



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 2015



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Vol. 20 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 17th December 15th

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 24th December 29th

WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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

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

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

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

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

We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends. ©2015

Weather Cancellation

In the event of inclement weather on meeting days or nights, if in doubt call:

**Ed or Joan Motuzas at
(508) 473-4239**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

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

Secretary

* Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

* Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

Webmaster

* Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

Librarian

Ed Motuzas 508/473/4239

Newsletter

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Senior Advisors

* Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

Steering Committee *

Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
 Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
 Linda Teres 508/620-0613
 Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
 Judith Cherrington 508/473-4087
 Carol Cotter 774/219-7774

The chapter address is:

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

Regional Coordinator

Tom Morse
 66 Atwood Avenue
 Middleboro, MA 02346
 Phone (508) 572-3038
 tjmorse521@gmail.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.

Betty Myers in loving memory of her son **William Bruce-Tague**.

Carol Cole in loving memory of her son **Adam Scott Cole**.

Mr. Kenneth Bleakney in loving memory of his daughter **Erica Bleakney** on her anniversary November 5th.

Dorothy Savice in loving memory of her son **Samuel O'Dafe Otobo** on his anniversary November 13th.

Mrs. Joan Hennigan in loving memory of her son **Dennis M. Hennigan** on his anniversary November 23rd, "First lost, first missed and forever loved".

Mr. & Mrs. James McCusker in loving memory of their son **Ryan J. McCusker**.

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

Mr. & Mrs. Earl Pearlman in loving memory of their son **Marc R. Pearlman** on his birthday December 14th.

Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Lovejoy in loving memory of their son **Jonathan Bret Lovejoy** on his birthday November 17th.





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

ALAN R. STUCHINS
ERICA BLEAKNEY
ERIC LIEF BOTTCHE
MATTHEW ALLEN BERTULLI
SAMUEL O'DAFE OTOBO
LAURENCE PONTREMOLI
SEAN P. COTTER
CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI
DENNIS HENNIGAN
DONNA ANN WOLFSON
ELISE LARKIN AYERS

December

LARRY DUGAN
STEVEN GRILLO
AARON STEVEN GRAY
JAMES S. CARPENTER VI
KEVIN HOLLAND
ROBERT M. BLOMSTROM
MATTHEW ROTA
JOHN (JACK) COADY

Birthdays

November

JOHN GARVEY
SCOTT A. LAMONT
DIXON BERGMAN
KEVIN R. ELDRIDGE
ALICIA D. JACKMAN
JONATHAN BRET LOVEJOY
ROBERT M. BLOMSTROM
HOLLY L. MACKENZIE
CHAD ARTHUR HOLBROOK

December

JOHN (JACK) COADY
LAUREN THIBEAU FLANAGAN
LISA RANDALL
MARC R. PEARLMAN
RYAN SEAN BARTLETT
KEVIN S. JOHNSON
JAMES S. CARPENTER VI



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.



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 YEAR AGO MY BROTHER DIED

The ground lays bare, the snow descends, could it be that life now ends? Oh, no my friend, for nature knows that winter snows hold the promise of spring.

-N. Haley

My brother, Bob, died on January 24 last year. At times, I wish I could just forget his death because of the pain I experience; and yet I know how important it is to feel all of my emotions. The memory of Bob, who he was and our relationship, is an important part of my life. I cannot change the fact that he is dead, but I can keep the memory of him close to me now and in the years to come. Acknowledging this has helped me through the stages of grieving, especially in the past few weeks as the anniversary of his death is approaching. So I dedicate this in memory of Bob, a very special brother.

In reviewing the literature of grief and loss, I was surprised to find how little has been written about the loss of a sibling. The death of a brother or sister is a major loss as this relationship is most often the longest and closest relationship in our lives.

When a young child suffers the loss of a sister or brother, it is often confusing and mysterious. Sometimes the child experiences feelings of guilt that he caused the death. Sibling rivalry is a recognized fact of the human existence, and it is not uncommon for the child to wish for the death of a sister or brother, or at least their permanent departure from the family. In cases of accidental death, the child might feel that they should have died instead. The parents, often feeling consumed with their own grief, might be unaware of these fears or concerns. It is important to explore all of the positive and negative feelings a child might have toward the deceased sibling.

For an adult, death of a sibling can have an emotional impact that takes a variety of forms. In many family situations today, adult siblings' lives have taken them in different directions, and the early childhood connections may fade. In other families, the ties have remained close. There is, however, a profound feeling of sadness when an adult brother or sister dies, as if one has lost a part of himself. The loss encompasses a connection to the past, of common experiences, of parents and childhood memories. As adults, siblings often find how different their interests and personalities may be. Regardless of these differences, the connecting bonds of parents and childhood experiences remain. Loss of a brother or sister also is an inescapable reminder of one's own vulnerability and of the fragile gift of one's own life. If parents are alive at the time one loses an adult sibling, grief may be diverted to concern for the parents' well-being. This might delay the grieving process and its healing effect.

In looking back over the past year, I recognize the stages of grieving I have experienced as those defined in the study of loss. The time is described, in general, as one of emotional turmoil and confusion. I recall days I would feel particularly good and there would be a sudden onset of intense sadness, tears and other overwhelming feelings, which seemed to come out of the blue. As the intensity subsides, depression follows as the realization sets in that death is final and irreversible. Acceptance eventually comes, and the pain begins to diminish.

I have experienced so many feelings and have found myself querying the way I feel, looking for answers, as I don't always understand why I feel the way I do. Having experienced this deep personal loss, I also have been acutely aware of the importance of other parts of my life, my family, my work, all of which, in some unexplainable way have provided a sense of balance and restoration of order.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

Bob was a bright, funny and loving brother. I will always miss him. In closing, I share the words of Helen Keller that have been of special importance to me at this time.

“What we have once enjoyed we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.”

**Bud Coglianese
Burr Ridge, IL**

Hope

Last month the first holiday catalog was deposited in my mailbox, “So early,” I thought, with tired resignation and more than a little resentment. The catalog unmistakably heralded the approach of the season of good cheer, and somehow I would have to get through it. It meant weeks of feeling like a despondent bystander as the world cloaked itself with bright trappings of love, joy, and goodwill toward men.

I was a bereaved parent, and I would spend yet another holiday caught up in the anguish of *remembering...*

With the catalog indifferently grasped in my hand I sat down in the kitchen, my heart heavy. My thoughts drifted back to last year’s holiday, and I again saw my husband’s melancholy face as he plaintively asked if we could put up just a *small* tree. I agreed only because it seemed important to him. It would be the first time since the death of our daughter that holiday decorations would grace our home. I had felt no joy, no solace when I looked at that tiny, glowing tree, but it was a huge relief not to feel the overwhelming pain I expected.

It had been the fourth holiday season without Tracey.

I sat in the kitchen, slowly turning the catalog’s pages. I was so lost in thought I scarcely saw what was in front of me. Last year the mailman had delivered greeting cards and best-wishes-for-the-season cards, as always. I had opened some with appreciation; others, the ones I knew would ignore our heartache, I tore open almost savagely. I had mailed my own greeting cards to many of these same people, and as had become my custom, each card was sent in memory of our daughter. It was the only way to manage the pain of a task I once loved.

I found myself absently leafing through the last of the pages. Though absorbed in my reminiscence I had carefully avoided looking at the many pages of toy offerings, I knew I would pay a painful emotional price if I lingered there. Children’s clothing had to be desperately rushed by as well (though my well-trained eye caught the words “girl’s size fourteen” and stopped despite all I could do...*oh, Tracey*).

Housewares were fairly safe though uninteresting, and these last pages depicted a wide variety of novelty items. A pair of butterfly earrings captured my attention, turning my thoughts immediately to one of my Compassionate Friends, a truly loving friend – who adored butterflies.

“I could order these as a gift for her,” I thought, and the idea startled me. With the notable exception of the painful purchase of a toy last year for my beloved daughter, I had not sought out a gift for anyone since her death. As the thought took root and began to flourish I felt my heart, so long frozen with grief, begin to warm.

Cautiously I pondered these emerging feelings. Was I ready for this? I was astonished to feel the ice encasing my heart begin to melt; emboldened by the warm feelings of caring spreading through me I looked more closely at the remaining pages of the catalog.

There! Another small item I was sure a second dear TCF friend would like. I found myself actually enjoying filling out the order form for both items.

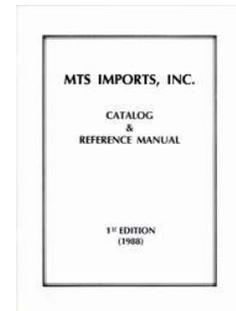
Enjoying???? Did I really use that Word? Had the pain and uncompromising grief, always intensified at holiday time, abated somewhat? Was I truly feeling lighter, more able to cope? Did this mean, *could* it mean that I might one day step back into the world when it donned its festive mantle?

I knew as I sat there I would always deeply love and ferociously miss my child...and I knew that grief would forever be a part of my life. Understanding that, might it still be possible to allow a small amount of holiday spirit to trickle into my life this year?

I think just for today I’ll hold on to that possibility, because today it seems I can imagine a less painful tomorrow. Today my heart contains a bit of warmth.

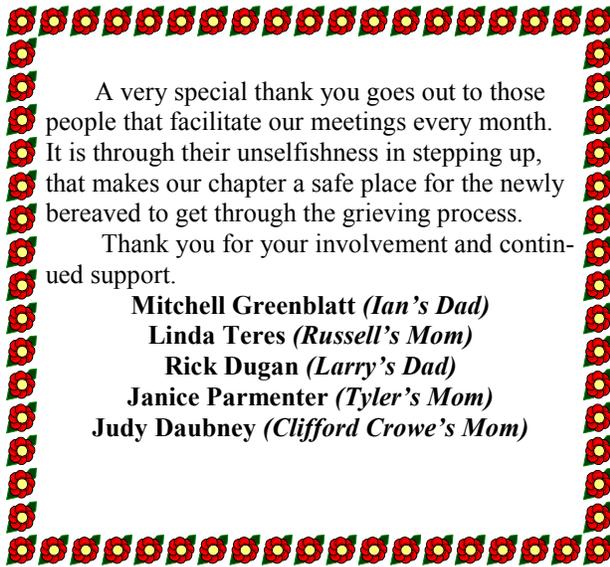
It feels good.

**Sally Migliaccio
TCF, Babylon, NY
In Memory of my daughter Tracey**





THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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)**

10 Things you can do to help make this holiday season more bearable for someone you know who is learning to live with the death of a child

1. Mention the child by name. Your friend is already sad...nothing you can do will make them sadder... unless they think you have completely forgotten the child who has died.
2. Extend an invitation. And another. And then another. Sooner or later the person will say yes - when they are ready and able. Don't abandon them. They may already feel abandoned and alone.
3. Realize that your friend may not really know what they want to do for the holidays. Or it may change hour to hour. Be flexible and patient. Accompany your friend as best you can. Let them take the lead. Don't force them to do anything. Don't make them feel guilty.
4. Offer to bring your friend to a holiday service, possibly one in remembrance of children who have died, such as a Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting service. Again, be flexible. He/she may change their mind again and again.
5. When you send a holiday card. Write a note. Mention their child by name. Share a favorite memory or story of the child who has died.

6. Search through your photos and videotapes. Find a picture and/or video of the child and mail it - or better yet deliver it in person. Make certain that photos or videos are clearly labeled so the recipient has time to prepare for what could certainly be an emotional experience.

7. Remember – you don't know how the person feels. But you can ask – “*What is it like to be you today?*” And then make sure you set aside time to LISTEN!

8. Expect crying. It's okay and healthy. You can cry, too. Crying helps people heal. Crying together helps people heal faster.

9. Don't work too hard on trying to “cheer your friend up.” It's okay to be sad. Do spend time with him/her. Let them talk. You listen. Silence is okay, too.

10. Don't forget to bring over a home-cooked meal and holiday cookies. Love comes in many forms.

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

At the Holidays, We Hope...

For those of you for whom this is your first holiday with the empty chair at the Thanksgiving table, we know that it is a particularly difficult day for you, and all of us who have been through that first major holiday understand your sadness and will keep you close in our hearts during this holiday season.

For those of you who have been through the first one and are in what I feel still the early years of this grief journey, we know how exhausting it is to try to put on a mask in order to make others feel comfortable. Here is hoping that you will be able to feel however you may feel today, and that your family and friends will be understanding and compassionate and allow you to have those emotions, whatever they may be.

For those of us further down the road of our grief journey, we know that no matter the years that have passed since our child, grandchild, sibling or other precious one has been gone, that though the years may soften our grief, we still ache for their presence and miss them with all our being.

And, above all, I truly hope that family and friends will speak their names and thereby giving you the gift of allowing you to remember - with them - the one you miss so much. Though gone from this earth, they are loved and present in our life every day and will forever be.

***Cathy Seehuetter
TCF, St. Paul, MN***



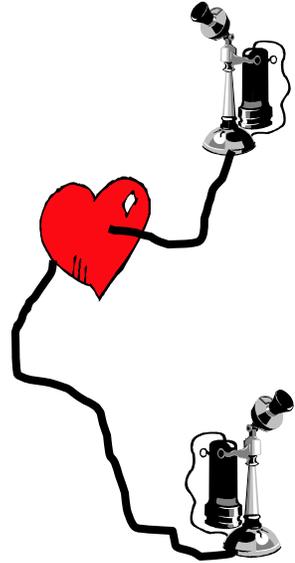
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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
- parmenter.org - children's bereavement
- griefwatch.com
- GriefNet.org
- healingafterloss.org
- Jeff's Place-www.jeffsplacemetrowest.org.
- opentohope.com
- pomc.com - families of murder victims
- save.org
- survivorsofsuicide.com
- Taps.org - military death



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



A Vision Of The Future

It was Christmas Morning, when all alone, I arrived at the Cemetery around 9:30 A.M.

The morning was mild and overcast gray with a slight mist creating a discomfort to my arms and shoulders. On this wondrous day, I went to the gravesite to visit with Loral and Macy, my beautiful granddaughters, who died in a tragic car/train crash 18 months and one week earlier.

This was the second Christmas that I have had to endure without the presence of their bright, shiny, and smiling faces. This is the second Christmas that I had to endure this great celebration without the sound of their joyous laughter so in tune with their brothers, sisters, and cousins.

This morning, while alone at the gravesite, as usual I talked with the girls, I prayed over them. I told them of all the gifts that their cousins, brothers, and sisters had received for Christmas. I cried that I never lose memory of their facial expressions of smiles and tears, and the sounds of their happy and sad voices.

There is a bench nearby and I sat down and enjoyed the silence and peacefulness of the cemetery. The gray weather seemed more tolerable now that I was able to release some inner feelings with my visit.



As I sat on the bench, enjoying the serenity of the cemetery, an old car drove up and stopped across the way.

From this car, slowly emerged an elderly man from the passenger's side. His hair was white and he was tall and gaunt from his elderly stage of life. The driver, an elderly lady, got out of the car and carefully made her way around to assist the old man who, with a walking cane, had slowly and carefully proceeded to walk toward a destination. The fragile old lady held his right hand to help keep him balanced and possibly to keep her own self upright. Slowly and carefully, they walked maybe forty feet where they stopped and stood side by side. There they looked down at a grave marker. After a minute or so, the old man very weakly and carefully bent over and touched the headstone and then slowly rose to the erect position and lifted his hand to wipe the tears from his eyes as he gazed far across the cemetery. The lady, also wiping tears, turned from the marker and slowly made her way back to the car as the old man stayed still and stood over the grave.



She entered the car with a strained and unmistakable form of grief showing on her face.

The old man, in the manner of a soldier, stood erect, completely still, not moving his head or any other part of his body as he gazed across the cemetery, stood several minutes and then he bent over and touched the marker again. Somehow it was so easy for me to visualize and feel his loving respect for the person beneath the headstone. Again the man raised and stood erect and gazed across the cemetery for several more minutes. I sensed that he saw nothing but the events of the past, and that he was in a trance with a mind full of memories of a lost child of long, long, ago.



Never before in my life could I have felt this sort of understanding and compassion burning from within me, in observation of a stranger in grief.

The old man touched the headstone one more time and then turned and carefully made his way back to the car where the lady helped him get back in.

Then they just drove off....probably to finish their Christmas Day routine of many long years of grief, possibly for the loss of their child.

What I saw this morning was only my observation and distinct feelings that they were grieving for a lost child. Here were people in their eighties or maybe early nineties that withstood the grief of a lifetime, who still grieve, who still have memories, and who still await that great reunion. They are closer to that date than most of us, and to that, I felt envy.

This simple observation and realization on this Christmas morning is a signal or sign to me softly confirming that the journey of grief in the loss of a child, will always be with us all of the way to our road's end.

Even though it is a rough road, it is our road. We cannot change that. It is a road for "People Like Us" who have lost children.

Our road will go into the books and be a part of our legacy. Our descendants will know of our road, but hopefully, will never have to understand or endure that road.

I dearly miss Loral and Macy.....and always will.

**PawPaw
Donald Moyers
TCF Galveston County, TX
In Memory of Loral and Macy**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



Other Area TCF Chapters

- MA/CT Border Towns Chapter (Dudley, Webster areas)
Chapter Leaders: Paul & Anne Mathieu
(508) 248-7144.....ampm1259@charter.net
- South Shore Chapter (Hingham, Weymouth areas)
Martha Berman
(781) 337-8649.....mmartha1@comcast.net
- Worcester Chapter
Chapter Co-Leaders: Lisa Holbrook
(774) 482-6066.....sixholes@charter.net
Mary Vautier....
(508) 393-7348....mjvautier@msn.com
- Central Middlesex Chapter (Needham, Concord)
Chapter Leader: Carol Gray-Cole
(781) 444-1091.....cgc603@aol.com

When Will The Pain End?

When I look back over my grief journey, I marvel at how far I have come and yet at how poignant and permanent the loss of my son will always be for me. How can this dichotomy exist within one person's mind?

The horror of the news of my son's death, the shock that slammed my mind into numbness, the unremembered conversations, the platitudes that followed the memorial service and the first two months of living in a complete fog of disbelief are very vivid in my mind. The horror is too real to forget. The next six months of melancholy, miserable mourning are forever locked in my mind. The pure physical pain, the piercing jolts when I momentarily thought of something beyond my child's death and was mercilessly slammed back into the finality of death's amputation of my son's smile, laughter and physical presence on this earth are etched for eternity in my soul. My mind simply couldn't accept that Todd was gone from this plane. The first anniversary of his death was a horrifying day worsened by a very bleak and foreshadowing conversation with my son's widow. Life would be much different for my husband and me from this point forward. There were no bridges to the past. She made that clear. I was inconsolable from the impact of her wicked words.

But I made it through the first and second years with help from my Compassionate Friends Chapter. I could cry and scream about the injustice of my loss and all that followed, and each parent understood.

Eventually I had told my story enough times to enough people that I subconsciously accepted Todd's death and all the changes in my life that followed.

At some point in my second year of grief I began reaching out to others. Helping others, seeing their pain, hearing their tearful words, had become cathartic for me. The more I helped, the more I was helped.

Yes, my son is still with me in my heart and in my memories. The movies of his life play in my mind almost daily. I have made new friends. I have walked away from old acquaintances. I have learned to separate the meaningful from the meaningless. And I have learned that I will always feel the pain of my son's death, yet I must always move forward into hope. Each day brings more hope as I accomplish another piece of my lifelong grief work.

So the dichotomy exists within me. In my heart, mind and soul my child will live forever. The memories of the full measure of each day of his life are there to give me peace and solace. Yet, the brutal pain of my son's death is there, too. Unlike any other love in life, a parent's love is unconditional and transcends all. There is a peace in knowing that. The pain doesn't end. It simply reshapes itself into a quiet, soft ache that gives us a gentle, often tearful, reminder that our child will always be with us. And perhaps that is as it should be.

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

Grief and Anger

In our chapter meeting this month we will be discussing anger in our grief. Many experience anger after their child or loved one dies. A description of anger is "A feeling of rage, an emotional agitation to what is viewed as unfair, unjust and sometimes even shameful."

When we are angry we need a target. Sometimes the target may be God. (He understands.) Some may even feel anger at their child or loved one, thinking, "How could he/she leave me like this? Why? Doesn't he/she know I'm hurting and in pain?" Some people are angry at the doctors, some at the funeral directors, some even feel anger toward themselves, thinking they could have done something to prevent the death.

We may even be angry at our spouse. He/she may not grieve the same way and we may misunderstand their feelings that are just as deep as our own. Maybe our clergyman is not as compassionate as we believe they should be, or maybe they were not available to us at all.



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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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We are angry because we feel abandoned and that life is unfair. We also feel very alone and no longer in control of our emotions. We may also think nothing will ever be the same, and it won't. But as time goes on, it does get somewhat easier as you work through your grief.

We all try at times to not let this anger show to others, but suppressing it can only lead to sickness and withdrawal. Masking anger will often hurt the ones around you and may even drive them away from you. You may even risk losing your closest support system.

Dealing with your anger and admitting it and also seeking help from others who have experienced this feeling is always the healthy thing to do. Personally, talking has been the best help for me. Attending a Compassionate Friends meeting and talking to others who have "been there" has helped many.

Jackie Wesley
TCF, East Central Indiana,
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The New Language of Grief

There are many different schemes and ways to look at the grief process. Some talk stages while others outline steps to be taken or tasks to be completed. I like to think of grief as a journey. However grief looks to you, it is important to understand that grief is not a sign of weakness nor a lack of faith. Grief is the price we pay for love.

Much has been written about grief and has added to our knowledge. Some has added to our confusion! Many still confuse the work of Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross with that of other professionals such as Colin Murray Parkes, Erich Lindemann, and William Worden. Kübler-Ross wrote of patients coping with dying while Parkes, Lindemann, Worden and others wrote of the grieving process which occurs following the death of a loved one. The difference between the two bodies of knowledge is significant, although many do not realize the "Stages of Adaptation" that Kübler-Ross identified do not necessarily apply to the experiences of the bereaved.

The work of Worden, Lindemann, Parkes and others clearly distinguished between adaptation to impending change and the responses experienced following a death. Yet today we still find the bereaved trying to fit their grief into a scheme that makes little sense to them. It is time we find a new language, a language that clearly defines the grief experience as we know it and one that gives us hope instead of tasks to complete or stages upon which to play.

When we first become aware of our loss, we may become numb. The literature refers to this as shock. Shock is a physiological phenomenon which protects us from further pain. When our circuits become overloaded, we cannot accept further information. Our numbness protects us from the reality of death. Our responses become mechanical. Decisions are made, actions are taken and events pass, all without our full participation. Shock is what helps us get through the necessary details of death. Our numbness can last anywhere from a few moments to several months.

When we are faced with difficult steps on our journey, we sometimes wish to postpone our progress. We want to sidestep the pain. Perhaps we are not yet ready to deal with reality or perhaps we feel afraid, unsupported, unskilled or unprepared to face the unfolding of a new life. "I won't deal with it!" "I can't cope with it!" "I don't want to face it." Words that each of us has echoed again and again.

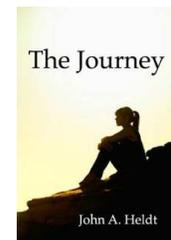
Instead of facing our grief, we postpone reality for a little while. It is easier to pretend that our child is away at camp instead of facing the bitter reality of death. And yet I know what it is that I am pretending. How could I ever forget?

Perhaps we could replace the word *denial* with the word *postponement*. It accurately describes what we do with a reality we are not quite ready to experience. We simply postpone that part of our journey until we feel ready to tackle the new reality.

Denial is not a lack of coping, but rather an accurate and creative way of *postponing*, until we feel more secure, more skilled, more supported. It takes a lot of energy to postpone reality for very long and so, eventually, most of us run out of energy to keep things in fantasy land. Slowly we move toward painful reality and begin the healing process of coping. When we feel ready, we will move from postponement to acknowledgment and then to action, in our own time.

Our journey toward awareness and acknowledgment hurts. Every part of us hurts. There's a tightness in the throat, a searing pain in the chest, a heaviness in the heart. It hurts to move. It hurts to breathe. It hurts just to *be*! Sometimes the pain is so intense we may develop physical symptoms. Sleep irregularities, changes in appetite and gastrointestinal disturbances are common. Heartache, restlessness, muscle tension and sighing may occur.

Anger and guilt are common emotions. You may feel angry with God, your spouse, your children or with others, either involved or totally separate from the death. You may be angry with yourself. You may want to withdraw and be left alone. Anger and guilt may be revisited many times.





THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Depression and feelings of emptiness or hollowness may temporarily overcome you. You may become preoccupied with images of your child. You may “see” or sense your child’s presence. You may begin to wonder if you are going crazy.

As long as we are changing the language, I’d like to replace acceptance with acknowledgment. Acceptance, to me, means agree with, and I will never agree with what has happened! But I can work towards acknowledgment of what has happened. As I begin to feel safer, more supported, more knowledgeable about the grief process and feel more skilled at grieving, I can allow whatever I have cast into postponement to resurface and begin then to resolve my grief.

I want to change one more word in the language of grief. Let’s get rid of the word *recovery* and use *healing* instead. *Recovery* is a medical model word, designed to describe broken bones, not hearts. We recover from a broken arm or the chicken pox. We don’t get over the death of someone we love. We get through it, one moment, one hour, one day, one hurt at a time. *Healing* is a hopeful word.

Healing doesn’t happen all at once, nor does a language get changed quickly. Healing is a matter of choice. It begins to occur when we learn to reinvest our energies, emotions and love rather than replace them. We will always love our children and we will continue to have a relationship with them for the rest of our lives. We do not stop loving someone just because they die!

You know you’re making progress when you fully understand that putting your child’s things away does not mean you are forgetting him. You do not have to say goodbye. We no longer save for a child’s college education, but perhaps we contribute to a scholarship in her name or create a living memorial to the love we shared. Our child died, but the love we share between us can never be destroyed.

The words we speak dictate our journey. Yet it seems more hopeful to speak of *postponement* instead of *denial*, *acknowledgment* instead of *acceptance* and *healing* instead of *recovery*.

We are diminished by grief, replenished by love, held by hope. I want a language that reflects that hope, a language that reminds me of joy remembered, of love given and received, of life lived, not lost. May love be what you remember the most.

Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CGC, CHT
Bereaved Parent and TCF Member Since
1976

Whispers from the Library

I recently had an opportunity to make a list of all the books in our library. In my little list-making world, it seemed like the logical thing to do at the time. When somebody gives you a collection of things to watch over, you make a list and see what you have.

And I found out what I set out to discover. We have over 125 books and pamphlets in our library, including over 100 titles. However, I also discovered much more than mere numbers.

One would expect a library such as ours to have books on dealing with grief. And we do. Lots of them. We have books by experts, by self-help authors, activists, and grieving parents. We also have very specialized books for those grieving a loss of a child through AIDS, suicide, or miscarriage.

In addition, we have novels, poetry, affirmations and devotions. Some of the books are religious, others could be called “new age.” They are not all for everybody, but they are very much like the members of TCF – a diverse group of individuals bound together by grief.

Please stop by our library before and after any meeting.

To check out a book, write your name, phone number and date on the card found in the back of the book.

Place the card in the file box. When you return a book, cross out your name, put the card back in the book and place the book on the table.

You may keep a book as long as you need. We have no late fees. However, we do ask that you show consideration for others and not keep a book too long. If you realize that a book is not for you and you set it aside, please remember to return it the next meeting. It may help someone else.

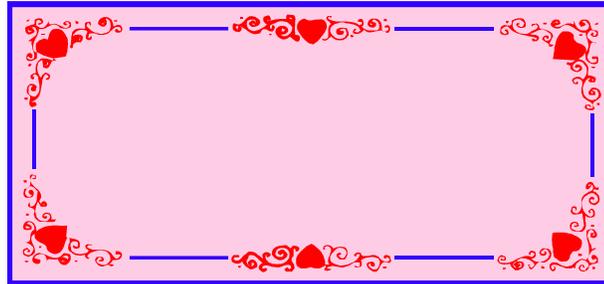


Lauren Nagel, Chapter Librarian
TCF, Sugar Land, SW Houston, TX



Have the very best Merry Christmas
and Happy Chanukah you can
possibly have.

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