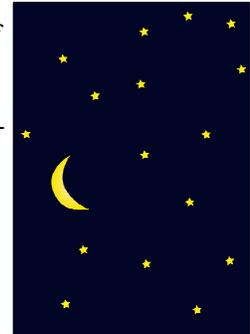
I can remember the first year or two when I would peer into her room and look at all the glorious clutter of her active life. I swore I would never touch a thing, never throw anything out, it would be left intact forever. The times I did spend in her room were usually spent wrapped in her afghan on top of her bed, practically curled in the fetal position with a box of Kleenex, and sobbing my heart out. "I will never change this room, never!" was my mindset back then.

But things have changed. Due to some family issues, we have to make room for more people residing in our house. The time had come to face it...I had no choice. It is a long involved process. My sweet Nina was a pack rat, to say the least! She saved everything! I have sifted through page after page of her school work. I have squelched the urge to look through the shoebox that says on the outside, "Notes from Friends, 8th grade", instead choosing to not invade her privacy, even after death. I have gone through her closet, and studied her clothing, remembering what she looked like in each outfit. She was so tiny! Size 3-4 jeans and the teeniest little shirts you can ever imagine.

It reminded me why we always said she was "Petite but powerful!"...though tiny she was a giant of a human being...loving, considerate, and so full of good ideas.

I have had my moments of intense sadness, such as when I have come across her, "Book about Me" that she made in school, the part that asks who is the most important person in your life, to which she answers in her grade school handwriting, "My Mommy, of course." I cry for the loss of that love and our close relationship, even something that carried over into her teens, what are supposed to be the "rebellious years." Even in her confirmation book she wrote the same identical thing when asked who was the most important person in her life. God, I miss her so.

What I have been pleasantly surprised about, though, is that maybe the fact that I waited so long has made this an easier (for lack of a better word...there is nothing "easy" about any of this!) task. Bittersweet, I guess would describe it. I have found myself laughing more at these pictures and reminders of the past, and crying less. And the most amazing thing has happened. The past three nights I have slept in her bed. I am the first one to have slept there since Nina died over six years ago. After I turn off the lights and crawl into her bed, the glow-in-the-dark stars that she put into perfectly placed constellations, gleam and twinkle...it is the only thing that you can see. I feel like I am lying in her bed, protectively wrapped in her arms, and seeing a piece of heaven just as she does now, and what she used to see from her bed when she was alive. The closeness I feel to her at that moment is indescribable! I haven't slept as peacefully since Nina died as I have these past three nights!



I wanted to share this with you in case there are others out there like me...who haven't taken on the task of clearing out their child's room and wondered if they ever would be able to. And, also for those who have heard the comments, "You haven't cleaned out her/his room YET!?!?!!" I know it isn't the right choice for everyone; as we all know, the ways we handle our grief and our ways of dealing with our child's possessions are all different, just as they should be. But for those who have waited, I want to reassure you that it has turned out to be a much more positive experience than I imagined. All part of seeing that you really ARE making progress and finding a little hope along the way...that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Cathy Seehuetter, Nina's mom forever
TCF, St. Paul, MN



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



I Didn't Say Goodbye

There simply wasn't time to finish the sentence or to make sure he had everything he needed: watch, money, schedule, notes, clean underwear. I had planned on having a nice, leisurely moment or two, simply gazing into one another's eyes, memorizing the lines that come in the crease of the face and breathing in the faint smell of soap and body talc. I had planned on a longer hug than I got, and I had planned on saying something more profound than, "Be careful."

But, as usual, the day got away from me, and even though it was early, I was already behind. So, in the end, it was the dash to the door and the hurried-up hug that separated us that day. A kiss on the cheek, a wave of the hand, and we were apart; each turning our attention to our separate appointments, meetings and tasks. I didn't get to say goodbye. It was, in other words, the beginning of another ordinary day in the hurry, rush-rush world we so comfortably live in. It was so ordinary.

But it was not to remain ordinary and now the entire world will long remember *that* day September 11, 2001 as a day of endings, a day of beginnings, a day of terror, a day of death. The bombings of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the aborted attempt at another site by terrorists flying jetliners loaded with men, women and children will take its place in history as one of the most horrifying terrorists activities of all time. To use human beings as weapons of destruction is simply unthinkable, unimaginable, indescribable, inhuman, insane.

Forever, we are all changed. We weep for those who died, for those whose loved ones were lost in the destruction, for those whose hopes were crushed in the falling towers.



We weep for those whose dreams of tomorrow will never be realized, for those who witnessed the horror and for those who felt it. We weep for those who lost their freedom, their spirit, their lives. We weep for ourselves as we realize how little we can save of any one day and how much hurt we can carry for one lifetime. We weep for the deaths of thousands and for the death of innocence for all of us.

It was just an ordinary day in early fall. And now, like so many other days, it is etched into the history books for the future to know. Each generation has had their historical marks to guide them through the passage of time and now September 11, 2001, has become one of those dates carved into the memory of every living soul. It was a dark day, and for many, the light has not yet returned.

It began as such an ordinary day, and now I'm wondering why my own grief has come back these past months as I have watched those newly struggling with their hurts. Am I grieving again because I did not "finish" my own grief journey? Did I fool myself into thinking that I was "over" my own grief! Or, am I "re-grieving" because I simply ache for the loss of life, security and innocence for our entire nation?

I have listened to the news and read the accounts of those directly involved in the bombings and have shared their grief as they face their own uncertain futures. I have listened to the ache of thousands of hearts who, like me, didn't get to say goodbye that day. Sometimes, we never get to say goodbye, and at other times, we have the opportunity and it just doesn't seem to be the "right word." So much grief has been spent on not saying a farewell. So much additional hurt has been felt because someone did not get to say goodbye. It was an ordinary day, and there was no special reason to say goodbye. No one knew it would be their last day. Hardly anyone ever does. Over and over again, we have heard stories of cell phone calls made in the last horrifying moments to loved ones on the ground. We have read the stories of those calls made by brave men and women as they faced their last moments of life. Sermons have been preached and poetry written about saying goodbye. As a therapist, I have listened to thousands of bereaved lament their last words spoken to loved ones, and so many of them wept in grief over not saying goodbye.

Why do we spend so much time and grief over not saying goodbye? Why do we wash away the words we did get to say over a lifetime of loving someone with the single lament, "But I didn't get to say goodbye"? Why are those words so important that the lack of them creates a lifetime of additional hurt and pain?

Twenty-five years ago I did get to say goodbye. I knew the end of our son's life was approaching, and I got the chance to give one last hug and say one last sentence. I got the chance to say goodbye and I *didn't* take it. In the last moments of my son's life, and years later, of my parents' lives, I did not say goodbye. Goodbye? Why would I want to say goodbye? I wasn't through saying hello!

With the very last breath of my son's life, I simply said, "I love you." I was able to be with my mom in her final hours, and I did not say goodbye. I said, "I love you." And although I was not with my dad when he died, the last words I shared with him as I left his home on what was to be his last night, I kissed him and said, "I love you." And that is exactly what those cell phone calls said, too. They called to tell the world what was happening and then, in the last breath, they said, "I love you!"

(continued on next page)



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

Let go of the hurt you are experiencing if you did not get to say goodbye. You would not have said it even if you had had the chance! You would have said, "I love you." Goodbye is simply too final, too harsh, too forever. Surely our loved ones knew we loved them. Surely our loved ones knew we cared. And even if you don't believe they knew, you can do something about that right now.

Go outside, find your special star, and with all your might, whisper, speak or yell out loud, "I LOVE YOU!" Trust me, the universe is listening, and your words of love will travel far to reach the heart of those no longer within hug's reach. I guess you could yell goodbye, too, if you really want to...but why? Why let the grief of not saying goodbye rob you of the memories of what you did get to say and how you lived your lives together? Why let not saying goodbye steal away the joy of knowing your loved one was in your life and is still a thread in your fabric, to be woven forever around your heart?

Goodbye? I'd rather live my life so that my last words are, "I love you." We never know when an ordinary day will turn into a day that gets marked down in the family history as a not-so-ordinary day. But all of us can live our lives so we can leave with few regrets. Don't let the events of the past several months rob you of your hope, your passion, your joy in living. Let it become a lesson for all of us to live our lives as if there were only moments left...because that is all there really are anyway.

Moments...just moments, one after another, each special and sacred in its own way, each waiting to be etched forever on our memories or lost in the sea of millions of other ordinary moments.

I learned so long ago that any moment can be the last one, so I no longer waste too many of my moments. Oh yes, there are days when I simply plod through the moments, not even aware of their passing. It often takes a cataclysmic event to shake me out of my reverie and reawaken me to the specialness of each moment. Hopefully, those shake-up events are not as devastating as those of September 11, 2001. But even that day can have meaning if each of us makes a commitment to never let another moment pass without our being aware of its passing. Take advantage of the moments we have and spend them wisely. Spend them saying, "I love you," instead of wishing you had said, "Goodbye."

I grew up military, married military and gave birth to military, and goodbye has always been a part of my life. But I gave up saying it long ago when I realized "I love you" lasts far longer and feels so much better. Goodbye? I'm not through saying, "Hello" and, "I LOVE YOU!"

Darcie Sims
Reprinted with permission to
TCF from Bereavement Magazine

Death is Not Dramatic

Loss is not always the screaming in the halls of the hospital. Or at the crash. Scene of the crime.

Death is not often dramatic. Not a TV or movie drama. No one making a speech in the hospital. No aria on stage.

Not histrionic at all.

No. It often comes quite away from the living. Quietly. Taking without anyone knowing. Maybe not even the victim. Sudden and quiet. No screams. No sudden awareness. Forget angels and choirs. Bright light or tunnels. Any and all of that. Just a sudden nothing and quiet to be shattered by another's sudden loss of breath, or whimper, or life slicing shriek of realization that death came and went. Leaving the living to ponder and grieve. And grieve.

And grief, real grief, is not histrionic. Maybe not even noticeable. Real grief.

Just pain beyond anything else. With no apparent cut. Or bruise. No broken bones. No cancer eating away at the organs. Not a knife sticking out of a chest. Blood fountain spurting from a severed artery or vein. Blunt force trauma to the head. Bullet in the gut. Bang crash of car hitting car. Bumpety thump of tires bouncing off and plowing through a person in the street. Nothing that shows others of the destruction inside.

Just tears might do that. Real ones. Or a show of them. To let yourself know. And others. That death has visited. And that bastard is staying for dinner.

Can grief be as silent and as loud as death itself? Even now, years after walking in on him, I have not roared my pain. Screamed my grief. Shrieked out in tears.

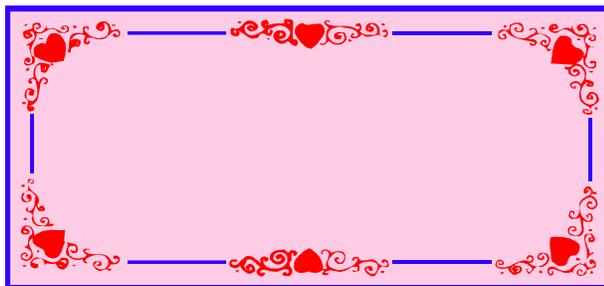
Am I a freak? Or just a bad parent? Did I love Isaac? Enough? To cry and scream and rent the air with my pain. If so, why not shriek right then and there? When I walked in and saw him. Dead. On the floor. Like he had fallen asleep on his back. With his eyes open . . . All I could do was mumble his name over and over. Knowing the reality.

Is there a proper way to react to death?

Would a scream have made me accept Isaac's death more? Would my scream have made me acknowledge death into my life? Why didn't I scream? Cry? Or howl? I loved, love my son. On TV and in books, memoirs, people cry out. Roar or at least squeak their pain. I did not. Though pain roared through every muscle, every nerve every capillary of my body. Pain overloaded my brain and emotions. I could only cringe. Whimper at best.

Neal Raisman
TCF, Central Ohio Chapter, Columbus, OH
In Memory of my son, Isaac

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



*This newsletter is printed
through the generosity of
The Copy Stop
Milford, MA*

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.”*