



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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July

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is an international non-profit self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.

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.

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Chapter 1562

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Our Chapter Meetings are held at Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA, the second Monday of the month at 7pm

Our support group provides a confidential and welcoming space for bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult (16 yr +) siblings. We hope that by being among others who understand this profound pain, you will feel free to talk, cry, and share your experiences; it is also perfectly acceptable to simply come and listen.

To honor your loved one, we invite you to bring a picture of your child to display during the meeting on special days or at any time you wish. Refreshments brought in memory of your child are also warmly welcomed.

For additional information about meetings, directions to our meeting space or to be added to the meeting reminder text list call or text 835-201-4606

Upcoming Meetings and Events

- Monday July 13 -
- Monday August 10 -

Cancellations will be posted on the website & sent to meeting list members

To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting can be an emotional experience, but please know that everyone present has experienced the profound loss of a child and shares a deep understanding of the pain you are enduring. We cannot walk your unique grief journey for you, but we can offer to take your hand and walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes; instead, we offer a safe space where we care, share, and understand.

Although each member's circumstances may differ, we have all "been there" and can genuinely say we understand. You are not alone.

To Our Seasoned Members

Think back to your very first meeting. You likely arrived feeling hurt, confused, and deeply alone in your grief. Do you remember the quiet relief of realizing you weren't alone? That others had walked this path and survived? That same love and support you received is now a gift you hold for others. While you have grown stronger and may no longer need the meetings for your own healing, our newest members need *you*. Please consider returning to share the hope that was once shared with you.

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

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Chapter & Meeting News

Meetings

6 members attended the June meeting. We hope that everyone found some encouragement at the meeting.

Liberation

By Andrea Gambill, Editor of Bereavement Magazine

It is one thing to be free; it is quite another to be liberated. Liberation implies that freedom was absent and there was bondage. Though it may not always seem obvious, grief has both the power to bind and the power to liberate from bondage.

Initially, when a person we love dies, it seems we are in the bondage of grief and will never recover. It feels as if we will never be the same again and we are right, we never will be the same again. But maybe being the same again shouldn't be our goal. Confronted by death, we suddenly see LIFE in a totally different way than we ever considered it before. Gradually, we begin to realize HOW we are different, and it is in those differences that we can find liberation and new freedoms.

Many of the things we used to think were important are now irrelevant. Previous goals and opportunities are now limp, meaningless, empty and discarded. But as we lose interest in many of the things that formerly seemed so life enhancing, we discover new values and priorities.

At last we are liberated from the bondage of competition. If we were formerly obsessed with the fastest, the most expensive, the biggest, the newest, the most beautiful, the most powerful, we now know how empty and futile those victories can be. In our "other lives", we believed we had to belong to the right organizations, attend the right schools, live in the right neighborhoods, work in the right jobs, wear the right clothes, have the right opinions. Now, some of the things that were "right" are wrong, and some just simply don't matter anymore. Our grief has liberated us from those masters.

We have a new freedom to challenge, to attempt new ventures, to confront old relationships, to develop and explore latent skills and talents. No longer are we burdened and shackled by "should" and "ought".

We have the freedom to be wrong. Though we are no longer "right" as often as we used to be, when we are right, we're more

(Continued on page 4)

Our Children Remembered July Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

	Birth	Anniv.
Scott Arcury - Son of Frank & Beth Arcury ; Brother of Lauren Arcury	Mar 6	Jul 24
Hunter Bremmer - Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmer	Dec 12	Jul 27
Brandon Buck - Son of Kathryn Bauer	Mar 10	Jul 24
Courtney Daud - Daughter of Marie Daud	Jul 15	Jul 15
Sarah Davidson - Daughter of Dean & Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Jul 10	Jul 10
Mark Dilts, Jr - Son of Mark & Joy Dilts; Brother of Beth Dilts	Jan 6	Jul 8
Connor Dugan - Son of George & Holly Dugan	Jul 17	Dec 24
Sgt. Christopher Geiger - Son of George & Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Terrance, David, Timothy & The late Michael Geiger	Mar 30	Jul 9
Eric Graver - Son of Mary L Graver	Aug 17	Jul 9
James "Jimmy" Hotz - Son of Elizabeth Hotz	Apr 24	Jul 4
Colleen Kilker - Daughter of Mark & Kathleen Kilker; Sister of Meghan, Bridget & 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
John Leonard, Jr - Son of Jack & Jule Leonard; Brother of Karen	Jul 27	Jan 6
Carter Mayer - Son of Ashley Mowrey	Jul 13	Aug 20
Ed McNally - Son of Don & Connie McNally; Brother of Sean McNally	Jul 29	Feb 11
Amy Ortelli - Daughter of Wayne & Rebecca Ortelli; Sister of Christian Ortelli & the late Jennifer Ortelli - Bryant	Feb 10	Jul 5
David Orwan, Jr - Son of Debra Orwan	Jul 8	Oct 5
Alexander Price - Son of Anthony & Jenny Price; Brother of Adam & Chole	Jul 17	Jul 9
Peter Radocha - Son of Lucille Radocha; Brother of Gina Sacco & Frank Radocha, Jr	Jun 13	Jul 1
Robert Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Jul 9	Apr 4
Elliot Senseman - Son of Heather Lyons	Aug 17	Jul 27
Jessica Smolenski - Daughter of Thomas & Pamela Smolenski	Nov 3	Jul 6
Zackary Stokes - Son of Pam & Duane Stokes	Aug 8	Jul 2
Paul Woodling - Son of Gregg & Mary Ann Miller	Jul 21	Nov 5



July "Love Gifts"



From:	Loved One
♥ Lucille Radocha	Peter Radocha <i>So many years, but always in our hearts</i>
♥ David Bremmer	Hunter Bremmer <i>I miss you and think of you every day! All my love, Dad</i>

What are Love Gifts?

Love Gifts are heartfelt expressions of love given in memory of our precious children, family members, and friends. With no dues or fees our chapter sustains its mission through the generosity of Love Gift donations. Gifts can be made in any amount and are tax deductible. Please use the form on the last page of this newsletter and mail or bring to the meeting.

Many thanks to the following for their ongoing contributions to the chapter

Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville
For our meeting space

The Matt Kush Foundation
In Memory of Matt Kush

United Way
Payroll Contributors

certain and less abusive about it.

We have been liberated from inhibition and self-consciousness. The strength born of our pain has given us the courage to speak out when before we might have been silent. We no longer fear the criticism and judgment of others. Who can hurt us now? We have experienced the worst and survived. Sorrow has stripped away those fears. Now, we are more aware of the panorama of Life and less concerned with our own little piece of it.

We have discovered the freedom to express our affection for others freely, even lavishly. We are acutely aware that there may be no more chances to say "Goodbye," or, "I love you," one more time.

We are free to develop a new acquaintance with our inner selves. Often we have a keener awareness of the "still, small voice" within. We hear our directions with more sensitivity and trust. We are more aligned with our spiritual connections and perhaps less impressed with "religion." We have learned to appreciate wisdom above knowledge.

We have the freedom to appreciate time in a new value system. Our experience has taught us to view time with a new fragility, because we know how easily and quickly it can seem to end.

We have the freedom to have an open mind. Previously, we may have made concrete and inviolate decisions about anything ranging from breakfast cereal to eternal destiny. Now, we are more cautious, ready to hear another point of view. Whereas we used to have all the answers, now we just have all the questions.

Finally, we have achieved a freedom from the fear of death. We can now look Death squarely in the eye and know that there is no more intimidation. No longer are we afraid. Death had one trump card, and now that it's been played, we stand in the victor's circle.

With liberation, we are free to live and work and advocate in memory of our absent loved

ones for whatever time we remain here on Earth. And when it's our turn to be called away, we will leave behind an ongoing legacy of freedom for those we love who yet remain.

Yes, in liberation, there is peace.

His Shoes Speak To Me

His shoes still sit on the closet floor,
Tho' he's been gone a decade and more.

Some days my memories are a bit hazy.
Is it a nightmare or am I going crazy?

I go the closet and there are his shoes
It's easy to see they really were used.

The prints of his feet are still inside.
He really did live, but too soon he died.

Reality returns, with his shoes on the floor
How long will they be there?
'Til I need them no more.

His bronzed baby shoes sit on a shelf.
They help me to meet a need in myself.

These baby shoes speak of a life just beginning,
The work shoes tell about life and its ending.

With the passing of years, some peace
I've attained.
But the happiness I once knew
cannot be regained.

Yet there's much about life I still want to live. To my
family and others, I still yearn to give.

I've cried many tears, felt the guilt and the pain.
My grief has diminished
and I can laugh once again

Ora S. Lewis,
TCF Orange
County



IT'S NOT UNUSUAL TO

- Feel physically exhausted, but have difficulty sleeping .
- Feel tightness in the throat, heaviness in the chest or a lump in the stomach .
- Wander aimlessly, forget in the middle of a sentence, neglect to finish tasks. Feel restless, look for activity, but be unable to concentrate .
- Think you're losing your mind .
- Feel the need to take care of others who seem uncomfortable around you .
- Feel you don't want to go on .
- Say to yourself, "If only I had" "
- Keep asking, "Why?"
- Feel that the loss isn't real.
- Sense the loved one's presence by expecting him to walk in the door or phone at the usual time. Hear the voice or see the face .
- Look for him in a crowd or see reminders unexpectedly .
- Need to tell and retell things about your loved one and the death .
- Cry at unexpected times .
- Feel able to cope but then fall back again .
- Feel depressed.

All of these reactions are natural and normal. Know that you are not alone in having them.

Excerpted from an article by Ruth Eiseman, Louisville, K Y

I Don't Think I'm Getting Better

"I don't think I'm getting any better." I have heard those words from virtually every bereaved parent I have ever talked to.

Bereaved parents don't see their own grief improve because they are with it 24 hours per day. Answer the following questions to see if you are getting better:

1. Have I gotten through one hour without crying?
2. Have I gotten through the morning without screaming?
3. Have I slept at least two hours without waking?
4. Have I caught myself smiling instead of crying when I think of my child?

We have to remember to take our grief one step at a time. If you answered "yes" to at least one question you are making progress - you have just taken another step.

~Pam Duke TCF. San Antonio, TX

Hard Times

How to hold on and how to let go... How to lose and how to keep... Those are hard problems for the bereaved parent. We want to keep the child in our life, we want to remember the child; we want to save those parts of our life which are tied to the child. Yet, at the same time, we know that the child is dead and things cannot be as they were before. The memories of good times now bring pain; the memories of the bad times raise guilt and a feeling of powerlessness.

The end of the grief process is a resolution of this tension between holding on and letting go. At the end of the process, strange as it may sound now, we can keep our relationship with the child and separate ourselves from the child. We can remember and be sad; we can remember and be happy; we can remember and just be.

But it takes a long time for such a resolution to happen and while we are in the process, we find ourselves pulled to one side and then to the other. Sometimes we want to leave the room exactly as it was. Other times we want to put everything away so nothing reminds us of the child. Sometimes we want to talk over and over again about the events of the death. Other times we want to avoid the topic altogether. Sometimes when all we have left of our child is our sadness, we don't want to give up our grief for fear of giving up our child.

All that is a normal process. We go through it at any death. When our parent dies the problem is how to hold on to our childhood and youth and yet give up our childhood and youth. So, we find ourselves keeping a bit of our parents in ourselves by becoming a little more like them.

I was once talking about this in class when suddenly a woman blurted out, "So that's why I wanted to use the good china so much a year after she died."

It's a lot harder to give up the child and keep the child at the same time, because when our parent dies we have to lose and keep our past. When our child dies we have to lose and keep our future...

In our grandparents' day, losing a child was an expected part of life. But it is not in our time. Few of us even knew anyone else to whom it happened. So we have few models. Each of us seems to have to find our own way for ourselves. It is a hard and lonely journey. But the experience of others who have gone down this valley is that there is a resolution at

the end. We can hold on and let go. If we can for a moment share with others on the same journey, we can help others find direction and let them help us. ... That is what The Compassionate Friends is all about.

Dennis Klass, Ph. D. TCF St. Louis, MO

Footprints in the Sand

*There was a day of sunshine,
when you followed after me.*

Bare feet in cool sand.

*Small prints skipping
through swirls of foam upon the
shore.*

*Even as we danced and laughed
The waves crashed against the rocks.*

Yet when I looked behind us

Only smooth sand remained.

The sea had erased our marks.

*People have ceased to speak of you
and grow uncomfortable when I do.
But I refuse to let them, like the sea,
erase your memory.*

Karen Nelson

TCF Box Elder County, Utah

Sibling Page



The Beach

I walked along the beach today
With thoughts of how we used to play,
That long road trip in Dad's green Ford
Mom kept trying to keep us from feeling
bored.

But the end result was always the best
When at Grandpa's house we came to rest.
Remember how we used to say...
"Can we please go to the beach today?"

Our best times together
we found down there.
Just two little kids without a care.
Flying colorful kites so high,
and building sand castles in the sky.

And those secret messages
we would send,
Hey Chris, who thought
those days would ever end?

I walked along the beach today,
with thoughts of how we used to play,
I wrote you a message in the sand,
with hopes you could read it
from a far away land.

"I miss you brother, did you have to go?"
It did say,
but the ocean's waves slowly washed it away.
"He's gone now" - said a voice from above.
But Chris - You will live forever through
my memories and love.

Dedicated to my little brother
Christopher Joseph Prescott

Darlene Prescott, TCF, Valley Forge, PA

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

Note:

*Siblings (age 16+) are welcome to attend our
compassionate friends meetings.*

*Also The Compassionate Friends hosts a
moderated chatroom and a facebook page just
for bereaved siblings. To join go to
www.compassionatefriends.org and click on the
"Find Support" tab.*



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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.

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 find and then choose online communities.

Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

TCF Quakertown - 267-379-0429

TCF Easton - 610-577-5193

TCF Pocono - 570-350-6695

GRASP - 484-788-9440

(grief recovery after substance passing)

Love Gift Form

The Compassionate Friends is a 501(c)(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 1st

Contributor Name *(this will be the name that appears in the newsletter)*

Address

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 are published in the next edition.*

Special Text - Brief message & signature *(Examples Messages - Happy Birthday; Loved & missed forever, Always in my heart Signatures - Love Mom, Dad etc.)*

I would like my love gift to go toward: (you may choose more than one)

☐ Newsletter

☐ Postage

☐ Office Expenses

☐ Special Events