

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



April 2026
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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 2nd -7:00 pm - Meeting:
see page 7

April 21st, Tuesday, at 6:00 pm.
TCF Dinner at: Archie's Tavern
37714 Six mile Rd. Livonia. It is in
the Laurel Park Mall.

Contact Joyce Gradinscak,
734-560-6883, you can text or call her
No Craft meeting until further notice.

49th TCF National Conference in
Baltimore, MD

July 2nd - July 5th

www.compassionatefriends.org

A New Season

A New Way of Coping

Spring is the season of shifting, sorting and cleaning house. Spring brings it a sense of renewal, a sense of wanting to lighten the load, clear the air and simplify living. It's a time to clear away the baggage of winter's grief and to shed the overcoat that seemed to shelter us from the pain. Spring is the time when we get a new sense about the cycles of life. When tulips bloom, trees bud and the garden begins to awaken, there comes a change in perspective. We may be able to see things in a new light, with new vision, with a clarity that can only be borne in the fires of loss. We will never go back to being who we were, but we can establish a new sense of self as we work through our grief. We can create a "new normal" as we learn to adapt to the changing demands of grief. We can get through this time of sorrow, but we will not get over it. We simply learn to look at things differently in the early light of spring. The death of a loved one teaches us to embrace the moments of our life rather than waste them in search of tomorrow. Grief is a thief, stealing away energy and time, and I no longer want to be a victim of anything.

There is so little time in life, when you really think about it. I no longer want to waste any of it. Sometimes I

forget and I get caught up in all the "little stuff," like schedules, and chore lists and meetings and appointments. Then I need to step back, take a breath and slow myself down. Then, and only then, can I begin to hear the new rhythms of whoever I am becoming. I am forever changed because someone touched my life. I want to remember that - always!

The lessons of our losses cannot be ignored nor negated. They simply are too expensive. I no longer want to count what I have lost. I want to acknowledge the blessings of the springs that I did spend with my loved one. I do not want to cloud the joy of our life together with a long list of things that I didn't say, things I didn't do, things I didn't mean.

The line between the living and the dead is so thin that it is not visible, but it separates those who are moving forward and those who are standing still in grief and regret. I will no longer live my life so that I am building up a bank of regrets that will have to be paid at the end of a loved one's life.

The time to say I love you is now. The time to settle the argument is now. The time to give a hug, a kiss, a handshake, an encouragement is now. The time is now, and now I want to take the time. Funny how that works. When you have too little time, it seems an impossible task to grab more. When you have

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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



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

too much, it seems an impossible task to spend it. The time to live is now. Live your life in celebration and gratitude of those who have so lovingly shared their life with you. Cherish those moments you spent together and live your new life now with a renewed commitment to living as fully as possible. It is acknowledging and living the pain that brings forth the energy and strength to allow hope and healing to return. No matter where you are, no matter what memories you carry with you, may love be what you remember the most.

Darcie Sims

*reprinted permission granted by
Bereavement Magazine*

My Photo Album

The photo album of my mind
Holds treasured thoughts of you,
And I can almost see again
The things we used to do.
I hear your voice; I see your smile.
I feel you close to me.
The photo album of my mind
Shows how we used to be.
Time may have changed us through
the years
But I will always find
You're just as I remember in
The album in my mind.
And, as I turn page after page,
Such precious scenes I see.
The photo album of my mind
Is very dear to me.
It holds the pictures of our past
Like reels of film unwind.
I cherish all those photos in
The album of my mind.

Jeanne Losey

Shelbyville, Indiana

Losing Jonathan

They say that couples, like branches on a family tree, often break apart after the death of a child. I have looked closely at the statistics, and the numbers do not support this belief. It is apparently an urban legend of sorts. But it's true we grieve deeply and alone in so many ways, and our grief can so weight us down that we do not pay

adequate attention to our loved ones.

I have also read that we mirror the sorrow of our spouse, sharply reflecting the pain, forcing us to look away. I don't believe this is true either. I saw Linda's pain. I wanted to reach out to her in any way I could. Her pain was mine. Fortunately, Linda's confidence continued to grow during the fifth year. Rooted in her own struggle, she was now convinced she should create a survival kit for others, orderly, tucked in, numbered. She was right. And she did. Here it is.

How have I survived? I often wonder about that. I stand outside myself and say, "How is this person still living and breathing?" I am amazed it is me that has gone through this excruciating trauma and come out on the other end, a changed but whole person. Here are some reasons that come to mind.

I am sure Jonathan would not forgive me if I stayed in that place of constant sorrow and deep pain. He loved life and wanted everyone around him to love life with him. My re-entry into life has been with Jonathan by my side, coaxing me slowly but surely. I must go on and do things that keep Jonathan's memory alive. It gives me pleasure to give a social justice scholarship in his name at the university, to work on the board of an organization that battles addiction or simply to help newly bereaved parents in our support group. It gives me pleasure to remember Jonathan and to think about all the wonderful times. All of this keeps his memory alive.

I am still a mother, I am still a father, and we must show Jeremy that our lives, though changed, will go on and be productive and happy. He too will help keep Jonathan's memory alive and will carry the happy memories of his brother with him forever.

Parental grieving is hard work and takes a very long time. It is a job forever. It zaps your energy and strength and makes you think you are going crazy. The world goes on, but you are outside of it and for you, the world

has stopped. I changed. I felt like I was in a foreign country. But life pulls you back in and you find yourself feeling some of those old feelings of joy. Maybe they are not as intense as before, but they are there.

Before Jonathan's death, things just seemed to work out. Our life was on a good path, we were lucky. When something was particularly worrisome, it seemed to turn out ok. I looked around me and saw tragedy hitting other families, but I was sure it would not hit ours. After Jonathan's death, things are different – I am different. Certainly, my priorities have changed. I understand that much of life is out of my control and I do not worry as much. Other things are just not that important and must be addressed with much less thought. I think I am a more compassionate and less judgmental person. I am more patient. I know if I am feeling sad and stuck, this will change and get better.

When I was at the beginning of my journey in this new life, I did not think I would ever come out of the darkness. Time does help. Our pain gets less intense and more manageable. We learn how to manage the bad times and take advantage of the good. We learn to accept the sadness of holidays and special occasions and how to appreciate the gift when we are surprised by joy.

We learn how to put the pain and sorrow away and take it out in small pieces rather than all at once, we learn how to remember the wonderful times with our children and to smile when we are thinking about them. The bitterness and anger begin to fade, perhaps to return again and again but with less intensity and for shorter periods of time. Our sorrow will never go away, and we will never stop missing our children, but they are as much a part of our new lives as they were of the old, but in a different way.

Losing Jonathan

Robert and Linda Waxler

Spinner Publications, Inc. 2003

Losing Jonathan is a hard book to read.

Joy Trickles In

Can joy be found in crumpled hearts,
in empty rooms, and broken parts?
Can it be found in desert earth, in
washed-up dreams and faded worth?
Can joy come when the rain out-
weighs the happy, blissful, sunny
days?

Or in the middle of our grief with
words held tight between our teeth.
Can joy be found in trembling hands,
where nothing but the unknown
stands?

Where the unthinkable comes true
and changes everything we knew.
I wonder if joy even knows how to
emerge when sorrow grows.
Does it lay down beside the bed and
still caress our weary head?

And is joy really brave enough to
walk along when things get tough?
Is joy right there before our eyes but
stuck between our heavy sighs?
I hear joy say that it's okay to feel
both joy and pain today.

Whatever loss or lacking light, joy
finds a way to make us bright.
You see our lanterns glow the best
when darkness comes to steal our
rest.

And just when sadness seems to win,
joy trickles in.

~ullie-kaye



THE ROBIN'S SONG

It's spring once again. Our part of the world is turning back towards the sun; trees are leafing out; wildflowers are blooming. Robins are again singing to one another. And, I believe, also singing to those who are grieving.

Before my daughter Lori died, I was under the misperception that only the English robin had a glorious song. That smaller, red-breasted scalawag of a bird delights all who hear it, and I had felt that we in the United States had been short-changed when they'd misnamed its larger, boring American

cousin the same sweet name. All I'd ever heard our robins do was *cheep!*

Then one June day, almost a year after Lori died, during one of the darkest times of my grief, my ears and heart flew open with surprise at a song I heard outside my window. I distinctly heard, in the midst of my pain, a bird singing loudly and clearly, "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio! . . . Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!" I went outside to see what marvelous bird might have been sent to sing to me. I could barely see the bird at the top of the neighbor's poplar tree, so, while hoping this exotic, magical bird wouldn't fly away while I was gone, I went to find our binoculars.

Rushing back, I could hear the bird from each room in the house. After adjusting the binoculars, I was truly amazed to see one of our "boring" American robins come clearly into view! As he continued singing clear as day, "Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio!" I marveled at this special message and wondered if my robin was the only one who sang these words. So I looked it up in my *Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* and found that my robin was not an anomaly, but that robins are considered "the true harbinger of spring, singing "Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily."

I stood there that day filled with wonder. I wasn't hearing things; there it was in the bird book: "Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily." I thought to myself, "Cheerily . . . No, that isn't what I hear." We had lived in England for a year and our family, especially Lori, who loved to put on an English accent, often said "Cheerio!" to one another when we meant, "Goodbye" or "See you later!" There was no doubt in my mind as I stood there listening. It WAS cheerio. Lori could have found no more perfect way to try to cheer me up AND say "hello!"

Nine springs have passed since then, and although I will always deeply miss Lori's physical presence in my life, those darkest of times are thankfully now mostly in the past. It is spring

once again and as I hear the robin singing so hopefully in the highest branches, it takes me back to that summer day, and I smile, remembering. And I think of all those who are now in the darkest depths of their own grief and pray they too will hear this lovely song.

*Genesse Gentry
Marin County, CA*

Powerful, powerful words from Lexi Behrndt

"Their story is not over. We carry them. But listen here: your story, my story, our stories are not over either. No matter how much you wished you could have stopped breathing when the breath left their lungs, no matter how hopeless your life seems, no matter how deep down in the pit anxiety or depression or PTSD have taken you. No matter how weak, how small, how fragile you may feel: you are not. You are fierce. You have been given a sacred task, and you are the person for the job.

Your story is far, far, far from over. Few people in this world meet someone who so intricately and radically changes their lives simply by entering it. Few people have their lives split into such a powerful before and after. And while it may be so easy to look at our before and afters through the lens of deep pain and sorrow, you have been given a sacred gift: to know a love so pure, so raw, that it extends across worlds, through time, and death cannot ever touch it. You've been given a sacred gift, a second chance, and invitation to never be the same from this point forward simply because they existed, you were chosen to be theirs, and you are tied together, eternally, your love a force greater than life itself. You are theirs; they are yours, for eternity. Press on."
www.scribblesandcrumbs.com

Life Will Never Be The Same Again...

Remember that life will never again be exactly the way it was before your

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SIBS

How Parents Can Help

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

1. Allow siblings to participate fully in funeral plans and memorial activities. Let them choose whether or not they want to see their sibling at the funeral home. Let them choose some of the music, write and/or read a memorial to their brother or sister, go with you or alone to cemetery visits.

2. Share with the siblings all factual information, as it becomes known. Being "left out" only enhances a growing sense of not being important to the family.

3. When you see children who remind you of your child, point them out to the siblings and explain the grief spasm it has caused. Mysterious behavior enhances the sibling's fear of being left out.

4. Ask the siblings to be with you occasionally as you grieve. If you always grieve in private, the emotional distance between you will widen.

5. Talk with siblings about both pleasant memories and unpleasant memories of the dead child. This prevents pedestal placing.

6. Don't tell siblings to "be strong" for someone else. That is too great a burden to carry.

7. Understand that it may be easier for siblings to talk to friends, or another trusted adult, than to parents. They desperately do not want to add to their parents' devastation so may seek coun-

sel and understanding elsewhere.

8. Remember that you can't change the past. But you can face the present and guide the future.

Your family will forever be changed – it does not always have to remain devastated.

*Janice Lord,
TCF/Anne Arundel County, MD*

Grief

is a river you wade in until you get to the other side.

But I am here, stuck in the middle, water parting around my ankles, moving downstream over the flat rocks. I'm not able to lift a foot, move on. Instead, I'm going to stay here in the shallows with my sorrow, nurture it like a cranky baby, rock it in my arms.

I don't want it to grow up, go to school, get married.

It's mine. Yes, the October sunlight wraps me in its yellow shawl, and the air is sweet as a golden Tokay. On the other side, there are apples, grapes, walnuts, and the rocks are warm from the sun.

But I'm going to stand here, growing colder, until every inch of my skin is numb. I can't cross over.

Then you really will be gone.

Barbara Crooker

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

Gail Lafferty - Sudden Death - (734) 748-2514

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

Meeting is Thursday, April 2nd. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: How has your grief changed you?

A Love Gift -No dues or fees are required to belong to The Compassionate Friends. We have all paid the ultimate price, the loss of our loved ones. Parents and others may provide financial support for our chapter through Love Gifts. It is a beautiful loving way to remember our loved ones. Love Gift form is on back page.

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.

Dina Klaus, whose beloved daughter, **Meadow Ily Marie Klaus-Walls**, born 12/20; died 2/18; 2 months

Julie Kuchuk, whose beloved granddaughter, **Meadow Ily Marie Klaus-Walls**, born 12/20; died 2/18; 2 months

Olivia & Chad Morgan, whose beloved daughter, **Aubrie Morgan**, born 8/22; died 1/14; age 18 years

Beth Schroka whose beloved granddaughter, **Aubrie Morgan**, born 8/22; died 1/14; age 18 years

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

loved one died. If you are expecting things to “get back to normal” after a while, you may be disappointed to find that the new “normal” is not like the old “normal.”

“Your life will go on, but precisely because the person was important to you- it will not be the same without him or her. In the beginning it will seem as if your grief is running you, but in the end, you can learn to run your grief.

When you understand what is happening to you and have some idea of

what to expect, you will feel more in control of your grief and will be in a better position to take care of yourself, to find your own way through this loss and to begin rebuilding your life. It is perfectly natural to need time and space to honor your feelings, and the memory of your loved one. It is also normal for significant dates, holidays, or other reminders to trigger feelings related to the loss.

It is not unusual for the painful emotions of your bereavement, to make others feel extremely uncomfortable...

to the point of feeling profoundly helpless. Unfortunately, this may leave you feeling isolated and lonely. Your family and friends care about you, and are likely to offer advice about what they think is best for the grieving process. Listen to all the well meaning advice given to you but this is your grief, it is your pain. No one other than you can work through your grief. It is incredibly important that you.... Do what you want to do! Do what feels right and most comfortable for you.

*Mark R Simpson, extracted from
www.livingwithgrief*

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

April 2026

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

*The journey of grief can seem bleak and lonely
Look in front of you . . .
there are others encouraging and guiding you
Look beside you . . .
there are others on the same journey
Look behind you , , ,
there are others encouraged by you
We are not alone on this journey
The Grief Toolbox*

Grief is Complicated

- ▶ *It's forgetfulness.*
 - ▶ *It's exhaustion.*
 - ▶ *It's questioning yourself about everything.*
 - ▶ *It's anger.*
 - ▶ *It's physical pain.*
 - ▶ *It's guilt.*
 - ▶ *And it's sadness.*
 - ▶ *It's complicated.*
- 