



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

FARGO/MOORHEAD AREA CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

F-M Area Chapter
P.O. Box 10686
Fargo ND 58106
www.tcffargomoorhead.org

National Headquarters
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook IL 60522
Toll-free (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org
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Chapter Leader - John Milligan (701) 282-4794

Newsletter Editor - Nancy Teeuwen (701) 730-0805

The F-M Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
127 2ND AVE E
WEST FARGO, ND
Please enter on the West side. Our meeting is in the Fellowship Hall - lower level, west side.
Upcoming Meetings
April 12th
May 10th
MEETING SUBJECT: Bring a memento of your child to share with the group

My apologies to the family of Kari Rae Borgen. In March's birthdays it listed that she would have been 5 which was incorrect. It would have been Kari's 40th birthday

Dates to Remember in 2012
July 20-22 in Costa Mesa, CA - 35th TCF/USA Natl Conference; 5th International Gathering
Regional Conferences
April 20-21 in Meadville, PA
July 28, 2012 - Fargo Chapter's 6th Annual WALK TO REMEMBER

If you have any pictures, stories, or poems of your child, grandchild or sibling that you would like to share on our website, please submit them to Sheryl Cvijanovich at SHERYLCV13@MSN.COM or mail them to the PO box listed on the back of the Newsletter. Anything sent to the PO Box will be scanned for the website and returned.

LOVE GIFTS

Steven & Deborah Anderson & Family in memory of their friends, Chri Wagar & Dillon Kapaun

Mary Vasecka in memory of her daughter, Corrine Hoefker
Bob & Gloria Sackman in memory of their son, Michael Robert Sackman
George & Patti Pratt in memory of their daughter, Nancy Pratt Coash
Ernie & Birdine Grafgaard in memory of their son, David Grafsgaard
Greg & Cathy Gronland in memory of their daughter, Tara Kellar

We are deeply grateful for the LOVE GIFTS given this month.
Our chapter and all chapters, are financed solely through your Love Gifts.
Donations make this newsletter, postage, books, tapes, etc. possible.
Thank you for your tax deductible gifts

OUR CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS. ©2007

Please be advised that if you have been on our mailing list for longer than a year, and you have not returned your authorization form or we have not heard from you within the past year, this will be the last newsletter that you will receive.

Letting Go

Recently I received an award for volunteering in the community. I was honored to receive it. Some of the people in my life mentioned that it looked like I had "let go" of the pain of losing my child. "Let go?" Of course, they don't understand.

But when the award was mentioned at our monthly Compassionate Friends meeting, a bereaved mother made an interesting observation that touched my heart and reminded me why I need this special group to keep me centered and balanced.

"I remember that article you read to us last Mother's Day....the one your son wrote about how proud he was of you," she said. "Wouldn't it be great to put that article in our memory book with the newspaper article about your award? He was right about you. He was proud of you."

What a great idea! What a wonderful way to bring my son into my life even though he is no longer on this plane. That's what Compassionate Friends do.....they help to bring our children into our lives even though our children are no longer alive. For a few hours each month, our children return to us. We're proud parents who can share our children's stories and keep our children in our lives.....without explaining why we won't be "letting go."

~Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/Katy, TX
In memory of son, Todd Mennen

B A B Y

I used to hold you in my arms, baby.
A pleasant weight.

Now I hold flowers, sweet like you.
A bundle so very, very 'light,
But oh, so heavy a burden.

(Lifted with love) Pikes Peak Chapter, TCF/Col. Springs

Mother of Sorrow

I hate to look at my mother
To see her in so much pain
Wrinkles hiding her countless tears
That would otherwise pour like rain.

I hate to see her hurt so much
But silently hold it in

Struggling to beat the heartbreak
When she knows that she can't win.

I hate to listen to her cries
Which she tries so hard not to show
Grasping on to everything
I wish she could let go.

I hate to watch her smile so bright
And know that it's all fake
Sure she's "happy" every day
But she's acting for our sake.

I hate competing with the sorrow
And I can't bring back my brother
Drew is up there watching you

He's living, loving, and laughing – Mother.

~ Kristy Shedon, TCF/Ashtabula, OH

ANGER

One of the reactions to our grief can be anger, and sometimes it may be irrational anger. You may be angry at your spouse and you may even be angry at your child/children who have just died. "Why did you die?", "Why weren't you more careful?" or "Why are you putting me through this terrible grief?"

Anger can be described as getting mad, but it can also be described as being hurt, or the feelings of helplessness, frustration, fear and even guilt. The reaction of guilt can be anger turned on our ourselves.

These feelings will eventually pass, but we must recognize and admit these reactions. I have. I also feel that these feelings of anger are NORMAL. One thing that I have experienced is that we can go through this phase more than once. After sharing with other bereaved parents and also reading about anger, I feel we are just normal bereaved parents/siblings with perfectly normal feelings.

~ Adaline Leir, TCF/Regina, SK

MIND GAMES

Mind games it can happen anywhere, anytime. Driving along the highway, I think: suppose, just suppose I turn my head quickly, will you suddenly be sitting next to me? Will you be humming along to a song that was a particular favorite of yours? I swear I can hear you. I want so much to hear you singing loudly and a bit off-key again.

Or perhaps I'm in the supermarket and I see someone with long, blond hair - is it you? My heart thumps. I want so badly for it to be you. People glance at me strangely and I realize I am standing in the middle of the aisle weeping. Even the special foods you loved can reduce me to tears. I'm tempted to buy your favorites and prepare them for when you come home for supper.

At night when I climb into bed, I scrunch over toward the middle, this gives you room to sit next to me the way you would after coming home from a late date. My senses are alive with you. I can smell your special perfume and feel your long, slender fingers with the pearl ring Daddy gave you for graduation. I can hear your laughter. I will you to stay with me until I fall asleep.

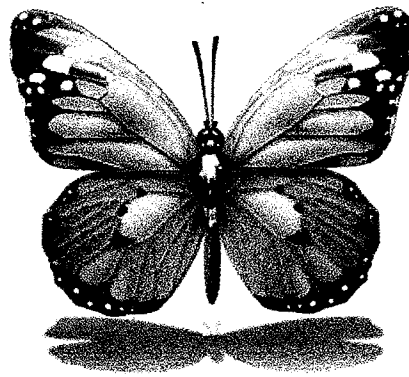
Then there are the times when I consciously call out your name in the silence of the house. My mind knows there will be no response, but in my heart I hear you answer me and for that split moment you are there at the top of the stairs as surely as I am at the bottom. Barbara...Barbara...Barbara... Your name is a litany. I suppose that behavior could be considered quite strange. What does one make of it? Weeping in supermarkets, calling to one who is not here. Oh, but in that fraction of a second when one feels one's loved one close, that feeling, although bittersweet, soothes and comforts a splintered heart. Mind games... it can happen anywhere, anytime.

~ Bunny Placco, TCF/Greater Providence, RI

"Friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief"
- Swedish Proverb

The Seven "T"'s of Grief

1. **Truth:** Tell it, regardless of how terrible the facts may be and how hard it is to talk about. Don't hide the truth about how you lost the person you loved. This generally applies to all kinds of tragedy.
2. **Trust:** Allow it. Don't let the painful circumstances surrounding the death of your child prevent you from talking with friends about your loss. It's very important to find people to trust to whom we can talk about what's going on in our lives.
3. **Therapy:** Which some completely believe in—not only traditional therapy of the talking kind, but also body therapy, massage, art therapy, music therapy, physical therapy, which can be therapy without even having the tag on it. Because loss can be a physical shock as well as a mental and emotional shock.
4. **Treasure:** Hold on. Don't stop treasuring your child.
5. **Thrive:** Keep looking at life with your eyes wide open. Don't give in to the temptation to use alcohol or other addictive substances to blunt or blur your sadness. Tremendous loss is also the opportunity for a fill in your life. It could be learning compassion for other people. It could be learning compassion for yourself.
6. **Treat:** nurture yourself. Give yourself the gift of kind understanding, and taking care of ourselves when we're in a fragile circumstance and when we have miles to go, because these things don't end in a week. They stay with us.
7. **Transcend:** The work always reminds me of spring because the earth transcends from the apparently dead circumstances. The spring comes and the sun comes and the flowers start to bloom, and the world really transcends death.



What Grieving People Want You to Know

- **I am not strong.** I'm just numb. When you tell me I am strong, I feel that you don't see me.
- **I will not recover.** This is not a cold or the flu. I'm not sick. I'm grieving and that's different. I will not always be grieving as intensely, but I will never forget my loved one and rather than recover, I want to incorporate his life and love into the rest of my life. That person is part of me and always will be, and sometimes I will remember him with joy and other times with a tear. Both are okay.
- **I don't have to accept the death.** Yes, I have to understand that it has happened and it is real, but there are just some things in life that are not acceptable.
- **Please don't avoid me.** You can't catch my grief. My world is painful, and when you are too afraid to call me or visit or say anything, you isolate me at a time when I most need to be cared about. If you don't know what to say, just come over, give me a hug or touch my arm, and gently say, "I'm sorry." You can even say, "I just don't know what to say, but I care, and want you to know that."
- **Please don't say, "Call me if you need anything."** I'll never call you because I have no idea what I need. Trying to figure out what you could do for me takes more energy than I have.

So, in advance, let me give you some ideas: *Bring food. *Offer to take my children to a movie or game so that I have some moments to myself. *Send me a card on special holidays, birthdays (mine, his or hers), or the anniversary of the death, and be sure to mention her name. You can't make me cry. The tears are here and I will love you for giving me the opportunity to shed them because someone cared enough about me to reach out on this difficult day. *Ask me more than once to join you at a movie or lunch or dinner. I may say no at first or even for a while, but please don't give up on me because somewhere down the line, I may be ready, and if you've given up, then I really will be alone.

~ Virginia A. Simpson, news@beyondindigo.com

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED



Birthdays and Anniversaries have been removed from the Internet version of our newsletter for security purposes





WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR



Every time I am in a group of bereaved parents~ I hear people say things like “I wish my child hadn’t died.” or “I wish I had him back.” That, unfortunately, can never come true.

The other wish I hear is, “I wish my friends (or church, or neighbors, or relatives) understood what I am going through and were more supportive.” This is a wish that has some possibility of coming true, if we are able to be honest and assertive with the people around us. What do we wish others understood about the loss of our child?

Here is a partial list of such wishes:

1. I wish you would not be afraid to speak my child’s name. My child lived and was important and I need to hear his name.
2. If I cry or get emotional when we talk about my child, I wish you knew that it isn’t because you have hurt me: the fact that my child died has caused my tears. You have allowed me to cry and I thank you. Crying and emotional outbursts are healing.
3. I wish you wouldn’t “kill” my child by removing from your home his pictures, artwork or other remembrances.
4. I will have emotional highs and lows, ups and downs. I wish you wouldn’t think that if I have a good day my grief is all over, or that if I have a bad day, I need psychiatric counseling.
5. I wish you knew that the death of a child is different from other losses and must be viewed separately. It is the ultimate tragedy and I wish you wouldn’t compare it to your loss of a parent, a spouse~ or a pet.
6. Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn’t shy away from me.
7. I wish you knew that all of the “crazy” grief reactions I am having are in fact very normal. Depression, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and the questioning of values and beliefs are to be expected following the death of a child.
8. I wish you wouldn’t expect my grief to be over in six months. The first few years are going to be exceeding traumatic for us. As with alcoholics, I will never be “cured” or a “former bereaved parent”.
9. I wish you understood the physical reactions to grief. I may gain weight or lose weight, sleep all the time or not at all, develop a host of illnesses and be accident-prone, all of which may be related to my grief.
10. Our child’s birthday, the anniversary of his death, and holidays are terrible times for us. I wish you could tell us that you are thinking about our child on these days, and if we get quiet and withdrawn, just know that we are thinking about our child and don’t try to coerce us into being cheerful.
11. It is normal and good that most of us reexamine our faith, Values, and beliefs after losing a child. We still question things we have been taught all our lives and hopefully come to some new understanding with our God. I wish you would let me tangle with my religion without making me feel guilty.
12. I wish you wouldn’t offer me drinks or drugs. These are just temporary crutches and the only way I can get through this grief is to experience it. I have to hurt before I can heal.
13. I wish you understood that grief changes people. I am not the same person I was the moment before my child died and I will never be that person again. If you keep waiting for me to “get back to my old self”, you will stay frustrated. I am a new creature with new thoughts, dreams, aspirations, values, and beliefs. Please try to get to know the new me ...maybe you will like me still.

Instead of sitting around and waiting for our wishes to come true, we have an obligation to teach people some of the things we have learned about our grief. We can teach these lessons with great kindness, believing that people have good intentions and want to do what is right? but just don’t know what to do with us.

Elaine Grier, TCF/Atlanta Chapter (reprinted from August Newsletter)



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OF THE F-M AREA
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FARGO ND 58106

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Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MISSION STATEMENT: 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.

A SINCERE WELCOME TO ALL COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS... We are a nonprofit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. We offer group support, understanding and friendship. Our purpose is to promote and aid parents and siblings in the positive resolution of the grief they are experiencing and to foster physical and emotional health. If you have questions or wish to talk directly to a member of the Fargo-Moorhead Compassionate Friends, please call any of the numbers listed.

FARGO-MOORHEAD COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS BOARD YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE BOARD AT ANY TIME!

Chapter Leader	John Milligan 701-282-4794	Secretary-Treasurer	Sheryl Cvijanovich 701-235-8158
Librarian		Initial Contact	Kylene Milligan 701-282-4794
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Teeuwen 701-730-0805	Newsletter Database	Mike Cvijanovich 701-235-8158
Newsletter Printing	Joyce at Olivet Lutheran Church	Mailing Committee	Contact Us to Join

LIBRARY INFORMATION: We have an extensive library available. Please feel free to check materials at our next meeting.

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

HAVING A BAD DAY OR NIGHT? Feel free to call and talk to any of the following:

John Milligan (son, 25 - car accident) 701-282-4794
 Duane Skramstad (daughter, 20 - car accident; son, 2 - drowning)..... 701-437-2507
 Cheri Eraker (son, 23 - accident)..... 701-451-0045
 Carol Nelson (son , 13 - leukemia)..... 218-346-3854
 Nancy Teeuwen (daughter, 15 hours - illness) 701-730-0805
 Mark & Hella Helfter (miscarriage & son, 35 - accident) 701-235-9622

Love gifts must be received by the 15th to be included in the next month's newsletter. If you wish to give a love gift please complete:

Love gift given in Memory/Honor of _____
 Name _____
 Address _____
 Relationship _____ Born _____ Died _____