

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

St. Paul, Minnesota Chapter Newsletter

No. 621 7884 Irish Avenue South, Cottage Grove, MN 55016 651-459-9341 February/March/April 2008
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The Compassionate Friends National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522 Phone No. (Toll free) 877-969-0010

The Saint Paul Chapter of The
Compassionate Friends
Meets on the second Thursday of
each month at
Beaver Lake Lutheran Church
2280 Stillwater Avenue;
Maplewood, Minnesota
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

For initial contact and meeting
information call Linda at
763-862-5179

The Compassionate Friends National
Web Site is located at
www.compassionatefriends.org

TCF St. Paul Chapter Web Site at
tcfstpaul.org

***MEETING TOPICS:**

*The following meetings include
General Sharing & Discussion to
also include the following topics:

Feb 14: Differences between Men
and Women's grieving styles will be
discussed (we will break up into
separate groups)

March 13: Spirituality and general
discussion.

April 10: After Death
Communications/Signs. Come share
your experiences and/or listen to
others share theirs. Separate
discussion group for those who do
not wish to participate in the topic
discussion.

*"Never doubt that a small group of
committed people can change the
world; indeed it is the only thing
that ever has." --Margaret Mead*

The Compassionate Friends, Inc. is a mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, as it is to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with the feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child.

The mission of The Compassionate Friends 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.

The Compassionate Friends' vision is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not The Compassionate Friends will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.

TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE "GRIEF ROAD"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK - what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

***INFORMATION REGARDING OUR MEETINGS**

PLEASE don't stay away from a meeting because the topic scheduled does not interest you. We are here to discuss whatever is on your mind; we do not stay on the topic only. This is YOUR group and we are here for each other. You do not have to talk at meetings. We welcome your participation in our group but it is not a requirement. Coming to listen to the others is okay too. Remember also that our meeting is open to adult siblings, grandparents, or adult family members such as aunts or uncles.

We Need Not Walk Alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.

ST. PAUL CHAPTER INFORMATION

Chapter Coordinators/Steering Committee: Cathy Seehuetter, Jan Navarro, Debbie Halfen, Lyle Lindberg, Dave Esberg, Denise Bjerke, Cori Clagherty
Newsletter Editor: Cathy Seehuetter
Mailing and Folding: Susan Rogge
Chapter Webmaster: Dave Esberg (tcfstpaul.org)
Treasurer: Lyle Lindberg
Librarian: Jan Navarro
Remembrance Cards: Kathy Lesnau
1st Contact: Linda Bergan
Outreach: Karen Gorz
Hospitality: Kim ZumMallen
TELEPHONE FRIENDS: Please call the following phone friends if you need someone to talk with:

ACCIDENTAL/SUDDEN DEATH

Cathy.....651-459-9341

ILLNESS

Jeanne.....651-330-7613

SUICIDE

Dave (Cell phone) 612-747-8225

ONLY CHILD

Kathy.....651-426-2446

INFANT LOSS

Lori.....952-229-4630

CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Lois.....651-777-2342

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS

MINNEAPOLIS: Meets the 3rd Monday of every month at Calvary Lutheran Church, 7520 Golden Valley Road in Golden Valley. Contact Carol Hawk at 763-542-8528.

RICHFIELD: Meets the 2nd Monday of every month at Hope Presbyterian Church, 7132 Portland Ave. So. For directions or more information, call Chris or Bob Lewis at 612-825-6500.

ST. CROIX VALLEY: Meets the 1st Thursday of every month at United Methodist Church, 1401 Laurel Avenue, Hudson, WI. For more information, call Ron or Kathy Felsch at 651-439-3290.

APPLE VALLEY: For meeting times and location, please call Shirley Doering at 952-432-5955

Chapter Website

For continually updated information regarding our chapter and other TCF news, see our chapter website at tcfstpaul.org.

Steering Committee Meeting

Please call 651-459-9341 if you are interested in helping with the work of the chapter and need further info and meeting date, time and place of our next meeting. All are welcome.

SUPPORT GROUPS AND NEWSLETTERS

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NATIONAL OFFICE

TCF.....toll free: 877-969-0010

E-mail: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

SUICIDE

Survivors of Suicide612-922-5830

Suicide Awareness.....952-946-7998

Or 1-800-511-SAVE

Crisis Hotline.....1-800-784-2433

PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN

St. Paul Chapter.....651-484-0336

E-mail: pomcmn@isd.net

National number..... (Toll free)(888) 818-

POMC

OTHER NEWSLETTERS

Alive Alone: Loss of an only child. There may be a minimal charge.

Kay Bevington
11115 Dull Robinson Road
Van Wert, OH 45891

The Compassionate Friends. National newsletter published four times per year. Cost is a donation of \$20 or more. This publication is for siblings and grandparents also.

TCF
PO Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522

Parents of Murdered Children. This "survivors" newsletter is issued three times a year and costs \$10. POMC helps survivors deal with their grief and the justice system. Write to:

Parents of Murdered Children
MN HOPE Chapter
PO Box 516
Circle Pines, MN 55014

Suicide Awareness/Voices of Education:

SA/VE
9001 E. Bloomington Freeway
Suite 150
Minneapolis, MN 55420
888-511-SAVE
www.SAVE.org

Our Children Remembered

The light of life never goes out.

Birthday and anniversary remembrances to the following children and their families:

LOVED...MISSED...REMEMBERED ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS AND ALWAYS

February

- | | | | |
|---------|---|---------|---|
| 2-03-79 | Graeme Grothe, son of Hannah Lieder | 2-25-95 | Afton, daughter of Mark & Diane Shepard |
| 2-16-70 | Ann-Marie, daughter of Ronele & Jerry Janes | 2-26-61 | Kathy Jo Whitehead, daughter of Mary Lou O'Connor |
| 2-17-70 | Stephen, son of Don & Nancy Selander | 2-26-98 | Zachary Jon, son of Patty Gaffney |

March

- | | | | |
|---------|--|---------|---|
| 3-05-85 | Jeffrey David, son of Ken & Diane Olinger | 3-18-76 | Andrew, son of Catherine Guisan & Steve Dickinson |
| 3-13-80 | Marit Eldri, daughter of Gregor McDonald | 3-25-81 | Cheryl, daughter of Denise & Steve Bjerke |
| 3-14-71 | Robert, son of Pete & Lee Meyerson, brother of Charlie | 3-27-69 | John, brother of Kristy Schauer |
| 3-16-75 | Joey, son of Diane Nelson | 3-27-55 | Rick, son of Dolores Walker |
| 3-18-82 | Jesse, son of Sandy and Cliff Romberg | 3-29-82 | Erik, son of Doug & Christy Spindler |

April

- | | | | |
|---------|--|---------|--|
| 4-09-62 | Sharon, daughter of Lois Nyman | 4-24-74 | Adam, son of Mark & Linda Triplett, brother of Katrina |
| 4-13-60 | Kathryn, daughter of Lois Klindworth | 4-26-83 | Joe, son of Steve & Lori Kromrey, grandson of William & Shirley Briggs and Leon & Rose Kromrey |
| 4-15-92 | Kevin, son of Joe & Debbie Halfen | 4-27-95 | Kaylen, daughter of Cheryl & Scott Baker |
| 4-16-83 | Marissa Marie, daughter of Nancy Bauer | 4-29-79 | Brandon, son of Dave Esberg |
| 4-16-85 | Brandon, son of Robbyn Devine | 4-30-82 | Michelle Lyann, daughter of Chuck Winter |
| 4-17-06 | Brandon, son of Teresa Quinn | | |
| 4-23-81 | Michael, son of Wendy & Tom Langer, brother of Jim | | |

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN...IN OUR HEARTS ALWAYS... REMEMBERED ON THE DAY OF THEIR DEATH

February

- | | | | |
|---------|--|---------|--|
| 2-02-05 | Afton, daughter of Diane & Mark Shepard | 2-22-00 | Christopher, son of Mary Warner |
| 2-04-03 | Barry, son of Claudia Eliason | 2-22-07 | Katie, daughter of Lynn & Bob Poferi |
| 2-03-03 | Brent, son of Nancy & Jim Hendrickson | 2-24-88 | Todd, son of Shirley & Don Terhell |
| 2-06-01 | Kyle, son of Sherry & Steve Lagoon | 2-26-04 | Timothy Keith, son of Ken & Diane Olinger |
| 2-14-91 | Ann-Marie, daughter of Jerry & Ronele Janes | 2-27-00 | Joe, son of Steve & Lori Kromrey, grandson of William & Shirley Briggs and Leon & Rose Kromrey |
| 2-17-06 | Jeffrey, son of Donna Elwell | 2-29-96 | Kyle, son of Ken & Karen Hannemann, brother of Kristin Garrett |
| 2-20-03 | Robert, son of Lee & Pete Meyerson, brother of Charlie | | |

March

- | | | | |
|---------|--|---------|---|
| 3-05-85 | Jeffrey David, son of Diane & Ken Olinger | 3-15-99 | Brandon, son of Dave Esberg |
| 3-07-99 | Julie Rosenthal, granddaughter of Elaine Henthorne | 3-16-75 | Joey, son of Diane Nelson |
| 3-08-04 | Kathy Jo Whitehead, daughter of Mary Lou O'Connor | 3-21-79 | Shelly Buchanan, daughter of Carol Malek |
| 3-10-99 | Sharon, daughter of Lois Nyman | 3-24-94 | Julia Ann Bartlett, daughter of Carol & George Konkle |
| 3-10-07 | Kayla Hoffman, daughter of Kristy Schauer | 3-25-07 | Brandon, son of Teresa Quinn |
| 3-11-05 | Patrick, son of Julie Niemi | 3-25-99 | Sarah, daughter of Randall Bachman |
| 3-14-02 | Kathryn, daughter of Lois Klindworth | 3-26-05 | Jamie Agudelo, child of Pat Ossell |
| | | 3-28-07 | Tom Anderson, son of Loretta & Jerry Sopkowiak |

April

- | | | | |
|---------|--|---------|---|
| 4-02-00 | Loren Tyner Lamb, son of Johanna Lester | 4-21-05 | Luke, son of Shannon Sievers, grandson of Karen McLaren |
| 4-05-95 | Michelle Lyann, daughter of Chuck Winter | 4-22-94 | Bill Achterling, stepson of Steve Wertz |
| 4-09-98 | Carley, daughter of Brenda Bauman | 4-24-06 | Andrew, son of Steve Dickinson & Catherine Guisan |
| 4-15-05 | Erin, daughter of Colleen & David Hines | 4-30-03 | Lawson Rios, grandson of Linda Bergan |
| 4-19-06 | Michael, son of Patty Rajala | | |

**** My sincere apologies to Mary Lou O'Connor for unintentionally omitting her daughter, Tammy Marie Malcolm's name from the Children Remembered page in the last newsletter. Tammy Marie's birthday is November 26, 1969.**

"LOVE GIFTS" are tax-deductible donations given in memory of our children or other loved ones by family, friends, or other caring people who wish to help with the work of the St. Paul Chapter. Our chapter is self-supporting and donations are our only means of existence. We gratefully accept these gifts with the knowledge that our children are warmly remembered. **'Love Gifts' were given in loving memory by the following:**

- Joannie Kemling, children Kellie Kaye & Mitchell John
- Bonnie & Dan Boyum, son Michael
- Peggy Thielen Peppard, son Trevor Thomas
- Linda Bergan, grandson Lawson & son Derek
- Tom Franzen, brother Dave & mother Bev
- Alex & Cindy Johnson, son Alex
- Dick & Mardell Cavanaugh, granddaughter Angela Klover
- Cathy & Greg Seehuetter, daughter Nina Westmoreland
- George & Carol Konkle, daughter Julia Ann Bartlett
- Lonnie Bonham, son Brett
- Joe & Denise Kirby, daughter Nicole
- Theresa, Jim & Joe Klover, daughter and sister Angela
- Maureen Johnson, brother John Keyser
- Mark & Diane Shepard, daughter Afton
- Steve Wertz, stepson Bill Achterling
- Cliff & Sandy Romberg, son Jesse
- Karen Gorz, daughter Rita
- Ken & Mary Jo Peterson, son Chris
- Lois O'Neil, granddaughter Erin Como
- Tom & Laura Burback, son Thomas, Jr.
- Brenda Bauman, daughter Carley Bruening
- Sue Ward, son Levi
- Lori & Kim Kale, son Austin
- Janis & Mark Baird, son Robert
- Gayle Schneider, for Alex Johnson
- Kathy & Al Lesnau, son Charlie
- Russ & Marsha Williams, son Larry
- Jason & Teresa Karsten, son Jaden
- Lois & Warren Johnson, daughter Cindy
- Don & Eleanore Baumann, daughter Betsy
- Elaine Henthorne, daughter Carla and granddaughter Julie
- Sharon Lunde, daughter Lisa
- Jeanne & Bob Walz, daughter Kelly Thompson
- Pat Harp, son Jim
- Lois Klindworth, daughter Kathryn & granddaughter Briana
- Mary Ann Pojar, son John
- Kim ZumMallen, daughter Hannah
- Katie Vener, son Mathew Crowe
- Laura & David Tussey, son Jacob
- Carol & Gary Malek, children Jesse and Shelly Buchanan
- Tom, Wendy & Jim Langer, son and brother Mike
- Nancy Bauer, daughter Marissa
- Jim Franzen, son David & wife Bev
- Don & Deb Nelson, son Cody
- Tom & Carol Nace, son Tommy
- Cori Clagherty, son Ryan
- Laurel Vigeant, daughter Germain

2008 REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Northeast Wisconsin Regional TCF Conference, March 7-9, Comfort Suites Hotel, Green Bay, Wisconsin. Keynote Speaker, Paul Alexander, nationally recognized bereavement counselor, certified social worker, singer, and songwriter--composer of the popular song, "Light a Candle." Workshops, speakers, candle lighting and much more.

Frankfort, Kentucky Regional TCF Conference, March 28-29, First Christian Church, Frankfort, Kentucky. Singer songwriter Alan Pedersen will perform. Workshops, speakers, candle lighting, "memory walk" and much more. See TCF National website for further info.

Western Pennsylvania 7th Regional Conference, April 4-5 Days Inn, Meadville, PA. Healing workshops, sharing sessions, and much more. See TCF National website for further info.

2008 TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE - NASHVILLE, TN

Nashville, Tennessee, known as the home of country music, will be the host city for the 31st national conference of The Compassionate Friends July 18-20, 2008. The 2008 conference will have special guest speakers and entertainers, more than 100 workshops covering most aspects of grief following the death of a child, and many additional activities including the ninth annual two-mile Walk to Remember at 8 a.m. Sunday July, 20.

Among the keynote speakers will be Joe and Iris Lawley, founding parents of The Compassionate Friends, who will fly all the way from England for what may be one of their final TCF speaking engagements outside of their home country.

The conference will be held at the Sheraton Music City Hotel and a room rate of \$124 (plus tax) is now available for guests attending the conference. You can take advantage of this rate by calling 888-627-7060. Please mention that you are with The Compassionate Friends. You may also register online at www.compassionatefriends.org.

2007 WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING PROGRAM

Approximately 300+ people attended our TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting program, which was held on a chilly evening Dec. 11th; it was a heart-warming and beautiful experience. One of the highlights was the addition of the slide presentation with approximately 75 pictures of our precious loved ones done so exquisitely by **Marlene Keyser**. **Tami Briggs** soothing harp music, **Michelle Marie's** stunning vocals, as well as nine-year-old **Kristina Plumb's** lovely singing voice added to the specialness of the evening. Thank you to all of those mentioned above, as well as those who planned the program and added decorations, set up and cleaned up, as well as those who attended, sharing refreshments and fellowship with each other. Without all of us working together we could not have made this the unforgettable evening, shared with family and friends, that it was. As each candle was lit and held aloft towards the stars, and the church became bathed in a heavenly light, we know our children, brothers and sisters, and grandchildren could see us from above. We hope to see everyone, and more, back for next year's TCF WCL on **12/14**

THE BEDROOM DILEMMA

There are many dilemmas affecting the life of a bereaved parent, but one that seems to cause one of the greatest amounts of stress and hand wringing is what we do with our children's (or siblings or grandchild's) bedroom. My daughter Nina's room was her sanctuary-- a very messy one at that. Much to my chagrin, the more clutter surrounding her the better! However, as a teenager, that is where she could be found most often; lying on her daybed chatting on the phone with her friends, homework and soda cans scattered around her, clothes and shoes thrown every which way. Laughter emanated from her bedroom, my daughter's intermingled with her friends' shrieks of delight. Many evenings I sat on her bed as she told me of her adventures as a freshman at Park High, her latest crush, and regaled me with her tales of a day in the life of a typical 15-year-old girl. Much of my memories are to be found in that room, and the realization I would never have those experiences again with Nina were almost unbearable. Therefore, what I would do with her bedroom now that she was no longer here was of utmost importance to me.

Over the 12 plus years since Nina left this plane, and I have been a part of TCF sharing groups, I have heard various ways others have dealt with this issue. Interestingly, what seems to come into play again and again is what friends and family thought should be done with the child's room. More often than not, their school of thought is that we should empty it completely, give away their possessions, and change it into an office or guest bedroom just as quickly as possible. They believe keeping things as is are only constant reminders of our children's absence. In reality, we are thinking of them 24/7 anyway. Truly, they mean well and are only trying to find ways to help us. However, in the early stages of our grief most of us are not capable of making such an important decision, which is one that should be made only by us. With our loved ones gone, once we change something, there is no going back. To clear away her things and depersonalize her room felt to me as if I was somehow removing her from my life. What I learned from seasoned bereaved parents was that what are perceived as painful memories of their absence, while in early grief, will, in time, become cherished memories we will want to hold onto. When the numbing brain fog lifts we will more clearly begin to realize that, and only then make more rational decisions that are right for our situation.

I decided to leave Nina's room as it was, mostly from advice I received at a TCF meeting. I told myself that I would know when I was ready to tackle that decision. This is not always possible for everyone--maybe they had previously crowded conditions and needed that room for someone else or a variety of other reasons. What we need to remember again is that handling something like this is so personal; what feels right for one person may be entirely wrong for another. I think the key thing to remember is

that if we are able to take our time that we try not to make a snap decision. We had no control over the fact that our child died; this might be something that we can make a choice when we are ready and able to do so.

In my case, I waited for seven years before redoing Nina's room. I tried to do it at one and a half years and then again at five years, and found that I just could not. When I finally did at seven years, I took my time and spent many weeks sifting through her life. I cried a ton of tears, but at that stage I spent the majority of time smiling and laughing. I found things she wrote, what I call 'buried treasures', that in the early stages would have set me back weeks because of its emotional impact, but years later brought me peace, and a deep personal understanding of Nina's thoughts that rekindled our close relationship.

I acknowledge that most people do not wait seven years to undertake the bedroom project; however, that is what worked for me. I made her room into a guest room that still included her daybed and many of her personal belongings. At that later stage, it became my private place where I would wrap myself in her handmade afghan, lie on her bed, look at the glow-in-the-dark stars on her ceiling (that are still there today), and I felt close to my daughter. The point here is that seven months or seven years, we must try not to let someone else force the issue, as well meaning as they may be, with something as important as what to do with our child's room. Everyone has different timetables. Only we will know what and when it is right for us.

With gentle thoughts,

Cathy L. Seehuetter
TCF/St. Paul Chapter

His Room

Sun splinters through
the stained glass unicorn
on the sill,
splattering blank walls with color.
Few things are as forlorn
as a vacant room,
furniture gone,
awaiting definition.
Bare, yet there on the carpet
imprints of chair and waterbed,
and there is the hole he
accidentally shot through the wall,
and there, and there, and there,
nail holes that held
pictures and posters
and eight-point antlers,
and there.....God, how can a place
so empty be so full?

--Richard A. Dew, M.D.

From Rachel's Cry, A Journey Through Grief

Valentine Love - New Meaning for Bereaved Parents

Though winter's delicate, lacy snowflakes may remind us of the lace-trimmed hearts of February's valentines, the "mourning" heart seems frozen in time. The bitter winds of loneliness blow mournfully through our souls. Death has tapped us on the shoulder, introducing his brother, Grief, who has moved into our hearts to take up unwelcome residence. Worn and exhausted by our pain, we have little energy to evict the intruder. It's hard for us to remember that the sun still faithfully shines behind the clouds and have obscured our vision.

"Love" is apparently the thought of the season, and we are reminded of its tenderness at every turn. But a piece of the fiber of our lives has been torn away, and love seems a vague and unfulfilled promise that belongs only to others. Hearts and flowers, lace and love, romantic verse and melody seem to have abandoned us as we grope in the darkness of our beloved's absence. Will the pain ever end? Will the hope and joy and renewal once again warm the frozen places in our hearts?

Gradually, as the hurt begins to soften, the thawing relief of healing slowly begins to melt the icy grip of our pain, hope does begin to "spring eternal". Roses, traditional in February's favorite holiday, remind us that summer will return.

It's unlikely that we will ever again perceive the usual symbols of love in quite the same way as before, but in many ways our concepts of genuine love will be stronger, richer and less assailable. Frivolous and shallow affection are absent from our thoughts. Deeper commitments and more demonstrative attention have become our new marching orders. In costly lessons, we've learned firsthand how fragile and fleeting life can be, and we are now resolute in our determination to announce to our remaining dear ones the importance of our bonds with them. We abandon the intimidation of "limits" such as the archaic notions that "men" mustn't cry or say "I Love You" or that we're too busy just not to pay attention to someone's needs.

As little by little, our pain softens and recedes, and we learn that suffering is but for a season, we also learn that LOVE doesn't die. In our emotional lives, Valentines can now take on a new significance as precious reminders of the love that still exists on both sides of life. Love lives within our hearts, and even Grief cannot steal it away. Love is our bridge over the rainbow.

--Andrea Gambrell/~reprinted from Bereavement Magazine-www.bereavementmagazine.com

Excerpt from *When Your Dreams Die* by Marilyn Willett Heavilin

In the early stages of grief... You may feel completely hopeless. The thought that your pain will ever subside probably seems impossible. You may feel disoriented, removed from what's going on around you, numb to feelings or emotions. You may experience deep or mild depression, feel that no one understands your pain.

In the middle stages of grief... The pain will subside every once in a while for at least brief moments. Some days your grief will not be your waking thought, although you will still think about it often through the day. You may begin to realize that others have problems that seem even more difficult than yours, and you may occasionally find yourself offering help and advice to another hurting person.

In the later stages of grief... You will begin to find a new normal that seems somewhat comfortable. Obviously you would prefer to go back to the old normal, but since you can't, you begin to view the new normal as an acceptable second best. As you work through the later stages of grief, you will desire to start living again, but you discover that because of your traumas, you view life differently.

Healthy grief will bring eventual resolutions. Listed next are ways people knew "that they were beginning to work through their grief."

I laughed out loud and didn't feel guilty.

I spent a length of time in conversation with someone and didn't mention my problem.

I could go to a graduation or wedding without crying.

I could enjoy having sex with my spouse again.

I could be excited for my friends who were pregnant, even though I couldn't have any more children.

My spouse and I could talk about our problem without fighting.

My dread of holidays, birthdays, death dates and anniversaries lessened.

I became aware of others' pain and wanted to help.

"Time heals," many people say. It may. It may help to dull your pain. But the medicine of time, taken by itself, is not sure. Time is neutral. What helps is what you do with time."

--Rabbi Earl A. Grollman

PRESIDENTS DAY - FEBRUARY 18, 2008

Did you know that...Twenty of our 42 presidents and their wives were and are bereaved parents? Below are some facts and /or quotes from bereaved Presidents and First Ladies.

Our 14th president, **Franklin Pierce**, lost two sons in infancy. History records his wife's grief so great that he resigned from the Senate. Two months before his inauguration to the presidency, their only child, Benjamin, 11 years old, was killed in a railroad accident. Mrs. Pierce collapsed from grief and was unable to attend the inauguration. She secluded herself in an upstairs bedroom for nearly half of her husband's term in office.

Our 16th president, **Abraham Lincoln**, lost two sons during his lifetime: Edward, four years old, while President Lincoln was in office; and William, 11 years old. He wrote, "In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all...it comes with bitterest agony...Perfect relief is not possible except with time. You cannot realize that you will ever feel better...and yet this is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now. I have experienced enough to know what I say." The president's wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, unable to cope with the assassination of her husband and the death of yet another son, Thomas, 18 years old, was confined to a sanitarium. Although she was released after a few months, she was never to be well again.

Calvin Coolidge had a son, Calvin Jr., who died at 16 while his father was in office. Recorded in his autobiography, the president said, "When he went, the power and glory of the presidency went with him."

Dwight Eisenhower's son, Doug Dwight "Icky," three years old, died at Camp Mead, Maryland. In President Eisenhower's autobiography written in 1969 (49 years after Icky died), he stated, "With his death a pall fell over the camp. When we started the long trip back to Denver for his burial, the entire command turned out in respect to Icky. We were completely crushed - it was a tragedy from which we never recovered. I do not know how others have felt when facing the same situation, but I have never known such a blow. Today when I think of it, even as I now write of it, the keenness of my loss comes back to me as fresh and terrible as it was in that long, dark day soon after Christmas, 1920."

"The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I truly wondered if my own heart and spirit would ever heal...I soon learned that I could help myself best by helping others...It wasn't until Robin died that I truly threw myself into volunteer work. That precious little girl left our family a great legacy: I know George and I care more for every living person because of her. We learned firsthand the importance of reaching out to help because others had reached out to us during that crucial time." - **Barbara Bush**

REMEMBER ME

As the wind stirs the leaves ... Remember Me
As the evening sunset cast its rosy glow ... Remember Me
Me
As you smell the earth after a fresh, spring rain ...
Remember Me
As you hear the sound of a child's laughter ...
Remember Me
As the warm summer sunshine caresses your skin ...
Remember Me
As the first winter snowflake falls to the ground ...
Remember Me
As the smell of spring flowers tantalize your senses ...
Remember Me
As you are wakened in the morning by the song of a
bird ... Remember Me
As the days gently ease, one into another ... Remember
Me
As you greet a smile on a friendly face ... Remember
Me
As you walk through life ... Remember Me
For I shall ... Remember You.
- Libby Graham

DAFFODIL TIME

Sometimes in our grief we become workaholics. We rush, rush, and rush, never stopping to "smell the roses." We are afraid that if we stop, or even slow down just a little, all those memories and thoughts of our dead child will come flying back, and we'll drop down to that black hole of grief again—so we don't stop or even slow down a little.

When I was in the fifth grade we had to memorize some poetry. I still remember lines from the poem "Daffodils": "*When oft upon my couch I lie, in vacant or in pensive mood, They flash upon that inward eye, Which is the bliss of solitude.*" For a couple of years after my daughter's death I could not, I would not allow myself to get into a vacant or pensive mood, because it wasn't daffodils that flashed upon my inward eye, it was always my daughter who was there—and there was no bliss.

Things change. Time helped to heal the raw open wound. Now, after four years, I can allow myself to have those vacant or pensive moods, and I can see the daffodils along with my daughter. My bliss is bittersweet, sometimes more bitter than sweet, usually more sweet than bitter, but it is bliss as those memories flash upon my inward eye. I have accepted that which cannot be changed. I do NOT like it; I have accepted that she is dead. As I lie there, in vacant or in pensive mood, I am careful that those memories that I allow to flash upon my inward eye are the happy ones, not the sad or unhappy ones.

They are more like roses than daffodils, though. They do have thorns that hide just below the beauty. But I can do it now. I can take time to "smell the roses." And so can you. Try it. In small doses at first, then larger ones. You owe it to yourself—and to your family—and to your child.
--Tom Crouthamel

Grief and Issues

The deepest, most painful thing that unites us and allows us to understand each other is the fact that at least one of our children has died. This shared pain brings us close together, and as we listen to each other, we do understand the shock, the raw pain, the memories that both hurt and comfort, the inability to sleep, or eat, or get enough energy together to do the yard work, or the housework. We understand the anger, the guilt, the loss of hope, and the memory lapses. So many symptoms of the deep grief that assaults our being when a precious child of any age dies are common to all of us. Our hearts are broken; at times, they seize with an actual pain. Our future with our child is gone. We will never know what they would have become. We have become foreigners, or aliens in a strange land. We know we will never be the same as we were before our loss. And it takes each of us a different amount of time to decide to live again, to know we will survive. We share so much that we wish we didn't have in common.

And we have what I'm calling "issues" attached to our grief, and our lives, that are different. Some of us have other children and have needed to comfort them and worry about them surviving the loss of their sibling. Some have spouses that either shared our grief or grieved in a completely different manner that left us angry, comfortless, and worried about their recovery, as well as our own. Some have no spouse to share our grief, and deal with loneliness. For some the child we "lost" was our only child, and we have lost what we envisioned as our future: no graduations, or weddings, or grandchildren, or a child to care for us in our old age, or grieve our own deaths. There have been sudden deaths, accidents, murders, heart failures, suicides, drug miscalculations that have ripped children from us. Stolen them senselessly. And there have been babies, born and unborn, who have died before they had a chance to live, and grow, and know our love, and young children who have died much too soon. Some have watched their child die slowly, and some have lost more than one child, and yet, somehow, survive.

These issues surround, and eventually layer on top of the deep grief of our children's deaths. We all have one or more of them. Do they divide us? I don't think so. Do we understand another's issues completely? No. My child was murdered. I am a widow. I mostly understand others with those issues. I understand the stress and drain of representing a child at the trial of his murderers, and the struggle to forgive, among other things that go along with this type of death. And I know what it's like to live alone. I only partly understand the issues that are not a part of my child's death, or my life. But I do understand the loss of a child. And I can listen to what I only partially understand, and care, and not measure my issues with another's. And I can know that these things matter. Regardless of how our children died, or what issues are attached to us, we are present to each other when much of the world is not. The wondrous thing we all do is give each other unconditional support. We are named appropriately. We are the compassionate friends.

--By Jean L. / TCF of Pasco County

"Beginnings"

The incredible pain of some ritual of the daily....Your clothes came back from the cleaners. Your dentist appointment is still tacked onto the refrigerator. The spaces in my calendar are full not only of the things we have done, but the things we still have to do. How could I have been so fooled? When I noted each event on the page, I had thought its certainty to be assured. As I touch again and again the still warm body of life we had, I torture myself with longing for the lost reality. Yet I endure each pain patiently, believing somehow that a new, more gracious reality awaits me.

Sleeping, which used to relieve the fullness of the day, has become just another difficult task.

I first avoid my bed, knowing that if I stop moving, memories will sneak into my fading consciousness and force a sob up into my throat. Other nights I lie awake for hours - feeling nothing, but still unable to capture sleep. Or I wake in the pre-dawn darkness, hoping desperately that the clock has moved toward morning. I was not prepared for sleep to be an enemy.

What I need now is a friend, and a way to rest my weary spirits.

--From TCF Atlanta Website Reflection

Sharing

Everybody has SOMETHING. Some call it faith. Some refer to fate, destiny...religion...God...a belief.

It does not matter what you call it; but in your moments of deepest sorrow, KNOW that it is there.

Don't be afraid to question it. Doubt it. Hate it. Curse it. Hide it. Scream at it. Test it. But KEEP it.

One day your grief will be resolved. Then you will be able to acknowledge it, accept it, be grateful for it, understand it, SHARE it. Only then can you LIVE it. I call mine FAITH: what do you call YOURS? --Shirley A. Melin, TCF, Fox Valley Chapter, Aurora, IL

"Getting on With Life"—What Does It Mean?

Of all the statements and spiritual platitudes quoted at me since my son Daniel's death, the phrase that I hear most frequently makes me squirm the most. "You have got to get on with your life." Recently I quit squirming long enough to ponder the meaning behind this phrase that is usually said to the bereaved in the form of a command. Exactly what does this phrase mean? What are people implying when they say it?

I was pregnant when Daniel died, and three months later I gave birth to a baby girl. Wasn't that getting on with life? I nurtured my three children, took them to school, the park and birthday parties. Now wasn't that going on with life? I even cooked dinner at least four times a week!

At first after Daniel's death, I would have liked to literally stop my life and be buried next to my son, but I existed. Like a plastic bag tossed about by the wind, I was fluttering, being carried by the events of life. Seasons came and went. In the spring, I planted marigolds and tomato vines. In the autumn, I jumped in fallen leaves with my children. I continued; I am still continuing to live.

Now I may be bereaved, but I am by no means a fool. As I ponder the meaning behind "getting on with life," I know exactly what those who say this have in mind. "Forget your dead child. Quit grieving. You make me uncomfortable!" Getting on with life means don't acknowledge August 25, Daniel's birthday, anymore. Forget how he slid down the snowy bank in the recycle bin, sang in the van and ate Gummy Bears. Forget he had cancer, suffered and died at only age four. Don't see the empty chair at the dinner table, don't cry, just live!

Some who are more "religious" would like to believe that a bereaved parent can claim, "My child is safe and happy in heaven. Therefore, why should I yearn for him?" Perhaps I pose a threat to certain types because I have let it be known I question God. I weep. I have been angry. I miss my Daniel. Maybe old friends feel if they hang around me too long I might convince them that a few of their illusions about life are just that, illusions. As my cries of anguish are heard, there are those who can only think how to make me be quiet. To stop my heartfelt yearnings, they say quite sternly, "You must get on with your life."

I am living. I do move on with life with Daniel in my mind and in my heart, although he is not physically here as I continue to live and to love. To sever his memory totally from my life would cause destruction and damage that would ruin me. To push Daniel out of my life and not be able to freely mention his name or write & speak about who he was on earth would only bring more pain to my life. I'd shrivel up. Comfort for

me comes in remembering with smiles how he drew with a blue marker on his sister's wall, ran outside naked and picked green tomatoes. For the reality is, getting on with life means continuing to cherish Daniel.

--Alice J. Wisler, *Bereavement Magazine*, Sept./Oct. 2000
grief@bereavementmag.com

Before You Know It

Before you know it,
Here's another March
With daffodils and crocus -
And hyacinths?
Before you know it,
Here's another sorrow -
The grieving over things
She used to sing about.

Before you know it,
Here's another greening
With quiet hope and modest promise
-
Listen, when you can.
--Sascha

Husband

I see the grief
behind your earnest eyes.
(You would give anything
to have your child again.)
I feel the helplessness
behind your silent anguish
(You would give anything
to take this hurt away.)
I know you learned
to keep your tears in hiding.
And you were taught
few words to speak for solace —
Not yours, not mine.
I see the grief
behind your earnest eyes.
And I will know
to understand and trust you,
loving father.

By Sascha, "The Sorrow and the Light"

Endowment

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 on earth
what is lost to death.
Hope can only go forward
and make us new.
Give space to hope in your life.
--Sascha From *LARGO*, Fall 2001



VALENTINE MESSAGE

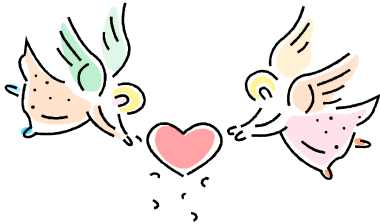
I send this message to my child
Who no longer walks this plane,
A message filled with love
Yet also filled with pain.

My heart continues to skip a beat
When I ponder your early death
As I think of times we'll never share
I must stop to catch my breath.

Valentine's Day is for those who love
And for those who receive love, too
For a parent the perfect love in life
Is the love I've given you.

I'm thinking of you this day, my
child,
With a sadness that is unspoken
As I mark another Valentine's Day
With a heart that is forever broken.
--Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

TCF, Katy, TX



PRAYER FOR SPRING

Like Springtime, let me unfold
and grow fresh and new
from this cocoon of grief
that has been spun around me.
Help me face the harsh reality
of sunshine and renewed life
as my bones still creak from
the winter of my grief.
Life has dared to go on around me.
As I recover from the insult
of life's continuance,
I readjust my focus to
include recovery and growth
as a possibility in my future.
Give me strength to break out of
the cocoon of my grief,
But may I never forget it as
the place where I grew my wings;
Becoming a new person
because of my loss.
--Janice Heil
Coquitlam, BC Canada

I'M MISSING YOU

I'm missing you.
All day, every day.
All day, every day.
On a bright summer morning, or
When the moon is full.
In the golden days of fall,
As the storm clouds build and it's
snowing.
When the willows begin to turn
green -
You are always with me,
In my mind and in my heart.
My brother, my good friend
I'm missing you.
--Kris Cunningham

TCF, Moro, IL

LITTLE ONE

I loved you at first sight
even after the pain of motherhood
the sleepless nights I carried you
inside
the pushing and shoving you did in my
womb
the aftermath of your delivery...
I loved you at first sight
and on that long night that I held
you
at 2:00am, 4:00am and saw you last
at 6:00am
I never knew that it would be the
last time I would hold you...
I loved you at first sight
and when I leave this world to join
you
- Lisa Neil Cunningham, TCF
Bridgewater, NJ
In memory of Austyn Craig Cunningham
November 1, 2001 February 17, 2002

EMPTY PLACES

I drove the old way yesterday.
It'd been a while, you see.
And there, without a warning,
the pain washed over me.
I drove the old way yesterday
and sadness came on strong,
taken back by so much feeling,
since you've been gone so long.
Places seem to lie in wait
to summon up the tears,
to say remember yesterday,
those days when you were here.
Places where you laughed and played
are places where I cry.
These places hold the memories
that will live as long as I.
--Genesse Gentry, TCF, Marin Cty CA

THE CAR

The car was a mess.
It leaked oil.
The air conditioning stopped working
over the summer.
It was obviously time to get a new
one.
My hesitation was great.
I procrastinated for months.
People didn't understand.
What was the problem?
Just go out and get a new car!
I wish it were that easy,
The car was a place where my family
had last been whole.
Julie had been there.
There had been countless trips to
school.
Lots of the running around a family
of five would do.
Family vacations taken.
It was also where we took the last
trip to the hospital.
The car was how we traveled to her
funeral and home from the
cemetery.
Necessity finally pushed me to
replace the car.
My wife and I drove to trade it in
silence, with knots in our throats.
The new car is nice.
Everything works, it even has a DVD
player.
My surviving children really like it.
However, there is something missing.
On the other hand, I think she would
have liked it too...
- Bruce Mitrani, TCF Bridgewater NJ

SPRING

I'm afraid of the Spring.
I'm afraid, you might say,
of other children's voices
as they come out to play.
I'm afraid of the feelings
deep down in my heart;
with all the pain and the hurt
I may fall apart.
Shall I shut all the windows
so I don't hear a thing?
Shall I shut my eyes
so I can't see the Spring?
Shall I let winter live
the whole year through
and feel safer inside
and a lot colder too?
--Penny Lenehan, TCF-Brookside, NJ

Siblings Grief:

Please Don't Overlook Me!
I know my size is smaller
my hands are littler my legs are shorter,
but my HEART can hurt just like yours.
I'm a CHILD
You're an adult...
Please don't overlook me!
I know my vocabulary isn't the greatest
my attention span lacks longevity
my logic sometimes seems irrational,
But my MIND can question death just like yours can.
I'm a TEENAGER
You're an adult...
Please don't overlook me!
I know my needs seem less important
my feelings seem less controlled
my actions are hard to understand.
But my BODY needs a hug just like yours does.
I'm YOUNGER
You're older.
Please don't overlook me!
I know tears are hard to show
fears are difficult to face,
death means not coming back,
But my SOUL searches for reassurance just like yours
does.
I'm HURTING
And you're hurting too...
Please don't overlook me!
--TCF Sibling Page Carson City, NV

Grandparent's Grief:

The death of your grandchild is like a double-edged sword. You grieve for the death of a child whom you cherished; a child whom you had hopes and dreams for. But you also grieve the death of your own child, the baby's mother or father. For the child's parents died with the child. Not physically, but figuratively. Your own flesh and blood, the person whom you once knew your child to be, will never be again. Your child has been transformed in a moment of time into a new person. An overwhelming grief has touched their lives. It is a time of confusion, anger and frustration for many grandparents. Offer your unconditional love and support. Go to support group meetings with your child and go to a grandparents group for yourselves. Remember your grandchild on special occasions such as his or her birthday/death day, Christmas and Easter. Send your child a Mother's Day or Father's Day card reminding them that they are still the parents of the precious child, always loved but now lost. Share their pain with them, even years later. It will surely create an even deeper bond of love, appreciation and fortitude withstanding the passing of time and circumstances.

--In Peace and Memory of our Beloved Children...
Joanne Cacciatore

A Family Copes With Tragedy

Most people think that after a reasonable period of mourning, families pick up the pieces of their lives and go on. I remember a friend asking me, three months after my son's death, if everything was back to normal. Those who haven't been through this experience cannot comprehend that life, as we know it will never exist again. There won't be "normal" years for parents whose world has been devastated. Their dreams of raising children have vanished forever. Our surviving children have lost a part of themselves—the part they shared with their sibling. One daughter said to me, "I don't want him to stop living. I don't want to go on with my life without him being part of it and growing along with me. I don't want to leave him behind. I need his caring and sharing."

How would we live? How would we manage? Nothing could ever replace what we have lost. Since my son's death, I don't make long-range plans anymore or take anything for granted. I live each day as it unfolds, for I have learned that everything I know or have known can be shattered in an instant. We did seek help in different ways, through counseling, writing and group therapy. As a result of our tragedy, our family is closer than we have ever been. Any anger or frustration we harbored about one another has disappeared because of its comparative triviality. We've shared feelings never before expressed and emphasized our love for each other, over and over again. This we will do forever more.

--Nancy Doss, TCF/Houston, TX

The Legend of the Tear Jar

In the dry climate of ancient Greece, water was prized above all. Giving up water from one's own body, when crying tears for the dead, was considered a sacrifice. They caught their precious tears in tiny pitchers or "tear jars" like the one shown here.

These captured tears were considered to be "holy" water and were sprinkled on doorways to keep out evil, or used to cool the brow of a sick child. The tear jars themselves were kept unpainted until the owner had experienced the death of a parent, sibling, child, or spouse. After that, the grieving person decorated the tear jar with intricate designs, and examples of these can still be seen throughout modern Greece.

This ancient custom symbolizes the transformation that takes place in people who have grieved deeply. They have not "gotten over" their grief, but rather "grown through" it. They appreciate relationships more. They appreciate life more. They find meaning in little things.

Those whom grief has transformed are not threatened by the grief of other people in pain. They have been in the depths of pain themselves, and returned.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS/ST PAUL CHAPTER
7884 IRISH AVENUE SOUTH
COTTAGE GROVE, MN 55016-2072

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Please circle the appropriate relationship:					
Parent	Sibling	Grandparent	Relative	Friend	Professional
Parent (s) name: _____			Child/Children's Name(s) _____		
Address: _____			Birth Date(s) _____		
City: _____			Death Date(s): _____		
State: _____		Zip: _____			
Home phone: _____			E-mail address: _____		
E-mail address: _____					
<input type="checkbox"/> Permission is given to include my child(ren), sibling or grandchild on the Remembrance page in the St. Paul Chapter newsletter and Chapter Website.			<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to enclose a donation to the St. Paul Chapter of The Compassionate Friends in memory of _____		

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