



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

FARGO/MOORHEAD AREA CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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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
August 9th
September 13th

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

Clare & Richard Elless in memory of their daughter, Tari Heller
Gordon & Virlyn Hoff in memory of their son, Karlton York Hoff

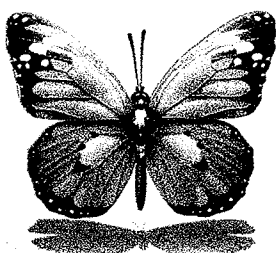
Lori & Jerry Brady in memory of their son, Greg Sears

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.

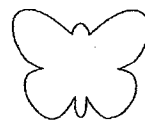


OUR CREDO

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



Butterfly Decals



The F-M Chapter has recently purchased a trailer, in order to transport materials to our chapter activities. We are selling butterfly decals, which will be placed on the trailer. The butterflies are 4 x 6 and available in five colors: yellow, pink, red, blue and green.

Each butterfly will contain the first and last name of a child.

If you wish to purchase a butterfly in the memory of a child, please send your name, the name of the child, butterfly color, and a check payable to TCF of Fargo-Moorhead, P.O. Box 10686, Fargo, ND 58106.

Butterflies are \$25 each, 3 for \$65 or 4 for \$80. If you wish to purchase more than 4 butterflies, please contact our chapter leader, John Milligan.

Love – Gratitude

The agony is so great and yet I will stand it. Had I not loved so very much, I would not hurt so much. But goodness knows, I would not want to diminish that precious love by one fraction of an ounce. I will hurt and I will be grateful for that hurt. As it bears witness to the depth of our meaning – and for that I will be eternally grateful.

~ Shirley Holzer Jeffery



SUGGESTIONS TO AID MARRIAGE



1. Don't expect spouse to be a tower of strength when he or she is also experiencing grief.
2. Be sensitive to your spouse's personality style. In general he or she will approach grief with the same personality habits as they approach life. It may be very private, very open and sharing or someplace in between.
3. Find a "sympathetic ear" (not necessarily our mate's) --someone who cares and will listen.
4. Do talk about your child with your spouse. If necessary set up a time to talk about the child.
5. Seek the help of a counselor if depression, grief or problems in your marriage are getting out of hand.
6. Do not overlook or ignore anger causing situations. It is like adding fuel to a fire. Eventually there is an explosion. Deal with things as they occur.
7. Remember you loved your spouse enough to marry. Try to keep your marriage alive: go out for dinner or an ice cream cone; take a walk; go on a vacation.
8. Be gentle with yourself and your mate.
9. Join a support group for bereaved parents. Attend as a couple, come by yourself or with a friend. It is a good place to learn about grief and to feel understood. Do not make it a pressure on your spouse to attend with you if it is not his/her preference.
10. Join a mutually agreeable community betterment project.
11. Do not blame yourself or mate for what you were powerless to prevent. If you blame your spouse or personally feel responsible for your child's death seek immediate counseling help for yourself and your marriage.
12. Realize that you are not alone. There are many bereaved parents. In 2 1/2 years our mailing list has grown from 50 parents to over 700 parents.
13. Choose to believe again in the goodness of God and of life. Search for you and laughter.
14. Recognize your extreme sensitivity and vulnerability and be alert to tendency to take things personally.
15. Read about grief, especially the books written for bereaved parents.
16. Take your time with decisions about child's things, change of residence, etc.
17. Be aware of unrealistic expectations for yourself or your mate.
18. Remember there is no timetable. Everyone goes through grief differently, even parents of the same child.
19. Try to remember that your spouse is doing the best he or she can.
20. Marital friction is normal in any marriage. Don't blow it out of proportion.
21. Try not to let little everyday irritants become major issues. Talk about them and try to be patient.
22. Be sensitive to the needs and wishes of your spouse as well as yourself. Sometimes it is important to compromise.
23. It is very important to keep the lines of communication open.
24. Work on your grief instead of wishing that your spouse would handle his/her grief differently. You will find that you will have enough just handling your own grief. Remember when you help yourself cope with grief, it indirectly helps your spouse.
25. As Harriet Schiff states, "Value your marriage. You have lost enough."
26. Hold on to HOPE. With time, work and support, you will survive. It will never be the same but you can learn again to appreciate life and the people in your life.

THOUGHTS ON SUICIDE CONCERNING GUILT

Many survivors feel guilt, blame, anger, shame and sometimes relief. It is important to realize that although you can do a good deal to help the person who is not entirely certain he wants to seek death, no one can prevent someone else from killing himself if he has firmly decided to do so. You may have been able to prevent the preventable; don't berate yourself for failure to prevent the unpreventable.

None of us in any of our relationships with anybody, could bear the sort of scrutiny that the survivor-victims turn on their relationships. We have all done and said things that are regrettable, especially with the pernicious wisdom of hindsight, once someone had died. But we have not killed anyone by so doing. We must forgive ourselves for having had a normal human relationship, and look also at the constructive and creative aspects of it.

- From "The Facts of Death" by
Michael A Simpson

"When you come to the edge of all the light you know, and are about to step off into the darkness of the unknown, faith is knowing one of two things will happen: There will be something solid to stand on, or you will be taught how to fly."

-Barbara J. Winter

THE FIRST YEAR

WOW!

A year has passed already.
It seems so long, yet so short a while.
This time last year I was pregnant;
The feel of your kicks made me smile.

Then came that horrible night -
A month before Christmas, to be exact.
The grief I went through in those moments
Left me wondering if I'd come through intact.

That Christmas passed oh, so painfully
My pillow soaked with tears every night.
My family wanted to forget, they didn't understand.
For the honor of your memory I had to fight.

Now it's the holidays once again.
It feels strange, sorrow and joy are mixed.
I'll do things different this year, too,
Knowing my heart will never be "all fixed".

Even if others choose not to remember you
I will, in my own quiet way.
I'll buy you a little present
And light a candle for you on Christmas day.

I know now I can make it
Though this past year has often left me crazy.
The grief subsides, the courage rises
To get me through, though my memory turns hazy.

I miss you and love you Rebecca
Yet I push on into the new year.
My memories and love are contained
In the falling of each silent tear.

I do not deny my sadness,
Neither will I deny myself some fun
As my second year without you
Starts with the rising of this morning's sun.

- Angel Neufeld, TCF/Regina, SK

OLD GRIEF

Older grief is gentler.
It's about sudden tears swept in by a strand of music.
It's about haunting echoes of first pain on anniversaries.
It's about feeling his presence for an instant one day while
dusting his room.
It's about early pictures that invite me to fold him in my arms
again.
It's about memories blown on wisps of wood smoke and sea
scents.
Older grief is about aching in gentler ways, rarer longing, less
engulfing fire.
Older grief is about searing pain wrought into tenderness.

- Linda Zelenka, TCF, Orange Park, FL

THE MASK

People say, "Oh my, oh my.
It's amazing how you're getting by.
I don't think that I could be
So strong if such a thing happened to me."

But how come such persons are never around
When I remove the face of a clown,
And there for all the world to see
Is a person destroyed by a tragedy.

So I look at these people and give a grin,
Hiding the sickness I feel within,
And hope that I will find a way
To get through another day.

~ Laraine Rodriquez, TCF/Gainesville, CA

SEASONS OF THE HEART

Your special days are unchanging
Seasons of the heart I celebrate.
Your birth, forever spring,
Tender memories relate,
New and green, a dream
From which too soon I awake.
The summer of your life was bright
Laughter needed no reason,
Seemingly endless days of sharing.
Sixteen summers. Short in season.
Your death brought winter without warning,
What sense in all this can be found?
Summer dreams replaced with mourning.
Where is hope now?
But the heart knows what
The mind cannot accept
That when all is lost,
It is love that is left.
Love knows no barriers
Time or distance recognize.
Love does not diminish,
But is constant in our lives.
And like a summer breeze
Uplifts and inspires us
With healing memories.

~ Peggy Walls, TCF/Alexander City, AL

Is it Easing?

I heard your name today and my heart did not skip a beat,
nor was my mind flooded with the emotion of losing you. I
heard your name today and it did not bring back the terrible hurt
feelings of when you first left me.

I heard your name today with a calmness that surprised me.
Many another child carries your name, and it had been torture
hearing it and seeing the smiling faces on those little girls.

But today I knew—I found out—what others in my footsteps
found out and tried to tell me. The hurt will ease; but the
memories, the love, the good times will never go away.

~ Phoebe C. Redman, TCF/Bradenton, FL

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED



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



SIBLING PAGE

WHEN A SIBLING DIES

The death of a child is a family crisis no less for the siblings than for the parents. Surviving siblings may feel abandoned because grieving parents no longer have the emotional energy to care for them. They may feel unloved as they experience family friends putting the deceased child on a pedestal. They may feel incredibly guilty, remembering every bout of sibling rivalry, every unkind word, and every slammed door. They may feel unworthy to be alive, longing for answers to explain why their brother or sister died and they didn't. And they may, therefore, seek conscious or unconscious ways to self-destruct: running away from home, using alcohol and other drugs, taking on characteristics of the dead siblings and thus diminishing their own image.

Following are suggestions children have shared about how parents can help them when a brother or sister has died:

1. Allow siblings to participate fully in funeral plans and memorial activities. Let them choose whether or not they want to see their sibling at the funeral home. Let them choose some of the music, write and/or read a memorial to their brother or sister, go with you or alone to cemetery visits.
2. Share with the siblings all factual information, as it becomes known. Being "left out" only enhances a growing sense of not being important to the family.
3. When you see children who remind you of your child, point them out to the siblings and explain the grief spasm it has caused. Mysterious behavior enhances the sibling's fear of being left out.
4. Ask the siblings to be with you occasionally as you grieve. If you always grieve in private, the emotional distance between you will widen.
5. Talk with siblings both about pleasant memories and unpleasant memories of the dead child. This prevents pedestal placing.
6. Don't tell siblings to "be strong" for someone else. That is too great a burden to carry.
7. Understand that it may be easier for siblings to talk to friends, or another trusted adult, than to parents. They desperately do not want to add to their parents' devastation so may seek counsel and understanding elsewhere.
8. Remember that you can't change the past. But you can face the present and guide the future. Your family will forever be changed--it does not always have to remain devastated.

- Janice Lord, TCF/Anne Arundel County, MD

DEATH

Death never comes when we are ready,
Often it sneaks up silently like an ocean wave covering rocks
and sand,
Or as God's angels in the sky and wind.
Other times it wanders around like wild tears running down your
face.
It doesn't seem to have very good feelings,
Leaving us with night and lives to go on with.
And yet it can be told quietly that death is memories and
sadness.

- Linda Gayle Julian, age 11
Bereavement & Kids - Nov/Dec 1996

COMPASSIONATE SIBLINGS

I had a prayer answered today, one I'd like to share.
I found I'm not alone in my grief, I found someone to care!
I've been in pain for quite awhile, but kept it deep inside,
But now I know there are people in whom I can confide!

They'll let me cry or scream or yell, and they know just how I
feel.

You see they also know that pain and know it's very real.
Each one has suffered a loss, one like I have known;
Yet now we stand together.

This unique group of siblings is bonded, you might say,
And strength to carry on is for what each one must pray.

One by one we keep going, although painful it might be,
And the emptiness we feel, many will never see;
Because we choose what face to show the world and courage
keeps us going,
We have a constant ache inside,
No matter what the outside is showing.

And whether it takes me a year or two,
Time is all that can heal;
So I've been sent some "Compassionate Siblings"
Who know just how I feel.

Bless those who need to be understood
When tears come and go without warning.
May we help heal the wounds so deep that are hurting all the
hearts left empty by the death of sibling.
- Stacie Gilliam, TCF/N. Oklahoma City, OK

I LOVED YOU

I loved you as one person loves another,
I loved you as a brother and as a mother loves her son.
I loved you like I've never loved anyone before,
Unconditionally, completely, never tallying the score.

I loved you as a baby and as you grew into a man.
Where the years went, I'll never understand,
But my love for you will have no bounds, no limit to its power,
It will always be a part of me in each and every passing hour.

When I am lonely I think of you and the times we had,
And then the loneliness doesn't seem quite so bad.
I remember your strength and your laughter in the air,
And even though you're gone, remember that I care.

In the sunrise I see you and your voice echoes in my heart.
Though you've moved beyond me, we will never be apart.
I have loved you all of your life and I'll love you to my end,
And time will pass too slowly until we meet again.

- Dana Noelle Watson, TCF/Prince Albert, SK
Written in memory of her brother, Evan



LAUGH THERAPY

I have a bitter/sweet, funny/sad story to tell about my little girl, JENNY. She was born with a heart defect, had one operation at five months of age and a second one at 2 1/2 years. She died 8 hours after the second operation.

I believed in life after death, so I knew her spirit would survive. It was a comfort when I sensed her spirit presence and others saw her impish form after death, but I was still in intense pain. One of the hardest challenges of life is to bury a child and still keep sane.

One day, a couple months after her death, I was reading a self-help book which encouraged the reader to try to look for "an element of fun, fantasy, absurdity or even a relieving silliness" in any distressing situation. I was still very much suffering from Jenny's death so I thought I would try to follow these instructions.

With eyes closed, I asked aloud, "is it possible for me to laugh about Jennifer's death?" I promptly burst into tears at the idea, but as the tears rolled down my cheeks, in my mind's eye, I could see Jenny hovering over me and pulling on my left arm, trying to lift what seemed like a lead weight. I heard her say, "That's the idea, Mom. Lighten up!"

Was that for real? It felt real to me. I've had other experiences of communicating with her spirit as well as that one and I don't think I'm crazy (not certifiably so, anyway). So I take that interchange as her way of encouraging me to recover from her death and to let humor brighten any dark corner of my existence.

- Anna Olson, TCF/Winnipeg, Canada
TCF/WPG Nov-Dec 1993

REMEMBERING

Go ahead and mention My child,
The one that died, you know.
Don't worry about hurting me further.
The depth of my pain doesn't show.
Don't worry about making me cry.
I'm already crying inside.
Help me to heal by releasing
The tears that I try to hide.
I'm hurting when you just keep silent,
Pretending she didn't exist.
I'd rather you mention my child,
Knowing that she has been missed.
You asked me how I was doing.
I said 'pretty good' or 'fine'.
But healing is something ongoing.
I feel it will take a lifetime.
By Elizabeth Dent

YOU DID NOT DIE

You live in the beautiful wind that blows.
You live in the sound of birds that crow.
You live in the sun that shines so bright.
You live in the peaceful dark at night.
You live in a star I see in the sky.
You live in ocean waves that come in with the tide.
You live in the smell of flowers and grass.
You live in the summer that goes so fast.
You live in my heart that hurts so much.
You did not die, we only lost touch

~ Shari Swirsky, TCF/Toronto, ON

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

When a child dies, grief is a family affair.
It hits the 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 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.
Each family member thinks in some way it's 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.

- Jackie Rosen
TCF/South Broward/North Dade Atlanta, GA

A MOTHER'S THOUGHTS

YESTERDAY.....

We dreamed of how our future would be,
Of times we'd share, my child and me.
Whether joy or pain, laughter or tears,
We'd stand together throughout the years.
A promise of what life should always be,
Of a child so dear, ever loving me.

TODAY.....

My heart sobs with uncontrollable grief.
I search for answers, but find nor relief.
The skies have darkened, no longer bright,
For my child is gone, forever from sight.
The dreams we shared never can be,
They're left to linger in my memory.

TOMORROW.....

My heart will push aside this cloud
That darkens my life like a heavy shroud.
Once again I'll see the dawning light
And know my child's love still burns bright.
I'll remember the moments we both shared;
I'll remember our love and how we cared.
I'll remember my child now lives in me,
And his YESTERDAYS shall always be.

- Carol Cichella
TCR/Rockford, IL

Life is eternal, and love is immortal,
and death is only a horizon;
and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight.
~Rossiter Worthington Raymond

JUST AN INFANT

We had a fine discussion, you and I, talking about those who don't understand our loss and how we feel. Peers in grief. Then you asked my son's age at death, and I could see your change of attitude as I replied "three months." Our talk was over.

Having lost an older child, you decided that what we both felt couldn't be the same, for your child was with you longer. My child was "just" an infant.

But our loss and pain are not that different, for through the death of our children, we have lost the same thing. Dreams of the future.

Yes, you have more memories than I, but we have both lost the tomorrows of our children, and that pain knows no minimum age. God, it hurts.

All the things we've wished for our children, with no regard to age, now will not come to pass. That future is gone.

Yes, my son was an infant, but that does not lessen the love that I have, as the age of your child does not affect your love. Love is an ageless emotion.

When my young son died, he carried away in his little hands as many dreams, hopes and love as your child did when he left. I miss you, Alex

- Doug Hughes, TCF/Cincinnati, OH

STRENGTH

In the early days of my grief,
a tear would well up in my eyes,
a lump would form in my throat,
but you would not know - I would hide it
for the strong do not cry -

And I am strong.

In the middle days of my grief,
I would look ahead and see that wall
that I had attempted to go around,
as an ever-present reminder of a wall
yet unscaled.

Yet I did not attempt to scale it
for the strong will survive -

And I am strong.

In the later days of my grief,
I learned to climb over that wall -
step by step -
remembering, crying, grieving.

And the tears flowed steadily
as I painstakingly went over.

The way was long, but I did make it.

For I am strong.

Near the resolution of my grief,
a tear will well up in my eyes,
a lump will form in my throat,
but I will let that tear fall -

and you will see it.

Through it you will see
that I still hurt and I care.

For I am strong.

- Terry Jago, TCF/Regina, SK

In memory of Kenna

In memory of Graeme Scott & Devon Paul

FOR FATHERS

"I am glad I wasn't too proud, too macho, too blind, to go to the TCF meetings. I still have that hole in my guts, my eyes still fill at odd times, but I know that I am not crazy, I know that I am not alone. I know that others have gone through the same things and for some dumb reason, that helps! Fellow Dads, what is your excuse for not coming to a TCF meeting?"

- Tom Crouthamel, TCF/Sarasota, FL

GRANDPARENTS GRIEF

Grandparents have the loss of a beloved grandchild and the pain of seeing your child suffer and you can't "fix it". And so they must deal with their own grief and still try to be helpful to the child. It seems like two hard tasks, but must be handled at the same time. If you have had a child die yourself and/or a sibling this may bring back a flood of emotions to re-handle.

Grandparents may also have to deal with "survival guilt". Why did my grandchild die before really enjoying life and I'm still here?"

- Author Unknown

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Coming together as a unique family

Out reach to others whose pain we share

Moving toward healing

Parents who have lost our children

Accepting the unfathomable pain

Searching for the way to recover

Initiating a new life

Our love forever

Never the same

Always remembering

Together we grow

Enlightened, different, stronger - we move onward as

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

~ Phyllis A Sereno, TCF/Bridgeport, CT

HEALING ANGELS

The angels in heaven have shed their tears -

Tears of sorrow and anguish

Tears of remembrance and longing

Tears for the lost.

Now the task of healing has begun.

It is enshrouded in a veil of fabric woven by God.

He alone has ordained His helpers

To bestow comfort upon those who are still grieving.

He has commanded that

The stars in the sky,

The rays of sun,

The blades of grass and

The flowers that bloom

Become embodiments of the souls

Who were snatched from us so abruptly and sadly.

Nevermore shall darkness becloud them.

Their loved ones will no longer be numbed with heartache,

Instead, they will be overcome with a balm of

Tranquility and hope.

Bereavement Magazine - January/February 2003

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OF THE F-M AREA
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**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
FARGO/MOORHEAD AREA CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MISSION STATEMENT: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

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
Lois Gangnes (son, 24 - accident)	701-282-4083
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 _____

NOTE: By giving a love gift, you are giving us permission to include your child(ren) in our monthly birthdays and anniversaries.