



The Compassionate Friends

Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

TCF's National Office
48660 Pontiac Trl #930808
Wixom MI 48393-7736
Toll-free (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

F-M Area Chapter
PO Box 10686
Fargo ND 58106
www.tcffargomoorhead.org
March 2024

Volume 41 Number 3

Chapter Leaders - Paul & Kara Bailey 701-491-0364

Newsletter Editor - Nancy Teeuwen 701-730-0805

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 March 28th
@ Randy's Diner Too

LOVE GIFTS

Linda Bartsch in memory of her son,
Brent Bartsch
Larry & Lois Gangnes in memory of
their son, Brent M Gangnes
Brenda Kluth in memory of her son,
Brandon W T Kluth
Anthony & Karel Varriano in
memory of their son, Chad Varriano
Jason & Kristi McSparron in
memory of their son, Jesse Skow
Russell & Sharon Lalum in memory
of their daughter, Carmen Lalum
Jim & Jody Kutter in memory of
their daughter, Michelle Kutter
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 March 28th. For more information, please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org.

Self Help

For many of us, the monthly meeting of our Compassionate Friends Group is the only real healing time we give to ourselves. Helping ourselves on a daily basis is critical to our journey in the grieving process.

Many of us find solace in books. Others find it in movies, music, time with friends, meditation or intense spiritual conviction. Each day we should take some time to center ourselves, to find a place of peace.

If you haven't already done so, start with a quiet time of reflection and search your soul for the key to your own solace. There will still be bad, even terrible, days. The effort to help ourselves begins with knowing ourselves and finding the unique activity that soothes our broken hearts for just a little while.

~ Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/ Katy, TX
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen



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MISCARRIAGE - The Unrecognized Tragedy

Though it's been almost three years since I experienced a miscarriage, it still evokes painful memories. My husband and I had two healthy daughters at the time and were eagerly anticipating the arrival of our third child. The little one was to complete our family.

But at 18 weeks gestation, things went awry, and we lost our wee son. I remember experiencing an overwhelming feeling of emptiness as I left the hospital without our baby. Denial, then shock, sadness and anger caused anguish over the "whys?" and "what ifs?" It wasn't long before I found out how miscarriage may be trivialized as an insignificant occurrence.

My physician, who had not been present when I delivered the baby, confronted me a few hours later. "It was a boy," I sobbed. "Oh," she remarked in an offhanded way, "I didn't see it." I vividly remember my anger toward her nonchalant manner and the way she referred to him as an "it." *Don't you know that was our baby, our little son?*, I thought. *Please don't minimize our loss.*

"You have other children at home, don't you?" she continued. *Yes*, I was screaming inside, *but don't you realize that each child is unique and special in his or her own right? Having two at home doesn't in any way lessen the sorrow I feel for this baby.* "Go home and enjoy your summer," she added later. "You can start trying again in another three months." Enjoy my summer?! This miscarriage had literally knocked me off my feet. There I was, an adult mother of two, reduced to tears whenever I saw a pregnant woman or new baby. (They seemed to be everywhere I went!) There was no denying the intense emotions I felt. My husband and daughters, as well, were trying to deal with the loss in their individual ways. Even though I tried, it was not an enjoyable summer. Life didn't automatically revert back to normal.

Yet my heartache was misunderstood not only by my physician, but by others as well. I was given the impression that it was inappropriate and even abnormal to be mourning. There was a conflict between the way I actually felt and the way society expected me to feel. I began to think I must be losing it.

Fortunately, I had a deep need to find out all I could about miscarriage. I read avidly, attended support group meetings and talked to other women who had been through a similar experience. I was relieved to find out that my reactions were healthy and normal. Until then, I didn't know that I was going through the grieving process.

The tears, along with the questioning, the heart-to-heart talks with my family and friends, and the memorial service to say goodbye to our baby all helped me to heal.

A loss is a loss. Just because it's named "miscarriage" doesn't mean that it's insignificant. Nothing has ever affected me so deeply.... Though the deep sorrow I felt has since subsided, I realize that I'll never completely "get over" him. There are still times that I long to hold our son, to watch him grow, to love him.... I know I'll never forget.

~Sara Winslow, Bereavement Magazine, Colorado Springs, CO, grief@bereavementmag.com

SUGGESTIONS TO AID MARRIAGE

1. Don't expect spouse to be a tower of strength when he or she is also experiencing grief.
2. Be sensitive to your spouse's personality style. In general he or she will approach grief with the same personality habits as they approach life. It may be very private, very open and sharing or someplace in between.
3. Find a "sympathetic ear" (not necessarily our mate's) --someone who cares and will listen.
4. Do talk about your child with your spouse. If necessary set up a time to talk about the child.
5. Seek the help of a counselor if depression, grief or problems in your marriage are getting out of hand.
6. Do not overlook or ignore anger causing situations. It is like adding fuel to a fire. Eventually there is an explosion. Deal with things as they occur.
7. Remember you loved your spouse enough to marry. Try to keep your marriage alive: go out for dinner or an ice cream cone; take a walk; go on a vacation.
8. Be gentle with yourself and your mate.
9. Join a support group for bereaved parents. Attend as a couple, come by yourself or with a friend. It is a good place to learn about grief and to feel understood. Do not make it a pressure on your spouse to attend with you if it is not his/her preference.
10. Join a mutually agreeable community betterment project.
11. Do not blame yourself or mate for what you were powerless to prevent. If you blame your spouse or personally feel responsible for your child's death seek immediate counseling help for yourself and your marriage.
12. Realize that you are not alone. There are many bereaved parents. In 2 1/2 years our mailing list has grown from 50 parents to over 700 parents.
13. Choose to believe again in the goodness of God and of life. Search for you and laughter.
14. Recognize your extreme sensitivity and vulnerability and be alert to tendency to take things personally.
15. Read about grief, especially the books written for bereaved parents.
16. Take your time with decisions about child's things, change of residence, etc.
17. Be aware of unrealistic expectations for yourself or your mate.
18. Remember there is no timetable. Everyone goes through grief differently, even parents of the same child.
19. Try to remember that your spouse is doing the best he or she can.
20. Marital friction is normal in any marriage. Don't blow it out of proportion.
21. Try not to let little everyday irritants become major issues. Talk about them and try to be patient.
22. Be sensitive to the needs and wishes of your spouse as well as yourself. Sometimes it is important to compromise.
23. It is very important to keep the lines of communication open.
24. Work on your grief instead of wishing that your spouse would handle his/her grief differently. You will find that you will have enough just handling your own grief. Remember when you help yourself cope with grief, it indirectly helps your spouse.
25. As Harriet Schiff states, "Value your marriage. You have lost enough."
26. Hold on to HOPE. With time, work and support, you will survive. It will never be the same but you can learn again to appreciate life and the people in your life.

Is it Easing?

I heard your name today and my heart did not skip a beat, nor was my mind flooded with the emotion of losing you. I heard your name today and it did not bring back the terrible hurt feelings of when you first left me.

I heard your name today with a calmness that surprised me. Many another child carries your name, and it had been torture hearing it and seeing the smiling faces on those little girls.

But today I knew—I found out—what others in my footsteps found out and tried to tell me. The hurt will ease; but the memories, the love, the good times will never go away.

~ Phoebe C. Redman, TCF/Bradenton, FL

Spring is Coming

If you are newly bereaved and looking toward your "first" spring, you may be surprised by some of the feelings you may experience during the next few weeks. We hear so much about the beauty of spring - the new life and the feelings of renewal that are supposed to accompany this lovely time of year. During my "first" year, I expected that spring would cheer me up, and make me feel lots better. How surprised and frustrated I was when, on one of those truly magnificent spring days as life seems to burst forth everywhere, I was "in the pits." When a friend said to me,

"Doesn't a day like this really lift your spirits and make you feel better?" I had to reply honestly that I was having a really bad day --that the sense of loss and emptiness was greatly intensified.

Gradually, I began to realize that my expectations for spring were unrealistically high. I had looked forward to spring with the wrong kind of hope. When we are newly bereaved, we are constantly looking for something to take away the pain and make our lives all right again. Unfortunately, there is no magical event or moment when this takes place. It does happen, but only with time and the grief work which we all must do before we can be healed. The coming of spring cannot make everything okay again. What it can do, however, is remind us that regardless of what happens in our lives, nature's process will continue, and that can offer us hope.

I am looking forward to spring this year. I welcome the sun's warmth, the return of the birds from their winter in the south, and forsythia, the daffodils and the greening of the world. Know that someday you will once again welcome spring. Be gentle and patient with yourself and with nature. Don't expect too much. Be ready to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your heart.

-Evelyn Billings, TCF/Springfield, MA

No one is asking us to forget, to turn away from all that we loved and cherished in the one we have lost. We couldn't do that even if we wanted to.

The task before us - and it can take a very long time - is to incorporate this grief and loss into the rest of our lives, so that it doesn't continue to dominate our lives. It's no longer the first thing we think of when we wake up in the morning, or the last thing we relinquish before we sleep.

A child said to his mother, in regards to the outpouring of kindnesses after his father's death. "There are so many good things. There's just one bad thing."

The "bad thing" will always be there, but when it begins to take its place among the good things life offers, we're on our way.

Even in my sadness I will be open to new adventure.

Elisabeth Kubler Ross, Taken from TCF online June 2006

Grief, You and Me

Grief, you are my mate my constant companion, wrapped around me, close as a lover, limbs entangled heaps of appendages interwoven in intimacy.

Some days I try to disentangle, disengage from you in irritation, picking and plucking you from me like fleas on a cat's fur.

Some days I try to push you away, shut you out, slam shut the cellar door and walk away into the kitchen and cook a big meal only to notice you sitting at the dinner table.

Sometimes I just let go completely and fall into you head first, heart first, defenseless before your gigantic tsunami of ache. Pummeled and tumbling in directionless white water I cry out.

Grief, you are much bigger than me taller, stronger, fiercer, you will outlive me, exhaust me, overpower me! Will I ever find my way back to up? where is the air? which way is air, and sun, and life?

Sometimes I wonder will we someday merge as old married couples do no longer having distinct identities, you and me. Maybe you will seep into my bones and we will just grow older and sweeter together.

~ Nadine Gregg, TCF/Santa Cruz, CA

THE BUMPY ROAD

The other day I sat alone and realized my heart was not as heavy. Oh, there are still times when I miss my child desperately, but I seem to rebound sooner now.

Then the phone rang; another mother called to lean on me. She must have known that I was ready. I listened, she shared and oh how I felt for her. When we said good-bye, I sat again but not as alone this time. New strength and pride came in knowing I had lent a helping hand.

My child's death has taught me so much new, a lot I wished I had never known. But since I do now know what others face, perhaps the bumpy road I've traveled can be made a little smoother for another.

~ A Bereaved Mother

You Are Not Going Crazy

One of the most common things we hear from bereaved parents is that they think that they are going crazy. If you feel this way, let us assure you that you are not. Grief and the resultant depression, fits of crying, and the feeling you are going to pieces may lead you to these feelings or often to the feeling you no longer want to continue living. It is not uncommon to have these feelings.

But most grief-stricken people do not go crazy or commit suicide. It is most important at these times for you to have someone to talk to – to share your feelings – and for you to be able to verbalize your pain. We of The Compassionate Friends want to help. We encourage you to call on us. We have all been where you are now, and we understand your pain.

~ Fay Harden, TCF/Tuscaloosa, FL

FOR THE BOTH OF US

As long as I can I will look at this world for both of us.

As long as I can I will laugh with the birds,

I will sing with the flowers, I will pray to the stars,
for the both of us. As long as I can I will remember
how many things on this earth were your joy.

And I will live as well as you would want me to live

As long as I can.

Sascha - from Wintersun



OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

CHILD

PARENTS

BRENT M BARTSCH.....	42.....	LINDA BARTSCH
JOHNNY LEVI GREY	43.....	DOERAE PRANTE
TAMARA JO "TAMMY" HINES.....	59.....	SHARON COOK
DARIN M KLABO	40.....	CRAIG & TERRY KLABO
MICHELLE KUTTER	35.....	JIM & JODY KUTTER
TYLER JAMES LARSON.....	39.....	KEVIN & CHERYL LARSON
ZAYNE WILLIAM MALHEIM OLAFSON.....	15.....	BILLY OLAFSON & SHANDRA MALHEIM
JAMIE CLIFFORD OLSON	46.....	GLENNIS OLSON
ANNIKA LORRAINE QUALLEY	13.....	RHONDA & MICHAEL QUALLEY
ROY DANA RICHMOND.....	59.....	THOMAS & AUDREY RICHMOND
DANE DONOVAN SAYERS.....	36.....	DALE & BONNIE SAYERS
JESSE SKOW.....	43.....	KRISTI & JASON MCSPARRON
CARLA RAE TRUITT	60.....	LORETTA KEISACKER
CHAD VARRIANO.....	52.....	ANTHONY & KAREL VARRIANO
ROBIN VIGDAL-HOSLER.....	53.....	WALTER & KARIE COWDEN
PAIGE WIGHTMAN.....	34.....	DAVID & MICHELLE WIGHTMAN
MELINDA JOY WINTERROTH.....	42.....	MONTY & JOANNE WINTERROTH

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD

PARENTS

RUSS T BOYLE.....	3.....	TOM & CHERYL BOYLE
KEVIN SCOTT COWDEN.....	6.....	WALTER & KARIE COWDEN
JUSTIN L DIETRICH.....	6.....	TRACY & CAROL DIETRICH
STEVEN "HERMAN" FESKE.....	6.....	ROSEMARY FESKE
JAYSON P HAUGEN.....	7.....	PAULETTE HAUGEN
DAVID MICHAEL HELFTER	20.....	MARK & HELLA HELFTER
KEVIN GENE HUELSMAN	3.....	EMMA HUELSMAN
MATTHEW MILLIGAN-OLSON	24.....	JOHN & KYLENE MILLIGAN
STEVEN J NEWARK JR.....	6.....	JANET & JOHN OURADNIK
JARAD NILLES	12.....	CAROLYN NILLES
JASON NYHUS.....	2.....	TERI NYHUS
ZAYNE WILLIAM MALHEIM OLAFSON.....	15.....	BILLY OLAFSON & SHANDRA MALHEIM
AMANDA LEA PERKINS	5.....	DWIGHT & MARLENE PERKINS
CONNER SANDER.....	5.....	KELLY SANDER
LAURIE SATHER.....	5.....	PEGGY BULLIS
JEFFREY M WEBBER.....	7.....	JUANITA WEBBER

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.

"...when a good or a great person's life comes to its final sunset, the skies of this world are illuminated until long after he is out of view. Such a person does not die from this world, for when he departs he leaves much of himself behind...and being dead, he still speaks."

~ Henry W. Beecher



SIBLING PAGE

LITTLE BROTHER

Someone took you away from me
And I wonder if they cared
About the ones' they left behind
And the pain that each must bear
Why did you have to leave me
When there was so much left to do
I'm not sure if I can go on
If I have to go on without you.
But life dictates the rules
There are things that I can't change
When you left, my heart was torn in two
My life got rearranged.
I have to believe I'll see you again
It keeps the hope alive and new
So until we meet again, little brother
Never forget that I love you.
~ Jenny, TCF/Indianapolis, IN

A STORM OF GRIEF

When a storm of grief grows in the heart,
Reach back for yesterday
To catch onto your memories.
The storm will calm, and for a brief moment
The lost feelings of happiness
Will shine through and through
~ Lori Pollard, TFC/Montgomery AL

BROTHERS & SISTERS

Be it your brother or your sister,
their presence is taken for granted.
When together, you fight and argue.
But also together, you stand against all others.
Then, one day you stand alone.
Gone the friend, the confidante, the rock.
You regret the last fight.
You wish to hear the voice, share your secrets.
The memories are sweet - remember the laughs and jokes.
They now await to be your guide.
~ John W. Hollinshead, Lockport, NY

The Elephant in the Room

There's an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting,
So it is hard to get around it.
Yet we squeeze by with "How are you?" And "I'm Fine."
And a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.
We talk about the weather. We talk about work.
We talk about everything - except the elephant in the room.
There's an elephant in the room. We all know it is there.
We are thinking about the elephant as we talk together.
It is constantly on our minds.
For you see, it is a very big elephant. It has hurt us all.
But we do not talk about the elephant in the room.
Oh, please say her name. Oh, please, say "Barbara" again.
Oh, please, let's talk about the elephant in the room.
For if we talk about her death,
Perhaps we can talk about her life?
Can I say, "Barbara" to you and not have you look away?
For if I cannot, then you are leaving me
Alone... In a room... With an elephant
~Terry Kettering

*Wild flowers recoup from winter's
desolation to decorate spring.*
By Diantha Ain

WHAT I NEED

A lot of time!
A little space, A kind of quiet
Resting place,
Are what I need At times like these
A special spot
Where I can grieve.
~ Beth Pinion, TCF/Andalusia, AL

How Does It Feel? What's It Like?

It's like:
A hole with no bottom
A hill with no top
A road with no bend
A night with no end
It's as if it's not happened
It's as if it's not true
It's as if it's a dream
Yet a numbness seeps through
There's a feeling of emptiness
A gap to be filled
There's a feeling of loneliness
That cannot be stilled
They say times a healer
How long will it take?
I can't see it ending
It's a permanent ache
Life has no meaning
Yet it has to go on
I find it so hard
To feel so alone
No one will ever know
The depth of my sorrow
I just have to trust
There'll be a better tomorrow
May God give me strength
To keep on going
To get through this pain to
feel real again
I'll never get over it
Of that I am sure
But I'll give time a chance
And hope for a cure.
Time's without end
Love is too
I'll never forget you. I'll always miss you
~ Stella Kelly (after the death of her brother)
Submitted by Pat King, TCF/ Seattle, WA

I wish I could say that it gets easier. I wish it GOT easier.
The good news is that it does get easier to recognize when it will
be difficult. The passage of time, the repetition of holidays and
of certain event, having gone through those occasions before
lessens the anticipation. I'm also a lot better at letting people
know what I need from them. And more importantly, what I
don't.

~ Jordon Ferber, Russell's brother

Grief Is Not Depression

When a family member or close friend dies, people may say that we're depressed, but in reality what we're experiencing is grief. Grief is different from depression, which is an emotion or feeling, like anger or glee.

It's only partially correct to tell a mother whose 4-year-old daughter has died of leukemia that she's depressed, or to tell a husband whose wife has been killed in an automobile accident that he's suffering from depression. What also has happened to each person is the onset of grief.

What is grief?

Grief is a condition of moral and spiritual crisis. All of the beliefs which we have, are challenged when a family member or friend dies. We find ourselves asking many painful questions:

- What does it mean to be mortal?
- Why do bad things happen to good people?
- Why is there suffering?
- What does it mean that everyone I love is finite and mortal?
- What role does fate (being in the wrong place at the wrong time) play in our lives?
- Does suffering have meaning?
- Is life inherently tragic?
- Does life have meaning?

A spiritual crisis.

This spiritual crisis-which is not necessarily a religious one - involves both an intellectual and emotional struggle with a variety of emotions, only one of which is depression. Sometimes, a clinical depression will be provoked by a tragic disaster. But along with feelings of depression, there are likely to be feelings of despair, longing, guilt, shame, blame, anger, shock, sorrow, denial, loneliness, fear, and rage. All of this surrounds us as we grieve. We find ourselves asking: If babies die of agonizing diseases, and if people can become widowed in a matter of seconds, can we trust life at all, much less a loving, divine God who is good and all powerful? If such tragedies can happen, how can we feel safe or know the earth won't spin off its axis or that gravity will hold?

There appears to be no order, no meaning to life as we have known it, when we grieve.

A crisis of the entire human condition.

This is why grief transcends emotions, becoming a crisis of the entire human condition. In addition to the wrenching emotional pain that occurs when we grieve, our intellectual understandings are cracked wide open, forcing us to our knees. We are overwhelmed with doubt, even if we thought we had faith.

An entire reworking of our fundamental beliefs will have to take place, from the ground up, as we work through our grief. Most of us go through life believing that bad things should not happen to good, law-abiding, God-loving individuals. It becomes important in a time of loss to find a philosophy of life that can incorporate an unfair, undeserved catastrophe. This takes a hard and rigorous searching of the soul.

Often, our grief excludes those systems, beliefs, and friends we used to count on for discourse. Working through the grieving process can be a lonely, exhausting, and relentless process. Sleep disorders, eating disorders, and mood swings often characterize the period surrounding grief. Our constant questioning may require the help of professionals (psychotherapists, psychologists, or clergy).

Become better, not bitter.

The grieving period can take months, even years. In time, courageous individuals choose to become better rather than bitter. We realize that the only way out of grief is through it. We don't get over it. We get used to it by incorporating the loss into our revised beliefs and philosophies. Only then can we continue on with our lives.

~ Peg Armstrong, Grief and Bereavement Specialist, San Antonio, TX

WHY ME?—THE UNANSWERABLE QUESTION

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?"

They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"Why me?" is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the "Why me?" will answer itself.

~ Polly Moore, TCF/ Nashville, TN

A HEART WEEPS

This is a level of loss
That numbs every part of my being
My heart is bound so tightly
That it cannot even weep.
Will this ever end?
The ground lies bare and brown
Covered with last year's leaves.
The earth is cold and hard
As desolate as my heart.
Sustain me in this hour!
Today, from that barren earth
A clump of green appeared
White snowdrops clustered there.
And I saw, once again, a fragment of beauty!
I weep with thanksgiving
For this beauty that has warmed me.
For this heart that leapt, and now knows
That joy can enter once again.

~ Marie Andrews, TCF/Southern Maryland

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 & is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter. A 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.)

Another Death - How Much Can a Family Take?

After three family members died in a row I thought I knew a lot about multiple losses. I never suspected, even for a second, that life had more to teach me. Last week my former son-in-law, the father of my twin grandchildren, died in a car crash. I can hardly believe he died the same way my daughter died.

When I heard about the fourth death in the family my mind zapped back to the first stage of grief -- shock and disbelief. I was overcome with grief and sobbed for my daughter, father-in-law, brother, former son-in-law, my grandkids, and myself. Then I stopped sobbing. In fact, my mind raced forward to the final stage of grief -- acceptance.

Judith R. Bernstein, PhD, writes about the stages of grief in her book, "When A Bough Breaks." Many researchers believe the stages of grief that Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross identified, she notes, but "all agree that these stages are completely flexible and there is no such thing as orderly progression." I understand her point, indeed, I lived it.

To go from disbelief to acceptance in two days was amazing. How did I do this? I may never fully understand the process, but I think it happened because I have studied grief, have the experience that comes with age, and good coping skills. One coping skill is sticking to a routine as much as possible.

I am trying to get my grandkids to stick to their routine. We had planned to have Thanksgiving dinner with the extended family and the kids wanted to do this. Twenty-three family members gathered around various tables and I saw them "close ranks" to help the kids. But the kids wonder, friends wonder, and we wonder why both of their parents died.

As I have done before, I turned to Rabbi Harold Kushner's book, "When Bad Things Happen to Good People." Nobody knows why four family members died in nine months, but if you believe Rabbi Kushner, bad things happen randomly. "They do not happen for any good reason which would cause us to accept them willingly," he writes. "But we can give them a meaning."

I am giving new meaning to life by caring for my grandkids. This care includes healthy meals, clean laundry, shopping service, taxi service, attending concerts and sports events, and listening. When my grandkids share their thoughts with me I listen as though their lives depend on each word.

I am giving new meaning to life by writing about my losses. During the last week I discovered something important about myself. One of the reasons writers do what they do is to gain understanding. I thought I was writing about multiple losses to recover. Now I realize I am writing about multiple losses to survive.

If you have suffered multiple losses I hope you give new meaning to your life. You may find meaning in caring for children, grandkids, or a remaining parent. Donating to a religious community or a health organization may also give your life new meaning. I have been humbled by the kindness of family, friends, and strangers. Their kindness has brought new meaning to my life.

This moment in time -- my grandkids' high school and college years -- will define my life. I will care for my grandkids until I take my last breath. Despite the pain of multiple losses I feel blessed. Multiple losses have taught me that every moment is precious and I will not waste a single one.

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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

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***The
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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
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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.