

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



September 2024
Volume 36, Number 9

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:

September 5 - 7:00 pm - see page 7

*Tuesday, September 17th at 6:00 pm.
TCF Dinner at: Archie's Tavern 37714
Six mile Rd. (same place-differnt
name.)*

Livonia. It is in the Laurel Park Mall.

Contact Joyce Gradinscak.
734-560-6883. you can text or call her.

No Craft meeting this month

A Thousand Ways to Grieve

I'm an active griever. By active, I mean that during those first few months following my loss, I devoured every book on grief I could get my hands on. I poured out my agony in my writing, attended grief seminars, went through photo albums and I searched the internet for helpful sites. I cried and fumed and spent long hours talking to anyone who would listen.

My husband simply withdrew and grieved in silence. Though we lived in the same house, grieved the same loss, and shared a life together, we were apart in our grief. We all have our own ideas on how to grieve and we're quick to judge those who don't conform to our way of thinking. When Prince Charles wore a blue suit to Princess Diana's funeral, he was condemned by the press until it was learned it was his former wife's favorite.

A friend of mine was criticized for wearing a pair of red strap, high heeled shoes to her husband's funeral, the same shoes she wore on the day they met.

If we are to grieve in harmony with those around us, we must give up the notion that grief can be expressed in limited ways. I once thought that grief manifested itself only in tears and depression. But I've seen what others whose vision is greater than mine have accomplished in the name of grief. Re-

solve to make peace with someone who grieves in ways that seem odd to you. Try expressing your grief in a new way: write a poem or song, start a journal, buy your loved one a gift and send it to someone you know who would love and appreciate the gesture. Wear something outlandish. Buy a bouquet of balloons in your loved ones favorite color. Laugh at something that would make your loved one laugh.

Tears, depression and sadness are all acceptable ways to show grief. So are blue suits and red shoes.

*Margaret Brownley,
Bereavement Magazine*



Memories

The certain special memories
That follow me each day,
Cast your shadow in my life
In a certain way.
Sometimes the blowing wind
Or the lyrics of a song,
Make me stop and think of you
Sometimes all day long
Memories are good to have
To share and keep in my heart,
Just knowing that you're still inside
Makes sure we'll never part.

*Collette Covington,
Lake Charles, LA*

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

<i>Child</i>	<i>Parent, Grandparent, Sibling</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Age</i>
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Available to members



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

GRIEF: 5 Musts for Deep Healing

During my 20 years of experience as a grief counselor, I have watched grievers survive and thrive. The following ‘Musts’ are common to healthy grieving and ultimately to deep healing.

Feel your Feelings

Although this may seem like a simple directive, it requires tremendous courage to feel pain with acceptance. Many feelings arise with grief: anger, frustration, resentment, despair, longing, hopelessness, sadness, fear, and even joy. Learning how to welcome each feeling as we do our breath, like an essential part of living, is something that we are not used to doing. Often, we are taught to squelch feelings and keep a “stiff upper lip.” With grief, the opposite is necessary. Allow your feelings to ebb and flow, like the tides of the ocean.

Experience all of your feelings, knowing that the process of doing so is important and healing. Be gentle with yourself, for the process requires a great deal of energy, and will feel tiring. When we let our emotions wash over us and through us without clinging to them, we honor our relationship with our loved one.

Feelings may be quite intense in the first year or two after a major loss, but do not be surprised when intense feelings also surface many years later. This is not unusual and is known as a process of “retriggering”. Again, the goal is to ride the waves with gentle acceptance. Know that all emotions change and flow even as your love remains constant.

How: Schedule time each day when you focus on your grief. Light a candle, look at photographs, and let yourself cry or yell or hit a pillow. If something stirs your sadness, let yourself go with it. If you’re in public, excuse yourself to a restroom or your car and let yourself cry.

Express your Feelings

Once we are feeling our feelings, it helps to have an outlet – a way to ex-

press the feelings outside of ourselves. Finding an avenue of expression facilitates the healing process. It isn’t necessary to be an artist but finding a way to get our feelings ‘out’ is important. Creating movement of our most intense feelings starts to make room for more love to fill us.

How: Journaling is an excellent way to express pent-up feelings. Try these prompts: Today, my grief feels like . . . Today, I’m really missing . . . Today, I wish that . . .

Join a support group in person or online where you can talk to other grievers and share your experience. This is an incredibly powerful means of support and expression. Create poetry, music, fiction or art that expresses how you feel. Take a deep breath and let out a loud, audible ‘sigh’.

Make a Connection with your Loved One Every Day

Death does not end our relationships. Fortunately for all of us, love transcends loss. Therefore, you are very much still in relationship with your loved one. Staying connected on a daily basis doesn’t mean living in the past or being stuck. Staying connected is a healthy way to honor our loved one’s continued influence on our lives as we continue to grow and learn . . . and it is a way of staying open to the love that is ever present in our hearts.

How: Light a candle at special meals to symbolize the presence of your loved one. Say hello to their picture and blow a kiss every day. Visit the gravesite as often as feels comfortable to you. Teach people around you that you want to remember, that you want to talk about your loved one, that you’re comfortable sharing memories

Write a letter to your loved one on birthdays, anniversaries, and the ‘death day’ to express your thoughts, to connect with them, to reflect on where you are with your grief. Keep these letters in a special place through the years so that you can see how life is flowing and changing.

Fill your Life with Gratitude

Although we may not be feeling gratitude when we are consumed with

grief, gratitude is an active way to facilitate deep healing. It’s important to be grateful for the life of our loved ones, rather than focusing exclusively on their death and our loss. Imagine that they had never been born and you had never experienced their presence in your life. In so doing we can gradually begin to open our hearts to the experience of love. Also, practicing gratitude for simple pleasures helps us to shine light on the blessings in our lives even in the midst of our grief. It is in this way that we begin to transcend the weightiness of grief and experience the full beauty of love and life, both in the past and in the present.

How: Make a list of things you love about your loved one, things that you remember with gratitude. Make a list of ways that you grew and changed as a result of knowing and loving your loved one. When you drink your morning beverage, stop and savor the sensations (smell, taste, texture of the cup, sounds, sights) and experience the moment mindfully. Every night before you fall asleep, list 3 things from your day for which you are grateful.

Make the Choice to Reengage with Life

Shifting from surviving to thriving is an intentional choice. Deciding to make meaning out of loss and seeing loss in the context of a larger perspective is a daily decision. To reengage with life means risking again, loving again, and moving forward with the ever-present eternal love of your loved one woven into the fabric of you. We are forever changed through our relationships with our loved ones – and by our grief – but we have the power to embrace life while we still have it.

How: Volunteer your time and services in a cause that is meaningful to you.

Keep your heart open by saying “yes” to life when you are able, knowing that your loved one never wanted you to finish your days with a bitter or broken heart.

Breath is the essence of life. Use this breathing technique to stay grounded: 4 breathe in for the count of 5, hold

for the count of 5, and exhale for the count of 5.

Be patient with your process, as grieving takes time. It might feel as if you are going in circles but remember that you are actually traveling a spiral path that is always circling higher. Remember also that love and loss are universal experiences. We are not alone in the process.

I hope that these ideas help you on your journey toward deep healing.

Ashley Davis Bush

www.ashleydavisbush.com

Five Years

The other night, my husband and I were discussing our “new” life. We do this often as we continue in our fifth

year without Marc, not so much to try to make sense of all this but rather to encourage ourselves to move forward in as positive a way as we can.

Norm asked me why it was that we find it difficult to be back in our old circle of friends. We know they would be happy to see us. We know it is our decision not to go. I said it’s because we cannot talk about Marc and so much else about our life as it now is. I said that superficial conversation leaves me cold. Norm summed it up by saying that, once you decide to spend your time and your effort on a regular basis with new friends who have also lost children, there is not enough energy left to deal with the niceties required to conduct social life

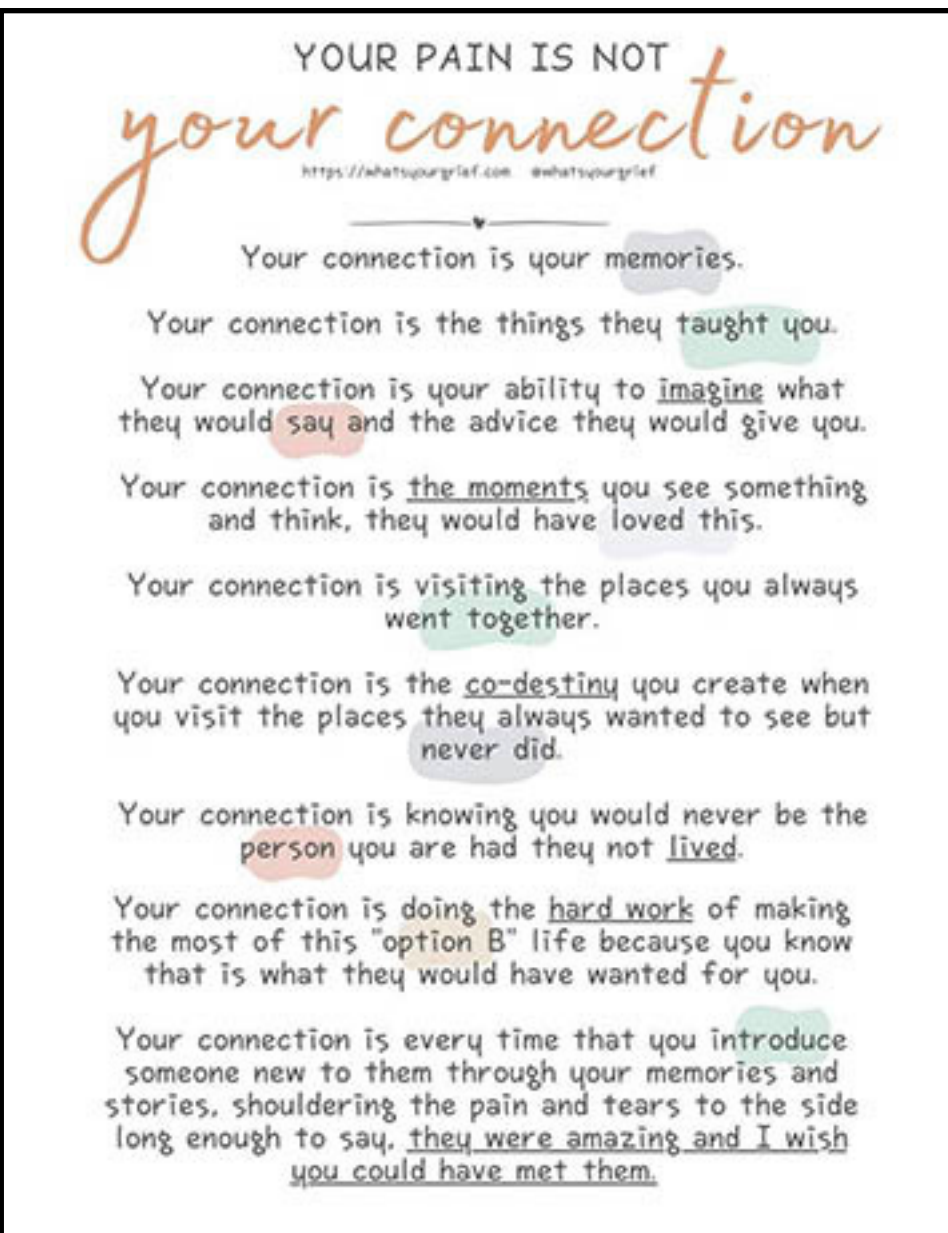
on an ongoing basis as we all used to know it. He’s right. When you boil it all down, that is the answer. It is an answer that contains many complexities.

Our friends are still good people, and we still see them from time to time. But we are not as interested, if at all, in most of what gets talked about. People do not say what is really in their hearts. We have shared with them our deepest despair. They talk about the stock market. I tell them of my small miracles. They talk of weddings and graduations. I talk of my children. They clam up. It sure is different. These are not bad people. These are scared people. If it could happen to me, it could happen to them. They have heard enough, and I know that they hurt, too. But not the way I do. I am so much better than I was but not where they are and I never will be: my life more or less intact, my family together. This seems to be a barrier too steep to climb, or it takes too much effort from both sides. I suppose I am jealous and perhaps sometimes irreverent about their concerns.

They seem inconsequential to me now; they would not have before. They haven’t changed; I have. I have taken that left turn on the new road. Now my life goes in a different direction. I can’t go back. I must, with much effort, build a new life that will be rewarding, happy and as fulfilling as possible. I do that with my new friends- the compassionate friends who have stood by my side for all these years.

I like my new life; surely not so well as my old life, but I like it. It is beginning to be comfortable, although there are times on this new road when I do not easily know where to turn. It is as they say, “the road less traveled”, but it is still a worthwhile and satisfactory road that is filled with the unexpected blessings of many new friends and relationships! Yes, I have accepted that fork in the road, it just sometimes remains a little bumpy.

*Toby Eisenberg,
TCF San Diego, CA*



SIBS

It's the Music that bonds the Soul

The room you once lived in doesn't look the same.
 The people who used to call you Never mention your name.
 The car you used to drive they may not make anymore.
 And all the things you treasured are boxed behind closed doors,
 The clothes you set the trends by are surely out of date.
 The people you owed money to Have wiped away the slate.
 Things have changed and changed Since you went away,
 but some things remain the same each and every day.

Like the aching in my heart – a scar that just won't heal.
 Or the way a special song can change the way I feel.
 Brother, you must know that the music bonds us and will keep us close;
 because secretly I know in my heart it's the music you miss most.
 So let the world keep turning, time can take its toll.
 As long as the music is playing You'll be dancing in my soul.
*Stacie Gilliam,
 TCF N.Oklahoma City, OK*

Re-entering School after the Death of a Sibling

Going back to school after the death of your brother or sister is a hard thing to go through. At first there are three

groups of people to deal with: people who give you a lot of support, people who don't know what to say, and those who give you weird looks and stay away from you. This lasts for a little while. After a short time, changes with each group occur.

Those who didn't know what to say start to speak or begin to talk. The group who kept away stop ignoring you. The people who gave you a lot of support, slowly return to their own affairs. After about a month and a half, everything goes back to normal and is over to everyone except you.

This is very difficult to accept and makes you feel all the more alone. After a while the shock for you goes away and it is then that you need the support from your friends, peers and teachers.

This month is the first anniversary of the death of my brother. Most people will have forgotten and everything is right with the world. But it is not! Certainly not to my mother and me.

*Jordan Ely
 TCF Albany/Delmar, NY*

It's a Family Affair

When a child dies, grief is a family affair.
 It hits Mom and Dad and siblings with equal despair.
 Mom cries and cannot get out of bed.
 Dad holds in emotions and leaves much unsaid.
 Sisters and brothers simply cannot understand.
 Why death came and dealt this kind of hand.
 No one acts as if they should and nothing is the same.
 The family wants to draw together but seems to share only pain.
 Someone must be responsible when a child dies.

(Continued on page 8)

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
- Marlene Hofmann - Drug related death - 734-331-9919
- Bob Vitolins - A father's grief - (313) 882-8632
- Gail Lafferty - Sudden Death - (734) 748-2514

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: 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808 Wixom, MI 48393

Phone: 877-969-0010; 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 Thursday7-9; 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



PLEASE REMEMBER
 Siblings are welcome to attend the Livonia Compassionate Friend meetings. We ask that you be at least 16 years old.

Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, September 5th at 7:00 pm. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: After reading A Thousand Ways to Grieve in newsletter – Have you ever done something in memory of your child that others may have thought strange or weird, but was helpful to you?

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 is on back page.

Rob & Joyce Gradinscak in memory of **Adam**; “Adam, 20th Birthday without you! Missing you!”

Ken Ventura in loving memory of **Kristen**

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.

Adam Kaplan, whose beloved daughter, **Michaela**, born 10/18; died 5/23; 5.5 years

Veronica & Alex Yahkind, whose beloved son, **Michael**, born 4/07; died 4/29; 35 years

The Sport of Grieving

It's not over till it's over, and it's never over. Wisdom taken from the people's philosopher and baseball great Yogi Berra. Strictly understood, it refers to the vicissitudes of the sports field. However, like many other Yogiisms, its message reaches way beyond the ball park. For me, the expression is the perfect summary of the grieving process experienced parents whose children have died. The game of life moves on. But the sense of loss and emptiness does not. The wish to see my son again, to be part of his evolving, maturing life, to leave this world knowing he will remain after I am gone, is a fantasy I cannot relinquish.

Meeting ordinary challenges seems as daunting as participating in a championship series that does not end. Succeeding at carrying out the mundane for a bereaved parent is akin to practicing a sport. I have begun to think of myself as an athlete, always in training, trying to improve my performance as a normal person. I visualize myself alert at bat; speeding, lightning fast, past the bases; sliding smoothly, safely home. All while having a hole in my heart from missing my son. Whatever is going on the outside, inside I am in a state of chronic grieving.

Chronic grieving, of course, is different than the pained paralysis immediately following the loss of a loved

one. Eight years have passed since my son died, and my mourning has taken on a very different form than it did at eight months, eight weeks, or even eight days ago. I have more practice in fielding the curve balls that come my way. Routine inquiries like how many children do you have, or what are you doing for Mother's Day no longer send me in to a spasm of confusion and inarticulateness. I am not hurled into a silent rage, lips clamped tightly shut to avoid inappropriate retort, when privy to a long winded diatribe about parents' inane complaints about their kids. I am even able to muster sufficiently comforting commentary regarding the loss of a pet. I have become able to attend celebrations of contemporaries of my son. I can talk about my son in a neutral tone and move on in the conversation without having to excuse myself and take a time-out for a private crying jag.

Yet I still feel like a loser, in the sense that part of me is missing and always will be. The seduction of giving into depression still beckons. The opponents guilt, despair, resentment remain ready to attack when least expected. Refusing to give up on the future requires the practice, dedication, and the willingness to consistently step up the plate and perform like an A-list athlete.

A parent whose child has died, shows the world the resilience and courage of grace under the pressure of

grieving.

The physical manifestation of my son is gone, but his being is not. I would prefer to have here, next to me, growing older as I grow old, but I must be satisfied with the reality of his presence in my consciousness only, evergreen and constant, forever young. Grieving is a way of accessing that presence. It is part of my emotional makeup. I welcome and embrace it. I have come to believe that grieving is an expression of love, and the love of your child is never over.

*Nora Yood,
Manhattan TCF*

Death of a Child

With the death of a child we as parents experience the ultimate failure - we are supposed to be invincible where our children are concerned and now we have failed to keep our child alive! Suddenly our belief system is shattered. The suddenness of the death has robbed us of our confidence in ourselves. We have low self-esteem; we suffer from lack of motivation due to our severe fatigue. We have nothing left to believe in, not even God for some. We are totally insecure. We are placed in the position of continuing to deteriorate or to begin to rebuild our lives by rebuilding our beliefs, our self-confidence and our self-esteem. The choice is ours. Choose to live. Our children would want us not only to just live, but continue to grow and love.

Faye Harden,, TCF Tuscaloosa

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

September 2024

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: Mary Hartnett, 5704 Drexel, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

Each family member thinks in some way its them, and cries.

But no one is responsible for things we cannot control.

So reach out to each other and keep the family whole.

Don't let the difference in how you each grieve change the love in your family or its belief.

Be strong when you can and weak when you must.

And love each other with kindness and trust.

To keep the family with love and you will all survive.

For we who have been there and made it through together can say that holding on to each other makes love last forever.

Lifted from McMinnville TCF