



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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September

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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, September 9

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 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

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Suggestions for Coping with Your Child's Days

Two days of each year stand out as the pits for most bereaved parents—the anniversary of their child's death and their child's birthday. Over and over parents ask, "How do you get through those two painful times?" The response is the same as the question, "How do porcupines make love?"- Very carefully.

I read somewhere that even if your mind forgets the anniversary or traumas you have experienced, your body remembers. Pneumonia was the final cause of our daughter's death in September, 1974. Each September and each February (her birthday month) I developed pneumonia, although I had never had it before in my life and was not consciously thinking of having it. The year our TCF chapter started broke the pattern, and I haven't had it since.

Knowing you will remember, here are some practical suggestions garnered from reading and listening to others talk. Sometimes the anticipation of how awful the day will be adds to the torture. Plan something away from home, a shopping trip, a business trip. You won't forget but distractions can help from focusing on agonizing memories.

Seek out a special friend who will let you share your memories and distress and who will permit you to cry, if you must. Talking and crying are cathartic and a part of healing.

Think of something you can do for someone else in memory of your child. Give a pie, a book, a bouquet of flowers or a visit to a person who is lonely (another kind of debilitating pain). You don't have to tell the person you are doing this in memory of your son or daughter, the thoughtful act can be a secret between you and your child. You are passing on some of the love you shared.

Take flowers to the cemetery and talk with your child. Does this sound like lunacy? I hope not because every time I go to the cemetery I talk with Tricia. Whether we admit it to others or not, don't we all talk to our deceased children at times? If someone sees my lips moving at the cemetery visit and fails to understand - that is his problem, not mine.

Say thank you aloud or as a silent litany during the day to God (or who ever) and to your child for the beauty of his/her life and for the enriching opportunity to experience the unique being that was your child.

If you stay at home with your grief, then, by gosh, wallow in it if you want to. Suffer your misery to its depths, cry, rant, rave, be resentful. We are brainwashed with "look on the bright side" and the power of positive thinking. I personally believe that periods of very negative thinking often release a residue of emotions and feelings which makes eventual positive thinking possible. As with a physical wound, pain is a part of healing. Pain signals that your body is still alive and is working on this affront to its mental and physical health. Later when your wound is healed or getting better, part of your pleasure at the release comes from being able to

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
Troy Kidd, Jr. -Son of Pamela Green; Brother of Amy & The Late Edwin Frantz	Sep 6	Jun 4
Nykolos LaRosa - Son of Shelly Youwakim; Brother of Krystole LaRosa	Sep 25	Oct 28
Anthony "Tony" Mariani, II - Son Kathleen Collins & the late Anthony E. Mariani; Stepson of Brian Collins; Brother of Matthew Mariani	Sep 13	Sep 6
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
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 & Brett Oakwood	Aug 1	Sep 6



Love Gifts, Donations & Contributions



With no fees, our volunteer staffed chapter sustains its mission through the generosity of donations (Love Gifts). Each donation, of any size, allows us to maintain member support, publish our monthly newsletter, and manage chapter expenses. Donations may be given in memory of a child or in memory or in honor of a friend or relative. Gifts are tax deductible. The Love Gift Donation can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

We thank the following this month for their generosity

Contributor	Loved One
♥Kathleen Collins	Anthony E. Mariani, II <i>Cherished memories of you comfort our hearts. Missing you until we meet again. Mom, Brian & Matt</i>
♥Denise Myers	David W Myers <i>Husband of Denise; Father of Travis, Crystal, Cody D&Ben; Grandfather of Cody A, Brittany, Madison & Olivia</i> <i>We all love and miss you.</i>

We thank the following for their contributions to the chapter

Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA
For our meeting space

The Matt Kush Foundation
In Memory of Matt Kush

United Way Payroll Contributors

*Once I dropped a tear in the ocean.
When I find it is when I'll stop loving you.*



Continued from page 2

remember how much it hurt.

For ten Septembers I have not been able to erase Tricia's death day from the calendar, but each year I face it better. Sometimes I still have a tightening in the chest and a lumpy leaden knot in my stomach or I permit myself to ask a few sad, unanswerable questions. Allowing myself to feel whatever my true feelings dictate, I have finally learned to slow the sting of grief, instead of denying it or fighting it. Her birthday has become a time of happy remembering. Often I wear something of hers on that day and let my love flow out to her, wherever she is. I'm so thankful I had her, even in the face of loss.

How do you get through these anniversaries? You simply live through them as best you can, sometimes using them as a yardstick for measuring your personal healing. Maybe you can say, "Last year I cried all day, but this year I cried only a few hours."

The death day may never be a good day, but we can't remove it from the 365 any more than we can bring our child back to life. And that, of course, is why the anniversary days are so painful, they intensify our great longing to erase the death. Each anniversary faced can be a step in acceptance and healing.

Elizabeth B. Estes, TCF, Atlanta GA



The Hawk

The air is warm beneath my wings
As I glide in the air for things, I see
A wooden cross, a family brings
Placed carefully here, oh the memories.

I hear them talk, they named this place
The tears they fall and sunset brings
The heavy heart I feel the pain
Of a child now resting here.

The deer in sunset visit the site,
The sun it rises and shines real bright
I can't read the markings on the cross
But know the pain of a young life lost.

I land in a tree over their heads
As they talk of the life this young one led
His love for hiking and my native lands
And all their dreams for him they had.

On this mountain, the stories linger
In the blowing wind his warmth is felt
For this young man gone before his time
Now lives with me on this countryside

By Lydia Burns, TCF Atlanta

A Death by Suicide

A death by suicide triggers great amounts of anger and guilt. However, some of those feelings can be balanced by struggling to see that the suicide was not so much a deliberate, hostile act, but a gesture of utter hopelessness and despair. Reminders that the person was so driven by emotional whirlwinds that it was impossible to sense any ray of hope can temper, considerably, the emotional impact of a death by suicide.

One of the best responses to a suicide that I have ever heard came though a sermon delivered by the pastor of a young man who shot himself. With great eloquence, his pastor was able to convey tremendous hope through these 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 only God knows how this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul."

Excerpt from "Helping Survivors Survive," Victor M. Parachin, Bereavement Magazine Jan 1991

A Native American Lesson in Grief

One of the most common questions that family and friends ask is how long does it take to “get over” the death of a loved one.

Native American culture holds many lessons about grief and its duration. The Native American legend of the Caterpillar people holds lessons for us all in grief. This legend is traditionally told during funeral services of the Shoshone.

"Long ago, there were two caterpillar people who loved each other very much. When the caterpillar man died the caterpillar woman was overcome by her grief. In her remorse she withdrew into herself and pulled her sorrow around her like a shawl. She walked and mourned for a year and because the world is a circle she ended up where she had started. The Creator looked down upon her and told her that she had suffered too long. 'Now,' he told her, 'is the time for you to step into a new world of beauty.' He clapped his hands and the caterpillar woman burst forth as a butterfly. Her world was now full of beauty and color."



Many Native American tribes see the butterfly as a symbol of everlasting life. The Wilik-wilik waashaashut or the Butterfly Dance enacts this legend. Young women line up single file and pull their shawls over their heads to cover them. This represents the caterpillar in the cocoon. The drummers sing and drum sadly. After the head dancer returns where she begun the dancers open their arms and display the brightly colored shawls. The song becomes more upbeat and the women dance to represent the fluttering of the wings.

Another saying of the Warm Spring Native American tribe is to compare the death of a loved one to a landslide. "When your road is blocked by a landslide, you clear it by taking away one rock at a time." In a time, when we want definite answers or a quick fix we should heed the wisdom these legends impart and let us work through grief at our own pace.

Trudy Weathersby, RN, M.Ed.

**Time cannot steal the
treasures we hold in our hearts**

Butterflies

I've always thought the butterfly to be so beautiful and free.
This delicate creation now has a precious, new meaning to me.

The caterpillar signifies our existence here on earth,
The cocoon is our death awaiting our rebirth.

The butterfly in its beauty is a symbol of greater freedom.
A small but glorious glimpse into Heaven's Eternal Kingdom.

I look upon this living creature with renewed faith and hope.
It gives me strength to face another day, and courage to help me cope.

Cherry Austin, TCF Newman Coweta, GA

A Grandparents Point of View

The death of a child is the most tragic thing that can happen to anyone. It affects so many lives - family, friends, and even strangers.

I lost my grandchild through death, and only a grandparent can understand the love a grandparent has for a grandchild and the loss that is felt when the child dies. For a grandparent, it is a double loss. Not only is your grandchild gone, but you also watch your child die each day. The smile that was always on her face is no longer there. The hurt is so deep and the questions so many. You feel helpless as a parent. You can't kiss the hurt away as you did when she was a child. You have no answers for her questions, for you don't understand the many feelings that you are experiencing yourself. Each day you hope and pray for a little ray of sunshine to show on her face. You search for a little something to say or do that will comfort her. It seems that there is no end to the suffering.

As time goes slowly by, the healing process begins. In time, a ray of hope will show on her face and a smile will make her eyes light up again. She will turn to you for what little comfort you can give to her. There will always be a part of you that is gone, but in time, you can learn to live with the part that is still here.

Ruth Eaton, TCF, Savannah, GA

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
TCF Tallahassee, FL*

Bereaved Parents

*Different ages
Different stages
Different issues*

*Same pain
Daily strain
Occasional tissues*

*Our children have died
Often is all we know
A fact we fear to hide*

*Despite our ever-present woe
We live with pride
Though broken-hearted
To love, remember, and grow*

*Victor Montemurro
TCF Medford, NY*

A Friend

*I need a friend to sit with me,
To help me struggle through
The sadness and the anger,
The crying I will do.*

*I need a friend to sit with me,
To help me work this out,
The guilt and all the anguish,
The times I'll want to shout.*

*I need a friend to sit with me,
To help me through my pain,
The longing and the emptiness,
The need to speak his name.*

*Lilly Barstow
TCF Abbotsford, BC, Canada*

Sibling Page

Say Their Name

Time goes on. I don't know that I believe the "time heals" idea, but I do know now that time just keeps going and drags you along with it. Into the future you never imagined. Into a life without your sibling or child by your side. It's painful and unbelievable, we all know that.

It's been 3 years since my brother Jason died needlessly, and I think about him every single day. I say his name. Sometimes out loud, very often in my head. Sometimes it gets stuck in my throat, and when I say it to a few dear friends it's often accompanied by a choke and tears. When my kids say "Uncle Jason" I smile because they remember him, or at least they remember the idea of him because we talk about him.

I realized one day when a friend told me she was "... thinking about Jason..." that it feels like a gift when others say his name to me. Even if it makes me cry, I love that they say his name and think of him and are willing to talk to me about him.

Which made me think. I should let people know I think about their kids and siblings. People I met at TCF meetings and 'met' their loved one through the stories we shared there. I think of them and say their names. Often when I'm alone, out in nature, I think of them and their families: I say their names... Ginger, Ryan, Scott, Cari, Weston, Toni, Stephanie Catherine, Cody Orion, Julie, Mark, Tyler, Isabella, Gretchen, Rick, Will, Brad, Sarah, Josh, Tracey, Brandon, Brian... so many, too many. Sometimes out loud. Sometimes in my head.

They are not forgotten. I say their names.

Kara Myers, Jeffco TCF sister of Jason Lhotka



Rest, my brother, you now have peace.
The wars within you all have ceased.
And with the rising sun each day,
Upon Heaven you will play.
Until we met again,
Know I love you, my brother, my friend.

Sandra Evans, TCF Kearsarge, NH



Memories of Your Face

I woke this morning
Finding everything in a haze
Wiping tears from my eyes
I saw your smiling face.

I reached out and touched you
Yet all I could feel was pain
You felt nothing
From your life within a frame.

I spoke.
Receiving no reply,
I told you that I loved you
I asked you why?

I'll never have another
No one to take your place
All I have, little brother, are memories
and the picture of your face.

*Lisa Walmsley,
TCF, Sarasota, FL*

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

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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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