



# The Compassionate Friends

## Lehigh Valley Chapter

### Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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June

TCF, Lehigh Valley  
Chapter 1562

Phone  
484-891-0823

Email:  
tcflehighvalley@gmail.com

Website  
www.lehighvalleytcf.org

Facebook Page  
facebook.comTCFlehighvalley

Pinterest  
The Compassionate Friends,  
Lehigh Valley Chapter

Steering Committee  
Brian & Kathleen Collins,  
Dean & Donna Davidson,  
Gene DeLong, George Geiger,  
Brenda Solderitch

Newsletter Editor/  
Database & Website  
Manager  
Kathleen Collins  
TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com  
484-891-0823

Treasurer  
Brenda Solderitch

TCF National  
Headquarters  
877- 969-0010 (toll-free)  
www.compassionatefriends.  
org

**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, June 10

*Note: Meeting Cancellations will be posted on the chapter Facebook page and a text sent to all on the meeting notification text list.*

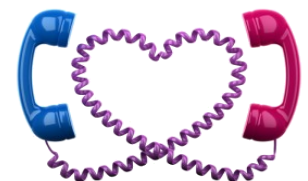
#### To Our New Members

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](http://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

All submissions must include the author's name and your contact information. Send to the newsletter editor

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

### Newsletter Editor Contact

- by mail:  
The Compassionate Friends, LV  
C/O Kathleen Collins,  
2971 Pheasant Dr.,  
Northampton, PA 18067
- by phone:  
484-891-0823
- by email:  
TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com

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## Why Am I So ANGRY ?

*Bill Ermatinger has been active in the Compassionate Friends since 1978. A former National Board member, Regional Coordinator, Chapter Leader, and National Conference anger workshop presenter. His daughter Kathy died in 1967 as a result of a mislabeled prescription. Melvin Winer, frequently writes for his local chapter newsletter. Bill and Mel collaborated on the following article, drawing from Bill's National Conference presentation and their individual grief experiences. Mel has also included insight from his still fresh grief after the death of his son Andy from cancer.*

"I am so consumed with anger, sometimes I think I might explode. I wasn't an angry person before my child died. Where does this anger come from?" "I know we did everything we could to help our child survive. So did the doctors. But if I really feel that way, why do I feel such a failure and so guilty now?"

These statements are frequently voiced by bereaved parents to each other or at TCF chapter meetings. Most of us, until we experience it ourselves, are not aware of the significant role that anger and guilt play in the grieving process. For bereaved parents, therefore, when they first experience the intensity of these emotions, it not only comes as a shock but frequently symbolizes a failure to handle grief in a socially acceptable manner, after all, anger and guilt are feelings that frequently make those around us uncomfortable, friends and family members are often at a loss as to how to respond to these emotions.

This article is about anger and guilt and how and why these two emotions play such a significant role in our grief experience.

Regardless of the circumstances of our child's death, for most of us, anger and guilt are a part of our grieving. We may not always be able to label these emotions or to acknowledge them, but they are there and we must deal with them. Failure to do so often results in our experiencing worse physical and emotional problems later on.

Whether we acknowledge it or not, most of us are angry about our child's death. Determining who we are angry at and what we are angry about is the first step in dealing with these emotions. In some instances, this anger is directed at a real target or person, for instance, anger directed at a drunk driver who caused a fatal accident, or in Bill's case, a pharmacist who made a mistake in his daughter's prescription. In other instances, anger is displaced; there is no definite target or person, but we want to believe that someone can be held accountable or responsible for our child's death. In Mel's case, there was no drunk driver or pharmacist to blame, so Mel directed his anger towards the doctors who failed to save his son, and beyond that, at God.

Many of us are uncomfortable with the intensity of the anger and guilt we feel. These emotions are unpleasant to experience; they challenge our ability to keep our selves in control when our feelings seem out of control. Often we try to talk ourselves out of experiencing these feelings. For instance, we may try to control our temper by pushing the anger inside and repressing it.

Sometimes we try to forget and just let bygones be bygones. Or we try to keep busy all the time and not give ourselves the opportunity to cope with our anger. Showing a happy face to the world is another way of not dealing with our emotions. Finally, there are drugs and alcohol; they will surely mask our feelings.

Not facing our anger merely delays the inevitable. Eventually anger finds

# Our Children Remembered

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

## Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
<b>John Ashner, Jr.</b> - Son of John and Grace Ashner	Jun 22	Nov 8
<b>Bryan Blocker</b> - Sister of Robert and Iris Blum	Jun 30	May 13
<b>John Fry</b> - Son of Cathy McDonald	Mar 19	Jun 14
<b>Jennifer Grider</b> - Daughter of Carl and Joan Grider	May 18	Jun 29
<b>Robert Grozier, II</b> - Son of Shirley Grozier; Brother of Laurie, Brenda & Vance	Feb 15	Jun 11
<b>Jill Harris</b> - Daughter of Pat Andrew & The Late Fred Andrew; Sister of Jeff	Nov 5	Jun 28
<b>Audrey King Koch</b> - Sister of Linda Hollabaugh	Jun 16	Dec 2
<b>Faith Kleppinger</b> - Daughter of Barbara Kleppinger & The Late John Kleppinger; Sister of Susan Schilling & Jill Kleppinger	Jun 8	Jun 15
<b>Zaine Krluc</b> - Son of Ramiz and Merima Krluc	Apr 10	Jun 12
<b>Michael Milot</b> - Son of John and Patti Milot; Brother of Jill	Jun 30	Feb 2
<b>Peter Radocha</b> - Son of Lucille Radocha; Brother of Gina Sacco & Frank Radocha, Jr	Jun 13	Jul 1
<b>Konnor Roy</b> - Son of Dale and Cynthia Roy	Sep 21	Jun 2
<b>Kevin Stewart</b> - Son of Joanne Stewart; Brother of Keith Stewart & The Late Constance Stewart	Oct 6	Jun 15
<b>Craig Yurick</b> - Son of Robert and Sharon Yurick; Brother of Todd Yurick	Aug 5	Jun 21



## 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
♥ Pat Andrew	<b>Jill Patricia Harris</b> <i>We love and miss you and Pops</i>

## Donations & Contributions

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

*I am glad I bought the ticket. I am glad I paid the price. I am glad I shared the journey, and have a memento or two from the ride.*

*I must let go of the hurt so there is more room for the love to grow.*

*Remember the life - Not the death.*

*Davie Sims/TCF Conference /from We Need Not Walk Alone, Summer 2012*

*Continued from page 2*

a way to surface. Therefore, we have to find ways to cope with these intense feelings. Obviously Bill could not shoot the pharmacist, and Mel could not burn the hospital down because of his rage directed at the medical profession. For some, physical activity is an effective way of coping; jogging, playing sports, and walking provide a sense of physical well being. Not everyone, however, is able to engage in these physical activities. Another way of coping with anger is to talk or write about it. Find someone to talk to. A Compassionate Friends meeting is a safe place to express overwhelming feelings. Another effective way is to write about them. Writing allows us to bring our feelings to the surface in a nonthreatening way. Keep a journal that no one will ever see, and reread it from time to time. You may discover that you are making progress by getting in touch with feelings of several months ago and realizing they are less intense now. Write letters to the source of your anger. You don't have to mail them (and you probably shouldn't), but writing allows you to confront your anger directly. Shortly after Andy died, Mel received a letter from the American Cancer Society requesting a donation. The letter was part of a mass mailing and was designed to alert people about the dangers of cancer. Mel felt the letter's wording was insensitive to those who had experienced cancer firsthand. Therefore, he wrote a response to the Society expressing his anger. This was also an effective way for him to express his anger at the disease that took his son's life.

Another way of coping with anger is to understand what is causing it. This understanding does not mean that we accept what happened, but only that we understand and accept our helplessness to have prevented it. Bill finally accepted that the pharmacist made a mistake because he was in a hurry; he knows the pharmacist did not purposely mislabel the drug. Mel is still coping with his anger at the doctor's failure to save his son's life, although he knows that they did their best. Another unsettling aspect of experiencing intense anger is when we realize that it is directed at God. We question why God allows young people to die and forces their parents to experience this agony. Mel's son was a young, healthy college student who died from a disease that seemed to come out of nowhere. Out of his outrage and sense of the injustice, Mel felt compelled to express his anger at God, even though it may have offended some people.

Finally, it is important to understand whom we may really be angry at. As difficult as it may be to admit, many of us are angry at our child who has died as well as at ourselves for failing to prevent his death. We may

be angry that the child has left us and we feel abandoned. We are angry at ourselves because we couldn't keep our child safe from harm. We are angry because we are alone, our child is dead, and our lives have changed forever.

Anger directed at our child is a feeling we cannot control. It can surface at any time and does not diminish our love in any way. In fact, it emphasized our love because we are really angry that our children are not here to share their lives with us. For many this anger subsides over time. Some parents have found comfort in writing about how they feel, expressing their anger that their child has left them alone, that they love and miss their child, that their lives can never be the same because their child has died.

Another inevitable and complex emotion that bereaved parents must deal with is guilt. Guilt is a culturally produced emotion, and we impose it upon ourselves because of our expectation that we are competent, responsible, and loving parents, and thus should be able to keep our children safe. Guilt derives from a sense that we did something wrong. We feel we should have been able to do something to save our child's life, and when we couldn't, we failed in our parental role of protector.

Bill felt guilty because he gave Kathy the medicine. He felt that he should have done something sooner and that he didn't recognize the problem in time. Mel and his wife question whether Andy received the best treatment and whether they should have taken him for surgery sooner. Compounding this sense of guilt are family and friends who offer suggestions or point out what should have been done. We know as parents we did the very best we could to save our child's life. We should understand that much of the guilt we feel comes from a sense of hopelessness or a feeling of failure or an inability to control events that we feel we should have been able to control. Many parents have also expressed feeling guilty about surviving their child and trying to get on with their lives. Mel finds that occasionally he feels guilty when he does something he enjoys or even experiences a light hearted moment and laughs. Mel knows Andy wanted his family to recover from his death and not always to be sad. When Mel experiences these feelings, he reminds himself of how Andy felt.

By trying to understand these emotions, we can begin to deal with them. Compounding our feeling

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that we let our child down is the fact that our child is no longer here to forgive us for what we feel is our failure. Many parents have found practical and active ways to cope with these intense and complex emotions. Some become active in causes or make a donation to honor their child's memory. Some get involved in organizations such as TCF to help others. Some parents become active in anti drunk-driving programs or anti-handgun programs, or support medical research programs. Most parents, finally, come to understand the anger and guilt they have experienced. They discover these gut-wrenching emotions subside over time. They may also experience a certain sense of satisfaction in knowing that their involvement in TCF or other self-help efforts has not only been a way to cope with their grief, but also a meaningful way to honor their child's memory.

Anger and guilt are a part of grief, and each of us will experience these feelings differently. For some, these feelings will last for years, while for others, anger and guilt will be fleeting as other emotions dominate. As our grief softens over time and we come to understand and accept its complexity, perhaps, in the end, we should not be surprised at the intensity of our feelings. After all, they are only a minute reflection of the intensity of our love.

*Bill Ermatinger & Melvin Winer*

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

The sadness, the anger,  
The loneliness of three.  
Preferring four always  
How small, this new we.

*Genesee Gentry*



## Father's Day

Years have come and gone  
and time has surely drifted by.  
I've searched for any answer,  
yet I'm left to wonder why.

The only thing I know for sure,  
through the happy and the sad.  
No matter what the circumstance,  
I will always be your dad.

Not a day goes by that  
I don't hold you in my heart.  
My love reaches far beyond  
this space we are apart.

These empty arms remember  
all the good times that we had.  
I may be standing here alone,  
but I will always be your dad.

Some won't understand,  
so I don't bother to explain.  
They look into my eyes,  
but they can only see the pain.

Afraid to look too deep  
as they are blinded by the fear,  
If only they could know,  
a father's love won't disappear.

So when this road gets lonely  
and the journey seems too hard,  
And I get to feeling sorry  
that I didn't get a card.

If I close my eyes  
I can almost hear you say.  
"I love you and I miss you, daddy....  
Happy Father's Day."

*Alan Pedersen*

*Alan is an award-winning speaker, songwriter and recording artist. His inspirational message of hope and his music have resonated deeply with those facing a loss or adversity in their lives and have made him one of the most popular and in-demand presenters in the world on finding hope after loss.*

## Life Goes On

When asked, "What is the most important thing you have learned about life?" Robert Frost replied, "In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on." As bereaved parents it is sometimes hard to believe this simple truth:

- ~ When your child dies and life feels like you have been punched with a metal press, life goes on.
- ~ When you cannot get up in the morning because of exhaustion, life goes on.
- ~ When you are not sure what day it is, life goes on.
- ~ When you cry in the cereal aisle, life goes on.
- ~ When friends hide from you, life goes on.
- ~ When your partner does not understand you, life goes on.
- ~ When the boss tells you to pull it together, life goes on.
- ~ When you do not recognize yourself, life goes on.
- ~ BUT, when you get up, get dressed and go to work, life goes on.
- ~ When you realize that love never dies, life goes on.
- ~ When you can laugh even a little, life goes on.
- ~ When hope returns, life goes on.
- ~ When new friends offer a hand, life goes on.
- ~ When a small hand fits into yours, life goes on.
- ~ When people say your child's name, life goes on.

Our children wait for us to realize life goes on. It was meant to go on. It has to go on and so do we.

*Keith Swett, Seymour, WI*



## Father's Day

Just as Mother's Day was difficult and sad for bereaved mothers - Father's Day will be very difficult for bereaved fathers. Many articles in this newsletter have been written by bereaved fathers.

I hunt, fish, camp, drive a fast car, play football, basketball and baseball, I am tough! I went to war. I am the toughest two-legged mammal alive. I am a MAN.

While our son was still in the hospital, I cried alone so my wife wouldn't see me. At home I cried alone, in the shower, in the back yard, anywhere but in front of my wife. I had to be a rock. After our son died, I helped support my wife in the best way I knew how. I was a rock for her to lean on. I was invincible. The rock caused more trouble than good. Soon, we were not talking or getting along with each other and I didn't understand why. My wife became angry. She told me, "You act like you don't love J.J." (because I didn't appear to be grieving).

The rock became mush. I then realized what I had done. I had played MAN instead of just being a father and a husband. You see, a mother does not need a rock with no emotions. She needed me to show her that I did indeed love our son and that I was hurting after his death, and that I did cry. My wife comforted me later that night, after we had talked. I cried, she cried. We both needed it. I found out that it was good for me to cry and let my wife help me. I am MAN. I am a grieving man, who now, does not mind crying in front of anyone. I cry for myself and for our son, J.J.

*By Jim Brown,  
TCF Cape May County, NJ*

# Sibling Page

## Why Can't I Let Go

You were always my hero.  
 I always wanted to be like you.  
 You were my younger brother,  
 Still, I always looked up to you.  
 You were always there for me,  
 Even when things were at their worst.  
 You helped me through my hardest trials,  
 And we always made it through.  
 Now as I sit here, writing these words,  
 Remembering you and times gone by,  
 I'm trying to say good-bye.  
 Nineteen years are just too many,  
 To just let you go,  
 I can't believe you're gone, you died,  
 And left me here alone.  
 Some days I'm fine, some days I'm low,  
 But most days, I just miss you so.  
 It was you and me,  
 But now, what do I do?  
 Each night I ask why?  
 Why I'm so angry?  
 Why I can't cry?  
 Why I can't let you go?  
 I know we'll see each other again,  
 But the years seem so long.  
 I long for the day I'll see you again.  
 Waiting for me with open arms.  
 Brother, I love you and miss you so.  
 But now I need you most.  
 This time in my life is oh so hard,  
 I just can't let you go.

*Stephen Welch  
 TCF, St Louis, MO*

## I Heard My Father Cry

Feeling so helpless and sad,  
 listening from the room next door,  
 over my ears using every pillow I had,  
 I couldn't take it any more.  
 His pain came from inside,  
 cries turned into screams,  
 what he felt he could no longer hide,  
 the loss of his only son took away his dreams.  
 His sighs echoed off the walls,  
 he couldn't seem to pull himself together,  
 as our eyes met at the end of the hall,  
 I realized his hurt will be with him forever.  
 With eyes so sad, he looked right through me,  
 not knowing what to say, I didn't even try.  
 This is something I never expected to see,  
 but now I know that real men do cry.

*Karen Keck, TCF, Sacramento Valley*

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](http://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

**W**e 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

Office Expenses

Outreach Program

Special Events