



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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September

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 September 14 -
- Monday - October 12 -

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

10 members attended the August meeting. We hope that everyone found some encouragement at the meeting.

Why Routines Help When You're Grieving

Think of your favorite comfort food, the coziest blanket you own, or the pleasure of consuming a warm cup of hot chocolate before bed. All these things make you feel better, right? They're like big, squeezie hugs (as Libby would say) because they are familiar. And it's this familiarity that makes routines so amazing. They're like a comforting, dependable embrace during times of grief.

Knowing simple things like when you're going to wake up in the morning, what you're going to eat, and that you're going to take a walk each Thursday with a friend after work can make a HUGE difference when you're on your grief journey. Grieving is mentally exhausting. Sometimes, you just need to give your brain a chance to "catch its breath." Routines say, "Hey brain, let's not focus on everything right now, let's just get through our morning routine."

Routines can also keep us healthy.

I know, the last thing we grieving souls want to focus on is diet and exercise. But I swear, tiny routines regarding health can make a massive difference in your mood. Like I said earlier, I am not asking you to dive headfirst into a rigorous workout routine or to finally go keto.

Doing minor activities throughout the week and ensuring you get balanced nutrition can make a large difference.

Routines help you stay connected

Even for an introvert like me, who tends to go into my cave when I'm wounded, finding ways to stay connected helps as well. Grief can be isolating and lonely, but scheduling time with people to engage in real-life human conversation can be very beneficial for reducing the loneliness felt in grief. Extroverts, on the other hand, may find that they want to slow their role socially and be with fewer, closer friends while grieving.

The best thing about routines is that they are all about YOU. Whether you're a jog-every-morning person (I am so jealous) or a stay-at-home-and-read person (raises hand), your routine should be tailored to what you enjoy, what you will stick with, and what can help you move forward. Creating a routine is completely personal, and you can start with small things that you do in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Whether it's getting up and making your bed, hydrating, doing a five-minute stretch, or having your favorite breakfast before the rest of your family wakes up, it's all about making the routine yours.

(Continued on page 4)

Our Children Remembered September Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

	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
Brandon Gehris - Son of Ryan & Tanya Nissen	Feb 2	Sep 3
Chelsie Graham - Daughter of Chris & Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
Raquel Guerra - Daughter of Jeff & 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
Nykolas LaRosa - Son of Shelly Youwakim; Brother of Krystole LaRosa	Sep 25	Oct 28
Anthony "Tony" Mariani, II - Kathleen Collins & The Late Anthony E. Mariani; Stepson of Brian Collins; Brother of Matthew Mariani	Sep 13	Sep 6
Jennifer Ortelli - Bryant - Daughter of Wayne & Rebecca Ortelli; Sister of Christian Ortelli & The Late Amy Ortelli	Oct 6	Sep 3
Scott Rothrock - Son of Larry & Linda Rothrock	Oct 20	Sep 18
Konnor Roy - Son of Dale & Cynthia Roy	Sep 21	Jun 2
Leo Shiner - Grandson of Morris & Maggie Shiner	Nov 23	Sep 8
Erik Swanson - Son of Susan Swanson	Sep 14	Feb 10
Sean Virmalo - Son of Udo & Janet L. Virmalo; Brother of Eric, Brett & Katelyn Virmalo	Sep 13	Apr 28
Stephanie Volkert - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zachary Volkert & The Late Victoria Volkert	Sep 22	Feb 12
Gage Voorhees - Son of Caroline Schrey; Brother of Kara	Oct 23	Sep 14
Hunter Yeagle - Son of Terree & Brett Oakwood	Aug 1	Sep 6



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:

Loved One

♥Kathleen Collins

Anthony E. Mariani*Alles Gute zum Geburtstag, mein schöner Junge. Meine ganze Liebe, Mutter*

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

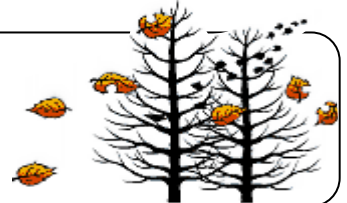
United Way
Payroll Contributors

(Continued from page 2)

Don't hesitate to write it down or even use a printable checklist to track your actions. Creating a routine brings you a sense of normalcy, a bit of predictability, and a whole lot of resilience. Whether you are just starting to create a new routine or trying to maintain one you've started, remember to be gentle with yourself. After all, it's all about moving forward, one tiny step at a time.

Brooke Carlock, opentohope.com

Fall



Will I ever see the leaves turn and wither without thinking of my son's last days? On the very first day of this season each year my heart aches. Yes, there IS such a physical thing as a heartache. It feels like the chest cavity is too small for the organ. It Hurts.

Then I look at the world. The wispy Fall clouds look like the sky has a furrowed brow, and occasionally it puckers up and cries with me. The sun is so innocent, so naïve. It casts its rosy glow on every object... oblivious to the gray pain just around the corner.

The trees begin to cry their dead leaves onto the ground and stretch their empty arms heavenward (just like me), asking "WHY?"

And then I think of my own naiveté five years ago with a bittersweet memory. I can't say I was carefree, but I never knew the terrible aching grief of losing a loved one. For many months after he died, I longed to escape back to the days before I felt the pain. Now I know that going back is more painful than facing the NOW.

All the other months I live a happy and healed existence, but beginning with that first day that's truly "autumn"...

My heart hurts, my brow furrows, my eyes cry, and even though the warm sun shines on me, my arms feel empty and they are raised to the heavens asking, "WHY?"

Hurry up, Fall, and move on by. Even the dead of winter is preferable to the pain you bring me each year.

Donna Ellis, Kansas City, MO



... In this world there are many kinds of longing,
But no longing to match the longing for one's child

Ki No Tourayuki



Death from a Grandparent's Point of View

by Ruth Eaton, TCF, Savannah, GA

The death of a child is the most tragic thing that can happen to anyone.

It affects so many lives; family and 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 away the hurt as you did when he was a child, for you don't understand the many feelings you are experiencing yourself. Each day you hope and pray for a little something to say or do that will be of comfort to them. 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 his eyes light up again. Your child will turn to you for what comfort that you can give. 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 there.

Angel of Mine

I felt an angel near today,
Though one I could not see,
I felt an angel, oh, so close,
Sent to comfort me.

I felt an angel's gentle kiss,
Soft upon my cheek,
And oh, without a single word
Of caring it did speak.

I felt an angel's loving touch,
Soft upon my heart,
And with that touch, I felt the pain
And hurt within depart.

I felt an angel's tepid tears,
Fall softly next to mine
And knew that as those tears did dry
A new day would be mine.

I felt an angel's silken wings
Enfold me with pure love
And felt a strength within me grow
A strength sent from above.

I felt an angel, oh so close
Though one I could not see
I felt an angel near today,
Sent to comfort me.

Author Unknown

When a child dies, it is natural to be afraid of any further pain. For a while we may just want to crawl into a hole and lick our wounds. But then we need to have the courage to say to ourselves, "I'm still here – I can fulfill some of the dreams and give the love my child would have given - I can make that life count." And in that sense of purpose and the good we do, we remain forever in touch with the child we thought we lost.

Excerpts from After a Child Dies by Eda Le Shan, Long Island, NY

It is the gift of hope which reigns supreme in the attributes of the Compassionate Friends. Hope that all is not lost. Hope that life can still be worth living and meaningful. Hope that the pain of loss will become less acute and above all else, the hope that we do not walk alone, that we are understood. The gift of hope is the greatest gift that we can give to those who mourn.

Reverend Simon Stephens, Founder of TCF, 1972

Your First Day

Your first day at school,
 You waved from the door
 All dressed in you No. 12 T-Shirt
 surrounded with stars.
 And your Scooby Doo lunch box
 Held tightly in your hand
 You seemed so little
 And world seemed so large.

All day I worried and watched
 The clock.
 At 3:00, I was waiting in front
 Of your school.
 You came running and couldn't stop.
 You had so much to tell -
 You'd made so many friends,
 Done lots of new and fun things,
 And, you WANTED to go back
 Again!

All my worry - for nothing
 You were happy, and so was I.

Your first day in Heaven
 I wonder how it went.
 You still seemed so little
 And heaven seemed so far.
 Each day I wonder and watch the sky
 Have you made many friends?
 Are you still having fun?
 Would you want to go back again?
 And then I sigh,

If only you could
 Come running and
 Tell me about
 your First Day.

*Naomi Holman
 TCF Volusia /Flagler Chapter, FL*



What Is Grief?

It's soaking your pillow with tears at night.
 your thoughts flying 'round in your head.
 You feel like you'll never sleep again,
 Wondering why you went to bed.

It's softly crying in the shower,
 And hoping no one will hear.
 When sobs wrack your chest, taking your breath,
 You'll surely be heard, you fear.

You blow your nose and wipe your eyes,
 Come out looking innocent.
 The silly games we all play,
 You wish you knew what they meant.

It's having swollen eyelids,
 Your nose peels all the time.
 You go through boxes of Kleenex.
 Then people say you look fine!

It's guilt and depression and anger,
 Emotions are magnified.
 Good days and bad days are measured
 By the amount of tears that you cried.

It's hanging in limbo from lawsuits,
 Your grieving has been put on hold.
 You feel like you'll never start healing
 Before you're a hundred years old.

It's when someone says; "It's God's will,"
 And you're sorry you nodded and cried.
 You feel like you've betrayed your child,
 Your precious child that died.

It's feeling abandoned by God,
 Wondering if He really does care.
 Then on a good day, believing,
 Convinced, all the time, he was there.

It's crying to God in your sorrow,
 Imploring him for some reprieves.
 He comes to you in his own time,
 Conveying that with you he grieves.

It's having compassion for others,
 Supporting them when their child dies.
 It brings back the painful memories,
 But, "Lord, help them," is what your heart cries.

By Elizabeth Dent TCF, McMinnville, OR

Sibling Page

Letter to Our Living Children

Yes, to all you beautiful living children - we are so fortunate to have you. We love you very much.

When fate takes one of you from us, we are so hurt. We have lost a part of you. too. We haven't forgotten you while we are grieving. It's only natural for us to remember and want to talk about the one who died. We haven't forgotten all the good things you do — no, we haven't forgotten, but now in our sorrow, we try to hang on to what we have lost.

Please don't shut us out because you're afraid by mentioning the death, we'll cry, and you don't want to add to our hurt and sorrow. We all need each other now. Unless we talk to each other and tell each other how we hurt, we will all suffer needlessly. We know you have lost a playmate — someone you told secrets to and grew to love very much, too. Let's tell each other our thoughts, talk them over together, cry and grieve together.

God never intended that people should be driven apart by death. Let's laugh, cry, play and pray together, Lets get all our thoughts and fears out in the open. That's what families are supposed to do — lighten each other's burdens.

Let us bury our dead together and keep our memories of them and express them often, but we must get on with living now.

Parents, we must live for our living children — show our love for them lest they feel unwanted And lose heart.

May God give us the strength to help each other when our burdens seem heavy.

Margaret Korotewshi
TCF, Fairmont, MN

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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 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 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