

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

## MARCH 2013

### 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.



### Valley Forge Chapter

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#### Regional Coordinators

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### Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of interest Please Mark Your Calendar

- Mar 7 General Sharing & Death by Suicide  
Sibling Sharing, ages high school & older
- Apr 7 General Sharing,  
Sibling Sharing, ages high school & older
- Jul 5-7, 2013 TCF National Conference  
Sheraton Boston Hotel, Boston, MA

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**

#### 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.

**NEW MEMBERS**

**Joanne Cooper**, son *Ben* (newborn)  
daughter *Katy* (9 months)  
**Patricia & Lee Grossman**, daughter *Rachel Leah Grossman* (32)  
**Adam Grossman**, sister *Rachel Leah Grossman* (32)

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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.

**Nina Bernstein**, in memory of my son, *Andrew Voluck* on his anniversary 2/9  
**Rhonda & Frank Gomez**, in honor of Rhonda's brother.  
**Marie & Ken Hofmockel**, in memory of our son, *Douglas* on his anniversary 2/7  
**Marilyn Toole** in memory of my son, *Ted* on his anniversary 2/26

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**LOVE GIFTS**

**Nina Bernstein** in memory of my son, *Andrew Voluck* on his anniversary Feb 9<sup>th</sup>.  
**Marcia & Harold Epstein** in loving memory of our grandson,  
*Andrew Voluck* on his anniversary Feb 9<sup>th</sup>.  
**Freda & Jack Gross** in memory of our beloved daughter, *Linda* on her birthday Dec 28.  
**Vivian, Kenneth & Ken Jr. Maahs** in memory of our beloved daughter/sister  
*Kirsten Allison Dawn Maahs* on her birthday March 22<sup>nd</sup>. & anniversary Jan 18<sup>th</sup>.  
**Elaine, Jim & Patrick Madden** in loving memory of our son and brother,  
*Andrew* whose anniversary is March 6th.  
**Toni & Tony Riccardi** in loving memory of our son,  
*David Riccardi* whose birthday was Feb 17<sup>th</sup>.  
**Nancy & Art Singer** in loving memory of our son, *Jeffrey Vincent Singer*  
whose birthday & anniversary are March 9<sup>th</sup>.

**MEETING CANCELLATION NOTIFICATION**

It is impossible to notify all members who are planning to attend a meeting. If there is a need to cancel a TCF meeting due to inclement weather, power shortage or any situations that may occur preventing safe travel, **Please view the Valley Forge web site: [www.tcfvalleyforge.org](http://www.tcfvalleyforge.org)**, for the latest update or call the TCF phone 484-919-0820.  
We have approximately 600 in our database mailing list. Not knowing who plans to attend, this would be an impossible task to contact everyone by telephone.

**The Compassionate Friends  
36th National Conference**



**For further information  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)**

**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**

**Dr. Heidi Horsley, Dr. Gloria Horsley**, founders of "Open to Hope" Foundation and **Phil Horsley** (Chair of TCF Foundation's Board of Trustees), a family united after the loss of sibling and son **Scott**, will combine to welcome you as Opening Keynoters at the National Conference.

**Tina Chery** who, after the murder of her son **Louis**, created the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute with a mission to create and support an environment where families can live in peace and unity.

**Ken Druck**, bereaved parent, founder of the **Jenna Druck Foundation**, and one of the nation's pioneers in personal transformation including healing after loss.

**Bill Hancock**, director of the Bowl Championship Series (college football), author of *Riding with the Blue Moth*, and father of **Will**, who was killed during the January 27, 2001 crash of an airplane carrying members of the Oklahoma State University men's basket team.

**Hotel Reservations Now being Accepted!**

You can now make reservations for the conference host hotel. We recommend making hotel reservations now. This is totally separate from making conference reservations. Most often the reserved block of rooms at the reduced rate are sold out. The Sheraton Boston Hotel requires a payment of the first night. This is refundable if you cancel 72 hours prior to your stay. To reserve your room online, please go to Online Reservations or reservations directly to the hotel at 617-236-2000. Room charge is \$129 per night plus 14.45% tax. The hotel is about 3 miles from the airport. Ultimate Shuttle (888-487-4379) is available around the clock for \$14. If you wish to spend additional time touring the area, the reduced room rate is available days before and after the conference. On-site parking for conference guests is \$39 per night or Valet \$46.00 per night. The driving time from Philadelphia is approximately 5 hrs.

**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](http://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.

**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.**

**MARCH BIRTHDAYS**

Catherine Dardozzi, son *James Dardozzi* 3/7  
Janie & Joseph Dougherty, son *Brendan K. Dougherty* 3/29  
Richard & Martha Fenoglio, daughter *Judith Fenoglio Daw* 3/30  
Sarah Fishel, daughter *Allyson* 3/26  
Bill & Karen Flavin, son *Chad Flavin* 3/7  
Lisa Foos, son *Curtis* 3/14  
Jo Ann Gatlin, daughter *Lisa Diane Gatlin* 3/20  
Marco & Patricia Giubilato, daughter *Robin Giubilato Zarelli* 3/18  
Elizabeth Haney, son *Christian* 3/6  
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Kathleen Heiss McCaughan* 3/25  
Margaret C Jones, son *Christopher* 3/17  
Gloria and Jerry Koval, son *Steven* 3/11  
Terry Kozlewski, son *Frankie* 3/12  
Tracey-Anne Langley, sister *Nataly* 3/25  
Julie Lauderback, son *Donovan Lauderback* 3/5  
Fred & Kay Lokoff, daughter *Terry Lokoff* 3/17  
Vivian & Kenneth Maahs, daughter *Kirsten* 3/22  
Lorelei Malandra, brother *Jeff Singer* 3/9  
Tom & Charmaine Malik, son *Danny Malik* 3/3  
Jeff and Kathy McCarron, daughter *Sarah* 3/30  
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan* 3/11  
Mary & Gregg Miller, son *David* 3/26  
Paul & Jackie Mimless, daughter *Stephanie* 3/20  
Beth Mohr, brother *Matthew Bock* 3/18  
John Mscisz, grandson *Liam John Willamson* 3/8  
Danielle Murtha, brother *Jake* 3/27  
Aminah Na'im, son *Dawann* 3/3  
Marie O'Connon, son *Curran J* 3/27  
Terri Pfeiffer, son *Matthew* 3/6  
Raymond & Marguerite Posluszny, son *Alex Posluszny* 3/22  
Lyla T. Poulson, daughter *Kimberly Poulson* 3/4  
Rusty & Anthony Puglisi, son *Michael Puglisi* 3/5  
Susan Reynolds, son *Craig Anderson* 3/24  
Thelma Rosen, nephew *Charles Carswell* 3/26  
Lisa and John Russo, son *Casey* 3/17  
Bonnie Russo, son *Matthew* 3/29

**MARCH BIRTHDAYS continued**

Susan & John Rutland, son *Justin Rutland* 3/28  
Carol Sannella, son *David Sannella* 3/18  
Abigail Schwartz, brother *Jake* 3/27  
Arthur & Nancy Singer, son *Jeffrey Vincent Singer* 3/9  
Phyllis Sisenwine, daughter *Jill* 3/12  
Jeffrey Smith, son *Jacob Smith* 3/2  
Mary Ellen Swider, daughter *Kelly Swider* 3/25  
Allan Thomas, son *Vernon Odins* 3/5  
Peggy Tweed, son *Matthew Bock* 3/18  
Dorothy Washington, daughter *Michelle Washington* 3/2  
Peggy West, daughter *Kelly Ann West* 3/8  
Theresa Wigand, daughter *Dawn* 3/7  
Mary Willinger, sister *Annette* 3/6

**MARCH ANNIVERSARIES**

Jovanna & Joseph Bevilacqua, son *Donato "Danny" Bevilacqua* - 3/27  
Marvin & Wilma Bordetsky, daughter *Noreen Bordetsky Cook* - 3/24  
Gary Chavez, wife *JoAnn* - 3/31  
Rose Marie Cote, son *Mark J. Cote* - 3/26  
Jamie (Germaine) Cote Weaver, brother *Mark Cote* - 3/26  
Mr. & Mrs. S. Cotteta, granddaughter *Denise* - 3/28/  
Robert Dilbeck, son *Daniel Dilbeck* - 3/25  
Linda DiPasquale, son *Thomas* - 3/24  
Ginny Ebert, son *Jason* - 3/25  
Tom & Irene Edmunds, son *Kyle Derek Edmunds* - 3/17  
Bob & Dena Filipone, daughter *Denise* - 3/8  
Rita & Thomas Gibbons, son *Paul Gibbons* - 3/20  
Herb & Karen Grant, son *Ryan* - 3/8  
Ronald J. & Margaret Halas, daughter *Desiree A. Halas* - 3/11  
Othell & William Heaney, son *Kevin* - 3/10  
Brad Ingerman, son *Justin* - 3/18  
Michael & Betsy Jarrett, son *Michael Jarrett* - 3/10  
Jacquie Kilroy, son *Shilen Kenneth* - 3/21  
Suellen & Stephen King, daughter *Danelle Rossi* - 3/12  
Susan Lipson, nephew *Justin Ingerman* - 3/18  
Elaine & James Madden, son *Andrew Madden* - 3/6/  
Lorelei Malandra, brother *Jeff Singer* - 3/9

**MARCH ANNIVERSARIES continued**

Dan Markle, brother *Matt Markle* - 3/3  
Anne McClenachan, brother *Andy McClenachan* - 3/30  
Kevin & Nancy McKelvey, son *Michael* - 3/30  
Barbara Meisenhelder, daughter *Renee Meisenhelder* - 3/2  
Bob & Janet Milnazik, daughter *Kim* - 3/3  
Beth Mohr, brother *Matthew Bock* - 3/16  
Ann Murray, son *Brian Rapoport* - 3/9  
George & Estelle Null, daughter *Kathleen "Kathy" Null* - 3/7  
Betty & Richard Owens, Sr., son *Richard H. Owens, Jr.* - 3/26  
Michele Paul, sister *Desiree Halas* - 3/11  
Thomas & Mary Jane Poore, son *Bradley Poore* - 3/19  
Kelly Rossi, brother *Kevin* - 3/8  
Becky Rotkowski, brother *Brian* - 3/14  
Arthur & Nancy Singer, son *Jeffrey Vincent Singer* - 3/9  
James & Betty Treichler, son *James Treichler Jr.* - 3/13  
Peggy Tweed, son *Matthew Bock* - 3/16  
Hans & Margaret Van Naerssen, son *Eric* - 3/25  
Linda Weaver, son *Damon Weaver* - 3/18  
Laurie Wyche, son *Jameson Wyche* - 3/1  
Pat Zimmerman, daughter *Gabrielle* - 3/23

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**I'LL NEVER BE THE SAME**

Confusion reigns within my heart,  
Within my soul, because  
I know I cannot ever be  
The woman I once was.

The cruelest nightmares come to pass  
Life's bitterest pill to swallow;  
In light of this, I can endure  
All else that's yet to follow.

How can I be complete and whole  
When part of me is gone ...  
a special part ...a precious part ...  
The part that was my son?

There's nothing that can fill the empty  
Spaces that remain;  
I've tried and failed so many times,  
I cannot try again.

Conceived in love, how gratefully  
I bore you ... filled with pride;  
A bit of my heart, a bit of my soul  
Went with you when you died.

No trying to regain the past ...  
That's all a bitter sham ...  
It's time that I resign myself  
To being who I am.

One cannot lose a child to death  
And still remain the same,  
Untouched by tears of emptiness,  
Undaunted by the pain.

To be the woman I've become  
(Not acting out a part) ...  
A mother with a shattered dream  
And a broken heart

*Peggy Kociscin, Albuquerque, NM*

**SHARED THOUGHTS ON CARING FOR FRIENDS & FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

Frequently, the change of seasons adds to our depression. In the spring, we look forward to the new plant life popping up all around us, bearing the fact its dormant life was only temporary. Often, when the evidence of spring does not lift our spirits as it has in the past, it iterates to the low level our depression has descended. We begin to question why our beloved children and siblings can not return to us. It can even make us feel we are less important than the nature we view.

When we are in the pit of depression, we can not see beyond our loss. It is important to have someone who will not immediately encourage us to see a doctor to prescribe anti-depressant drugs, so they can shift the responsibility of helping us to someone else. We need someone who is willing to listen to our rambling and repetitive talking about our loss, and will not pass judgment, even though they do not understand us. But hopefully, they will gently encourage positive thinking. We need to be accepted for what little we can give in return. When we lean on those who help us, it is essential to let them know we are doing the best we can in our very abnormal situation, and appreciate their allowing us to talk about that which is very healing in our grief.

Relationships with our family members, are also important. Our remaining children need to know they are as equally important, and loved as much as our deceased. By putting our dead child on a high pedestal, the remaining siblings can feel they are not as precious to us. It is best to be verbal, and not assume they understand our feelings. It is very normal for siblings to find more comfort in sharing with friends, or other siblings, rather than parents. It is too much for them to take on their parent's grief, and it hurts too much to see parents cry. They have had both the terrible loss of a sibling and a stable parent (as they knew them), and they too, are fragile.

The marriage is under tremendous strain. Both are so overwhelmed with grief, and don't have the strength to support the other. It is like leaning on a bent twig. If we harbor little grievances, all sorts of held in resentment may surface, exploding into serious problems. Most sexual relations habits will change, and frequently, in opposite directions. It is important to try and resolve continued absence of sexual relationships. This takes communicating with one another. A spouse can not fully understand or solve their mate's grief, but we must accept each other's style of grieving. The accusation of blaming a mate for the death is probably the most damaging of all. If this continues to smolder, it may be helpful to include a third party, such as a psychiatrist, pastor, or some form of grief counselor. No bereaved parent can handle being accused of their child's death. We must attempt a resolution, we can't afford to lose our marriage along with our child. Sometimes an experienced grief specialist can help clear our vision. It is very normal to blame someone for the death. But, most often in a family situation, the death could not have been prevented, or the party being accused was acting to the best of their ability. We must forgive, for they also loved the deceased, and are hurting badly

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

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"Commitment to life and living for yourself, spouse and family; and commitment to your child's memory are four choices you must make. Each one requires perserverance and patience. Failure to make these commitments will extend the tragedy by increasing the loss."

*Nancy Hogan*

**HOW WILL WE BE CHANGED**

No one chooses most of the events that happen in life. No one chooses to be born at a certain time. When I graduated from high school, the economic conditions and employment possibilities were far different from those faced by this year's graduates. No one can choose their parents, and few choose to be bereaved parents. In some things, the only choice we have is in how we will respond. Our child is dead; there is no way that fact can be changed. But we are alive - ours is the life for which we are responsible: Responsible to God, to ourselves, and to the child who is dead.

Every event changes us. The question is, "How will we be changed?" The death of our child changed and is changing us. The question is how.

When we think about how we change, some interesting direction words are useful. How about "growing" or "shrinking?" Does the death of our child make us grow and become more human and more what we hope to be, or does it make us pull back inside ourselves, afraid to reach out to new experiences, because we are too afraid to hurt?

How about "deeper" and "shallower?" Does the death of our child deepen our understanding of the possibilities of human life and love, or make us retreat to the safe shallows of well-lighted and known waters?

How about "open" and "closed?" does the death of our child open us to another tragedy and give us compassion for those who hurt as we do, or does it close us in on grief, so that it starts to eat away at our insides?

TCF says that it merely offers friendship and support to bereaved parents, but it seems to me that it is more than that. TCF is a group of bereaved parents who have chosen a direction, which I describe as "growing, deepening, and open." To be sure, we are in different stages; and it is we as individuals who determine our direction.

Perhaps we need to learn to speak more directly to others who seem to be changing in other directions. There are those who are afraid to grow for fear that they will move away from the place where their child was. Others are afraid to be open because they don't know that when they let others' pain in, they also let their own pain out.

Maybe that's what the line in TCF's statement of purpose is about - "positive resolution of their grief." How can grief be resolved positively? The answer is in the positive ways we change. Our child did not die for us to die, too. Our child was moving to deeper and deeper understandings - can we do less? Our child was being opened every day to new experiences and different people. Why not continue that in us?

We did not choose the event, but we choose the direction. One of the central verses in the Old Testament is, "I have set before you this day life and death; therefore, choose life." It seems to me, that in facing death, The Compassionate Friends have chosen life.

*Dennis Klass,*  
TCF - St. Louis, MO

### On Sibling Grief From a Grieving Sibling

I am a surviving sibling. Fifteen months ago I was not even familiar with the term...now I am one! How am I doing? What are the guidelines to measure my progress? Why can't I remember when I was told of my brother's death...or the days following the accident for that matter? Did I go crazy? Was it yesterday, or was it over a year ago? Did I laugh just today when I never thought I would laugh again? What is this peaceful feeling that I feel from time to time? Is it healing?

Lee, 29, was my little brother. I remember trying to alternately protect or tease him, make him laugh or make him cry. He was like having a real live baby doll to play with since I was 10 years older than he. (Our Mother said he was the cleanest little boy in the neighborhood. I guess having 3 older sisters is the reason for that!!!)

How can I explain the pain I felt on learning of his accident. I wanted to go to him right away to see that he was OK, but our cousin, Judy, said that wasn't possible. I guess that was when I was told that he was dead...but I don't remember that. I only remember screaming.

When was it that I began to heal? Probably at the same time that I thought I was going totally, certifiably crazy! Then, someone told me about The Compassionate Friends and what they did. I wondered if they could help me but doubted that they could. After all, how could they understand how much I hurt at having lost my precious baby brother or how close we had always been and how he always helped me. Why should they even care about me? But, you know what...they did help. With the help and support of this group of wonderful caring people, I am alive today and working toward a fruitful life. I will never be the same as I was before June 18, 1992, but I truly believe I have become a better person.

While Lee's life taught me so much, his death taught me some invaluable lessons. I have learned to become more aware of life and my own mortality, and am more attuned to other needs. I no longer take anything for granted. I miss him terribly but take solace in the belief that he is happy in his new world and that one day we will be reunited.

Sibling grief takes a tremendous amount of time and work. Sometimes just thinking of my brother, looking at his picture, or hearing his favorite song, "God Bless America," reduces me to a teary mess. Sometimes these same things make me smile. But, I am surviving and have developed a new perspective on life. I am closer to and cherish my family more than ever and realize how very important they are. I am dedicated to helping other surviving siblings work through their grief. I pray daily for peace, not only for myself and my family, but for everyone making this journey through grief. One thing that I have found to be most helpful during the past fifteen months of grief work has been to talk about and to be honest about my feelings. I encourage siblings (and parents) to try to hook up with a support group such as The Compassionate Friends to talk out your feelings and concerns. After all, we've already paid an extremely high price to join this group...the life of our loved one...so why not take advantage of what they have to offer.

You may even find yourself helping someone else (even though you might not believe that now.)

*Sunday Lee Stanton*  
Wyoming Valley, PA

### Random Reflections

It's been a year now  
And the books say I should be  
Getting back to "normal."

But I still can't pass your picture  
On the bookcase without  
Touching your face.

I still wake up in the night  
Sometimes and can almost  
Hear your voice in the quiet.

I still run to the window when the  
Dogs bark at night with the hope  
In the back of my mind that somehow  
You've wandered into the yard.

I still whisper your name into the wind  
When I walk down our lane in the still  
Of evening and strain to hear an answer.

When I'm troubled and upset  
I still talk to you like  
I always did and  
Imagine the advice you'd give me.

I still stop on our dark country road  
Sometime and turn off the car engine  
And lights and wait and hope that  
I can see or hear you.

It's been a year now and the  
Memories are still so vivid  
That I can almost touch them.

It's been a year now and I know  
With all my heart that your  
Presence will never fade in my mind.

*Tammy Walmann* – Miami Co., KS



**OUR LOGO: ITS MYSTERY AND ITS HISTORY**

Are the hands reaching out or letting go? Are they the hands of one person or two? These are questions often heard from new members,...so we asked the people who know.

Much of the beauty of our logo lies in the fact that there are no definitive answers to its symbolism. At first glance its meaning seems obvious; yet as you look more closely, these questions may arise.

The hands represent different things to us at different periods in our grief journeys. To the newly bereaved, the hands reach out toward him or her, offering comfort and support. Later in our grief journeys, they may symbolize the process of letting go, of coming to terms with the child's death, or acknowledgment that the child is no longer a part of our earthly existence.

Still later in our grief journeys, we begin to reinvest in life and reach out toward others. Then, *our* hands become the hands which are extended to the newly bereaved. ***The circle is complete:*** a circle of love and understanding, with the child at the center.

Joe Lawley, Founder-Chairman of the Society of the Compassionate Friends (Coventry, England, 1969) supplied the details on how the logo came about. Help came from John Fisher Design, Marketing, LTD, Maggie and John Fisher (Coventry) – whose 8 ½ year-old daughter, Clare, was killed on November 17, 1974 –wrote: "We are mobile, immediately available, and ready, both physically and spiritually, to begin work for the Friends. Please use us".

The logo first appeared on the June 1975 newsletter. Originally, the logo was a bright emerald green; subsequently, in 1977, the general universal color of royal blue with white was used and continues to this day.

*Joyce Andrews*  
From "Friend Caring & Sharing"

**MY SWING**

Out in the backyard  
Was the most wonderful thing,  
From a huge maple tree  
There hung my swing.

When I had a problem  
A bad day at school,  
Straight to my swing  
That's what I'd do!

I'd swing away worries  
Swing high in the air,  
When I was there swinging  
I hadn't a care.

Now I am much older  
The pains run so deep,  
I have much depression  
And I cannot sleep.

Now I am childless  
I don't have my boy,  
My reason for living  
The source of my joy.

My life is so different  
Not a minute goes by,  
When I can become tearful  
I just start to cry.

My husband's so patient  
With me all these years,  
He never stops trying  
To stop all my tears.

He gave me a gift  
Only a true friend can bring,  
He gave me back comfort  
He gave me my swing!

*Diane Hornis*  
Alive Alone Newsletter, Feb. 1999

## **GUIDELINES FOR GRIEVING COUPLES**

Realize the death of your child will hurt more than you imagined. It will rearrange your life and world view. Your relationship with your partner will be stretched. There are some things you can do to reduce strain on your relationship.

You and your partner will grieve differently. Let go of the assumption that you "ought" to do it alike. Respectfully make room for each other's style.

Increase the amount of time you spend in each other's company. Listen to each other as much as you can. Do special little things for each other.

Realize you cannot meet all your partner's needs. You have limits. You are both overextended. Do seek appropriate outside support when you need it.

Focus on what you need. Let go of trying to get your partner to do something different about his or her own grief.

Grief takes its time and is not very predictable. Let go of trying to conform to anybody else's idea of how you ought to be doing.

Women, if you don't see "Dad" grieving in ways you recognize, stay clear of the trap of deciding this means he doesn't care about the baby (or you) very much. Ask him what he does with his sadness and sense of helplessness. Remember you both hurt. You will both feel it and show it in different ways.

Men, if your partner needs to talk about the baby and her grief more than you can absorb, encourage her to find additional places to talk. Show her you care in other ways. Keep clear of the trap of thinking you aren't doing it "right". Let go of trying to get her "through it" easier or faster.

Remember other parents have survived this much pain. Life will be meaningful again.

Keep remembering life will become meaningful again.

From "Coping with infant or Fetal Loss:  
The Couple's Healing Process" By *Gilbert and Smart*

## **GRIEVING IN PAIRS**

How many times have people said, "Well, thank God you have each other!" How many times have you felt each other to be entirely inadequate at meeting your needs.

Alarming statistics are available telling us of the rocky road parents encounter in their marriage after the death of a child. We sometimes see in ourselves a touchiness or quickness to become irritated that wasn't there before, it always seems that my "bad" day is my wife's "good" day, or the day she wakes up crying is the day I am planning to play tennis.

Or sometimes, even more difficult, we both have a bad day and find no help from the other in pulling things back together. How can one person hold up another when he is, himself, face down in the mud?

Every person grieves differently. This is a rule that even applies within a family. And the needs of every individual are different. While you may need to talk and talk, and talk, your spouse may need some time alone to reflect inwardly.

You have both been through the worst experience of you life. And while at times you can face recovery as a team, sometime you must develop the patience to be able to wait out certain needs alone or with someone else. Realize that no matter how it is shown, your partner hurts, too.

***Gerry Hunt***

Like a bird singing in the rain - Let grateful memories survive in time of sorrow.

Robert Lewis Stevenson