

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



March, 2019
Volume 31, Number 3

The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.

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Meeting Information

When: First Thursday of
each month. 7-9 p.m.
Where: St. Timothy's Church
16700 Newburgh Road, Livonia,
East side of Newburgh, 1/4 mile S. of
Six Mile

Coming Events:

NEXT MEETING- March 7 - First time tables, sibling table, Infant loss table, topic table: Do you do anything or do you plan to do anything special on the anniversary of your child's death?

March 19 - 6:30 pm TCF Dinner-at Brann's Steakhouse (39715 6 Mile, Northville, MI) sign up at meeting or call Kathy 734-306-3930 or katjrambo@gmail.com

March 23 - Bowling Fundraiser - page 7

March 30 - 10 a.m. - Craft Day - Plymouth Library see page 7

March Winds

He raced against the wind as if his life depended upon it. Eyes bright, cheeks glowing from the still almost chilly March wind, Throwing me a smile now and then to make sure I was watching. I was, and when I caught a smile I applauded. His effort so great for one small boy I don't remember now if his kite ever flew - sometimes, In spite of heroic efforts, they don't. But I remember the day The nip in the air His cheeks glowing His fresh, clean smell My afternoon of playing catch With his smiles... I remember every year when March winds begin to blow. Even if he had not died long after the age of flying kites, I still would remember. Maybe if he were still here, Teaching his own small boy The delicate art of flying kites And catching his own smiles, It wouldn't hurt so much When March winds begin to blow. *Songs from the Edge* by Faye Harden,



March

It is March. What a strange time of the year. One day is spring, and the next day it is winter again. And yesterday, when the wind picked up some forgotten leaves and whirled them around my feet, I felt as if fall were in the air. I've never liked March very much. Maybe it reminds me too much of my own life; my own grief process; one day up and the next day down, up and down in one day! I felt as if I could never enjoy the good days, because I knew a bad day would follow. Just like March, never trust the sunshine and warmth, because tomorrow a bitter wind will blow and clouds will darken the sky. Sometimes I would even rush through a happy moment just to get it over with, just to hurry on to the grief. Or even borrow tomorrow's grief to avoid today's joy. Why trust the happiness when I know that I will be crying soon? Close the windows and block out today's sun, because it will probably rain tomorrow. How long did I live like that? Years. For years I hid from March's sunshine. I can't tell you when I realized that I could live one moment at a time and accept what was in that moment. Cheerful, that is what it is in that moment. BJ,
TCF Bloomington, IN

Our Children Loved and Remembered Always

This month, we remember the children who are so deeply and sadly missed. Please take a few moments to place them and their parents in your thoughts.

Let Us Remember Them Always

Child Parent, Grandparent, Sibling Date Age

Confidential Information



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

The Gift

I have a gift

I did not want this gift, it meant suffering and pain, The pain because of love.

A love which had manifested itself in a child.

The child brought it's love to me and asked for my love.

Sometimes I did not understand this.

Sometimes I was too busy to listen quietly to this love.

But the love persisted; it was always there.

And one day the child died.

The love remained.

This time the love came in other forms.

This time there were memories.

There was sadness and anguish.

And unbelievable pain.

One day a stranger came and stood with me.

The stranger said, "I understand,"

And did.

You see, the stranger had also been this way.

We talked and cried together.

The stranger became my friend as no other had.

My friend said, "I am always here" and was.

One day I lifted my head

I noticed another grieving, gray and drawn with pain

I approached and spoke.

I touched and comforted.

I said, "I will walk with you,"

And I did.

I also had the gift.

Joe Lawley

TCF Co-Founder Coventry, England

Prayer for Spring

Like Springtime, let me unfold and grow fresh and new

from this cocoon of grief

that has been spun around me. Help

me face the harsh reality

of sunshine and renewed life

as my bones still creak from

the winter of my grief.

Life has dared to go on around me as I recover from the insult

of life's continuance.

I readjust my focus to

include recovery and growth

as a possibility in my future.

Give me strength to break out of the cocoon of my grief.

But may I never forget it as the place where I grew my wings,

Becoming a new person because of my loss.

Janice Heil

TCF Coquitlam, BC

Feeling Bad About Feeling Good

"In our greatest adversity we find our greatest strength. In that strength we find our greatest healing."

One of our healing goals is to bring happiness back to our lives. We yearn to smile and laugh again. Early in our journey we ask, "Will I ever feel joy again?" or, "Can I ever have a happy moment after the death of my child?"

Those emotions seem like elusive, distant dreams that may never happen again. As our world crumbles, it feels like much of our life has ended, and the possibility of regaining even a brief glimpse of happiness seems remote. Yet somehow we manage to get out of bed, go to work, or take care of other children if we're fortunate enough to have them, and the world keeps turning even though our hearts bleed. As time passes and we do our grieving/healing work, we begin to have happy moments. It's what we want, but when we laugh again, and it's true heartfelt laughter without our masks, we may think, "What right do I have to be happy when my child is dead?" or, "If I feel better, am I abandoning my child?" Those questions can bring feelings of guilt and rob us of any healing we've felt. Having that guilt is common and normal, but sustaining that guilt can keep us from continuing to heal. So what can we do to let go of that guilt and continue on our healing path?

I believe the reason we smile again is because we're fulfilling another of our grieving goals, which is the return of the life of our child. We smile, we laugh, and we feel better because we

think of our child as living, living through our memories. When my son died, I believed I would never have him in my life again. His life, in any form, was gone forever. I now know that's not true. It took many years and a lot of grief work, but when I was able to let go of his physical death, his life force and spirit re-entered me, along with my smile. Sadly, the bodies of our children will never come back. That's a tough reality to acknowledge. Our greatest suffering comes from not being able to hold them, see them, or interact directly with them. So much of who they are was wrapped up in their bodies. When their bodies left, so did they... or so we thought.

Our kids are much more than just their bodies. Even though we miss them terribly, when we close our eyes and think of our child, good memories can come to us. That, too, is the child we know and love. Early on, those memories may have made us cry because we knew they'd be making no more. Over time, as we challenge our grief and do our work, those memories can make us smile, even though we will at times have a tear in our eye. Those memories of a living child we'll always have, and need for our healing. So go ahead and smile without guilt. Go ahead and laugh and feel good about laughing. It's your child who's bringing that joy to your life. They live, not like they did before, but in the best possible way we let them live. They live in our hearts, our lives, and in our joy. Feel good about feeling good.

Rob Anderson,

TCF Boston '05 Workshop

That Anniversary

All our lives we've known about anniversaries.

Our parents celebrated their Anniversary.

The school we attended marked its Anniversary.

The company honored your Anniversary when you started your career.

The Lions Club held a gala to remember its Anniversary.

But there is one Anniversary that we're never eager to recall.

It's **THAT ANNIVERSARY**

When a child dies we retain vivid memories of that fateful day. Time cannot rob us of the memory and the grief of that awful and confusingly sad day. Unlike your wedding date or your first day on the job or when you graduated from school, which may have become hazy over time, the circumstances and ticks of the clock of *That Anniversary* remain etched in our minds.

Some of us do special "things" on *That Anniversary*. We pray. We cry. We grieve. Some make an effort to try to distract the intense sadness that *That Anniversary* brings. Some walk on the beach or take a ride in the country. We look at old photos or other memorabilia to remember and to ward off anything that might cloud the memory of our daughters and sons.

Friends and relatives also remember *That Anniversary* and may send a card or ask you out to lunch or choose not to visit you showing respect for your need for solitude. Regardless of how you deal with *That Anniversary*, you cannot avoid it. Sometimes even the days leading up to *That Anniversary* bring apprehension and uneasiness. That's OK. *That Anniversary* will always come (and go) as will the days before and after, too.

The Compassionate Friends understands that on *That Anniversary*, as when it occurred, your heart is heavy yet empty at the same time. It can be a confusing time. There may be guilt or remorse or simply confusion. But it is up to you to sort it out and move ahead because after *That Anniversary* there will be another and another. Surely your heart may not feel as heavy or as empty as time passes, but *That Anniversary* will always be there. How you face it, how you mark it, how you remember it and how you caress it is the key to moving forward and conditioning yourself for the next time *That Anniversary* occurs.

Michael Tyler

TCF Lighthouse Chapter Lewes, DE

Moving Through The Grief Of Losing a Child

I was a woman like many others; focused on my five children and family, living a quiet life on Bainbridge Island in the state of Washington. And then, in August 2004, our lives changed. That night, eight teenagers piled into an SUV and took a midnight joyride. My 16-year-old twin daughter, Sarah, was killed.

The thought of losing a child--if "losing" is the correct verb--had never crossed my mind. Tragedies, as such, were something that happened to someone else, something you read about in the paper or heard from a neighbor. Nothing could have prepared me for the deep pain...but nothing could have prepared me for the peace that now permeates my mind and heart. The shock sets in; everything moves in slow motion as if time comes to a halt, and time has halted.

An acquaintance delivers a candle on day six with a card inscribed, "Place this candle in your kitchen. Each night while you prepare the family meal know that the shimmering of the candlelight reflects the child who now lives within you." A lovely thought. Eight years later, I still light a candle on my kitchen windowsill. My child lives within me now.

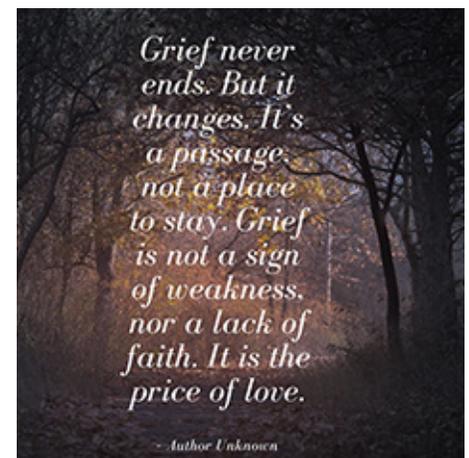
The days turn to weeks. Friends surround you, keeping you busy, your mind occupied. Absorb their kindness. Accept their help. Eliminate expectations. Learn to be gentle with yourself. Give yourself space. Make room for quiet. Always remember that grief is personal, as is death. There is no right way or wrong way to grieve. Seek out therapy. You may be ready. Share your story and connect with others. Surround yourself with those who will listen, not necessarily those who will offer advice. For it is when others listen that we can sort out our thoughts and settle our mind. Your inner strength seeks you out, sometimes sooner in the process, sometimes later. That strength moves you forward--tiny steps in this process. Let the

memories fill your mind. Let yourself laugh again. Smile. Sing out when a favorite song you shared plays on the radio. Let your heart awaken to the joys memories bring. Pay attention to the synchronicity and patterns in your life. Pay attention to your intuition. And pray. It doesn't matter what you believe. Just ask, notice, and respond. Faith, hope and love all intersect. Maybe things will begin to make a little sense, just maybe. Look to your children who live. Note their resilience and strength during this epic period of trauma. Let their sense of life and hope inspire you.

When the pain returns, and it will, allow yourself to go to the depths of that pain. Cry. I promise, you will be okay when you resurface. And as you move towards years four and five, you will learn that yes, life has been a living nightmare, and it is okay to admit that. Realize that as the years pass, you will learn to weave your loss into your daily life. Accepting the loss of a loved one is to release, but not erase. To hold. But not to hold the pain. As year five turns towards eight, my hope is that you can slowly wrap yourself around the idea that you can celebrate life and celebrate death. Death and gratitude can go hand in hand. Just possibly, it is those who have passed before us who are our greatest teachers. Remember always that you never walk alone because the life of someone who passes lives on in the love you shared.

Caroline Flohr

www.HeavensChild.com



SIBS

What I have Learned

I learned to condense the story of what happened to my brother down to about 30 seconds.

I learned how to call work and ask for a few weeks off.

I learned how to go about arranging a funeral. My parents included my sisters and me in every decision.

I learned not to wear heels when you will be at the funeral home for hours on end.

This was a lot to learn at 18, but the most important thing I learned was months after Tommy's death. I learned that everyone grieves differently. My grief was not the same as my parents or sisters. It was my own.

Everyone here has learned something as a result of their loss. We attend this candlelight every year not only

to listen to words of hope, and light memorial candles, but to share what we have learned from our losses.

Learning that will help us shine light into the darkness so we may begin to heal.

Aspects of Sibling Grief Comparisons and Expectations

You are special and you are wonderful (come on...you know you are). You have no one to live up to besides yourself, your goals, and your own potential.

Okay, I just wanted to say that as a reminder to anyone who feels like they're living in the shadow of a deceased sibling. Feeling compared or overshadowed is common after the death of a sibling, and (although you may be hesitant to admit it) this experience can result in feelings of resentment or anger towards family and/or the person who died.

If this sounds like you, the first thing we recommend you do is to ask yourself, "Who is making me feel this way?" If the answer is your parents or other family members, then the next thing you might do is try to communicate with your family about how you feel. This might seem like a scary task because you don't want to rock the boat or make anyone feel worse in their grief. If this is the case, or if you think your concerns will fall on deaf ears, you might want to consider talking to a counselor about how to approach the situation or enlist the help of a family counselor to work with the family as a whole.

Now, you may find that you yourself are responsible for comparisons and expectations. This might happen for a number of reasons including insecurity, guilt, or the feeling that you need to pick up where your sibling left off. If you think you might be the source of comparison, then some serious self-reflection is probably needed.

Acknowledging the truth of the situation is a good start, you're in even better shape if you can identify why this is happening. As you search for answers, you might find it's helpful to spend time in reflection, to journal, or to talk to a trusted confidant, support group member(s), or counselor.

Missed Opportunities

When a person dies, you are not only robbed of their physical presence in the here and now, but you (and they) also lose the chance to spend your tomorrows together. Your life after their death becomes filled with thoughts of "if only", "we would have", and "I wish." This is obviously the case for missed opportunities in the future; the happy moments you wish you could have spent together like weddings, graduations, births, adventures, and family get-togethers. However, missed opportunities are also felt when people wish they could make up for all they didn't do while the person was alive. For example, taking the chance to say "I love you", "I'm sorry", "I forgive you" and "I care".

Need to Talk to Someone Between Meetings?

TELEPHONE FRIENDS:

The people listed below have volunteered to take your calls:

Linda Houghtby - Long term illness - (734) 591-3062

Catherine Walker - Loss of Only Child - (248) 921-2938

Charli Johnston - Suicide - 734-812-2006

Joe Hofmann - Drug related death - 734-331-9919

Bob Vitolins - A father's grief - (313) 882-8632

Dana and Brandy Bumstead - Loss of an infant -(313) 447-8144

Kathy Rambo - Sudden Death - (734) 306-3930

Remember that our chapter has a Facebook page. It is a closed page, so you just need to search for The Compassionate Friends of Livonia, Michigan and ask to join.

TCF CHAT ROOM

www.compassionatefriends.org

The chat rooms are moderated and are open at different times. There is one open most evenings from 10-11 p.m. They are all moderated which means that all the chat rooms have a trained facilitator in them.

National Mailing Address: PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522; Phone: (630) 990-0010; Toll Free: (877)969-1101; Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

Ann Arbor: Mike Fedel: MikeFedela2@gmail.com; 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room)1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor

St. Clair Shores: 2nd Wed. Kathy Joerin ; 586-293-6176, KJMac21@aol.com

Detroit: Kellie West Outer Drive Methodist Church,12065 West Outer Drive, Detroit ; 2nd Wed., 6:30 - 8:30; 734-660-9557.

Troy: St. Paul's Methodist Church, 620 Romeo, Rochester, MI 3rd Thursday7-9; Tina@586-634-0239

Pinckney TCF Chapter: The Christian House of Prayer, 9949 McGregor Road, Pinckney, MI; 2nd Monday of the month, 6 - 8 pm; Jimmy Batchelor - 734-277-9705

Tecumseh TCF Chapter: First Presbyterian Church, 211 W. Chicago, Tecumseh, 4th Sunday of the month, 2-4 pm, Rose Hatchett, 517-270-3308.



Livonia Chapter Page



The Compassionate Friends

11th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

In loving memory of all the children who died too soon

Saturday, March 23, 2019 at 1:00 pm

(Registration will begin at 12:15 pm)

Westland Bowl
5940 N. Wayne Road
Westland, MI 48185

(On east side of Wayne Rd ¼ mile north of Ford Rd just past Red Lobster)

**Any questions please contact Cindy Stevens @ 734-837-3722
Or Mary Hartnett @ 313-550-5410**

\$25 per person

(Includes: 3 games (9 pin no tap), shoes, 2 mystery game drawings, 2 slices of pizza)
Additional Raffle Tickets will be sold for 50/50 drawing and Prizes

**Please make check out to: The Compassionate Friends (Livonia)
Mail to: 25164 Hanover St, Dearborn Heights, MI 48125**

OPEN TO PUBLIC



March Craft Day

Our March 30, 2019 Craft Day will be held at Plymouth Public Library from 10 am – 1 pm. We will be decorating small canvases using embellishments or a photo of your child. Please contact Kathy @ 734-306-3930 or Gail @ 734-748-2514 if you have any questions. Limit 2 - Cost: \$5.00

Infant Loss Sharing Table

Our chapter is now offering a sharing table for Infant Loss/ Stillborn & Miscarriage.

Please contact Michelle Ciemnicki with any questions at 734-276-3149 or email at michellejurcak@gmail.com.

Sibling Sharing Table

We encourage siblings to attend our meetings and meet Amy Golen who will be leading this table. Contact Amy at 313-283-8136 or email at aegolen@gmail.com.

New Members

We welcome new members. We are so sorry for the circumstance that has brought you here. Although we have no easy answers, we can offer you understanding through our common experiences. We also know how much courage it took for you to attend.

Angie Herman whose beloved son; **Nick**, Born 7/17; Died 8/18, 27 years
Kenneth and Nadine Johnson whose beloved son; **Keifor**, Born 4/24; Died 11/14, 26 years
Denise Mouro whose beloved daughter, **Katelyn Albig**, Born 9/22, Died 10/14, 22 years
Thom and Barbara Seabolt whose beloved grandson, **Kyle**, Born 8/14, Died 12/11, n/a
Pat Zytowski whose beloved son, **Matt**, Born 11/11, Died 12/4, 35 years

A Love Gift is a gift of money to Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but may also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, simply a gift from someone who wants to make a donation to help in the work of the Livonia Compassionate Friends. Love Gift form on back page.

- ♥ Tim & Jan Anstett "In loving memory of Erika on her 37th birthday; 03/12. Forever in our hearts! We miss & love you!"
- ♥ Robert & Joyce Gradinscak "Adam – Love and miss you every one of these 14 years. Love, Mom, Dad, & Family"
- ♥ Nancy and Ralph Green in memory of JoAnne Tappan's sons - Kevin 3/10/71-3/21/89 and Keith 10/20/66 - 2/8/2019. "JoAnne was the editor of this newsletter for many years beginning in the 1990's. She took on this monumental task following the death of her son, Kevin. Please keep Joanne and her family in your prayers as they continue to mourn the recent loss of Keith."

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

March 2019

If any of you would be willing to get the newsletter via the internet,
please email me. Thanks, Brenda Brummel

LOVE GIFTS

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Love Gift Donation of \$_____ in Memory of _____

Message: _____

Direct my gift to: _____Outreach (Printing, postage, phone , web
_____ General Fund (90% local; 10% national)

Mail to: Rhonda Temple, 25164 Hanover St., Dearborn Heights, MI 48125

Chasing Butterflies

So many times I wonder now
How will I make it through?
As years go flitting by me
Taking memories of you
Elusive, fragile, here and there
I chase and cast my net
Tiny pieces of our long agos
I fear I might forget
Like a thousand butterflies
So many, yet too few
Each one a treasured moment Each
one a part of you
Time may bring me closer
To the day I see your smile
But time can be my enemy
Stealing from me all the while
So I will chase each memory
Seen through this Mother's eyes
Until I'm with you once again
I'll be chasing butterflies.
Donna Gerrior
TCF Pasco County, FL In Memory of
Rob