



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 2018

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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 18th & October 16th

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

September 25th & October 30th

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. ©2018

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
 Wendy Bruno 508/429-7998

The chapter address is:

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

Regional Coordinator

Dennis Gravelle
 638 Pleasant St.
 Leominster, Ma. 01453-6222
 Phone (978) 537-2736
 dgtcf@aol.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

Mrs. Verna S. Hobson in loving memory of her son **Raymond John Hobson** on his anniversary September 30th.

Miss Brooklyn Rose Dullea in memory of her father **Christopher Marc Dullea**, "my loving father".

Mr. Donald DiLorenzo in loving memory of his son **Christopher D. DiLorenzo**.

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Contois in loving memory of their son **Shawn P. Contois** on his birthday August 2nd.

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Martin Jr. in loving memory of their son **James Patrick Martin**.



*At times our own light goes out
 and is rekindled by a spark from
 another person. Each of us has
 cause to think with deep gratitude
 of those who have lighted the
 flame within us.*

—Albert Schweitzer—



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
JULIE BENFIELD
DONNA M. McHUGH
JASON RAKITIN
GREG BRUNO
ADAM N. YOUNIS
RAYMOND JOHN HOBSON

October

ANDREW DELPRETE
RYAN C. TOTH
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
BETSY CHICK-GRANT

October

EVAN M. RODRIGUES
DENNIS M. HENNIGAN
TIMOTHY JAMES THORSEN



My apologies to Mr. James Loughran and Janice Tynan for omitting their sons names **Christopher J. Loughran** in the July / August Newsletter, and **Michael Vincent Tynan** in the May / June Newsletter



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.

Open Letter to Our Siblings

Dear Sibling,

How can I possibly tell you how much I miss you? But of course you probably know - since you knew me better than anyone. No matter how much time passes, I still wish you were here to share our lives and the future I expected us to have together.

Even though we fought and at times neglected each other, I just assumed that you would always be there. That we'd grow old together and remember stories of growing up and laugh at each other as we looked and acted more like our parents. That we'd share our joys and setbacks, and adore each other's children.



Your death has rocked me harder than I could imagine I'd survive. Ultimately, there are no answers to my questions. There is no replacing you and there is no solace for my grief.

There is only the simple choice I make every day to live on in the honor of your memory and the love we shared. To strive to carry on the best of who you were. To cherish the brief time we have with others. To celebrate the opportunity to be alive. To have compassion for the pain of others as well as my own. To have the courage to love fully as I have loved you and to remember that you would want me to go on and find joy again.

You gave me so many gifts while you were alive and I continue to discover the gifts in this loss. I am so thankful you were born my sibling. I would not have traded our time together for anything. You are always with me because you are a part of me.

***Mary Lamourex
TCF, Marin County, CA4***

Living Through Grief When an Adult Brother or Sister Dies

Author: Beth Anderson

"We brothers and sisters were so happy at home... Who could have then believed that life would ever become so torn asunder?" Dag Hammerskjold

That is one of many quotes from *Surviving the Death of a Sibling: Living Through Grief When an Adult Brother or Sister Dies* by T. J. Wray. This book saved me in those first weeks after my little brother, Sergeant Phillip Anderson, was killed in Balad Ruz, Iraq. While reading the book, I was amazed at how the author's feelings following the death of her brother mirrored my own. The death of a sibling is one of life's greatest and often unrecognized losses.

Although nothing can take away the sorrow and the sense of unfairness that we feel when our brother or sister dies, T.J. Wray's words help to convey the sense that we are not alone in our grief journey. As we also learn through TAPS, comfort comes from knowing that, as surviving siblings, we are forever connected. I was reassured by reading the experiences of other surviving siblings whose stories are so beautifully compiled in this book.

Dr. Wray writes, "Although the subjects of death, dying, and grief are more widely discussed now than in years past, the subject of adult sibling grief has been largely ignored by the grief support community, leaving surviving adult siblings to endure their grief in silence.



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“Our society fails to recognize the depth of love we feel for our brothers and sisters and the consequent grief felt at their passing. Aside from our parents, our siblings are the only people who have known us for our entire life. Adult sibling bereavement is what psychologists call a *disenfranchised loss*, which means that society fails to classify our mourning as a legitimate loss. After all, when an adult sibling dies, he or she often leaves behind parents, a spouse, and even children, all of whom suffer a more socially recognized type of loss, while surviving adult siblings stand in the shadows, often feeling as if our grief is somehow unwarranted.”

Each chapter ends with a “What Helps” section containing many practical suggestions for coping with grief. The suggestions are a great tool to share with a support person in your life, like a spouse, partner, or best friend. There is also an excellent resource list at the end of the book. In addition to recommending the book to other bereaved siblings, I also immediately asked my spouse to read it. It can definitely help a great deal to give our spouses or partners something that they can learn from and use as a resource. In most cases, they have no idea what we're going through and can definitely benefit from direction in how to handle the situation with the amount of compassion and sensitivity that is needed. When handing over the book, I said, "Everything written in this book is exactly what I'm feeling now and will be feeling for a long time. Please refer to it often."

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)

WHO WAS THAT PERSON?

An eight year retrospective...

By Rich Edler

Who was that person? He looked like me. He talked like me. But I don't think I know him anymore.

Who was that person? He had so many friends. He was popular at cocktail parties and told good jokes. Today, he seeks out one person he can really talk to and that is enough. His telephone Rolodex is a lot smaller, but so much more important.

Who was that person? He had such different priorities. He skated over life, like an ice skater on a frozen pond. He never thought about how cold the water was. Now he has a totally new perspective on the world. He reaches out to people who hurt because he knows how they feel. He has been there. He has felt the ice water.

Who was that person? He had an orderly chronological sense of time. Now the world is divided forever into simply “before” and “after”.

Who was that person? He used to rush through dinner or cut the family vacation short to get back to the office. Now he thinks back to the family times as the most wonderful times of his life. He knows what is irreplaceable.

Who was that person? He used to worry about so many imaginary troubles, most of which never happened anyway. Now he spends most of his time in the present. He appreciates today's sunset, daisies, simple things and good friends. He knows how precious each moment is.

Who was that person? He used to think about what he wanted to get out of life. Now he thinks about how grateful he is for the gifts he has had.

Who was that person? He used to measure his goals in terms of where he is going. Now he focuses more on what his life will have been about. He asks less and less why his child died, and more often: “Why did he live?”

Who was that person? He had never heard of The Compassionate Friends. Now they are his best friends. And he knows that by helping someone else through TCF, he also helps himself.

Who was that person? I don't think I know him anymore.

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 “If I Knew Then What I Know Now” is dedicated to him. His following book, “Into the Valley and Out Again” is the story of a father's grief after the loss of his son and the changes in priorities and approaches to life that follows.



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Nibbling At Life's Pleasures

Most mothers I know are pretty selfless creatures. When there's not enough meat to go around, Mom takes a second helping of beans. There's probably nothing she'd rather do than iron Missy's cheerleader uniform at midnight. And why would she want a new Easter dress when the old polka dot polyester still fits? Altruism aside, every mom needs a smidgen of pleasure in her life to help maintain her sweet disposition.

To reward myself for being a hardworking wife and mother of three active boys, I allowed myself an occasional indulgence...a long, hot bath in a tub filled to the brim, a good book (preferably one that would make me laugh), and my favorite guilty pleasure, a Skor bar. I liked to eat it a piece at a time, sucking off the chocolate before I crunched down on the tooth-jarring English toffee. If I managed to finish a Skor with fillings intact, it was a triumph. And if I could read a good book while soaking in a hot tub and munching on a Skor bar, well, life just didn't get any better.

Then one day I found out how life couldn't get any worse, when my 3-year-old son, Blake, died suddenly from meningitis. Guilt and self-hatred overwhelmed me. What kind of mother wouldn't recognize how sick her child was and rush him to the hospital? How could I have been so blind, so stupid? As his mother, he trusted me to care for him, and I let him down.

My once-carefree existence became a series of gray days followed by black, sleepless nights. I ate, but only to stay alive. I took short, cool showers, but only to get clean. I never picked up a book unless it dealt with grief. Driven by guilt, I convinced myself that I no longer deserved any of life's pleasures. Besides, how could I ever enjoy anything again with Blake gone?

One night, some months after Blake died, my husband, Jeff, left to take our boys to basketball practice. The dishes were done, the house was spotless, and the long, empty evening loomed ahead of me. I went into the bedroom, flopped on the bed and curled up with the cat. On the nightstand I spotted a book a friend had given me. "Funny," she had said. "A great read." Well, it wasn't a grief book so I wasn't interested. Idly, I picked it up anyway and read the first page. Before I knew it, I was hooked. Suddenly, I heard a strange sound, somewhere between a hack and a hoot. The cat jumped and looked at me in alarm. I had laughed! It was a creepy, creaky laugh, rusty from months of disuse, but a laugh nonetheless. Did I just have fun? Yipes! I couldn't do that! I snapped the book shut and shoved it under the bed.

The next morning I took a shower as usual, only this time I lingered for three minutes instead of two and I turned the temperature up a notch so it was almost warm.

I dressed and headed for the grocery store, where I careened down the aisles grabbing stuff from the shelves and trying not to look at the treats I used to buy for Blake. While reaching for a package of sugarless gum at the checkout, I caught sight of a display of Skor bars. I quickly looked away, but to my amazement, a Skor bar leaped onto the conveyor belt with my other groceries. Before I could put it back, the sacker had bagged it and it was mine.

I broke the speed limit getting home, dashed inside, and guiltily pitched the Skor bar on the highest shelf of the pantry. Later, when I opened the pantry to get a can of tuna for my lunch, a small voice from above called out, "Pat, oh Pat, I'm here. Come and get me." I slammed the door and started furiously chopping pickles for tuna salad. But the voice in the pantry became more insistent. "Pat, I'm here and I'm delicious!" A Skor-deprived woman can only stand so much. I flung open the pantry, stood on tiptoe, snatched the talking Skor bar, and ripped the wrapper open with my teeth. In a frenzy, I broke off a piece and popped it in my mouth. Hungrily, I sucked the chocolate off and crunched down on the rock-hard toffee. Lord, it was good! To my amazement, the heavens didn't open and swallow me. Lightning didn't strike me dead. For the first time in months, I REALLY enjoyed myself! I chucked the tuna back on the shelf and piece by piece, I relished the rest of the Skor bar. Then, with chocolaty fingers, I grabbed a handful of Cheetos and a couple of Oreos, and washed them down with a Yoohoo. It was the best lunch I'd had in months.

Later, as I was putting clean towels in the linen closet, I heard a familiar voice echoing from the bathtub, "Pat, I missed you. Wouldn't a hot bath feel good? Why don't you fill me up? Trying not to be alarmed that voices were orchestrating my behavior, I obediently ran hot water in the tub, but only half-full. I didn't want to go overboard. Peeling off my clothes, I hopped in. And as I sank into the heavenly, steamy water, I closed my eyes and thought of Blake. He knew how to live! He packed more living into three years than some people do into thirty. He ran faster, climbed higher, laughed louder than any little kid I ever knew. He savored life, every aspect of it. No nibbling at life for him! He broke it off in chunks and devoured it.

Right now, because of my grief, I could only nibble at life's pleasures. But I knew Blake wouldn't want me to live a guilt-ridden, joyless, life. He would want me to buy a SIX-PACK of Skor bars, fill the tub to the brim with the hottest water, grab a good book, and soak and eat and read until the water turned cool and I was all pruny.

And, by golly, some day I'd do just that. *For Blake. For Blake's mommy.*

Pat Dyson
TCF, Beaumont, TX
In Memory of my son Blake



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.

One Moment in Time

As bereaved parents, we have a line of demarcation in our lives. This line is like no other. Other people define their lives by that one big career step, move or degree. But in other people's lives, things are different. We are not like other people.

We experienced a clearly defined moment in time when everything changed. The tectonic plates of our lives shifted at one moment on one date of one year. Nothing will ever be the same. We definitively mark the time before and after our child died. Life was different before our child died. It was easy; it was filled with promises of tomorrow, accomplishments, setbacks, goals set and achieved and happiness that abounds in the natural order of life. But our basic assumptions were shattered and our world turned inside out at that one moment in time when our child died.

Can we ever feel as optimistic about life as we did before that moment in time? Will we ever again believe that one day we will feel balanced, optimistic and serene?

We certainly can, and most parents certainly do. As you read the articles in this month's newsletter about the journey through grief, consider the gentle optimism that presents itself in these parents' words. Each of these parents has walked this lonely road. Each has come through the darkest, rockiest valley into a gauzy sort of light which gradually crystallized into a true sunshine as time moved forward. How did they do it?

Insight is offered in these parents' stories. We must do our grief work, face our demons and stand them down. We must talk with others, set limits on what we will tolerate, and hold our line. We must seek counseling, attend seminars, attend TCF meetings or other offerings that give us the support of parents who have lost a child or help us in acquiring skills to cope with our pain and loss.

We must take grief breaks in the beginning and for the first year or two. We must take care of ourselves physically, mentally, and emotionally.

But most of all we must keep our child with us as we complete our life's journey. How we choose to complete our journey is unique. The common denominator that all of us share is the need to find a precious flicker of hope which we can nurture and coax to a radiant glow. We all find it in different ways and at different times on our grief journey. But, rest assured, we all find it. I call it "my little light."

One day you will feel the burden lifting. You will laugh about things your child said or did. That moment will gently envelop you. There is hope. Let your little light glimmer and then glow.



Annette Mennen Baldwin

TCF, Katy, TX

In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen



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)
- ♥ Mercedes Kearney.....mdkearney@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



For the Newly Bereaved

We welcome you, we are sorry for the cause that brings you to us and we know how devastated you are. We have all been there. Nothing is required of you and there are no dues or fees. You need not speak a word or you can share. Attending your first meeting does take courage, but our members who attend find a comforting network of support, friendship and understanding that only friends who have "been there" can give. Based on our experiences, we suggest you attend three or four meetings before evaluating the benefit of our group to you. Just come, be as comfortable as you can and let us walk with you.

Meetings are a place to talk about your child, a place to remember the joys of their life and the pain and struggle of living without them. It is a place to meet other parents who have in fact survived what may seem impossible to you right now.

Meetings are not "the answer." Grief is not a problem to be solved and meetings are not "pity parties" although there are tears and sadness, but there is also hope.

Meetings do not bring about closure. You close on a house, not the death of a child.

May you find your own peaceful solution to fit your individual needs for coping with special dates which are painful after losing your child. We are here to help.

Janet G. Reyes
TCF, Alamo Area Chapter, TX

Moving On?

Several years after the death of our daughter, we finally made the decision to move to a new house. A new house our daughter never lived in and never will. We left an old house where she lived her entire four short years. A house where she spent countless hours playing, eating, sleeping, dressing up, making mischief, making us laugh...the list goes on. But it was also the house where she died. It was the house seared in our memories on that horrible day where our lives changed forever in a way we wish we could just figure out how to undo. As I prepared to move, I had to face a lot of memories and choices.



Before being faced with moving, I kept everything my daughter had touched, wore, played with, etc. Some were kept in bins kept under my bed or in closets. Some were displayed prominently. Some were just left as they were before she died. But as I packed, I was faced with the question of what to do with these things? Do I keep her things until I'm dead and then let my other kids deal with the question of what to do? Do I get rid of all of it, knowing that these are just things and none of it will bring her back?

The truth is, they are just things – but they are things that can have significant memories attached to them. Some more than others. For example, a pair of plain pants she wore a handful of times are just pants. But the dresses or shirts she loved and wore over and over are special. So are the clothes that have very specific memories attached to them or are featured in treasured photographs. The toys she barely played with are just toys, but the toys and books and puzzles that occupied her for hours day after day are ones that meant something to her, and mean something to me as well. So I came to terms with the reality of keeping what still held precious memories for me, and donating the rest.

Packing the house also brought with it a mix of anticipation and anxiety. I didn't know what "new" things of hers I would come across as I pulled out neglected boxes or cleaned out long forgotten drawers. Would finding these things bring floods of emotion and make me cry, or would finding something new that she created - such as a drawing - lead me to a new treasure that I can cherish forever? Finding hair from her first haircut took my breath away and turned my stomach into knots.



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How could I have been so careless as to keep it in a random place where it could have easily been thrown away? Finding her faded, broken sunglasses in the yard brought back memories of her wearing them upside-down and a cute photograph of us together. I kept the hair, of course, but in the end let go of the broken sunglasses. My memories are enough.

Moving to a new house was a lot of work. Do I miss the old house? No. Will I keep the memories? Yes. We may have "moved on" to a new house without our daughter, but we will never leave behind our love and precious memories of her.

*Maria Kubitz
TCF, Contra Costa County, CA
In Memory of my daughter, Margareta*

It Doesn't Take Much

I am closing in on six years since my son Jordan died. Most days, I function productively. I have a "to-do" list (as I always have), I interact with the world in a reasonably coherent manner, and I like to think I help a few other people along the way. I know my dog is well cared for and I hope my husband and daughter think I have attended to them as best I can with whatever energy still resides within me.

Today, I had to go to the pharmacy to pick up the "solution" one needs in order to prepare for a colonoscopy. Even though I am well past the age when one is supposed to undergo that procedure on a regular basis, it is a procedure I have not been willing to endure in the last six years. Prior to the death of my son, I was a compliant patient any doctor would appreciate. I am less so these days. My approach to my medical care is highlighted by apathy.

Then my grief counselor died of colon cancer at the age of 59. His widow wrote a passionate, eloquent plea for people to get colonoscopies. So, I consider this one I'm getting to be the "John Anderson Memorial Colonoscopy."

And, as much as I loved John and appreciated him, I am not enthusiastic.

How could it be that the line in the pharmacy put me face to face with one of those round yellow Cheerios dispensers? The ones where a segment of the lid flips open so a child can reach in without spilling all the contents. They can't be more than about five inches in diameter. I haven't seen one of those in decades. I had no idea they are still made or sold. They seem to be such an antique.

For years, it was an indispensable accessory to my days. I packed it in diaper bags. I made sure it was in the stroller. I always had it in the car so it could easily be passed to a child in the car seat.

It didn't just house Cheerios. There were raisins, too. And goldfish. Maybe some nuts. If I was feeling indulgent, there may have been M&Ms. Sort of a trail mix. But that little Cheerios container went everywhere with us for many years. It soothed many moments of grumpiness. It tided us over until meal time. It distracted fits of boredom for long car rides.

And, today, I found myself eye-to-eye with that artifact from my days of happiness as a mom. Those eyes that stared at the Cheerios dispenser were eyes flooded with tears by the time I got to the head of the line at the pharmacy. Tearful eyes on a day when I thought I was handling things fairly well.

It doesn't take much.

*Peggi Johnson
TCF, Piedmont, VA*

Holiday Wish List: Peace on Earth (& No More "Closure", Please...)

What more can be said about the past seven weeks, since the nightmare of September 11th? All of us witnessed the horror and, via television, relived it over and over and over again. Much like President Kennedy's assassination and the Challenger tragedy, I know that it will be an image ingrained in my mind forever, only with more empathy and a greater impact because of the purposeful and enormous loss of life.



Once I got beyond the shocking, unbelievable images of the hijacked airplanes slamming into the World Trade Center, and beyond the fact that this was not an action flick with chillingly realistic special effects, without any hope that in a minute someone would jump up and say, "Don't worry, this was only a movie, folks," -- then numbing reality set in. My mind then focused on something that I could relate to all too well: the thousands of people whose lives at that very moment changed eternally; the survivors of the victims, the loved ones left behind to begin this difficult grief journey.

For most of us, what happened on that fateful Tuesday on a beautiful late summer day in New York, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania, brought our thoughts right back to that same "dark place" we were at when our children died. We relived that moment when we suffered the worst loss. It replayed in our minds, like videotape on everlasting rewind.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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I felt the same indescribable sick feeling wash over me as I contemplated what this moment would mean for the victims' families.

It was not long before the word "closure" began cropping up in the rhetoric of newscasters, commentators, reporters and politicians. Since Nina died, to me the word "closure" is equivalent to fingernails scraping down a chalkboard. It seems to me that closure is used as a way to say, "Let's get some closure in here so that those of us not directly affected by this tragedy can put it behind us and get on with *our* lives." In this sense, closure is not meant for the victims of the tragedy; closure is meant for those hoping to just "make it go away." If only it were that simple.

The far-reaching effect of the events of September 11th just might spur a quest for more grief education and how to help those who are grieving. Perhaps the general population will come to realize that for those whose precious loved one has died, there is no such thing as closure. Yes, thankfully, closure as an end to the intensity of our pain, but not in the sense that we just "get over it." We don't, and we *never* forget, but begin learning to live with the pain of their absence the very best way we can. It is not easy. There is a reason it is called grief work; indeed, it is the hardest work we will ever accomplish.

There are thousands joining the ranks of the newly bereaved entering their first holiday season minus their child. Although it has been six years since my Nina died, I'll never forget those trying days. Watching the world untouched by grief as they go about their normal holiday routine of shopping and decorating, the general hustle and bustle of this time of year. You wonder, "Don't they know the world as I knew it has stopped? How can their lives just go on as if nothing has happened?" Many bereaved parents have said that ideally they would go to sleep sometime in late October and wake up sometime after January 1, after the last remnants of the season are cleared from every corner of our existence. Although we can't make that happen, I can offer a few things that might help. Please don't let anyone tell you that you should or should not do something that you just don't feel up to this season. The number one thing to remember is that you need to take care of yourself, physically and emotionally. That might mean that you forgo buying Christmas presents, decorating, baking, and all the other normal things you used to do. This holiday season is anything but normal for those who are bereaved.



Tell your family members and friends how they can help you. I know they would appreciate your honesty and guidance, as they are also at a loss of what to do. Feel free to bring your child into the holidays with you in any way that you can. Set a picture of them out with a candle alongside it to light whenever you wish. Bring it with you when you go to family celebrations. Speak your child's name freely. Others are afraid to for fear they will bring you more pain. Explain to them that you want to hear their name spoken; that they will always be very much a part of your life even though they have died. Encourage them to share their memories of your child, grandchild, brother or sister. You can tell them that by sharing that special memory they are giving you a most valuable gift. Let them know that even though you may cry, they are tears that need shedding and are all part of the long process toward healing.

It goes without saying what would be #1 on all bereaved parents' holiday wish lists; a wish that we know can never come true. However, we can wish, hope and pray for peace on Earth, good will to all men, that all of the occupants of this troubled world will love more and wars will cease. My wish is that you find peace in your heart again and that you remember always that you are never alone. That we, who have been there too, are here to offer you the gift of friendship, encouragement, understanding, and hope for as long as you need us.

With warm and gentle thoughts, and extra hugs to last through this holiday season and always,

Cathy L. Seehuetter
TCF, St. Paul, MN

In Memory of my daughter, Nina

Anticipation and All Those "Days"

There have been several lately sharing their feelings of fall/autumn. Wow, there was a time that I, too, dreaded fall. Spring and fall are the most dramatic of the seasons and fall always represented to me as much beauty as spring. The changing colors, the flower bulbs maturing under the soil preparing for their entry into spring, and the anticipation of holidays were a delight. My birthday (11/03) and Robert's birthday (11/07/76) were also another highlight to fall. Birthdays were (and still are) always so special for our family.

After Robert's death on 11/24/91, I learned what the word "anticipation" meant, not as Webster states "pleasurable expectation," but the anticipation of a bereaved parent. There is little pleasure in anticipating their birthday, their death date anniversary, Mother's Day, Father's Day, holidays, etc.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS OF METROWEST



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Planning for these days early on in our grief is like an albatross, we want to do something special for our child/sibling, but the grief is so heavy on our hearts, that we can barely think, much less make it a “memorable” occasion. Another Webster definition of anticipation “visualization of a future event or state” which in some ways is a more accurate way for us to understand the anticipation we feel. We spend a lot of time and energy trying to visualize those upcoming events and special days without our child/sibling that sometimes the reality of who and what they still are to us gets lost in the pain.

Many have talked about having so many holidays, anniversaries, etc. so close together time wise. This is true in my case also. My birthday, 11/03, Robert’s birthday, 11/07, his heaven date, 11/24, Thanksgiving, and two other very close relatives have November birthdays. I have struggled with “November” for almost 10 years now. After Robert’s death, celebrating my birthday has been pretty much non-existent. Thanks to my loving family, I was given a “new” birthday two years ago. I was given a rebirth of June 3 (any year, any age I want to be). We celebrate my birthday in June now which helps a lot and takes some of the pressure and anticipation off when November rolls around. I can also now celebrate Robert’s birthday, a special meal out with his brother, Kevin, and a balloon lift-off just to let him know how much he is loved and missed.

Well fall is here again and November is fast approaching. There was a time when I yearned to be a bear so I could hibernate from mid-October (when the anticipation begins) until the first of the year. That would get me thru all “those” days of November and the holidays. Now, even though I still feel the anticipation days, I look at them thru different eyes, thru the eyes of “mature” grief, seasoned by many autumns that have passed since Robert’s death.

Barbara Parsons
TCF, Lawrenceville, GA
In Memory of my son, Robert Parsons

From My Heart . . . To Yours

The newly bereaved parents looked around the group at the meeting and hoped and prayed they wouldn’t still be attending TCF meetings 20, 30, and 40 years from now. Well actually, we at TCF hope you will be.

You see, the bereaved parents who answered the call in their hearts to continue to open the door for monthly meetings and to go each and every month with arms open for hugs and tissue boxes passed around, are the one reason why you had a place to go and pour your hearts out, cry your eyes out, and feel justified in what you were experiencing since your child died.

If it were not for these bereaved parents who buried a child decades ago, there might not be anyone there to sit around and take the time to care about you, to listen with understanding, to offer support, to know what you are going through. It might have been many years ago, but those shoulders were dragging at one time, too.

Forty years ago, burying a child hurt just as much as it does for you today. Twenty years ago, the pain of loss was no different than it is for you today. These parents know. They understand. That’s why they are still here. It is not because they can’t move on with their own grief. It is because they want to help you move on with yours.

Thank goodness someone in your area listened to the voice in their heart to start a TCF group, to organize meetings, to put out a newsletter, to answer your phone call, to share their own story. Because of that, you feel safe to share your pain. And every time you share your feelings, every time you cry with someone, every time you work through your pain, healing is slowly and silently creeping into your heart.

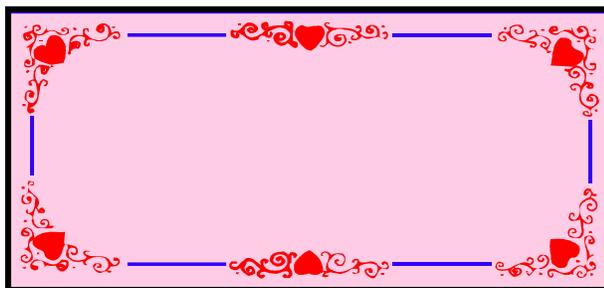
One day you might feel you don’t need to attend any more TCF meetings. We know that time will come. We will be happy for you. But if it should happen that a little voice in your heart continues to whisper . . . “Now it’s your turn to help someone else,” be sure and listen, because someone else is going to have to take the place of those who have been there for so many years before you arrived.

So, look around at those who have opened the doors for you and helped you. Then listen to your heart . . . always listen to your heart.

Cathy Heider
TCF, North Central Iowa Chapter



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



Address Correction Requested

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

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



TO OUR OLD MEMBERS

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