

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families

## FEBRUARY 2011

### Inside Valley Forge

**Meetings are on the first Thursday** of every month at 7:45PM (ending at 9:30PM). We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall, Valley Forge and Henderson RDs, King of Prussia, PA. Phone **on meeting evenings only** is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Rhonda at 484-919-0820.



#### Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of interest

Please Mark Your Calendar

Feb 3 General Sharing

Mar 3 General Sharing & Death by Suicide

July 15-17, 2011 34th National Conference  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

We encourage newsletter writings from our members. You may also submit articles written by others, please include the author of all articles submitted. **The cut-off date for newsletter entries is the 15th of the preceding month. ARTICLES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE NEWSLETTER EDITORS.**

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends, or to receive our newsletter. Your tax deductible donations (which we call love gifts) given in memory of your loved one enables us to defray the cost of chapter expenses, particularly the newsletter, meetings, and our outreach to the newly bereaved. **Please include any special tribute you wish printed in the newsletter along with your gift.**

If you donate to **United Way** at your place of work, and wish your contribution to go to the Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, you may do so by entering: **The Compassionate Friends - Valley Forge Chapter United Way ID# 04-104.** on your pledge form.

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:  
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER  
SEND TO: CHAPTER LEADER  
RHONDA GOMEZ**

#### Valley Forge Chapter

##### Chapter Leader

Rhonda Gomez  
12 Brook Circle  
Glenmoore, PA 19343  
(484) 919-0820 Chapter cell phone  
email: [sugar@tcfvalleyforge.org](mailto:sugar@tcfvalleyforge.org)

##### Database Record Keeper

Diana Clark  
742 Berwyn Ave.  
Berwyn, PA 19312  
(610) 656-2437  
email: [dclark0707@gmail.com](mailto:dclark0707@gmail.com)

##### Webmaster

Frank Gomez  
[www.tcfvalleyforge.org](http://www.tcfvalleyforge.org)

##### Newsletter Editors

Marie & Ken Hofmockel  
340 Allendale Road  
King of Prussia, PA 19406  
(610)337-1907  
email: [kenhofmockel@comcast.net](mailto:kenhofmockel@comcast.net)

##### National Headquarters

P.O. Box 3696  
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696  
Toll Free: (877)969-0010  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
email: [national\\_office@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:national_office@compassionatefriends.org)

**NEW FRIENDS**

**Bob & Dena Filipone**, daughter *Denise* (21)

**Jeanne Kalish**, daughter in Hospice

**Debra Keevill**, son *Brandon* (24)

**We welcome our newly bereaved friends, and are sorry for the cause that brings you. Having been in the depths of despair, we know that it is difficult to share our pain and personal feelings. It is important that you attend three or four meetings before evaluating the benefit of our group to you. Our meetings offer confidentiality, unconditional love, compassion and understanding to all of you.**

---

**DECEMBER REFRESHMENTS**

**Nina Bernstein**, in memory of (my son Andrew's girlfriend) *Molly's* birthday, who passed the same time as Andrew.

**Donna & Bill Deasey**, in memory of our daughter *Michelle's* birthday.

Anyone wishing to donate refreshments (cheese & crackers, fruit, cakes, cookies, etc. ) in memory of loved ones, please call **Rhonda Gomez (484)919-0820**, or you may sign the **refreshment chart** located on the refreshment table. Beverages are provided by the chapter.

---

**LOVE GIFTS**

**Additional Love Gifts received in November 2010:**

**Anna & Thomas Glenn**, in memory of our daughter, *Lauren*.

**Gwen & Dennis Kearns**, in memory of our son, *Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.*

**Rhonda & Melvin Kreiner**, in memory of our daughter, *Anna Kreiner*, on her 42nd birthday.

**Willard & Patricia McLain**, in memory of our son, *Gary*. We miss you. Mom & Dad, sisters Brenda, Linda & Denise. A peaceful holiday season for all TCF families.

Correction to January 2011 newsletter love gifts <b>Frank &amp; Dolores Yanni</b> , in memory of our son <i>David</i> (23)
---

**Nina Bernstein**, in memory of my son, *Andrew Voluck*.

**Robert & Kathleen Grossi**, in loving memory of our son, *James Michael Grossi*.

We love and miss you. Mom, Dad, Teresa's family & Patty's family.

**Nancy & Gerald Hall**, in memory of our son, *Douglas Bryan Hall*.

**Jeanne Kalish**, in honor of my daughter in hospice.

**Lynette Lampmann**, in loving memory of my beloved son, *Shawn*, on his birthday 2/10 and his anniversary 2/13. You are so missed & loved.

**Barbara & George McClory**, in memory of our beloved daughter, *Susan McClory Brown*.

**Barbara & George McClory**, in memory of *Jennifer Beerley*, loving daughter of our dear friends Anne & George Beerley.

**Bob McCullough**, in honor of *Caroline*, our angel - She's always near, To lend an ear, On every day, Throughout the year! Best wishes to all at TCF.

**Connie & Dick Nolan**, in memory of our son, *Christopher*, on his birthday, January 3rd.

**Ronda Stansbery**, in honor of my daughter, *Susan Anne Stansbery*.

We extend our sympathy, and send love and compassion to the family of **Kathleen Grossi**. Kathleen passed away suddenly on December 30, 2010. Kathleen & her husband Robert, lost their son James Michael Grossi in 1990. Kathleen and Robert joined the Valley Forge Chapter of TCF four months after the death of their son. They have been diligent supporters, for the last 20 years, of the Valley Forge Chapter.

### **VOLUNTEER NEEDED FOR CO-LEADER**

If you have resolved some of your grief, and feel capable of helping other bereaved families, it can be very healing to reach out to others in pain. The Chapter is looking for a volunteer to accept the position of Co-Leader with Rhonda. If interested, please contact Rhonda Gomez. Her contact information is on the front page of this newsletter.

### **NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL**

A newsletter helps to keep our TCF family informed of local and national events. We consider this an important function of our program.

**We are asking if you have email, would you consider receiving your newsletter in email format.** You will receive your copy earlier if you opt to receive it by email. If you chose to use the email method of receiving your newsletter, you will have the option to switch back to the old method. If you wish to receive it by email please contact: **Frank Gomez gomez@hybridpoplars.com**

---

### **TCF 34TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

The conference will be held in Minneapolis/St. Paul July 15-17, 2011 at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel. You will find it to be another great conference with around 100 workshops, sharing sessions, special keynote speakers at the Opening, Closing and Friday Afternoon and Saturday Evening banquets, Hospitality Room, Butterfly Room, Reflection Room, a completely stocked bookstore, special Friday evening entertainment and a Remembrance Candle Lighting. TCF's Walk to Remember will be held Sunday morning.

**Room Reservations are now being accepted** at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Minneapolis South for those planning to attend the TCF's national conference July 15-17.

Room rate is \$129 per night for a King Room or Double Bed Room, single or double occupancy; \$139 for triple and \$149 for quad. These special reduced rates are available on stays from July 10-19 if the reservation is placed by June 21 (subject to availability). These are specially negotiated rates available only for those attending the national conference.

Reserve your accommodations online at [Sheraton Bloomington Hotel Minneapolis South](#) or telephone 952-835-7800 and mention you are with The Compassionate Friends. Arrangements are being made for free shuttle pick-up to and from the hotel and the Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport (there will also be shuttles during the conference to and from the Mall of America). Those driving to the conference will have complimentary free parking at the hotel (Valet service is available \$8 per day).

**OUR CHILDREN & SIBLINGS LOVED, SADLY MISSED AND REMEMBERED**

Each month some of us must face those special, but difficult days of birthdays and anniversaries. This Month we ask your thoughts and prayers for the parents/siblings/relatives of the following children:

**We will no longer list the birth and death years of deceased persons in our newsletter.  
We have concerns this information could be misused, and result in an adversity for the families.**

**FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS**

**Madeleine Adler, son *J. Peter Adler* 2/5**  
**William & Charlotte Bodulich, son *William W. Bodulich* 2/14**  
**Ann Bruner, sister *Katy Wade* 2/8**  
**Donna & Gregory Class, daughter *Megan Maria Class* 2/7**  
**Liz & Scott Conaghan, brother *Jan* 2/6**  
**Bud Cunnane, son *Patrick* 2/14**  
**Marie D'Angelo, son *Mark Anthony* 2/15**  
**Jim & Ruth Fairley, son *David Fairley* 2/5**  
**Charlie & Jill Fick, son *Michael Sternberg* 2/10**  
**Laura Giordano, son *Peter* 2/12/**  
**Marian Glennie, daughter *Susan Martini* 2/28**  
**Sandra Greenly, son *Michael Greenly* 2/18**  
**Cathy Grosshanten, son *Gary* 2/16**  
**George & Kay Hartman, son *Thomas R Hartman* 2/4**  
**Jean & James Hayden, son *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* 2/17**  
**Othell & William Heaney, son *Kevin* 2/14**  
**Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Noreen Schmucker* 2/15**  
**Kimberlee Hills, brother *Chuck Hills* 2/10**  
**Charles Hills, son *Chuck Hills* 2/10**  
**Thomas & Virginia Hoesch, son *William E. Buddy'Hoesch* 2/16**  
**Marlene Hoffman, brother *Barry Hoffman* 2/4**  
**Sally Ivory, son *Jimmy Ivory* 2/4**  
**Joan Jagers, son *John Costello* 2/17**  
**Deborah Keevill, son *Brandon* 2/23**  
**Shirley & Philip C. Kennedy, son *Philip V. Kennedy* 2/22**  
**Margaret & Edward Kiefski, Sr., son *Edward Kiefski, Jr.* 2/11**  
**Lynette Lampmann, son *Shawn* 2/10**  
**Carole LaSorsa, son *Stephen* 2/17**  
**Herb & Adaline Leir, daughter *Kimberley Dawn Leir* 2/8**  
**Liz & Joe Loeper, son *Jamey* 2/27**  
**Rachena & Pat Fatale, son *Mark Longan* 2/21**  
**Sharon Martin, brother *Shawn Lampmann* 2/10**  
**Julie & Richard May, son *William L. May* 2/25**  
**Jennifer McGowan Clark, brother *Joseph McGowan* 2/25**  
**Sue McMaster, cousin *Laura* 2/28**

**FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS (continued)**

**Kathleen Mitchel**, brother *Jeffrey Hathaway* 2/19  
**Audrey Morasco**, son *Christopher Morasco* 2/22  
**Mary Mulholland**, son *Joseph McGowan* 2/25  
**John & Mary Ann Murphy**, daughter *Maureen Murphy* 2/13  
**Dale & Helen Ninneman**, son *Dale Ninneman II* 2/24  
**Connie & Richard Nolan**, son *Christopher Nolan* 2/9  
**Emil Nunez**, son *Oliver Nunez* 2/12  
**Robert & Jean Phillips**, son *Robert Phillips* 2/23  
**Carol Phipps**, daughter *Casey* 2/18  
**Joan & Earl Reigel**, daughter *Melissa Reigel* 2/19  
**Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert**, mother (Bubbles) *Theresa Volpe* 2/27  
**Tony & Toni Riccardi**, son *David Riccardi* 2/17  
**Jacqueline Rider**, son *Matthew Rider* 2/14  
**Barbara Rossman**, daughter *Kickole Lyn* 2/13  
**Linda Sandlin**, brother *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* 2/17  
**Bernice Scheinfeld**, son *Richard Scheinfeld* 2/18  
**Judy & Lin Schleicher**, daughter *Quinna Marie Schleicher* 2/2  
**Frank and Kay Shinnors**, son *Erik Shinnors* 2/22  
**Janemarie Smith**, daughter *Beth Jovanovic* 2/6  
**Margaret & Wade Stallard**, son *Wade Hampton Stallard, III* 2/21  
**Elaine & Joe Stillwell**, son *Denis E. O'Connor, III* 2/4  
**Robert & Nancy Thompson**, friend *J. Peter Adler* 2/5  
**Esperanza & Libardo Toro**, daughter *Maria Eugenia Toro* 2/9  
**Barbara Torrens**, brother *Robert Birmele* 2/18  
**Henry & Elizabeth Weaver**, grandson *Donald Smith, Jr.* 2/24  
**Gisela Witte**, son *Bruce G. Edlund* 2/24  
**Herb Zucker**, daughter *Eileen Zucker Horn* 2/8

**FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES**

**Marilynn Anton**, cousin/godmother *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7  
**Nina Bernstein**, son *Andrew Voluck* - 2/9  
**Peg Brown**, daughter *Kathy* - 2/5, son *Ken* - 2/9, & *Bob* - 2/23  
**Lisa Connolly**, daughter *Elyce Pindjak* - 2/10  
**Allison Crowder**, daughter *Amber* - 2/21  
**Emilie Degville**, daughter *Madeline* - 2/3  
**Harold & Marcia Epstein**, grandson *Andrew Voluck* - 2/9/  
**Danielle Evelyn**, son *Samir* - 2/12  
**Rita & Thomas Gibbons**, daughter *Patricia Gibbons* - 2/1  
**Jack & Freda Gross**, daughter *Linda Joy Gross* - 2/25  
**Kimberlee Hills**, brother *Chuck Hills* - 2/24

**FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES continued**

Charles Hills, son *Chuck Hills* - 2/24  
Marlene Hoffman, brother *Barry Hoffman* - 2/12  
Marie & Ken Hofmockel, son *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7  
Robert Huss, son *Daniel* - 2/27  
Judy Kahl, son *Mark* - 2/16  
Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner* - 2/7  
Sandi Kensicki, sister *Rose* - 2/5  
Tobie & Herman Kessler, daughter *Beth Kessler Waasdorp* - 2/9  
Lynette Lampmann, son *Shawn* - 2/13  
Sue Lawlor, son *Jim* - 2/17  
Janet Leflar, son *Scott* - 2/22  
Marie MacCaughern, daughter *Theresa Peazzoni* - 2/7  
Mary MacFarland, son *Marc* - 2/12  
Carl & Josie Malitsky, daughter *Cynthia Malitsky* - 2/8  
Sharon Martin, brother *Shawn Lampmann* - 2/13  
James & Mary Beth Mattiford, son *Scott Mattiford* - 2/26  
Debra McKinley - Hastings, brother *Ken* - 2/17  
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan* - 2/11  
Alexandra Milas, sister *Demitra Vallianos* - 2/17  
Jeffrey & Christine Miller, daughter *Teresa Leanne Miller* - 2/20  
Andrew Miller, daughter *Perri* - 2/5  
Leonard & Thelma Miller, son *Lowell Bruce Miller* - 2/23  
Kathleen Mitchel, brother *Jeffrey Hathaway* - 2/27  
Fran & Kathy Moran, daughter *Denise Nicole Moran* - 2/3  
Anthony & Mary Morrell, son Andrew *Michael Morrell* - 2/2  
Aminah Na'im, son *Dawann* - 2/14  
Kathy Nicholson, son *Frank* - 2/3  
Dale & Helen Ninneman, son *Dale Ninneman II* - 2/29  
John & Therese O'Rourke, son *Brian J. O'Rourke* - 2/25  
Carol Phipps, daughter *Casey* - 2/16  
Thomas & Jeri Reinert, son *Thomas Reinert, Jr.* - 2/19/  
Susan Reynolds, son *Craig Anderson* - 2/3/  
Jacqueline Rider, son *Matthew Rider* - 2/14  
Sandra & John Salemmo, son *John C. Salemmo, Jr.* - 2/12  
John & Marie Sanders, son *Robert Sanders* - 2/10  
Pamela Schneibolk, brother *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7  
Priscilla Shober, son *Jeffrey R. Shober* - 2/2  
Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith* - 2/20  
Ellen & Frank Svitek, daughter *Kate Elizabeth Svitek* - 2/9  
Mary Ellen Swider, daughter *Kelly Swider* - 2/8  
Elaine & Tim Thomas, son *Seth Peterson* - 2/9

**FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES continued**

**Ann VanLandingham**, daughter-in-law *Rita VanLandingham* - 2/12

**Laura & Leo Weishew**, brother **Steven McGowan** - 2/2

**Rose Yanni**, nephew *David Yanni* - 2/10

**Frank & Dolores Yanni**, son *David Yanni* - 2/10

**Anthony & Cindy Zalesky**, grandson *Max Zalesky* - 2/12

---

**PLEASE LET ME MOURN**

I've never lost a child before, and I don't understand all these emotions I am feeling. Will you try to understand and help me?

Please Let Me Mourn

I may act and appear together, but I am not. Often times it hurts so much I can hardly bear it.

Please Let Me Mourn

Don't expect too much from me. I will try to help you know what I can and cannot handle. Sometimes I am not always sure.

Please Let Me Mourn

Let me talk about my child. I need to talk. It's part of the healing. Don't pretend nothing has happened. It hurts terribly when you do. I love my child very much, and my memories are all I have now. They are very precious to me.

Please Let Me Mourn

Sometimes I cry and act differently, but it's all part of the grieving. My tears are necessary and needed and should not be held back. It even helps when you cry with me. Please don't fear my tears.

Please Let Me Mourn

What I need most is your friendship, your sympathy, your prayers, your support, and your understanding love. I am not the same person I was before my child died, and I never will be. Hopefully we can all grow from this shared tragedy.

Please Let Me Mourn

God gives me the strength to face each day and the hope that I will survive with His help and yours. Time will heal some of the pain, but there will always be an empty place in my heart.

Please Let Me Mourn

Please let me mourn and thank you for helping me through the most difficult time of my life.

Lonnie Forland, TCF, Northwood, IA

## SHARED THOUGHTS ON DON'T MISLABEL YOUR DIFFERENCES

Winter snow and cold weather doesn't give many of us choices, as how to spend our time. Being cabin bound can add to depressions, but at the same time it allows privacy to deal with our loss, and an excuse to not attend the many social gatherings that are so difficult for newly bereaved people. Friends and family that are untouched by death, sometimes expect more than we can give. The often-used phrase of "Life goes on" has taken on a new connotation for us. For we now know time goes on, but sometimes people don't, and the loss of those we love make us feel we are just putting in our time, and the "living" has gone from our lives.

Subconsciously, most of us have reserved death for other families. We tend to not even think about our own mortality. The thought of our children dying was something our hearts would not allow our minds to consider. For the most part, our parental responsibility was to teach our children about love and life, social graces, and all the positive things they might encounter.

Our family is close, and together we could endure anything. But, when the horrifying news came, it did not take long to learn each had to adapt their own pattern of grieving. This creates a feeling of loneliness and rejection to not have one another to lean on. It is particularly frustrating for mates who were always there for one another. Now, when the greatest support ever is needed, you feel alone, rejected, and even guilty for not being able to communicate. Most of us feel the bond should deepen with a tragedy, and when our differences emerge, the concern for our marriage becomes a reality. It is very difficult to sort grief from marital problems, and frequently all problems get labeled marital. It is very unfair to expect our mates to meet our needs, when they are hurting as badly as we are. Most of us are guilty for unrealistic expectations on others and ourselves. It is important that we know these problems are normal.

Those of us who are many years removed from fresh grief, realize how ignorant we were to expect to lean on a bent twig, whose load is as heavy as our own. Grief makes it difficult for a marriage to survive, but it can survive if we respect and nurture one another. You know you are healing, when you can accept the grief style of others, as being the best for them. Being considerate of those around us is very difficult when our needs are so high, and our energy so low, particularly on days our grief is so overwhelming. There are days we can barely dress, eat, stifle our tears, and control our anger. To reserve energy to nurture others puts great demands on us.

The initial grief seems to drive a wedge in the marriage. After surviving the gut wrenching months, and allowing some healing to take place, it can strengthen our relationship. Just knowing another person endured the degree of pain you have over your child, has to bring respect and love for that person. It does get softer, and more tolerable. Life holds so much more than I ever expected possible for me, but it took a lot of grieving to get there. I pray all of you will reach the same plateau.

God Bless, **Marie Hofmockel**, TCF Valley Forge

**QUESTIONS/ANSWERS FROM  
BEREAVED SIBLINGS**

**All of a sudden I burst into tears and cannot control crying.**

You have the freedom to cry when you need to. Crying is a normal reaction. You may feel embarrassed, but most people will react with sympathy and wish for themselves that they could cry freely. Crying is a natural outlet to grieving.

**Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.**

At some time everyone is angry at the person who died. Anger does not mean you loved them less; it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.

**I can't concentrate. I can't think and I can't remember anything. I think I am losing my mind.**

You are not losing your mind, although it may feel that way. Your mind is probably overloaded. Not only do you have to go through your daily routine, but your mind is flooded with thoughts and feelings for your brother or sister. This is temporary; your memory and concentration will return over time.

**I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying. I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy. Am I ?**

Some grieving people experience intense dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings you have during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.

**I feel so guilty for the way I yelled at my brother. We would fight about the silliest things. I'll never be able to tell him how sorry I am.**

Brothers and sisters in every family quarrel and don't apologize after every argument. Even though you fought, you still loved your brother and he loved you.

**Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.**

This truly one of the most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents. Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another.

*Author Unknown*

---

**I'M MISSING YOU**

I'm missing you -  
All day, ever day.  
On a bright summer morning, or  
When the moon is full.  
In the golden days of fall,  
As the storm clouds build and it's snowing  
When the willows begin to turn green -  
You are always with me,  
In my mind and in my heart.  
My brother, My Good Friend.  
I'm missing you.

*Kris Cunningham, TCF Moro, IL*

---

A lot of time!  
A little space,  
A kind of quiet  
Resting place,  
Are what I need  
At times like these,  
A special spot  
Where I can grieve.

**Beth Pinion** TCF - Andalusia, AL

### **Some Common Thoughts Following the Death of Your Child**

- It is not uncommon to feel bitterness or a sense of injustice when one loses a child. So if you find yourself thinking, Why me?, Why my child?, Why our family?, You're in good company.
- Some parents describe "an irrational sense of self-blame" following the death of a child. I never was able to figure out what a rational sense of self-blame might be. But I do know that many of us blame ourselves. We replay the what-ifs of our child's life and death a thousand times a day. Almost always self-blame is misplaced.
- Grief over the loss of a child lasts longer than any other kind. It heals more slowly and causes the most monumental disruption for those who survive. This is because a child is a part of what psychologists call our internal psychological structure - meaning that in a way, part of the parent dies too.
- Most experts believe that loss and helplessness are the greatest tests any human can face. A child's death is off the charts in both categories.
- You may be strong, smart, and highly resilient. But nothing can prepare you for the loss of a child.
- One reason the loss feels so enormous is that a child's death violates an implicit generational contract that our own children will survive us.
- A child's death also challenges the fundamental instinct of parents to protect their child. That is what we are supposed to do, isn't it? To make the world safe? The feeling that we have failed to do so can haunt us, compounding our sadness.
- In an era of medical miracles, we are less culturally conditioned to expect a child's death than in previous generations. On the contrary, the prevailing assumption is that science and technology can and will work wonders.
- Some experts estimate that in the face of a child's death two years is a reasonable grieving period. Others double that figure. The truth is, it takes as long as it takes - sometimes a whole lifetime. But if you are lucky, the grief will transmute. Even its physical properties will transform. Its weighty presence abates. The grief becomes gentler - less terrifying - and sometimes, paradoxically, rather sweet.

Taken from *After the Darkest Hour the Sun will Shine Again*  
By **Elizabeth Mehren**

## EXPECTATIONS

Expectations play a large role in our grief. Certainly, expecting to feel better and to not always hurt is helpful, (although we tend to expect it to happen too soon) but other expectations can be hurtful. Some of these are the expectations we have of those around us - our friends and relatives.

We “expect” them to listen to us talk about our child and our pain. We “expect” them to be sensitive and aware that we are hurting more on a particular day or date. We “expect” that they will understand that it is normal to grieve for so long. We “expect” them to understand our mood swings. We “expect” and we “expect”, and when they don’t understand or provide what we need we are angry and hurt.

**TO EXPECT IS TO PRESUME.** When we expect a friend or relative to behave a certain way or say a particular thing, we presume they know what we want or need. **This is rarely possible.** Even if the other person is a bereaved parent, he cannot read our minds. What they needed in their grief may not be what you need in yours. If our friend or relative is not a bereaved parent, it is even less likely they will have any idea how to help us.

The problem with expecting understanding and help from another, is that we set ourselves up to be hurt. On page 452 of one of my favorite books, ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, it says, “my serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations.” Of course, serenity doesn’t exist for the bereaved parent, but the hurt we feel from others IS “inversely proportional to our expectations.”

If we expect a friend or relative to do or say the right thing and they don’t, we are hurt. But, on the other hand, if we do not expect their reaction and they react as we would like them to, we will be pleased. I think it would be better to be pleased now and then, rather than be hurt almost every time.

We need to remind ourselves over and over, that **others do not know how to help us.** They are not being cruel, uncaring or indifferent. **They simply do not know what to say or do.** Therefore, the responsibility to let them know of our needs lies with us. Not only must we tell them of our needs, after we have done that we must take it a step farther. In the future, if the individual does not react in the way we prefer, we must try to accept this and consider that, for reasons only they can know, they are either unable or unwilling to do as we ask. We can’t know their innermost motivation anymore than they can know our innermost needs.

To eliminate the hurt we feel from others **we must let go of our expectations of them.** We can only be hurt if we **ALLOW** ourselves to be hurt by something that was done or said (or not done or said) in ignorance. **Remember, we ourselves did not know of bereaved parents needs** before our child died. There will be times we must simply say, “He or she doesn’t know,” or we might ask ourselves, “How important is it that that person is not supportive?”

It is up to us to protect ourselves from any more hurt than we already have. **If we stop expecting what others may not or cannot give, we can stop some of the unnecessary hurt.**