

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



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

Chapter Leaders

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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:

August 6th - 7:00 pm - Meeting:
see page 7 for more info

August 18th Tuesday, at 6:00
pm. TCF Dinner at: Archie's Tav-
ern 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.

Butterflies Make Me **Happy**

Sometimes in our grief we truly believe we are going crazy. We hurt so bad we don't think we can manage to go on living without our precious child here with us. Part of the grieving process is learning how to do just that. Some parents need the reassurance that their child is okay. I think the human mind can only take so much pain and jumps at the chance to see signs from their children, reassuring them that they are okay.

The way I look at it, if you get comfort from a dream or a sign — enjoy it. You've suffered enough, and believing in signs, butterflies, dreams or whatever else gives you comfort and hurts no one else is your right as a bereaved person. Are these signs real, or just in my imagination? Can I prove they are messages from my son? Does it even need to be proven? No, I can't scientifically prove it. But I know that dreams, butterflies, signs and enjoyment in nature makes me feel closer to Eric, and therefore I will continue to enjoy them. It hurts no one, I'm not obsessive about it and anyone who chooses to think I'm nuts for believing in such things, can think I'm nuts.

We've all heard how the butterfly is

a symbol of rebirth. Whether it's our child moving from this world onto a higher plane, or a bereaved parent emerging from the cocoon of grief into a world without our child here. With us, butterflies are a comfort for many. When I'm missing my son and see a butterfly flittering from flower to flower, I smile and feel better. When I'm in a happy mood and see a butterfly, I enjoy the beauty of such a delicate creature. Taking the time to slow down and watch such a fragile creature going about its business is calming and I don't think anyone should discount the benefits from having a calming moment.

About four months after Eric died, I had a dream about him. I woke myself up from tears of joy running down my face, I knew he was okay... what a relief that was. I still hurt terribly and missed him more than I thought I could endure, but I felt comforted by the dream. Some could say it was my subconscious trying to sort things out, but I choose to believe it was his way of trying to comfort me. Either way, it made me feel better.

(Continued on page 4)

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

Names available to members



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

Maybe it's because bereaved parents walk around in such a fog and function on automatic pilot that we are moving slow enough to notice the signs that are around us. Maybe dreams are one way for us to accept messages we need to hear and take into our hearts without logically trying to interpret them. Maybe faith is what we rely on when nothing else makes sense and we instinctively know we need something to hold on to. Whatever it is, just give me a second helping; I like feeling closer to my son!

Lynn Vines

TCF South Bay/L.A., CA

Lost Potential

Last year I attended a workshop presented by a specialist in grief named Dr. Cable. Dr. Cable said many important things about the grief process, but as a bereaved parent, one thing stuck in my mind. He said that if you ask a bereaved person to describe his deceased mother, he will say, "Oh, she was so sweet. She always wore flowered dresses and loved to bake cookies." But, if you ask a bereaved parent to describe her deceased child, she will say, "Oh, he would be five this year and just starting kindergarten," or, "She would be twenty-two this year and graduating from college."

You see, we bereaved parents grieve the lost potential of our children. Our children don't stop growing in our minds. We grieve again and anew each year as our child would have been a different age.

Chris Anderson

TCF, Walla Walla, WA

BUT YOU'RE
ABSOLUTELY
NORMAL!

Grief is a normal reaction to loss, and it shows up in many ways you might not expect.

If you've —

- ♥ been angry with doctors or nurses for not doing enough,
- ♥ been sleeping too much or not enough,
- ♥ noticed a change in appetite,
- ♥ felt no one understands what you're going through,
- ♥ felt friends should call more or call less or leave you alone or invite you along more often,
- ♥ bought things you didn't need,
- ♥ considered selling everything and moving,
- ♥ had headaches, upset stomachs, weakness, lethargy, more aches and pains,
- ♥ been unbearable, lonely, and depressed, been crabby,
- ♥ cried for no apparent reason,
- ♥ found yourself obsessed with thoughts of the deceased,
- ♥ been forgetful, confused, uncharacteristically absentminded,
- ♥ panicked over little things,
- ♥ felt guilty about things you have or haven't done,
- ♥ gone to the store every day,
- ♥ forgotten why you went somewhere,
- ♥ called friends and talked for a long time,
- ♥ called friends and wanted to hang up after only a brief conversation,
- ♥ not wanted to attend social functions you usually enjoyed,
- ♥ found yourself unable to concentrate on written material,
- ♥ been unable to remember what you just read,
- you're normal.

These are all common reactions to grief. They take up to two years (or more) to pass completely, but they will pass. You'll never forget the person who has died, but your life will again become normal, even if it is never exactly the same. Take care of yourself. You will heal in time.

Joanne Bonelli,

TCF, Greater Boise Area, Idaho

"Grief is not a sign of weakness, but the price of love."

What To Do With Anger

Anger is one of the most difficult emotions for me to express. Reared as a "proper" young lady, I was taught that anger was not becoming. Many of the women I have spoken to were similarly taught.

I found, however, I did not have the tools to deal with the deep anger that came shortly after the death of my daughter. My anger was spilling over to people who did not deserve it, or I vented excess anger by overreacting to some situations.

With the loving care and patience of several people, I developed some tools that helped me to express my anger. Rather than trying to suppress my angry feelings, I learned to release them in constructive ways.

Hopefully, some of these coping techniques will be helpful to others.

EXERCISE - This is a great way to release anger, plus get into shape! I joined the YMCA, swam twice a week, did "Y's Ways to Fitness" three times a week, and walked three to five miles each day. At first, I was concerned about doing so much exercise because I have a very bad back, so I took it easy and worked my way up to my present routine. I always feel much better after a good workout, and I had the extra benefit of getting out of our home and back into society.

After my daughter's death, my life felt so out of control; but as I became more fit, I regained some control. This renewed strength aided in my recovery.

Exercise decreases stress levels and aids in controlling depression. Since grief can also make us more vulnerable to physical illness, exercising and taking care of our health is important. Even daily walking is good therapy.

WRITING - When the anger bubbled up in me, I would write. Many

times I didn't know where to begin, so I just started by writing, "I am angry because. . . "Soon, my thoughts were coming faster than I could write them down. After I had expressed my anger in writing, I often discovered that the sources of my anger were different than I had imagined. It usually sifted down to just being angry about my daughter's death. The technique of writing about your feelings is especially nice because you can just throw away or burn your words and the anger with them.

PAINTING - There is nothing like taking bright oils or acrylics and stroking them over an open canvass. I had not painted in over fifteen years, but I went up into the attic and got down the easel, brushes, and paints. I always felt better after a good painting session. Those times were very private for me and no one ever saw my creations, but they were helpful in expressing my anger.

TALKING - Sometimes I would call a good friend and just rant and rave. My friend was a very good and non-judgmental listener. She realized that most of what I said in anger I did not mean. She never gave advice or held me to my "anger" statements. She just lovingly listened. This technique calls for a careful choice of friends who can maintain confidentiality and are not afraid of anger. It is even more helpful if the friend has had a similar loss.

ENERGY - Convert anger into energy and use that energy to change the world. Angry with the limited support that mothers of children with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) had in their communities, I converted that anger into action. I joined several nationwide support groups and helped to bring their support into our community.

My anger was further converted into energy which I used to raise

money for SMA research. I baked over 700 loaves of bread (a lot of anger there!) for a fundraiser. My friends saw my energies and joined in to help. Together, our efforts raised over \$6,000 in under six weeks! This kind of energy can be contagious.

Reaching out to others can help in healing. If something good can come from our tragedies, it can add meaning to their deaths.

EGGS - Yes, eggs! When I just could not resolve my anger with any of the above techniques, I would take a dozen eggs and a black felt-tipped pen and go into the back yard. Writing the reason I was angry on the egg, I threw it at the back fence. At first, I thought this was a little crazy, but after throwing the first egg and watching it shatter, I felt so much better! I always used just one word to describe my anger. It might be: Death, SMA (the disease my daughter died of), Husband, A friend's name, God. No one need know what you write on that egg! Afterward, the birds would have a treat eating the eggs; and listening to their happy noises while having their treat, eased my anger.

These are some of the techniques I used to express my anger. It is OK to be angry, and it is important to express, not suppress anger. Suppressed anger can result in deep depression.

*Penny A. Blaze
New Canaan, CT*

The Harvest Of Your Grief Work

"It isn't right! I go a month sometimes and don't cry. I actually get involved in something, and don't think about my daughter for hours. I had fun at the company picnic last week. I feel so guilty. Am I forgetting my daughter?

This mother was 2 years into her grief. She was doing good grief-

work – leaning into the pain, talking out feelings, expressing emotions and attending Bereaved Parents meetings regularly. And she was hurting less. When parents begin to reap the harvest of their grief-work well done, they sometimes feel they are losing their children. The truth is: They are just reaping the harvest of their grief-work done well.

In the first couple of years, pain ties us to our children. During that time, we equate pain with love. By the time we are beginning to resolve our grief (and that is what is happening) pain has been our companion for so long that we feel lost without it. This is one of the few places in grief where our mind needs to take over for awhile. We need to look at the illogic of prolonged grieving. We need to see that we are beginning to reach the goal we hoped some day to reach.

Self-talk can help as rid ourselves of this illogical emotion. Ask yourself:

...If you believe that to keep your child in your heart for the rest of your life, you must hang onto the pain.

...Will your prolonged misery make your child less dead?

...Does the fact that your child is dead mean that you must die also?

...Does your prolonged misery accomplish anything? What purpose does it serve?

...Will hanging onto your pain make you grow and change, or will it make you unhappy and bitter?

....What effect will your prolonged grief have on your marriage and/or surviving children?

...Do you really want to stay in the pit indefinitely?

....Will your continuing grief honor your child?

These questions can help you see that beginning grief resolution is as healthy and normal after a couple of

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GRIEVING IS A LONELY JOB

I don't care what anybody says... grieving is a very lonely job. Friends and family try to help in their own caring ways, but sometimes it's almost too much effort to try to explain how you feel inside. In fact, I'm not so sure that there are words to describe the feeling. It isn't "physical pain," and I don't know if "emotional pain" is any more descriptive. It's just a feeling that's always there. The sadness... the loneliness... the helplessness.

On the outside, of course, no one would know. From the beginning people would always tell me how

great I looked or how well I was doing. What did they expect? Sometimes I'm tempted to ask, "Well, how do you expect me to look?" But I don't. They mean well. They just don't know what else to say.

Oh, it's true, the last 15 months since my 17-year old son, Shane, was killed in a motorcycle accident with his friend, I've come a long way. Life is good... and I have much to look forward to each day. A challenging job, terrific friends, a great family... including Shane's 14-year-old brother, Zachary. But there are days when it's just not enough.

It's interesting how your entire perspective about life changes when you're forced to endure a personal tragedy. I call it my "BIG DEAL SCALE." Losing Shane was the

"biggest deal" I've ever experienced. It gives me a tool in which to measure the trivial ups and downs of life. We all have the strength to endure a tremendous amount of pain. We just have to get it in perspective. It doesn't come easy. I consciously work at it every day. I wonder if it will ever go away. Sometimes I hope it doesn't. I guess it's my way of remembering... of holding on.

My biggest source of strength comes from Zachary, though. My heart aches for him; knowing how close he was to Shane. The first few days after the accident, he said, "Shane was my idol. He always helped me and taught me things." It's hard for me to imagine what it must be like for him. Still sleeping in the same room that they shared for 13 years. Although, now he sleeps in Shane's bed. And does his homework at Shane's desk. He says he likes it like that. I guess it's just his way of remembering... of holding on.

Months ago when Zachary asked when the "hurt" would stop, I didn't have an instant answer. Grieving is a lonely job. To be done in individual time frames. But, what I did tell him was, "Trust me. The pain will eventually fade... but, the memories will last a lifetime." And just the other

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: PO Box 46, Wheaton, IL. 60187

Phone: (877)969-0010; Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

Ann Arbor: Mike Fedel: mfedel2@gmail.com; 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room) 1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor; tcfannarbormich.org
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

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PLEASE REMEMBER

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

Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, August 6th at 7:00 pm - Newcomer and topic tables. Topic Table: ***One of the articles is a mother's attempt to handle anger. Has your grief included times of anger and how did you handle it?***

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

years as allowing yourself to enter fully into your grief in the early months after your child has died.

Rethink your reactions. Let yourself get to the other side of your grief. Let yourself appreciate the peace and comfort that is beginning to be yours. Most importantly, let yourself feel the joy of remembering your child without the deep, searing, pain you have felt for so long.

*Margaret Gerner,
St. Louis MO*

Commonly Asked Questions About Grief

How long will this go on?

The journey through grief is a highly individual experience. Rather than focus on a timeline it is perhaps more helpful to focus on its intensity and duration. Initially grief is overwhelming and people can feel out of control. With time people find they have more ability to choose when they access memories and emotions. The intensity of grief is related to the

degree of attachment to the person, relationship to the deceased, level of understanding and social support from others, personality and nature of the bereavement.

Am I going mad?

It may certainly feel like it at times! Particularly if the individual's need to grieve is out of step with social and cultural expectations. Grief affects people physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. People may be required to make adjustments to their lives and learn new skills, at a time when they feel least able to do so. Receiving validation and permission to grieve is important in the recovery and healing process.

How do I know when I need help?

Reassurance from others who have also experienced grief and an understanding of what people have commonly undergone when grieving can be a helpful yardstick. Any continued fears or anxieties about your well being or thoughts of self harm should be addressed by seeking help.

Prolonged intense emotion or obsessive thought or behavior that make functioning difficult may also require help.

Do I have the right to inflict this on others?

What can I expect of them and they of me?

Others may feel intensely uncomfortable with the emotion and the pain of the bereaved to the point of feeling helpless. The anxiety this causes may mean that the bereaved person might feel they are being avoided—increasing feelings of isolation. It is important that the grieving person is assertive about their needs and wishes, and it is helpful if they communicate with family, friends, and colleagues rather than leave them guessing about what would be useful and comforting. Never underestimate the power of listening and being a warm presence. There are no magic words or actions. Trust your ability to care taking into account your relationship with the person you are trying to help.
from Australian Center for Grief and Bereavement)

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

August 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

day he said to me, "You're right, Mom. The hurt is much better." I can see it in his face, in his eyes. He has matured so much this last year. It seems like he was just a baby when this all happened. Now, I can see so much of Shane in him. And, I know that if he can handle this "job," he can handle anything. And so can I.
*Susan Hedlund,
TCF Portland, OR*

*"There is a unique pain
that comes from burying
your future."*