



The Compassionate Friends

Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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The F-M Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at
FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
127 2ND AVE E
WEST FARGO, ND

Please enter on the west side. Our meeting is in the Fellowship Hall - lower level, west side

Meetings for 2023 will be quarterly instead of monthly

Next Meeting & Topic
September 14, 2023 - To be determined

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting – 6:30 pm on August 24th @ Randys Too – Note we are meeting half a hour earlier

LOVE GIFTS

Patrick Hecker in memory of his wife, Marilyn Hecker and his son, Patrick J Hecker

We are deeply grateful for the LOVE GIFTS given this month.

Our chapter and all chapters are financed solely through your Love Gifts.

Donations make this newsletter, postage, books, tapes, etc. possible.

Thank you for your tax-deductible gifts.

Happy Summer! The F-M Chapter of The Compassionate Friends needs assistance. We are looking for volunteers to help with newsletter prep, writing out cards, other secretarial duties, and meeting assistance. If you are interested, please contact Kara at 701-261-0668 or Sheryl at 701-540-3287. You can also email us at tcf1313@gmail.com.

OUR CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE.

WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS. ©2007

LOVE

“...Grief is the price we pay for love. We did not lose our children. They died, taking with them our hopes and dreams for the future, but, never, never taking away their love. Though death comes, love will never go away. Hold it tight, the love our children gave us. Hold it tight through the storms of grief and bring it with you into today. Love never goes away...” ~ Darcie Sims

Our Mom's group generally meets on the 4th Thursday of the month. This month we are meeting at 6:30 pm at 7 pm at Randy's Diner Too, 641 32nd Ave W, West Fargo. Our gatherings are very informal as we meet to talk about our children, books, recipes, jobs and whatever else comes up in conversation. We all have times when we need the listening heart of another mom or grandma. Please join us this month on Thursday August 24th. For more information, please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

We are asking, would you please receive your newsletter by email. We do not want to remove anyone from our newsletter mailing list who is benefiting from receiving it. We hope it is a help to you while going through your grief, giving you better understanding of your feelings and letting you know “We need not walk alone”.

We consider this an important function of our program. If you have email, would you consider receiving your newsletter in email format. You will receive your copy earlier if you opt to receive it by email. If you wish to receive your newsletter by email, please email Nancy Teeuwen at fmtnwlr@live.com with your full name and your child's name. **Note:** If you are already receiving the newsletter by email, no action is required.

With Whom Can We Share our Feelings?

For many of us, there are few people with whom we can share our innermost feelings; yet these very feelings may be nearly exploding to get out! Perhaps for the first time in your life you are really angry—angry at God?—at your dead child?—just angry?!

Are any of you bereaved parents going about your daily routines, appearing to those around you to be “doing well”? Yet in your “alone moments” you hurt so badly you think you may never feel better again? Or perhaps you’re not even resuming a routine, lack motivation, are barely functioning. Many bereaved parents have shared these feelings with each other.

Who would understand if you told them you started sobbing when you passed your dead child’s favorite food in the grocery store?...Or that you want to yell at the crowds nonchalantly walking in the shopping center, “Don’t you know my child has died?” Another bereaved parent probably would understand.

To how many of your friends could you tell that you kept some of your child’s clothing “handy” and experienced a bittersweet feeling when you smelled these clothes? Another bereaved parent would probably not think this unusual.

How fortunate you are if you can share these and other feelings with your spouse, family members, your minister, or good friends. However, many times, these people from who you would expect the most support aren’t equipped or can’t handle your normal feelings of grief.

One of the benefits mentioned most often of Compassionate Friends, whether it’s by attending the meetings, using the available listeners by phone or through the newsletter, is hearing that your feelings are not unusual after all. It is also most comforting to hear from bereaved parents for whom it has been 3, 6, or 7 years since their child died that they experienced many of these same feelings, worked their way through their grief and can now say, “I don’t feel that way anymore. I really laugh and don’t feel guilty.

“I’m leading a productive life again. I may think of my child almost every day, and still miss him/her, but I no longer review details of the accident or illness, or circumstances surrounding their death. I’m no longer angry or feel guilty. Most memories are pleasant memories.”

This is why we “old-timers” continue to attend meetings, remain available by the telephone and try to meet peoples’ needs through the newsletter.

~ Carolyn Reineke, TCF/Fort Wayne, IN

Loved and Missed Forever

Many people have asked me this question: “Does time heal?” I often say that I will grieve for my son for the rest of my life but I do believe that time softens the pain and the anguish. We can cope with the loss, but we never forget. The closer we are to our children, the harder it is when they leave us. Being a member of a TCF group can help us to see how our members cope differently with their grief and the way they feel after a period of time. Some have lost children less than one year ago and others ten years ago.

Talking things over in a group and knowing that you are not alone in your grief works wonders. Often family and friends listen to you for a few weeks after your child’s death but then tell you to get on with your life. Little do they know that this is not possible.

I have listed below how I feel seven years after my son’s suicide, and how I felt in the beginning of my grief. I do hope that this will help the newly bereaved and give them some hope for the future.

Early Grief

1. Cried all day.
2. Could not concentrate.
3. Could not read.
4. Very bad memory
5. Did not want to go out.
6. Could not drive.
7. Would not go on holiday.
8. Dislike people.
9. Liked my own company.
10. Lonely. Missed him at family gatherings.
11. Wanted answers to “Why?”
12. Would not accept he had taken his own life.
13. Wanted to talk about him all the time.
14. Frightened that people would forget he lived.
15. Photos and videos are very important now.
16. Walked the house at night. Nightmares.
17. Hated shopping.
18. Jealous of other couples with a son.
19. Kept looking for him on railway stations.
20. Believed his spirit was with me always.
21. Wrote to Michael about special family events.
22. Had counseling for two years twice a week.

Seven Years Later

1. I cry now and again.
2. Concentration much better.
3. Read many books.
4. Memory improved but not great.
5. Like to go out.
6. Drive a great deal.
7. Enjoy holidays.
8. Have accepted people’s ignorance.
9. Still do.
10. Still the same.
11. “Why” is not important now.
12. Know that he did.
13. Still like to talk about him but people and places selective.
14. All that is important is that our family does not forget.
15. Still cry when I see them.
16. Sleep much better. Rarely have a nightmare.
17. Enjoy shopping now.
18. Still jealous.
19. No longer look for him.
20. Still believe he is with me always.
21. Wrote in a journal every day. Now realize how bad my grief was.
22. Now run a group for other bereaved parents

~ Author unknown

Dancing In the Flame

Though I am tired and weary,
My eyes continue to weep,
And my heart denies me the comfort,
That I find only in my sleep.
So I sit alone in the darkness,
Before the firelight,
And stare into the flames,
On this dark and moonless night.
As the flames leap and dance,
I am surrounded by an eerie sight,
That evokes haunting memories,
Brought to life by the fire's light.
My thoughts take me back,
To a time when you were here,
To times when laughter filled my heart,
Times lost forever, I fear.
In the flames, I see your face,
Your sweet and loving smile.
And I know that we will meet again,
But I must wait a while.
These quiet moments of reverie,
Bring comfort to my aching heart,
And tell me that you and I,
Are never far apart.
Now my heart begins to lighten,
As sleep arrives to claim,
The pain I felt just moments ago,
Before I saw you dancing in the flame.

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux

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A Solitary Journey

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

~ Helen Steiner Rice, TCF/Pasco County, FL

THOUGHTS ON SUICIDE CONCERNING GUILT

Many survivors feel guilt, blame, anger, shame and sometimes relief. It is important to realize that although you can do a good deal to help the person who is not entirely certain he wants to seek death, no one can prevent someone else from killing himself if he has firmly decided to do so. You may have been able to prevent the preventable; don't berate yourself for failure to prevent the unpreventable.

None of us in any of our relationships with anybody could bear the sort of scrutiny that the survivor-victims turn on their relationships. We have all done and said things that are regrettable, especially with the pernicious wisdom of hindsight, once someone had died. But we have not killed anyone by so doing. We must forgive ourselves for having had a normal human relationship and look also at the constructive and creative aspects of it.

- From "The Facts of Death" by Michael A Simpson

THE NORMAL FAMILY

If you think you are going insane, THAT'S NORMAL.
If all you can do is cry, THAT'S NORMAL.
If you have trouble with the most minor decisions, THAT'S NORMAL.
If you can't taste your food or have any semblance of an appetite, THAT'S NORMAL.
If you have feelings of rage, denial and depression, THAT'S NORMAL.
If you find yourself enjoying a funny moment and immediately feeling guilty, THAT'S NORMAL.
If your friends dwindle away and you feel like you have the plague, THAT'S NORMAL.
If your blood boils and hair in your nose curls when someone tells you, "It was God's Will," THAT'S NORMAL.
If you can share your story, your feelings with an understanding listener – another bereaved parent, THAT'S A BEGINNING.
If you can get a glimmer of your child's life rather than his/her death, THAT'S WONDERFUL.
If you can remember your child with a smile, THAT'S HEALING.
If you find your mirrors have become windows and you are able to reach out to other bereaved parents, THAT'S GROWING.

~ Edith Fraser

Butterfly Wings, Bricks and Lead

When I saw her load of grief, it looked to me to be merely a light load of butterfly wings, as compared to my full load of heavy bricks. Then I saw another man, and he seemed to be carrying a small load of lead. But as I watched her step on the scales bearing her load of butterfly wings, the scales read "one ton." When he stepped on the scales with his load of lead, the scales also read "one ton." I knew my grief-load of bricks would weigh more, but those scales read for me, "one ton." Our loads of butterfly wings, lead and bricks weighed exactly the same to the one carrying that particular load of grief.

We bereaved parents often feel resentment when a non-bereaved person speaks about our child's death. HOW can THAT PERSON know or even dream of how I feel or what I am going through? These feelings may be justified. But when we begin to feel resentment toward another bereaved parent "That child's death was easy compared to my child's death," "I have suffered more than she/he ever did" —we should remember that each of our grief-loads weights two thousand pounds to the one under it. Compared to Rose Kennedy, who had one child in a mental institution, and lost one daughter and three sons in violent deaths, my grief-load begins to look as if it were made of gossamer soap bubbles, but when I again step on that scale, it still reads, "one ton."

Our grief-loads may appear to weigh less because we who are under them have grown stronger through time and grief process maturation. The load actually weighs no less; it is we who have grown stronger and can carry it more easily. Sometimes we can even completely ignore the weight that is still there. Always be careful in judging another's grief-load. Remember the lead, butterfly wings and those bricks, and how they all weigh the same to the one under that load of grief.

~ Tom Crouthamel, TCF/Sarasota, FL

It is the will of God and Nature that these mortal bodies be laid aside, when the soul is to enter into real life; 'tis rather an embryo state, a preparation for living; a man is not completely born until he be dead: Why then should we grieve that a new child is born among the immortals?

~Benjamin Franklin, 22 February 1756



OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED *BIRTHDAYS*



CHILD

PARENTS



| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| KASIE JOANN BERG..... | 43..... | KIMBERLY FOLSTROM |
| HALLIE CLARE BJELLAND..... | 19..... | ANDY & RHONDA BJELLAND |
| RUSS T BOYLE..... | 49..... | TOM & CHERYL BOYLE |
| DEREK R CHURCH..... | 26..... | KELLY CHURCH |
| JAKE EDMUND DAVIS..... | 32..... | ED DAVIS |
| CONNOR RAY FORDE..... | 27..... | RON & KARLA FORDE |
| NATHANIEL "NATE" HAALAND..... | 36..... | SUSAN PETRY |
| ROBERT DEAN HANSON..... | 47..... | STEVE & DIANE HANSON |
| HEIDI HELLAND..... | 36..... | JOHN & TERRI HELLAND |
| TARI ELLESS HELLER..... | 68..... | RICHARD & CLARE ELLESS |
| KEVIN GENE HUELSMAN..... | 52..... | EMMA HUELSMAN |
| CORDELL ALAN KISER..... | 51..... | KEITH & SANDRA KISER |
| TRAVIS SCOTT KOENIG..... | 36..... | LAUREL KOENIG |
| ERIC CRAIG LARSON..... | 43..... | CRAIG & BARB LARSON |
| KELSEY GRACE MILLER..... | 30..... | SHAWN & JIM MILLER |
| KYLE NELSON..... | 29..... | JERRY & YVONNE NELSON |
| MICHAEL "MIKE" ROY NORBY..... | 64..... | LAROY NORBY |
| CAITLIN JEAN POSCH..... | 35..... | DEAN & JEANNIE LAMB |
| BRANDI ROSE IRENE TEEUWEN..... | 21..... | JOHN & NANCY TEEUWEN |
| DANE TVEDT..... | 35..... | TOMMY & LEAH TVEDT |
| CORA WAGNER..... | 23..... | DONNA J WAGNER |
| DILLON ANDREW WILSON..... | 30..... | DENISE WILSON |



ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD

PARENTS



| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|------------------------------|
| WHYLIX EDWIN DITCH..... | 4..... | LANCE & TASHARA DITCH |
| DOUGLAS C HUDSON II..... | 3..... | DOUG & SUE HUDSON |
| BRANDON HUSETH..... | 1..... | ROBERTA & BRANDON WINGE |
| CORDELL ALAN KISER..... | 11..... | KEITH & SANDRA KISER |
| JACOB LABER..... | 7..... | DEBRA LABER |
| TYLER JAMES LARSON..... | 2..... | KEVIN & CHERYL LARSON |
| KELSEY GRACE MILLER..... | 30..... | SHAWN & JIM MILLER |
| TONY MILLER..... | 8..... | SHAWN & JIM MILLER |
| SAMUEL JEROME NOESKE..... | 6..... | JERRY & AMY NOESKE |
| NICHOLAS ORVIK..... | 6..... | KIRSTEN ORVIK |
| KYLE KEVIN QUITTSCHREIBER..... | 5..... | KEVIN & KATHY QUITTSCHREIBER |
| TYLER ROURKE RICHARDSON..... | 3..... | JENNIFER RICHARDSON SMITH |
| GREGORY SEARS..... | 14..... | LORI & JERRY BRADY |
| BRANDI ROSE IRENE TEEUWEN..... | 21..... | JOHN & NANCY TEEUWEN |
| SCOTT ANTHONY TOBOLT..... | 20..... | JOHN & MARY TOBOLT |
| ROBIN VIGDAL-HOSLER..... | 18..... | WALTER & KARIE COWDEN |
| AUSTIN WAYNE WAGAR..... | 11..... | JAMIE & SCOTT OLSON |
| KRISTOPHER WEISS..... | 5..... | HERMAN & RENNAE WEISS |



Please check out our Chapter website's page for 'Our Beloved Children'. If you would like your child's picture and a poem or story posted on this page, please submit them to us at tcf1313@hotmail.com or mail them to our PO Box (listed on the back of the newsletter). Photos and poems/stories sent to the PO Box will be electronically scanned and then returned to you so please remember to include a return address.



SIBLING PAGE

Like the Butterfly

It fluttered above my head
Weightless in the soft breeze.
I reached up my hand
It lit on my finger.
Waving glistening wings gently,
It looked at me for timeless moments.
I smiled, reaching deep and
Finding all those cherished memories.
As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,
I knew we had said hello once more.
~ Leslie Langford, TCF/North Platte, NE

DO NOT OVER PROTECT ME ... LET ME BE ME...

When you are consumed with grief, don't forget about me.
Let me be me ...
I grieve too but different from you, I miss my brother/sister too.
Let me be me ...
Tell me I can't fix your pain. Don't tell me I won't understand.
Please don't overwhelm me with your grief. Just like the real
world mine doesn't want to talk about a dead sister/brother.
Let me be me ...
Tell me often that you love me for being me. Ask me about my
goals and dreams for the future.
Let me be me ...
Don't break my spirit with your grief.
Let me be me ...
Let me follow my dreams. Now they will include some of my
sister's/brother's dreams.
Let me be me ...
Don't overprotect me.
Let me be me ...
Please don't feel every spare moment I have with basketball,
baseball, soccer, music or dance classes, just so you can fill your
spare time and fall exhausted into bed at night. I need free time
to explore who I am.
Let me be me ...
Don't forget to continue to teach me to celebrate life. I need to
know that through all this pain there is hope ...for my future.
Let me be me ...
As young as I am please don't overprotect me ... Love me,
guide me, teach me.
LET ME BE ME ...

~ Colleen, TCF/Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Dedicated to all the brothers and sisters of The Compassionate
Friends.

WHEN...

when we finally realize that you
are always going to be smiling
and dancing in our hearts,
then, our pain shall turn to joy.
~ Bob Walters, TCF/South Lake Tahoe, CA

REST, MY BROTHER

Rest, my brother, you now have peace.
The wars within you all have ceased,
And with the rising sun each day,
Upon the heaven you will play.
Until that day we meet again,
Know I love you, my brother, my friend.
~ Sandra Evans, TCF/Kearsarge, NH

I Will Miss You

I feel great anxiety now that your time is growing short.
Seven weeks since we first heard the word "Cancer".
The time is way too early—
Days, weeks, and years too early.
What of our plans?
I love you. I want you to stay.
Please Lord let her stay with us.
But I also feel your pain.
I see it on your face.
I see it in your body.
Your sad eyes say you want to stay.
With all your might you want to stay.
But the pain is great—overpowering.
How helpless I feel.
Sitting by your bed.
Holding your hand.
Watching you sleep.
I will miss you.
Memories come to me.
I smile then sadness washes over me.
I cry.
Finally I realize...
Your breathing is quieter and much slower now.
Peace has relaxed the anxious lines on your face—
Your beautiful face.
At last relief has come to you...but not to me.
Your soul spirit is lifted.
He has taken you home.
I will miss you. Oh, how I'll miss you.

~ Linda Jo Palo

In loving memory of my sister, Corinne (7/6/50 – 4/26/07)

I'M MISSING YOU

I'm missing you -
All day, every day.
On a bright summer morning, or
When the moon is full.
In the golden days of fall,
As the storm clouds build and it's snowing
When the willows begin to turn green -
You are always with me,
In my mind and in my heart.
My brother, My Good Friend.
I'm missing you.
~ Kris Cunningham, TCF/Moro, IL

MY BROTHER'S EYES

I search for my brother's eyes in my son; and in me I see his
smile.
With my offspring all around me; I hold on to him for awhile.
Although he died so long ago he continues to live still.
In this one's laugh and that one's hand – I always feel a thrill.
My family laughs when I find the likeness – the features that
remind.
They say I'm making it all up and that I must be blind.
But I have memorized it all and find him in little ways.
His eyes, his smile and gestures are still with me today.
~ Nina Danielson, Cape Cod, MA
Dedicated to my brother Moss

Newly Bereaved... Self Care and Health in Bereavement

I can remember in my very early days of grief wandering my home asking myself and whoever was in earshot "How do I do this?" How would I continue, heal, pick up the billions of pieces of me shattered across the universe? Over the past few years now, I have learned only a few things. I am certain I have more to learn. The camaraderie of The Compassionate Friends is built on sharing— among other things.

This is my "how" list, keep what works for you— round file the rest.

Eat when you can, things which sound or taste good. Be mindful that overindulging— eating your grief— will only bring poor health and extra pounds. Early on though, just make sure you eat to keep your health. Others need you well.

Sleep when and if you can. It will be hard and we all know that nightmares or just wakefulness can plague the bereaved parent. Sleep issues— if they impact your health or well being should be addressed with your health care provider.

Sometimes crying yourself to sleep is a means to an end. Crying in the shower or a soothing prebedtime bath might work as well. The crying is a given— as a sleep enabler, not horrible.

Water— drink enough. If you cry a lot, or a little— it depletes your stores. Replenish. Stress and mourning will rob you of hydration also. Replenish. Water helps us restore and heal. Make it a healthy habit.

Support group— monthly meetings, time in the company of nurturing friends, gathering in places of worship or meditation. There is strength and healing in these sacred circles.

Express— find healthy outlets to express your grief. Some yell, some cry, some rage, some paint, some journal, some read, some bake or cook, some pray, some serve the less fortunate. Find that activity or activities that soothes your soul and do them. Tend your soul and your broken heart.

Movement— find some way to move in your day. There is our walking group you could join, or many enjoy hiking. Others run or swim. Others— get out of bed. There are days that is enough, and quite an effort really. Finding a way to move when you seem rooted in one place is difficult but necessary for healing and health.

Ritual— most bereaved parents have rituals they do to honor their children and heal themselves. We often have small memorials set up, we create gardens or visit our child's grave sight. We find rituals to mark their birthdays and the anniversary of their death. Try to create rituals that don't become an added burden. Make an agreement with your self that when or if it becomes so, that it is not forbidden to let it go. Some rituals are simply only for a season. Some will bring you great comfort over the years.

Permission— give yourself permission to grieve. I firmly believe that mourning our children is sacred and an endeavor worth giving your all. After all— grief is love with nowhere to go. Allow and defend your right to mourn. Good heavens, no one should try to deny you that.

Choice— allow yourself to make healthy choices that you choose freely that will allow you to grieve, and heal. Choose the way you wish to grieve. Choose without forcing it to allow yourself to laugh and have joy as well— your child will not feel betrayed— I promise.

We love you and we want you well— with no demand to be silent or dry eyed.

~ Penny Daniel, Snohomish, WA

Names in Granite

Several years ago, on a visit to Washington, D.C., I visited the Vietnam War memorial. I knew a young man who died during the war and whose name appeared on the Memorial. I made a point of finding his name of the Wall; it was a moving experience for me. After I located his listing, I stood at the Memorial, reflecting on his life, his surviving child and wife, and thought about what this Memorial must mean to them.

This is a Memorial that was born in controversy. One veteran called it, "the black gash of shame." Another veteran thought the Memorial did little to lift the spirits of the men who fought in the Vietnam War. In fact, a second monument was built on the site to pacify those who expressed initial dissatisfaction. As years have passed, however, and millions have visited the Memorial, it has come to be a place of healing and peace.

People may wonder about its success as a tribute to the men and women who fought and died in Vietnam. But I don't. As a TCF chapter leader and editor of our chapter newsletter, I have come to understand the meaning of the Vietnam Memorial and its message to all of us.

We have a column in our newsletter titled, "That Their Light May Always Shine...Our Children Loved and Remembered." This column lists the day a child died, his/her name, and the child's parents. We call these "remembrance dates" rather than anniversary dates, thereby avoiding a word that connotes celebration and jubilation.

Occasionally and accidentally, I have omitted a child's name. Invariably, when this happens, I receive a phone call from a very distraught parent who wants to know why their child's name did not appear in the newsletter.

In fact, recently, a mother called to inform me that I had omitted her son's name. This child died five years ago. I asked why this error caused so much pain. She said, "When his name appears in the newsletter each year, it is the only time I ever see it in print. It is a sign to me that he lived and to anyone else that reads the newsletter. Maybe everyone else has forgotten that he lived, but I remember and the newsletter reminds others. Then I know I am his mother."

I understood, as never before, the importance of the written word, or as in this case, the written name. Any person who questions the impact of a black granite wall listing 58,132 names has never experienced the death of a child.

~ Cissy Lowe Dickson, TCF/Houston Bay Area Chapter, TX

Benchmarks

Goodbye would be too difficult,
Although I know you are gone.
Instead, I keep you in my heart
And your memory lives on.
I have redefined my purpose, son,
Since you are no longer here.
With your death I faced a choice To die, exist or to live free.
My life has changed forever, child, I'm redefined each week,
You would call these "benchmarks"
Of goals set and then achieved.
And so I set my benchmarks,
Achieving many, reshaping some...
But everything is different now
Except your mother's love.
~ Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/Katy, TX
In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen

We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name in the newsletter. Permission may be withdrawn at any time by written request. This information is used to maintain our Chapter database. It is confidential and is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter. A submitted permission slip is valid for four years from the month received.

Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

Date: _____

(Signature)

Please return to: The Compassionate Friends of F-M Area, PO Box 10686, Fargo ND 58106
(If you have already submitted a permission slip within the past 4 years, you do not need to submit another one.)

I'd Rather do it MYSELF!

Many of you are far too young to remember an old TV commercial for headache pain relief. (Sadly, that doesn't include me!) Growing up, I remember seeing the situation play out with different people who were so stressed out with pain that their irritation level was off the charts. When some well-meaning relative or friend suggested something to do, the one who needed to use the advertised product would shout: "I'd rather do it MYSELF!" Naturally, the camera would then pan to the product that was supposed to instantly relieve this pain and stress.

As kids, we'd watch our parents or teachers start to get upset about something, and one of us would whisper a mimic of that commercial: "I'd rather do it MYSELF!" Then we'd all dissolve into giggles.

I wonder if sometimes, in grief, that is what we realistically really need to do: do it ourselves. This thought came to mind while reading letters from many of your readers. So many times I see things like:

- * This feels good to me, because I can be in control.
- * I can stay here as long as I want, and nobody tells me to leave.
- * I don't have to justify this to anybody.

So exactly what are we "just doing ourselves" that feels so much better? Many new survivors feel better when they can wear some clothing or accessories their loved one left behind. A woman might substitute his shirt for her nightgown - and sleep better. She may wear her spouse's ring on a chain around her neck and feel closer to him. A widow might sit in the sawdust of the workshop where her husband loved to be and feel close to him there, while someone else might take a lawn chair to the cemetery and linger for an extended period of time.

Others may choose to stay in their child's room for an extended period of time, just feeling close to them there. Many play the music their loved ones especially enjoyed and then choose to cry or smile or relax as they see fit. It just feels good. There are so many places we can be or things we can wear or objects we can hold close to us that make this grieving process very personal and all our own. Have you discovered this, too?

I always thought this situation was just part of reaching out for the one who is gone, and trying to relive our time with them, even though that is irretrievable. But lately I've been thinking it may be our way of trying to exert a little control by doing some of our grieving on our terms.

After all, grief's worst habit is to show up when we least expect it, right? The tears come on an "ordinary" day. A sob rumbles in our chests when we're talking to someone about anything but our grief. We're driving the car and suddenly tears are splashing on the steering wheel. These occasions leave us feeling extremely vulnerable. I don't know about you, but I sure feel awkward and terribly unsettled by its unexpected appearance, because I can never get mentally ready for grief symptoms that show up like that.

But when we have made the choice to wear our daughter's baggy sweatshirt or our husband's socks, or to play his favorite music or sit in her "space," we are in charge of our own feelings. We're willing to take the chance that tears may come - or maybe, instead, we will feel quiet peace. Why? Because we are controlling our grief and we are in charge for that brief period of time. My, how that feels good!

Hummm, I'm truly amazed this never crossed my mind before. Do you think this idea is crazy?! (I guess that could be a possibility, too!) But if you think there is some validity to this strange notion, then the next time a friend or relative looks at you as if you've lost your mind because you're doing some of these things, feel free to mimic that old commercial and shout out (well, keeping peace in the family might require muttering it instead!), "I'd rather do it MYSELF!"

Cheering you on, Carlene
Living With Loss Magazine Archives

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**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MISSION STATEMENT: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

A SINCERE WELCOME TO ALL COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS. We are a nonprofit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. We offer group support, understanding and friendship. Our purpose is to promote and aid parents and siblings in the positive resolution of the grief they are experiencing and to foster physical and emotional health. If you have questions or wish to talk directly to a member of the Fargo-Moorhead Compassionate Friends, please call any of the numbers listed.

FARGO-MOORHEAD COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS BOARD

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE BOARD AT ANY TIME!

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LIBRARY INFORMATION: We have an extensive library available. Please feel free to check materials at our next meeting.

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

HAVING A BAD DAY OR NIGHT? Feel free to call and talk to any of the following:

- Sheryl Cvijanovich (son, 23 - illness)..... 701-540-3287
- Lois Gangnes (son, 24 - accident) 701-282-4083
- Nancy Teeuwen (daughter, 15 hours - illness) 701-730-0805
- Mark & Hella Helfter (miscarriage, son, 35-accident & son, 45-cancer)... 701-235-9622

Love gifts must be received by the 15th to be included in the next month's newsletter. If you wish to give a love gift, please complete:

Love gift given in Memory/Honor of _____

Name _____

Address _____

Relationship _____ Born _____ Died _____

NOTE: By giving a love gift, you are giving us permission to include your child(ren) in our monthly birthdays and anniversaries for a period of 18 months.