



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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JULY & AUGUST 2017

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

To All Bereaved Parents...

By: Eunice Guy, TCF Atlanta, GA

I am a recovering bereaved parent. I was a parent by choice. One of my children died; I became a bereaved parent, certainly not by choice. As I tried to recapture the security of what was, after many agonizing months, I would always hurt and miss my dead son, and that, ultimately, only I could be responsible for recovering this hateful disease called grief.

I had to make the choice of being a bereaved parent or a recovering bereaved parent. I chose the latter. I sometimes fall off the wagon, and I know that I always will. The love of my child will never leave me, but thank God for being a recovering bereaved parent.

It does take time, however, so don't give up on yourself. It may take more or less time for some others. Be patient.

Missing You

I just can't believe it...
The sun still rises and sets,
The moon and stars still shine,
The flowers still bloom,
The birds still sing.
I expected a change in everything,
I just can't believe it...
It still gets dark and light,
The ocean still has waves,
The rain still rains,
The wind still blows,
Is it because they do not know?
I just can't believe it...
I thought the world would stop,
When in my house I found,
An empty chair, a missing smile,
I thought it would stop,
For just a while,
I just can't believe it...

Gretta Viney
TCF Yakima, WA

Reflections

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations: that life isn't always fair or predictable; that sometimes even my best still isn't good enough; and that from the day of her death, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness.

Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts. As a result of my sister's death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor and to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss. I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the rough times. But most of all, I have been given the gift of time—time to heal and time to replace those painful memories of death with priceless memories of my sister's life.

Cathy Schanberger from
This Healing Journey—An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings © The Compassionate Friends



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.

The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the *elixir of hope*. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to *live and love again*.

-Simon Stephens, founder of The Compassionate Friends.

**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
August 20, 2017**

MISSING YOU DANA

LOVE MOM & DAD

(Pat Markowitz)

Please Wait for Me in Heaven

Sitting here and thinking
And missing you tonight
I am hoping and I'm praying
That you're never out of sight.

I see you on every corner
Everywhere I go
At each store I step inside
I just wanted you to know

I see you at the market
I've seen you driving past
I saw you walking in the mall
But you just walked too fast

I can never seem to catch you
You're always a step ahead
Try as hard as I might to touch you
My hand reaches out to air instead

I never get to hold you
Yet I feel you in the room
I only get a small glimpse
But trust me, I know it's you

Don't be afraid to come near me
I won't get scared and cry

You can put your hand on my hand
Come on...please give it a try

I will wait forever
And one day after that
If a lifetime is what it takes me
Then I will do just that

Please wait for me in heaven
Just be waiting at the gate
I don't know when I'll get there
I just know I have to wait.

I still have work to do here
So until my time is through then lead me
into heaven so I can be with you

By Gwendy Vanucci
In memory of her son, Tommy

Lovingly lifted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*,
That National Magazine of The Compassionate
Friends, Summer 2013.



His Name is Todd. He Is My Son.

By Louise Higgins

“I don’t know what it’s like to lose a child.” I’ve heard that said so many times over the last five years. My response...well, it is always the same...“You’re not supposed to.”

I’ve found that people really don’t know what to say most of the time, and that doesn’t bother me. How can they know how to respond to something that, I believe, no one was ever meant to experience? Unfortunately, there are far too many of us who have, and do, experience it, and we have found out it is a never ending, ever-evolving experience. I have to admit that I’ve come a long way in what I’ve heard called the “new normal.” We may not have known exactly what normal was before the deaths of our children, but we knew without a shred of a doubt that our lives would never, ever be the same after those deaths occurred.

At first, I was always a breath away from that horrible pain and tenderness that could immediately bring me to devastation. That devastation and the tears that accompanied it followed me everywhere I went, even in my sleep. It seemed to last forever, but looking back over the last four and a half years, it’s moved to a deeper place inside me. Just as tender, but not ever-present. I never know when the pain of losing him is going to rise up, but I greet it with a welcoming heart when it does. After all, my grief is directly connected to the son I can no longer laugh with, or hug, or have heated political and religious discussions with. I embrace those tender times and wouldn’t allow anyone to talk me out of them or try to take them away from me. They help define an ever-growing love for him that is always present and more meaningful than his death. Ironically, his death has caused that love to grow continually, even in his absence.

What is difficult for me? It is this. It’s when people so easily forget that I go to sleep and wake up in a world I was never prepared for. It’s when people forget that I have a tender delicate place inside myself that can be much more easily hurt. So when people are less than kind, it affects me much more easily and deeply than it did before Todd left our family. What do I do about that? I forgive them, or I work at forgiving them. Most of the people I know just don’t remember my nightmare, and that’s simply because it was and is my nightmare and not theirs. So I forgive and continue to let my life unfold as

gracefully as I can.

Fortunately, I have three children who love me very much, and they never cease to show me love and consideration so that I never, ever take that for granted. The tragedy of my son’s death, I believe, has enhanced my love for them.

Another unusual circumstance that has helped me is that one of my dearest friends, Trisha, lost her firstborn son, too, about a year and a half after I lost mine. This is something that was unimaginable in our friendship, and we never dreamed we would have this in common, but here we are sharing our grief, laughter, anger and occasional silence. The understanding between the two of us is automatically there, no explanations are necessary, and her care and support have been invaluable to me, and the same is true for her.

For those of you out there who also walk this path...my heart bonds with yours in sending along wishes and hopes that new experiences in your life will make the pain of your loss more bearable. As you keep on walking, may your life be sprinkled with pleasant surprises and unexpected joys that will come before and follow after those inevitable times of grief. Remember life is still full, so fill up with as much as you can.

Louise Higgins lost her son Todd, 42, on his birthday, February 26, 2008. His family - son, Riley, 14 years old; father, Gary; brothers, Lenny and Tony; and lovely sister, Rebecca - miss him terribly. Todd had an ongoing interest and education in criminal law and had an insatiable appetite for reading, often reading 60+ books a year. “We will never forget” is the invisible banner the family walks with now. Louise is affiliated with The Compassionate Friends of Spokane, Washington. Lovingly lifted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*, That National Magazine of The Compassionate Friends, Summer 2013.



Take Your Time

One of the hardest things about grief is the so-called “time table.” You are told you should be feeling one way or the other. You are given a time to mourn by the outside world, and then you must be “over it.” “Get on with your life.” “Count your blessings.”

All of this can make you both angry and afraid. Angry because (a) you don’t WANT to get over it,” (b) you are “getting on” with your life in the best way you know how, and (c) your “blessings” have nothing whatsoever to do with the pain of your loss! Afraid because you are not having some of the feelings you think you should be having because you are not reacting “normally.” There is a period of extreme shock that can last from a few weeks to several months; you may not feel anything except numbness for awhile. That’s OK!

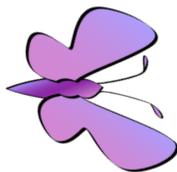
The best advice is...take your time. Be gentle with yourself. Do what you need to do, not what you think you should do. Don’t clutter up your life with things that will exhaust you physically and weaken you emotionally. Remember, you are fighting the hardest battle you will ever have to face, so give yourself the best weapons you can.

Rest, get in touch with your feelings, and talk. Say your child’s name to anyone who will listen...take time...your time...to heal.

*Sandra Young
TCF Knoxville, TN*

LIKE THE BUTTERFLY

It fluttered there, above my head,
Weightless in the soft breeze.
I reached up my hand,
It lift upon my finger.
Waving glistening wings gently,
It looked at me for timeless moments -
I smiled, reaching deep, and
Finding all those cherished memories.
As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,
I knew we had said hello,
Once more.



*Leslie Peterson,
TCF Nebraska*

Opening Doors - My Conversation with God

Dear God, I’m standing before a door—beyond it “THE MEETING” takes place. My hands are trembling, I’m very scared and there are tears starting to well up in my eyes. Through the door I can hear voices, even laughter. This can’t be the right room! Do they really “know my pain” as I’ve been told. I will never be able to laugh like them again. God, please give me the strength to do this.

We sit together and each person gives an account of what has brought them here. There is so much pain; I can barely speak through my emotions. Yet, they all listen and as the meeting ends, someone touches my hand.

Dear God, I’m at “the door” again. Please give me the strength to go through. As I take my seat, I see familiar faces. They smile at me and I try to smile back. Do they know how hard this is for me? Was it ever this hard for them?

There are so many sad stories. Maybe they do feel my pain! I shed more tears. This time I’m able to ask a few questions through muffled sobs. Still, they all listen and as the meeting ends, someone touches my hand.

Dear God, I’ve prayed for strength many times as I’ve entered this room. Each time, as stories are shared, I realize they do “know my pain.” I feel stronger now so I can share without crying. I realize that all along they were easing their own pain by helping me through mine! A new person comes through “the door” and takes a seat next to mine. The newcomer sheds many tears as attempts are made to talk through muffled sobs. Again, we all listen and as the meeting ends I touch a hand.

*By Becky Pritchard
Lovingly lifted from
A Journey Together, the national newsletter
of BP/USA, Spring 2012*

Goodbye With Dignity

Some weeks ago Rick Santorum, candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination, was ridiculed for taking his baby, who died just two hours after its birth, home so his other children could see and touch the infant in an effort to give those youngsters an understanding that the baby was real. His detractors called him crazy. I think not.

How we handle the death of our child is a personal ordeal. There is no right or wrong way to handle the wide range of feelings that engulf us, especially in the immediate aftermath of learning our precious child has died. No one is ever prepared for the depth of sadness that comes surging across the emotional landscape.

Mr. Santorum showed great strength and compassion when he appreciated the need of his baby's siblings to see and touch the lifeless body so their loss would be a collective loss of the entire family and not become an unmentionable subject in the months and years ahead. How he was able to consider the feelings of others while dealing with his own enormous pain is remarkable. How he found that strength is a mystery; but a mystery that all bereaved parents understand. Each of us, after the immediate shock wave rolled by, found the strength that allowed us to do what needed to be done: we made the calls, arranged the funeral, prepared the house for company, and other feats of magic.

After those first days passed and grief's full force totally overwhelmed us, whatever strength we had ebbed away. Only then did we realize how remarkable it was that we were able to function at all, let alone with some level of competence. When we look back we may wonder how we managed to hold our head up and focus on the tasks at hand. We did it because we had to. We did it because we loved our child and it was important that we said goodbye with dignity.

*By: Richard A. Berman, Editor
of BP/USA National Newsletter,
A Journey Together, Spring 2012*

Blessings Inside Sorrow

There are blessings inside sorrow, or so I have been told. I am not sure I always agree. At times, I can see the gifts I have been given. Love...without measure...fills my heart when I think of you. But I loved you then too, when you were in my arms, not in my heart. And I miss you now. The emptiness you left can never be filled, not by an blessing I might receive from sorrow.

And yet, still, I wonder. Are there blessings? Would I have known how much I cared for you...for your brothers, for your Dad, were it not for your coming, and so suddenly, softly leaving, without a good-bye? Would I treasure the life I have remaining if it weren't for your loss? Certainly I loved and treasured before you left, but hasn't my sorrow caused me to express that love and to treasure more highly those around me? I KNOW I can't take for granted that they will always be.

In the aftermath of losing you, when life lay crumbled around me...still was there not a glimmer of hope? That life would go on, and, somehow, we would survive, and build on the ashes of our broken hearts. Building somehow in spite of our pain. Mixing the cement of our love with tears, we bound ourselves together even more tightly than ever before. And our love grows stronger. And we have not forgotten.

What a bitter lesson! And still, the emptiness will never be filled. There yet remains a hole in my heart...and in all our hearts. Dear son, we will never forget you. The blessings inside our sorrow will never fill the hole you left in the fabric of our lives. It remains open, a testament that you mattered, and that your coming and soft going made a difference. And in that difference lies the blessing inside our sorrow. We were blessed to have held you for a time, even though you could not stay. And even through our tears, we smile at the memories. And we know that you are not completely gone. You shadow our lives, affecting them in big ways and small. And though I would trade these blessings in a minute just to have you back in my arms. I am indeed grateful for the blessings inside sorrow.

*By Lisa Sculley
In Memory of my Son, Joey (2/25/99)
TCF Jacksonville/Orange Park Chapter, FL*



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Albany Co-Leader: Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114

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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.



You need not walk alone

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