



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Volume 33 Issue 4

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October, November, December 2019

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The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is an international non-profit self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.

Our Mission: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

Our Vision: Everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped

Our Chapter Meetings are held 2nd Monday each month from 7 to 9 pm at Sacred Heart Hospital (2nd Flr. Conference Center), 4th & Chew Sts, Allentown. Free parking is available in hospital parking decks

Meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Separate sharing sessions are offered to new members. Participation in group sharing is confidential and voluntary. Our hope is that being among other bereaved parents you may feel free to talk, cry and share, but it is okay to just come and listen too.

We invite you to bring a picture of your child to display at the meeting for their birth or anniversary month or at any time.

Upcoming Meeting and Events Schedule

Oct. - Meeting – General Sharing

Nov. - Meeting – General Sharing

Dec. 8 - 23rd Annual TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting—See page 2

Dec. 9 - TCF Lehigh Valley Candle Light Remembrance Service - See page 2

Note: Newcomers please arrive a half an hour early for your first meeting

To Our New Members

Making the decision to come to your first meeting can be difficult. It can also be difficult to return for a second or third meeting, but we ask that you attend three meetings before deciding whether or not TCF will work for you. We cannot walk your grief journey for you, but we can take your hand and walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our members circumstances may be different, we have all “been there”...we are all grieving the loss of a child and therefore we can truly say we understand. You are not alone.

To Our Seasoned Members

Think back to your first meeting, You were hurt, confused and felt alone in your grief. Remember the comfort you felt when you found you weren't alone and that others that had been where you were and survived. Remember the love and support you felt as fellow members offered on your grief journey. Now you are stronger and may not feel the need to attend meetings for aid and comfort. We need you though. New members need you. They need your encouragement, support and wisdom. If you haven't attended a meeting in awhile please consider coming back to offer hope to those who now feel lost and see no hope.

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Telephone Friends

For those times you need to connect with someone between meetings, the following members are available to listen and share

Infant Loss -	Kim Szep 610-730-3111
Only Child -	Shelly Garst 484-241-5396
Addiction -	Nancy Howe 484-863-4324
Suicide -	John & Maria Szabo 610-866-5468
Homicide -	Ginger Renner 610-967-5113

TCF Online Support (Live Chats)

Go to -
www.compassionatefriends.org
 Click on the "Find Support"
 tab, then the "Online Support"
 option for a listing of chatrooms
 available

Chapter Notes

Mark Your Calendars

DECEMBER 9

The 22nd Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting will be held this year on Sunday, December 9, 2018. This is a very special and moving event, when bereaved families join together from around the world in memory of all children gone too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.



The Compassionate Friends

Worldwide Candle Lighting

Join us on December 9, 2018

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 22nd annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

Participants may observe the event at home with family or attend a local gathering. The Compassionate Friends National website, www.compassionatefriends.org, has a page where you can search for local gatherings

DECEMBER 10

TCF, Lehigh Valley Candle Light Remembrance Service

We invite all TCF members as well as anyone who has experienced the loss of a child to join us as we celebrate the lives of our children, grandchildren and siblings in this very special service of remembrance. The program includes remembrance music, poetry, a sibling candle wreath lighting, memorial scroll, a slideshow of our children (to have your child added to the slideshow see page 3). The program starts promptly at 7 p.m., so please try to arrive 15-20 minutes prior.



The Memorial Scroll, inscribed with the names of the children who have died, will be on display. If your child's name has yet to be inscribed, you will have an opportunity to add it. A memory table will be set up to display your photos. Following the program a reception will be held across the hall from the Auditorium. Please bring one a favorite treat or finger food to share.

Note: Volunteers are needed to help with the service and poetry readings. To volunteer please arrive by 6:00 pm and see Brenda in the regular meeting room across from the auditorium.

To add your child's picture for the slideshow, submit the following no later than Oct. 31st:

- ♥ 1-2 individual (not group) photo(s) of your child, sibling or grandchild (up to 8x10). All photos returned at the service. **Note:** If you previously submitted a photo you do not need to submit another.
 - ♥ Your contact info, child's name, birth & anniversary dates, family members names
- Submit by:**
- ♦ **Email:** a photo quality jpeg & info to: kimberlee.szep@lvh.com
 - ♦ **Mail:** in a stiff mailer to - Kim Szep, 5816 Snowy Orchid Lane, Allentown, PA 18104 *or*
 - ♦ **Make an appointment** by calling Kim @ 610-530-4244
- Please follow the submission instructions carefully and submit all required information prior to the deadline. The chapter is not responsible for submissions that are incomplete, late or sent to the wrong address.**

Newsletter Notes

This newsletter comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter with the hope that it will be a helpful resource for you on your grief journey. If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter please contact the newsletter editor at 484-891-0823 or email: TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com

NOTE: If you are moving or are having your mail held or forwarded please notify the newsletter editor so that we can update your information and you can continue to receive the newsletter. If the newsletter is returned to us either and you have not notified us you will be removed from the mailing list.

Newsletter Submissions

We welcome and encourage original stories and poetry from our members. We reserve the right to modify or reject submissions not in keeping with our mission. Submissions must include the author's name & your contact information. Send to The Compassionate Friends, C/O Kathleen Collins, 2971 Pheasant Dr. Northampton PA 18067 or email to: TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com by the following due dates:

Issue	#1 - Jan, Feb, March	#2- April, May, June	#3 - July, Aug, Sept	#4 - -Oct, Nov, Dec
Due Date	Dec. 1st	March 1st	June 1st	Sept 1st

TCF Memorial Garden Update

Okay, here's the latest on the Garden. I Received a call yesterday from Palmer Township regarding amendments to our agreement for the garden. I went there today to sign on our behalf; they will be signing at their next Board of Supervisors meeting. They are finishing up their work at the Community Center shortly. However, because of the lead time necessary to gather our plantings, our landscaper will not be able to put them in during this growing season. He plans on commencing the installation as soon as the weather breaks next spring; late March or April (everyone pray for a mild winter, please). What I'm asking for is for each and every one of you to consider volunteering your time to serve on the Garden maintenance committee. This is going to be my sole continued connection with TCF starting next year, so who's with me?

*John Szabo, TCF Easton Chapter Co-Leader
610-866-5468 szabojanos1@verizon.net*



Suicides Journey

By Toni Hamilton, TCF McMinnville, OR



*When someone takes their own life
It causes so much pain.
The hurt it runs so deep,
Never to be the same.*

*Many people filled with guilt
Asking why didn't I see?
Such a senseless act
Why aren't you here with me?*

*It matters not the reason
Or who has done the deed
To heal and forgive myself
These are a parent's greatest need.*

*So when you look back and remember,
All the wonderful things with them you were a part
Let them comfort and sustain you
Carry them forever in your heart.*



A death by suicide triggers great amounts of anger and guilt. However, some of those feelings can be balanced by struggling to see that the suicide was not so much a deliberate, hostile act, but a gesture of utter hopelessness and despair. Reminders that the person was so driven by emotional whirlwinds that it was impossible to sense any ray of hope can temper, considerably, the emotional impact of a death by suicide.

One of the best responses to a suicide that I have ever heard came through a sermon delivered by the pastor of a young man who shot himself. With great eloquence, his pastor was able to convey tremendous hope through these words.

"Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage, and only God knows how this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul."

~Excerpt from "Helping Survivors Survive," Victor M. Parachin, Bereavement Magazine, January 1991

Love Gifts

Love Gifts are tax deductible donations that enable the chapter to continue to reach out to the newly bereaved and provide ongoing support to all members. They may be given in memory of a child or in memory of or in honor of a friend or relative. To make a love gift please use form in this newsletter.

We thank the following for their generosity

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Loved One</i>
♥ Yvonne Hude	Molly Hude <i>Happy 31st Birthday. Missing your beautiful smile & energy! Love, Mom, Dad, Grammy & Family</i>
♥ Fred & Pat Andrew	Jill Patricia Harris <i>Happy Birthday Jill. Love You, Mom, Dad, Jeff, Sam & Alex</i>
♥ Betty Schuler	Dean Lynn Schuler <i>Love and miss you very much. Love, Mom</i>
♥ Frank & Lucy Reinhard	Cathy A. Mertz and Denise Deiter <i>In memory of our two daughters</i> ♡
♥ Kenneth & Barbara Zellner	Kenneth Samuel Zellner <i>In Loving Memory</i>
♥ Stephen & Jeannette Viglione	Jeanne Catherine Hurley <i>Happy Birthday—We love you. Merry Christmas Love, Mom Stephen, and Gavin (your grandson)</i>
♥ Jack & Janet Blosky	Kevin Thomas Blosky <i>You live in our hearts forever</i>
♥ Don and Sue Southgate	Troy Southgate <i>We love you so very much, we wish you were stil here. Love Mom, Dad & Marty</i>
♥ John and Grace Ashner	John Ashner, Jr. <i>We love you and miss you very much. Mom & Dad</i>
♥ David Bremmer	Hunter Bremmer <i>Happy 39th Birthday! All my love, Dad</i>
♥ Doris Ernst	Wayne Stephen Ernst <i>In Loving Memory</i>

Donations and Contributions

We thank the following for their monetary and in kind donations

- ★ Sacred Heart Hospital, Allentown
for meeting room and drinks
- ★ Giant Food Store Employees for United Way Contributions
In Memory of David Todd Smith
- ★ Mary Ann Donuts, Allentown for meeting snacks
- ★ Aetna Payroll Contributors
- ★ United Way Payroll Contributors
- ★ All our vounteers

To contribute through the United Way to The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley, ask your employer for the appropriate form and use the number 12116 in the write-in



How Long Does It Take?

Joan Schmidt, TCF, Central NJ Chapter



As long as it takes, that's how long it takes. It's not about forgetting. It's about hurting. And I know that if I am alive twenty-five years from now, and I happen to look at the blue sky with puffy clouds and think of my son, Fred, and figure out how old he'd be and what he'd be doing, and what is children should be doing - I'll hurt.

And I know that when I can switch my train of thought from what is not, to what was (a happy memory), I'll be able to smile through the tears.

We don't stop hurting, ever. But so many things occur each day, so many events and thoughts and happenings intervene - that our focus is shifted. The death of our child changes from the main concern in our life, to a concern of many.

A life may stop, but the loving goes on forever. To love deeply is to be vulnerable. . . for all our days.



Our Children Remembered

Please keep the parents, grandparents and siblings of the following children in your thoughts and hearts



Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
David - Son of Nancy Densler	Sep 7	Nov 15
John Ashner, Jr. - Son of John & Grace Ashner; Brother of Suzanne & Michael	Jun 22	Nov 8
Salvatore Bartolotta - Son of Mary Bartolotta	Nov 26	Dec 27
Kevin Blosky - Son of Jack & Janet Blosky; Grandson of Jack & Nancy Blosky	Jan 28	Oct 4
Hunter Bremmar - Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmar	Dec 12	Jul 27
Brian Burke - Son of Rich & Mary Burke; Brother of Melissa Burke	Jan 3	Oct 9
Jessica Coe - Daughter of Randy & Diane Coe; Sister of Allison Coe	Aug 13	Oct 7
Christopher Cole - Son of Donald Cole; Brother of Lauren Cole	Oct 10	Sep 10
John Counterman, III - Brother of Theresa Legarski	Sep 30	Nov 2
Christopher Daud - Daughter of Marie Daud	Nov 4	Sep 16
David DeLong - Son of Gene & Dawn DeLong; Brother of Jamie DeLong	Oct 23	Dec 7
Wayne Ernst - Son of Doris Ernst & The Late Julius Ernst	Jan 6	Dec 24
Jillian Faustner - Daughter of Joan Cottone & Sister of Jennifer, Jessica & James	Aug 7	Oct 21
Benjamin Fry - Son of John & Cynthia Chryst; Twin of Jeff Fry; Brother of the late Peter & Paul Fry; Grandson of Charles & Rose Giltner	Oct 6	Mar 14
Kevin Garrison - Son of Kathleen Garrison	Dec 2	Jan 16
Erik Gaughran - Son of Rita Gaughran	Mar 29	Dec 10
Chelsie Graham - Daughter of Chris & Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
James "Jim" Gum - Son of Sherwood & June Gum; Brother of Deborah Martini	Nov 21	May 1
Ryan Hamell - Son of Greg & Jeanette Hamell	Apr 6	Nov 23
Brett Harris - Son of Chester & Carol Kinsey, Jr.; Brother of Terry & Lisa	Dec 10	Jan 14
Jill Harris - Daughter of Fred & Pat Andrew; Sister of Jeff	Nov 5	Jun 28
Heather Hawn - Daughter of Mike & Cathi Tirrell; Sister of Holli & Chad	Feb 25	Dec 25
Jennifer Hendershot - Daughter of Candi Lynn; Sister of Kevin Strohl	Jan 13	Dec 12
Richard "Rich" Hollabaugh - Son of Linda Hollabaugh & the late Wayne Hollabaugh	Dec 20	Apr 10
Molly Hude - Daughter of Rex & Yvonne Hude; Granddaughter of Nancy Kornafel	Nov 2	Jul 2
Jeanne Hurley - Daughter of Stephen & Jeannette Viglione; Sister of Michele Yankowy & Robert Wambold, Jr.	Oct 12	Aug 13
Jordon Hyndman - Son of Robin Hyndman; Brother of Shawna & Briana Hyndman	Nov 14	May 23
Brandon Jesse - Son of Cathi Jesse; Brother of Christian Jesse	Nov 2	Aug 6
Jonathan Keller - Son of Dennis & Lori Keller; Brother of Amy Keller	Oct 25	Mar 23
Audrey King Koch - Sister of Linda Hollabaugh	Jun 16	Dec 2
Kimberly Kissel - Daughter of Michael & Gloria Kissel, Jr.; Sister of Colleen & Micheal Kissel & Lisa Zelko	Feb 6	Dec 22
Richard Kulik - Son of Dolores Kulik; Brother of Christina Schantzenbach & Michael Kulik	Sep 5	Oct 27
Charles Kunsman, Jr. - Son of Charles & Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & late David Kunsman	Sep 18	Nov 19
Trever Landis - Son of Robin Landis; Brother of Marlea, Dana & Kelsey Landis	Apr 16	Dec 9
Joseph Lestishock - Son of Marjorie Lestishock	Aug 30	Nov 2
Paul Levine - Son of Louisa Levine; Brother of Gregory, Mary & Philip Levine	Sep 28	Oct 31
Nathan Loicano - Brother of Andrea Loicano	Nov 17	Nov 18
Andrea Luecke - Daughter of Louise Luecke; Sister of Jennae Luecke	Jan 30	Oct 23
John Luzenski - Son of John & Audrey Luzenski; Brother of Judy & Jeffrey Luzenski	Oct 6	Oct 28
Anne Marie Mabus Heater - Daughter of Wayne & Frances Mabus; Sister of Steven Mabus	Jan 7	Nov 25
Michael McLaughlin - Son of James & Julia McLaughlin; Brother of Matthew & Patrick McLaughlin	Mar 16	Dec 24
Emma McNulty - Daughter of Jessica & Susan Katzbeck	Nov 19	Mar 11
Cathy Ann Mertz - Daughter of Franklin & Lucille Reinhard; Sister of The late Denise Deiter	Oct 28	Dec 17
Doreen Meyers Ortiz - Daughter of Terry & Angeline Meyers; Sister of Dwayne T. Meyers	Dec 18	Jul 13
Jacob Miller - Son of William R & Caroline P Miller	Nov 15	Nov 16
Suzanne Miller - Daughter of Russell & Margaret Billig	Nov 28	Sep 28
Glenn Miller, Jr. - Son of Lin Miller; Brother of Lorrie Woolever	Nov 20	Aug 4
Cody Myers - Son of David & Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal & Benjamin Myers	Dec 12	May 15
Wayne Petzold - Son of David & Joan Petzold, Sr.; Brother of Amy, Dave & Father of Katie Petzold	Aug 20	Oct 8
PJ Pfenning - Son of Maureen Pfenning; Brother of Amanda Sciarillo & Lauren Pfenning	Aug 30	Nov 5
Deanna Renner - Daughter of Ginger Renner & The late Merle Renner	Oct 11	Oct 22



Our Children Remembered



Please keep the parents, grandparents and siblings of the following children in your thoughts and hearts

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Lydia Rice Cobb - Daughter of Virginia Rice	Sep 27	Oct 10
Scott Rothrock - Son of Larry & Linda Rothrock	Oct 20	Sep 18
Jason Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Aug 25	Nov 13
Lauren Schneck - Daughter of James & Lisa Schneck	Aug 10	Dec 2
Dean Schuler - Son of Betty Schuler & the late Lester Schuler	May 22	Nov 19
Steven Seibert - Son of Thomas & Eva Seibert; Brother of Nick & Krista Seibert; Grandson of Eva Juhasz	Jun 27	Dec 22
Anthony Sisonick - Son of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Brother of Nicholas Sisonick	Nov 8	Aug 27
Matthew Solderitch - Son of Brenda Solderitch & the Late Stephen Solderitch Sr.; Brother of Tina Saginario	Nov 24	Nov 3
Troy Southgate - Son of Don & Sue Southgate; Brother of Martin Southgate	Feb 25	Oct 30
Michael Stocker - Son of Calvin & Kay Stocker; Brother of Megan Fibrick	Oct 14	Jan 26
Debra Sweeney - Daughter of Richard & Doris Hosler; Sister of Donna Mallard	Nov 16	Jan 5
David Uecker - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker; Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki	Aug 2	Oct 3
Chad Wagner - Son of Carl & Pamela Fehnel; Brother of Cori	Mar 13	Dec 23
Gregory Weiland, Jr - Son of Robin Gehret; Brother of Rozalyn Weiland	Sep 23	Dec 12
Gilbert Weiss - Brother of Ginger Renner	Nov 17	Oct 22
Darren Whipple - Brother of Jean Marie Yurkovitch	Oct 27	Nov 2
Christopher Williamson - Son of Chris & Kim Williamson; Brother of the late Christina Joy Williamson	Nov 12	Nov 12
Adam Wolk - Son of Michael & Sheila Wolk ; Brother of Laura & Sarah Wolk	Aug 1	Oct 22
Kenneth Zellner - Son of Kenneth & Barbara Zellner	Oct 11	Nov 15

The Grief of a Parent who has Lost an Infant

By Claire McGaughey and Sue Shelley - Infant group

To experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should that child be stillborn, or die hours, days or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for the parents. No parent ever expects to outlive his child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to his parents. The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant.

1. **SHAME & GUILT** - especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. "Other women have live, normal babies, why can't I?" Should an infant die months after birth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.

2. **NO MEMORIES** - Parents may only have "souvenirs of an occasion" (birth certificate, I.D. bracelet)

by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few belongings, but they may still feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.

3. **LONELINESS IN GRIEF** - It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is a newborn, they may give the impression you are grieving unnecessarily over a non-person. They hope you can "forget this baby" and "have another one."

4. **NEGLECTED FATHERS** - Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby, too.

5. **MOTHERS vs. FATHERS** - Since the mother has bonded with her child all during the pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father's, who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife's grief is so profound and so prolonged.



To A Child Gone

Author Unknown

I thought I was ahead of you in line.
 You would take your turn
 after I took mine.
 Like we did before.
 I guess you don't need new shoes
 for starting heaven.
 Or a light left on against the dark,
 the way I always did.
 But I'm so used to parenting,
 I wanted just to be there -
 to do whatever needed to be done.
 But you went first.
 And now, my little one,
 Suddenly you are MY senior.
 Morning, I know, will come,
 But, bring close your light .
 This time it is I who fear the night.

Halloween

By Cindy Holt TCF, Jamestown, NY



October is the time for the funny looking creatures appearing at our doors for a trick or treat. Halloween was never my favorite time of the year. I think it was because I could never come up with those cute original costumes for my girls like every other mother managed to do every year. It seemed like after answering the door and seeing 200 original costumes I'd always think to myself, "Why didn't I think of that?" I'd tuck a few ideas away in my head for the next year, but when the time came to execute those ideas, I had tucked them so far away I couldn't remember them. Once again we were scrambling around on October 31st trying to come up with ideas that both girls would be happy with.

There were six years difference between our two daughters. That wasn't the only difference. Our oldest girl, Kirsten, could have her Halloween candy last until Easter and

then we'd throw it out. JoAnn, our youngest, would eat her candy from house to house and would come home with a full stomach and empty bag. In the summer of 1978, JoAnn had her second open heart surgery. She died July 2, 1978 at age six. When October rolled around that fall, I dreaded that evening of seeing the little children coming to the door and remembering how JoAnn loved the candy and the enthusiasm of the evening. As the evening wore on, I realized that the doorbell wasn't ringing very much. I went to the window and saw that there were plenty of children walking in little groups but they were walking past our house.

I realized then that the neighbors and people who knew us had, no doubt, told the children not to come to our house. My emotions were very mixed up. On one hand I knew the parents were trying to protect us from this first experience of not having JoAnn.

It was very kind of them. On the other hand, it only reminded me of how different our home was now. When nine o'clock came it was a relief to know the first event was over. It has been five years now since JoAnn died. Halloween doesn't bother me but we all know that the next day we turn the calendar and November is here with the holidays around the corner. For us as bereaved parents these are hard times whether you are a new bereaved parent or have had a number of years since your child died. We need not walk alone but reach out to each other. One of the greatest blessings to me now is the gift of memory and I cherish the happy memories that I have been blessed to remember JoAnn in all seasons of the year.



I Can Choose...

To Be A Survivor

- To seek out people and resources who will listen and care when I need support
- To search for meaningful things to give my life a sense of purpose
- To realize that loss is only one of the many factors in my life
- To communicate with family and friends when I need information & help
- To accept what is gone and out of my control and act on what I can do
- To try to understand how my family feels - they hurt too
- To look for ways to fight back against negative feelings
- To talk about fears with someone I trust
- To accept my grief as a recovery process in my recovery from loss
- To be angry at the circumstances of the death and seek comfort and strength from God or others

OR

To Be A Victim

- OR retreat from life and isolate myself from sources of support
- OR decide I have no hope or purpose in life and that I have nothing to live for
- OR see myself only as a bereaved parent and allow this to blacken and disrupt all aspects of my life.
- OR wait for others to discover what I need, getting angry and pitying myself when they don't.
- OR constantly pity myself over what has changed and what I can't do
- OR feel that absolutely no one can understand me and what I am going through
- OR feel that I am helpless and at the mercy of fate.
- OR bottle up fears and horrors that are unexpressed and let them have power over me.
- OR be ashamed of my grief and pretend all is well to protect others' discomfort.
- OR blame God for my circumstances and become angry, bitter and alienated from Him.

Adapted from "Positive Patterns of Survival" a segment of the "I Can Cope" course TCF, Australia



Trick or Treat

By Kathi Slief TCF, Tulsa, OK

The night is dim
And the pumpkins grin
At children on the porch.

The doorbell rings
"Trick or treat" they sing.
My heart burns like a torch.

The Dracula's face
And a princess in lace
Are peering in at me.

How I'd love to ask
"May I lift your mask?"
And hiding, there you'd be!

You'd get such a kick
From that silly trick.
But disguised you must stay.

In the wind that blows
My heart still knows
You're playing October charades.

The only kind of
courage that
matters is
the kind
that gets you
from one minute
to the next.

If You See Ghosts You're CRAZY!

By Reverend Dr. Marge Swacker

Don't you believe it. A great many people who have lost loved ones see or hear them in the days and weeks after the death. I can't explain it, but I know very normal people who have seen a loved one, heard his or her voice. Some say it's the mind playing tricks on us. Others say it is a gift meant to comfort us. Still others say this experience surprised them but did not come as a total shock. Whatever the case. I have known too many sane, normal people who have had such experiences. Don't confuse the natural working of a normal mind with the foolish stories of Edgar Allen Poe.

Fall Already

By Judy Dicky, TCF Greenwood, IN

One morning last week I woke at first light to discover that sometime during the night summer had left town. It was COLD! In my mind's eye I saw three inches of snow on the ground, and in a long dreadful parade behind the snow was the Holidays- Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's. And the wind and drippy blanket of gloom that could smother the brightest of spirits...

Wait a minute! Here I had awakened to the first breath of fall, and already I was fighting a whole winter at once! "Hey Dummy", my common sense scolded, "Don't you think it would be better to fight one snowflake at a time? If you'd stop moaning for long enough to look out the window, you'd see a prize-winning day!" And you know what? I had a great day. That is, I had a great day after I had finally gotten my overblown sense of dread under control. It's not the first time I have found myself letting my enjoyment of the present moment be dulled by my sense of dreaded anticipation. And

after all, the full extent of our lives is in the present second - the second before is gone, and even the events of the next second are hidden from us.

So, while I will still dread the times to come when I will feel the sharpness of Tim's absence, I vow not to let the winter rob me of what I know in my heart Tim would want for me - the living of my life, and the feeling of happiness and the beauty that can be had from it.

Now, all I need is for someone to call me about every day or so and remind me of my vow.

One November Day

By Sherry Brown, TCF Lehigh Valley, PA Submitted by Brenda Solderitch in memory of son Matthew

Everything we do
Changes our life in some way,
This happened to me
One November day,
That's when I had
My son; You see,
It was a joyful
Time for me.
As time went on
And years went by,
He became his own person
A wonderful guy

Those who knew Him
Loved Him so much,
It amazes me;
All the lives
He touched,
For those of you;
That he never met,
He is one person you'd
Never Forget,
He's in God's Hands
For He passed away,
But I'll always remember
That one November Day

Ten Tips to Surviving the Holidays

By TCF National

With Thanksgiving and the normally festive holidays around the corner, millions of families throughout the United States that have lost a child are struggling with how they can simply survive to see the new year. "The stress that bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents face during the hustle and bustle of the holidays can feel overwhelming," says Patricia Loder, former executive director of The Compassionate Friends. "It is difficult for those who have not gone through the death of a child to understand the depth of despair which such a loss brings."

The Compassionate Friends, is a mutual assistance self-help organization for bereaved parents and families where more seasoned grievers help support the more newly bereaved.

Mrs. Loder, whose two young children died in a car crash in 1991, says there are many tips that can help a grieving family prepare for the holidays.

- 1) Plan ahead. Realize you will not be able to do everything with everyone. Decide what is truly important to you and your family.
- 2) Don't be afraid to ask friends for help. Tasks which may normally take little effort can feel overwhelming, whether it's fixing a meal, cleaning the house, or putting up decorations.
- 3) No one expects you to string rows and rows of lights just to prove you have the holiday spirit. If you don't feel up to past efforts, you may simply want to place an electric powered candle in your window in memory of your child.
- 4) Just because you've hosted holiday gatherings in the past doesn't mean you're obligated to this year. Others will understand.

5) After a child dies, old traditions are often left behind and new ones that incorporate the child who died can take their place. Honor the memory of your child in unique ways that have meaning to you.

6) Surviving children should be included in your plans. They, too, mourn their sibling, but need a normalcy the holidays can provide.

7) If you don't get everything done you plan, be easy on yourself. Grief is tough work and you should never feel guilty for not getting everything done.

8) If you must shop for others, find a time when the stores are not extremely busy like early morning, order through the Internet, or ask others to shop for you.

9) Participating in a memorial service, such as The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting the second Sunday in December, can be very meaningful. This can be done in a formal service with others or through a short private candle lighting in the privacy of your home.

10) Remember that the fearful anticipation of an approaching holiday is usually worse than the day itself. "Many people believe they can escape the holidays by leaving home on a vacation," adds Mrs. Loder. "This rarely helps because grief can never be left behind and it is important to have the support of relatives and friends. Talking with others who have also lost a child can help those facing grief to understand they are not alone. Others have survived the holidays and they will, too."

When snowflakes dance on winter winds
And colored lights

shine Christmas cheer,
When children's laughter fills the air
And family gathers from far and near,
I try to celebrate with them
And not let my hurting show.
But the empty space within my heart,
At this season, seems to grow
'Til oftentimes it fills the days,
And many nighttimes too,
With aching thoughts and memories
Of Christmases I spent with you.

Yes, memories do hurt, it's true
But I have this feeling too.
I'm so glad I hold these memories,
For with them I hold part of you.
So for now, I'll wipe away the tears
And join with loved ones dear
To celebrate this Christmas time,
For I know that, in my heart, you're here.

Christmas Memories

Arden Lansing, TCF,
Monmouth County, NJ



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And colored lights shine Christmas cheer,

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Holiday Lights

By Bettye and Sam Rosenberg
TCF Louisville, KY



During the holiday season, both Christian and Jew light candles in celebration of their respective faiths, and as they do so even the darkest of rooms become warm and bright from the glow of the candle. Then, we can ask ourselves how powerful and sinister can the darkness be if it can be overcome by the light of one little candle.

There is then a message in this for all of us. When the darkness seems to overwhelm us, and it can be a mental and spiritual darkness as well as the darkness of winter night, we need to be reminded that it is powerless to withstand the smallest bit of illumination.

So as the world grows colder and

darker during these winter months, we as Compassionate Friends must do what people of many faiths have been taught to do at this season. Light a candle in someone's life to make the darkness and fears flee. A little bit of light is all that most of us need, but, oh, we need that little bit so badly.

So, let us all in The Compassionate Friends extend a candle of light and hope not only to each other, but to the unfortunate people who, for whatever reason, become one of us this winter and will be in need of that light. It's the least we can do and it accomplishes so much.

Together we can make it through.

One Little Candle

By Sheila Simmons
TCF Atlanta, GA

I lit a candle tonight,
in honor of you.
Remembering your life,
and all the times we'd been through

Such a small little light t
he candle made until
I realized how much in darkness
it lit the way.

All of the tears I've cried
in all my grief and pain.
What a garden they grew,
watered with human rain.

I sometimes can't see beyond the
moment, in hopeless despair.
But then your memory sustains me,
in heartaches repair.

I can wait for the tomorrow,
when my sorrows ease.
Until then, I'll light this candle
and let my memories run free.

My First Five Years As An Only Child

By Kristin Steiner. TCF. Staten Island, NY

I've been without my brother for five years. I guess the hard part is over now. Sometimes I think I have aged 30 years in the past five. In a strange way, these past five years have been the best and worst years of my life. I have accomplished the many things of a typical young adult learning to drive, graduating from high school, going to college, and starting a career.

Every one of my accomplishments has been clouded by the fact that my brother George is not here to share each milestone, and is not achieving any more milestones for himself. He was cheated of so many things. He will never graduate, get married, have children or travel. He will never grow old, and I will never have a brother to grow old with. I'll never have nieces and nephews. The sibling relationship, usually the longest relationship of one's life, has been cut short for us. In these five years, although I have learned to accept that he is not coming back, the difficult part is dealing with it day by day.

My relationship with George ended just when we started to become friends. The childish fights and other annoyances of having a big brother were changing to real conversations and to having an occasional ally. I am angry about all the things that we have missed and all the things that will never be, and I guess I always will be. Five years heals a lot of wounds, but the hurt will always be there, no matter how many years pass.

In these past five years, I have been forced to grow up too fast. I have been forced into a new outlook on life. I have felt lonely and alone. I now realize that I will never be the same person as before. Maybe I am a better person because of what I have been through. Five years ago I never thought I would survive, but I am still here dealing with it every day. I don't know what the next five years will bring, but at least I have made it this far.



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS,
LEHIGH VALLEY**

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Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

TCF Carbon County Chapter - 1st Tuesday 7- 9 pm
Leaders - Dave & Lora Krum, Phone: 484-719-6753 Email:
tcfcarboncounty@gmail.com

TCF Easton Chapter- 2nd Thursday 7 - 9 pm Leaders
John & Maria Szabo, Phone: 610-866-5468 Email:
szabojanos1@verizon.net

TCF Quakertown Chapter - 2nd Tuesday 7:30 - 9 pm
Phone: 267-380-0130, Email: contact@tcfquakertownpa.org

GRASP (grief recovery after substance passing) Contact:
Nancy Howe 484-863-4324; 484-788-9440; nancyhowe@ymail.com or Jenny Kemps - 610-442-8490

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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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.

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