



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, 2023



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Vol. 28 Issue 3

YOU ARE INVITED

The Compassionate Friends - Metrowest Chapter meets twice a month. Evenings on the third Tuesday from 7:00 to 8:30 pm in the conference room at the Milford Senior Center at 60 North Bow St. Milford Ma.

May 16th. & June 20th.

The **Tuesday** afternoon meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month next to St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Milford at the parish center. ***Please call Ed or Joan Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 by the last weekend or earlier if you plan to attend.***

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

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

May 30th. & June 27th.

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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

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

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

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

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends. ©2023

WHO ARE WE?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, grandparents 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 before 6:00 p.m. at (508) 473-4239

(If school is closed in Milford, because of weather, then all meetings will be cancelled at the Senior Center & Parish Center.)



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

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

Secretary

* Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

* Mitchell Greenblatt 857/225-7135

Webmaster

* Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

Librarian

* Judy Daubney 508/529-6942

Newsletter

* Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Steering Committee *

Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
 Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
 Linda Teres 508/366-2085
 Wendy Bruno 508/429-7998

The chapter address is:

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

Regional Coordinator

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

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

The Compassionate Friends, National Office
 48660 Pontiac Trail #930808
 Wixom MI 48393-7736
 Toll-Free (877) 969-0010

Web Page:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Chapter Web Page
www.tcfmetrowest.com

TRIBUTES, GIFTS AND DONATIONS

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

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

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

Mr & Mrs. Burton Stuchins in loving memory of their son **Alan R. Stuchins** on his birthday March 2nd. "Every day is One day closer to you".

Mrs. Phyllis Curran in loving memory of her daughter **Monica Michelle Curran** on her birthday, May 21st.

THINGS TO DO WHEN DESPERATE

1. Breathe.
2. Get my teddy bear.
3. Call other bereaved people (keep their phone numbers easily available)
4. Call close friends (keep their phone numbers easily available, too.)
5. Call a counselor.
6. Call a hot-line.
7. Get in my rocking chair. Get in any chair and let it support me.
8. Take a hot bath.
9. Run around the block three times.
10. Listen to soothing music.
11. Put on a relaxation tape.
12. Ask someone to hold me.
13. Cry.
14. Yell into my pillow.
15. Join a support group.
16. Say to myself, "Others love me," or, "I have the right to survive," or, "Others have gotten through this, I can too."
17. Stroke the dog or cat.
18. Watch an old movie on TV or read a book.
19. Hug a tree.
20. Stand or lie on the floor and feel the floor support me.
21. Pray.
22. Start again at the top.

*edited by Anne Pieper,
 from The Courage to Heal,
 by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis*



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

**Alec Canarri
Adam Scott Cole**

June

**Russell J. Teres
Ian Greenblatt
Caleb Rappi
Jenna Louise Giardini**

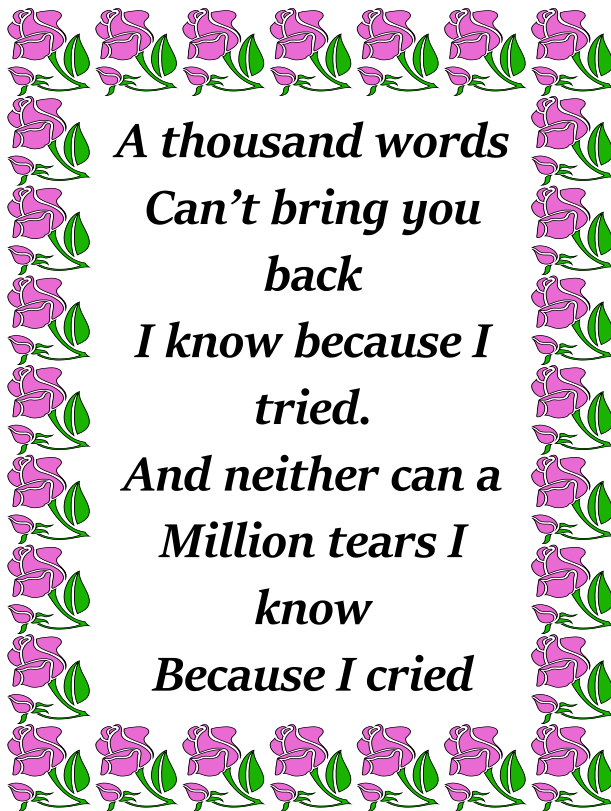
Birthdays

May

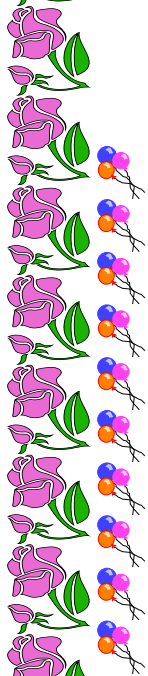
**Jacob Thomas Taylor
Christopher Allen Lill
Monica Michelle Curran
Christopher Scott Lowell
Michael Vincent Tynan
Jason L. Milligan**

June

**Jonathan David O'Brien
Lauren Mary Toloczko
Scott Motuzas
William Marston
Peter Raymond Landry
Steven Grillo
Patrick L. Cuff**



*A thousand words
Can't bring you
back
I know because I
tried.
And neither can a
Million tears I
know
Because I cried*



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



THE SIBLING CORNER



This page is dedicated to siblings together adjusting to grief thru encouragement & sharing

"Siblings Walking Together." We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends. We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters. Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us. Sometimes we will need the support of our friends. At other times we need our families to be there. Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be. We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak. Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life. Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

A Journey to the "New Normal"

May 31 marked seven years since my only sibling Dave died from cancer at age 32. This June 28 we would have been celebrating Dave's 40th birthday with a big party, and I'd be kidding him about going bald, just like all the Snapp men before him. Instead, I'll be getting ready for the TCF National Conference, at which I'll share memories of his brilliance, great smile, and sense of humor with those who will never have the pleasure of meeting him in person.

At this point in my grief journey, most will be good memories of how Dave lived, rather than bad memories of how he died. I can't recall the moment when that shift of perspective occurred, but I would like to share a few memories and milestones that have marked the way:

- Months after Dave died, I went to see the movie "Big", starring Tom Hanks, and "lost it" when his mother stared out the window wondering if she'd ever see him again. I watched the movie again recently and didn't lose it.
- It was three months before I felt up to sharing with anyone the details of the day my brother died at his home in Bellevue, Washington, in the company of Mom, Dad, and me. On the way home from that emotional conversation, I drove the wrong way down a one way street in downtown Chicago, it might be smart to have a friend drive you to your first few TCF meetings!
- I discovered that the grief path is not a straight line. A few good days can be followed by several bad ones. I've heard other TCF members call this their "roller coaster ride."
- For a year, I couldn't keep the radio on if "Wind Beneath My Wings" came on. For the next year, I kept it on but cried through it. Now, I can usually make it all the way through without any tears!

With the help of TCF, I realized that despite friends expecting it to be possible, I'd never be "back to normal". My focus instead shifted to finding my "new normal". While I can't point to a time when that happened (probably after the 1990 TCF Conference), that was a milestone.

- For three Christmases after Dave died, I didn't put up a tree in my condo. For Christmas, 1991, as I was getting out ornaments for my first tree since his death, I came across a bunch of ornaments that he had had in his apartment. I came totally unglued then, but now I look forward to seeing those ornaments each Christmas.
- It was three years before I felt that I had enough emotional energy to pursue a relationship. Even now, I don't have a lot of tolerance for guys I go out with that gripe about their brothers or sisters.

My most vivid "landmark" to date along my grief journey came in February 1993. Following my Dad's father's death in December, 1992, we were in Atlanta cleaning out my grandfather's apartment, and I came across a pile of post cards and letters that Dave had written to my grandparents through the years. Earlier in my journey, a "blind side" such as that would have sent me into a tailspin. In this case, though, my immediate reaction was one of happiness, for I had found a part of Dave that I didn't know I still had! I saved a few of the post cards, sent a couple to my cousin who was referenced in some of the letters, and (amazingly) threw the rest away. It was fun to share the memories, but I didn't feel the need to hang onto them. It was at that point, nearly five years after Dave's death, that I truly felt as if I was closing in on that "new normal".

**Karen Snapp
Frisco, Texas
from the TCF Stages Newsletter**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



LET'S TALK ABOUT ANGER

Your child has died, and on top of all the other new and different feelings that are now a part of your being, you find that anger, too, has reared its head. It isn't hard to find targets at which to direct your anger. They're all around, conveniently waiting for you to single them out. There's nothing strange about this, for, you see, anger is a large part of the grief process for many.

Anger isn't considered a "good" emotion. Many have been programmed from early childhood not to show anger. "Don't you raise your voice to me, young lady (or stamp your foot, or slam that door)!" As a result, it is difficult for these people to even admit that they are angry, and that somebody must pay! Many will deny this emotion in the groups, but the seasoned sharing bereaved parent can often sense the rage within those parents and with gentle probing and reassurance, can help a parent to identify what they're really feeling and that it's really okay to feel that way.

Anger isn't an emotion that just goes away if not admitted. It simply buries itself in the sands of your being and there it festers and gnaws until you become an ugly and twisted person, who is no longer able to have satisfying relationships with yourself, much less with others.

The healthy way to deal with anger is to admit it first off, and to know that you're not a bad person because you are angry. The second thing is to identify why you are angry, and, the truth of that is you're really angry because your child is dead (and that's more than a good enough reason). Thirdly, you need to recognize those who are the targets of your anger. You may find yourself angry with people who just happened to be convenient. For instance: the doctor or the nurse who showed no obvious compassion at the time of the death; or the emergency medical people who didn't get there fast enough, you think; or The Compassionate Friends organization, if, for example, you felt in the beginning that your grief was private and you saw our efforts to extend a helping hand as an intrusion, or maybe we spelled your name wrong; or the people around you whom you thought would know the right things to say or do to ease your pain but who failed you instead because they didn't understand your needs; your spouse because he or she can't make it better, is grieving totally different from you and may want you to grieve his or her way, or because there was buried anger within your relationship with your spouse from things or situations that had nothing to do with your child's death, but is now surfacing.

If there was a suicide involved, it's easy to blame your child's spouse or girl or boyfriend. "If only they had treated them better," you think.

The anger, no, rage, that comes from the fact that your child was murdered. The knowing that someone deliberately took your child's life, no accident there; it was intentional. That's an anger that is more easily understood and there's no problem identifying it. Besides the murderer, there are also convenient targets of law enforcement people who do their jobs poorly, or the unfairness of the judicial system, or the opposing attorneys who try to make your dead child the culprit. If your child was killed by a drunk driver, you have many of the same targets as one whose child was murdered, plus anger at the drunk driver, who may have also died in the accident, denying you the satisfaction of seeing them punished.

Maybe you see your God at fault because your child is dead. Do you feel He failed you and are you angry about that? Have you admitted that to Him and felt free to wrestle with it?

The list could go on and on. I am sure you have several of your own to add to the list, for we find many outlets for our anger. Better, some say, than blaming yourself totally and living with the depression of that. The important thing is that we admit the anger that is inherent in the situation and get it out in the open. Bring it to the meetings and let's talk about it, or share it with a trusted friend who may not understand it, but who can hear it without making you feel guilty for being angry.

Sometimes there are things you can do to help you express and then let go of this anger. Some people find it can be dispelled by telling the person, either face-to-face, or by letter, just why they are angry. Some letters need only be written and never mailed, for often it is the act of expressing your frustration that allows you to let go of it. If your child died a violent death and from your experiences you see the need for changes in our laws, it can be a tremendous help to work for these changes and have something meaningful occur because of your anger.

Nobody in TCF says you shouldn't be angry. Instead, they encourage you to admit, identify, recognize, express, knowing that you may not be able to let go of it right now. You are encouraged, however, to have a goal of doing what is necessary to express and dispel it, and reaching out toward the time when you can let go of the anger. As long as you choose to be angry, know that you are denying yourself any pleasure that is left out there for you, for anger and happiness do not walk hand-in-hand. You have been hurt enough; you deserve whatever happiness you can find, and there is some. Make letting go of anger your goal and start today working toward it. It is a kind thing that you do for yourself, and you do deserve some kind things.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



THEN AND NOW

Susan was born in March and we buried her in March. She was two weeks shy of her 20th birthday when she fell off that bridge. As I sit writing this it is bitterly cold outside. They just announced that the wind chill is minus four. It was an overcast, bitterly cold day when we buried her eight years ago in Arlington National Cemetery. I remember very little about those days, but I have seen the photographs. They show faces devoid of any light. Zombies who simply moved where they were told to move. Grim-faced, hair blowing in the blustery wind, we went through the motions of placing her ashes in the niche while Rev. Jim Atwood prayed over us.

What a difference between that day eight years ago and now. I have joined our church's sixth grade youth group as an adviser and spent Friday night at a lock-in where we played games, roller skated, watched videos and at 2 a.m. went outside for a snowball fight. I laughed until my sides split at the antics of some of the 6th grade boys. They were wrestling like a litter of puppies playing with each other—all you could see were a tangle of arms, legs, and bodies which were rolling around on the floor.

Could I have done this three years after the death of my precious Susan? Of course not. The reality of her death was just setting in. The terrible finality of it all. Could I have done this five years after her death? Perhaps. Although I found the fifth year to be a terrible experience. Why, I'm not sure, but several others said that they had the same experience during the fifth year. I guess it has to do with the realization that more distance was between me and my memories.

I remember Bob Rosenberger of the Burke/Springfield chapter of The Compassionate Friends saying that we were beginning to heal when we began thinking of the happy times surrounding our child's birth rather than the terrible time of their death. There are times when I think of Susan as being just a dream that I had. I suppose that the reason I can do things now with so much light-hearted fun is that, at last, I have begun to reinvest in life, something I never thought I could do.

I remember reading in all the grief books about this "reinvesting in life" but it didn't make any sense to me when I was in the throes of my acute grief. During those early years, I couldn't accept that I would ever feel truly happy again. But something happened along the way. I found that it was indeed possible to feel again and now, eight years down the pike, I do feel good about living and I enjoy doing many things again that used to hurt too much.

In some of the darkest moments of my grief, I remember telling my husband, John, that if we could get through this then we could handle anything that was thrown our way. I hope you will have the same experience of finally being able to re-invest in life again.

Mary M. Bell
Arlington, VA, Chapter TCF

GRIEF AND VACATION TIME

Vacation time, like holidays, can be especially painful for bereaved parents. Caught up with normal demands of making a living or keeping a household going, we have less time to think than we do on vacations, especially the "take it easy" kind at a hideaway tucked away somewhere.

In the summer following Tricia's death, I found vacations could bring a special kind of pain.

We avoided going to locales where we had vacationed with her. At one time, I thought Williamsburg might be off my list forever, since we had an especially happy holiday there with her and her younger sister.

I tried it one summer three years later and found that she walked the cobbled streets with me.

Now that nine years have elapsed and the searing pain has eased, maybe I can let the happy memories we shared in Williamsburg heighten the pleasure of another visit there.

For the first few years after Tricia's death, we found fast-paced vacations to be the best at places we had never been before.

The sheer stimulation of new experiences in new places with new people refreshed us and sent us home more ready to pick up our grief work. That is not to say when we did something or saw something that Tricia would have enjoyed, we didn't mention her. We did, but it seemed less painful than at home. One caution: do allow enough time for sleep. Otherwise, an exhausted body will depress you.

Charles and I have found that an occasional separate vacation (or weekend) is helpful. This, too, is an opportunity to change our stride, to experience the world a little differently.

Our experimentation with this may have stemmed from a reevaluation of priorities. Life is too short to miss a trip associated with a special interest.

A writers' workshop that might bore Charles is no longer off limits to me, any more than his going alone to a postal convention.

Allow yourself space since you are not grieving at the same rate. When I go by myself, I take only my memories, not his and mine, and my response to them is different. I have often found this helps straighten out my thinking.



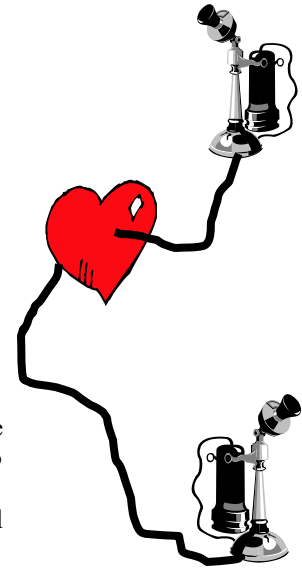
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Phone Friends

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

- Ed & Joan Motuzas, ...**Scott**, age 31, Kidney and Liver Failure,(508)473-4239
- Janice Parmenter,**Tyler**, age 29, Chronic Addiction,(508)528-5715
- Judy Daubney,**Clifford**, age 27, Suicide,(508)529-6942
- Linda Teres,.....**Russell**, age 19, Automobile Accident,(508)366-2085
- Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 18, Automobile Accident,..... (508)653-0541



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

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We've said it a hundred times: you have to find your own way, your own peace. Let vacation time be another try at that, but do give yourself a break in choosing the time and locale where that can best be accomplished. Don't be afraid of change; it helps with your reevaluation of life.

*Elizabeth Estes
TCF, Augusta, GA*

MOTHER'S DAY AND GRADUATION

After my daughter Kyra died on November 14 of 2004, one of my first thoughts was I am no longer a mother, because Kyra was my only child. It didn't take me long to realize that that was not true, I am and always will be Kyra's mom. As I have walked my grief journey I have found myself referring to grief as labor. It then came to me that for me, losing Kyra was like giving birth in reverse. I experienced intense emotional and physical pain that I wondered if I could endure, similar to the physical pain of labor, only in grief it lasts for weeks, months and years. It took my breath away, brought me to my knees and often I found myself crying out in anguish and anger, like child birth. It has been over a year and a half since Kyra died and I have felt a break in the pain. It has started back up recently due to graduation but I know it will ease some after May.

Some women experience false labor leading up to the birth of their child. I think that those intense pains that come from out of nowhere and last only a short time is something that I will forever experience.

. I now realize, that in letting go of her death, I can embrace and carry her spirit with me always. So, I liken grief to giving birth in reverse.

I go from Mother's day to Graduation, because Kyra would have graduated from High School at the end of May. Graduation was something I knew would be hard for me to endure without her here, alive and being part of the celebration. I thought about what Kyra graduating would mean to me and it didn't take me long to come up with, it was going to be my day to celebrate.



Kyra was an intelligent child with a low attention span, a need to talk, and lower than I would have liked motivation. It was a frustration that her teachers and I shared. So, homework time was a challenge and I used motivational charts, rewards and even punishment. But, I quickly found that you can't force someone to be motivated and went back to encouraging. I knew that she would come around and become motivated and I started seeing it her Junior year the year she died. I thought that graduation would be the reward for all the long nights and constantly trying to encourage and motivate. Well, it's not to be and I had to decide how will I endure graduation. I began to think about all she is missing. I believe in Heaven so I don't believe she is missing any joy or good times, because I believe she is now experiencing indescribable joy and unimaginable good times. The reality of what she is missing is, she is missing misery, pain, frustration, disappointment, a broken heart, grief, hopelessness and agony.

And I am missing her incredible joy and zest for life, her strong faith, beautiful smile and her wonderful heart.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from page 7)

As I close I remember when I was pregnant with Kyra, I took two helpings of food because I said I'm eating for two. Now I will try my best to live life to the fullest and be all that I can because now I'm living for two. Just as her living made me want to be a better person, her dying will make me a better person if I allow it, because I now carry her with me. I will strive to do and see life the way she would have if she could have stayed here longer.

Julie Short
In Loving Memory of Kyra
TCF, Southeastern IL

A Grieving Father Looks At Mother's Day

Will the circle be unbroken by and by, Lord, by and by?
Maybelle Carter

On Sunday, May 13, 2001, religious and secular institutions across our western hemisphere will celebrate Mother's Day. Corporate America will eagerly open its arms, that is its doors, to embrace Mom with sales. Florists will be working overtime to insure that floral bouquets arrive on time. Restaurants will be offering special Mother's Day meals so families can honor mom by eating out. In synagogues, temples, and places of worship, mothers will be honored in a variety of ways. There will be silent, invisible mothers on that day. They will go unrecognized for the most part. They will be generally unnoticed. They will even be ignored. They are the grieving mothers. For them, the day is not a celebration, but endurance. Mother's Day changes completely for them after the death of a child. The pain is a pain only another grieving mother can relate to.

All of the imagery that is conjured up doesn't necessarily help either. The pages of the hymnbook flutter with the images of a mother and her children. Read the titles of the songs as you flip the pages: "My Mother's Old Bible Is True," "Will The Circle Be Unbroken?," "Mother's Prayers Have Followed Me," and, "Are All The Children In?" Religious guidebooks and holy texts are filled with thousands of references and pictures of mothers nurturing their children. This motherly love is central to all the religions of the world. The implied message is that a mother's love for her children is a bond quite unlike any other. So the death of a child, to them, must feel quite unlike any other loss. These wonderful words and images which are meant to comfort, end up tormenting them.

I write this column as a grieving father. I share my insights from my personal experiences and my readings on child-loss.

But a lot of my education has come from the truest source of all, my forever-best friend, Debby. She has taught me that a mother's pain is so inexplicable, except to other grieving mothers, because when their child dies, a unique bond is broken. I cannot understand this bond, because like all Dads I am an outside observer so many times in the birthing process. But I do know that this bond exists. My many hours of watching The Discovery Channel and Animal Planet with my son, Carl, taught me one lesson, nature's lesson. Never mess with mothers. There's a reason why mother bears have notorious reputations. They fiercely protect their young.

There is a deep, mysterious, and unique relationship that a mother has with her child. Pregnancy is the start of a bond, which men cannot fully understand.

The intricacies of feeding, nurturing, and protecting that new life, is beyond the scope of male experience. It just boggles my mind that my wife did all those jobs 24 hours a day, and still worked a regular job too. Fathers are sort of detached observers in the birth process. Mothers are participants in the clearest meaning of the word. Their bodies work all day and night. They feel the movements of the new life within them; endure the hardships and sicknesses. Go through intense ups and downs. Live with the sheer terror of the unknown. Mix all these ingredients together and the result becomes a spiritual umbilical cord of great durability between a mother and the new life within her.

Nothing can sever that cord. It survives all the troubles and turmoil in life that children can bring. Nothing can break through that cord. Nothing, that is, except a child's untimely death. Now, I am trying to understand all of this in my finite, male mind, and frankly, I can't. I can't begin to understand a mother's keen sense of suffering when a child dies. I am left only to my inadequate imagination of her emptiness within. I caught glimpses of this suffering watching Debby sob and repeatedly cry out, "I can't protect him anymore! I can't comfort him anymore. I can't treat his hurts anymore!" Truly, a big part of a mother dies when her child dies.

I share these thoughts with grieving family members and friends so there can be some sort of understanding. Mother's Day will never be the same. If it is a first time after the passing of a young one, anxiety and grief will be severe, frequent, and intense. Expect those feelings, but they will also pass.

Here are some suggestions, which come from grief counselors and experienced grieving parents. Keep the level of anxiety and anticipation low. Let the grieving mother set the tone for the day. Let it be her day to observe in her fashion.



Fold & Tape

The Compassionate Friends
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Fold & Tape



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST UPDATE (THIS PAGE WILL BE PRINTED EVERY OTHER EDITION)

We continue to update our mailing list. We want everyone who reads our newsletter to receive it; however, mailing costs make this update necessary. We want to send it where it is being read. Your donations allow us to print and mail this newsletter and to reach out to hundreds of parents and siblings.

Please fill out this form now if you wish to be added to or removed from our mailing list. This form should be filled out annually. If we don't hear from you in a year's time you will be notified through the newsletter that your name will be removed from our mailing list unless we hear from you.

If you are able to make a donation at this time, it will be gratefully received. Please mail to address below.

PLEASE FILL OUT THIS FORM AND RETURN IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

I (do___) (do not___) wish to continue receiving the TCF newsletter.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(Parent / Sibling / Grandparent___) (professional___)

(Donation included___) Make checks payable to "The Compassionate Friends" or TCF

If there are any errors in spelling or other information in this newsletter, please call it to my attention so that I may correct it. Please use this page to send back information, reverse side is addressed for your convenience.

Mail to: TCF Metrowest, 26 Simmons Dr., Milford, MA 01757-1265

CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

PLEASE ADVISE US OF ADDRESS CHANGES TO INSURE YOUR RECEIVING THE NEWSLETTER, THEY ARE NOT FORWARDED BY THE POST OFFICE.



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Have a plan for the day. It can be the simplest of plans, and it should be. Elaborate plans can cause more grief, not less.

Communicate the family plans with all family members and friends. Be assertive. Stick to those plans. If a quiet day is needed, do it. If many friends and family are the answer, do it.

Words can hurt or heal. So choose the words of encouragement wisely. Resolve to be a good listener that day.

Remember that the best gift to give to a grieving mother can't be bought. It is priceless. It can't be wrapped. It is too immense. That gift is you.

Now, I close with something for all you precious, compassionate mothers. Please be good to yourselves, you have surely earned it.

Aaron Pueschel

You were on my mind . . .

When I woke up this morning... You were on my mind. You were on my mind.

You with that genuine enthusiasm, like a kid with his first bicycle.

You with the curiosity and excitement that dads love to be there for.

There's so much of you still with me. Still with us!

It's not fair that we feel cheated or that we won't share your ways anymore.

But in reality, after all the tears and inner feelings of pain and sadness pass.

We will have joy and great happiness because we shared your days. Your laughter. You.

And when I wake up each morning it will be OK that you were on my mind... You are on my mind.

That's a special place for you to be, because it will be forever.

*Michael Tyler
TCF, Lighthouse Chapter*

The Grief of a Parent Who Has Lost An Infant.

To experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should the child be stillborn, or die hours, days or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for the parents. No parent ever expects to outlive his child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to his parents.

The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant:

SHAME AND GUILT - Especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. "Other women have live, normal babies, why can't I?" Should an infant die months after birth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.

NO MEMORIES - Parents may only have "souvenirs of the occasion" (birth certificate, I.D. bracelet) by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few belongings, but feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.

LONELINESS IN GRIEF - It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is newborn, they may give the impression you are grieving unnecessarily over a non-person. They hope you can "forget this baby" and "have another one."

NEGLECTED FATHERS - Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby, too.

MOTHERS VS. FATHERS - Since the mother has bonded with her child during the pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father's, who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife's grief is so profound and so prolonged.

*Claire McGoughey & Sue Shelley
Infant Group. TCF. St. Louis, MO*

Other Area TCF Chapters

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Chapter Leader: Carol Gray-Cole
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North Central Mass. Chapter (Westminster, Gardner, Fitchburg areas)

Chapter phone line: (978) 786-5014

Chapter Co-Leaders: Denise Whitney...
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Chapter Co-Leader: Carolann Picnacik...



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Metrowest Chapter
26 Simmons Dr.
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Address Correction Requested

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

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



TO OUR OLD MEMBERS

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