



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Volume 40 Issue 6

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June

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, 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 June 8 -
- Monday July 13 -

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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The Club That Should Never Be



A few years ago, as I sat in my basement a couple days after I had lost my oldest son, an old acquaintance stopped by. As a lot of people had, he stopped to talk and grieve with me. But he said something that no one had said yet. He told me that I was now a part of the club. I indicated that I didn't understand. He explained that the club was comprised of fathers who had lost their children.

It was not a club that anyone sought affiliation with, but by reasons of fate found themselves to be lifelong members. It didn't exactly sink in at that time, but I came to understand what membership in the club meant.

I speak as a father because that is what I am, I know that mothers have their own club, but I am not a mother and therefore cannot speak as one. Fathers, as a rule, are not as emotional and outwardly caring as mothers. Even through a tragedy such as losing a child, we feel that we must remain totally in control and take care of the others hurting around us, even though deep down we want to tell the world how much it hurts. But we don't seem to have that ability. At least we do not have that ability with anyone outside the club.

As with any club, we members share a common bond. And as with any club, we come to rely on each other because eventually you must tell someone how much it hurts, or how mad you are or how that one grievous day has entirely turned your life upside down. And the only person you can bring yourself to tell is someone who has experienced it. They are the only ones who can understand how your heart has been so badly broken that at times it seems it may never mend.

They are the only people whom you feel even remotely comfortable talking with. Club members will never judge, they will never tell you to snap out of it, they will never tell you to straighten up and get back to normal because they know that nothing will ever be normal, as you knew it, again.

I am not talking group therapy here; I am talking about two men sharing with each other their deepest thoughts. This does not come easily. Each one of us has something that we must eventually say to someone. It might be how

(Continued on page 4)

Our Children Remembered June Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

	Birth	Anniv.
John Fry - Son of Cathy McDonald ; Son of Cathy McDonald	Mar 19	Jun 14
Jennifer Grider - Daughter of Carl and Joan Grider	May 18	Jun 29
Jill Harris - Daughter of Pat Andrew & The Late Fred Andrew; Sister of Jeff	Nov 5	Jun 28
Troy Kidd, Jr. - Son of Pamela Green; Brother of Amy & The Late Edwin Frantz	Sep 6	Jun 4
Audrey King Koch - Sister of Linda Hollabaugh	Jun 16	Dec 2
Faith Kleppinger - Daughter of Barbara Kleppinger & The Late John Kleppinger; Sister of Susan Schilling & Jill Kleppinger	Jun 8	Jun 15
Zaine Krluc - Son of Ramiz and Merima Krluc	Apr 10	Jun 12
Michael Milot - Son of John and Patti Milot; Brother of Jill	Jun 30	Feb 2
Michael Muller - Son of Marilyn Muller	Jun 15	Dec 2
Kishan Purani - Son of Ashish and Radhika Purani	Jun 4	Jun 4
Peter Radocha - Son of Lucille Radocha; Brother of Gina Sacco & Frank Radocha, Jr	Jun 13	Jul 1
Konnor Roy - Son of Dale and Cynthia Roy	Sep 21	Jun 2
Steven Seibert - Son of Eva Seibert; Brother of Nick & Krista; Grandson of Eva	Jun 27	Dec 22
Talia Shumway - Daughter of Don and Amy Shumway	Jun 5	Apr 3
Emmanuel Trotter - Son of Tonya Trotter	Jun 23	Jan 17
Craig Yurick - Son of Sharon Yurick & The Late Robert Yurick; Brother of Todd Yurick	Aug 5	Jun 21



June Love Gifts”



From:	Loved One
♥ Lucille Radocha	Peter Radocha <i>So many years, but always in our hearts</i>
♥ Tonya Trotter	Emmanuel Torey Trotter <i>Happy 17th Birthday, Manny. We love and miss you more than words can ever say. Love Mom and your siblings</i>
♥ Pat Andrew	Jill Patricia Harris <i>We love and miss you and Pops. Mom, Jeff, Sam & Alex</i>

What are 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

<i>Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville For our meeting space</i>	<i>The Matt Kush Foundation In Memory of Matt Kush</i>	<i>United Way Payroll Contributors</i>
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(Continued from page 2)

we reacted at the time of death, or how we feel about God now that He has taken a child away, or just a simple story that hasn't ever been told to anyone else. And once you have shared that story, you may not feel all that much better, but it was a story that had to be told. It was a burden that you had to relieve from yourself. And once finished, you are eternally grateful for that person being there and you know that sometime, somewhere, someone will find you for the same reason.

It was my turn the other day. In much the same way that my beloved cousin was there for me, I was there for my friend. As he started to recite his story, I looked at him. Sitting there was a soldier of 13 years, a Gulf War veteran, a man whose features looked as though they were carved from a block of granite. But this was a man whose heart had been broken. This was a man who, if possible, would do anything to bring his dear daughter back to him. But knowing that would never be, he had to tell his story. It was difficult. He stumbled, paused, choked on each word, but he pressed on and when finished he wiped the tears away.

And I cried, too. I cried for him and I cried for me, because we had both been there and we would forever be there. We had experienced, as many fathers (and mothers) do, the absolute worst thing that could ever happen, something that should not be allowed to happen. We were members in a club that should never be.

*Brian Chambers,
TCF Eddyville*

No Macho Spoken Here

Cry on my shoulder and I'll cry on yours, cry and cry, let the hurt run out through your tears scream out your pain my tears run down your chest. This child, our child has died a beautiful child, created by us, a pair neither play at being strongest being weak together creates the strongest link.

*Toby Sue Shaw,
TCF, Stamford, CT*

To Bury A Child

I always took for granted,
as a parent, I'd go first,
but somehow in our family
life's order got reversed.

I believed the day would come
that you would bury me,
but in my sorrow,
I now know that isn't meant to be.

The wisdom of our Father,
who dwells in heaven's sky,
Is well beyond that of my own.
I shall not question why.

I pray that He will comfort me,
and help my heart to heal.
Only those who've lost a child
can know the pain I feel.

In God's time I know
you'll be back in my arms again.
Don't forget how much you're loved
and missed, dear child, 'til then.

Ron Tramer, RonTranmer.com

***Friends are those rare
people who ask how you
are doing and then wait
to hear the answer.***

*Ed Cunningham
TCF Savannah, GA*

Get On With Your Life

"Get on with your life,"
I hear people say,
And those who don't say it
are thinking that way.
"It's been quite a while -
so I just do not see
The possible gain
if you grieve constantly."

"Then take all the things
That your child held so dear.
If they give sadness,
then why keep them near
To store with the mass cards
and last lock of hair,"
And perhaps, like our child,
we'll forget they're not there.

So they think our sorrow
should end with the days
Of empty fruit baskets
and old cold-cut trays,
And all of the pain
we felt with friends near
Should wilt now like flowers
they left at his bier.

Now what do you do
to get on with your life?
You can't bury pain
that still cuts like a knife.
So I guess we're supposed to
"get on" for the crowd,
Where everyone's sign reads
"no sadness allowed."

So get on we do,
and we put on a face
That 'mid worlds of laughter
seems not out of place.
Now all of the folks
that we see every day
No longer need reasons
for looking away.

Then one day they'll ask,
" Why are you so glum?"
"You're down in the dumps -
what can it be from?"
"You've been doing so well for so long,
so it seems,"
And the seething volcano
inside of me screams.

Ken Falk, TCF Northwest Chapter, CT

Fathers Day

Every father believes in his role as protector of his family. He has been assigned the job of fixer and problem solver. He has been told since his youngest days that he must be strong - must not cry.

But each father among us has had to face that point where no amount of fixing, problem solving, and protecting has been able to stop our child's death. And, inside, we must ask ourselves about our failure, and we must face our lack of omnipotence.

Father's Day is often a forgotten holiday, overshadowed by the longer-standing tribute to mothers. But for the bereaved father it is a poignant reminder of bittersweetness: sweet in the memory of a loved, now lost, child; bitter for the death and pain and recognition of inability to stop what happened.

Fathers do not often have a chance to share their hurts and concerns. Oftentimes they are unable to do so, a remnant of childhood 'earnings about the strength and stoicism of "big boys." A father may even be uncomfortable opening up to his wife, and the wife who pushes him to talk may be pushing too hard.

Father's Day does not have to be a time when everyone pours out of the woodwork to say, "I'm sorry we haven't talked. Let's do it now." But it can be a time when the family gives Dad a hug, does something special, helps with the chores, and mostly, lets him know how important and needed and loved he is. It is some of these things that he has lost with the death of a child. And, like Mother's Day, the day set aside for fathers does not have to be limited to a Sunday in June. It can be any day and every day.

Fathers often show their hurts differently, often internally. BUT THEY DO HURT.

Gerry Hunt, TCF White River Junction, VT

My Old Friend Grief

My old friend Grief is back. He comes to visit me once in a while to remind me that I am still a broken man. Surely there has been much healing since my son died six years ago, and surely, I have adjusted to a world without him. But the truth is we never completely heal, we never totally adjust. Such is the nature of loss that no matter how much life has been experienced, the heart of the bereaved will never be the same. It is as though a part of us also dies with the person we lose through death. We will be all right, but we will never be the same. And so my old friend Grief drops in to say hello.

Sometimes he enters through the door of my memory. I'll hear a certain song or smell a certain fragrance; I'll look at certain pictures and remember how it used to be. Sometimes it brings a smile to my face, sometimes a tear.

One may say that such remembering is not healthy, that we ought not to dwell on thoughts that make us sad. Yet the opposite is true. *Grief revisited* is *Grief acknowledged*, and *Grief confronted* is *Grief resolved*. But if grief is resolved, why do we still feel a sense of loss on anniversaries and holidays and even when we least expect it? Why do we feel a lump in the throat even six years after the loss? It is because healing does not mean forgetting and because moving on with life does not mean that we don't take a part of our lost love with us. Of course, the intensity of the pain decreases over time if we allow grief to visit us from time to time. But if the intensity remains or if our life is still dysfunctional years after our loss, we are stuck and in need of professional help to get unstuck.

Sometimes my old Grief sneaks up on me. I'll feel an unexplained but profound sadness that clings to me for days. Then recognize the Grief and cry a little, and then I can go on. It's as though the ones we have lost are determined not to be forgotten.

My old friend Grief doesn't get in the way of living; he just wants to come along and chat sometimes. Grief has taught me a few things about living that I would not have learned on my own. He has taught me that if I try to deny the reality of a major loss in my life, I end up having to deny life altogether. He has taught me that although the pain of loss is great, I must confront it and experience it fully or risk emotional paralysis. Old Grief has

taught me that I can survive even great loss, and although my world is different, it is still my world, and I must live in it. He has taught me that when I let go, I can flourish again in season and bring forth the good fruit that comes not in spite of my loss, but because of it.

My old friend Grief has taught me that the loss of a loved one does not mean the loss of love. Love is stronger than separation and longer than the permanence of death. My old friend Grief may leave me for a while, but he'll be back again to remind me to confront my new reality and to gain through loss and pain.

Adolfo Ouezada TCF, Grand Junction, CO

Time Will Ease The Hurt

The sadness of the present days
Is locked and set in time,
And moving to the future
Is a slow and painful climb.

But all the feelings that are now
So vivid and so real
Can't hold their fresh intensity
As time begins to heal.

No wound so deep will ever go
Entirely away,
Yet even hurt becomes
A little less from day to day.

Nothing can erase the painful
Imprints on your mind,
But there are softer memories
That time will let you find.

Though your heart won't let the
Sadness simply slide away.
The echoes will diminish
Even though the memories stay.

Bruce B. Wilmer

Sibling Page

Excerpts from “Adult Siblings Grief”

Most people misunderstand how deeply adult siblings grieve. If your sibling was older than you, you have shared life with him or her as long as you have had your parents. Even if your sibling was younger, you may not remember life without him or her.

When you sibling died, you not only lost a unique loved one, but you lost that person's role within the family. It is normal that you and other siblings will try to 'fill in' some of these roles. Some changes may take place quite naturally and easily while others may feel awkward and cause a great deal of conflict with the family.

For some bereaved siblings, the fact that their sibling's death has altered their relationship with their parents is deeply painful. Under the stress of coping with the death of their child, your parents may react to you as though you were still a small child. They may try to comfort you at their own expense, or try to protect you from the reality of death. If this happens, you may need to talk to your parents and offer them some concrete ways they can be supportive of you.

You may find yourself trying to protect your parents from the grief you feel. You may go to great lengths to hide your pain from them. You may take on parental responsibilities in an effort to care for them ending up 'parenting your parents'. And if your parents feel you are overprotecting or smothering them, respect their response.

Ultimately, you will forage a new relationship with your parents. Talk with them about what you observe and ask them to share with you how they see you differently. Tell them you want to use these new understandings to build a new, more mature relationship with them.

*Lovingly Lifted from
"Broken Hearts, Living Hope"*

I Heard My Father Cry

Feeling so helpless and sad,
listening from the room next door,
over my ears using every pillow I had,
I couldn't take it any more.
His pain came from inside,
cries turned into screams,
what he felt he could no longer hide,
the loss of his only son
took away his dreams.
His sighs echoed off the walls,
he couldn't seem to pull himself together,
as our eyes met at the end of the hall,
I realized his hurt will be with him forever.
With eyes so sad,
he looked right through me,
not knowing what to say,
I didn't even try.
This is something I never expected to see,
but now I know that real men do cry.

*Karen Keck,
TCF, Sacramento Valley*

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)

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