

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



March 2023
Volume 35, 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:

March 2 - Monthly Chapter
Meeting see page 7

March 18th - Annual Bowling Fund-raiser

**March 21 - 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 Day this month



The Compassionate Friends

14th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

In loving memory of all the children who died too soon

Saturday, March 18th, 2023 at 2:00 pm
(Registration will begin at 1:15 pm)

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: 3 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

What I Need TIME ~

Time alone; and time with others whom I can trust and who will listen when I need to talk. Months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings which go along with loss.

REST ~

I may need extra amounts of things I

needed before. Relaxation, exercise, nourishment, diversion, hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a cause to work for, to help others, any of these may give me a lift. Grief is an emotionally exhausting process. I need to replenish myself – to follow what feels healing and what connects me to the people and things I love.

(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 for members only



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

SECURITY ~

I need to reduce, or find help for financial or other stresses in my life. I need to allow myself to be close to ones I can trust. It helps when I allow myself to get back into a routine, and to do things at my own pace.

HOPE ~

I find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered and that time does help, gives me hope that sometime in the future my grief will be less raw and less painful.

CARING ~

I try to allow myself to accept the expressions of caring from others, even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative also suffering from the same loss often brings me a feeling of closeness with that person.

GOALS ~

It often feels that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month, helps me get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a good rule of thumb. At first, my enjoyment of these things just isn't the same. I know this is normal. As time passes, I will need to work on some longer range goals to give some structure and direction to my life. It is OK to get some guidance or counseling to help with this.

SMALL PLEASURES ~

I no longer underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food - all are small steps toward regaining my pleasure in life itself.

BACK-SLIDING ~

Sometimes after a period of feeling good, I find myself back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair or anger. Intellectually, I know this is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for

a time. I'm told, this is because as humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and the meaning of death all at once. So, I give myself permission to let it in a little at a time.

DRUGS? ~

Drugs are not always helpful. Sometimes, even medication intended to help me get through periods of shock may prolong and delay the necessary process of grieving. I cannot prevent or cure grief. The only way OUT is THROUGH.

Alan Taplow Adapted by Alan Taplow from Judy Tatelbaum's book, The Courage to Grieve

I Don't Like The Pain

I don't like the pain, the pain deep in my heart,

In the pit of my stomach,

I avoid the pain.

I glance at your pictures, not spending too much time,

Staring at your beautiful eyes, your lips, your smile, so perfect.

I go into your room, kiss your picture and your pillow goodnight.

Touch your blanket, turn the light off and quickly go down the hall to my room.

I don't like the pain.

I don't like the pain, but I don't like the distance either.

Tonight I went into your room and I did not glance at your picture as before.

Tonight I stared at it and I thought and I remembered and I cried.

I felt the pain as the tears flowed from my eyes.

The pain is worth it. I need more than a glance right now.

I have made the choice to let the pain in.

In exchange I get to remember.

Even though it is hard, I realize I need more.

This time I put my head on your pillow and close my eyes.

I can see you laying there like an angel, so peaceful and beautiful.

I open your dresser drawers and touch your clothes to my face.

Before I leave your room tonight, I sit

on your bed with your picture in my hand

And I look at your face.

I study you with appreciation, with love, with tenderness a mother has for her daughter.

I don't like the pain. But the pain is my reality, and I accept it because I want to remember. –

Nancy Fisher in memory of Emma

Semper Parente

There is no name for my situation in this world. Both my sons died and I am a parent without children. There is no name for a parent without children. The name for a child whose parents have died is orphan. The name for a spouse whose husband or wife has died is widow or widower. Is it because it is so painful and unimaginable that no one could bear to name them?

J.K. Rowling writes in her series of Harry Potter novels that the villain Voldemort, considered to have been the most powerful and dangerous dark wizard of all time, is so terrifying that he is called "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named." Albus Dumbledore, Harry Potter's headmaster, says "call him Voldemort, Harry. Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself."

Identifying and naming your fear is the first step towards understanding your fear. There is power in naming your fear. An unnamed fear remains vague and nebulous and grows larger in size due to the fact that it cannot be defined and contained in a name. When you can clearly name your fear, it can connect you to new ways of thinking that will open doors for you.

I want to call myself and other parents who have lost a child, "semper parente." It is Latin and when translated into English means "always parent." It is an understanding of the infinite nature of being a parent. It changes the paradigm of parenthood, and expands the timeline beyond this world. The fact that I was a parent and had children changes eternity. Nothing can change that fact.

Semper parente, always a parent.

This name binds me and my children in eternity. It is fitting that a novel about an orphan helps me understand the need for a name for myself. Harry's parents were killed by Voldemort when he was a baby and the love from his parents provided protection for Harry to survive Voldemort's attack. With the help of magic, Harry's parents provide courage and support for Harry in his ongoing battles with Voldemort. Using reverse logic, Harry's parents are "semper parentibus" or "always parents" in eternity. They are bound to Harry in his world and into eternity.

It is also fitting that semper parente is Latin. Latin is considered a dead language because it is no longer a spoken language. But it was transformed into Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian. Latin is used today in technical fields when clarification is important, such as in medical terminology. Clarification is important in choosing a name for a parent whose child has died. Semper parente defines me and it transforms the meaning of my parenthood into the infinite.

Karen Quandt

Letting Go Of Guilt

Quite often, the first feelings that overtake a mother or father following the death of a child are feelings of extreme guilt. Thoughts of "if only" seem to relentlessly keep returning. "If only" I had taken her to the doctor sooner. "If only" I had not given him the car keys when I knew the roads were icy. "If only" I had not turned my back to answer the phone. "If only" I had not left him playing alone in the bathtub. Guilt is such a heavy burden of grief to carry around!

How does a parent move beyond the guilt of losing a child? How can a parent shed the painful feelings of inadequacy? How does a parent ever find a way to let go of the guilt?

The most difficult step in releasing the tight clutch that guilt holds on a parent's heart is dealing with the reality of the loss. "My child died" are often the most difficult three words

that will ever come from the mouth of a parent. Those words are hard words, yet they are words that are necessary to say and to understand, before being able to rid oneself of guilt.

When we live in an "if only" emotional environment, we have not yet come to the full realization that child loss has actually occurred. We are still working through the mental "if only" reasoning which continues to wreak havoc on a parent's heart. When a parent lives in an "if only" state, the reality of the child's death can never be completely accepted. As painful as it is, a parent must, at some point-make the hard choice to accept the reality that the child has died.

Because a parent's primary role is to nurture and care for the child, a parent often has a feeling of deserving punishment when a child dies. That is simply another way of expressing the heaviness of guilt. A parent often wrestles with the thought that "because my child died, I do not deserve to ever smile again". Guilt continues to prevent many parents from moving forward in this difficult journey we call grief.

It takes a lot of concentrated effort, hard work, and support from others to be able to forgive oneself and finally let go of the gnawing feeling of guilt following the death of a child. Until a parent makes the decision to leave the heavy weight of guilt behind, joy can never return to a heart that has been so deeply wounded by the loss of a child.

Letting go of guilt is a decision that must be made. There is no timetable for making that decision, and others cannot force that decision on any parent. Eventually, a parent will come to the realization that the child's death is real, and there is a hard choice to be made: to continue to live in the guilt of the loss, or to let go of that heaviness of guilt and begin to experience a bit of peace and joy once again.

Letting go of guilt requires a real effort to put an end to the "if only" questions. Letting go of guilt means that a parent no longer blames him-

self for the death of the child. Letting go of guilt means forgiving oneself and accepting oneself. Letting go of guilt means being gentle with oneself and allowing time for healing to take place.

Letting go of guilt is one of the most difficult parts of grief work. It takes a lot of energy, understanding, and patience. But, when guilt is finally set free, a parent's heart can begin to walk the journey of healing through child loss.

Clara Hinton, TCF, Orange Coast Chapter, CA

There's a New Man in Town

My son is dead. The moment I was told my son died in an auto accident, there was a new man in town. The old man would find a way to fix 'it' or at least make 'it' better. The new man couldn't fix a thing. Oh, he could make arrangements, settle accounts, acknowledge condolences as though he were really there but the new man was far off, living in a protective shell hardened by disbelief and shock. Yes, he did things, but he didn't feel in the old ways, he was far off being reborn.

My wife's grief would bring the new man back, at least for a while. There was no fixing her, just acknowledgment of the hurt and pain and helplessness we both felt. I was there for her as she was there for me and we bonded in our grief at depths we did not know existed. My son did not die to make our marriage better or worse and his death did not change what it fundamentally was and is. There is however a new level where we meet to hurt and heal together.

When a baby is born there are pain and tears followed by profound joy. If that baby dies before his parents, there is pain and tears and a longing for peace. No man can anticipate the number of tears that will flow during his rebirth. The half hour drive to work each morning was a time of nothing but tears and pain and guardian angels to provide safety for myself and those

(Continued on page 7)

SIBS

From This Healing Journey, An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings

A bereaved Sibling wrote... Siblings have to remember that their parents are so consumed by grief that they may not be able to worry about you. Don't feel that they don't love you, they do, but their grief is so strong that it is controlling them. Sometimes you feel you are lost in the shuffle. You are hurting and everyone is telling you to be strong and you keep saying to yourself, "What about me?"

The demand for TCF programs continues to grow as grief-related problems are recognized. The death of a sibling, however, is one of the most

traumatic and least understood life crises. Adolescence is a particularly vulnerable period in which to experience such a loss. Bereaved teenagers and young adults must cope with normal developmental tasks at a time when the entire family is in crisis.

The attention and concern of family members and friends often centers on the bereaved parents. Surviving children are frequently referred to as the "forgotten mourners." They are encouraged by others to be strong for their parents and are often told they are young and therefore will get over the loss. As a result, children are offered a multitude of so-called comforting clichés rather than the necessary information they need to mourn effectively and eventually to reach a satisfactory resolution of their grief.

Judy Kaplan, Editor

I Miss You

I never put this in writing but I remember the day of your funeral. I was in my own little world, I couldn't believe what was happening. For the funeral home we collected pictures of you and made a collage of your life, but I wanted to take more pictures of you later. I didn't want this to be the end. We had the funeral and everyone showed how much they loved you. I hope you heard my song to you. You were and are the "wind beneath my wings". When we drove to the cemetery, I got out and knew we would lay you next to dad. Nothing seemed real. When I was sitting there before they were going to bury you, I didn't hear a word anyone said. I was looking at the trees blowing in the wind. I actually felt peace at that moment in time. I felt the wind and knew you were there.

A peace I knew you gave. I love you. And I knew you were safe. Thanks for that moment of peace.

Erica Herbert TCF, Troy, MI

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



PLEASE REMEMBER
Sibs 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, March 2 at 7:00 pm. First time tables; topic tables *“Did you or do you still suffer from guilt about your child(ren)? How do you feel about it?”*

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.

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

around me. The new man was every bit the good driver the old man was, but he wasn't there, he was far off being reborn in those unstoppable tears. Peace was nowhere to be found.

I am not going into detail into the many ways I think I have changed. Believe me, I have changed and so have you, fellow bereaved father. I cannot believe my son died to make me a better man. I do believe that my son's death shocked me into holding dear all that was always precious to me with the new knowledge that "it" can all end in an instant, and neither the old man nor the new man can ever fix "it."

The protective shell is fading away and real peace is finding its way into my heart and soul. But the shell will never be completely gone and the peace will never blend into complacency. We are new men with new priorities and new things to do. This does not mean we abandon all that was of the old man, the newness is in our attitudes and understanding and acceptance of vulnerability.

Dave Simone, Tampa FL

Living with Shadow Grief

Grief is a facet of grief that will stay

with you for the rest of your life.

When your grief is triggered at various and often random times by a smell, a certain time of day, specific places or events... this is called "shadow grief." Parents who have lost a child will experience shadow grief for as long as they live. It can be overwhelming to experience these episodes of grief months and years after the loss that feel almost as intense and deep as they did when the loss was new.

The types of triggers and our responses to them are as varied as we are. Anniversaries of your child's birth and death, your due date, the day you learned that something might be wrong with your baby, your doctor's office, holidays and other family traditions can often be painful triggers. Fortunately, the anxiety and anticipation that build in our minds as we lead up to certain anniversaries is usually worse than the actual event turns out to be. It can be helpful to plan ahead if you know a certain trigger of yours is looming on the calendar. Planning a way to remember your baby, privately or with family and friends can be especially healing.

There will also be times when you are feeling especially low and depressed,

and do not realize until much later that you were experiencing shadow grief. You might find that in time your eye is not watching the calendar so closely, and suddenly a meaningful date arrives, for example. Although your awareness might not be focused upon the event, your subconscious remembers for you, and your body will feel the impact of this grief.

Allow yourself the time and space to feel your feelings. Communicate to those close to you that you are having a rough day. There is no right or wrong way to experience grief.

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

March 2023

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

March Wind

Perhaps our grief is like the
March wind.

When the wind blows, we have two
choices: we can either
stand tall and face the wind, or we
can

allow it to blow us over.

Stand tall against the wind, and
imagine it is
your child giving you the strength to
endure.

When you feel that gentle breeze
or the wind upon your face,
that's your child giving you a great
big hug or

just a soft embrace.

May the winds of March
dry your tears and
help you feel the presence of your
child.

TCF Quad City Area Chapter, Moline,