



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 2017



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Vol. 22 Issue 4

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:

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 (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:

July 25th & August 29th

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

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

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. Phyllis Curran in loving memory of her daughter **Monica Michelle Curran** on her birthday June 21st.
 Mrs. Paula Franciose in loving memory of her son **John Rocco Franciose Jr.** on his birthday May 11th.
 Mrs. Virginia Lombard in loving memory of her son **Robert L. Lombard Jr.** on his birthday July 22nd, and his anniversary June 27th.
 Mrs. Susan Sannicandro in loving memory of her son **Frankie E. Topham**.
 Mr. & Mrs. Burton Stuchins in loving memory of their son **Alan Stuchins**.
 Mr. Warren Donnelly in loving memory of his nephew **John Rocco Franciose Jr.** on his birthday May 11th.
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Toth in loving memory of their son **Ryan C. Toth**.

Memories

I am the unforgiven for I was not there
 I am the unforgiven when you needed me near
 I am the unforgiven for I could not stop the pain
 I am the unforgiven for my tears are the rain.
 As you walk, but not alone, for you held your brother's hand
 He brought you to the unknown, yet familiar land
 You were scared, but he showed you the way
 He showed you a more peaceful and brighter day
 You tried to look back; but some force would not let you see...
 For I stood alone and heartbroken, you both left me!
 The days left to wake up to are empty and gray
 Sometimes I find it hard to find my own way
 Trying to find a reason to live
 With a vacant heart, not much left to give
 A memory of a lingering light...
 A memory of a day turned bright...
 A memory of your smiling face...
 A memory...put away...in a very special place.

Bette F. Lewis
TCF, Metrowest, Milford, MA



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

CHARLES J. GHERA III
MATTHEW B. O'LEARY
WILLIAM BRUCE-TAGOE
SCOTT F. MOTUZAS
MOLLY ELIZABETH LACE ANDERSON
JEFFREY DAVID PARKHURST
CHRISTOPHER J. BROVELLI
CHAD M. G. DIGREGORIO
RYAN J. McCUSKER
DENNIS NIELD
TARYN MARIE NORTON GAVELIS
DIXON BERGMAN
TERRIE SCHOUMAKER
DANIEL BARRINGTON

August

WILLIAM H. BARDOL Jr.
STEVEN "CHRIS" MARSHALL
MATTHEW DENICE
MICHAEL MINTO WALLACH
KIMBERLY ANNE TANNER

Birthdays

July

ROY RANDALL
ROBERT NIELD
JEFFREY DAVID PARKHURST
ROBERT L. LOMBARD Jr.
KAITLYN KENNEDY
DEVIN J. EHRMANNTRAUT
DEANNA KELSEY RICHARDS

August

ERICA BLEAKNEY
HEIDI ANN RICHER
TIMOTHY JOHN O'NEIL
CHARLES J. GHERA III
DONALD R. NEGROTTI
DAVID A. SCHNEGG
KEVIN HOLLAND
CLIFFORD CROWE
GREG BRUNO
ADAM SCOTT COLE





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 Grief All My Own

I was a freshman at Point Loma Nazarene College when my brother, Carl, died. The news reached me hours after he had been found at the base of the radio tower. Jim, a faculty member and family friend, stuck his head inside the door of my chemistry class as I waited for class to begin and motioned me outside. I was pleasantly surprised to see him, but my smile faded as I noticed the somber expression on his face. He took my hands in his as he told me of my brother's death. I searched his face desperately waiting for his expression to break into a grin as people will often do before they let you in on the joke, but there would be no punch line. I drew back instinctively and as I pulled away, Jim tightened his grip. I began shouting "No!" over and over until I became aware of myself once again and sunk into his hug. When I started to breathe more regularly Jim walked back into the classroom to get my backpack.

I began to grow physically and emotionally numb as he led me down the stairs to his van. He asked me if I had a friend who could wait with me until I could get to the airport. I nodded indicating I did. He drove over to her classroom and I carefully looked in to see if I could find her. Fortunately she saw me and dismissed herself.

When I got to the dorm, the RA (resident assistant) for my unit was already waiting for me. She and my friend, Heather, followed me to my room after an exchange of somber glances between them. Without much thought as to what I needed I packed a suitcase hoping I had everything I needed since I would be going home for the week. I was nearly finished packing when one of my roommates came into the room. She heard the announcement in chapel and came to see how I was handling the news.

I was suddenly aware of how closely I was being watched. It was as though I had taken up residence in a fishbowl.

The girls sat silently watching me, not quite knowing what else to do. I could feel their unease at not knowing what to say; afraid of saying something that would cause me to have some sort of nervous breakdown right in front of them. I desperately wanted to be alone. It was as though I was a hostess at a boring party needing to entertain my guests, but I was afraid to act anything but somber. Would they think Carl meant nothing to me if I tried to strike up meaningless conversation? I felt an emptiness growing in the pit of my stomach. I wanted to crawl in bed and curl up against the wall. Yet, all I could do was sit uncomfortably while they watched. I was the elephant in the room. My brother had just died, yet no one could state the obvious: something horrible had just happened. I didn't know it at the time, but I had experienced for the first time a reaction that was to become all too familiar to me.

After a draining week at home, I was unprepared to face my friends, roommates, and acquaintances at school. I could feel the tension as I walked into my unit. The girls watched cautiously as if waiting to see if it would be OK to approach me. I wanted to tell them about the week and about all of the painful memories my hometown triggered of my brother. Actually, I needed to talk about it, yet I knew it was better to keep it to myself. I don't know how to explain it, but people react very strangely when they hear about someone's death. I couldn't count the frequency with which I was purposefully avoided or had someone quickly change the subject if I happened to mention my brother. I soon discovered a positive reply when asked how I was doing avoided many uncomfortable situations. Most of the time people merely asked out of a sense of obligation, not concern.

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Few wanted to hear how my stomach turned when I walked up to his casket and saw the bruises, which ran down alongside his head and neck beneath the makeup the mortician applied in an attempt to conceal them. Nor did they want to hear how my heart skipped a beat when I thought I caught a glimpse of Carl riding his skateboard down the street, only to have it break one more time when I realized it couldn't have been him. They didn't even want to hear how I found comfort in memories of him such as the time we were just little kids and had been sent to our rooms because somehow we had managed to irritate Dad. Unwilling to accept our punishment and allow our fun to come to an end we recorded ourselves giggling and set it behind our dad's chair knowing we were sure to get a reaction. We laughed hysterically when our dad heard the recording and sprang from his chair to catch us out of our rooms. I found I was truly alone in my grief aside from what I could share with my parents. I try not to get angry when I think of how others reacted to me in my grief. I, myself, reacted toward others the same way before I lost my brother. Yet, it was difficult to be forced to create a mask for the comfort of others when comfort was what I sought. Each day I "put on a happy face" and tried my best to appear together.

A few weeks after I returned to school the other girls in the unit no longer tolerated my grief. I could sense their irritation when I failed to get out of bed as they prepared for class. No longer was it necessary to try to comfort me. They had accepted my brother's death and were done feeling bad. It would not have been a great shock to learn they had forgotten I had a brother. I was forced to stuff my grief for the remainder of the semester. I cried only when I was sure I was alone and knew no one would be back for a while.

I carefully watched what I said as not to let anything about my brother slip into conversation. I found even sharing a good memory of Carl could set off a series of uncomfortable events. The mere mention of his name would cause my listeners to freeze. Would I break down immediately and fall to pieces at his memory? I didn't know at the time it would have been OK. No one had to understand my emotions, nor did anyone have to deal with them. I was the only one able and willing to carry myself through my grief. I had to realize I could only do what I could as I struggled with my grief and had to remind myself I would be able to do more as time passed and the impact of his death gradually became less painful. It was necessary for me to understand if I never got over his death I would also be all right as the death of a sibling is not something anyone ever truly gets over. Everyone deals with grief differently. If I were to only allow myself to grieve as much as others around me felt comfortable I would be quite miserable today.

It has been four years since his death and I continue to miss him. I still watch what I say to others, but I don't worry so much about their reaction. I know what to expect from someone when they hear about Carl for the first time and have found ways to keep the evil of discomfort for all parties at a minimum. When Carl died I struggled with what my answer would be when someone asked if I had a sibling. I didn't know how to answer. Would I say I did have a brother or would I say I had a brother? Neither answer seemed quite correct. Today I can answer the question. Carl was and always will be my brother. My memories of him are mine to share if I wish.

My grief is also mine to deal with, as I need to. It is not open to the criticism of others.

By Carrie Pueschel

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)

"Beneath the Ceiling of the Sea"

I often wonder where our children are. Sometimes, I try to 'find' Todd, especially when I'm alone, taking an early morning walk or searching a star-filled night. I try to imagine what their world must be like. Is it like the Garden of Eden? Do they float on clouds? There are times when I doubt there can be another world. No one here has found it and what kind of other surroundings could there be? My mind was limited to this environment; that is, until I discovered the land beneath the ceiling of the sea. Last year, on a trip, my husband, Clay and I did some snorkeling and were fascinated by what we saw. This year we took up scuba diving. On our first ocean dive, I held a blowfish and was given a baby octopus which skittered up my arm and swam away.

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We swam through arches and among beautiful fish and coral. What an enchanting world it is, just below this ceiling of the sea! Spurs of coral and sea fans, some five feet and higher, wave in the water, as if caught in a gentle breeze. The colors, bright yellow, orange and red, luminous blues and greens, iridescent blacks and silvers, fish in all shapes and colors. I was humbled by the grandeur. Most fish move about slowly, letting the surge and movement of the ocean set their course. Everything is peaceful, quiet. We learned that it is important to relax, to breathe deeply and slowly, gliding through the water, using only our flippers, and to maintain neutral buoyancy, neither sinking nor rising. A few fish swim close to inspect us. I try to reach out and touch a golden & black one, but it easily glides away. Sound is magnified. I first heard it, then looked up and saw it was raining on the surface, raindrops making little pools on the water.

As we relax, we also must be aware of our surroundings and of each other at all times. In this world, we are the invaders, the ones that need all the equipment to survive. As splendid as the sea is, I can't imagine knowing only this world. Never to see the sun (it is only a reflection under water), trees, mountains, never to feel a warm breeze or rain, never to smell lilacs or hear the call of cardinals, never to eat blueberries and ice cream. All these things we take pretty much for granted.

I like to think of fish in their world and us in ours and somehow relate it to our world and our children in theirs. The kingdom beneath sea level is a beautiful place, but our world contains so many more wonders.

As fish cannot imagine what it is like to live above the ceiling of the sea, how can we imagine the wonders our children are experiencing above the ceiling of the sky?

**Barb Seth
TCF, Madison**

Newly Bereaved . . . Time will ease the hurt

The sadness of the present days is locked and set in time, and moving to the future is a slow and painful climb.

But all the feelings that are now so vivid and so real can't hold their fresh intensity as time begins to heal.

No wound so deep will ever go away, yet every hurt becomes a little less from day to day. Nothing can erase the painful imprints on your mind; but there are softer memories that time, will let you find.

Though your heart won't let the sadness simply slide away, the echoes will diminish even though the memories stay.

**Bruce Wilmer
TCF/NJ newsletter**

What Grieving People Want You to Know

- **I am not strong.** I'm just numb. When you tell me I am strong, I feel that you don't see me.
- **I will not recover.** This is not a cold or the flu. I'm not sick. I'm grieving and that's different. I will not always be grieving as intensely, but I will never forget my loved one and rather than recover, I want to incorporate his life and love into the rest of my life. That person is part of me and always will be, and sometimes I will remember him with joy and other times with a tear. Both are okay.
- **I don't have to accept the death.** Yes, I have to understand that it has happened and it is real, but there are just some things in life that are not acceptable.
- **Please don't avoid me.** You can't catch my grief. My world is painful, and when you are too afraid to call me or visit or say anything, you isolate me at a time when I most need to be cared about. If you don't know what to say, just come over, give me a hug or touch my arm, and gently say, "I'm sorry." You can even say, "I just don't know what to say, but I care, and want you to know that."
- **Please don't say, "Call me if you need anything."** I'll never call you because I have no idea what I need. Trying to figure out what you could do for me takes more energy than I have.

So, in advance, let me give you some ideas: *Bring food. *Offer to take my children to a movie or game so that I have some moments to myself. *Send me a card on special holidays, birthdays (mine, his or hers), or the anniversary of the death, and be sure to mention her name. You can't make me cry. The tears are here and I will love you for giving me the opportunity to shed them because someone cared enough about me to reach out on this difficult day. *Ask me more than once to join you at a movie or lunch or dinner. I may say no at first or even for a while, but please don't give up on me because somewhere down the line, I may be ready, and if you've given up, then I really will be alone.

Virginia A. Simpson
news@beyondindigo.com

Moving On?

Several years after the death of our daughter, we finally made the decision to move to a new house. A new house our daughter never lived in and never will. We left an old house where she lived her entire four short years. A house where she spent countless hours playing, eating, sleeping, dressing up, making mischief, making us laugh...the list goes on.

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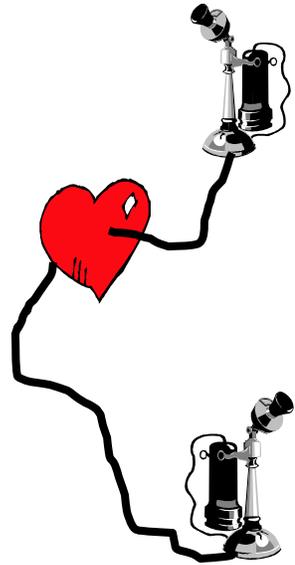
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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)366-2085
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.

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



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But it was also the house where she died. It was the house seared in our memories on that horrible day where our lives changed forever in a way we wish we could just figure out how to undo. As I prepared to move, I had to face a lot of memories and choices.

Before being faced with moving, I kept everything my daughter had touched, wore, played with, etc. Some were kept in bins kept under my bed or in closets. Some were displayed prominently. Some were just left as they were before she died. But as I packed, I was faced with the question of what to do with these things? Do I keep her things until I'm dead and then let my other kids deal with the question of what to do? Do I get rid of all of it, knowing that these are just things and none of it will bring her back?

The truth is, they are just things – but they are things that can have significant memories attached to them. Some more than others. For example, a pair of plain pants she wore a handful of times are just pants. But the dresses or shirts she loved and wore over and over are special. So are the clothes that have very specific memories attached to them or are featured in treasured photographs. The toys she barely played with are just toys, but the toys and books and puzzles that occupied her for hours day after day are ones that meant something to her, and mean something to me as well. So I came to terms with the reality of keeping what still held precious memories for me, and donating the rest.

Packing the house also brought with it a mix of anticipation and anxiety. I didn't know what "new" things of hers I would come across as I pulled out neglected boxes or cleaned out long forgotten drawers. Would finding these things bring floods of emotion and make me cry, or would finding something new that she created - such as a drawing - lead me to a new treasure that I can cherish forever? Finding hair from her first haircut took my breath away and turned my stomach into knots. How could I have been so careless as to keep it in a random place where it could have easily been thrown away? Finding her faded, broken sunglasses in the yard brought back memories of her wearing them upside-down and a cute photograph of us together. I kept the hair, of course, but in the end let go of the broken sunglasses. My memories are enough.

Moving to a new house was a lot of work. Do I miss the old house? No. Will I keep the memories? Yes. We may have "moved on" to a new house without our daughter, but we will never leave behind our love and precious memories of her.

Maria Kubitz
TCF, Contra Costa County, CA
In Memory of my daughter, Margareta



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)
Martha Berman
(781) 337-8649.....mmartha1@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.....cg603@aol.com



The Therapeutic Tear: Healing Release for Parents

Consider the nature of our loss. Our children have died. The worst nightmare that life can thrust upon humans has become our reality and burden. Our emotions will forever be entwined with the death of our child. Our hearts will never mend. Life will never return to what it once was. Often there is no joy. We have been thrown into a dark purgatory without our child. The sadness is overwhelming, the hopelessness is oppressive. This is our condition, our reality.

Tears are a gift to the parents of those who no longer live. Consider the beautiful nature of the tear. It can well up suddenly or slowly, depending on the circumstance. We can choke back our tears, holding them inside. We may let our tears go, filling our eyes and running down our faces. Occasionally, we dab the corner of our eye before the tear gets an opportunity to be joined by other tears in an unpredictable and visible flood of emotion. But the nature of the tear remains intact. Whether we cry on the inside or cry on the outside is predetermined by society, our genetics and a host of other factors. But we do cry these beautiful tears for our deceased children. These tears somehow remind us of the connection to our children, their departure and our deep, deep loss.

These are beautiful tears of love. These tears express the power of our love for our children who have been stolen by death. Each tear and each bereaved parent is different.



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What is the reason for uncontrollable, unexpected weeping? Why do some people shed few tears and others cry copiously? Is one form of crying superior to another? What triggers “tears from nowhere?”

Each of us is different. Each of us handles our loss in a unique way. But all of us are crying. For some of us tears remain inside, never to be seen. They build through the years, drowning us with pain. Some of us weep profusely and frequently. Many of us cry without any visible provocation. Some tears are silent, some are accompanied by sobbing.

These tears of ours are as natural as the sunshine on a warm spring day. These are healing tears, though they are shed in great sorrow. Together we will discuss the nature of our tears. We will remember the first tears shed in shocked sobbing, wailing screams. We will remember later tears as we progressed on the road of life without our child, tears shed on holidays, anniversaries, birthdays and special occasions. Tears shed for no apparent reason. We will consider our tears today...their meaning, their value and their beauty. Our tears are a portal that opens for us to feel our loss, feel our love for our child and feel our own humanity.

Please join us as we discuss the “Therapeutic Tear” with our Compassionate Friends.

We will explore and learn together as we travel this sad path.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

A Familiar Face

My family was on vacation in 1985 traveling from Houston to the Black Hills of South Dakota. We were traveling through Kansas and it was getting dark and late. I got out of our car to check us into a motel. The woman waiting on me was obviously very tired. When she saw me, she opened her eyes widely and just looked at me for a while. The expression on her face was as if she saw someone who looked very familiar and very close to her. I knew instinctively that I reminded her of someone special. As I started to fill out the forms, she began to cry. She was in too much pain to explain herself to me. I reached over to hold her hand. The next morning when I came to check out, she was making small talk but her eyes were remembering a face that looked like mine. As I told her good bye, she started to cry again.

Years later my thirteen-year old son, Ryan, died. Six months after his death, I was shopping and saw a young boy who looked a lot like Ryan. I followed him from aisle to aisle. I told this boy's mom that my son had just died and her son looked so much like mine.

I pulled out pictures of Ryan and she agreed the boys did look a lot alike. Their clothes were even similar. The mom told her son to give me a hug: "a real one with both arms." While I was hugging this young man, I asked God to please let Ryan's spirit move through his body so I could touch Ryan again. The hug felt like Ryan. I closed my eyes and pretended it was Ryan. That hug felt like salve on my broken heart.

I wonder if God ever lets our children's spirits come into some other person for just a few seconds so we can feel some sort of relief? When that woman in Kansas was looking at me like I was someone else, I did, for a few brief seconds feel like another person. I hope the tearful woman felt it, too.

Niece Moss
TCF, Houston-West, TX
In Memory of my son, Ryan

WHO WAS THAT PERSON?

An eight year retrospective...

Who was that person? He looked like me. He talked like me. But I don't think I know him anymore.

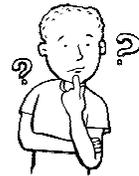
Who was that person? He had so many friends. He was popular at cocktail parties and told good jokes. Today, he seeks out one person he can really talk to and that is enough. His telephone Rolodex is a lot smaller, but so much more important.

Who was that person? He had such different priorities. He skated over life, like an ice skater on a frozen pond. He never thought about how cold the water was. Now he has a totally new perspective on the world. He reaches out to people who hurt because he knows how they feel. He has been there. He has felt the ice water.

Who was that person? He had an orderly chronological sense of time. Now the world is divided forever into simply “before” and “after”.

Who was that person? He used to rush through dinner or cut the family vacation short to get back to the office. Now he thinks back to the family times as the most wonderful times of his life. He knows what is irreplaceable.

Who was that person? He used to worry about so many imaginary troubles, most of which never happened anyway. Now he spends most of his time in the present.



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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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He appreciates today's sunset, daisies, simple things and good friends. He knows how precious each moment is.

Who was that person? He used to think about what he wanted to get out of life. Now he thinks about how grateful he is for the gifts he has had.

Who was that person? He used to measure his goals in terms of where he is going. Now he focuses more on what his life will have been about. He asks less and less why his child died, and more often: "Why did he live?"

Who was that person? He had never heard of The Compassionate Friends. Now they are his best friends. And he knows that by helping someone else through TCF, he also helps himself.

Who was that person? I don't think I know him anymore.

Rich Edler
TCF South Bay/LA, CA
In Memory of Mark Edler

Rich and his wife Kitty are founding members of the South Bay/LA Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Son Mark died in 1992 and Rich's first book "If I Knew Then What I Know Now" is dedicated to him. His following book, "Into the Valley and Out Again" is the story of a father's grief after the loss of his son and the changes in priorities and approaches to life that follow." Rich served on TCF's National Board of Directors for several years including as president of the board. He died in February of 2002.

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Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night

It was nine years ago on July 18, 1992 that two police officers came to our door with news that no parent expects or wants to hear. "We are sorry to inform you that your son was killed by a suspected drunk driver tonight."

SHOCK~ My first reaction was disbelief. How could Marc be dead? He has his whole life ahead of him. He was driving a friend home and I was waiting up for him. No, this can't be! But it was the harsh reality that I could not fathom at that moment that caused me to slip into the nice protective overcoat named "SHOCK."

Thank goodness for the "shock" factor because that is what allowed me to make the necessary arrangements for the days that were to follow.

ANGER~ From the minute I was told that Marc had died I was angry with God. I talked, screamed and wrote in my journal about being so mad that God did not protect us under His umbrella that I thought was in place for our family. No, I do not believe that **God planned** for Marc to die at age nineteen or even that it was **God's will**. It has taken me years to understand that we, all of us have 'free will' and one 42-year-old man used his 'free will' to drink and drive that fateful night that killed our son within one mile of our home.

BARGAINING~The funeral was held here and a week later we drove home to Topeka, Kansas where we had a Memorial Service for friends and family. We drove back to Georgia arriving late one night after the 14-hour drive. I unpacked a few things in the kitchen while my husband was upstairs taking a shower. When I had finished I tried to climb the stairs, but I froze and then fell grasping at the carpet on the stairs sobbing loudly in the entryway. I cried out to God asking, "Why didn't He take me instead?" I told him He could make the change right here, right now and no one would ever know the difference.

PAIN~As the shock began to wear off, I felt the intense excruciating pain. It was so deep and cut like a knife. I thought that the pain was going to kill me it hurt so bad. It felt like someone had ripped my heart out. I felt gutted and empty inside. I was surprised to learn that grief is not just about feeling sad. When you experience grief, there is a **real** physical pain and mine was in my chest that hurt for many months every waking moment. I remember I wanted to die. More importantly I wanted to be with Marc.

TEARS~ I did not know there were so many different ways to cry or different sounds one could make while crying. I would be sitting in my chair and begin to cry and invariably I would end up on the floor, face down in the carpet crying my eyes out. At other times, I rocked back and forth sobbing so hard and speaking gibberish that even I could not understand what I was saying. Our older son told me that I even cried in my sleep because he had heard me one night.

DEPRESSION~ I kept the drapes drawn that first year and withdrew from the world. I was like a frightened animal huddled in a corner. My first thought upon waking each morning was that Marc was dead. I would curl up in a fetal position and cry. I had trouble concentrating, remembering things and making decisions. My mind would wander constantly. I had no energy, none, zip! I remember being so proud of myself the time that I completed mopping my kitchen floor that had taken me three days to do.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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RECONCILIATION~ I am nine years into my grief journey. For me, it has been about “leaning into my pain” and stumbling around in the dark searching and trying different ways to cope since the death of our son, Marc. I read grief books, I journal, I attend bereavement seminars, I visit the cemetery and most importantly, I cry.

“DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT”—but stand toe to toe with the beast called grief! Do not be afraid of your thoughts, feelings, and pain. They are ALL normal reactions to the death of your dear child. Instead I ask you to wrestle grief down to the ground, screaming, kicking and crying until you have made grief your equal and more manageable.

I heard a speaker say, “we did not expect to outlive our child, but we can make a choice as to whether we will become bitter or better with the time we have left.” Let’s begin to take control of our life, picking up the pieces and make the choice to be a better person. If not for ourselves, let’s do it for our children.

*Susan Van Vleck
TCF, Marietta Chapter, GA
In Memory of Our Children*

Waiting for the Wake-Up Call

I’m waiting for the wake up call that surely must come someday in this journey through grief. When *will* it get better?!! I’m waiting for the day when the memories are softer, the step a little lighter and when the sounds in my heart aren’t always those of sadness, I’m waiting for the music to return, for the light to shine, for the magic to come back. I’m waiting for the pain to stop, the hurt to leave and for everything to go back to its original place. I want the picture to look the same as before, and I’m waiting until it does.

But, while I’m waiting, I’m learning a lot, I know I have to make lists now in order to capture my chores and things I have to do. I gave up trying to remember and now just carry a notepad with me (with a pencil attached!) I have set the clocks 10 minutes fast so I have a better chance of being on time, and I have stocked the car with maps of every place I need to be.

I make menus and create shopping lists. I plan ahead, write down everything and then don’t worry when I lose the list, get lost, or simply change my mind, I think most people thought I was always confused, so now I don’t worry so much about not remembering. I’m liking advantage of being bereaved and am learning to work with the lack of concentration, the forgetfulness, the confusion. If it isn’t written down, it doesn’t exist and I’ve been much happier ever since!

If the weather and the seasons can’t get it together, why should I try to coordinate an outfit? I’ll just wear what’s comfortable for the moment and worry less about what others think. Maybe they are as confused as I am. Maybe they’re struggling too. Maybe we should all just stop, look and listen...trying to remember to hold hands when crossing the street and practice hugging instead of hitting.

Maybe spring reflects nature’s inability to make up its mind or maybe that hesitation to change is more of Mother Nature’s mourning the passing of her winter season. Maybe it’s hot one day and cold the next to keep us on our toes, to keep the blood flowing, the legs moving. Maybe shoveling snow one day and planting seeds the next is what we are supposed to be doing, maybe spring is the season of change and we should let go of the whys? and work on the hows? Maybe pushing the plow is better than trying to pull it.

Maybe just relaxing into the craziness and letting the tides ebb and flow across the beach will work better than trying to direct the winds that change rides on. Perhaps letting the sun warm my winter-weary bones is a more productive activity than rearranging the closet, and maybe the good memories will come back if I let them.

Maybe spring is the reason for getting up...to simply see what is possible today. Maybe today is the day and if I’m in bed, I’ll miss the beginning, and I’ll still be lost.

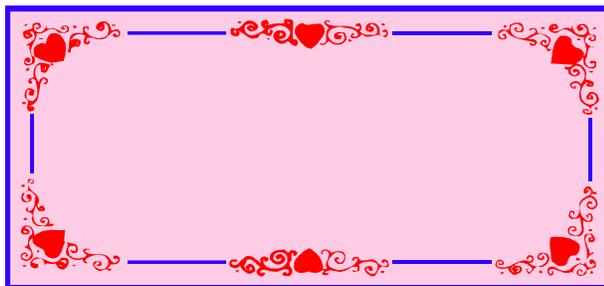
Maybe I’m already in the middle of change and maybe I will always be confused, lost and slightly off balance, but maybe that’s okay, and I’ll just have to figure out how? instead of why? And when that happens, I know I won’t be lost anymore! It really doesn’t matter if it’s Tuesday or Friday (unless one of those days is garbage day, and then it does matter!) Maybe I can let go of the time frames and calendar pages that dictate my life and my emotions and let life simply flow.

Perhaps you and I have already answered the wake up call. Don’t let a poor yesterday or an uncertain tomorrow use up today. I think this is it, and now is the time for being all I can be. Half of me is still in winter and dyeing eggs. All of me is still perhaps a bit off balance, but I am alive and that’s a start! This wasn’t the life I expected to live, but it is the one I’ve got.

If I’m lost, I’ll explore wherever it is I am. If I’m late, I’ll just apologize and enjoy the time I have left. If I’m out of place, out of style or out of sync, I’ll just keep dancing to the tune I hear and let the rest of the world figure out their own melody...

*Darcie Sims
Bereavement Magazine Mar/Apr 1995*

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TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person - or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.



TO OUR OLD MEMBERS

*We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. **THINK BACK...** what would it have been like for you if there had not been any “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief, and encourage you? It was from them you heard, “your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer.”*