



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

MARCH 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 Founders 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

Mar 3, General Sharing

Apr 7 General Sharing

July 8 - 10, 2016 39th TCF National Conference
"Hope Rises on the Wings of Love"
Scottsdale, Arizona (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

John Bilinski, daughter *Alayna* (9)
Kelly & Hank Murray, son *John* (36)
Mary Matcovich, son *Christian* (21)
Liliana Couchara, friend *Christian*(21)

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

Nina Bernstein in loving memory of my son, *Andrew* on his anniversary 2/9
Rhonda & Frank Gomez in loving memory of Rhonda's brother, *Paul* on his birthday 2/7

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

LOVE GIFTS

Nina Bernstein in loving memory of my son, *Andrew* on his birthday 2/9
Janie & Joe Dougherty in loving memory of our son, *Brendan Dougherty* on his birthday 3/29.
Lee & Patricia Grossman & Adam in blessed memory of our daughter/sister,
Rachel Leah Grossman on her birthday 2/2
Shirley & Philip Kennedy in loving memory of our son, *Philip V. Kennedy* on his birthday 2/22.
Nancy & Art Singer in loving memory of our son, *Jeffery Vincent Singer* on his anniversary 3/9.
Linda & John Wilson in loving memory of our son, *Sean E. Wilson* on his birthday 2/18
Luanne Kline in memory of *Dolores Yanni*, and in honor of her son *David*
Germantown Central School Sunshine Club in memory of *Dolores Yanni*,
and in honor of her son *David*

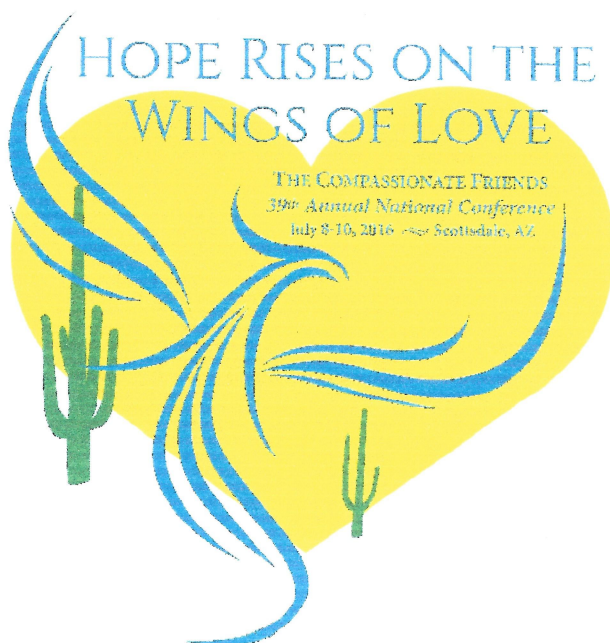
In loving memory of our son, *Sean E. Wilson*, we would like to commemorate his birthday, February 18. Sean would have been twenty-five this year. We lost him at the tender age of twenty-three.

To all those parents who like us, struggled with an inept mental health system this is woefully inadequate for treatment of maladies of the brain, we offer the following link to an article which offers some hope that research will be conducted to improve a young person's chances of surviving acute anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia. Far too often, these conditions are ignored, misdiagnosed, and misunderstood. Our children do not choose to have these genetic predispositions any more than individuals choose to have cancer. The research is what is needed and it is only just beginning. Health care professionals can only be trained properly if the scientific research is conducted and answers sought to unlock the mysteries of the human brain. Let us hope that this will finally come about for future generations.

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/scientist-open-black-box-of-schizophrenia-by-discovering-potential-genetic-cause/>

Linda & John Wilson

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.

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.

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
Danielle & Joshua Graham, brother *Jake* 3/27
Elizabeth Haney, son *Christian* 3/6
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Kathleen Heiss McCaughan* 3/25
Margaret C. Jones, son *Christopher* 3/17
Gloria & 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
Shannon Mastronardo, son *Keith* 3/23
Lee & Laurie Maxwell, son *Dan* 3/14
Jeff & Kathy McCarron, daughter *Sarah* 3/30
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan* 3/11
Greg and Mary Miller, son *David* 3/26
Beth Mohr, brother *Matthew Bock* 3/18
John Mscisz, grandson *Liam John Willamson* 3/8
Aminah Na'im, son *Dawann* 3/3
Marie O'Connon, son *Curran J.* 3/27
Steve Patrizio, son *Stephen* 3/12
Janet Patrizio, son *Stephen* 3/12
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
Susan & John Rutland, son *Justin Rutland* 3/28

MARCH BIRTHDAYS CONTINUED

Carol Sannella, son *David Sannella* 3/18
friend *Christopher Harvey* 3/5
Abigail Schwartz, brother *Jake* 3/27
Arthur & Nancy Singer, son *Jeffrey Vincent Singer* 3/9
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
Peggy West, daughter *Kelly Ann West* 3/8
Mary Willinger, sister *Annette* 3/6
Carolyn & Tom Yuhas, son *Eric Whitelock* 3/4
Judi Zollers, son *Sam* 3/6

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

Loretta Bovell, daughter *JoAnna* - 3/7
Gary Chavez, w*JoAnn*- 3/31
Rose Marie Cote, son *Mark J. Cote*- 3/26
Jamie (Germaine) Cote Weaver, brother *Mark Cote*- 3/26
Barbara Cotteta, granddaughter *Denise*- 3/28
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 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
Dan Markle, brother *Matt Markle*- 3/3
Shannon Mastronardo, son *Keith*- 3/19
Anne McClenachan, brother *Andy McClenachan*- 3/30
Kevin & Nancy McKelvey, son *Michael*- 3/30
Barbara Meisenhelder, daughter *Renee Meisenhelder*- 3/2

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

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
Akhil & Judy Tripathi, son *Sunil* - 3/17
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

CATCHING BUTTERFLIES

<p> It often hurt to come upon reminders of my son. Tho' often since I lost him, I would search around for one. Which always brought on sadness, And the tears that I would shed. Were caused by names or faces, All things that I would dread. </p>	<p> This view of his intrigued me; I wanted to hear more, And learned that he took all of them And carefully would store. All of the reminders that I chose to push away. He would tuck them deep down inside his heart each and every day. </p>
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<p> But then one day I came upon a man Who'd lost his son. I found that things I ran from, He wouldn't even shun. But rather he would treasure, And I said I wondered why. He told me that he called them "Catching Butterflies." </p>	<p> Now a name or likeness, When catching me off guard. Does not upset me as it did, and I don't find it hard. For now, instead, I see these times as opportunities To see my son awakened In these new, fresh memories. </p> <p style="text-align: right;"> <i>Dottie Williams, TCF Pittsburgh, PA</i> </p>
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SHARED THOUGHTS ON DEPRESSION

Depression is one aspect of grief that all recognize. We feel no real zest for life. No matter how hard we try, there is no feeling of joy. It robs us of feeling much of anything, other than wanting our child or sibling back. The desperate feeling that happiness will never return, now that our child or sibling is gone, destroys our hope.

Bodily distress and physical symptoms may occur. Such as headaches, high blood pressure, sleeping difficulty, loss of appetite, not eating, or overeating. Sometimes looking for an impossible easy escape may cause the use of drugs or alcohol, which mask reality, prolongs our grief, and lowers our self-esteem.

We have to deal with our grief, though it is very painful, healing comes through facing it. It takes more than time, it is hard work. That is why we say you must work through your grief.

Remember that healing is a very slow process. We want relief before it is possible. Family and friends try to rush us through. We must take our time and talk to the right people. It is important to seek those who have experienced this depth of pain, and know the best we can do is one day at a time, and sometimes the best we can do is one hour at a time. These people will gently encourage and support us. It is vital to know others have survived the loss.

We cannot cover up, or run away from depression. It is better to release our emotions, let the tears be outside, rather than inside, for tears help to reduce tension. The feelings you hide, can't heal.

It helps to find purposeful work. It can restore self-esteem and ease the feeling we have failed. We need to prove to ourselves that we are capable of being productive, and a contributing person again. This can begin on a very small scale. We must start at the bottom and rise up again. It does not help to try more than we are capable, and cause a feeling of failure.

It is important to care for our health; depression is very draining physically and emotionally. Even though we don't care about ourselves now, that will change. It can take a lot to undo the damages that neglect causes to our health.

Depression is like being on a roller coaster, about the time we see progress, something knocks us down. The down periods become shorter as healing begins. Sometimes it is very hard to see our progress, for we constantly tell ourselves we should be better, rather than recognizing our progress.

Loss of our child or sibling is never over, they cannot be replaced. **If we work through our grief, the wound will heal. We will always have a scar, but we can learn to live with that.** The best healing comes through love, understanding, and support. And the best place to get it is through The Compassionate Friends.

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

THE GIFT OF SOMEONE WHO LISTENS

Those of us who have traveled a while
Along this path called grief
Need to stop and remember that mile -
The first mile of no relief.

It wasn't the person with answers
Who told us of ways to deal
It wasn't the one who talked and talked
That helped us start to heal.

Think of the friends who quietly sat
And held our hands in theirs,
The ones who let us talk and talk
And hugged away our tears.

We need to always remember
That more than the words we speak,
It's the gift of someone who listens
That most of us desperately seek.

Nancy Myerholts
Waterville/Toledo TCF

STEPS TO MAKING PROGRESS

ALLOW YOURSELF

To be imperfect.
Whatever brings you pleasure and a little peace.
To remember your child in whatever way
you feel appropriate.

FORCE YOURSELF

To keep communication open.
To accept offers of help from family & friends.
To go through the old routines again.
To really listen to your spouse and children.
To try an activity you used to enjoy.

CONVINCE YOURSELF

That every member of the family will and
should grieve differently.
That you won't feel dead inside forever.
That your confusion about intimacy with your
spouse is normal.

LET YOURSELF

Off the hook for problems.
Feel the anger.
Feel whatever it is that you do feel about God.
Treasure your special friends.

TEACH YOURSELF

To establish small goals.
Everything you can learn about grief.
To ignore well-intentioned, unhelpful comments
of others.
To let go of the moment of your child's death.
To embrace the memories of your child.

TALK TO YOURSELF

To change the negative ways you think.
About everything.

FORGIVE YOURSELF

For not being the most perfect parent.
For all the things you did or did not do.

FIND YOURSELF

Now that you have changed into a different
person.
Without relying on drugs, alcohol, etc.
Rely on positive techniques (reading,
writing, new hobby, etc.)

INDULGE YOURSELF

By being selfish, doing something just for
you.
Because you deserve it.

EXPRESS YOURSELF

By talking out your feelings.
In a safe atmosphere,
such as The Compassionate Friends.
Through a new activity.

FORGET YOURSELF

AND GIVE OF YOURSELF

By seeking out other bereaved parents and
others in trouble.
By concentrating on others who are in pain.
To discover that

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE
As a tribute to your child.

Joe and Elizabeth Rousseau

**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

THOUGHTS FROM A PARENT WHO LOST AN OLDER CHILD

Perhaps, I had my child longer than you had yours, but thirty-eight years does not seem long. Perhaps, there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me even if your memories are memories of only one or two days.

Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine.

In thirty-eight years there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted.

My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the 'acceptable' diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are place in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with help of four treatment centers the recovery was not to be.

One day at a time my recovery is taking place. The pain, after two and one half years has gone to a place where it can be tolerated. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three granddaughters who now live three thousand miles away from me.

My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same! My child has gone to a place where I cannot go and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one day at a time enriched because my son came through my body into my life.

Helen Godwin, TCF – Orange Park – Jacksonville Chapter

RISKS

To laugh...is to risk appearing the fool
To weep...is to risk appearing sentimental
To reach out for another...is to risk involvement
To expose feelings...is to risk exposing your true self
To place ideas, your dreams before a crowd...is to risk their loss
To love...is to risk not being loved in return
To live...is to risk despair
To try...is to risk failure.

But risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing
The person, who risks nothing, does nothing...has nothing...and is nothing.
They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they cannot learn...feel...change...grow...love...live
Chained by their certitude's, they are a slave, they have forfeited their freedoms
Only a person who risks is free. *Author Unknown*

**“Who can so softly bind up the wound of another,
as he who has felt the same wound himself.”**

Thomas Jefferson

BURNOUT QUIZ

Burnout is defined as ... *depleting oneself, exhausting one's physical and mental resources, wearing oneself out by excessively striving to reach some unrealistic expectation imposed by oneself or by the values of society. Listening intently and following the directives of one's own negative self-talk.*

Quiz

Do you notice changes in yourself in the past few months --- number each of the following 1 (little or no change) to 5 (a great deal of change).

1. Do you tire more easily, feel fatigued not energized?
2. Are you working harder and accomplishing less?
3. Do you get annoyed at people telling you "you don't look so good lately"?
4. Are you more and more disenchanted and cynical?
5. Are you forgetting things, appointments, deadlines, personal possessions or double scheduling?
6. Are you often overcome by sadness you can't explain?
7. Do you see close friends and family less often?
8. Are you more irritable, short-tempered, more disappointed in those near you?
9. Are you too busy to do routine things, make phone calls, read report, send birthday cards?
10. Do you have headache, colds, pains?
11. Do you feel out of touch when you stop for a minute?
12. Do you find yourself unable to laugh about yourself?
13. Does sex seem more trouble than it is worth?
14. Do you have very little to say to people?
15. Is there no joy in your life?

Scale: 0 - 25 you're fine; 26 - 35 watch out; 36 - 50 oops! You're a candidate for burnout.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT BURNOUT

1. Make a list of things to change.
2. Watch funny videos and laugh more.
3. Change your job description or change jobs.
4. Give yourself the gift of time, silence, and calm.
5. Meditate.
6. Exercise.
7. Read a book or two on stress management.
8. Relax with warm baths, quiet music, good books.
9. Made a list of the good things in your life.



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

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

The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. ©2007