



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.

March-April, 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.

March 21st.. & April 18th.

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.

March 28th. & April 25th.

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. Betty Myers in loving memory of her son **William Bruce Tagoe**. "Always in my heart, forever missed and my undying love. Till we meet again".

Mrs. Maria Peniche in loving memory of her son **Manuel (Manny) Peniche** "Always loved, forever missed".

Mr. Michael Durkin in loving memory of his Two daughters **Casey Reuter Durkin and Molly Durkin**. "Forever loved and never forgotten".

Mr. & Mrs. Earl Pearlman in loving memory of their son **Marc R. Pearlman**. "Every day is One day closer to you".

Mr. Daniel Scott Sr. in loving memory of his son **Daniel J. Scott Jr.** "Forever missed, always loved."

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".

Mr. Scott Cohen & Lisa Gelin in loving memory of **Brett Cohen** on his anniversary February 14th. "Always missed, forever love".

Mr. & Mrs. Barry Buchinski in loving memory of their son **Adam J. Buchinski** on his anniversary March 27th. "Having you in our lives was our greatest joy, losing you had been our greatest heart ache".

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Eldredge in loving memory of their son **Kevin R. Edlredge**. "Love you miss you everyday".



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, March and April. 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

March

JASON L. MILLIGAN
TIMOTHY JAMES THORSEN
PAULA BETH WATERS
PAUL MICHAEL MACINNIS
STACEY ANN MAHONEY
KEVIN R. ELDREDGE
ADAM J. BUCHINSKI
CHRISTOPHER SCOTT LOWELL
TYLER PARMENTER

April

CHRISTOPHER ALLEN LILL
SHANNON A. McTIERNAN
KELSEY MULKERRINS
JUSTIN MAYER
PETER RAYMOND LANDRY

Birthdays

March

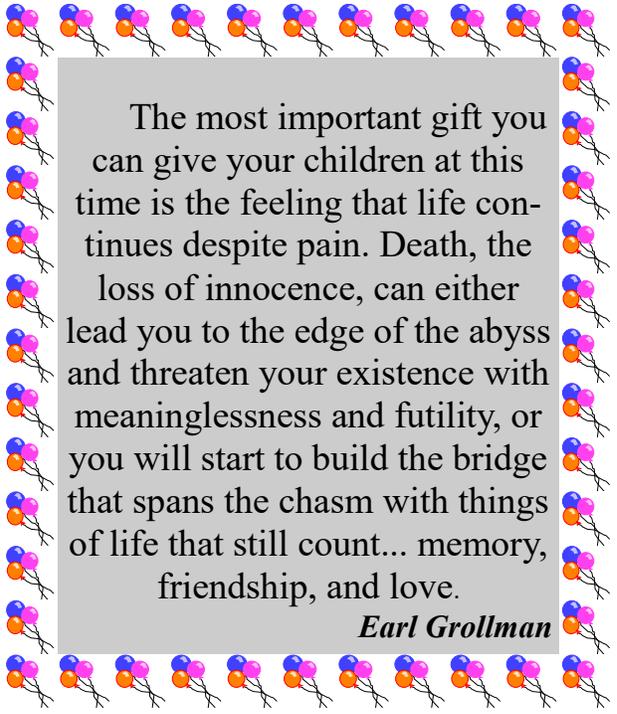
ALAN R. STUCHINS
TIMOTHY JOHN KOVALCHIK
IAN GREENBLATT
SHERIL SEARS JONES
CALEB RAPPL
ANDREW RYAN WEGLINSKI

April

EVAN S. GARNETT
DANIEL J. SCOTT Jr.
PAULA BETH WATERS
ANDREA RENEE BOSWORTH
JOHN W. STACK
RYAN MICHAEL GAUDET
ELIZA JULIET NORTON



Softly...may peace replace heartache and cherished memories remain with you always on your child's anniversary.



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 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.

Playing in the Shadows

We grew up together
Big sister, little brother.
I took care of you
Until you were old enough
to care for yourself.
Though you didn't say it.
I knew you loved me,
We played in the sunlight, you and I;
Remember the games of Mother-May -I,
And Hide and Seek?
Sure we had our fights
As all siblings do.
But through it all we never lost
Our love for each other.

Now you're gone.
I'll never see you again,
Except in the memories,
Of those sunny days.

You will forever be sixteen -
Far too young to die.
You had your whole life to live.
I'll always grieve, but I must go on.
Still, without you,
I play alone in the shadows.

Cheryl Larson
TCF, Pikes Peak, CO

To Those Who Don't Know

If you could imagine the loneliest moment in your entire life, remember exactly how your body felt in that moment, empty those feelings into an expanding pill and swallow it, then you could begin to imagine what it feels like to live through loss.

I have one hand in happiness - the memories we made together - and one hand in isolation - the world without my brother. I constantly push and pull in an attempt to firmly remember, yet triumphantly live, a positive life.

Scott Mastley
TCF Sibling Co-leader, Atlanta, GA
Written for his brother, Chris

Alike

Cathy-
As I look in the mirror,
I wonder if it's true,
Is it true when people say,
I look like you?

I know I have the pictures,
And I have movies too,
But these do not help much,
So do I look like you?

I never got to know you,
I wonder if it's true,
When my friends and family say,
I look like you.



Kelly Maxwell
TCF, Pikes Peak, CO



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Healing the Bereaved Child.

Support groups help bereaved kids by:

- *Countering the sense of isolation many bereaved children experience in our shame-based, mourning-avoiding culture.
- *Providing emotional, physical and spiritual support in a safe, non-judgmental environment.
- *Allowing them to explore their many thoughts and feelings about grief in a way that helps them be compassionate with themselves.
- *Encouraging members to not only receive support and understanding for themselves, but also to provide help to others. (We know that children do not like to be different from peers and often resist being singled out for purposes of receiving help.)
- *Offering new ways of approaching problems (e.g. how to respond to the peer who makes fun of the fact that someone in their life has died).
- *Helping them trust in what, for many, seems like an unsafe, uncaring world.
- *Providing a supportive environment that can rekindle their love for life and living. In short, as bereaved children give and receive help, they feel less helpless and are able to discover continued meaning in life. Feeling understood by their peers and effective adult leaders brings down barriers between the bereaved child and the world outside. Our mourning-avoiding culture often invites children to keep their grief internalized and to adopt ways of avoiding the painful, but necessary, work of mourning. Support groups instead foster the experience of trusting and being trusted and have the potential of doing wonders in meeting the needs of bereaved children.

*Excerpts from Dr. Alan D. Wolfert
Bereavement Magazine March/April 98
Bereavement Publishing, Inc.
8133 Telegraph Dr.
Colorado Springs, CO 80920*

Someday

Someday, it won't hurt so bad and I'll be able to smile again. Someday, the tears won't flow quite as freely whenever I think of what might have been. Someday, the answers to "why" and "what if" won't be quite as important. Someday, I'll be able to use what your death has taught me to help others with their grief. Someday, I'll be healed enough to celebrate your life as much as I now dwell on your death. And someday, maybe tomorrow, I'll learn to accept the things I cannot change .
But for today . . . I think I'll just be sad.

*by Steven L. Channing
TCF, Winnipeg, MB*

Butterfly Wings, Bricks and Lead

When I saw her load of grief, it looked to me to be merely a light load of butterfly wings, as compared to my full load of heavy bricks. Then I saw another man, and he seemed to be carrying a small load of lead.

But as I watched her step on the scales bearing her load of butterfly wings, the scales read "one ton." When he stepped on the scales with his load of lead, the scales also read "one ton." I knew my grief-load of bricks would weigh more, but those scales read for me, "one ton." Our loads of butterfly wings, lead and bricks weighed exactly the same to the one carrying that particular load of grief.

We bereaved parents often feel resentment when a non-bereaved person speaks about our child's death. HOW can THAT PERSON know or even dream of how I feel or what I am going through?

These feelings may be justified. But when we begin to feel resentment toward another bereaved parent, "That child's death was easy compared to my child's death," "I have suffered more than she/he ever did" — we should remember that each of our grief-loads weighs two thousand pounds to the one under it. Compared to Rose Kennedy, who had one child in a mental institution, and lost one daughter and three sons in violent deaths, my grief-load begins to look as if it were made of gossamer soap bubbles, but when I again step on that scale, it still reads, "one ton."

Our grief-loads may appear to weigh less because we who are under them have grown stronger through time and grief process maturation. The load actually weighs no less; it is we who have grown stronger and can carry it more easily. Sometimes we can even completely ignore the weight that is still there. Always be careful in judging another's grief-load. Remember the lead, butterfly wings and those bricks, and how they all weigh the same to the one under that load of grief.

*Tom Crouthamel
TCF, Sarasota, FL*

Names In Granite

Several years ago, on a visit to Washington, D.C., I visited the Vietnam War memorial. I knew a young man who died during the war and whose name appeared on the Memorial. I made a point of finding his name on the Wall; it was a moving experience for me. After I located his listing, I stood at the Memorial, reflecting on his life, his surviving child and wife, and thought about what this Memorial must mean to them.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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This is a Memorial that was born in controversy. One veteran called it, "the black gash of shame." Another veteran thought the Memorial did little to lift the spirits of the men who fought in the Vietnam War. In fact, a second monument was built on the site to pacify those who expressed initial dissatisfaction. As years have passed, however, and millions have visited the Memorial, it has come to be a place of healing and peace.

People may wonder about its success as a tribute to the men and women who fought and died in Vietnam. But I don't. As a TCF chapter leader and editor of our chapter newsletter, I have come to understand the meaning of the Vietnam Memorial and its message to all of us.

We have a column in our newsletter titled, "That Their Light May Always Shine...Our Children Loved and Remembered." This column lists the day a child died, his/her name, and the child's parents. We call these "remembrance dates" rather than anniversary dates, thereby avoiding a word that connotes celebration and jubilation. Occasionally and accidentally, I have omitted a child's name. Invariably, when this happens, I receive a phone call from a very distraught parent who wants to know why their child's name did not appear in the newsletter.

In fact, recently, a mother called to inform me that I had omitted her son's name. This child died five years ago. I asked why this error caused so much pain. She said, "When his name appears in the newsletter each year, it is the only time I ever see it in print. It is a sign to me that he lived and to anyone else that reads the newsletter. Maybe everyone else has forgotten that he lived, but I remember and the newsletter reminds others. Then I know I am his mother."



I understood, as never before, the importance of the written word, or as in this case, the written name. Any person who questions the impact of a black granite wall listing 58,132 names has never experienced the death of a child.

Cissy Lowe Dickson
TCF, Houston Bay Area Chapter

Accepting the Unacceptable

"I will never be able to accept the death of my child." Does that sound familiar? Have you said that? Not surprising. That is one, if not the most, difficult thing we have to do to get to the other side of the long dark tunnel of grief.

What does "accept" mean? One parent told me he would never accept his daughter's death, because he said "accept" means to "agree, approve, to consent to." Obviously, in that context no one in their right mind would "accept" their child's death. But there are other meanings to "accept" : "believe to be true," "acknowledge." We do not like the sound of those words either, but at some point, accept them, in order to get on with our lives.

By stating we will not accept it, what is accomplished? ... Will it make it not true? If only it were that simple. Then I would be 100% in favor of denial. But it doesn't work that way. There are some things that cannot be changed, no matter how hard we may want them to be.

One example: My husband had a heart attack a little more than a year after Eric's death. He vehemently denied he had had a heart attack. ... He continued on with his HEAVY smoking. Then came his stroke. He is now badly paralyzed on his left side. He cannot deny his stroke. And he cannot go back, and accept his heart attack, change his way of living and perhaps avert the stroke. So what did his denial accomplish? It made things worse.

So it is with us. Denial won't work. At some point in time, we know it has happened. I realized for myself, it was when I could say "Eric died." I could say the word "dead." It took quite a long time. I could say "I lost a son" but not "he died." One day it just came out. It actually shocked and upset me. But afterwards, looking back, I realized that was a big step for me. Not a happy one, but it was one of my turning points.

All of the "stages" of grief that we go through are hard. There is nothing easy about it. As Darcie Sims said..."grief hurts." That almost seems like too mild a statement. The feeling is impossible to put in words. It's devastating!!

"Grief work" takes time and effort. I wish there was an easier way for all of you. I can only give you the hope and encouragement that you, too, can make it. Be kind to, and patient with, yourself. God Bless!

Mary Ehmann
TCF, Valley Forge, PA

The Breakfast Cup

Yesterday we had breakfast, a small group of men whose common distinction was that we had each lost a child or young son or daughter to death. Talk ranged around the table, mixed with pride, love, regret, and questions: What now? How do we move forward in life a little less than we were? Why was I unable to protect my child? How can I honor his or her memory? How can I be a better man because of this precious gift given me?

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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)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.



When Words Become Gifts

On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Erik and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said, "I saw your name tag, are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation, "Yes, I am!" With those three, almost magical, words this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was saying David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom but I better not say anything, she said something.

Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a class-mate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared. Acknowledging that I'm still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am, and always will be, Erik and David's mom.



The fourth gift was permission to share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven't been any truly easy, carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most "doable" way for me to go on. Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me.

As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing more than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters most to us.

The real treasure comes when others introduce our children's names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the meaningful legacy that our sons and daughters have left to us and to the world.

By Nita Aasen, St. Peter, Minnesota

Reprinted with permission from We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.

A Word About Closure

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

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

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Closure conjures up the idea of healing or moving past. It sounds like some magic moment that happens and the grieving is over. A moment that closes the door to a bad time in our lives and we do not have to think about it anymore. I don't think there are any magic moments in grief. Grief is a process. A long slow process. There are events that are memorable but they don't take the pain away. There are times of healing, but the process must still go on.

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

We don't have closure; we have times of growing reality. Reality does not come all at once. We must gradually come to grips with our loss. We go through a time of real, but not real. We know it has happened but we still think it is a dream and we will soon awake. Reality develops gradually through many experiences. It grows in those times when we face a little bit more of our loss, and reality becomes more vivid. Viewing a loved one, the funeral, the first visit to the cemetery, cleaning out the closets, cleaning out the room, all of these are steps toward reality and toward coping. They are not the closing of a door nor opening a new door. They are just tiny steps toward deciding to live again and learning to cope.

Doug Manning
*Lovingly lifted from the
Central Iowa, TCF, Newsletter*

My Missing Piece

For 62 years I have been searching for my missing piece.

At 21, they told me it was for the best. I tried so hard to believe.

At 21, I cried and they told me I should pull myself together. I tried so hard to believe. I tried so hard to stop.

At 21, they told me there would be other children. I tried so hard to see it their way.

At 21, alone, I went on as if nothing had happened.

At 26, there were more children. They said, "See, everything is wonderful." I said, yes, and it was, but my piece was still missing. Secretly, I thought I must be a bad mother. I should be happier. And so life went. A creeping sadness I couldn't shake 62 years, I waited for someone to ask and say, "How hard for you." Someone said it and the missing piece has been found, reborn.

My baby, my child, my dreams. You were my first step into believing in the future. You, my child, my missing piece.

So many years I was isolated from you and myself. Now my pain is clean. I still don't know WHY, but I know I have a right to grieve, and remember, and acknowledge, what you mean and meant to me. Strange, now at 83 I truly feel I can go on.

Written by an 83-year-old mother in treatment for a complicated grief reaction 62 years after the death of her baby.

TCF, Boise, ID

Thoughts on the Death of an Older Child

Perhaps I had my child longer than you had yours, but 38 years does not seem long. Perhaps there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me, even if your memories are memories of only one or two days. Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine. In 38 years there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three granddaughters who now live three thousand miles away from me.

My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the "acceptable" diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are placed in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with the help of four treatment centers, the recovery was not to be. One day at a time, my recovery is taking place. The pain, after two and a half years, has gone to a place where it can be tolerated. My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same; my child has gone to a place where I cannot go and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one day at a time enriched because my son came through my body into my life.



Helen Godwin
Orange Park TCF, Jacksonville, FL



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Other Area TCF Chapters

- MA/CT Border Towns Chapter (Dudley, Webster areas)
Chapter Co- Leaders: Paul & Anne Mathieu
(508) 248-7144.....ampm1259@charter.net
- 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



Toeholds

If you are out there and haven't been able to attend a meeting - or even if you have, but still find yourself "yo-yoing," you have to know that this is the way the road to recovery is. Would that it were a road that angled straight up, but it isn't. The road is full of hills and valleys and you are first up and then down, thinking for a day or two that you have this thing under control only to find yourself down in the valley again the next day. What you can't see when you are in the middle of all this is that each time you slip back; you don't slip all the way back to the bottom of the hole. Each time you climb out, you make yourself some toeholds that enable you to give yourself a boost. You eventually learn that there are some things you can do to help yourself. These toeholds help you to inch your way to the top again. Also, they stop your slide so that you don't have to go to the bottom of that hole each time.

We make progress in such small amounts that it is difficult sometimes for us to realize that we are progressing. Try not to judge your progress from day to day, week to week, or even month to month. I find that it is better for me to judge my progress from year to year. That way I can better remember how I was handling a particular event last year as compared to how I handled that event this year. I can see my progress, and I am again encouraged to know that I am moving ahead. I'm thankful for my toeholds.

Mary Cleckley
TCF, Atlanta, GA⁹

SPRINGTIME

Although winter is not yet over, we are beginning to look forward to springtime. Springtime, bringing with it, among other things, Mother's Day, The Passover for my Jewish friends, Easter Sunday, the sweet fragrance of hyacinth in bloom. But what is the special something that seems to put a little extra bounce in our steps, that seems to lift the spirits a little? I wonder if it's a deep-down feeling that reminds us that once again the promises of springtime will be fulfilled.

There is a bare-limbed tree outside my bedroom window, but I know that pretty soon I will see buds popping out of the ends of those limbs. And each day after that, those buds will become larger - until one day, a leaf will unfold itself from that bud. And it never ceases to amaze me that in the springtime I can take the tiniest of seeds, place it in the soil of Mother Earth, and soon a lovely flower will evolve from that seed. How? Science can explain the facts of growth, but can many really understand the wonder of it? How does a butterfly know when it is no longer a caterpillar - how does it know that it's time to leave its cocoon? What tells the tulip that it's time to leave the protection of a bulb, wriggle up through the soil, and open its petals to the rays of the sun?

Springtime. A time of renewal and rebirth. New life and new beginnings. And because I know that this fulfillment of rebirth at springtime is not the result of a "coincidence," not the "lucky toss" of the dice, it says something of much deeper meaning to me. I do not believe that the grace is the end of life -- any more than the cocoon represents the end of life for the caterpillar. I believe that our loved ones live, beyond the confines of our hearts, beyond our thoughts, beyond our memories, in a place not bound by the limits of time as we are. And that they are free, free as the butterfly soaring into the light of a new day. And I can find joy in that belief.

Springtime. When we push the hands of the clock forward for daylight savings time. We "spring ahead" now and "fall back" in autumn. I guess I do that too, learning to cope with my son's death. A lot of days are "spring forward" days; I enjoy the little things of life, I can laugh and feel good, talk about Rob without crying. And then, there are those "fall back" times when I just don't make it and the only thing that preserves my sanity is to sit down and have a good cry. But I know that I can get up again and go on after those times of falling back. I can, and I will. Just as you can, too. And so, my wish for you this coming springtime is that your "spring forward" days will be many and lengthy, while your "fall back" days become fewer and less painful for you!

Audrey Cain
TCF Northern NY, Chapters



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



A Message for My Husband ...from a Grieving Mother

My world has turned upside down since the death of my child. I am writing this to you because I know that my grief is difficult for you to understand. All bereaved couples probably have challenges in this regard, but our situation is complicated by the fact that my child was not your biological child.

You have asked how you can help me. This is what I need:

Acceptance:

The enormity of my pain is incomprehensible to you, even though you have experienced the death of other family members to whom you were close. In addition, you were not part of my child's early life, so your relationship to him is very different. You can't know what it feels like to lose a child. I need you to accept that fact and listen to me when I want to tell you what it is like for me. I don't need advice or solutions - just a willingness to hear my feelings. I know that men and women grieve differently and although talking may not be helpful for you, it does help me understand my loss.

Patience:

No matter how much you love me, you cannot cure my grief. I have to do this in my own way and in my own time. I need your patience because although I want this pain to go away quickly, I know it will not. I don't have control over when it hits me or how long it lasts. I need you to know that I am not intentionally wallowing in my grief; I am just trying to get through it the best way I can.

Flexibility:

I understand your fears that since I am not "myself" right now, I am not the person you married and you want the old "me" back. I am less efficient and less able to concentrate and remember than before the death occurred. The small things that used to be important to me just don't seem to matter anymore. I have been assured that I will regain my ability to think and remember. Yet, things will never be the same as they were before my child died. I will never be able to view the world in the same way. You and your love are still incredibly important to me. I need you to be flexible as we gradually create a new normal for our family.

Support:

Though I try to be strong, I have given myself permission to seek help and understanding from others who have experienced a similar loss. It is important that you support my efforts to attend counseling sessions or parent support group meetings, for I need these other people in my life right now. This does not mean that I love or need you less.

Openness and Understanding:

I know that sexual intimacy is an important part of our relationship, but right now my heart and my soul are consumed with grief and my body simply cannot respond. I need your understanding as we work on openly communicating our needs to each other.

Please know that I truly appreciate your offers to help. Know, too, that I have faith that there will again be a time when our family will experience happiness and joy.

**Catherine Johnson
Enumclaw, WA**

Catherine Johnson, M.A., is a Certified Grief Therapist and Death Educator who does individual counseling as well as facilitating a parent grief support group as part of an on-going aftercare program for Weeks' Funeral Homes in Washington state. She has published several articles and chapters on topics related to bereavement, made presentations on the national level, and serves on the Board of Directors for the Association for Death Education and Counseling

THANKS

Thanks to the friend who did know the "right words" to say: **"There is a group in town that might help you."**

Thanks to the parent who somehow found the courage to call that phone number and find out about **"that group."**

Thanks to the mother who went to that first meeting knowing it would really hurt to talk - and talked.

Thanks to the dad who said after the first meeting he could never come back - but did.

Thanks to the parent who, at the fifth meeting, put her arms around a "new one" and said: **"They really can help."**

Thanks to the mom who, for the first time, was able to bake cookies - for her **"Compassionate Friends."**

Thanks to the homemaker who could never talk in front of people - who became a facilitator.

Thanks to the six-foot father who cried in front of the other men - and didn't say he was sorry.

Because of you we will be able to help someone we don't even know - next month.

THANKS.



**by John De Beer
Greater Omaha Chapter of TCF**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



The Seasons Of Grief

The seasons take on new meanings when a child dies. The snow of winter melts into the first breath of spring. How well I remember the first spring of my grief. I looked forward eagerly to its coming . . . surely when the long dark days of winter are past--surely spring will be better!!

How surprised I was at tears springing forth with the discovery of each new crocus and every bursting bud and spring flower. Yes, spring was beautiful, but oh, so sad, that first year without my son to share it with. For suddenly I realized that it was he who gave me my first crocus, bulb and all, when he was five! And he who gave me my first bedding plants for Mother's Day each year.

And now, the Lenten Season unfolds once more, and I'm aware of other bereaved parents who will withdraw to the privacy of their personal and painful world of memories with this new season for them. Ash Wednesday . . . Easter. . . Passover for my Jewish friends . . . these are a totally new experience in the first years of grief. The liturgical words are a thousand years old; yet tears blur the painful newfound meaning.

TAKE TIME TO GRIEVE. Take time for the memories of other Easters. Take time to mourn what might have been. Indulge yourself in the beauty of an Easter Lily. Don't be afraid if at first there seems more pain than comfort in the age-old words and the beautiful music of Easter. And never be ashamed of your tears. One day you, too, will say, "It is finished."

To walk through grief is not easy. When the shock and numbness have gone, we are left with reality, with the reality that life includes pain and loss. Easter is a season of many feelings . . . a time of pain and loss. It is also a time of rebirth, and of real personal growth. So, also, are the Seasons of Grief.

Shirley Melin
TCF, Aurora, IL

When It's Hard To Go Back A Second Time!

If you have attended a Compassionate Friends support meeting, you know that discussions can have a rough effect upon your feelings and your sadness. If it happened to you at the very first meeting you attended, it may have felt devastating. Your first encounter might feel like the hardest thing you've done since the death of your child.

We are not surprised then, when we learn that some say, "NEVER, NEVER AGAIN WILL I EVER EXPOSE MYSELF TO SUCH PAIN!" "I won't go back a second time!"

We're not surprised. We are concerned, and we care about you.

We write to you who may have decided, "not to go back to a meeting a second time." We write to you as well as a group of people who have hung tough - together through a lot of pain. What we exchange with each other for sharing our pain is love, care, affirmation and understanding.

We think about people in the months and years recently past who never came back to a second meeting. We wonder - HOW ARE THINGS GOING FOR YOU? ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION TO YOUR GRIEF WORK IN WAYS THAT ARE HELPFUL?

Most Compassionate Friends understand the "WHY" of I'm not going back there again. And we know that Compassionate Friends meetings aren't necessarily for everyone. However, are you sure it isn't for you? We are truly thankful if you are finding your way through your terrible loss. We also rejoice with you in your growth and wish you courage and strength along your journey to healing.

However, if staying away is how you avoid the pain of your grief, you may be staying away for the wrong reason. You see, there is both comfort and healing in sharing the pain of your grief with those who walk where you walk. Together, "we walk through a valley that is as dark as the shadow of death." When you can do that, you will discover you are not alone! That discovery is one of the early steps in your own healing. Join us again for a second, third or fourth time. We are, Your Compassionate Friends!

Toni Jones
TCF, York, PA

Toni Jones is a hospital chaplain in York, PA. advisor and facilitator for York, TCF, and a frequent workshop presenter for TCF conferences.

IN MEMORY OF THOSE LOVED

May you always walk in sunshine
and God's love around you flow:
For the happiness you gave us,
No one will ever know.
It broke our hearts to lose you,
But you did not go alone:
A part of us went with you
The day God called you home.
A million times we've needed
you,
A million times we've cried.
If love could only have saved you.





The Compassionate Friends
Metrowest Chapter
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Address Correction Requested

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

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



TO OUR OLD MEMBERS

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