



The Compassionate Friends

Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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November 2023

Volume 40 Number 11

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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

Next Meeting & Topic
December 14, 2023 - Candle Lighting

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

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on Thursday November 16th @ Randy's Diner Too
Annual Worldwide Candle lighting - December 10th at 7 p.m. local time
Angel Of Hope Memorial December 6th at 7 pm

LOVE GIFTS

Tom & Nancy Kassman in memory of their son. Kyle Kassman

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.

It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth - and that we have no way of *knowing* when our time is up, we will then begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had.
~ Elisabeth Kuebler-Ross

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

Footsteps in the Sand

"We cannot protect ourselves from the rain, but we can go together in search of the parade" ~ Darcie Sims

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 November 16th. For more information, please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org.

A Note from our Chapter Leader:

Sheryl, Nancy and I have all decided that it is time for us to step down from our roles and let someone else take over our Compassionate Friends Chapter. Sheryl will be leaving her position as Secretary, database administrator and webmaster at the end of this year. Nancy will be stepping down from her role as Newsletter Editor at the end of June 2024 and I will be stepping down as Chapter Leader at the end of March of 2024. We are all very thankful for TCF and all of the support we received when we lost our children and all of the wonderful lifetime friends we have gained through the years.

We would love to talk to anyone who is interested in taking over these positions and give you an outline of our duties. Please feel free to contact me or Sheryl.

If no one is willing to volunteer, we will unfortunately have to close our chapter in the spring of 2024.

~ Kara Bailey

RECIPE FOR RECOVERY

As many of us go about preparing our Holiday dinners, don't we wish we had a "Recipe for Recovery?" "Just add a cup of boiling water, stir well and drink," and our grieving would be over. Our society seems to crave "instant answers," but bereavement is a long process, and there are no easy solutions. Yet, I couldn't help imagining what I would put in my own "Recipe for Recovery,"

Start with one cup of the MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS - all those dear friends who did not turn away from me when they heard of Steve's suicide; but helped in many practical, caring ways to make the first months easier.

Add several GOOD EGGS - helping professionals like my minister, the counselor who suggested TCF and the young funeral director couple who organized the TCF Chapter I attended in New York.

Throw in a few heaping tablespoons of READING MATERIALS - Books and pamphlets from the TCF Library that started my thoughts going in a positive direction.

Add THE SALT OF THE EARTH - wonderful new friends I met through TCF and other support groups. Maybe we should call them THE CREAM OF THE CROP, because eventually they rise to the top.

Sprinkle liberally with TEARS - because it's okay to cry and generously with LAUGHTER - because we can learn to smile again.

Bake in a warm oven of TENDER LOVING CARE. Be sure to make enough to share with others and freeze some for later. That's my recipe - what's yours?

~ Cynthia Kelley, TCF/Cincinnati, OH

PRAYER

I'm thankful this Thanksgiving
That my grief is not so new.
Last year it was so painful to
Think of losing you.
Death can't claim my love for you
Tho we are far apart,
Sweet memories will always be
Engraved upon my heart.
Time can never bring you back
But it can help me be
Thankful for the years of joy
You brought our family.
To all the parents with grief so new
I share your loss and sorrow
I pray you find with faith and time
The blessings of each tomorrow.

~ Charlotte Irick, TCF/Idaho Falls, ID

Our Children Did Exist

I've lost two children, I hear myself say,
And the person I'm talking to just turns away.
Now why did I tell them, I don't understand.
It wasn't for sympathy or to get a helping hand.
just wanted them to know we've lost something dear,
I want them to know that our children were here.
They left something behind which no one can see. They made just
two people into a family.
So, if I've upset you, I'm sorry as can be. You'll have to forgive me,
I could not resist.

I just wanted you to know that our children did exist.

~ Betty Schreiber, TCF/Ashtabula, OH

WE ARE THE CHILDLESS PARENTS

By Sascha

I am the childless mother
lost between loving and pain
lost to the promise of children
searching for answers in vain.

I am the childless mother
caught between courage and fears
left without bridge to the future
finding no sound for my tears.

I am the childless father
caught between courage and fears
left without bridge to the future
finding no sound for my tears.

I am the childless father
lost between loving and pain
lost to the promise of children
searching for answers in vain.
We are the Childless Parents
sharing the grief and the night
sharing the darkness together
waiting to walk in the light

TAKE ME TO WHERE THE WATERMELON GROWS

Take me to where the watermelon grows
stretched out over years ago
Take me to where memories live, and sorrow
never casts its shadow
Show me the grass where laughter thrives
where little boys and girls dance
Take me to those rich fields of yesterday
ripe with the memories
...basking in sunlight,
waiting for me to smile
as I remember my child.

~ Alice J. Wisler

Love Always Remembers

May tender memories soften your grief
May fond recollections bring you relief
And may you find comfort and peace in the thought
Of the joy of knowing your loved one brought
For time and space can never divide
Or keep your loved one from your side
When memory paints in colors true
The happy hours that belonged to you.

~ Helen Steiner Rice, South Shore, Hingham, MA

You Will Feel Better

Sorrow comes to all... it comes with bitterest agony...
Perfect relief is not possible except with time.
You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better...
And yet this is a mistake
You are sure to be happy again,
To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less
miserable now. I have had
experience enough to know what I say.

~ Abraham Lincoln

Cemetery Moms

Jessica's Mom found another elephant to perch on Jess' headstone. She sits on the next grave marker with her arms wrapped around her knees, rocking and telling the latest about the court case that plays out her agony in the local newspaper. It was one year ago that her daughter innocently hung out with her long-time friends, boys who stole a gun they didn't think was loaded. Dads, siblings, grandparents and friends come too, but today, only Cemetery Moms are here.

Music comes from Keith's section of Clinton Grove Cemetery, where Civil War soldiers rest with the county seat's first settlers, and now our children. Keith's mother brings a tape player to comfort her while she plants and prunes and fusses over every leaf and petal. The music he wrote and performed couldn't drown out the teasing, bullying and pressure of high school and, she tells us, he ended his life.

Not far, a different Jessica's mother plants purple- blue flowers to match her daughter's purple headstone- imported from Europe - favorite color of the girl who was expected to survive heart surgery.

A grave away from my son is John, who also ended the life that had overwhelmed him. He is Jessica-the-elephant-collector's cousin. In four years, I have never seen John's mother here.

She is the one who discovered her son in the garage. So we tend John's place, planting and watering around the statue representing John's pug dog.

My own little Steven lies in this section among the other young ones. He lost the battle with lifelong medical problems. I've come to change the poem in the outdoor frame next to Steven's blue headstone - blue for little boys and angels. Jessica's mom listens to how Steven "told" me to buy that little Raspberry Punch rosebush for the gravesite. (He "blew raspberries" when he was contented, which I believe he is now.)

We guess at who left some token of love for Jess. There are no car pools or school activities or passing off outgrown clothes to occupy our time and our talk. Not even the latest surgery or teenage crisis. In winter. I come Fridays, and eat my lunch in my car parked alongside our kids' section. Jessica's mom says not to worry if I don't get here every day this summer to water the impatiens; she comes every day with her sprinkling can. We are the Cemetery Moms.

~ Linda May, TCF/Troy, MI

SHARED THOUGHTS OF CELEBRATING THANKSGIVING WHILE GRIEVING

For many of us, fall means the time of year to be in awe of all the beautiful colors of nature, and to give thanks for our many blessings. When our child or sibling dies, our eyes still see nature's beauty, but our hearts are in too much pain to feel, appreciate, or enjoy anything. The Thanksgiving holiday seems almost unacceptable to many newly bereaved. It is very difficult to give thanks, when one of our greatest blessings has been taken from us, and the gut-wrenching pain is with us every moment.

We now know how precious the gift of life is. We are more appreciative of our surviving family, and find the dreaded anticipation of not having our whole family together for our traditional Thanksgiving adds to our grief. This is not a time to shelter others from our pain. Not being honest can give false messages, and confuses others who want to help us. Friends and extended family members frequently think they know what is always best for us. Their advice may only be best for them, by easing their pain and pretending you are capable of handling more than you can.

It is important to include immediate family members in your holiday planning. Don't try to read their minds. You are showing respect and acknowledging their pain by getting their input. They, too, have apprehensions of upcoming holidays, and need to have open verbal communication.

If you plan to be with friends or extended family, it may be wise to give advance notice that you may not be able to "keep it together". If you plan to have people in, try to let others help you prepare the dinner. You may want to deviate from traditions. Only you can decide what is best for you. Ask friends to accept your decision. We kept all our traditions, but that may not be best for you. We still had our surviving children at home, and it seemed important to hold to our seasonal celebrations.

Even though it is difficult to count blessings, we need to communicate with our feelings. Family, friends, and relationships are always at the top of our list of things to be thankful for. Next came material things, which now seem so trivial, and not even worth enumerating. "Things" don't belong on the same page anymore. Most of us have learned a new meaning about life. What a waste it would be if we endured all this pain and agony, and did not become a more caring person. We also have a new understanding of the word "Compassion", and have learned to reach out to those who need us.

We should not minimize our pain. It often prevents us from counting our blessings, and that is very normal during our early grief. The intense pain blocks out everything. We should feel no guilt for having normal human reactions. Allow yourselves to grieve and cry, it is very healing.

There are no shortcuts to get through our grief. But, it will get softer, and tolerable, and we learn how to handle the holidays. I could not believe this in my fresh grief. I have healed more than I ever thought possible. All memories were so painful. One of the things I am most thankful for is that I can now remember beautiful times with Doug, without having intense pain. I feel and hope you will also have this blessing one day. God Bless,

~ Marie Hofmockel, TCF/Valley Forge, PA

THE EMPTY CHAIR

The table is set, and ready with food to delight the eye, Everyone is waiting, with anticipation high.

But one place is empty, void of a loved one dear, And as we pause to remember, we wipe away the tear.

Your chair may be empty, and your presence no longer there. But your memory is with us, as we gather around this fare.

Someone recalls something you once said, and the memories start to flow, And in this magic moment, your spirit upon us glows,

Gone but never forgotten, as with us you'll always be, And if I look close, your presence, in the empty chair I see.

~ Sheila Simmons, Dallas, GA



OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

CHILD		PARENTS
OLIVIA MAE BUTH.....	25.....	TIM & MELANIE BUTH
MATTHEW ISAAC CVIJANOVICH	42.....	SHERYL CVIJANOVICH
STEVEN "HERMAN" FESKE	65.....	ROSEMARY FESKE
JOHN CHARLES FRISCH.....	61.....	ARLEEN FRISCH
RYAN P GOERTZ.....	45.....	JAMES & CHERI GOERTZ
COLE HALLAND.....	38.....	STEVEN & JOAN HALLAND
MASON HAMRE	19.....	CHRIS & CHRISTINE HAMRE
KYLE KASSMAN	38.....	TOM & NANCY KASSMAN
KAMMI THORLAKSON LELAND	49.....	LYNDA & SVEN MICKELS
JEREMIAH MEDENWALD	41.....	TERRY & ROXANN MEDENWALD
BENJAMIN MERCK.....	20.....	MARK & LINDA MERCK
CASEY MEYER	42.....	REBECCA MEYER CHARLET
MARK ANTHONY MORATIS.....	62.....	WALTER & MARGARET MORATIS
DENNIS JAMES MULDOON, JR	56.....	PATRICIA MULDOON
RYAN DEAN NELSON	43.....	BECKY NELSON
BRANDON NILES	28.....	MARY & MARK TUTTLE
REED JOEL PROCHNOW.....	48.....	NEIL & KATHLEEN PROCHNOW
THERESA JANE RICHTER.....	50.....	RONALD & SUE OLSON
CHLOE GRACE RONGEN.....	12.....	CONNIE & BARRY RONGEN (Grandparents)
ANDREW SADEK	30.....	JOHN & TAMMY SADEK
TYLER JAMES THOEMKE	32.....	JAMIE & SHERI THOEMKE

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
BRIAN BJERKEN	17.....	DENNIS & SHIRLEY BJERKEN
RILEY MARK DAHLBERG.....	17.....	BLAKE & CHRISTINA DAHLBERG
LINDA HAINE	1.....	JANE HAINE
HEIDI HELLAND.....	12.....	JOHN & TERRI HELLAND
TARI ELLESS HELLER	16.....	RICHARD & CLARE ELLESS
TRAVIS SCOTT KOENIG.....	3.....	LAUREL KOENIG
JESSE ANDREW KOLNES	6.....	LEOBA KOLNES
LANNIE LEE KORNELIUS.....	16.....	LEROY & DONNA KORNELIUS
ERIC CRAIG LARSON.....	21.....	CRAIG & BARB LARSON
BENJAMIN MERCK.....	4.....	MARK & LINDA MERCK
KYLE NELSON.....	9.....	JERRY & YVONNE NELSON
RACHEL PAYNE.....	2.....	BETTY KARAIM
CHLOE GRACE RONGEN.....	12.....	CONNIE & BARRY RONGEN (Grandparents)
MILLARD SAMUELSON.....	2.....	ROSEMARY SAMUELSON

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.

You were our lightning vibrant and beautiful, but all too brief.

SIBLING PAGE

ALIKE

As I look in the mirror,
I wonder if it's true,
Is it true when people say,
I look like you?
I know I have the pictures,
And I have movies, too,
But these do not help much,
So do I look like you?
I never got to know you,
I wonder if it's true,
When my friends and family say,
I look like you.
~ Kelly Maxwell, TCF/Pikes Peak, CO

Miss Me A Little, But Let Me Go

When I come to the end of the road,
And the sun has set for me.
I want no tears in a gloom filed room,
Why cry for a soul set free!
For this is a journey we all must take,
And each must go alone.
Miss me a little, but not for long,
And not with your head bowed low.
When you are lonely and sick of heart,
Go to the friends you know.
Bury your sorrows in doing good deeds,
Miss me a little, but let me go.
Author Unknown

This Thanksgiving

This Thanksgiving and always,
Through the grief, Through the tears,
Through the loneliness, Through the fears,
WE ARE THANKFUL
WE HAD OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS
~ Khaki Chambers, TCF/Pensacola, FL

REMINISCING

I thought about you today
As I bade farewell for school.
I thought about you today
When I heard a certain song.
I thought about you today
As the teacher passed the test.
I thought about you today
When the kids jumped in the leaves.
I thought about you today
As a stranger passed my way.
I thought about you today
When I got drenched in the rain.
I thought about you today
As I sat in church and prayed.
I thought about you today
When I embraced an old friend.
I thought about you today
As the day turned into night.
I will think of you again
When I close my eyes and dream.
~ Lori Phillips, TCF/Scranton, PA

THEY DON'T WEAR PURPLE HEARTS IN HEAVEN

I lost my brother to a foreign land;
I was too young to even understand
There was a knock at the front door,
Then Momma wasn't smiling anymore.
The man at the door was a Marine;
The first I've ever seen.
Momma told me to go out and play,
Then the preacher came and they started to pray.
Tears ran down Momma's eyes, and
I heard her say, "Why, Lord, Why?"
Father stood there seemingly mindless, all he said was,
"We've lost another of America's finest."
The Marine handed Momma a small velvet case,
Inside was a Purple Ribbon, attached to
a gold heart with Washington's face.
I asked Momma if it were mine,
But she said "It's your brother's, Sunshine."
"Momma can we send it to Kevin?"
She answered, "They don't wear Purple Hearts in Heaven."
Author unknown
Lifted from TCF Atlanta Linked Together Newsletter

AS I REMEMBER HIM

Whenever I answer an email from a newly bereaved sibling I say "My twin brother Alan passed away of AIDS on June 25th 1992. There isn't a day in which I don't think of him."
The greatest joy in my life was being Alan's twin brother. The worst time since Alan's death was turning 40. As the ninth anniversary approached last year I was very anxious. I had thought I was doing much better and couldn't understand why I was unable to decide what I should do. Afterward, I was still nervous, as I am each year between June and August, our birthday month, but last year was worse.
As my birthday neared I realized that would be my first "milestone" birthday without Alan. I decided I wanted to go to Philly, Alan's town. To me it would be easier than being with all of the family, all except Alan. I had figured out my family was planning a surprise party. One morning before work, I became physically sick. Even though I had survived without Alan for nine years I now realized that I couldn't continue without help. Twice a week for the two weeks before my birthday I received counseling. I had decided I would have a birthday party if I could make the guest list. It turns out everyone I would have wanted was already invited. Many didn't speak of Alan but they could see his picture button while speaking to me. Thoughts of Alan were never far and as I walked the last friend to his car I realized that it was an enjoyable day but each milestone would be an adjustment.
As I approach my 41st birthday, the tenth without Alan, I have had his initials put on my car's license plate. Each trip to a diner, I order Jell-O after a meal; each new state I visit I get a miniature license plate with his name. I gave his clothes to friends and charity, designed his headstone and developed a program for his memorial service. I started a scholarship, created an AIDS quilt, web page and a backyard garden. I devoted a room, "Alan's room", with posters and articles by and about him. I donate items for AIDS & TCF auctions, write articles and volunteer for TCF, all in Alan's memory. As long as I live I will continue to find ways to honor his memory as I remember him.
Daniel Yoffee
In Memory of my brother, Alan

HOLIDAYS IN HEAVEN

The Holiday Season is just not the same,
A smile is missing when saying one name.
For parents who've lost a daughter or son,
Nothing can bring back the delightful fun,
Of watching them talk, laugh, or just run.
The memories are all that we do have now,
We do go on.....only God knows how.
A New Year comes as midnight arrives,
Our Angels still a big part of our lives.
If only we could trade the presents we receive,
For one more day with those whom we grieve!
But nothing can bring back our beloved child,
The one that laughed, cried, and often smiled.
They are together in a much better place,
Watching us cry.....touching our face!
Although we miss them on Holidays to share,
Be assured their loving presence fills the air,
At home, in church, at New York's Times Square!
So celebrating the Holidays are now hard to do,
But always remember they are thinking of you too,
Wishing you happiness and showing their love,
Not on this Earth, but from Heaven above!
~ Dan Bryl, TCF/Lawrenceville, GA
In Memory of his daughter, Jessica

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

I'm thankful this Thanksgiving
That my grief is not so new.
Last year it was so painful to
Think of losing you.
Death can't claim my love for you
Tho we are far apart,
Sweet memories will always be
Engraved upon my heart.
Time can never bring you back
But it can help me be
Thankful for the years of joy
You brought our family.
To all the parents with grief so new
I share your loss and sorrow
I pray you find with faith and time
The blessings of each tomorrow.
~ Charlotte Irick, TCF/Idaho Falls, ID

Thanksgiving

Our time together was too brief,
Your life on earth numbered in but days.
Yet, how could I have loved you more if I had
held you through the seasons of your life?
When does love begin?
For me the day you first moved within me
Wrapped me in such warmth that it can still
keep out the cold as here I stand missing you
and all that we could have shared.
Death has robbed me of your softness and of
all the dreams I had for you,
But not of my love.
Not even death can take that from me – from us.
And for that, I am thankful.
- Karen Nelson, TCF/ Brigham City, UT

THE LITTLE THINGS

Often, even the simple tasks of everyday living seem to drain every ounce of one's energy. Remember going to the grocery store even months after your child's death and the feelings you had as you passed up his or her favorite cereal? Or watching another child the same age as yours in a restaurant and trying to swallow your food – you probably didn't even taste it. Or hearing a certain song in public and fighting back the tears? Sometimes even getting through the day in your own home makes you feel like you've run a marathon and leaves you in worse shape. You probably never dreamed that doing the family laundry could make you cry or that getting a piece of mail in your child's name could suck your breath away.

Even the best of friends and families can't possibly know the strength you must summon day after day after day. We shouldn't expect them to understand completely, but it does get lonely. Perhaps this quote puts it in a nutshell:

One sad thing about this world is that the acts that take the most out of you are usually the ones that other people will never know about.

~ Anne Tyler, TCF/Sacramento Valley, CA

If I allow my grief, even one day of it, to dominate me, then I will have missed whatever today might have been. Then death piles upon death... one day after another. All missed because I was too busy reliving a hurt... too tied up in memories to gather in today...
"Footsteps Through the Valley" By Darcie D Sims

GRANDPARENTS' REMEMBRANCE

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is two-fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

~ Susan Mackey, TCF/Rutland VT

Heaven's Rocking Chair

Are there rocking chairs in Heaven
where little babies go?
Do the angels hold you closely
and rock you to and fro?
Do they talk silly baby talk
to get a smile or two,
and sing the sleepy lullabies
I used to sing to you?
My heart is aching for you,
my angel child so dear.
You brought such joy into my life
the short time you were here.
I know you're in a happy place
and in God's loving care.
I dream each night I'm rocking you
in Heaven's rocking chair.

~ Ron Trammer

The Stress Test

On my desk is a little card that measures stress. It is similar to the “mood rings” of the 1970s in nature. If I am having a good day, the color is green. If I am particularly serene, the color is blue. Sometimes the color is black or red.....these are the bad days. Black equals stress; red equals tense.

If only our real emotions were that easy to measure and quantify. If only we could touch a card or a stone and find out if we are angry, sad, depressed, withdrawn, happy, balanced or “normal”. But, this does not exist.

Instead we must rely on our subjective minds to analyze what should be a very objective situation: where are we now? Only parents who have lost a child can relate to this statement. Where am I now? Yesterday seemed good, but today is terrible. I don't even want to get out of bed.

Then the guilt sets in: it is the American way to “get on with it”. The work ethic is part of the fabric of most of our lives. Be productive. Have accomplishments. Do things, tackle projects, keep on moving, moving, moving.

Sometimes that moving is really running: running from our demons. Can we analyze this for what it is? Can we ask ourselves what those demons might be? Can we go into the dark recesses of our minds and pull out the offensive demon and throw it into the stratosphere? Actually, we can.

I have done this many times. Some people do this with prayer, some with yoga, some with exercise, some with meditation, some with medication, some with reading, some with professional therapy, some with sheer willpower.

We each search for ways to deal with our grief, to analyze each phase of our grieving process, to help ourselves to help ourselves. What I have found to be most helpful in analyzing each phase of “demon purging” is the exponential value of talking with others who are also in grief. Asking questions of them will often answer questions of my own. I move forward one step after each Compassionate Friends meeting. It is a difficult step, a tearful, emotional step, a step that slides sideways and backwards and forwards and then finally settles. But it is the next step on the road of grief. I take that step and its lesson and I apply it for the next month.

The meter of measurement is what I tell myself before I go to sleep each night. Today was good because..... Tomorrow will be good because.....

Where did I learn this technique? I invented it 38 years ago. I invented it for my child. Each night before he fell asleep, we would read a book. Then, we would talk about his day. What was bad? How can you change it? What was good? How did it make you feel? What are you looking forward to tomorrow? Think about that while you fall asleep, I would tell him. Tomorrow will be a good day filled with whatever positive event he had mentioned. He would recite all the good things from his day and everything positive about tomorrow.

Even as teenager and later as an adult, my child and I would have these late night conversations. Our final night conversation was just 6 hours before he died. He was thinking positive, anticipating the good.

So now I continue the tradition. What was good today? What was bad? What am I looking forward to for tomorrow? There is always something positive. I analyze the things that went wrong and “sleep on” a solution.

So this is my stress test –not very complicated-something like a prayer for enlightenment and positive feelings. I discover my yo-yo emotions, my grief, my sadness and yet I remember the happiness and the hope. It helps me to sleep each night. Tomorrow will be better.

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

Who Suffers More?

Suppose you had two jars from your supermarket that you wanted to re-use, but you need to remove their labels first. One of the jars has a pressure-sensitive label which peels right off without a trace of residue. The other one has a label that refuses to budge regardless of soaking, scraping or general pleading. The removal does not depend upon the qualities of the label or the jar. It is the kind of bonding that determines the kind of separation. Only the adhesive involved matters.

Neither the size of the label and jar, nor the length of time they have been joined together will determine how great a struggle there will be in separating the two from each other.

So it is with love and death. Therefore, let us always keep in mind as we experience our own separation pain that it is not relevant how old the child was who died -- we don't love our children more as they grow and develop. (Sometimes the more obscure label has the more tenacious bond!) The *only* measure of our grief is the intensity of our attachment.

Unbonding is not necessarily a visible or obvious process. Just as you cannot tell by looking at a jar whether its label is readily removable, you cannot tell just by looking at a parent how much suffering is caused by the unbonding process. For some parents the attachment is firm even before their children are born. For others it cements more totally with time.

None of us can judge for another. We can only extend to others the same comfort, support and understanding that we hope to receive for ourselves. Remember, we're all rowing in the same storm, and we all intend the same destination: the safe harbor of healing and peace.

~ Andrea Gambill, TCF/Indianapolis, IN

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 Cvijanovich701-540-3287	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.