



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.

November - December 2013



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Vol. 18 Issue 6

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:

November 19th December 17th

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:

November 26th December Meeting Cancelled

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**

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 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
- Carol Cotter 774/219-7774

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.

Mrs. Jean Garvey and the Kushalena Family in loving memory of **John W. Garvey** on his birthday November 4th.

Ms. Viola Paulhus and Helen Homenick in loving memory of our son and grandson **Michael J. Paulhus** whom we have missed for over fifteen years.

Mr. & Mrs. Michael McWhorter in loving memory of their daughter **Alyssa A. Haden**. On her anniversary October 10th.

Ms. Betty Myers in loving memory of her son **William Bruce-Tagoe** on his birthday September 10th.

Mr. & Mrs. Henry Slopek in loving memory of their cousin **Kathy A. Burns**. "Our WTC angel of 9/11."

Mrs. Tracy Juliano in loving memory of her son **Christopher Marc Dullea**.

Mr. & Mrs. Charles Hodgman in loving memory of their beloved son **Ian Macinnes Hodgman**.

Mrs. Joan Hennigan in loving memory of her son **Dennis M. Hennigan**. "Forever loved and missed and deeply remembered always", on his anniversary November 23rd.

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Boudreau in loving memory of their son **Nicholas L. Boudreau**.

Kendra Mae Kiraithe in loving memory of her son **David Alexander Schnegg** on his anniversary October 22nd.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Eldredge in loving memory of their son **Kevin R. Eldredge** on his birthday November 14th.

Mrs. Alice Horigan in loving memory of her daughter **Donna M. McHugh** on her anniversary September 18th, and her birthday October 16th.

Mr. & Mrs. Paul Webster in loving memory of their son **Joseph Webster**.

Mr. & Mrs. Flavio DiCarlo in loving memory of their daughter **Geraldine DiCarlo** on her anniversary December 28th.



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 November and December. 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

November

LEAH CATHERINE TEPPER
LISA MASTROMATTEO
MATTHEW ALLEN BERTULLI
KRISTIN L. McGRATH
ALAN R. STUCHINS
SEAN PATRICK COTTER
CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI
CHRISTOPHER JAKSTIS
MICHAEL P. McLAUGHLIN
DENNIS M. HENNIGAN
KAI PARKER REZENDES
DONNA ANN WOLFSON

December

CHRISTINA M. ROSSETTI
LARRY DUGAN
STEPHEN GRILLO
AARON STEVEN GRAY
JAMES S. CARPENTER VI
RICHARD J. MABIE
KEVIN HOLLAND
DANNY FERGUSON
JENNIFER L. GOLDSWORTHY
JOSHUA GILBERT

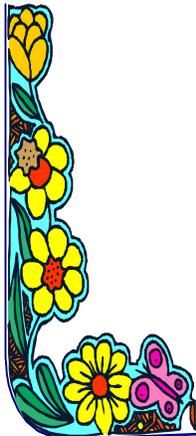
Birthdays

November

JOHN GARVEY
DIXON BERGMAN
MICHAEL BARRY
MICHAEL COUGHLIN
ANDREW ROBERT BIBBO
KEVIN R. ELDREDGE
ALICIA D. JACKMAN
HOLLY L. MACKENZIE
WILLIAM E. DeLORIE JR.
CHAD ARTHUR HOLBROOK
2ND LT. USMC IAN THOMAS McVEY

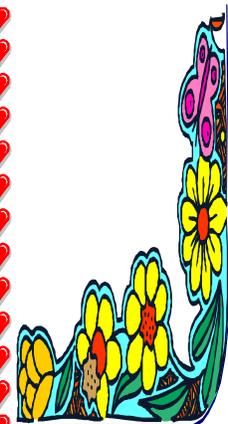
December

LAUREN THIBEAU FLANAGAN
LISA RANDALL
TIMOTHY G. RECKERT
MARC R. PEARLMAN
PETER W. DALEY
JOHN PATRICK McGUE
JENNIFER KIZNER GOLDFARB
JAMES S. CARPENTER VI
DANNY FERGUSON
NOELLE SARAH JOHNSON
R.J. SUTHERLAND
JENNIFER L. GOLDSWORTHY



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 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.

Please Don't Discount Sibling Grief

I have come to think of sibling grief as "discounted grief." Why? Because siblings appear to be an emotional bargain in most people's eyes. People worry so much about the bereaved parents that they invest very little attention in the grieving sibling.

My personal "favorite" line said to siblings is, "You be sure and take care of your parents." I wanted to know who was supposed to take care of me, I knew I couldn't.

The grief of siblings may differ from that of a parent, but it ought not to be discounted. People need to realize that while it is obviously painful for parents to have lost a child, it is also painful for the sibling, who has not only lost a sister or brother, but an irreplaceable friend.

While dealing with this double loss, he or she must confront yet another factor: The loss of a brother or sister is frequently the surviving sibling's first experience with the death of any young person. Young people feel they will live forever. A strong dose of mortality in the form of a sibling death is very hard to take.

The feelings of siblings are also often discounted when decisions are being made on things ranging from a funeral plan to flower selections. Parents need to listen to surviving siblings who usually know a lot about the tastes and preferences of the deceased.

Drawing on the knowledge that surviving siblings have about supposedly trivial things, such as favorite clothes or music, can serve two purposes when planning funeral or memorial services. First, their input helps ensure that the deceased receives the type of service he or she would have liked. Second, their inclusion in the planning lets them know they are still an important part of the family.

I realize that people are unaware that they are discounting sibling grief. But then, that's why I'm writing this, so people will know.

***Jane Machado
TCF, Tulare, CA***

Ashley

When I think of Ashley, I think of all the good times. And some of the stupid little fights that we had. Maybe those fights used to feel dumb but now I miss them. I love and will always hang on to the good times. My biggest fear is that I will forget her. If I don't think I'm going to remember, I dig out old memories.

I think of her death sometimes as we're sledding down a hill, which is our life, and the sled is getting faster to the end of her life, or the bottom of the hill, but my sled isn't going as fast as hers. I know she can see me, but I can't see her. I hear her calling my name, but no words are coming out of my mouth to call her. This is how I sometimes feel.



***Hannah Childs
Northeast Baltimore***





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Thanksgiving Marks Beginning Of Holiday Madness and Sadness

In our society we have turned the holidays into a never ending round of parties, shopping, cooking, preparations for guests or travel and stress, lots and lots of stress. It begins in October with the not so subtle reminders from our friendly retail stores. Most of us dread this time of year because as members of Compassionate Friends, we have one more item on our list and it invariably is at the top, my child is gone, how can I handle the holidays?

This will be my third Thanksgiving without my son. We had 35 wonderful Thanksgiving celebrations together, and now it's just me. My only child is gone, my grandchildren now live solely in their mother's world. I am not a part of that world.

But I am learning to cope with this reality. I am learning that I can hold on to the traditions that don't cause me sadness and let go of those that do. As bereaved parents we fall into a unique category. As humans we accept that the loss of parents, spouses, aunts, uncles, siblings, friends and acquaintances is inevitable. But never, never, were we taught or conditioned to the idea that our children would or could precede us in death. The very notion of this shook us to our core. Now we have lost our child to death. Nobody prepared us for this mind numbing loss. The rules have been broken. We have no coping skills. Our friends usually can't help. Our families try, but until one endures a loss of this magnitude, the ability to fully comprehend the never ending rounds of sadness is simply not there.

We do have a support system.....we can choose to participate or simply be there, in the moment, at our Compassionate Friends meetings. Here we find our most meaningful and helpful connection with other parents.....parents who are walking the road we now walk. These bereaved parents are here to help us on this unfamiliar road. They cannot answer every question because the answers don't exist to most questions. When will this pain end? When will life go back to "normal"? There are different types of pain and new kinds of normal. We gather each month to help each other, to lean on each other, to find hope in each other's ability to function. From this meeting of kindred souls we do derive some solace, some peace and some hope.

I have watched the newly bereaved, raw in their sadness when they first attend a meeting. As the months move forward, I begin to see a change in these parents. Each changes in a different way, for each experiences their loss and their grief process in a different way. Some changes aren't apparent for months, even a year or two.

Learning that we are not alone in the grievous burden of our loss is comforting. Learning that others have developed ways to cope with the holidays, the birthdays, the death anniversaries and other special occasions gives us the hope that we, too, will one day feel comfortable in our new "normal."

I have chosen to accept this group of gentle, kind and compassionate friends as an integral part of my life. The first holidays were horrible. I learned that I had to do what I felt was right. I learned to let go of the expectations of others and live in the moment. Even if I plan to do something and change my mind, I feel no guilt. I learned that those who truly love me understand. I have found that I am truly becoming myself....my new self. It is a slow process. There are setbacks.

Holidays are extremely difficult for every parent who has lost a child.....it matters not how long ago our child died. The pain is fresh, new and raw at this time of year. This is the season for leaning on our compassionate friends, for asking questions, expressing fears, anxieties, doubts, depression and anger and for finding the comfort, hope and understanding that each of us so desperately seeks.

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

A Tree Full of Memories

Christmas was my absolute favorite time of the entire year. Every nook and cranny was filled with Yule adornment. Not a corner of the house was safe from this self-proclaimed Christmas Freak! One year we even hung assorted ornaments on a fake palm tree, lovingly dubbing it the "Bahama-Mama" tree, because in our family one Christmas tree was never enough. The kids even had small tabletop trees in their rooms. Our upstairs tree was the decorator tree, the one with the fancy, color-coordinated ornaments, to be handled by no one but me. The downstairs tree was the family favorite and trimmed by the children. Hanging from its branches were the ornaments that I had purchased every year for each of them from the time they were born. I always looked forward to finding just the right one that would represent their individual interests at that particular time in their lives. But as each of us knows, the holidays, as we knew them, forever changed after our precious children died. And so it was for us the Christmas of 1995, our first without Nina's shining presence. I was quite positive that I would never decorate again. It was far too painful.

Yet, something happened three Christmases ago. One night I lay in Nina's daybed, staring at the ceiling thinking Scrooge-like thoughts, wishing it was January 2nd and I could put the holidays behind me for another year.



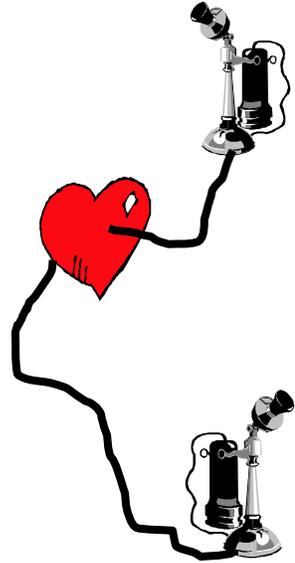
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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)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.

Support Resources

TCF Online Chat Groups:

WWW.compassionatefriends.org/resources/online_Support.aspx

- For questions, please contact Diana Jorden, 925-432-3854, who moderates the general grief and suicide loss rooms on Friday nights and Sunday. TCF online offers several specialized chat rooms, all moderated by moms who have been in chat for at least 2 years or more. We offer a sibling-only chat, loss under 1 year, loss over 2 years, loss of only child, suicide survivor, infant/pregnancy loss, and every night (and Monday mornings) there is a general loss room open to parents, step and grand, and siblings.
- You can sign up for the online TCF National newsletter at www.compassionatefriends.org
- You can reach our TCF National Facebook page through the link on the same home page of our national website. You will be asked to join Facebook if you are not already a member, and we hope you'll find our Facebook page as interesting as do the more than 11,000 fans who have already found us!

Other Grief Support Websites

- agast.org - for grandparents
- alivealone.org
- aliveinmemory.org
- angelmoms.com
- babysteps.com
- bereavedparents.org
- beyondindigo.com
- childloss.com
- goodgriefresources.com
- griefwatch.com
- GriefNet.org
- healingafterloss.org
- opentohope.com
- pomc.com - families of murder victims
- save.org
- survivorsofsuicide.com
- Taps.org - military death
- webhealing.com



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Suddenly, I found myself rise from her bed and walk to the closet where all the holiday paraphernalia was stored. I searched furiously until I found what I was looking for—a box marked “Nina’s Xmas Ornaments.” I brushed away the collected dust and carried it up the stairs to the corner of the living room where a forlorn and neglected-appearing 2-foot tree stood. I recall sitting on the floor in front of the tree, sighing deeply, and gingerly opening the box. I was afraid what the depth of my emotions would be when I saw those long untouched ornaments of Christmases past; afraid of the feelings that I had learned to hide so well from the rest of the world; afraid the floodgates would open and the tears would never stop.

I carefully lifted the cover and tenderly held each one in my hands. I found myself recalling the beautiful memories of previous Christmases when my beloved daughter was alive. There was the pink and white checked fabric baby buggy with pipe-cleaner handles of her first Xmas, followed by Teddy bears with Santa hats, and crocheted Sesame Street characters from her toddler days. There were the priceless picture ornaments taken by her nursery school teacher showing 4-year old Nina with the then-blond, wispy hair and blunt cut bangs grinning back at me. There were the handmade ones from early grade school that she affectionately created with felt and glitter; the violin and piano ornaments symbolizing her musical attempts; the self-explanatory Shop-til-You-Drop ornament; the more sophisticated ornaments for a teenage Nina, and finally the last one before her death at 15-years-old commemorating her reign as our city’s Miss Teen. I gently held them, reliving the stories behind each one and savoring the precious memories they brought with them as I placed them on the tiny tree. I then unearthed from hiding the ornaments bought after her death. Even then, I couldn’t bear to stop buying them for her. There I found dark-haired angels and butterflies of every shape and color, now symbolizing her new and eternal life, and appropriately hung them alongside the others.

Though tears fell as I cautiously placed them on the bare branches of the tiny tree, I felt familiar warmth radiate throughout my body, thawing the coldness in my heart and soul. I smiled, knowing in my heart that this was a Christmas gift coming directly from Nina. I felt it was her way of telling me that perhaps it was time to find some peace and hope again in the holiday season. Not that it would or could ever be the same as it was before 1995, or that I would ever stop missing her presence, but perhaps now begin to remember some of the joy found in priceless memories of holidays past.

If you are in the early years of your grief, you believe you will never again feel any amount of enjoyment in the holidays. However, allow myself and other seasoned grievers to be the bearers of hope. At one time we felt just like you. When you feel ready for even a spark of pleasure in the holidays, let it return to your heart again. I sincerely believe our children want us, in time, to accept their spirit gifts of renewed joy, peace, and hope sent to us from them with love.

With peace and gentle thoughts through this holiday season and always,

Cathy L. Seehuetter
TCF St. Paul, MN
In Memory of my daughter, Nina

10 Tips for Living with the Holidays this Year

1. Remind yourself that you will survive. You will.
2. Think about what will bring you the most peace this holiday season.
 - a. Keeping all traditions intact?
 - b. Tweaking some traditions a bit and adding new ones?
 - c. Throwing out all the old traditions and starting new ones?

Flying to the Caribbean and completely skipping the holidays this year? It’s okay to do that.
3. Don’t expect anyone to mention your child by name. *Believe it or not*, that’s your job. People will look to you to determine whether or not it’s safe to talk about the person that died. A few subtle ways to do that:
 - a. Serve/bring your child’s favorite dish to the holiday get-together, talk about it!
 - b. Bring a favorite picture, pass it around. Work it into the dining table centerpiece.
 - c. Bring a favorite memento, a book, a poem, a toy, a video, an article of clothing, share it after dinner. Have your child’s favorite music playing in the background, tell the story!
4. Plan a special evening for close family and friends when you REMEMBER. Ask everyone to bring a favorite photo and write down a special memory. Set time aside to sit in a circle and share the photos and memories.
5. Remember that it’s okay, it’s even healthy, to cry.
6. It’s okay to stay in bed...you will get out, when you are ready and able.
7. It’s also okay to smile or even laugh, a bit. You’re not being disloyal.



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8. Buy yourself a gift. Wrap it. Write a note – to you – from your beloved child.
9. Buy someone less fortunate than you a gift.
10. Light a candle.

Use in TCF newsletters granted by the author, Tom Zuba, twice bereaved parent, author, speaker, and workshop presenter. www.tomzuba.com.

Chapter Note

Mark your calendar, Alan Pedersen will be making his *Final Tour* and he's coming to our chapter. On October 22nd. At 7:00 p.m.

Please note that the location will be at Christ Episcopal Church, 14 School St. Medway Ma.

Those that are tech savvy, you can Google the address and get directions. And those who are not can e-mail me and I'll send you directions.

Alan's music and message have become very popular with grief organizations. Alan and his wife Denise, founded *The Angels across the USA Tour* and together they have traveled to over 340 cities sharing a message of hope and offering support to families who have had a child die.

Alan's roots run deep when it comes to The Compassionate Friends. He has spoken and performed at more than 160 chapters in the U.S. In 2010 he was named "Professional of the Year" by TCF and currently serves on TCF's National Board of Directors.

Helping Yourself Through the Holidays

The stores and malls are already filled with many of the signs and sounds of the holidays. Each year the frenzies of buying and selling seem to begin earlier and earlier. The merchants want to get as much as possible out of this time of the year, so the world is bombarded with the "sights and sounds" of the season.

Most individuals look forward with a certain amount of anticipation to Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, and Christmas. The one who has lost a sibling or a child this past year or even years before looks to this time of the year with great dread and even fear.

They wish, in a way, that they could go to bed on November 1st and wake up on January 2nd of next year.

The first holidays after the death of a loved one may be especially difficult for the survivors.

If you or someone you know is facing the holiday season and dreading feelings of emptiness, there are a number of things you can do to cope. Don't be afraid to grieve, if you need to, and set aside time to be alone if you want. You can also relive the happy memories by talking about your loved one to those who care.

It has been suggested that people do what they want to do, whether that means staying home, going to religious services or visiting family or friends. If you seem to enjoy this time or a special event, don't feel guilty. Experiencing joy is giving and receiving. This doesn't mean that you have forgotten your child or sibling or that you loved him or her any less.

The griever enters this time of the year with a number of questions about their grief. They have a number of fears and concerns. Let's look at some of them so we can get a better understanding of what the griever sees in most cases:

First, there is the anticipation of the pain of the holidays, the pain of facing "the first" holiday without that very special child or sibling. Then there is the fear and pain of other people being happy and joyous when you are not and are very alone. We live in a family society and while everyone else will be with family, you will be alone or missing a family member! Solution, try to plan ahead and be with someone and spend the day or a few days with those you love. Don't make it a taboo to talk about your loved one, and balance your time with others with some time alone for yourself.

Second, the fear of preparation for the holidays, grief is very tiring and taxing. It drains those who are grieving. The holidays are also a very busy and tiring time, as we all know the sending of cards, the buying, wrapping, cooking, and giving of gifts. The holiday parties and even the special holiday music and programs seem to make the griever not have any energy at all. They want to be alone and not involved.

Solution, no one says that you have to do any of those things. If it makes you feel good to cook and bake and buy, do so if it doesn't, don't. Don't allow others to put you into their mold.

If you decide to do things, make a plan and work it. Send out a few cards a day, buy a gift at a time, and not all at once. Pace yourself, don't over do it! It is most important that you don't impose things on yourself that you can't do.

You might want to use special ways to memorialize your loved one. Suggestions may be:

- Give a gift in memory of your child, brother, or sister.
- Attend a special memorial service and pay respect to those you love and miss.
- Make a special ornament and hang it on a tree in memory of your loved one.



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- Do for others and it will make you feel good.
 - Organize your shopping with a specific list and a budget.
 - Divide responsibilities for meals, decorating, or wrapping with your family.
 - Take time for others, contact your local churches or charities for information about serving food to the homeless or collecting gifts for needy children. This may be especially helpful if you're away from loved ones during the holidays.
 - Take time for yourself, enjoy the holiday season as best you can. The purpose of the season is to create happiness. And if you are happy, those around you will be, too!
- Be careful of "should", it is better to do what is most helpful for you and your family. If a situation looks especially difficult over the holidays, try not to get involved.

And don't forget: ***Anticipation of any holiday is so much worse than the actual holiday.***

Keep a balance in your life and remember that you are loved.

Dr. Lee Drake, Ph.D.

Dr. Drake, a bereaved sibling with a long background on the subject of grief and grief recovery, was a much sought after speaker and a public relations director for a funeral home group in Florida, prior to his death in 2005. He conducted group and one-on-one counseling with bereaved families and individuals, and was a published author, including the popular booklets "Holiday Support" and "Helping the Hurting in Crises."



Save a tree

To all members that receive this newsletter via snail mail. If you would like to get your newsletter a week earlier thru e-mail please send your e-mail address to: ***headly@comcast.net***. This would save a tree and reduce postal cost.

Christmas Past, Christmas Present: An Ever-Changing Perspective

'Tis the season....to be maudlin. For bereaved parents, the artificiality of the Madison Avenue inspired advertising, marketing, store displays and endless streams of television commercials can be overwhelming. We are not like those happy families in the pictures and television commercials. We are different. We are not merry: we are maudlin. We are insulted by this artificial joy and "must have" concept that further belittles the intent of the holiday season. The death of our child has changed our perspective on the holiday season forever.

For the first few years after my son died, I could not think about Christmas. Everything screamed buy, buy, buy. Christmas season sales projections by the retailers were being viewed by the Wall-Streeters as the gospel according to King Scrooge. The "Greed Creed" seemed oppressive. Displays in stores before Halloween swept me with a tsunami of anxiety. As Thanksgiving approached and passed, I began to feel more deeply depressed....more maudlin and sad.

Then on the 19th of each December, I marked my son's death anniversary. I never even considered those words until my son died. Now they had become the biggest part of my holiday vocabulary. I couldn't shop, write Christmas cards, go to holiday parties or watch television "specials" without feeling very, very sad. Tears would silently slide down my cheeks as I thought about all that would never be, all that was lost.



Two years ago I began to analyze these feelings. I realized that I could shut out those things that harmed me and gently embrace those elements of the season that comforted me. That's when I began to control the messages with which I was bombarded. I turned off the television or watched commercial free shows. I rented movies that I liked. I watched "It's a Wonderful Life" several times and felt the message of the story in my heart. I shopped on-line, staying away from the garish, gaudy and tasteless displays in the stores. I controlled my environment until I could overcome the negative impact of the seasonal stimulation.

Do all bereaved parents feel this way? I suppose a few don't, but in the first few years of grief the bombardment and the reminders of all that we have lost paralyze us. Some turn to their religion for guidance and comfort. Some ignore the season entirely. Others vacation each year during the holidays. The majority of us eventually learn to start new traditions....traditions that include our absent children yet bring some measure of peace to our hearts.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

And I think that's how my son would want it to be for my husband and me. He would want us to be with gentle people who enjoy companionship and memories more than the material goods. He would want us to continue to help those in need.....to buy a gift and give it in his name, to donate to the Salvation Army so that others might have a happier holiday.

This year I will work with other bereaved parents, parents who are still raw and new to their loss. I will reach out to them, give them the benefit of what wisdom I have acquired and send them a message of hope. Instead of showering my son's daughters with yet more junk or the crass gift of cash, I will donate to a very worthy cause in their names. These three donations will help three children who live on the opposite end of the economic spectrum from them. I doubt that they will grasp the meaning of this gift given the value system in which they have spent the last five years. But I will. Their father would approve. And that's what really counts. I'll do the same for my grandson...he will appreciate the meaning of this gift.

As far as some of the other people in my life, I will buy a little something....on-line. I might even enter a store or two this year. But the buying spirit has eluded me for five years. I don't think it's going to return, and I don't miss it.



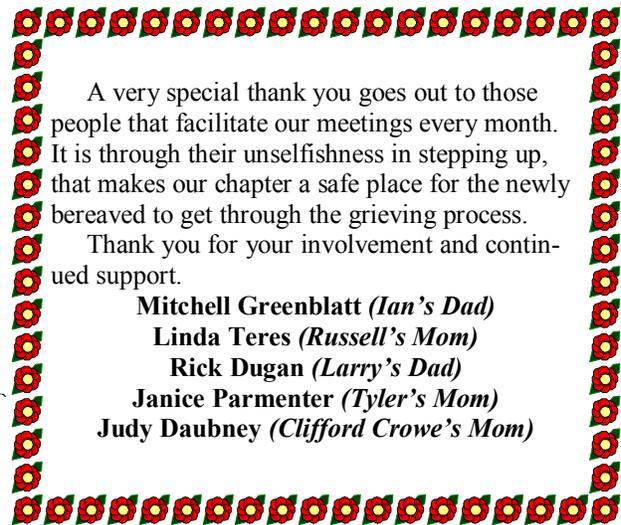
The anxiety hasn't started yet. It starts later every year. I am not quite sure why this is, but I would guess that as salient beings, we learn to cope with the unthinkable. I doubt that anxiety will keep its distance from me throughout the season, but I think its grip on my mind has lessened considerably.

Am I looking forward to the holidays? Not really, but then I feel that way about a lot of things now. It's just the way it is. The holidays come, the death anniversaries come, the birthdays come, the taxman certainly arrives and the world keeps right on spinning. Since my grandchildren are absent from my life by their mother's choice, I do not know them anymore. This is sad, but not devastating. This is just the way it is. I have gotten through the anger and bitterness and arrived at a place of peace on these lost relationships.

We'll spend Christmas with my family. We'll cook, we'll talk, and we'll exchange little gifts. Sometimes my husband and I buy something together that both of us will enjoy. Sometimes we just skip it. We keep it simple and we reach out to others who need reassurance, help and understanding. That is the real meaning of the holiday season, and this keeps us closer to Todd.

Whatever you choose to do this year, it will be right. Know, too, that the anxiety you are feeling is far worse than the actual day itself. Try not to pressure yourself too much; talk with your family about your needs and be open as to what you can handle. Do what is best for you. We're all different people who share a very unique experience....we have lost our precious children to death. We are seekers of peace and hope. One day we will find both.

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



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)

Chanukah

At this season of life, we remember the light you brought into our lives:

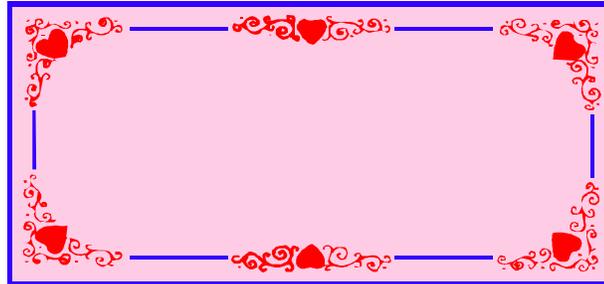
- The light of your laughter
- The light of your wit and intelligence
- The light of your love

May the time not be distant when the memory of these lights will illumine our hearts and minds and eradicate the darkness therein.

Stephanie Hesse
TCF, Rockland County, NY
TCF, North Palm Beach County, FL



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The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all
children who have died

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*... that their light
may always shine.*

**Second Sunday in December
7 PM Around the Globe**

