



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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Chapter 1562

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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.

You're Invited

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

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

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

- Please do not attend if you feel ill, were exposed to Covid, the Flu, or tested positive in the last 14 days

Next Meeting Monday, April 8

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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How Dare It Be Spring

My daughter, Colleen, died on March 29th and was buried April 1st, 1989. I noticed, through my haze, that spring was coming and I got so angry! I saw the first shoots of flowers in my garden, something that I had always tended so carefully, and I didn't care. I never even picked one of those lovely, fragrant lilies of the valley that grew just outside my front door. I don't think that I could even smell them.

It seemed to me an insult to see mothers pushing their children in strollers on those first warm days. How could they do that when I no longer could? How dare kites dance on spring breezes? I remember coming out of the hospital the morning that she died and seeing a jogger at the lake across the street. It seemed so strange that he could continue his routine when the world had just fallen apart. Just seeing the sun shining isolated that spring, seeing everyone else enjoying nature at *its* most beautiful. It hurt so much! I couldn't make myself do any of the things that had given me so much pleasure in springs of the past, it was just too painful.

The next year I felt a little better, but my heart still wasn't in spring activities, I forced myself to do things for my surviving daughter's sake. Those first walks felt so alien without a stroller to push that I often had to cut walks short. I did pick my flowers but they didn't seem quite as sweet as I remembered them. I no longer hated other moms who walked their children; I just avoided looking at them.

Now, it is my third spring. It still hurts, but it no longer seems like spring was invented just to torment me. I look forward to working in my yard and garden this year. I take walks and my arms don't ache for a stroller to push. I will always love and miss Colleen. I still think about her every day, but the pain no longer overpowers everything else.

For those of you, who are experiencing your first spring without your child, hold on. It really does get better. I remember very well those words at my first several TCF meetings. I listened politely, all the while thinking, "But you don't know how horrible MY pain is. Somehow mine is worse and I'll never get better!" You probably think that too. Even if you don't believe us right now, you've got to hang on, it DOES get better!



Kathy McCormick
TCF Lower Bucks, PA

Our Children Remembered

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

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Patricia Arey - Daughter of Elizabeth & the late William Arey; Sister of Elizabeth Ann, Barbara, Rose Marie & Elaine	Apr 18	May 8
Holly Cavanaugh - Daughter of Bill Cavanaugh; Sister of Bo Cavanaugh	Apr 27	Sep 25
Edward Gaydos, III - Son of Edward and Sally Gaydos; Brother of Blasia Gaydos	Apr 23	Apr 8
David Hoagland, Jr - Son of Gypsy Garrett	Sep 24	Apr 26
Richard "Rich" Hollabaugh - Son of Linda Hollabaugh & the late Wayne Hollabaugh	Dec 20	Apr 10
James "Jimmy" Hotz - Son of Elizabeth Hotz	Apr 24	Jul 4
Zaine Krluc - Son of Ramiz and Merima Krluc	Apr 10	Jun 12
Robert Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Jul 9	Apr 4
Nicholas Savacool - - Son of Howard and Laura Savacool; Brother of Brandon, Candace & Lacie	Feb 27	Apr 1
Benjamin Steinert - Son of MaryAnne Steinert	Aug 1	Apr 9
Sean Virmalo - Son of Udo and Janet L. Virmalo; Brother of Eric, Brett & Katelyn Virmalo	Sep 13	Apr 28



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
♥Udo and Janet Virmalo	Sean Mikhail Virmalo <i>Always with us. Udo, Janet, Eric, Brett and Katelyn</i>

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

Symbols of Easter

The EASTER BUNNY comes from the ancient belief that the hare was a symbol of the moon and the beginning of spring when the earth moved across the winter solstice, bringing "new life." The rabbit is also one of the few animals born with its eyes open. Thus the Easter Bunny quickly became a Christian symbol for the resurrection — where God's people see and open to a new life.



The DAFFODIL, according to ancient legend, was one of the first flowers Christ saw when he emerged from the tomb on Easter Sunday. The flower was so impressed that it bent its head in reverence for the divine miracle, and Christ's glory was so bright when it shone, it turned the little flower the "brightest yellow" forevermore.

The BUTTERFLY has for many centuries been depicted in Christian art as a symbol of the Resurrection. It is a sign of the believer's share in Christ's victory over death. As a very unattractive and earthbound worm, the little creature enters its cocoon for a deathlike sleep — then it bursts forth from its "tomb."



Prayer for Spring



*Like Springtime, let me unfold
and grow fresh and anew, from
this cocoon of grief that has
been spun around me.*

*Help me face the harsh reality
of sunshine and renewed life,
as my bones still creak from
the winter of my grief.*

*Life has dared to go on around
me, and as I recover from the
insult of life's continuance, I
readjust my focus to include
recovery and growth as a
possibility in my future.*

*Give me strength to break out
of the cocoon of my grief. But
may I never forget it is the
place where I grew my wings,
becoming a new person
because of my loss.*

Janice Heil,
Coquitlam, BC Canada



Nature's Rainbows

We held them in our parent arms
for days or weeks or years.
Now we hold them in our hearts
and cry the darkest tears.


The cord attached to children,
eternally fine and strong.
We never leave the missing;
It holds us all life long.

Our children now inside us
our souls tattooed with gold,
their love, their words, caresses,
are hugs that we still hold.

If we open to the knowledge,
that they aren't completely gone,
we will sometimes feel their touching,
sometimes soft and sometimes strong.

When they show us nature's rainbows,
we can feel their proud delight,
sending signs to show they're living,
only far beyond our sight.

Genesse Gentry,
from "Stars in the Deepest Night"



*Good memories
Are the perennials
That bloom again
After the hard
Winter of grief
Begins to yield
To hope*

Sascha Wagner

Letting Go of Guilt

Quite often, the first feelings that overtake a mother or father following the death of a child are feelings of extreme guilt. Thoughts of "if only" seem to relentlessly keep returning. "If only" I had taken her to the doctor sooner. "If only" I had not given him the car keys when I knew the roads were icy. "If only" I had not turned my back to answer the phone. "If only" I had not left him playing alone in the bathtub. Guilt is such a heavy burden of grief to carry around!

How does a parent move beyond the guilt of losing a child? How can a parent shed the painful feelings of inadequacy? How does a parent ever find a way to let go of the guilt?

The most difficult step in releasing the tight clutch that guilt holds on a parent's heart is dealing with the reality of the loss. "My child died" are often the most difficult three words that will ever come from the mouth of a parent. Those words are hard words, yet they are words that are necessary to say and to understand, before being able to rid oneself of guilt.

When we live in an "if only" emotional environment, we have not yet come to the full realization that child loss has actually occurred. We are still working through the mental "if only" reasoning which continues to wreak havoc on a parent's heart. When a parent lives in an "if only" state, the reality of the child's death can never be completely accepted. As painful as it is, a parent must, at some point make the hard choice to accept the reality that the child has died.

Because a parent's primary role is to nurture and care for the child, a parent often has a feeling of

deserving punishment when a child dies. That is simply another way of expressing the heaviness of guilt. A parent often wrestles with the thought that "because my child died, I do not deserve to ever smile again". Guilt continues to prevent many parents from moving forward in this difficult journey we call grief.

It takes a lot of concentrated effort, hard work, and support from others to be able to forgive oneself and finally let go of the gnawing feeling of guilt following the death of a child. Until a parent makes the decision to leave the heavy weight of guilt behind, joy can never return to a heart that has been so deeply wounded by the loss of a child.

Letting go of guilt is a decision that must be made. There is no timetable for making that decision, and others cannot force that decision on any parent. Eventually, a parent will come to the realization that the child's death is real, and there is a hard choice to be made: to continue to live in the guilt of the loss, or to let go of that heaviness of guilt and begin to experience a bit of peace and joy once again.

Letting go of guilt requires a real effort to put an end to the "if only" questions. Letting go of guilt means that a parent no longer blames himself for the death of the child. Letting go of guilt means forgiving oneself and accepting oneself. Letting go of guilt means being gentle with oneself and allowing time for healing to take place.

Letting go of guilt is one of the most difficult parts of grief work. It takes a lot of energy, understanding, and patience. But, when guilt is finally set free, a parent's heart can begin to walk the journey of healing through child loss.

Clara Hinton, TCF, Orange Coast Chapter. CA

We are broken puzzles, tapestries with broken threads. Yet puzzles can be reassembled to form different pictures. Tapestries can be rewoven. But the original pictures can never be the same.

Our lives have many tears and many holes, but somehow we pull together and we re-weave a family fabric that's made of love and hope and laughter and magic. That pattern is partly our child.

*Darcie Sims,
"The Other Side of Grief"*

A Thousand Little Moments

By Tracy Smith, In Memory of my niece Madison Lynne Smith, TCF National Website

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of all the things I lost
the day you went away

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of the pain I feel in my heart
that never fades away

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of the piece of my soul
that you took with you that day

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of the time we've lost
and the games you'll never play

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of the memories we never got to make
and all the words I never got to say

But a thousand little moments
each and every day
also remind me of all the things I've gained
in the short amount of time you got to stay

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me of the love I hold within my heart
that will never fade away

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me that the missing piece of my soul
will be restored when we meet again on my final day

A thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me to be thankful for the time we had and
reassure me that you hear my words every time I pray

And a thousand little moments
each and every day
remind me that I am one moment closer to the day
that I'll once again see your smiling face

Grieving in Pairs



How many times have people said, "Well, thank God you have each other"?
How many times have you felt "each other" to be entirely inadequate at meeting your needs?

Alarming statistics are available telling us of the rocky road parents encounter in their marriage after the death of a child. We sometimes see in ourselves a touchiness or quickness to become irritated that wasn't there before. It always seems that my "bad" day is my wife's "good" day, or the day she wakes up crying was the day I had planned on playing tennis.

Or sometimes, even more difficult, we both have a bad day and find no help from the other in pulling things back together. How can one person hold up another when he is himself down in the mud?

Each person grieves differently. This is a rule that even applies within a family. And the needs of every individual are different. While you may need to talk and talk and talk, your spouse may need some time alone to reflect inwardly.

You have both been through the worst experience of your life. And while at times you can face recovery as a team, sometimes you must develop the patience to be able to wait out certain needs alone or with someone else. Realize that no matter how it is shown, your partner hurts too.

TCF White River Junction, Vt Newsletter

Sibling Page

You've Got To be Strong Now!

"You've got to *be* strong now, for your parents." How many of you heard that when your brother or sister died? It generally comes from some well meaning relative or family friend. You've got nothing to grieve about. You didn't lose a child.

Yes, your parents were grieving and they had a right to as well. They lost a child. You didn't just lose a brother or sister, you lost more.

You lost any or all of the following. A playmate who could keep you company as a child. A dining companion when everyone else seemed to desert you. A rival in many areas. A critic of everything bad you did. A fan of all your good points and deeds. A personal doctor who looked after you when you were ill. A conscience that told you what the right thing to do was when you didn't know. A bank manager who loaned money to you when you were broke. A personal secretary who posted your mail, answered the phone and answered the door. A personal slave. A body guard. A soul mate. Your confidant. The person that when all looked lost, took your hand and said everything would be alright. Your best friend. You didn't lose a person. You lost a whole slew of people.

No wonder you have all this grief. It's no wonder you have all these feelings and emotions swirling around your body. You have a right to grieve too, and don't let anybody stop you.

Warren Pynt
in memory of his brother Graham.
TCF/Johannesburg. SA



One More Day

If I were granted one more day
To spend alone with you,
I'd say the things I should have said
And do all I wanted to do.

I'd tell you that I love you.
Did I tell you that before?
Or did I just take it for granted
That you'd always walk through the door?

I'd play all the games you asked me to play
But I was too busy, you see.
I'm sorry for the times I wasn't there,
Now, I wish you were here for me.

I'd tell you I miss you so very much.
You've been gone forever, it seems,
And I still hope that one of these days
I'll wake from this terrible dream.

If one more day were given to me
To tell you the things I'd say,
The only thing I'd want after that,
Would be just one more day.

Crystal Gibb, Bereavement Magazine, Jan. 1991

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.



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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 - 267-379-0429

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)

Mail Love Gifts to:

Address

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY
C/O BRENDA SOLDERITCH
415 S. HOKENDAUQUA DR
NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

Phone

Email Address

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)

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Special Events