

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



March 2020
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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- March 5 -First time tables, sibling table, Infant loss table, topic table: Do you use such things as busyness to try to escape grief? Does it work?

March 21 - Craft Day - see page 8

March 17: 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

Finding Spring Again

It is the end of February, which means we are nearing the end of what has often been a brutal winter. While gazing at the mountains of snow piled high in my front yard and the footlong icicles hanging from my roof, it is hard to imagine that spring will ever come. We have endured bitter cold winds that have chilled us to the bone and treacherous roads that we have cautiously traveled. The days have been long and dark and often free of sunlight. No matter how long you have been a native of the Upper Midwest, I know we all will be glad when it comes to an end.

However, as I described these thoughts about winter, I felt as if I was describing the days of my early grief. At that point, I did not believe that a day would ever come when I would thaw from the chill that had overtaken my body and mind. The bleakness of my existence during those early months after Nina died is almost frightening to remember; it is so difficult to even conceive of that much pain. I was anesthetized from some of its cruelty by the protective blanket of numbness that blessedly shielded me from the gale force of such overpowering sorrow. How could I ever feel spring in my heart again?

Spring had always been my favorite season. The air had a certain freshness to it that I would drink in. Simply put,

it always made me feel happy and light of heart. Spring was our reward for surviving the freezing winter months that preceded it. It brought a smile to my face and a bounce to my step. However, it was the spring of the year where my heart was irretrievably broken. It was during this exquisite season of warm, lilac-scented breezes and sun-kissed mornings where my sweet daughter Nina's life would end.

I wondered if my thoughts about spring would ever be the same. Rather than anticipate with gladness the coming of spring, I dreaded it with the knowledge that it contained the anniversary of her death. The smell of the air and the look of the sky that I once found exhilarating now brought me back to my darkest day. I know that anyone who has lost a loved one to death, no matter the season, understands.

Will spring come again to your life? In the almost six years since Nina died, has it come to mine? Looking back at my description of the winter of "my early grief," I know that I have come a long way from that time of desolation. I have found, especially after the first two years, that with each subsequent spring, I have rediscovered some of the pleasure I used to feel. I have learned that just because I have found things to feel joyful about again, it doesn't mean I am

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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 not shown except to members



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

dishonoring my daughter's memory. I now take her along with me in my mind and my heart. I try to retrieve memories of the dandelion bouquets she so carefully gathered and presented to me, the rides to the park in the Radio Flyer, our talks while sunning on the deck, and, of course, shopping for spring clothes! Her favorite pastime! I will always feel tenseness, apprehension and sadness as May 11th draws near, but I no longer hold it against spring.

It is a slow, difficult journey, this grief pathway we travel. It is as treacherous as the roads we maneuvered following the winter storms, never knowing when we will hit an icy patch on the road and be thrown into a tailspin. Yet, we must travel it if we are to find any measure of peace and healing. Please be patient with yourself as you are working hard to survive this winter in your heart. Trust that spring, though a much different one than the one we knew before our beloved child died, will come again.

*Cathy Seehuetter,
TCF/St. Paul, Minnesota*

Starting Over Again

As parents, how many times have we told our children: "Try, try again. You can do it. Just start over." We would say this, be it a coloring book not kept within the lines, with learning to tie shoes, working with school assignments, or later with the other difficulties that life brings.

Little did we think that this well meaning advice, which we gave out of love and concern for our children's well being, would be the words that we now must follow. "Hang on." "Don't give up." "Try again, and start over."

All this now applies to us. Had the situation been reversed, we would not have wanted our children to live out the rest of their lives in pain and unable to go on. We would have wanted them to continue not in constant sorrow but with hope for renewal and better days ahead.

As we have said to them, they would

be throwing right back to us. . .

"It is a very hard road that you must travel, but you can do it. What you wanted for me, I want for you. Do what you have to. Find your way out of the dark tunnel, and when you fall, pick yourself up and start over again. You can do it."

If we could hear them right now, they would be saying: "LIVE, for life is but a moment. LOVE, for that is what really matters, and GO ON for we shall be together again someday."

*MaryAnn Lambden
TCF/Gloucester County, NJ*

Grandparent's Remembrance

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is two-fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

*Susan Mackey,
TCF/Rutland, VT*

Self Care in Grief – The Myth of Keeping Busy

When experiencing grief keeping busy only serves as a distraction that buries the pain underneath every activity you can pile on top of it. It only helps to make one more day go by which in itself connects to the myth that time heals all wounds. If this were true when someone breaks their leg we would say to them, "Don't be upset, time will heal this wound." Beyond all this... keeping busy is not self-care.

So, how can we take care of ourselves while grieving? Well, here are a few ways we can truly care for ourselves during this time when we need self-care more than ever:

Face your feelings – the painful emotions associated with grief are a natural and normal response to loss. You can try and suppress them or hide from them all you want, but in the end this will only prolong the grieving process. Acknowledging your pain and taking responsibility for your feelings will help you avoid the complications often associated with unresolved grief such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and health problems.

Express your feelings – the most effective way to do this is through some tangible or creative expression of your emotions such as journaling, writing a letter expressing your apologies, forgiveness and the significant emotional statements you wish you had said, or art projects celebrating the person's life or what you lost.

Feel whatever you feel – it's okay to be angry, to yell at God, to cry or not to cry. It's also okay to laugh, to find moments of joy, or to let go when you're ready. Your grief is your own and no one can tell you when you should be "over it" or when to "move on."

Look after your health but be aware of short-term relievers – these can be food, alcohol/drugs, anger, exercise, TV, movies, books, isolation, sex, shopping, workaholicism (the trap I fell into), etc. Most of these are not harmful, in fact some are healthy, but they become harmful when they are used for the wrong reasons...to cover-up, hide or suppress our grief. Try and get good sleep, try and make healthy food choices, try and be physically active but more importantly, allow yourself to grieve as this is the best form of self-care.

Excerpted from a blog post by Nick Frye at whatsyourgrief.com

People keep telling me that life goes on, but, to me, that is the saddest part.

Last Moments

Last moments
Snatches of conversation
That echo across all decades ...
Priceless words
Indelibly etched on the heart.
Sometimes
Thoughts were never spoken
But unexpected sentiment
A quick embrace, a silly smirk,
Or joyous laughter,
Reaches through the pain
And warms the heart.
We came too soon to understand
The folly of harsh words
Or neglected touch,
For who can know which
Taken-for-granted event
Will become
A last moment.

*Diane Fields,
TCF/Westnoreland, PA*

“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 kept existing. 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 and 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,

Do You Know?

Do you know what I’ve learned, that the deepest, truest healing offered by The Compassionate Friends comes not in the first few years, but later.

Do you know that just when you think there is no more to gain by coming to meetings, something you will say or do will help another and another . . . and exponentially, through your opened heart, there can flow riches, gifts beyond imagining?

Do you know that TCF’s truest alchemy lies not in what we can get but what we can give? That by turning grief’s dark energy and inner absorption outwards towards the hope of helping others, we can regain a sense of purpose, honor our beloved children, and take them with us as we do?

All this . . . if only you stay on—or come back—to help those more newly bereaved, sharing your own unique path through grief and learning, along with others, what you did not know that you know.

*Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
TCF/Marin County, CA*

Standing

People say “Oh you are doing so well, you are so strong, you are an inspiration!”

We do not feel strong.
We feel shaken to the core,
saddened beyond belief,
pain beyond comprehension,
Forever changed.

What do they see that we cannot see?
That a horrible storm, unexpectedly
ripped through our lives
and we are still standing.

They are amazed.
We are paralyzed.
Still standing.

*Julie Short,
TCF/Southeastern Illinois Chapter
In Memory of Kyra*

SIBS

Letting Go

You're still here in my heart and mind,
still making me laugh because your stories live on.
I hold you in a thought and I can feel you.
I feel you and this gives me strength and courage.
The tears I have cried for you could flood the earth,
and I know you have wiped each one away.
For you Brother, I promise you this,
I will go on with my life and make you proud.
I will always hold you in my heart.
I promise you I will be missing you every day till the end of time,
but this is not my end and I can't hold

my head underwater.
I need to breathe.
I need to love and miss you,
but I also need to live because through me you will live,
you will still laugh and love,
you will still sing and dance,
you will still hug and kiss.
You will forever be in our lives,
you will forever be a brother,
a son,
an uncle
and friend.
I am going to miss your shining face
I think of you and wonder why?
I might cry or smile,
but at the end of the day,
I am one day closer to you...
© Shannon Billeter

One
It was only 1 second, one thought,
one decision, one action in a lifetime

of seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions. It was so fast, so permanent, so irreversible, so hopeless. This moment, this thought, this decision, this action do not define him, do not honor him, do not immortalize him. It is the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that define him, that honor him, that immortalize him.

I remember my brother in all of the other seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that preceded this one. I remember him coming home from the hospital, lip synching in the basement, falling out of the tree, biking across campus, coming home from school, from boot camp, from war... I remember him hiking, and skiing, and running, and laughing, and crying. I remember how safe I always felt when he was around. I knew he would take care, protect, defend.

I don't remember exactly when my brother became an amazing human being – I just looked at him one day and knew he was. I knew that nothing would make him change his mind about me. He was without judgment, without prejudice, without preconception. I knew my brother because we talked and he listened. I respected my brother most for his humanity – for being so sensitive, so vulnerable, so honest. I loved my brother for sharing the load when it was too hard for someone he loved to carry alone. I knew my brother because he left so much of him in me.

I trusted and respected my brother's decisions in the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, I have to trust and respect this one decision the same. I honor my brother by honoring myself. I do not dwell in that one moment, instead I celebrate and cherish all of the others.

In that 1 second,
one thought, one decision, one action,
I found the strength he had given me and I will not let him down. I will not let that one moment be the only one.

Michele Mallory

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.



Livonia Chapter Page

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.

- ♥ Sharon Curson "In remembrance of our cherished son David C Jones. We love & miss you always & forever"
- ♥ Glenn & Carol Mead "In memory of our son Bobby Mead. It's been 5 years since you left us & our hearts have never been the same without you. We miss you everyday. Love, Mom, Dad, Kate, DJ, Addison & Heidi"
- ♥ Jan & Tim Anstett "In loving memory of our beautiful daughter; Erika Kelly on her 38th birthday"
- ♥ Michele & Ray Schmidt "In loving memory of our sweet niece; Erika Anstett on her 38th birthday"
- ♥ Joyce & Robert Gradinscak "In memory of Adam -- 15 years! Missing you babe!"

New Members

We welcome new members. We are so sorry for the circumstance that has brought you here. Although we have no easy answers, we can offer you understanding through our common experiences. We also know how much courage it took for you to attend.

Graddie & Robyn Liddell, whose beloved daughter, **Emily**, Born 1/22; Died 1/22

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

Donation Basket



Again this year our chapter would like to donate a Michigan Basket to the auction at the 2020 National Conference in Atlanta. If you would like to donate, items we can use are: any sports team items from Detroit, any foods made here and you may have other ideas to add to the basket.

We please ask that you stay away from large glass items like wine bottles or things that may break easily in shipping. We thank you for any help you can provide. You may bring any donations to the chapter meetings through July and contact Kathy Rambo or Gail Lafferty with any questions.



The Compassionate Friends

12th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

In loving memory of all the children who died too soon

Saturday, March 07, 2020 at 1:00 pm

(Registration will begin at 12:15 pm)

Vision Lanes
38250 Ford Rd
Westland, MI 48185
(On Ford Rd & Hix)

**Any questions please contact Cindy Stevens @ 734-837-3722
Or Mary Hartnett @ 313-550-5410**

\$25 per person

(Includes: 3 games (9 pin no tap), shoes, 2 mystery game drawings, 2 slices of pizza)
Additional Raffle Tickets will be sold for 50/50 drawing and Prizes

**Please make check out to: The Compassionate Friends (Livonia)
Mail to: 25164 Hanover St, Dearborn Heights, MI 48125**

OPEN TO PUBLIC

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

March 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



March Craft Day

We will be making bracelets at our Craft day on March 21, 2020 at the home of Kathy Rambo from 10 am to 1 pm. We had a snow day in January for this craft so we are making the bracelets this month.

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 March meeting. Any questions please contact Kathy (734-306-3930) or Gail (734-748-2514).