



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.

September – October 2017



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Vol. 22 Issue 5

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:

September 19th & October 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 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:

September 26th & October 31st

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, 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. Alan Kennedy in loving memory of their daughter **Kaitlyn E. Kennedy** on her birthday July 24th. "Happy 30th Birthday Kait, love Mom and Dad, miss you always."

Mrs. Cheryl A. Cohen in loving memory of her son **Jonathan David Cohen** on his anniversary September 23rd.

Mrs. Tracy Dullea-Juliano in loving memory of her son **Christopher Marc Dullea**. "On our sixth anniversary without him".

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Donaher in loving memory of **Richard "Butch" Motuzas**.

Mr. & Mrs. Neil Dalcero in loving memory of their daughter **Joelle M. Shaver**.

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

Mr. & Mrs. Gary Anderson in loving memory of their son **Timothy Michael Anderson** and their daughter **Kimberly Anne Tanner** on her anniversary August 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, September and October. 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

September

CHAD ARTHUR HOLBROOK
MONICA MICHELLE CURRAN
DAVID HEMINGWAY
DONNA M. McHUGH
SHAYNE M. DESROCHES
GREG BRUNO
ADAM N. YOUNIS
RAYMOND JOHN HOBSON

October

STEPHEN M. NEGROTTI
ANDREW DELPRETE
ROBERT NIELD
DAVID A. SCHNEGG
MARC R. PEARLMAN
DANIEL L. PHIPPS
CLIFFORD CROWE

Birthdays

September

STEVEN "CHRIS" MARSHALL
TYLER PARMENTER
SAMUEL O'DEFE OTOBO
WILLIAM BRUCE-TAGOE
RUSSELL J. TERES
AARON STEVEN GRAY
DANIEL R. ADILETTO
JOSEPH LEE LaBRADOR
BETSY CHICK-GRANT

October

STEPHEN M. NEGROTTI
EVAN M. RODRIGUES
DENNIS M. HENNIGAN
JEFFREY MALCOLM FLYNN
MATTHEW MOSHER
TIMOTHY JAMES THORSEN





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.

COPING WITH THE GRIEF OF OLDER SIBLINGS

Everyone grieves differently. A sibling's response is determined by his or her relationship to the child who died and place in the family.

The most difficult thing for them is that the foundation of the family is shaken. Everything has changed over night and that leaves them feeling insecure.

The death of a sibling is a mid-life crisis for kids. Suddenly they are aware of their own mortality. That may cause them to become over-protective. They may also overreact to illnesses.

They will rarely talk about their feelings because they're afraid it will hurt their parents more. The reality here is that parents are at the bottom of the list of people they will talk to, but that doesn't mean they aren't talking to someone.

School becomes a terrible problem and grades drop because they can't function any better than we do as parents.

At some point in the grief process overachieving can also become a way of dealing with pain.

Conflicts intensify between remaining siblings.

Sometimes there is nothing you can do for your kids but allow them to hurt. At the same time, it is hard for parents to let the grief be the child's problem.

They feel they have to make up for the child who's gone.

Kids will think, "It should have been me. You wouldn't hurt quite as much." You have to develop memories of things that happened after the child died, and you have to develop new traditions, but that takes years.

There is likely to be some distancing for awhile. There is also a fear that if you pull away you'll never be close again, but that usually doesn't happen.

The loss surfaces for young people at every milestone in their lives-significant birthdays, graduation, weddings, parenthood, etc.

The child who is suddenly the only child has envy of other kids siblings. They seem to experience more anger and pain than other bereaved siblings do.

It is difficult for kids when the parents energy is wrapped up in the dead child. Inside they're screaming, "Look at me, I'm still alive."

The reality of death is that there is always remorse about things done or left undone.

Siblings can benefit from this painful experience. They may gain a different perspective on life, value it more highly, and adopt new priorities. They learn things that strengthen them and they tend to be more compassionate and sensitive than other young people.

***Karol Wendt
Milwaukee, WI***

A Part of Me

You were not just my brother, but
You were my friend as well.
You were supposed to be here always
Or till the world came to an end.
I know that we argued and
Seemed to disagree,
But I could always count on you
To be there for me.
You may be gone from this world I see,
But you will always be a part of me.

***Donna Montville
TCF, Gardner, MA***



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



The Clock

In my office is a regulator clock. I bought this clock for my son as a gift for his 16th birthday. I told him that the clock was symbol of a what I had worked to give him.....roots and wings. It was in his room until he was 22 when he married and bought a home of his own. When he was first married the clock had an honored place in his small "starter" home. It was placed in the entry hallway, above a special table that he and his wife had purchased. Eight years later, the decision was made to "step up" to a larger home. He moved his family into a beautiful home with lots of space for everyone. It was in the "right" subdivision. The little clock was placed in a grander entry hall, above the little table. It looked a bit out of place, but my son kept it there.



In 2001 my son and his wife decided to build a home in a very exclusive neighborhood in west Austin. Todd acted as the general contractor, and he loved building the home. Cost overruns were plentiful, something new for him.

One day Todd was painting some trim work around his garage. I went out to spend some time with him and talk. I saw the little regulator clock leaning in a corner of the garage, its wood case scratched, its pendulum hanging loosely, its glass door ajar. "What's up with this?" I asked. He looked at the clock, he looked at me, he looked at his Suburban, his house and around the neighborhood. Tears began filling his eyes. In our telephone conversations, I had learned pieces of the problem, but not the enormous totality of it all. Suddenly, Todd began telling me about the quality of his life. It broke my heart. The house had cost overruns despite the hundreds of hours Todd put into it. He had taken a substantial cut in pay. His wife did not want to return to her career in human resources, but there was no other choice. This had caused many arguments. His team had been laid off; he expected to be laid off in January. He was working with headhunters, but there wasn't much out there for him. He regretted many decisions. He had placidly gone along with the slow program until he had morphed into someone he didn't know anymore. Materialism, more money, more things, the stress of traveling, the corporate games. Oh, he hated the corporate games. He wanted a simple life; he loved building houses. "So, Mom," he told me, "the clock is a reflection of me.....I can't feel my roots and my wings. I have lost touch with myself."

I told him he was wise to see the problem and analyze it. I reminded him of his grandfather's favorite quote....."heat melts butter and it strengthens steel." I told him this adversity would make him stronger, wiser, less susceptible to the vanities of our society and the personal pressures to accept an empty value system.

Adversity would strengthen his roots and wings. We talked for quite a while. We talked about a positive attitude. We knew he would make it work. He had returned to his roots.

Two months later Todd was killed. After his memorial service the family was standing in the driveway; the garage door was open. I looked at the regulator clock. His wife didn't know what was wrong with it. I offered to take it and see if it could be repaired. She shrugged; it didn't matter to her. Later I went inside and noticed the handmade wedding ring quilt I had given them as a wedding gift it was lying in a ball on the game room floor. Then the reality hit me. My poor child. The quilt and the clock were the symbols of a value system that I gave him. Tears filled my eyes. The memory of his pain was haunting.



I took the little regulator clock home, touched up its case, cleaned its glass, polished it and fixed the pendulum. I set its hands at 1:50, the time of Todd's death. I look at that clock 100 times each day knowing that my son had rediscovered his roots in this life and that his wings are now eternally intact.

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

I Never Believed...

I never believed I would see another season change with gladness. I never believed I would see the world again without the haze of tears. I never expected to actually laugh again. I never felt my smile would return and feel natural on my face. I never hoped for another day when I would not want to die. I never envisioned a world that could again be bright and full of promise. I believed that all that had passed from me the day he died and went away, never to return. But I was wrong, and I know that in the fullness of your grieving, you too will come to understand that life goes on...that it can still have meaning...that even joy can touch your life once more.

Don Hackett
TCF, Hingham, MA





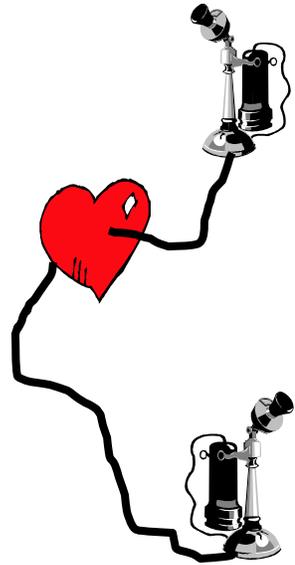
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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 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
- bereavedparentsusa.org
- beyondindigo.com
- childloss.com
- goodgriefresources.com
- parmenter.org - children's bereavement
- griefhealingblog.com
- 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
- webhealing.com
- Griefshare.org



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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I truly believe that these things make our children very proud of us.

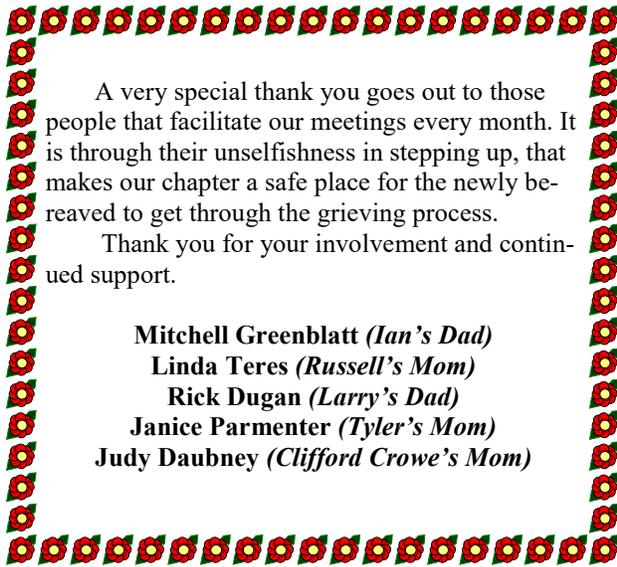
The last verse says: *“There’s a curious feeling rising up from the dark, some kind of strength I’ve never had. But I’d trade it in a second to have you back, I’ve got to make some good out of the bad.”* Yes, we’d trade it in a second to have them back...doesn’t that just say it all?

“I laugh louder, cry harder, take less time to make up my mind, and I love deeper, go slower, I know what I want and what I don’t. Maybe I’ll be better than I’ve ever been...better than I’ve ever been.” (Refrain from “Better Than I’ve Ever Been”.)

Though not the life we had hoped, wished and dreamed of, at some point each of us will know that with the help of other Compassionate Friends, the love of family and our children, (and lots of patience with ourselves) perhaps we too will choose to be better than we’ve ever been.

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

In Memory of my daughter, Nina



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)**

With Whom Can We Share our Feelings?

For many of us, there are few people with whom we can share our innermost feelings; yet these very feelings may be nearly exploding to get out! Perhaps for the first time in your life you are really angry, angry at God? At your dead child? Or just angry?!

Are any of you bereaved parents going about your daily routines, appearing to those around you to be “doing well”? Yet in your “alone moments” you hurt so badly you think you may never feel better again? Or perhaps you’re not even resuming a routine, lack motivation, are barely functioning.

Many bereaved parents have shared these feelings with each other.

Who would understand if you told them you started sobbing when you passed your dead child’s favorite food in the grocery store?...Or that you want to yell at the crowds nonchalantly walking in the shopping center, “Don’t you know my child has died?” Another bereaved parent probably would understand.



To how many of your friends could you tell that you kept some of your child’s clothing “handy” and experienced a bittersweet feeling when you smelled these clothes? Another bereaved parent would probably not think this unusual.

How fortunate you are if you can share these and other feelings with your spouse, family members, your minister, or good friends. However, many times, these people from whom you would expect the most support aren’t equipped or can’t handle your normal feelings of grief.

One of the benefits mentioned most often of Compassionate Friends, whether it’s by attending the meetings, using the available listeners by phone or through the newsletter, is hearing that your feelings are not unusual after all. It is also most comforting to hear from bereaved parents for whom it has been 3, 6, or 7 years since their child died that they experienced many of these same feelings, worked their way through their grief and can now say, “I don’t feel that way anymore. I really laugh and don’t feel guilty.

“I’m leading a productive life again. I may think of my child almost every day, and still miss him/her, but I no longer review details of the accident or illness, or circumstances surrounding their death. I’m no longer angry or feel guilty. Most memories are pleasant memories.”

This is why we “old-timers” continue to attend meetings, remain available by the telephone and try to meet peoples’ needs through the newsletter.

**Carolyn Reineke
TCF, Fort Wayne, IN**

Compassion, Then and Now

My dictionary defines *compassion* as “pity for the suffering or distress of another, with the desire to help or spare.” I had experienced feelings of compassion for others but never grasped the full meaning of that word until the death of my 17-year-old grandson in 1997. The series of events, however, that led me to an understanding of compassion had their beginning 43 years earlier.





THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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At the age of 25, I was a typical expectant parent. My wife and I enjoyed the planning and preparation necessary to welcome our firstborn. Eager anticipation gave way to despair upon the premature birth of twin boys, Ronald and Donald, at the end of their second trimester. They lived but one day. My older brothers arranged funerary details and close friends made brief obligatory visits to express their regrets. I attempted the stoic facade that I thought was expected of me.

For an extended period, our home seemed empty and near dysfunctional. I felt terribly alone in my grief. It seems that only I could realize that what had

Sadness

occurred was not just an *unfortunate incident*—my sons were dead! Paranoia was joining grief. Group conversations went through an awkward pause when I appeared. Family and friends were overly considerate in that my “illness” and its root cause were conversationally taboo. No one offered any guidance and professional counseling was not considered a viable option.

A degree of relief came to me unexpectedly. A close friend spoke to me one day of his hopes and aspirations for his own children. He seemed to understand my deep disappointment. That one-on-one session was the beginning of a path toward acceptance that culminated with the birth of my first daughter.

In February of 1960, my niece, Peggy, died of staphylococcus pneumonia at age 14. The beautiful and radiantly healthy child walked into a doctor’s office with mild respiratory symptoms, then died 72 hours later despite valiant efforts by an elite medical team. A massive shock wave went through the extended family.

Peggy’s father, one of my older brothers, was a senior master sergeant and air force career man. He and his wife were devastated and bewildered by the sudden loss of the older of their two daughters. Personnel of the air force base and their families were immediate in response when grief came to one of their own. Volunteers absorbed duty responsibilities and mundane household functions. Living as they did with the ever-present possibility of tragedy, they were prepared to assist with all ongoing and emergency family requirements, save one. Procedures were geared to the death of an *adult* and the manual did not exist for coping with the loss of a child. Had The Compassionate Friends been available, the anguish in a long period of adjustment could have been lessened.

Each of us will experience grief through the loss of people we love; death is the certain culmination of life.

We are capable of enduring the inevitable death of adults, but the death of a child is a calamitous shock for which we are not prepared and are ill-equipped to endure. Death of the young who have yet to savor the wonders of life is the ultimate family disaster, for death also comes to hopes and dreams.

These thoughts raced through my mind when I learned that my 17-year-old grandson, Rob, had not survived an automobile accident.

The thoughtful acts of others on my behalf were invaluable. A friend and neighbor arranged a non-stop flight from Portland to Dallas and walked me through the airport maze for departure. Delta discounted airfare through their bereavement policy. Three of my daughters met me at Dallas for the drive to Tyler, Texas.



My thoughts during the flight had been filled with memories of the previous summer that Rob had spent in our home on the Oregon coast. It was impossible that the young man who had shared work, fishing, and laughter with me was irrevocably gone.

My own grief became secondary when I saw the devastation in my son’s family. Robert, his wife, June, and their two remaining sons, Jason and Michael, were in a state of shock and denial. In their attempt to establish cause, they were erroneously trying to accept responsibility. Expressions of *if only* and *what if* were compounding their pain. I listened attentively and weighed my responses carefully but felt woefully inadequate to render the assistance I wanted to give. They searched desperately for a path through the depression, grief, and sorrow that engulfed them. Their quest led them to the Web site of The Compassionate Friends.

By telephone, letter, and e-mail, they contacted other families throughout the country who had experienced the death of a child. As the therapy of communication and association assisted them in mending their wounded family, they made in-person visits to area TCF groups and ultimately realized their opportunity to assist other families in distress. They were instrumental in founding The Compassionate Friends of Tyler. Their personal recovery was furthered by their efforts to help others.

My own journey toward recovery began immediately after graveside services for Rob. Another grandson, 14-year-old Benny, stood alone by the floral mound. I was deeply moved by his abject sorrow. No words were spoken as I walked to him and placed an arm around his shoulders. He understood and we both were strengthened. He would join me the following summer in exploring the natural wonders of Oregon and sharing memories of Rob in the wilderness setting he had loved. The sadness of Rob’s going was made more bearable by the balm of mutual support.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Compassion is a basic human emotion. Through TCF, emotion evolves to interaction and promotes understanding. Since its 1969 inception in Coventry, England, TCF has spread worldwide and assisted thousands of people through the trauma of child loss. The practice of leaving families alone in their grief must not continue. Someone, somewhere, is searching in desperation for relief. When a grief-stricken person reaches out, a waiting hand must be there. For that hand...we are responsible!

Bob L. Hatfield In Memory of Rob

Bob Hatfield is a bereaved parent, grandparent, sibling, and uncle. He was introduced to TCF by his son and daughter-in-law, June and Robert Hatfield, chapter leaders of the Tyler, Texas chapter of TCF where June also serves as newsletter editor.

While in the service, Bob wrote for Stars & Stripes, and later studied journalism and creative writing. Now retired, he and his wife, Frances, reside on the central Oregon coast, where he spends his time writing prose.

Bread Crumbs, Finding Our Way Back

Bread crumbs are all we have.

They are what is left behind after the death of our child. They are our memories and our mementos.

A bread crumb is the little answering machine cassette tape that says "Hi, it's me. Leave a message at the beep." We may be the only people with a cassette tape in our safe deposit box. It's not much, a few quick words, but it's his voice, a small crumb from the original.

A bread crumb is his favorite shirt that I still can't part with, so I wear it for good luck on special days. A bread crumb is the last Father's Day card he wrote in his own hand before he went off to college.

Thanks for everything Dad, especially the \$. My years at home were better than words can say and I never took anything for granted. I've had the best childhood anyone could have. Thank you for the ideas and opportunities I grew up with. I love you. Mark

I call these things crumbs because they are a disappointing piece of the real thing, but treasured because they are all we have.

I also think there is a second way of looking at this. Bread crumbs are a part of children's stories symbolizing signposts along the way to help lead us out of the forest, to find our way back to the land of the living, at least if the birds don't eat them.

I like to think that the return from grief is like finding our own way out of the forest. The way is marked by great changes or signposts if we will only follow the bread crumbs. I think of them as gifts left behind by our children. They change us and they lead us out of the forest, but at a very different place than we first went in. Here are three I have found. Maybe you will find others.

Crumb One

We pick up a new sense of what is important and what is not. We suffer fools, superficial cocktail parties, and convenience friends poorly. We seem to develop an immediate impatience for the meaningless and the trivial. On the other hand, we pick up an incredible sensitivity to the world around us that we did not have before. We watch the news differently. We value people more than things. We live more in the moment and less in the future because we know that sometimes "tomorrow doesn't come."

Crumb Two

We find our real self on the road back. After the loss of a child and a period of emptiness, we do eventually come back. But we come back differently, and I believe better, than the person that entered that awful forest.

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 45 Restaurant" in Medway. We will have a choice of three meals (1) fish, (2) beef or (3) chicken. 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.

(continued on next page)



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



(continued from last page)

With our new understanding of priorities, we listen again to “that still small voice” that we silenced in the race to climb the career ladder or have the “perfect life” or do what our parents or teachers thought we “should” do. We find new courage to be the person we really are.

We begin living from the inside out instead of the other way around, from a sense of what is important, not what is expected. From a life of “what’s in it for me?” to “how can I help you?” We discover new and compassionate friends, and sometimes drift away from old ones. We go from a thousand name Rolodex of contacts to a handful of people we love.

We often also find our spiritual center and an inner peace. We become unafraid to die, at the same time we are beginning to live again.

Crumb Three

We pick up one more gift that I have noticed. We seem to get anointed with an ability to help someone else. You know what I mean. We didn’t want it. We didn’t ask for it. But we got it, anyway. It’s almost like a giant invisible radar screen gets mounted on our head and we now pick up vibrations from other people in need. And we find that we really can help. People seek us out. People who don’t know what to say when a child dies call us and ask: “Could you please go over?” We know we can and will, if only to listen.

I am reminded of the story of a little boy who arrived home late from school. “Where have you been?” his mother asked. “I was helping Timmy who broke his bike,” the child answered. “but, Honey,” the mother said. “You don’t even know how to fix a bike.” “I know Mom,” came the reply, “But I was just helping him cry.”

Sometimes we can just help someone else cry, and that is enough. Unlike most other people, we can walk directly up to a bereaved parent or sibling, look them in the eye, and say, “I know how you feel.” That is what TCF is all about. And in helping another person, we help ourselves heal too.

So, what do we do with these new gifts or bread crumbs left along the way for us? New priorities. A new sense of self. And the ability to help someone else.

These are definitely good things. They did not come from the death of our child. Nothing good comes from the death of a child. As Rabbi Harold Kushner said in Seattle: “there is no silver lining.” But there is change. These changes come *after* the death, when we recognize that we can’t change what happened, but we can change what we do about it.

One day our surviving son, Rick, put his arms around us in a family hug and said: “Okay Mom and Dad, now that we are a family of three instead of four, we each have to live our lives one-third better.” That, more than any other moment in our grief, marked our turning point.

My wife has a recurring dream. She is in Heaven many years from now and she greets our son. “Okay, Mom,” Mark says, “So tell me everything you did after I died?” On that day she will be proud to answer: “I lived the rest of my life one-third better in your name.”

I suspect most bereaved parents divide their lives into those two distinct stages of time: before and after the death. What we do in State Two we do in our child’s name.

And because we do it, the world after our child died in some small way is changed forever. And when the world in some small way is changed forever, then our child’s life continues to make a difference.

And when our child’s life continues to make a difference, he or she is never entirely gone.

Rich Edler

In Memory of my son, Mark

Rich and his wife Kitty are founding members of the South Bay/LA Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Son Mark died in 1992 and Rich’s first book “If I Knew Then What I Know Now” is dedicated to a down day; patience with relatives and friends who wish to help but seem to hurt with hollow advice and logical words; and patience with time, for it takes time to adjust, and time can move so slowly. his son and the changes in priorities and approaches to life that follow.” Rich served on TCF’s National Board of Directors for several years as has his wife, Kitty. He died in February of 2002.

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Thought for the Day

It is not easy returning to the world of normalcy when your world is so upside down. It is not easy to stop being a mother or father to your child that has died.

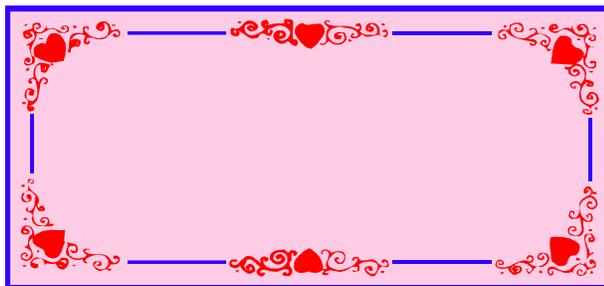
The thought for the day is a word, patience, patience with yourself who suddenly and powerlessly has been thrown into this horrid nightmare; patience with your spouse who always seems to be having an up day when you are having a down day; patience with relatives and friends who wish to help but seem to hurt with hollow advice and logical words; and patience with time, for it takes time to adjust, and time can move so slowly.

PATIENCE!

Rose Moen

TCF, Carmel-Indianapolis, IN

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TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

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



TO OUR OLD MEMBERS

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