



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

Volume 28 Number 9

Fargo ND/Moorhead MN

September 2011

PLEASE NOTE OUR MAILING ADDRESS ON THE BACK PAGE
REGULAR MEETING: 7:30 P.M. SECOND THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH

This month's meeting is on September 8th

Next month's meeting is on October 13th

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH - 127 2ND AVE E - WEST FARGO, ND

Please enter on the West side (Elevator entrance). Our meeting is in the Fellowship Hall - lower level, west side.

If you have topic ideas for future meetings, please let us know.

The Compassionate Friends National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

Phone number: 877-969-0010 - E-mail: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org - Web Site: www.compassionatefriends.org

Website for the Fargo/Moorhead Chapter - www.tcffargomoorhead.org

If you have any pictures, stories, or poems of your child/grandchild/sibling that you would like to share on our website, please submit them to Sheryl Cvijanovich at sherylev13@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.

Help us save money and paper.....

To receive the newsletters via email in a pdf format, please send an email to the newsletter editor, Nancy Teeuwen at FMTCFNWLTR@LIVE.COM. Please be sure to include your name in the email.

*****SEPTEMBER LOVE GIFTS*****

Bill Olafson & Shandra Malheim in memory of their son, Zandyn Larry Malheim Olafson 7/2010 - 7/2010

Bill Olafson & Shandra Malheim in memory of their friend, Jennifer Rathert Hughes 4/1979 - 7/2010

Paul, Kara, Ashley, Kyle, Chase & Arianna Bailey in memory of their son/brother/uncle, Nicholas Lee Bailey 1/1992 - 9/2009

Ellen Pazdro in memory of her grandson, Matthew Cvijanovich 11/1981 - 1/2005

Donna Holley in memory of her nephew, Matthew Cvijanovich 11/1981 - 1/2005

Karen Boyes in memory of her daughter, Kelly Boyes 2/1981 - 9/2008

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

For information on other chapters: TCF National Office.....877-969-0010

A Solitary Journey

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

~ Helen Steiner Rice, TCF/Pasco County, FL

LOGIC VERSUS EMOTION

I was thinking recently about how our emotions play such a strong part in how we feel. After my daughter's death (08-13-2002), a few people pointed out to me that I shouldn't feel guilty about something I couldn't change. Their advice was logical. But humans aren't like Mr. Spock on Star Trek. You remember that Mr. Spock would frequently chide Captain Kirk for doing something illogical, something based on his feelings.

No, we humans are filled with emotional feelings. It's one of the things that separates us from animals. Even though someone might tell me not to linger in sadness or to feel guilty about my daughter's death because it wouldn't change what happened, I still had both feelings. Even though my logic might tell me to shrug off these unpleasant feelings, I couldn't, at least not for some time. And that's the point. Clear thinking, logical human beings are still subject to powerful emotions, even though those emotions will seem illogical to some people.

Do understand that strong feelings of sadness, loss, and guilt are normal after the death of a child, and at some point logic will allow those feelings to lessen. As our logical minds begin to prevail, we may seek positive ways to remember our child (scholarship funds, charitable donations, etc.) and we may seek positive ways of changing ourselves into better people. At this point our logical minds will push us in a constructive direction and we will feel better. So don't worry excessively about those strong, emotional feelings after the death of your child they're perfectly "logical".

By David Haddock

September Memories

Many of our members have lost children of school age. Even for those whose children died before they could go to school or after they were finished with school. September often brings painful memories. Seeing children with brand new clothes and the latest craze in lunch boxes and book bags, lined up for the bus, brings back memories for all of us. For some, we see children our child's age, progress to the next grade when he or she will never have that experience. For some, we remember putting our child on that bus, the last minute rush to replace outgrown clothes and buy school supplies.

For some, the pain is from the dreams we had of seeing our child go to school, dreams that our child never lived long enough to bring to fruition. Some of us have younger children who are now "passing" the age of our dead child, who should have been the older brother or sister.

In my case I have one daughter left, and I remember shopping for back-to-school clothes for two. I can't help but wonder what size Colleen would be wearing now. She'd be 12. Colleen rode in one of those little buses because she was handicapped. My mom used to hold her at the front door of her house, swaying back and forth, saying, "Tick tock, here comes the bus." I often think of that when I see one of those little buses. Even after five years, I still look for #77, her bus.

I guess I'm trying to say two things. First, we're all in this together: we experience different variations of the same pain. Second, we all have to expect that moments of nostalgia and longing will be with us. ALWAYS. The pain does dull somewhat with the years, but tears will always spring to our eyes at certain moments. The special days will always tug at our heartstrings in a way that non-bereaved parents will never fully understand. At least we have each other, people who know what we're feeling and do understand our pain. I'm glad we can be here for each other.

~ Kathy Hahn, TCF/Lower Bucks

Thoughts About Progress

One thing that is frequently discussed at our meetings is the despair of thinking you are on the road to "recovery," when all of a sudden you seem to be back at square one. But are you really?

Let's keep in mind most of us have had no previous experienced "recovering" from the loss of a child. Therefore, we have no point of reference—it's all new to us. Actually the "roller coaster" of emotions is perfectly normal. In the very beginning most of us seem to vacillate between dead numbness and excruciating pain. Constant crying, to not a tear left—just dried up and limp. We actually are living minute-to-minute.

After a couple of months we might actually have a few hours that we have not cried or felt that deep overwhelming despair. Then, WHAM—back to where we started. We tend to panic and think something is wrong with us. Let's be realistic! There is something wrong—terribly wrong: we have each lost a child.

Let's be fair to ourselves. We started to play a role to the outside world. Like the old song says, "laughing on the outside—crying on the inside." We want to be acceptable to society. "You are doing so well," we hear. If only they knew! We may feel we have to fool others, but let us really be honest about our feelings. To deny our feelings, particularly to ourselves, is to block the road to recovery. Remember that recovery in this case does not mean, "getting over it," it means to gain control of our lives again.

So, let's not worry about what other people think, say, or expect. Our friends (well meaning as they are), sometimes members of our family, even someone who has lost a child, should not sit in judgment. Each person grieves differently, due to a person's general make-up and the relationship with the dead child. Unless someone has totally withdrawn from everything and everybody over a lengthy period of time, the chances are all is in the realm of normalcy. Only after we have walked down the long road of grief and can look back, remembering those early days and weeks, can we see we really are not on square one again. We have just slipped backwards for a time. That is all. Allow yourself that, and then strive forward again. It takes time, a lot of time! We tend to expect too much from others, others expect too much from us, and therefore, we tend to expect too much from ourselves.

~ Mary Ehmann, TCF/Valley Forge, PA

TO SEE THE GOLD

Autumn's here, when trees turn to gold,
It's the prettiest time of the year I'm told.
Then, I think back, Denny, to that September day,
When all of a sudden you were taken away.
That's when the color left the trees, for me,
And grief set in and I could not see.
But, now that years have passed, my Son,
The memories of you are happier one's
Even, the color of the trees,
Are beginning to unfold.
Now, I know someday soon,
I may see the gold.

~ Gwen Kearns, TCF/Valley Forge, PA

No matter how long we are on this earth, the more we have to realize that life finds us living every day with the unanswered. Faith helps us to live with the unresolved. Trust helps us to accept...and go on with the work of living.

~ Mark Connolly

SIBLING PAGE

Going Back to School

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 while, changes with each groups occur. Those who did not know what to say start to speak or begin to talk. Those who kept away stop ignoring you. The people who gave you a lot of support slowly return to their own affairs. After a while, everything goes back to normal, and it is over to everyone except you. This is difficult to accept and makes you feel all the more alone.

After a long 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 for my mother and me.

~ Jordan Ely, TCF Albany/Delmar NY

Ask Dr. Paulson

Mary A. Paulson, PhD, is a bereaved sibling as well as a child and adolescent psychologist at Harding Hospital in Worthington,

Ohio. Her question and answer column, aimed at bereaved siblings and the family that loves them, appears in the quarterly TCF national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*.

Q. My 23-year-old son has been having troubling nightmares about his sister who died of suicide three years ago. He relives her death, or dreams she is angry and trying to hurt or terrify him. They had the usual sibling arguments but nothing unusual. He has trouble sleeping now which is greatly affecting his work. What can he do to stop the nightmares?

A. Our bodies are amazing. Sleep not only rejuvenates us for the next day, but it is during our sleep that we work out some of our toughest issues, relive memories or live out pleasant fantasies. Dreams are the mind's way of wrestling with difficulties, anxiety, and trauma. Dreams help us sort through the day's stressors. How many of you have had a dream in which you solved a math problem for school? The sudden shock of a sibling's death may provoke many types of dreams. You may dream of your own death or imagine your sibling returning to life and dying again. Years after a loss, you may dream of doing fun activities with your brother or sister. It's the mind's way of saying the relationship is still important and intact even though your sibling has died. Sometimes more painful dreams can emerge if there is a lot of anger surrounding the death or if violence was involved. In these cases, it's best if you are prepared ahead of time for their occurrence and plan to take an active role in your dreams. You can actually change your dreams into something more positive as they are happening. It is very important for you to not allow the dreams to overtake you to the point you are not sleeping enough. Exhaustion will interfere with your daily responsibilities and prevent you from doing the hard work of grieving. If this is happening, then it is best to consult a professional. With time (and perhaps some effort) your dreams should become more pleasant—good memories from the past or pleasant dreams about your brother or sister still actively sharing your life.

Mary A. Paulson, PhD, TCF E-Newsletter, Feb 2011

SHARED THOUGHTS ON SIBLING GRIEF

We often call bereaved siblings the forgotten mourners. Frequently friends and family treat them as secondary grievers, and the approach is "How are your parents doing?", therefore, giving siblings the impression their grief is not as significant as parental grief. Often we hear the ridiculous suggestion that siblings should be strong, and take care of their parents. When siblings cannot reduce the parental grief they feel they have failed, which adds to their low self-esteem.

Our longest lifetime relationship is usually with our siblings. We count on them to always be there for us. We share with them our innermost secrets, as both children and adults. We even expect them to be there for our unborn children, as well as support when our parents are aged. They are our confidant, our best friend, our idol, our advisor, and sometimes they are younger, and we are the same things to them.

When our sibling dies we no longer feel so invincible, we worry who will be next, and quickly learn how final death is. Our family is disrupted, our sibling position changes, we may now be the oldest, the youngest, or the only child. We cannot avoid the pain of grief, our parents are different now, and they are so consumed with their own grief, that they cannot be the parents that we want them to be for us, this lessens our security. Everyone's personality has changed. We not only have to adjust to the new person we have become, but also to the difference that the whole family has undergone. Sometimes it is very difficult to be in the home, when it is so filled with pain, and so much of the laughter has turned to tears. Frequently friends are easier to talk to, than our family. The fear of losing another family member makes the parents so over protective that they take away the carefree feeling of life, which adds to the stress of sibling grief.

When our loss is at an early age, it is not uncommon to later grieve as an adult for that person. I was 12 years old, when I lost my first sibling. My brother was 30. I later went through an entirely different grief cycle as an adult. At the age of 12, I felt my brother was much older. As I got nearer and surpassed the age of 30, I then realized how young he was. This stirred up new emotions.

The hurting and healing causes us to redefine our priorities in life. Grief frequently causes us to have more compassion for hurting people. We learn to appreciate people more than things, and frequently a life long commitment is made to make the world a better place. It is our choice to decide what we will do with the experience we have so painfully endured.
God Bless,

~ Marie Hofmocker, TCF/Valley Forge, PA

A PART OF ME

You were not just my brother, but
You were my friend as well.
You were supposed to be here always
Or till the world came to an end.
I know that we argued and
Seemed to disagree,
But I could always count on you
To be there for me.
You may be gone from this world
I see,
But you will always be a part of me.

~ Donna Montville, TCF/Gardner, MA

August 13, 2011 was a perfect day for a walk and about 75 - 80 people joined us for our 5th Annual Walk to Remember. As is tradition, we walked from Oak Grove Park to Island Park and back. As we entered Island Park, each walker was handed a small vial of 'bubble juice' with a bubble wand inside. Several participants laid down flowers in memory of their children, grandchildren and siblings at the base of the Angel of Hope statue.

After we had all gathered at the Angel of Hope statue a few words were spoken and everyone blew bubbles simultaneously. What a sight it was to see thousands of bubbles rising to the heavens....kisses enclosed in each bubble. Before heading back to Oak Grove, family members who had brought balloons released them to the skies. Back at Oak Grove we joined one another for a delicious potluck that included chicken, hot dishes, fresh buns, salads, chips, and desserts. The only thing better than the food, was the fellowship.

Thank you so much to John and Kylene Milligan who organized the walk. Without them, none of this would be possible. Thank you also to Kara Bailey and her 'peeps' who not only provided the bubbles which carried our kisses, but also provided a memorial poster that was signed by most (if not all) participants. Finally, thank you to all who participated.

School Starts

Strange things happen to you when your child dies. You'll fail if you try to make sense of most of it.

Both my children had finished high school when my son died, yet I found the beginning of school—especially that first year—to be difficult. The bus stops in front of my home for the neighborhood children. Suddenly, as they all gathered to wait for the bus, I found myself reliving those simpler, happier days of old; longing for them actually. It was a painful time.

Now, if I, whose children are grown and gone, had a problem with school starting, those of you who do have school age children must know that your pain is normal. It's another reminder that life goes on—with or without our children—and acknowledging that it hurts! I came to the conclusion that it was all right to pine for happier times and it was nothing to get upset about. As with many remnants of grief, I recognize it, allow it and then get on with my life.

Maybe you're like me, you'll always be a little nostalgic about school starting. That would probably have been true even if my son had lived. Maybe you, too?

~ Mary Cleckley, TCF/ Stone Mountain, Georgia

Older grief is gentler.

It's about sudden tears swept in by a strand of music.

It's about haunting echoes of first pain, at anniversaries.

It's about feeling his presence for an instant one day while I'm dusting his room.

It's about early pictures that invite me to fold him in my arms again.

It's about memories blown in on wisps of wood smoke and sea scent.

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

What Is Left?

When a child dies, you ask, among other questions, what is left? A beautiful, sensitive, intelligent son has chosen to end his life. What can be left after such a crushing blow?

Others will point out that you have a spouse, other children or grandchildren, perhaps relatives and friends. They are all left. Perhaps you have a career that is left. And yet how meaningless all of those are to a bereaved parent, to one who is suffering the most devastating loss of all. So you continue to search for what it is that is left.

You read books on bereavement scarcely remembering what you have read; you attend meetings, talk with others who have suffered a loss like yours. If you are fortunate you have one or two good friends who, while they cannot fully understand, are there to love and listen. Perhaps there is a therapist who guides you in your search for an answer. But for a long while everything you read or hear has little meaning and certainly cannot provide the answer to your question. Or can it? Does all that you have read and heard and experienced finally come together and answer the questions of what is left?

For me it does. The answer was 13 months in coming, but how clear it seems now. I am left. That's it! I am left and I have been left with the love of Scott. It is a new love, it is different, more intense, it is undemanding, it need not be reciprocated, there are no strings attached. I love this love of Scott's. It warms me and comforts me. It is a wonderful love, but I cannot keep it. It would be wrong to do so; this love is too precious to keep to myself.

I am left with love to spare and love to share. It will never run out. He will always be with me to replenish it. I have found my answer! I am left to share Scott's love with you.

~ Betty Stevens, TCF/Baltimore, MD

Sometimes We Have To Let Go

How many times did I tell you that you could not die before I did? Because I could not live if you died. SO MANY TIMES. Did I hold you here too long to suffer more than you should? I could not bear the thought of life without you. Children should not die before their parents.

How many times has my heart cried "I lied, I lied. I didn't mean it," since that last afternoon when I knew it was time to let you go. You told me that you loved me more than anything but you wanted to go home to Heaven. I told you it was Okay, that I wanted you to go and not have to suffer anymore.

I told you that when a child is born the cord that binds a mother and child together is cut, but there is an invisible cord that binds us that can never be broken. That wherever you go I will always be with you, and no matter where I am you would always be with me. Because I loved you more than life itself I had to let you go. But my heart still cries, "I didn't mean it, it was a lie, I didn't want you to die."

But I will always carry you in my heart, and part of my heart and soul went with you that day. I know that you are waiting for me in Heaven. ONLY THEN WILL I BE WHOLE AGAIN.

~ Hattie Pridgen, TCF/Wilmington, NC (Cape Fear Chapter)

~reprinted from TCF Atlanta Newsletter July/August 2002

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
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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.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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 _____