



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.

May – June 2020

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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 9:00 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:

May 19 & June 16

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 last weekend or earlier if you plan to attend.**

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

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

May 26 & June 30

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. ©2020

WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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

Weather Cancellation

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



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

* Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239
 * Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Secretary

* Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

* Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

Webmaster

* Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

Librarian

Ed Motuzas 508/473/4239

Newsletter

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Senior Advisors

* Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

Steering Committee *

Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
 Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
 Linda Teres 508/366-2085
 Mitchell Greenblatt 508/653-0541
 Wendy Bruno 508/429-7998
 Carol Cotter 774/219-7774

The chapter address is:

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

Regional Coordinator

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

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

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

Chapter Web Page
www.tcfmetrowest.com

TRIBUTES, GIFTS AND DONATIONS

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

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

Mrs. Maria Peniche in loving memory of her son
Manuel (Manny) Peniche

Mrs. Diane Sears in loving memory of her daughter
Sheril Sears Jones on her birthday March 6th.

Mr. & Mrs. Burton Stuchins in loving memory of their son
Alan R. Stuchins on his birthday March 2nd.

Mr. & Mrs David Burroughs in loving memory of their son
Eric T. Burroughs on his anniversary April 22nd.

Chapter Notice

Due to the current situation with the Coronavirus "stay at home status" the current meeting schedule is very tentative. I will be sending out a new schedule as so as we finalize the new dates. Until we get an all clear, we will have to make due with what we can do. We will all get through this.

Announcement

A child dies. The fun, the joy, the laughter, and the dreams all end. Shock, disbelief, and emptiness take over. No one can hurt this much and survive. Yet tens of thousands of parents, siblings, and grandparents do every year with help from The Compassionate Friends, a national self-help support organization for families that have suffered the devastating loss of a child and are going through the natural grieving process. With more than 600 chapters in the United States, The Compassionate Friends holds meetings designed to throw you a lifeline of hope, friendship, and understanding. There is also online support. To learn more about this phenomenal organization, call 877-969-0010 or visit them on the web at compassionatefriends.org. The Compassionate Friends—supporting family after a child dies.



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, May and June. 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

May

COREY S. VAUTIER
ADAM SCOTT COLE
LEA M. SIEBERT
LISA RANDALL

June

RUSSELL J. TERES
IAN GREENBLATT

Birthdays

May

MATTHEW C. ZONGHETTI
MONICA MICHELLE CURRAN
KATHLEEN ANN STETSON
BENJAMIN CROW
MICHAEL VINCANT TYNAN
ALEX DAVID STOLICNY

June

AUSTIN MILES CASWELL
SCOTT MOTUZAS
ZAKARY WILLIAM MARSTON
JOHN PAUL BEAUDOIN
JUSTIN MAYER
STEVEN GRILLO
NICHOLAS L. BOUDREAU
PAUL FERRIER Jr.
KRISTIN CULLINANE



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

My apologies to Joseph and Sally K for omitting their son 'Kevin K name from the January/February 2020 issue on the Anniversary and Birthday page of the Newsletter.



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.

THE AFTERMATH OF SUICIDE

I had never experienced the death of a close loved one before my brother died. When David died, my world came crashing down around me, shattering me into a million pieces. My brother and I were close, but I had no suspicion that he was contemplating suicide and had been for a long time. The night my sister called to tell me he was dead is etched in my memory forever. If I shut my eyes, I can go back to that time and place almost three years ago and still hear her voice. It is a very painful memory and one that I don't call up, but it is there nonetheless.

The overwhelming feelings of shock, disbelief, numbness, despair, and sadness are very vivid. At the same time, I was outraged at what he had done to us, to me. How dare he do this! I couldn't even begin to guess how many times I said, "I can't believe this is happening."



The first six months was a confusing and emotionally draining period for me. I was obsessed with wanting to have answers, especially from him. I read many books on suicide and finally after reading Iris Bolton's book "My Son, My Son," I came to realize what she said was true: "You can ask why a million times but you finally have to let it go, because the person you need the answers from is not here to give them to you. If only for the sake of your own sanity, you have to stop asking why."

Our family drew closer together from this tragedy, and it made me more aware of how much I value and love them. I also had the support of a good friend who was willing to spend hours talking and crying with me. I still get very angry at my brother for changing our lives so irrevocably. That anger inevitably turns into sadness. I cannot see his smiling face, or hear his laughter, or watch him grow into adulthood. Yes, I had dreams for him, too.

He was an intelligent, warm, sensitive and caring young man, and I was eager to see what direction his life would take. I can't help but wonder what he would be like today. I miss him very much.

I will never agree with his solution, but it was his choice to make and I have to learn to live with it. I am absolutely certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that I will see him again. Only then will I get answers to my questions. I have no choice but to wait until that time.

**Nicki Wright
TCF, MO-KAN, Ks**

Life Is Something That Comes and Goes

***Life is something that comes and goes
As silently as the gentle wind blows - one day here,
the next day gone.***

You try to understand the reason of it all,
Why some remain when others are called.
The purpose is there if only you see
That only God knows what will be.



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Life is something that comes and goes as silently as the gentle wind blows.

I pray and pray for the day
When I will hear my brother say,
“I love you kid sister, I’ll see you soon.
Think of me when you look at the moon.”
I look outside and see the moon so bright,
As full as can be, shedding its light.
I stare at the stars and the heavens above
And remember my brother so full of love.

He was my friend, my brother my keeper,
And since he died, the road seems steeper.
But I must have faith in Jesus, My Lord,
Who helps me understand the truth of His word.

Life is something that comes and goes
As silently as the gentle wind blows - one day here, the
next day gone.

Breta Dodd, Age 16
TCF, Grand Junction, CO

DOES GRIEF REALLY GO AWAY?

Of course, you know the answer to the question in the title. In this article, I want to review many of the ways that grief does not go away. When you approach people who’ve not experienced a significant death in their life, especially the death of a child, grandchild or sibling, and ask, “How can you tell if someone is in grief?”

You often get answers such as, “They are crying, they look sad, they talk about their loved one, they aren’t themselves, they seem out of it.” OK, fair enough. But, what do these same people think when these symptoms are not visible? For many people, they breathe a sigh of relief that the bereaved person is “over” their grief or has “moved on” with their life. Several years ago I did an analysis of the media (radio, TV, newspapers) and found that journalists like to use terms like closure, healed, accept, or recover when talking about a person who has experienced a death. However, these are not terms that bereaved people typically use. The media use of these words only adds to the myth that we “get over” a death.

Because grief is such a complicated array of reactions, it would be amazing if any bereaved person someday totally “had closure, healed, accepted, and recovered.” Several years ago, with input from bereaved people, I put together a beginning list of grief reactions by classifying them into five categories:

Mind

Heart Spiritual Other People Physical

In this article, we will look at the Mind category and see how some of these grief reactions can last a lifetime. In future articles, we’ll examine the other four categories. See if you have found yourself experiencing any of the reactions listed below. If so, well, then—that’s grief.

You may want to give this article to someone to help them further understand how you never will really be “over it.”

Read the grief reactions below along with statements that people say and check the ones that still apply to you today:

Mind

Denial—“I still can’t believe this happened.” Or “I just can’t believe that she (or he) is gone.”

Unreality—“Sometimes this just feels so unreal.”

Time Distortion—“At times it feels so long ago and yet other times it feels like yesterday.”

Avoidance—“There are people, places or things that I still avoid since the death.”

Searching—“I still find myself searching for this person.” *Longing & Missing*—“I still miss him (or her) being in my life.”

Loss of Shared Communication—“I don’t have the person who shared my ideas or little inside jokes with me.”

Multiple Reminders—“Everywhere I look reminds me of my loss.”

Concentration Problems—“I still have problems focusing on things.”

Memory Problems—“Since the death, my memory is still not what it used to be.”

Obsessive Thoughts—“I keep having the same thoughts of my loved one over and over.”

Rituals—“There are things I still feel I need to do in recognition of my loved one.”

Confusion—“I’m still confused about many things related to the death.”

Altered Sense of the Future—“I don’t look forward to the future anymore.”

Desire to Obtain More Information—“There is still a lot about the death I want to know.”

Disruption of Social Clock—“It is wrong that my child (or grandchild) died before me.”

Dreams and Nightmares—“I still dream about her (or him).” *Loss of Role*—“Since the death, I wonder who I am anymore.”

These are just some of the Mind reactions that people can have for a lifetime. How many did you check?

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Don't worry if you checked many or a few. There is not a "score" to add up. The death of your child, grandchild, or brother or sister is something that has forever changed your life. Therefore, while the pain lessens, coping with the many aspects of grief is a lifelong process.

Yola, one of the original Seattle TCF moms put it so well when she talked about the grief of her son after 20 years. She said, "You know, Dr. Bob, grief is unfinished love." Yes, Yola, you are so right.

BOB BAUGHER

Dr. Bob Baugher is a Psychology Instructor and Death Educator at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington. He has given more than 600 workshops on coping with grief and loss.

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

Two Butterflies

The loss of one's child to death is the single most defining moment in our lives. Our lives are shattered, our minds are numbed by the totality of this pain. As members of Compassionate Friends, we discover a new way of viewing the world; we share the same emotional space, the same loss.

When one of our members lost another child to death, the agony became exponential to each of us. We know this parent, we know this child. We know this parent's journey and the strides she made after the death of her son. Now she will walk this painful road again with the death of her daughter. We find ourselves asking how this could possibly happen.

When I visited Robin on the day after the third anniversary of the death of her son, Chris, she was mourning the death of her daughter, Dawn, who had died just six days earlier. Robin was reserved and serenely quiet.

"Let's look at Chris's garden," Robin said. And so we sat under the trellis in the shade of the vines looking at the lovely Irish garden that Robin had made for Chris. Not much was said. "The rest of the family is coming in later today and tomorrow," Robin told me. The memorial service was scheduled for Sunday afternoon. Robin didn't know how she was going to face yet another death. Dawn was a veteran. I didn't know that.

Quietly we sat and looked at the garden, sheltered under the beautiful flowering vines. The Celtic crosses that connect us both to our Irish heritage were there. A sweet angel was placed in the flowerbed. Robin mentioned that Dawn had picked out another angel statue for Chris's garden. She said she would be putting it in the garden in a few days. "This is Chris and Dawn's garden now," she commented. I agreed. "I'll need to rearrange some things, add some plants and put something in especially for Dawn," she remarked. "I can't believe this is happening again, my daughter is dead. My son is dead. Dawn's memorial service will be on the same date as we held Chris's memorial service." I didn't know that, I told her.

Robin's dogs joined us. They sensed the mood of quiet reflection and simply relaxed in the shade. I asked Robin if she was still in shock. She thought she probably was. "That's good," I told her.

Two butterflies joined us. They danced in front of us, playing above the trellis and over the garden. The butterflies perched next to Robin for a few seconds, then began their dance of freedom again. They lingered for quite some time as we watched them. Two perfect tears slowly rolled down Robin's cheek. "That's Chris and Dawn visiting us," Robin whispered. Yes, I believe it was Chris and Dawn.

***Annette Mennen Baldwin
In Memory of Chris Wilson
and Dawn Wilson-Shafer
Robin's Beautiful Children***

Heeding the Call of Life

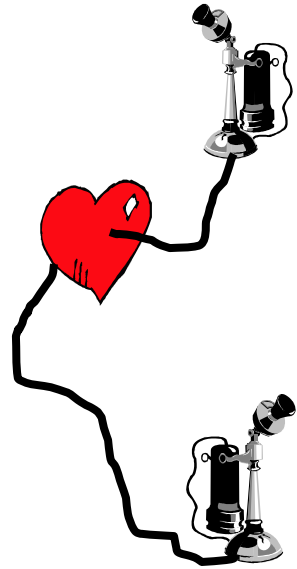
There is tremendous wisdom that is accumulated in one's encounter with grief, and it needs to be shared. Healing takes place when we turn our pain into a positive experience and we realize that helping others is the key to helping ourselves. When that happens, our problems don't look so big. We expand on newfound strengths and we discover that as one door closed, many others have opened.



Phone Friends

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

- Ed & Joan Motuzas, ...**Scott**, age 31, Kidney and Liver Failure,(508)473-4239
- Janice Parmenter,**Tyler**, age 29, Chronic Addiction,(508)528-5715
- Judy Daubney,**Clifford**, age 27, Suicide,(508)529-6942
- Linda Teres,.....**Russell**, age 19, Automobile Accident,(508)366-2085
- Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)881-2111
- Sandra Richiazzi.....**Bryan**, age 17, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106
- Sarah Commerford....**Timothy**, age 21, Homicide.....(508)429-9230



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

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The road to recovery from grief, therefore, is to take time to do things which will enable us to give new meaning to our lives.

That's when our journey through grief becomes a journey of discovering ourselves, our potential, and our resources in the encounter with life. That's when we become BETTER people, rather than BITTER people. In grief, no one can take away our pain because no one can take away our love.

That call to life is to learn to love . . . again.

**Father Arnaldo Pangrazzi
TCF, Muskegon, MI**

Vacation with Danny

For our monthly TCF meeting in June, one of our group facilitators suggested that we take our child who was no longer with us, on our summer vacation. This was a comforting idea, as well as quite an imaginary illusion, which I was a bit leery about. I thought, what the heck, I might as well do it. The anniversary of Danny's death was three years already, and I missed him just as much or more as I did the preceding 36 months. I really didn't know what to expect, but maybe I would sense his presence as I have numerous times since his death, at the age of 29.

We were on a planned group tour, with everything already prearranged. Our hotel was "The Embassy Suites", one that we had stayed with to celebrate a special occasion with Danny when he was 14.

The first night we toured the Kennedy Center. Upon walking into the entrance, I could hear a Celtic group of singers. Of all the songs in the world that they could be singing, "Danny Boy" was the song!! I stood there in awe with tear-filled eyes, along with a smile. I was utterly ecstatic!!!

After that I noticed a street named Pennsylvania Avenue (the state where Danny had lived in the last two years of his life). Then we drove to Gettysburg where I noticed a marker with the name Daniel James (Danny's formal first and middle name). We also visited the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. I sauntered in and noticed a sign in big bright orange neon letters... Lockheed Martin...it was as bright as the sun!! Danny had worked for the company until his last breath.

At the Holocaust Museum, there were many pictures of children. One little blond boy, who looked like he was 5-years old was a spitting image of Danny at that age. I also came across a telegram that was sent from Poland (a country of Danny's ancestry) to Lancaster County, PA (the exact county Danny lived in). Upon exiting the museum, the word's "Daniel's Story" were shown crystal clear inside of a glass frame.

After our flight home and ride in the car, I asked the driver to turn up the volume on the radio, and a minister was reading a Bible passage from the book of Daniel. Of all the events and "signs" that took place, I was clearly aware that Danny had been with me the whole vacation. I was glowing in amazement and awe!!!

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Thank you, Charles our facilitator, for reminding me to take Danny along on our trip, thanks Danny for coming along with me on a terrific trip!!!

Sue Kromer
TCF, Contra Costa County, CA
In Memory of my son, Danny

When Someone Takes His Own Life

In many ways, this seems the most tragic form of death. Certainly it can entail more shock and grief for those who are left behind than any other. And often the stigma of suicide is what rests most heavily on those left behind.

Suicide is often judged to be essentially a selfish act. Perhaps it is. But the Bible warns us not to judge, if we ourselves hope to escape judgment. And I believe this is one area where that Biblical command especially should be heeded.

For we do not know how many valiant battles such a person may have fought and won before he loses that one particular battle. And is it fair that all good acts and impulses of such a person should be forgotten or blotted out by his final tragic act?

I think our reaction should be one of love and pity, not of condemnation. Perhaps the person was not thinking clearly in his final moments; perhaps he was so driven by emotional whirlwinds that he was incapable of thinking at all. This is terribly sad. But surely it is understandable. All of us have moments when we lose control of ourselves, flashes of temper, of irritation, of selfishness that we later regret. Each one of us, probably, has a final breaking point – or would have if our faith did not sustain us. Life puts far more pressure on some of us than it does on others. Some people have more stamina than others. When I see in the paper, as I do all too often, that dark despair has rolled over some lonely soul, so much so that for him life seemed unendurable, my reaction is not one of condemnation. It is rather, “There but for the grace of God ...”

And my heart goes out to those who are left behind, because I know that they suffer terribly. Children in particular are left under a cloud of *differentness* all the more terrifying because it can never be fully explained or lifted. The immediate family of the victim is left wide open to tidal waves of guilt: “What did I fail to do that I should have done? What did I do wrong?”

To such grieving persons I can only say, “Lift up your heads and your hearts. Surely you did your best. And surely the loved one who is gone did his best, for as long as he could. Remember, now, that his battles and torments are over. Do not judge him, and do not presume to fathom the mind of God where this one of His children is concerned.”

A few years ago, when a young man died by his own hand, a service for him was conducted by his pastor, the Reverend Weston Stevens. What he said that day expresses, far more eloquently than I can, the message that I’m trying to convey. Here are some of his 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 his strength. At last these adversaries overwhelmed him. And it appeared that he lost the war. But did he? I see a host of victories that he has won!

For one thing – he has won our admiration – because even if he lost the war, we give him credit for the courage and pride and hope that he used as his weapons as long as he could. We shall remember not his death, but his daily victories gained through his kindnesses and thoughtfulness, through his love for family and friends, for animals and books and music, for all things beautiful, lovely and honorable. We shall remember not his last day of defeat, but we shall remember the many days that he was victorious over overwhelming odds. We shall remember not the years we thought he had left, but the intensity with which he lived the years that he had.

Only God knows what this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul. But our consolation is that God does know, and understands.

Norman Vincent Peale

On Cleaning Out His Stuff

It has been 18 years since my son Chris was killed in a car accident. I have been using his room as my computer room for the last six years but I have not cleaned out his drawers or closet—they were almost as he left them. After recognizing that I needed more space and the job finally “had” to be done, I decided to finally begin the process of throwing some of Chris’ high school papers away. After all, it had been 18 years—surely I had progressed far enough along in my grief to finally begin to deal with “his stuff.”

Surprisingly I found the task challenging and gut-wrenching. I still had a difficult time working my way through some of the items I found, as I poured over notebooks, papers and drawings. One of the papers was an evaluation from a career counselor. Just reading over her findings brought a wave of tears that was almost uncontrollable. She had captured our boy with accuracy and tenderness, sensing this was a young man of character and warmth.

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She talked about his smile when he acknowledged that he didn't like camping very much, so he could not see himself as a forest ranger. She saw a young man who had a quiet and gentle strength. With a lump in my throat, I shared it with my husband and both of us "choked up" with tears.

Letters from his girlfriend and his return letters back to her were comforting and lovely. His warmth, kindness and tenderness as a 17-year-old young man "in love" for the first time, came through as he wrote from his heart. Just seeing his handwriting again was such a cherished treasure. Lyrics from the many songs he wrote for "the band" were deep and inspiring. Some of his reports from school had encouraging comments from the teachers. I saved some of his childish drawings of Smurfs, "A Sweet Story" (a second-grade drawing of children running into the arms of Jesus) and his many stuffed animals-or "his kids" as he used to call them. He had named them, drew them all and then placed them in a scrapbook. What a precious gift to hold on to. I'll show it to my grandchildren some day.



Then I began the arduous task of organizing the cards, notes and words of comfort we received as the days, weeks and months after Chris' death passed by. Many shared how they remembered events he attended, and conversations they shared with our son, which we were not aware of. Some shared how they were praying for us. I saved rain and mud-soaked notes that were left on his grave-so many missed him in those early days of overwhelming grief, especially his classmates. What beautiful and wonderful human beings touched our lives so many years ago and gave us the strength in those early days of bereavement to go on. It continued to bring tears to my eyes and yet, the tears were those of gratitude for the many who had taken our grief and for a time, had cried with us and carried some of it for us. It warmed my heart to recall that so many cared and grieved with us. The prayers continued throughout the first year and beyond. We could not have made it without those human arms of love around us, listening ears, tear-soaked eyes and encouraging words.

Although I was drained after two days of tossing, remembering, crying and organizing, I was comforted for having done this job that I had dreaded for years. It brought me back in touch with my grief and I felt so much closer to Chris than I had felt in a long time. I felt as though I had had a visit with him. I was reminded of what a special young man he was and how I was privileged to have been his mom.

One thing I know for sure, the love for Chris, the memories we shared with him and the compassion shown to our family will remain in our hearts far longer than "the stuff" and that is what is really important.

*Carole Dyck
TCF, Verdugo Hills, CA
In Memory of my son, Chris Dyck*



Other Area TCF Chapters

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Mother's Day

As I write this, I am very much aware that Mother's day is coming soon. That will be an undoubtedly difficult day in countless homes. For all the thousands of mothers who will be glowing with a radiant kind of pride and happiness that day, there will also be those of you whose hearts are aching for that phone call that will never come, that special visit, that one Mother's day card which will not arrive. For us, the reading and re-reading of that one last card - "Mom, you are the greatest and I love you" - will have to last a lifetime. How does a mother face a lifetime of silence on "her" day? Ask those of us who have "been there" already, and we will tell you of lonely Mother's Day visits to spring-green cemeteries where the sweet clear notes of a single spring bird perched nearby float over our heads and seem surely to have been intended as divine comfort for a heart full to breaking. You will hear of yellow roses being sent to a small church - "in memory of..." and a cherished story of a kind and sensitive friend who sent a single rose that first Mother's Day "in remembrance".



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Always we struggle with the eternal questions - how does life in fairness extract from us the life of a beloved child in exchange for a clear bird call in a spring-green cemetery, a slender vase of yellow rosebuds or even the kindness and sensitivity of a friend who remembered our loneliness and pain on that day? Where is the fairness and justice in such barter?

The answer comes back again and again - life does not always bargain fairly. We are surrounded from birth to death by those things which we cannot keep, but which enrich, ennoble and endow our lives with a fore taste of Heaven because we have been privileged to behold, to experience, to wrap our arms around the joyous and beautiful.

Can we bottle the fragrance of an April morning or the splendor of a winter's sunset and take it home with us to place it on our fireplace mantle? Can we grasp and hold the blithesome charm of childhood's laughter? Can we capture within cupped hands the beauty and richness of a rainbow? Can we pluck the glitter of a million stars on a summer night or place in an alabaster box the glow and tenderness of love?

No, we cannot. But to those who have been given the splendor, the blithesome charm, the glory, the glitter, the tenderness and the love of a child who has departed, someday the pain will speak to you of enrichment, the compassion for others, of deeper sensitivity to the world around you, of a deeper joy for having known a deeper pain. Your child will not have left you completely, as you thought. But rather, you will find him in that first clear, sweet bird call, in those yellow rosebuds, in giving and receiving and in the tissue wrapped memories that you have forever in your heart.

Mary Wildman
TCF, Moro, IL

When you've lost a child

Losing a child is one of the most devastating types of losses anyone can experience. No parent expects to outlive their children. It feels unnatural and wrong. **Grieving the loss of a child is an experience that colours the rest of a parent's life. You can't escape it and on days like Father's Day, the grief may seem too much to handle.** Time won't heal the hurt, but it will become more bearable.

For a father, facing Father's Day after the loss of a child can be extremely upsetting. This is especially true when the loss is new, but the pain of the day may continue year after year

. If you're grieving the loss of your child, here are some tips to help you get through the day.

Spend time with your kids. If you have other children, spend the day with them. It may hurt to be with them and without the child you have lost, but finding joy in the children still with you is a powerful way to cope with those negative emotions of loss.

Surround yourself with loved ones. You may want to hide away and be alone, but resist the urge. Spending time with people who care about you will be more helpful.

Keep busy. Living in a state of distraction from your grief is not necessarily healthy, but on difficult days like Father's Day it can help.

Remember you're still a father. Just because you've lost a child doesn't mean that you're not still a father to them. Never forget that. You are your child's father forever.

Walter Carter

Resisting Resentment

I have been aware for years now that battling a descent into self-pity is pretty much a daily struggle. More recently, I am noticing how much I struggle with resentment.

I am at an age when many of my friends have children who are nearing adulthood or have reached adulthood. As a consequence, their lives are focused on graduations, new jobs, new apartments, weddings, and grandchildren. None of those things are happening for me and I am finding it hard. I don't resent the friends who are enjoying those life pleasures; in my own weirdly stunted way, I am happy for them. But I do resent that those things aren't going to happen for me.

Didn't I change an equal number of diapers? Didn't I nurse children through all the miseries of childhood maladies? Didn't I pack all those school lunches? Didn't I cheer at all those soccer games?

I know I did.

I know I carefully assembled Easter baskets and tried to be creative about Halloween costumes. I played Santa. I never missed a Parent/Teacher conference. I organized elaborate birthday parties. I even provided pick-up and delivery service for a tuba for two years.

I cooked dinners for the Youth Group. I made ginger-snaps and date nut bars and pumpkin streusel muffins (his favorites). I fixed daily BLTs in August when the tomatoes were ripe.

But my son will never graduate from college. He'll never get married. He'll never have a career.





THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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He won't have children. He won't call me on my birthday or negotiate with me about when and for how long to visit. And I resent it.

I go to Crate and Barrel, or Bed, Bath & Beyond, or Pottery Barn and I select wedding gifts from a registry. I send checks for graduations. I buy gift cards from Target for baby showers. And I resent it.

Peggi Johnson
TCF, Piedmont Chapter, VA

9 Months

9 MONTHS!....9 whole months since that Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day!!

Several people have compared it to the 9 months of pregnancy, those happy months of anticipation before Jason was born. Yesterday things kept coming to mind, so here is my list of comparisons.

When I found out I was pregnant with Jason the excitement ran high. I had not told Stan I was hoping because we had been disappointed many times before. After the test at the clinic, I found Stan to share the news. We were elated! We held each other and laughed.

When I got the phone call about Jason's accident, I found Stan (via cell phone) to share the news. We were devastated! We held each other and cried.

Nausea! Not feeling well through most of the pregnancy.

Nausea! Physical pains throughout my whole body the past 9 months.

Sorting clothes to get ready for a new little one. How fun!

Sorting clothes to give away or get ready for a garage sale. How heart wrenching!

Reading books that people have given me to try to understand my pregnancy.

Reading books that people had given me to try to understand my grief.

Choosing equipment that will be needed for this baby.

Choosing a tombstone that will help us and others remember him forever.

Phone calls of "how are you doing?"

Phone calls of "how are you doing?"

.Not sleeping because my back hurt.

Not sleeping because my heart hurts.

Feeling overwhelmed with so much to do and so little energy to do it.

Feeling overwhelmed with so much to do and so little energy to do it.

At the end of the 9 months we made phone calls to tell others about the birth of this beautiful little boy...this gift from God.

At the beginning of these 9 months we made phone calls to tell others about the death of this wonderful young man.

Helping older brother, David, adjust to having a baby brother.

David helping us now as we all adjust to Jason being gone.

The pregnancy ended after 9 months. Life was good!

This void will last forever.....

Joann Marner
Brighton, Iowa

In Memory of my son, Jason

(Permission for TCF chapters to reprint granted by the author)

Gambling

I am not a gambler. I am far from viceless, but that particular vice has never beckoned me. I like Las Vegas, but I like it for spa treatments, poolside beverages, and Cirque du Soleil, not for the casinos. I don't bet on card games, playoffs, or the lottery.

So why didn't I realize that becoming a parent was such a huge gamble?

For many people, parenting brings the greatest joy, greatest pleasure, greatest sense of pride, greatest satisfaction.

When Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was asked about her greatest accomplishment, her answer was, "my children."

To me, it has brought the greatest pain and the greatest suffering. I didn't even guess I was risking that.

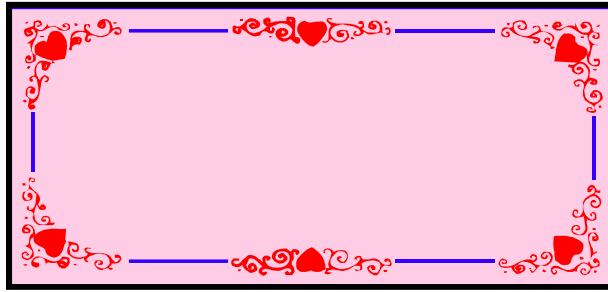
In Stephanie Benbenek's searingly honest book *Keeping Clarke*, she writes, "Of all my truthful admissions, this is the hardest: the only unconditional love that exists in this world is from a parent to a child....To this day and for eternity, the loss of being able to love unconditionally will be my greatest and deepest hollow space."

In our land of plenty, parenting can reasonably be anticipated to yield pleasurable results. Parents who are attentive, invested, capable of providing shelter, security, nutrition, education, encouragement....those parents have a reasonable expectation of a "good outcome."

So, when the outcome is tragic, it's as though the "house" cheated. No wonder I feel like I'm in some sort of exile. All around me, people are reaping the rewards of their investment, celebrating their proceeds. I made a similar investment....or rolled similar dice. I bet on a similar hand of cards...and here I am...with empty pockets. I gather that somehow I owe the house.

Peggi Johnson
TCF, Arlington, VA

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