



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 40 Issue 5

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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.

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Chapter 1562

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

Our support group provides a confidential and welcoming space for bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult (16 yr +) siblings. We hope that by being among others who understand this profound pain, you will feel free to talk, cry, and share your experiences; it is also perfectly acceptable to simply come and listen.

To honor your loved one, we invite you to bring a picture of your child to display during the meeting on special days or at any time you wish. Refreshments brought in memory of your child are also warmly welcomed.

For additional information about meetings, directions to our meeting space or to be added to the meeting reminder text list call or text 835-201-4606

Upcoming Meetings and Events

- Monday May 11
- Monday June 8

Cancellations will be posted on the website & sent to meeting list members

To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting can be an emotional experience, but please know that everyone present has experienced the profound loss of a child and shares a deep understanding of the pain you are enduring. We cannot walk your unique grief journey for you, but we can offer to take your hand and walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes; instead, we offer a safe space where we care, share, and understand.

Although each member's circumstances may differ, we have all "been there" and can genuinely say we understand. You are not alone.

To Our Seasoned Members

Think back to your very first meeting. You likely arrived feeling hurt, confused, and deeply alone in your grief. Do you remember the quiet relief of realizing you weren't alone? That others had walked this path and survived? That same love and support you received is now a gift you hold for others. While you have grown stronger and may no longer need the meetings for your own healing, our newest members need *you*. Please consider returning to share the hope that was once shared with you.

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

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Chapter & Meeting News

Please Note: The chapter's primary phone number has changed. Our new number is 835-201-4606. All other contact details such as email address and website remain the same.

Meetings

6 members attended the April meeting. We hope that everyone found some encouragement at the meeting.

Something to Think About as Mother's Day and Father's Day Approach

Parental love involves a never-ending commitment and plenty of opportunities to care for and assume responsibility for your child. Parental grief challenges you to find a way to live with the frustration of being robbed of the opportunity to directly care and be responsible for your child.

Parental love involves having plenty of opportunities for emotional and physical contact with your child. Parental grief challenges you to find a way to continue loving your child without that continued contact.

Parental love involves having dreams and expectations for the future of your child. Parental grief challenges you to find solace and meaning in a life briefly lived.

Parental love involves knowing where your child is. Parental grief challenges you to find a safe place for your child.

Parental love involves attending to your child's needs when he is in your presence. Parental grief challenges you to learn how to look after your own needs when you sense your child's presence or struggle with his absence.

Parental love involves learning to live with your child's natural and gradual absence as she grows up and leaves home. Parental grief challenges you to find ways to deal with your child's unnatural and sudden absence.

Parental love involves knowing when it is time to release your hold on your child, for his sake. Parental grief challenges you to learn when it is time to let go of your sorrow, for your sake.

Parental love involves an expanded capacity for love and life. Parental grief challenges you to find a use for that expanded capacity, to not let it go to waste or to wither away.

Because parental love is never-ending, so too is parental grief. You don't really get over the death of a child, you just learn to live with it.

And so, on this special day when you celebrate your role as a mother or father, be kind to yourself. Give yourself a hug. Give yourself some time alone. Give yourself permission to remember, to cry, to miss your child, to tell others how you feel. But most important of all, remember to celebrate the special gift of parental love, the lasting gift that your child has given you, a gift that not even death can take away.

Karen Martin, TCF Rockville Center. NY

Our Children Remembered May Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

	Birth	Anniv.
Patricia Arey - Daughter of Elizabeth & the late William Arey Sister of Elizabeth Ann, Barbara, Rose Marie & Elaine	Apr 18	May 8
Gabriel Benner - Son of Baily Benner	May 4	Feb 9
Jacob Campbell - Son of Maynard & Janis Campbell	May 25	May 24
Edwin Frantz - Son of Pamela Green; Brother of Amy & The Late Troy T. Kidd, Jr	Aug 11	May 24
Jennifer Grider - Daughter of Carl & Joan Grider	May 18	Jun 29
David Heard - Son of Susan Heard; Brother of Daisy Heard	May 20	Feb 10
Atticus Jones - Nephew of Elisabeth Alcott	May 20	Jun 1
Colleen Kilker - Daughter of Mark & Kathleen Kilker; Sister of Meghan, Bridget & Mark Kilker	May 6	Jul 23
David Kunsman - Son of Charles & Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & the late Charles Kunsman, Jr	May 2	Jul 15
Cody Myers - Son of Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal & Benjamin Myers	Dec 12	May 15
Allison Reboratti - Daughter of Eduardo & Barbara Reboratti	Jan 25	May 9
Eric Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Feb 15	May 20
Dean Schuler - Son of Betty Schuler & the late Lester Schuler	May 22	Nov 19
Jonelle Sisonick - Daughter of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Sister of Nicholas Sisonick	May 22	Aug 3
Shane Uttard - Son of Brenda Deubler	Jan 15	May 13
Gilbert Weiss - Brother of Ginger Renner	Nov 17	May 13



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:	Loved One
♥ Liz & Jim Hotz	Jimmy Hotz <i>Love Mom, Dad & Keith</i>
♥ Betty Schuler	Dean Lyn Schuler <i>In Loving Memory</i>
♥ Udo & Janet Virmalo	Sean Virmalo <i>"Always With Us" Udo, Janet, Eric, Brett & Katelyn</i>
♥ Mark J. & Kathleen M Kilker	Colleen Kilker <i>I miss you and Dad, Honey! Life is sweet! Love Mom & Dad</i>

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

The Cord

We are connected,
My child and I, by
An invisible cord
Not seen by the eye.

It's not like the cord
That connects us 'til birth
This cord can't be seen
By any on Earth.

This cord does its work
Right from the start,
It binds us together,
Attached to my heart.

I know that it's there,
Though no one can see
The invisible cord
From my child to me.

The strength of this cord
Is hard to describe,
It can't be destroyed
It can't be denied.

It's stronger than any cord
Man could create,
It withstands the test
Can hold any weight.
And though you are gone,
Though you're not here with me,
The cord is still there
But no one can see.

It pulls at my heart
I am bruised, I am sore,
But this cord is my lifeline
As never before.
I am thankful that God
Connects us this way,
A mother and child
Death can't take it away!

-Author unknown

The Unfinished Mother

When child loss occurs, a mother goes through a difficult time of emotional turmoil and questioning. "Am I still a mother?" "Does my child still have a birthday each year, or does time stand still?" "Can the mother/child relationship continue to grow, or am I now an "unfinished mother?"

Losing a child places a mother on a road that begins a lonelier journey than ever expected - one that can never really be explained. There was a beginning, but with the death of the child, there is no middle and no end. Everything seems so unfinished. Hopes and dreams were stopped far too soon. Joy was snatched away so suddenly. A mother is left with empty arms and an empty heart. Nothing can ever be complete when a child's life ends.

When the death of a child occurs, a mother is stopped in her tracks, and she suddenly feels inadequate and incomplete. She wears a new name. She is an "unfinished mother", never being able to see the rest of the picture. She will never be able to watch her child mature into a young adult. She will never be able to see all the pieces fit together. The picture will always have part of the scenery missing. It is so painful to be an unfinished mother! Child loss makes everything seem so empty and incomplete.

The reality of child loss is devastating to a mother. There are overwhelming feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and most often feelings of failure. These feelings can overwhelm a mother for several months following the death of a child, and it can be quite difficult to build a support system to carry a mother through this roller coaster of emotions. Very few people will understand a mother's explanation of feeling like she is an unfinished mother.

There will come a critical point in this journey of grief when a mother must reach deep inside her inner resources and make a conscious decision to accept herself just as she is - a mother whose heart has been touched by the pain and grief of child loss. Only then can she start to put together some of the broken pieces and begin to feel like there will be a day when she will feel more like a complete mother than an unfinished mother.

When a child dies, life is suddenly thrown completely off balance. A mother is left feeling like her identity has been taken away. It is often a long difficult journey to find that place of identity as a mother again. It's hard to understand that there is unfinished living that will never be completed. Peace can finally come to a mother's heart when she realizes that there is

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a big difference between having unfinished business and being left feeling like an unfinished mother.

A mother is never "unfinished." No matter how brief her time was with her child, the bond of love between mother and child was complete. A mother's love for her child is unending. Dreams may shatter and circumstances may change, but a mother's love remains strong. As a mother travels the path to healing, it is important for her to remind herself often that she is a mother forever. Her motherhood did not stop when her child died. This understanding of motherhood releases the feelings of guilt and failure and allows a mother to begin to see herself as a whole person again - a complete mother.

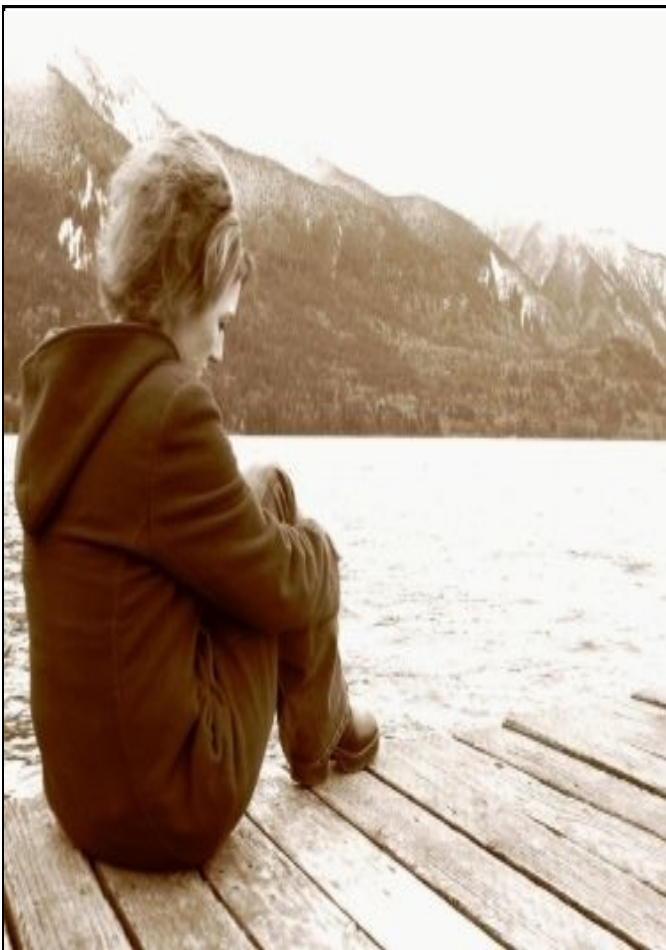
A mother is never an "unfinished mother." A mother's love runs far too deep to ever be called unfinished!

*Clara Hinton
silentgriet.com*

*I carried within my womb,
Then held you in my arms
And now until it no longer beats
I'll carry you in my heart.
Loving you yesterday,
today and forever*



Author Unknown



A Name for My Pain

I have given a name to my pain—
it's called "Longing."

I long for what was,
and what might have been

I long for his touch and smell of sweat;
I long to hold him one more time.

I long to look on his beautiful face
and impress it upon my memories and heart.

I long to return to the day before
and protect him from his death.

I long to take his place,
so he may live and have sons too.

I long for time to pass much faster,
so my longing and pain will lessen.
Will they?

*June Williams-Muecke
TCF Houston West, TX*



My Brave Young Men

There are names upon names written on this plaque
of brave young men who never came back.

Take a good look as they go marching by.
I want you to hear their widows and mothers cry.

I want you to touch each lonely tear
and feel each heartache that will never disappear.
Look into the eyes of each wife, mother and dad,
and touch the small hand of each fatherless child that
war has left so sad.

Oh my friend, never forget as you walk by these brave
young men who died.

Let it be known and ever so plain,
that my brave young men did not die in vain.

America will always be the home of the brave;
America will always be the land of the free
because of the life of each young man whose name is
written in blood upon me.

Rest in peace, my brave young men.

*Glen Genseat, Korean War veteran,
on the Memorial to Korean Veterans,
Springfield, Illinois, cemetery.*

Grief Is An Emotion, Not A Disease

*Excerpted from "A Conversation with Rabbi Grollman"
by Judy Kaplan, TCF National Newsletter Editor*

Grief is an emotion, not a disease. There is no timetable for recovery, but there is also no getting around the pain. Each of us has to experience the pain in order to recover from it ... Our hopes and dreams may no longer be possible. We may feel hopeless and want to run away. It takes time and effort to regain the ability to function. We must express our pain and be patient with ourselves. The Compassionate Friends plays an important role in this process Grief is a process. Recovery is a decision. Readjustment does not come overnight, but-each of us can resolve to survive - One moment at a time.

Permission to Backslide

From "How to go on Living" by Peppers and Knapp

Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair, or anger. This is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. It happens because we are humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and the meaning of death at once. So we let it in a little at a time.

Second Sunday of May

by Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF, Katy, TX

Many happy memories
Linger in our hearts this day
As we each remember our child
Who has left this earthly plane.

The day is bittersweet for us,
The mothers who have lost so much,
For to remove all pain could well
Erase the precious life we touched.

Tears will trace the memories of
Other, happier Mother's Days,
As we dwell in a quiet reverie
This Second Sunday of May

Sibling Page

When Living in Grief, “Keep Walking”

Within two weeks after my sister's death, I knew, as did my husband, that I was not in a good place. I felt like I was walking around the edge of a big black hole. One missed step and I would fall into that hole. My husband gently suggested I go see my doctor. I heeded his advice and saw my doctor the very next day. She put me on an anti-depressant and set up my first appointment with a therapist. On my first visit, the therapist and I talked about my sister's death, the tragic way in which she died. I shared some of my darkest thoughts with the therapist. My sister was murdered, in her home, brutally stabbed to death.

I talked about how I thought about her crying out, begging for her life. I talked about the way she fought for her life. I talked about the fear and terror she felt before taking her last breath. I talked about her dying alone. Towards the end of the session, my therapist looked at me and said, There is a quote that comes to mind that I think you will understand. A quote by Winston Churchill. “When you think you are going through hell, keep walking.”

I looked at my therapist. I understood what the quote meant, at least what it meant to me. The therapist told me that I too would keep walking. Slow small steps. She reminded me it would be a long walk and to take my time.

As I drove home that day, I thought about that quote. I also thought how it felt like I was going through hell. Keep walking. The phrase stuck in my mind. Over the next weeks and months, I kept walking. Early on, walking meant getting off the couch and getting dressed. Eventually walking meant doing a load of laundry and fixing myself something to eat. Walking meant facing each day, doing something, anything. Week after week, month after month, I felt myself straying a little farther away from the edge of that black hole.

Six months after my sister's murder, an arrest was made. I was able to take a few more steps away from that black hole.

It has been a very slow process. I've learned patience not only with myself, but with others and

the justice system. The black hole is still there, albeit it appears much smaller now. I've moved farther and farther away from that hole. I know it wouldn't take much for me to slide closer to that hole again, but I keep walking. Every day I keep walking by working, writing, honoring my sister. The black hole will always be there, but as long as it is just a small speck on the horizon, I know I'm walking and I'm winning the battle.

Everyday I think of that quote. Everyday I tell myself...keep walking.

By Shirley Wiles-Dickinson

Shirley Wiles-Dickinson is the youngest of four girls in a Midwestern family. In 2009, her sister was brutally murdered.

Thoughts for Siblings on Mothers Day

Mother's Day is sure to be a stressful time for a bereaved mom. Even when remaining children in the family gather to make their mother happy and to show her how purposeful her life is to them. Mother's Day is almost certain to be lonely for any bereaved mother.

If your mother doesn't seem as responsive that day, you sons and daughters, give your hugs and kisses anyway. She loves you, too. Remember that she's also the mother of a child no longer here...your brother or sister.. .and she misses your sibling as much as you do.

Excerpted from "One Women's Opinion" by Shirley Ottman

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.



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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.

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

<p>TCF Quakertown - 267-379-0429</p> <p>TCF Pocono - 570-350-6695</p>	<p>TCF Easton - 610-577-5193</p> <p>GRASP - 484-788-9440 (grief recovery after substance passing)</p>
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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



Mail this form to:

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

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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