



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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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.

Meetings

Our chapter meets at Bethany Wesleyan Church in Cherryville, PA

To be notified of meetings call or text the newsletter editor at 484-891-0823. We will add you to the notification list and you will be notified of upcoming meetings .

Meetings are open to bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Group participation is confidential and voluntary.

Note: In order to meet safely all attendees must agree to the following

- Face masks required for unvaccinated or partially vaccinated persons. Face masks are optional, but appreciated for those that are fully vaccinated and boosted.
- Do not attend if you are feeling ill, have been exposed to Covid, tested positive in the last 14 days or have a new unexplained rash
- Chairs will be preset to maintain social distancing
- No food is allowed

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 walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our 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.

Telephone Friends

Sometimes you may need to talk to someone who cares and understands between meetings. To help we maintain a list of telephone friends. During these times the following members are available to listen, share and offer what support they can.

Infant Loss - Kim Szep -	610-730-3111
Only Child - Shelly Garst -	484-241-5396
Addiction - Nancy Howe -	484-863-4324
Homicide - Ginger Renner -	610-967-5113

To volunteer as a telephone friend contact the newsletter editor



TCF National Support Resources

The TCF National website has over 35 private Facebook pages and a number of moderated chatrooms. To register for the FB pages or chat rooms go to www.compassionatefriends.org and click on the find support tab and then choose online communities.

Newsletter Notes

This Newsletter comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter. We hope that it will be of some comfort to you on your grief journey.

We welcome original stories and poetry from our members.

All submissions must include the author's name and your contact information. Send to the newsletter editor (address listed above)

If you move please contact the Newsletter Editor with your new address

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Why We Grieve Differently

Each of us is unique with our own personality, life experiences and ways we respond to the stress and events that happen throughout our lifetime. Therefore, it's not surprising that our grieving styles are different and no two of us will ever grieve the same way. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to feel or grieve after a loved one dies. As bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings, we are inundated with well-meaning and well-intended advice about how we should grieve and are even given imposed "rules" of grief. We are often blamed if we are too "strong and stoic" and likewise judged if we continue to grieve beyond someone's arbitrary timeframe. People grieve with different intensities over varying durations of time. Some people are more expressive with their grief and find it more helpful to talk and express their emotions while others tend to process their thoughts and emotions internally. One process is not intrinsically "better" than another - they're simply different.

Despite the fact that we grieve differently, people generally experience some fairly normal and predictable reactions and stages to traumatic loss. Initially, shock and denial are typical responses to emotional trauma and serve as a protective response to the reality of what has just occurred. You may feel as though you are walking around in a daze or feeling numb as if disconnected from your life; this usually gives way to overwhelming and intense feelings. Experience physical symptoms such as stomach cramps and feeling as though you can't breathe are common reactions. You may have a sense that your heart has broken into a million pieces. Many people experience a sensation of a knot in the center of their being and have a feeling as though they will never be whole again. You may also experience intense anger and rage.

Thoughts and behaviors may change. You may experience repeated and vivid memories and flashbacks of the event which can lead to reactions such as a rapid heartbeat or anxious feelings. Often people find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions. It is very common for sleeping and eating patterns to be disrupted for awhile. As time goes by, you may experience recurring emotional reactions to triggers such as something you see or hear, something someone says or simply the day of the week or month in which the loss occurred. When the reality of the loss begins to settle, you may sink into a deep sorrow and depression and feel your life is over. Usually with time, this gives way to a coming to terms with the reality and a discovery of ways to move beyond your suffering, integrating the loss into who you are now with a renewed sense of hope and meaning for the future. The grief journey isn't necessarily a linear process.

Sometimes you may find yourself revisiting a stage you thought you had left behind and think you're not making progress. Moving back and forth between stages is a normal part of the grieving process. Over time, symptoms of an emotional trauma generally

Continued on page 4

Our Children Remembered

October Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Brian Burke - Son of Rich & Mary Burke; Brother of Melissa Burke	Jan 3	Oct 9
Christopher Cole - Son of Donald Cole; Brother of Lauren Cole	Oct 10	Sep 10
David DeLong - Son of Gene DeLong & The late Dawn DeLong; Brother of Jamie DeLong	Oct 23	Dec 7
Jillian Faustner - Daughter of Joan Cottone; Sister of Jennifer, Jessica & James	Aug 7	Oct 21
Andrea Luecke - Daughter of Louise Luecke; Sister of Jennae Luecke	Jan 30	Oct 23
Joseph McDonald - Son of Cathy McDonald	Dec 26	Oct 13
Deanna Renner - Daughter of Ginger Renner & The late Merle Renner	Oct 11	Oct 22
Scott Rothrock - Son of Larry & Linda Rothrock	Oct 20	Sep 18
Kevin Stewart - Son of Joanne Stewart; Brother of Keith Stewart and The Late Constance Stewart	Oct 6	Jun 15
David Uecker - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker; Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki	Aug 2	Oct 3
Gilbert Weiss - Brother of Ginger Renner	Nov 17	Oct 22
Adam Wolk - Son of Michael & Sheila Wolk; Brother of Laura & Sarah Wolk	Aug 1	Oct 22

Donations & Contributions

★ **Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA**
For our meeting space

★ **Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions**
In Memory of David Todd Smith

★ **Aetna Payroll Contributors**

★ **United Way Payroll Contributors**

★ **The Matt Kush Foundation**
In Memory of Matt Kush



Love Gifts



Love Gifts enable us to reach out to newly bereaved and provide ongoing support to all members.

They may be given in memory of a child or in memory or in honor of a friend or relative.

Please use form in this newsletter to donate. Gifts are tax deductible.

Contributor	Loved One
♥ Gene and Jamie DeLong	David DeLong and Dawn DeLong <i>In honor of David's 45th birthday on October 23rd and in loving memory of our wife and mother Dawn; 3 years without you on October 4th.</i>



This House and I

I think this house and I shall grow old together and fall down around one another.

How can I paint the walls when his breath has coated them?

How can I wash the door frames when the smudges of his fingerprints surely are still there?

How can I patch the hole I kicked in the wall in the weeks after he died?

How can I clean the carpets that still hold billions of his skin cells, his DNA?

How can I throw out the old, broken chair that he sat and slept in?

How can I clear the air that sometimes still carries his scent?

How can I ever fix the broken hearts of his mother, his sisters and I?

How long must I wait?

Jack McPeck TCF of Spokane, WA

(Continued from page 2)

subside to a manageable level and normal daily functioning gradually returns. If you find yourself resorting to destructive means of coping with the loss or having difficulty moving forward you should seek professional help.

However, people respond to a traumatic loss, it is important to recognize that we are unique individuals with unique styles, intensities of our emotions and timetables. We will all respond differently to the loss of a loved one. When we honor this truth, we can then accept our own manner of grieving and be sensitive and respectful to another's response to loss. We all have our own unique personal journey back to wholeness and healing.

By Pamela Leonhardt, PsyD, & bereaved mother

The "Veteran" Bereaved Parent

Have you ever attended a TCF meeting to see a "veteran" bereaved parent shed a tear or openly show grief and have wondered why after all that time??

Please don't get the wrong idea - the wrong idea being:

1. You won't ever cry after ten years
2. You won't feel a need to still attend TCF meetings.
3. You won't feel like sticking with TCF in case a newly bereaved parent needs you.
4. You won't care enough to stay and help organize future meetings.
5. You won't feel compassionate enough to hear a newly bereaved parent talk of their grief.

Yes, some veteran bereaved parents move on and I wish them peace. But I am personally grateful for veteran bereaved parents who stay with TCF. What would newly bereaved parents do if they attended their first meeting and no one was there?

By Sandy Smith, TCF/, Greater Cincinnati Area, OH

Fall



Leaves so bright and golden in the sun,
Glistening in early morning with dew.

Another season has begun,
Another fall to see, without you.
Pumpkins so ripe and beautifully bright,
In the still of a frosty night.

An array of colors for us to enjoy
Their beauty only dulled by the thought
Of our emptiness without our little boy.

The wind and the cold
and the awesome dark skies,
Somehow disappear in the memory
Of your beautiful brown eyes.
We see the beauty of fall colors so clear,
Oh, how I wish you were here!

The harvest moon shining,
Through the barren trees,
As we prepare for the first hint of snow,
Reminds us of a child who only meant to please,
And all those memories, only you will know.
Life goes on, as the seasons do.
But there's one thing that stays the same,
And that is OUR LOVE FOR YOU!

Jean Staicar, TCF Central Iowa

*You left us so quickly
There were no goodbyes
How long is this forever
Your death and our lives*

Genesse Gentry

The Grief of a Parent Who Has Lost An Infant

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 the 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:

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 afterbirth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.

NO MEMORIES - Parents may only have "souvenirs of the 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 feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.

LONELINESS IN GRIEF - It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is 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."

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.

MOTHERS vs. FATHERS - Since the mother has bonded with her child 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.

*Claire McGoughey & Sue Shelley
Infant Group, TCF, St Louis, MO*

Little Baby

Little baby who was not to be,
You were a person . . . at least to me.
Would your eyes be blue?
Or hazel and dark?

Would you caw like the crow?
Or sing like a lark?
Would you have ten little fingers
and ten tiny toes?
A rosebud mouth, a turned up nose?

Would you be laughing and happy,
Or somber and quiet?
Would you run and jump or rather be still?
Would you like to read, or prefer to play?

None of my questions will have an answer.
Your chance to live will never be.
The only thing I truly know . . . Little baby,
We would have loved you so!

Joan D. Schmidt TCF Spotswood, NJ

I Lied

*I lied and said I was busy. I was
busy, but not in a way most people
understand.*

~I was busy taking deeper breaths.

*~I was busy silencing irrational
thoughts.*

~ I was busy calming a racing heart.

~ I was busy telling myself I am okay.

*Sometimes, this is my busy & I will not
apologize for it !*

Brittin Oakma

Loving lifted from the TCF Portland, OR newsletter



My Witch and My Angel

For Zoe Halloween is just about as good as it gets. Not much in my daughter's world beats candy, costumes, friends, make-up, and staying up late even on a school night. Life at age six can be gloriously simple.

But I don't know much of what my son Max thought of Halloween. When he died at age two, he only had one real "trick-or-treat" to his credit. That year, 1987, I dressed him in a pumpkin costume and we traipsed to a few neighbors. I took far too many pictures. Max was a fiend for sweets and with the candy ration lifted for the evening, he had to be living well.

I imagine that year would have been his last dressed as a mommy-pleasing pumpkin. At three or four I knew he would demand Ninja or pirate costumes; I would have laughingly bought them and maybe even the plastic sword. I would have let him paint grotesque stitches across his nose and wear fangs that glowed in the dark.

Instead, this is Zoe's year to cast aside the girly version of Max's pumpkin cap. The beloved pink princess frills and red nail polish are being exchanged for a witch hat and black glue-on fingernails sharpened into talons. For the first time, she wants to be Scary and Ugly. With mahogany lipstick and smoky eyes, she will fly out the door in less than a month to cross one more threshold that her brother did not.

I can see the evening now. As I assemble face paints on the counter, I will take a deep breath -the same one I take every year at every holiday and milestone. With my unsteady hand I will design witchy warts and create wrinkles on Zoe's perfect face. I will declare her the Scariest and Ugliest of All.

But as I help my little witch into her costume, I know my eyes will fill with tears. I will think about the years that were supposed to be: a young boy as Dracula, a 13 year-old teen in baggy clothes escorting his little witch-sister down the block. Who would he be now, the toddler we knew, the boy we lost? What would our life be like if the scary things were still just make-believe?

Zoe will see my tears, but she won't be alarmed: in our family's emotional lexicon, sad and happy often go together and crying is as OK as laughing. She will ask me why I'm sad and I will tell her the truth: I am thinking about Max and wishing he could be here.

And although she is now the mean and fierce Witch Zoe, she will nod her head with understanding. Her plastic nails will lightly graze my arm as she reaches to pat me. Suddenly the frown on her face will disappear and she repeats what has become her annual Halloween revelation: "Mommy, it's OK. Don't forget that Max can go 'trick-or-treat' as an angel." She describes a glittering figure, luminous wings aflutter, giant treat bag at the ready. I smile at the idea and the moment passes.

Later, I light the candle in the pumpkin and watch Zoe skip next door to show off her costume. She heads up the sidewalk, stopping halfway to turn and wave to me. She makes her scariest face and yells, "Mom take my picture!" I raise my camera and look through the viewfinder. As the flash glows briefly in the dusk, I see a beautiful angel standing in the shadows beside her. But this angel doesn't wear white and his wings have been clipped. I am sure he never had a golden halo. He is a small chubby boy with a jack-o-lantern face on his tummy and chocolate on his fingers. It is 1987 and he is having a really great Halloween.

Just like his sister.



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In memory of Max
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The Compassionate Friends

Season of Many Feelings

Fall is a season of many feelings

Autumn is here once again as it comes every year
And with the leaves my falling tears.

This time of year is the hardest of all

My heart is still breaking, once again it is fall.
Memories once so vivid are seeming to fade, My
time spent with you seems some other age. This
season reminds me of grief and of pain, But yet
teaches of hope and of joy once again.

For the trees are still living beneath their gray
bark, And you my sweet child are alive in my
heart!

By Cinda Schake, TCF, Butler, PA



Sibling Page

Two Viewpoints

The following letter, signed "Sibling," appeared in the Louisville, KY newsletter. It is a poignant expression of love and pain that is typical of siblings' reactions. It is hoped that, for those of you with teenagers, it will offer clues leading to freer communications and sharing of feelings.

Dear Parents of "Compassionate Friends":

I am writing to let you know how I feel and maybe how some of the other siblings feel. There have been times when my parents start really getting extra down about my brother. I usually leave the room. I feel that no matter how hard I try, I will say or do something that will hurt them more, or that they won't understand what I'm really trying to say. They already feel enough pain. I really love them and I understand enough about how they hurt, but I'm just not good at saying what I feel. It seems like it never sounds right.

I also hold my emotions back from them. I always hear it is best to let it out, and I do, but not in front of my parents. I'm afraid they might try to hold their emotions back in front of me, so I won't get upset. I've had rough times for the past couple of years, and I'm still having hard times, so I'm always afraid they will hold back if they see me getting upset. I know that would just hurt them more when they try to hold it back. I love to talk about the good times my brother and I had, but I'd just rather be alone when I cry for him.

Just once in a while my sister and I can talk about him, but that's the only person I can really talk to. I hope and pray with all my heart that my parents will understand, but I just can't talk to them. I miss my brother a lot, more than I think they really realize. I love and care for them too much to go and upset them even more.

Maybe I'm wrong, but please parents, understand how I feel. May we always be close.

Love, Sibling

To Be A Kid Again

I want to go back to the time when:

- ~Decisions were made by going "eeny-meeny-miney-mo."
- ~Mistakes were corrected by simply exclaiming, "Do over!"
- ~"Race issue" meant arguing about who ran the fastest.
- ~Money issues were handled by whoever was the banker in "Monopoly."
- ~Catching the fireflies could happily occupy an entire evening.
- ~It wasn't odd to have two or three "best" friends.
- ~Being old referred to anyone over 20.
- ~The net on a tennis court was the perfect height to play volleyball and rules didn't matter.
- ~The worst thing you could catch from the opposite sex was cooties.
- ~It was magic when dad would "remove" his thumb.
- ~It was unbelievable that dodge ball wasn't an Olympic event.
- ~Having a weapon in school meant being caught with a slingshot.
- ~Nobody was prettier than Mom.
- ~Scrapes and bruises were kissed and made better.
- ~It was a big deal to finally be tall enough to ride the "big people" rides at the amusement park.
- ~Getting a foot of snow was a dream come true.
- ~Abilities were discovered because of a "double-dog-dare."
- ~Saturday morning cartoons weren't 30-minute ads for action figures.
- ~No shopping trip was complete unless a new toy was brought home.
- ~"Oly-oly-oxen-free" made perfect sense.
- ~Spinning around, getting dizzy, and falling down was cause for giggles.
- ~The worst embarrassment was being picked last.
- ~War was a card game.
- ~Water balloons were the ultimate weapon.
- ~Baseball cards in the spokes transformed any bike into a motorcycle.
- ~Taking drugs meant orange-flavored chewable aspirin.
- ~Ice cream was considered a basic food group.
- ~Older siblings were the worst tormentors; but, also the fiercest protectors!

Author Unknown

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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.

We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.

Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

TCF Carbon County - 484-719-6753

TCF Easton - 610-515-3526

TCF Quakertown - 215-703-8431

GRASP (grief recovery after substance passing)

TCF Pocono - 570 - 350 - 6695

484-863-4324 or 610-442-8490

Love Gift Form

Your love gift will help defray the cost of chapter expenses such as the newsletter mailings, meetings and our outreach to the newly bereaved. The Compassionate Friends is a 501c(3) non-profit organization and your donations are fully tax deductible.

Deadlines are the 1st of the month previous to the month you wish publication in. Example the deadline for publication in January is December the 1st

Contributor Name (this will be the name that appears in the newsletter)

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I would like to make a donation of _____ ☐ In Memory of ☐ In Honor of ☐ A Chapter Gift (without memorial or honorarium)

Name of person gift given for

Edition to be published in. Deadlines listed above. Late submissions or those that do not indicate an edition will be published in the next edition.

Special Text - Brief Messages Please. Poems & story submissions are always welcome and should be sent directly to the Newsletter Editor for inclusion in the newsletter.

Please designate which of the following your gift is for (you may circle more than one)

Newsletter Expenses

Postage

Office Expenses

Outreach Program

Special Events