



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

## October 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

- Oct 6 General Sharing
- Nov 3 General Sharing
- Dec 11 World Wide Candle Lighting  
(see page 2)  
Collection of gifts for First Step (under privileged children.) (see page 2)

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.



**NEW PEOPLE**

**Barbara Kirk, son *Eric* (31)  
Bob & Laura Latshaw, *Scott* (35)**

**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.

**Robert & Lee Duffield**, in honor of their son, ***Michael Robin*** (46).

**Frank & Ronda Gomez**, in memory of their son, ***Frankie's*** birthday 9/30.

**LOVE GIFTS**

**Nina Bernstein**, in loving memory of my son, ***Andrew*** on his birthday 10/12.

**James & Phyllis Casey**, in loving memory of our son, "***Jimmer***" on his anniversary 9/17.

**Catherine Dardozzi**, in loving memory of my son, ***James*** on his anniversary 9/7. Love Mom.

**Joy Settles**, in loving memory of my son, ***Raymond Gary Korn*** on his birthday 10/5. Love Mom.

**Rose Yanni**, in memory of my wonderful nephew, ***David Yanni*** on his birthday 10/26.

***David*** was a remarkable young man in many ways. He was loving and caring to all.

The Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends will hold a candle lighting remembrance service on December 11th at 2 PM at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in the Founders Hall. (same place as our monthly sharing secessions are held). We chose 2 PM for our local service so that it would be available to everyone, including those who do not drive at night. We also urge you to light a candle in your home at 7PM. We hope you will take this opportunity to join us in remembering our children & siblings who have died, but will never be forgotten. Let us ensure that their light may always shine.

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

**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 1st meeting & December 11th World Wide Candle Lighting Service 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 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.**

**OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS**

- Chip Arena, son *Nick* 10/10
- Carole Bailey, son *Matthew J. Bailey* 10/6
- Victoria Bayle, son *Bobby D. Bayle III* 10/5
- Nina Bernstein, son *Andrew Voluck* 10/12
- Joe & Maryann Bucci, son *Dante* 10/7
- Martha & Albert Caesar, son *Daniel Mark Caesar* 10/18
- Diana Clark, grandson *Alexander* 10/16
- Theresa L Cole, son *Christopher Michel* 10/10
- Laureen Cole, brother *Chris* 10/10
- Carole and Kevin Creighton, son *Ryan Kent Creighton* 10/7
- Virginia Di Fronzo, daughter *Sis* 10/7
- Harold & Marcia Epstein, grandson *Andrew Voluck* 10/12
- Gwen & Walt Gearhart, grandson *Jamie Rogers* 10/29
- Daniel Gentry, daughter *Emily* 10/9
- Rita Gibbons, daughter *Patricia Gibbons* 10/26
- Virginia Hagen, son *Matthew D. Hagen* 10/20
- Joanne Haley, son *Douglas Haley* 10/4
- Carl & Catherine Helwig, son *Michael Helwig* 10/9
- Janet Higgins, son *Nicholas* 10/10
- Lori Joseph, son *Andy* 10/6
- Lynn Kivlen, son *Brien Kivlen* 10/12
- Barb & Larry Lauchle, son *Gray* 10/23
- Maryann Lockyer, son *Keith* 10/23
- Maureen Lok, daughter *Jessica* 10/24
- Jennifer & Michael Magee, sister *Jacqueline Ann Rogers* 10/3
- Dan Markle, brother *Matt Markle* 10/30
- James & Mary Beth Mattiford, son *Scott Mattiford* 10/15
- Mark & Kathryn McNally, daughter *Beth Ann McNally* 10/1
- Alexandra Milas, mom's sister *Demitra Vallianos* 10/16
- Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy, daughter *Barilyn Mountjoy* 10/3  
daughter *Maralin Mountjoy* 10/3
- Kelly & Hank Murray, son *John Murray* 10/30
- Kathy Nicholson, son *Frank* 10/26
- Peggy O'Brien, son *Rick O'Brien* 10/4
- Deborah Osting, son *Christopher Daniel Osting* 10/24
- Roy Redman, daughter *Linda Inez Redman* 10/22

**OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS continued**

Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, son *Thomas Reinert, Jr.* 10/21  
Ginger & Merle Renner, daughter *Deanna Dawn Renner* 10/11  
Carol Robinson, son *Jim Kearney* 10/4  
Skipp & Kathy Robinson, daughter *Carrie Robinson* 10/28  
Mike & Diane Rogers, daughter *Jacqueline Ann Rogers* 10/3  
Donna Rogers, son *Jamie Rogers* 10/29  
JoAnne Sands, son *Tyler* 10/16  
Joy Conard Settles, son *R. Gary Korn* 10/5  
Robert & Nell Shoemaker, daughter *Brynn Shoemaker* 10/5  
Janis Siravo, son *Christian* 10/7  
Betsy Townsend, daughter *Wendy Townsend Besche* 10/25  
Janice Vanderslice, son *Gregory Vanderslice* 10/4  
Lucia Watters, daughter *Luanne Zambino* 10/14  
Mimi & Tom Weber, son *Michael* 10/8  
Beth Williams, son *Joey Burks* 10/4  
Sandra & Harry Wolfheimer, daughter *Ann Marie Wofheimer* 10/10  
Frank Yanni, son *David Yanni* 10/26

**OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES**

Marilynn Anton, cousin *Steven Schneibolk* - 10/2  
Herb and Fran Barnett, son *Andrew* - 10/16  
Victoria Bayle, son *Bobby D Bayle III* - 10/2  
Gina Cappelli, son *Dan Foley* - 10/9  
Tina & Mike Cusamano, daughter *Amanda Angelucci* - 10/1  
Tom & Marge Del Rosario, son *Dominic* - 10/17  
Virginia Di Fronzo, daughter *Sis* - 10/4  
Joseph & Patsy Dooley, son *Peter J. Dooley* - 10/1  
Shirley & Herb Druker, daughter *Heidi* - 10/25  
Jim and Patty Duffy, son *Michael Duffy* - 10/28  
Bonnie Gardner, daughter *Michelle* - 10/19  
Thomas & Anne Glenn, daughter *Lauren Glenn* - 10/15  
Carol Graber, son *Bobby* - 10/28  
Herb & Karen Grant, son *Shaun* - 10/21  
Cathy Grosshanten, son *Gary* - 10/18  
Thomas & Virginia Hoesch, son *William E. "Buddy" Hoesch* - 10/7  
Marie & Ken Hofmockel, grandson *Steven Schneibolk* - 10/2  
Joan Hornsby, daughter *Jackie* - 10/5  
Jean Jones, grandson *Bobby* - 10/28  
Margaret & Edward Kiefski, Sr., son *Edward Kiefski, Jr.* - 10/25  
Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy, daughter *Barilyn Mountjoy* - 10/3  
daughter *Maralin Mountjoy* - 10/3



**OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED**

**John B. & Lillian Neff**, son *Patrick Neff* - 10/17  
**Gary & Patricia Otto**, son *Benjamin Otto* - 10/17  
**Joan Palumbo**, son *Michael* - 10/13  
**Barbara Pearl**, son *Jason Seth Pearl* - 10/16  
**Betty Jane Peters - Neilson**, son *Martin A. Peters* - 10/22  
**Ruth Pluck**, niece *Jackie* - 10/5  
**Robert & Barbara Pontician**, son *Rob Pontician* - 10/28  
**Barbara Purtell-Frank**, son *Michael John Keller Purtell* - 10/29  
**Marge Randolph**, son *Doug Fixter* - 10/12  
**Ginger & Merle Renner**, daughter *Deanna Dawn Renner* - 10/22  
**Robert & Nancy Ricciardi**, daughter *Jessica Lee Ricciardi* - 10/7  
**Ilene & Sy Rockower**, daughter *Amy Rockower* - 10/17  
**Thelma Rosen**, brother *David Beeler* - 10/31  
**Barbara Rossman**, daughter *Kickole Lyn* - 10/12  
**Ron & Sandy Ruth**, son *Brian David Ruth* - 10/21  
**JoAnne Sands**, son *Tyler* - 10/16  
**Carol Sannella**, husband *Robert J. Sannella* - 10/21  
**Pamela Schneibolk**, son *Steven* - 10/2  
**Susan Snyder**, son *Brian* - 10/22  
**Ruth Thomas**, son *David George Thomas* - 10/28  
**Barbara Torrens**, brother *Robert Birmele* - 10/21  
**Weldon & Marie Tyson**, daughter *Lisa M. Tyson* - 10/26  
**Tina Ulshafer**, son *Jimmy* - 10/30  
**Henry & Elizabeth Weaver**, grandson *Donald Smith, Jr.* - 10/16  
**Jackie Wesley**, daughter *Teresa Ellen Wesley Hough* - 10/2  
**Beth Williams**, son *Joey Burke* - 10/4  
**Paul & Marcia Woodruff**, son *Danny Woodruff* - 10/29

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**ON "PICKING UP THE PIECES"**

Had someone say to me not too long ago that she was glad to see that I was "picking up the pieces and going on." Well, I am picking up the pieces all right -- but what she doesn't know is that they're almost a whole set of new pieces! I haven't been able to go on as though nothing about me has changed since my child died. I'm a different me, and I am still learning about how the new me reacts to old situations.

I am finding that this new set of pieces doesn't exactly fit together all nice and neat like a jigsaw puzzle. Some of the old pieces are still hanging in there, but they don't quite mesh with some of the new pieces. I am in the process of grinding off the rough edges now, hoping eventually for a better fit, one that I can live with more comfortably. Time, patience and hard work are helping me accomplish this.

How are the rough edges on your new pieces coming along.?

**SHARED THOUGHTS ON GUILT**

Frequently we invent our own guilt, by blaming ourselves because we did not have hind sight, and dwell on the "ifs and onlys". Parents assume responsibility for children's behavior, welfare, and fate, often forgetting that we are human and not all-knowing.

Sometimes we become our own worst enemy, especially when assuming the responsibility for our child's or sibling's death. It is important to understand the cause of the death, and not assume guilt that is not ours.

Often, we feel guilty for being alive, when our child or sibling has died. The event is so out of the natural order, that it is difficult to re-program our mind, to accept the fact that we have to live the rest of our lives without their being with us. It is hard to let go of the hopes and dreams for the future of that child or sibling.

In our early grief, it is easy to feel guilty for crying, laughing, socializing, or not socializing. Our behavior does not feel comfortable, or appropriate. We do not fully enjoy anything, because we can not attain our greatest desire (to be with our child or sibling).

Often guilt comes when we can no longer meet our responsibilities as homemaker, provider, mother, father, wife, husband, or sibling. All this adds to our low self-esteem, and makes us feel a failure. Our self worth is lowered when we feel dysfunctional.

Our grief will sometimes cause us to place guilt where it is not justified. It is important to not lay guilt on other family members, and guard against being accusatory, particularly for the child's death.

It is very normal to go through these stages of grief, which can rip us apart, and cause us deep pain. Through our grief work, particularly by sharing our feelings with a compassionate person who is not judgmental, the wound will heal, and help us to know and understand we did not cause, or could not have prevented the loss of our loved one.

Being so critical of ourselves, frequently inflicts much of our own pain. It is easier to forgive all others, than to forgive ourselves for not being super-human with impossible insight. It helps to be kind to yourself. We need all the love we can get to carry us through. Having done the best we can is all that can be expected of us.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel* - TCF Valley Forge Chapter

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**Now I Know**

I never knew, when you lost your child,  
What you were going through.  
I wasn't there, I stayed away,  
I just deserted you.  
I didn't know the words to say,  
I didn't know the things to do.  
I think your pain so frightened me,  
I didn't know how to comfort you.

And then one day my child died.  
You were the first one there.  
You quietly stayed by my side, listened,  
And held me as I cried.  
You didn't leave, you didn't go,  
The lesson learned is ...  
Now I know.

**Alice Kerr, Lower Bucks Co. PA**



**Doppelganger**  
*by Marilyn Toole*

I was already 1½ hours into the movie before I spotted him in the orchestra playing on the screen in the all-Beethoven orchestral film. There, second row on the left, third in, probably playing second violin. Sitting right in front of the middle-aged lady oboist with the frizzy blonde hair. *He was a dead ringer for my son*, a smaller version. Definitely Hispanic, with that thick black hair, just long enough to make a lifestyle statement, dark olive skin, intense dark eyes, sharp nose, thin dark line above his lip, not quite convincing anyone it was a mustache, chin not as strong. I couldn't take my eyes off him, but the camera was playing with me, just focusing on him every two or three minutes.

Then came the part in the piece where I *always* close my eyes; the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, *Allegretto*, the section in the movie *Immortal Beloved* where young Beethoven flees the house where he has just been beaten by his father, rushes down to the pond, and lies supine on the water under the star-ridden sky, the black water under him looking as though the entire sky has fallen in on it, swallowing the scene that shrinks the young Beethoven into a star in the firmament.

But this time I can't look away. I have to see the violinist again. There! I spot his hands nimbly working the frets, his vibrato joining the rest of the glorious waves pulsing into the audience. He is in Berlin, but my son is here, with me, brought to life by this little anonymous second violinist third chair in the Berlin Philharmonic. He disappears, replaced by a flautist who looks like Michael Wetherly of NCIS whose lips barely touch the silver, his eyebrows moving up and down to the beat of the conductor.

The camera moves again. Wait! Is that him? No! That man is a cellist-- he looks like Ted's cousin Mark, who is also dark but *was* a musician. Music wasn't Ted's muse; instead he became a well-respected restaurant manager in Herndon, Virginia, for a Friday's that was failing. Ted's business skills breathed life back into the management so it is still thriving, thirteen years after Ted looked down at something while driving in a sleet storm, oblivious to the traffic jam ahead and, of course the fact that in less than two seconds he would never again see anything.

Ted never took up the violin. That was his baby brother Steve's choice, and he, Steve, with two masters degrees under his belt, now has his own popular Celtic band, playing guitar, mandolin, banjo. He often drives to gigs on the same highway where his brother took his last look at a flinty February sky.

But *what if this were* my son Ted up on that screen? Would I be sitting there in the darkened movie theater, a proud mother, back in the U.S., perhaps planning a trip to Berlin in the spring for a long-awaited visit? Would I take him to Darmstadt, to see where his father and I met? Would he be coming here soon, on tour, and invite me to New York to attend a concert? Would we go out for dinner at that marvelous little Italian restaurant right near Carnegie Hall? Would I tell him how much I miss him and I wish he had never taken that job in Germany?

*Continued on page 8*

*Continued from page 7*

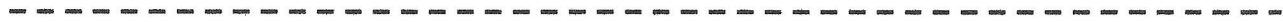
Would we be texting, skyping? Would he be married? Be a dad? Would his hair be starting to thin? Would he be hating his second violin third chair job, the seat reserved for the worst of the best? I'll never know. My son's future was stolen by the storm in a split second on that icy road on his way to the dentist.

The little violinist stood up for the applause. No, he is much shorter, like most of my son's Hispanic cousins. At the family reunions Ted stood among them, at six feet, like a tall oak among New Jersey scrub pines. I wonder if the violinist and the dark-skinned cellist in the orchestra are related, as Ted and his cousin Mark are.

The movie ends. I walk out of the theater all aglow. I was able to spend an unexpected wonderful moment with my son's doppelganger. Not the real thing, but a nice substitute, a brief moment of pretend.

*Marilyn Toole*

*TCF Valley Forge Chapter*



**HE ONLY TOOK MY HAND**

For my Beautiful Daughter "LUANNE"

On her birthday in heaven !

Last night while I was trying to sleep,  
My daughter's voice I did hear,  
I opened my eyes and looked around,  
But she did not appear.

She said, "Mom, you've got to listen,  
You've got to understand,  
God didn't take me from you, mom,  
He only took my hand.

When I called out in pain that day,  
The moment that I died,  
He reached down and took my hand,  
And pulled me to His side.

He pulled me up and saved me  
From the misery and pain.  
My body was hurt so badly,  
I could never be the same.

My search is really over now,  
I've found happiness within,  
All the answers to my empty dreams  
And all that might have been.

I love you all and miss you so,  
And I'll always be nearby.  
My body's gone forever,  
But my spirit will never die.

And so, you must all go on now,  
And live, and understand...  
God did not take me from you,  
He only took my hand."

*Author Unknown*

*Submitted by Lucia Watters, TCF Valley Forge*

*Mother of Luanne*



**KEITH - with all my love - Lisa**

I love you and I miss you -  
just wish I could kiss you.  
I miss you every morning,  
I miss you every day.  
I miss you every night -  
Just want to hold you tight.  
I hope you know how much I care,

now your memory lives on around me,  
each and every day.  
Just wish you were here beside me,  
listening to what I have to say.

**Lisa Ann Kline - TCF - Valley Forge, PA**  
**for brother Keith Kline 5/11/74 - 5/20/95**

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**Find Someone to Talk With About Your Grief**

Finding someone to talk with following the death of your brother or sister may be one of the best ways to cope with the loss. It really doesn't matter who that person is, as long as you can be open and honest in conveying your feelings.

It would be terrific if this person could be a parent or a surviving brother or sister, because sharing your loss and going through the grief process together can make you stronger as a family. But often other members of the family are facing their own struggles with the grief process and may not be able to open up with you.

Sometimes it is difficult to share your own feelings with other family members because of the emotions this can bring on. Tears are often difficult for us to handle because, as surviving siblings, we may feel guilty for causing someone else to have a bad day". We may interpret the other person's tears to mean that our deceased sibling is more important than we are, or that we must compete with them for our parents' attention. If you can't talk with your parents or a surviving sibling, talking with another person who has experienced the death of a brother or sister may be the next best thing.

One of the hardest things to do after a sibling dies is to create a life for yourself that will not include your brother or sister. You have to continue going to work or school; fight back the tears when that special favorite song comes on the radio; run to the phone to call your brother or sister only to realize no one will answer; thinking you see your sibling in a crowd; and, answering for the first time the question "how many brothers and sisters do you have?"

Others around you may not understand these things, but someone who has had a brother or sister die knows what this is like. They have sat at a red light, crying their eyes out. They, too, may wear their sibling's clothes. They, too, may look to date someone who knew their brother or sister.

Although no one can know exactly what you are going through (because no one will have the same relationship you had with your brother or sister), someone whose sibling died has probably gone through many of the same experiences you are going through. It helps to hear that what you're going through is "normal". It helps to talk about your sibling and his or her death. It helps to talk about what's going on in your life now.

The Compassionate Friends provides you with unique opportunities to do just that - to talk with someone who has had a brother or sister die. Your local chapter may have a surviving siblings group. If not, you may want to consider joining the Compassionate Friends Sibling Pen Pals which matches you with someone in your age bracket whose brother or sister died in a similar way to yours.

You may find it helpful to talk with a counselor or therapist. As an objective third party trained in dealing with the bereavement process, they may be able to help you through what will probably be a very difficult time. They may be able to help by providing you with insights you may not get from family or friends.

*Mary A. Paulson, Ph.D.*



## THOUGHTS ABOUT PROGRESS

One thing that is frequently discussed at our meeting is the despair of thinking you are on the road to "recovery", when all of a sudden you seem to be back at square one. But are you really? Let's keep in mind most of us have had no previous experience in "recovering" from the loss of a child. Therefore, we have no point of reference- it's all new to us. Actually the 'roller coaster' of emotions is perfectly normal. In the very beginning most of us seem to vacillate between total numbness and excruciating pain. Constant crying until not a tear left... just dried up and limp...we actually ARE living minute to minute.

After a couple of months, we might possibly have a few hours that we have not cried or felt that deep overwhelming despair. Then... WHAM. . back to where we started. We tend to panic and think something is wrong with us. Let's be realistic! There is something wrong--- terribly wrong-- we have each lost a child. Let's be fair to ourselves. We started to play a role to the outside world. Like the old song says, "laughing on the outside, crying on the inside." "We want to be acceptable to society." You are doing so well, we have heard from friends and family. IF ONLY THEY KNEW!!! We may feel we have to fool others, but let us be really honest with our feelings. To deny our grief, particularly to ourselves is to block the road to recovery. Remember, that recovery in this case does not mean "getting over it,"... it simple means to gain control of our lives again.

So, let's not worry about what other people think, say, or expect. Our friends (well-meaning as they are), sometimes members of our family, even someone who has lost a child, should not sit in judgment. Each person grieves differently, in different times, and in different ways, Unless someone has totally withdrawn from everything and everybody over a lengthy period of time, the chances are all is in the realm of normalcy.

Only after we have walked down the long road of grief and can look back, remembering those early days and weeks, can we see we really are NOT on square one again. We have just slipped backwards for a time. That is all. Allow yourself that. Then strive forward again. It takes time, a lot of time! We tend to expect too much from others; others expect too much from us; and, therefore, we tend to expect too much from ourselves. Remember, grief work is the very hardest work you will have to do in your entire life.

*Mary Ehmann, TCF Valley Forge, PA*

By my helping I will be helped  
 If I accept your anger then my anger is accepted.  
 By my caring I am cared for.  
 When I listen I will be listened to.  
 And all these things mean  
 On the lonely road of grief I will not be alone.  
 My recovery will be a little gentler,

And my child will not be forgotten  
 Because the memory of him can be shared  
 With you who understand how I feel --  
 My special Compassionate Friends

*Shirley Egan*  
 TCF, New South Wales, Australia



## TO BE A SURVIVOR . . . . . OR BE A VICTIM

As a bereaved parent, I have choices in how I will cope with my grief, I can choose:

**TO** seek out people and resources who will listen and care when I need support  
 . . . . . **OR** retreat from life and isolate myself from sources of support.

**TO** search for meaningful things to give my life a sense of purpose  
 . . . . . **OR** decide that I have no hope or purpose in life and that I have nothing to live for.

**TO** realize that loss is only one of many factors in my life  
 . . . . . **OR** see myself primarily as a bereaved parent and allow my having experienced the death to blacken and disrupt all aspects of my life.

**TO** communicate with family and friends when I need information and help  
 . . . . . **OR** wait for others to discover what I need and get angry and pity myself when they don't.

**TO** accept what is gone or not within my control, and take action on what I **CAN** do  
 . . . . . **OR** constantly pity myself over what has changed and what I **CAN'T** do.

**TO** try to understand how my family feels, that they hurt too  
 . . . . **OR** feel that absolutely no one can understand me and what I am going through.

**TO** look for ways to **FIGHT BACK** against negative feelings  
 . . . . . **OR** feel that I am helpless and at the mercy of fate.

**TO** talk about fears with someone I trust  
 . . . . . **OR** bottle up fears and horror that are unexpressed and let them have a lot of power over me.

**TO** accept my grief as a necessary process in my recovery from loss  
 . . . . . **OR** be ashamed of my grief and pretend all is well to protect the discomfort of others.

**TO** be angry at the circumstances of the death and seek comfort and strength from God  
 . . . . . **OR** blame God for my circumstances and become angry, bitter and alienated from Him.

Adapted from *Positive Patterns of Survival* . . . a segment of the **I Can Cope Course**  
 taken from the Enid Oklahoma Chapter Newsletter - February, 1991



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS, INC.**

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Chapter Leaders  
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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