

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



January, 2020
Volume 32, Number 1

The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.

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Meeting Information

When: First Thursday of
each month. 7-9 p.m.
Where: St. Timothy's Church
16700 Newburgh Road, Livonia,
East side of Newburgh, 1/4 mile S. of
Six Mile

Coming Events:

NEXT MEETING- January 2 -First time tables, sibling table, Infant loss table, topic table: "Any resolutions for dealing with your grief in the New Year?"

January 21: 6:30 pm TCF Dinner-at Richard's Family Restaurant, 39305 Plymouth Rd., Livonia 48150. sign up at meeting or call Kathy 734-306-3930 or katjrambo@gmail.com

January 18 - Craft Day - see page 8

Reflections on a New Year

We begin a new year, one that many of us enter with reluctance. After all, it means another year away from our child and another year to live without the physical presence of the one we have lost. Apprehensive about any new challenges that we may be called upon to face in our broken condition, we call out "Wait, I'm not ready yet!"

The death of our child changed the course of our life; nothing will be the same again. But it also has shaped us into who we are today. And it will continue to do so as we learn to incorporate this loss into who we are to become. Have you found that you have already begun to live differently? Compassion towards others is more profound. Trivial things are no longer important. Appreciation for life, and those in our lives, is paramount. We're living the same life, just differently. Tragedies, disappointments, and heartaches combine with beauty, love, and joy fashion our life. These are all a part of life, and our challenge is to incorporate them into our world. The difference that our child's life has had upon the world continues through us.

So, rather than being fearful of the challenges that lie ahead, perhaps a better question to consider at this time might be: What opportunities will present themselves in the coming

year to honor this loss that is already a part of our life? Our child has become more integrally entwined into our being than ever before. We bring him or her to every situation that we encounter. How can we make that situation better because of this bond? The start of a new calendar year is a good time to remember that we are in the midst of life. It is not perfect, nor is it one that we might have chosen. But, our struggles do not put life "on hold." Rather, they are a part of life itself. Our life is ours to make the most of, with many gifts that we can share with others. There is not a better time than the present to gather up the pieces and recognize the uniqueness that we each call "ME", a uniqueness made more wonderful because of our child's presence in the life we chose to live.

*Paula S Schultz
TCF Evergreen Park, IL*

Resolutions

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and

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Our Children Loved and Remembered Always

This month, we remember the children who are so deeply and sadly missed. Please take a few moments to place them and their parents in your thoughts.

Let Us Remember Them Always

Child Parent, Grandparent, Sibling Date Age

Names available only to newsletter subscribers



Lisa Cherry
Jason

Russi Arden
Cheryl Beuther

January 07 52 yrs
January 08 43 yrs

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

*Softly ... may peace
replace heartache
and cherished memories
remain with you always on
your child's birthday*

Love

*In times of darkness, love sees.
In times of silence, love hears.
In times of doubt, love hopes.
In times of sorrow, love heals.
But in all things, love remembers.*

in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better.

Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself—both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what our meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

This newsletter is another way you can become more involved in our chapter. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs. Have a happier New Year!

Pat Akery
TCF, Medford, OR

The Deafening Silence

Dear TCF friends, A few days after Christmas I received an email from a bereaved mom who was struggling to understand her friends' and family's behavior over the holidays. She gave permission to use her note hoping it will help others to know that they are not alone. At her request, identifying names were omitted.

"Hi Marge, This is [bereaved mom's name.] I only met you once at a meeting at St. Francis. I hope you don't mind my emailing you. I don't expect any reply- - it's not urgent. This is my third Christmas without my son. I have amazing friends and family, but only ONE person [a friend] from TCF said ANYTHING ABOUT [my son] this holiday season. I guess I'm supposed to "be done" or "be over it"??? I feel angry for the first time. Not quite sure what would help. I don't want to make anyone feel bad. They have their own lives. I said something to my husband and daughter and it didn't go that well. They apologized and then dropped it! Well, thanks for listening."
[signed with bereaved mom's name]

I wrote back to this hurting mom.

Dear [bereaved mom],

Your pain, sadness and anger are familiar to many bereaved parents. We will always feel the hole in our hearts and our lives after our child dies. Gifts beyond measure are when we are given the opportunity to hear our child's name spoken and when others acknowledge our grief and share with us that they miss our beloved child, too. But as time passes, these gifts are offered less and less.

Unfortunately, those who no longer openly acknowledge the grief and our child's absence usually are not aware of how painful it is to us when those 'gifts' are no longer given. I don't think it is because they no longer care or have forgotten about our child. I think it is because they have no idea how precious those acknowledgments are to us. We need to educate them. Yes, sometimes there are those who DO think we should be over 'it' after a couple of years, but they have no idea of what it really is like to be in our shoes.

One of the things we can do to keep those 'gifts' coming is to make opportunities for the conversations to keep happening. I've heard of many ideas to help make our child's name 'mentionable' during the holidays...or any other time of the year!. Some bereaved parents ask family and friends to write

notes to/about our child and drop them in the child's Christmas stocking or other designated place such as a special bowl. Then the notes are read aloud when everyone is gathered at the dinner table. Another way to get a conversation started is to ask friends and family to share a funny or memorable story about our child. The stories are so healing. Another method is for each person to choose one word to describe your child and then explain why.

Other bereaved parents light a special candle in remembrance and make it known what the significance is for that specific candle on the mantle or dinner table centerpiece. I have a friend whose family has made it a tradition to make a toast to those who are not at the holiday meal...whether it is because of death or circumstance that they can't be there... and those 'absentees' are mentioned by name.

Those are just a few ideas that come to mind, but the bottom line is that it is up to us bereaved parents to set the stage and make sure that our friends and family know that it is ok to talk about our children. One bereaved mom realized this early on and specifically gave 'permission' to her friends and family to talk about her son. She explained how precious it was to her and once they knew, some of the tension was relieved. But there will always be those who think that if they say something it will remind us of our child and make us feel sad (as if we'd forgotten about our child!). It is those folks who haven't a clue what we are feeling. And sometimes, yes, there are those who have gone on with their lives and haven't been as supportive as they once were... assuming that you, too, were 'going on' with your life.

You mention that you tried to talk to your husband and daughter. I think us moms have a greater need to talk than most dads. And siblings grieve differently than their parents. We women work thru our feelings by talking and hearing others talk about their feelings. Men typically talk less and go in their 'cave' and work on their grief inside their heads and hearts or by

intense physical activity. It's just one more of the many differences between men and women!

I'm glad you emailed me, but am sorry that I can't 'fix' this for you. I wish I had a magic wand to wave and take away your anger and sadness. (... and to 'fix' those 'clods' who seem so insensitive!!)

I do care and want you to know that you are not alone in how you feel. So many parents express similar feelings of anger and betrayal. I have a feeling that this will be just one of many topics discussed at our next meeting, Jan. 13th. I hope you'll be there to share your experience.

Sending a big caring hug to you!

Marge

So, dear TCF friends, especially those who are struggling to understand the deafening and painful silence you may have experienced during the holidays, please know that you are not alone! Make the opportunity soon to discuss with your family and friends what happened during the holidays, how you felt and what you need. Then be proactive the next time a special family time comes around by having a plan in place that gives your friends and family the opportunity to talk freely about your precious child!

Marge Tomlinson,

TCF, Seattle King County Chapter

Love and Hope

On a cold winter day the sun went out

Grief walked in to stay

I turned away from the unwanted
guest

And bid him be on his way.

Grief was merciless, he brought his
friends,

Loneliness, Fear and Despair.

They walk these rooms unceasingly
In the somber cloaks they wear.

Every so often now,

Love pays a call

She always has

Hope by her side I welcome

Love as well as Hope

For I thought surely they had died.
Love counsels Grief in a most gentle
way

Bids him be still for a while

Then Love walks with me through
memory's hall

And for a time...I can

Kerry Marston, T

CF, Grand Junction, CO

Some Common Thoughts Following the Death of Your Child

- It is not uncommon to feel bitterness or a sense of injustice when one loses a child. So if you find yourself thinking, Why me? Why my child? Why our family? You are in good company.

- Some parents describe "an irrational sense of self-blame" following the death of a child. I never was able to figure out what a rational sense of self-blame might be. But I do know that many of us blame ourselves. We replay the what-ifs of our child's life and death a thousand times a day. Almost always self-blame is misplaced.

- Grief over the loss of a child lasts longer than any other kind. It heals more slowly and causes the most monumental disruption for those who survive. This is because a child is a part of what psychologists call our internal psychological structure, meaning that in a way, part of the parent dies too.

- Most experts believe that loss and helplessness are the greatest tests any human can face. A child's death is off the charts in both categories.

- You may be strong, smart and highly resilient, but nothing can prepare you for the loss of a child.

- One reason the loss feels so enormous is that a child's death violates an implicit generational contract, that our own children will survive us.

- A child's death also challenges the fundamental instinct of parents to protect their child. That is what we are supposed to do, isn't it? To make the world safe? The feeling that we have failed to do so can haunt us, compounding our sadness.

- In an era of medical miracles, we are less culturally conditioned to expect a child's death than in previous generations. On the contrary, the prevailing assumption is that science and technology can and will work wonders.

- Some experts estimate that in the face of a child's death two years is a reasonable grieving period. Others double that figure. The truth is, it takes as long as it takes, sometimes a whole lifetime. But if you are lucky, the grief will transmute. Even its physical properties will transform. Its weighty presence abates. The grief becomes gentler, less terrifying and sometimes paradoxically rather sweet.

Elizabeth Mehren

After the Darkest Hour the Sun Will Shine Again

Dear Child Of Mine

Dear Child of mine who died before
your time,

I am grateful for your life.

Though death brought the end of
hopes and dreams,

still I am grateful for your life.

Through you I have known joy and
sorrow, laughter and tears.

Through you my life has been en-
riched, my compassion heightened
and I am more keenly aware of the
grief of others.

I am grateful for your life.

Now I draw upon my memories of
you, some happy, some sad.

They keep you close in many ways.
They are priceless, precious memories
that help me bear the pain.

Through them I will learn to live
again.

I am grateful for your life.

I have been blessed by your life
and left with your love.

I will share that love and strive to live
to be a blessing to others.

Dear Child of mine, though you died
before your time,

you are never far away from me.

I have loved you in my heart of hearts
and there I will love you through
eternity.

I am grateful for your life. Dear Child
of mine.

Sibling Grief

One of the great losses in life is the death of a brother or sister, and many of us will face the loss of a sibling more than once. Yet this is one of the most neglected types of grief, especially in adulthood. (For more information on how grief of all kinds affects children, please read how children are affected by sibling loss in [this](#) section.) Following a death, the focus of support is usually on the surviving spouse and children, or on the parents who have lost their child, rather than on the siblings. A sibling often has less input into the funeral, memorial service or other arrangements. Sentiments and condolences offered

to them often lead with questions about how the deceased's "immediate" family or parents are faring. It should be remembered that this is a significant loss for a sibling, and they are dealing with their own deep grief or mourning.

Your grief will be individual and unique. How you grieve and for how long will be different than for anyone else, and you need to allow yourself to grieve in your own way.

The loss of a sibling in adulthood can have many meanings. It is the loss of a brother or sister who shared a unique co-history with you. This person was an integral part of your formative past, for better or worse. Your brother or sister shared common memories, along with critical childhood experiences and family history. When death takes your brother or sister, it also takes away one of

your connections to the past. That brother or sister knew you in a very special way, unlike those who know you now as an adult. Consequently, a constant is gone. This can make you feel insecure, for although you may or may not have had frequent contact with your sibling, at least you knew another member of your family was there.

Your sibling holds a symbolic place in your life even if your brother or sister did not have an impact on your current day-to-day activities. This brother or sister's death can make you feel older and indicate that your family is dwindling. Because you likely have the same genetic background, the death of a sibling may increase concerns about your own mortality. And in some cases, the death of a sibling may suddenly make you an only or the eldest child — creating a profound shift in the role you may have held for all or most of your life. This new role, when combined with your natural grief, can make it difficult to wade through the many complicated emotions that arise when a sibling dies.

Some adults who have lost an adult sibling experience a change in their relationship with their parents. Since siblings often feel their grief isn't fully acknowledged and their parents are focused on overcoming their loss, they can feel abandoned by their parents. At a time when they need them the most, their parents are disabled by their own grief. It's critical that surviving siblings get the support they need from others in their family or community. This will help meet not only the surviving sibling's needs, but also temper any feelings of resentment or abandonment.

Mourning after the loss of a sibling can be complicated for several reasons. The ambivalence that is normally present in a sibling relationship may give rise to guilt, and guilt is known to complicate mourning. You may have had a close relation-

Need to Talk to Someone Between Meetings?

TELEPHONE FRIENDS:

The people listed below have volunteered to take your calls:

Linda Houghtby - Long term illness - (734) 591-3062

Catherine Walker - Loss of Only Child - (248) 921-2938

Charli Johnston - Suicide - 734-812-2006

Joe Hofmann - Drug related death - 734-331-9919

Bob Vitolins - A father's grief - (313) 882-8632

Dana and Brandy Bumstead - Loss of an infant -(313) 447-8144

Kathy Rambo - Sudden Death - (734) 306-3930

Remember that our chapter has a Facebook page. It is a closed page, so you just need to search for The Compassionate Friends of Livonia, Michigan and ask to join.

TCF CHAT ROOM

www.compassionatefriends.org

The chat rooms are moderated and are open at different times. There is one open most evenings from 10-11 p.m. They are all moderated which means that all the chat rooms have a trained facilitator in them.

National Mailing Address: PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522; Phone: (630) 990-0010; Toll Free: (877)969-1101; Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

Ann Arbor: Mike Fedel: MikeFedela2@gmail.com; 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room) 1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor

St. Clair Shores: 2nd Wed. Kathy Joerin ; 586-293-6176, KJMac21@aol.com

Detroit: Kellie West Outer Drive Methodist Church, 12065 West Outer Drive, Detroit ; 2nd Wed., 6:30 - 8:30; 734-660-9557.

Troy: St. Paul's Methodist Church, 620 Romeo, Rochester, MI 3rd Thursday 7-9; Tina@586-634-0239

South Rockwood TCF Chapter: Southwood United Methodist Church, 6311 S. Huron River Drive. South Rockwood, MI 48179; 3rd Tues. of month meeting - 7 pm; Sheri Schooley, Leader; Contact Karen 734-672-7469

Tecumseh TCF Chapter: First Presbyterian Church, 211 W. Chicago, Tecumseh, 4th Sunday of the month, 2-4 pm, Rose Hatchett, 517-270-3308.



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Livonia Chapter Page



From the Chapter Leadership:

We want to thank everyone who helped us with our event this year. Thank you to City of Plymouth and

Chris Porman for the use of beautiful Kellogg Park; The Sinagra's and Jeff Reynolds from American Speedy Printing for the ornaments; Kevin Moss and Theresa Flores for the printing of our candle lighting programs; Jamie Fiegler for signing our event; all the parents who showed up to complete the ornaments and drive to the park to decorate the trees; Samantha Morris & Carter Mikovich for singing the opening song, Judy Cappelli for the reading of the program; Gail Laferty for the Lighting of the Candle; Rhonda Temple and Dan Myska for reading of the names; Rhonda Temple & Janet Schatz for the power point presentation; Kathy Rambo & Joyce

Gradinscak for keeping the new ornaments added to the trees; those who helped with new additions to the list and questions that night and all who were helpful in their own special ways. Most of all..we thank all those who made the trip to the park that evening. And we light our candles... In memory of our beautiful children, grandchildren and siblings who have died to soon..so that their light may

THANK YOU

Thank you to Shrader Funeral Home, Plymouth, MI for supplying our candles for our December TCF meeting. We so appreciate your support.

A Love Gift is a gift of money to Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but may also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, simply a gift from someone who wants to make a donation to help in the work of the Livonia Compassionate Friends. Love Gift form on back page.

- ♥ Matt & Cindy Stevens "In memory of Justin. Missing you very much on your angel day 7 years now"
- ♥ Laura Myers "In memory of Paul. In my heart forever"
- ♥ Brendolyn Jasper "In memory of Jeffrey. Happy New Year, we miss you!"
- ♥ Robert & Mary Vitolins "In memory of Laura, our sweet daughter and sister. Love, Dad, Mom & Karen"
- ♥ Mr. & Mrs Glenn Laswell "In memory of Christine Kramis. Christine we miss you so much as yet another year passes without you! We love you so much! Love, Mom, Dad, and Tammy"

ship with your sibling or a distant one — either extreme and everything in between can affect your guilt or feelings of abandonment after your brother or sister's death. You may experience guilt, sadness and regret if the relationship was never what you would ideally have wanted it to be. Perhaps you had not spent as much time together since you became adults with your own careers and families. Your survival itself can be another source of guilt, especially if you recall the times when you wished your sibling would disappear. These are all normal reactions to sibling loss, and you shouldn't judge yourself if these feelings arise in

you. Another factor that complicates sibling grief is the need to support your parents in their grief. This can draw on your energy and emotional reserves, making it harder to care for yourself. You may question if you have the "right" to mourn as deeply as they do, or as a surviving spouse or children do. Know that you do have the right and the need to mourn, and deserve the same support and care as others affected by your sibling's death.

There are some recommended readings below to help cope with grief.. There are also online and local groups for those who have lost a sibling — being part of a community of people who have suffered a similar

loss may be helpful.

Some suggested books:

Surviving the Death of Sibling: Living Through Grief by T.J. Wray

Healing the Adult Sibling's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas After Your Brother or Sister Dies

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Sibling Grief: Healing After the Death of a Sister or Brother

Pleasant White

The Oxidation of Grief: Reflections on Adult Sibling Loss

Maria Piantanida

TCF Livonia Chapter
Brenda Brummel
10531 Calumet Trail
Gaylord, MI 49735

January 2020

If any of you would be willing to get the newsletter via the internet,
please email me. Thanks, Brenda Brummel

LOVE GIFTS

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Love Gift Donation of \$ _____ in Memory of _____

Message: _____

Direct my gift to: _____ Outreach (Printing, postage, phone , web
_____ General Fund (90% local; 10% national)

Mail to: Rhonda Temple, 25164 Hanover St., Dearborn Heights, MI 48125



January Craft Day

We will be making bracelets at our Craft day on January 18th at the home of Kathy Rambo from 10 am to 1 pm.

The bracelet is made with beads, buttons, charms and special thread. All supplies are provided but if you have charms or buttons from your child, please bring them as they truly add to your bracelet. There will be a signup sheet and examples at the January meeting. Any questions please contact Kathy (734-306-3930) or Gail (734-748-2514).