



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 2009

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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 15th** **October 20th**

The **Tuesday** afternoon meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month next to St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Milford at the parish center. **Please call Ed or Joan Motuzas at (508) 473-4239 by the last Monday or earlier if you plan to attend.**

Directions....On Route 16 (Main St.) going north through downtown Milford (Main St.) at Tedeschi's Market on the left, take a left at the lights onto Winter St. The parish center is the last building before the church. Going south on Route 16 (East Main St.) after Sacred Heart Church on the left. Bear right on Main St., continue past Dunkin' Donuts on the right, proceed to the next set of lights and take a right onto Winter St. There is parking on both sides of the street. Look for Compassionate Friends signs to meeting room. Our next two meetings will be on:

September 29th **October 27th**

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. ©2009

Weather Cancellation

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

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



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



Chapter Information

Co-leaders

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

Secretary

- * Joan Motuzas 508/473-4239

Treasurer

- * Joseph Grillo 508/473-7913

Webmaster

- * Al Kennedy 508/533/9299

Librarian

- Ed Motuzas 508/473/4239

Newsletter

- Ed Motuzas 508/473-4239

Senior Advisors

- * Rick & Peg Dugan 508/877-1363

Steering Committee *

- Judy Daubney 508/529-6942
- Janice Parmenter 508/528-5715
- Linda Teres 508/620-0613
- Carmela Bergman 508/359-8902
- Mitchell Greenblatt 508/881-2111
- Judith Cherrington 508/473-4087

The chapter address is:

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

Regional Coordinator

Rick Mirabile
11 Ridgewood Crossing
Hingham, MA 02043
Phone (781) 740-1135
Email: Rmirabile@comcast.net

The Compassionate Friends has a national office that supports and coordinates chapter activities. The national office can be reached as follows:

The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Voice Toll Free (877) 969-0010
Fax (630) 990-0246
Web Page: www.compassionatefriends.org

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.

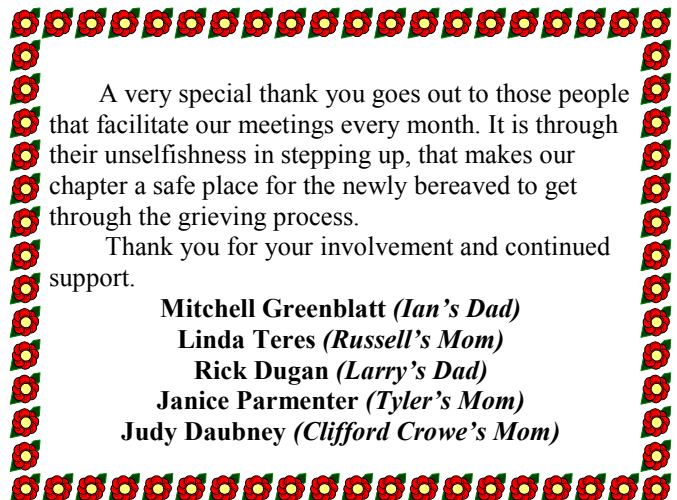
Love Gifts

Mrs. Dorothy A. Pisapia in loving memory of her son **Matthew Pisapia** on his anniversary June 10th.

Mrs. Diana R. Hearn in loving memory of her son **Michael Hearn**.

Mr. & Mrs. William H. Bardol in loving memory of their son **William H. Bardol Jr.** on his anniversary August 5th.

Mr. & Mrs. Steve Rabinowitz in loving memory of their daughter **Gianna Rose Therese Rabinowitz**.



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)**



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 of 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

CINDY CABRAL-BEATSON
JASON R. BOGHOSIAN
KATHY A. BURNS
DONNA M. McHUGH
WILLIAM BENJAMIN HUMPHREY
GREG BRUNO

October

BRUCE F. BENNETT
GIANNA ROSE THERESE RABINOWITZ
JACY HENDERSON
DEBORAH NICHOLS-WEAVER
LAURA SWYMER-CLANCY
DAVID ALEXANDER SCHNEGG
BRYAN PLUNKETT
MARC R. PEARLMAN
CLIFFORD CROWE

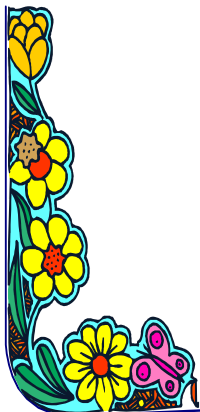
Birthdays

September

TYLER PARMENTER
SCOTT M. BULOCK
ANDREW JOHN GEARY
RUSSELL J. TERES
BRIAN D. CONNORS
JOSEPH A. McCLOY
KRIS DANIEL GENTILOTTI
MATTHEW PISAPIA

October

KATHY A. BURNS
DAVID C. LACY
STEPHANIE LAUREN COLLETT
DENNIS M. HENNIGAN
GIANNA ROSE THERESE RABINOWITZ
DONNA M. McHUGH
NATHANIEL WOODRUFF
CHRISTINA M. ROSSETTI
ROBERT F. DUMONT JR.
SUSAN ROSE THOMSON



CHAPTER TID-BITS

Al Kennedy has graciously volunteered to make up picture buttons of our loved ones. The buttons are 2 1/4 inch diameter. If you have a photo of your child, you can e-mail it as an attachment to aksound@comcast.net or bring it to the next meeting. Al has a tool that will cut out the 2 1/4 inch diameter picture to fit in the button. The circle is an approx. diameter of the button. A special thanks to *Al Kennedy*.





The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



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.

I Love My Baby

I love my baby that died.
Let your tears out.
And remember her always
She would have been fun to take care of.

But I'm lucky I saw her..
It would have been fun to play with her.
But I can't.
Gianna would be almost one now.
And she is still in my heart.



*By David Rabinowitz (age:10)
In memory of my sister
Gianna Rose Therese Rabinowitz*

AN EMPTY CHAIR

The first wedding was two years after Alan, my twin-brother, passed away. My second oldest brother was getting married. I was waiting for the question, "When was I going to get married?" I was never asked so I couldn't use my prepared response, "When Alan could be my best man."

I thought if I did get married I would have an empty chair next to me. If Alan couldn't be my best man, I didn't want anyone. My brother's name would appear in the program (that he would have designed) as honorary best man.

This year I turned thirty-six, it was my sixth birthday without Alan. At the restaurant we had made a mistake, the reservation had been made for one too many. I had ended up sitting next to an empty chair.

Although I thought, I was doing better, no longer crying at family events. I now realize that I will not have an empty chair at my wedding, if I can ever bring myself to get married without Alan being there. The loss I feel will always be there but it's much worse seeing an empty chair



Daniel Yoffee



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



Communicating with My Child

Eighteen months ago, I dedicated a bench to Philip. It's in a space Philip would like, out in the natural world, with abundant wildlife and wonderful views across hills and sea.

I go there often to spend time alone with my beloved son. I sit on the bench, look at the vistas, and remember our family as it used to be. I talk to Philip. I make him promises; I ask for his guidance. I muse on what his life would be like now. I tell him how deeply I love him, how missing him gets harder with each passing year. I tell him about his brothers, about his sister-in-law and his little nephew, both of whom he never met. I tell him how important he is to us. I tell him that we will never forget him, that though our lives are five years past his death, we still think of him all the time and want him with us. I tell him that I am having a terribly hard time accepting that he has died, and that I am doing the best I can.

I have no idea if I am communicating with a Philip who has survived death or with myself, who hopes he has. Sometimes I think I feel an impatient nudge, a sort of, "Get on with it, Mom, it's not what you think" message. Sometimes I feel his arms around me in compassionate understanding. Sometimes I don't feel any response at all.

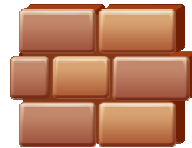
I am grateful for these private times with my child. Whether he lives on in some other sphere, and how I hope he does, or whether he resides only in our deepest hearts, there is an honoring of him in these conversations, a recognition of his existence and its importance, that matters very much to me.

I believe that we all need to find our individual ways of keeping the channels to our children open. My conversations with Philip may seem odd to some people, but they are right for me. I encourage you to honor your own private ways of communicating with your beautiful child, whatever they are. If you are searching for the channel that will work for you, consider what some other bereaved parents have found helpful: poetry, painting, journal writing, hiking in the natural world, day-dreaming, music, meditation, lighting candles, wearing a deceased child's clothing, sitting in his/her room, playing a sport she/he loved, among many, many others. May the time spent in private dialogue with your child bring you peace-filled moments, a renewed sense of connection, and strength to continue the difficult journey we are all on.

*By Kitty Reeve
TCF, Marin County
and San Francisco, CA Chapters*

Butterfly Wings, Bricks and Lead

When I saw her load of grief, it looked to me to be merely a light load of butterfly wings, as compared to my full load of heavy bricks. Then I saw another man, and he seemed to be carrying a small load of lead. But as I watched her step on the scales bearing her load of butterfly wings, the scales read "one ton." When he stepped on the scales with his load of lead, the scales also read "one ton." I knew my grief-load of bricks would weigh more, but those scales read for me, "one ton." Our loads of butterfly wings, lead and bricks weighed exactly the same to the one carrying that particular load of grief.



We bereaved parents often feel resentment when a non-bereaved person speaks about our child's death. HOW can THAT PERSON know or even dream of how I feel or what I am going through? these feelings may be justified. But

when we begin to feel resentment toward another bereaved parent "That child's death was easy compared to my child's death," "I have suffered more than she/he ever did", we should remember that each of our grief-loads weighs two thousand pounds to the one under it. Compared to Rose Kennedy, who had one child in a mental institution, and lost one daughter and three sons in violent deaths, my grief-load begins to look as if it were made of gossamer soap bubbles, but when I again step on that scale, it still reads, "one ton."



Our grief-loads may appear to weigh less because we who are under them have grown stronger through time and grief process maturation. The load actually weighs no less; it is we who have grown stronger and can carry it more easily. Sometimes we can even completely ignore the weight that is still there. Always be careful in judging another's grief-load. Remember the lead, butterfly wings and those bricks, and how they all weigh the same to the one under that load of grief.

**Tom Crouthamel
TCF, Sarasota, FL**



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



Light Rekindled

Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into a flame by another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those who rekindle this light.

Albert Schweitzer

This quote was recently in the daily newsletter at the hospital where I work. Having just returned home from my ninth National Conference of The Compassionate Friends, it really hit home and made sense to me regarding my journey “through the valley.”

Our family had experienced grief in several forms in the years prior to our daughter Anna’s death. However, at this particular time in our life, everything was moving along smoothly. Life was full of hopes and dreams for the future. Then the unthinkable happened. Anna’s “sinus headaches” became so severe that she became incapacitated. Over the next few weeks the doctors struggled to establish the right diagnosis, finally providing us confirmation of the worst of their considerations. Anna had several horrible, malignant brain tumors. In forty-nine days from the diagnosis our “light went out” as our precious child breathed her last breath.

Like others who have experienced the death of a child, our lives were turned upside down without our permission. It all happened so quickly that we were spinning out of control, functioning on auto-pilot, relying on friends to perform many daily tasks. As we now look back, we realize that the numbness that we felt during those first days and weeks following her death was truly a gift. Surely no one could survive this overwhelming, gut-wrenching pain if the reality of it hit all at once. The reality comes soon enough as the intensity of grief seeps into our entire being. As life goes on for everyone around us, we are left to deal with our shattered world and wade into the mucky waters of grief.

Fortunately my husband and I became aware of The Compassionate Friends. We attended national conferences and soaked up all the information, support and hugs that were offered. We soon were committed to starting a chapter in our area, but the exhaustion of grieving prevented us from moving forward with this plan for four years.

Today, through the support of family, loyal friends in our church who allowed us to lean on their faith and hope when ours was weak, and with the new friends we have made through The Compassionate Friends, we have found our way to “the other side of grief.” It has not been an easy road, but it was one that we had to travel in order to discover wholeness and find the “new normal” that defines the rest of our lives.

Yes, this was the ninth conference we have attended. People ask “why?” “Why do you continue to be part of The Compassionate Friends?” The answer is easy. The people are fabulous. No one cares what kind of house you live in or what kind of work you do. They care about YOU and the grief you bare. They want to HEAR your story and KNOW YOUR CHILD and SEE his/her picture on the picture board. Their compassion is genuine. They ask how you are because they really want to know. The world tells us to “be over it.” The Compassionate Friends, whether it is a local meeting or national conference, affirms and validates YOUR unique grief. TCF is a safe place where you can say anything, cry or not cry, laugh or not laugh, do whatever you want (without causing harm to self or others) without explanation. In addition, the workshops are excellent. The speakers are phenomenal. As hospital and hospice chaplains we have benefited in recent years from the professional day workshops, where we have learned new ways to bring hope to those who have experienced the death of a child of any age.

Ten years after Anna’s death, we continue to attend the National Conference. A high percentage of those who attend are quite newly bereaved, two years or less. On the final evening as we are gathered together in the banquet hall, I look around the room at the hundreds of people in attendance. There is an overwhelming amount of pain in that huge room. Yet, as one by one the candles are lit during the service of remembrance, there is also an enormous amount of hope. Within this family of The Compassionate Friends, bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents find assurance that their child will remain in their hearts forever and that one day life can be good again.

All of my Compassionate Friends are high on my list of those to whom I express my deepest thanks for helping to rekindle the light that went out for me the day my daughter died. It is the vision of The Compassionate Friends that “everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.” Won’t you please give us a try, no matter the age of your child or cause of death or how long it has been, we want you to know that “you need not walk alone” on this life-long journey, and that your child is forever loved and remembered.

***Paula Funk, Anna’s Mom,
TCF, Safe Harbor Chapter, Petoskey, MI***



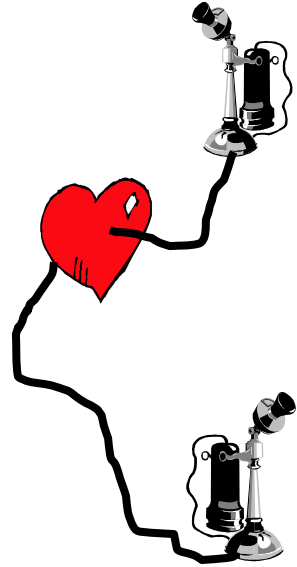
The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



Phone Friends

Sometimes it helps to just be able to talk to someone; maybe at a time when pain or stress seems too much to bear. We maintain a list of Telephone Friends; people who are willing to listen, to commiserate, to give whatever support they can. In a time of need, feel free to call one of our Telephone Friends.

- Ed & Joan Motuzas, ...**Scott**, age 31, Kidney and Liver Failure,(508)473-4239
- Janice Parmenter,**Tyler**, age 29, Chronic Addiction,(508)528-5715
- Judy Daubney,**Clifford**, age 27, Suicide,(508)529-6942.
- Linda Teres,.....**Russell**, age 19, Automobile Accident,(508)620-0613
- Mitchell Greenblatt,...**Ian**, age 19, Automobile Accident,..... (508)881-2111
- Judith Cherrington,...**Jeffrey**, age 48, Cancer,(508)473-4087
- Gloria Rabinowitz.....**Gianna Rose Therese**, Still Born.....(774)287-6497



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.

Memories

Time can never erase,
The memory of your face;
Nor the passage of the years,
Stem the volume of my tears.

You are with me for always,
In my heart throughout all days;
Then in my dreams nightly,
Your star shines ever so brightly.

I want your spirit to remain,
Inside of me, despite the pain.
To forget you would be a curse,
Because no memories would be much worse.

You were born a part of me,
Now you live within the heart of me;
Forever precious, forever young,
My beautiful, darling little ones.

*In Loving Memory of My Angels...
Michelle, Jerry & Danny*

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux

No Matter Where You Go...

I was watching a ridiculous but entertaining movie for my frame of mind at the time. There was a scene where the lead was playing a loud, rock song in a night-club, when he suddenly stopped to say someone was crying. A surprised audience and band could not imagine how the lead could have heard the sobs. He called for a spotlight and began talking to a tearful girl who he found was on the run. Buccaroo Banzai said to her, "No matter where you go, there you are."

We, as bereaved parents, are sometimes just like that girl. We have found ourselves in a bad movie, trying desperately to run from the pain and suffering that is our grief. Some of us have tried to run away from our grief by changing jobs, moving or retreating into depression. It isn't surprising that we feel unable to do anything positive. No matter where you go, no matter what you do, there you are - no matter...

Grief is not something you can run away from. It isn't something you can shelve until a more appropriate time. It builds until it bursts out with tears, anger, guilt, blame, depression and loneliness. Let it go. Let it happen. We all deserve to grieve. We need to let grief express itself, in every way, to truly grieve well.

We as Compassionate Friends, above the roar of living around us, can hear your sobs, and we know your fears and pain. We can extend love and hope. In time, the tumult of feelings, the heartache and desperation will soften. Then, instead of finding grief wherever you go, you will find that you are there, now, and not having such a bad time.

**Edie Kaplan
TCF, West Broward, FL**



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



THE DIVORCE MYTH

By Cissy Lowe Dickson
*Former Bay Area Chapter Leader and SE Texas
Regional Coordinator.*

Some months ago I saw *Dead Man Walking*, a movie about a young man who murders two teenagers and is sentenced to die. In one scene, one of the bereaved fathers leaves a support group for parents whose children have been murdered, and he turns to Sister Helen and says, "Most folks who lose a kid split up...70% or so."

Three days later I was at a hair salon and picked up a magazine to pass the time while waiting my turn. Cindy Crawford was the cover story of *Cosmopolitan*, January, 1996. This is what I read in her question and answer interview:

Question: Things haven't always been easy for you. Your brother died of leukemia when you were ten, and later, your parents got divorced. How did all that affect you?

Answer: They are separate events in my head, although there is some research indicating that 75% of couples who have lost a child end up getting a divorce. So they are probably more related than I like to think....

My reaction to both of these incidents was one of frustration. I want to tell you why. From the time our son died in 1985, to the time I became a Chapter Leader in 1987, I read many books on grief. Repeatedly I read the divorce rate of 70 - 80% among bereaved parents. Because these books were so comforting and truthful in other ways, I felt the divorce rate must be true. As a Chapter Leader I thought it was my duty to warn newly bereaved parents of this high divorce rate. So, I repeated it in my opening remarks. Imagine being a newly bereaved parent and hearing this at your first meeting.

Four years later I was asked to present a workshop at the TCF National Conference. By then I seriously questioned the statistic. I told my audience that I had over 300 people on my chapter newsletter mailing list and had phone or personal contact with many of these parents. I felt confident stating that the high divorce statistic was false.

After my workshop, I reviewed the evaluations of my audience. One person wrote that he had During the next 20 years this concept was stretched to divorce, and the myth began a life of its own. Here are some of the vague comments we found in literature: "Our guess is that many marriages do end after the death of a child;" "Some professionals working with families who have experienced SIDS guess the divorce rate to be 40 to 70 percent;"

"We suspect the marriages of many of those who lose a baby suddenly and without apparent reason end in divorce;"

Dr. Catherine Sanders (1992) in her book, *The Loss of a Child*, states "that...from 75 to 80 percent of all married couples have serious problems after their child dies" without reference to any specific research. Early in her book, she refers to her personal life experience which resulted in divorce. Later in the book she states that her divorce was 20 years after the death of her son. She continues, "a marriage that loses a child is seriously jeopardized." worst of all, she states, "...estimates suggest anywhere from 50%-75% of all marriages, in which there has been child loss, end in divorce."

The Grief Center of Texas interviewed 54 parents whose children died. Part of the survey included this question: Do you feel that your marriage has changed since your child died? Can you describe how the marriage has changed? Space limits the number of responses that could be included in this article. Nearly all the responses shared the tone of those listed below:

"We have been together for 13 years and losing our first born child bonded us together in a way we never anticipated. We are both wary of what the future holds, but are committed to our union."

"Our marriage feels stronger than ever, and I think we've become closer and more understanding of each other's feelings and needs" "After the hurt and devastation of the loss of a child, we don't want to do anything to cause any pain for each other."

"Our marriage has improved, due to the closeness and openness that we never took the time for. (Before the death) you get busy and have stupid priorities that mean nothing in the long run."

"We communicate more openly and really listen to what each other is saying. We are both more compassionate and understanding of each other and others." attended a workshop prior to mine and that the presenter stated that the divorce rate was definitely 70% or more. This person suggested we "get it together" and agree on the facts.

At the Annual Meeting, I approached the other presenter, a former TCF Board President, who had quoted the 70% statistic. After a brief discussion with him, it was apparent that we did not agree. According to the order of business, I awaited my two-minute turn at the microphone. I implored the Board to become responsible for the perpetuation of a "supposed" statistic that only causes more pain to newly bereaved parents. I requested that TCF stop repeating this "supposed" statistic in workshops, chapter meetings, or in new literature until research proved its validity.

(continued on page 11)



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

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

Fold & Tape



The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



(continued from page 8)

Under the auspices of The Grief Center of Texas, a non-profit organization I co-founded in Houston in 1990, my partner and I invited Susan Kutzner, Ph.D., at Baylor College of Medicine, to help us research marital satisfaction in marriages before and after the death of a child.

As a first step, the literature was reviewed to find the origin of the divorce statistic. While we found prevalent comments regarding the 70-80% divorce rate, we found no research to substantiate these comments. Harriet Sarnoff Schiff's, *The Bereaved Parent* (1977), stated that "as high as 90% of all bereaved couples are in serious marital difficulty within months after the death of their child."

"We were at mid-life crisis time when she died. Mid-life crises disappeared with this crisis. We've worked hard to renew communication. We have inevitably changed, mostly better...working to survive physically, spiritually and emotionally.

We need each other. We laugh and cry together and love and try and succeed and fail."

Until grant money with the cooperation of TCF members, or similar organizations, undertake valid research, I hope all of us will do our part to stop this myth. Let us encourage our members and remind them that they will survive physically, spiritually, and emotionally. As the respondent above states, "We need each other...to laugh and to cry and to love and to try."

Reprinted from Friends, Caring and Sharing, the national in-house newsletter for chapter leaders and newsletter editors

Spirit Gifts

Grief is such an individual journey. We are cast on its path without our consent, enveloped by a depth of pain we never dreamed existed. We all have times when despair and loneliness threaten to engulf us.

But we do have one companion on this lonely, unsought road: our child who died. I think there is never a moment in the day when a part of me is not connected to Philip, to our years together, and to our present relationship. Our journey through grief is a good-bye to the physical presence of our children, but it is never good-bye to their spirits and to the essence of their beings. Philip lives inside me now, and the same gifts he gave me when he was physically alive are still available to me through his spirit. In some ways, those "spirit gifts" are stronger, because they are contained and undiluted within me.

When the days get unbearably hard, when I think of all this wonderful young man missed by not getting to live out his life, I try to remember to focus on the present Philip, the one inside me.

I try to integrate his gifts into my life, sometimes seeing through his eyes, thinking from his heart and mind. Often when I walk in the hills, I'll hear his voice: "Pay attention, Mom." (He noticed the details in nature so much more than I.)

No matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains within you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still alive.

...May the spirit of the child who lives so deep within your heart help you through this month and through every moment of the re-establishing of your life.

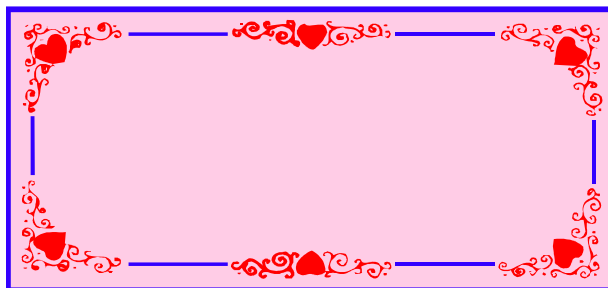
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Newsletter Editor, TCF, Marin Co. &
San Francisco CA, Chapters

On Grief and Laughter

After the death of a child, how many of us, as bereaved parents, might say to ourselves, "How can I ever smile again?" I know I felt that way following the death of my son. I have heard bereaved parents, especially during the early days after the loss, say, "I suddenly found myself laughing at work. How could I have done that?" After my son died, I went back to work one week after the funeral, and one of the first things I had to do was attend a department meeting. At one point, someone made a humorous remark. Everyone laughed, except me. One of my coworkers, seeing my poker face, called across the table, "Come on, don't look so sad." There were other times, too, when people thought I shouldn't be so glum, that I should be smiling or laughing. Once, while riding in my carpool, the driver turned around to me after observing my mask-like expression in the rear-view mirror, and exclaimed, "Smile!" I remember retorting with some acerbity, "You smile." But in time I did smile. I did laugh. It must be the subconscious guilt within ourselves that denies us the right to smile or laugh. It happened, I don't remember how long it was, at least several months, I think. I have seen parents at a TCF meeting, whose loss is recent, with tear-stained faces, smile

when someone at the meeting says something that tickles the funny bone. How many of us have heard our non-bereaved friends say to us, "How can you go to that support group? It's all sadness and gloom." *How wrong they are!* Of course, we cry at TCF, but there are moments of laughter, too. Crying and laughter, after all, are often interchangeable, such as crying at weddings or graduations and giggling inappropriately at the sight of someone taking an unceremonious pratfall on a slippery sidewalk. Perhaps laughter is also the beginning of Nature's way of mending, of healing us.

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



*This newsletter is printed
through the generosity of
Ridgewood Printing &
Copy Service.
Milford, MA*

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.”*