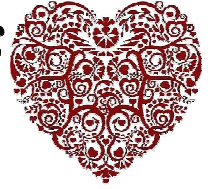


The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



484-597-0240

Email: tcflehighvalley@gmail.com

www.lehighvalleytcf.org

facebook.com/TCFlehighvalley

February 2014

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www.compassionatefriends.org
To participate, click on "Online Support" under the resource tab

Who We Are

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a national nonprofit self-help organization that offers friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. There are no religious affiliations and no dues.

About Our Meetings...

Meetings are held 2nd Monday each month from 7 to 9 pm at Sacred Heart Hospital (2nd Flr. Conference Center), 4th & Chew Sts, Allentown. Free parking deck passes are available at the meeting.

Meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Younger siblings may benefit from one of the children's bereavement groups listed below. Meetings vary, from sharing, to guest speakers, to special presentations. Separate sharing sessions are offered to new members. Participation in group sharing is confidential and voluntary. Our hope is that being among other bereaved parents you may feel free to talk, cry and share, but it is okay to just come and listen too.

We invite you to bring a picture of your child to display at the meeting for their birth or anniversary month or at any time.

Meeting and Events Calendar

Feb 10 Monthly Meeting - Memories from the Heart - see page 2

March 10 Monthly Meeting - General Sharing



Inclement Weather

Cancellations due to inclement weather will be posted on the chapter facebook page (facebook.com/TCFLehighValley), on the website calendar and on voicemail message at 484-891-0823



Other Local TCF Chapters Meetings

Carbon County

1st Wednesday 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Palmerton Community Ambulance Assn.
501 Delaware Ave, Palmerton
610-826-2938
Email: pannbiss@aol.com

Easton

2nd Thursday 7 - 9 pm
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,
2115 Washington Blvd., Easton
610-866-5468
Email: szabojanos1@verizon.net

Quakertown

2nd Tuesday 7:30 - 9 pm
St. Lukes Quakertown Hospital
1021 Park Ave, Quakertown
215-536-0173
Email: tcfquakertownchapter@verizon.net

Local Children's Support Groups

Ryan's Tree for Grieving Children (ages 5-18)

Sessions are offered at various times throughout the year.
For information or to register contact Krista Malone @ 610-997-7120 or visit www.slnh.org/ryanstree

Children's General Bereavement Group (ages 5 - 13)

Jeanette Laube, MA facilitates a children's bereavement group on a as needed basis. Preregistration required. Meeting day, time & place coincide with TCF, LV meetings. To preregister or get further information contact Jeanette @ 610-762-5783

TCF Telephone Friends

For those times that you need to connect with someone between meetings, the following bereaved parents are available to listen and share.

Infant Loss	Kim Szep.....	610-730-3111	Suicide.....	John & Maria Szabo.....	610 866-5468
Infant Loss	Cathy McDonald...	610 391-1474	Addiction.....	Nancy Howe.....	484-863-4324
Multiple Children/ General Loss.....	Betty Thompson...	610 868-0303	Homicide.....	Ginger Renner.....	610-967-5113
Only Child.....	Shelly Garst.....	484 241-5396			

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News, Events & Announcements

Mark your calendars for these upcoming meetings & events

❖ February 10 Meeting - Memories From the Heart

Please bring a memento, picture or memory of your child to share with the group.

❖ March 10

General Sharing

❖ June 14

TCF Family Picnic, Moore Twp Recreation Center, Bath, PA

News

We are working to solve the newsletter printing issue. As you may know, a few months ago we lost the printer who had provided the chapter with reduced rate printing. The printer we are using currently using has discounted their price but even this discounted price is a seven fold increase over what we had been paying. This is not a price change that we will be able to sustain through the current amount of love gifts and donations we receive. We will continue to print and distribute the newsletter while we explore all options, but unless we find another source of low cost printing or someone steps forward to underwrite the cost of printing, major changes may need to be made. Several changes discussed include Bi -monthly or quarterly newsletter, a yearly subscription fee, email newsletters.

We prefer to not make any changes because we know that newsletter provides a important lifeline to our members especially those that are not able to attend meetings for one on one support.

If you know someone who may be able to provide a reduced cost printing or underwrite the cost of printing or if you have ideas about how we can cut down the cost please call Kathy at 484-891-0823



Our Morning Call

"Be An Angel"

Wish List

- Reduced rate printing services or digital copier
- Reduced rate or no cost office space in Bath, Northampton or Bethlehem area
- Monetary Donations



Find us on the web at:

www.lehighvalleytcf.org

and on Facebook at:

www.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 take your hand and walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our members 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.

To Our Seasoned Members

Think back to your first meeting, You were hurt, confused and felt alone in your grief. Remember the comfort you felt when you found you weren't alone and that others that had been where you were and survived. Remember the love and support you felt as fellow members offered on your grief journey. Now you are stronger and may not feel the need to attend meetings for aid and comfort. We need you though. New members need you. They need your encouragement, support and wisdom. If you haven't attended a meeting in awhile please consider coming back to offer hope to those who now feel lost and see no hope.

"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely help another without helping himself" ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our Children Loved and Remembered Always

Birthday and Anniversary dates can be especially difficult.

Please keep the parents, grandparents and siblings of the following children in your heart this month

February Birthdays

Susan Antler	Daughter of Charles and Charlotte Antler	Feb 21
Dakota Arndt	Son of Steve and Mary Arndt; Brother of Ann Marie & Dylan	Feb 6
James Balloch	Grandson of Bill Gerth & Fern Gerth	Feb 22
Justin Bramich	Son of Nancy Quinton; Brother of Ryan & Ian Bramich	Feb 2
Ky DiVittorio	Son of Jan DiVittorio; Brother of Ian DiVittorio	Feb 13
Eric Fenstermacher	Son of Rick and Kathleen Fenstermacher; Brother of Heather Fenstermacher	Feb 14
Wayne Forman	Son of Donald and Theresa Forman; Brother of Jeffrey, Carol, Ken & Gene	Feb 20
Aaron Groff	Son of Leon and Debra Manuel; Brother of Melissa LaBar	Feb 11
Mark Hebdon	Son of Lawrence and Ruth Hebdon; Brother of Laura Long & Michael Hebdon	Feb 24
Kimberly Kissel	Daughter of Michael and Gloria Kissel, Jr.; Sister of Colleen & Micheal Kissel & Lisa Zelko	Feb 6
Janet Mitchell	Daughter of Inez Housel; Sister of Tammy Housel, Brian Housel, Lisa Housel, Jay Housel	Feb 24
Amanda Mohr	Daughter of Rodney Mohr & Beverly Mohr	Feb 25
James "Jimmy" Mullen, II	Son of Jeanie Mullen	Feb 26
Rosemary Olesh	Daughter of Rose Mociadowski; Sister of Jean Redding	Feb 2
Susette Olewine	Daughter of Louis and Joyce Szoke	Feb 17
Angelo Providakis	Son of Michael and Joanne Providakis	Feb 7
Jennifer Schaible	Daughter of Linda Stewart; Sister of Andy Schaible & The late Aaron Schaible	Feb 18
Quinna Schleicher	Daughter of Lin and Judy Schleicher; Sister of Aaron Schleicher ; Granddaughter of Marie Moyer	Feb 2
Joseph Siedlecki, Jr	Son of Joe and Monica Siedlecki; Brother of MaryAnn, Michele & the late Jeanmarie Siedlecki Moyer	Feb 26
David Todd Smith	Son of David and Kathleen Smith	Feb 25
Troy Southgate	Son of Donald and Susann Southgate; Brother of Martin Southgate	Feb 25
Kevin Stenlake	Son of Elizabeth Leada Stenlake; Brother of Dawn Frey	Feb 22
Jon Sulick	Son of John Sulick; Brother of Aymae Sulick	Feb 9
Kassidy Sullivan	Daughter of Jessica Potteiger	Feb 20
Jonathan Venkauskas	Son of Dan and Jane Venkauskas; Brother of Becky Venkauskas; Grandson of Daniel and Betty Venkauskas	Feb 17

Please Note: Due to privacy concerns Birthday and Anniversary listings are only published with permission for parents /guardians, siblings and grandparents. If your child, grandchild or siblings name does not above or a correction is needed please fill out and sign the Update Form on page 11

February Anniversaries

Evan Albertini	Son of Louis AlBertini; Brother of Christopher AlBertini	Feb 13
Susan Antler	Daughter of Charles & Charlotte Antler	Feb 21
Hannah Rose Bankos	Daughter of Thomas & Christina Bankos; Sister of Matthew Bankos	Feb 24
Graham Beckhorn	Son of Alice Keyes; Brother of Patrick Beckhorn & Christopher Beckhorn	Feb 14
Hope Davidson	Daughter of Dean & Donna Davidson	Feb 8
Brock Depew	Son of Alex & Patricia Polohovich; Brother of Troy Austin Depew	Feb 12
David "Dave" Fegley	Son of Dick & Peg Fegley	Feb 18
Eileen Collins Gant	Daughter of Dorothy and the late John Collins, Sr; Sister of John, Steven & Brian Collins, Kathleen Collins-Morrison & MaryAnn Watkins	Feb 14
Raymond Haas, Jr.	Brother of Charles Haas & Linda Wronowski	Feb 29
Christopher Harrison	Son of Jerry & Elizabeth Harrison; Brother of Andrea	Feb 10
David Heard	Son of Susan Heard; Brother of Daisy Heard	Feb 10
Schlyer Kemps	Son of John & Jenny Kemps; Brother of Courtney & Alex Kemps	Feb 10
Matt Kush	Son of Rick & Ann Kush; Brother of Mike & Jenn	Feb 10
Adam LaRizzio	Brother of Jordan LaRizzio	Feb 20
Kristen Lyn Lisicky-Tyber	Daughter of James J. & Annette Lisicky; Sister of James M. Lisicky	Feb 15
Aidan Maher	Son of Raymond & Courtney Maher; Brother of Brady Maher	Feb 2
Katherine McGraw	Daughter of John & Sue McGraw; Sister of Maggy & Sean McGraw	Feb 28
Ed McNally	Son of Don & Connie McNally; Brother of Sean McNally	Feb 11
Carrie Meuret	Daughter of Jennifer Zayas; Sister of Dakota Zayas	Feb 13
Thomas Miller	Grandson of Emma Butz	Feb 18
Michael Milot	Son of John & Patti Milot; Brother of Jill	Feb 2
Russell "Russ" Nicholson	Son of Jim & Lyn Nicholson; Brother of Rachel Nicholson	Feb 24
Donna Potkovic-Roth	Daughter of Michael & Annette Potkovic, II; Sister of Matthew, Mark, John, Denise, Michele & the late Michael Potkovic, III	Feb 26
Michael Powers	Son of Richard & Margaret Powers; Brother of Billy, Richie, Tara & Ryan Powers	Feb 10
Maria Rothermel	Daughter of Gerald & Doris Rothermel; Sister of Mark Rothermel	Feb 3
Joey Russo	Son of Susan Russo; Brother of Jena & Jevin Russo	Feb 23
Jennifer Schaible	Daughter of Linda Stewart; Sister of Andy Schaible & The late Aaron Schaible	Feb 26
Tara Stauffer	Daughter of Kermit T. & Faye Nester	Feb 19
Constance Stewart	Daughter of Joanne Stewart; Sister of Keith & Kevin Stewart	Feb 1
Kassidy Sullivan	Daughter of Jessica Potteiger	Feb 20
Frank Thiel	Son of Gregg & Debi Thiel; Brother of Ryan, Greg & Adam Thiel	Feb 11
Meredith Unger	Daughter of Kathleen Paone	Feb 17
Stephanie Volkert	Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zachary Volkert	Feb 12

Please Note: Due to privacy concerns Birthday and Anniversary listings are only published with permission for parents /guardians, siblings and grandparents. If your child, grandchild or siblings name does not above or a correction is needed please fill out and sign the Update Form on page 11

Love Gifts

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. Our largest monthly expense is the printing and mailing of newsletters to our 400 readers. Your tax deductible Love Gift donations enables the chapter to continue our mission of reaching out to the newly bereaved and providing ongoing support to all our members. Love Gifts are most often given in memory of a child who has died. They may also be given in memory of or in honor of a friend, relative or special person. To make a love gift donation please use form on page 11

We thank the following for their generous donations this month

- | | |
|--|--|
| ♥ Don and Sue Southgate | Troy Southgate
<i>We love and miss you so very much. All our love, Mom, Dad & Marty</i> |
| ♥ Lawrence and Ruth Hebdon | Mark Hebdon
<i>We think of you everyday!</i> |
| ♥ Lew and Sharon Richards | Darryl Shurow
<i>In Loving Memory</i> |
| ♥ Art & May Guerrieri | Rita Guerrieri
<i>Miss you...Love you forever, Rita. Mom, Dad & Maryrose</i> |
| ♥ Rick & Ann Kush
The Matt Kush Fondation | Matt Kush
<i>In Loving Memory</i> |
| ♥ Pete & Robert Mather | Ensign Beth Anne Mather
<i>In Loving Memory</i> |
| ♥ Rella Daniels | Jonelle L. Sisonick
<i>In memory of our daughter. Love and blessing at Christmastime</i> |
| ♥ Rocky and Sadie Fraccica | Rocky J. Fraccica
<i>So much love, Mom & Dad</i> |
| ♥ Mary Burke | Brian Michael Burke
<i>In memory of Brian Burke. Forever in our hearts.</i> |
| ♥ Susan McGraw | Katherine "Katie" McGraw
<i>In Loving Memory</i> |
| ♥ Ann Evans | John "Jack" Evans, III
<i>A wonderful son and brother who will be forever in our hearts.</i> |
| ♥ Richard and Margaret Powers | Michael F Powers
<i>We miss you so! Life will never be the same. Love Mom, Dad, brothers, sisters and family</i> |

Donations and Contributions

TCF Lehigh Valley Contributors

- ★ *The Matt Kush Foundation*
In memory of Matt Kush
- ★ *John & Jane Ebner*
"Be An Angel" donation
- ★ *Sacred Heart Hospital, Allentown*
for meeting room and drinks
- ★ *Mary Ann Donuts, Allentown*
for meeting snacks

- ★ *Aetna Payroll Contributors*

- ★ *Giant Food Store Employees, Village West, Allentown for United Way Contributions*

- ★ *United Way Payroll Contributors*

TCF Carbon County Contributors

- ★ *Palmerton Community Ambulance Assn.*
for meeting room
- ★ *The Country Harvest, Palmerton*
for meeting snacks

To contribute through the United Way to The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley, ask your employer for the appropriate form and use the number 12116 in the write-in area.

Thoughts on Valentine's Day

By Karen Nelson, TCF Elder Utah

"How sad this day must be for you."

I read it in their eyes.
As if there's no more love
between us anymore,
you and I



How wrong they are
they do not understand
the bond between a parent and child

I do not have to see your face
to remember your sweet smile.

I do not have to hug you,
although if I could, I would
I do not have to hear your voice,
our love is understood

Everyday I think of you,
my thoughts are full of memories.
I realize that love does not end
with death's painful goodbye.
I await with hope until
we can say hello again,
you and I

The Month of February

By Fran MacArthur TCF/Southern MD

This is the month that a whole day is dedicated to love. In our sorrow, let us not forget that one emotion which, above all else, can comfort and console us.

Let us think of the things we love:

Our child ~ whom we loved - still love - and always will love - here in our hearts as long as we live.

Our families ~ hurting like us - lonely - needing each other - needing us.

Our true friends ~ listening - trying to help = wanting to lighten our load, but not knowing how - not always understanding, but there.

Our memories ~ of wonderful times gone by - some that make us laugh - some that make us cry - but all part of the fabric of our lives and of our love for each other.

Our quiet times ~ to get away by ourselves and think - to read - to note again the world around us -to let peace enter.

Our Compassionate Friends ~ who are there - who know - who understand when others do not.

"Love makes the world go round" and when our world comes to a sudden, grinding, heart-shattering stop, love is the glue that keeps us from falling off."



About Hearts

Excerpted from an article by Bill Glover, TCF, Atlanta, GA

Each of us has two hearts. The one that beats in our chest and sustains life. We know about that one. And the one that is described by philosophers as the residence of our spirit and our consciousness. Most of us probably didn't get to know that one until our loss. Remember the fists that sat in the middle of your chest for the first several months? And you went to the doctor, and he did an EKG, and he said, "Your heart is just fine, No-o-o problem!"

The heart that was laid open by this event can't be seen on an x-ray or measured by an EKG. And once opened, it can't be sewn up. We're stuck with it. **AND BETTER OFF WITH IT!** The Compassion lesson is learned when you can control your tears for your own child, but can't control your tears for another's child.

And through this terrible experience, we have all learned that compassion and love, both seated in heart No. 2, are the only important things in life. The price has been terrible, but we have learned what REALLY matters, and just as importantly, what DOESNT!

Going Crazy Syndrome

By Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD from Grief Digest
Centering Corporation, Omaha

As C. S. Lewis noted, "Grief is like a long, winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape." As you explore the terrain or your unique grief journey, you may ask yourself, "Am I crazy?" A vital part of healing in grief is understanding the normalcy of your experience. Seemingly strange thoughts and feelings such as time distortion, obsessive review, search for meaning and others explored in this article are normal, and if you are experiencing them, that means they're necessary to your healing.

Time Distortion

"I don't know what day it is, let alone what time it is!" This kind of comment is not unusual when you are mourning. Sometimes, time moves so quickly; at other times, it merely crawls. Your sense of past and future may also seem to be frozen in place. You may lose track of what day or even what month it is.

This normal experience of time distortion often plays a part of the "going crazy" syndrome. No, you are not crazy. But if you don't know that time distortion is common in grief, you may think you are.

Obsessive Review or Ruminating

Obsessive review, or ruminating, are the psychological terms used for describing how you may constantly think about the circumstances of the death or stories about the person who has died. Its "telling your story" over and over again, either in your mind or out loud. This normal process helps bring your head and your heart together! Allow yourself to do this. Blocking it won't help you heal. Don't be angry with yourself if you can't seem to stop wanting to repeat your story. Review or rumination is a powerful and necessary part of the hard work of mourning.

Yes, it hurts to constantly think and talk about the person you loved so much. But remember-all grief wounds get worse before they get better. Be compassionate with yourself. Try to surround yourself with people who allow and encourage you to repeat whatever you need to tell again.

Search for Meaning

Naturally, you try to make sense of why someone

you love has died. You find yourself asking questions like, "Why him or her?" "Why now?" "Why this way?" Of course you have questions. You are human and are simply trying to understand your experience. No, answers won't always be, and often aren't. specific to your question. Yet, you still need to give yourself permission to ask them.

As you wrestle with "Why?" you may be outraged at your God or Higher Power. You may feel a stagnation of disillusionment with your spiritual life as you embrace your pain. On the other hand, you may feel more in touch than ever before with your spirituality. Either way, you can only be where you are. You may be able to come up with dozens of reasons why this person should not have died under these circumstances at this time. Whatever the nature or number of your questions, asking them is a normal part of your grief journey.

As you explore the meaning of this experience through your questions, be certain you don't commit "spiritual suicide." Do not prohibit yourself from asking questions you know are within you, even if the questions seem irreverent or doubting in your faith system. If you do suppress your normal and natural questions, you may shut down your capacity to give and receive love during this vulnerable period in your life.

Be aware that people may try to tell you not to ask questions, about your personal search for meaning. Or worse yet, watch out for people who try to provide easy answers to your difficult question. Most grieving people do not find comfort in pat responses; neither will you. The healing occurs in posing the questions in the first. place, not just in finding answers.

Find a friend, group or counselor who will understand your need to search for meaning and be supportive without attempting to offer answers. Companionship and responsive listening can help you explore your religious and spiritual. values, question your philosophy of life, and renew your resources for living!

Is This Death God's Will?

Closely related to the search for meaning is the commonly asked question, "Is this death God's will?" If you have a perception of an all-powerful God of

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

Higher Power, you probably find this question particularly difficult.

Sometimes you may reason: "God loves me, so why take this most precious person from me?" Or you may have been told: "It's God's will and you should just accept it and go on." However, if you internalize this message, you may repress your grief and ignore your human need to mourn. Repressing your grief because you need to "just accept it and go on" can be self-destructive. If you don't ask questions and if you don't express feelings, you may ultimately drown in despair. If your soul does not ask, your body will probably protest. Repressing and denying heartfelt questions can, and often does, keep your wounds from healing. Listen to your questions!

Transitional Objects

Transitional objects are belongings of the person who died. They often can give you comfort. Objects such as clothing, books or prized possessions can help you feel close to someone you miss so much.

For example, when I was counseling a grieving woman, she shared with me that she found it comforting to take one of her husband's favorite shirts to bed with her. She said, "As I clutched his shirt close to me, I didn't feel so alone. But as I worked with my grief, my need for the shirt dwindled over time."

Some people may try to distance you from belongings such as the shirt described above. This behavior fits with the tendency of our culture to move away from grief instead of toward it.

Remember - embrace the comfort provided by familiar objects. To do away with them too soon takes away a sense of security . that these belongings provide. Once you have moved toward reconciliation, you will probably be better to decide what to do with them. Some things, however, you may want to keep forever. That's all right, too. Simply giving away the

belongings of the person who died does not equate with healing. in your grief.

Nor does keeping some belongings mean that you have "created a shrine." This phrase is used when someone keeps everything just as it was after the death. Creating a shrine, however, only prevents acknowledging the painful new reality that someone you love has died. Understanding the difference between transitional objects and creating a shrine is important. The former helps to heal; the latter does not.

Anniversary and Holiday Grief Occasions

Naturally, anniversary and holiday occasions can bring about "pangs" of grief. Birthdays, wedding dates, holidays and other special occasions create a heightened sense of loss. At these times, you may likely experience a grief attack or memory embrace. Your "pangs" of grief may also occur in response to circumstances that remind you of the painful absence of someone in your life. For many families, certain times have special meaning such as the beginning of spring, the first snowfall or an annual 4th of July party, and the person who died is more deeply missed at those times. Perhaps the most important thing to remember is that these reactions are natural. Sometimes the anticipation of an anniversary or holiday actually turns out to be worse than the day itself.

Interestingly enough, sometimes your internal clock will alert you to an anniversary date you may have forgotten. If you notice you are feeling down or experiencing "pangs" of grief, you may be having an anniversary response. Keep in mind that this is normal.

The aspects of grief explored in this article are in no way an all-inclusive list of experiences, that might constitute the "going crazy" syndrome. However, my hope is that this information helps you better understand the normalcy of you unique journey into grief.

"DON'T SCRAPE THE ICE"

The season for ice and snow is upon us (again)! Although we want to make sure the grave site markers are visible, it causes permanent damage to some markers if snow and ice are scraped off. Even plastic scrapers will mar bronze. Before using salt, snow removal chemicals, etc..., it is suggested that you check with the groundskeeper at your cemetery. ~TCF Billings, MT

Bereaved Presidents

Did you know that 20 of our presidents and their wives were/are bereaved parents?

- ★ Our second president, John Adams, lost his son Charles, 20, while he was president. Thomas Jefferson had six children and only two lived to maturity. One daughter, Mary, 26, died while he was president.
- ★ James Monroe lost a son two years of age. John Quincy Adams lost a daughter in infancy; a son died while Adams was president, and another son died five years later.
- ★ William Harrison had 10 children; six died before he became president.
- ★ Zachary Taylor had six children; two died as infants and a daughter died three months after her wedding.
- ★ Millard Fillmore's daughter, Abigail, died at 22.
- ★ Our 14th president, Franklin Pierce, lost two sons in infancy. History records his wife's grief so great that he resigned from the Senate. Two months before his inauguration to the presidency, their son, Benjamin, 11 years old, was killed in a railroad accident. Mrs. Pierce collapsed from grief and was unable to attend the inauguration. She secluded herself in an upstairs bedroom for nearly half of her husband's term in office.
- ★ Our 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, lost two sons during his lifetime: Edward, four years old, while Lincoln was in office, and William, 11 years old. He wrote, "In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all ... it comes with bitterest agony ..." The president's wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, unable to cope with the assassination of her husband and the death of yet another son, Thomas, 18 years old, was confined to a sanitarium. Although she was released after a few months, she was never to be well again.
- ★ Rutherford B. Hayes had eight children, three of whom died in infancy.
- ★ James Garfield had seven children; two died while still infants.
- ★ Chester A. Arthur's oldest son died in infancy.
- ★ Grover Cleveland's oldest daughter, Ruth, died at 13 years of age.
- ★ Our 25th president, William McKinley, lost both children: Ida, four months old, and Katherine, four years old. His wife became so overwhelmed with shock and grief that she became an invalid for the remainder of her life.
- ★ Theodore Roosevelt's son died at 21 years of age.
- ★ Calvin Coolidge had a son, Calvin Jr., who died at 16 while his father was in office. Recorded in his autobiography, the president said, "When he went, the power and glory of the presidency went with him"
- ★ Franklin Roosevelt's son, Franklin Jr., died in infancy.
- ★ Dwight Eisenhower's son, Doug Dwight "Icky," three years old, died at Camp Mead, Maryland. In President Eisenhower's autobiography written in 1969 (49 years after Icky died), he stated, "With his death a pall fell over the camp. When we started the long trip back to Denver for his burial, the entire command turned out in respect to Icky. We were completely crushed it was a tragedy from which we never recovered. I do not know how others have felt when facing the same situation, but I have never known such a blow. Today when I think of it, even as I now write of it, the keenness of my loss comes back to me as fresh and terrible as it was in that long, dark day soon after Christmas, 1920."
- ★ Our 35th president, John F. Kennedy and his wife Jackie lost their two-week-old son Patrick in 1963 while he was president. The Kennedys' first child was stillborn.
- ★ George Bush and his wife Barbara lost their daughter Robin at three years old to leukemia.

"In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all, and it often comes with bitter agony. Perfect relief is not possible except with time. You cannot now believe that you will ever feel better, but this is not true. You are sure to be happy again... I have had enough experience to make this statement."

Abraham Lincoln

Sibling Page

I'm Still Here

By Laura Weider, writer & assistant editor for "George" magazine

At first "I'm still here" was the mantra I chanted inside my head, chiding myself for sadness, urging myself that, unlike Rachel, I was still living and must not be sad, must not miss a moment of time or anything else precious. Months later, unable to contain my grief, I said I'm still here as if I were the only one of my tribe to escape slaughter and wandering plains alone. I wanted to die. Not because I hate life, but because I wanted to see Rachel.

Many times my parents, washed in grief, looked at me through salt water, saying, "You're still here. You're all we have left." Those words weighed heavily upon me, made me feel too loved, too lucky. And they made Rachel feel too gone. But, just as many times I wanted to shake my parents out of depression and back into life before Rachel's death, saying, "I'm still here. Don't you leave me too."

For almost a year after Rachel died, I didn't say her name out loud. The sound of the R and the A and the ending L felt foreign on my tongue. Later, when I joined a support group, the facilitator noted that I never said Rachel's name. It just hurt too much. And if I'd had my choice, I would have asked my parents not to say Rachel's name either. Any instance we now used her name was unhappy.

Talking about family or home or anything in my past was terrifying for me. Sometimes, as I told a story or recounted a memory, I said "we" instead of "I". Pretty soon, though, I got the hang of checking over everything in my head before I opened my mouth. The thing is, though, if you tell a lie enough times, you start to forget the truth you're trying to cover up in the first place. I started to feel my memory blurring and that frightened me. Memory was my only link to Rachel.

I ask myself why I have such trouble talking about Rachel's death or even her life, and come up with a couple of things. I really believe no one understands my particular pain, the things I've lost, tangible and intangible, since Rachel's death...

The only person that knows exactly how I feel is dead.

It's hard to worry about your own grief when your parents are not parental anymore. My mother, who probably told me when to take my first breath and how long it would last, abruptly withdrew from being an overbearing presence in my life. She never left me completely, but there were enough times when she'd look down at her feet and say quietly... "Laura, I just can't take this right now. I'm lucky if I can get up in the morning." Just as I wanted my old self, my old world back, I wanted a mother I could fight with.

My father sits at the head of the table, head bent to his chest, and pulls his glasses off to sob freely... This idea that you should be able to protect and comfort and be there for your parents even more than for yourself is particular to people on the brink of adulthood. Like me. In other words, if I were 12 or 13, few people would expect me to assume a parental role. But as I was 18, it was apparently okay for people to continually ask, "How are your parents doing? Are you helping them as much as you can?" I felt guilty enough about being alive. And then to have people insinuate that my main function in life thereafter was to be a comfort for my parents made me feel worse. Because I honestly didn't see that my parents were remarkably comforted by me. They were sad when I was there and when I wasn't. And I couldn't do a thing about it.

Laura Weider, was 17 and leaving for college in a week when her sister Rachel, 18, was killed in a freak boating accident at a summer camp where they were counselors. Laura wrote "I'm still here" four years later.

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TCF Credo

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 and 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 we feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source for strength; while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in a 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 that 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 grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends

Siblings Walking Together

(Formerly Sibling Credo)

We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters.

Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us.

Sometimes we will need the support of our friends.

At other times we need our families to be there.

Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be.

We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed.

About This Newsletter

This newsletter comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter with the hope that it will be a helpful resource for you on your grief journey.

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