



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

North Shore-Boston Chapter

Newsletter

September 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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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[www.thecompassionatefriends.org](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org)

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

**9/8/09**      **Loss of a young child/Loss of an Adult Child - 2 groups**  
Carmen / Reggie & Cindi  
**PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A TUESDAY**  
**due to the holiday**

**10/5/09**      **Alan Pederson - in concert**  
**Short discussion group to follow**

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#### [www.TCFNoShore-Boston.org](http://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:*

#### **Joey Bolivar**

Always on our minds, forever in our hearts - we feel you near us everyday. Thanks for the marble!  
Missing you every day - Mom, Dad, Jenn & Kris  
and all your extended family.

#### **Colleen "Kelly Dawkins" Lavigne**

Kel, we miss you so much. Your little girls are getting so big, your energy is definitely in them.  
Miss you, Mom, Dad, Ron, Erin & Shauna, Steve,  
Cyndi, Jodi & families

# Chapter Sharing Pages

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## September Birthdays

Robert Joseph Biondo  
son of Lorraine Biondo

Joey Bolivar  
son of Reggie & Cindi Bolivar

Derek Anthony Broughton  
son of Edward and Louise Broughton

Glenn Buttrick  
son of Heidi Scott

Scott Curley  
son of Richard and Joann Curley

Stephen Dame II  
son of Stephen & Karen Dame

James Anthony Keen  
son of Nina Keen O'Connor

Kelly Dawkins Lavigne  
daughter of Frank and Maureen Dawkins

Shane Lambert  
grandson of Irene Lambert

Mark Michael McDonough, Jr.  
son of Millie Bowman

Erik Sean Rakos  
son of Frances Rakos

*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.*

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



## September Angel Dates

Samantha Rose Baer  
granddaughter of Ruth and Martin Baer

James Vincent Barreira  
son of Susan Barreira

Sean Michael Fitzpatrick  
son of Ann Marie Fitzpatrick

Kelly Dawkins Lavigne  
daughter of Frank and Maureen Dawkins

Jeff Madden  
son of Claire Madden

Katarina Smiles Rodriguez  
daughter of Paulette Smiles

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 **15th 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

Childs Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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### From the Chapter Leader

As this summer is winding down, we are finally experiencing some more typical and enjoyable summer weather. Since I am one of those individuals who loves being outdoors, I have always looked forward to summer because of its warmth and its long daylight hours, along with the many opportunities for outdoor activities. By mid July of this year, I began to wonder if the summer of 2009 would bypass us altogether. I heard several people refer to the season as the "non-summer". Strangely, this dreary weather pattern reminded me of the early phases of my grief after the death of my son.

Through June and much of July, we had so many successive days of rain that I almost stopped expecting the sun to shine. Similarly, after my son, Tom, died, crying became a part of my everyday life. This pattern seemed to last so long that I seriously doubted that I would ever again spend an entire day without tears. I couldn't imagine that my grief would eventually subside, even though the more seasoned grievers at the Compassionate Friends meetings assured me that it would.

The rainy weather in the early part of the summer also frustrated me because it spoiled the long daylight hours. The constant cloud cover dimmed the brightest days of the year, and I felt cheated because I was not able to truly enjoy the longest days of summer. This was also reminiscent of the early phases of my grief. My pain and sadness were all encompassing; my intense emotions acted like thick, dark clouds which prevented any light, joy or hope from entering my life. Even though I still had so much for which to be thankful, the depth of my grief did not allow me to see or appreciate the good things in my life.

As I write this, August has arrived and the recent weather pattern has been largely warm, sunny and very pleasant. I am still somewhat surprised to see three or four days in a row without rain, but the beautiful summer weather has arrived and I have been able to participate in outdoor activities and enjoy some carefree days. Likewise, as I have moved forward in my grief journey, I must admit that I am now able to experience happier days. Clouds still exist, but they no longer linger as long as they once did, and are now thin enough to allow the light, the joy and the hope to shine through. I am again able to focus on the blessings in my life. I recognize and understand that I will continue to have "bad weather" days from time to time, but I am no longer stuck in the same dreary weather pattern as I was twelve years ago.

For those of you who are in the early phases of your grief, please trust that the relentless rains and overcast skies will eventually improve for you, too. Allow those of us who have been there and are now experiencing sunnier days to help you weather the storms.

Carmen

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### ***A Love Song***

The mention of my child's name  
May bring tears to my eyes,  
But it never fails to bring  
Music to my ears

If you are my friend,  
Please don't keep me  
From hearing the beautiful music.  
It soothes my broken heart  
And fills my soul with love.

*Nancy Williams, TCF, NJ*

### ***Grief***

Grief is the ceremony  
of lost treasure.  
Grief is the homage  
you pay to the love  
you were once blessed to share.  
Grief is not an enemy.

*~ Sacha*

# Chapter Sharing Pages

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## Helping Yourself Heal When Your Child Dies

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

### Allow Yourself to Mourn

Your child has died. You are now faced with the difficult, but important, need to mourn. Mourning is the open expression of your thoughts and feelings regarding the death of your child. It is an essential part of healing.

With the death of your child, your hopes, dreams and plans for the future are turned upside down. You are beginning a journey that is often frightening, painful, and overwhelming. The death of a child results in the most profound bereavement. In fact, sometimes your feelings of grief may be so intense that you do not understand what is happening. This article provides practical suggestions to help you move toward healing in your personal grief experience.

### Realize Your Grief is Unique

Your grief is unique. No one will grieve in exactly the same way. Your experience will be influenced by a variety of factors: the relationship you had with the person who died; the circumstances surrounding the death; your emotional support system; and your cultural and religious background.

As a result of these factors, you will grieve in your own special way. Don't try to compare your experience with that of other people or to adopt assumptions about just how long your grief should last. Consider taking a "one-day-at-a-time" approach that allows you to grieve at your own pace.

### Allow Yourself to Feel Numb

Feeling dazed or numb when your child dies may well be a part of your early grief experience. You may feel as if the world has suddenly come to a halt. This numbness serves a valuable purpose: it gives your emotions time to catch up with what your mind has told you.

You may feel you are in a dream-like state and that you will wake up and none of this will be true. These feelings of numbness and disbelief help insulate you from the reality of the death until you are more able to tolerate what you don't want to believe.

### This Death is "Out of Order"

Because the more natural order is for parents to precede their children in death, you must readapt to a new and seemingly illogical reality. This shocking reality says that

even though you are older and have been the protector and provider, you have survived while your child has not. This can be so difficult to comprehend.

Not only has the death of your child violated nature's way, where the young grow up and replace the old, but your personal identity was tied to your child. You may feel impotent and wonder why you couldn't have protected your child from death.

### Expect to Feel a Multitude of Emotions

The death of your child can result in a variety of emotions. Confusion, disorganization, fear, guilt, anger and relief are just a few of the emotions you may feel. Sometimes these emotions will follow each other within a short period of time. Or they may occur simultaneously.

As strange as some of these emotions may seem, they are normal and healthy. Allow yourself to learn from these feelings. And don't be surprised if out of nowhere you suddenly experience surges of grief, even at the most unexpected times. These grief attacks can be frightening and leave you feeling overwhelmed. They are, however, a natural response to the death of your child. Find someone who understands your feelings and will allow you to talk about them.

### Be Tolerant of Your Physical and Emotional Limits

Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you fatigued. Your ability to think clearly and make decisions may be impaired. And your low-energy level may naturally slow you down.

Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Nurture yourself. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. Lighten your schedule as much as possible. Caring for yourself doesn't mean feeling sorry for yourself it means you are using survival skills.

### Talk About Your Grief

Express your grief openly. When you share your grief outside yourself, healing occurs. Ignoring your grief won't make it go away; talking about it often makes you feel better. Allow yourself to speak from your heart, not just your head. Doing so doesn't mean you are losing control or going "crazy." It is a normal part of your grief journey.

### Watch Out for Cliches

Cliches--trite comments some people make in attempts to diminish your loss--can be extremely painful for you to hear. Comments like, "You are holding up so well,"

# Chapter Sharing Pages

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"Time heals all wounds," "Think of what you have to be thankful for" or "You have to be strong for others" are not constructive. While these comments may be well-intended, you do not have to accept them. You have every right to express your grief. No one has the right to take it away.

## Develop a Support System

Reaching out to others and accepting support is often difficult, particularly when you hurt so much. But the most compassionate self-action you can do at this difficult time is to find a support system of caring friends and relatives who will provide the understanding you need. Seek out those people who encourage you to be yourself and acknowledge your feelings -- both happy and sad.

A support group may be one of the best ways to help yourself. In a group, you can connect with other parents who have experienced the death of a child. You will be allowed and gently encouraged to talk about your child as much, and as often, as you like.

Sharing the pain won't make it disappear, but it can ease any thoughts that what you are experiencing is crazy, or somehow bad. Support comes in different forms for different people -- support groups, counseling, friends, faith -- find out what combination works best for you and try to make use of them.

## Embrace Your Treasure of Memories

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of a child. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring these memories, share them with your family and friends.

Keep in mind that memories can be tinged with both happiness and sadness. If your memories bring laughter, smile. If your memories bring sadness, then it's all right to cry. Memories that were made in love -- no one can take them away from you.

## Gather Important Keepsakes

You may want to collect some important keepsakes that help you treasure your memories. You may want to create a memory book, which is a collection of photos that represent your child's life. Some people create memory boxes to keep special keepsakes in. Then, whenever you want, you can open your memory box and embrace those special memories. The reality that your child has died does not diminish your need to have

these objects. They are a tangible, lasting part of the special relationship you had with your child.

## Embrace Your Spirituality

If faith is part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you are angry at God because of the death of your child, realize this feeling as a normal part of your grief work. Find someone to talk with who won't be critical of whatever thoughts and feelings you need to explore.

You may hear someone say, "With faith, you don't need to grieve." Don't believe it. Having your personal faith does not insulate you from needing to talk out and explore your thoughts and feelings. To deny your grief is to invite problems to build up inside you. Express your faith, but express your grief as well.

## Move toward Your Grief and Heal

To restore your capacity to love you must grieve when your child dies. You can't heal unless you openly express your grief. Denying your grief will only make it become more confusing and overwhelming. Embrace your grief and heal.

Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself. Never forget that the death of your child changes your life forever. It's not that you won't be happy again, it's simply that you will never be exactly the same as you were before the child died.

The experience of grief is powerful. So, too, is your ability to help yourself heal. In doing the work of grieving, you are moving toward a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in your life.

## Related Resources

- [Understanding Grief: Helping Yourself Heal](#) (book)

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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*

## Chapter Sharing Pages

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### **TELEPHONE FRIENDS**



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.**

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

### **CELEBRATE THE CHILDREN CONCERT**

by **Alan Pedersen**  
**October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

At our next chapter meeting, our members and guests will have an opportunity to attend a performance by singer/songwriter, Alan Pedersen, who also happens to be a bereaved parent. Alan has graced us with his talent on two other occasions, in September 2006 and May 2008. We are fortunate that he will be in this area in October and are eager to welcome him again. The performance will begin at 7:30 PM, which is our usual meeting time. For those members who would prefer to attend a regular sharing session instead of Alan's performance, we will provide the opportunity to do so that evening. If you are interested in learning more about Alan and his music, please feel free to log onto his website at [www.everashleymusic.com/home.html](http://www.everashleymusic.com/home.html). Alan will also be performing for some of our neighboring chapters. His calendar is posted on his website and you may contact the other chapters by logging onto [www.tcfno-shore-boston.org](http://www.tcfno-shore-boston.org). The contact information for surrounding chapters is listed on the "Neighboring Chapters" page.

A whispered wish of remembrance  
 Silent words of loss  
 A song of good-bye  
 An unspoken prayer for lasting peace  
 A message of hope  
 Rejoice for the spirit that has passed.  
 Release the sorrow and the sadness.  
 Rebuild a life again.  
 Emerging from your cocoon so gently placed  
 Sensing the freedom in the waiting sky  
 Wings open and quickly a flight  
 Adrift in the air  
 dancing with the wind  
 Aglow in the sunlight.  
 The message of hope  
 Touching the spirit  
 Teaching to begin anew  
 Transforming the wish into hope  
 on the radiant wing of a butterfly.

~ Kirsti A. Dyer, MD, MS

### **Message of Hope**

# Chapter Sharing Pages

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## 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 – SEPTEMBER 2009



National Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://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](http://www.TCFNoShore-Boston.org) \*\*\*\*\*

Help us save money and paper.....

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