



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 are quarterly

Next Meeting & Topic
March 14, 2024

Weather cancellations will be posted on WDAY, KVLV, KFGO and the Fargo Forum online at
www.inforum.com!

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 6:30 pm on January 25th @ Randy's Diner Too

LOVE GIFTS

Ramona & Jerome Gunderson in memory of their daughter, Sarah Frances Gunderson
Alida Flom in memory of her son, Dr. Jonathan Andres Flom
Sharon Cook in memory of her children, Tamera Jo "Tammy" Hines and Steven Duane Cook

HOLIDAY ANGEL GIFTS

Neil & Kathleen Prochnow & Family in memory of Reed Joel Prochnow
Kelly Sander in memory of her son Conner Sander
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.

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 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 January 24th. For more information, please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org.

I'M BEGINNING

I'm beginning to know your children
From the things I heard you tell. From the pictures that
you've brought here I think I know them well.
Our hurt and sorrow are immense
I'm not sure where to start.
Compassion after all is
Your Pain in my heart.
My thanks to you for listening
To words wrung from my soul.
We are The Compassionate Friends
That's all I need to know.

~ Jack Brown, TCF/Louisville, KY

Resolutions

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better.

Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself—both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what our meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

This newsletter is another way you can become more involved in our chapter. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs.

Have a happier New Year!

~ Pat Akery, TCF/Medford, OR

Decide What You Want to Do from *You Can Become Whole Again*

There is much more you can do with grief than just survive it. Being able to "take it" and endure life in spite of your loss may seem the brave thing to do, or even the only choice you have when tragedy comes.

But these two assumptions are wrong. Unhealthy too. Such stoical endurance is in reality false courage. It takes no courage to avoid dealing with the unpleasant things that happen in life. Any coward can do that. But it does require the highest kind of courage to continue experiencing life, whatever the circumstance, and that's the other choice you have.

Which do you opt for? The alternative that seems the easiest – carrying on in spite of your loss? Or the one that seems most difficult, but is in fact the most profitable in the long run – growing as a person because of your loss?

Only you can decide. Only you can want to stagnate in sorrow, or grow, as you heal, in understanding more about life and death through grief. Don't say the choice depends upon what you can or cannot do. It's not a matter of "can" or "can't" but of "will" or "won't."

That lays the responsibility for how you fare solely on your shoulders, doesn't it? Accept the fact, my friend, for that's exactly where responsibility for your recovery rests.

~ Yolanda Miller

"Wishes For Bereaved Parents For The Coming Year"

by Joe Rosseau, Former National TCF President

- * *To the Newly Bereaved*, we wish you patience - patience with yourselves in the painful weeks, months, even years ahead.
- * *To the Bereaved Siblings*, we wish you and your parents a new understanding of each other's needs and the beginnings of good communication.
- * *To Those Of You Who Are Single Parents*, we wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone, with your loss.
- * *To Those Of You Who Are Plagued With Guilt*, we wish you the reassurance that you did the very best you could under the circumstances and that your child knew that.
- * *To Those Of You Who Have Suffered Multiple Losses*, those who have experienced the death of more than one child, we wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life again.
- * *To Those Of You Who Are Deeply Depressed*, we wish you the first steps out of the "valley of the shadow."
- * *To Those Experiencing Marital Difficulties* after the death of your child, we wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.
- * *To All the Fathers*, we wish you the ability to express your grief, to move beyond society's conditioning, to cry.
- * *To Those With Few or No Memories Of Your Child*, perhaps because you suffered through a stillbirth, a miscarriage, or infant death, we wish you the sure knowledge that your child is a person and THAT YOUR GRIEF IS REAL.
- * *To Those Of You Who Have Experienced The Death of An Only Child or All Your Children*, we offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.
- * *To Those Of You Unable To Cry*, we wish you healing tears.
- * *To Those Of You Who Are Tired*, exhausted from grieving, we wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.
- * *To All Others with Special Needs* that we have not mentioned, we wish you the understanding you need and the assurance that you are loved.

Journey Through Grief

Why should I, who never did neglect my grief,
Who began this journey so resolutely,
Determined to accept each step and see it through,
Find myself beginning on this path again
As if from the very start of it?
Did I not face this tragedy straight on,
And look death in the face and feel its touch?
Do I not understand that each soul, soon or late,
Returns to God? Why then, in a sudden unexpected moment
Does the shock of this death confront me,
As if I had never known of it at all?
Why do I, who was recipient of such love,
Of caring and compassion that abound -
Who was encompassed in the arms of family and friends,
And know that my loss is shared by many,
Feel such an individual grief?
And why do I, who let my tears flow free,
Who felt them wash upon my heart, my mind, my soul,
Who has screamed the scream of primal desperation,
And, through blurred eyes, has set my gaze upon the present,
Find that in some unsuspected moment,
Tears rage and gush, as if I'd never cried?
Because I am the mother of a child who died!
by Vivian Dean, TCF/Fort Bragg CA

I Don't Know Why

I don't know why. I'll never know why.
I don't have to know why.
I don't like it.
I don't have to like it.
What I have to do is make a choice about my living.
What I do want to do is accept it and go on living.
The choice is mine.
I can go on living, valuing every moment
in a way I never did before,
or I can be destroyed by it and,
in turn, destroy others.
I thought I was immortal.
That my family and my children were also.
That tragedy happened only to others.
But I know now that life is tenuous and valuable.
So I am choosing to go on living,
making the most of the time I have,
valuing my family and friends
in a way never possible before.
~ Iris Bolton, From the book My Son, My Son

WHEN A CHILD DIES

When the thing that one only imagines...actually happens,
you discover very quickly that you have a difficult time speaking
about it...People who have lost a child, including myself, act in all
kinds of weird ways in order to deny the awful truth...not
just because of the awful pain of losing a person they have
loved...many of us have lost parents, mates and friends, and no
matter how painful, it's just not the same...but because what has
happened is so unnatural, so against the necessary order of things,
that we cannot accept it... It is almost beyond our comprehension
that children should die before the adults...it contradicts history,
violates basic physics and so when we lose a child or children, life
seems to lose all meaning. We are changed forever...
~ Anne Davis, TCF/Oklahoma City, OK

THE SCENT OF MY BABY

When we think of babies
We think of that certain scent.
The scent that newborns seem to have,
or me-that came and went.
The scent of my baby
s a different one.
It's not shampoo or baby powders
It's not that "newborn scent".
But that of fresh cut flowers.
For God chose my son to be with Him
And leave me down below.
So the flowers I place upon his grave
Are the only scent I know.
So when I smell a flower
My son always comes to mind
And the delicate scent of a flower
Seems to suit my son just fine.
For my son touched and brightened my life
Just like a flower may.
And the true beauty of a flower
Was my son in every way.

~ Debby Root, TCF/Fox Valle

LAUGH THERAPY

I have a bitter/sweet, funny/sad story to tell about my little
girl, JENNY She was born with a heart defect, had one operation
at five months of age and a second one at 2 1/2 years. She died 8
hours after the second operation.

I believed in life after death, so I knew her spirit would
survive. It was a comfort when I sensed her spirit presence and
others saw her impish form after death, but I was still in intense
pain. One of the hardest challenges of life is to bury a child and
still keep sane.

One day, a couple months after her death, I was reading a
self-help book which encouraged the reader to try to look for "an
element of fun, fantasy, absurdity or even a relieving silliness" in
any distressing situation. I was still very much suffering from
Jenny's death so I thought I would try to follow these instructions.

With eyes closed. I asked aloud "is it possible for me to
laugh about Jennifer's. death?" I promptly burst into tears at the
idea, but as the tears rolled down my cheeks, in my mind's eye, I
could see Jenny hovering over me and pulling on my left arm,
trying to lift what seemed like a lead weight. I heard her say,
"That's the idea, Mom. Lighten up!"

Was that for real? It felt real to me. I've had other experiences
of communicating with her spirit as well as that one and I don't
think I'm crazy (not certifiably so, anyway). So I take that
interchange as her way of encouraging me to recover from her
death and to let humor brighten any dark corner of my existence.

- Anna Olson, TCF/Winnipeg, Canada

Though life is not as it was before, And never will be again,
Our memories are much richer, Than if love had never been."

~ Author Unknown

Grief is not truly a process unless
There is an EXIT as well as an ENTRY.

Grief has a beginning.

Does it also have an ending?

"Footsteps Through the Valley" By Darcie D Sims

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED

BIRTHDAYS

CHILD

PARENTS

NICHOLAS LEE BAILEY	31.....	PAUL & KARA BAILEY
KONNIE JEAN CHAFFEE.....	51.....	MARK & JEAN CHAFFEE
WILLIAM "BILL" COWDEN	57.....	WALTER & KARIE COWDEN
BRIELLE DEUTSCHER	13.....	LYNN & DONNA MICKELSON (Grandparents)
JESSICA DONAHUE	35.....	SHANNON & TIM DENNISON
ERIK HINZPETER.....	44.....	JOHN & LEANN RINDT
MATTHEW R HOLLAND	28.....	CHAD & RHONDA HOLLAND
DANA DAWN KEBLAR	46.....	DEBORAH FACEY
MICHAEL L LIVDAHL.....	30.....	ROBERT & TANYA LIVDAHL
TANNER ORVIK.....	24.....	KIRSTEN ORVIK
CHAD MICHAEL RINNELS	49.....	MIKE & CHERYL RINNELS
MILLARD SAMUELSON.....	64.....	ROSEMARY SAMUELSON
MATTHEW ALLEN WINTER.....	37.....	CAROL & DAN WINTER

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD

PARENTS

NATHAN ANDERSON.....	23.....	DIANE & JAY FENSKE
SHERI PETERSON BJORGAN.....	24.....	DEWAYNE PETERSON
HARPER DEKKER BLAKE	2.....	JADEN & MENDI BLAKE
ANDREW HOWARD BRAUN	18.....	CRAIG & DEANNA BRAUN
OLIVIA MAE BUTH.....	6.....	TIM & MELANIE BUTH
SANDRA DIANE CASELLA.....	12.....	RICHARD & DIANE MACGREGOR
MATTHEW ISAAC CVIJANOVICH.....	19.....	SHERYL CVIJANOVICH
JAKE EDMUND DAVIS.....	3.....	ED DAVIS
JESSICA DONAHUE	5.....	SHANNON & TIM DENNISON
RACHEL ELIZABETH ELLINGSON.....	5.....	PATRICIA & ERIC MONSON
JONATHAN ANDREW FLOM.....	1.....	HAROLD & ALIDA FLOM
NATHANIEL "NATE" HAALAND	3.....	SUSAN PETRY
MATTHEW R HOLLAND	9.....	CHAD & RHONDA HOLLAND
DERRICK DENNIS JACOBS.....	6.....	TROY & DENISE JACOBS
TODD MICHAEL KESTER	1.....	JANICE KESTER
JEREMIAH MEDENWALD.....	1.....	TERRY MEDENWALD
TANNER ORVIK.....	24.....	KIRSTEN ORVIK
ELIJAH ORVIK.....	2.....	KIRSTEN ORVIK
JESSE DANIEL SCALLON	6.....	LEE & LUANNE SCALLON
ERIC JOHN SCHAFER.....	9.....	BILL & LOIS SCHAFER
JANESSA "JAYE" NICOLE SMITH.....	4.....	KEITH & MARY GOHDES
CARLA RAE TRUITT	7.....	LORETTA KEISACKER
LARISSA UNGER.....	4.....	JON & CYNTHIA UNGER

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

What About Me?

Have you ever felt that, as a surviving brother or sister, we are often forgotten? I have felt this way quite often in the last 6 years. Over time, the feeling becomes less and less. Our parents' grief is so much different from ours. No more or less hurtful than ours, but different. They lost their child. I hope that, in my lifetime, I never have to know how that feels. I know how painful it was when Sean died. I don't want to know the pain of having a child die. But, oftentimes, we are "the forgotten mourners." I love my brother very much, and miss him just as much. I think that people sometimes forget that we are hurting also. My parents were offenders of that too.

I know they know my sister and I were hurting, but they were so wrapped up in what they were feeling that they didn't have time to worry about what we were feeling. I tried so hard to make my parents well again that I neglected my own grief. Pretty much denied it. We really want to make our families "normal" again.

I have had some awful things said to me over the last 6 years. Two weeks after Sean died, someone said to me, "Well, you do still have a sister." Well, yes, I do still have a sister, but that doesn't lessen the pain of my brother's death, and my sister can't possibly replace my brother. Probably the worst thing anyone has said to me is "Why aren't you over this? Sean has been dead for 6 months." Well it is not something you just "get over." I have learned a lot of things over the years, and if I hadn't been in such a state of shock, maybe I would have had some good responses. When I think back on it, I wish I had. I have decided that, from what I have learned, I need to educate people and make them understand that siblings and friends have the right to grieve too.

As surviving siblings and friends, we also have to realize that we need to find a new "normal." We also need to know that it's okay to feel all of the things that we feel — be it anger, sadness, guilt, or any other emotion.

Just know that you're not crazy or wrong to grieve. Know also that it is all right to think and talk about them when you're ready, not when someone else says or thinks you should be ready. Death and grieving are, unfortunately, a part of life.

~ Traci Morlock, BPUSA, St. Louis, MO

"AFTER"

As the world around me gets brighter,
And the darkness fades away,
The weight I carry gets lighter
Because I know she'll be near one day.
My life is no longer as lonely,
As when it was when she left.
I know she wasn't trying to hurt me,
But for a while I couldn't catch my breath.
Each day the pain gets easier
And the memories aren't so sad.
I'm finally able to smile for her,
As I think of the time we had.
Now when I'm feeling alone,
And ask for her embrace,
I close my eyes and she warms me,
And her spirit kisses my face.

~ Sarah Yoder ~ in memory of her sister Morgan

SIBLINGS THOUGHTS & FEELINGS

He is gone
And he's never coming back
I hope he knows
How much he's missed.
He touched so many people
They loved him too
But they have no idea
What I'm going through.
I cover up my feelings
As much as I can
Nobody has to know
The pain I have inside.
Sometimes I just can't hold back
My feelings of loneliness and
despair
I love him so much
This world is not fair.
Why Him?
He was such a good brother
I still don't understand
Why did it happened to him?
I can't handle these feelings
They have become too much
I just want to be with him
Am I asking too much?
I love him, I always will
But one day we'll be together - forever.
~ Selina Lepinski, TCF/Winnipeg

BELIEVE

In the rising of the sun
and in its going down,
We remember them.
In the blowing of the wind
and in the chill of winter,
We remember them.
In the opening of the buds
and in the warmth of summer,
We remember them.
In the rustling of the leaves
and the beauty of autumn.
We remember them.
In the beginning of the year
and when it ends,
We remember them.
When we are weary
and in need of strength,
We remember them.
When we are lost
and sick at heart,
We remember them.
When we have joys
we yearn to share,
We remember them.
So long as we live,
they too shall live,
for they are now a part of us
We remember them.

from *GATES of PRAYER*
Reform Judaism Prayer book

The Holidays are Behind Us

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of both, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there among all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also a thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out at the winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb - a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard, our throats tight from tears shed or unshed, our chests banded tightly by our mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too, in our searchings, find places of warmth and change and love and growth deep within. Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be armed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope or of new acceptance or of new understanding or of new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love for our child, that are forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

~Marie Andres, TCF So. MD Chap., MD

Winter

by Roberta Hermansen

This winter's desolation is my desolation,
It's barrenness, my heart.
Some say spring will come
Trees will leaf,
Buds will swell, New life will emerge.
But I feel winter in my heart,
In my soul,
In my being,
I wonder if the ice will ever thaw
So I can drink from it again
To nourish my spirit.

Grief Tip – A Fresh Start

The New Year can bring a feeling of fresh start after loss. It's a time to make an effort to heal your grief going forward. Think about the kind of life you want to be living and the kind of people you want to be around you. Make an effort to surround yourself with hope by joining a support or education group. Engage in activity. It can change you from being lonely to being willing to become social again. Now is the time to begin again.

From the Southern Piedmont/Charlotte Chapter, TCF
Newsletter, Jan-Feb 2012

“Death ends a life, but it does not end a relationship.”

~ Dennis Klass

A New Year's Resolution

Now the holidays are over, and once again a new year faces us—for some, the first one without that precious loved one—for others, another one of many. The loss is still remembered, no matter how many others we have faced.

What will we do in the coming months? Each hour seems so long and the days seem to stretch ahead forever, as if another year cannot possibly ever come to an end. But friends, it will and we will survive. The road at times is hard and the pain is so hard to bear, but each year we realize that the pain has eased. We never will be totally without this pain of love and shattered dreams, but we will be able to live. This love that is stored in us for our missed child can be spread out to others to help us to ease their pain.

So, in this New Year, let's make a new resolution—that our love for our dead child will be brought out of our hearts and given with our best effort to others to help them ease their pain. In so doing, we will find our pain is eased also.

~ Thelma Richardson, TCF/Mesa County, AZ

What is New About the New Year?

There is a lot of silliness about ringing in the New Year, and I have never been able to enter into the spirit with noisemakers, funny hats and loud hurrahs. Since the death of my son, I especially find myself wondering what this is all about. I think some of the partying and celebrating are motivated by a deep desire for a new start in our lives; a desire to leave behind some of the problems, sorrows, worries and pain of the year just ending. The short, sunless days and long, dark nights make us want something to cheer us. So we give the New Year's Eve party a try.

But it really doesn't work for most of us; we see now that we are just the same and the heaviness in our hearts, as we continue with the struggle to cope with the loss of our child, remains with us. Can we find new ways to live our lives in the New Year?

I'd like to suggest a few things we can try. Let's make an effort to find new friends. A good place to start this is at Compassionate Friends meetings. Here you are with a group of people who care about each other in special ways. We understand the pain and anger, the confusion and the inertia suffered by bereaved parents.

In the New Year, let's also find new ways to be close to the family that we have left. We feel regrets about hugs not given, letters not written, "I love yous" not said often enough. We can do all these things now. We can establish new memories with the family we have right now. Another way to move into this New Year with a better feeling is to think about what we can do for others, because that is truly a way to help ourselves, too.

If we can reach out to other sorrowing families, give a gift of our time, a note of love, a listening ear, or a shoulder to lean on, we'll grow stronger ourselves. For those parents who are suffering the deep pain of the newly bereaved, none of the things I've mentioned may be possible yet. For you, I hold out the hope that soon your days will be just a bit better, your sorrow a little lighter, your tears healing, your friends strengthening and your memories filled more with the good times and less with the unhappiness of your grief.

~ Dory Rooker, TCF/Upper Valley, VT

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.)

DON'T BE STRONG

As children most of us were told over and over, "Big girls and boys don't cry, only Babies and Sissies cry." This fallacy is so deeply rooted in some of us that when our child dies we have to be strong. We push back, deny, and try to hide our grief.

This type of being strong is what I call the Stiff Upper Lip Syndrome. Suppressed grief and unshed tears are like a pressure cooker with a faulty valve; it can explode at any time. Pressure builds, and builds, and finally is released one way or another. We can either let our tears flow, admit our grief, and release our pressure in a natural way; or, we can plug that valve and wait for the time bomb.

You say, "Wait a minute, what will my family and other people think-if they see me cry?" Your family needs to know that you are human not made of steel. They need to know that you love, that you hurt, and that you also feel the loss. If you remain the strong one, you may be faced with anger, bitterness, broken communication, or indifference from your family members. Later you may be accused of being cold and uncaring. For someone trying to be strong for the rest of the family, someone hiding the hurt, this could be the final blow that causes the explosion.

Friends! Most of your friends and neighbors haven't known the grief of having a child die. They don't understand the pain of "no longer setting that place at the table; the stack of laundry no longer done; the silence; the graduation unattended; or, the grandchild that will never be." They don't understand the role of parenting that has stopped! They only see the physical absence of your child. No you shouldn't worry about being strong for them, because they can't even begin to contemplate the agony your child's death brings. You couldn't before you experienced. They can't because they haven't experienced. This leaves only a few people that are just insensitive beings too involved with themselves and their world to care about anything or anyone. Since they can't care, why then, should we be concerned with what they think.

Some people think that our tears are tears of self-pity, to an extent they are. We mourn the loss of a very beautiful part of ourselves. Our life will never again be completely the same. I have cried many times these last few years, and I'm sure there will be more tears. I don't cry so much for the child that is no longer here; as I do for myself, what could have been, and what used to be. I don't mean for you to drown yourself in pity and let grief completely disrupt your life. What I am saying is don't be afraid to show your emotions. When there is a need for tears, let them come.

As I see it you have a choice, you can either be human and show your emotions and help yourself; or, you can try to be superhuman, try to control your grief and one day run the risk of having something inside of you break or become badly bent. Don't say it won't happen because someday it will. There is no other way to deal with grief; you can't go around it, over it, or under it; you have to go through it. By suppressing your feelings you run the risk of distorting your personality for life; and harming or destroying your family and yourself emotionally.

The choice is yours. Only you can make the decision. Remember: It takes more strength and courage to admit and share feelings and pain with others, than it does to close yourself behind a wall and hide from your grief.

~ Sue Heisten, TCF/Columbia, MO

THINGS TO DO WHEN DESPERATE

1. Breathe.
2. Get my teddy bear.
3. Call other bereaved people (keep their phone numbers easily available).
4. Call close friends (keep their phone numbers easily available).
5. Call a counselor.
6. Call a hot-line.
7. Get in my rocking chair. Get in any chair and let it support me.
8. Take a hot bath.
9. Run around the block three times.
10. Listen to soothing music.
11. Put on a relaxation tape.
12. Ask someone to hold me.
13. Cry.
14. Yell into my pillow.
15. Join a support group.
16. Say to myself, "Others love me," or, "I have the right to survive," or, "Others have gotten through this, I can too."
17. Stroke the dog or cat.
18. Watch an old movie on TV or read a book.
19. Hug a tree.
20. Stand or lie on the floor and feel the floor support me.
21. Pray.
22. Start again at the top.

Edited by Anne Pieper, from *The Courage to Heal*,
By Ellen Bass and Laura Davis

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
OF THE F-M AREA
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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!

Chapter Leader	Paul & Kara Bailey	701-491-0364	Newsletter Editor	Nancy Teeuwen	701-730-0805
Newsletter Database	Sheryl Cvijanovich	701-540-3287	Secretary	Sheryl Cvijanovich.....	701-540-3287
Treasurer	Chuck Klinkhammer.....	701-298-2929	Website Administrator	Sheryl Cvijanovich.....	701-540-3287
Initial Contact	Sheryl Cvijanovich		Mailing Committee	Contact Us to Join	

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.