



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 39 Issue 4

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April

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.

TCF, Lehigh Valley
Chapter 1562

Phone
484-891-0823

Email:
tcflehighvalley@gmail.com

Website
www.lehighvalleytcf.org

Facebook Page
facebook.comTCFlehighvalley

Pinterest
The Compassionate Friends,
Lehigh Valley Chapter

Chapter Leader
Newsletter Editor
Kathleen Collins
TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com
484-891-0823

Treasurer
Kathleen Collins

TCF National
Headquarters
877- 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.
org

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 April 14
- Monday May 12
- Monday June 9

Meeting Cancellations

Cancellations will be posted on the webpage.

Those on the meeting text list will be notified via text.



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

• by mail:

The Compassionate Friends, LV
C/O Kathleen Collins,
2971 Pheasant Dr.,
Northampton, PA 18067

• by phone:

484-891-0823

• by email:

TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com

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The Top 10 Things I have Learned about Grieving as a Couple

1. Go to grief counseling as a couple if you can. It will help you understand and accept differences in grieving at a time when you both need each other so much.

2. Know that you each have strengths, weaknesses and limitations - chances are these are different for each of you. It sounds obvious, but can be very hard to accept that both of you have suffered a great loss and one of you may not be able to give the other what you need in such a desperate time. Grief takes a lot of energy and you may not always have much to give your partner during this time. Also, you each have different ways of coping and dealing with your grief - neither of you is wrong - allow the other space to do what they need to do, whatever that is.

3. It is normal to have disagreements over nothing that turn into big blow-out fights.

4. It is normal to get frustrated with each other. Grief requires tremendous patience. Try to be as patient as you can with yourself and your partner.

5. It is normal to take things out on each other. Try to be aware of this and stop yourself from doing this as much as you can.

6. Know that no matter how good your relationship is, or how supportive your partner is, grief can make you miserable, cloud your judgment, and make you feel like you need a divorce.

7. It is usually not a good idea to make any big changes when you are grieving and this includes leaving your relationship.

8. No matter how alike you are, each of you will have different things that upset and bother you more than other things, and different stages and time frames for your grief. Do your best to understand that you do not have to agree or be feeling the same things at the same time to accept each other's feelings and support each other.

9. No matter how much you love each other, there will be times when you will feel completely alone while grieving the loss of your child. Grief is lonely.

10. Always do your best to have a united front to family, friends and the rest of the world - no matter if you agree or not. Other's judgments have a great potential during this time to pull you apart. You are much stronger as a pair than as two separate individuals. There will be times when it feels like you have no one in the world to support, listen and stand up for you. Try your very hardest to be there for each other as much as you can. NO-ONE else in the world loved your child more than each of you. Therefore, no-one else in the world shares this world of grief the same as the two of you.

*By Caroline, Mom to Jack Robinson
~ Sharing, Volume 15/ Mar-Apr 2006*

Our Children Remembered

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

April Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Patricia Arey - Daughter of Elizabeth & the late William Arey; Sister of Elizabeth Ann, Barbara, Rose Marie & Elaine ; Sister of Elizabeth Ann, Barbara, Rose Marie & Elaine	Apr 18	May 8
Holly Cavanaugh - Daughter of Bill Cavanaugh; Sister of Bo Cavanaugh	Apr 27	Sep 25
Edward Gaydos, III - Son of Edward and Sally Gaydos; Brother of Blasia Gaydos	Apr 23	Apr 8
David Hoagland, Jr - Son of Gypsy Garrett	Sep 24	Apr 26
Richard "Rich" Hollabaugh - Son of Linda Hollabaugh & the late Wayne Hollabaugh	Dec 20	Apr 10
James "Jimmy" Hotz - Son of Elizabeth Hotz	Apr 24	Jul 4
Zaine Krluc - Son of Ramiz and Merima Krluc	Apr 10	Jun 12
Robert Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Jul 9	Apr 4
Nicholas Savacool - Son of Howard and Laura Savacool; Brother of Brandon, Candace & Lacie	Feb 27	Apr 1
Benjamin Steinert - Son of MaryAnne Steinert	Aug 1	Apr 9
Sean Virmalo -Son of Udo and Janet L. Virmalo; Brother of Eric, Brett & Katelyn Virmalo	Sep 13	Apr 28



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:

Loved One

♥Udo & Janet Virmalo

Sean Mikhail Virmalo

"Always with us" Udo, Janet, Eric, Brett and Katelyn

♥Merima Krluc

Zaine Krluc

Happy 3rd Birthday baby boy. I love you and miss you. Love, Mom

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 our chapter sustains its mission through the generosity of Love Gift donations. Gifts can be made in any amount and are tax deductible. Please use the form on the last page of this newsletter and mail or bring to the meeting.

Many thanks to the following for their ongoing contributions to the chapter

Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville
For our meeting space

The Matt Kush Foundation
In Memory of Matt Kush

United Way
Payroll Contributors

Happy Birthday in Heaven

I wish you were here today
Even for a little while
So I could say Happy Birthday
And see your beautiful smile

The only gifts today will be
The ones you left behind
The laughter, joy and happiness
Precious memories...the best kind

Today I'll do my very best
To try to find a happy place
Struggling to hide my heavy heart
and the tears on my face

I'll sit quietly and look at your picture
Thinking of you with love
Hoping you're doing okay
In Heaven up Above

May the angels hold you close and
sing you a happy song...
and I'll be sending wishes to you
today and all year long.

*Kidaca,
AllPoetry.com*



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, TCF, Katy, TX
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen*

Waiting For Answers

Years ago I left my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends and drove home in tears. My son, Max, had died a few short weeks before and I had been anxiously awaiting this evening. These people must have some answers, I thought. With paper and pen in purse, I was ready to take notes and do as they prescribed. I would do anything to ease the ache in my soul. But when I walked out into the spring air later that night, I felt betrayed. I hadn’t heard any answers. Instead of learning how to leave my grief behind, it had been confirmed, made more real with expression. I know I would miss Max forever. Now I wondered if I would grieve forever. Would it always be this way, a flash of pain aligned with every memory?

During the next months and years, I attended TCF meetings and conferences, read books, raged, kept busy, sometimes spent the day in bed. I wrote, cried and talked about Max. Slowly, I discovered the answers I had feared were true: yes, I will grieve forever, and yes, my memories will often provoke tears. But something had changed. My grief was now more forgiving, my tears almost sweet with memory. Max’s life took shape again as the anguish of his death began to recede. If I would always miss him, I would also always have him with me in so many ways. I wanted to carry his memory into the future: the joy, the lessons, and the inevitable pain. How could I do otherwise?

As I walked to my car after that first meeting, the TCF chapter leader caught up with me. “How can I stop this pain?” I asked. She put her arm on my shoulder. “Just do what feels right to you,” she said. “Listen to your heart. And we’ll be here to listen, too.” Sometimes the best advice is none at all

*Mary Clark,
TCF, Sugarland/SW Houston, TX*

“My life was suddenly divided into BEFORE and AFTER and there was no going back to BEFORE. But then I realized I had a choice to live the AFTER. I had to decide.”

by Brenda Neal from “A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance”

Although the following article depicts a man who has experienced the fullness of life, it holds just as true for anyone, any age.

Easter Means Forever

by Norman Vincent Peale

Today I want to write a few lines about Easter and life after death, a subject of profound interest to everyone, young and old. At Easter we commemorate the supreme mystery of life; we reaffirm the glorious hope that life is eternal.

An immortal parable to me is the most satisfying illustration on the subject of life after death. It has to do with a baby in a prenatal state. The baby is nestled up under his mother's heart, well fed and happy. He likes it there. Suppose, then, that somebody comes to the baby and tells him, "You're not going to stay here. You're going to be 'born'", and he learns that being "born" meant he would leave this warm, secure place. That would not be "being born" to him. That would be "dying" for dying is considered an end. And the baby would say, "I don't want to die out of this place. I like it here. I'm warm, I feel love all around me, I'm happy and content. Just leave me alone. I don't want to leave this nice place." But, there comes a day when he is born or, looking at it from his angle - when he "dies" out of that place and is born into our world.

What happens to him? The first thing, he feels soft, tender, loving hands gently holding him. He looks up into a wonderful face that is full of love and loving eyes are shining down at him. Then as he grows he has the fascinating experiences of childhood, and young manhood and the future is before him. He feels strong. It is good to be alive. He marries and has children. He becomes middle-aged, is creative and happy and life is good; indeed, the world is good. He loves it.

Then the years begin to add up. His hair becomes white and his step a bit feeble. And he knows he has to die, to leave all this and go away into another place, some uncertain place that is mysterious to him. And once again he protests, "I don't want to die! I like it here. I love to feel the warmth of the sun on my face, the softness of rain, the bite of snow. I love to see great blue-shrouded mountains shouldering out the sky. I love to watch the ocean

washing upon soft shores of sand. I love to be with my family and friends. Life is good. I don't want to leave here." But, as it happens to all humanity, one day, he does die to this world.

What happens then? Does God all of a sudden change in nature? That doesn't make sense. Isn't it reasonable to believe that the first thing man will feel is the touch of great, loving hands, that he will look up into a face that is infinitely loving: he will look around him wonderingly and his breath will be taken away by the beauties that he sees? All tears will be wiped from his eyes and he will ask, "Why was I so afraid of this thing called death, when as I now see, it is life more wonderful than ever before?" And he will be forever alive.

THIS IS WHAT EASTER REALLY MEANS. IT IS A FAITH, A HOPE.

But, when you really think it through, it, also, becomes a very rational conclusion.



In the spring, I will bring daffodils to you with a prayer, after the cold, snowy winter is over and gone.

I will sit on the grass and sing the songs that we shared, knowing that your boundless spirit still lives on.

I've walked the path of sorrow. It's helped me to grow. Through the tears have come my strength and my healing.

My heart, once wounded and broken, is mended and filled with deep love for everyone in all that I do.

And every warm, sunny spring, I will bring yellow daffodils and cherish the memories of you.

Sharon Coder - TCF Inland Empire, CA

Ten Years

It's been ten years since you left my side
 And I find myself still asking why.
 Why is this life so unfair?
 For some it goes by without a care
 Yet others don't even get a chance
 To learn how to walk or enjoy their first dance

Sometimes a life begins only to end.
 Laugh now, enjoy each moment while you can
 For I believe life is about love.
 We all eventually go to that great place above.
 With us we'll take what's in our heart
 Don't waste energy for things from
 which we'll part

Those hugs we shared I'll always have
 I thank God for the time we had.
 It wasn't enough though, those eighteen years.
 I so wish you were still here
 Ten years - yet as if only a day
 Since, from me, you were taken away

Joanne Providakis, TCF Lehigh Valley Chapter

May I Grieve

In the daytime,
 I walk and work, and all;
 But at home, in the evening,
 I stumble and fall.

The office says, "Function, smile and get control."
 But at home I can grieve to cleanse my soul.
 Must I be two people for the rest of my life?
 If I could be just one person for more than one day,
 My freedom to grieve would help light the way.

But society tells me not to be sad,
 They say,
 "She's at peace now and you should be glad."
 When grieving the loss of a child is perceived,
 How much easier it is for we the bereaved.

Susanne Demars, TCF, Hingham, MA

Normal

If you think you are going insane,
 THAT'S NORMAL.

If all you can do is cry,
 THAT'S NORMAL.

If you have trouble with the most minor
 decisions, THAT'S NORMAL.

If you can't taste your food or
 have any semblance of an appetite,
 THAT'S NORMAL.

If you have feelings of rage, denial and
 depression,
 THAT'S NORMAL.

If you find yourself enjoying a funny moment
 and immediately feeling guilty,
 THAT'S NORMAL.

If your friends dwindle away and you feel like
 you have the plague,
 THAT'S NORMAL.

If your blood boils and hair in your nose curls
 when someone tells you, "It was God's Will,"
 THAT'S NORMAL.

If you can share your story, your feelings with
 an understanding listener - another bereaved
 parent,
 THAT'S A BEGINNING.

If you can get a glimmer of your child's life
 rather than his/her death,
 THAT'S WONDERFUL.

If you can remember your child with a smile,
 THAT'S HEALING.

If you find your mirrors have become windows
 and you are able to reach out to other bereaved
 parents,
 THAT'S GROWING.

By Edith Fraser, Unknown Chapter

Sibling Page

Random Reflections

By Tammy Walmann, Miami Co., KS

It's been a year now
And the books say I should be
Getting back to "normal"
But I still can't pass your picture
On the bookcase without
Touching your face.
I still wake up in the night
Sometimes and can almost
Hear your voice in the quiet.
I still run to the window when the
Dogs bark at night with the hope
In the back of my mind that somehow
You've wandered into the yard.
I still whisper your name into the wind
When I walk down our lane in the still
Of evening and strain to hear an answer.
When I'm troubled and upset
I still talk to you like
I always did and
Imagine the advice you'd give me.
I still stop on our dark country road
Sometime and turn off the car engine
And lights and wait and hope that
I can see or hear you.
It's been a year now and the
Memories are still so vivid
That I can almost touch them.
It's been a year now and I know
With all my heart that your
Presence will never fade in my mind.

How Can They Move On?

Traci Morlock, Bereaved Parents, USA

How can they move on? Every day I realize that while my brother's death may have touched many people's lives, they seem to be able to just pick up where they left off and continue with their lives. For me, it has been so much harder.

I learned this week, that last year, my brother's girlfriend had gotten married. While I am very happy for her to have finally been able to love again, my happiness is also filled with a little jealousy. I think of my brother at some point everyday. Does this mean that she has forgotten him? I have asked myself this question all week. I hope that she hasn't and at least remembers the good times that they had sometimes. I find it hard to think of her with someone else, but she was so miserable for so long, she deserves a little happiness. I was also told that she is pregnant and is having her baby soon. When I heard this I almost cried. I think that was harder than finding out that she was married. Then a real jealousy kicked in. I thought, "Hey, what about Sean's baby?" Hell never know the joy of being a parent.

After mulling this around for a while, I realized that everyone must move on. Sometimes I feel as if I can't go on another day because I feel so much pain. That pain is not so strong as it was two or three years ago, but it does come back to visit now and then. When Sean first died, a few of his friends came over a lot. Over the past few years, that began to happen less and less until his friends stopped coming at all. One of his friends still comes by or at least calls my mom at Christmas. Another puts presents on his grave occasionally.

I know that a lot of people cared about my brother, but I think that knowing him for 19 years and being as close as we were has made it all the harder for me. I know that he watches over our family and is always with us. I know in my heart that moving on is not the same as forgetting. I hope with my heart that all who knew Sean still spare at least one thought for him once on a while. While I wish every one of his friends much happiness in their lives, I hope that they never forget.

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



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

Address

Phone

Email Address

Mail this form to:

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY
C/O KATHLEEN COLLINS
2971 PHEASANT DR.
NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

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

Name of person gift given for

Edition to be published in. Deadlines listed above. Late submissions are published in the next edition.

Special Text - Brief message & signature (Examples Messages - Happy Birthday; Loved & missed forever, Always in my heart Signatures - Love Mom, Dad etc)

I would like my love gift to go toward: (you may choose more than one)

☐ **Newsletter**

☐ **Postage**

☐ **Office Expenses**

☐ **Special Events**