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.

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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:
November 5th - - 7:00 pm - Meeting: see page 7 for more info
November 17th -Tuesday, at 6:00 pm. TCF Dinner at: Sandy's Beech, 25853 5 Mile Road, Redford, MI 48239
Contact Joyce Gradinscak, 734-560-6883, text or call
No Craft meeting until further notice.
Dec. 13th - Annual Candle Lighting - Kellogg Park



Annual Compassionate Friends Candle Lighting

The Compassionate Friends World-wide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon.

The Livonia Chapter Candle Lighting will take place in Kellogg Park on December 13th at 7 pm. There will be music, readings and all the names of children that have been submitted will be read. Families and friends are welcome. Candles are provided.

If your child(ren)'s name was on the list last year, it will be read this year. If you would like your child(ren)'s name added to the list to be read, call 734-778-0800.

See page 7 about ornaments.

Thanksgiving Thoughts

If your thoughts are turning to the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, and your stomach turns…
…if you are cynically wondering just what there is to be "thankful" for…
…if you are asking yourself how can I be around family when my family is not complete…
…if you are questioning how you are going to listen to idle chatter about wallpaper and earrings when you know these things don't matter anymore…
…perhaps the following ideas sent in by other bereaved parents might be of some help.

* One family puts an empty place at the table with a beautiful red rose on the plate. Before dinner the whole family stands and drinks a toast to the brother who shared their life.
* A couple who has no other children invites people from work or the neighborhood who also have no family in the area to share the day.
* A young mother places a picture of her baby on the table of her mother's home and when everyone is seated she lights a candle and reads a poem.
* Going to the ocean …with only the immediate family is another person's way of handling the day.
* Another mother takes a plateful of Thanksgiving dinner to the cemetery for her son.
* One family had energy enough to work in the mission downtown

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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.

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

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serving dinner to the homeless.

So often, family members don't know what to do so they just do nothing. Their non-action translates into rejection and pain for us. If you can, ask for what you need, request your family to talk about your child, to let you stay home or leave early. If you need it, you have my permission to do whatever you need to do to get through the holiday as intact as possible. Be kind to yourself.

Sue Anderson, TCF, Seattle, WA

The Holiday Army

Here it comes again — the Holiday Army — in its annual march against us. Some of its generals are called "Thanksgiving," "Christmas," "Hanukkah," "New Year's Eve" and "New Year's Day." They are no respecters of the heartbroken and emotionally wounded, and their troops are merciless. They take no prisoners! They demand that we participate in their joy and nostalgia or they will mow us down with their militant tanks of holiday spirit. Sometimes they declare their war on us openly — without shame or remorse. Sometimes, they wait for us in ambush. Their intelligence operators have been working diligently all year, waiting for the Thanksgiving Day (or sometimes Halloween!) trumpet signal to begin their attack. They just don't seem satisfied to have their celebrations and parties and dinners and festivities unless they can recruit ALL of us into their ranks.

Actually, we wish them well. All we really want is for them to leave us alone and let us mourn in peace and quiet. We prefer our "Silent Nights" to their "Deck the Halls" and Jingle Bells." We don't intentionally spoil their fun; it's just that our pain makes them uncomfortable. They've been conditioned to believe that "The Holiday Season" should have no blemish of suffering or lack of frivolity. We must not only bandage our wounds while in their presence, but cover them with taffeta and sequins besides. They are convinced that all we need is to "put on a happy face" and all our sorrows will magically evaporate. In their mad pursuit of happiness, they shoot us with the bullets of shopping, piped-in music, special holiday foods and fragrances, gift wrapping, decorations (especially the angels!), joyous children with happy smiles, cards, invitations, parties and gift exchanges. Any other time of the year, snow is considered a nuisance to shovel and plow through. At the holiday season, though, it is touted as romantic and is linked to sleighs and starry nights in front of fireplaces, snuggled close to those we love.

The most devastating bombs they drop into our lives are the images of reunion — times of greeting and hugging folks who are much loved and sometimes not often seen for awhile. They may only be separated by geography; our absent loved ones cannot cross the chasm of loss that looms before our tear-filled eyes. They remind us of things we should be thankful for (and we are more thankful for many of those things than they can ever imagine). They prod us with their spears of delightful togetherness, never realizing that what they celebrate is what we cannot now enjoy. We would not dream of attacking them in these battles for holiday survival. With our noses pressed against the glass that divides us, we actually long to be able to be part of their happiness. We remember the times we joined in their fun and we, too, were part of their army of nostalgia and joy.

Our broken hearts and bleeding wounds do not excuse us from being gracious, however. While grief does not give us permission to be rude and selfish, and we take no overt action against their aggression, we are not without defenses in these battles. We can shield ourselves with the armor of dignity with kind but direct and simple explanations: "We understand your need for celebration, but this year we prefer quiet and private reflection and meditation." "Right now it's hard for us to function in large groups and to appreciate laughter and high spirits." "Our energy is so limited; we'd appreciate some quiet one-on-one time with you in a more spiritual atmosphere." We can gently remind them of how important it is for us to remember those we love who are gone. These are statements that clarify our position without judging or criticizing them for theirs. In kind and non-threatening ways, we need to tell them what's good for us, because they won't think of it on their own, and they can use the education. We also can exercise the muscles of our sense of humor. It will take some effort on our part, but so does anything that is worthwhile and good for us. We can teach ourselves not to fall into the trap of thinking that our grief makes us the center of the universe. We can limit our demands that others treat us in "special" and "deferential" ways because of our pain. We can cut them a little slack and remember that once upon a time, we were just like they are now. It's good and healthy for us to review our perspectives now and then and decide if we're being fair and reasonable.

We can express our love in simple and unhurried ways without all the frenetic, expensive and often hysterical hype that the holidays can generate. And we must exercise the expression of our love. Grief does not rob us of our ability to love; it reminds us ever more dramatically of our need to both give and receive love while we are here.

Whenever we can take some control in our situations, we empower ourselves, and then we feel less like victims in what seems like a war of "peace on earth, goodwill toward men." Anytime we can educate and inform with mercy and compassion, we have given a truly spiritual holiday gift of love that will keep on giving forever.

Andrea Gambill

Can I Still Grieve?

How much time am I allowed; are there rules I must go by?

Does anyone ever keep track of the thousand tears I cry?

Will I someday know the answers, have it figured in my head?

Just how long am I supposed to grieve now that my child is dead?

People think they know the answers to all the questions I may ask.

But only if you've lost a child, can you understand this task.

I'm reading all the books I can, to know what griefs about.

But do these rules apply to all?

It's hard to figure out.

While driving home from work tonight, I feel I'm sinking low.

I try to put grief off my mind, but where can I now go?

You think grief has a pattern, with a beginning and an end.

But I'm grieving for a lifetime, can you understand, my friend?

So, when I really need you, will you stay or will you leave?

What will be your answer, when I ask, "Can I still grieve?"

Debbie Hefflinger
TCF Toledo OH

A Forgiving Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving was always an easy holiday. Unlike Christmas, there was no pressure of giving just the right gift! Thanksgiving Day brought family gatherings and good food. Late on those afternoons, we would return home full from over-eating and satisfied that our family relationships were intact. It was also a day that reminded us of everything for which we were thankful. We are supposed to be thankful for our health, our families, our comfortable life, etc. The death of a child changes our perceptions, however.

When the family now gathers around the Thanksgiving table, I now see a missing plate that no one else sees. When our nieces and nephews are laughing or crying, I hear a voice that no one else hears. When a family member recounts a story about something his or her child did last week, I wish for a story to tell.

We still have much to be thankful and we should remember that. But now, Thanksgiving Day has an additional observance for us too, doesn't it? It is a day of forgiveness also. We must forgive others who cannot acknowledge our missing child, for what ever reasons. If family and friends cannot understand us, then we must try to understand them, especially on holidays. If we can exhibit tolerance, forgiveness and understanding on a day on which we offer thanks, we can climb another step on our ladder to recovery. I hope you have a forgiving Thanksgiving.

Jim Hobbs

Confusion

Two steps forward, one step back …

Or is it two steps backward, one step forward …?

Now I can't remember.

Which way am I going?

And what will I do when I "get there"?

Confusion, lack of direction, memory "loss", and a sense of just going in circles are all a part of the grieving process.

Over and over we find ourselves standing in the middle of a room wondering why we are there. We came with a purpose but darned if we can remember what it is now that we are here.

I know that it can be blamed on age but I also know that grief can play havoc with our ability to function on a day-to-day basis. Tasks that once seemed simple now take forever to complete – and we only get it done if we write it down first!

I can report that for me … it's getting better. Now, it is age more than grief which steals my memory and hides it on the counter.

Yesterday I thought I was pretty effective …

I got dressed, I ate, I accomplished things.

But today … I can't find the list, I'm not sure I showered,

And why am I looking in the freezer?

Two steps backwards, today.

Oh well, tomorrow I will start again.

Jane Ono,, TCF Coquitlam, BC

Grandparent Grief

In many families, the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are every bit as profound as those between parents and their children. The death of a grandchild also ranks high on the scale of human grief – but it is rarely acknowledged. There are few books or support groups addressing the grief of grandparents, and bereavement counselors who specialize in this kind of grief are rare. Grandparents are usually left to cope as best they can.

When a grandchild dies, the anguish of grandparents is doubled. Their grief for a son or daughter suffering this tragic loss only compounds their pain at the loss of a beloved grandchild. Grandparents who outlast a grandchild struggle with a death that seems out of order; they may cope with survival guilt, perhaps wondering why they couldn't have died instead.

Moreover, a grandchild's death chips away at a grandparent's assumed legacy. Most of us hope to make a mark in the world, and the achievements of our children and grandchildren are a part of that dream.

When one dies prematurely, that loss resonates through the generations, and like the bell in John Donne's poem – "it tolls for thee."

Helen Fitzgerald, CT



SIBS

Sibs

Don't be surprised at extremely strong feelings of rage and anger, guilt and regret. Also, there will be times of longing for that brother or sister which are so intense you think you can't stand it – but somehow you will stand it. You may have a profound sense of being alone because no one understands what you're going through. If you can, try to find someone outside of your family to talk to, someone who will listen. If you think it's necessary, don't be embarrassed about seeking professional counseling.

Acceptance takes time, but finding it is a big part of grief work. You life will not return to the way it once was – there will be a "new normal." Don't expect others to understand what you're going through because they can't. They're in an awkward position of unintentional ignorance about death and grief. What you can expect is that people will either say "dumb things" that will hurt you or make you mad, or they will say absolutely nothing.

That's why … it's important for you to know that you're not alone. There are others like you who do understand your pain, your anger, your sense of helplessness.
REACH OUT.
TCF, Verdugo Hills, CA

Now That I Am Gone

Now that I am gone, remember me with smiles and laughter.

And if you need to cry, cry with your brother or sister who walks in grief beside you.

And when you need me, put your arms around anyone and give to them what you need to give to me. There are so many who need so much.

I want to leave you something—something much better than words or sounds.

Look for me in the people I've known or helped in some special way.

Let me live in your heart as well as in your mind.

You can love me most by letting your love reach out to our loved ones, by embracing them and living in their love.

Love does not die, people do.

So, when all that's left of me is love, give me away as best you can.
Author unknown

A Young Sibling Speaks

My sister's up in heaven,
not underneath this stone,
not buried in the ground
all quiet and alone

She's with the other angels,
as happy as can be,
and from her lofty window
she watches over me.

And so I bring her flowers,
she'll see them from above.
For though I cannot see her,
my heart can feel her love.
Jessica Bryan
BPUSA, Augusta, GA



Need to Talk to Someone Between Meetings

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; tcfanarbormich.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 Thursday7-9;
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

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, November 5th at 7:00 pm - Newcomer and topic tables. Topic Which of the Thanksgiving articles speak to you the most?

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.

Carol & Glenn Mead in memory of their son, ***Bobby;*** "Much loved, much missed. Forever In our hearts. Happy 43rd Birthday Bobby. Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, DJ, Heidi & Addison."

Laura & Mike Mikulan in memory of their son, ***Zayne;*** "Zayne, we miss you so much!"

Helen King in memory of her grandson,;"Mariano; "Mariano I miss you every day. I love you, Grandma!"

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.

Thomassia Jackson whose beloved daughter, ***Clarece***, Born 8/18; Died *7/26*; 18 years

Michelle and Scott Mirkes, whose beloved son, ***Simon,*** Born 15/18; Died 7/17; 1**6** years

Let Us Celebrate Their Births



Memory Tree

There will be a TCF tree at Kellogg Park that will be decorated with ornaments with our children, siblings and grandchildren's names.

If you had your child, grandchild or sibling on the list last year to be read at the Candle Lighting, an ornament will be made and placed on the tree. You can still contact the TCF at 734-778-0800 and give the names you want read and an ornament made for them.

Memory

Memory is a form of immortality
Those you remember never die
They continue to walk and talk
with you
Their influence is with you always.

Wilford A. Peterson
TCF, Kansas City, MO

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

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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

Veteran's Day

To take part in the events that honor and thank our worthy veterans is a national tradition. For the parent whose son or daughter is a veteran but has since passed away, it is a double edged sword.

They can stand tall in pride at their child's service to our country as well as their accomplishments while in the service, but within certainly lies the powerful ache of loss we all know to well.

From our chapter to all the parents feeling both pride and sorrow—we thank you for your child's service. We thank you for raising a patriot. We thank you from the depths of our own broken hearts.