



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 39 Issue 3

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March

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

All bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings (over the age of 16) are welcome to attend. Participation in group sharing is confidential and voluntary. Our hope is that being among others who understand you may feel free to talk, cry and share, but it is okay to just come and listen too.

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

Upcoming Meetings and Events

- Monday March 10
- Monday April 14
- Monday May 12

Meeting Cancellations

Those on the meeting text list will be notified via text. All others please call 484-891-0823

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.

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

Newsletter Editor Contact

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Strange Words “Welcome New Members”

I am always amazed at the instant empathy we each feel as new members come to their first meeting. We have the strangest welcome for these parents: “We are so sorry you have to be here.”

In other organizations the questions are probing: where did you go to school, where do you work, where do you live? All designed to “size up” the newcomer, put him or her in the proper perspective of a neatly ordered world. For us, this information is meaningless. We know the world isn't neat and orderly; we discovered that when we lost our children. We care about you, the newly bereaved parent, whose life was tossed into a cosmic blender when your child died. We care because we are you. We have been here a while, in this purgatory of pain. We have learned to live our lives in a different way, to place value on understanding and hope, the intangibles of the purest meanings of life. We have learned to value each other, to reach out and talk, to wait patiently during the silences needed to form thoughts. We listen intently as you quietly say your child's name, tell your child's story, speak of your heartbreak.

Yes, this is a different kind of welcome. But it is the most deeply sincere welcome we will ever receive. We are kindred souls, you and I. Each of us lives in the “after death” world of losing our child. Each of us has learned gradually that the hope we have attained has made life better, lessened the pain, moderated the isolation, tears, emotional devastation and pure mayhem that once overtook us. Each of us has learned this slowly, in our own time and in our own way.

Each month new parents who have suffered the most horrific loss that a human can endure are welcomed into our group. We reach out, we listen with our hearts and we remember.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

Circle

How do you bear it all?
The cry came from a mother
Whose son had died only weeks
before.

We were in a circle,
looking at her,
Looking around, looking away,
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.
How do we bear it?
I don't know,
But the circle helps.

Eva Lager, TCF/Western Australia



Our Children Remembered

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

March Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Scott Arcury - Son of Frank and Beth Arcury; Brother of Lauren Arcury	Mar 6	Jul 24
Tyler Balog - Son of Jeff and Grace Balog; Brother of Troy Balog	Mar 4	Feb 6
Christopher Brunner - Son of Cynthia Kern	Nov 29	Mar 20
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 - Sister of John, Steven, Brian, Kathleen & MaryAnn	Mar 25	Feb 14
Sgt. Christopher Geiger - Son of George and Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Terrance, David, Timothy & The Late Michael Geiger	Mar 30	Jul 9
Carly Grozier - Daughter of Cathie Given	Mar 4	Jan 17
Brian Gum - Son of Geary and Brenda Gum	Feb 21	Mar 5
John Kopitskie - Son of Steve and Lisa Kopitskie; Brother of Leslie, Sarah & Matthew	Mar 4	Jan 25
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; Daughter of Barbara Maquera; Step Daughter of Angie Villa; Sister of Patrick Villa, Cruz Maquera & Gianni Villa	Mar 23	Mar 24



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:

Loved One

♥ Houser Auctioneers & Clients

Gene Delong
In Loving Memory

♥ Wayne & Rebecca Ortelli

Amy Beth Ortelli & Jennifer Rebecca Ortelli - Bryant
You are both forever in our hearts

About 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 to belong to the Compassionate Friends, our chapter sustains its mission through the generosity of Love Gift donations. Gifts can be made in any amount and are tax deductible. The Love Gift Donation form can be found on the last page of this newsletter. Love gifts can be brought to the meeting or mailed to the address on the form.

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

Accepting the Unacceptable

"I will never be able to accept the death of my child." Does that sound familiar? Have you said that? Not surprising. That is one, if not the most, difficult thing we have to do to get to the other side of the long dark tunnel of grief.

What does "accept" mean? One parent told me he would never accept his daughter's death, because he said "accept" means to "agree, approve, to consent to." Obviously, in that context no one in their right mind would "accept" their child's death. But there are other meanings to "accept" : "believe to be true," "acknowledge." We do not like the sound of those words either, but at some point, accept them, in order to get on with our lives.

By stating we will not accept it, what is accomplished? ... Will it make it not true? If only it were that simple. Then I would be 100% in favor of denial. But it doesn't work that way. There are some things that cannot be changed, no matter how hard we may want them to be.

One example: My husband had a heart attack a little more than a year after Eric's death. He vehemently denied he had had a heart attack. ... He continued on with his HEAVY smoking. Then came his stroke. He is now badly paralyzed on his left side. He cannot deny his stroke. And he cannot go back, and accept his heart attack, change his way of living and perhaps avert the stroke. So what did his denial accomplish? It made things worse.

So it is with us. Denial won't work. At some point in time, we know it has happened. I realized for myself, it was when I could say "Eric died." I could say the word "dead." It took quite a long time. I could say "I lost a son" but not "he died." One day it just came out. It actually shocked and upset me. But afterwards, looking back, I realized that was a big step for me. Not a happy one, but it was one of my turning points.

All of the "stages" of grief that we go through are hard. There is nothing easy about it. As Darcie Sims said..."grief hurts." That almost seems like too mild a statement. The feeling is impossible to put in words. It's devastating!!

"Grief work" takes time and effort. I wish there was an easier way for all of you. I can only give you the hope and encouragement that you, too, can make it. Be kind to, and patient with, yourself.

God Bless!

Mary Ehmann TCF, Valley Forge, PA

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.

*"in the pain of loss
reach deeply
Into your being,
access the love
that resides there,
that will sustain you
until you meet again."*

© Alison Stormwolf

Life's Tapestry

It's said a splendid tapestry depicts life's 'grand design'
Immense in its complexity, the threads all intertwine...
To form a pattern illustrating with explicit weave
The reason why our children die, and why we're left to grieve.

I've heard it called the 'master plan', and there are those who say
each thread's the story of a life, from birth to dying day.
No death occurs that is not planned, some greater purpose served and
some draw comfort from belief that fate cannot be swerved.
If destiny holds all the cards than nothing could be changed,
We could not alter tragedy – for death was prearranged.

I do not know if I believe that fate decreed the day
My life lost its illusions, enchantment came to stay.
But I do know the path I'm on is one that's far less clear...
I stumble through this darkness praying light will reappear.

Yet in my soul her light lives on, my love for her remains
With innocence she healed my heart and broke through my life's chains
My daughter showed me how to trust, her needs taught me to fight,
She planted seeds of caring about others and their plight.

If the tapestry depicts the life of all who walk the earth,
The master weaver added my child's thread and knew her worth.
Her life, her death, my agony – are pushing me to find
The reason for her years with me, and why I'm left behind.

I understand my path will stay in darkness 'til I see
The means by which I'll utilize the gifts she gave to me.
If I can find a way to share the caring I now feel
It will honor her dear memory and help my heart to heal. ~

Sally Migliaccio, TCF Babylon 1997



Surviving the Guilt

Posted on March 17, 2022 by Christina Tracy on *Andrews Angel's* <https://andrewangels.org/blog/>

When you go to bed at night, you are (hopefully) easing into being content that the day is over. Everyone is home, tucked in their beds, you've accomplished what needed to be done and drifting off to sleep, satisfied. All is quiet and your family is safe.

That was how I felt when I went to bed the night Andrew died. My daughter was out with friends but my two sweet boys were safe and secure enclosed in the warm walls of our home. I went to sleep knowing that I had had a successful day of organizing a closet and taking down holiday decorations. All was right in the world.

An hour later, nothing was right. My world was turned upside down. My life, as I knew it, forever changed. I was inspired to write this after reading an article posted on Facebook, by Angela Miller, author and creator of A Bed For My Heart, an online community for child loss.

'I Wasn't Sure If I Could Survive': What It's Like to Lose a Child" struck a cord with me. Particularly, this quote:

"One of the unique features about losing a child is that there is always a sense of guilt there," she explains. "The role of being a parent is to keep your child present and on this earth and healthy and well, so regardless of the circumstances, mothers often feel like they failed. It's such a huge burden to carry."

~Cadmona A. Hall, PhD

I have had extreme guilt since losing Andrew. I couldn't understand it...he was home. He was safe at home, in his room. I was 20 ft down the hall from him. I was right there. I had checked on him before retiring to my room. By all accounts, in my mind, I failed him. Failed to do the most basic part of being a mother...keeping him alive.

I've carried this immense guilt inside of me. Guilt that I could not keep my child alive. Guilt knowing that while I was asleep, he was literally dying 20 feet from me and I didn't know. How could I not have woken up? Why didn't my motherly instinct naturally kick in and stir me to get up. Why didn't I know something was not right.

Something was wrong. Why couldn't I save my child's life. Why didn't I run into his room and revive him. Why was I content and at peace in my bed because *I organized a fucking closet!*


Why. Why. Why.

It has taken me a very long time to understand that I will never be able to understand that night. I know I did not do anything wrong. Andrew's death was the most freak accident. It was not my fault. However, carrying the guilt and surviving the guilt is something I face every day. It is etched into my soul. The basic instinct of protecting my child was robbed from me.

"I began to see my writing journey as another way to honor Hudson's memory; I also say often that the only thing that brings me any consolation after her death is knowing that her life can still have meaning, that she can still have an impact on others and the world even though she is no longer physically here. So if sharing my story helps someone else, I feel like that is the greatest way to honor her and to comfort myself."

~Mandy Hitchcock

While I fight these demons inside, I push through, for Andrew. For his life. For his memory. Speaking his name. Sharing his story. Being there for others who have children with ADHD. Supporting them. Advocating. Anything I can do to honor Andrew.



Guilt is
perhaps the
most painful
companion of
death.

Elizabeth Kubler Ross

Sibling Page

If I could speak to all the siblings out there, I'd say I know you're frightened and maybe feeling anger and guilt, for those are normal feelings at times like these. I know it isn't fair, but some of life isn't. It's hard to accept that fact, isn't it? I know you may even resent having some special time in your life interfered with by your parents' prolonged grieving. Be patient.

There will be better days. I know you may be sorry you said or did some things that involved your dead sister or brother. Sibling rivalry is a normal and natural thing. All of us say and do things we wish we hadn't. That's a part of being human. Forgive yourself for being human and try to remember the good times, too.

If you're older, I know you find it difficult to share the pain you're feeling with your parents because you can see they are having a hard time. Your impulse is to protect them and that includes from your own pain. Sometimes you become the parent and they, the child. Do you realize that if you do too great a job of disguising your grief, your parents may misunderstand and think you aren't grieving at all? Share some parts, at least, with them if you can. It is better for you and them to release your feelings rather than bottle them up and pretend everything is okay.

I know you become discouraged after a while when you find you aren't able to make your parents "better". It isn't a failure on your part that this is true. Try to accept the fact that it takes much time and grief work before they can be better. They, and you, have lost something very important and it isn't possible for them to put it all behind them and go on as though nothing has changed. All of the crying and unhappiness you are seeing is necessary for them to go through before they can reach the other side of the grief process where it is less painful.

I know you begin to wonder if your dead sibling was your parents' favorite child and if you really matter at all. Oh! You do! Had it been you, or any of your brothers or sisters, it would be the same, for this is the way it is when any child dies. It may take some time before your parents can show it in obvious ways, but you are one of the most important reasons they struggle so to regain some equilibrium in their lives. You

are important!

I know you wonder sometimes if your parents are remembering the same person since they only seem to remember him or her as being a perfect angel with no faults. You, on the other hand, may remember some qualities that weren't so saintly. When you are remembering your sibling, bring up some of the irritating things he or she used to do so that everyone can remember him or her as he or she really was – a human being, complete with good and bad. It's hard to live with the memory of a saint, isn't it?

I know it may be bothersome if you find your parents are overly concerned for your safety now. They may tend to overprotect, but you need to understand that they now know that bad things do indeed happen to good people and their security is shattered. Just a simple thoughtful act like calling if you're going to be later than expected can really help them and make them less anxious.

Holidays and birthdays will be more painful than fun in the beginning. Try to understand if old traditions are put aside right now and don't demand that everything be exactly as it used to be. Given time, you and your family will work out just how you want and need to observe special family occasions and there will be enjoyable times in your home again. They just may have to be observed in different ways than before. I know you need to hear that your family will survive this tragedy.

Our parents may need the same assurance. Those of us who have had the necessary time for our adjustments do offer you and your family that assurance. It will never be the same, but you will come to value each other in ways not previously thought of. Now is the time for your family to be pulling together – not apart. A loving family will survive. Try to share and communicate your feelings. If you can't talk to your parents, find someone who cares and can listen. It can help all of your family to recover in an emotionally healthy way.

IT will be better! Write that down!

Mary Cleckley, TCF Atlanta, GA

Note:

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

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



The Compassionate Friends Credo Copyright © 2007

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 - 610-515-3526

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



Mail this form to:

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY
C/O KATHLEEN COLLINS
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NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

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**

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☐ **Special Events**