



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

North Shore-Boston Chapter

Newsletter

May 2011

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.

National Office:

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PH: 630-990-0010
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www.thecompassionatefriends.org

UPCOMING MEETINGS

5/2/11 Annual Pot Luck/Balloon Release
(DETAILS INSIDE)

6/6/11 Missed Milestones – 2 groups
Young children – Marianne
Older children - Scott

Chapter Co-Leader: Carmen Pope 978-998-4087
connect@tcfnorthshore-boston.org

Chapter Co-Leader: Mariann Lindquist 781-938-5562
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*This month's website is sponsored
in memory of:*

Francis William D'Ippolito

We miss you more than words
can express. You are always in
our hearts and on our minds.

Love, Mom, Dad and Adrienne

-and-

Eric Krasker

Missing you more and more
each day.

All our love,
Mom, Dad and Lynne

Chapter Sharing Pages



May Birthdays

Steven Bekel son of Nancy Bekel
Christopher Burke son of Dotty and David Burke
Courtney Marie Corning daughter of Ginny & Jack Corning
Erik W Dill son of Kathy Cunningham-Dill
Frankie D'Ippolito son of Frank & Cynthia D'Ippolito
Kara Lynne Irving daughter of Jean and Jerry Irving
Eric Howard Krasker son of Barry and Cheryl Krasker
Bobby Moore son of Jeff Moore
Eric Joshua Smith son of Bill & Stacey Smith



May Angel Dates

Sheryl Lynn Becker daughter of Millie & Jerry Becker
Steven Bekel son of Nancy Bekel
Dominic Cordima son of Tom and Mary Cordima
Edward Michael Hedrington son of Jo Hedrington
Alyssa Lynne Nanopoulos daughter of Andrew & Nancy Nanopoulos
Eric Joshua Smith son of Bill & Stacey Smith
Donald Tottingham son of Mal and Bobbie Tottingham
Sheryl Ann Meehan daughter of Don and Eileen Veitch

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. Permission must be given for us to print your child's date. If the information is missing or not correct please send the correct data to:

Cindi Bolivar Childs Name: _____
28 Colburn Rd,
Reading, MA 01867 Birth Date: _____ Angel Date: _____

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

At a recent chapter meeting, men and women split into separate sharing groups. In the women's group, we spent some time talking about how our expression of grief is, on the whole, different from the way men express their grief. However, after attending Compassionate Friends meetings for over 13 years, I truly believe that the expression of one's grief is more unique to each individual than it is gender-related. One of the issues we touched upon in the women's sharing session was the fact that it is sometimes easier for us to deal with our own grief than to witness the grief of our other family members (spouses, surviving children, parents).

I remember how concerned I was about my husband in the early months after our son, Tom, died. By nature, my husband is an optimist who focuses on the big picture. I, on the other hand, am a realist with pessimistic tendencies who tends to focus on details. Somehow, this balance has worked for us. I pursued counseling, Compassionate Friends meetings, constantly read books from our chapter library, and talked to anyone who would listen after Tom died. My husband had one meeting with a counselor, attended one TCF meeting, and rarely talked about his feelings. I distinctly remember one comment he made early on in our journey, that, "There are no more highs . . . just mediums and lows." Of course, I understood what he meant and agreed with the sentiment, but what scared me was that this was coming from the "optimist".

In time, I learned that my husband was finding his own ways of dealing with his grief. Even though he didn't talk as much as I tended to talk about the whole situation, he was, in fact, confronting his grief. He might choose to watch a tearjerker movie as a means of releasing his emotions. He would occasionally meet other bereaved fathers through his business connections, and the knowledge that he was not alone was reassuring to him. He was an avid golfer before Tom died, and though he did continue to enjoy the game after Tom's death, his priorities changed; he would write Tom's name on each of his golf balls before starting a round, as a reminder that the outcome of this game was insignificant in the big picture. He would often play by himself, using the time to quietly reflect and process his grief. I eventually realized that I had to take care of my needs and to trust that he was taking care of his. We learned how to weather the storms and our relationship deepened as a result.

What eventually surprised us was that the "highs" did return to our life. We did not recognize them for a long time, but when they started to creep back in, I had a new appreciation for what was good in life and what truly mattered. I hate to admit it, but I took so much for granted before this tragedy struck our family. Now, I often find myself filled with gratitude over the simplest of gifts.

Years ago, I attended the TCF National Conference in Boston. One of the workshops, presented by Vicki Scalzitti, was entitled "I Am So Mad at God: Developing a Working Spirituality for Bereaved Parents." One of the suggestions by the workshop presenter was to acknowledge and recognize the positive changes that have occurred as a result of the loss we experienced. By the time I attended that workshop, almost 8 years had passed since Tom's death. I had worked through the intensity of my early grief and had begun to recognize the silver linings. I believed that I had become more compassionate, more understanding, and more appreciative of the blessings in my life. I knew that my relationship with my husband had been strengthened. I had learned that joy could co-exist with sadness, and that the joy in my life almost seemed more real as a result of the depth of my sadness.

What I clearly remember about the workshop was that we should never compare what we have gained from this experience to what we have lost, because what we have gained will *never* be adequate compensation for our loss of our children, grandchildren and siblings. However, since we are powerless to change the outcome, it is worthwhile, when we are ready, to adjust our attitudes and to focus on the silver linings in our lives.

Carmen

Chapter Sharing Pages

On Mother's Day and Losing my Only Child

When your only child dies, do you still get to call yourself a parent?

My husband and I got "that call" on a bright, beautiful, sun-kissed Thursday. "Get here as fast as you can," they said, "She is in very, very critical condition."

Very, very critical condition ... what does that mean? Brain damage? Life support? Shattered bones? Months in rehab?

What it meant was, "Your beautiful 25-year-old daughter died instantly in an accident two hours ago, but we aren't going to say that over the phone. We'd rather tell you when you are sitting here in front of us, in case we have to catch you when you fall over." We did not fall over.

And so it was. She is gone. She doesn't get to continue to be herself, or a daughter, cat owner, niece, cousin, grandchild, friend, relative, neighbor, girlfriend, or a certified medical assistant. She won't get to be a wife, in-law, mother, aunt, grandmother, radiation therapist, someone's supervisor, or an old woman.

She doesn't get to laugh, eat lobster, swim in the ocean, entertain her friends at our family vacation home in Maine, go to Dave Matthews concerts, feel the sun on her face or brush her teeth. Expect to unpack a veggie wrap for lunch and find that I made ham and Swiss instead, and feel disappointed. She doesn't get to worry about whether she's got enough gas in her tank to get home or hope there's enough gas in the tank to grill salmon steaks for her Daddy-o.

She can't continue to be an extraordinary and unique member of a team of caring health care professionals who make it their mission to heal the injured, cure the sick, tend the pain, listen and counsel those who struggle to understand their individual situations, and help develop plans to let the hurt and hurting find their way and get back to the business of living.

I don't get to ask her advice about which earrings to wear. I don't get to buy her flannel pants to wear around the house just because I know how much she loved flannel pants, or a car air freshener just because I know how much she loved a particular scent.

I don't know whether it will be possible to ever see a day begin and believe it will be wonderful. I can't imagine my life without my PJ in it. I have to find my direction and see where she sends me, because I can't believe she would step away like this without wanting me to do something that she couldn't get to do herself.

I don't know whether, in the eyes of the world, I can still call myself a parent or a mother. But it doesn't matter how other people define that word. I know I will always be a mother — her mother — whether she's here to accept my mothering or away and out of reach.

I am her mother.

Penny Richards, TCF No Shore –Boston

Dandelions and Grass

Dandelions and grass
Clasped in a chubby hand,
Starry-eyed, so pleased with himself,
Never a bouquet so grand;
Slightly wilted, with drooping leaves,
Received as the rarest of blooms,
In my best vase on a cloth of lace
They proudly graced my rooms.

In the years to come, that same hand
Wrote a lovely poem,
Built a model airplane
And played the saxophone.
But ever in this mother's heart
In all the years that passed,
The loveliest thing that David gave
Was dandelions and grass.

Joy C. Worland
submitted with changes by Audrey Hoyt
TCF Kansas City, MO

Closure: Is it a Reality?

By Carole J. Dyck, R.N.

The use of the word "closure" is often heard in public circles or in the media especially after a tragedy and implies finality. The word comes with the sense that there will be a time, day, or event like a funeral that marks when a grieving person will be "healed" or "over it," as though it were a disease and you could magically take a pill to be cured.

Our Children Remembered

There is an expectation that when the eulogies are said and the casseroles are gone, the grief somehow magically goes away. *The truth is that those of us who are in TCF realize that the death of a child or sibling changes our lives forever, and we will never truly "be over it."*

Yes, we will not have the intensity of the pain and sorrow we had at the beginning of our grief. We will go on with life and find a new normal for us, but life will never be as it was before the death, and we will never be fully "healed." Sometimes those around us have attempted to comfort us by pointing to deadlines, replacements, or "at leasts." We have heard it said, "At least you have other kids," or "You can have another baby," or "Hasn't it been 6 months?" Many see "comfort giving" as a short-term support effort, and soon we will be "over it" as we are kept busy returning to the tasks of daily living and focusing on our blessings. These comments hurt rather than provide the comfort they are meant to provide. Grief follows no plan, no stages, timetable, formula, or schedule. There are no road maps; there are no absolutes.

We learn in TCF that everyone grieves differently. Grief is like being lost. The familiar things we relied on to live each day are gone. We must find new anchors or stabilizers along the way and learn a new way of relating to the world and people around us. We are forced to live without our child or sibling. The reality of our loss often far outweighs what we have remaining. Grief is all consuming, distorts reality, and we begin to mark time in "before or after our loved one died." No one can hurry the process of grief; no one can do it for us. Not even our spouses, parents, or other children can help us in those early days. The truth is that when our grief is new, we feel exhausted physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We barely have enough energy to breathe.

We feel as though we have no control over our lives anymore, nor do we care. We realize on some level we are helpless. We might even feel hopeless or purposeless. Some of us feel isolated, lonely, and misunderstood. Some feel like everything is trivia compared to the loss we have experienced. Some feel as if the world is spinning on around us, and nobody really cares that our child, sibling, or grandchild died. All of these feelings are normal and part of the grieving process. *And yes, we also need to realize it is a process—a very long, gradual, and difficult process.* Time does not heal all wounds, but time softens the intensity of the

grief. What helps is finding those who will listen with their hearts and give us hope and understanding. Those who will spend hours, days, and months with us as we tell our story over and over so we can somehow believe it ourselves. What helps is to surround ourselves with those patient people and meaningful activities that comfort and support.



Gradually, the cold darkness of grief begins to give way to the warmth of the memories, acceptance, purpose, and reinvestment in life. We learn to speak of our loved one without crying, and to begin to accept that whatever time we had with him or her, we would have taken even if just but a moment. We learn that grief is the price we pay for loving our child or sibling so much, and we wouldn't want it any other way. Our relationships with family, friends, and yes, even God can be strengthened or challenged as we look for new ways to connect with them. We may lose old friends who don't really understand. We learn that problems in life are not overwhelming. We are handling the worst thing that can happen to us; what else can happen? We learn to more deeply cherish those we love. We help others in grief without batting an eye. Sometimes we pick up "gifts" along the way by becoming more caring, compassionate toward others, and appreciative for what is important in life. New strengths can develop as we find our new selves along the way. Life will be different as we learn to cope, but still have meaning.

For those of you who are new in your loss, we hope that you will continue to share your sorrow with us and learn from those further ahead on the path of grief. Someday it won't hurt as much as it does now, and you won't always feel "this elephant on your chest." We encourage you to ask the family and friends around you for what you need and tell them when their expectations for you are too high. We hope you will explain to them that your grief is not on a timetable and will probably not ever reach what society calls "closure." Explain to them that you will always miss your child or sibling, but you will learn to live with a broken heart. We hope you will inform them that the mention of your child's name is music to your ears and it's okay to talk about him or her. Your TCF friends will be with you and hold your hand every step of the way.

Carole J. Dyck RN became a bereaved parent in 1989 when her son Chris died in an automobile accident. Carole was a co-leader of the Verdugo Hills TCF Chapter, Glendale, CA for several years and served on the National Board of Directors of The Compassionate Friends.

reprinted from We Need Not Walk Alone -Summer 2003

Chapter Sharing Pages

	<h3 style="margin: 0;">TELEPHONE FRIENDS</h3> <p style="margin: 0;">Our telephone friends are here to help you if you feel the need to connect with someone outside of our usual meeting night. We are not professionals - we are all bereaved parents seeking to find a way through our grief. Please be considerate in the timing of your calls to these volunteers.</p>	
Beverly	Carmen Pope, infant son, anencephaly; 11 year old son, boating accident	978-998-4087
Billerica	Jeff Moore, son 17, moped accident	978-663-8539
Cambridge	Lin Campbell, daughter, 23, drug overdose	617-576-9290
Lynn	Pat Karakashian, son, 29, drug Overdose	781-593-5875
Marshfield	Trudy Sevier, daughter 27, suicide	617-791-0439
Malden	Marnie Smithers, son 13, ATV Accident	781-322-1722
North Andover	Catherine Olson, daughter 27, pedestrian accident	978-681-8341
North Reading	Margo Vogis, son, 20, automobile accident	978-664-0688
Reading	Reggie & Cindi Bolivar, son 22, automobile accident	781-944-0016
Winchester	Maureen McCormack, son 20, drowning	781-729-1878
Melrose	Wayne Patick, son 22, suicide; intentional heroin overdose	781-622-9094
Everett	Steve Robinson, daughter 24, domestic violence	508-728-4040
Campton, NH	Melinda & David Paul, daughter, 20, sudden cardiac arrest	603-726-8190

Annual Pot Luck Supper and Balloon Release May 2, 2011

Our annual Pot Luck supper will be held this year on our regular meeting night in May. We will begin the evening with a brief ceremony and balloon release at 6:30 PM, followed by a Pot Luck supper and raffle.

Our chapter Pot Luck Supper is a popular annual event and we look forward to seeing 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.

We will provide one balloon for every family in attendance. There will be markers available for you to write your child's name and/or a special message to your child on the balloon.

In order to help defray the expenses of running our chapter, we will hold a raffle in conjunction with the Pot Luck Supper. Raffle tickets will be sold at the door that evening. If you would like to donate a raffle prize, you may bring it to the April meeting or on the night of the event. In the past, members have donated items that are symbolic of our children, often with a butterfly or angel motif. We are very grateful for any donation.

Our usual sharing session that evening will begin at 8:00 PM. Members may attend both the supper and sharing session, or you may attend only one or the other.

If you plan to attend the Pot Luck Supper event, please RSVP to Mariann at 781-938-5562 or Carmen at 978-998-4087. Mariann and Carmen can also be reached via e-mail at Connect@tcfnoshore-boston.org. 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 at this annual event.



LOVE NOTES



From Roy & Mariann Lindquist. In Memory of Joel Lindquist. Thinking of you on Mother's Day. You'll always be our shining star. Love, Mom, Dad & Andrew

From John & Elaine Kingston. In Loving Memory of Patricia Kingston. In Loving Memory of our daughter "Patty". You are remembered always with love. Mom & Dad

From The Irving Family. In Loving Memory of Kara Lynne Irving. Cherished memories on your Birthday, May 4th. We love and miss you always. Love Mom, Dad & Greg

From Stacey Smith. In Loving Memory of Eric Joshua Smith. Eric, you will always be loved and forever missed. Love, Mom, Rachel & Aaron

From Linda Corliss. In Loving Memory of Jimmy Corliss. Not a day goes by that I don't think of you and wish you were here to love and enjoy. Love you, Mom

From Alice & Gil Costa. In Loving Memory of our son and brother, Roger. We love and miss you as much, if not more than we did 21 years ago when you became our little guardian angel. Please watch over your little brother who is now in the Navy. Love, Mom, Dad & Matt

From Jeff Moore. In Loving Memory of Bobby Moore. It's hard to believe that on your birthday you would be turning 37, and even harder to believe it has been 20 years since you left us. Words can't begin to express how much I have missed you. Love Dad

From Virginia Corning. In Loving Memory of Courtney Marie Corning. Hi sweetheart, Mom & Dad miss you more every day. There is not a day that goes by that you are not in our thoughts. Happy 22nd birthday Courtney and what a special gift you have received "Grampy". Give him a kiss for us Courtney. Love, Mom, Dad & Family xoxoxo

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
PLEASE FORWARD



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
North Shore-Boston Chapter

NEWSLETTER – MAY 2011



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 *****

Help us save money and paper.....

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