



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

Volume 34 Issue 3

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**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.

**Our Vision:** Everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

**Our Chapter 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 is available in hospital parking decks. Newcomers please arrive a half an hour early for your first meeting

Meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. 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.

## **Meetings Update**

**Please see page 2 for important information about future meetings and action required.**

### **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.

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**Telephone Friends**

For those times you need to connect with someone between meetings, the following members are available to listen and share

Infant Loss -	
	Kim Szep 610-730-3111
Only Child -	
	Shelly Garst 484-241-5396
Addiction -	
	Nancy Howe 484-863-4324
Suicide -	
	John & Maria Szabo 610-866-5468
Homicide -	
	Ginger Renner 610-967-5113

**To volunteer as a  
phone friend  
Contact the  
newsletter editor**

**TCF Online Support**

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
Click on "Online Support" under  
the "Find Support" tab

## Chapter Notes

### Future Meetings Update

We have been informed by the hospital that they have made the decision to keep the conference center meeting rooms closed for the next 3 months. We are currently exploring alternate sites that would allow us to meet safely or possibly virtual meetings.

If you are interested in meetings you must call or text 484-891-0823 or email [TCFLehighValley@gmail.com](mailto:TCFLehighValley@gmail.com) Please state your name, contact phone number and that you are interested in attending. We will contact you directly when we have a meeting date.

Your response is necessary to attend.

## Newsletter Notes

**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.**

*If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter please contact the newsletter editor by phone at 484-891-0823; by email: [TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com](mailto:TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com) or by mail: TCF News Editor, 2971 Pheasant Dr., Northampton, PA 18067*

We welcome original stories and poetry from our members. We reserve the right to modify or reject submissions not in keeping with our mission.

All submissions must include the author's name and your contact information. Send to The Compassionate Friends, C/O Kathleen Collins, 2971 Pheasant Dr. Northampton PA 18067 or email to:

[TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com](mailto:TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com) by the following cutoff dates:

Newsletter	Cutoff Date	Newsletter	Cutoff Date
Jan, Feb, March	Dec. 1st	July , Aug, Sept	June 1st
April, May, June	March 1st	Oct, Nov, Dec	Sept 1st

**NOTE: If you are Moving or going on Vacation and having your mail held or forwarded** please inform the Newsletter Editor of your new address or of a hold or forward on you mail. The Post Office does not hold or forward the newsletter. They are returned at our expense and we in turn remove those individuals from the mailing list.

## Love Gifts

Love Gifts are tax deductible. They enable us to reach out to newly bereaved and provide ongoing support to all members. They may be given in memory of a child or in memory or in honor of a friend or relative. Please use form in this newsletter to donate.

### *We thank the following for their generosity*

Contributor	Loved One
♥ David Bremmer	<b>Hunter Bremmer</b> <i>I Think of you every day. All my love, Dad</i>
♥ Yvonne Hude & Nancy Kornafel	<b>Molly Hude</b> <i>Its been 7 years. Too Long. Always on my mind, forever in my heart. Love, Mom, Dad &amp; Grammy</i>
♥ Thomas & Sydney Caton	<b>Kimberly Jo Caton</b> <i>Still missing you—Love you forever</i>
♥ Jim and Barbara Minter	<b>Jim Minter</b> <i>Happy Birthday Jimmy. Wish you were here. Love, Mom &amp; Dad</i>
♥	

## Donations & Contributions

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ★ <b>Sacred Heart Hospital, Allentown</b><br><i>for meeting room and drinks</i>                      | ★ <b>The Matt Kush Foundation</b><br><i>In Memory of Matt Kush 8/1985 - 2/2001</i> |
| ★ <b>Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions</b><br><i>In Memory of David Todd Smith</i> | ★ <b>Aetna Payroll Contributors</b>  |
| ★ <b>Mary Ann Donuts, Allentown</b><br><i>for meeting snacks</i>                                     | ★ <b>United Way Payroll Contributors</b>   |
| ★ <b>Everyone who volunteers their time and talents to the chapter and helping with the meetings</b> |  |

To contribute to TCF through the United Way ask your employer for the appropriate form and use the number **12116** in the write-in area.

## Our Children Remembered

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

### **Birthdays and Anniversaries**

	Birth	Anniv.
<b>Walter Alfonso</b> - Son of Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman & the late David Kunsman & late Charles Kunsman, Jr	Aug 10	May 18
<b>James Balloch</b> - Grandson of Bill Gerth & Fern Gerth	Feb 22	Sep 4
<b>Todd Belles</b> - Son of Anita Belles	Sep 17	Sep 28
<b>Hunter Bremmar</b> - Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmar	Dec 12	Jul 27
<b>Holly Cavanaugh</b> - Daughter of Bill Cavanaugh & Beverly Ann Cavanaugh; Sister of Bo Cavanaugh	Apr 27	Sep 25
<b>Carol Chanitz</b> - Daughter of Jay & Ruth Chanitz	Aug 25	Aug 25
<b>Joseph Chanitz</b> - Son of Jay & Ruth Chanitz	Jul 16	Aug 28
<b>Matthew Chupella</b> - Son of Maryann Chupella	May 18	Jul 31
<b>Jessica Coe</b> - Daughter of Randy & Diane Coe; Sister of Allison Coe	Aug 13	Oct 7
<b>Christopher Cole</b> - Son of Donald Cole Brother of Lauren Cole	Oct 10	Sep 10
<b>Michael Conelias</b> - Son of Trent & Joanne Conelias	Dec 10	Aug 1
<b>John Counterman, III</b> - Brother of Theresa Legarski	Sep 30	Nov 2
<b>Christopher Daud</b> - Son of Marie Daud	Nov 4	Sep 16
<b>Courtney Daud</b> - Daughter of Marie Daud	Jul 15	Jul 15
<b>Hope Davidson</b> - Daughter of Dean & Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Aug 8	Feb 8
<b>Sarah Davidson</b> - Daughter of Dean & Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Jul 10	Jul 10
<b>Sheila DeBoer</b> - Daughter of Barbara DeBoer & the late Henry DeBoer; Sister of Leslie & Cory DeBoer	Jan 29	Jul 27
<b>Denise Deiter</b> - Daughter of Franklin & Lucille Reinhard; Sister of & Cheryl A. McCue & the late Cathy A. Mertz	Jul 3	Jun 11
<b>Mark Dilts, Jr</b> - Son of Mark & Joy Dilts; Brother of Beth Dilts	Jan 6	Jul 8
<b>Alexandra Dixon</b> - Daughter of Albert & Joan Dixon; Sister of Zack Dixon	Sep 22	Jul 31
<b>Jillian Faustner</b> - Daughter of Joan Cottone; Sister of Jennifer, Jessica & James	Aug 7	Oct 21
<b>Brenda Fehr Hatrak</b> - Daughter of David & Eileen Fehr; Granddaughter of Warren & Rose Fehr and Elwood & Mary Mann	Aug 31	Jan 8
<b>Sgt. Christopher Geiger</b> - Son of George & Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Michael, Terrance, David & Timothy Geiger	Mar 30	Jul 9
<b>Chelsie Graham</b> - Daughter of Chris & Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
<b>Eric Graver</b> - Son of Mary L Graver	Aug 17	Jul 9
<b>Rita Guerrieri</b> - Daughter of Art & Mary Guerrieri; Sister of Maryrose Guerrieri-Nesbitt	Sep 29	Mar 11

# Our Children Remembered

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

## Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
<b>Zachary Heck</b> - Son of Lori Edinger	Sep 3	Apr 25
<b>David Hoagland, Jr</b> - Son of Gypsy Garrett	Sep 24	Apr 26
<b>James "Jimmy" Hotz</b> - Son of Elizabeth Hotz	Apr 24	Jul 4
<b>Molly Hude</b> - Daughter of Rex & Yvonne Hude; Grand daughter of Nancy Kornafel	Nov 2	Jul 2
<b>Jeanne Hurley</b> - Daughter of Stephen & Jeannette Viglione; Sister of Michele Yankowy & Robert Wambold, Jr.	Oct 12	Aug 13
<b>Colleen Kilker</b> - Daughter of Mark & Kathleen Kilker; Sister of Meghan, Bridget & Mark Kilker	May 6	Jul 23
<b>Matthew Kolb</b> - Son of Debbie Kolb & The Late Bob Kolb	Nov 26	Sep 6
<b>Richard Kulik</b> - Son of Dolores Kulik; Brother of Christina Schantzenbach & Michael Kulik	Sep 5	Oct 27
<b>David Kunsman</b> Son of Charles & Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & late Charles Kunsman, Jr	May 2	Jul 15
<b>Charles Kunsman, Jr</b> - Son of Charles & Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & late David Kunsman	Sep 18	Nov 19
<b>Matt Kush</b> - Son of Rick & Ann Kush; Brother of Mike & Jenn	Aug 24	Feb 10
<b>John Leonard, Jr</b> Son of Jack & Jule Leonard; Brother of Karen	Jul 27	Jan 6
<b>Joseph Lestishock</b> - Son of Marjorie Lestishock	Aug 30	Nov 2
<b>Paul Levine</b> - Son of Louisa Levine; Brother of Gregory, Mary & Philip Levine	Sep 28	Oct 31
<b>Michael Mann</b> - Son of Lee & Shirley Lutz	Sep 26	Aug 12
<b>Anthony "Tony" Mariani, II</b> - Son of Kathleen Collins & the late Anthony E. Mariani; Stepson of Brian Collins; Brother of Matthew Mariani; Grandson of William Pickett	Sep 13	Sep 6
<b>Ed McNally</b> - Son of Don & Connie McNally ; brother of Sean McNally	Jul 29	Feb 11
<b>Jonathan Melendez, Jr</b> - Son of Jonathan & Michelle Gilbert Melendez; Brother of Jonah Nieves	Sep 3	Jan 17
<b>Doreen Meyers Ortiz</b> - Daughter of Terry & Angeline Meyers; Sister of Dwayne T. Meyers	Dec 18	Jul 13
<b>Suzanne Miller</b> - Daughter of Russell & Margaret Billig	Nov 28	Sep 28
<b>Glenn Miller, Jr.</b> - Son of Lin Miller; Brother of Lorrie Woolever	Nov 20	Aug 4
<b>Jim Minter</b> - Son of Jim & Barbara Minter; Brother of Jeanine Minter	Aug 15	Mar 14
<b>Buddy Pearson</b> - Son of Bob & Shelly Garst	Jul 12	Mar 24
<b>Wayne Petzold</b> - Son of David & Joan Petzold, Sr.; Brother of Amy, Dave & Father of Katie Petzold	Aug 20	Oct 8
<b>PJ Pfenning</b> - Son of Maureen Pfenning; Brother of Amanda Sciarillo & Lauren Pfenning	Aug 30	Nov 5
<b>Michael Powers</b> - Son of Richard & Margaret Powers; Brother of Billy, Richie, Tara & Ryan	Jul 9	Feb 10
<b>Peter Radocha</b> - Son of Lucille Radocha; Brother of Gina Sacco & Frank Radocha, Jr	Jun 13	Jul 1
<b>James Ralls</b> - Son of Tina Ralls; Brother of Timothy & Geoffrey	Jan 2	Aug 17
<b>Lydia Rice Cobb</b> - Daughter of Virginia Rice	Sep 27	Oct 10
<b>Anthony Romig</b> - Son of Lois Pearsall & Edward C. Romig, Sr; .Brother of Edward C. Romig, Jr.	Sep 12	Jan 20
<b>Cory Ross</b> - Son of Kathy Ross; Brother of Michael Ross	Jul 24	Jun 12
<b>Scott Rothrock</b> - Son of Larry & Linda Rothrock	Oct 20	Sep 18
<b>Jason Rute</b> - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Aug 25	Nov 13
<b>Robert Rute</b> - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Jul 9	Apr 4
<b>Aaron Schaible</b> - Son of Linda Stewart; Brother of The late Jennifer Schaible	Jul 30	Aug 28
<b>Lauren Schneck</b> - Daughter of James & Lisa Schneck	Aug 10	Dec 2
<b>Anthony Sisonick</b> - Son of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Brother of Nicholas Sisonick	Nov 8	Aug 27
<b>Jonelle Sisonick</b> - Daughter of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Sister of Nicholas Sisonick	May 22	Aug 3
<b>David Todd Smith</b> - Son of David & Kathleen Smith; Brother of Stephanie Seifert	Feb 25	Sep 17
<b>Constance Stewart</b> - Daughter of Joanne Stewart; Sister of Keith & Kevin Stewart	Sep 23	Feb 1
<b>Keith Storat</b> - Son of Richard & Susan Storat; Brother of Todd & Greg	May 18	Jul 22
<b>Michael Szabo</b> - Son of John & Maria Szabo, Jr	Aug 2	Aug 17
<b>Jared Thomas</b> - Son of Sandra B. Schueck	Aug 31	Jun 22
<b>David Uecker</b> - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker; Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki	Aug 2	Oct 3
<b>Sean Virmalo</b> - Son of Udo & Janet L. Virmalo; Brother of Eric, Brett & Katelyn Virmalo	Sep 13	Apr 28
<b>Stephanie Volkert</b> - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zachary Volkert	Sep 22	Feb 12
<b>Christina Williamson</b> - Daughter of Chris & Kim Williamson; Sister of the late Christopher Jayden Williamson		Aug 6
<b>Steven Winkler</b> - Son of Ellen Winkler; Brother of Jennifer; Grandson of Arnold Abramowitz	Jan 12	Jul 26
<b>Adam Wolk</b> - Son of Michael & Sheila Wolk; Brother of Laura & Sarah Wolk	Aug 1	Oct 22
<b>Craig Yurick</b> - Son of Robert & Sharon Yurick; Brother of Todd Yurick	Aug 5	Jun 21





## valley of the Butterflies

by Marcia Alig, TCF, Princeton NJ

There is a sun-drenched valley, light with the scent of clover and lilacs  
where the butterflies dance.

Leaping and swooping, they reflect colors of every hue and dimension.  
There are monarchs and skippers, swallowtails and delicate spring azures.  
Each dances its unique pattern of flits, circles and dives.

There are no roads, paths, or gates to broach the valley's entrance;  
Yet it is visited often in thoughts and dreams.  
Every parent who has sent forth a child, and vainly waited for its return,  
comes seeking in the valley of the butterflies  
and there finds a beautiful spirit, stretching its wings to the clouds  
and brushing its feet on the grass, dancing in swoops, flits and dives,  
drying its dewy wings in the warm sunshine of forever.

## Forgive Me Friend

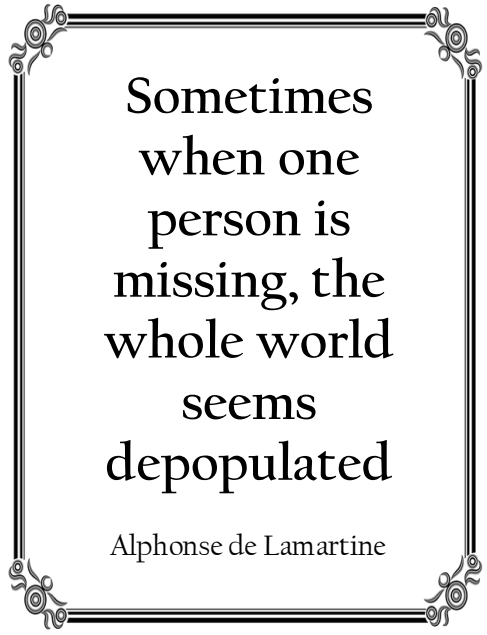
By Gretchen Warren , TCF Solano County, CA

Forgive me, Friend  
If I don't seem there  
If I seem a little distant  
Or you think I don't care.  
My child has died

It's hard to explain  
My down-an-out days  
When I don't respond  
Or I seem in a daze  
My child has died.

I seem to be happy  
When I suddenly cry  
The emotion overpowers me,  
Hard as I try.  
My child has died

So forgive me, My Friend,  
When I can't seem to give.  
I'm doing all I can  
Just to get up and live.  
My child has died.



Sometimes  
when one  
person is  
missing, the  
whole world  
seems  
depopulated

Alphonse de Lamartine

## My Swing

Diane Hornis, Alive Alone Newsletter

Out in the backyard  
Was the most wonderful thing  
From a huge maple tree  
There hung my swing

When I had a problem  
A bad day at school  
Straight to my swing  
That's what I'd do!

I'd swing away worries  
Swing high in the air  
When I was there swinging  
I hadn't a care

Now I am much older  
The pain runs so deep  
I have much depression  
And cannot sleep

Now I am childless  
I don't have my boy  
My reason for living  
The source of my joy

My life is so different  
Not a minute goes by,  
When I can become tearful  
I just start to cry

My husband's so patient  
With me all these years  
He never stops trying  
To stop all the tears

He gave me a gift  
Only a true friend can bring  
He gave me back comfort  
He gave me my swing!



## Grandparents Remembrance

By Susan Mackey TCF Rutland,

We are the grieving grandparents,  
the shepherds of our children and  
grandchildren's lives.

Our grief is two-fold and at times,  
we feel powerless to help. We seek  
to comfort our children in the  
depths of their grief and yet we  
need the time and space to face our  
own broken hearts.

We have been robbed of the special  
tender touch a grandparent shares  
with a grandchild, and we have lost  
a symbol of our immortality. As we  
walk by our child's side, we both  
give and draw strength. We reach  
into their hearts to comfort them,  
and when they reach out to us in  
their distress, we begin the journey  
to heal together. We continue to be  
their guardians.

We allow traditions to change to  
accommodate their loss. We  
support the new ones, which  
symbolize the small steps on their  
journey. It is in their healing that  
our hearts find comfort.

## The Unfinished Path

By Tim Maloney  
from the TCF National Webpage

When we were young,  
under your wing I was kept.

As I grew older,  
on your shoulder I wept.  
With a problem I could come  
to you, day or night.  
Just knowing your answers  
would always be right.

You joined the Marines and  
"Semper Fidelis" you barked.

I could see right then  
my path was marked.  
It was a path to perfection  
or so I thought.

To be like you is  
what I sought.  
Since your prints have ended,  
I don't know where to go.  
I've asked Mom and Dad,  
but they don't quite know.  
So I ask your advice  
just one more time.  
Because your prints have ended,  
The rest must be mine.

## Permission to be Crazy

by Elaine F. Stillwell, MA, MS -  
"Healing After Your Child's Death"  
"booklet excerpt

It's OK to do strange things,  
anything that gives your heart a  
sense of peace, as long as you don't  
hurt anyone. Whether you're  
running down the beach, standing  
in the shower, or riding in your car  
screaming at the top of your lungs,  
releasing balloons with notes  
attached, talking to an empty chair,  
wearing their clothes, baking a cake  
for their birthday, signing their  
name on cards, decorating their  
grave with things they loved, or  
collecting angels in their memory -  
it's OK. No excuses are necessary.  
You have learned to do what your  
heart needs, and that is a big step.

**Pretending to  
be a normal  
person day after  
day is exhausting**

Suzy Toronto



# Why Am I So Angry

By Bill Ermatinger

*Bill Ermatinger has been active in the Compassionate Friends since 1978. A former National Board member, Regional Coordinator and former Penn-Line, MD, Chapter Leader, Bill has led the workshop on anger and guilt at the National Conference for the past several years. His daughter Kathy died in 1967 as a result of a mislabeled prescription. It was not until 12 years later, however, that he became active in TCF. Melvin Winer, also a member of the Penn-Line Chapter, frequently writes for his local chapter newsletter. Bill and Mel collaborated on the following article, drawing from Bill's presentation at the National Conference and their individual grief experiences. Mel has also included insight from his still fresh grief after the death of his son Andy from cancer.*

"I am so consumed with anger, sometimes I think I might explode. I wasn't an angry person before my child died. Where does this anger come from?"

"I know we did everything we could to help our child survive. So did the doctors. But if I really feel that way, why do I feel such a failure and so guilty now?"

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

how and why these two emotions play such a significant role in our grief experience.

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

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

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

Sometimes we try to forget and just let bygones be bygones. Or we try to keep busy all the time and not give ourselves the opportunity to cope with our anger. Showing a happy face to the world is another

way of not dealing with our emotions. Finally, there are drugs and alcohol; they will surely mask our feelings.

Not facing our anger merely delays the inevitable. Eventually anger finds a way to surface. Therefore, we have to find ways to cope with these intense feelings. Obviously Bill could not shoot the pharmacist, and Mel could not burn the hospital down because of his rage directed at the medical profession. For some, physical activity is an effective way of coping. Jogging, playing sports, and walking provide a sense of physical well being. Not everyone, however, is able to engage in these physical activities. Another way of coping with anger is to talk or write about it. Find someone to talk to. A Compassionate Friends meeting is a safe place to express overwhelming feelings. Another effective way is to write about them. Writing allows us to bring our feelings to the surface in a nonthreatening way. Keep a journal that no one will ever see, and reread it from time to time. You may discover that you are making progress by getting in touch with feelings of several months ago and realizing they are less intense now.

Write letters to the source of your anger. You don't have to mail them (and you probably shouldn't), but writing allows you to confront your anger directly. Shortly after Andy died, Mel received a letter from the American Cancer Society requesting a donation. The letter was part of a mass mailing and was designed to alert people about the dangers of cancer. Mel felt the letter's wording was insensitive to those who had experienced cancer firsthand. Therefore, he wrote a response to the Society expressing his anger. This was also an effective way for him to express his anger at the disease that took his son's life.

(Continued on page 8)

*(Continued from page 7)*

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

Finally, it is important to understand whom we may really be angry at. As difficult as it may be to admit, many of us are angry at our child who has died as well as at ourselves for failing to prevent his death. We may be angry that the child has left us and we feel abandoned. We are angry at ourselves because we couldn't keep our child safe from harm. We are angry because we are alone, our child is dead, and our lives have changed forever.

Anger directed at our child is a feeling we cannot control. It can surface at any time and does not diminish our love in any way. In fact, it emphasized our love because we are really angry that our children

are not here to share their lives with us. For many this anger subsides over time. Some parents have found comfort in writing about how they feel, expressing their anger that their child has left them alone, that they love and miss their child, that their lives can never be the same because their child has died.

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

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

experiences a lighthearted moment and laughs. Mel knows Andy wanted his family to recover from his death and not always to be sad. When Mel experiences these feelings, he reminds himself of how Andy felt.

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

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

**Holding onto anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you're the one that gets burned**

**Buddha**



## Love Gift Form

**Please consider making a Love Gift to support the Compassionate Friends today.**  
**Your 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.**

Submission Deadlines: Issue 1 - Dec 1<sup>st</sup>; Issue 2 - March 1<sup>st</sup>; Issue 3 - June 1<sup>st</sup>; Issue 4 - Sept 1<sup>st</sup>

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

Address

Phone

Mail to:

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS,  
 LEHIGH VALLEY  
 C/O BRENDA SOLDERITCH  
 415 S. HOKENDAUQUA DR  
 NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

Email Address

I would like to make a donation ☐ 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 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.

Enclosed is my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Lehigh Valley ☐ Easton *Note: Please mail Easton gifts to the address below*

The Compassionate Friends, Easton C/O John Szabo ,  
 1514 Sculac Dr., Bethlehem, Pa 18020

**If your gift is for Lehigh Valley** please designate which of the following your gift is for ( you may circle more than one )

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Special Events

## Member Update Form

Please use this form to change\* or update\* information or permit publication of child's Birth and Anniversary dates in "Our Children Remembered" (OCR) section

**Mail this update form to:** Kathleen Collins, 2971 Pheasant Dr., Northampton, PA 18067 **or email updates to:** TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com

The following is ☐ Information change or update ☐ Address or Phone change ☐ Permission (check this box to grant OCR publication Newsletter/ Web permission)

Your Name

Signature (required)

Relationship to Child

Email Address

Mailing Address (where your newsletter is to be sent to)

Phone Number

Child's Name

Date of Birth

Date of Death

Parent / Guardian Names

Child's Sibling's & or Grandparents Names to be listed (We publish only Parents/Guardians, Grandparents and Sibling names)

**\* IMPORTANT:** If this is a information change, specify what change(s) are ( i.e. correction, sibling name addition etc...) Use another page of paper if necessary



## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY

Phone: 484-891-0823

E-mail: [tcflehighvalley@gmail.com](mailto:tcflehighvalley@gmail.com)

### **Other Local TCF Chapters and Support Groups**

**TCF Carbon County Chapter** - 1st Tuesday 7-9 pm Leaders - Dave & Lora Krum, Phone: 484-719-6753 Email: [tcfcarboncounty@gmail.com](mailto:tcfcarboncounty@gmail.com)

**TCF Easton Chapter**- 2nd Thursday 7 - 9 pm Leaders John & Maria Szabo, Phone: 610-866-5468 Email: [szabojanos1@verizon.net](mailto:szabojanos1@verizon.net)

**TCF Quakertown Chapter** - 2nd Tuesday 7:30 - 9 pm Phone: 267-380-0130, Email: [contact@tcfquakertownpa.org](mailto:contact@tcfquakertownpa.org)

**TCF Pocono Chapter** - 1st Monday 7:00pm Leader Teresa Myers Phone: 570-350-6695, Email: [tcfpoconochapter@gmail.com](mailto:tcfpoconochapter@gmail.com)

**GRASP** (grief recovery after substance passing)  
Contact: Nancy Howe 484-863-4324; 484-788-9440; [nancyhowe@ymail.com](mailto:nancyhowe@ymail.com) or Jenny Kemps - 610-442-8490

## The Compassionate Friends Credo

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**W**e need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

*We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.*