



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

APRIL 2016

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

Apr 7 General Sharing

May 5 General Sharing

July 10-12 TCF National Conference Scottsdale, AZ
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
NEW PEOPLE**

David Castle, best friend *Eric Burbano* (25)
Robert & Lee Duffield, son *Michael* (46)

We welcome our newly bereaved friends, sorry for the cause that brings you. We have all been in the depths of despair, and offer unconditional love and understanding to all of you. It sometimes takes several meetings to feel the full benefit of group sharing.

REFRESHMENTS

Lisa Russo in loving memory of my son, **Casey**, on his birthday March 17th.

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

Rose Marie Cote in loving memory of my son, *Mark* on his anniversary 3/26.

Barbara McClenahan in loving memory of my son, *David McClenahan* (51).

Catherine Darozzi in loving memory of my son, *James* on his birthday 3/7.

Bob & Lee Duffield in loving memory of our son, *Michael* on his birthday 3/31.

Patricia & Marco Giubilato in loving memory of our daughter,
Robin Giubilato Zarelli on her birthday 3/18.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

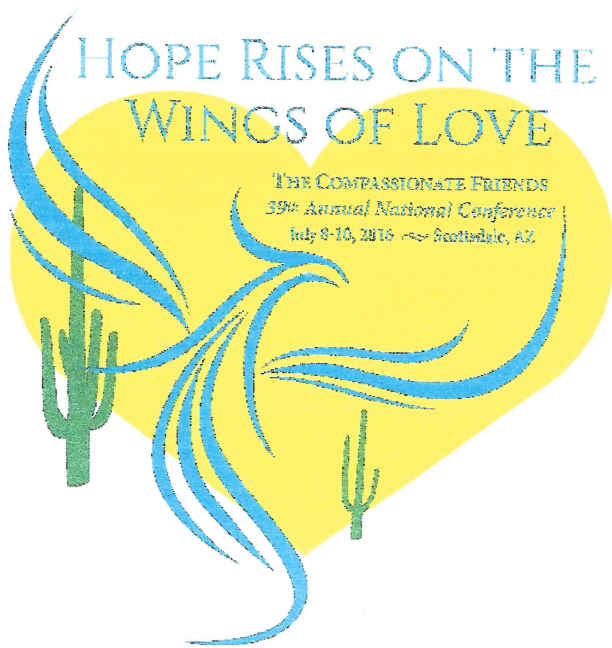
We are asking if possible , would you please receive your newsletter by email.

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**

The Compassionate Friends National Conference 2016



The Compassionate Friends National Conferences offer much healing to bereaved parents.

Many well known speakers will be addressing the opening and closing sessions., luncheons, banquets, and many workshops on different aspects of grief.

National Conferences offer a Hospitality Room, Reflection Room, Butterfly Boutique, Book Store, and Memory Boards to place a picture of your loved ones, and a candle lighting service.

There will be time for one-on-one sharing with our TCF families.

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.

RESPONSE FEATURE ON VALLEY FORGE WEBSITE

The Valley Forge website (www.tcfvalleyforge.org) has a feature for you to leave comments and suggestions that you would like to see in the Chapter Program. Please voice your opinions on how the Chapter is being conducted, and ways we might improve the program. The chapter belongs to all of us, please support it.

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.**

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Leslie Brown, son *Scott* 4/3
Ellen & James Burbano, son *Eric* 4/19
Gina Cappelli, son *Dan Foley* 4/20
Phyllis & James Casey, son *Jim "Jimmer" Casey* 4/18
Martin & Mary Conway, son *Neal* 4/8
Linda DiPasquale, son *Thomas* 4/26
Janie Ebersole, daughter *Ashley Sankus* 4/19
Ginny Ebert, son *Jason* 4/17
Scott & Charlene Fazekas, son *Eric Scott Fazekas* 4/25
Maureen & Jim Fleagle, son *Brian* 4/20
Carol Fritz, daughter *Kate Pawlowski* 4/3
Joe & Katie Glinski, son *Joey* 4/10
Stephanie Grier, son *John "JD" Grier* 4/15
Nancy & Gerald Hall, son *Douglas Byron Hall* 4/15
Kristen Hallman, brother *Joey* 4/10
Othell & William Heaney, son *Roger Heaney* 4/17
Jeanne R Helmers, daughter *Betsy Helmers* 4/7
Cynthia Hornyak, daughter *Meredith* 4/1
John Horulko, son *Daniel* 4/6
Monica Horulko, son *Daniel* 4/6
Robert Huss, son *Daniel* 4/18
Dennis & Lois Ianovale, son *Dennis* 4/18
Carl & Dorothy Johnson-Speight, daughter *Carlana Speight* 4/6
Millie Jones, grandson *Shawn Dian* 4/18
Roxanne Kamilatos, daughter *Dina* 4/29
Susan Kelleher, son *Jake* 4/24
Janet & Dave Keller, granddaughter *Elily Lou Miller* 4/4
Karen Lapera, son *Michael* 4/3
Karen & Francis Legieko, son *John Francis Legieko* 4/8
Lynne & John Malloy, son *David Gross* 4/13
Betty Manzi, grandson *Ronnie T. Seal, Jr.* 4/17
Elaine Marino, son *Mark Joseph Marino* 4/20
Michelle Mazzio, son *Brendan Mazzio* 4/18
Robert & Marjorie Meckley, son *Douglas Meckley* 4/25
Bob & Janet Milnazik, daughter *Kim* 4/24
Sheila & Mike Mullin, son *Matthew* 4/10

APRIL BIRTHDAYS continued

Fran Miller, son *Christian* 4/7
Ashlie Nawrocki, sister *Chereen* 4/3
Rosemary Peterson, son *Donald R. Peterson* 4/18
Thomas & Mary Jane Poore, son *Bradley Poore* 4/25
Joe & Kim Pratt, son *Paul* 4/7
Thelma Rosen, son *Thomas Grisafi* 4/24
Marie Shippen, son *Michael Morgan* 4/19
Art & Carol Silverman, daughter *Cheryl Beth Silverman* 4/23
Barry & Sigrid Snow, son *Robert Snow* 4/28
son *Kevin Snow* 4/19
James & Betty Treichler, son *James Treichler Jr.* 4/21
Ann VanLandingham, son *Eric VanLandingham* 4/21
Deb Walter, son *Evan* 4/18
Ellen & Dale Weaver, son *Jeffrey M. Weaver* 4/12
Linda Weaver, daughter *Krista "Binky" Weaver* 4/29
Jackie Wesley, daughter *Teresa Ellen Wesley Hough* 4/25
Terry & Bob Wolfe, son and stepson *Steven Moyer* 4/22
Joan Zdun, son *Erick George* 4/14

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

George & Anne Beerley, daughter *Jennifer Beerley* - 4/19
Leslie Brown, son *Scott* - 4/4
Diana Clark, grandson *Alexander* - 4/5
Tom & Irene Cornely, daughter *Colleen* - 4/26
Judy & William Cosgrove, son *Michael Cosgrove* - 4/17
Anton & Maureen DeMaioribus, daughter *Ann DeMaioribus* - 4/23
Nancy & David Dykty, brother *Jim Sutton* - 4/16
Joanne Haley, son *Douglas Haley* - 4/3
Walt & Adele Higgins, son/stepson *Brian* - 4/17
Sharon Hirst, son *Tom* - 4/16
Susan Kelleher, son *Jake* - 4/14
Janet & Dave Keller, granddaughter *Elily Lou Miller* - 4/4
Joan Kellett, son *Daniel Thomas Kellett* - 4/29
Lynn Kivlen, son *Brien Kivlen* - 4/26
Terry Kozlewski, son *Frankie* - 4/1
Susan & Richard Leimbach, son *Sean Duffy* - 4/2
Becky & Alan Logsdon, son *Nathaniel Logsdon* - 4/29
Denis Nicholson Asselin & Judy, son *Nathaniel* - 4/15

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Elaine Marino, son *Mark Joseph Marino* - 4/21
'daughter in law' *Lisa Marino* - 4/12
Jennifer McGowan Clark, brother *Joseph McGowan* - 4/15
Susan McKelvey, son *John* - 4/23
Joan Morefield, son *Robert* - 4/29
Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy, daughter *Marian Mountjoy* - 4/16
John Mscisz, grandson *Liam John Williamson* - 4/6
Mary Mulholland, son *Joseph McGowan* - 4/15
Sheila & Mike Mullin, son *Matthew* - 4/25
Barbara & Jeff Norris, son *Greg* - 4/1
Terri Pfeiffer, son *Matthew* - 4/20
Maureen & David Rich, daughter *Mallory Kirby Rich* - 4/26
Harry & Carol Schultz, son *Brian Andrew Schultz* - 4/18
Joy Conard Settles, son *R. Gary Korn* - 4/30
Jeffrey Smith, son *Jacob Smith* - 4/5
Barry & Sigrid Snow, son *Robert Snow* - 4/28
Edward & Mary Stimson, son *Keith Stimson* - 4/7
Dave & Lynn Strange, son *Bradley* - 4/21
Fred & Irene Sutton, son *Jim Sutton* - 4/16
Tracey Sutton-Vitabile, brother *Jim Sutton* - 4/16
Allan Thomas, wife *Zinta Thomas* - 4/23
Harry & Lynne Urian, son *Mike* - 4/22
Joan & Ed Young, son *Jed Young* - 4/2
Joan Zdun, son *Erick George* - 4/4

“Human pain does not let go of its grip at one point in time. Rather, it works its way out of our consciousness over time. There is a season of sadness. A season of anger. A season of tranquility. A season of hope. But seasons do not follow one another in a lockstep manner. At least not for those in crisis. The winters and springs of one’s life are all jumbled together in a puzzling array. One day we feel as though the dark clouds have lifted, but the next day they have returned. One moment we can smile but a few hours later the tears emerge... It is true that as we take two steps forward in our journey, we may take one or more steps backward. But when one affirms that the spring thaw will arrive, the winter winds seem to lose some of their punch.”

Robert Veninga
A Gift of Hope: How We Survive Our Tragedies

SHARED THOUGHTS ON “MEMORIES of GRIEF”

Our son, Douglas, died 29 years ago on February 7th. Time does not erase the memory of those early years when my pain was so intense. Although never feeling suicidal, I began each day with a prayer that the world would end, so there would never be another bereaved parent. I did not want anyone to experience the degree of agony I was enduring. Never once did I regret having Doug, the joy he brought was greater than the death. As I look back, that was a foolish wish. Had the world ended, all those beautiful subsequent children would never have been. I was looking for a quick fix to my pain.

Frequently, we get caught up in hurrying our recovery. Our pain is so intense, we feel we can't endure one more day. Once the natural order has been violated, a deluge of fears overcomes us. It is very normal to be out of control in such an abnormal situation. It is important to recognize our grief, for much of it can be resolved through expressing ourselves. When talking to other bereaved parents and siblings, we realize our feelings are very natural reactions.

There are many books on grief that can offer a sense of direction. There are also many guidelines that warn of pitfalls. These are great tools to aid in our healing. But I feel nothing is as comforting as another bereaved person saying, “I know”. If you have been there, you fully understand. The love you receive is unconditional and this type of support is what sustains us.

If we devote time to grief work, and deal with our problems as they arise, it helps to clear our hearts and minds so we can make room for the new situations that we must handle. If we shelve our feelings, we soon have such an insurmountable load, that we can't deal with any of it. We must always take one day at a time, and face it little by little. Some days we may have such little strength that we not only did not gain ground, but we have slipped back. Don't run away from your grief, meeting it head on helps to gain a better foothold.

Slowly, we begin to heal, the happy memories often bring smiles rather than pain. Our sorrow softens, and the death becomes less important. The lives of our loved ones become more important, and we appreciate the beauty and happiness our loved ones gave to us. We can not expect to return to the way we were. Life will be different as we deal with the memories of grief, but it is a far cry from dealing with fresh grief. We will always regret the death, but doing our grief work helps the scar we carry to become tolerable.

My vacations are different, but enjoyable. I look forward to each new day, and enjoy being creative. I look forward to family gatherings, and feel life can be good again. Believe me when I tell you I dreaded each of these in my early grief. I could not even feel complete joy when my first granddaughter was born. I just couldn't feel anything. There wasn't any “complete joy” to be had. This particular grandchild has brought me so much joy in subsequent years, and now I know it was my grief that denied me these pleasures.

I wish for you that your grief will turn to memories of grief, and happiness will fill your lives again.

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

SPRINGTIME'S BURDEN TURNS TO PROMISE

Seasonal changes are difficult for many bereaved parents. This is often most true as winter yields to spring.

The land seems to throb with life once more as young buds emerge and robins return from their sojourn in the south. Lilacs bloom and the breeze carries their fragrance. Woodland animals begin to lose the leanness of winter hunting or quiet hibernation.

The day is longer and filled with renewed vitality to match its length. It is as if a cold hand had loosed its bitter grip and the earth is reborn.

It is this quality of resurrection that seems so bitter. For as we struggle in the darkness of loss, all around us is the vigorous

rush of life, breaking forth in colors and song. But our children do not come forth. They dwell in the land of death and the nether-world nightmare of our anguish.

But I believe we can see as well the promise inherent in spring's unfolding glory and grasp the continuity its return affirms. Last fall we saw an acorn, but this year we see the tender shoot of an infant tree.

From gnarled, dead-looking stumps, the cut-back rose sends tendrils of green to drink the sun. In each full cycle of our planet around its sun, we encounter irrefutable testament to renewal. In this we sense the defeat of death.

This is the time of year, when twilight surrenders to darkness, to stand outside and feel the rays of countless stars, smell the scents granted by the new earth, hear the chorus of night creatures and sense the rebirth that has no end.

Stand silently then, beneath the constancy of the night sky and upon the rejuvenating earth, and sense our children, constant and growing too, yet beyond our sight. Life continues. There are no endings. There are only beginnings. That is the promise of spring.

*Don Hackett, TCF
South Shore, MA*

STILL LIVING

Just when I think this old life
isn't worth living,
I am touched by the big brown eyes
of the one still living.

Just when I think my heart is breaking,
That same heart leaps for joy
with the one still living.

Just when I'm down and out,
Suddenly I'm lifted up by
the one still living.

Just when the load seems too heavy,
The burden, is lifted by a smile from
the one still living.

Just when sadness and despair seem
the only emotions left,
Happiness and laughter are brought out by
the one still living.

Just when I need it most, I get a hug from
the one still living.

Anita Detamore, TCF, Knoxville, TN

It isn't the mountains ahead that wear you out. It's the grain of sand in your shoes

Author Unknown

LIFE CAN BE GOOD AGAIN

For nearly sixteen years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the sounds that marked his presence. Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of ever finding life once more.

He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong.

Life still had meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the years before his coming. Indeed, even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give it purpose and resolve.

Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process but I know that this is much easier to write than it was to experience.

I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unremitting pain that engulfed me in those early years. Working through them was the most demanding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long-term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years.

Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing. Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual. These points included:

- * Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.

- * Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem unable to help us in our time of deep trouble and need.
- * The accepting, at lost of the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.

Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends, and surviving siblings, our love for whom seems shrouded behind the totality of our grief.

Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through writing a book, planting trees, sustaining scholarships, or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention.

A time comes for many to find new homes, jobs, and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives.

Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us tomorrow with hope.

No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.

Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy, and his shortcomings live on in me. No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life.

Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt-producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.

Is this not our goal, to heal, to find the strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

Don Hackett - TCF, Hingham, MA

HELPING OTHERS - 10 RULES FOR SELF HEALING

1. Tell friends to call you often. Explain that after the first couple of months you'll need their calls.
2. Tell your friends to make a specific date with you; none of this "we must get together for lunch". Remind them that you're bound to have "down" times and their patience would be appreciated.
3. Tell them to please feel free to talk about the person that has died -- and don't avoid that person's name.
4. It's important for friends to understand that you may appear to be "doing so well" but on the inside you still hurt. Grief is painful, it's tricky and it's exhausting.
5. Ask your friends to care but not to pity you.
6. Make plain that friends and relatives can still treat you as a person who is still in command and can think for yourself.
7. Tell your friends that it's all right to express their caring. It's OK for them to cry; crying together is better than avoiding the pain.
8. Let your friends know too, that it's all right to say nothing. A squeeze or a hug are often more important than words.
9. Let people know that they can invite you to socialize, but that you might decline.
10. Ask your friends to go for walks with you. You and your friends can "walk off" feelings. Walks promote conversation and help fight depression.

Ruth Jean Loewinsohn

IF I SHOULD TELL YOU

If I should tell you
That it will get better
In time (just when I don't know)
Will you look at me
With lifeless, leaden eyes, with sagging shoulders,
And turn away in forlorn disbelief?

If I should tell you
That this damnation will fade
Slowly, slowly, ever so slowly,
As you battle the pain, such riveting pain,
That enervates and drains your very being,
will you believe me?

If I should tell you
That that Gordian knot
So relentlessly snarled
Will gradually fray and unravel
And you will start to rise up again.

If I should tell you
I, too, like you have been there,
Have struggled, rebounded, and
fought my way back.
The nights will become softer,
The days less relentless.

If I should tell you
You will live again, you will live again.
And somehow, somewhere,
You will love again, you will love again.
And embrace, and caress, and encompass
The memory of that beautiful child
of yours.

YOU WILL.

Will you believe me? Please do.

Dave Ziv - Bucksmont Chapter, PA

SUDDEN ACCIDENTAL DEATH

This will touch on a few of the real problems we encounter, in traumatic grief experienced from the sudden accidental death of a child: shock, guilt, unfinished business, lack of closure, negative attitudes or obstacles to recovery, and anger.

I don't pretend to have any concrete answers, but hopefully a few insights on how to cope with grief. We all grieve differently. What works for one may not work for another.

We don't want to make judgments on which kind of grief is more difficult, but sudden death is recognized as one of the most difficult to recover from because of the tremendous shock involved. It will be longer, lonelier, and more hazardous to your lasting emotional stability than if you had been able to anticipate the loss and to communicate with your child before death.

One of the large differences between sudden accidental death and death by long-term illness or anticipatory death, is the shock involved. It is the primary factor. This shock affects the body as major surgery would. Shock is marked by a lowering of blood pressure, coldness of skin, rapid heartbeat and an acute sense of terror. Therefore, we may experience immediate physical problems upon learning of the death of our child. The physical problems we encounter include excessive tiredness, headaches, stomach problems, and strange heart activity. These may come at any time in our bereavement and often come and go.

Emotional or psychological shock is indeed of even larger significance. It is of unfathomable proportion. Initially there is alarm because in an instant our whole lives are changed: there is disbelief; the overwhelming reality is more than we can comprehend. We think there must be a mistake. Often we experience a numbness. Later we go through this feeling of numbness again, and it may last for weeks or months.

When numbness wears off, we go into our intense grief experience. There are tears, depression. We relive the events surrounding the death over and over. Usually by this time the family and friends have gone back to their own lives, and we are alone with this awful burden of grief. At this time the highly emotional experience may cause us to think we are mentally unstable, that we are losing our minds. Just remember that you are not alone, that the others of us who have had our children die in this manner have felt the same things, but don't hesitate to seek professional help if you feel you need it or if you appear to be "stuck" in any of the stages. With sudden death there is usually a feeling of guilt. It may be self-imposed or real. We remember punishments that were unresolved, arguments that were not reconciled, and there is always the question of "Could I have prevented it? We ask ourselves the question "Why" over and over. I know now that this question is often unanswerable - but we all ask anyway.

In sudden death we have no chance for closure; no chance to say good-bye. This adds to the burden as we think of what we Could have or Should have done. We are hindered in accepting our child's death by negative attitudes that arise from our questions and our need to place blame.

We have been hurt beyond our wildest dreams and must allow ourselves to express whatever emotion we may feel. It may not be pleasant for those around us, but it is necessary. We must work through our emotions, get them out. There are forms of denial, learn to recognize them and work through them. People release their emotions in different ways. Crying is help-ful and necessary. Talking is of utmost importance. This is one of the primary functions of The Compassionate Friends. We'll listen to one another where our friends are likely to hand us a drink or a tranquilizer as they grow weary of listening to us. We need to talk for months and sometimes years about our ex-perience. Many of our feelings may frighten us, but know that they are normal, natural, and to be expected. Even thoughts that we are losing our minds are normal. We've all felt that way. Just remember we are NOT losing our minds, it only feels that way.

The circumstances of sudden death cause loneliness. Few people can identify with us because our circumstances are practically unique. This uniqueness isolates us.

Another of our severe problems is often anger, which might be better described as rage. It can be anger focused on individuals who were responsible for the death of our child, at medical personnel who we feel did not do the right things to save our child, at God for letting this happen to our child, anger at people around us whose lives are happy and whose children are healthy. We may even feel anger at our child for dying and leaving us with such a burden of grief. Anger is normal but, if denied and repressed, can be turned inward and become expressed as depression. Depression can lead to thoughts of suicide. Get help if it last too long.

Anger gives us tremendous energy and that energy can be used. It can be focused on healthy outlets. For instance, take up a cause, work for stricter law enforcement against drunk drivers or gun control issues. Use that energy positively, it will give a sense of accomplishment and renewed self-esteem. Bereaved parents are in grave danger of drug and alcohol abuse, for these are tools that sometimes give temporary relief. Drugs and alcohol are merely means of putting off the grief process. Grief work will have to be done eventually and our literature tells us it is worse when put off or delayed.

With the death of a child we as parents experience the ultimate failure - we are supposed to be invincible where our children are concerned and now we have failed to keep our child alive! Suddenly our belief system is shattered. The suddenness of the death has robbed us of our confidence in ourselves. We have low self-esteem. We suffer from lack of motivation due to our severe fatigue. We have nothing left to believe in, not even God, for some. We are totally insecure. We are placed in the position of continuing to deteriorate or to begin to rebuild our lives by rebuilding our beliefs our self-confidence and our self-esteem. The choice is ours. Choose to live. Our children would want us to not only just live, but to continue to grow and love.

Fay Harden, TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

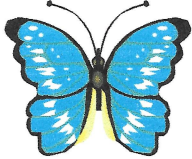


**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

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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.

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