



## 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.*

### Special Edition

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## YOU ARE INVITED

The Compassionate Friends - Metrowest Chapter meets twice a month. Evenings on the third Tuesday from 7:30 pm 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.

The afternoon sharing meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month. We will meet in the parish center of St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Milford. ***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 (East Main St.) going north through downtown Milford (Main St.) at Store 24 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.

## 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 and siblings. No dues or fees are required to belong to the Metrowest Chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

### A Very Special Newsletter

This newsletter is special in that it is only sent out to ***newly bereaved parents.***

The intent of this newsletter is to get information to parents and siblings that will help them cope with these new and profound feelings that are very hard to understand upon the death of a child or sibling. Other newsletters will follow and you may want to attend our meetings when you feel ready.

***The Compassionate Friends are here for you.***

### 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. ©2007**



# 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
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The chapter address is:

The Compassionate Friends  
Metrowest Chapter  
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### Regional Coordinator

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

The Compassionate Friends  
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Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696  
Voice Toll Free (877) 969-0010  
Fax (630) 990-0246

Web Page: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Chapter Web Page**  
[www.tcfmetrowest.com](http://www.tcfmetrowest.com)

## HEALING VERSUS RECOVERY

When a child dies, there is, indeed, an injury of massive proportions. All systems physical, mental, and spiritual are affected. There is physical pain, emotional wrenching, spiritual upheaval and struggling. All this may be occurring simultaneously. Though there may not be bleeding in the physical sense, there is emotional hemorrhaging. The body and psyche are in crisis. Bereaved parents are often unable to eat; they may experience sleep disturbances and disorientation. Believe it or not, all these reactions are normal. Grief is a normal part of life. This is not a mental illness or some chemical imbalance of the brain. What is not normal is to experience the death of a child.

The major difference between recovery and healing is that the goal is not to return to who we were before our child died, that goal is impossible to achieve. To continue to try to achieve a goal of recovery is to assume that life will be basically the same with a few minor adjustments. We'll set one less place at the table, buy less food, feel sad on holidays, cry a bit more. Our lives have been permanently and irrevocably changed. Part of the healing process is accepting that not only has our life changed, but that we are, in fact, becoming different people. The becoming is the healing.

During this process, we examine every facet of our lives and our belief systems. This is a journey, not a "repair." By living through this journey, we become different people. True, we may basically look the same, but we are not the same as before our child died. We look at life in a new way. Our interests change and our priorities change. We have a new and deeper level of understanding and compassion for those experiencing pain.... all kinds of pain. We have a different understanding of spirituality. We ourselves feel new and different. We carry some of the old person with us through the healing process, but we emerge different. We are healed, not recovered.

*Bridie Tracy*

## MALE/FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS

**Most relationships are intrinsically difficult**

HE: "Big Picture" — SHE: "Details"  
HE: "Thinks"— SHE: "Feels"  
HE: "Logical" — SHE: "Intuitive"  
HE: "Copes Internally"— SHE: "Copes Externally"  
HE: "Sighs" — SHE: "Cries"

*Buz Overbeck*



# The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



## THE SIBLING CORNER



This page is dedicated to siblings together adjusting to grief thru encouragement & sharing

### *The Sibling Credo*

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.

### **BY SIBLINGS**

*From the Young Adult Group,  
TCF, Albany/Delmar Chapter, NY*

#### **When My Sibling Died I Felt:**

- That a part of me died and I was all alone.
- Very angry at everything.
- My childhood had died, too.
- Angry and sad that my family life as I had known it was over.
- Terrified that I would lose someone else I loved.
- Cheated that I didn't have a brother.
- Angry at how it happened.
- Alone.
- Terrible.
- I wanted to cry.
- I felt angry, depressed, confused, drained, worried.
- Why did it happen to him and not someone else?
- I wanted him back.

#### **When My Sibling Died Some Problems I Had Were:**

- Most people thought my parents were the only people suffering.
- I was afraid to cry in front of my parents because I didn't want to upset them.
- People thought I should be over my grief in a week.
- I felt guilty when I felt happy about something.
- People refuse to talk to you about the death of a sibling because they think you will go crazy.
- People asking me how my parents are doing and not bothering to ask me how I'm doing.
- People saying it was only a brother or sister you lost and you shouldn't feel as bad as your parents.
- Parents yelling at you because you don't show any emotion about your sibling's death and that you don't care at all.
- People saying they knew exactly how you felt when it had never happened to them.
- When things don't go right, I think about my brother, and things just get worse.
- People expected me to be back to normal after a short time and didn't understand when I wasn't.
- My parents tend to get overprotective of me.
- I became very closed. It was hard to talk to people who never felt the way I did.

#### **I Find It Hard To Talk To My Parents About The Loss of My Sibling Because:**

- I don't want to upset them.
- I hurt more when they hurt.
- I hate to see my mother cry.
- I would rather grieve by myself and keep it to myself.
- I don't get along with my mother that well.
- They don't know how I felt.
- I think they will start to cry.
- I didn't find it hard to talk to my parents.



# The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



## Myths about the impact of grief on the marriage of bereaved parents



**MYTH (1) As the same child has died each parent experiences the same loss.** Each individual mourns the relationship and person that has been lost. As parents, each of us has experienced differently and had a unique relationship with that child.

Therefore, both bereaved parents are mourning different losses, and these will be what will influence what one misses and when one misses it (e.g., one parent may miss the opportunity to talk with the child after school, while the other especially may miss watching football games on Sunday).

**MYTH (2) Spouses will tend to be more similar than dissimilar in their grief.** At latest count, people grieve according to 32 different sets of factors, each of which influences any one grief response. Grief is highly idiosyncratic, as individualistic as a fingerprint. Spouses are no more alike necessarily in their mourning than are strangers. Loving one another, or living in the same house, does not make individuals respond to loss similarly. Some of the major factors contributing to differences between parents include: type and quality of the relationship with the child; sex-role conditioning; personality and coping behaviors; past experiences with loss; social, cultural, and religious backgrounds; social support received; reliance on drugs and alcohol; and physical health. Spouses will have to give each other wide latitude for their differing experiences of grief.

**MYTH (3) Once a couple can learn to manage their grief they will be back to themselves again.** A major loss always changes the bereaved somewhat. Parts of us die when someone we love very much dies; most of us continue on, but we are altered by the impact of the loss and to the adaptations to it that have been required of us. We not only will have to learn how to relate in a new way with our deceased child, i.e., we still can have a relationship with that child, but it must be a different type now that he or she is dead. We also must learn how to relate to the rest of the world, including our spouse, in new ways to accommodate the changes in us occasioned by the loss. Especially during the long period of acute grief, in which the absence of our child painfully teaches us repeatedly that he or she is gone, it may be very difficult to relate to our spouse because of our pain and distress. Couples who are successful in managing to weather this crisis together:

- (1) keep the communication open as much as possible;
  - (2) recognize their distress and the changes in themselves, and work to express both in the healthiest possible fashion;
  - (3) insure their expectations of one another are appropriate and give each other permission to grieve individually as necessary; and
  - (4) find ways slowly to integrate all of the changes into the marriage. The duration of mourning varies according to the particular loss, its circumstances, the mourner, and the conditions surrounding the mourner. Nevertheless, it is now known that mourning a beloved person may take years of acute grief and that the long-term mourning process takes much longer, with some aspects of mourning never being entirely finished, i.e. there always may occur subsequent experiences which can trigger in us temporary upsurges in grief for our child, e.g. when his brother gets married and he is not there, or when it is Thanksgiving and her place is empty at the table). It constitutes neither pathological nor unresolved grief, nor does it mean that acute mourning still persists. Bereaved parents must recognize that mourning the loss of any major person, especially a child, will mean continuing throughout the rest of life to encounter times when the pain of the loss is brought back and the absence made more acute at that moment, which causes a temporary upsurge in grief. As long as this does not interfere too long with your continuing to move adaptively into the new life without your loved one, such reactions need not be incompatible with healthy adaptation for the rest of your life.
- MYTH (4) Loss only brings pain and devastation.** Despite the agony of losing their child and the long-term effects of such a loss, many bereaved parents have worked enormously hard to develop some positive gains out of their losses (e.g. beginning support groups, reordering their priorities, developing better family communication, establishing closer relationships, etc.) while they never would have chosen to lose their child to achieve these gains they are determined to choose healthy responses to it - you can do this as well.

by *Therese Rando, Ph.D.*  
excerpts from *TCF National Newsletter*





# *The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest*



## **WHEN A SIBLING DIES**

The death of a child is a family crisis no less for the siblings than for the parents. Surviving siblings may feel abandoned because grieving parents no longer have the emotional energy to care for them. They may feel unloved as they experience family friends putting the deceased child on a pedestal. They may feel incredibly guilty, remembering every bout of sibling rivalry, every unkind word, and every slammed door. They may feel unworthy to be alive, longing for answers to explain why their brother or sister died and they didn't. And they may, therefore, seek conscious or unconscious ways to self-distract: running away from home, using alcohol and other drugs, taking on characteristics of the dead sibling and thus diminishing their own image.

Following are suggestions children have shared about how parents can help them when a brother or sister has died:

1. Allow siblings to fully participate in funeral plans and memorial activities. Let them choose whether or not they want to see their sibling at the funeral home. Let them choose some of the music, write and/or read a memorial to their brother or sister, go with you or alone to cemetery visits.
2. Share with the siblings all factual information as it becomes known. Being "left out" only enhances a growing sense of not being important to the family.
3. When you see children who remind you of your child, point them out to the siblings and explain the grief spasm it has caused. Mysterious behavior enhances the sibling's fear of being left out.
4. Ask the siblings to be with you occasionally as you grieve. If you always grieve in private, the emotional distance between you will widen.
5. Talk with siblings both about pleasant memories and unpleasant memories of the dead child. This prevents pedestal placing.
6. Don't tell siblings to "be strong" for someone else. That is too great a burden to carry.
7. Understand that it may be easier for siblings to talk to friends, or another trusted adult, than to parents. They desperately do not want to add to their parents' devastation so may seek counsel and understanding elsewhere.

8. Remember that you can't change the past. But you can face the present and guide the future. Your family will forever be changed - it does not always have to remain devastated.

*Janice Lord*  
*TCF, Anne Arundel County, MD*

## **WELCOME**

It is always hard to say "welcome" to persons coming to our meetings for the first time because we are so very sorry for the reason you became eligible for membership in The Compassionate Friends. However, we are glad you, and your spouse, or you and a friend (who offered to come and give you support) may find the courage to come. We hope you find understanding and comfort in the company of other bereaved parents who truly understand your grief. There are no words to describe your pain, anger, remorse and emptiness. We know that our words cannot take these feelings away. We can only sit beside you as you suffer and work through grief in your own way, on your own timetable. Please come again and give our group a chance to help you. We hope through the sharing of your story, your feelings and tears, you will be helped as you move through this painful journey towards peace.

## **I BELIEVE**

I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge;  
That myth is more potent than history;  
That dreams are more powerful than facts;  
That hope always triumphs over experience;  
That laughter is the only cure for grief;  
And I believe that love is stronger than death.

*Robert Fulghwn*  
*TCF, Boise, ID*

*The only feelings that do not  
heal are the ones you hide.*  
*Henri Nouveau*



# *The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest*



## *Message From TCF Founder The Rev. Dr. Simon Stephens*

I know that many of you are still in the valley of the shadow, and you still feel, I expect, very much alone. At times such as these, of course it is difficult to catch a glimpse of the butterflies, because darkness of the soul and mind can cloud our vision. It is difficult to be strong. It is difficult to be brave when others laugh and smile in the sunshine. It is difficult to be strong when your heart is well and truly broken; and when the love and light of your life has been rudely and sometimes violently eclipsed. But I believe that with each passing day, each helping hand, and each kind word, the darkness of the valley begins to surrender itself to the light of a new dawn.

Of course, as we all know from our own experiences, miracles rarely, if ever, happen overnight. And as we all know, there may be many false dawns to a new day. Important family anniversaries can plunge us into despair when the dawn, almost within our grasp, slips away. We find ourselves slipping back once again into our own personal darkness, and once again we begin the hard work of grieving.

But as Compassionate Friends will tell you in Australia, England, Canada, New Zealand, USA, and South Africa, the nights really do get shorter. They really do. If you remain resolute to your course, then sooner or later, you will be rewarded with a glimpse of the sun, as it rises over the valley's brim. And I suspect that in the peace of that early morning hour, you will see the butterflies dancing in the sun's rays and those butterflies, of course, are your children's love. And I can also promise you this, as founder of T.C.F., that very suddenly the darkness will lift from your mind and the weight will lift from your heart and you will behold your child in his or her newly found freedom of eternal love. And then, you will know, in your heart, that all is well.

It is my prayer and earnest hope that the love and the light which is The Compassionate Friends' gift to you will be a source of inspiration and courage to you in the months and years to come, for we need not walk alone. It is true, together we can make it, through the valley to the sun's rising.

God bless The Compassionate Friends everywhere. May He bless and protect you and all those you love, and may you always walk into the sunlight with your child at your side.

*Excerpted from  
Rev. Dr. Simon Stephens'  
address at Tulsa T.C.F. Conference, 1987*

## **SIBLINGS & BEREAVEMENT: GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS**

**Do not** allow a breakdown of discipline in your home; be calm and relaxed in your disciplining.

**Do not** condemn children for laughing and playing during the early stages of bereavement. No living person, regardless of age, can healthfully handle much grief in one lump sum.

**Do** explain that a reasonable amount of quarreling is normal between siblings.

**Do not** push children to go to the cemetery. Let them take the lead. Some adults need more time to work things through than others. The same is true for kids.

**Do** remember your children are suffering just as you are suffering. They also fear the strength of their own grief.

**Do not** turn your normal, good-bad child into saint just because he/she is dead. No one can compete with a ghost, especially one who no longer possesses any bad qualities. Living children may react opposite to all the "goodness" in order to gain attention.

**Do** try to explain as naturally as possible that there is a lot we don't understand about death and repeatedly emphasize that death is beyond anyone's control.

**Do not** avoid talking about your dead child. She or he existed. Let the surviving children remember that.

**Do not** hide your own grief. Encouraging a child to air his/her sorrow can be the greatest gift other than your time that you can give.

*Harriet Sarnoff Schiff*

## **LISTEN TO YOUR HEART**

When your heart says "cry" but your mind says "don't", listen to your heart. It could be your pride, not your mind, that is saying "don't cry", for tears are hard for one's pride to accept. Crying because your child has died does not mean that you are not a strong person.

Tears do not mean you are having problems with emotional instability. You are crying because you are hurt. You were in love with your child and now your child is dead. Not letting it out little by little through tears may mean you are bottling it all up inside. Is this good? Next time your heart says "cry", listen to it. You'll feel better for it in the long run.

*Rose Moen*



# The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest



## SOME WAYS TO HELP A GRIEVING SPOUSE

- \* Assign top priority to your marriage and relationship.
- \* Cultivate transparency, openness, and honesty.
- \* Accept the pain that you feel. Be willing to share it and to listen to your spouse's expression of the pain he or she is feeling.
- \* Be patient with your spouse and with yourself. Recognize that your spouse is probably not at the same place in the grief process as you, and that is okay.
- \* Don't expect your spouse to be your only source of healing.
- \* Keep working at communicating. Give special attention to your affection for each other. Learn and practice the gestures of love.
- \* Remember to stay in touch physically, the importance of human touching and hugging is hard to over-estimate.
- \* Allow or create space in your relationship. Everyone is entitled to a degree of privacy with their feelings, including their grief.
- \* Allow yourselves to enjoy life and each other. Be willing to laugh together, as well as to cry together. Work at finding some fun things to do together.
- \* Help each other to remember that life is more than this child who has died. As important as your child is to you, and as much as you feel pain over his or her death, your marriage and relationship involves far more than your child.

**Howard Cupp**  
**TCF, Norman, OK**

Sometimes love is for a moment.

Sometimes love is for a lifetime.

Sometimes a moment is a lifetime

**Pamela S. Adams**  
**TCF, Idaho, NE**



## AFTER THE LOSS: COPING WITH THE HOLIDAYS

"I thought I was doing much better. The pain had subsided; I could laugh again. I was beginning to spend time with friends. My eating and sleeping patterns were back to normal. Then, I had to face my first holiday without him. I felt the familiar effects of grief wash over me and it was just like the healing process had never even begun." Author unknown.

**Holidays.** They can be the most joyous or the most painful days of the year, depending on how, and if you're prepared for them. Holidays are especially difficult if you've recently lost the love of another person through death. By planning ahead, however, and dealing realistically with your holiday expectations, you can help insure your days are filled with peaceful satisfaction rather than painful sadness. Holidays aren't just "something to be gotten through." They should be a time for rejuvenation and reflection. Whether this holiday season is the first or the fortieth you've faced since losing a loved one, there are some special considerations you need to think about while making your holiday plans. The first years after the loss of a loved one are the most difficult, however, and it is these days this booklet focuses on.

Notice in the sentence above, it says: "the first years" are the most difficult. Not the first hours, the first days, or the first months, but the first years. It is important for you to realize that your loss is going to require an adjustment in your life. This is especially true around the holidays. Traditions may change, the amount of entertaining you do will likely be altered, and your celebrations may be somewhat tempered. Before reading any further, it is important to accept and admit this to yourself. If you can do this, you are half way to the point of being able to enjoy peaceful and pain-free holidays.

## ANTICIPATION

Initially, the most difficult part about facing a holiday, or an entire holiday season, is the fear about how awful the day is going to be. Often, the anticipation prior to the event is worse than the day itself due to the worry about surviving the occasion. Looking ahead and imagining what the day will be like tends to intensify any feelings of grief because we're reminded of the lost love. Holidays also are a means of marking the passage of time, and that, too, can be a painful reminder. Writing down your fears in advance of a holiday will help you express your feelings.

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When writing be entirely honest with yourself. It will help you gain control over your feelings. Clarifying your thoughts will help you feel less overwhelmed, especially when you begin to view events rather than endless commitments and demands.

## **PARTICIPATION**

Actively participating in holiday activities, instead of thinking about what used to be, is a good way to begin your holiday healing. By planning ahead, you'll have a grasp of what you do and do not want to do. This will prevent you from having to make decisions under pressure and give you the strength to say "no" if necessary. Also, by being well-organized, you'll enable yourself to limit the amount of activity you plan while using your time most efficiently during the holidays. You'll be able to build "quiet time" into your schedule without resenting having too much to do in a short period of time.

Holidays are naturally demanding - whether you've lost a loved one or not. They usually require entertaining or being entertained, shopping, commitments to spend time with family and friends, extra housework and cooking, etc. If you're invited to do something you'd rather not do, be tentative in giving your answer. An honest but brief explanation of how you've been feeling lately will be understood and will allow you flexibility. Simply tell your host or hostess that some days are better than others since your loss and if you're feeling up to it, you'd love to attend. This way, no firm commitment has been made and yet you still have the opportunity to enjoy the company of friends, if you desire. This also allows you to observe realistic limits in your routine.

## **PREPARATION**

You may find that getting into the "holiday spirit" is difficult for you this year. That's okay. If you're not ready to celebrate this year, don't. If you have small children, however, you'll need to discuss any holiday changes with them so that they don't feel punished or confused. If they are also suffering from the loss, a traditional family celebration might be good for them. Chances are, even if you don't feel up to it, you'll be able to count on family members to help make the holiday as "normal" as possible for your children. If you need help, discuss it in advance with members of your family so that the day will run smoothly. Decorating for the holidays, although it may seem like more work than it is worth, will bring warmth into your home and should not be avoided.

If purchasing and decorating a tree seems overwhelming to you, let your children, other family members, neighbors or friends help you. They'll provide valuable companionship and help make the project a special event rather than a chore. Once the decorating is done, you'll be happy to have the seasonal reminder that life is continuing on and so must you.

If you find yourself alone for the holidays, take advantage of the time and pamper yourself. Get a book you've wanted to read, write letters that are overdue, treat yourself to a special meal, or call a friend who may also be alone. Being alone does not necessarily mean being lonely though, and you may find you enjoy the time to think and reflect. If you know in advance that you don't want to be by yourself plan not to be. It may mean calling family or friends and suggesting a special holiday activity, but it's a way for you to let them know you'd like to spend time with them. Fellowship with others often is the best medicine for a grieving heart.

## **CONTINUATION**

Regardless of how many commitments you have over the holidays, the most important thing to remember is to keep things simple. Say no to invitations you'd rather not accept, and don't be afraid to express your feelings. If you want to cry, do. If you need to talk about how you are feeling, do. If you want to be alone, it's okay as long as you continue to reach out to others on occasion. Above all, take the time necessary to be in touch with your feelings and expectations and react accordingly. If you do, you'll find you're actually enjoying the holidays rather than just coping with them.

## **WAYS TO ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS**

- Make or bake all your holiday gifts.
- Shop by catalog in order to avoid the Christmas rush.
- Contact a local college or foreign-student center. Invite a few students to dinner.
- Call the Salvation Army, a local church, or a foster care agency and ask for the name of a needy family. Put together a holiday gift package or dinner basket and deliver it.
- Baby-sit for neighborhood children on New Year's Eve. Or, offer to baby-sit for parents while they shop for Christmas.
- Start a new tradition in memory of a loved one.
- Let someone do you a favor.

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- Do someone a favor.
- Read about Christmas traditions in other countries.
- Organize a caroling group to go door-to-door or sing at a nursing home.
- Check with your church or local schools for special concerts or presentations.
- Renew an old friendship.
- Smile.

*Lovingly lifted from a newsletter from TCF  
Chapter, Troy, MI  
Printed with permission from the Potere-  
Modetz Funeral Home, Rochester, MI*

## UNDERSTANDING COMMON PATTERNS OF AVOIDING GRIEF

The avoidance patterns identified and described below are as follows:

- |                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1) the Postponer   | 2) the Displacer |
| 3) the Replacer    | 4) the Minimizer |
| 5) the Somaticizer |                  |

1. The Postponer is the person who mistakenly believes that if you delay the expression of grief, over time it will hopefully go away. However, in reality the grief builds and manifests itself in ways that are destructive to the griever. Society thinks this person is doing well.

2. The Displacer is the person who takes the expression of grief away from the loss itself and displaces the painful emotions onto a less threatening person, place or situation.

3. The Replacer is the person who takes the emotions that were invested in the deceased and invests them prematurely in someone or something else.

4. The Minimizer may be aware of the feelings of grief, but dilutes them through rationalizations - tells others the loved one is better off not suffering, etc. Convinces self and others that the loss is not painful.

5. The Somaticizer is the person who converts their feelings of grief into physical symptoms.

Bereaved people who adopt these avoidance patterns do so unconsciously and for complicated reasons. Generally, the reasons are related to a high need for self-control, an inability to allow oneself to feel and to express deep feelings or an intolerance to feelings of pain and helplessness. Still others may lack a support system that encourages them to express their feelings. Among some of the more common consequences of adopting grief avoidance patterns are;

- deterioration in relationships
- symptoms of chronic physical illness
- symptoms of chronic depression
- symptoms of chronic anxiety

Grieving is not easy, but neither is avoiding grief. Both demand a high price in emotional pain. However, healthily resolved grief brings about a gradual lessening and finally an end to the pain. Grief avoidance must be continued indefinitely. Considerable emotional and psychic energy must be expended to keep the emotions of grief pushed down inside. The task never ends. Instead it complicates itself.

Sources: "Understanding Common Patterns of Avoiding Grief" by Dr. Alan Wolfelt, from *Thanatos* Summer 1987; and "The Avoidance of Grief" by Margaret Gener, MSW, *Chrysalis Newsletter*, The Chrysalis Caster, St. Louis, Mo

*Article obtained from Joyce Andrews, Editor of TCF's Friends Caring and Sharing and Regional Coordinator SE, Texas*

## ABOUT BEING STRONG

Many people are convinced that being strong and brave means trying to think and talk about "something else."

But we know that being strong and brave means thinking and talking about your dead love, until your grief begins to be bearable.

That is strength. That is courage. And only thus can "being strong and brave" help you to heal.

*Sascha*





# *The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest*



## ***Grief Education***

Recently, I overheard a lament by a very young, bereaved mom and it got me to thinking. She said, "I don't feel young anymore." Grief has that effect on all of us, regardless of our age, don't you think? We've instantly been made older when we are new survivors.

Of course, she was referring to all of her friends. They are having babies, rejoicing over each new tooth and new step. They talk of mortgages, house plans, new carpet and wallpaper. They have baby showers, write thank you notes and take pictures for a baby book. But all this young mom was doing was making funeral plans, picking out a casket, getting sympathy cards instead of presents and suddenly feeling old. The bloom of youth had been replaced by the reality of life and death.

Nothing really grabs our attention like death. Everything that seemed important the day before suddenly has no significance now. What we worried about in the past has no bearing on today. Compared to death, everything else seems like a piece of cake. But, in the midst of this incredibly heart-wrenching time, I wonder if we haven't been given an opportunity to learn things our friends can't grasp. We have learned the value of enjoying each day as it comes, not always saving and waiting for a rainy day but doing things now.

We have learned the importance of giving hugs, saying thank you and sharing joys while our families are with us. We have learned to be grateful for the privilege of doing their laundry, fixing their lunches, buying groceries, waiting up till they come home, giving them advice and picking up the pieces when they don't follow our advice.

We have realized the satisfaction that comes from cheering their endeavors and overlooking their limits. We understand that memories are made each day, and we need to make them count because we may not have an opportunity to "add to our memory banks."

Yes, grief has made us older, but I hope that as time passes we can look back and say that it has also made us wise in ways that never would have been possible before. It's not that we wanted to volunteer to be bereaved! I often say that when someone says we only learn through actual experience, we should raise our hands and ask if we couldn't just try the correspondence course as an alternative.

But, since the experience is upon us, I hope you can know that your family and friends and those you work with and live nearby are going to benefit from the life-changing things you've already learned.

I'm proud of all of you enrolled in this most dreadful course in grief. You've earned an A.  
Love, Carlene.

***by Carlene Vester Eneroth  
Spokane, Washington***

Reprinted from Bereavement Magazine May-June '97, Bereavement Publishing Inc.

## ***REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST YEAR***

Although all of my dreams can not come true, some of them can, and will.

Although I can not have the future that I planned to have, I can still have a future.

There was no gift in Ryan's death, but there was a gift in his life.

I must believe that darkness can not last forever, and learn to release the darkness in the hope of new dreams.

I have learned that I can not control everything that happens to me, but I do have a choice at what I do with what has happened.

I may forget what his voice sounded like, or what his cologne smelled like.

But I will never forget what he "loved" like. Although Ryan has died, the love that I share with him can never be destroyed.

It is safe within me, I only have to call it up whenever I need it.

It fills me with love and joy.

Although my family's circle of life has been broken by death, it will be mended by love.

I will always love and miss Ryan, but I know that he is waiting for me, somewhere very near.

All that we were to each other, that we are still.

***Ryan's Mom  
Marsha Guilliams  
St. Louis Chapter TCF***



# *The Compassionate Friends of Metrowest*



## *For the Newly Bereaved: Normal Manifestations of Grief*

- Loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhea, “hollow stomach”.
- Lump in the throat, tightness in the chest, palpitations.
- Inability to sleep, early morning awakening, extreme fatigue, feeling of weakness.
- Inability to concentrate, forgetfulness regarding what is said in the middle of a sentence.
- Loss of time perception, difficulty with remembering or maintaining a schedule.
- Intense sense of loneliness and feelings of social isolation, overwhelming sense of sadness.
- Longing for life to return to the way it was, the sense that nothing is real and that the death of the loved one isn’t real either. (“This is just a bad dream - I’ll wake up and my child will be alive.”)
- Crying at unanticipated times, over-sensitivity to noise.
- Breathlessness, frequent sighing, inability to complete normal tasks or read a book.
- Resentment of others because “life goes on” for them.
- Hear, smell, and see loved one, particularly in familiar settings.
- Retelling details of the loss again and again.
- Anger at the loved one for dying.
- Having recurrent feelings of guilt and remorse.
- Feeling that life no longer holds any meaning, wishing to be with the loved one.
- Feelings of being “crazy.”
- Playing the “if only” game —“if only I had taken her to a doctor (or the hospital) earlier or listened to what she was saying or hadn’t let her take the car or hadn’t let her ride her bike, etc.”
- Bereaved parents whip themselves over and over again with “if only.”
- Feeling angry at God.

*Lifted with love from the newsletter  
of South Shore Chapter of TCF*

**DEAR “GENERAL PUBLIC,  
FRIENDS and RELATIONS”**

Allow us to share with you a little of what we are feeling and how you can help and support us. First of all, we have suffered a tremendous loss, and we need to grieve. Even though this may make it uncomfortable for you to be around us, it’s something we must do. We won’t be “over it” in a few weeks or months, as you might expect. Hopefully, we will learn to live with it,

and cope with it. If, in the first stages of our grief, we seem to talk incessantly about our child, how much we loved him, and all the details of his death, just listen to us and “be there.” It is one of the kindest things you can do for us. Even in the future, would you give us the freedom and pleasure to talk of our dead child? Please mention his name from time to time or relate something you remember about him. It makes us feel good when someone else remembers!

Some of the problems bereaved parents face as part of their grief work are:

- Restoring emotional balance
- Deciding what to do with our child’s belongings
- Lacking motivation
- Dealing with guilt and anger
- Feeling the intensity of the hurt
- Knowing the individuality of grief
- Handling anniversary dates—birth and death
- Delaying major decisions for at least a year (moving, job changes, etc.)
- Experiencing marital discord
- Going to the cemetery
- Remembering our child in special ways
- Feeling that “we are different”
- Dealing with the question, “How many children do you have?”

So you can see that grieving is work. It’s something we must do for our health’s sake. A Compassionate Friends meeting is one of the few places where we feel at ease talking of our child, where we feel not so different and alone, and where tears are not intimidating to those around us.

If we sound a bit selfish, I guess grieving at first, is selfish. Only after we resolve the many feelings that we have and accept the fact that our child is indeed dead, can we reach out to help others, experience growth and live again in a full and productive way.

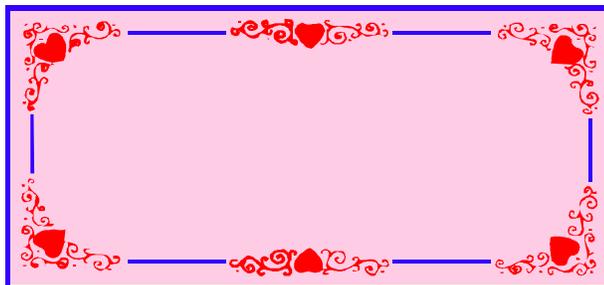
We try not to be critical of you. After all, before our child died, we were the “General Public, Friends, and Relations.”

Thanks for this opportunity to share some of our feelings. We need your help and support!

*Sincerely, A Typical Bereaved Parent  
Carolyn Reineke  
TCF, Ft. Wayne, IN*



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This special newsletter is printed in loving  
memory of *Scott Francis Motuzas*  
*June 12, 1962 - July 9, 1993*

### ***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.”*