



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2020

TCF MONTHLY MEETINGS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER

3rd Tuesday every month at 7:30 pm
Westminster Presbyterian Church
85 Chestnut St., Albany
Jan Messina 518-439-0346
JanMessina@verizon.net
Kathleen Kelleher 518-439-1114
Kathleen.Kelleher17@gmail.com

SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

1st Tuesday of every month (except July & August) at 7:30 pm
Wesley Health Care Center
131 Lawrence St., Saratoga Springs
Gabby Gravelle 518-596-4275

SCHENECTADY CHAPTER

1st Wednesday of every month at 7 pm
St. Kateri Community Room
Lower Level
1803 Union St., Schenectady
JoAnn Bomeisl 518-372-8215
tcf1389@gmail.com
John Powers 518-399-2492
jpower11@nycap.rr.com
Peggy Hohenstein 518-887-5204

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

GREENE COUNTY CHAPTER

2nd Wednesday of every month at 7 pm
United Methodist Church
40 Woodland Ave., Catskill
georgeknoll64@yahoo.com
Carol 518-537-6098

Empty Places

I drove the old way yesterday
It'd been a while, you see.
And there, without a warning
The pain washed over me.

I drove the old way yesterday
And sadness came on strong,
Taken back by so much
feeling,
Since you've been gone so
long.

Places seem to lie in wait
To summon up the tears,
To say remember yesterday,
Those days when you were
here.

Places where you laughed
and played
And places where I cry,
These places hold the
memories,
That will live as long as I.

*By Genesse Gentry
TCF, Marin County, CA*

Decorations That My Daughter Made

Three paper hearts hanging
on my door,
Never did I expect my heart
to be so torn.

Three paper hearts, Red, Pink
and White
Never did I expect it to
happen on that night.

Three papers hearts, made by
my daughter for Valentine's
Day.

Never did I expect her life to
end that way.

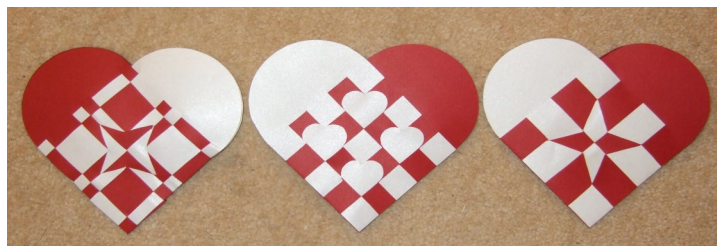
The hearts they hang there
still,

Never did I think "paper"
would outlive my daughter's
smile.

Three paper hearts, hanging
on my door,

Pink, White and Red.

By Donna Brown
In memory of her daughter
Nieve Castro
TCF, Rutland, VT





LOVE GIFT

Living on in our hearts.

This newsletter is made possible by donations through love gifts. Love gifts are a way that we can honor our children throughout the year, on their birthday, anniversary of their death or during the holidays. Please consider giving a love gift in memory of your children. Love gifts can be made in any dollar amount and mailed to Debbie Bouchey, 26 Berkshire Drive, East Greenbush, NY 12061.

Call for Submissions

Anyone wishing to submit an original poem or story for publication in our newsletter can do so by sending the writing to Debbie Bouchey at alyssabob@yahoo.com

Please remember that editing may occur and not all submissions are guaranteed to be printed.

Please consider sending a Love Gift to honor your child and to help support our chapter and newsletter.

In memory of **Tom Galarneau**, my son - 1/11/71 - so many years have passed Tom - your memory and life will never be forgotten.
Love forever, Mom and Brother Don

In memory of **Thomas J. Persico** on the 23rd Anniversary of his death on January 6th. The memory of your bright smile lives on. You are always in our thoughts and forever in our hearts. Love, Your Family

In loving memory of **Christopher Bascom** who is always with us in our hearts. Missed so much by his family. (Janice Newport)

SEVEN GRIEF STRATEGIES FOR THE NEW YEAR

By Brad Stetson

The old saying is true: "if there is an elephant in the room, introduce him." No good purpose is served by denial, yet we are very good at it. And when it comes to facing the pain of our grief with eyes open, we often turn away instead. But when we have a psychological elephant in the room of our mind, we should acknowledge him, and plan a way to shrink him down to a manageable size then get him on his way. If we've had a loss recently, the new year provides a good opportunity for us to be honest about the pain of our grief, and resolve in the months to come to be proactive and do the necessary grief work to begin addressing the elephant in the room.

Imagine you had a friend for whom you cared deeply, and imagine that friend just experienced the death of someone they love very much. You would want to help them, comfort them and encourage them. Now substitute yourself for that friend. You are worthy of being comforted and encouraged, too. Write yourself a letter saying the same things you would say to a good friend. Then, read the letter, put it away for a few days, then read it again. Do this for a few months and then write yourself a second letter, and so on. This is an act of self-compassion, treating yourself as gently as you would treat someone else. Avoid thinking you are so "strong" or "solid" that you don't need help and tender compassion. That is a misunderstanding of strength and personal fortitude. Feeding intense sorrow and bereavement is not a sign of weakness, to the contrary, it is a sign of deep humanity and personal capacity to love.

Continued on page 5

1. *Write yourself a comforting and encouraging letter.*

LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
February 20, 2020

WHEN TOMORROW STARTS WITHOUT ME

When tomorrow starts without me, and I'm not there to see,

If the sun should rise and find your eyes, all filled with tears for me.

I wish so much you wouldn't cry, the way you did today, While thinking of the many things we didn't get to say.

I know how much you love me, as much as I love you, And each time that you think of me, I know you'll miss me too.

But when tomorrow starts without me, please try to understand, That an angel came and called my name and took me by the hand.

And said my place was ready in Heaven far above, And that I'd have to leave behind, all those things I dearly love.

But as I turned to walk away, a tear fell from my eye, For all my life, I'd always thought, I didn't want to die.

I had so much to live for, so much yet to do. It seemed almost impossible, that I was leaving you.

I thought of all the yesterdays, the good ones and the bad, I thought of all the love we shared, and all the fun we had.

If I could relive yesterday, just even for a while, I'd say goodbye and kiss you, and maybe see you smile.

But then I fully realized, that could never be, For emptiness and memories, would take the place of me.

And when I thought of worldly things I might miss come tomorrow, I thought of you, and when I did, my heart was filled with sorrow.

But when I walked through Heaven's gates, I felt so much at home. When God looked down and smiled at me, from his great golden throne.

He said, "This is eternity, and all I've promised you. Today your life on Earth is past, and here it starts anew".

"I promise no tomorrow, but today will always last, And since each day's the same day, there's no longing for the past".

"But you have been so faithful, so trusting and so true. Though there were times you did some things, you know you shouldn't do".

"But you have been forgiven, and now at last you're free, So won't you take my hand now and share My life with Me".

So when tomorrow starts without me, don't think we're far apart, For every time you think of me, I'm right here in your heart.

- by Erica Shea Liupaeter
Lovingly lifted from BP/USA A Journey Together
Fall 2011, www.bereavedparentsusa



The New Year comes when all the world is ready for changes, resolutions -- Great Beginnings.

For us, to whom that stroke of midnight means a missing child remembered.

For us, the new year comes more like another darkness.

But let us not forget that this may be the year when LOVE and HOPE and COURAGE find each other somewhere in the DARKNESS to lift their voice and speak:

LET THERE BE LIGHT

*By Sascha Wagner
TCF, Des Moines*

WISHING FOR OLD CLOTHES

By Deb Kosmer

Most of us have had the experience of buying new clothes that didn't quite feel right. Perhaps they were a little too tight or too big or the brand-new material was scratchy, not soft like our older things that have had several washings. We may decide not to wear them at all or we may decide to wear them awhile until we are comfortable in them. This can be a frustrating experience.

When we are grieving, most of us feel like we aren't living in our body anymore. We may look in the mirror and see our old reflection staring back at us, but we know there is a stranger inside. We may be shocked or surprised that on top of the grief we are feeling and everything else we have to deal with, it isn't even us, the old familiar us we knew, who is left to do this. It is this new person who has taken up residence where we used to live. This new person may be very angry or sad or both. He or she is probably confused, numb, anxious, and afraid. Their appetite and sleep habits may have changed. All the familiar things are gone along with all the safe places from their lives. In some ways, it is like waking up in a new set of clothes that we didn't ask for, we didn't choose, and that certainly don't fit. Try as we might, this is one set of clothes that at least for a while we cannot take off.

We are in a place we have never been before. We are now living in a world where our loved one doesn't. Their absence may scream at us or leave us too numb to hear or feel anything at all. Though the places may be familiar, we feel lost and alone. Unlike a new set of clothes that may be returned to the store, for us there is no return. We are where we are and it takes time to get used to it. Part of the difficulty and frustration we feel is that no one can tell us exactly how much time we will have to wait in this limbo that used to be our life.

As hard as all of this is, it may also seem as though



the people in our lives have changed. Some of those people we thought we could depend on in times of trouble are strangely now absent from our lives. Others, though present, keep telling us to put on that old set of clothes that for us is impossible, since it disappeared from our lives with the death of our loved one.

So now what? After a while we realize that no matter how much we might like to we cannot go back, and the only way left to go is forward. Though no one can make this journey for us, we can allow the people we choose to walk alongside of us. We will learn that it pays to be choosy and select family and friends who don't expect us to be anyone but who we are. People who will listen quietly when we need to vent and who will respect our silence when we don't wish to talk. People who will let us find our own way and time and not push us to follow theirs. People who will be gentle with us as we learn to be gentle with ourselves.

One day we will wake up, and when we look in the mirror we will recognize ourselves in our new set of clothes. We will realize that we have survived and once again feel hope for the future. We will still miss our love one, but the pain will no longer be more than we can bear. We will take some of our old life and our self from our past and mix them in with the person we have become. We will recognize that this is okay and not a betrayal of our loved one. Our world will have changed but will once again feel familiar.

Our loved one's death we will not forget

But in time

Mostly we will remember their life

Deb Kosmer, MSW, is a bereavement support coordinator who lived in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and lost her son Shawn J. Schmitz in October 1989. This story is from The Compassionate Friends National Magazine, We Need Not Walk Alone, Winter 2007-08.

When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in our hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing, and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.

Henri Nouwen

2. Buy a big calendar, and use it.

One problem bereaved people face is the feeling that one day drags into the next, always the same. Grieving people also sometimes are pressured by well-meaning people into doing activities they really don't want to do. An "appointment calendar" can solve both of those problems. Large calendars, like a desk calendar, give you room to write. As the New Year begins, sit down with the calendar, and start filling your days with appointments.

Appointments with whom? Most importantly, with yourself. Without taking yourself out of social circulation, you can pen in valuable "self-time." The simple act of reserving time for yourself empowers you to breathe and reflect as the New Year unfolds. Appointments like "movie with me" or "journaling with me" make it possible for you to always tell others, when asked to go somewhere or do something, "Let me check my calendar, I may have an appointment." This way you can decline in a socially graceful way. If you want to accept someone's invitation, you can always break an appointment with yourself.

3. Move your body, move your mind.

As you adjust to your life without the physical presence of your loved one who died, it's vital you get outside and move. Notice, I didn't say, "exercise," since for some people that may sound daunting. There is no need to make it a big undertaking. Pick short, achievable goals, like a short hike, a walk around the block, a bike ride to the park. Keep these jaunts short, as this will give you a sense of accomplishment, and you will derive the physical and psychological benefits of having enlisted your body in your ongoing encounter with grief.

4. Realize that you do not need to "understand" your grief right now.

When I coached Little League, I established the One Minute Rule. It was this: If anyone gets hit by a baseball, whatever the person hit by the ball says for the first minute after being hit is OK. Screaming and accusations were common after being hit by the baseball, but everyone knew that you got a free pass for a minute. And they knew that after a minute the person had to be ready to move on. Well, bereaved people get a lot longer than a minute, or a month, or a year, to integrate their experience into the rest of their outlook on life. So don't feel anxiety about fully grasping what has happened to you. Time will help clear your mind, and you will eventually be able to address your loss, the pain it has brought you, and the changes in your life that have ensued.

5. Decide that in the New Year, you will begin to focus a bit more on others, as part of your loved one's legacy.

This is a valuable change you can make in your life. We all need to get out of ourselves and focus on other people and their problems. Sometimes, this helps us gain a fresh perspective on our own life. As you do this, you will no doubt talk with new people, and when the opportunity

presents itself tell them about your loved one who has died. You don't have to tell your loved one's life story or anything like that, just mention them in passing. You may feel more comfortable talking about your loved one with people who didn't know him or her, and it is valuable to begin to talk out loud -- in the past tense -- about your loved one. It may be shocking to hear yourself talk about them in the past tense, but it will help you integrate their death into your life.

6. Listen to music.

A recent study I saw asserted that sad people who listen to their favorite music that matches their mood report feeling better. Music is therapeutic and soothing. Throughout history, music has been central to the expression of human values and sentiments. Make a short list of some songs of different types that you have always liked. Then go to youtube.com and listen to them or order them online. If you are not accustomed to doing that on a computer, ask a friend to do it for you. Just get the music playing so you can listen. As you do, let your mind take you where it will, and after a while I'll bet you'll feel relaxed and even renewed.

7. Wishing you well.

As the New Year begins, write down what your loved one would want for you in the New Year. Trouble imagining what that might be? It's probably the same you would wish for your loved one, had you been the one that died. Make a list of a few states of mind, attitudes or commodities that your loved one would want for you to attain as you move forward without them. For example, my husband would want me to look toward the future, and not be paralyzed by mourning. Or, my sister would want me to buy those expensive boots we used to talk about. Then, choose one of those outcomes and pursue it. Look back at your list after a few months, and check off the outlook or object you now have. Deliberately choose to achieve something your loved one would want you to have in this New Year. By doing so, you will honor their memory.

So often we think of grief as something that happens to us, instead of something we do. This is unfortunate, since passivity and inaction will not help us to engage the new reality of loss in our lives. This is not to say that grief is a "problem" we can solve, or a "condition" we can make go away, but it is to say that we can be active participants in our emotional well being. By purposefully facing our sorrow, and calmly, carefully thinking about what we can do to help integrate our sorrow into our larger life, we can contribute to forging our new identity. And this is a powerful choice to make as a New Year and our new lives dawn.

Reprinted from the Compassionate Friends National Magazine, Autumn-Winter 2019. Originally reprinted with permission from Grief Digest Magazine, Volume 12, Issue 1.



Leadership

Albany Co-Leader: Jan Messina 439-0346
Albany Co-Leader: Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114
Saratoga Springs Leader: Gabby Gravelle 596-4275
Newsletter Editor: Debbie Bouchey
518-435-5321 or alyssabob@yahoo.com
Mailers: Joanne Baia
Special Mailing: Marylou & Ed Clark
Regional Coordinator:
Al Visconti—(518) 756-9569

TCF's 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's VISION: That everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.



National Headquarters, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522, 877-969-0100 (toll free)
www.compassionatefriends.org

The Compassionate Friends
c/o Debbie Bouchey
26 Berkshire Drive
East Greenbush, NY 12061

Non Profit Org
U.S. Postage Paid
Slingerlands, NY
Permit No. 23

Address Service Requested