



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

## DECEMBER 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

- Dec 4 General Sharing**  
Collection of gifts for First Step (see page 2)
- Dec 14 World Wide Candle Lighting (see page 3)**  
Collection of gifts for First Step (see page 2)
- Jan 1 General Sharing**
- Oct 9-11 2015 E. PA Regional Conference**

**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**

#### Chapter Leaders

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

#### Database Record Keeper

Frank Gomez

#### 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)

#### Love Gift Acknowledgements

Connie Nolan

#### Treasurer

Emil Nunez

#### Librarian

Carole Bailey

#### Chapter Advisors

Marie & Ken Hofmockel

#### Regional Coordinators

Ann Walsh 717-515-3000  
Bobbi Milne 215-801-2840

#### 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)

#### 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 MEMBERS**

**Beth Williams, son *Joey Burke* (33)**

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**REFRESHMENTS**

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.

**Cathy Breskman** in honor of all the children.

**Marilyn Toole** in honor of my son, on his birthday 11/3

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**LOVE GIFTS**

**Danielle & Joshua Graham** in loving memory of Danielle's brother, ***Jacob Murtha***

**Patricia & Lee Grossman** in loving memory of our daughter, ***Rachel Leah*** on her anniversary 12/5.

**Sigrid & Barry Snow** in loving memory of our son, ***Kevin*** on his anniversary 11/26.

**Merrily & Harry Spiess** in loving memory of our son, ***F. Ryan Spiess*** on his birthday 11/29 and our grandson, ***Charles Smith*** on his birthday 1/27.

**Priscilla Thoroughgood** in loving memory of my daughter, ***Kendra Enochs*** on her birthday 12/5. Happy Birthday Kendra Enochs, you are never forgotten.

**GIFTS FOR UNDER PRIVILEGED CHILDREN**

**FIRST STEP** is a program of Chester County for under privileged/handicapped children. For many years our Chapter has collected gifts for them. We will do so again this year, at our December 4th meeting & December 14th World Wide Candle Lighting Service (Children's Memorial Day) Program. The children are between the ages of 2 and 6. Both clothing and toys are welcome gifts. It is very rewarding to remember your child, by showing love to these children. Please add a tag that states suggested age and sex. You may sign it, "from your friend", or your child or sibling's name. This may be the only gift the child will receive. We appreciate your participation in this worthy cause.

**NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL**

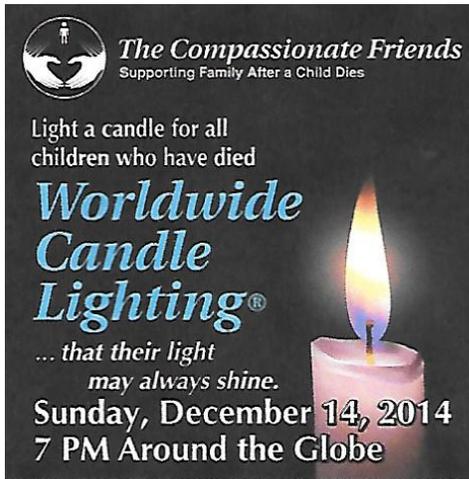
**We are asking if possible , would you please receive your newsletter by email.**

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**

**COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING**



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 17th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

**SPEAKER: Dr. Yvonne Kaye**

Dr. Yvonne Kaye is an international speaker with a wide range of subjects, including post traumatic stress disorder and bereavement, specializing in the death of children. She is a certified Thanatologist, veteran radio talk show host, author, and Interfaith Minister, believing in the power of the human spirit. She is a strong advocate of humor and spirituality, a Spiritual Coach and her philosophy is "Laughter is the miracle healer". Dr. Kaye received the prestigious Matty Muir Award 2005 for work with victims of crime. She has given much support for many years to TCF. Dr. Kaye has often been a Keynote speaker at Regional, National and International TCF Conferences. She has been a long time friend of the Valley Forge Chapter.

**The Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends will hold a candle lighting remembrance service on December 14th at 2 PM at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in the Fellowship Hall. (same place as our monthly sharing sessions are held). We chose 2 PM for our local service so that it would be available to everyone, including those who do not drive at night. We also urge you to light a candle in your home at 7PM. We hope you will take this opportunity to join us in remembering our children & siblings who have died, but will never be forgotten. Let us ensure that their light may always shine.**

**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.**

**DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

Chris Aiello, brother *Louis (Lou)* 12/24  
Lori Bartholomew, brother *Matthew* 12/17  
Eleanor Brennan, grandson *Jonathan Masiak* 12/20  
Ben & Cathy Breskman, son *Brian* 12/11  
Libby Cavallaro, sister *Theresa* 12/29  
Benjamin E. Cohen, daughter *Donna Lynne Cohen* 12/9/  
Anita Conway, son *Daniel* 12/9  
Jean & Bill Cotter, son *Patrick Cotter* 12/20  
Bobbie Coyle, son *Whitney Coyle* 12/23  
Janet Cozzone, daughter *Jesika* 12/5  
Adriene & Peter De Moerloose, daughter *Olivia* 12/30  
Tom & Marge Del Rosario, son *Dominic* 12/14  
Antoinette & John DiDonato, son *Kenneth (Kenny)* 12/15  
Joseph & Patsy Dooley, son *Peter J. Dooley* 12/22  
Justine Ellinger, daughter *Keira Ellinger* 12/11  
Bob & Dena Filipone, daughter *Denise* 12/13  
Bonnie Gardner, daughter *Michelle* 12/16  
Suze Goldberg, uncle *Neal* 12/14  
Jack & Freda Gross, daughter *Linda Joy Gross* 12/28  
Judy Kahl, son *Mark* 12/11  
Joan Kellett, son *Daniel Thomas Kellett* 12/7  
Wendy Kuhn, brother *David* 12/19  
Teresa & Bill Lattanze, daughter *Jodi Noell Lattanze* 12/19  
Kevin & Nancy McKelvey, son *Michael* 12/4  
Pat Miller, son *Nathan* 12/2  
Fran & Kathy Moran, daughter *Denise Nicole Moran* 12/31  
Ann Murray, son *Brian Rapoport* 12/2  
Bonnie Nimerfroh, son *David* 12/19  
Maurice & Ruth Onraet, son *Thomas* 12/19  
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Martin A Peters* 12/8  
Maureen & David Rich, daughter *Mallory Kirby Rich* 12/4  
Thelma Rosen, brother *David Beeler* 12/24  
E. Pearl & Ernest Smith, son *Tony* 12/23  
Patti & Glen Smith, son *Chris* 12/30  
Eileen Smith, son *Craig* 12/17

**DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS continued**

John & Rose Stanley, daughter *Susan Stanley* 12/4  
Ronda Stansbery, daughter *Susan Anne Stansbery Stamman* 12/22  
Edward & Mary Stimson, son *Keith Stimson* 12/29  
Priscilla Thoroughgood, daughter *Kendra Enochs* 12/5  
Judy Tomarelli, son *Daniel Robert Tomarelli* 12/19  
Jackie Ward, grandson *Anthony* 12/1  
Laura & Leo Weishew, brother *Steven McGowan* 12/28  
Pat Zimmerman, daughter *Gabrielle* 12/25

**DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES**

Nina Ansel, daughter *Jenny* - 12/21  
Carole Bailey, son *Matthew J. Bailey* - 12/21  
Richard & Jo Bewley, son *Kevin Bewley* - 12/29  
Lisa Bledy, sister *Danielle Bledy* - 12/4  
David Bonga, daughter *Amanda* - 12/31  
Catherine Chan, son *Chanlan Lee* - 12/19  
Tracy & Mike Collins, daughter *Krystal Chuck* - 12/5  
Martin & Mary Conway, son *Neal* - 12/10  
Carole and Kevin Creighton, son *Ryan Kent Creighton* - 12/6  
Reno & Bonnie Crescimone, son *Jonathan* - 12/21  
Bill & Donna Deasey, daughter *Michelle Deasey* - 12/19  
Helen Deery, son *Ronald J. Deery, Jr.* - 12/20  
Susan Dehlinger, daughter *Amy M Dehlinger* - 12/7  
Antoinette & John DiDonato, son *Kenneth (Kenny)* - 12/5  
Maureen & Jim Fleagle, son *Brian* - 12/11  
Lee & Patricia Grossman, daughter *Rachel Leah* - 12/5  
Michelle Hillstrom, daughter *Jen* - 12/20  
Anthony & Carol Iacobucci, son *Anthony Iacobucci* - 12/13  
Enid M. Irizarry, daughter *Lisette M. Molina* - 12/25  
Carl and Dorothy Johnson-Speight, daughter *Carlena Speight* - 12/13  
son *Khaalig Jabbar Johnson* - 12/6/  
Millie Jones, grandson *Shawn Dian* - 12/23  
Joan Kingslake, daughter *Ann Kingslake Woods* - 12/31  
Al & Sue Koenig, daughter *Emily Grace Koenig* - 12/11  
Howard & Stacy Koller, daughter *Kaitlin* - 12/18  
Teresa & Bill Lattanze, son *William Noel Lattanze* - 12/25  
Barb & Larry Lauchle, son *Gray* - 12/18  
Timothy & Maxine Lurowist, daughter *Kristine* - 12/24  
Barbara McClenahan, son *David McClenahan* - 12/12  
Norine & William McDevitt, Jr., son *Sean Francis McDevitt* - 12/6

**DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED**

**Alfred J. Michini**, son *Alfred J. Michini, II* - 12/14  
**Alexandra Milas**, brother *Nicholas Stathes* - 12/19  
**Gerald & Margaret Milice**, son *Gerald Milice* - 12/11  
**Greg & Mary Miller**, son *David* - 12/3  
**Audrey Morasco**, son *Christopher Morasco* - 12/27  
**Emil Nunez**, son *Oliver Nunez* - 12/24  
**Carol & Dennis O'Connor**, brother *Jack Coladonato* - 12/3  
**Roy Redman**, daughter *Linda Inez Redman* - 12/16/  
**Tony & Toni Riccardi**, son *David Riccardi* - 12/1  
**Elise Rice**, son *Raymond Anthony Rice* - 12/9  
**Daune Ring**, daughter *Chloe* - 12/29  
**Margaret & Robert Rooney**, daughter *Sharon Rooney* - 12/8  
**Beth Schad**, son *Gage* - 12/27  
**Melissa Schnitzler**, brother *Richard "Jon" Masso* - 12/21  
**Abigail Schwartz**, mother *Barbra* - 12/26  
**Art & Carol Silverman**, daughter *Cheryl Beth Silverman* - 12/16  
**Mike & Beverly Smith**, son *Ryan* - 12/11  
**Lisa M Spinks**, brother *Robert* - 12/9  
**Ronda Stansbery**, daughter *Susan Anne Stansbery Stamman* - 12/22  
**Fred & Irene Sutton**, mother(Fred's) *Pearl Collins* - 12/19

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**BEATITUDES FOR THOSE WHO COMFORT**

Blessed are those who do not use tears to measure the true feelings of the bereaved.  
Blessed are those who do not always have a quick “comforting” answer.  
Blessed are those who do not make judgments on the bereaved’s closeness to God by their reaction to the loss of their loved one.  
Blessed are those who hear with their hearts and not with their minds.  
Blessed are those who allow the bereaved enough time to heal.  
Blessed are those who admit their uncomfortableness and put it aside to help the bereaved.  
Blessed are those who do not give unwanted advice.  
Blessed are those who continue to call, visit, and reach out when the crowd has dwindled and the wounded are left standing alone.  
Blessed are those who know the worth of each person as a unique individual and do not pretend that they can be replaced or forgotten.  
Blessed are those who realize the fragility of bereavement and handle it with an understanding shoulder and a loving heart.

*Jacki Deems*

**SHARED THOUGHTS ON GETTING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS**

As we approach the holidays it is normal for our fears to become magnified. The holidays put an extra burden on us physically, financially, and emotionally, this can be an overwhelming time. Sometimes friends and family forget the stress and depression we are coping with.

It is unfair to expect the non-bereaved to understand what we are experiencing, and to know the length of time it takes to work through our grief. Before our loss we could not fathom the depth of despair it takes to get through our anguish. This may be a good time to be honest, and tell family and friends, "we are both physically, and emotionally drained, we plan to participate in the holidays as much as we are capable. But, that we do need understanding and to be excused from painful gatherings, so we can grieve, remember our child or sibling and heal through doing these things." When responding to invitations, it is helpful to be very open (but kind), and ask them to not pressure us to do more than we are capable.

Part of our celebration is to reminisce the beautiful time our family was all-intact and enjoying just being together. Now we face these same holidays knowing the circle will never again be complete, the intensity of it all makes us afraid. We are aware of the shattered dreams and how our future will always remain somewhat fragmented. It is very difficult for newly bereaved to accept that it will get any better. But, those of us who have more time in our bereavement know the pain will soften, but special occasions will always tug at our emotional stability. We have also learned that those occasional tears are OK, and now that we are much stronger we can tolerate the down times, for we have much more resilience.

Frequently, we try to take on more than we can handle. It is important to not over burden ourselves for that increases our fatigue, and lowers our self-esteem when we can't fulfill our commitment. You may want to re-evaluate your traditions, and decide which ones are really important to you, and are they worth keeping.

For those of us who have been able to maintain our relationship with our Supreme Being find it helpful to concentrate on our spirituality, rather than the commercialism of the holidays. It often helps to do something to commemorate our children or sibling - a remembrance service, light a candle, buy an ornament, write notes to our loved one, visit the grave, only you and your immediate family can decide what will get you through the holidays. It often helps to set aside some special time for our grief, to deal with our feelings, and express our love for our child or sibling in private.

Remember, getting through the holidays will help us take one more step in our healing process. It is unfortunate that we have to experience this pain to grow, and regain control of our life. Each of these hurdles helps to strengthen us, to get us through today, and into tomorrow, where we may find hope and peace.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

**We wish all of you a very meaningful Holiday,  
May love be what you remember the most.**

**SANTA LOST A CHILD**

Santa lost a child.  
You can see it in his eyes.  
There's a spot of deep dark wisdom there.  
Behind the krinkling brightly twinkling  
hides the tender sadness of a long lost love.

Santa lost his only child.  
You can see it in his hands.  
They are soft and sure when he holds a  
young first born.  
They are folded firmly with respect when he  
counsels an only  
on what the future may bring.

Santa lost a daughter.  
You can see it in how he is with girls.  
He beams bright with glee as he beholds the  
princess in each,  
the pretty one who will live long ... and  
healthy ... and happily ever after.  
May theirs be the dreams that come true.

It was well before the days of yore  
when Santa was just a mortal man,  
when his soulmate Jess could bear but a  
single child,  
when that child blossomed into a practically  
perfect little girl,  
when that cherished little girl had just turned nine.  
That's when the illness took its wretched hold  
and reduced her to a wisp.  
And, on a cold gray day, she blew away in the wind.

Santa lost a child, his only child,  
his darling daughter, the love of his life.  
Now you know why Santa and his wife  
forsook the mortal world.  
And now you know why Santa loves every child  
as if each were his very own.

*R. M. Mebane*

**I WILL NOT FORGET YOU**

I will not forget you.  
Boy with hazel eyes.  
I will see you shining  
In every new sunrise.

I will not forget you  
Child with golden hair.  
I will feel your presence  
You are every where.

I will not forget  
Your grin with dimples deep.  
I'll hold you in my dreams  
While in my deepest sleep.

I will not forget you  
Sweet memories make me glad.  
I will not forget you  
Not all the love we had.

I will not forget  
Your laughter or your smile.  
You'll be right beside me  
And walk my every mile.

No, I will not forget you  
Your spirit fills my soul.  
I will not forget my son  
Your memory keeps me whole.

*Jacqueline Brown*  
Peace Valley TCF  
New Britain, PA

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*Tears don't erase all the hurt,  
Tears don't bring the dead to life,  
But tears do help to ease the pain.*

*Phillip W. Williams*

*Barbara Lazear Ascher's brother, Bobby, died of AIDS at the age 31. Following is an excerpt of a beautifully written sensitive article describing the author's struggle with grief. "A Brother's Death" was originally printed in the New York Times Magazine.*

When we first learned of Bobby's illness, it seemed incomprehensible that this could be happening to our baby brother. My sister and I began a journey into paralysis. There were days when it seemed we had to concentrate on putting one foot in front of the other if we were to walk at all. If we traveled more than a couple of blocks, we were exhausted for the rest of the day.

We were hungry, we weren't hungry. We made chocolate chip cookies and chocolate brownies and didn't eat them. We opened and closed the refrigerator door, looking for something that might cushion the pain, fill the chasm that was opening from within.

Now I realize that this was the beginning of grief which starts in the stomach, yawning like the gaping mouth in Munch's painting. "The Scream." But what did we know of grief? We were young, our beloved had not yet died. I began to understand that grieving is like walking. The urge is there, but you need a guiding hand; you need someone to teach you how.

I went to speak with a wise and trusted minister at my church who warned that there were bad times ahead. The death of a sibling, he said, grievous in itself, is also a startling reminder of our own mortality. I suppose it's not dissimilar to the time in youth when we first learned of our origins and began to understand -- if they made me, then they can make another. After that we became the nervous sentinels of our territory. When a sibling dies, the absolute certainty of death replaces the cherished illusion that maybe we'll be the exceptions. When a sibling dies, death tugs at our own shirttails. There's no unclasping its persistent grip. "You too," it says. "Yes, even you."

When you are new to grief, you learn that there's no second-guessing it. It will have its way with you. Don't be fooled by the statistics you read: Widows have one bad year; orphans three. Grief doesn't read schedules.

One morning three weeks after Bobby died, I arose feeling happy and energetic. Well, now, I thought, I guess we've taken care of that. Wrong. The next morning I was awakened by a wail I thought was coming from the storm outside until I realized it was coming from me.

Grief will fool you with its disguises. Some days you insist that you're fine -- you're just angry at a friend who said the wrong thing. One day I wept into the lettuce and peaches at our local market when an acquaintance approached to scold me for my stand in an old battle. Of course, we both assumed that she was responsible for my tears.

You learn that you can cry and stop and laugh and even follow a taxi driver's commands to "Have a nice day," and then cry again. You learn that there is no such thing as crying forever. Three months ago I was certain that I would never be happy again. I was wrong.

Grief is like the wind. When it's blowing hard, you adjust your sails and run before it. It blows too hard, you stay in the harbor, close the hatches and don't take calls. When it's gentle, you go sailing, have a picnic, take a swim.

You go wherever it takes you. There are no bulwarks to withstand it. Should you erect one, it will eventually tire of the game and blow the walls in.

We cannot know another's grief, as deeply personal as love and pain. I cannot measure my own against the sorrow of my brother's friends who must wonder every day which among them will be next... I shy away from the magnitude of my brother's own grief when, upon being diagnosed, he heard the final click of a door as it closed on possibility.

A friend of mine said of her son when he died at 30, "He was just beginning to look out at the world and make maps." So was my brother. And then there was no place to go.

*Barbara Lazear Ascher, NY, NY*

**HELP FOR THE HOLIDAYS****YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

Holidays are often difficult for anyone who has experienced the death of someone loved. Rather than times of family togetherness, sharing and thanksgiving, holidays can bring feelings of sadness, loss and emptiness.

**LOVE DOES NOT END WITH DEATH**

Since love does not end with death, holidays may result in a renewed sense of personal grief – a feeling of loss unlike that experienced in the routine of daily living. Society encourages you to join in the holiday spirit, but all around you the sounds, sights and smells trigger memories of the one you love who has died.

No simple guidelines exist that will take away the hurt you are feeling. We hope, however, the following suggestions will help you better cope with your grief during this joyful, yet painful, time of the year. As you read through this, remember that by being tolerant and compassionate with yourself, you will continue to heal in your personal grief experience.

**TALK ABOUT YOUR GRIEF**

During the holiday season, don't be afraid to express your feelings of grief. Ignoring your grief won't make the pain go away and talking about it openly often makes you feel better. Find caring friends and relatives who will listen – without judging you. They will help make you feel understood.

**ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY STRESS**

You may already feel stressed so don't over-extend yourself. Avoid isolating yourself, but be sure to recognize the need to have special time for yourself. Realize also that merely "keeping busy" won't distract you from your grief. Experience suggests that it only increases stress and postpones the need to talk out thoughts and feelings related to your grief.

**BE WITH SUPPORTIVE, COMFORTING PEOPLE**

Identify those friends and relatives who understand that the holiday season can increase your sense of loss and who will allow you to talk openly about your feelings. Find those persons who encourage you to be yourself and accept your feelings both happy and sad.

**MENTION THE NAME OF THE PERSON WHO HAD DIED**

Include the person's name in your holiday conversation. If you are able to talk candidly, other people are more likely to recognize your need to remember that special person who was an important part of your life.

**DO WHAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU DURING THE HOLIDAYS**

Well-meaning friends and family often try to prescribe what is good for you during the holidays. Instead of going along with their plans, focus on what you personally want to do. Discuss your wishes with a caring, trusted friend. Talking about these wishes will help you to clarify what it is you want to do during the holidays. As you become aware of your needs, share them with your friends and family.

*(continued on page 11)*

**BE TOLERANT OF YOUR PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL LIMITS**

Feelings of loss will probably leave you fatigued. Your low energy level may naturally slow you down. Respect what your body and mind are telling you and lower your own expectations about being at your peak during the holiday season.

**EXPRESS YOUR FAITH**

During the holidays, you may find a renewed sense of faith or discover a new set of beliefs. Associate with people who understand and respect your need to talk about these beliefs. If your faith is important, you may want to attend a holiday service or special religious ceremony.

**EMBRACE YOUR TREASURE OF MEMORIES**

Memories are one of the legacies that exit after the death of someone loved. And holidays always make you think about times past. Instead of ignoring these memories, share them with your family and friends. Keep in mind that memories are tinged with both happiness and sadness. If your memories bring laughter, smile. If your memories bring sadness, then it's all right to cry. Memories that were made in love – no one can ever take them away from you.

**RENEW YOUR RESOURCES FOR LIVING**

Spend time thinking about the meaning and purpose of your life. The death of one loved creates opportunities for taking inventory of your life – past, present and future. The combination of a holiday and a loss naturally results in looking inward and assessing your individual situation. Make the best use of this time to define the positive things in life that surround you.

**PLAN AHEAD FOR FAMILY GATHERINGS**

Decide the family traditions you want to continue and the new ones you would like to begin following the death of someone loved. Structure your holiday time. This will help you anticipate activities, rather than just reacting to whatever happens. Getting caught off guard can create feelings of panic, fear and anxiety during a time of the year when your feelings of grief are already heightened. As you make your plans, however, leave room to change them if you feel it is appropriate.

**AS YOU APPROACH THE HOLIDAYS, REMEMBER: GRIEF IS BOTH A NECESSITY AND A PRIVILEGE**

It comes as a result of giving and receiving love. Don't let anyone take your grief away. Love yourself. Be patient with yourself. And allow yourself to be surrounded by loving and caring people

*Dr. Alan Wolfelt*



**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.

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