

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
January 11th
February 8th

Dates to Remember
Mom's meeting - 7 pm on January 25th @ Fry'n Pan
41st National Conference July 27-29, 2018 St Louis, Missouri

LOVE GIFTS
Carol & Daniel Winter in memory of their son, Matthew Winter
Janet Erickson in memory of her daughter, Julie Erickson
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.

"When it seems that our sorrow is too great to borne, let us think of the great family of the heavy-hearted into which our grief has given us entrance, and inevitably, we will feel about us, their arms and their understanding."
~ Helen Keller

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

"When our special sadness comes to call, when we remember more than we can bear, when courage falters – shadows everywhere: Then let us reach and touch and share, we, who are friends." ~ Sascha Wagner
Our Mom's group generally meets on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Fryn' Pan restaurant, 300 Main Avenue, Fargo. Our gatherings are very informal as we meet to talk about our children, books, recipes, jobs and whatever else comes up in conversation. We all have times when we need the listening heart of another mom or grandma. Please join us this month on Thursday January 25th. For more information please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or sherylc13@msn.com.

When sending a Holiday Angel gift, please make sure to use the Angel gift form or make a note that it is for the Holiday Angel.
We have received some gifts without notes and are not sure if they are a Love Gift or a Holiday Angel Gift.

Holiday Angels that were not listed in December's Newsletter

<u>Given By</u>	<u>In Memory of</u>
Shawn, Jim, Alexander & Elinah Miller ...	Kelsey Grace Miller
.....	Tony Miller
Lynette Myrold.....	David William Hallman
Joe & Vincent Leggio.....	Annie Page Leggio
Hanson-Runsvold Funeral Home	

WHEN IT HURTS TOO MUCH TO TALK. ..WRITE!

I never thought of a typewriter as a therapist until my son died. I still don't think of it as a Dr. Smith-Corona, but there's no doubt it has played an active role in resolving my grief. Maybe that's because I find it awfully hard to verbalize my deepest feelings unless I'm paying someone \$50 an hour to hear me out. And maybe it's because I don't always understand exactly how I feel until I see what I think on paper.

If some aspects of your child's death are too painful to talk about, or if you seem to be stuck at some point in your grief work, you too may find that the process of writing your thoughts out will help you clarify and come to grips with them.

Perhaps the biggest advantage of confiding in a typewriter is that the words like death and dying don't make them sweat and squirm. Bless their little keyboards, they take it all in without ever saying they know just how you feel!

Another reason is that you can write any time you need to talk, if you know how to make a pencil work. That is particularly useful in the dark of night when our struggles with grief seem to intensify and sleep eludes us. Using that time to ventilate on paper is a constructive way to use hours that would be spent tossing and turning, and the emotional release it brings is both restful and satisfying.

That feeling of release can be especially important to parents who didn't have a chance to say goodbye. One way to fill that need is to write your child a letter detailing how much their love meant to you and expressing your regret because you didn't get to tell them that. You may want to tuck the letter away with some of your child's possessions, or burn it and scatter the ashes on their grave or where you feel the wind will carry it to them.

Writing is also a safe way to discharge anger that would otherwise be directed towards our mates. Unfortunately, unjust accusations of guilt and lack of caring are a common component of grief. Painful words that are hurled at a spouse can never be reclaimed or their memory totally erased, but if they are committed to paper instead they can be burned when our rage has subsided, or hidden and reevaluated at a later date. That is one way to work at maintaining our marriages that are so vulnerable during bereavement.

An additional advantage I discovered is that writing diminished the guilt I felt over my son's death. I suspect that is frequently the case because it is so easy to list our real or imagined shortcomings when we're grieving, and so hard to remember all the good and right and special things we did to try to preserve our children's lives.

But perhaps the most compelling reason of all to write about our sons and daughters is that it preserves their memory, and that is a very special love gift to our family and our friends. As I write this I cannot help but think about my new grandson and my hope that he will learn to love the uncle that he never knew because of the book I've written about him.

Granted, that task was simpler for me because I'm a writer than it would be for those of you who aren't. But the thing we have in common is that for all of us who chose to tackle such a job, it is a labor of love. The finished product doesn't have to be bound in leather and printed in gold to be precious. It is a priceless gift even if it is handwritten and tucked in a plastic folder.

I had been a professional writer for several years before our son, Eric, died, but after his death I found it hard to write about anything except him and the way I felt. And I couldn't do much of that at one time without soaking my paper with tears. So I began by-writing - little—pieces, for our chapter newsletter. In each of those I talked about one aspect of my grief. No more.

That is one of the secrets of good writing that will help you say all you need to say. Don't try to tell your child's whole story at once, don't try to describe your grief in the space of a page. Do it bit by bit.

Start by picking up that pencil or sitting down at the keyboard and writing about one happy incident in your child's life. Don't worry about form or punctuation or spelling. Just tell about that incident from start to finish. Then go back and fill in the details. Describe the day, the setting, the sounds, the smells, the prevailing emotions, and the people involved. Rewrite, cross out, erase, fill in, correct, move words around, and use both a dictionary and thesaurus until the story sounds just right to you.

One word of caution is in order here. When you are writing, it is all too easy to remember the good things your child did and forget about the ornery, naughty things that made him or her real. Those must be included if your word portrait is to be a three dimensional picture. And besides, no sibling could or should be expected to live up to the memory of a brother or sister who was perfect.

Do this exercise three or four times and each time you repeat it, write about a different special time including at least one story you could introduce by saying, "You won't believe what he did today."

Looking at family albums and reading old letters can help you re-create those scenes. So can playing remember when with family members and friends who were involved and can help you fill in details you might have forgotten.

Getting into the swing of writing by concentrating on the good times will make it easier to wrestle with the tough emotions of grief.

One way to begin that process is to interview yourself. Pretend that you are going to write a story about a mother or father like yourself who has lost a child under circumstances almost identical to those surrounding your child's death. Make a list of questions to ask that hypothetical person and be sure to include all the ones you wish someone would give you a chance to answer. Review this list several times over a period of two or three days, and keep it close at hand so that you can add any questions that occur to you as you mentally prepare for this interview.

Arrange the questions as nearly as possible into a chronological order and tackle them one at a time, answering each as completely as you can. As you work through the list you'll remember things you wish you'd said in answering previous questions. Consequently, using a separate sheet of paper for each will make it easier for you to add to them.

I think the advantages of writing about our grief far outweigh the disadvantages, but I wouldn't be honest if I didn't admit the negatives exist. Perhaps the greatest is the fact that this exercise is painful. It just plain hurts to mine our souls and we have to dig deep if we are to get it all out. Despite that, or because of it, writing is a healing exercise. And that is a powerful incentive for continuing what sometimes seems like torture.

You and you alone must be the judge of how much you can do, and how much you can take. It is up to you to decide when to push yourself to write a little bit more and when to take a break or quit altogether.

The work can also be frustrating. You may sit at the typewriter for hours without pecking out a single word just because you don't know where to start. And once you get going, you may write and rewrite a sentence or a paragraph or a page umpteen times and still not

feel that it accurately reflects your thoughts. If that happens and you're really serious about this, it's time to head for the library and check out a few books on writing to help you over this block and through the rough spots.

Finally, the work can be emotionally exhausting. When I was writing *E.B. and I*, a book about my son, some chapters took so much out of me that I had to put the manuscript away for several weeks before I could face it again. However, the day it was finally finished, a curtain fell on my grief. After I had said everything that I needed to say, I was physically and emotionally spent, but within a few days the curtain rose and a new me stepped forth.

That's what writing about grief does for you, I think, and that's why it can be so helpful to do it. When we call that awful, powerful force by its rightful name, recognize its ramifications in our life and describe them, we can also come to grips with them and then go on to something else.

~ Judy Osgood, TCF/Central Oregon Chapter

GRIEF: THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE

Grief is a NATURAL and NORMAL reaction to loss...loss of any kind. It is a physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological response. The death of a loved one is perhaps the most devastating loss one may experience. Yet, grief occurs following any change in our lives. Even positive changes can bring a momentary grief response.

Grief is a complex process, guided by our past experiences, our religious beliefs, our socio-economic situation, our physical health and the cause of loss. Loss, anger, fear, frustration, loneliness and guilt are all part of grief. It is important to understand that grief is NOT a sign of weakness nor a lack of faith. **GRIEF IS THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE.**

Grieving may cause physical and behavioral changes such as sleep irregularities, changes in appetite, gastrointestinal disturbances, "heart ache", restlessness, spontaneous crying, irritability, sighing or muscle tension.

Anger and guilt are common emotions. You may feel angry with God, your spouse, your children or with others, either involved or totally separate from the death. You may be angry with yourself. Guilt feelings often accompany or follow anger. You may want to withdraw and be left alone.

Depression, feelings of emptiness or hollowness may temporarily overcome you. You may experience headaches, tightness in the throat or chest, muscle aches, or a burning sensation in your stomach. Grief hurts! You may, for a while, become preoccupied with images of your loved one. You may "see" or sense your loved one's presence. You may begin to wonder if you are going crazy.

You can help yourself through grief.

1. Acknowledge the loss.
2. Accept the pain of grief. Try to live through it, not avoid it.
3. Share your thoughts and feelings. Find enough compassionate listeners. You can talk more than one person can listen!
4. Understand that each person has an individual timetable for grief. Each person grieves separately and differently. We each move through grief at our own pace.
5. Find your sense of humor. Try to hang onto it!
6. Get some physical exercise. If nothing else, jog your memory.
7. Learn to hug again.
8. Accept yourself. Begin to understand you are someone new. Acknowledge that change.
9. Begin to become the person you already are.....
10. Remember, though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!!!!

~ By Darcie Sims

Challenge and Change

As I look back over the past six years since our son died, I realize how much I have changed. When we talk about grieving, we often forget to mention that we grieve, too for the person we were before our child died. We might have been energetic and fun-loving, but now are serious and absorbed.

Our friends and family miss the old us too, and their comments show it. "Don't you think it's time to return to normal?" "You don't laugh as much as you used to." They are grieving for the person who will never be the same again.

Like the caterpillar that shrouds itself in a cocoon, we shroud ourselves in grief when a child dies. We wonder, our families wonder when will we come out of it? Will we make it through the long sleep? What hues will we show when we emerge? If you've ever watched a butterfly struggle from the safety of the cocoon, you'll know that the change is not quick or easy- but worth the effort!

We begin to mark our struggle from the cocoon of grief when we begin to like the new us. When our priorities become different and people become more important than things; when we grasp a hand that reaches and reach in turn to pull another from the cocoon, when we embrace the change and turn the change into a challenge, then we can say proudly: "I have survived against overwhelming odds." Even though my child's death is not worth the change in and of itself, the changes and the challenges give me hope that I can be happy.

I can feel fulfilled again. I can love again.

~ Sherry Mutcher, TCF/Appleton, WI

"There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable—some day."

~ Darcie D. Sims

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

CHILD		PARENTS
NICHOLAS LEE BAILEY	25	PAUL & KARA BAILEY
KIRSTIN ELIZABETH CANTLER-BOOKE	9	CHRIS & DAWN CANTLER (Grandparents)
KONNIE JEAN CHAFFEE	45	MARK & JEAN CHAFFEE
NANCY PRATT COASH.....	59	PATRICIA PRATT
BRIELLE DEUTSCHER	7	LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON (Grandparents)
GREGORY S GROOTERS.....	58	LARRY & HAZEL GROOTERS
MATTHEW R HOLLAND	22	CHAD & RHONDA HOLLAND
DANA DAWN KEBLAR	40	DEBORAH FACEY
TARA LEA KELLAR.....	39	CATHY & GREG GRONLAND
DAVID VICTOR LAMBRECHT	56	VICTOR & LORETTA LAMBRECHT
MICHAEL L LIVDAHL.....	24	ROBERT & TANYA LIVDAHL
CHRISTIANA N SANDSTROM.....	5	ANDREW & SHAYNA SANDSTROM
MATTHEW AARON THIBEDEAU.....	44	MARY & GALEN SCHROEDER
THOMAS LEE THOEMKE.....	42	JEAN & BILL THOEMKE
MATTHEW ALLEN WINTER	31	CAROL & DAN WINTER

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
NATHAN ANDERSON.....	17	DIANE & JAY FENSKE
SHERI PETERSON BJORGAN	18	DEWAYNE & ARLENE PETERSON
ANDREW HOWARD BRAUN	12	CRAIG & DEANNA BRAUN
SANDRA DIANE CASELLA	6	RICHARD & DIANE MACGREGOR
ZACHARY COLE.....	6	JERRY & DEB COLE
MATTHEW ISAAC CVIJANOVICH.....	13	MICHAEL & SHERYL CVIJANOVICH
TYLER JUSTIN EICHOLTZ.....	15	STEVE & LISA EICHOLTZ
MATTHEW R HOLLAND.....	3	CHAD & RHONDA HOLLAND
WENDY KUEHL.....	8	KEITH KUEHL
DAVID VICTOR LAMBRECHT	56	VICTOR & LORETTA LAMBRECHT
CHRISTOPHER LOE	5	MARGARET "MUGS" LOE
JESSICA FAYE MOEN.....	2	BRAD & JACKIE MOEN
DEETTA LOUISE NICHOLS	4	RAMONA A KADOUN
ERIC JOHN SCHAFER.....	3	BILL & LOIS SCHAFER
GARRETT JOSEPH SCHWAN	14	JENNA BJORNSTAD
BRUCE C THORNBY.....	9	JANET & HOWARD GALLAGHER
CARLA RAE TRUITT.....	1	LORETTA KEISACKER
KATHRYN (KATIE) ELIZABETH WHELTLE ...	3	SHARON & MARK WHELTLE
CHAD WOLD.....	2	TOM & BONNIE WOLD

Please check out our Chapter website's page for 'Our Beloved Children' (www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourchildren.html). If you would like your child's picture and a poem or story posted on this page, please submit them to us at tcfl313@hotmail.com or mail them to our PO Box (listed on the back of the newsletter). Photos and poems/stories sent to the PO Box will be electronically scanned and then returned to you so please remember to include a return address

*Though life is not as it was before,
And never will be again,
Our memories are much richer,
Than if love had never been."
-- Author Unknown*

SIBLING PAGE

Dealing with Grief: A Sibling Viewpoint

Two things happened to me on January 11, 1992. I lost my brother to death, and I lost my parents to grief. My dad, the one who seemed to always have the answer to my questions, the "rock" in the family, the one whose job was to fix everything, completely lost it. The fear, anger and shock in his eyes when told that my brother had died are engraved into my memory. He fell limp in the arms of my mother and me in the emergency room at UCLA medical center. This was the first time I had ever seen my parents lose control. At that moment our roles switched.

"I'll take them," I said to the nurse as she handed me a bag labeled "EDLER." It was the personal belongings of my brother. I quietly took them and placed them in my car. For the next three months, I seemed to make many of the decisions. It was not a courageous leader rising up to the occasion. I was the least common denominator. My parents, although they tried, could not help me. They were trying to deal with the tremendous grief themselves.

For this reason, I put off dealing with Mark's death for many months. I cried and felt sad, but never addressed the issue. My friends were concerned and asked how I was doing. But no one, unless you have been there, really wants to hear the true answers. Mark was the only other person in the world who was a combination of my mom and dad. My friends could not relate nor would I want them to. I would never wish this upon anyone. But this left me alone to deal with it and I chose to put it off.

After three months I met a gentleman at a family retreat with a group of which my dad was a part. Kevin had lost his brother to suicide about nine months earlier. He was farther along in his "coping" than I was. I could talk to him about Mark, mention Mark's name and share stories without making the whole room uncomfortable about the subject.

I saw someone who was dealing with it and it gave me hope. There is a certain vocabulary that you learn after going through this that no book, no story and no amount of explanation can do justice. I don't talk about certain things with my friends because I do not have the time or energy to explain (or try to explain) the many feelings I am having. Kevin understood. He had the vocabulary.

This was the first step into healing. I came to grips with the reality of my new life—different than the one before, but there was no going back. At this point, I went on autopilot. I remember many events of the three years following the death. My girlfriend and I broke up. My parents changed houses. I went through the many firsts, but just kept moving forward. I was not depressed, however. My lows were not very low. But my highs were not very high.

I became involved with The Compassionate Friends sibling group of our local chapter in the third year. I did it half out of responsibility to my parents and half out of the knowledge that if I was running the meeting, then I was in control of how much sharing I needed to put into it. Kind of a control thing. To my surprise the meetings have become so beneficial to my healing that I am surprised at myself. By sharing with others, I feel that I help them and in turn myself. Many feelings, thoughts or emotions that I may have thought were just mine, I have found are universal with others. After three years I began to come "out of the valley."

I can only say that by looking back. Hindsight has allowed me to see my steps of healing. I stepped into the role of being strong for our family because I felt that was best. Many others I have talked to mention a similar reaction. Your parents are barely able to deal

with their own grief. The last thing you want to do is bring more pain on them, so, you don't share with your parents.

Last July at The Compassionate Friends conference, many parents walked up to me and asked, "How do I know if my son (daughter) is dealing with this? I am concerned since they do not tell me anything."

"You don't know," I answered, "and neither do I, but unless you see something obviously dangerous, they are dealing with it in their own way at their own speed and you may not be a part of their grieving."

I now have a different outlook on life. It is precious. I feel that in my new life I am closer to my parents. Each one of us has to live our lives 1/3 better in Mark's memory. I value my friends and time more. I can handle stress much better. Just think of the alternative. I have become a better person by helping others. I like the new person I have become.

I would trade it all in a second!

~ Rick Edler, TCF/LA/South Bay, CA

BIG SISTER, LITTLE BROTHER...

We grew up together—
big sister, little brother.

I took care of you,
until you were old enough to
care for yourself.

Though you didn't say it,
I knew you loved me.

We played in the sunlight, you and I.

Remember the games of
'Mother-May-I' and 'Hide and Seek'?

Sure we had our fights,
all siblings do,

but through it all we never lost
our love for each other.

Now you're gone.

I'll never see you again,
except the memories
of those sunny days.

You will forever be sixteen—
far too young to die.

You had your whole life to live.

I'll always grieve, but I must go on.

Still, without you,

I play alone in the shadows.

Author unknown ~ TCF/MI

BROTHERS

Brothers grow together with wind in their hair, wild schemes in their heads, and with mud in their raggedy pants.

They look back into one another's eyes, with spirits burning from a common flame. They wrestle life with such similar hands.

No tree is too tall or hill too high to climb, for those whose bonds are flesh and set together through time.

Yet the song ever told us that dragons live forever but not the little boys.

Suddenly one of us is all alone, clinging to the memories of wind and mud and hills of stone.

We're still together in our own way, if not but in a burning little flame.

~ Ken, TCF/Salem, OR

The Long Walk of Moms and Dads After Overdose

It's a hard road, the one that we walk after our children die from a drug overdose. It's a walk that numbs your feet from the miles of isolation and grief. So many Orange County moms and dads are on this road now, too many of them. I'm only one of thousands. The White House is now trying to grapple with the problem (*In heroin fight, White House tries to break down walls between public health, police*, August 16, 2015), but they will likely fall short. A strategy that doesn't prioritize empowering people who use drugs to save their own lives and the lives of their peers by making the opiate overdose reversal medicine naloxone far more readily available to them is doomed to disappoint expectations. Ask a parent of a child who could have been saved by naloxone, they'll tell you.

Lost in the publicity around the White House's plan to reduce accidental drug overdose deaths are the faces and stories of our own sons and daughters, our friends and siblings, the people we knew who died from a drug overdose. They were smart, thoughtful, good people. I'm so tired of how we "other" them in our stories about drug addiction. My own son Jeff certainly didn't deserve to be "othered." He was athletic and charming; he was handsome and kind. His dad and I were very proud of him for turning into such a bright, lovely, young man. Heroin changed him in some ways, but in other ways he remained the loving, gentle person he always was.

He died in 2008 at the age of 27 from an accidental overdose. Our whole family had struggled to help him. It was a multi-year herculean effort that challenged everything we knew about being good parents. But my God we loved him, even through the worst of it, because we could still see our Jeff in there; in his darkness and struggle, we still saw our beautiful son.

After Jeff's death, my husband Gary and I made a life-altering, enormously positive decision. We decided to channel our energy towards connecting with others who had also experienced this kind of loss. We knew we would never recover from the loss of our son, but we also knew that there must be other families who, like us, had suffered the loss of their loved one. We started a GRASP chapter (*Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing*), a national support group. Two months later we took over the organization. When we began searching for others like us, we couldn't have known the magnitude of what we'd find.

Moms and dads all across Orange County and Southern California, looking for each other, coming together and building communities of strength where only sorrow had previously existed. We began to discuss how we could pass laws, the ones that could have saved our kids. Laws like the "911 Good Samaritan" law which encourages people to call for help at the scene of a suspected overdose without fear of arrest for drug violations. We met in living rooms, in restaurants, in backyards, and in support groups. We organized, we strategized, and we worked to help pass that law and then another one, one that makes the overdose reversal drug naloxone available in pharmacies without a prescription. And on one day every year, International Overdose Awareness Day, we all come together not just to mourn, but also to celebrate the incredible good that we've done and the fierce love for our kids that never fades and that drives us to keep going.

This year, we're walking, a walk of remembrance and unity, on the Huntington Beach Pier on August 30th at 6:00 p.m. Every year parents and loved ones all around the world find their way to a local Overdose Awareness Day event to meet others like them; to find comforting faces along their walk toward healing and strength.

For a parent, processing the grief, stigma, shame, and confusion of our child's overdose death is exhausting and arduous. It's a journey we never expected to take and when it came, we hadn't packed, we weren't prepared, and yet we were on our way. We were instantly catapulted down that road further away from life as we knew it and closer to a destination we hoped would provide at least some measure of respite when we arrived. As the loved ones left behind, we all walk that road. We walk it, but now we walk it together.

Denise Cullen, MSW, LCSW runs GRASP, an international organization for grief recovery after a substance passing (www.grasphelp.org), and is a founding member of Moms United to End the War on Drugs (www.momsunited.net). She and her husband founded Broken No More (www.broken-no-more.org), a nonprofit support and advocacy organization. Denise and Gary live in Orange County.

~ Denise Cullen

Certified Grief Recovery Specialist and CEO, Broken No More

New Year Goals

The holidays are over and I bet you're glad about that. You did make it through, and by now maybe some of the stress of that powerful time has left you. Next year you will find you learned from this year, no matter how many years it has been, and I hope it will be easier for you, too, in the years ahead.

If you made New Year's resolutions, I hope they included:

- To try and take it one day at a time;
- To forgive yourself for whatever it is you feel you did wrong;
- To figure out ways to resolve your anger so you can let go of it;
- To concentrate on and value what you have left, as much as what you have lost;
- To risk reinvestment in life;
- To let those you value know how important they are to you.

These are important steps forward. Try to be good to yourself in the new year.

~ TCF/Long Beach Chapter, CA '94 newsletter

We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name in the newsletter. Permission may be withdrawn at any time by written request. This information is used to maintain our Chapter Database. It is confidential and is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter.

Your Name: _____

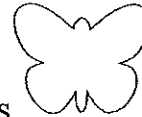
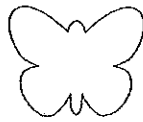
Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

Date: _____

(Signature)

Please return to: The Compassionate Friends of F-M Area, P.O. Box 10686, Fargo ND 58106
(Please note that if you have already submitted a permission slip, you do not need to submit another one)



Butterfly Decals

"Butterflies are the heaven sent kisses of an angel." ~ Author Unknown

Butterfly decals are available to help personalize our trailer. The trailer is used to carry items to and from our Walk to Remember and other chapter events. It has also given us some visibility in the Fargo/Moorhead community. Each butterfly decal holds the first and last name of one of our beloved children.

Butterflies are available in five colors (yellow, pink, red, blue and green). The cost is as follows: \$25 for 1 butterfly, \$50 for 2 butterflies, \$65 for 3 butterflies and \$80 for 4 butterflies. If you wish to purchase more than 4 butterflies please contact John Milligan at 701-491-0364.

Butterfly orders should include the child's first and last name (middle name is optional) and the color of the butterfly. Checks should be made payable to TCF of Fargo-Moorhead and the order mailed to PO Box 10686, Fargo, ND 58106.

You can see pictures of the trailer with butterflies on our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourtrailer.html.

DON'T BE STRONG

As children most of us were told over and over, "Big girls and boys don't cry, only Babies and Sissies cry." This fallacy is so deeply rooted in some of us that when our child dies we have to be strong. We push back, deny, and try to hide our grief.

This type of being strong is what I call the Stiff Upper Lip Syndrome. Suppressed grief and unshed tears are like a pressure cooker with a faulty valve; it can explode at any time. Pressure builds, and builds, and finally is released one way or another. We can either let our tears flow, admit our grief, and release our pressure in a natural way; or, we can plug that valve and wait for the time bomb.

You say, "Wait a minute, what will my family and other people think-if they see me cry?" Your family needs to know that you are human not made of steel. They need to know that you love, that you hurt, and that you also feel the loss. If you remain the strong one, you may be faced with anger, bitterness, broken communication, or indifference from your family members. Later you may be accused of being cold and uncaring. For someone trying to be strong for the rest of the family, someone hiding the hurt, this could be the final blow that causes the explosion.

Friends! Most of your friends and neighbors haven't known the grief of having a child die. They don't understand the pain of "no longer setting that place at the table; the stack of laundry no longer done; the silence; the graduation unattended; or, the grandchild that will never be." They don't understand the role of parenting that has stopped! They only see the physical absence of your child. No you shouldn't worry about being strong for them, because they can't even begin to contemplate the agony your child's death brings. You couldn't before you experienced. They can't because they haven't experienced. This leaves only a few people that are just insensitive beings too involved with themselves and their world to care about anything or anyone. Since they can't care, why then, should we be concerned with what they think.

Some people think that our tears are tears of self-pity, to an extent they are. We mourn the loss of a very beautiful part of ourselves. Our life will never again be completely the same. I have cried many times these last few years, and I'm sure there will be more tears. I don't cry so much for the child that is no longer here; as I do for myself, what could have been, and what used to be. I don't mean for you to drown yourself in pity and let grief completely disrupt your life. What I am saying is don't be afraid to show your emotions. When there is a need for tears, let them come.

As I see it you have a choice, you can either be human and show your emotions and help yourself; or, you can try to be superhuman, try to control your grief and one day run the risk of having something inside of you break or become badly bent. Don't say it won't happen because someday it will. There is no other way to deal with grief; you can't go around it, over it, or under it; you have to go through it. By suppressing your feelings you run the risk of distorting your personality for life; and harming or destroying your family and yourself emotionally.

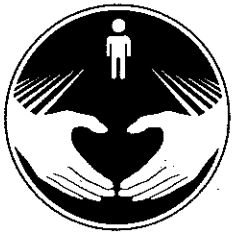
The choice is yours. Only you can make the decision. Remember; It takes more strength and courage to admit and share feelings and pain with others, than it does to close yourself behind a wall and hide from your grief.

~ Sue Heisten, TCF/Columbia, MO

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
 OF THE F-M AREA
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 FARGO ND 58106

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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	Paul & Kara Bailey 701-491-0364	Newsletter Editor	Nancy Teeuwen..... 701-730-0805
Co-Chapter Leader	Lori Wiger 701-446-7504	Newsletter Database	Mary Bjerke
Secretary	Sheryl Cvijanovich 701-540-3287	Website Administrator	Sheryl Cvijanovich..... 701-540-3287
Treasurer	Chuck Klinkhammer..... 701-298-2929	Initial Contact	Mary Bjerke
Mailing Committee	Contact Us to Join	Librarian	Contact Us to Volunteer

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:
 Sheryl Cvijanovich (son, 23 - illness)..... 701-540-3287
 Lois Gangnes (son, 24 - accident)..... 701-282-4083
 Nancy Teeuwen (daughter, 15 hours - illness)..... 701-730-0805
 Mark & Hella Helfter (miscarriage, son, 35-accident & son, 45-cancer) ... 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.