



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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May

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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, May 13

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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C/O Kathleen Collins,
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- by phone:

484-891-0823

- by email:

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Gone Too Soon

As I think about Mother's Day this year I become very nostalgic. Every spring during my elementary school days, I looked forward to the day the order form for our plants for Mother's Day came from our local florist. I always ordered pansies for my mom, the ones with purple and yellow or yellow and brown. I could hardly wait for the delivery day to come, so that I could present them to my mother. She always received them with much surprise and appreciation, as if it were a gift she had never received before or even expected.

As a child, Mother's Day was an important occasion to my family. My dad always insisted we wear the traditional carnations: white if one's mother was deceased, red if still living. He would make a special trip to the florist to purchase them. We would attend church, and then drive to a nearby city for lunch. I remember clearly my first Mother's Day being "the mom." Our Anna was only about three weeks old, so I had a very limited idea of what it really meant to be "the mom." But I do remember being treated like a queen and enjoying every minute of it.

Over the next several years as we raised our two daughters, my husband continued to affirm the women of our family. On Mother's Day he always bought roses for each of his girls. Anna would get a yellow one. Debbie would get a peach-colored one. The red roses were for me. When the girls were young I would receive and treasure their hand-made cards. As they grew into young adults, their choices in purchased cards were just as significant. Every year as Mother's Day approached, we looked forward again to spending the day together as a family. We would attend church, go out for my favorite brunch, have lots of conversation, fill our bellies to the max, laugh until we cried, be silly, make memories. That was before...

Then the unthinkable happened. Our daughter, Anna, died. How could those special days of love and togetherness, laughter and fun become among the most dreaded days a mother must face? How could those days that we had once anticipated with joy and excitement bring such unbelievable heartache and confusion, loneliness and tears?

During those first few years we were simply lost. This was new, undesired, and certainly not requested, territory that we had been forced to enter. What were we supposed to do? How were we supposed to act? I just wanted to run away or stay in bed with the sheets over my head. The traditions we had come to love and enjoy became intensely painful. It became an impossible task to attend church services or go out for brunch. Seeing families enjoying their togetherness pierced my heart with an endless ache. My tear-filled eyes burned at the thought of being surrounded by "intact" families. Feelings of anger and resentment overwhelmed my heart. On the inside I wanted to lash out at all those mothers and fathers who were surrounded by all of their children and those sisters and brothers who had no clue what it would be like to lose a

Continued on page 4

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
Gabriel Benner - Son of Baily Benner	May 4	Feb 9
Bryan Blocker - Sister of Robert and Iris Blum	Jun 30	May 13
Jennifer Grider - Daughter of Carl and Joan Grider	May 18	Jun 29
David Heard - Son of Susan Heard; Brother of Daisy Heard	May 20	Feb 10
Colleen Kilker - Daughter of Mark and Kathleen Kilker; Sister of Meghan, Bridget and Mark Kilker	May 6	Jul 23
David Kunsman - Son of Charles & Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & the late Charles Kunsman, Jr	May 2	Jul 15
Cody Myers - Son of David and Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal and Benjamin Myers	Dec 12	May 15
Eric Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Feb 15	May 20
Dean Schuler - Son of Betty Schuler & the late Lester Schuler	May 22	Nov 19
Jonelle Sisonick - Daughter of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Sister of Nicholas Sisonick	May 22	Aug 3
Shane Uttard - Son of Brenda Deubler	Jan 15	May 13
Joseph Visnosky, Jr. - Brother of Grace Ashner	May 27	May 4
Liam Young - Son of Thomas and Gabrielle Young; Brother of Nathan & Nora	May 13	Nov 14



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
♥ Betty Schuler	Dean Lynn Schuler <i>Love and miss you.</i>

Donations & Contributions

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ <i>Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA</i>
<i>For our meeting space</i> ★ <i>Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions</i>
<i>In Memory of David Todd Smith</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ <i>Aetna Payroll Contributors</i> ★ <i>United Way Payroll Contributors</i> ★ <i>The Matt Kush Foundation</i>
<i>In Memory of Matt Kush</i> |
|---|--|

Thought for the Day

It is not easy returning to the world of normalcy when your world is so upside down. It is not easy to stop being a mother or father to your child that has died. The thought for the day is a word -Patience.

Patience with yourself who suddenly and powerlessly has been thrown into this horrid nightmare; Patience with your spouse who always seems to be having an up day when you are having a down day; Patience with relatives and friends who wish to help but seem to hurt with hollow advice and logical words; and Patience with time, for it takes time to adjust, and time can move so slowly.

PATIENCE!

Rose Moen TCF Carmel-Indianapolis, IN

Continued from page 2

sibling. As the day drew to a close I felt tremendous relief that it was over. Exhausted, I would lay silently with my head on my pillow as quiet tears lulled me to sleep.

The feelings that I have shared are not uncommon in the early years of grief with those who have experienced the death of a child, grandchild or sibling. If you or someone you care about has experienced the death of a child, I offer some suggestions from those who have been there to help you to make it through this time.

- ♥ Realize this day is full of potential for a multitude of feelings to sneak up on you and catch you by surprise. • Especially during those early years, do whatever works for you. This may be a time of being in “survival mode.” Trying to please everyone else can cause undue stress.
- ♥ If you have surviving children who want to honor you, communicate your feelings to them. Let them know that while you are grieving the death of their brother or sister, you still love them.
- ♥ Try to keep things simple and uncomplicated.
- ♥ Visit the cemetery.
- ♥ You may choose to pretend the day just does not exist and do something completely unrelated to Mother’s Day. Clean the house, take a nap, get out of town. One of my Compassionate Friends spends Mother’s Day at Home Depot. No one bothers her there or mentions Mother’s Day.
- ♥ Have a good cry. If you have trouble crying, just stop by a card shop and read a card or two. Maybe even buy the card that you believe your child would give you.
- ♥ Go to the recycle bin and break glass into the proper receptacle.
- ♥ Know that the days before the holiday may be worse than the actual day.

As with all holidays, be reassured that what you do this year does not have to be what you do next year. As my Compassionate Friends and I have found, with proper grief work over time, the intensity of our

feelings has softened. This will happen for you, as well. In the meantime, be gentle with yourself. And remember, “you need not walk alone.”

Paula Funk, May 2, 2019, compassionatefriends.org

THE CORD

We are connected
my child and I,
An invisible cord not seen
by the eye.

It's not like the cord
that connects us till birth.
This cord can't be seen
here on earth.

This cord does its work
right from the start.
It binds us together,
attached to my heart.

I know that it's there
though no one else can see
The invisible cord
From my child to me.

The strength of this cord
is hard to describe;
It can't be destroyed,
it can't be denied.

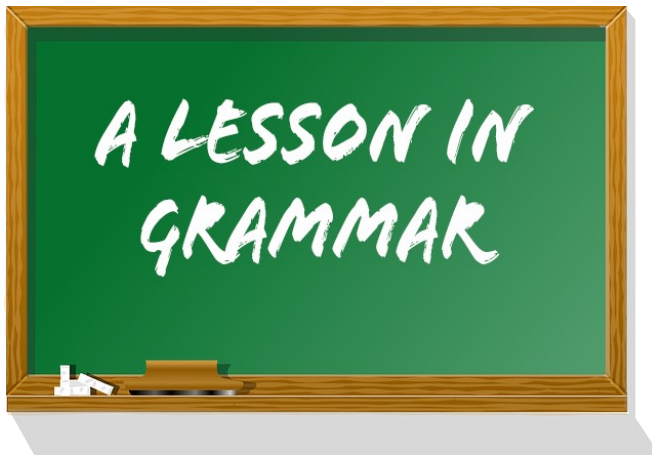
It's stronger than any cord
Man could create.
It withstands the test and
can hold any weight.

It pulls at my heart
I am bruised - I am sore,
But this cord is my lifeline
As never before.

I am thankful that God
connects us this way;
A Mother and child
Death can't take it away.

Peg Meyer, TCF Nashville, TN





When your child dies, you soon find yourself back to the basics of English grammar. The question of present, past or future tense takes on added importance and a new dimension. You struggle with the conjugation more so than in elementary school.

The familiar "I am" loses its identity, for you find you no longer know who "I am." It is all much more complicated because your present "here and now" suddenly became your past; "is" immediately became "was." Most of the time you find yourself vacillating, not quite sure what the reality of your situation is since the present with its void hurts, the past with its memories hurts and you can't see much future in your future. There seems no place to hide.

When you have had the time to do the painful, but necessary work of creating a life that doesn't include your dead child, you will find once again you will have three distinct areas in your life: A present that has less pain in it, a past whose memories now offer comfort, and a future that offers some opportunities for pleasure and happiness. Granted, they will differ from what they once were, but they will be there, nonetheless.

In the meantime, if you're like me, I don't want anybody to quibble with me about whether my son's birthday is or was November 20th, because (a) it is, and (b) it was, and (c) it always will be. And, as to whether I have or had two children, (a) I do, and (b) I did, and (c) I always will have.

You deserve to know the answer to today's pop quiz in English grammar. You may choose (a), (b), (c) or (d) all of the above, and I promise the people

who really matter won't mark you wrong, no matter what your choice. So, with that out of the way, we can move on to some of the more important courses like resolving your anger and/or guilt, for starters. You'll have your Masters in those before we're finished.

Mary Cleckley TCF, Atlanta, GA



Angel Moms

We have shared our tears and our sorrow,
We have given encouragement to each other,
Given hope for a brighter tomorrow,
We share the title of grieving mother.

Some of us lost older daughters or sons,
Who we watched grow over the years,
Some have lost their babies before their lives begun,
But no matter the age, we cry the same tears.

We understand each others pain,
The bond we share is very strong,
With each other there is no need to explain,
The path we walk is hard and long.

Our children brought us together,
They didn't want us on this journey alone,
They knew we needed each other,
To survive the pain of them being gone.

So take my hand my friend,
We may stumble and fall along the way,
But we'll get up and try again,
Because together we can make it day by day.

We can give each other hope,
We'll create a place where we belong,
Together we will find ways to cope,
Because we are Angel Moms
and together we are strong!

Author: Judi Walker

Memorial Day A Day to Remember

By Ruth Gregory, TCF Phoenix, AR
In Loving Memory of my son, Tim

A day to remember our brave soldiers
Who paid for our freedom the ultimate price
Bouquets of tiny red, white and blue
Flapping against hot, crystalline skies

AKA Decoration Day

A day we visit the final resting place
Which embrace the remains of those loved ones
Who will always fill our hearts' spaces.

When the grave of the one you visit
Holds the earthly body of one so dear,
Your son. Again return the feelings
of anguish, longing, frustration and fear.

Fear of death? No, long since gone.
Fear of life! Will this pain ever end?
Fear of forgetting? At first, overwhelming.
Fear of lost faith, with God must we contend?

Too young to be a soldier, sailor or marine
Though service was once a childhood dream
Of yours, though in my heart I couldn't bear
Ever seeing you go marching off to war.

But how could I know that before you'd reach
The age of such decisions, you'd be gone.
What have I learned, and now what must I teach
From you short life and the journey I'm now on?

The memorial to you must have a foundation
Of weeping, yearning, searching and sorrow,
Then must reflect the love and zest for life
Without bitterness, with hope for tomorrow.

On this Memorial Day, as I "decorate" your grave,
Washing the stone with my tears and love,
I "celebrate" your life and take comfort in knowing
That you're not there, but are watching from above.



Mind Games

Mind Games, it can happen anywhere, anytime. Driving along the highway, I think: just suppose I turn my head quickly, will you suddenly be sitting next to me? Will you be humming along to a song that was a particular favorite of yours? I swear I can hear you. I want so much to hear you singing loudly and a bit off-key again.

Or perhaps I'm in the supermarket and I see someone with long, blond hair, is it you? My heart thumps. I want so badly for it to be you. People glance at me strangely and I realize I'm standing in the middle of the aisle weeping.

Even the special foods you loved can reduce me to tears. I'm tempted to buy your favorites and prepare them for when you come home for supper.

At night when I climb into bed, I scrunch over toward the middle, this gives you room to sit next to me the way you would after coming home from a late date.

My senses are alive with you. I can smell your special perfume and feel your long, slender fingers with the pearl ring Daddy gave you for graduation. I can hear your laughter. I will you to stay with me until I fall asleep.

Then there are the times when I consciously call out your name in the silence of the house. My mind knows there will be no response, but in my heart I hear you answer me and for that split moment you are there at the top of the stairs as surely as I am at the bottom. Barbara...Barbara...Barbara...Your name is a litany.

I suppose that behavior could be considered quite strange. What does one make of it? Weeping in supermarkets, calling to one who is not there. Oh, but in that fraction of a second when one feels one's loved one close, that feeling, although bittersweet, soothes and comforts a splintered heart. Mind games...it can happen anywhere, anytime.

Bunny Placco TCF, Greater Providence, RI

Sibling Page



SPRING

It's spring again
That time of year
The flowers bloom
But you're not here

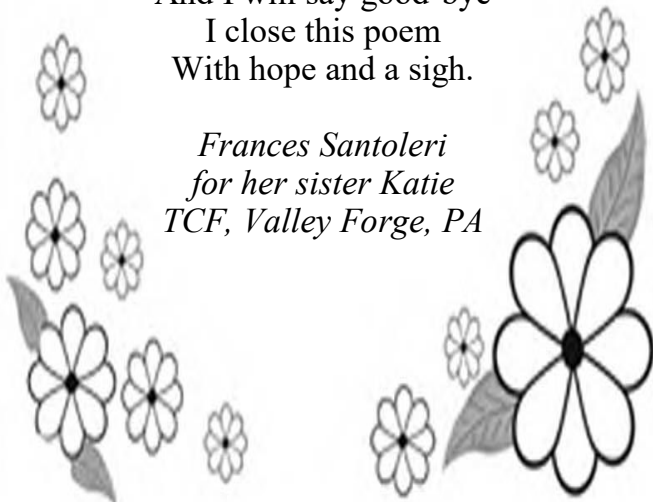
The children go outside
Laughing and they play
But I'm too sad so
I sit inside all day

I miss you more
Than words can say
Physically, emotionally
Each and every way

It's almost summer time
And school will be done
But you won't be
Here to share the fun

And now it's time to end
And I will say good-bye
I close this poem
With hope and a sigh.

*Frances Santoleri
for her sister Katie
TCF, Valley Forge, PA*



A Tribute

I think of you in silence,
But my feelings seldom show
But how it hurts to lose you
Know one will ever know

I hope there is eternal life,
So we can meet again.
I not only lost my brother,
I lost my best friend.

The reason you left so early
I'll never understand why.
I just wish I'd known you were never coming back,
Cause I would have said good-bye

*By Marta King,
TCF Concorde NH*

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 - 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)

Newsletter Expenses

Postage

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Outreach Program

Special Events