

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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

NOVEMBER 2008

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 at Valley Forge and Henderson RDs, King of Prussia, PA. Phone on meeting evenings only is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Ann or Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule

Please Mark Your Calendar

Nov 6 **General Sharing & Loss by Suicide**
Dec 4 **General Sharing**
Dec 14 **Children's Memorial Day Service**
 2PM Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
 (please see page 3 for details)
Jan 8, 2009 **General Sharing - please see page 2**
 Please note January meeting is
 scheduled for the second Thursday

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 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.**



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**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: RECORD KEEPER, FRANK GOMEZ
PLEASE SEND ALL OTHER CHAPTER MAIL
TO CHAPTER CO-LEADERS
ANN RAPOPORT or RHONDA GOMEZ**

Please note that the date of the January 2009 meeting will be held on January 8th, since the first Thursday falls on a holiday, New Years Day.

NEW FRIENDS

Danielle Murtha, brother *Jake*

We welcome our newly bereaved friends. We are sorry for the cause that brings you. We have all been in the depths of despair, and know that it is difficult to share our pain and personal feelings. We hope you will attend three or four meetings before evaluating the benefit of our group to you. We offer confidentiality, unconditional love, compassion and understanding to all of you.

OCTOBER REFRESHMENTS

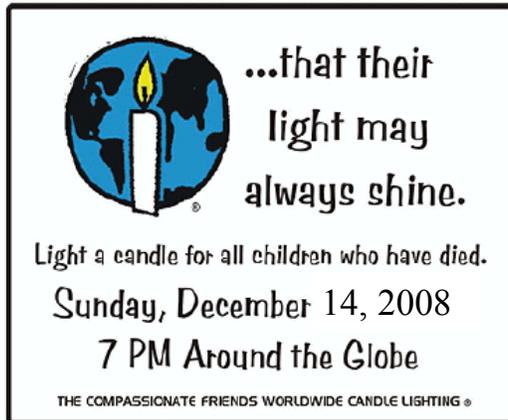
Carol Bailey, in honor of her son *Matthew J. Bailey* on his birthday
Nina Bernstein, in honor of her son *Andrew Voluck* on his birthday
Larry & Barbara Lauchle, in honor of their son *Gray* on his birthday

Anyone wishing to donate refreshments (cheese & crackers, fruit, cakes, cookies, etc.) in memory of loved ones, please call **Ann Rapoport or Rhonda Gomez (484)919-0820**, or you may sign **the refreshment chart** located on the refreshment table. Beverages are provided by the chapter.

LOVE GIFTS

Carol & Art Silverman, in memory of *Steven Schneibolk*. Steven is the son of Pamela Hofmockel Schneibolk and the grandson of Marie & Ken Hofmockel.
Rita & Thomas Gibbons, in honor of our daughter *Patricia Gibbons*.
Nancy Althouse in loving memory of my daughter *Donna Lee Althouse*.
Laurene & Tony Quercetti and sibling **Carol**, in loving memory of our daughter and sister *Christine L. Quercetti*. You are gone, yet not forgotten, although we are apart, your spirit lives within us, forever in our hearts.
Anthony & Marie Morrell, in loving memory of our son *Michael*.
Robert McCullough, in loving memory of my precious daughter *Caroline*.

The Compassionate Friends



Held annually the second Sunday in December, this year December 14, The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe as they light candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

The Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends will hold a remembrance service on December 14th at 2 PM, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in the fellowship hall (same place our monthly sharing secessions are held). We also urge you to light a candle in your home at 7 PM.

GUEST SPEAKER JOE PURIFICO

Joe & Marti's twenty year old son, Jeffrey, died January 2003 in an auto accident. They have been members of the Valley Forge Chapter since February 2003.

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 hope you will take this opportunity to join us in remembering our children who have died, but will never be forgotten. Let us ensure that their light may always shine.

NEWSLETTER CHANGE

We will no longer list the birth and death dates of deceased persons in our newsletter, or on the Valley Forge website.

The Compassionate Friends national office has issued this mandate. They feel this information could be misused, and could result in an adversity for the 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 family members.

Additions or corrections to this list should be given to the editors, Marie & Ken Hofmockel.

PLEASE SEE PAGE 3 "NEWSLETTER CHANGE."

Nancy Althouse, daughter *Donna Lee Althouse*
Anne R. Ambirge, friend *Daniel F. O'Donnell, Jr.*
Dixie Arnold, daughter *Laura Arnold*
Robert & Joan Auch, son *Ronny Auch*
Jim Bailey, son *Brendan Bailey*
Victoria Bayle, husband *Robert D Bayle II*
Julie Beasley, son *Aaron*
Gloria Bello, son *Joseph*
Stephen & Barbara Billings, daughter *Laura Elizabeth Billings*
Jackie & Steve Brown, son *Doug Brown*
John & Joyce Bryant, son *John Russell Bryant*
Regina Buckingham, son *Brian J. Buckingham*
Beth Anne Bunting, son *Jason V. DePaul*
Scott & Gail Campbell, daughter *Chelsea*
Joyce Caperilla, daughter *Jennifer*
Kathy Castner, son *Matthew*
Libby Cavallaro, sister *Theresa*
Loretta & Ken Cericola, son *Anthony Cericola*
Christopher Ciunci, sister *Elizabeth*
Thomas & Janet Cleary, son *Ryan*
Benjamin E. Cohen, daughter *Donna Lynne Cohen*
Anita Conway, son *Daniel*
Tom & Irene Cornely, daughter *Colleen*
Mr and Mrs. Franklin Cox, daughter *Christen Fox*
Antoinette & John DiDonato, son *John Jr*
Maura & Chuck Dombroski, son *Paul Dombroski*
Julie & Joe Fabrizio, brother *John Russel Bryant*
Rocheina & Pat Fatale, son *Mark Longan*
JoAnne Forman, son *H. Scott Hartman, Jr.*
Mary B. Frederick, son *Michael W. Frederick*
Sharon & Francis Gailey, daughter *Danielle Marie Gaile*
son *Francis E. Gailey, III*
Angela Giannantonio, son *Anthony*
Linda & Steven Gilbert, daughter *Pamela Gilbert*
Charlotte and Michael Gormish, brother *Douglas Moyer*
Elizabeth Haney, son *Christian*
Othell & William Heaney, son *Roger Heaney*
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Kathleen Heiss McCaughan*
daughter *Noreen Schmucker*

Carl & Catherine Helwig, son *Michael Helwig*
Danielle Hemmensch Ricci, boyfriend *Ryan*
Jacob & Rachel Himmelstein, son *Benjamin Himmelstein*
Cynthia Hornyak, daughter *Meredith*
Anthony & Carol Iacobucci, son *Anthony Iacobucci*
Enid M. Irizarry, daughter *Lisette M. Molina*
Vern & Joyce Kaiser, son *Brian*
Luann Kalamon, son *Adam Michael*
Sandi Kensicki, sister *Rose*
John & Ilene Kostic, son *John E.*
Rhoda & Melvin Kreiner, daughter *Anna Kreiner*
Joe & Barbara Ladd, son *William "Bill" F. Ladd*
Mary Leech, daughter *Phyliss Leach*
Joanne & Thomas Lennen, son *Scott C. Lennen*
Ed & Linda Lincul, son *Matthew*
Marie MacCaughern, daughter *Theresa Peazzoni*
Jennifer & Michael Magee, sister *Jacqueline Ann Rogers*
Helen & Bob McIlvaine, son *Robert McIlvaine*
Robert & Jean McWilliams, daughter *Jean Marie Opella*
Alexandra Milas, daughter *Nicole Penelope Wiseley*
Pat Miller, son *Nathan*
Leonard & Thelma Miller, sister *Geraldine Weiner*
Audrey Morasco, husband *John J. Morasco*
Joan Morefield, son *Robert*
Anthony & Mary Morrell, son *Andrew Michael Morrell*
David & Donna Morrell, son *Matthew Morrell*
Deone Morrison, son *Tod Morrison*
Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy, daughter *Marian Mountjoy*
Betsy Oakes, son *Bruce Schaeffer*
Carol & Dennis O'Connor, son *Michael O'Connor*
Rose & Mike Orlando, son *Michael*
Patricia Peraino, brother *Anthony*
Diane Perrymore, son *Keith*
Sheldon & Joan Plam, son *Michael Tobiah Plam*
Robert & Barbara Pontician, son *Rob Pontician*
Tony & Laurene Quercetti, daughter *Christine L. Quercetti*
Roy Redman, daughter *Carol*
Trish & Bell Rich, daughter *Renee Rich*
Ruth Richardson, grandson *Nicholas Richardson*
Gina & Brian Richardson, son *Nicholas Richardson*
Jacqueline Rider, son *Josua Rider*
Skipp & Kathy Robinson, daughter *Carrie Robinson*
Ilene & Sy Rockower, daughter *Amy Rockower*
Mike & Diane Rogers, daughter *Jacqueline Ann Rogers*

Donald & Mary Rose, daughter *Marjorie Rose-Cotteta*
Shirley Sabantini, daughter *Phyllis Ledden*
Melissa Schnitzler, brother *Richard "Jon" Masso*
Priscilla Shober, son *Gregory Shober*
Edie Smith, son *John Seddon "Sed" Wilson*
Barry & Sigrid Snow, son *Kevin Snow*
Jen & Alex Soutos, daughter *Alexi*
Harry & Merrily Spiess, son *F. Ryan Spiess*
Shuchi & Peter Stanger, sister *Urvi Thanawala*
Sheela & Kishor Thanawala, daughter *Urvi Thanawala*
Jerry & Ann Timinski, daughter *Janelle Ann Timinski*
Marilyn Toole, son *Ted Toole*
Esperanza & Libardo Toro, daughter *Maria Eugenia Toro*
Weldon & Marie Tyson, son *Ronald C. Stewart*
Emanuel and Claudia Utti, stepson *Richard "Jon" Masso*
Mary Walker, daughter *Susan*
George & Helen Warriner, son *David J. Warriner, Sr.*
Dorothy Washington, daughter *Michele Washington*
Linda Weaver, son *Damon Weaver*
daughter *Krista "Binky" Weaver*
Elinor Wenk, son *Raymond Wenk, Jr.*
Bill & Patti Whitehead, daughter *Maria*
Paul & Marcia Woodruff, son *Danny Woodruff*
Robin Zelenak, brother *Ronny Auch*

SORROW IS NOT FOREVER -- LOVE IS!

"So often, one attempts to face the whole future at once. But we will not live that period all at once, only day by day. Don't try to face twenty years. Face today. When that has been achieved, face tomorrow. You will find more and more ways in which you can cope. The Chinese have a saying that a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. There is no way you can take the fifteenth, or the two hundred seventh step, before you have taken the first.

It can be difficult to face going out again and resuming your regular activities. It can take more courage to face the little things than the big things in life. Going out shopping for groceries for the first time can become an ordeal. Making the change more complete could help. Try a different store, a different day or time, and go with a friend. When it seems very hard to decide what to do first, maybe it's not very important where you start, as long as you start. Choose a simple task and get started. Once you've begun, it will be far easier to set your priorities, and you will have gained in confidence for already having achieved something.

***"from "The facts of Death"
by Michael A. Simpson
from Birmingham, Alabama TCF***

SHARED THOUGHTS ON THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is the beginning of our holiday season. This once joyous time, can become a horrendous anticipation for us. This is the season we like **all** our children and siblings gathered around us. We enjoy the togetherness, for it is a time to be thankful for each of our family members. We find it difficult, for such a large piece to be missing from our family circle.

We suggest you try to discuss your plans with your immediate family, your spouse and children. It not only makes them feel part of the family, but it also removes the tremendous burden of making all the decisions, from your shoulders. This also sends the message you know they are hurting, by acknowledging their pain, you open up the door of communication.

You have to decide what is best for your family. You may choose to keep it traditional, or make changes. These changes can be temporary or permanent. It may help to talk about what things you were doing just for the sake of tradition. If they aren't meaningful, and are painful, you may choose to drop them.

Some find it helpful to go away, others want to be home. Some have found it very peaceful to devote time to helping others. There are many organizations that need help to serve a meal to others who have no one to spend the holiday with. It is a way of bringing the love for your child or sibling to life. For some it is impossible to give thanks when your grief is very fresh, this is normal for many. Allow yourself to cry, and grieve, if that is all you are capable of this year, in time you will be able to think beyond your pain, don't feel guilty for something you cannot do. Remember it helps others to feel good, when they can do small physical chores for us, if you are in need of their help, ask for it.

We can't avoid Thanksgiving, and sometimes we even feel a little guilty for not being thankful for what we have left. Our overwhelming grief crowds out our appreciation of what we have. We are human, and it is normal to lament our loss. Perhaps this is the season to enumerate, and be thankful, for friends and family who have helped us through these devastating times. We all wanted more time, but we must remember our pain is so very great, because we were given someone very special to share a segment of our life with. For this we are thankful. We also are very thankful for all the friends and support we have in The Compassionate Friends. Your sharing with us has gotten us through many holidays, gave us strength and healing from having passed through another painful event. Each passing event tells us we can survive, and doing our grief work softens our pain. We wish you peace of mind and love, as you remember your child or sibling this Thanksgiving.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

Hold on to what is good even if it is a handful of earth.
Hold on to what you believe even if it is a tree, which stands by itself.
Hold on to what you must do even if it is a long way from here.
Hold on to life even when it is easier letting go.
Hold on to my hand even when I have gone away from you.

Nancy Wood, "Many Winters"

HALLOWEEN, THANKSGIVING, CHRISTMAS, AND EVEN NEW YEAR'S DAY

Once again the time of celebrations is upon us. Ghosts, goblins, and a wicked witch or two express our farewell to October and prepare us for the turkey, family reunions, and pumpkin pie that mark Thanksgiving. Then comes a most cherished holiday – Christmas, followed by New Year's Day.

For many parents these occasions are almost unbearably difficult because our memories give us glimpses of excited costumed children voicing a timid “trick or treat” at neighbors' doors. We remember the fondness of a family Thanksgiving and chuckle at recalling best clothing smeared the color of cranberry. But, perhaps most of all, we live again the search for that favorite toy or book, or the vibrancy of a child's eyes drinking in the Christmas tree.

It is wonderful to remember, but in the first years at least, the pain overshadows most of the happiness we have in recall. But even for those along in years and growth from the time of bereavement, there is a longing that is forever barren, a hope that cannot be realized. The pain may be less wrenching, less totally consuming, but it is always there.

There are ways to help yourself if you wish, but it is very hard at first. You can curse the darkness, holding the pain close to you to protect what little seems to remain of you, and we who are also bereaved will understand, for we have gone that lonely road as well. Plan to give yourself lots of latitude and learn to tolerate and learn to tolerate your own behavior. If you spend all, one, or two of these days in tears, depression or yearning, it simply means that you are not ready to face the task that the holidays have become. Perhaps in the future you will.

When I think of my son Olin or the children we have all lost, I think of light and dreams, joy and laughter. There is no holiday memory or activity, beautiful present or well-intentioned relative that will compensate for the life, the light, or the splendid future forever lost to eternity. Yet, as I grow older in my grief, I also remember that my child's light and dreams gave birth to my own joy and laughter. These were gifts he gave me every holiday together with a limitless love that defies all time and space, even death itself.

So I have promised him a laugh back this Christmas, at least, and on the other holidays if I can. It's not a gift to put in a box or stocking and the packaging will still be the same old me. But he'll have my gift this year – a smile, a laugh, some joy from me. As I write this it seems very strange, for that gift is but a return of many he gave, colorful packages, invisible to all but me, nestled in splendor beneath our tree.

Don Hacket TCF, Hingham, MA

MY PRAYER

Lord, please help me to know:

- that just because something bad has happened to me, I still don't have a protective umbrella over my head:
- that my experience of losing my child hasn't given me an immunity to further loss;
- That, unfortunately, it doesn't work like an immunity shot.

Therefore, Lord, help me to value those I have left as much as those I have lost. Amen.

Mary Cleckley

IT'S NOT FAIR

It's not fair that my only sibling, my older brother, my best friend died.
But I have to survive this.

It's not fair that I won't have nieces or nephews, nor will my future children have Michael as the wonderful uncle that he would have been.
But I have to survive this.

It's not fair that he wasn't here to give me a hard time about turning 30.
But I have to survive this.

It's not fair to have to deal with such a heart wrenching blow.
But I have to survive this.

As all of us know at TCF, life sometimes isn't fair. We all have to survive the pain of losing a sibling or a child. It is not fair that we have to, but we do. It has been one year and three months since my brother died, and I have to survive this. But you know what, every day that passes and every morning that I wake up, I realize that I AM surviving this!

So will you!

Renee Highsmith TCF Valley Forge Chapter

In memory of my brother, **Michael Highsmith** 1/22/66 - 6/16/97

QUESTIONS/ANSWERS FROM BEREAVED SIBLINGS

All of a sudden I burst into tears and cannot control crying.

You have the freedom to cry when you need to. Crying is a normal reaction. You may feel embarrassed, but most people will react with sympathy and wish for themselves that they could cry freely. Crying is a natural outlet to grieving.

Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.

At some time everyone is angry at the person who died. Anger does not mean you loved them less; it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.

I can't concentrate. I can't think and I can't remember anything. I think I am losing my mind.

You are not losing your mind, although it may feel that way. Your mind is probably overloaded. Not only do you have to go through your daily routine, but your mind is flooded with thoughts and feelings for your brother or sister. This is

temporary; your memory and concentration will return over time.

I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying. I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy. Am I?

Some grieving people experience intense dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings you have during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.

I feel so guilty for the way I yelled at my brother. We would fight about the silliest things. I'll never be able to tell him how sorry I am.

Brothers and sisters in every family quarrel and don't apologize after every argument. Even though you fought, you still loved your brother and he loved you.

Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.

This is truly one of the most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents. Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another. *This Healing Journey*

WOULD HAVE BEEN ... SHOULD HAVE BEEN ...

He would have been ten years old on his last birthday. Blonde and fair with a sprinkling of freckles across his nose. He would have had friends over to play, collected bugs, played ball and watched the Power Rangers after school. For Halloween he would have been something scary, hiding rubber spiders around the house to frighten us.

He should have been healthy, strong and tall. Laughing in the sun, running through the grass and going swimming on a hot day. He should have been with us on all of our trips and visits to see grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles. He should have had wonderful birthday parties and Merry Christmases with lots of presents and blissful parents. He should have been in the “family” photos.

He could have been cured. Was that so much to ask? To have been one of the “lucky ones” rather than the down-side of the statistics. He could have lived to see the flowers and trees grow and bloom; the ones we planted together that last fall. Instead he has fake flowers lining his grave, fading in the hot New Mexico sun, as he faded away from us. He could have been a great man.

He might have been a doctor, or a scientist, or maybe an actor ... instead of the main character in a poem for bereaved parents. He made us laugh so much with his crazy costumes and rubber snakes. He might have or could have or would have but I’ll never know ... all those dreams that died the night he died. He might have loved to read.

He might have ... but he ISN’T here, having spent only half of those 10 years on earth. He is the ghost who keeps me company as I wander through my remaining years on earth, a shadow of my former self, making clay angels that are fair and blonde with a hint of freckles on their noses. He ISN’T here with me. The deep void his passing left is only partially filled by day-to-day activities. There is an empty hole that opens up at night as I try to fall asleep without watching reruns of the horror movie called cancer. Can’t I put life on rewind and do a second take, erase all of this sadness and sorrow?

What he WAS was a teacher. He taught me about life and death and courage. A day does not go by that I don’t think about him and I remember well the lessons that he taught me.

Donna Davis, TCF, Rossell, NM In memory of **Sean Patrick Davis**

THANKSGIVING

I give thanks, Lord, for

Time --

The time I had with Tim, time to grow and learn even when I’m no longer young, and time which will one day reunite me with my child.

Friends --

Those that I’ve known that time had taken from me, those I cherish now, and those I’ve yet to meet.

Answered Prayers --

I asked for comfort and strength to face what I must face and you answered me -- maybe not the way I wanted, but you always answered me.

For Family --

And I find my family expanding with each day. I find relatives need not always be family and family need not always be relatives. Love makes families -- not bloodlines.

For the Children --

Those remaining -- mine and everyone else’s. And for the ones that remain only in memory.

For Love --

Love that’s been given me so freely from hearts that were broken like mine but still could offer me strength and hope.

For all of you,

I thank God.

Judy Dickey TCF, Greenwood, IN

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.

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