

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



February 2024
Volume 36, Number 2

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:

February 1 - Monthly Chapter
Meeting see page 7

*February 20 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

*March 23 - 1:00 pm Annual Bowling
Fundraiser - see this page*



The Compassionate Friends

15th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

In loving memory of all the children who died too soon

Saturday, March 23rd, 2024 at 1:00 pm
(Registration will begin at 12:30 pm sharp)

Vision Lanes
38250 Ford Rd
Westland, MI 48185
(On Ford Rd & Hix)

Please let us know if you will be joining us so we can reserve lanes

Cindy Stevens @ 734-837-3722

Or Mary Hartnett @ 313-550-5410

\$25 per person

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

**Please make check out to: The Compassionate Friends (Livonia)
Mail to: Mary Hartnett 5704 Drexel St, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127**

OPEN TO PUBLIC

The Month of February

This is the month that a whole day is dedicated to love. In our sorrow, let us not forget that one emotion which, above all else, can comfort and console us.

Let us think of the things we love:
Our child ~ whom we loved - still love -
and always will love - here in our hearts

as long as we live.

Our families ~ hurting like us - lonely -
needing each other - needing us.

Our true friends ~ listening - trying
to help - wanting to lighten our load,
but not knowing how - not always
understanding, but there.

Our memories ~ of wonderful times
gone by - some that make us laugh -

(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 for membes



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

some that make us cry - but all part of the fabric of our lives and of our love for each other.

Our quiet times ~ to get away by ourselves and think - to read - to note again the world around us -to let peace enter.

Our Compassionate Friends ~ who are there - who know - who understand when others do not.

“Love makes the world go round” and when our world comes to a sudden, grinding, heart- shattering stop, love is the glue that keeps us from falling off.”

Fran MacArthur, TCF/Southern MD

Our Broken Hearts

If someone fell and broke a leg, people would rush to their aid. They wouldn't stop to even think about it. Yet, when it's our hearts that are broken, few rush to our aid and even fewer understand. At first, we receive the cards and phone calls wishing us well and telling us “if there's anything I can do”...but they soon taper off to a trickle. Then we begin to hear that we must ‘get on with our life,’ ‘we can't let it get us down,’ and we're told just how soon we should be ‘back to normal’... we're given a deadline of sorts. When we don't follow the acceptable standards for healing, we are thought to ‘need help’...the professional kind... and we're told that we are ‘in denial’. These same people, who seem to have all of the answers, not only have never experienced the loss of a child but also tend to not want to get too involved...too close to our pain. They would rather stand off to the side until we're back to our old selves...whatever that is!

They're uncomfortable when we speak of why our hearts are broken and they don't mention it for fear of reminding us of how our hearts broke in the first place... as if we could ever forget. When they ask us, “How are you”...it's more a greeting than a question. They don't want to hear how we ache inside, how lonely and empty we feel, how desolate we feel. Why...because they can't fix it. They

can't make us whole again. And unlike a broken bone that's healed, we will never be as good as new. We will forever be missing a part of what made us the person that we once were.

When our child died, so did a part of our heart and where that piece was, now there is nothing...only a gaping hole that nothing and no one can ever fill. Unlike a broken bone, we will not mend in a few weeks...in fact, we will never fully mend. We learn to live without that piece of our hearts...to live with our loss, to survive...one day at a time!

*Jacquelyn Comeaux**In Loving Memory of My Angels...Michelle, Jerry & Danny*

Am I Going Crazy?

As C. S. Lewis noted, “Grief is like a long, winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape.” As you explore the terrain or your unique grief journey, you may ask yourself. “Am I crazy?” A vital part of healing in grief is understanding the normalcy of your experience. Seemingly strange thoughts and feelings such as time distortion, obsessive review, search for meaning and others explored in this article are normal, and if you are experiencing them, that means they're necessary to your healing.

Time Distortion

“I don't know what day it is, let alone what time it is!” This kind of comment is not unusual when you are mourning. Sometimes, time moves so quickly; at other times, it merely crawls. Your sense of past and future may also seem to be frozen in place. You may lose track of what day or even what month it is.

This normal experience of time distortion often plays a part of the “going crazy” syndrome. No, you are not crazy. But if you don't know that time distortion is common in grief, you may think you are.

Obsessive Review or Ruminating

Obsessive review, or ruminating, are the psychological terms used for describing how you may constantly think about the circumstances of the death or stories about the person who

has died. Its “telling your story” over and over again, either in your mind or out loud. This normal process helps bring your head and your heart together! Allow yourself to do this. Blocking it won't help you heal. Don't be angry with yourself if you can't seem to stop wanting to repeat your story. Review or rumination is a powerful and necessary part of the hard work of mourning.

Yes, it hurts to constantly think and talk about the person you loved so much. But remember-all grief wounds get worse before they get better. Be compassionate with yourself. Try to surround yourself with people who allow and encourage you to repeat whatever you need to tell again.

Search for Meaning

Naturally, you try to make sense of why someone you love has died. You find yourself asking questions like, “Why him or her?” “Why now?” “Why this way?” Of course you have questions. You are human and are simply trying to understand your experience. No, answers won't always be, and often aren't specific to your question. Yet, you still need to give yourself permission to ask them.

As you wrestle with “Why?” you may be outraged at your God or Higher Power. You may feel a stagnation of disillusionment with your spiritual life as you embrace your pain. On the other hand, you may feel more in touch than ever before with your spirituality. Either way, you can only be where you are. You may be able to come up with dozens of reasons why this person should not have died under these circumstances at this time. Whatever the nature or number of your questions, asking them is a normal part of your grief journey.

As you explore the meaning of this experience through your questions, be certain you don't commit “spiritual suicide.” Do not prohibit yourself from asking questions you know are within you, even if the questions seem irreverent or doubting in your faith system. If you do suppress your normal and natural questions, you may

shut down your capacity to give and receive love during this vulnerable period in your life.

Be aware that people may try to tell you not to ask questions, about your personal search for meaning. Or worse yet, watch out for people who try to provide easy answers to your difficult question. Most grieving people do not find comfort in pat responses; neither will you. The healing occurs in posing the questions in the first place, not just in finding answers.

Find a friend, group or counselor who will understand your need to search for meaning and be supportive without attempting to offer answers. Companionship and responsive listening can help you explore your religious and spiritual values, question your philosophy of life, and renew your resources for living!

Is This Death God's Will?

Closely related to the search for meaning is the commonly asked question, "Is this death God's will?" If you have a perception of an all-powerful God of Higher Power, you probably find this question particularly difficult.

Sometimes you may reason: "God loves me, so why take this most precious person from me?" Or you may have been told: "It's God's will and you should just accept it and go on." However, if you internalize this message, you may repress your grief and ignore your human need to mourn. Repressing your grief because you need to "just accept it and go on" can be self-destructive. If you don't ask questions and if you don't express feelings, you may ultimately drown in despair. If your soul does not ask, your body will probably protest. Repressing and denying heartfelt questions can, and often does, keep your wounds from healing. Listen to your questions!

Transitional Objects

Transitional objects are belongings of the person who died. They often can give you comfort. Objects such as clothing, books or prized possessions can help you feel close to someone you miss so much.

For example, when I was counseling a grieving woman, she shared with me that she found it comforting to take one of her husband's favorite shirts to bed with her. She said, "As I clutched his shirt close to me, I didn't feel so alone. But as I worked with my grief, my need for the shirt dwindled over time."

Some people may try to distance you from belongings such as the shirt described above. This behavior fits with the tendency of our culture to move away from grief instead of toward it.

Remember - embrace the comfort provided by familiar objects. To do away with them too soon takes away a sense of security that these belongings provide. Once you have moved toward reconciliation, you will probably be better to decide what to do with them. Some things, however, you may want to keep forever. That's all right, too. Simply giving away the belongings of the person who died does not equate with healing in your grief.

Nor does keeping some belongings mean that you have "created a shrine." This phrase is used when someone keeps everything just as it was after the death. Creating a shrine, however, only prevents acknowledging the painful new reality that someone you love has died. Understanding the difference between transitional objects and creating a shrine is important. The former helps to heal; the latter doesn't.

Anniversary and Holiday Grief

Naturally, anniversary and holiday occasions can bring about "pangs" of grief. Birthdays, wedding dates, holidays and other special occasions create a heightened sense of loss. At these times, you may likely experience a grief attack or memory embrace. Your "pangs" of grief may also occur in response to circumstances that remind you of the painful absence of someone in your life. For many families, certain times have special meaning such as the beginning of spring, the first snowfall or an annual 4th of July party, and the person who died is more deeply missed at those

times. Perhaps the most important thing to remember is that these reactions are natural. Sometimes the anticipation of an anniversary or holiday actually turns out to be worse than the day itself.

Interestingly enough, sometimes your internal clock will alert you to an anniversary date you may have forgotten. If you notice you are feeling down or experiencing "pangs" of grief, you may be having an anniversary response. Keep in mind that this is normal.

The aspects of grief explored in this article are in no way an all-inclusive list of experiences, that might constitute the "going crazy" syndrome. However, my hope is that this information helps you better understand the normalcy of your unique journey into grief.

Alan D. Wolfelt,

PhD from Grief Digest

About Hearts

Each of us has two hearts. The one that beats in our chest and sustains life. We know about that one. And the one that is described by philosophers as the residence of our spirit and our consciousness. Most of us probably didn't get to know that one until our loss. Remember the fists that sat in the middle of your chest for the first several months? And you went to the doctor, and he did an EKG, and he said, "Your heart is just fine, No-o-o problem!"

The heart that was laid open by this event can't be seen on an x-ray or measured by an EKG. And once opened, it can't be sewn up. We're stuck with it. AND BETTER OFF WITH IT! The COMPASSION lesson is learned when you can control your tears for your own child, but can't control your tears for another's child.

And through this terrible experience, we have all learned that compassion and love, both seated in heart No. 2, are the only important things in life. The price has been terrible, but we have learned what REALLY matters, and just as importantly, what DOESN'T!

SIBS

I'm Still Here

At first "I'm still here" was the mantra I chanted inside my head, chiding myself for sadness, urging myself that, unlike Rachel, I was still living and must not be sad, must not miss a moment of time or anything else precious. Months later, unable to contain my grief, I said I'm still here as if I were the only one of my tribe to escape slaughter and wandering plains alone. I wanted to die. Not because I hate life, but because I wanted to see Rachel.

Many times my parents, washed in grief, looked at me through salt water, saying, "You're still here. You're all we have left." Those words weighed heavily upon me, made me

feel too loved, too lucky. And they made Rachel feel too gone. But, just as many times I wanted to shake my parents out of depression and back into life before Rachel's death, saying, "I'm still here. Don't you leave me too."

For almost a year after Rachel died, I didn't say her name out loud. The sound of the R and the A and the ending L felt foreign on my tongue. Later, when I joined a support group, the facilitator noted that I never said Rachel's name. It just hurt too much. And if I'd had my choice, I would have asked my parents not to say Rachel's name either. Any instance we now used her name was unhappy.

Talking about family or home or anything in my past was terrifying for me. Sometimes, as I told a story

or recounted a memory, I said "we" instead of "I". Pretty soon, though, I got the hang of checking over everything in my head before I opened my mouth. The thing is, though, if you tell a lie enough times, you start to forget the truth you're trying to cover up in the first place. I started to feel my memory blurring and that frightened me. Memory was my only link to Rachel.

I ask myself why I have such trouble talking about Rachel's death or even her life, and come up with a couple of things. I really believe no one understands my particular pain, the things I've lost, tangible an intangible, since Rachel's death...

The only person that knows exactly how I feel is dead.

It's hard to worry about your own grief when your parents are not parental anymore. My mother, who probably told me when to take my first breath and how long it would last, abruptly withdrew from being an overbearing presence in my life. She never left me completely, but there were enough times when she'd look down at her feet and say quietly... "Laura, I just can't take this right now. I'm lucky if I can get up in the morning." Just as I wanted my old self, my old world back, I wanted a mother I could fight with.

My father sits as the head of the table, head bent to his chest, and pulls his glasses off to sob freely... This idea that you should be able to protect and comfort and be there for your parents even more than for yourself is particular to people on the brink of adulthood. Like me. In other words, if I were 12 or 13, few people would expect me to assume a parental role. But as I was 18, it was apparently okay for people to continually ask, "How are your parents doing? Are you helping them as much as you can?" I felt guilty enough about being alive. And then to have people insinuate that my main function in life thereafter was to be a comfort for my parents made me feel worse. Because I honestly

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

Tecumseh TCF Chapter: First Presbyterian Church, 211 W. Chicago, Tecumseh, 4th Sunday of the month, 2-4 pm, Marsha & Jeff DiCenzo 517-918-5608 & 517-358-1883



Livonia Chapter Page

Regular meeting: Thursday, February 1 at 7:00 pm. As usual, there will be a First Time Table and tables for “older” members. For the latter, the topic: What part or parts of *Am I Crazy* can you relate to?

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.

- ♥ Walter & Judith Dever in memory of **Josh Dever & John Strasser** : “In memory of Josh Dever & John Strasser.”
 - ♥ Tom & Connie McCann in memory of our sons **Ryan “Ryfro”, Tom Jr., Bryan “Bryfro” Soupis** considered a son to our family and **Mark “Sparky” Abbott, Joe Coffey and Jim “Jimmy Vick”** : Happy Birthday Tom Jr. 2/16 We love you and miss you.”
 - ♥ Robert & Mary Vitolins in memory of: **Laura** “Loving and missing you every day. Mom, Dad and Karen”
-

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

didn't see that my parents were remarkably comforted by me. They were sad when I was there and when I wasn't. And I couldn't do a thing about it.

Laura Weider, writer & assistant editor for “George” magazine

Love And Hope

On a cold winter day the sun went out
Grief walked in to stay
I turned away from the unwanted guest
And bid him be on his way.
Grief was merciless, he brought his friends:
Loneliness, Fear and Despair.
They walk these rooms unceasingly
In the somber cloaks they wear.
Every so often now, Love pays a call
She always has Hope by her side
I welcome Love as well as Hope
For I thought surely they had died.
Love counsels Grief in a most gentle way
Bids him be still for a while
Then Love walks with me through memory's hall
And for a time, I can smile.

A Valentine to All My Compassionate Friends

We who have had our hearts so badly broken know each other.
We have lost a child, grandchild, a sister, or a brother.
It matters not if we've seen each other's faces
We share mending hearts full of achy places.
At first our hearts feel shredded and torn.
We might even wish that we'd never been born,
We don't understand how our lives went so wrong.
Everyone tells us they're glad that we're strong.
All we know is that we hurt to the core
Because a child dearly loved is with us no more.
With time, patience and understanding we begin to heal.
We begin to accept what is, and life starts to seem real.
Each time we tell our tale, each hug we receive,
Puts a band-aid on the hurting spots and gives us reason to believe.
That we will feel joy again, that life does go on.
Tho' we're never quite the same, since our child is gone.
Compassionate Friends teach us ways we can cope,
Until we can live again and face life with hope.
So to TCF members, whether we've met or not,
Thank you for the band-aids on that bruised, healing spot.

I Love You ALL
*Kathy Hahn TCF,
Lower Bucks, PA*

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

February 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

*I have felt no greater pain
than the moment when your
heart ❤️*

Stopped beating.

*And mine
carried on...*

