



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

NOVEMBER 2015

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

- Nov 5 General Sharing**
- Dec 3 General Sharing**
- Dec 13 World Wide Candle Lighting (see page 4)**
Collection of gifts for First Step (see page 4)

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

Kelly & Gary Walens, son *Kevin* (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 birthday on October 12.

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 Voluck***, on his birthday 10/12
Thomas and Anne Glenn, in loving memory of our daughter, ***Lauren Glenn***, on her anniversary 10/15 and the Chapter newsletter.

Joanne & Thomas Lennen, in loving memory of our son, ***Scott Lennen***, on his 52nd birthday. Always in our thoughts, forever in our hearts! Miss and love you always, Mom and Dad.

Joan and Sheldon Plam, in loving memory of our beloved son, ***Michael Tobiah Plam***, on his 21st anniversary. Love, Mom & Dad.

Vern and Joyce Kaiser, in loving memory of our son, ***Brian***, on his 42nd birthday.

Donations in memory of Mary EhmmanAuger.

Marion E. Baer

Marjorie F. Randolph

Fred and Irene Sutton

Robert and Stephanie Sheller

Jan & Dan Jackson gifted their picture button making machine to the Valley Forge Chapter.

We thank them for this gift, and the many years of giving (free of charge) picture buttons (unlimited number) to members of the Valley Forge Chapter, attendees of TCF Regional and National Conferences.

Jan & Dan joined the Valley Forge Chapter 10 months after the loss of their only child, John (1997). Their support has been greatly appreciated.

FREE PHOTO BUTTONS

Frank Gomez has volunteered to make picture buttons for members (any Chapter) of The Compassionate Friends. You may mail your photos directly to Frank, or bring them to our monthly meetings at the Valley Forge Chapter. We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Founders Hall, Valley Forge & Henderson Roads, King of Prussia, PA.

The buttons are 2 1/4 inches in diameter with a pin back. Face of loved ones should be a maximum of 1 1/2 inches, from the top of the head to the chin. You may request as many buttons as you like. Please send one photo for each button, the photo will be used to make the button, therefore your photos will not be returned.

Mail photographs, mailing address, and email address to:
Frank Gomez, 12 Brook Circle, Glenmoore, PA 19343
Frank@tcfvalleyforge.org



NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

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

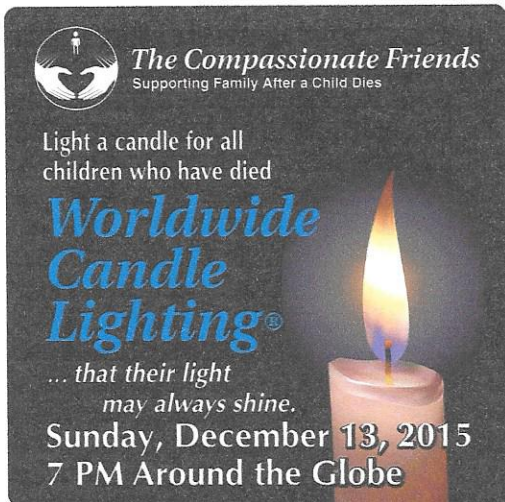
We do not want to remove anyone from our newsletter mailing list who is benefiting from receiving it. We hope it is a help to you while going through your grief, giving you better understanding of your feelings, and letting you know **"We need not walk alone"**.

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**

**We wish all of you a very meaningful Thanksgiving.
May the love and fond memories of your loved ones help you on
your journey of grief.**

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 18th 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.

The Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends will hold a candle lighting remembrance service on December 13th at 2 PM at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in the Fellowship Hall. (same place as our monthly sharing sessions are held).

THE SPEAKER TO BE ANNOUNCED IN THE DECEMBER NEWSLETTER.

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.

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 3rd meeting & December 13th 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.

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.

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Gloria Bello, son *Joseph* 11/24
Jackie & Steve Brown, son *Doug Brown* 11/28
Catherine Chan, son *Chanlan Lee* 11/27
Lisa Connolly, daughter *Elyce Pindjak* 11/14
Tom & Irene Cornely, daughter *Colleen* 11/1
Franklin & Patricia Cox, daughter *Christen Fox*, 11/2
Antoinette & John DiDonato, son *John Jr.* 11/24
JoAnne Forman, son *H. Scott Hartman, Jr.* 11/21
Sharon & Francis Gailey, daughter *Danielle Marie Gailey* 11/7
Angela Giannantonio, son *Anthony* 11/11
Enid M. Irizarry, daughter *Lisette M. Molina* 11/16
Vern & Joyce Kaiser, son *Brian* 11/9
Luann Kalamon, son *Adam Michael* 11/12
Sandi Kensicki, sister *Rose* 11/7
John & Eileen Kostic, son *John E.* 11/29
Rhoda & Melvin Kreiner, daughter *Anna Kreiner* 11/19
Joanne & Thomas Lennen, son *Scott C. Lennen* 11/14
Dan Logan, daughter *Joanie* 11/15
Leonard & Thelma Miller, sister *Geraldine Weiner* 11/04
Joanne Morasco, son *Robert* 11/4
Joan Morefield, son *Robert* 11/25
Anthony & Mary Morrell, son *Andrew Michael Morrell* 11/28
David & Donna Morrell, son *Matthew Morrell* 11/9
Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy, daughter *Marian Mountjoy* 11/11
Betsy Oakes, son *Bruce Schaeffer* 11/19
Carol & Dennis O'Connor, son *Michael O'Connor* 11/21
Patricia Peraino, brother *Anthony* 11/11
Susan Pollock, son *Brendan Rosko* 11/14
Robert & Barbara Pontician, son *Rob Pontician* 11/28
Roy Redman, daughter *Carol* 11/20
Daune Ring, daughter *Chloe* 11/14
Lois Robinson, son *Randy* 11/5
Ilene & Sy Rockower, daughter *Amy Rockower* 11/22
Andrea Rohloff, son *Jim* 11/14
Priscilla Shober, son *Gregory Shober* 11/7
Edie Smith, son *John Seddon "Sed" Wilson* 11/15
Elaine & Tim Thomas, son *Seth Peterson* 11/21
Judy Tomarelli, husband *Bert* 11/2
Marilyn Toole, son *Ted Toole* 11/3

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS CONTINUED

Jack, Bobbie and Ross Trotter, daughter/sister *Megan* 11/25
Weldon & Marie Tyson, son *Ronald C. Stewart* 11/12
Harry & Lynne Urian, son *Mike* 11/14
Linda Weaver, son *Damon Weaver* 11/21
Paul & Marcia Woodruff, son *Danny Woodruff* 11/23

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Nancy Althouse, daughter *Donna Lee Althouse* - 11/4
Victoria Bayle, husband *Robert D Bayle II* - 11/9
Julie Beasley, son *Aaron* - 11/5
Stephen & Barbara Billings, daughter *Laura Elizabeth Billings* - 11/26
Scott & Gail Campbell, daughter *Chelsea* - 11/4
Joyce Caperilla, daughter *Jennifer* - 11/22
Libby Cavallaro, sister *Theresa* - 11/19
Loreta & Ken Cericola, son *Anthony Cericola* - 11/10
Becky & Frank Clark, daughter *Lisa* - 11/25
Thomas & Janet Cleary, son *Ryan* - 11/14
Benjamin E. Cohen, daughter *Donna Lynne Cohen* - 11/22
Kathy Concannon, daughter *Tracey* - 11/9
Anita Conway, son *Daniel* - 11/29
Lisa & David Dibello, son *Joey* - 11/13
Julie & Joe Fabrizio, brother *John Russel Bryant* - 11/9
Rochena & Pat Fatale, son *Mark Longan* - 11/15
Abigail Figueroa, son *Jose C Figueroa* - 11/11
JoAnne Forman, son *H. Scott Hartman, Jr.* - 11/12
Sharon & Francis Gailey, son *Francis E. Gailey*, - 11/24
Linda & Steven Gilbert, daughter *Pamela Gilbert* - 11/6
Laura Giordano, son *Peter* - 11/7
Elizabeth Haney, son *Christian* - 11/28
Othell & William Heaney, son *Roger Heaney* - 11/22
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Kathleen Heiss McCaughan* - 11/23
daughter *Noreen Schmucker* - 11/27
Carl & Catherine Helwig, son *Michael Helwig* - 11/24
Danielle Hemmench Ricci, boyfriend *Ryan* - 11/14
Jacob & Rachel Himmelstein, son *Benjamin Himmelstein* - 11/19
Cynthia Hornyak, daughter *Meredith* - 11/27
Vern & Joyce Kaiser, son *Brian* - 11/2
John & Eileen Kostic, son *John E.* - 11/18
Karen Lopera, son *Michael* - 11/26
Julie Lauderback, son *Donovan Lauderback* - 11/20
Ed & Linda Lincul, son *Matthew* - 11/27

NOVEMBER Anniversaries Continued

Bonnie MacDonald, son *R. Scott Geddes* - 11/28
Jennifer & Michael Magee, sister *Jacqueline Ann Rogers* - 11/7
Alexandra Milas, daughter *Nicole Penelope Wiseley* - 11/5
Pat Miller, son *Nathan* - 11/8
Leonard & Thelma Miller, sister *Geraldine Weiner* 11/04
Audrey Morasco, husband *John J. Morasco* - 11/19
Rose & Mike Orlando, son *Michael* - 11/21
Sheldon & Joan Plam, son *Michael Tobiah Plam* - 11/7
Tony & Laurene Quercetti, daughter *Christine L. Quercetti* - 11/7
Roy Redman, daughter *Linda Inez Redman* 10/22
Ruth Richardson, grandson *Nicholas Richardson* - 11/14
Gina & Brian Richardson, son *Nicholas Richardson* - 11/14
Skipp & Kathy Robinson, daughter *Carrie Robinson* - 11/16
Mike & Diane Rogers, daughter *Jacqueline Ann Rogers* - 11/7
Donald & Mary Rose, daughter *Marjorie Rose-Cotteta* - 11/24
Priscilla Shober, son *Gregory Shober* - 11/3
Cathy Siciliano, son *Anthony* - 11/24
Barry & Sigrid Snow, son *Kevin Snow* - 11/26
Jen & Alex Soutos, daughter *Alexi* - 11/22
Harry & Merrily Spiess, son *F. Ryan Spiess* - 11/29
Judy Tomarelli, husband *Bert* - 11/18
Esperanza & Libardo Toro, daughter *Maria Eugenia Toro* - 11/3
Steven Tucker, son *Steven II* - 11/1
Mary Walker, daughter *Susan* - 11/19
Linda Weaver, daughter *Krista "Binky" Weaver* - 11/4
Bill & Patti Whitehead, daughter *Maria* - 11/1
John & Linda Wilson, son *Sean* - 11/3
Pat Zimmerman, son *Bernard Zimmerman* - 11/13

“...a bear wedged in great tightness.”

“In a tape called. ‘To Touch a Grieving Heart’ there is a wonderful little reminder of the *Winnie the Pooh* story by A. A. Milne. You may recall that Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbit’s hole, he gets stuck tight - so he can’t even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and offer words of comfort...and thus to help ‘a bear wedged in great tightness.’

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think Grief is like being ‘a bear wedged in great tightness.’ And, while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, The Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other; that ‘we need not walk alone.’ ”

Opening remarks of the late Richard Edler’s keynote speech at the 1996 TCF National Conference

SHARED THOUGHTS ON CELEBRATING THANKSGIVING WHILE GRIEVING

For many of us, fall means the time of year to be in awe of all the beautiful colors of nature, and to give thanks for our many blessings. When our child or sibling dies, our eyes still see nature's beauty, but our hearts are in too much pain to feel, appreciate, or enjoy anything. The Thanksgiving holiday seems almost unacceptable to many newly bereaved. It is very difficult to give thanks, when one of our greatest blessings has been taken from us, and the gut-wrenching pain permeates our very being.

We now know how precious the gift of life is. We are more appreciative of our surviving family, and find the dreaded anticipation of not having our **whole** family together for our traditional Thanksgiving adds to our grief. This is not a time to shelter others from our pain. Being hypocritical gives false messages, and confuses others who want to help us. Friends and extended family members sometimes think they always know what is best for us. Their advise may only be best for them, by easing their pain and pretending you are capable of handling more than you can.

It is important to include immediate family members in your holiday planning. Don't try to read their minds. You are showing respect and acknowledging their pain by getting their input. They, too, have apprehensions of up coming holidays, and need to have open verbal communication.

If you plan to be with friends or extended family, it may be wise to give advance notice that you may not be able to "keep it together". Ask friends to accept your decision. If you plan to have people in, try to let others help you prepare the dinner. You may want to deviate from traditions. Only you can decide what is best for you. We kept all our traditions, but that may not be best for you. We still had our surviving children at home, and it seemed important to hold to seasonal memories.

Even though it is difficult to count blessings, we need to communicate with our feelings. Family, friends, and relationships are always at the top of our list of things to be thankful for. Next came material things, which now seem so trivial, and not even worth enumerating. "Things" don't belong on the same page anymore. Most of us have learned a new meaning about life. What a waste it would be if we endured all this pain and agony, and did not become a more caring person. We also have a new understanding of the word "Compassion", and have learned to reach out to those who need us.

We should not minimize our pain. It often prevents us from counting our blessings, and that is very normal during our early grief. The intense pain blocks out everything. We should feel no guilt for having normal human reactions. Allow yourself to grieve and cry, it is very healing.

There are no shortcuts to get past our pain. But, it will get softer, and tolerable, and we learn how to handle the holidays. I could not believe this in my fresh grief. I have healed more than I ever thought possible. All memories were so painful. One of the things I am most thankful for, is that I can now remember beautiful times with Doug, without having intense pain. I feel you will also have this blessing one day.

WHY CAN'T I REMEMBER?

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 laugh just today when I never thought I would laugh again? What is the peaceful feeling that I feel from time to time? Is it healing?

Lee at 29, was still 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 three 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 okay, 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 wonder 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? But, you know what...they did help. With the help and the 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 my brother died, but I truly believe I am 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 the needs of others. 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 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 and I pray 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 be honest about my feelings. I encourage siblings to try to hook up with a support group such as The Compassionate Friends.

Sunday Lee Stanton - TCF, Wyoming Valley, PA

IN MY HEART FOREVER

I thought of you with love today
But that is nothing new.
I thought about you yesterday,
And days before that too.
I think of you in silence.
I often speak your name.

Now all I have is memories.
And your picture in a frame.
Your memory is my keepsake.
With which I'll never part.
God has you in his keeping.
I have you in my heart... forever.

Author Unknown

EXPECTATIONS

Expectations play a large role in our grief. Certainly, expecting to feel better and to not always hurt is helpful, (although we tend to expect it to happen too soon) but other expectations can be hurtful. Some of these are the expectations we have of those around us - our friends and relatives.

We "expect" them to listen to us talk about our child and our pain. We "expect" them to be sensitive and aware that we are hurting more on a particular day or date. We "expect" that they will understand that it is normal to grieve for so long. We "expect" them to understand our mood swings. We "expect" and we "expect", and when they don't understand or provide what we need we are angry and hurt.

TO EXPECT IS TO PRESUME. When we expect a friend or relative to behave a certain way or say a particular thing, we presume they know what we want or need. **This is rarely possible.** Even if the other person is a bereaved parent, he cannot read our minds. What they needed in their grief may not be what you need in yours. If our friend or relative is not a bereaved parent, it is even less likely they will have any idea how to help us.

The problem with expecting understanding and help from another, is that we set ourselves up to be hurt. On page 452 of one of my favorite books, ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, it says, "my serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations." Of course, serenity doesn't exist for the bereaved parent, but the hurt we feel from others IS "inversely proportional to our expectations."

If we expect a friend or relative to do or say the right thing and they don't, we are hurt. But, on the other hand, if we do not expect their reaction and they react as we would like them to, we will be pleased. I think it would be better to be pleased now and then, rather than be hurt almost every time.

We need to remind ourselves over and over, that **others do not know how to help us.** They are not being cruel, uncaring or indifferent. **They simply do not know what to say or do.** Therefore, the responsibility to let them know of our needs lies with us. Not only must we tell them of our needs, after we have done that we must take it a step farther. In the future, if the individual does not react in the way we prefer, we must try to accept this and consider that, for reasons only they can know, they are either unable or unwilling to do as we ask. We can't know their innermost motivation anymore than they can know our innermost needs.

To eliminate the hurt we feel from others **we must let go of our expectations of them.** We can only be hurt if we **ALLOW** ourselves to be hurt by something that was done or said (or not done or said) in ignorance. **Remember, we ourselves did not know of bereaved parents needs** before our child died. There will be times we must simply say, "He or she doesn't know," or we might ask ourselves, "How important is it that that person is not supportive?"

It is up to us to protect ourselves from any more hurt than we already have. **If we stop expecting what others may not or cannot give, we can stop some of the unnecessary hurt.**

STRANGE WORDS WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

I am always amazed at the instant empathy we each feel as new member come to their first meeting. We have the strangest welcome for these parents: "We are sorry you have to be here.

In other organizations the questions are probing: "Where did you go to school, where do you work, where do you live?" All designed to "size up" the newcomer, put him or her in the proper perspective of a neatly ordered world. For us this information is meaningless. We know the world isn't neat and orderly; we discovered that when we lost our children. We care about you, the newly bereaved parent, whose life was tossed into a cosmic blender when your child died. We care because we are you. We have been here a while, in this purgatory of pain. We have learned to live our lives in a different way, to place value on understanding and hope, the intangibles of the purest meanings of life. We have learned to value each other, to reach out and talk, to wait patiently during the silences needed to form thoughts. We listen intently as you quietly say your child's name, tell your child's story, speak of your heartbreak.

Yes, this is a different kind of welcome. But it is the most deeply sincere welcome we ever receive. We are kindred souls, you and I. Each of us lives in the "after death" world of losing our child. Each of us has learned gradually that the hope we have attained has made life better, lessened the pain, moderated the isolation, tears, emotional devastation and pure mayhem that once overtook us. Each of us has learned this slowly, in our own time and in our own way.

Each month new parents who have suffered the most horrific loss that a human can endure are welcomed into our group. We reach out, we listen with our heart and we remember.

Annette Mennen Baldwin, In memory of my son, **Todd Mennen**, TCF,

HOW TO HELP ME GRIEVE

Be there for me:

I feel alone, in pain.
I need a friend.

Share my sorrow:

Speak from your heart.
I have to talk about my feelings.

Let me grieve:

Listen to me, I need to cry.
We all grieve in our own way
and in a different time frame.

Keep the memory alive:

It is always on my mind.
I have so many memories.

I need your help:

Help me, call me, pray for me.
Do whatever you can.

Don't desert me:

Don't desert me after the 1st or 2nd week.
I need you especially on holidays.

Take care of yourself:

I need to depend on you.

Help me to heal:

Involve me, listen to me months later.
I need your interest and invitations.

Be my friend:

Don't be afraid of me or my grief.
It's okay to cry.
Lastly, please don't criticize until you've
walked in my shoes.

Instead: Pray for me.

Vivian Sagert

TCF, Minitonas, Manitoba, Canada



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

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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.

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