



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Bluegrass Chapter Newsletter

"We need not walk alone."

www.tcfbluegrass.org

P.O. Box 647, Nicholasville, Kentucky 40340

January 2011

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Telephone Friends

Sometimes it helps to be able to talk to someone who understands. The following bereaved parents are willing to provide support and comfort.

Jim Sims

(859) 858-8288

(859) 797-2168

Mary Camp

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Janie Fields

(859) 881-1991

The death of a child of any age, from any cause, is a shattering experience for a family. When a child dies, a family needs emotional support for the long grief journey that lays ahead.

*There is
Hope*

helping families toward the positive resolution of their grief following the death of a child.

Our Mission & Purpose is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age by any cause and to provide information to help others be supportive.



Since 1980, the Bluegrass Chapter of The Compassionate Friends has been actively



The New Year

By Karin Powell TCF Volusia/Flagler Chapter, Ormond Beach, FL

Let this New Year gently lead you into a more peaceful time. May your grief stay within your heart for your loved one, but also guide you into new experiences that are still waiting for you. Let the memory of your loved one fill you with hope that this will be a better year, that the pain will subside and only the wonderful memories will remain. That the sting of tears will ease and you will find peace.

*The Compassionate Friends
National Office*

P.O. Box 3696

Oak Brook, IL 60522

(877) 969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

In the event of inclement weather, local radio/television stations will be contacted regarding meeting cancelation. If Fayette County Schools are closed that day, we will not be meeting.

Our Children
Forever Loved and Remembered

January Birth Dates

1/1 **Paul Travis Hickey** Son of Al and Sandy Hickey
1/1 **A. Daniel Morris** Son of James and Marie Morris
1/2 **Jim Albright** Son of J. M. and Erna Albright
1/2 **Tyler Benjamin Johnston** Son of Joe and Andi Johnston
1/3 **Wesley Thomas (Tom) Whitehouse** Son of Betty Whitehouse
1/3 **John Andy Girdler** Son of Ella Girdler
1/4 **Joseph Lewellyn Powell** Son of Celia and David Powell
1/6 **Jeffrey Lynn Spradling** Son of Wilma Cracraft
1/7 **David Nelson Hunt** Son of Judy & Walter Hunt
1/7 **Benjamin Steele Truitt** Son of Charlotte Truitt
1/8 **David Kellemeier** Son of Pat and Robert Kellemeier
1/10 **J. Randall "Rand" Rogers** Son of Ron and Virginia Atwood
1/11 **Jason Lee Stephens** Son of Bobby and Carolyn Stephens
1/12 **Crystal Ann Knafl** Granddaughter of Karen and John Knafl
1/13 **Martha A. Moloney** Daughter of Dorothy Moloney
1/14 **Donald Duncan** Son of Donald and Diane Duncan
1/14 **Evan Scout Warren** Son of Brian and Kellie Kozee Warren
1/15 **Cole Brian Gilliam** Son of Joan B. Gilliam
1/16 **Larry Manuel** Son of Betty and Jack Manuel
1/20 **Jerry Denver Ison** Son of Genett Ison
1/21 **William (Billy) Allen Ransdell** Son of Mack and Deedee Ransdell
1/21 **Robin Grace Dixon** Daughter of Lenna and Letch Dixon
1/22 **Deana Marie Sea** Daughter of Darrell and Jean Sea
1/22 **Jacob Scott Harrod** Son of Mike and Cindy Harrod
1/27 **Weston "Ashe" Marlowe** Son of Brandi and Wesley Marlowe
1/27 **Mark Anthony Bishop** Son of Marlene and Mark Bishop
1/29 **David Julian Hunt** Son of Gail Tomblin
1/30 **Christian "Chris" Ford Cash** Son of David Cash

Pennies From Heaven

Author Unknown

I found a penny today just laying on the ground.
But it is not just a penny this little coin I found...

Found pennies come from Heaven
that's what my Grandpa once told me. He said Angels toss them down . Oh, how I loved that story...

He said when an Angel misses you, they toss a penny down.
Sometimes just to cheer you up and make a smile out of your frown.

So don't pass by that penny when you are feeling blue.
It may be a penny from Heaven that an Angel has tossed to you!

Our Children
Forever Loved and Remembered

January Remembrance Dates

- 1/1 **Eric Ritchey** Son of Lynn and Harley Ritchey
1/2 **Julie Ann Kirkpatrick** Sister of Roy Stewart
1/4 **Mark Christopher Wills** Son of John and Patricia Wills
1/4 **Michael Houston Finley** Son of Katy Finley
1/5 **Ryan Christopher Harris** Son of Larry and Patricia Harris
1/7 **Bart Taylor** Son of Jack Taylor
1/7 **David Ryan Goldey** Son of George and Julia Goldey
1/8 **David James Rison** Son of Karla Scott and David Rison
1/9 **Angela M. Meece** Daughter of Claude and Verna Meece
1/9 **Wesley Thomas (Tom) Whitehouse** Son of Betty Whitehouse
1/9 **Mitch Baber** Son of Steve and Kim Baber
1/9 **Donald Jeffrey Johnson** Son of Barb and Don Johnson
1/14 **Evan Scout Warren** Son of Brian and Kellie Kozee Warren
1/16 **Jennifer Lee Toadvine** Daughter of Ted and Cyndi Toadvine
1/17 **Howard Joseph "Jay" Crim** Son of Becky & Keith LaVey and Howard B. Crim
1/18 **Neil Patrick Fouch** Son of Jennifer Gray and Michael Fouch
1/17 **John Martin Robinson** Son of Pat and Jim Robinson
1/19 **Andrew Clive Cloyd** Son of Roxann Devereux and Richard Cloyd
1/20 **Nathan Winston Crim** Son of Becky & Keith LeVey and Howard B. Crim
1/22 **Julian Vincent D. Regalado** Son of Mary Frances & Ramon Regalado
1/22 **Corey Len Tackett** Son of Sallie Jones
1/24 **Nathan Charles Stamper** Son of Charlie and Missy Stamper
1/25 **Kevin Allen Flynn** Son of Betty and Allen Flynn
1/26 **Geoffrey James Chapman** Son of Maureen Chapman
1/26 **James Earl "Travis" Fryman** Son of Rickey and Mavis Fryman
1/27 **Zachary P. Stanfield** Son of Ron and Karen Stanfield
1/28 **Stacey Carol Sea** Daughter of Darrell and Jean Sea
1/28 **Shannon D. Robinson** Son of Dale and Teresa Robinson
1/29 **Ryan Gregory Yeiser** Son of Greg (George) and Rita Yeiser

Endowment

By Sascha

Hope gives us vision for regaining the tenderness of memories.
Hope carries us through to survival and healing.
Hope offers us courage for acceptance and overcoming.
Hope gives us new spirit and new laughter.
Hope is among the greatest gifts to be found in time of sorrow.
But hope cannot restore what is lost to death.
Hope can only go forward and make us new.
Give space to hope in your life.



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Frankfort, Kentucky Regional Conference "Words of Wisdom, Hearts of Love"

Friday March 25

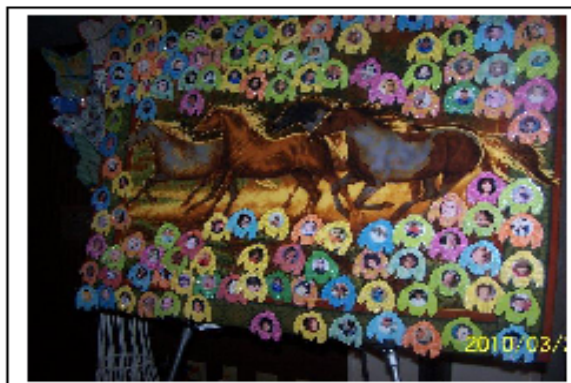
- 10:00 am - 9:00 pm Registration
 1:00 pm - 1:10 pm Welcome – Dusty Rhodes
 Chapter Leader & Regional Coordinator
 1:10 pm - 1:40 pm Pat Loder, Executive Director of
 The Compassionate Friends
 1:40 pm - 2:00 pm Break
 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm Workshop Session
 A: First 2 Years
 B: Reinvesting in Life
 C: Healing, Guilt & Regret
 D: Addiction & Child Loss
 E: Workplace & Grieving
 F: Beyond 5 Years
 3:00 pm - 3:20 pm Break
 3:20 pm - 4:20 pm Workshop Session
 G: Depression vs Grief
 H: Impact of Stillbirth & Infant Death
 I: Helping Yourself Help Others for
 Chapter Leaders & Steering Committee
 J: Songs of Sorrow
 K: A Grandparent's Lament..
 My Grandchild, My Child
 4:20 pm - 5:45 pm Break
 5:45 pm - 7:00 pm Dinner & General Mark Graham
 "Words of Wisdom, Hearts of Love"
 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm Alan Pedersen & Candle Lighting
 Program with Mitch Carmody
 9:00 pm - 10:30 pm Mitch Carmody Whispers of Love,
 Signs from our Children

TCF Frankfort Member Regina Blanton will be making 3" picture buttons before the sessions begins and during the noon hour. Please bring a 4 x 6 picture of your child(ren)

Saturday March 26

- 6:30 am - 7:30 am Registration
 7:30 am - 8:30 am Breakfast
 8:30 am - 9:00 am Pat Malone, Former Past President of
 The Compassionate Friends
 9:00 am - 9:20 am Break
 9:20 am - 10:20 am Workshop Session
 L: Impact of Child Loss in the Family
 M: Anger & Guilt
 N: Surviving Suicide
 O: Creative Arts
 P: TBA
 10:20 am - 11:00 am Break
 11:00 am - 12:00 pm Workshop Session
 Q: Grief after Long Term Illness
 R: Death by Violent Crime
 S: Be Bitter or Better
 T: Butterfly Workshop
 U: Fallen Heroes (Police, Firefighters, Military)
 12:00 pm - 1:15 pm Lunch
 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm Workshop Session
 V: Giving Yourself Permission
 W: No Surviving Children
 X: Strengthening the Local Chapters
 Y: For Women Only
 Z: For Men Only
 2:30 pm - 2:45 pm Break
 2:45 pm - 4:15 pm Closing

Photo from 2010 Conference



To have your child included on "Our Children" webpage, please contact our webmaster Mary at thecamps@roadrunner.com.

Corrections to Birth Dates or Remembrances should be sent to Lisa at garandsmom@yahoo.com.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
 Supporting Family After a Child Dies

"Words of Wisdom, Hearts of Love"
 Frankfort, KY Regional Conference 2011
 March 25th & 26th

REGISTRATION FORM (PLEASE PRINT)

(A SEPARATE FORM IS REQUIRED FOR EACH PERSON ATTENDING)

Guest Name: _____

Guest Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name of Child: _____ age _____ birth date _____ death date _____

Name of Child: _____ age _____ birth date _____ death date _____

Name of Child: _____ age _____ birth date _____ death date _____

To insure your child(ren's) picture is included in the slideshow, please make sure your registration is received by March 22, 2011

Registrations received after this date are accepted, however pictures will not be included in slideshow.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION: \$60.00 PER PERSON INCLUDES FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER, HOT BREAKFAST SATURDAY MORNING AND BOX LUNCH ON SATURDAY. BLOCK OF ROOMS RESERVED AT CAPITAL PLAZA HOTEL AT A DISCOUNTED RATE OF \$ 77.00 PLUS TAX. TO GET DISCOUNT YOU MUST MENTION TCF AND RESERVE BY MARCH 4 (502)227-5100.

Mail Registration to: The Compassionate Friends of Frankfort, KY PO Box 4075, Frankfort, KY 40604

If you have family/friends that wish to only attend Friday night dinner or Saturday luncheon. Please let us know.
 Friday night dinner \$ 15.00 per person # of guests _____ - Saturday luncheon \$ 10.00 per person # of guests _____

Please submit a small photo of your child with your registration for our slideshow by March 22, 2011. Place child's name and dates on back of the picture. We do our utmost to return all pictures but **PLEASE** do not send originals.

Child care will not be available

There will be tables available for memory items if you would like to bring a picture or special item to share.

PLEASE CHECK ONE WORKSHOP PER SESSION

ITINERARY OF WORKSHOPS LISTED ON CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

(Workshops are subject to change without notice.)

Friday 2:00 – 3:00	Friday 3:20 – 4:20	Saturday 9:20 – 10:20	Saturday 11: 00 – 12:00	Saturday 1:30 – 2:30
A.	G.	L.	Q.	V.
B.	H.	M.	R.	W.
C.	I.	N.	S.	X.
D.	J.	O.	T.	Y.
E.	K.	P.	U.	Z.
F.				

15 Years of Lessons from My Heart

Elaine Stillwell, Denis and Peggy O'Conner's mother
Rockville Centre, NY

Never did I dream that there was so much to learn about grieving! I began my journey when my two oldest children, 23 year old Denis and 19 year old Peggy died 4 days apart from the same automobile accident. Telling others the lessons I have learned over the years, I lovingly refer to as "sharing Peggy and Denis with the world." Maybe some of these discoveries will help you.

Find those loving people. Surround yourself with people who put no demands on you and let you grieve at your own pace, setting no timetables for you. Feel their presence and their art of loving listening. Caring friends, new and old were a major force in my healing. Just knowing someone cared enough to walk the journey with me gave me strength to get up each day.

Read about grief. Visit the public library (155.937) or your favorite bookstore and locate all those wonderful books written by persons who have "walked your walk" and find out what helped them to survive. Inspiring words and stories will fill you with positive ideas, validate your feelings and suggest coping skills and offer hope to have a meaningful life again. Books brought peace to my soul, a challenge to my spirit and a lifeline of hope to my family and me. I read my way to sanity.

Pamper yourself. Take good care of yourself, not out of selfishness, but out of wisdom. Do what helps you the most. Carefully pick and choose things to do that are refreshing to you. Avoid situations and people that drag

you down, until you are stronger and can handle them. Making decisions day by day, strengthened my ability to expand my choices and increase my energy, hastening my healing.

Keep a journal. Try to write your thoughts and feelings each day in a special notebook. Record what brings you a moment of joy or what causes turmoil in your life. Write the things you wished you had said, ask for forgiveness if that is necessary, or simply tell what your days are like now. As time goes on, you will learn a lot about yourself from your journal, tracking the roller coaster ride of grief. How I regret not keeping a journal, but no one ever suggested it to me. I would love to know how I handled those raw feelings that are now a blur to me and eased my heart in those beginning days.

Take time to grieve. Set aside a special time that you can meditate, think, read, cry, look at pictures, pray, feel their heavenly presence, a time by yourself that you can sort out your feelings and deal with them one by one, a time to re-energize yourself. Slow down and make this a priority. This was one of my hardest tasks, trying to schedule a "time for me," rearranging a busy day's activities to find 15 to 20 minutes of reflections, instead of running from grief.

Tell the world how you really feel. Don't be afraid to tell people that you are struggling to take "baby steps" in your grief, that you are not "fine." Be honest so you can help educate others to understand the grief journey. This takes time until you can find the right words

to explain your feeling. I found comfortable words to express exactly how I felt. It took time to go from being the "vulnerable-fine" to the "stronger...telling it as it is."

Cry. Release all those emotions instead of stuffing them down inside. Crying is healing and is a vital part of our mourning. I cried every day from four to five after I got home from work, releasing all that tension and hurt. I call my husband, my "blotter," soaking up all those tears. Then he would say, "What's for dinner? And I would nurture him.

Tell your story. It is important to talk, telling the story of your loved one, so it becomes part of you and your whole being. No matter where I was, what line I was on, what situation I was in, I told everyone about Peggy and Denis. It soothed my soul to make sure their memories were not erased and became a motivating factor in my life to share my children with the world, never to be forgotten.

Teach others to talk about your loved one. Make sure people know that it is "music to your ears" to hear stories about your loved one, or just the mention of their name. Dispel the myth that talking about them is upsetting to you. Fifteen years later, I am still working on this. Hearing their names and knowing they are remembered makes my heart sing.

Reach out to you spouse/family and friends. Even though you might be grieving differently and feel like you are living on different planets, respect each other's method of mourning and be sure to spend time together each day, even

Continued on Page 11...

Continuing Your Relationship with Your Child

Theresa Valentine, Sean Valentine's mother
Anywhere, USA

Does it just eat at your heart when you are in line at a store and the clerk reminds you to “have a good day”? It's hard to have a “good day” when you're longing for your child is the only connection you seem to have to them.

Children are part of us. We created them, we nurtured them, we cherish them, we watched them grow, guided them throughout their life.

Then they died; many of them suddenly and unexpectedly. When our son, Sean, died I felt that my connection to him was severed. I wasn't prepared for that; didn't want it; I still needed him in my life.

One of the most difficult “tasks” that we face in our grief work is figuring out how to continue our relationship with our child. Parents, especially Mothers, begin establishing a relationship with their children before they are born. That relationship does not end when our child dies; the problem is we have to figure out for ourselves what the relationship will now look like in our life.

Do you “talk” with your child when you visit the cemetery? Do you write to them in your journal? Do you pray to them at night? Do you ask them questions; or for help or strength? Many of us have done that, it is a way of staying “connected.” Or, put another way, of continuing the relationship.

Some months after Sean's death I told a trusted friend that it felt like I was “loosing” him, he was receding into a fog. What I meant, but could not articulate, was that I

felt as though I wasn't “connecting” with him, my life was changing and he wasn't part of the changes. For example before his death I was shopping for a new car, about 6 months later I got a car but instead of it being fun or making me excited it made me sad because I no longer had the car that I had used to chauffeur him around.

I kept looking for “signs” that he was still “with me”, at least his spirit. If I saw a butterfly I wanted to believe that he “sent” it to me. If a rainbow appeared I took it as a “gift” from Sean. Were these truly signs or messages that his spirit was sending to me? I don't know; what I do know is that they made me feel better, at least for a moment, because I *believed* in them. The point is to use what makes *you* feel good. If you *want* it to be a sign, it becomes *your* sign; you may not always need this but if it works for you now accept it.

Often the things that we take as our signs help us in reestablishing our connection. I wanted to believe in them and so I did; others may not feel the need for this method of keeping the connection and will find a way that works for them.

During the first year after his death I became afraid of forgetting the details of him and of his life. I know now that I needn't have worried, but I did because I had not experienced the cycle of grief and because I had that “fog” thing going on in my brain.

This fear of forgetting caused me to keep holding tight to my

pain; I felt like it was all I had left of him. I was afraid that if I let go of the pain I would lose the last connection I had to him. I was using the pain as a connection, I don't recommend this but as I said there aren't many models for this so I had to go down a few blind canyons before I found the right path.

At some point I realized that Sean – and his life was about more than pain. And I knew that I needed to let go of a little of my pain. Boy was that scary!

But it was rewarding. A funny thing happened. Spontaneous memories came to me and were a joy and a reassurance that I wouldn't forget. I found I was able to laugh and enjoy some of those memories, and people in my life were willing to share their memories. It became easier to talk about him without crying. When this happened friends and extended family began to talk about him as well; they had been afraid of causing me to cry. I had reclaimed some of the joy that his life had brought. I began to develop a subtle, but very real, sense that he was “with” me; I no longer needed to ask “where are you, are you OK”.

I began to relate with him in more peaceful ways. He is with me always. He lives in my heart now. When I am happy I communicate that to him; when I see something beautiful that he would have enjoyed I “share” it with him; when his niece was born I told him about how cute she was, and later about her first steps.

Finding a New Normal for Yourself

In the early days, weeks, and even months after our child dies, most of family members, friends, and colleagues are very supportive of the ways we mourn the death of our child. They understand and encourage us as we weep, talk about our child, express our devastation. They understand that we are deeply sad, even depressed, have no joy in our lives, and can hardly function.

But at some point, many of these same friends, family, and colleagues begin to wonder – and some will even ask – when we are going to get back to *normal* again. They want the old happy, productive, focused, fun person to return.

What they don't understand is that we *are* now normal. And if we weren't behaving and feeling as we are, we would not be normal – in fact we would be abnormal.

When we lose a bet or a job or wreck our car or suffer a financial setback etc., the loss can hit us pretty hard. However, we don't say, "Oh well, that's life," and just *move on* and forget about what happened. The loss lingers with us. Fortunately we find ways to deal with these losses fairly quickly.

When we have a serious disease or lose our sight or an arm or leg, it hits us harder. And we certainly don't say, "Oh well, that's life," and just *move on* and forget what we've lost. These losses are usually life-changing. We try to find ways to deal with them, but it can take a long time – and many times our life is drastically different than it was before. We arrive at a new normal, which may even involve a wheelchair, nursing care, etc. We usually don't advise people who have lost their sight or a limb to "Just get over it and get on with life" or "to get back to normal."

Yes, it is terrible to be infirm, and it is terrible to lose a limb. But the death of our child is like moving to a whole new planet. And most of those who have not been on that "planet" don't understand this. There is *nothing* we can do to have our old life – from before the death of our child – back. Yes, we do move forward. And yes, we do find ways to deal with this loss and to absorb it into our new life. But mourning the death of our child takes a long time – perhaps the rest of our life.

In the beginning, that shock, numbness, weeping, questioning, sense of hopelessness, loss of joy, etc. are normal. And at that time we are *normal*. Not the normal we were before our child died, but today's *normal*.

And over time, as the shock and numbness wear off but the reality and the pain flood in, our sense of hopelessness and loss of joy, our inability to function as we used to in work, home and life, our crying, deep sadness or depression continue and may even deepen. This *is* normal.

As time goes on, we find ways to cope with our new life, ways that are helpful to us in our mourning, ways to deal with the world. Our pain and sadness remain, but we find ways to make these deep feelings part of our life rather than the forces we have to battle. And we may begin to have some hope and to find some meaning and joy in life – not like we had before, but some. That is our new *normal* at this time.

And eventually, while the pain has not lessened and our sadness at the death of our child has not lessened or gone away, we have grown and strengthened to the point where we know we can live with that pain and sadness and that we can live a full life. This life will always be different than it was before the death of our child. What is meaningful to us now, what brings us joy now, what is important now, is vastly different than it was. This is our new *normal*.

It is the New Year

The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of both, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there among all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also thankfulness for the memory.

Continuing Relationship Continued From Page 7...

Yes, when I am sad I share that too. My strongest memories today are not of his death (although I will never forget it), but of his *life*. The fact that he *lived* is more important than the fact that he died. Do I wish that he were still living?? Of course. Do I get sad sometimes; Do I cry? Yes. But his *LIFE* is what I focus on. I am who I am today and I do what I do because he died – But also because he *LIVED*. The lessons I learned

came from his life and his death.

Part of the reason this concept of a continuing relationship is so tough to figure out is that all relationships are unique. Parents have a relationship with each child that is unique to that child, now you are trying to "remodel" that unique relationship so that it fits the reality of your continuing life. No one can tell you exactly how to do this because it is so personal. I hope I have helped you think about

how you might begin the process. I can assure you that it is possible and rewarding and you will be glad you put the effort into it. As I am writing this it has been 22 years since Sean's death and he is still very much a part of my life, and the life of the rest of our family. I really believe that this is because I muddled through the details of that connection even when it hurt to do so. I know you can do it too.

Meeting Information

Lexington

Third Monday of Every Month
6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m.
Hospice of the Bluegrass
2321 Alexandria Drive
Lexington, Kentucky



Winchester

First Tuesday of Every Month
7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
Hospice East
417 Shoppers Drive
Winchester, Kentucky

Meeting Format

Doors open one-half hour before meeting times to provide the opportunity to visit with old friends and acknowledge new ones. Please plan to arrive early so the meeting can begin on time.

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.

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*When a Child Dies...**What We Can Teach the World [and ourselves]!**...about our grief!***1. GRIEF HURTS.**

There is real pain. It is not psychosomatic!

2. GRIEF IS NORMAL.

The pain, anger, depression, numbness, guilt, mental confusion, etc., is all NORMAL. You are not going crazy because you experience these.

3. GRIEF ENDURES.

It lasts longer than society (or we ourselves) generally recognizes. It takes years for healing to occur.

Be patient with yourself.

4. PEOPLE GRIEVE DIFFERENTLY.

Everyone is an individual and does his/her grief work differently. There is no right way to grieve.

5. PHYSICAL REACTIONS

- a. Loss of appetite or overeating.
- b. Insomnia - sleeplessness
- c. Sleeping all the time- depression?
- d. Sexual difficulties-not wanting/deserving pleasure.
- e. Loss of energy - takes all you have to get out of bed!
- f. Difficulty concentrating -can't hold thoughts, organize, plan, forgetful, etc.
- g. Physical ailments: hypertension, headaches, any illness related to stress.

6. GRIEF BRINGS TEARS.

Causes one to cry. Crying is a healthy expression of grief. It releases built-up tensions. Grieving persons should be encouraged to cry freely as they feel the need. The chemical makeup of tears from grief is different from other tears. MEN SHOULD CRY TOO! Crying is OK!

7. HOLIDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES, SPECIAL DAYS ARE STRESSFUL.

Holidays are "family times" and are difficult when a child is absent. Anniversaries include birthdays, deathdays. Special Days include every Fridays if the child died on a Friday, 1st day of school and your child isn't there to go this year, graduation exercises -- two and three years after the death...all can be stressful.

8. GRIEF CAUSES ONE TO EXAMINE HIS/HER PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE.

We now question many religious principles that we've always accepted without question in the past. Simple answers to life questions are no longer acceptable to many during grief. Things just aren't "black and white" anymore. Those in grief seek deeper truths now and these truths must be real to them -experienced-to be accepted. Questioning God and His role in the loss is NORMAL and OK! Being angry at God is OK! You can't be angry at someone you don't believe in! Remember, there is no way that a loving God would cause a child to die and leave the family with such horrible grief. He hurts when we hurt.

9. GRIEF CHANGES YOU!

When your child dies, you will never again be the person you were the day before the death! Friendships and relationships change because WE CHANGE. Don't be frightened by the changes taking place INSIDE you. Go with them. You will eventually find your "resting place" as healing takes place.

10. RECOVERY AND HEALING IS POSSIBLE!

You will never "get over" the death of a child and there will always be a void in your life, BUT, you won't always hurt like you do initially. To recover, you must go through the grief, experience it.

All attempts to avoid it will only postpone it!

IT DOES GET BETTER!

"15 Years" Continued From Page 6...

if it is just giving a hug, holding hands, walking around the block together or sharing a cup of coffee. Give yourselves time to be on the same wave-length. I shared anything I read that I found helpful, cut out articles to paste on the refrigerator and made sure I got plenty of hugs for survival. We drew strength from those arms wrapped around each other.

Give yourself permission to be crazy. Doing things that are not harmful that bring pleasure to your heart but might seem strange to the non-bereaved can make you smile and give you momentum. So, send off some balloons with a message attached, bake them a birthday cake, sing their favorite song, wear their favorite shirt, carry their eight by ten picture with you at all times, sign their name to a card, save an empty chair for them, collect angels, paint rainbows, whatever makes your heart feel good. I was saved by buying and giving angels to everyone dear to me with my children's names and dates. It did wonders for my heart and is a tradition that continues fifteen years later.

Pray. Praying is simply talking and talking is healing. So, pray to your loved one, to God or whoever is your higher power and feel the strength that enfolds you and carries you. Peggy and Denis are

wonderfully reliable for finding me parking spaces or securing beautiful weather for special events like weddings which bring many phone calls for their intervention.

Establish new routines/traditions. Try some new things that develop new pleasures for your family, whether it be different seats at the table, new hobbies new ways to celebrate holidays, delighting with new friends, doing all those things you put off, or just taking time "to smell the roses." I found comfort in doing things that Peggy and Denis loved to do; walking on the beach, listening to music, being an avid tennis fan, rooting for Notre Dame and celebrating St. Patrick's Day with gusto. Lightening candles and collecting angels started delightful traditions which kept them included in every event.

Invest in that special love. Don't waste that special love you have. Find ways to keep your loved one's memory alive by using that special love, writing, planting a garden, establishing a scholarship, sponsoring a person in need, carrying the coffee pot to the TCF meeting, volunteering at the Cancer Care, MADD, local blood drives and nursing homes, working with scouting, 4-H and community sports, helping a support group, taking part in walkathons, Habitat

for Humanity, parish needs and in group that is meaningful to you. By investing that special love, your loved ones can make a difference in the world. Founding a chapter of TCF, serving as chapter leader and newsletter editor and going on to become Bereavement Coordinator for my diocese, reaching out to help the bereaved in one hundred and thirty parishes is a "dream come true for me." Offering something that was not available when my children died. Endings brought me a new beginning and with them a challenge to invest that special love I have for Peggy and Denis.

Harbor hope. Realize that others before you have emerged intact and that you will too. Their inspiration will give you faith in yourself to come through the darkest hours. Hope is grief's best music. Let its melody caress your soul and sing to your heart, inviting you to a meaningful life again. Use this powerful tool of hope to heal, to venture forward, to be the new you and to carry your loved one with you in your heart. That spark of hope flickered for me, glowed and then ignited, illuminating my way out of the Valley of the Shadow and creating a beacon of hope for others by my "sharing Peggy and Denis with the world."

You Know You're Getting Better When....

- Your memories make you smile instead of break into tears.
- When someone else's pain hurts you more than your own.
- When you can tell someone else life really DOES go on.
- one day you wake up and you don't have to remind yourself to breathe.
- you want to find a way to leave your grief in the past.
- you find you are actually enjoying living.
- you can come home and be content in an empty house.

Ashtabula Township

Sorrow mingled with hope as parents, grandparents and siblings meet for the Compassionate Friends monthly support-group meeting.

"Our love for our children unites us," said Herb Saari, founder of the northeast Ohio chapter, as he read the TCF Credo.

The mission of TCF is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

"We are starting our 23rd year, and to commemorate, we are going to light a candle," said Kathy Coy-Hawley, who co-leads the group with Saari.

The candle, with four wicks, was lit for grandparents (the forgotten mourners), for all of the bereaved parents, for siblings (the other forgotten mourners), and for our blood children who died too soon, Coy-Hawley said.

Coy-Hawley, who lost her son to suicide, began the introductions around the crowded room.

"Coming to TCF was like walking onto a lifeboat. You feel a stigma; especially children who died from suicide, the stigma is terrible. The most wonderful thing is to be able to talk about your child and how you feel," she said.

Coy-Hawley's daughter, Wendy Scott, 31, of Jefferson, is the TCF surviving siblings support-group leader.

"I came to group and could talk about my big brother and tell all my feelings because I could not burden

my Mom. I knew she was hurting so much already," Scott said. "The sibling group is a safe confidential place where the siblings can express their feelings."

TCF began in Coventry, England, in 1969 and was incorporated in the United States as a nonprofit organization in 1978. There are now chapters in every state, which now number almost 600, and hundreds of chapters in Canada, Great Britain and many countries across the globe, according to a TCF fact sheet.

Herb and the late Marge Saari began the northeast Ohio chapter of TCF in October 1983 after experiencing the loss of two daughters and a grandson in only 11 months.

"I don't remember the funerals; I remember the friends," Herb Saari said. "We started with seven families, and in 23 years we have grown to more than 300 families."

Through TCF, the Saaris finally found a place they could cry and share their true feelings, without feeling they were being judged.

"Six months of Compassionate Friends did more for my wife and I than any therapy," he said. "I would never leave this group because they helped us so much."

Other people around the room agreed with Saari.

One grieving mother said, "This group saved my life." Another said, "TCF has been a lifeline for me and my family."

There were some who could not talk because the loss is so new and others who brought up specific issues

related to the losses they are dealing with.

"Christmas is the hardest for us to get through," said one grieving mother.

Kathy Frambac, of Conneaut, who has been attending meetings since last October, feels "the first year you are in shock, and the second year reality sets in," she said.

Another mother agreed. "Sometimes the second year is worse than the first, and people expect you to be better; you expect you to be better," she said.

Cathy Herpy of Ashtabula has been attending TCF meetings since 1994. Her son, Wayne, died in 1993 at 28, of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

"TCF has really helped me - after I got through being angry at God and just plain angry," Herpy said. "I was thankful that (Wayne) had accomplished so much in his young life, including marrying and having two wonderful sons that we are so proud of."

Parents grieving miscarriages are also welcome at TCF to share their grief.

Ann Turner of Ashtabula Township is grateful to be able to express the pain of losing her child because of a miscarriage.

"You grieve the same because you lost your child," she said.

"Our stories are all different. We all understand each other's pain," Coy-Hawley said. "It is so wonderful to hear someone else say, 'I felt that way.'"

Meeting Format

Doors open one-half hour before meeting times to provide the opportunity to visit with old friends and acknowledge new ones. Please plan to arrive early so the meeting can begin on time.