



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



March

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Our Mission: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

Meetings

Our support group meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Group participation is confidential and voluntary.

The Lehigh Valley chapter meets at Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA the second Monday of the month at 7pm

For information about meetings, directions to our meeting space or to be added to the meeting text reminder list call or text 484-891-0823

Note: For the safety of all attendees

- Face masks are required for unvaccinated, optional for fully vaccinated.
- Please do not attend if you feel ill, were exposed to Covid, the Flu, or tested positive in the last 14 days

Next Meeting March 13

Note: If we need to cancel the meeting we will notify everyone on the text list and post the cancelation on our facebook page - 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 walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our circumstances may be different, we have all "been there"...we are all grieving the loss of a child and therefore we can truly say we understand. You are not alone.

Telephone Friends

Sometimes you may need to talk to someone who cares and understands between meetings. To help we maintain a list of telephone friends. During these times the following members are available to listen, share and offer what support they can.

Infant Loss - Kim Szep -	610-730-3111
Only Child - Shelly Garst -	484-241-5396
Addiction - Nancy Howe -	484-863-4324
Homicide - Ginger Renner -	610-967-5113

To volunteer as a telephone friend contact the newsletter editor



TCF National Support Resources

The TCF National website has over 35 private Facebook pages and a number of moderated chatrooms. To register for the FB pages or chat rooms go to www.compassionatefriends.org and click on the find support tab and then choose online communities.

Newsletter Notes

This Newsletter comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter. We hope that it will be of some comfort to you on your grief journey.

We welcome original stories and poetry from our members.

All submissions must include the author's name and your contact information. Send to the newsletter editor (address listed below)

If you move please contact the Newsletter Editor with your new address

Newsletter Editor Contact

- by mail:
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Inside this issue:

Article - Moving Through the Grief of Losing a Child	2 & 4
Love Gifts	3
Our Children Remembered	3
Article - Reaching Out	4
Poem - Please	
Article - The Stone	5
Poem - Because of You	
Articles - The Veteran Bereaved Parent; Compassion	6
Poems - March ; Heaven	
<u>Sibling Page</u>	
Poem - How does it Feel, What's it Like	7
Love Gift Form	8

Moving Through the Grief of Losing a Child

I was a woman like many others; focused on my five children and family, living a quiet life on Bainbridge Island in the state of Washington. And then, in August 2004, our lives changed. That night, eight teenagers piled into an SUV and took a midnight joyride. My 16-year-old twin daughter, Sarah, was killed.

The thought of losing a child, if "losing" is the correct verb, had never crossed my mind. Tragedies, as such, were something that happened to someone else, something you read about in the paper or heard from a neighbor. Nothing could have prepared me for the deep pain...but nothing could have prepared me for the peace that now permeates my mind and heart. The shock sets in; everything moves in slow motion as if time comes to a halt, and time has halted.

An acquaintance delivers a candle on day six with a card inscribed, "Place this candle in your kitchen. Each night while you prepare the family meal know that the shimmering of the candlelight reflects the child who now lives within you." A lovely thought. Eight years later, I still light a candle on my kitchen windowsill. My child lives within me now.

The days turn to weeks. Friends surround you, keeping you busy, your mind occupied. Absorb their kindness. Accept their help. Eliminate expectations. Learn to be gentle with yourself. Give yourself space. Make room for quiet. Always remember that grief is personal, as is death. There is no right way or wrong way to grieve. Seek out therapy. You may be ready. Share your story and connect with others. Surround yourself with those who will listen, not necessarily those who will offer advice. For it is when others listen that we can sort out our thoughts and settle our mind. Your inner strength seeks you out, sometimes sooner in the process, sometimes later. That strength moves you forward - tiny steps in this process. Let the memories fill your mind. Let yourself laugh again. Smile. Sing out when a favorite song you shared plays on the radio. Let your heart awaken to the joys memories bring. Pay attention to the synchronicity and patterns in your life. Pay attention to your intuition. And pray. It doesn't matter what you believe. Just ask, notice, and respond. Faith, hope and love all intersect. Maybe things will begin to make a little sense, just maybe. Look to your children who live. Note their resilience and strength during this epic period of trauma. Let their sense of life and hope inspire you.

When the pain returns, and it will, allow yourself to go to the depths of that pain. Cry. I promise, you will be okay when you resurface. And as you move towards years four and five, you will learn that yes, life has been a living nightmare, and it is okay to admit that. Realize that as the years pass,

Continued on page 4

Our Children Remembered

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

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Jessica Finlayson - Daughter of Eric and Jean Dalstad, Sister of Rebecca Dalstad	Mar 19	Jan 22
John Fry - Son of Cathy McDonald	Mar 19	Jun 14
Eileen Collins Gant - Daughter of The Late John & Dorothy Collins; Sister of John, Steven, Kathleen & Brian Collins & MaryAnn Watkins	Mar 25	Feb 14
Sgt. Christopher Geiger - Son of George and Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Michael, Terrance, David & Timothy Geiger	Mar 30	Jul 9
Brian Gum - Son of Geary and Brenda Gum	Feb 21	Mar 5
Emma McNulty - Daughter of Jessica and Susan Katzbeck	Nov 19	Mar 11
Jim Minter - Brother of Jeanine Minter	Aug 15	Mar 14
Mardelle Parenti-Blume - Daughter of Brian and Nancy Kleckner	Feb 9	Mar 1
Sheena Villa - Daughter of Bill Villa & Barbara Maquera; Step Daughter of Angie Villa; Sister of Patrick Villa, Cruz Maquera & Gianni Villa	Mar 23	Mar 24



Love Gifts



Love Gifts 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. Gifts are tax deductible.

Contributor	Loved One
♥ Rella Daniels	Jonelle Sisonick & Anthony Sisonick <i>All my love, Mom</i>

Donations & Contributions

- | | |
|--|--|
| ★ Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA
<i>For our meeting space</i> | ★ Aetna Payroll Contributors |
| ★ Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions
<i>In Memory of David Todd Smith</i> | ★ United Way Payroll Contributors |
| | ★ The Matt Kush Foundation
<i>In Memory of Matt Kush</i> |

Longing for One More Day

An Old Irish Prayer

When we lose someone we love it seems that time stands still. What moves through us is a silence... a quiet sadness... A longing for one more day... one more word... one more touch... We may not understand why you left this earth so soon, or why you left before we were ready to say good-bye, but little by little, we begin to remember not just that you died, but that you lived. And that your life gave us memories too beautiful to forget.



Continued from page 2

you will learn to weave your loss into your daily life. Accepting the loss of a loved one is to release, but not erase. To hold. But not to hold the pain. As year five turns towards eight, my hope is that you can slowly wrap yourself around the idea that you can celebrate life and celebrate death. Death and gratitude can go hand in hand. Just possibly, it is those who have passed before us who are our greatest teachers. Remember always that you never walk alone because the life of someone who passes lives on in the love you shared.

Caroline Mohr
www.HeavensChild.com



Each of us has lost a child. We know the hopelessness, the feeling of unworthiness that comes from being unable to help the child we loved. We feel hurt, we need help, and we feel the need to help others.

The death of a child often brings about a loss of self-esteem. We must be reminded that we each have God-given worth and beauty. We, too, are of value. This sense of being somebody is important to the young and the aging, male or female.

As Compassionate Friends, we must commit ourselves to reach out and help others. Giving this help is not without pain. However, there is so much brokenness where we can bring healing. There is no much coldness where warmth is needed. There is so much loneliness and emptiness. There is so little understanding.

As Compassionate Friends, we do understand. We are committed to suffer and rejoice with each other. In making this commitment and in sharing another's grief, we find our own selves beginning to heal.

Audrey Hoyt,
TCF Kansas City, MO

“Please”

Please, don't ask me if I'm over it yet.
I'll never be over it.

Please, don't tell me she's in a better place.
She isn't with me.

Please, don't say at least she isn't suffering.
I haven't come to terms with why she had to suffer at all.

Please, don't tell me you know how I feel
Unless you have lost a child.

Please, don't ask me if I feel better.
Bereavement isn't a condition that clears up.

Please, don't tell me at least you had her for so many years.
What year would you choose for your child to die?

Please, don't tell me God never gives us more than we can bear.

Please, just tell me you are sorry.

Please, just say you remember my child, if you do.

Please, just let me talk about my child.

Please, mention my child's name.

Please, just let me cry.

Rita Moran.
Published in Compassionate Friends

THE STONE



The best way I can describe grieving over a child as the years go by is to say it's similar to carrying a stone in your pocket.

When you walk, the stone brushes against your skin. You feel it. You always feel it. But depending on the way you stand or the way your body moves, the smooth edges might barely graze your body.

Sometimes you lean the wrong way or you turn too quickly and a sharp edge pokes you. Your eyes water and you rub your wound but you have to keep going because not everyone knows about your stone or if they do, they don't realize it can still bring this much pain.

There are days you are simply happy now, smiling comes easy and you laugh without thinking. You slap your leg during that laughter and you feel your stone and aren't sure whether you should be laughing still. The stone still hurts.

Once in a while you can't take your hand off that stone. You run it over your fingers and roll it in your palm and are so preoccupied by its weight, you forget things like your car keys and home address. You try to leave it alone but you just can't. You want to take a nap but it's been so many years since you've called in "sad" you're not sure anyone would understand anymore or if they ever did.

But most days you can take your hand in and out of your pocket, feel your stone and even smile at its unwavering presence. You've accepted this stone as your own, crossing your hands over it, saying "mine" as children do.

You rest more peacefully than you once did, you've learned to move forward the best you can.

Some days you want to show the world what a beautiful memory you're holding. But most days you twirl it through your fingers, smile and look to the sky. You squeeze your hands together and hope you are living in a way that honors the missing piece you carry, until your arms are full again.

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FourPlusAnAngel.com

Because of You

The road seems long and winding.
Your death has affected my life,
my thinking,
my behavior and attitudes.

Thoughts of you are with me daily,
not heavy or over burdened.

Just you - a baby, soft and silent.

I have changed - grown, looking at life differently.
Sometimes frightened, sometimes calm, sometimes
seeing beyond to a spiritual side where I have
learned to feel your presence, comfort, and support.

An uplifting to a height I never would've known
or grown to see if there hadn't been you.

Kris Ingle
UNITE Notes, Spring 1991 vol 10 #2
Seasons of Grief an Anthology of Poetry from UNITE Notes



"To lose a child is to lose part of
yourself..."

And to find parts of yourself
You were not aware of"

Author Unknown



Look for us on the Web



- ♥ Visit our web page at www.lehighvalleytcf.org for group information, past and present newsletters & helpful links
- ♥ Like and Follow our facebook page: www.facebook.com/TCFLehighValley for meeting reminders, cancelations, announcements, meaningful posts .
- ♥ Find us on Pinterest under the keyword **The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter**

The "Veteran" Bereaved Parent

Have you ever attended a TCF meeting to see a "veteran" bereaved parent shed a tear or openly show grief, and have wondered why after all that time?

Please don't get the wrong idea - the wrong idea being:

- You won't ever cry after ten years.
- You won't feel a need to still attend TCF meetings.
- You won't feel like sticking with TCF in case a newly bereaved parent needs you.
- You won't care enough to stay and help organize future meetings.
- You won't feel compassionate enough to hear a newly bereaved parent talk of their grief.

Yes, some veteran bereaved parents move on and I wish them peace. But I am personally grateful for veteran bereaved parents who stay with TCF. What would newly bereaved parents do if they attended their first meeting and no one was there?

Sandy Smith, TCF Greater Cincinnati Area, OH

Compassion

I cry when a tear rolls down your cheek

I agonize when you weep

I know that you question, I know that you pray

That you scream at night in your sleep.

I'm aware of your quavering voice when you speak

Of your blank, straight forward stare

I know of your pain, your depression, your guilt

That you search for "a face" everywhere.

I watch as you walk with your head bowed low

With despair written over your face

I hear the quick sigh, the internal cry

I know how you warily pace.

I see how you search, for a sign, for some hope

That the light will still shine in your life

I know how you live, I know that you die

From the harsh words that wound like a knife.

I empathize most with your loneliness now

Even though you're not always alone

I see the rapture as you speak your child's name

For, *I'VE LOST A SON OF MY OWN.*

Charmaine Stickel, TCF Pittsburgh, PA

March

The month of in between

In between winter

And in between Spring

Your death has left me

feeling in between

In between this world

And in between the next

Since you died

Nothing's the same

I no longer feel like I belong

Yet I haven't wings for heaven

Though I have no heart for Earth

So I'm somewhere with March

I'm somewhere in between

Naomi Holtzman, TCF Volusia/Flagler FL

Heaven

I hope they have

horses in Heaven,

and saddles and

bridles and trails.

I hope they have

puppies and kittens,

and baseballs and

hammers and nails.

I hope they eat

ice cream in Heaven,

and pizza and

fish sticks and fries.

I hope there is green grass

and sunshine,

and crickets and

bright butterflies.

I hope children

are children in Heaven,

I hope they laugh and

they sing and they run.

For my daughter is

somewhere in Heaven,

barefoot and

looking for fun.

Tony Cartledge,, TCF Raleigh, NC

Sibling Page

How Does it Feel? What's it Like?

It's like:

A hole with no bottom
A hill with no top
A road with no bend
A night with no end

It's as if it's not happened
It's as if it's not true
It's as if it's a dream
Yet a numbness seeps through

There's a feeling of emptiness
A gap to be filled
There's a feeling of loneliness
That cannot be stilled

They say times a healer
How long will it take?
I can't see it ending
It's a permanent ache

Life has no meaning
Yet it has to go on
I find it so hard
To feel so alone

No one will ever know
The depths of my sorrow
I just have to trust
There'll be a better tomorrow

May God give me strength
To keep on going
To get through this pain to
Feel real again

I'll never get over it
Of that I am sure
But I'll give time a chance
And hope for a cure.

Time's without end
Love is too
I'll never forget you
I'll always miss you

*Stella Kelly (after the death of her brother) Submitted
by Pat King TCF Seattle WA*

Remembrance

In the light of the day
I awake with thoughts of you
In the dark of the night
I sleep with thoughts of you
Is it grief or disbelief?

Evan Fillmore, Huntington UT

Did you know that The Compassionate Friends hosts a chatroom and a facebook page just for bereaved siblings?

To join go to
www.compassionatefriends.org
and click on the "Find Support"
menu. There you will find options for moderated chatrooms and private facebook pages and information on how to join.



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

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

Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

TCF Carbon County - 484-719-6753

TCF Easton - 610-515-3526

TCF Quakertown - 215-703-8431

GRASP (grief recovery after substance passing)

TCF Pocono - 570 - 350 - 6695

(484) 788-9440

Love Gift Form

Your love gift will help defray the cost of chapter expenses such as the newsletter mailings, meetings and our outreach to the newly bereaved. The Compassionate Friends is a 501c(3) non-profit organization and your donations are fully tax deductible.

Deadlines are the 1st of the month previous to the month you wish publication in. Example the deadline for publication in January is December the 1st

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

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I would like to make a donation of _____ ☐ In Memory of ☐ In Honor of ☐ A Chapter Gift (without memorial or honorarium)

Name of person gift given for

Edition to be published in. Deadlines listed above. Late submissions or those that do not indicate an edition will be published in the next edition.

Special Text - Brief Messages Please. Poems & story submissions are always welcome and should be sent directly to the Newsletter Editor for inclusion in the newsletter.

Please designate which of the following your gift is for (you may circle more than one)

Newsletter Expenses

Postage

Office Expenses

Outreach Program

Special Events