



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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September

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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 support group meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Group participation is confidential and voluntary.

The Lehigh Valley chapter meets at Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA the second Monday of the month at 7pm

For information about meetings, directions to our meeting space or to be added to the meeting text reminder list call or text 484-891-0823

Note: For the safety of all attendees

- Face masks are required for unvaccinated, optional for fully vaccinated.
- Please do not attend if you feel ill, were exposed to Covid, the Flu, or tested positive in the last 14 days

Next Meeting Sept.

Note: If we need to cancel the meeting we will notify everyone on the text list and post the cancelation on our facebook page - facebook.com/TCFLehighValley

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

Newsletter Editor Contact

- by mail:

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Shared Thoughts on Shock & Denial

Shock is often our survival after the loss of a child or sibling. Our minds go into a state of numbness that insulates us from the pain of fully facing the death all at once. We have discussed anticipatory grief with long term illness, and most will say even though the physician predicts the loved one to be terminal, the mind will still hold back in accepting the fact that death is inevitable.

It is natural to deny anything that will bring such unbearable pain. We use this cushion to get us through that very early stage of our grief, whether it be sudden or long-term. Our brain tries to take one step at a time.

In retrospect, the numbness that shock brought, insulated and cushioned me enough to survive. The time we stay in shock varies greatly. It can be an aide in our grief, but we can not stay there forever.

We usually move into denial. I found myself stuck here for a while; I just didn't want to face the fact that future plans did not include Doug. I wasn't finished mothering him, and having many other children did not help in the beginning. I had a lot of unfinished love that belonged to Doug alone, and it could not be directed toward another child. I felt very guilty for being so all consumed with grief, and not being able to function for my surviving children.

We aren't ready to move on, so we frequently tell ourselves it is all a bad dream that will go away. We don't want to be a part of anything that says our child is dead. The pain is too great to admit our loss is permanent. We can never approve of the happening, but we eventually have to acknowledge the fact that it did happen, so that we can establish where we are. Once we totally acknowledge the death, we move on to other stages of grief.

No matter how well we have learned the grief stages, we can not rush through them to reach the other side. It is called grief work because of the effort and time it takes. We must lean into the pain. It is so gut-wrenching, and we have all had feelings that we just can't survive it. But it softens, we learn to live and love ourselves again. We regain our ability to feel, look for a tomorrow, and all those good memories that we worried about forgetting are still there. When the healing takes away the gut-wrenching pain, the memories can be pleasant. I wish you could be where I am, without going through where I have been. Peace is there for us, but never comes as soon as we would like it to. Be patient with yourself

Marie Hofmockel . TCF Valley Forge

Our Children Remembered

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

	Birth	Anniv.
Holly Cavanaugh - Daughter of Bill Cavanaugh; Sister of Bo Cavanaugh	Apr 27	Sep 25
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 - Son of Marie Daud	Nov 4	Sep 16
Chelsie Graham - Daughter of Chris and Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
Raquel Guerra - Daughter of Jeff and Kathi Kline	Sep 12	Sep 16
David Hoagland, Jr - Son of Gypsy Garrett	Sep 24	Apr 26
Nykolas LaRosa - Son of Shelly Youwakim; Brother of Krystole LaRosa	Sep 25	Oct 28
Anthony "Tony" Mariani, II - Son of Kathleen Collins & the late Anthony E. Mariani; Stepson of Brian Collins; Brother of Matthew Mariani; Grandson of William Pickett	Sep 13	Sep 6
Suzanne Miller - Daughter of Russell and Margaret Billig	Nov 28	Sep 28
Scott Rothrock - Son of Larry and Linda Rothrock	Oct 20	Sep 18
Konnor Roy - Son of Dale and Cynthia Roy	Sep 21	Jun 2
Leo Shiner - Grandson of Morris and Maggie Shiner	Nov 23	Sep 8
Constance Stewart - Daughter of Joanne Stewart; Sister of Keith Stewart & The Late Kevin J. Stewart	Sep 23	Feb 1
Sean Virmalo - Son of Udo and Janet L. Virmalo; Brother of Eric, Brett & Katelyn Virmalo	Sep 13	Apr 28
Stephanie Volkert - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zachary Volkert	Sep 22	Feb 12
Hunter Yeagle - Son of Terree and Brett Oakwood	Aug 1	Sep 6



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. Gifts are tax deductible.

Contributor	Loved One
♥ Larry & Linda Rothrock	Scott G. Rothrock <i>All our love and memories</i>
♥ Maggie & Morris Shiner	Leo Shiner <i>In loving memory of our wonderful grandson Leo, passed September 8th at the age of 25. Missed terribly. Pop-Pop and Nana</i>

Donations & Contributions

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ★ Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA
<i>For our meeting space</i> | ★ Aetna Payroll Contributors |
| ★ Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions
<i>In Memory of David Todd Smith</i> | ★ United Way Payroll Contributors |
| | ★ The Matt Kush Foundation
<i>In Memory of Matt Kush</i> |

I Wish You Were Here Today

I wish you were here today
 Even for a little while
 So I could say Happy Birthday
 And see your beautiful smile

The only gifts today will be
 The ones you left behind
 The laughter, joy and happiness
 Precious memories...the best kind

Today I'll do my very best
 To try to find a happy place
 Struggling to hide my heavy heart
 and the tears on my face

I'll sit quietly and look at you picture
 Thinking of you with love
 Hoping you're doing okay
 In Heaven up Above

Kidaca, AllPoetry.com

When Someone Takes His Own Life

by Norman Vincent Peale

In many ways, this seems the most tragic form of death. Certainly it can entail more shock and grief for those who are left behind than any other. And often the stigma of suicide is what rests most heavily on those left behind

And my heart goes out to those who are left behind, because I know that they suffer terribly. Children in particular are left under a cloud of differentness all the more terrifying because it can never be fully explained or lifted. The immediate family of the victim is left wide open to tidal waves of guilt: "What did I fail to do that I should have done? What did I do that was wrong?" To such grieving persons I can only say, "Lift up your heads and your hearts. Surely you did your best. And surely the loved one who is gone did his best, for as long as he could. Remember, now, that his battles and torments are over. Do not judge him, and do not presume to fathom the mind of God where this one of His child is concerned."

A few years ago, when a young man died by his own hand, a service for him was conducted by his pastor, the Rev. Weston Stevens. What he said that day expresses far more eloquently than I can, the message that I'm trying to convey. Here are some of his 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 his strength. At last these adversaries overwhelmed him. And it appeared that he had lost the war. But did he? I see a host of victories that he has won!

"For one thing, he has won our admiration, because even if he lost the war, we give him credit for his bravery on the battlefield. And we give him credit for the courage and pride and hope that he used as his weapons as long as he could. We shall remember not his death, but his daily victories gained through his kindnesses and thoughtfulness, through his love for family and friends, for animals and books and music, for all things beautiful, lovely and honorable. We shall remember not his last day of defeat, but we shall

remember the many days that he was victorious over overwhelming odds. We shall remember not the years we thought he had left, but the intensity with which he lived the years that he had. Only God knows what this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul. But our consolation is that God does know, and understands."

If You Would Have Known

If you could have seen the devastation,
shattered hearts you'd leave behind,
would you still have left this world that day?
Would it have made you change your mind?

If you'd known we'd cry so violently
and struggle just to breathe,
would that have made a difference?
Would you still have chosen to leave?

You left without a warning;
you left without saying "goodbye."
You left us with only questions.
The most important one is "why?"

Why did you believe
you had to face this world alone?
Why did you suffer silently?
We would have helped if we had known.

How long had you been hurting
before deciding you were done?
I'm glad your pain has ended,
but our pain has just begun.

So when you see us start to fall apart,
when our pain is too much to bear,
please take our hands and guide us;
remind us that you're there.

Help us hold on to the part of you;
you left us with your song.
Keep playing it in heaven.
We'll write the words and sing along

Shelby N. Merchen.

Family Friend Poems, Sep 2020.

<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com>

Hope Defined

H TCF offers us help in learning how to heal when we don't know where to begin. TCF offers us a hand to hold when we feel lost and a reassuring hug when times are tough. TCF offers us an opportunity to be honest about our feelings without fear of judgment or censure. TCF shows us that happiness can again be possible as we move once again into life, honoring our children's memory as we go.

O TCF gives us an opportunity to be open and forthright in expressing our deepest emotions. TCF gives us an outlet for our anger, frustration, and TCF provides ongoing outreach and support when those in our other support systems may have receded or disappeared altogether as our grief journey moves from days and weeks into months and years. TCF offers us a sense of optimism that life can be good again and that the intense pain of early grief will not last forever.

P TCF helps us gain perspective on what we are experiencing, yet has the patience to listen to our story as many times as we need to tell it. TCF offers us a place where we may feel safe and protected as we share our pain and our memories. TCF offers us the promise of more inner peace as we move toward a place of remembering more about our children's life and dwelling less on the circumstances of the death. TCF helps us understand the need to pardon ourselves for any mistakes we may feel we made as parents and not to blame ourselves for our children's death.

E TCF provides education about the grief process, so that we may better understand and cope with what is happening to us. TCF offers encouragement that our pain will not always be so great and that we will survive. TCF members provide the true empathy that only those who have walked our path can know. TCF offers us a chance to express what is in our hearts and embraces us with understanding.

Susan Chan, Topeka, KS, TCF Chapter

Lady Liberty must have shed tears

*I wonder what she thought
as she stood there, strong and tall.
She couldn't turn away.
She was forced to watch it all*

*Did she long to offer comfort
As her powerful country bled?
With her arm forever frozen
high above her head.*

*She could not shield her eyes
She could not hide her face.
She just stared across the water,
keeping freedom's place*

*The smell of smoke and terror
somehow reduced her size.
So small within the harbor
but still we recognized...*

*How dignified and beautiful
on a day so many died.
I wonder what she thought
and I know she must have cried.*



Angela Cimmino

New York Native, Billings TCF

In memory of those that lost their lives on September 11th

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 Wagner



Grieving Grandparents Grandparent's Day



Reading the stories about grieving grandparents, I can't help but be reminded of something my mother told me about a year ago. I had just received several cards on Christopher's birthday and was telling her about every acknowledgement I received. She started to cry and told me how grateful she was to know others reached out to me in my sorrow and grief.

Then she said, "I wish someone would remember me in that way sometimes. No body thinks I hurt but I do. I hurt so much for you and I miss Christopher so much, but my friends never acknowledge my grandson's birthday to me, or the anniversary of his death."

Then I realized that I too, just like them, was one of those people who didn't understand her needs. She has always been so supportive and always, always, talks about Christopher, yet even I had failed to ever send a card or note to her that just said, I know you hurt too, for me and for Chris and I know your life is different now too. She so desperately needed to know that others understood her pain and she felt so alone in her grief. She felt so out of place with her grief because it wasn't HER son. She felt like she was "only" his grandmother, therefore not entitled to be remembered in any special way.

I think grandparents often really are the forgotten grievers. I can tell you without a doubt that my mother's pain is every bit as intense and devastating to her as my pain is to me. For every tear I shed, she sheds two. One for me and one for him.

Please remember your parents along this journey too. Because all those little acts of kindness that mean so much to us, mean equally as much to them as well. We can never assume they know that we understand their pain. We have to tell them. They need to be remembered too.

*Blessings Mickey Crawford - Chris' mom,
Lawrenceville, GA TCF*

Double Grief

The death of my grandchild
And the grief of my son
Pull on my heart strings
And I am undone

In secret I mourn beyond relief
for I have been given a double grief.
God, Help me to deal with the pain and sorrow
Of living without the hope of tomorrow.

Andy Cipriano, Tallahassee, FL TCF

The end of summer

*The branches dance as the gentle wind rustles
through the leaves
I listen for your name
I do not hear it*

*The bird's chirp and sing as they fly to the feeders
I listen for the melody that echoes your voice
It is not there*

*The fluffy clouds floated across the sky
Creating ever changing pictures as they move.
I look for your name in the colors
I do not see it.*

*I sit quietly observant in this sylvan place
I hear you, I see you, I feel you
here in my heart.*

Carol Silverman, TCF Abington, PA

"Hold On"

For those of you who are hurting too deeply, whose pain is too fresh, whose child's death is still too close to hear me, I'd like to give you the message "hold on, hold on tight." Right now for you, there seems to be little sunshine, little hope and no energy to choose life. So hang on tight. And if you know someone who is struggling just to hang on, reach out to them right now. Loan them some of your strength, knowing they will loan you some of theirs when you need it. That's what TCF is all about; helping each other through the anger, the pain, the emptiness, the silence, helping each other rediscover life. We have to learn to dream new dreams and hope new hopes, and it is here with the love and support of our new family of friends, that our journey begins.

Author Unknown

Sibling Page

Missing You Forever

its been 2 weeks today
that you finally got it your way
you left us here, without a farewell
leaving behind just your smell

everyone tells me to respect your decision
and understand that you fulfilled your mission
but they don't understand my pain
they don't know how it feels to be stuck under the rain
I wish I could hold you

and tell you that I love you
I wish I could understand
I wish I was there to hold your hand
maybe I could have changed your mind

the night that you decided to leave
and to no longer believe
I know you weren't afraid anymore
of who would be waiting for you at the door

I finally saw your last letter
I was hoping it would make me feel better
instead I miss you more
and your last words made me swore
it made me wish you weren't gone
because I don't know for how long I can stay strong

it's been 2 weeks I lost you brother
it's been 2 weeks I lost my other
I wish you had given me the chance
to take one last glance
at you face filled with love
before you fly away like a dove

rest in peace brother
I hope you will no longer suffer
I will be waiting for you in my dreams
to re-live all those beautiful memories.

By © Sanaz Shokravi
in the memory of my big brother Mehrshad Shokravi

Source:

<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/missing-you-forever>

Re-entering School after the Death of a Sibling

Going back to school after the death of your brother or sister is a hard thing to go through. At first there are three groups of people to deal with: people who give you a lot of support, people who don't know what to say, and those who give you weird looks and stay away from you. This lasts for a little while.

After a short time, changes occur with each group: those who didn't know what to say start to speak or begin to talk, the group who kept away stops ignoring you, and the people who gave you a lot of support slowly return to their own affairs. After about a month and a half, everything goes back to normal and is over for everyone except you. This is very difficult to accept and makes you feel even more alone.

After a while the shock for you goes away, and it is then that you need support from your friends, peers and teachers. This month is the first anniversary of the death of my bother. Most people will have forgotten and think everything is right with the world. But it is not! Certainly not to my mother and me.

*Jordan Ely, Bereaved Sibling
TCF Albany/Delmar, NY Chapter*

Did you know that The Compassionate Friends hosts a chatroom and a facebook page just for bereaved siblings?

To join go to
www.compassionatefriends.org
and click on the "Find Support"
menu. There you will find options
for moderated chatrooms and
private facebook pages and information on how to join.



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 - 215-703-8431

GRASP (grief recovery after substance passing)

TCF Pocono - 570 - 350 - 6695

(484) 788-9440

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