



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG
WWW.COMPASSIONATEFRIENDS.ORG

MAY-JUNE 2019

TCF MONTHLY

MEETINGS

ALBANY

7:30 pm
3rd Tuesday every month
Westminster Presbyterian
Church
85 Chestnut St., Albany
Jan Messina 439-0346
Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114

SARATOGA

1st Tuesday of every month- 7:30 pm
Wesley Health Center Care
Activities Room, Lawrence St.
Gabby Gravelle 596-4275

SCHENECTADY

1st Wednesday every month
St. Kateri Library, 1803 Union St.
John Powers 399-2492
JoAnn Bomeisl 372-8215

MID-HUDSON VALLEY

2nd Wednesday every month
Chris Yurchuk
845-691-2111

GREENE COUNTY

2nd Wednesday every month
United Methodist Church
Woodland Ave., Catskill
Judy 622-4023



TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Having a bad day? Need someone to talk to? Want information about the next meeting? Help is just a phone call away

Jan Messina 439-0346

Gabby Gravelle 596-4275

Helen Connors 226-0557

ANGRY

I read the beautiful poems so lovingly
written by grieving parents,

AND I FEEL ANGRY

I read about the angels on their
parents' shoulders,

AND I FEEL ANGRY

I listen to parents relate how they
communicate with their child gone
from this earth,

AND I FEEL ANGRY

We memorialize our children with
beautifully written books,
scholarships, gardens, trees, and
lighting candles,

AND I FEEL ANGRY

That the world continues, in spite of
our children dying,

AND I FEEL ANGRY

Our surviving child's first steps, first
day of school, graduation, wedding
are bittersweet,

AND I FEEL ANGRY

I will grow and change and maybe
find hope again because I have been
through the worst possible loss,

AND I FEEL ANGRY

David died and I need to write this
poem,

AND I FEEL ANGRY

Bust most of all, I feel angry that our
children, grandchildren, siblings have
died and we will never see them
again.

*By: Lois Copeland
TCT Arlington (VA) Chapter*

Many people are convinced that
being strong and brave means
trying to think and talk about
"something else."

But we know that being strong and
brave means thinking and talking
about our dead loved one until your
grief begins to be bearable.

That is strength.

That is courage.

And only thus can "being strong
and brave" help you to heal.

Sascha

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

We know the heartache that you
bear.

We've felt the pain -- we've been
there.

We share a bond of infinite sorrow,
of hope for peace and
strength for tomorrow.

A time will come when you'll seek
relief,

Solace and comfort to ease your
grief.

We welcome you.

We'll be here.

We understand.

We've much to share.

TCF, Scranton, PA



LOVE GIFTS

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.

GRIEF IS NOT:

Grief is not a mountain to be climbed,

With the strong reaching the summit long before the weak.

Grief is not an athletic event, with stop watches timing our progress.

Grief is a walk through loss and pain with no competition and no time trials.

**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
June 20, 2019**

In loving memory of our daughter **LISA GERHAN (1971-1997)**
Love Mom & Dad (David Gerhan & Anita Paul)

42ND TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE



RINGS OUT IN PHILADELPHIA
JULY 19-21, 2019

The Compassionate Friends National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone's wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program culminating with the annual Walk to Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves. Join us as together we remember and share the everlasting love we have for our precious children, siblings and grandchildren.

The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia, on July 19-21, 2019 at the Philadelphia 201 Hotel. "Hope Rings Out in Philadelphia" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great National Conference experience. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere

as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

- Choose to attend from nearly hundred different workshops and sharing sessions, given by professionals and also individuals just like you.
- Take advantage of "Healing Haven" to receive free personal services such as a massage.
- Craft items to commemorate the love for your family member in the "Crafty Corner".
- Step away for a quiet moment of pause in the "Reflection Room".

For more information and to register, visit www.compassionatefriends.org.

"MOTHER-LESS DAY"

In the month of May there's a holiday although there won't be one for me. It's "Mother-less Day" now and that's the way it'll always be. I won't receive dandelions from the yard that you picked with love and care. They were always

your favorite flower. They reminded me of your long, blonde hair.

I won't get hand-made cards from school that you'd cut, color and glue. They were worth more than money could buy because they came from you.

It's "Mother-less Day" now, another reminder that you're not here. I will never

receive another hug or kiss that I used to hold so dear. Instead, I'll visit you at the cemetery. It won't ever feel like a holiday. Without you it's "Mother-less Day," now -- just another day in May.

*By: Barbara Embry
TCF, Louisville, KY*

How to Handle Mother's Day

Special days of any kind can be especially difficult for anyone who has lost a child. The first year following the loss of a child is often filled with days of dread and fear when anniversary dates and holidays approach. Mother's Day is a holiday that is one of the most dreaded holidays of all. A mother grieving the loss of her precious child often spends weeks in fearful waiting of the day, wondering how she will every make it through.

There is no real way of avoiding Mother's Day. The stores are filled with gifts made and designed especially for mothers and children. Advertisements for gifts on the radio and in the newspaper bombard us every day for weeks prior to Mother's Day. Card and flower shops experience their busiest season of the year on Mother's Day. Reminders of this special holiday are everywhere!

The pain of facing Mother's Day without a child can be the most lonely pain a mother will ever know. There is an empty ache that becomes increasingly more evident as the day approaches, and there seems to be no way to find relief. It is wise to share these feelings with other family members and friends rather than to avoid the topic. By sharing how you feel, you can alert others to be more sensitive to your needs during this painful day of sad reminders. Sit down with your family and discuss what you would like to do for Mother's Day. Remember that this is not a time to worry about hurting other's feelings, but rather a time to make your wishes known.

Remind yourself often that there is no right or wrong way to handle Mother's Day. Some mothers have found it helpful to go away on a mini weekend trip, totally avoiding any church service, special meals, or family gatherings that will be too painful to attend.

Other mothers choose to do something special in memory of their child such as take a walk to a quiet place, read a special poem, and then release a balloon in memory of their child. The actual releasing of the balloon is known to give mothers a sense of letting go that is quite healing.

Many choose to use Mother's Day as a special day to plant a flower or a tree in memory of their child who has died. Seeing something growing is often a visible reminder of the ongoing love a mother has for her child.

Whatever you choose to do, remember not to set expectations too high for the day. Plan to do something that is healing for you, but realize that you will still experience a wide gamut of emotions, and many tears will fall.

Because grief is exhausting mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, be sure to eat nutritious food for the day, hydrate yourself with lots of fluids and allow yourself time to rest and be replenished. Grief Work is the hardest work you will ever do!

By planning ahead for Mother's Day, you have already crossed a big hurdle in your walk through child loss. Telling others that this is going to be a difficult day for you is a way of building up a support system that will help you get through the day. Remind yourself often that you will make it through Mother's Day, and when you do, you will be one step further along in this difficult journey we call grief.

Returning to Work After Losing a Child

By: Helen Fitzgerald BPUSA Summer 2015 Newsletter

After a death in the family, the time comes when grieving family members begin to re-enter the routines of everyday life. Out-of-town relatives return home. Children go back to school and grieving adults must get back to work. For some, returning to work is a welcome change. It is part of their life that did not include their love one, and it can create a break from what has been an ever-present grief. The office may be the only part of life that seems normal and routine. But many who have experienced a recent loss, returning to work can be difficult. If you are grieving, you may be dreading the thought of returning to the business world for several reasons:

Seeing co-workers for the first time exposes you to “I’m so sorry” comments, and they remind you of your loss. As difficult as these expressions of sympathy may be to hear, they are better than no acknowledgement at all. A simple thank you is all the response necessary.

You may have a high-pressure job with deadlines and little room for mistakes. You have probably noticed that it is difficult to concentrate and retain information in your grief. You may be easily distracted and errors can occur. It is useful to check everything twice, or ask a coworker or supervisor to review what you have done. Let coworkers or a supervisor know how difficult things seem at this time and how you need their help.

You may worry about breaking down in front of colleagues or in the middle of an important meeting. This can happen, but save yourself embarrassment by briefly letting people know what has occurred in your life. If you need to excuse yourself, do so. Before returning to work, try some of the following suggestions:

Be sure the office staff knows what happened. Give them as much information as you are comfortable sharing. Sometimes the circumstances around a death are very personal; if people ask too many questions, let them know you are not comfortable discussing this. Allow one key person to have enough information to keep speculation at a minimum. Keep him or her informed about funeral arrangements, time away from work, and how you are going.

Let your office know you want to be included in regular e-mail correspondence so you can be kept updated on what is happening at the office.

You might arrange to go into the office to meet coworkers for lunch, getting past the first encounters and “I’m so sorry” comments. It can make it easier to go back to work at a later date.

Consider returning for half days for a week or so, easing your way back into the normal routine.

Ask a grief therapist to meet with coworkers, especially if the death was sudden or traumatic. An example: one employer called a grief therapist to help employees after a coworker reported the death of her child. These coworkers had some good questions: “What do we do with the pictures of our kids that are on our desks? Should we put them away because it is going to be so hard on her?” The answer: “it will be hard for her to see the pictures. But she must deal with it at some time, and it is better she do it with people like you who care for her. It may be worse if you put all the pictures away. She’d surely notice, and know it is because of her. Expect her to keep the picture of her dead child on her desk, and it is okay to comment on it.”

Encourage your coworkers to learn more about grief so they can better understand what you are going through. Let them know what is helpful to you when you are having a particular hard day. This may include giving you a hug, allowing you to have alone time, fixing a cup of coffee, or going for a short walk. The more they know what they can do for you, the more comfortable they will be with your tears and the more comfortable you will be in their presence.

Keep good communications going. Set up regular meetings with your supervisor, colleagues or employees to talk about what is happening. Ask for feedback. Good, clear communication will discourage idle and unhelpful chatter.

It is important to tell your story. But be careful not to share your feelings too much or too often. If you notice people getting bored, looking at their watch, or changing the subject, you may be overdoing it. Ask a trusted coworker if you are talking too much. However, the need to talk to help yourself heal is very real; setting up an appointment with your company’s EAP (Employee Assistance Program), contacting your local hospice, or joining a support group can give you an appropriate place where you can say what you need to say.

You may need help with certain projects or deadlines. Don’t forget to thank those who help you. Small rewards are often appreciated, such as coffee break snacks, flowers, public thanks at a meeting, or an appreciative e-mail. Thinking ahead will make your return to work easier and less painful. Healing from the death of a loved one is a long, slow process, but getting back into a routine is an important step in the important journey.

I'LL ALWAYS BE YOUR DAD

Years have come and gone and time has drifted by.
I've searched for any answer
Yet I'm left to wonder why.
The only thing I know for sure through the happy and
the sad, no what the circumstances,
I will always be your Dad.
Not a day goes by that I don't hold you in my heart.
My love reaches far beyond this space we are apart.
These empty arms remember all the good times we had.
I may be standing here alone, but
I will always be your Dad.

Some won't understand so I don't bother to explain.
They look into my eyes, but they never feel the pain.
Afraid to look too deep as they are blinded by the fear.
If only they could know a father's love
won't disappear.

So when this road gets lonely and the journey seems too
hard, and I get to feeling sorry
That I didn't get a card,
I'll close my eyes and I can almost hear you say,
I love you and I miss you daddy...
HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

*By Alan Pedersen
TCF Ocean County, NJ*

GRADUATION DAY

It's June and graduation time again. Your child would
have been among those wearing the cap and gown,
walking down the aisle to the ever stirring "Pomp and
Circumstance". Now there will be a vacant spot in the
line. Should you attend? Can you stand the pain? Will
people think you're strange?

As always, you must follow your heart. So go if you'd
like to, and don't hide your tears. It's quite all right to
miss your own child while celebrating the achievements
of others. Just remember that your own instincts are the
most important ones, that no one can make this decision
for you, and that it doesn't really matter what other
people think of you. It was your child who died. This is
your pain, and you have the right to feel it and deal with
it in your own way—and may a bit more healing take
place in doing.

*- Peggy Gibson
TCF Nashville, TN*

MEMORIAL DAY

For each grave where a soldier lies
at his rest,
For each prayer that is said today
out of love,
For each sigh of remembering someone
who died.
Let us also give thought to the
mothers and fathers, the brothers
and sisters, the friends and the lovers
whom death left behind.

- Sasha Wagner



*Dedicated to the
children who
graduated only in
our hearts.*

TO MY HUSBAND

Your tears flow within your heart,
Mine flow down my cheeks.
Your anger lies with thoughts and movements.
Mine gallops forward for all to see.
Your despair shows in your now dull eyes.
Mine show in line after written line.
You grieve over the death of your son.
I grieve over the death of my baby.
But we're still the same, still one.
Only we grieve at different times,
Over different memories and at different lengths.
Yet we both realize the death of our child.

*By: Pat Burden
TCF, Augusta, GA*



Leadership

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Albany Co-Leader: Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114
Saratoga Springs Leader: Gabby Gravelle 596-4275
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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.



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