



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 2013

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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 19th April 16th

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 26th April 30th

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. ©2013

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 508/620-0613
- Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
- Judith Cherrington 508/473-4087

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

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.

Mr. Robert Hudson in loving memory of his sisters **Beatrice Elizabeth Hudson** and **Rita Hudson-Carney**.

Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Bergeron in loving memory of their daughter **Dolores R. Bergeron**.

Mrs. Dorothy Pisapia in loving memory of her son **Matthew Pisapia**.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Donovan in loving memory of their daughter **Kristen Donovan** on her anniversary March 29th.

Mr. & Mrs. Melvin Kizner in loving memory of their daughter **Jennifer Kizner-Goldfarb**.

Ms. Lynn Waugh in loving memory of her daughter **Kelsey Mulkerrins** on her anniversary March 18th.

Mr. & Mrs. Rick Dugan in loving memory of their son **Larry Dugan** on his birthday March 6th.

Mr. Shawn Garvey in loving memory of his son **John W. Garvey** on his anniversary April 1st.

Mrs. Viola Paulhus in loving memory of her son **Michael J. Paulhus** on his anniversary March 28th.

Mr. Donald DiLorenzo in loving memory of his son **Christopher D. DiLorenzo**.

Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Jackman & daughter Jennifer in loving memory of their daughter and sister **Alicia D. Jackman** on her anniversary March 8th. Miss you AJ XO.

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Boudreau in loving memory of their son **Nicholas L. Boudreau** on his anniversary March 4th.

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Bennett in loving memory of their son **Bruce F. Bennett**.

Mr. & Mrs. Daniel J. Scott in loving memory of their son **Daniel J. Scott Jr.** on his birthday April 19th.

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Parmenter in loving memory of their son **Tyler Ray Parmenter** on his anniversary March 30th. "We will always love and miss you"! Love, Mom & Dad.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Eldredge in loving memory of their son **Kevin R. Eldredge** on his anniversary March 24th.



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

WILLIAM C. LEWIS
NICHOLAS L. BOUDREAU
ALICIA D. JACKMAN
STACEY ANN MAHONEY
KEVIN R. ELDREDGE
MICHAEL J. PAULHUS
KRISTEN DONOVAN
TYLER PARMENTER
CHRISTOPHER SHEA

April

JOHN GARVEY
JOSEPH WEBSTER
CHRISTOPHER J. MITRANO
CHRISTIAN ALBEE
BRIAN JOSEPH MacISAAC
LEANA GRANOVSKY
TRACY SMITH
JACKI PAULINE BRAMBERG
BENJAMIN GIOVANGELO
EMMA FRANCES DALTON
KELSEY MULKERRINS
FRANK W. TOPHAM
KERI L. O'NEIL-DERBYSHIRE
JUSTIN MAYER

Birthdays

March

ALAN R. STUCHINS
IAN GREENBLATT
WAYNE A. FRYE
MICHAEL HEBDEN
MICHAEL HEARNS
WILLIAM H. BARDOL JR.
ANDREW B. MILLINER
SHAWNA JEAN LARASSA
MICHAEL D. DUPONT
CHRISTOPHER JAKSTIS
CHRISTOPHER J. MITRANO
RITA HUDSON-CARNEY
ANDREW W. CUSHER
LISA MASTROMATTEO

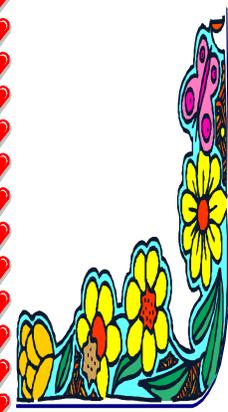
April

LARRY DUGAN
SEAN PATRICK COTTER
BENJAMIN GIOVANGELO
LAURIE SLOPEK
DOLORES ROSE BERGERON
DANIEL J. SCOTT JR.



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.

Marc's Birthday

To my brother Marc in heaven:

Today, December 14, 2012 would be your 40th birthday. It has been 5 years since you left this Earth, but it seems like yesterday. I feel your prescience often, and know you are watching over me always, my dear guardian angel. You are of the timeless and formless now, finally and completely free, free of pain, attachments, worldly thoughts, and all forms of suffering. I pray your transition was one of peaceful passing, as you transcended your human experience. You embody the spirit eternal now.

Today, here on earth, a tragedy took place, as I'm sure you already are aware. I know you will watch over these children whose lives were abruptly cut short today and empower their spirit to ease the suffering of their grieving loved ones here on Earth.

I miss you and love you, my dear brother... please continue to guide me in the right direction, to give me the strength and confidence I need to face my fears and conquer my demons as I navigate the bumpy roads on this journey called Life. I used to envision us sharing and supporting one another through life's defining moments...I still interact with you nightly in my dreams, only to awake and accept the reality of your physical absence daily. May you R.I.P. Marc. May your spirit soar gloriously above the heavens, gracefully free like a butterfly chasing a rainbow.

*Lisa Pearlman, 12/14/12
Metrowest Chapter , TCF
Holliston , MA*

Surviving My Sister's Suicide

As a survivor of my sister's suicide, what became clear to me is the importance of telling one's story as part of the grieving process. This process is too often shrouded by stigma and silenced by shame. I write this article with the hope that by sharing my story and talking about suicide openly, you might learn a little bit more about suicide, which might help you assist someone in distress and guide you to save their life.

As a survivor, I often felt isolated and weakened by a strong stigma. After the suicide death of my sister in 1994, she was then 49, I would have liked to be able to speak about it openly with my siblings as I was attempting to reclaim the "truth." It took almost 10 years for that healing process to complete itself.

During my recovery, I learned that survivors who feel strong and safe enough to break the silence and openly tell friends, family and colleagues that a loved one died by suicide, not only helps their own bereavement process, but also contributes to more understanding and knowledge of the phenomenon, instead of maintaining the myths that grow in silence and denial. Suicide is surrounded by myth.

One myth is the belief that suicide is the result of a single precipitating factor as opposed to being a complex psychosocial issue. Another myth is the belief that suicidal ideation is the result of mental illness. Although that can be true, it would be irresponsibly simplistic to think that way. Research is discovering the link between bullying and suicide called "bullycide". Suicide survivors, like myself often struggle for many years, to find reasons why someone would even consider death by suicide.



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What other options were available? What if one of these other options had been considered? All these questions make the grieving process last even longer.

However long the process, this search for meaning, safe sharing with others and time, helps diminish the suffering. It was when I heard other people's stories, knowing that it was not their fault, that guilt over my sister's suicide started to go away.

After my sister's death, I became obsessed with finding the causes of her despair, forgetting my own grief. Thus also began my journey into the world of suicide prevention, becoming a counselor specializing in it.

It seems that only other survivors can truly know the depth of despair experienced. Peer support is invaluable in the healing process of families dealing with the suicide loss of a loved one.

I felt a lot of compassion, love and non-judgmental listening from the bereavement support group as I spoke of the loss of my sister Louise. I never felt stigmatized as mentally ill or thinking they didn't understand, as many survivors fear when seeking help from professionals. This fear of being judged, shamed, blamed or embarrassed may also be why survivors might avoid seeking help altogether.

Stigma also persists when a parent has to choose to tell or not tell children who have lost a close relative or friend to suicide. Parents may want to protect their child from the pain, however, similar to talking to children about sex, my advice to parents is to never lie to a child. That doesn't mean telling descriptively all the details of a suicide but using one's judgment in explaining what happened.

I remember feeling isolated and guilty for not having prevented my sister's death one way or another (irrational feeling of failed responsibility). Guilt combined with incomprehension is what I think makes suicide different from any other death. It's very hard to make any sense of it. All the Whys? and What ifs? that you can think of remain with you for such a long time.

As I read the second last chapter of Carla Fine's testimonial book, "Forgiving Them, Forgiving Ourselves", I find myself sitting outside at my friend's beautiful house in Lions Bay, overlooking the ocean and mountains, enjoying a late sunny and warm afternoon, surrounded by the smell of cedar trees. Peacefully and inspired by Carla's writing, I reflect on my closing words for this article.

Even though I would have liked to believe that, through love, we could keep the people we care about alive, I know we can't and forgive myself for that. My closure on my sister's suicide would not be complete without also forgiving her for leaving this world the way she did.

The Gift of Giving

*In the Hope of Helping Others -
The Compassionate Friends*

After the death of our daughter Lori, I was completely devastated. Everything I believed about life was tossed out the window and I was filled with despair. It felt as if grief would destroy me.

Much of that time is now a blur, too painful to remember. But I do recall clearly my feeling of disconnection from most of the world of the living. My life had been ruined and I had no idea what to do. The friends with whom I'd surrounded myself before Lori's death had no way of knowing how to befriend me in this and I had no idea how to ask for the help I needed. So into my overwhelming grief was added hurt and loneliness because friends who didn't know what to do or say often opted to do and say nothing.

Then my husband and I found the monthly meetings of The Compassionate Friends (TCF) a support organization for families that have experienced the death of a child. I won't say the meetings were immediately a perfect fit for me, because they weren't, or that I felt comfortable as I attended, because I didn't. I was a very private person; I had had no experience crying on anyone's shoulder. My tears had always been in solitude. I'd never learned to express my feelings in words. So when someone asked me how I was feeling, I'd almost panic. How DID I feel? And after listening to the others in the circle, by the time my turn came, I was often overwhelmed with feelings. Like many others, I can't cry and talk at the same time, which caused people to have to wait as I tried to get the words out . . . I hated all the eyes on me while I tried to gain enough control to speak.

So why did I keep going? At the beginning it was because my husband, Bill, wanted to go and it was there that I learned more about how he was feeling. I was also learning from the more seasoned grievers ways of coping with my loss. All too soon I learned that TCF was actually a sanctuary, the rare place where I could try to explain my feelings or talk about Lori and her death without people trying to change the subject because they were being made uncomfortable by my words. And it was such a relief to find out that not only was it ok to voice my darkest thoughts and feelings, but others often felt the same way too. They understood! Some months I had to overcome my lethargy to get into the car and drive the half hour to get to the meetings, but every time I went I was thankful that I had. Looking back now, I realize that the meetings, and the friends I made at the meetings, probably saved my life.

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But by the spring before the second anniversary of Lori's death, we were no longer attending every meeting. I regularly spoke with TCF friends, but didn't feel I needed to go every month. I had come to the point, as so many do, where I felt I'd received most of the help I would get from TCF. I might soon have stopped going to the meetings altogether. Now I can't even imagine who I would have become if that had happened. Instead I was given a gift, a reason to keep attending the meetings. Our facilitator was moving out of the area and I was asked to facilitate the local meetings. I said yes and found there was a whole new world of healing when I stopped going only for myself and began to attend meetings to help others. I can't overemphasize the importance of this turning point in my life.

From then on, every month I had to look outside myself into the hearts and minds of others and try to give them hope. I found the intensity of my own raw pain began to take a backseat to that of others more newly bereaved than I. Because I needed to find words for THEM, to try to help ease THEIR pain, a floodgate was gradually opened in me and words, amazing words, began to fill my life. Feelings, with the words to describe them, began to well up from my innermost being, feelings from the past, from those first months after Lori's death, and feelings in the present, words in the form of poetry, poems to help me understand myself and poems to help others. Truly, I believe this would not have happened if I hadn't opened my heart to my newly bereaved compassionate friends.

I believe there is the potential for something like this to happen to all who become actively involved in the "helping" aspect of The Compassionate Friends. I don't mean that everyone begins writing poetry. But I do believe that the greatest healing derived from TCF is this outward movement, this growth away from the self-centeredness, self-absorption of grief, towards the open hearted hope of helping others.

It comes to me that parenthood, itself, does something like this. From our self-centered, self-directed lives before our children are born, we learn the awesome responsibility of another person's life when we first gaze upon them. Our lives change focus and their survival and growth become our highest purpose; our hearts become larger because our children are in them. When our children die, we not only hurt because the most important, most loved people of our lives are gone, but that intense focus is gone and our sense of great purpose. We wander in a wasteland, searching for what has been lost.

When Lori died, we still had our 15-year-old daughter Megan at home, but I felt so crippled as a mother. How thankful I am that Megan was somehow able to get through those early years with a mother so distracted by grief - and emotionally distanced by fear. I was half a mother in more ways than one.

Now, because of TCF, I began to find a new focus for my maternal instincts and a new way to grow back into the loving mother I'd been before Lori died. As I tried to grow to the task of helping those more newly bereaved than I, just as I'd had to grow to the task of being Lori and Megan's mother, I was benefiting three-fold. First, my "mother" energy, which is a huge part of me, was again flowing outward. Second, as I was learning ways to help others heal, I was learning them for myself. And third, once again, I began to feel that I was doing something important with my life, that my life mattered, that my life had purpose.

When I look at other bereaved parents who seem to have survived this great loss the most successfully, I find that they too have again found purpose. And often that purpose has something to do with the child who has died. Sometimes they work towards eradicating the reason their child died: drunk driving and cancer are two examples. Some start foundations in their child's name. Some take up and even finish the work that their child started.

Many bereaved parents, like me, have regained a sense of purpose through The Compassionate Friends. My work in TCF has given me a great sense of purpose, satisfaction in helping the newly bereaved at our monthly meetings, being part of the Steering Committee, a vital part of my chapter, and Chapter Leader. As Regional Coordinator I also try to give support to my region's chapters, and the ripples go out from there.

And just as important to me, besides this sense of purpose, TCF has allowed me to keep Lori more visibly in my life. Wherever I go, whatever I do for TCF, Lori's name is mentioned; Lori is not forgotten. Because what I do for TCF matters, and because all I do for TCF, I do in her name, Lori's life continues to matter, all these years after she left this earth. Through TCF Lori remains in the forefront of all I do, the guiding star in the direction of my life. I could not have found a more loving or fitting way to honor her than I have through The Compassionate Friends. My grief and TCF have forced me to grow in ways of which I had never dreamed. And Lori has been with me every step of the way.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
In Memory of my daughter, Lori
From *Catching the Light – Coming Back to Life after the
Death of a Child* and previously published in *We Need
Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine
of The Compassionate Friends.



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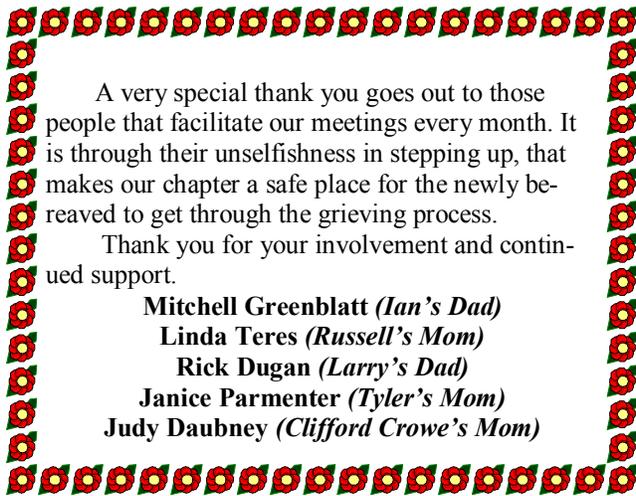
Phone Friends

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)620-0613
- Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)881-2111
- Judith Cherrington,....**Jeffrey**, age 48, Cancer,(508)473-4087
- 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.



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)**

Quiet Courage

I have seen much courage in my life. Many types of bravery have inspired me. I am astonished by the courage of the elderly widow who buries her husband, quietly sells most of her personal belongings, furnishings and home and moves into a tiny apartment so that she can survive until death takes her, too.

I am distressed by the youthful courage demonstrated every day by soldiers who were high school kids heading for homecoming last year but who now serve in dangerous, hostile places fighting an enemy who is invisible in the crowd. The law enforcement memorial in Washington, D.C., speaks of the many brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty to keep anarchy at bay.

The EMS and fire fighting people who hold strong to tradition and put themselves in harm's way each day to save others amaze me with their dedication and devotion to duty.

The single mother who works two jobs, raises her children, cares for them in times of illness, keeps a home, cooks, cleans and still finds time to bake cookies for the PTA fundraiser is a heroine who is doomed to remain faceless and unknown. Yet the courage to start each new day in the hope of making a better life for her children drives her forward.

There are all types of courage in this life. All are impressive, all are worthy of praise and all set standards for us to emulate.

But the deepest, most compelling courage I have seen in my life is that of the parent who has lost a child to death. Each has experienced total helplessness and real physical pain in their loss. Raw in their grief, they join our Compassionate Friends group. I am struck by how weakened in spirit these parents are, how tenuous their hold on sanity must surely be. Yet these parents quietly enter our meeting room and face the unknown with tears in their eyes and tremendous weight in their hearts.

Their world is upside down, their children have died and the pain and loss seem insurmountable. They have been snatched out of their former reality and slammed into the depths of hell by a cosmic force more intense than a tsunami. These moms and dads who have lost their beautiful child listen quietly as others talk of children who have lived for years in their parents' hearts.

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Each parent tells a story, each voice breaks, each heart breaks as a lost child's name echoes in the quiet room. The courage to acknowledge and face this new reality and look for hope in the midst of this infinite despair is a pure wonderment.

What pain is in this room? What deep, agonizing loss is systemic within this group? What will I say? How can I relate when I cannot even remember what day it is? How can I go on for one more day? These are the agonizing feelings of the newly bereaved parent. The Compassionate Friends meeting is the place they have chosen to begin their journey into what they perceive as a hideous, horrible, dark and unknown future. Yet their courage to face this, the greatest loss any human could possibly endure, is extraordinary. The power of the mind to begin to see reason, to begin to seek hope, to climb this mountain of trauma and travail cannot be overstated. This power is pure courage, raw courage, desperate courage, but courage in its purest form.

Each meeting brings the dread of facing the reality of their child's death. Yet the parents who have lost so much return to talk, to listen, to understand, to move into the light of hope. Gradually an understanding develops. Slowly each parent learns we must continue to live and honor our child. They light candles, visit cemeteries, fund scholarships, write poetry, raise funds to help others.....all in memory of their precious children. They reach out to other parents who are newly bereaved, listening, talking and listening again with their hearts. Occasionally they smile. Then one day they laugh. The journey is long, the grief work is difficult, the pain is forever, yet they keep on moving forward into the light.

There are no medals, no press releases, no television appearances, no accolades, no parades. The deepest, soul-permeating, life changing and amazing courage is found here. As I look at my Compassionate Friends I am awe-struck by the rare and quiet courage that fills this room.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

THE STORM OF GRIEF

It comes like a huge thunderbolt, shocking and deafening you to all else around you. Suddenly the world that has been so bright is black and desolate. There seems to be no hope.



The tears come like torrential rains. The winds of reality come, and your body is torn by the pains and fears caused by the storm. Even when the tears stop for a while, the dark clouds loom over you, threatening you with more tears and more pain.

Most passersby can't help you through the storm because they have never been caught in one like it, and some don't seem to care. There are a few who will reach out their hand and try to pull you from the storm, but the storm must be endured. And then there are the special Ones, the ones who are willing to walk with you through the storm. Usually these are people who have been there before and know the storm can be survived.

After a time, the torrential rains turn to showers, and then the showers come less often. But the clouds don't go away. The sadness and pain remain, but they become more bearable.

Eventually, as the clouds begin to part, there may even be a rainbow, a sign of hope. And as the sun begins to shine a little more, flowers of memory will blossom to be enjoyed. I don't think the showers will ever end, but I believe as they get farther apart, the sky will get bluer; we will see more rainbows, and the flowers will bloom more and more.



Perhaps it's even good to have a shower now and then, to cleanse our souls and to revive those special flowers of memory.

Mary Jo Pierce
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

Other Area TCF Chapters

- MA/CT Border Towns Chapter (Dudley, Webster areas)
Chapter Leaders: Paul & Anne Mathieu
(508) 248-7144.....ampm@charter.net
- South Shore Chapter (Hingham, Weymouth areas)
Martha Berman
(781) 337-8649.....mmartha1@comcast.net
- Worcester Chapter
Chapter Leader: Phyllis Simas
(508) 845-1462.....mrspbs1@verizon.net
- Central Middlesex Chapter (Needham, Concord)
Chapter Leader: Carol Gray-Cole
(781) 444-1091.....cgc603@aol.com

Happy Easter!





THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



The Luck of the Irish??

My name should have been O'Loder, for it seemed like I had the luck of the Irish.

After all, I grew up in a great home with a wonderful family.

I received an excellent education.

I got a great job where I met a special person who became my life's partner.

I began my own business, which became very successful.

And the greatest luck of all, my daughter was born. It wasn't planned, but God knew what was best. Three years later we were blessed with a son. Stef and Steve lived and played together with a special love.

I still remember the St. Patrick's Day assignment Stef brought home only days before the accident that took her life and that of her brother. Asked to tell why she was lucky, she wrote, "because I have a brother!"

A few days later my life lay in a shambles, the best part of my life gone. Stef was only eight and Stephen just five. They hadn't had a chance to really experience what life was all about. It was painfully obvious my name did not start with an O'.

Three years have now passed since that day. The shock of the moment has worn off. My wife and I have somehow survived the deaths and now have a new wonderful son and daughter with which to share our lives, and our love.

But, perhaps, the luckiest thing of all that happened to us since the accident is that we have made new, very special friends, Compassionate Friends who have helped us with our survival.

We have a new family of special people who have survived the unluckiest day of their lives and are able to share their loss with us. Isn't this really what "luck" is all about?



Here are two name poems we just received from one very special Compassionate Friends, Sandy Roush, which she wrote specially for our Stephanie and Stephen.

Sent by God, she
Touched our lives
Ever in our hearts
Precious child
How we miss you
And await our reunion
Never really far away
In God's loving arms
Eternity is ours

Song of my heart
Taken too soon
Ever loving son
Pleasing to God
He holds you now
Everlasting life
Now awaits in heaven

Wayne Loder

TCF, Lakes Area Chapter, MI

In Memory of my daughter and son, Stephanie and Stephen Loder

Helping Someone Survive

A death by suicide triggers great amounts of anger and guilt. However, some of those feelings can be balanced by struggling to see that the suicide was not so much a deliberate, hostile act, but a gesture of utter hopelessness and despair. Reminders that a person was so driven by emotional whirlwinds that it was impossible to sense any ray of hope, can temper considerably the emotional impact of a death by suicide.

One of the best responses to a suicide that I have ever heard came through a sermon delivered by a pastor of a young man who shot himself. With great eloquence, his pastor was able to convey tremendous hope through these words: "Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage, and only God knows how this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul."

Victor Passchin

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Beyond Surviving: "Twenty Five Commandments"

Hundreds of books have been written about loss and grief. Few have addressed the aftermath of suicide for survivors. Here again, there are no answers; only suggestions from those who have lived through and beyond the event. I've compiled their thoughts.

1. Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with "why" it happened until you no longer need to know "why," or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings, but all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy – you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will have to act on these thoughts.
8. Remember to take one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. Don't panic if emotions return like a tidal wave. You may only be experiencing a remnant of grief; an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and with others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as The Compassionate Friends, or Survivors of Suicide groups. If not, ask a professional to help start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, i.e., headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, etc.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and go beyond just surviving.

Iris Bolton, author of My Son, My Son

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, yet 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.

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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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The Myth of Closure

"When will I begin to feel better? When will I return to normal? When will I achieve some closure?" grievers often ask. Closure, our culture tells us, will bring about a tidy ending, a sense of completion. Some grievers hope that the desired magical closure will occur after the funeral or memorial service. Others are confident it will come once they have cleared out their loved one's room. Or maybe after a special personal ritual. Or perhaps after the first anniversary comes and goes, "surely then, we will have closure," we think. We pray.

The reason we long for closure, of course, is because we would like to neatly seal away all of this pain. We would like to close all of the sad, confused, desperate, angry feelings out of our life. We would like to put all of this behind us.

Closure. What an odd concept really, as if we could truly close the door on pain, turn the lock and throw away the key. The truth is far more complex, of course.

Closure is for business deals. Closure is for real estate transactions. Closure is not for feelings or for people we love.

Closure simply does not exist emotionally, not in a pure sense. We cannot close the door on the past as if it didn't exist because, after losing someone dear to us, we never forget that person or the love we shared. And in some ways, we never entirely get over the loss. We learn to live with the loss, to integrate it into our new identity.

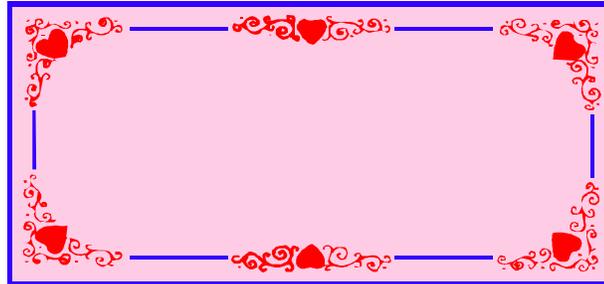
Imagine if we really could end this chapter in our life, completely. It would mean losing our memories, our connections to those we love. If we really found closure, it would ironically hurt even more because the attachment would be severed. And this attachment is vital to us, the memories are treasures to be held close, not closed out.

Perhaps it is better to think in terms of healing. Yes, we can process our pain and move to deeper and deeper levels of healing. Yes, we can find ways to move on and channel our pain into productive activities. Yes, we can even learn to smile again and laugh again and love again.

But let's not ever think that we'll close the door completely on what this loss means, for if we did that, we would unwittingly close the door on all the love that we shared. And that would truly be a loss too terrible to bear.

Ashley Davis Prend, ACSW, Hospice of North Idaho

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



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TCF 2013 National Conference
Save the date: July 5-7, 2013 in Boston, MA