

**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
NORTSHORE/BOSTON CHAPTER
NEWSLETTER**



April 2009

To all those newly bereaved, who are receiving this newsletter for the first time and to all our Compassionate Friends, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that you and your family have many friends. We, who received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow, now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help. You are not alone in your grief.

Meetings are held the 1st Monday of each month at the Aldersgate Methodist Church, 235 Park Street, North Reading at 7:30 P.M. We are a self-sustaining organization with no funds except what we receive through donations from members and newsletter recipients. Please join with us at a meeting.

Grief support after the death of a child

The Compassionate Friends is a national nonprofit, self-help support organization that offers friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and there are no membership dues or fees.

The secret of TCF's success is simple: As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward and both are helped to heal.

The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

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www.thecompassionatefriends.org

UPCOMING MEETINGS

4/6/09 Two Groups Men/Women
Facilitated by Reggie and John / Stacey and Carmen

5/4/09 Annual Pot Luck Supper
Small sharing session after - Cindi

Chapter Leader: Carmen Pope 978-750-4043
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www.TCFNoShore-Boston.org

**Thank you to our recent Web Site Sponsors -
without our sponsors our website cannot be hosted.
Please consider sponsoring the web site for a month
in memory of your child.**

**Contact Carmen Pope if you are interested in doing
so, and help us keep our web site going.**

*This month's website is sponsored
in memory of:*

Ricardo

*You're gone from our sight but not from our hearts.
We miss you always and forever.*

*Love
Mom, Dad and Sister*

Chapter Sharing Pages



April Birthdays

Samantha Rose Baer
grand-daughter of Ruth and Martin Baer

Janelle Marie Garland
daughter of Barbara Beal

Peter MCassely Jr
son of Peter & Nancy Cassely

James Steven (Jimmy) Corliss
son of Linda Corliss

Anthony Ralph Cota Jr
son of Anthony and Maria Cota

Jeanette Lee Glavin
daughter of Cynthia Glavin

Thomas "Scott" Gray
son of Laura Gray

Robert R Kerr
son of Bob and Rosalie Kerr

Jeff Madden
son of Claire Madden

Faith Pendleton
daughter of Deniece Pendleton

David Conant Siljeholm
son of Anita Siljeholm

Katarina Smiles Rodriquez
daughter of Paulette Smiles

Death ends a life, but it does not end a relationship,
which struggles on in the survivor's mind towards
some resolution.

-From the movie *I Never Sang for My Father*



April Anniversaries

Andrew Dargan
son of Tod and Jane Dargan

Jennifer Gianocostas
daughter of Skip and Diane Gianocostas (step-mom)

JillHartel
daughter of Stephen Hartel and Lisa Alecci-Hartel

Devin John Henderson
son of Lori & Barry Henderson

Eric Hill
son of Peggy & Tom Hill

Ricardo Melo
son of David & Theresa Melo

Eileen E Missett
daughter of Ann Missett

Reid Robert Sacco
son of Gene & Lorraine Sacco

Brian T Wilson
son of Linda Wilson

As a regular feature, the newsletter is used to acknowledge the Birthdays and Anniversaries of the death of our children/siblings at the request of parents/siblings. Information needs to be received by the **1st of the month prior to the issue** when you want your child remembered.

If the information is missing or not correct please send the correct data to: Cindi Bolivar
28 Colburn Rd
Reading, MA 01867

Childs Name: _____
Birth Month: _____ Death Month: _____
Parents: _____

All entries will be listed in the appropriate newsletter as accurately as possible. We are all grieving parents and mistakes can happen. Please let me know immediately if there is a problem and it will be corrected in the next issue.

Chapter Sharing Pages

From the Chapter Leader

We often speak at our meetings about the individual nature of grief, that each of us is unique in the ways in which we express our emotions and mourn the loss of our children. As a newly bereaved parent, grandparent, or sibling, this discovery may present an added frustration to the already overwhelming task at hand. Because no one grieves in exactly the same manner, one is sometimes left with the desperate sense that *nobody* really understands. This reaction even occurs between individuals who share the loss of the same child.

I remember being frustrated by this very experience in the early weeks and months after my son died. I immediately sought professional counseling and then became involved in The Compassionate Friends support group, whereas my husband seemed to be doing nothing to help himself. I was fraught with worry over the fact that he did not verbalize his grief as specifically as I did, and it was a challenge for me to let him grieve in his own way. I was concerned about the emotional welfare of my surviving children, who almost seemed afraid to mention their brother's name. I was confused by the seemingly inconsistent support of my parents and my husband's parents who, at times, were so understanding, and at others, seemed to expect that we should be back to normal.

As time passed, I began to appreciate the value of our differences. I learned that my husband had his own outlets and his own methods of expressing his grief and that many of these did not happen in my presence. I found clues that my children were also expressing their grief and honoring their brother's memory in their own individual, sometimes private, ways. I realized that my son's grandparents were dealing not only with the loss of their grandson, but also with the overwhelming helplessness they experienced in trying to help their own children cope with such a monumental tragedy, so I became more understanding of their behavior. I ultimately developed a deep sense of gratitude for our individual styles and approaches, because somehow, some of us found strength while the others were struggling, and vice versa, and we were thereby able to support each other through the ongoing challenges we encountered on the journey.

One of the ways in which I have benefited from being involved in The Compassionate Friends is by being exposed on a regular basis to the individuality of grief. When I listen to other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents, I realize that my way of grieving is not the only way and I become more open to a wide range of emotional behaviors and coping mechanisms. Sharing with other bereaved families has taught me to be less judgmental, more understanding and more compassionate with other grievers, even members of my own family. In addition, I have learned that, as unique as we all are, some aspects of our grief are very similar. By listening to others in the group, my emotions and concerns as a bereaved parent are validated and I know that what I am feeling is normal. By witnessing bereaved families over time, I have learned that most find ways to cope and to reinvest in life, and that gives me hope. For those who are newly bereaved, I encourage you to keep sharing with those who understand. You, too, will feel validated and will learn about the many facets of this journey, some common and some unique. You, too, will find ways to cope and to eventually reinvest in life.

Carmen

"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself."

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

Chapter Sharing Pages

Annual Pot Luck Supper - May Meeting

Our annual Pot-Luck supper will be held this year on our regular meeting night in May (Monday, May 4th). We will begin the evening with a brief ceremony and balloon release at 6:30 PM, followed by a pot luck supper and small general sharing session.

Our Pot Luck Supper has been a popular annual event and we look forward to seeing many of our current and past members in May. This is a wonderful opportunity to share on a more personal level with other members. You are invited to bring a picture of your child to share with the group. We will also have our usual monthly birthday table available for those children with May birthdays.

There will be one balloon for every family in attendance. There will also be markers available for you to write your child's name or a special message on the balloon before launch.

Every family is asked to bring a food item to share. There will be a sign up sheet at the April meeting. If you are unable to attend that meeting and would like to attend the Pot Luck Supper event, please RSVP to Cindi at Newsletter@tcfnohshore-boston.org or 781-944-0016, or Carmen at Connect@tcfnohshore-boston.org or 978-750-4043. It is helpful for us to know ahead of time how many people to expect and what you are planning to contribute to the supper. All hot meals should be brought ready to serve – we do not have the resources to reheat food. We will need salads, main courses and desserts. Beverages and paper goods will be provided by the Chapter.

We look forward to seeing you there and are grateful for any assistance you provide in helping us to coordinate this event.

Cindi

It is crucial that we not resist the tides but instead give in to them, and trust that after each wave we will be brought safely back to shore.

Laynee Gilbert
I Remember You: Grief Journal
L.O.A. Publications, 1995

Helping Others Help You – Ten Rules for Self-Healing

1. Tell friends to call you often. Explain that after the first couple of months you'll need their calls.
2. Tell your friends to make a specific date with you; none of this "we must get together for lunch." Remind them that you're bound to have "down" times and their patience would be appreciated.
3. Tell them to please feel free to talk about the person that has died – and don't avoid that person's name.
4. It's important for friends to understand that you may appear to be doing so well but on the inside you still hurt. Grief is painful, it's tricky, and it's exhausting.
5. Ask your friends to care, but not to pity you.
6. Make it plain that friends and relatives can still treat you as a person who is in command and can think for yourself.
7. Tell your friends that it's all right to express their caring. It's okay for them to cry; crying together is better than avoiding the pain.
8. Let your friends know, too, that it's all right to say nothing. A squeeze or a hug are often more important than words.
9. Let people know that they can invite you to socialize, but that you might decline.
10. Ask your friends to go for walks with you. You and your friends can "walk off" feelings. Walks promote conversation and help fight depression.

*Ruth Jean Loewinsohn
TCF Mt. Vernon OH*

Chapter Sharing Pages

Impact on the Family after a Child's Death

"It's when we are all together that we miss him (her) the most." These are words I said after my son died and what I have heard from so many bereaved parents over the years. The empty chair—a place previously occupied by the child – is so very apparent when the family gathers. Not only does each individual in the family miss the deceased person, but the loss affects the family as a group. When a child dies, the family is thrown into a state of "disequilibrium."

Relationships may change. Sometimes, we become closer to certain people in our family as a result of the death; occasionally, maybe from lack of support, we move farther apart. In a meeting, one bereaved parent shared that she is no longer as close to her sister. Another parent spoke of her relationship with her father, which has blossomed since her child's death.

Because all of us have particular roles in the family, the position or function that child filled is lost. One person at our meeting said, *"Our child provided the humor in the family."* Another shared, *"My son was the organizer and planner in our house."* When your family eventually adapts to the loss and regroups, perhaps someone will also fill the role that the deceased child once had.

But before this transformation can happen, we must grieve the loss and the way life used to be. Because we grieve separately, we need to find times when we grieve together. Research indicates that families that practice open communication adjust better after the death of a child. My experience in working with families substantiates these findings. It is important to make opportunities to share feelings and exchange memories, to provide understanding by expressing empathy to each other and to respect each other's timing and style of grieving.

Don't expect other family members to be your entire support system: they are often too absorbed in their own grief to give you all that you need for support.

In time, you may find that your loss has left some positive effects on your family. Many bereaved parents and siblings confess that they have become more sensitive and compassionate toward others. Some families move closer together. The death of a child is a high price to pay for growth.

Janice Johnson, M.A.
LCSW BP/USA Hinsdale IL

I Still Live On.....

The little bit of sun shine
Amidst the morning sky
In the beautiful rainbow
After a storm that passes by

The icicles that cast such colors
On a snowy day
The flowers that do blossom
In the month of May

The stars up in the heavens
That twinkle in the night
The warmth of the sun light
That shines so big and bright

The rush of the waves
As they glide up to the shore
Thee distand sound of thunder
Before it starts to pour

The breeze that genly flows
With the sweet smell of the spring
The beginning of another day
As the birds set out to sing

The beauty of the world
I still live on.....
Feel me all aournd you
I have never truly gone.

*In memory of Joey and his heavenly buddies
Lyndie S Sorenson June 2007*

Chapter Sharing Pages

To Get Somewhere You Have to Leave Nowhere Behind

By Rob Anderson, Sugar Grove, Illinois

When I first tried to ride my bicycle without training wheels and without my dad holding onto the seat, a mixture of excitement and fear pulsed through my body. I felt much more fear than excitement. I was afraid of falling down, breaking my leg or crashing into a tree and killing myself. "Somebody save me...please!"

We lived outside Toledo, Ohio, with a soaring cottonwood tree in our parkway. Unbeknownst to me, someone planted a magnet inside that tree so when I started pedaling my bike I was yanked into its trunk, and not in a nice way. OUCH! Challenging my fear was not something I wanted to do, but if I wanted to ride with my friends I had to conquer that fear. At the time, I didn't understand the subtle things I was learning by pushing myself and expanding my comfort zone. I didn't know my confidence would grow, propelling me to take risks in other areas later in my life. The lesson I learned was that to get somewhere I had to leave nowhere behind.

After my son died, I found myself living in nowhere and it was fine with me, just like it is for all newly bereaved parents. Our comfort zones have been destroyed, nothing will ever be like it was. Our past lives ended and this new unwanted journey propelled us into areas we knew nothing about. The pain was so intense, the suffering so great, we sometimes didn't want to live another moment.

"Nowhere is just fine thank you." And that's where we stay for a long time. In the beginning that's okay. It's okay to feel anything we want to feel; to do anything we want that doesn't harm us or others; to stumble and fall in our new crippled lives. Nowhere becomes very comfortable, somewhere is not a place we want to go.

It's when nowhere does become comfortable, and we resist going somewhere, that we make the unconscious decision to either stay in nowhere or challenge ourselves—get back on our bikes, so to speak—and work at going somewhere, even though we don't know where somewhere will take us. Getting back up, spinning the pedals in place, balancing our bike as we throw our leg over the bar again is a scary thing to do. But when we say, "Anywhere is better than nowhere," that's when our healing begins. And it must begin if we're ever going to go somewhere with our lives. The unknown can be a frightening place because we're walking blind. And yes, we may fall down again, but each time we get back up, we're on our way to somewhere and we're a little bit stronger, a little bit more healed.

Grief is scary stuff. The scariest stuff I've ever known. As a combat veteran, wounded in Viet Nam, the terror I felt in the jungle paled in comparison to the terror I felt when I learned of the death of my son. Grief pounded on me, pinned me down, and wouldn't let me up for a long time. We all know that feeling and how terrifying grief can be. It's the monster under the bed that's now out from under the bed and holding us down, just about scaring us to death. Somehow we managed to breathe, somehow we managed to exist.

How do we start going somewhere and leave nowhere behind? We start by expressing our pain in positive ways. If we express it negatively through violence, abuse, excessive drinking or taking drugs, we will be stuck in nowhere until those destructive behaviors stop. Nowhere is not a good place to live. Trying to bury our pain only creates more pain; it will not go away or weaken if we run from it. It will chase us down, because our pain, our grief, is our lifetime companion. If we confront it and work at our healing, the pain will lessen, our lives will get better. But they will only get better if we want them to get better and we do our work. To get somewhere we have to leave nowhere behind. It's not easy to start the healing. It's hard to jump into the deep end of the pool of our grief and try to swim with all the burdens in our new lives dragging us down, but it can be done.

What are positive ways we can express our suffering? We've been bitten by the poisonous snake of death and we need to get that poison out. One of the best ways to bleed out the poison of our suffering is to talk about it, talk about all of it. It's okay to be angry, guilty, and resentful, feel sorry for ourselves and experience the myriad of other emotions that churn inside us. It's okay to express them not only through talking, but also through crying, writing, yelling at the wall, screaming in the car, beating up a pillow, hugging a friend, exercising, painting, making a memory book and on and on. If you need to, let others know what you need, ask for help. It's not a sign of weakness to say, "I don't know what to do, help me." That's a sign of strength and your desire to go somewhere and leave nowhere behind. Early in our new lives it's necessary to let ourselves feel and express all our emotions, even the scary ones. As we do our healing work, it's important to understand that holding on to the ugly emotions will keep us at nowhere; keep us from going somewhere.

Forgiveness and letting go are positive ways to leave nowhere behind and move somewhere ahead. Letting go of our anger toward those who don't "get it" is a good way to move somewhere. No one gets it like we do; don't expect them to. Letting go of our expectations of others who we think should be supporting us better will help us heal. Forgiving those who hurt us, even though they thought they were trying to help is a positive way to heal. Letting go of blame, guilt, resentment and our child's physical death are ways to propel us forward in our healing. Moving forward with our lives is always our goal. Even though we will stumble and fall many, many times (and that's okay) it's absolutely paramount to our healing that we get back up and move ahead, move somewhere further down the road on our journey. Forgiveness and letting go can be powerful healers.

Ask yourself, "What can I do to keep from staying in nowhere?" Even though the deaths of our children have absolutely crushed us, it is because of their lives that we must fight for our lives. What are the little things in your life that will take you down your path to somewhere; to a better, happier and more meaningful life? One way to move to somewhere is to reach out and help others. Helping others will help us heal. As we involve ourselves in the lives of others we can once again find meaning in our lives.

You will always have the love you have for your child. Since you can no longer give it directly to them, give it away to others, spread your love around. Volunteer at a hospital, your church or a school, mow a neighbor's lawn, wash their windows, work for your community's festival or go to a nursing home and talk with the elderly. Give a compliment, hold open a door, give someone a ride when they need it. There are lots of ways to get involved, lots of ways to go somewhere; ways to help yourself by helping others.

Even though we will forever grieve the deaths of our children, it doesn't mean we need to lead a grief-stricken life. We must continuously fight nowhere by working at going somewhere. Somewhere is a place of hope, a place where our lives can have meaning again. As we fight for our somewhere, we fight for the return of our smiles and the return of the lives of our kids. The fight is worth it; life is worth it; we are worth it.

Unanswered Questions

You left us so suddenly that I think most of us just felt shock. Did you know of everyone's love for you? We used to have lots of fun playing basketball, talking about diesel trucks and dragsters, and playing videos. You lived for scouting, you lived for animals and nature—you lived for us all. I got to know your corny jokes, your adolescent fears (although for you they were understandably real), the simplest way with which you saw life, the joy you placed in others' hearts.

How could it be that you're gone now while others seemingly less deserving live on? I'm not sure. Life isn't fair—everyone has said it—but why? Why does the sun rise? Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? I haven't been alive very long, but the only response I can come up with is love. Love has to be the answer to this question.

I love you. We all love you. We shall meet again someday, and that day will be a day of joy for me—a day that we shall again be companions. By that time, we'll have a lot to share. It already seems a lifetime since you've gone. So it goes.

We live, we love, we learn. Our biggest task to learn is to let you go and never forget.

Scott T. Anderson

**Omaha, NE
Reflections**

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations: that life really isn't always fair and predictable; that sometimes even my best still isn't good enough; and that from the day of her death, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness.

Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts. As a result of my sister's death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor and to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss. I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the rough times. But most of all I have been given the gift of time—time to heal and time to replace those painful memories of death with priceless memories of my sister's life.

Cathy Schanberger

Sibling articles from This Healing Journey, An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings, The Compassionate Friends, 2002

Chapter Sharing Pages



TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Billerica	Jeff Moore, son 17, moped accident	978-663-8539
Danvers	Carmen Pope, infant son, anencephaly; 11 year old son, boating accident	978-750-4043
Andover	Steve Hartel and Lisa Alecci, daughter ,6, leukemia	978-470-2323
Plaistow, NH	Lynne Jeffries, son, 4, drowning	603-382-4134
Rockport/Cape Ann	Jim and June McCloy, son, 32, complications during bone marrow transplant	978-546-7634
Lynn	Pat Karakashian, son, 29, Drug Overdose	781-593-5875
North Reading	Margo Vogis, son, 20, automobile accident	978-664-0688
North Andover	Catherine Olson, daughter,27, pedestrian accident	978-681-8341
Marshfield	Trudy Seveir, daughter, 27, suicide	781-837-3171
Cambridge	Lin Campbell, daughter, 23, drug overdose	617-576-9290
Woburn	Alaina Huxtable, grandson 4, accident	781-933-6845
Lynn	Gladys Nelson, son 24, cancer, special needs	781-595-4124
Winchester	Maureen McCormack, son 20, drowning	781-729-1878
Malden	Marnie Smithers, son 13, ATV Accident	781-322-1722
Reading	Stacey Smith, son 23, suicide	781-944-5841

The Butterflies Are Coming

It's spring! The butterflies are coming. Many of us at TCF hold the butterfly with utmost regard, for it is a symbol of our child's life after death. We think of our children being born into a free and more beautiful existence after the drudgery of a caterpillar's life here on earth. But what about us? Does the butterfly hold an even deeper meaning for bereaved parents? It seems, in fact, we have died also. We are never the same after the death of our child. But, can we be transformed into a beautiful creature or are we doomed to be trapped in the web of a cocoon forever? I believe it is simply a matter of choice. We can stay in the silken threads which we have spun for ourselves. It's quite safe there. Perhaps if we isolate ourselves with a really tough cocoon, no one can ever reach in far enough to hurt us again. But if we take a chance on emerging into a new person, the light of our children's love will have a chance to shine through our newly formed wings. It won't be easy. The grief cocoon holds anger, fear, guilt and despair. But we can work through it. In fact, there's no going around it. All butterflies must work their way through an ugly cocoon. The butterflies are coming. Won't you join them?

*Kathie Silief
TCF Tulsa, OK*

Prayer for Spring

Like Springtime, let me unfold
and grow fresh and new
from this cocoon of grief
that has been spun around me.

Help me face the harsh reality
of sunshine and renewed life
as my bones still creak from
the winter of my grief.

Life has dared to go on around me
as I recover from the insult
of life's continuance.
I readjust my focus to
include recovery and growth
as a possibility in my future.

Give me strength to break out of
the cocoon of my grief.
But may I never forget it as the
place where I grew my wings,
Becoming a new person
because of my loss.

*Janice Heil,
TCF-Coquitlam, BC Canada*

Chapter Sharing Pages



LOVE NOTES



*In Loving Memory of Jimmy Corliss.
You're always in my heart. Love, Mom*

*In Loving Memory of Peter M.Cassely
Forever in our hearts. Love, Mom & Dad*

*In Memory of Reid Robert Sacco.
Reid, our son, my brother and our hero, you continue to be the energy of each and every day. Your love and spirit fills our hearts and endures with every breath we take. The impervious precious bond we shared when we were together, we continue to share that same bond each day even though we are apart. Together with love always and forever, Mom, Dad and Weston*

*In Memory of Patricia Kingston.
Thinking of you. Happy Easter 2009. Love Mom & Dad.*

Chapter Sharing Pages

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person or just the right words that will help you in your grief or comfort you. Remember we have all been there and even though circumstances may be different we really do understand. You are not alone

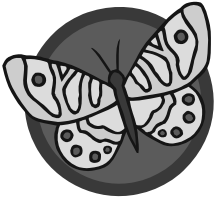
TO OUR OLDER MEMBERS

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back.... remember hearing from others farther along than you...“your pain will not always be this bad it really does get better” Come to the meetings and share your wisdom. Show others that there is hope, from someone who has found it.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
NorthShore/Boston Chapter
PO BOX 1117
Billerica, MA 01821-0961

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIALS



NEWSLETTER – April 2009



National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

***** CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.TCFNoShore-Boston.org*****

To receive these newsletters via email please send an email to the editor.