



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.

July, August 2023

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YOU ARE INVITED

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

July 18th. & August 15th.

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

Directions....On Route 16, going north through downtown Milford (Main St.) at the Town Hall on the right take a left at the lights onto Winter St. The parish center is the last building before the church.

Going south on Route 16 (East Main St.) after Sacred Heart Church on the left, bear right on Main St., continue past Dunkin' Donuts on the right, proceed to the next set of lights and take a right onto Winter St. There is parking on both sides of the street. Look for Compassionate Friends signs to meeting room.

July 25th. & August 29th.

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. ©2023

WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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

Weather Cancellation

**In the event of inclement weather on meeting days or nights, if in doubt call:
Ed or Joan Motuzas at
(508) 473-4239**

(If school is closed in Milford, because of weather, then all meetings will be cancelled at the Senior Center & Parish Center.)



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

Judy Daubney 508/473/4239

Newsletter

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Steering Committee *

Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
 Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
 Linda Teres 508/366-2085
 Wendy Bruno 508/429-7998

The chapter address is:

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

Regional Coordinator

Dennis Gravelle
 638 Pleasant St.
 Leominster, MA 01453-6222
 Phone (978) 537-2736
 dennisg@tcf.email.com

The Compassionate Friends has a national office that supports and coordinates chapter activities. The national office can be reached as follows:

The Compassionate Friends, National Office
 48660 Pontiac Trail #930808
 Wixom MI 48393-7736
 Toll-Free (877) 969-0010

Web Page:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Chapter Web Page
www.tcfmetrowest.com

TRIBUTES, GIFTS AND DONATIONS

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

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

Ms. Maureen McTiernan in loving memory of her daughter **Shannon A. McTiernan** "Always in my heart, forever missed, and my undying love. Till we meet again".

Mr. & Mrs. Charles Anderson in loving memory of their son **Ryan C. Anderson**. "Every day is One day closer to you".

Mr. & Mrs. Carl Bergman in loving memory of their children **Jesse Stuart Bergman and Rebecca Bergman**. "Always missed and forever loved".

Mrs. Diane Sears in loving memory of her daughter **Sheril Sears Jones** on her anniversary July 25th.

Ms. Betty Myers in loving memory of her son **William Bruce Tagoe** on his anniversary July 6th. "Forever loved and never forgotten"..

Mr. & Mrs James Loughran in loving memory of their son **Christopher James Loughran** on his birthday August 5th. "Every day is One day closer to you".

Mr. Michael Durkin in loving memory of his Two daughters **Casey Reuter Durkin and Molly Durkin**. Mr. & Mrs. Earl Pearlman in loving memory of their son **Marc R. Pearlman**

Mr. Paul Stack in loving memory of his son **John W. Stack** on his birthday April 26th. "Every day is one day closer to you".

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Baisley in memory of their only child **Stacy Ann Mahoney** on her birthday February 20 th. And her anniversary March 21st. "We miss you so Much".

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Taylor and sons Eric and Michael, in loving memory of their son and brother **Jacob Thomas Taylor** on his birthday April 4th.

Mrs. Marie Dow in loving memory of her son **Michael D. Dow** on his birthday April 7th.

Ms. Linda Zaccagnini in loving memory of her stepson **Robert Marshall Machanic**. "I miss you so much".

2 Mr. Scott Cohen & Lisa Gelin in loving memory of



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, July and August. 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

July

WILLIAM BRUCE-TAGOE
SCOTT F. MOTUZAS
JOHN W. STACK
ETHAN WAYNE MILLER
JACOB THOMAS TAYLOR
ANDREW RYAN WEGLINSKI
SHERIL SEARS JONES
DIXON BERGMAN

August

MAXWELL A. LAVENSKIE
JULIE A.SLOCUM

Birthdays

July

PATRICK WALKER EVENS
MIRANDA E. DeGUGLIELMO
MATTHEW DAMIGELLA
TROY F. MARDEN
MIRA TUTEJA
MICHAEL J. MULLANEY
OWEN PATRICK BINGHAM
ELISSA DAON
COLLEEN CAHILL MOORE
KAITLYN KENNEDY
BRIAN F. ALLARD

August

MAXWELL A. LAVENSKIE
BRETT E. THOMPSON
CHRISTOPHER JAMES LOUGHRAN
AKIF S. QUTAB
DANIEL P. MERCURE
JENNA LOUISE GIARDINI
CASEY REUTER DURKIN
DAVID ALEXANDER SCHNEGG
CLIFFORD CROWE
GREG BRUNO
ADAM SCOTT COLE
JOHN J. POTORSKI

*Softly...may peace re-
place heartache and
cherished memories
remain with you al-
ways on your child's
anniversary.*

*Death wounds us, but wounds
are meant to heal and, given
time, they will. But we must
want to be healed.*
Joseph Bayly



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.

A SIBLING SPEAKS OUT

What happens to the children when a brother or sister dies? In some ways it is a very different experience from that which parents go through, while in others it is very much the same. Part of the reason for the difference is that the child who has died has a unique relationship with each family member. Part of the reason for the similarity is that all have suffered a loss.

One of the strongest desires expressed by siblings is that they are much more likely to want to return to a normal routine. They want to return to school fairly quickly and to go out with their friends. They want their parents to stop crying, not because they don't care but because they do care and want to see the hurt stop. Just because a child wants to go to a movie doesn't mean he isn't grieving. I think that children are much less exposed to socially "appropriate" behavior after someone has died and may do things that do not fit into an "appropriate" role.

Another strong feeling I see is that of guilt. As much as parents know about their children, there are some things they will never know. A child's private thoughts or an exchange between children may never come to the parents attention. The source of a child's guilt is frequently the result of an argument, a hastily shouted "drop dead," or a similar fleeting thought. These incidents come back to haunt children as though one such incident had something to do with the death.

There are a few more concerns that may develop. One is how to take over for the dead child, for example, the household chores that were always done by him or her, but that now have to be done by someone else. Related to this concern is a situation in which a child always shared a particular activity simply because the sibling did it too.

After the death, the surviving sibling may feel compelled to continue the activity because to give it up would be to take away a reminder of the dead sibling. Another concern is that whatever happened to the brother or sister may happen to the survivor. This is particularly acute if the sibling who died was older. As the child approaches the age of the sibling when he or she died, a feeling of anxiety may develop.

Many children realize this fear to be groundless but find themselves wondering if they will survive. Consequently, birthdays are often occasions with unexpressed conflicts.

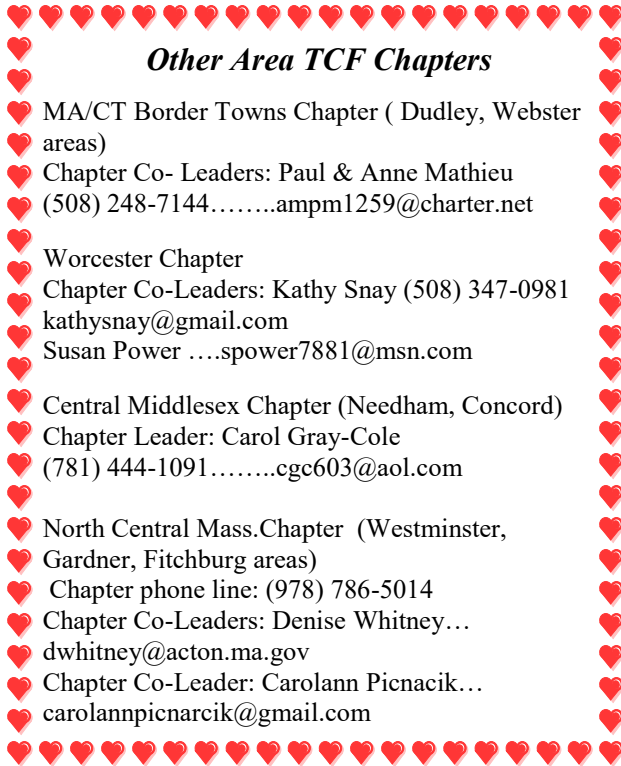
Children also share some of their parents' feelings: the loneliness, the looking for comfort, the feeling that no one else really knows what they're going through. They also share the unanswerable questions: "If I could have" . . . and "What if?" . . .

A child's life is changed forever when a brother or sister dies. If I could advise parents, it would be to say, "children do not grieve the same way as parents do because of different relationships. Keeping these differences in perspective will help you understand why children sometimes do the things they do. It helps to consider a child's point of view when you are hurting so much. During such an emotionally draining time as grieving don't leave anything to chance; don't assume anything. Making sure you and your children are aware of each other's feelings will mean less confusion, less tension, more sharing, and more growing together as a family."

***Julie Peterson
TCF, Pawtucket, RI***



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Other Area TCF Chapters

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

OLD GRIEF

Older grief is gentler.

It's about sudden tears swept in by a strand of music.
It's about haunting echoes of first pain on anniversaries.
It's about feeling his presence for an instant one day while dusting his room.
It's about early pictures that invite me to fold him in my arms again.
It's about memories blown on wisps of wood smoke and sea scents.

Older grief is about aching in gentler ways, rarer longing, less engulfing fire.
Older grief is about searing pain ~ wrought into tenderness.

Linda Zelenka
TCF, Orange Park, FL

A Mother's Grief

A mother's grief is physically intense and devastating to the mother's self-identity and yet, like all grief, contains the seeds for personal growth and greater meaning in life.

A mother's bond with her child begins before child-birth. Whether or not she ever holds the child to her bosom or nuzzles its head with her nose or puts her finger in its grasp, she begins the strongest physical bonding in human experience. When this bond is broken the process of mothering is abruptly interrupted.

Mother's grief, is hugely physical. And the pain of grieving mothers seems to be more intense and long lasting. A mother is unable suddenly to abandon her mothering, regardless of the child's age at death. In fact, cutting the grass around his grave feels to me like I'm manicuring his nails, just as I used to do when he was a little boy.

Even after the child is grown there is a definitive bond between mother and child. My connection to my 17- year-old son was forcefully demonstrated to me the day he died eleven years ago. I was in a restaurant having lunch when I felt an inexplicable rush of nausea that sent me outside for air, where I vomited for 20 minutes. That fateful night, I was told by police it was the exact moment my son fell to his death.

It is no surprise that mothers whose children die feel severe physical pain and have more physical symptoms than fathers during their grief. Mothers describe their pain as "being wounded," "violently torn apart," "kicked in the teeth," "as if every part of my body was broken," "blown apart and shattered." Mothers are so bound to their children that a child's death often feels to the mother as if a portion of her body has disappeared.

Often mothers define themselves through relationships with their children. The closer a mother's sense of identity is bound to her dead child, the more devastating the loss and grief. Death of a child can bring on an identity crisis for a mother that shakes her very sense of self. Mothers can experience feeling like they failed to protect their child.

It is perhaps a miracle that a mother is able to survive the death of her child. In the beginning, most mothers do not feel they will survive; but somehow, they do. That a mother can change in positive ways, integrating aspects of her child into her own life, internalizing her relationship to her child and using it to find strength and wisdom, or finding the courage to live joyfully and fully again, is truly a testament to the power of mother love.

One of the distinctive features in the grieving mother's experience is that at the same time she continues to miss the physical presence of her child, she may feel very closely connect to her child, as if the child has once again become a part of her. Some mothers talk to their child. Some use the child as a teacher or guide.

Grieving mothers need to know that the relationship with the child will never die, that their child will always be part of their life, but the form of the relationship will change.

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Indeed those mothers who seem to heal most completely are those for whom the child has become an integral part of their inner lives.

Many mothers are frightened of their despair and want to stifle their suffering. Friends and family see grief as a bad thing to “be lessened.” But negating her grief robs a grieving mother of an opportunity to become her most integrated and powerful self. Rather than trying to stop the pain of grief, compassion and acceptance of the mother and her despair, should be offered. Also the mother must patiently and compassionately feel and accept her pain.

Mothers focusing on their process rather than denying it, capture the potential for growth that lies in grieving.

Mothers do survive the death of a child, whether through hard work or a commitment to grow or just through the passage of time. Through that survival comes a deeper sense of compassion for others. And, though the intensity and character of grief continually changes over time, the depth of love of a mother for her child remains forever constant.

*By Nisha Zenoff
TCF, Palo Alto, CA*

SUGGESTIONS TO AID MARRIAGE

Don't expect a spouse to be a tower of strength when he or she is also experiencing grief.

Be sensitive to your spouse's personality style. In general he or she will approach grief with the same personality habits as they approach life. It may be very private, very open and sharing or someplace in between. Find a “sympathetic ear” (not necessarily your mate's), someone who cares and will listen.

Do talk about your child with your spouse.

Seek the help of a counselor if depression, grief or problems in your marriage are getting out of hand.

Do not overlook or ignore anger-causing situations. It is like adding fuel to the fire. Eventually there is an explosion. Deal with things as they occur.

Remember you loved your spouse enough to marry. Try to keep your marriage alive; go out for dinner or an ice cream cone; take a walk; go on a vacation.

Be gentle with your mate.

Join a support group for bereaved parents. Attend as a couple, come by yourself or with a friend. It is a good place to learn about grief and to feel understood. Do not make it a pressure on your spouse to attend with you if it is not his/her preference.

Join a mutually agreeable community betterment project.

Do not blame yourself or your mate for what you were powerless to prevent. If you blame your spouse or personally feel responsible for your child's death seek immediate counseling help for yourself and your marriage.

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Realize that you are not alone. There are many bereaved parents.

Choose to believe again in the goodness of God and life. Search for joy and laughter.

Recognize your extreme sensitivity and vulnerability and be alert to the tendency to take things personally.

Read about grief, especially the books written for bereaved parents.

Take your time with decisions about your child's things, change of residence, etc.

Be aware of unrealistic expectations for yourself or your mate.

Remember there is no timetable. Everyone goes through grief differently, even parents of the same child.

Try to remember that your spouse is doing the best that he or she can.

Marital friction is normal in any marriage. Don't blow it out of proportion.

Try not to let little everyday irritants become major issues. Talk about them and try to be patient.

Be sensitive to the needs and wishes of your spouse as well as yourself. Sometimes it is important to compromise.

It is important to keep the lines of communication open.

Work on your grief instead of wishing that your spouse would handle his/her grief differently. You will find that you will have enough just handling your own grief. Remember when you help yourself cope with grief, it indirectly helps your spouse.

As Harriett Schiff states, “Value your marriage. You have lost enough.”

Hold onto HOPE. With time, work and support you will survive. It will never be the same but you can learn again to appreciate life and the people in your life.

Hope for Bereaved Parents, Syracuse, NY

Summer Thoughts...

Summer is a time when things naturally slow down, a time when many are waiting for the orderly routine of their lives to begin again. For those of us in grief whose lives are already in limbo, it can seem endless if we let it. Seeing children, babies, and teenagers is not easy for us, and in summer we see them everywhere from shopping centers to beaches. Everyone is out living, loving, enjoying carefree activities with their children, and we want to scream, “**It's not fair!**”

I was sitting on my patio one evening at dusk recently listening to the shouts of children outside playing, and I was crying as I remembered the sounds that my child used to make. I became very depressed as I thought what a long summer this was going to be.

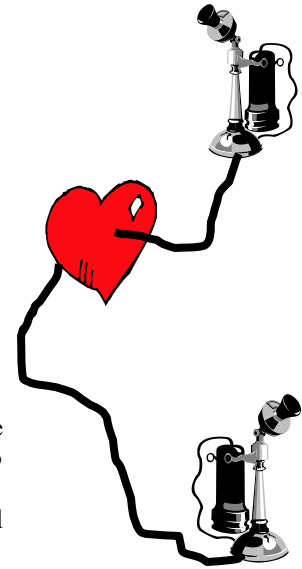
In my reverie I was reminded of a recent comment I had heard at a TCF meeting: “My child was such a loving, giving person. He would not want me to waste my life being bitter.” I also remembered a good friend telling me to “count my blessings” and naming over all the things I had to be grateful for. I was furious at the time.



Phone Friends

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

- Ed & Joan Motuzas, ...**Scott**, age 31, Kidney and Liver Failure,(508)473-4239
- Janice Parmenter,**Tyler**, age 29, Chronic Addiction,(508)528-5715
- Judy Daubney,**Clifford**, age 27, Suicide,(508)529-6942
- Linda Teres,.....**Russell**, age 19, Automobile Accident,(508)366-2085
- Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)653-0541



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

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Nothing that I had to be grateful for could compensate for the fact that my child was dead. Now sitting in the twilight of this early summer evening, I began to see things differently. I determined that this summer would not be an eternity, that I would not let it be. I decided first of all to stay busy. I know I can find plenty to do if I only take the time to look. I am also going to try to enjoy the simple things that used to give me so much pleasure, like working in my garden and flowers. I then decided to try to be truly grateful for the blessings that I have, like my husband, my surviving children, my job, my friends, etc.

It has been almost five years for me, and I know that last year this would not have worked. Of course, I still have times of sadness. I know I always will, but I have decided that in the process of grieving, we close so many doors that the only way to recovery is to reopen them gradually at our own pace.

I know I will never be the same person I was before the death of my child, but I hope eventually in some ways I will be a better person because suffering can be beneficial if we learn and grow through it. A year ago I didn't feel this way, and I know I still have a long way to go, but in the meantime I know the greatest tribute to my child will be to enjoy this summer as he would have done.

*Libby Gonzalez,
TCF, Huntsville, A*

GRIEVING IS A LONELY JOB

I don't care what anybody says, grieving is a very lonely job. Friends and family try to help in their own caring way, but, sometimes it's almost too much effort to try to explain how you feel inside.

In fact, I'm not so sure that there are words to describe the feeling. It isn't "physical pain," and I don't know if "emotional pain" is any more descriptive. It's just a feeling that's always there. The sadness, the loneliness and the helplessness. On the outside, of course, no one would know. From the beginning people would always tell me how great I looked or how well I was doing. What did they expect? Sometimes I'm tempted to ask, "Well, how do you expect me to look?" But I don't. They mean well. They just don't know what else to say.

Oh, it's true, the last 15 months since my 17-year-old son, Shane was killed in a motorcycle accident with his friend, I've come a long way. Life is good and I have much to look forward to each day. A challenging job, terrific friends, a great family, including Shane's 14-year-old brother, Zachary. But there are days when it's just not enough.

It's interesting how your entire perspective about life changes when you're forced to endure a personal tragedy. I call it my "BIG DEAL SCALE." Losing Shane was the "biggest deal" I've ever experienced. It gives me a tool in which to measure the trivial ups and downs of life. We all have the strength to endure a tremendous amount of pain. We just have to get it in perspective. It doesn't come easy. I consciously work at it everyday. I wonder if it will ever go away. Sometimes I hope it doesn't. I guess it's my way of remembering of holding on.

My biggest source of strength comes from Zachary, though. My heart aches for him; knowing how close he was to Shane. The first few days after the accident, he said, 'Shane was my idol. He always helped me and taught me "things.' It's hard for me to imagine what it must be like for him. Still sleeping in the same room that they shared for 13 years.

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Although, now he sleeps in Shane's bed. And does his homework at Shane's desk. He says he likes it like that. I guess it's just his way of remembering... of holding on.

Months ago when Zachary asked when the "hurt" would stop, I didn't have an instant answer. Grieving is a lonely job, to be done in individual time frames. But, what I did tell him was, "Trust me. The pain will eventually fade, but the memories will last a lifetime." And just the other day he said to me, "You're right, Mom, the hurt is much better." I can see it in his face, in his eyes. He has matured so much this last year. It seems like he was just a baby when this all happened. Now, I can see so much of Shane in him. And, I know that if he can handle this "job," he can handle anything. And so can I.

**Susan Hedlund
TCF, Portland, OR**

Souls in the Light

Souls are traveling different paths
To heavenly spheres and dimensions
His giving presence was once here on Earth
His end came too fast

Within an instant his precious life was gone
A strong magnetic feeling
To enter the brilliant light
Everything is golden in heaven

Visions of paradise will soothe your weary eyes
Every color so vivid and bright
Glorious music sung by angelic choirs
Loving, serene too peaceful to leave

Have you seen the faceless people
Joyously waiting to guide you by the hand?
Frankie, my son
Is your soul out there?

Do you hear me crying?
Silent screams of agony
Buried deep within my wounded soul

**Susan Sannicandro
TCF, Metrowest Chapter, Milford, MA**

Undiminished

The most powerful healing factor for me after my daughter Joey died was my resolve to be undiminished. This resolve did not appear instantly. First I endured a total emotional collapse; the best way to describe me after Joey died. After the numbness came the pain, then the collapse, and the craziness, the black thoughts. Without the will to recover, the willingness to figure it out and do it, no matter how difficult, my soul would probably still be in the morass that engulfed me after Joey died.

Emotionally I was demolished, wretched (sad is an inadequate word), and confused. My realization that I am not going crazy, that I am just going through what other bereaved parents go through was my first realization that this misery might be temporary. That did not offset the maelstrom of other powerful feelings swirling within me. Fear also became a powerful factor, the fear that I might remain a wretch, if not totally, in part. Some spunk arose spontaneously within me that insisted I recover, all the way. To sum it up, I was an emotional mess, scared that I might remain so, determined to become whole again, and did not have a clue as to how to do it.

So how does one do it? The realization early on that I am not going crazy made a big difference. This awareness came as a result of going to many TCF monthly sharing meetings; listening, saying little, and finally comprehending. The difficult part here is that nothing seems to show up after the first few monthly meetings. I kept coming though. Many others, after a meeting or two, stop coming, and thereby lose a lot that can be gained from our meetings.

Then the other burdens that frightened me had to be resolved. I could not even talk about it then, but now it is OK. I became impotent, sexually nonfunctional. By then I had been divorced for a few years, and I made my internal peace with the possibility that the woman I was with, a long-ago bereaved parent, might walk away. She did not, and after two seemingly very long months, my erectile dysfunction, as they call it now, disappeared. In a sense, that was the easy load to lift. My anxiety during this time hovered around fever pitch.

My spontaneous crying jags were another aspect of my grieving. These occurred only while driving alone in my car. No particular thought or way of thinking could be blamed. Driving along, usually to or from work, minding my own business, so to speak, and the water works just turned on. It would last for a few minutes, though I never actually timed it with my watch. Then it stopped.

This behavior bothered me because it happened seemingly at random times, generally not intense enough to require me to pull over.



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My inability to control this, to prevent it, or to turn it off made me uneasy. What if I cry in front of others? Grown men are supposed to exercise self-control, and in this instance, my self-control did not exist. I never did resolve this. I lived with it, uncomfortably, and the crying jags finally tapered off and vanished. No conscious effort of mine made any difference here. Also, six months after Joey died, I went to a Zen Buddhist monastery for a weekend. Most of the time there involved meditating. With my mind empty, tears just gushed forth. I just sat there, cross-legged, and let them flow. At least there, it did not matter. However, I have not been to that monastery since.

The black thoughts were the most persistent burden. These thoughts said: (1) I am useless, (2) people are no good, (3) effort is futile, and (4) life is no good. I have no idea where they came from. Immediately after Joey's death, these were not mere thoughts; they were my reality, with the crying jags, the impotence, and my craziness reinforcing them. In this state logic does not help. My succor came from insights, arising seemingly out of nowhere. The crying jags finally ended; my impotence ended, finally, but those black thoughts remained. Weaving through all this was an overwhelming sadness; my daughter is gone. My happiness, even my right to happiness, is gone.

As time passed, the black thoughts slowly receded. After some months I became aware that good positive thoughts occasionally intruded. After about a year, when these black thoughts arose, I could dismiss them as merely thoughts, not reality. Yet they came, they were a part of me. Once I could distinguish them from reality, life improved enormously.

Then our chapter acquired a leadership crisis. I stepped in, held the chapter together, and started our newsletter. I acquired the necessary software, upgraded my computer so it could run the software, and got some help with it. Then, with more guts than brains, I started the newsletter. Hey, it worked. The chapter held together, and the newsletter was well received, and it runs today, better than ever.

At about this time, TCF had a regional chapter leaders' conference close enough for me to attend. At this conference, not only did I tap others unabashedly, but I also saw other bereaved parents (these chapter leaders) functioning, animated, cheerful, and normal. They made a profound impression on me. By God, if they can do it, so can I. This conference boosted my resolve since it showed me not only the value of recovery, but that it is possible.

Most of life requires us to fix whatever is broken with whatever is at hand. My emotional demolition gave me a unique opportunity. Step away from the emotional wreckage and begin anew. Nothing was left from before. In a sense that is the hardest part and the best part.

Each bereaved parent finds his or her own way to recovery. We each start off differently, and then find our own right path. In broad terms, that is how I did it. It starts with resolve, the will to be OK. If you have that, then the rest somehow appears.

*By Aaron M. White
TCF, Metrowest Chapter, Milford, MA*

TO A COMPASSIONATE FRIEND

THEY told me life never gives you more than you can handle. Lies, I can't handle this.

THEY told me, in a year I would be my old "self" again, they were wrong, "it" died with my son.

THEY told me to get my act together and start living again, all I see is his death.

THEY said, if I was a true believer, this would be a time of joyous celebration.

Damn them! I couldn't give him life, now I can't give him heaven.

YOU didn't say, "You'll handle this, you're strong."

You said, "go ahead and cry. I'll wait until you're ready."

YOU didn't say I'd be my old self again. Your old self died too. You helped me find my new self.

YOU didn't tell me to get my act together. You said, "Take things slowly, a day at a time. The pieces will fit when you're ready."

YOU saw that my faith was shaken, you didn't preach. You reminded me that He in whom I believe is patient and understanding. His love would preserve until I found my way back.

Thank you, Friend, for showing me Compassion. Perhaps I can do for someone what you have done for me.

*Edith Fraser,
TCF, Winnipeg Canada*

A GIFT FOR SURVIVING CHILDREN

The most important gift you can give your children at this time is the feeling that life continues despite pain. Death, the loss of innocence, can either lead you to the edge of the abyss and threaten your existence with meaninglessness and futility, or you will start to build the bridge that spans the chasm with things of life that still count... memory, friendship, and love.

Earl Grollman



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



The Room

I stepped into your bedroom
 and tiptoed by your bed,
 Remembering the many times
 I tousled your blond head,
 Remembering the smiling glances
 we exchanged when our eyes met,
 Without words ever spoken —
 these memories I'll never forget.
 It's harder now to step into your room
 - won't see that smile anymore.
 I turn around with tear-stained eyes
 and gently close the door.

Cathy R. Seaver
TCF, Worcester, MA

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.

Linda Teres (Russell's Mom)
Janice Parmenter Tyler's Mom)
Judy Daubney (Clifford Crowe's Mom)

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REFLECTIONS ON A GRAVE SELDOM VISITED

Rose granite - etched with the words, "beloved son"
 And two dates - which show the world here was a life
 but short-lived.

It guards the discarded wrappings of a most precious
 gift. But the essence of what was our son is not there.

He remains with us. He exists in the echo of yester-
 day's laughter. And the certainty of tomorrow's
 devotion.

He lingers in the half-forgotten fragments of elusive
 dreams, and hides in the crevices of memory. We see
 him - suddenly - briefly in the gesture of a sibling
 which seems familiar.

On all that he touched, or wore or visited, He left a part
 of himself for us to remember. And all the love, which
 went forth from him to others and back again.

How could he have died? It was never a tangible thing
 So it followed no rules. It still envelops us, it is what is
 left and it will be there always.



Abigail Sammon
TCF, Cleveland, OH

A Father Writes

A father does not find his job an easy one. The responsibilities he faces are enormous. Everything, from finance to being a good role model, tests a man's ability to be the best father he can be. It is a job charged with emotional, physical and mental challenge. And, at the time, it is only one of the many roles he fills. His roles include husband and lover, son, friend, boss, co-worker, to name a few. The relationships he has are numerous, complex and always changing. One event in particular can really put these relationships and roles to the test, the death of his child.

The bereaved father is a unique individual, his uniqueness and attendant problems are not often understood by others, or even by himself.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from page 10)

His child's death puts extraordinary demands on him. All the roles he fills change, and his life is truly not ever the same again. That is not to say it cannot be good, but just that the circumstances are going to be different.

When a child dies, it seems that the majority of sympathy is directed toward the mother. This is usually because she is much more open in her grieving, thus it is easy to focus on her emotional needs. But what of the grieving father? His other roles may actually prevent him from working out his grief. As husband and provider, he is the one who sees to the practical things around the death, funeral arrangements, notification of people, arrangement for sibling care, etc. It may be days, weeks or months before things are settled to the point that he thinks deeply about what happened. In most cases, he is back to work and into his usual routine so quickly that he can find himself comforted by this. The impact of the child's death is lessened to a degree. Away from the house, it is easier to "forget" what has happened.

In our society we are taught in subtle, and not so subtle ways, that men don't cry and that, in general, they are not at all open about their emotions. Thus, many men are denied a perfectly good emotional release mechanism, crying. Even in the privacy of his own home, a man may feel that he has to "be the strong one." Our experience has taught us that men who use crying as a tool in their grief work have fewer long-term adjustment problems. Since men often suppress their feelings, good and bad, how they are coping with their child's death never comes to the surface.

**Bob Steiner,
TCF, Salem, OR**

VACATIONS

Vacation time is upon us again. You may be having trouble with that very thought. My only advice is to go where it is the most comfortable for you. Large places with many people may not be the answer this year. The family oriented spots may make it more obvious that one of your blessings is missing. It may be that you are locked into plans that were made before the tragedy of your child's death. You may hesitate to change these plans if they involve other people. I, personally, could only be with people who understood my feelings in the beginning. If the other people involved are not sensitive and understanding, you may want to reconsider your plans. Good, warm, caring friends who will allow you to be wherever it is that you are can be a great comfort. Keeping it simple with a backdoor through which you can escape if necessary, can be the best answer. Going away and coming home can be a problem in the beginning. Know that it is normal.

Whatever it is that you do and wherever it is that you go, I hope you will keep in mind that it won't always be this painful. **IT WILL BE BETTER.** Be patient. If you can find any peace and enjoyment, do it. You deserve it and it doesn't mean you don't care.

**Mary Cleckley
TCF, Atlanta Chapters**

STILLBORN

I carried you in hope, the long nine months of my term, remembered that close hour when we often felt you kick and move. As you slowly grew within me, wondered what you'd look like when your wet head emerged, girl or boy, and at what glad moment I should hear your birth cry, and I welcoming you with all you needed of warmth and food. We had a home waiting for you.

After my strong laborings, sweat cold on my limbs, my small cries merging with the summer air, you came. You did not cry. You did not breathe. We had not expected this; it seems your birth had no meaning, the summer air, or had you rejected us?

They will say that you did not live, register you as a stillborn. But you lived for me all that time in the dark chamber of my womb and when I think of you now, perfect in your little death, I know that for me you are born still; I shall carry you with me forever, my child, you were always mine, you are mine now. Death and life are the same mysteries.

**Sheila Kitzinger
TCF, Rhode Island
in Education and Counselling for Children,
by Leonard Clark, Schocken Books, 1979**

*There is a place that
we call Memory...
a province by itself
which, though unseen,
Is home and haven to the heart...
and there, in peace and beauty,
waiting, are those with whom
we shared our yesterdays.*

**Nancy Cassell
TCF, Monmouth County, NJ**



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



Address Correction Requested

We are very pleased to announce The Compassionate Friends (TCF) 46th Annual National Conference in Denver! TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreak- ing loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences.

**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
46TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE
July 7, 2023 – July 9, 2023
Sheraton Downtown Denver Hotel
1550 Court Place
Denver, CO 80202
REGISTER NOW**