



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 shall be worn covering the nose and mouth at all times during meetings. Bandanas, Scarves etc are not acceptable
- Do not attend if you are feeling ill, have been exposed to Covid or have tested positive in the last 14 days
- 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 below)

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

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Shared Thoughts On Healing, But Never Forgetting



We lost our son, Doug, 28 years ago. I did not run away from anything. I met it all head-on, but all the while, feeling the intensity of the pain would last a lifetime. **I did my grief work**, I shared my grief with most anyone who wanted to listen. (probably with some who did not want to listen) After a while, I noticed I did not have the need to speak of my grief, and could find healing in listening to, and trying to salve other's pain. This played a big role in my becoming functional again. For the most part, my life is enjoyable and filled with anticipation and looking for a tomorrow.

The one thing I cannot get past is feeling the pain for the newly bereaved. Because I have "been there" their pain becomes my pain. Several years ago our steering committee decided it would be beneficial for those attending a Compassionate Friends meeting for the first time, to meet separately. Having previously talked to most of these people by phone, gave me some insight on their background, therefore I seemed the logical one to facilitate this group.

This was a very good experience for me. It reiterated that we heal, but we don't forget. Perhaps the remembering is what gives us compassion and the desire to reach out to those hurting so badly. Much of the devastation of our loss is the same for all of us, the deep depression, anger, guilt, no interest in life around us, "going over the edge", worry about losing another, crying, can't cry, marital deterioration, unable to fulfill obligations with our family and work situations. I so want to make them better **now**, teach them to love again (particularly themselves), restore their faith in their supreme being, help them sort grief from true marital problems, and tell them we have all felt like we were going over the edge (but didn't).

It seems so little to offer, "your feelings are normal, you will get better, and become functional again". If the newly bereaved could **truly believe** these words, then I guess that is **a lot** to offer. But I feel most of them are saying "you don't know how deep I have fallen in the pit" and this transition could never happen to me. (This was my reaction in the early stages) Believe me, we know where the bottom is, we've been there. We can learn to smile again; we can even learn to live again, once we have let go of some of the pain. Be patient, this doesn't happen soon. If it has not been long enough for you to see progress, look at those at The Compassionate Friends meetings, who have moved ahead in their grief. They didn't love any less, they have not forgotten how intense your pain can be, and they are just in a different place in their grief. Many have stayed to help you through your loss; their very presence says its possible to survive.

They are healing, but never forgetting.

God Bless, Marie Hofmockel, TCF Valley Forge, PA

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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.

We thank the following this month for their generosity

Contributor	Loved One
♥ Lucille V. Radocha	Peter A. Radocha <i>In Loving Memory</i>

Our Children Remembered

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

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Jessica Finlayson - Daughter of Eric & Jean Dalstad ; Sister of Rebecca Dalstad	Mar 19	Jan 22
John Fry - Son of Cathy McDonald	Mar 19	Jun 14
Eileen Collins Gant -Daughter of The Late John & Dorothy Collins; Sister of John, Steven, Kathleen & Brian Collins & MaryAnn Watkins	Mar 25	Feb 14
Sgt. Christopher Geiger -Son of George & Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Michael, Terrance, David & Timothy Geiger	Mar 30	Jul 9
Brian Gum - Son of Geary & Brenda Gum	Feb 21	Mar 5
Emma McNulty - Daughter of Jessica & Susan Katzbeck	Nov 19	Mar 11
Jim Minter - Brother of Jeanine Minter	Aug 15	Mar 14
Mardelle Parenti-Blume - Daughter of Brian & Nancy Kleckner	Feb 9	Mar 1
Sheena Villa - Daughter of Bill Villa; Daughter of Barbara Maquera; Step Daughter of Angie Villa; Sister of Patrick Villa, Cruz Maquera & Gianni Villa	Mar 23	Mar 24

Today we remember the day we were blessed with your birth.
 How wonderful to have your life to share upon this earth.
 Too few birthdays you spent with us, now another in heaven.
 We wonder what our lives would be if you were still here in them.
 But sadly it is not our fate to spend our days with you.
 So we will cherish our memories to help see us through.
 Our memories of your smile, compassionate, generous ways,
 The joy you brought to all you saw each and every day.
 Oh Son how we wish so bad we could be together,
 But always know we love you today, tomorrow and forever.
 Happy Birthday precious angel, may your spirit soar above,
 Mom, Dad, Sister, family and friends sending all our love.

Cindy McClain, TCF of the Wabash Valley, IN In Memory of my son Dylan



SPRING: Hope or More Pain

By Margaret Gerner,
BP/USA St. Louis, MO

Here it comes! Spring! Flowers blooming, weather warming, the cold of winter is behind us. We're coming up out of our pain, right? Wrong!

My six-year-old son Arthur was killed by an automobile on Friday, May 28, 1971. The Easter before was the last time we were together as a complete family. For years after, spring and especially the Easter season began the realization that we were no longer a complete family, and never would be again. Each year brought a new year of pain.

When the first spring came after Arthur was killed, I thought I would be better. Buds popped out and my sadness was deeper. Faster came, and my pain was no less. The temperature rose, but the coldness in my heart never left.

Many more springs came and none of them brought the relief I prayed for. For me, the hope and renewal that was supposed to be a part of spring was a lie.

Ironically, though, the beginning of the resolution of my grief began in the spring of 1978. My grief, which by this time had become prolonged and distorted, created a number of other problems in my life. Among them, was the deterioration of my marriage.

We began seeing a marriage counselor. I couldn't believe it when he told me that it was not only acceptable, but necessary to face Arthur's death and talk about the pain and emotions I had been encouraged to suppress all these years.

Mine is a long story of struggle and determination, of steps and missteps, and pain and sadness and loss. But it is also a long story of change and growth. The beginning of the resolution of my grief may have started then, but it didn't all happen in spring. It took place over many seasons.

Various seasons are significant for all of us. The Christmas holidays may be significant for you. The middle of June for someone else. A colorful fall may be significant for another. But, for some reason, we are led to believe that spring will bring a lessening of our pain. This is not true. Spring is simply a time of year. It's a date. It's a season. It's symbolic. But, spring is not magic.

Yes, it holds promises, but those promises are only brought to fruition when we work at them. Spring can be the impetus for change. The changes that take place in nature can cause us to do what we need to do to resolve our grief. The beauty of spring can be the factor that encourages us to find beauty in our lives again. Yes, we see growth and change and renewal all around us in spring. But it won't happen for us unless we make it happen.

In early grief, we hardly see spring come. We are so immersed in our pain and desolation that it is hard to see anything. Just as winter comes before spring, dark painful grief work comes before we begin to see the light of comfortable life again. Don't expect to sidestep the healthy, albeit painful, normal, and long process of grief. Don't endow a season with magic to make changes in you. Hard grief work is that will get you to the other side of your child's death, not a date on the calendar.



Crocuses poke their heads
through the crusty snow to let us
know the long, bleak winter is
ending and spring will come again.

So, too, the long bleak winter of your
aching, breaking heart will end and
spring will come again one day.

Be patient, but believe it -
your spring will come again.

15 Things I Wish I'd Known About Grief

Lovingly Lifted from The Compassionate Friends of Delaware County, April 2018 Newsletter

1. You will feel like the world has ended. I promise, it hasn't. Life will go on, slowly. A new normal will come slowly.
2. No matter how bad a day feels. It is only a day. When you go to sleep crying, you will wake up to a new day.
3. Grief comes in waves. You might be okay one hour, not okay the next. Okay one day, not okay the next day. Okay one month, not okay the next. Learn to go with the flow of what your heart and mind are feeling.
4. It's okay to cry. Do it often. But it's okay to laugh, too. Don't feel guilty for feeling positive emotions even when dealing with loss.
5. Take care of yourself, even if you don't feel like it. Eat healthily. Work out. Do the things you love. Remember that you are still living.
6. Don't shut people out. Don't cut yourself off from relationships. You will hurt yourself and others.
7. No one will respond perfectly to your grief. Even people you love will let you down. Friends you thought would be there won't be there, and people you hardly know will reach out. Be prepared to give others space. Be prepared to work through hurt and forgiveness at others' reactions.
8. God will be there for you perfectly. He will never, ever let you down. He will let you scream, cry, and question. Throw all your emotions at Him. He is near to the brokenhearted.
9. Take time to truly remember the person you lost. Write about him or her, go back to all your memories with them, truly soak in all the good times you had with that person. It will help.
10. Facing the grief is better than running. Don't hide from the pain. If you do, it will fester and grow and consume you.
11. You will ask, "Why?" more times than you thought possible, but you may never get an answer. What helps is asking, "How can I embrace others, how can I change and grow because of this?"
12. You will try to escape grief by getting busy, busy, busy. You will think if you don't think about it, it'll just go away. This isn't really true. Take time to process and heal.
13. Liquor, sex, drugs, hobbies, work, relationships, etc., will not take the pain away. If you are using anything to try to numb the pain, it will make things worse in the long run. Seek help if you're dealing with the sorrow in unhealthy ways.
14. It's okay to ask for help. It's okay to need people. It's okay, it's okay, it's okay.
15. Grief can be beautiful and deep and profound. Don't be afraid of it. Walk alongside it. You may be surprised at what grief can teach you.

*In this world there are many kinds of longing,
But no longing to match the longing for one's child*

Ki No Tourayuki



My Swing

Out in the backyard
Was the most wonderful thing,
From a huge maple tree
There hung my swing.

When I had a problem
A bad day at school,
Straight to my swing
That's what I'd do!

I'd swing away worries
Swing high in the air,
When I was there swinging
I hadn't a care.

Now I am much older
The pains run so deep,
I have much depression
And I cannot sleep.

Now I am childless
I don't have my boy,
My reason for living
The source of my joy.

My life is so different
Not a minute goes by,
When I can become tearful
I just start to cry.

My husband's so patient
With me all these years,
He never stops trying
To stop all my tears.

He gave me a gift
Only a true friend can bring,
He gave me back comfort
He gave me my swing!

Diane Hornis Alive Alone Newsletter, Feb. 1999

Should Have Been 31 Weeks Today

© Sue Morton
Family Friend Poems

Most days it's just easier
to smile and say I'm ok
instead of telling people
what I really want to say.

Things happen for a reason
is what people tell me.
But just because the brain knows that,
the heart doesn't listen, you see?

It's not just something to "get over,"
like a cold or simple flu.
This emotional roller coaster of HELL
is just something I must go through.

Nobody can truly understand
what I feel inside,
how all I want to do
is stay in bed and hide.

Everyone's pain is different;
nobody's is the same.
This dreadful, dreadful emptiness
leaves me feeling insane.

My heart is broken.
It will never mend.
I still haven't seen this light
that's supposedly around the bend.

Originally Published by Family Friend Poems
Source: familyfriendpoems.com

Time

It is has been said "Time heals all wounds". I do not agree. The wounds remain.
In time, the mind (protecting its sanity) covers them with scar tissue and the pain
lessens. But it is never gone.

Rose Kennedy

Sibling Page

Change is Natural

By Marydith Ferris, TCF St. Petersburg, FL
Reprinted from "This Healing Journey," A Bereaved Sibling's Anthology

Sometimes I sit and think of what my life would be like today if my brother were still alive. I think of my graduation day and cry because he wasn't there to share my laughter and joy when I received my diploma. Then I think back to his graduation day, knowing how happy he was and how excited he was to join the real world. Now that I have graduated, I don't feel the same excitement or joy because he is not here to share it with me.

The loss of my brother has changed my life forever. I would do anything to bring him back so everything would be the same as it was before. But I can't. I love my brother and I always will. I miss him more than anything.

When you lose someone as close to you as a brother, you tend to change for good and for bad. Sometimes people change by becoming more loving to others who are close to them, and that can be good. There are some people who change by becoming more withdrawn into themselves. That is what happened to me.

Before my brother's death, I would very rarely discuss my problems with someone else. Now I don't discuss them at all. Now I tend to react much more quickly to all kinds of situations. Sometimes I blow up at people when they did nothing wrong. I will apologize and they think I am crazy. But if you simply explain the situation and apologize, they do understand.

What I am trying to say is that change is a natural thing; we just have unique circumstances under which we change. Most people will automatically understand, but there are a few who need some explanations. Just know that you are okay and don't worry about what others think. Know inside that you are doing what you need to do to get better.

Random Reflections

Tammy Walmann – Miami Co., KS

It's been a year now
And the books say
I should be Getting back to "normal."

But I still can't pass your picture
On the bookcase without
Touching your face.

I still wake up in the night
Sometimes and can almost
Hear your voice in the quiet.

I still run to the window when the
Dogs bark at night with the hope
In the back of my mind that somehow
You've wandered into the yard.

I still whisper your name into the wind
When I walk down our lane in the still
Of evening and strain to hear an answer.

When I'm troubled and upset
I still talk to you like I always did and
Imagine the advice you'd give me.

I still stop on our dark country road
Sometime and turn off the car engine
And lights and wait and hope that
I can see or hear you.

It's been a year now and the
Memories are still so vivid
That I can almost touch them.

It's been a year now and I know
With all my heart that your
Presence will never fade in my mind.

Life can be the same after a trinket is lost,
But never after the loss of a treasure.

Paul Irion, TCF Savannah, GA

The Compassionate Friends Credo Copyright © 2007

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 - 267-380-0130

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

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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