



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 2009

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YOU ARE INVITED

The Compassionate Friends - Metrowest Chapter meets twice a month. Evenings on the third Tuesday from 7:30 to 9:30 pm in the library of St. Mary's Parish Center, Route 16, Washington St., Holliston. The parish center is located between the church and the rectory. Our next two meetings will be on: **March 17th April 21st**

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 Monday 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:

March 31st April 28th

WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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

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

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

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

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow. We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends. ©2009

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

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 508/620-0613
- Carmela Bergman 508/359-8902
- Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
- Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

The chapter address is:

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

Regional Coordinator

Rick Mirabile
11 Ridgewood Crossing
Hingham, MA 02043
Phone (781) 740-1135
Email: Rmirabile@comcast.net

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

The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Voice Toll Free (877) 969-0010
Fax (630) 990-0246
Web Page: www.compassionatefriends.org

TRIBUTES, GIFTS AND DONATIONS

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

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

Love Gifts

- Mrs. Susan Sannicandro in loving memory of her son **Frank (Frankie) W. Topham.**
- Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Bergeron in loving memory of their daughter **Dolores R. Bergeron.**
- Mr. & Mrs. Arnold Wolfson in loving memory of their daughter **Donna Ann Wolfson.**
- Mr. & Mrs. Anthony L. Chinappi in loving memory of their son **Michael Chinappi.**
- Mr. & Mrs. George Swymer in loving memory of their daughters **Laura Swymer - Clancy & Karen Swymer - Shanahan.**
- Mr. & Mrs. William T. Connors in loving memory of their son **Brian David Connors.**
- Mr. & Mrs. Paul Therrien in loving memory of their daughter **Dana Nicole Therrien.**
- Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Jackman in loving memory of their daughter **Alicia D. Jackman & Pamela Jackman** in loving memory of her brother **Douglas C. Curtiss.**
- Mr. Robert Hudson in loving memory of his sister **Beatrice Elizabeth Hudson** on her birthday, February 21st.
- Mrs. Beverly A. Marks in loving memory of her son **Shawn P. Marks** on his anniversary February 15th.
- Bunny Siebert in loving memory of her daughter **Lea M. Siebert** on her anniversary February 3rd.
- Mr. & Mrs. Robert A. Eldredge in loving memory of their son **Kevin R. Eldredge** on his anniversary March 24th.

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 make 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)



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



Our Children Remembered

As a regular feature, the newsletter acknowledges anniversaries of the deaths of our children/siblings and their birthdays. This issue covers the months of 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

ASHLEY MORGAN MAHONEY
ALICIA D. JACKMAN
BRIAN D. CONNORS
PAUL DALEY
NOEL ANTHONY GURLEY
KEVIN R. ELDREDGE
GRACE MAY SPIVACK
MICHAEL J. PAULHUS
TYLER PARMENTER
NICHOLAS ORIE VAN RYE
SCOTT M. BULOCK
CHRISTOPHER SHEA

April

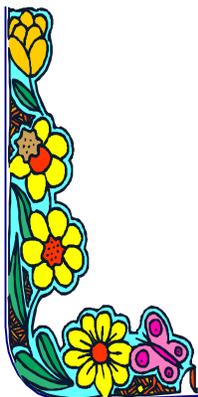
ANDREW JOHN GEARY
CHRISTIAN ALBEE
CORI SHEAHAN
BETH ANNE BAUER
MICHELLE NICHOLSON
KRIS DANIEL GENTILOTTI
KELSEY MULKERRINS
FRANK W. TOPHAM
JUSTIN MAYER
MATHEAU VIRCA
KAREN SWYMER – SHANAHAN

Birthdays March

ALAN R. STUCHINS
IAN GREENBLATT
MICHAEL HEARNS
WILLIAM H. BARDOL JR.
ANDREW B. MILLINER
KEVIN WASHBURN
CORI SHEAHAN
GRACE MAY SPIVACK
WILLIAM BENJAMIN HUMPHREY
LISA MASTROMATTEO

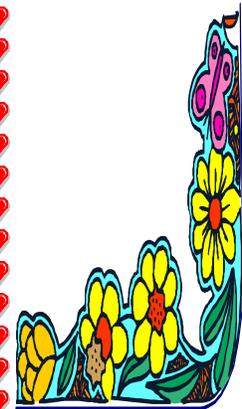
April

DANIEL CUMBO
DONALD ROY SANBORN
DAVID P. RUSAKOVICH
LARRY DUGAN
NOEL ANTHONY GURLEY
LAURIE SLOPEK
GERRY LAPIERRE
MICHAEL CHINAPPI



CHAPTER TID-BITS

Al Kennedy has graciously volunteered to make up picture buttons of our loved ones. The buttons are 2 1/4 inch diameter. If you have a photo of your child, you can e-mail it as an attachment to aksound@comcast.net or bring it to the next meeting. Al has a tool that will cut out the 2 1/4 inch diameter picture to fit it in the button. The circle is an approx. diameter of the button. A special thanks to *Al Kennedy*.





The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



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.

GRADUATION, A TIME TO REMEMBER

I was driving down the road the other day, thinking of how the retail market makes any event an opportunity for revenue. Graduation seems to fall into that category, with cards and gifts for every graduate. This time of year reminds me that my graduation from high school was a bittersweet time.

Really, it was the first time I had "surpassed" my older brother, David, in anything significant. I turned the age that he was when he died, 18, in the beginning of my senior year of high school. That year was difficult for me, as I felt that I was getting to move past where he had been cut short. Graduation day was no exception. I was happy to be getting out of high school, and looking forward to that coming August when I would go to college. But why was I getting to do these things, and not David? What made me so special that I got to stay here and experience these things? I still am not quite sure of the answer to those questions.



Graduation from high school was really just the first of many events which I have gotten to experience that David never will. College graduation, my wedding, and the birth of my two children are examples. And for me, each event has been a bit bittersweet.

The good news is this: that while time does make it easier to bear day-to-day activities without your sibling, each major event in your life presents itself as a new opportunity to remember your brother or sister, as well. For me, figuring that out was a huge relief, as it meant that my fear of forgetting David was not something I needed to worry about any more.

His memory is just as alive for me today, 15 1/2 years later, as it was when I took that walk across the stage to accept my high school diploma.

Amy Baker Ferry
Heart of Florida, TCF
Longwood, FL

I Am Your Sister and Always Will Be

"I am your sister and always will be." That's how Susie signed her cards to me. After a while, she shortened it to, "I am..." And of course I knew the rest of it. Susie was two and one-half years younger than I. She was alive one evening talking on the phone to Mom about the Oscars and to Dad about moving. The next day she was found. Whatever it was, it ended her life and changed mine forever.

There was a wonderful side of my sister that I didn't pay enough attention to. She was a kind and loving person, always ready to shelter lost animals and lost souls. When she was in a good mood, her smiles warmed my heart. Yet I spent most of my life wishing that things were different: wishing that she thought more of herself, wishing that she would take my advice, wishing that she were happier, wishing that we could accept each other.

Now, for two years, I've done nothing but wish she were here so we could have another chance to work at our relationship. Now, I wish that I had been able to give her my unconditional love & support. (She needed it and deserved it.) Now, I wish that I could have been with her that night so she would not have been alone. Now, I wish that I would have held her in my arms and told her how very much I loved her. Because, Susie, I am your sister and always will be.

Michele Walters
TCF, Baltimore, MD



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



Embracing The Invisible Kinship of Compassionate Friends

Every morning following the death of my son I awoke and thought, "my child is dead." The enormity of that realization each morning was crushing, the momentary shock was like a knife in my heart. I would drag myself out of bed and shed silent tears. My life was forever changed: my only child's life had ended. The unfairness would rock me into hyper-consciousness as I began my day. Living was a major effort.

Initially I could only cling to my sanity. After the shock passed, the depression and anger had me in a vise grip. My moods would swing every morning, afternoon and night. I would retreat into myself, irrationally lash out at others and then retreat back into myself. My mind would wander, I made silly mistakes in my work, I couldn't recall names of people who had been in my life for years and my word retrieval was at the bottom.

After two and a half months of this grim routine, I attended my first Compassionate Friends meeting. A friend drove me and guided me along into the meeting. I was in a haze. The only contribution I could make was to tearfully say my son's name. But I continued to attend.

As the newly bereaved, I was given the gift of wisdom from those who had been on this journey much longer than I had been. After several meetings I began contributing little bits. I still wept each time I talked, but I was talking. This was a major breakthrough for me.

Despite the negativity that enveloped me as I let go of my life before the death of my son, I continued to attend Compassionate Friends meetings. I missed my son's ability to soften the vitriolic attitude of others who were in his life. Now I was on the firing line. I began sharing my experiences, the horrors of being sued for the wrongful death of my own child and the ache I felt for a once normal relationship with my son's children. Life was forever altered.....for my grandchildren and for me.

The "wise ones" guided me along this path of grief. I learned to live in the moment. I learned to place no expectations on others. I learned that once burned is twice warned in human relationships. I learned that I could survive if I chose to do so. I also learned that to extend my compassion to others was to participate in my healing.

Eventually I wrote an article for our Compassionate Friends newsletter and gave it to the editor. Then I wrote another, and another, and another. Then I began printing the newsletter. Each step, each little contribution brought me closer to sanity. I was participating in the effort to help others in their journey of grief, and in doing this I was helping myself on the journey. I was working with those who had made this journey and survived. Perhaps I, too, would survive.

Then I was asked to be the editor of the newsletter. At first I was fearful of this responsibility, but then I realized that I could, in some small way, help others whose children had died. And in offering that help, I could further my personal healing.

It's been 2 years, 8 months and 10 days since my son, Todd, was killed in a car accident. My husband, who was driving, has worked very hard to retain his sanity. I have learned to help him in that struggle. I have learned to accept that my relationship with my granddaughters was forever relegated to pure insignificance after my son died. I have learned that money is the alpha and the omega for some people and the pain they inflict to get money is justified in their minds. I have learned to accept life as it comes. I am the director of my life and no others.

How am I traversing that road from pure shock to accepting new normalcy? How do I keep my child with me and let go of the horrifying, life altering changes associated with his death? How do I deal with the stupefying actions of others that followed my son's death? The answer is as simple and as complex as the grief and compassion that lives within each parent whose child has died.

Through the efforts of the "wise ones", I found comfort and hope. The comfort offered by those who have lost a child is unlike any other we will experience. Their loss is the same as ours: the unspeakable, the worst nightmare, the darkest fear of every parent has now transformed into their reality. Their compassion is real. Their suggestions are gentle. Their wisdom comes over time and is the culmination of experiences which bring the realization that each of us progresses at a different rate, grieves in a different way and deals with life from a different perspective.

Those who have been here and choose to return, to relieve the pain of their child's death in order to help others are the nucleus of our organization. And so, as each day goes by, I learn from others that I must learn for myself. My truth is unique. Each truth is unique. Each parent is unique. Each child is uniquely remembered by bereaved parents and every member of our Compassionate Friends group.

I realized this week that my first thought of the day doesn't overwhelm me like it once did. My child lives in my heart. I have learned to live that reality. It is my hope to help other parents find this tiny vestige of peace.

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



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



The following article originally appeared on the Website of TLC Group < <http://fohnix.metronet.com/~tlc/> >, which specializes in publications for transition, loss and change.

Share the Pain

Guest Writer - Bill Chadwick

I was watching the news tonight when they announced that the 27- year- old son of Bill Cosby had been murdered today. I felt that now familiar sickening in my gut again...as one more young person beat us adults to the grave. Such a senseless waste...and such pain.

They read a statement from Mr. and Mrs. Cosby which said in part "... this is a tragedy that is very difficult to share with anyone." The death of a loved one is such a personal thing...a direct wound to the heart. His statement is so full of truth. In fact, it may be impossible to share the loss completely with anyone...but I think we have to try.

When my 21-year-old son Michael was killed three years ago by a drunk driver, the pain was so intense...so incredibly powerful...that I just didn't think I would survive. It is a miracle that I ever did. I remember feeling so alone...so completely alone. People were hovering around me day and night...yet I felt so far away from them. My pain was a very personal pain, one I knew they could never comprehend. I was right I think...they didn't or couldn't understand. It was that realization which caused me to seek out someone, anyone, who did understand. Was it a coincidence that I had recently signed on to the Internet?

I found a place on the Internet called "alt.support.grief" It's one of the Usenet Newsgroups. When I arrived, there were only a few "posts" there, but enough that I could sense the mood of the group. I was totally new to the Net...and had never posted to a Newsgroup before. It took a lot of courage...but I mustered enough to type: "My name is Bill...and my 21- year- old son Michael was killed in a car crash on October 23, 1993. My life has been forever changed."

I have been typing that same message now for over three years...and it is still true today. Michael's life, and his death, forever changed me. But, that day, when I shared my pain for the first time on ASG, my life changed even more. I felt some relief almost immediately, even before people had responded. As the responses to my message (back then, only a couple!) began to get posted, my heart warmed. I had no way of knowing then just how important these precious people would be to me. In the end, they literally saved my life.

Something powerful happens when we write about our grief and share it. Even before it is shared...just the writing of it seems to help. I think it helps to move us out of our denial. Somehow, seeing my own words in print helped me to center on the reality of Michael's death. But if writing it is helpful, sharing it is miraculous!! As I always say on ASG..."A miracle happens when we share our pain here. I don't know why it works, but it does!"

I remember hearing some years ago about an experiment conducted at an eastern university. It seems they lined up 50 barefooted students and had them come one at a time and place one bare foot into a bucket of ice. They timed each student to see how long he could keep his foot in the bucket before the pain overwhelmed him. After each student was clocked, they lined them up again, this time with a partner to stand next to them, holding their hand. On average, each student was able to keep their foot in the bucket twice as long as when they were alone!

The obvious conclusion that the scientist drew from this experiment was that somehow the students could endure more pain when they were not alone. I think perhaps the scientist may have missed the most important factor in the formula. You see, the student holding the participant's hand, had his foot in the bucket only minutes before. He knew what it felt like!!

Talking to a therapist, writing in a journal, sharing with a relative, all of these are positive ways to express our feelings of grief. But, there is something very special, very powerful, about sharing with someone who has been down the path you are walking. Find them at a Hospice grief group, at "The Compassionate Friends", or right here on the Internet, just find them. And once you have found them, don't let them go until you have told them EVERYTHING! It will be a big favor you are doing for yourself, and an even greater favor you will be doing for them!

Love & Peace, Bill

"In this life we cannot do great things...We can only do small things with great love." – Mother Theresa

My email address: zoom@zoom.baton-rouge.la.us

My homepage is a memorial to Michael. There is extensive info on grief there and great links to other sites on grief. Please check it out!: <http://zoom.baton.rouge.la.us/> Online Grief Support Group: A warm and compassionate place...where we share the common bond of grief. A miracle in my life!: [news:alt.support.grief](http://news.alt.support.grief)

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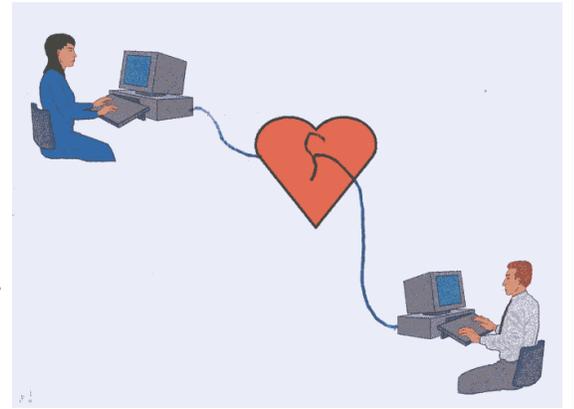


Cyberspace News

First of all visit TCF on the Net! At <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>
Dr. Mary A. Paulson PhD, a bereaved sibling, is a child and adolescent psychologist at Harding Hospital in Worthington, Ohio. She will answer your questions related to sibling loss, grief and recovery. E-mail your questions to: JEY23A@prodigy.com

Ed & Joan Motuzas at: headly@comcast.net
Rick Dugan at: Rick-Dugan@comcast.net
Carole Katz at: capekatz@comcast.net
Parents of Suicides website/memorial: www.parentsofsuicide.com
To subscribe to PS e-mail support group: www.onelist.com/subscribe/parentsofsuicide
Grieving Parents memorial website: www.angelfire.com/ab3/grievingparents/
To subscribe to Grieving Parents support group: www.onelist.com/subscribe/grievingparents
Teen Age Grief at: juliesplace.com

***Keep an eye out for our new website coming soon.
At, www.tcfmetrowest.com***



About Dry Wells

If a grieving parent finds comfort in talking with understanding people, he often will turn to those in his life who have supplied a shoulder during past stressful times. Many of life's problems are circumstances familiar to most people, either from personal experience or by observation. It isn't necessary to have experienced some things to understand them. If there is a solution, good insight will enable some bystanders to come up with logical suggestions or answers.

The death of a child is not one of those experiences. One has to have been there to truly understand the feelings and problems associated with such a loss. And, yet, the grieving parent will most probably turn to a person who, though loving and caring, will not be able to fathom the depths to which this experience takes a parent. The result often is the same as before: Answers are given, only this time there are no answers or simple solutions to make it all better. Or, maybe sensing this is different and feeling inadequate the person turned to will attempt to brush it aside, try to ignore it and encourage the bereaved parent to do the same.

Though their needs aren't met, many parents will turn to the same people time and again, searching for the support they so desperately need; hoping for comforting words that say, "Even though I don't understand all that you are going through, I'll listen to your pain because I care," or "I'm here as long as you need a loving shoulder."

Turning to those same inadequate people can be equated with taking a bucket, day after day, to a dry well, thinking that demanding it often enough, surely water can be coaxed out of that dry hole. But there is no water there and no matter how often one dips into that well, nothing will appear in the bucket to quench the thirst. Likewise, expecting eventual comfort from some who are unable to be supportive brings the same results:

There will be nothing forthcoming that will quench the thirst for understanding. There are people who can fill that role who have either been there or because they are unusually empathetic. Better to seek out productive wells than to go through the frustration and anger of dealing with old, dry ones.

It is possible to continue to have interaction with those who fail to comfort. Some of these relationships are important ones and should not be impulsively put aside. The grieving parent may be the only one who is able to salvage that which was once valued. It is done by determining to keep the grief needs separate from other areas where it is still possible to have a dialogue.

Grieving takes patience. Don't let dry wells defeat your efforts to survive your child's death. Come to your nearby Compassionate Friends' meeting. Here's a place you'll find a fountain of knowledge and understanding, for all the wells there are productive ones!

***Mary Cleckley
TCF, Atlanta Chapters, GA***



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

It is always hard to say “welcome” to persons coming to our meetings for the first time because we are so very sorry for the reason you became eligible for the membership in The Compassionate Friends. However, we are glad you found the courage to come and we hope you find understanding and comfort in the company of other bereaved parents who truly understand your grief. There are no words to describe your pain, anger, remorse and emptiness. We know that our words cannot take these feelings away. We can only sit beside you as you suffer and work through grief in your own way, on your own timetable.

Please come again and give our group a chance to help you. We hope through the sharing of your story, your feelings and tears, you will be helped as you move through this painful journey towards peace.

December Meeting (Holliston)

Mrs. Paulette Metcalf.....Son, Stf. Sgt. Scott J. Metcalf, 36 years old
Mrs. Shirley Areano.....Son, Kurt Paul Areano, 45 years old

January Meeting (Holliston)

Mrs. Nuala Mills.....Granddaughter, Robyn Nelson, 12 years old

On pain and healing...

In pain management used for patients with chronic pain, it is taught not to tighten around the pain but to relax and allow the pain to be present. The idea is that when pain is resisted, it intensifies. When we breathe deeply and acknowledge the presence of pain, it has room to move and can dissipate more readily. Pain is there to tell us something, to warn us of possible danger. This is as true for emotional, spiritual and mental pain as it is for physical pain. When pain speaks, we need to listen. All it takes is paying attention to our pain so that when it comes we remember to breathe and get soft. We don't want to fight with our pain. We want to learn from it.

Time does not heal. But healing does take time. Give yourself the gift of time. To become whole means that as we open to the pain, we open to the loss. We break open and, as a consequence, we get bigger and include more of life. We include what would have been “lost” to us if our hearts and minds had closed against the pain. We include what would have been lost if we had not taken the time to heal. As singer/songwriter Carly Simon tells us: “There’s more room in a broken heart.”

From the chapter, “Time Does Not Heal All Wounds,” of the book, “Good Grief,” by Deborah Morris Coryell

ADJUSTED

“It's been several years since your son died,”
They say, “Surely, you must have
adjusted by now.”
Yes, I am adjusted —
Adjusted to feeling pain
And sadness and grief and guilt and loss.
Adjusted to hurting and unexpected tears.
Adjusted to seeing people made
uncomfortable upon
Hearing me say “My son died.”
Adjusted to losing my best friend because
I'm not always “up.”
Adjusted to people acting as if grief is contagious.
And TCF meetings are “morbid.”
Adjusted? Oh, yes, to many things.
Knowing I won't hear his voice, but listening for it still.
Knowing I won't see him drive his Toronado,
But staring at every one I see.
Adjusted to feeling empty on his birthday
And wishing for just one more time with him.
Adjusted: As life goes on —
To realizing I cannot expect everyone I meet
To wear a bandage — just because I am still bleeding...

Shirley Blakely Curle
TCF, Central, AR



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



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

PICTURES FROM THE HEART

Since we have lost our children, part of what remains of them are pictures from the heart, which are those mental images we hold so dear. For some of us these pictures are memories of what had been, and for others these pictures are dreams of what might have been. And for some of us these pictures are a little of both. For us, dreams and memories are really the same. It is the dimension where our children now reside.

In a sense, dreams are nothing more than memories of the future, because we remember our children by the dreams we had for them; and memories are nothing more than dreams of the past, because to remember them is certainly to dream of them. I believe it is incorrect to think that someone will not hurt as much because they only had their child for a little while or to think that someone will not hurt as much because their child had the chance to grow up. In these dreams and memories, these pictures from the heart, all of our children are infants and all of our children have grown up. The sadness and pain comes from the broken heart, the memories and the dreams from the pieces that remain.

Kenneth Hensley
TCF, Nashville, TN

Rituals

Rituals are planned activities, symbolic in nature, that help us through times of chaos. Immediately after our child died we were in shock, totally unable to think of what to do, but the ritual of the funeral gave us a prescribed activity which helped us through those first few days. Society has created rituals so that we have prescribed action when a situation arises that we don't deal with regularly. In other words, rituals give us something to do when we don't know what to do.

A good example of times that are chaotic and where we don't know what to do is our child's special days, birthdays, holidays and death dates. A common statement is "what will I do on that day?" On any other day in our grief we know what we will do. We'll work, care for the house or any other of our usual activities, but we are at a loss when it comes to our child's special days. We are especially uncomfortable because we feel that these days should have special activities but we don't know what they are.

By using the concept of rituals, we can make the special days easier to get through. We can plan specific activities involving our child symbolically that will take away the chaos of not knowing what to do on that day.

We did this on the holidays and special days after the death of my granddaughter Emily, and it worked very well for us.

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The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



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For Emily's birthday, nine months after she died, we came together as a family as we had done at Christmas time. Dorothy, Emily's mother, decorated as she would have for a birthday party. While we called it "Emily's Birthday Party," it was, in reality, a celebration that she had been born and given us so much joy. Those of us present wrote notes to Dorothy sharing our feelings about the gift Dorothy had given us in Emily. We cried and comforted each other, and together we affirmed the rightness of openly expressed grief.

On Emily's death date in August each of us wrote "messages" to Emily on small pieces of paper and put them in Helium filled balloons. We took them outside and released them. Symbolically we were sending them to her in Heaven. Back in the house we shared our "messages" with each other and talked about past experiences we had had with Emily that the others might not have known about. Dorothy gave each of us a letter "from" Emily which we shared as a group. (As it had before, these letters brought forth tears from all of us, but we had expected it would and it was okay.) Other years may not be as planned or as elaborate as that first year, but the point is that these planned activities gave us something to DO and sustained us in the chaos of that special day.



I do suggest some caution in planning your own activities. It is wise to let those who will be with you on that special day know what you will do or what you expect them to do. Some people won't be able or want to participate. We must give them that option. Also, we'll want to share this special activity with only those with whom we are comfortable sharing tears and painful memories.

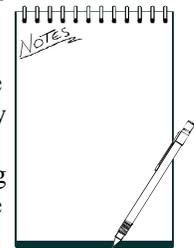
With a little thought and ingenuity you'll be able to come up with your own ideas for activities that will symbolically involve your child and help you to openly face the fact that this day was a special one for your child, and that, although he/she is dead, the day is still special. In addition, it will give you something to do when you don't know what to do.

**Margaret Gerner, MSW
TCF, St. Louis, MO**

Ideas for Writing Your Story or Journal

Recently, several new TCF members have asked me for suggestions about what they can do at the early stages of grief and what helped me in my experience in those earlier days of grief when my son, Bobby, died. In thinking about that, I remember my journal and what a meaningful and effective way of venting that was for me. As you may know, very often our close friends think we should be "moving on with life" or "letting go," etc. Unfortunately, for me, they just didn't get it. So, I looked back through some past newsletter issues and found an article on ideas for writing your story or journal, I hope you find it helpful:

Bereaved parents who have written about their loss unanimously agree that writing unleashes enormous stress and pain. In my own experience, I recall one night when I locked myself in the bathroom and wrote a long letter to my son, Bobby. It was my chance to express my feelings without having them diminished by well meaning and caring people around me trying to be helpful. I will never forget the pressure that letter released for me. Although the letter was not saved, the positive result was everlasting.



Have you ever thought of writing your story or keeping a journal? You may find it helpful to clarify your thoughts about your child by recording your feelings in the form of a letter. Write a letter to your child, expressing your thoughts and feelings about the following:

- ***A special memory that I have about you.***
- ***What I miss the most about you and our relationship.***
- ***What I wish I'd said or hadn't said.***
- ***What I'd like to ask you.***
- ***What I wish we'd done or hadn't done.***
- ***What I've had the hardest time dealing with.***
- ***Ways in which you will continue to live on in me.***
- ***Special ways I have for keeping my memories of you alive.***

Choose one or several ideas that have significance for you or start at the top of the list and work your way down. These topics may serve to help you come up with your own ideas, specific to your situation and relationship. Give yourself this exercise as a gift. If you would like to share your writing at a TCF meeting, please do. You never know how many other parents will be touched and benefit from your experience.

**by Pat Akery, Chapter Leader,
TCF, Medford, OR**



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



CONFESSIONS OF A PASTOR

When I left the seminary, there were many things I was prepared for; my mistake was believing I was prepared for everything. In fact, I was not prepared for everything, but I did not realize how totally unprepared I was until I spent some time as a pastor of a community church. Even though I had been through four years of college and four years of seminary, there was much I was not ready for. Funerals I knew how to do, at least we had discussed them in school. When it came time to help families through the grief experience, however, I soon realized how woefully inadequate my training had been.

I believe many pastors leave the seminary feeling as I did, ready to take on the world. I believe many soon discover what I did, that the more I experienced as a pastor, the more I realized how little I really did know.



For instance, I used to believe that the grief experienced by a woman whose husband died, or the man whose brother died, or the parents whose child died was the same. I was wrong.

As a caretaker of those God has entrusted to me, I set out to do my best at the funeral, to visit afterward, and I then expected the family to get on with their lives. For the most part, people did, that is, except for one group. This particular group puzzled me. I could not figure out why their tears lasted not just months but years longer. I believe you know which group this is. I wanted to understand why this group, bereaved Parents, got hit so much harder, and what I, as one who cared for them, could do.

I set out to learn all that I could about the death of a child. The more I learned, the worse I felt. The group that I had been treating like any other turned out not to be like any other. I no longer believed that all grief was the same, that is to say, that all deaths yielded the same reaction in the grieving process. Some may disagree, but as far as I am concerned, the greatest loss any human can sustain is the death of a child.

I thought over what I had said to bereaved parents to ease their pain. It hurt me to learn I had been just as much a part of the problem as I had thought I was a part of the solution. I also realized that solutions, though possible, are very hard to come by. I learned how inadequate my answers were in the face of a child's death. I came to understand that although it goes against a preacher's constitution, it was often better to keep my mouth closed and listen as one who cared that it was to offer verbal dribble. It was embarrassing to find that I, too, was guilty of the disappearing pastor syndrome following the death of a child.

Pastors don't know all they should when they leave the seminary. If we were to learn it all there, we might never be able to leave. Seminary cannot prepare us for everything, and by God's grace, and that of our people, there is forgiveness for our shortcomings. If your pastor still hasn't figured out what you need, perhaps you might help him. Your local chapter has a list of books that might be helpful, or some extra newsletters might provide some insight. Better yet, sit with him at dinner and tell him what bereaved parents go through. It might surprise him to learn how long grief lasts or that many parents leave their child's room untouched for years.

As a result of my post-seminary crash course in parental grief, I've learned a lot of good things. I do not ever tell a parent they can always have another child. I don't attempt to answer "why?" I love them even when they get mad at God. I reassure them that they aren't crazy. I help them through anxiety attacks. I listen more than I talk. I never tell them I know how they feel, they know and I know that I don't. I always tell them and show them that I care. I never ask them to tell me what I can do for them; they won't. I just show up regularly to say I remember and I care. I never let them blame themselves for things God alone has control of. I talk about their child frequently and openly.

Don't expect that your pastor understands everything that you are going through or the depth of your pain. I believe he would thank you dearly if you took it upon yourself to teach him how to better care for those in his flock who have suffered the loss of one of His dear little lambs.

**Rev. Greg Hubbard
, Goodland, KS**

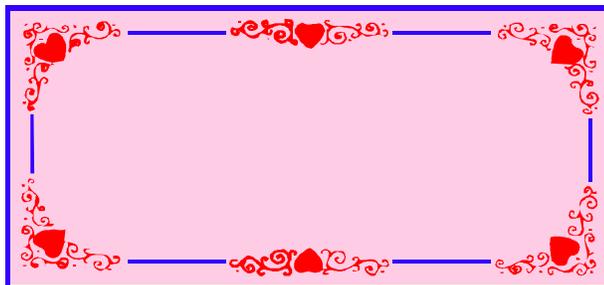
*Reprinted from The (National) Compassionate Friends
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As Long As I Can

As long as I can, I will look at the world for both of us.
As long as I can, I will laugh with the birds, I will sing
with flowers, I will play to the stars, for both of us.
As long as I can, I will remember how many things on
this earth were your joy. And I will live as well as you
would want me to live, as long as I can.

**by Sascha.
(Sascha's son Nino drowned at age 3;
years later, her daughter Eve died by suicide
at age 21.)**

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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.”*