



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



July

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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.

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.

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. We also welcome refreshments brought in honor of your child.

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 July 14
- Monday August 11
- Monday September 8

Meeting Cancellations will be posted on the webpage and texted to the meeting list members

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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Shared Thoughts on Setting Your Own Pace for Grieving

When we are in our early stages of grief, it can be a relief to see the summer's flurry of activities end. Picnics, family vacations, gatherings with happy children that once were such special times, can bring additional agony after the loss of a child or sibling. Watching other families, who have not lost one of its members, can cause us to fantasize, what could have been for us.

When we feel so all encompassed with grief, it is hard to imagine that we can one day enjoy life again. Our life seems so irrevocably changed. When we first begin our journey of grief, and pain permeates every part of our being, the road appears so dark and endless. We so desperately need someone to appreciate what we are experiencing and to understand we have been immobilized by our loss. It is normal for those around us, who have not experienced such a loss to want us to "snap back" to our old self. What they cannot appreciate is that all of our reactions are normal. Our fast paced society does not allow us proper time for grieving. It is healthy to cry, and talk about the deceased. It isn't time alone that heals; it is primarily the grief work. And we can only have a healthy healing grief process when we move at our own pace. Some need to spend more time than others on particular aspects of grief. The age of the deceased, the relationship you had with them, the cause of death and a long list of circumstances can create varying intensity of pain in different areas of grief. Each person in grief has to make their own path. We all hurt to the depth of our capacity, but each path to recovery is unique. It is very helpful to have someone who is non-judgmental with whom we can express our concerns. Putting our thoughts into words can bring healing.

It takes all the strength we can muster up to get our lives back together again. In our early stages of grief we cannot fathom ever leading a full life, laughing, As we progress in our grief, and much healing being productive, or being a functional human being again. It is normal to feel our life is over. As we progress in our grief, and much healing, it is also normal for the intensity of our emotions to lessen, even though our grief may be lifelong process. We learn to live without our loved one being physically among us. That does not mean our loved one is not with us in our memory. The memories Will always be a part of our being. We will always be the same to each other. Our love does not diminish as our grieving progresses, we remember the good times and put away the thoughts of "I wish I had", or "I should have". The pain softens and our memories are our most prized possession.

It takes a lot of mountain climbing to reach the valley in grief. It cannot be rushed; no one can do it for us.

I hope all the brilliant colors of fall can form a rainbow for you, and give you hope.

Marie Hofmockel - TCF Valley Forge, PA

Our Children Remembered

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

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Scott Arcury - Son of Frank and Beth Arcury, Brother of Lauren Arcury	Mar 6	Jul 24
Hunter Bremmer - Son of David Bremmer, Brother of Heather Bremmer	Dec 12	Jul 27
Courtney Daud - Daughter of Marie Daud	Jul 15	Jul 15
Sarah Davidson - Daughter of Dean and Donna Davidson, Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Jul 10	Jul 10
Mark Dilts, Jr - Son of Mark and Joy Dilts, Brother of Beth Dilts	Jan 6	Jul 8
Connor Dugan - Son of George and Holly Dugan	Jul 17	Dec 24
Sgt. Christopher Geiger - Son of George & Patricia Geiger, Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Terrance, David & Timothy & the late Michael Geiger	Mar 30	Jul 9
Eric Graver - Son of Mary L Graver	Aug 17	Jul 9
James "Jimmy" Hotz - Son of Elizabeth Hotz	Apr 24	Jul 4
Colleen Kilker - Daughter of Mark and Kathleen Kilker; Sister of Meghan, Bridget and Mark Kilker	May 6	Jul 23
David Kunsman - Son of Charles and Joan Kunsman, Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & the late Charles Kunsman, Jr	May 2	Jul 15
John Leonard, Jr - Son of Jack and Jule Leonard, Brother of Karen	Jul 27	Jan 6
Carter Mayer - Son of Ashley Mowrey	Jul 13	Aug 20
Ed McNally - Son of Don and Connie McNally, brother of Sean McNally	Jul 29	Feb 11
Amy Ortelli - Daughter of Wayne and Rebecca Ortelli, Sister of Christian Ortelli & The Late Jennifer Ortelli	Feb 10	Jul 5
Alexander Price - Son of Anthony and Jenny Price, Brother of Adam & Chole	Jul 17	Jul 9
Peter Radocha - Son of Lucille Radocha, Brother of Gina Sacco & Frank Radocha, Jr	Jun 13	Jul 1
Robert Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Jul 9	Apr 4
Elliot Senseman - Son of Heather Lyons	Aug 17	Jul 27
Jessica Smolenski - Daughter of Thomas and Pamela Smolenski	Nov 3	Jul 6
Zackary Stokes - Son of Pam and Duane Stokes	Aug 8	Jul 2
Paul Woodling - Son of Gregg and Mary Ann Miller	Jul 21	Nov 5



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:

Loved One

♥David Bremmer

Hunter Bremmer

I think of you every day! All my love, Dad

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

That Anniversary

All our lives we've known about anniversaries. Our parents celebrated their Anniversary; the school we attended marked its Anniversary; the company honored your Anniversary when you started your career; the Lions Club held a gala to remember its Anniversary; but there is one Anniversary that we're never eager to recall, it's That Anniversary. When a child dies, we retain vivid memories of that fateful day. Time cannot rob us of the memory and the grief of that awful and confusingly sad day. Unlike your wedding date or your first day on the job or when you graduated from school, which may have become hazy over time, the circumstances and ticks of the clock of That Anniversary remain etched in our minds.

Some of us do special "things" on That Anniversary. We pray, we cry, we grieve, and some make an effort to try to distract the intense sadness that That Anniversary brings. Some walk on the beach or take a ride in the country. We look at old photos or other memorabilia to remember and to ward off anything that might cloud the memory of our daughters and sons. Friends and relatives also remember That Anniversary and may send a card or ask you out to lunch or choose not to visit you showing respect for your need for solitude.

Regardless of how you deal with That Anniversary, you can not avoid it. Sometimes even the days leading up to That Anniversary bring apprehension and uneasiness. That's OK. That Anniversary will always come and go as will the days before and after, too. The Compassionate Friends understands that on That Anniversary, as when it occurred, your heart is heavy yet empty at the same time. It can be a confusing time. There may be guilt or remorse or simply confusion. But it is up to you to sort it out and move ahead because after That Anniversary there will be another and another. Surely your heart may not feel as heavy or as empty as time passes, but That Anniversary will always be there. How you face it, how you mark it, how you remember it and how you caress it is the key to moving forward and conditioning yourself for the next time That Anniversary occurs.

Michael Tyler

Summer Breezes

There's a hint of girlish laughter
Wafting past the porch.
For a moment I pause to listen.
In the warmth of summer sun
Memories are to bask in.
Trees you climbed, kites you flew,
Bikes you raced,
Waves you splashed in.
At night we wrapped time around us
As we blanketed the grass
And gazed toward heaven.
The stars were full of wonder then,
And lazy days seemed endless.
Life spread before you,
Laughter filling the wind with
happiness.
Just now I thought I heard you
once again.
How pleasant this breath of summer,
The breezes hold such memories
Of life, of you.

Karen Nelson, Box Elder County, UT



Forth of July

Each year on the 4th of July we celebrate the birth of our great nation - a nation of people 'united' in a dream. It was through hope, determination and a bonded strength that the people of America strived to achieve their dream of freedom to be a free nation.

Nothing, however, is achieved without a strong will. We too as bereaved parents are fighting a battle to be free - free of pain that has become a part of our waking days. We want to be happy. We want to be able to enjoy life again. You are one of those proud Americans. Refuse to give up. Fight for I your dream. There is peace to be found in freedom!

Written by a member of TCF Homdel, NJ

Grief is Like...

One of the difficulties bereaved persons face is how to explain to us how they FEEL, when they are grieving. What does it FEEL like to be in the skin of a bereaved person? Is it similar to other experiences in our life? Is there a way we can relate on some level to the pain of grieving persons when we are not grieving ourselves. Most people can't allow themselves to go to the place where they could actually see themselves in the dark hole of grief. We don't want to believe it would be that bad for us, that we have the inner resources to minimize griefs hold on us, unlike our grieving friends. But if we can just connect their feelings with some feelings that we have experienced ourselves, then maybe, just maybe, we can begin to comprehend the impact of grief on a person's life. Then, after you connect with any of these feelings you need to remember to multiply your own feelings times 100, to get closer to the bereaved person's experience.

Here are some feelings that I've experienced while grieving or that I've heard other bereaved persons describe.

GRIEF is like being in a bubble. You are no longer a part of the world around you. Everything sounds muffled. You hear conversations, but it's like the words have no meaning. Nobody can reach you. There is an uncomfortable distance that has been created between you and those who don't understand grief.

GRIEF is like looking through a one-way window. You can see others, but they can't see you. You feel invisible to others. It's hard to understand how the world can go on when life has stopped.

GRIEF is like wearing a heavy weight on your chest. You have trouble breathing. Sometimes your body takes deep sighing breaths in an attempt to get more oxygen. Sometimes you have anxiety attacks. And your heart actually aches. The location of your grief spot is right under your sternum close to your heart. It's no wonder that your chest hurts.

GRIEF is like wearing a heavy coat with all the pockets full of rocks. The grief literally weighs you down and slows you down. Grief is not only emotionally exhausting, but physically exhausting also. Because the warm glow of life is not pulsing through your body you may find it hard to keep warm. After a while that heavy coat of grief will begin to feel comfortable, and you may decide you don't want to take it off.

GRIEF is like being a traveler on a high-jacked plane. It is as if you have been taken to a foreign land where you do not know the language or the culture. Soon you learn you can never return to the world as you knew it. Grief can be pretty scary. You do not want to be there. You probably don't know how to grieve and you may not know what is expected of you. When you try to speak to your friends, they may not understand you. Your friends know you have "gone away" for a while, but they assume you will return and be the same old you they once knew. But then you begin to realize you will never return to that place again and that others may never know or understand this.

GRIEF is like the stages of love: first falling in love and being totally preoccupied by your new love, then becoming comfortable as you begin to trust that your love will always be with you. In grief, as when you first fall in love, your heart longs to be with the person who's died. Your desire to touch him or her is overwhelming. Most other parts of your life seem unimportant in comparison. Then slowly, normal life begins to creep back in and you find that your grief no longer demands the high maintenance that it first required. You will have created a special space in your heart where you can carry this departed loved one with you at all times, even as you go about other things.

Death ends a lifetime, but not the relationship

Pat Schwicbert, R.N. TCF Online



A Native American Lesson in Grief

By Trudy Weathersby, RN MEd

One of the most common questions that family and friends ask is how long does it take to get over the death of a loved one. Native American culture holds many lessons about grief and its duration. The Native American legend of the Caterpillar people holds lessons for us all in grief. This legend is traditionally told during funeral services in the Shoshone.

"Long ago, there were two caterpillar people who loved each other very much. When the caterpillar man died the caterpillar woman was overcome with grief. In her remorse she withdrew into herself and pulled her sorrow around her like a shawl. She walked and mourned for a year and because the world is a circle she ended up where she had started. The Creator looked down upon her and told her that she had suffered too long. Now, he told her, is the time for you to step into a new world of beauty. He clapped his hands and the caterpillar woman burst forth as a butterfly. Her world was now full of beauty and color.

Many Native American tribes see the butterfly as a symbol of everlasting life. The Wilik-wilik waashaashut or the Butterfly Dance enacts this legend. Young women line up single file and pull their shawls over their heads to cover them. This represents the caterpillar in the cocoon. The drummers sing and drum sadly. After the head dancer returns where she began the dancers open their arms and display the brightly colored shawls. The song becomes more upbeat and the women dance to represent the fluttering of wings.

Another saying of the Warm Spring Native American tribe is to compare the death of a loved one to a landslide. "When your road is blocked by a landslide, you clear it by taking away one rock at a time." In time, when we want definite answers or a quick fix we should heed the wisdom these legends impart and let us work through grief at our own pace.

Reference: Tafoya, Terry, "The Widow as Butterfly, innovative Approaches for Bereavement Based on Native American Tradition." The Director February 1998.

Trudy Weathersby, RN Med is an active licensed Registered Nurse and the Death and Dying Online Guide for about.com



Summer Delight

Where is the child that skipped through the sprays of summer rain and laughed his way into my heart? Where is the boy who climbed my trees and spied on me, scaring me half to death from behind the leaves? Where is the child with sun-tanned legs who ran Fourth of July races in green, green parks? Where is the sleepy child who wrapped his arms around my neck and said, "When I grow up, I'm gonna marry you, Mom." He's here .

He twines our past around my future, and takes me back home and makes me young again as sure as summer comes. A sun-tanned spirit with an impish grin still whispers in my ear that stars are not stars at all but lightning bugs he's captured in ajar. In his eternal youth he is my summer's glow, the sunshine in my garden, my comfort on long hot summer nights of remembering.

Where is the child that once played among my summer flowers? He darts and runs away as I idly dream of yesterday, at once elusive, yet so near. Oh, I'm sure he's here. I'm sure I saw him just a minute ago or was it just a touch of summer madness that made me think I'd greeted him...

Oh! Where is that child of summer gladness? His laughter slides down summer rainbows and captures me with unbound glee. His summer brownness runs barefoot on my heart. With sun-bleached hair he smiles at me from photos from summers past, and I remember love...

Fay Harden, TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

~ Songs From the Edge

Sibling Page

The following is a response sent to Ann Landers by Dawn Morville Johnson, sibling representative on the TCF National Board of Directors.

Dear Ann Landers:

As a bereaved sibling, I was disappointed in your response to "Anonymous in Raleigh, N.C.," who asked whether it would be appropriate to send her parents a card on the anniversary of her brother's death. You advised her not to send a card, but to take her parents to dinner "with no mention of the sad anniversary."

Bereaved parents will tell you that the one thing they want to do is talk about their child. Ignoring the anniversary of a child's death is the same as ignoring the child's birthday: it makes bereaved parents feel as though their child did not exist. Many bereaved parents have told me that their surviving children will not talk about their brother or sister who has died. Often this is because they are afraid of upsetting their parents. However, bereaved parents yearn to hear their children mention the dead child's name. "Anonymous" should be encouraged in her efforts to remember the anniversary of her brother's death by sending a card to her parents.

On the anniversary of my brother's death, I send a special card to my parents to tell them that I am thinking about them and remembering my brother.

We open our hearts to each other and share our memories of him and how much we miss him. We also put flowers on his grave that day and have flowers on the church altar in his memory on the Sunday closest to the anniversary of his death. In other words, the day is not like any other day, so I don't treat it as such. My life and my parents' lives changed forever the day he died. Making no mention of it would only be another tragedy.

From the TCF Southern OR Online Newsletter

Washing the Family Car

As the water began to bead across the hard black surface, my mind slipped into a memory back to a time when a smile could fix the pain, and mortality was not questioned.

You and I played during the dreary task of washing the family car. Rinsing turned into a water fight.

Soapy sponges became weapons, and upside-down buckets served as our fortress. This dull chore became an adventure, a game shared only by you and me. Drenched, the giggles slowly subsided and we turned to complete the more serious side of our labor.

We began to dry off the car. As the memory faded, so did my smile. While forlorn, my mind came back to the present. I had my own serious task to complete.

So I picked up a towel to dry off your headstone.

*Adele Rosales, in memory of her sister Anita
from TCF Rockland County, NY*

Never Alone

*I feel you in the morning when at first I awake
Your thought is with me with each decision I make
You've been around forever since before the first
breath you took
Now I have to go on alone
But for love, I need not look
Cause by what you bestowed
In our short time together
Will last in my heart forever and ever
Although you've left and now walk above
I'm never alone I'm wrapped in your love, enjoy now
your reward feel peace that your love continues on
What was taught to me, will be taught to mine
Cause you live on in me even after you've gone.*

*Originally written by Rodney Belcher Edited by Lauren
Welsch at age 14 In memory of her brother, Clayton James
Welsch, born still March 24, 2003*

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

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