



## 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 2017**



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**Vol. 22 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 21st & December 10th (Note Change)***

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 (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 28th & December 26th***

### 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. ©2017**

### *Weather Cancellation*

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

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



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



## Chapter Information

### Co-leaders

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

### Secretary

\* Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

### Treasurer

\* Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

### Webmaster

\* Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

### Librarian

Ed Motuzas 508/473/4239

### Newsletter

Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

### Senior Advisors

\* Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

### Steering Committee \*

Judy Daubney 508/529-6942  
 Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715  
 Linda Teres 508/366-2085  
 Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111  
 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, support our outreach program, contribute to the national chapter and meet other chapter expenses.

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

### Love Gifts

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Parmenter in loving memory of their son **Tyler Ray Parmenter** on his 45th birthday this past September. "We think of you always and you are forever in our hearts. Love Mum and Dad."

Mrs. Phyllis Curran in loving memory of her daughter **Monica Michelle Curran**.

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

Mrs. Joan Hennigan in loving memory of her son **Dennis M. Hennigan** on his birthday October 9th and his anniversary November 23rd. Remembering my son, "Always missed and forever loved."

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Marshall in loving memory of their son **Steven "Chris" Marshall**, on the anniversary of his birth September 3rd.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Eldredge in loving memory of their son **Kevin R. Eldredge** on his birthday November 14th. "Miss you and love you so much."

Alice Horigan in loving memory of her daughter **Donna M. McHugh** on her birthday October 16th.





# 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  
LAURENCE PONTREMOLI  
SEAN P. COTTER  
CYNTHIA ZOTTOLI  
LILY ANN HALEY  
DENNIS HENNIGAN  
RACHEL O'DETTE

### *December*

LARRY DUGAN  
STEVEN GRILLO  
AARON STEVEN GRAY  
JAMES S. CARPENTER VI  
TIMOTHY M. ANDERSON  
KEVIN HOLLAND  
HEIDI ANN RICHER  
DONALD R. NEGROTTI  
ROBERT M. BLOMSTROM  
ALISSA ZALNERATIAS

## *Birthdays*

### *November*

JOHN GARVEY  
DIXON BERGMAN  
KEVIN R. ELDRIDGE  
ALICIA D. JACKMAN  
JONATHAN BRET LOVEJOY  
ROBERT M. BLOMSTROM  
MATTHEW B. O'LEARY  
DANIEL L. PHIPPS  
CHAD ARTHUR HOLBROOK

### *December*

LISA RANDALL  
MARC R. PEARLMAN  
EVIN S. JOHNSON  
JAMES S. CARPENTER VI  
EVAN GEORGE REA





# 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.

## One

It was only *one* second, *one* thought, *one* decision, *one* action in a lifetime of seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions. It was so fast, so permanent, so irreversible, so hopeless. This moment, this thought, this decision, this action do not define him, do not honor him, do not immortalize him. It is the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that define him, that honor him, that immortalize him.

I remember my brother in all of the other seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that preceded this *one*. I remember him coming home from the hospital, lip synching in the basement, falling out of the tree, biking across campus, coming home from school, from boot camp, from war... I remember him hiking, and skiing, and running, and laughing, and crying. I remember how safe I always felt when he was around. I knew he would take care, protect, defend.

I don't remember exactly when my brother became an amazing human being, I just looked at him one day and knew he was. I knew that nothing would make him change his mind about me. He was without judgment, without prejudice, without preconception. I knew my brother because we talked and he listened. I respected my brother most for his humanity, for being so sensitive, so vulnerable, so honest. I loved my brother for sharing the load when it was too hard for someone he loved to carry alone. I knew my brother because he left so much of him in me. I trusted and respected my brother's decisions in the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, I have to trust and respect this *one* decision the same. I honor my brother by honoring myself. I do not dwell in that *one* moment, instead I celebrate and cherish all of the others. In that *one* second, *one* thought, *one* decision, *one* action, I found the strength he had given me and I will not let him down. I will not let that *one* moment be the only *one*.

## The Surviving Children

Being a parent is never easy. When one's child dies, it is even more difficult being parents to the children who survive. In those first days and weeks, shock may cause us to make decisions (or allow others to make them) that we will later regret. We may wish later that we had included the children more, that we had not permitted ourselves to be isolated from them, that we had explained things differently. Most of us never expect to face this situation, so we have never thought through in advance what the best course would be.

At some point in our grief, we do become more sensitive to these "forgotten grievers" who have lost a brother or sister. They are having struggles of their own. The first thing to remember is that everything going on with our other children is not caused by the death. They are still, through it all, growing up, going through the various developmental stages that have always concerned parents. Any special problems they had before will not have magically disappeared. Just as we proclaim repeatedly that there is no one way for a parent to grieve, so each child has his own style and timetable for everything, and we cannot control these. We can only try to understand and help when we can. We cannot make it "go away" any more than we can make any of the other harsh realities of life go away.

The very foundations of life have been shaken. The home, so sheltering and safe, has been invaded by forces our surviving children do not understand and parents, who seemed all-powerful and all-wise, may have been reduced to quivering, uncertain robots. Probably for the first time, death, whatever that is, has claimed someone who is not old. Worse, if there has been the usual quota of sibling rivalry and squabbling, the child may be afraid that he has caused the death by being "bad," or by wishing there were no such bothersome person to have to share with or "take a back seat to."

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## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Just as every child is different, every relationship is different. Feelings toward an older brother or sister who was protector, teacher, idol, and those toward a younger one who may have been a sometime responsibility, hanger-on, biggest fan, are not the same. They may have been best friends or rivals who didn't get along very well. Their responses to the death will be as varied as our own.

A child's place in the family system is changed. The second oldest finds himself suddenly the big brother. The buffer between the others may be gone. Most difficult of all, a child may have become an "only child." Any child younger than the one who died has to go through the scary years of being the same age. Similar symptoms and situations are so frightening. Brothers and sisters often do look and behave very much alike, and these resemblances can be a source of discomfort or of pride. There may be efforts to exaggerate these, to replace the missing child, to make things the way they used to be.

What can we as parents do to help? Most of all, our children need reassurance and honesty. They need to know they are loved and that the family and the home will continue. They need all the facts they can understand. Part of this honesty requires that they know of your grief. By your actions, you can teach them it is okay to cry (even fathers!), it is okay to admit you are angry at "life" for being this way, that you too are confused about "why". Maintaining a "stiff upper lip" in front of the children only encourages them to suppress their feelings.

Try to be available when they want to talk, but be prepared for the possibility that they may not want to talk with you about their feelings. Many children hold back because they are afraid they might make you cry. You can try explaining that you are not worried about that, but they may still prefer to talk to someone else. They may be ashamed of some common reactions such as feelings of anger, guilt, jealousy, even relief. Perhaps you can help them find someone they can talk to comfortably. They may have already found such a person without you realizing it.

Be honest in the way you remember the child who has died. It is tempting to reminisce about only the good and wonderful qualities, but was this really a saint? Surely not. Recall, and talk about, the not-so good and wonderful things too. Be sure you are remembering a real child, for everyone's sake. A saint is hard to live up to. Talking with other parents at a meeting of The Compassionate Friends can give you practical suggestions about things that have worked for other families. You will hear ideas you may not have thought of. Some will have received help from caring professionals and you may decide to consult someone too.

When you recognize your family in what others are saying, you may decide that you and your children are really doing pretty well hurting and healing together and that it just takes longer than you thought it would.

*By Ronnie Peterson*

### *Why It's Important to Talk About Your Children Who Are No Longer Here*

Have you ever noticed how much people clam up and will not mention a child's name when child loss has taken place? To bereaved parents, this is one of the biggest hurts of all. What we need, what we're wanting so desperately, is to know that our child has not been forgotten! Hearing our child's name spoken is the sweetest name we can ever hear! I am a bereaved mom, and I know that for me to hear the names of my sons who are no longer here with me is both a comfort and support.

Samuel was born still and during that time twenty-five years ago, sadly parents were not encouraged to talk about their deceased children. That was especially true for parents of early loss such as miscarriage, stillbirths, and ectopic pregnancies. Everything was "hush-hush" and we were often made to feel "odd" or a bit "crazy" to want to name our child, much less talk about our child.

I wrote in great depth about this in my first book on child loss, "Silent Grief." I cannot tell you how thankful I am that things have gradually changed for the better over the years! Today, it is not unusual at all for miscarried babies to be named, and it is certainly encouraged for all stillborn babies to be named, held, have pictures taken, and to have some kind of special memorial service. Oh, how healing those things are! And, how special to be able to hear the name of your baby being spoken many years later by those who remember! ***Just hearing someone speak of my baby Samuel is music to my broken heart!***

In May of 2015 my son Michael (Mike) died unexpectedly of a massive heart attack. There are no words that can describe the depth of grief that I feel as Mike's mom. Nor are there words to describe what his siblings and his wife and three children are feeling. Mike's friends are grieving, and they have expressed how much they, too, miss him!

**Part of my daily strength comes from hearing the name "Mike" spoken to me.** Yes, of course I cry at the mention of his name.





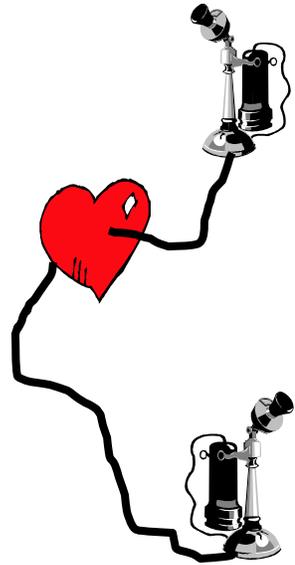
# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



## 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)881-2111  
Sandra Richiazzi.....**Bryan**, age 17, Automobile Accident,.....(508)877-8106  
Sarah Commerford....**Timothy**, age 21, Homicide.....(508)429-9230



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

## Support Resources

### TCF Online Chat Groups:

[WWW.compassionatefriends.org/resources/online\\_Support.aspx](http://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](http://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](http://agast.org) - for grandparents
- [alivealone.org](http://alivealone.org)
- [aliveinmemory.org](http://aliveinmemory.org)
- [angelmoms.com](http://angelmoms.com)
- [babysteps.com](http://babysteps.com)
- [bereavedparentsusa.org](http://bereavedparentsusa.org)
- [beyondindigo.com](http://beyondindigo.com)
- [childloss.com](http://childloss.com)
- [goodgriefresources.com](http://goodgriefresources.com)
- [parmenter.org](http://parmenter.org) - children's bereavement
- [griefhealingblog.com](http://griefhealingblog.com)
- [griefwatch.com](http://griefwatch.com)
- [GriefNet.org](http://GriefNet.org)
- [healingafterloss.org](http://healingafterloss.org)
- [Jeff's Place-www.jeffsplacemetrowest.org](http://Jeff's Place-www.jeffsplacemetrowest.org).
- [opentohope.com](http://opentohope.com)
- [pomc.com](http://pomc.com) - families of murder victims
- [save.org](http://save.org)
- [survivorsofsuicide.com](http://survivorsofsuicide.com)
- [Taps.org](http://Taps.org) - military death
- [webhealing.com](http://webhealing.com)
- [Griefshare.org](http://Griefshare.org)



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Over the years, I got to know Robin's likes, dislikes, and all of her friends, *and she had a lot of friends!* I attended and participated in all of Robin's activities, supporting her in her many endeavors – including gymnastics (her favorite). I was there when she had migraine headaches, running her to the doctor when her Mother couldn't, encouraging her, supporting her, all the things Dads do for their kids. I want to tell you in no uncertain terms, being a stepparent is so much harder. You get the responsibility and, often times it seems, none of the respect. "Mom said I could so I don't have to listen to you" or "You can't tell me what to do, you are not my dad" and so forth. I tolerated and dealt with her emotional outbursts when she became incensed at anything (sometimes it seemed everything) during the teen years. All *Dads* know how trying those times can be!

Now I am a bereaved stepparent...the one in a kind of "no man's land." I am not biologically connected to Robin; I sometimes feel like an outsider around people who were *once* a family, Mother, Father, Son, and Daughter. Many of our friends have worried about Cindy and Chris. They often ask me "How is Cindy doing?" or "Is Chris OK?" Although I knew and lived with Robin for 10 years, very few ask, "How are *you* doing?" I am only the *stepparent*. The idea that this tragedy cannot be as devastating to me as it is to Robin's "real family" is incomprehensible.



One definition for the word father is "father figure: one often of particular power or influence who serves as an emotional substitute for a father." This is what I was for Robin. She loved to push my buttons – but that was part of our relationship, as frustrating as it could be. Robin is the only daughter I will ever have. I was every bit a *father* to her. I love her and I miss her.

We, the stepparents of children who have died, grieve for our children too. *Only* society puts the "Step" in the name. *Parent* is still the biggest part of who we are. We hurt because they were our children too - often without the support and understanding that is demonstrated towards the biologically connected parents. These beautiful children with whom we developed emotional bonds are now gone out of our lives; and we, too, endure the same feelings of loss and sadness.

**Tony Cinocco**  
*In memory of Robin Ann Craney*  
*TCF, Denver, CO*

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)**

## Chapter News

Just a heads up, our chapter is planning a Candle Light Ceremony and a social event on December 10th. In place of our regular meeting on the third Tuesday of the month. The committee selected "The Restaurant 45" in Medway. We will have a choice of three meals (1) Baked Haddock, (2) Steak Tips or (3) Chicken Parmesan. The price will be \$32.00 p/p. Menu includes garden salad, meal, coffee and dessert. There will be a cut-off date of November 21st. All checks are to be made out to "TCF Metrowest". Any questions, please call Ed Motuzas at (508) 473-4239. I know it's hard to plan so far ahead but we would love to make this an annual event so please give it some thought. I will be sending out an information sheet to be filled out and sent back to Ed Motuzas, if you are planning to participate in the Worldwide Candle Lighting and Dinner. There may be a limit on attendance so you don't want to be put on a waiting list. Again the cut-off date is November 21st.



# 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.**

Fold & Tape

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

Fold & Tape

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# ***THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST***



## ***HOLIDAY BLUES***

The holidays are fast approaching and this time always makes me a little sad. It doesn't matter how much time has gone by, the holidays seem to make the ache that much more. Thanksgiving was always my son Chris' favorite holiday.

It was all about family, food, and football. As Chris grew more mature and had a fiancé, he really learned what family meant to him. Most holidays he spent with Amy and her family. She had a big Italian family and they were always together on the holidays. He really loved Amy's dad, and her dad was glad he was around. He often told me what a blessing Chris was in a house full of women and how great it was to have another male to talk to. Football wasn't the only sport Chris liked. I would have to say basketball was his favorite, but we both liked to watch baseball. As I am sitting here watching the first game of the World Series, I am reminded of time spent with Chris watching baseball.

Being from New York I was partial to the Yankees and we lived close enough to drive into the city to see the games. Those are the best memories I have, when my sons were younger and they liked to be with their parents and go to baseball and football games. Chris was visiting here and he and Steve went to see the Texans play. He had a great time and came home with pictures mostly of the cheerleaders! It makes me wonder if he saw the game at all. Those are the memories I cherish. Even though the holidays are and will be a little sad without my son and daughter, I will get through them. I have a new family now and hopefully we can make more happy memories. The old memories will never be forgotten.

That first year is definitely the hardest to deal with, and most of the time you feel like you are on auto pilot, just going through the motions. I know how long it took me to feel like it wasn't the end of the world anymore, and to have a little joy back in my life. It was right about that time when the trial and the sentencing hearing were over, and Dawn was finally putting some closure to her brother's death that she was killed in an auto accident. It is very painful to lose one child, as you all know, and then another one is gone. Some of you know of this unspeakable horror, and wonder why. Very shortly after Dawn died my husband Steve got sick. He ended up being diagnosed with lung cancer and died 3 weeks later, just four months after Dawn's death. I found myself not really doing a good job with my grief after losing Dawn and Steve so close together. I eventually did work through it, and now feel I have joy back again.

I remember that first Thanksgiving and being totally alone. I was invited to a friend's home and I did go. It was better than sitting around by myself and crying.

That first Christmas was hard and I wasn't going to decorate, but I thought I would feel better if I did. I am glad I did and the decorations made me a bit brighter. I got a live tree like we always did, and since there were no presents to go under the tree I decided I would put some gifts under the tree. I put framed pictures of my children and husband, and those were my gifts that year. Those were always my gifts, but sometimes it is easy to forget. I went to my son Fred's house in Maine and spent Christmas with him and his wife.

Looking back at that Christmas I realize that was the most calm I had ever felt.

Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that our family is so important until they are not here with us. But that is human nature. It takes a loss like that of a loved one to put things into perspective. I know how much pain and grief all of the newly bereaved have, and it seems worse because the holidays are near. I pray you can all find a balance in your lives and find some kind of peace from God in your lives as well. Your Compassionate Friends are near and always willing to talk you through any crisis you may have. I can't tell you how many times I have had to call one of them and I was hysterical, but by the end of the conversation I was calm. It helps so much to reach out to someone who has walked in your shoes, and we are all here for you. That is why our phone numbers are in the newsletter every month. Please do not be afraid to call any one of us to help you get through a difficult time. This group saved my life and I want to give back to others. Please remember that not only do you help yourself when you reach out to someone else, but you also help the other person.

***Robin Conner  
TCF, Katy, TX***

***In Memory of my children, Christopher Wilson and Dawn Wilson/Shaffer***

## ***HOLIDAY THOUGHTS***

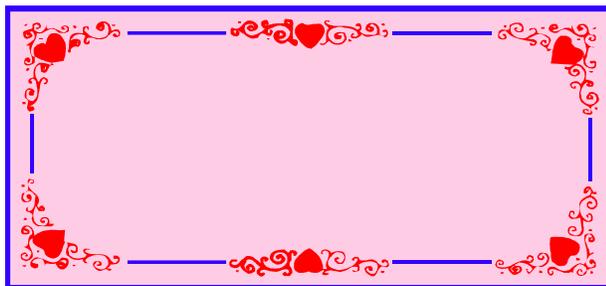
For those who think that Christmas and Chanukah are just nice days to give and get presents, bereaved parents have another message. Mixed with the joy is the knowledge of sadness. With the hope of birth comes the threat of death. We should not try to cover up our sadness in front of people, for we have a lesson to teach them.

But the holidays have a lesson for us, too. Yes, there is death. Yes, there is great bitterness in life. There is darkness. But there is hope. There is birth. There is light.

In a society which works so hard to deny death, perhaps only bereaved parents and a few others can truly understand the depths of these holidays.

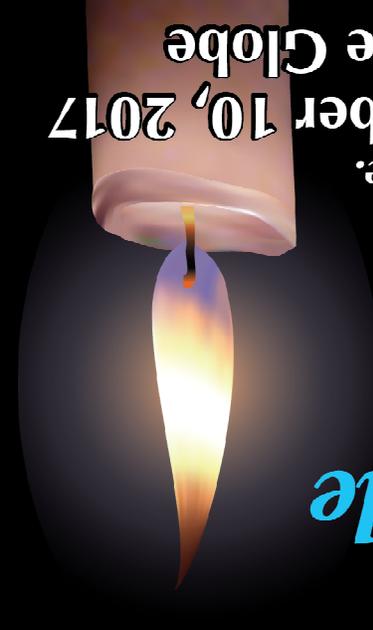
***Dennis Klass  
TCF St. Louis, MO***

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