

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:

September 3rd- 7:00 pm - Meeting:
see page 7 for more info

September 22nd, 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.

The Depths of Grief

We are all bereaved parents, or bereaved family members. We live with the pain of loss each day, every day. We are veterans of a most unholy pain, rising each day to begin again the struggle to survive, the fight to make sense of a world that - for us - has become senseless. Now our ranks have sadly swelled.

On the eleventh day of September many thousands of innocent people perished. The killing was as indiscriminate as it was impersonal; husbands, wives, daughters, sons, brothers, and sisters died. Each life lost on that day represents, as we know all too well, a forthcoming struggle of the survivors to go on in a newly-painful world that will make little sense.

As the relentless news poured in on that black day my sorrow grew exponentially. Grief and horror mushroomed - demanding to be expressed. Tears fell as they had not in a number of years. Inside of me, the raw pain of grief blossomed anew. "What's going on?" I asked myself. "Why this overwhelming reaction? This isn't the first tragedy you've been witness to since the death of your little girl!" My pain seemed disproportionate, yet I continued to feel raw and weepy. I was unable to hinder the tides of emotion that swept over me that day, and all the days that have followed. Eventually I began to realize I was closely relating on two levels to the

thousands who - without warning - had lost those most precious to them. The devastation that occurred in New York had happened in the place my heart called home, so on that level this was a personal tragedy. And as a grieving parent, I cringed at the unimaginable agony of those left behind --the weeks, months and years of anguished days and sleepless nights that lay in store for those frantic with fear on this horrendous day. I suspected that each of them was convinced that this was the most devastating day of their lives, and while I would not dispute that, I knew they were innocently unaware of the battles to come -- the nightmares that lay in wait in the days and weeks ahead.

The tears I could not control were also for the innumerable acts of selflessness seen so many times throughout this horror. People put themselves at risk to help others; the injured lent a willing hand of support to those whose need seemed greater. As I watched this on television I was again so deeply moved. It seems our strongest bonds can be forged during the worst times in our lives. This lesson is one I learned first-hand when my own tragedy struck, and my anguish led me to The Compassionate Friends. There other grieving parents held out their hands to me, and it was there I found

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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

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*

the unwavering support that helped me survive my pain.

Now I could only hope each of these survivors would find a safe place to voice their grief. So many have been so cruelly thrust into our world. We are here, hands outstretched, for those who need us.

Sally Migliaccio

Newsletter Editor, TCF Babylon, NY

Words That Helped Me

At one of our TCF meetings a couple who regularly attend meetings mentioned something that had helped them. This has stayed with me and can be applied to many different life events. I hope this observation can help others.

Two parents can carry the same loss and yet walk through it in very different ways. Even though they are grieving the same child, their grief does not look or feel the same from one moment to the next. One may need to talk, to say their child's name often, to keep memories alive in conversation. The other may hold their grief more quietly, turning inward, carrying it in a more private space. Neither way is right or wrong—they are simply different expressions of love and loss.

A helpful way to understand this is to imagine that both parents are on the same train. The destination is shared—they are both traveling through the landscape of grief after the death of their child. But on any given day, they may be riding in different cars.

One day, they may sit together, looking out the same window, sharing memories and tears. The next, one may be in a car filled with reflection and silence, while the other is in a car where the need to speak and reach out feels stronger. Sometimes the train feels steady; other times it lurches unexpectedly, and each parent experiences that movement differently.

What matters is not that they grieve in the same way, but that they remain on the same train—connected by their love for their child and by a shared understanding that no one else can fully know. With patience, compassion, and space for each other's way of griev-

ing, they can move forward together, even when they are not side by side.

Connie Schram

Excerpts from A Letter to Parents Surviving a

Child's Suicide

I recently passed the one year anniversary of my 19 year old son's death by suicide. In that time I've experienced the rollercoaster of emotions you would expect someone in my shoes to endure.

This journey has been complicated by the creation of a mental health awareness initiative inspired by my son's efforts while alive. By being so open about his struggles (and the fact that I was so clueless about them), I have welcomed a slew of invited and uninvited conversations with other parents who are also grieving the loss of a child to suicide or struggling to support a child who has attempted suicide.

That is why I'm writing this particular post. It's for all you parents who are grieving the loss of a child to suicide or those who are attempting to support grieving family and friends.

There Is No Timeline

The first bit of insight I wish to share is that there is no timeline for this journey that you're on. If you're a planner, throw that attitude out the window. If you're looking for an agenda of what to expect, when, and how to do it, you'll be disappointed.

Understand that you've been put on a journey that has no end but it will continue to move forward. Each day will bring new challenges, new surprises, and new moments of clarity and even joy. Yes, even joy.

Don't set yourself up for further anguish and frustration by expecting to do this on a timeline. Know that you're on a journey unique to you and that while it may be rocky, each day does get a little better.

There Is No Right Answer

"Why did this happen?"

If you have not asked this question yet, you will.

If you knew your child was suffering you'll want to know why you

couldn't stop him from taking his life. If you didn't know, you'll want to know why she did it or why you didn't recognize it. There are probably many other questions you're seeking answers to.

Simply put, there's no right answer.

Know that people who have been diagnosed with depression or who have attempted suicide in the past have died by suicide. Know that those who have been seeing a counsellor and taking various medications have also taken their lives. So for those of you who did not know your child was suffering, know that even if you did, you may not have been able to prevent the tragedy.

On the other hand, there are those who have attempted suicide once, twice, or more times that have never attempted it again and live seemingly happy, normal lives (although often aided by medication and/or counselling).

The point is there is no answer to those questions. It's OK to ask them or feel the frustration but don't beat yourself up thinking you could have done something to prevent it. You may have or you may not have — you won't know.

Understand that people who died by suicide were ill and that the illness eventually took them. It's similar to having a child suffering from cancer; even when it's detected and treated, you can't guarantee that they won't eventually lose their battle with the disease.

Being "OK" is Exhausting

At some point you'll go back to work. You'll eventually start participating in group activities, you'll be out in public again. People will ask "how are you?" but you will know they don't really want to know the answer. They care and they want to help but they don't want to hear your answer, you'll see it their eyes or how they fidget when they see you coming. It's not that they don't want to help or listen, they just won't know how to respond.

So you'll say you're "OK" when you're the exact opposite. You'll not share what you're feeling when you want to crumble into their arms and cry for half an hour. You'll go

on with your day, pretending to be OK. And when you get home from work at 6:00 PM you'll be ready for bed, utterly exhausted and spent. **BEING OK IS FREAKING EXHAUSTING!** It has been one of the most emotionally taxing experiences for me this entire year. Even now, over a year later, when I give a 15 minute or 60 minute presentation to kids or parents about mental health, I need to sleep for 18 hours to recuperate.

Allow yourself the time to rest, you'll need it just from being.

Your Child Did Not Do This to You

Among the unending variety of emotions you'll experience, anger and/or guilt will be two of the strongest.

"Why did he do this to me?"

"What did I do wrong?"

"I should have prevented this."

What I've discovered from speaking to many teens and young adults who are suffering with depression is that at their lowest moments, they are not thinking of you – or anyone for that matter. They simply can't think or experience any reality beyond the pain and anxiety they are feeling at that moment.

In lucid moments, they may have the perspective to see their struggle but when depression or whatever mental illness they're suffering from takes hold of them, they don't have that perspective.

A student suffering from depression recently said, in response to the adage that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem: "You don't get it, depression ISN'T a temporary problem! It's a permanent problem.

The point is, when their illness takes over, it's like any physical illness that we seem to be able to reconcile. They simply don't have the option out, just like they don't have the option out when they're involved in a fatal car crash or when an embolism explodes in their brains.

As survivors, we must find a way to accept that this was not a rational choice. The illness of depression took that choice away from them.

They did not die from suicide...they died from depression. The choice was not theirs.

Sam Fiorella

Priceless Mundanity

Did you know that when you died everything you owned or touched became priceless?

- hairs in the bathroom sink or in your brush
 - fingerprints on a light switch
 - clothing that smells of weed and sweat
 - old cigarette butts
 - hair on your deodorant stick
 - stinky candles you loved to burn
 - where you last placed the toothpaste tube
 - soap in the bathtub
 - drinks in the fridge
 - items you had chosen but never ordered on Amazon or Temu
 - all the shows and movies you watched
 - your playlists
 - your Uber orders for fast food
 - videos and phone messages
 - your phone number
- I cannot bring myself to clean, delete or donate you away.

These last remaining physical remnants of you remind me that you LIVED, MY LOVE.

OH GOD - you LIVED!

That you were alive and real and you made messes that annoyed me but I'd happily live with everyday if you would just come home.

Brenda McGoldrick

Matthew's Mother

On the 5th year of grieving...

These are the lessons that most helped me:

1. Scream in your car. It's cathartic. Trust me. Give it a try.
2. Try not to compare your grief to others. Even if you lost the same person...it's a different relationship.
3. Isolating is normal. Just remember to check in with the ones who check on you.

4. Ugly cries...like the ones that touch the depths of your soul are actually quite helpful. A release.

5. Express your feelings. Whether on paper, to a therapist, a trusted friend or using another creative outlet...get those emotions out so they don't get stuck.

6. It doesn't matter how long it's been since you last heard their voice...the waves of grief can crash into you at any time. Any place. .when reality hits again that they are really gone.

7. Let go of the guilt. We would all go back and do something differently if we could. You only had the information you had at that time with no way of knowing what was going to happen. You are only human.

8. Sometimes it helps to change traditions so it doesn't hurt as much when they won't be there..

9. But...Try to find a way to honor them at these events so they feel close to you.

10. Anxiety is normal. Because grief lets fear take over as you are now aware that terrible things can happen. It makes you feel out of control. Talk to your doctor if you feel it's interfering with every day life.

11. Try a gratitude journal. I know this is the worst time to ask you to feel grateful but it helps. Just one thing a day. It could be that you didn't burn dinner that night. But in time..it will get easier. That's how you know you are moving through your darkest days.

12. Walk. Just getting out and getting fresh air and exercise can make a difference in your mental health. Try listening to comforting music on your walk. I love being out in nature to clear my mind.

13. Time doesn't lessen grief. It's what you do with that time. If you don't grieve, emotions will have nowhere to go. You have to feel the pain of this loss. Lean into it even if it hurts. That's how you move forward with it.

14. We are our own worst critics. Try giving yourself a no judgement zone. Grieving is frustrating.

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River Reflections

I just got back from a river rafting trip, where I found myself thinking about my brother a lot. He died 16 months ago of an overdose of morphine. I don't know why it happened; it happened. I didn't see the beginning of his life—he was three years older, but I saw the end. I can look at it now and see it in its entirety—his 33 years of living that I so much counted on and expected to last another 70 or 80 years. I thought I would always have him to talk to—about life, about family, and about ourselves.

The river was a meditative place for me. The rhythm of the oars, the gentle motion of the raft the shore gliding by, the gurgle of the water as it seeped into and back out of our raft—all of this provided just enough stimulation and was hypnotic enough that I didn't

want to do anything but sit and think. For a few days on the river, I floated without any of my day-to-day concerns, without the usual level of tension standing behind me.

What rose to the surface, visible in the clear water of my mind after the silt of all my worries sank to the bottom, were thoughts of my brother.

Nat would have liked this trip. The rough beauty of the terrain and the quiet power of the water would not have been lost on him. He would have noticed the beauty of the full moon and the light on the canyon walls as the sun rose and set.

I have felt a lot of anger at him for dying, for taking his own life, for engaging in an activity so dangerous, for playing Russian roulette, for committing suicide. He left no note, he didn't say good-bye; he left a wife and two sons whom he loved very much but who, like me, were not enough to keep him alive. It wasn't the anger, though,

that I felt on the river. I just remembered him.

Grief is at its sharpest when, after a death, he all of a sudden flashes into focus so real and so present that I can hear his voice as if he has just spoken to me. I can imagine the scent of his hair, remember the texture of his face as I touch it, and I can see him walking and talking as if he were only there a moment ago. At these times, the grief flares up; the wound feels fresh and sharp with memories of the love, the charm, and the grace. I realize both with gratitude and with anguish for the wound this reality carries, that he is not someone I can let go. These memories will come to me for the rest of my life. He is truly a part of me. He is mixed up in my blood and my bones and the electrical impulses of my brain. And in whatever way all of these things go together to form a soul, he is a part of that too. There is no escaping him.

This is the gift and the price of love—it doesn't end. My brother was there in the river's sand and mud, in the full moon, the constantly flowing cold water, the clear dry air, the red canyon walls, and the blue sky. And he was there in me. And I was there, alive and more appreciative than I would have been before he died. I was more aware of my connection to my surroundings—that one day my body will be river mud, water, and bones like driftwood. What form my love will take then, I don't know. Maybe if there is a river and desert light offering delight to someone's senses, that will be enough. I don't know.

Emily Moore

TCF Los Angeles, CA

In Memory of my brother, Na

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



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, September 3rd at 7:00 pm - Newcomer and topic tables. Topic Table: In the article on Lessons learned in five years, which of those have you learned and are their others?

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.

Judi Cappelli in memory of her son, **Christopher**; "No matter how many years have passed. No matter how much has changed in my heart, you will always live on. Love and miss you, son."

*Grief is not a disorder, a disease
or a sign of
weakness. It is an emotional,
physical and spiritual*

*necessity, the price you pay for
love. The only cure
for grief is to grieve.
-- Earl Grollman*

Especially when you have a particularly good day but end up a sobbing mess on the floor the next. Remember this journey is not linear. Try talking to yourself like you would if it was your best friend going through the same thing. BE your best friend because you are the only one who knows what this loss feels like.

15. Which brings me to self care. Give yourself love. And pep talks. And lots and lots of grace.

16. Grieving is a thousand conversations your mind has with your heart. Eventually your life (that you were given no choice but to live) grows around the pain. It's a long road of getting used to this different world without your loved one in it. The pain will dull, wounds will heal, then the scab covering it sometimes gets ripped off again during special days. And so on. Which brings me back to #15. Give yourself grace.

Because I don't have to tell you how hard this is. You know all too well. Just keep going. One minute at a time. One hour a time. Then one day. Just keep going.

Krsite Reitz via The After Glow



Dragonflies: Tiny

Messengers of Hope

For many bereaved parents, signs of love and connection often appear in unexpected places. One of the most meaningful symbols is the dragonfly.

Dragonflies begin their lives underwater before emerging transformed into graceful creatures able to soar.

For many grieving parents, this journey reflects the experience of grief itself—a passage through deep sorrow toward a new way of carrying love and memories forward.

Across many cultures, dragonflies symbolize change, resilience, hope, and the enduring presence of those we have lost. Whether they appear in a garden, along a walking path, or during a difficult moment, their presence can bring comfort and a sense of connection.

Not everyone interprets dragonflies in the same way, but for many bereaved parents they serve as a gentle reminder that love continues beyond loss. The next time a dragonfly crosses your path, perhaps it can be an invitation to pause, remember, and hold close the bond that death cannot take away.

“With each piece, the bereaved, through trial and error, find where each piece belongs or even if it belongs at all. This process is different for every person and does not adhere to any kind of timeline. This (what feels like endless) thinking is the work that grief demands—it is the creation of a new picture of your life— created one piece at a time.”

Stephanie Elson

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September 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: _____

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City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

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Love Gift Donation of \$ _____ in Memory of _____

Message: _____

Direct my gift to: _____ Outreach (Printing, postage, phone , web
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Mail to: Mary Hartnett, 5704 Drexel, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

