

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



April 2024
Volume 36, Number 4

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:

April 4 - Monthly Chapter
Meeting see page 7

**April 16 at 6:00 pm. TCF Dinner at:
Grand Tavern 37714 Six mile Rd.
Livonia. It is in the Laurel Park Mall.**

Contact Kathy Rambo (734-306-
3930); you can text, call or e-mail her at
Katjrambo@gmail.com.

**No Craft meeting this month
National Conference, New Orleans,
July 12-14**

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org>



In place of the Balloon Launch in May, we have decided to be more global friendly, and are transitioning to this new idea. We will write a message to our child, grandchild or sibling, on a colored ribbon, and hang it on a wrought iron fence. These will stay up through May and June to celebrate Mother's Day, and Father's Day. We will still include the bagpiper and other music to keep this evening special.

Spring is Coming

If you are newly bereaved and looking toward your "first" spring, you may be surprised by some of the feelings you may experience during the next few weeks. We hear so much about the beauty of spring - the new life and the feelings of renewal that are supposed to accompany this lovely time of year. During my "first" year, I expected that spring would cheer me up, and make me feel lots better. How surprised and frustrated I was when, on one of those truly magnificent spring days as life seems to burst forth everywhere, I was "in the pits." When a friend said to me, "Doesn't a day like this really lift your spirits and make you feel better?" I had to reply honestly that I was having a really bad day - that the sense of loss and

emptiness was greatly intensified.

Gradually, I began to realize that my expectations for spring were unrealistically high. I had looked forward to spring with the wrong kind of hope. When we are newly bereaved, we are constantly looking for something to take away the pain and make our lives all right again. Unfortunately, there is no magical event or moment when this takes place. It does happen, but only with time and the grief work which we all must do before we can be healed.

The coming of spring cannot make everything okay again. What it can do, however, is remind us that regardless of what happens in our lives, nature's process will continue, and that can offer us hope.

I am looking forward to spring this year. I welcome the sun's warmth, the return of the birds from their winter in the south, and forsythia, the daffodils and the greening of the world. Know that someday you will once again welcome spring. Be gentle and patient with yourself and with nature. Don't expect too much. Be ready to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your heart.

Evelyn Billings, TCF Springfield, MA

Appropriate Expectations for Yourself and Grief

Please review the following list of expectations and evaluate yourself on

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

<i>Child</i>	<i>Parent, Grandparent, Sibling</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Age</i>
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Available to members only



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

*Softly ... may peace
replace heartache
and cherished memories
remain with you always on
your child's birthday*

each one to see if you are maintaining realistic expectations for yourself. You can expect that:

- Your grief will take longer than most people think.
- Your grief will take more energy than you would have ever imagined.
- Your grief will involve many changes and be continually developing.
- Your grief will show itself in all spheres of your life: psychological, social and physical.
- Your grief will depend upon how you perceive the loss.
- You will grieve for many things both symbolic and tangible, not just the death alone.
- You will grieve for what you have lost already and for what you have lost for the future.
- Your grief will entail mourning not only for the actual person lost but also for all the hopes, dreams, and unfulfilled expectations you held for and with that person, and for the needs that will go unmet because of the death.
- Your grief will involve a wide variety of feelings and reactions, not solely those that are generally thought of as grief such as depression and sadness. The loss will resurrect old issues, feelings, and unresolved conflicts from the past.
- You will have some identity confusion as a result of this major loss and the fact that you are experiencing reactions that may be quite different for you.
- You may have a combination of anger and depression, such as irritability, frustration, annoyance, or intolerance.
- You will feel some anger and guilt, or at least some manifestation of these emotions.
- You may have a lack of self-concern.
- You will have trouble thinking (memory, organization and intellectual processes) and making decisions.
- You may feel like you are going crazy.
- You may be obsessed with the death and preoccupied with the deceased.
- You may experience grief spasms,

acute upsurges of grief that occur suddenly with no warning.

- You may begin a search for meaning and may question your religious and/or philosophy of life.
- You may find yourself acting socially in ways that are different from before.
- You may find yourself having a number of physical reactions.
- Society will have unrealistic expectations about your mourning and may respond inappropriately to you.
- You may find that there are certain dates, events, and stimuli that bring upsurges in grief.
- Certain experiences later in life may resurrect intense grief for you temporarily.

In summary, your grief will bring with it, depending upon the combination of factors above, an intense amount of emotion that will surprise you and those around you. Most of us are unprepared for the global response we have to a major loss. Our expectations tend to be too unrealistic, and more often than not we receive insufficient assistance from friends and society. Your grief will not only be more intense than you expect but it will also be manifested in more areas and ways than you ever anticipated. You can expect to see brief upsurges of it at anniversary and holiday times, and in response to certain stimuli that remind you of what you have lost. Your grief will be very idiosyncratic and dependent upon the meaning of your loss, your own personal characteristics, the type of death, your social support, and your physical state.

Therese A. Rando

What I Wanted To Say Today

I wrote a note to the mom of a 22 year old girl who died. I wanted to say don't believe those other cards, the ones that say "time heals" and "God only takes the best" and "may your sorrows be lessened." You'll only be disappointed. I wanted to say this is the most heart-wrenching, chest crushing, breath stealing tragedy on earth. I wanted to tell her there

will be days she wants to die, and friends who will not understand some of the things she does or says.

I wanted to tell her she will still feel her daughter's presence at times, sometimes so strongly that it is as if she is dancing just at the edge of whatever activity is going on. And other times she might not feel her presence at all. I wanted to tell her that her life will not go back, that she will never be the same, because a piece of her left with her daughter. And that even though the pain does not go away, somehow her soul will eventually make enough room so she can hold it all—the grief, the pain, the joy and the love. I wanted to tell her... but I didn't. Instead, I wrote—I'm sending love, for words are pointless right now. And that is the truth.

Susi Costello , Charlotte NC

Journey

This journey of the bereaved, especially the bereaved parent, is unlike other battles we face. It is both an outward battle, as well as an internal battle.

Pain and challenges come from external sources, places, rooms, pictures, comments, etc. as well as from within. To say we do battle mentally is a huge understatement. The years of collected memories, moments, sounds and laughter are stored in countless files in our mind.

To close our eyes is to turn on the recordings. Eyes open is to see the tangible and physical reminders that our child once lived. Eyes closed is to experience the view from an anguished heart. Both are brutal.

One of the most difficult aspects of grief, for me, is that the path truly must be walked alone. Others can and do support us, in part, but no one looks through the unique lens we do. Actions taken in an attempt to "help" us often hurt us. Words given, well meaning, often isolate us further.

There is no blame, for how can one possibly know the endless and varied nuances of grief we now live with, except for those who've walked this

path. Yes, people may say we have shut ourselves off, or have become “too private”, but often we didn’t start out that way. We are quickly advised how to feel, what to do, and when to do it! Shame sets in, guilt sets in, and we withdraw. Though it is a lonely place, it truly is the place where we must find our inner strength and begin to rebuild.

Michelle Thomason, In loving memory of her son, Michael Thomason

Death During Or Following Conflict

A little discussed problem for many bereaved parents is the state of their relationship with their child in the day or hours preceding the child’s death. This problem is not unique to those of us who have had either our only child or all our children die.

Most frequently the issue revolves around argument, anger or harsh words between parent and children as the last contact before death. It is small wonder that this should weigh heavily. None of us would willingly choose such an unpleasant permanent parting. Yet, it is not entirely uncommon, as my own situation may illustrate.

Olin, our seventeen year old son and only child was working in the dining room and kitchen of a summer camp a few miles down the road from home. On the day of his death, July 6th, I suddenly realized it was 8:AM and rushed to his room to get him up. Unfortunately, he had been out somewhat late the night before and had assured me that this would be no problem for working the next day. Thus, I yelled at him to get up, only to be assured by him that he had time. That seemed farfetched and I was verbally forceful in requiring him to get up and leave for work. Our dialogue was heated and senseless, my own portion being a good example of a parent’s unreasonable demand (so I discovered from Olin’s employer)

I was troubled throughout the morning and resolved to apologize that evening and straighten out the needless tension of the morning. But such was

not to be, for at noon he was dead, and never again would we meet in life.

It took many months of soul searching with much time spent in the abyss of depression and despair, before I could come to terms with the conflict which seemed to cloud the loving nature of our relationship. I finally came to understand that the years of our contact as father and son, the genuine love we shared, was the true measure of our care and concern for one another. It was not the first time one of us had been unreasonable or argued.

Had he lived, we likely would have had other, similar struggles, for such is normally a part of human association. Indeed, it is only in loving we shared the closeness that enabled the intensity of parent-child disagreements. Olin was a teenage boy seeking a growing measure of independence, albeit with the security of a strong and loving home base. And I was a parent trying to learn how to let go and still keep him safe. Such is a usual time of passage between parents and kids. This is not to make light of such a time, for in the best of circumstances it is difficult to deal with in a constructive manner.

When children die in the midst of turmoil like this, it is only reasonable to expect a deepening of torment and guilt. For all of us, it is wise to accept that the love between parent and child, before, during and after the teenage years, keeps both vulnerable to disagreement or conflict.

I finally came to understand that, had the situation been reversed, and I had died, Olin would feel a greater intensity of that same type of remorse and guilt. Like me, Olin would finally be forced to examine our years together, to remember other conflicts, and recall the constancy of the love and care with which all were ultimately resolved. I believe he would come to realize that I did not doubt his love, that a petty argument had no power to devastate what love had built between us.

So at last I did still the guilt of our final parting, realizing that the bond of

love was the bulwark of our relationship, thus rendering it impervious to smallness and pettiness. We love our children and try to do what is right for them. But, we are human, without qualities of infinite foresight or insight. In spite of our intentions, we make mistakes. We feel the same emotions our children feel, and even though we strive to be more mature, we do not always succeed. In our loving, we make errors in parenting just as our youngsters, in their loving, make errors too.

Olin knew I loved him. He knew before, during, and beyond death. This I firmly believe, after walking the deep valleys of my guilt and anguish. was resolved, I urge you to examine your relationship with your son or daughter in all its expression during all the time you had together. I know you will feel again and see again the love. Know that your child saw and felt the love, too. Remember, whatever your final words, you parted in love. In that same love you remain. And many of us firmly believe that it is in that love, ultimately, that you will meet again.

Don Hackett, TCF Hingham, MA

It Will Be Another Birthday Without You

The sun will shine
roses bloom, geese fly
throughout the sky
stocks will trade,
the weatherman predict
politicians debate
It’ll seem like another day
just a day, same 24 hours
not a special holiday
But to this mother
who will stand at the grave
lifting balloons into the sky
serving angel food cupcakes
with rainbow icing
coated with tears
fluctuating between emotions:
the grief over death
the celebration over birth
For this mother
It will be yet
Another birthday without you.

SIBS

The Other "I Love You"

"Wow." That one word meant everything to me. There I was, the picture of nervousness in white. The ceremony was just a few minutes away, and there I sat in that room on the brink of one of the biggest days of my life. I looked up, and there you stood in the doorway, all 6'3" of "little" brother complete with tux. I braced myself for what would come next as I saw your face curl into the smile we had always shared.

"Don't touch my stuff." "Cow." "Stay out of my room." This was the extent of our heart-to-hearts growing up. I'd go to my room for peace and quiet and seconds later, your music would be shaking the windows. You drank out of the milk carton, left

the bathroom a mess of puddles, and thought nothing was ever your fault. You could spoil even the best of my moods in five seconds flat and then breeze out of the room to finish your day. For years our contact was restricted to passing each other on our way to somewhere else - maybe a wave if we happened to pass on the road. By our late teens, we had grown into our own lives, and they had very little to do each other anymore.

I remember one day I'd noticed you'd started shaving. Another day I was shocked to finally see a hint of muscle on that beanpole frame. It wasn't until my wedding day, though, that I realized that you really, finally had grown up. And it isn't until now that I realize that in such a short time you taught me some really big lessons about life and love. It was impossible

to think that in one moment you'd be gone. It was unimaginable to me that the first funeral I'd ever go to was not for my 87-year-old grandmother, but for my 20-year-old brother. And it was crazy to think that this same bratty, brother would be the one to teach me how to live my life and even what it means to really love someone.

One Sunday morning, a phone call from my mom made the unthinkable a reality. Suddenly, those wishes I had always made out loud about being an only child began to echo in my head. I spent the first few nights just rocking and crying and repeating the same four words. "I love you, Mike." "I love you, Mike." Oh, why didn't I ever just tell you that? All that silence, all that yelling, all those opportunities I wasted in getting to know you were eating up my soul. This wasn't the plan. We were supposed to become friends again when we grew up. There was supposed to be so much time left. Time to start over and meet again as adults. How could we just leave things like this? How could we have been so cheated? I got my wedding pictures back right around the time that you died. When I saw them, I remembered that day and what you had said. It was not what I had expected, not "that dress makes you look fat" or "what happened to your hair?" but just one simple word: "Wow."

With some people in your life, the words "I love you" just comes in another form. The bond between siblings can be a quiet thing that even they don't always realize is there. We may have driven each other crazy all those years, but we couldn't have been so good at it if we hadn't known each other so well. I may not get any more days with you, but I got at least one that meant everything to me. I got

(Continued on page 7)

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

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

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

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: 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808 Wixom, MI 48393

Phone: 877-969-0010; 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 Thursday 7-9; Tina@586-634-0239

South Rockwood TCF Chapter: Southwood United Methodist Church, 6311 S. Huron River Drive, South Rockwood, MI 48179; 3rd Tues. of month meeting - 7 pm; Sheri Schooley, Leader; Contact Karen 734-672-7469



PLEASE REMEMBER

Siblings are welcome to attend the Livonia Compassionate Friend meetings. We ask that you be at least 16 years old.

Livonia Chapter Page

Regular meeting: Thursday, April 4th at 7:00 pm. As usual, there will be a First Time Table and tables for “older” members. For the latter, the topic: Can you comment or add to the list of Expectations?

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 is on back page.

- ♥ Rob & Joyce Gradinscak in memory of Adam; “19th Angel Day. Still missing you always”
 - ♥ Nancy Gleim in memory of Ryan H. Gleim; “May you soar with the eagles”.
 - ♥ Vince & Sylvia Fregonara in memory of Michael Fregonara; “You were and are a shining star in the darkest of nights.” Forever Loved, Mom, Dad & Bradbury
-

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

one day when you weren't my bratty little brother and I wasn't the stuck-up older sister. I got at least one day when we were more than family; we were friends.

It's been a year now, and I think of you every day. I think of you when I feel I'm doing more of what I think I have to do, than what I want to do. I remember our Mom ended up being so thankful that you decided to ditch work to go to the lake the day before you died. I think of you when I'm tempted to judge someone because they don't fit in my standards.

I remember the friends of yours I had called “losers,” who showed up by the hundreds to say how much you meant to them and to be there for your family at the toughest time of our lives. I think of you when I pick up the phone to talk to Mom and Dad every few days, just to keep close and let them know I love them. Because ultimately, the people you love in this life are really all that matter. You taught me that real love persists through anything: the longest silences, the harshest words, and even death. And that sometimes that can be the most painful thing in the world.

I try to remember two things on those really bad days that still come around from time to time. One is that grief is an amazing testament to the person who has left. The more hurt I feel, the more I understand how much you really touched my heart. The second is that sometimes love just hides in strange places for a while, but sooner or later it always turns up, sometimes in the form of just one simple word and a smile. But in any form it takes, it's something to be treasured.

*Kim Singletary,
TCF Kamloops, B.C.*

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

April 2024

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: Mary Hartnett, 5704 Drexel, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

