



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

JULY 2014

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

July 3 - General Sharing & Death by Suicide

July 11-13 37th Compassionate Friends National Conference, Chicago.

Aug 7 - General Sharing

**Sept 13 Butterfly Release & Program
2PM Upper Merion Township building
King of Prussia (see page 3)**

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**

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TCF Mission Statement

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.

INSIDE VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER

REFRESHMENTS

Mary Lou Harrison in memory of her son, ♥*Scott*♥ on his anniversary June 9th

Refreshments may be donated in memory of loved ones, please call **Rhonda (484) 919-0820**, or you may sign the refreshment chart located on the refreshment table.

LOVE GIFTS

Robert & Kathleen Grossi, in loving memory of our son, **James**, on his birthday June 30

Dawn MacMichael donation thru United Way of Delaware

Sam & Palma Panichello, in loving memory of our beloved son, **Joseph**, on his anniversary, June 7th. After 18 years we still miss him dearly. He is in our thoughts and prayers every day.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

We are asking if possible , would you please receive your newsletter by email.

We do not want to remove anyone from our newsletter mailing list who is benefiting from receiving it. We hope it is a help to you while going through your grief, giving you better understanding of your feelings, and letting you know **“We need not walk alone”**.

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 the newsletter by email please contact: **Frank Gomez fgomez@hybridpoplars.com**

TCF Facebook

Join 22,000 people who are sharing their grief journey at The Compassionate Friends Facebook page. The page is designed to be informative and supportive. Check out the question or quote of the day. You can find the page by going to TCF's website home page at www.compassionatefriends.org and clicking on the Facebook icon. Or you can go to Facebook and do a search for “The Compassionate Friends/USA.” Join us and contribute to the conversation.

The Compassionate Friends National Conference



37th National Conference
Chicago, Illinois
July 11-13, 2014



BUTTERFLY RELEASE AND PROGRAM
Saturday, September 13, 2014 at 2PM



Upper Merion Township Park (back of Police Station)
175 West Valley Forge Road, King of Prussia, PA 19406

Diagonally across from our monthly meeting place at Good Shepherd Church.
This event will be held in back of the township building, left of the gazebo.

Cost \$10.50 per butterfly - August 16th last day to place order.
There is no admission or parking fee.

Water will be provided by the chapter. Please bring folding chairs or a blanket to sit on.

A family may order one butterfly to share, or order one butterfly for each family member. You may order as many butterflies as you wish. All butterflies must be preordered. If you are unable to attend on this date, we can release the butterfly that you have purchased in your loved one's name. The names of all loved ones will be read during the program.

For questions, please call TCF Valley Forge 484-919-0820
Any further details will be posted at the VF website. www.tcfvalleyforge.org

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Address: _____

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Total number of butterflies ordered: _____ \$10.50 each

Total money (no credit cards) enclosed: _____

Please forward registration and check to: Rhonda Gomez,
12 Brook Circle, Glenmoore, PA 19343

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.**

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Nina Ansel, daughter *Jenny* 7/27
Mary Auger, son *Eric R. Ehmann* 7/13
Charlene & Earle Bare, son *Abe Bare* 7/1
Herb and Fran Barnett, son *Andrew* 7/2
Joann & Gary Chavez, son *Christopher Dale Chavez* 7/19
Tracy & Mike Collins, daughter *Krystal Chuck* 7/19
Hazel Corbin, daughter *Dayle C Rutledge* 7/7
Tom & Judy Hahn, daughter *Erica Hilley* 7/2
Janet & Dave Keller, brother *Thomas A. Keller* 7/3
Al & Sue Koenig, daughter *Emily Grace Koenig* 7/8
Joan Lippre, son *John* 7/16
Robert McCullough, daughter *Caroline Patricia McCullough* 7/19
Felix & Shirley McShane, son *Brian* 7/30
Cameron and Sandra Meikle, daughter *Laura* 7/4
Alexandra Milas, brother *Nicholas Stathes* 7/1
John & Mary Ann Murphy, son *Brian Michael Murphy* 7/20
Carol & Dennis O'Connor, brother *Jack Coladonato* 7/14
Gary & Patricia Otto, son *Benjamin Otto* 7/26
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Walter C. Peters* 7/4
son *Russell F. Peters, Jr.* 7/25
Vernice Quattlebaum, daughter *Gwendolyn Y. Ashe* 7/11
Donald & Freda Rhinier, son *Glenn D. Rhinier* 7/18
Kelly Rossi, brother *Kevin* 7/24
Abigail Schwartz, mother *Barbra* 7/15
Mike & Beverly Smith, son *Ryan* 7/18
Helen Smith, son *Bob Smith* 7/2
Patricia & Bertram Snead, son *James Christopher Snead* 7/15
Jen & Alex Soutos, daughter *Alexi* 7/27
Harry & Merrily Spiess, son *F. Ryan Spiess* 7/16
Lisa M Spinks, brother *Robert* 7/9
Linda Sposato, daughter *Bernadette Funaro* 7/23
Dave & Lynn Strange, son *Bradley* 7/9
Ellen & Frank Svitek, daughter *Kate Elizabeth Svitek* 7/1
Anne & Charles Swann, daughter *Katherine Anne Swann* 7/12
Jean Sykora, son *Mark* 7/14
Chris & Larry Teal, son *Wade Teal* 7/30

JULY BIRTHDAYS continued

Renee Teufel, son *Gregory* 7/28
Robert & Nancy Thompson, son *Andrew Thompson* 7/21
Brenda Timbers, daughter *Niya Raquel Timbers* 7/3
Steven Tucker, son *Patrick Ryan* 7/12
Barbara Tuller, son *Charles* 7/3
Pat Villante, daughter *Laura* 7/28
Irene & Bob Weaver, daughter *Monica* - 7/17
Bill & Patti Whitehead, daughter *Maria* 7/4

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

Lori Bartholomew, brother *Matthew* - 7/14
Eleanor Brennan, grandson *Jonathan Masiak* - 7/9
Jackie & Steve Brown, son *Doug Brown* - 7/23
Joanne & Tom Christman, son *Kyle R. O'Neill* - 7/20
Catherine Dardozzi, grandson *Evan Schmidt* - 7/15
Vanessa Diaz, friends child *Samir* - 7/12
Bob & Connie Ercole, son *David* - 7/2
Sharon & Francis Gailey, daughter *Danielle Marie Gailey* - 7/14
Ron & Sue Gamza, daughter & grandson *Rachel & Troy* - 7/24
Gwen & Walt Gearhart, grandson *Jamie Rogers* - 7/12
Carolyn & Allen Gephart, son *Joseph Malec* - 7/14
Craig & Kathleen Gerland, daughter *Alexis* - 7/18
Rhonda and Frank Gomez, son *Frank Jr.* - 7/17
Jean & James Hayden, son *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* - 7/26
Beatrice K Hildebrandt, son *John R. Hildebrandt* - 7/12
Mark & Vicki Hoffman, son *Eric Daniel Hoffman* - 7/21
Dennis & Lois Ianovale, son *Dennis* 984 - 7/6
Sally Ivory, son *Jimmy Ivory* - 7/16
Maryann Lockyer, son *Keith* - 7/15
Fred & Kay Lokoff, daughter *Terry Lokoff* - 7/27
Maryellen & James Madden, daughter *Anne Marie Madden* - 7/28
Lynne & John Malloy, son *David Gross* - 7/1
Linda Massey, son *Gene* - 7/16
Frank & Bernadette McAllister, son *Christopher J. McAllister* - 7/11
Cheryl Mezzaroba, son *Lon Mezzaroba* - 7/24
Betty (Elizabeth) Miller, son *Raymond "Jim"* - 7/26
Danielle Murtha, brother *Jake* - 7/29
Chris Poulsen, nephew *Jerry* - 7/3
Marie Poulsen, grandson *Jerry August Warfel* - 7/3
Donna Rogers, son *Jamie Rogers* - 7/12
husband *Jonathan Rogers* - 7/13

JULY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Thelma Rosen, nephew *Charles Carswell* - 7/10
Linda Sandlin, brother *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* - 7/26
Mildred Sayles, son *Fredrick Chavis* - 7/6
Donna & Eric Schaertl, son *Jared M. Schaertl* - 7/13
Suzanne Schoenhut, son *Joe* - 7/5
Anna Schwarz, son *Jerrold Schwarz* - 7/11
Ann Sherwood, son *David Foster Sherwood* - 7/28
Matthew Silverman, sister *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Howard & Margorie Silverman, daughter *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Janis Siravo, son *Christian* - 7/22
Eileen Smith, son *Craig* - 7/31
Carole Solomon, niece *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Philip & Ilene Spector, neice *Avery Silverman* - 7/14/
Margaret & Wade Stallard, son *Wade Hampton Stallard, III* - 7/27
Margaret & Matthew Strickler, son *Timothy Strickler* - 7/23
Suzanne Teleha, son *Peter Teleha* - 7/29
Hellmut Theil, son *Hellmut Theil, Jr.* - 7/14
Gerard & Jane Thimm, son *Gary Thimm* - 7/12
Robert & Nancy Thompson, son *Andrew Thompson* - 7/28
Brenda Timbers, daughter *Niya Raquel Timbers* - 7/2
Shelly Wagner, son *Andrew Wagner* - 7/26
Irene & Bob Weaver, daughter *Monica* - 7/17
Ellen & Dale Weaver, son *Jeffrey M. Weaver* - 7/29
Peggy West, daughter *Kelly Ann West* - 7/28
Patricia White, daughter *Diane Patricia White* - 7/4
Donna White, sister *Diane White* - 7/4
Nancy Willis, son *Alex* - 7/9
Andy & Peg Yanoviak, daughter *Elizabeth "Betsy" Hershman* - 7/5

They are everywhere, people who are hurting so deeply...so desperately...so broken in spirit and soul that they feel almost certain they will never smile again. Hearts so tender and crushed, that pain is all consuming and it strips them of all hope that there could ever be a day they wouldn't hurt. If only they could see a day when their agony would end. But what can I do? All I can do is love them - so desperately that their pain is no longer theirs alone, but mine as well, and I bearing the same pain makes it more endurable. To this end I seek, and to this goal I commit my life. I can do something - I can love.

Debby Grogan

TCF - Atlanta, GA

Debby is a nurse. The patients who come upon her are fortunate.

SHARED THOUGHTS ON SHOCK & DENIAL

Shock is often our survival after the loss of a child or sibling. Our minds go into a state of numbness that insulates us from the pain of fully facing the death all at once. We have discussed anticipatory grief with long term illness, and most will say even though the physician predicts the loved one to be terminal, the mind will still hold back in accepting the fact that death is inevitable.

It is natural to deny anything that will bring such unbearable pain. We use this cushion to get us through that very early stage of our grief, whether it be sudden or long-term. Our brain tries to take one step at a time.

In retrospect, the numbness that shock brought, insulated and cushioned me enough to survive. The time we stay in shock varies greatly. It can be an aide in our grief, but we can not stay there forever.

We usually move into denial. I found myself stuck here for a while; I just didn't want to face the fact that future plans did not include Doug. I wasn't finished mothering him, and having many other children did not help in the beginning. I had a lot of unfinished love that belonged to Doug alone, and it could not be directed toward another child. I felt very guilty for being so all consumed with grief, and not being able to function for my surviving children.

We aren't ready to move on, so we frequently tell ourselves it is all a bad dream that will go away. We don't want to be a part of anything that says our child is dead. The pain is too great to admit our loss is permanent. We can never approve of the happening, but we eventually have to acknowledge the fact that it did happen, so that we can establish where we are. Once we totally acknowledge the death, we move on to other stages of grief.

No matter how well we have learned the grief stages, we can not rush through them to reach the other side. It is called grief work because of the effort and time it takes. We must lean into the pain. It is so gut-wrenching, and we have all had feelings that we just can't survive it. But it softens, we learn to live and love ourselves again. We regain our ability to feel, look for a tomorrow, and all those good memories that we worried about forgetting are still there. When the healing takes away the gut-wrenching pain, the memories can be pleasant. I wish you could be where I am, without going through where I have been. Peace is there for us, but never comes as soon as we would like it to. Be patient with yourself

God Bless, *Marie Hofmocker* , TCF Valley Forge

DOUG

This was my brother, taken from me
His body now dead, his spirit set free
His friends all mourn, life that's past
And learn so young that life won't last
When life must end with so few years
It fills the heart with sorrow's tears
He lived his life, as all men should
He lived his life as few boys could

He took life's best, and worst the same
And fought so hard to win the game
But in the end, it's not the score
Or length of play that matters more
But love he shared before the end
And joy he gave to each his friend.
Kevin Hofmocker, TCF Valley Forge, PA
(One month after brother's death)

CARRY YOUR OWN SIGN POST

Carry your own signpost. Really I am serious. Think about it. They liken the grief process to a journey, and I agree with that symbolism. But who makes the road signs on the way? It feels like everywhere and everyone has an idea, a "method", or opinion of where we should be in our grief. They stick those sign posts everywhere ...in the well meant phrases ("It's time to move on"); in the avoidance of talking about the one who died; in their speech to others around us; in the barrage of Techniques, Methods, and Guidelines people are willing to tell us to help us cope.

But what if we carry our own signpost? We would always be in the right place - after all you put what you want on the sign. We would always be going in the right direction doesn't matter if it's backwards, forwards, sideways ... the point at this pain filled stage in our life is we are moving - period. We are going to go every which way when grieving. There is no straight line, no technique to learn, just a gradual moving through. That is the next thing to put on your sign ... you post the speed. You set the timeline. Now be honest... don't you feel like there should be a sign above your head anyway? Ever changing, and of course with the standard toilet paper roll affixed to it ... those of you who are going "huh?" need to stop in your tour at Grief Inc. and visit Darcie.

By the way did I mention you can change your sign minute to minute? Use a white board and marker ... much easier. We can turn it into a warning sign - 'WARNING BEREAVED PEOPLE TEND TO TAKE UNEXPECTED TURNS' - then no one trying to walk with us will be surprised when we suddenly veer over to Weepy City for coffee, or to brake hard for Memory Crossings. One place I end up at a lot is Tear Drop Falls. I tend to look like hell when I leave, but I always feel better later. We all have standing reservations at Heartbreak Hotel, and the "tourists" just don't understand the immense meaning of the landmarks in our land - Guilt Mountain, the Bitter Cliffs, and of course we all troop through the Angry Desert once in a while. Some people spend a lot of time there. ... but of course they are carrying their own sign, so that is ok... they will come and meet us at the one sane place we all gravitate to ... the Compassionate Friends Sharing Meeting.

These landmarks are important to those of us who have already toured them, they serve as reminders of how far they have come in their journey - thank goodness some of them stick around so we can read their signs ... and find the gem of our journey ... the Hope Diamond! Carry your own sign, set your own pace, be where you feel you need to be. It is your heart that is broken, it is the love that you have for your child that will guide you - if you let it help you carry your sign.

CindyVogt
TCF/SouthWestManitoba

Hi. My name is **Marlene Boylan**.

My sister, **Tiffany** died June 10, 1994. She was 13 years old. She died of a train accident. Her friend **Tammy** died too. Tammy was 14 years old. Both families miss them but it has to be like this. People still put flowers and crosses up at the tracks. I know everyone must suffer, but soon we will be back home.

Marlene Boylan, age 11
Valley Forge, PA

Scott was good to me. He is the best brother anyone could have. Here are some memories of him: We always wrestled. When I was 6, I went to an Orioles game with him. I used to help him with his home work. He was a caring person. He taught me all I know. He died of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy when he was 11, and I was 6. I miss him so much. It's been 4 years now since he died and I never forgot him. Oh, I really miss you Scottie.

Greg Rosenthal, age 10
Valley Forge, PA

TO MY SISTER

You touched us all
You loved us all
Forever giving
Forever caring
Forever forgiving
Never wanting to return.
Blessed are those who shared your life
Rich are those who carry your memories
Please rest now
Your chores we will finish.
Till we meet again ...

Cindy Kelz
Arlington Heights, IL

WHY CAN'T I LET GO

You were always my hero.
I always wanted to be like you.
You were my younger brother,
Still, I always looked up to you.

You were always there for me,
Even when things were at their worst.
You helped me through my hardest trials,
And we always made it through.

Now as I set here, writing these words,
Remembering you and times gone by,
I'm trying to find a way to tell you,
I'm trying to say good-bye.

Nineteen years are just too many,
To just let you go,
I can't believe you're gone, you died,
And left me here alone.

Some days I'm fine,
Some days I'm low,
But most days,
I just miss you so.
It was you and me,
But now, what do I do?

Each night I ask why?
Why I'm so angry?
Why I can't cry?
Why I can't let you go?

I know we'll see each other again,
But the years seems so long.
I long for the day I'll see you again,
Waiting for me with open arms.
Brother, I love you and miss you so.
But now I need you most.
This time in my life is oh so hard,
I just can't let you go.

Stephen Welch
TCF Sibling Group - St Louis, MO

TAKE THE TIME . . . TO HURT, TO CRY. . .

Wordless and worldless -- Endless and forever, grief goes on --
It takes the best -- And leaves the rest an empty shell -- Life is Hell.

David was dead four months when I wrote that in my journal. Time is my enemy. As I envisioned the future of my life, I saw only a vast expanse of desert - dry, parched, and empty.

It is now a year and a half since David's death, and I recognize that time has become my friend. Now, when I look to the future, I see hills and valleys - struggles, to be sure, but, also, moments spent at the summit. What has happened? Time is healing.

Take the time . . .

To hurt . . . The pain is great and the temptation to run away is great. But, there is no avoiding, no escaping the hard feelings. If you cover them over, they only re-surface later in a potentially more destructive way.

To cry . . . It may feel like once started, you can never stop. But you have every reason to cry, and when you have cried enough, you will stop.

To "fall apart." . . . If you have a broken leg, you would not expect yourself to function at full capacity right away. Your wound is much greater - you have a broken heart. Confusion, inability to concentrate, lethargy, imagined glimpses of your dead child are a normal part of the grieving process and do not mean that you are going crazy.

To be "selfish." . . . Mourning is an egocentric time, a time for turning inward and introspection.

To "identify" . . . and seek out resources in your environment that can help: friends, clergy, Compassionate Friends, a counselor. Talk to them.

Having done all that - having lingered in the valley of the shadow - it is time to begin the climb out.

Take the time . . .

To engage again in activities that were once pleasurable. They may hold no joy the first few times; someday they will and that will be all right.

To laugh without guilt. Savor the good moments in the day, brief though they may be. Through your child, you can re-discover the beauty of a sunset.

To care for your health. Grieving is a physio-, as well, as psycho-logical stress. Your body needs protection.

To be patient. Wanting to live again and learning to live again takes time. The path out of the other side of the valley is steep, and we all often stumble. But with time - time spent doing the work of grief - you can find the path to a world made richer by your love.

Bronna Romaoff, PHD - Albany, NY, TCF

STRENGTH

In the early days of my grief,
A tear would well up in my eyes,
A lump would form in my throat,
But you would not know - I would hide it.
For the strong do not cry ...
And I am strong.

In the middle days of my grief,
I would look ahead and see that wall
That I had attempted to go around,
As an ever-present reminder of a wall yet
not scaled.
Yet I did not attempt to scale it,
for the strong will survive ...
And I am strong.

In the later days of my grief,
I learned to climb over that wall
step by step,
Remembering, crying, grieving,
And the tears flowed steadily as I
painstakingly went
For the way was long, but I did make it ...
For I am strong.

Near the resolution of my grief,
A tear will well up in my eyes,
A lump will form in my throat
But I will let that tear fall
And you will see it.
Through it you will see that I still hurt
And I care ..
For I am strong.

Terry Jago,
TCF, Regina, Canada

**In your gathering of memories, invite
your courage to remember everything.**
Sasha Wagner

**A FATHER’S VIEW OF
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS:
COURAGE, SURPRIS, AND UNDERSTANDING**

Attendance Requirement: Courage

I don’t think I am unique, I did not want to attend a meeting of Compassionate Friends. I was coerced by my wife. It was subtle but effective. My son, on the other hand, made a devil’s deal; he agreed to go to the next meeting in exchange for a favor - his debt some weeks away. The thought of discussing death nauseated me. We, my son and I, had made a bad deal.

The Meeting: A Surprise

I was surprised to find I was not the only man to have lost a child. There was a reality to that recognition. My loss, not unlike yours, is a personal matter. No one can tell me how I feel or how I ought to feel. Yet, the group never made me feel guilty about my selfishness; they understood.

The Result: An Understanding

Compassionate Friends is not an efficient organization. There are no systems, no quick easy cures. Grief is a catharsis. Most of what you hear there you will dismiss, it will not apply to you. But, there are nuggets - small ideas you will want to try or things you will want to think about. Some you will try. Many you will discard. Only a few will help the pain. These you will treasure. Your friends and associates may try to understand your grief and try to help. They can do neither. They don’t understand. And they try to help. My son felt he had gained little from the meeting. Yet, he left feeling he had helped someone else deal with his grief. What a marvelous satisfaction for a 15 - year old.

What’s in it for you? Compassionate Friends is here to help - to listen, to suggest, to understand. If you handle your grief well, you do not need Compassionate Friends, But we need you. Your approach or method of dealing with grief could help one or more of us. Please share it.

Bob Watts 7/96 TCF, Stamford, CT



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

Valley Forge, PA Chapter
Rhonda & Frank Gomez
Chapter Leaders
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343

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**...A bereavement organization
For parents, siblings & families
We offer friendship, love and understanding
We talk, we listen, we share, we care**

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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. ©2007