



# The Compassionate Friends

## Fargo/Moorhead Area Chapter

### Supporting Family After a Child Dies

TCF's National Office  
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Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, we have decided for the safety of our members to cancel monthly chapter meetings until further notice.

#### Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 7 pm on September 24th @ Denny's  
Annual Worldwide Candlelighting - December 13, 2020 7 p.m. local time

#### LOVE GIFTS

Doe Rae Prante in memory of her son, Johnny Levi Grey  
Anthony & Karel Varriano in memory of their son, Chad Varriano  
Philip & Opal Bachmeier in memory of their son, Steven M Bachmeier  
Jim & Jody Kutter in memory of their daughter, Michelle Kutter  
Paul and Kara Bailey in memory of their son, Nick Bailey

Butterfly donation from:  
Philip & Opal Bachmeier in memory of their son, Steven M Bachmeier

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.

#### Autumn

In the fall when amber leaves are shed, Softly—silently Like tears that wait to flow, I watch and grieve. My heart beats sadly in the fall; 'Tis then I miss you most of all.  
~ Lily de Lauder, TCF/Van Nuys, CA

#### 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 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Denny's restaurant, 4437 13th Ave SW, 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 September 24th. For more information please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at [www.tcffargomoorhead.org](http://www.tcffargomoorhead.org).

#### Butterfly Decals

“Butterflies are the heaven sent kisses of an angel.” ~ Author Unknown  
Butterfly decals are available to help personalize our trailer. The trailer is used to carry items to and from our Walk to Remember and other chapter events. It has also given us some visibility in the Fargo/Moorhead community. Each butterfly decal holds the first and last name of one of our beloved children.

Butterflies are available in five colors (yellow, pink, red, blue and green). The cost is as follows: \$25 for 1 butterfly, \$50 for 2 butterflies, \$65 for 3 butterflies and \$80 for 4 butterflies. If you wish to purchase more than 4 butterflies, please contact Paul and Kara Bailey at 701-491-0364.

Butterfly orders should include the child's first and last name (middle name is optional) and the color of the butterfly. Checks should be made payable to TCF of Fargo-Moorhead and the order mailed to PO Box 10686, Fargo, ND 58106.

## Myths and Their Impact on Grief and Marriage

By Therese Rando, Ph.D

### The Adverse Impact of Myths About Grief

Society maintains a number of inappropriate and unrealistic myths, stereotypes and standards for mourners in general. These not only do not help bereaved individuals, they actually hurt them. False expectations are established against which mourners and their caregivers evaluate grief responses, and pathology may be interpreted mistakenly when reactions depart from them. Consequently, mourners may feel guilt and failure, perceive something to be wrong with themselves, or assume they are going crazy when such expectations are unmet, despite their being totally unrealistic to begin with! Additionally, mourners may not receive the necessary assistance they require, since those in a position to give it often are laboring under the same misconceptions as well. They do not have an accurate picture of what mourners require and experience.

Clearly, these myths are quite dangerous, and this is why it is important to educate both the general public and professionals about the realities of bereavement. Hopefully this will result in more appropriate expectations, accurate knowledge, compassionate understanding, and a lessening of unnecessary pain for those who mourn the loss of a loved one.

Unfortunately, the population of bereaved individuals most subject to inappropriate expectations and the negative effects of misinformation are bereaved parents. This is because they must endure all of what mourners in general must cope with, AND THEN SOME. Without question the death of a child is such a unique loss that bereavement after it fails to be explained by the general conceptualizations we have about grief and mourning. In fact, bereaved parents are predisposed to be exceptionally vulnerable to "unresolved grief" and to misdiagnoses of pathology as a result. This is because there are a number of factors inherent in losing a child which are known to promote a failure to grieve, to complicate healthy mourning, or to lead directly to pathological responses. It becomes evident that what has been associated with "abnormal" or "pathological" grief in other mourners is part and parcel of the bereavement experience following the death of a child. The aspects that accompany this particular loss are the very same ones that in any other type of loss predispose a mourner to problems. It is no wonder why so many bereaved parents have been misdiagnosed as having pathological grief or chronic mourning. For this reason, it is absolutely imperative to develop a new model of parental mourning, and to identify new criteria what does constitute unhealthy grief in this special population.

However, society is not the only group which contributes to the pain of bereaved parents by its unrealistic expectations, bereaved parents do this to themselves as well. One of the prime areas in which this is found is in the marital relationship. Far too many times, bereaved parents tend to underestimate or overestimate the impact of the death of their child on their marriage. The remainder of this article is devoted to delineating some of the myths about the impact of grief on marriage in the hope that bereaved parents will become more realistic in their expectations of themselves and their mates, and decrease the amount of avoidable distress they experience when misinformation prevails.

### Myths About the Impact of Grief on the Marriages of Bereaved Parents

*(1) As the same child has died, each parent experiences the same loss.* Each individual mourns the relationship and person that has been lost. As parents, each of us has experienced our child differently and had a unique relationship with that child. Therefore, both bereaved parents are mourning different losses, and these will be what will influence what one misses and when one misses it (e.g., one parent may miss the opportunity to talk with the child after school, while the other especially may miss watching football games on Sunday).

*(2) Spouses will tend to be more similar than dissimilar in their grief.* At latest count, people grieve according to 32 different sets of factors, each of which is highly idiosyncratic, as individualistic as a fingerprint. Spouses are no more alike necessarily in their mourning than are strangers. Loving one another, or living in the same house, does not make individuals respond to loss similarly. Some of the major factors contributing to differences between parents include: type and quality of the relationship with the child; sex-role conditioning; personality and coping behaviors; past experiences with loss; social, cultural, and religious backgrounds; social support received; reliance on drugs and alcohol; and physical health. Spouses will have to give each other wide latitude for their differing experiences of grief.

*(3) Once a couple can learn to manage their grief, they will be back to themselves again.* A major loss always changes the bereaved somewhat. Parts of us dies when someone we love very much dies. Most of us continue on, but we are altered by the impact of the loss and the adaptations to it that have been required of us. We not only will have to learn to relate in a new way to our deceased child (i.e., we still can have a relationship with that child, but it must be a different type now that he or she is dead).

We also must learn how to relate to the rest of the world, including our spouse, in new ways to accommodate the changes in us occasioned by the loss. Especially during the long period of acute grief, in which the absence of our child painfully teaches us repeatedly that he or she is gone, it may be very difficult to relate to our spouse because of our pain and distress. Our communication with each other may have deteriorated; our sexual relationship may not be what it once was or it may have disappeared entirely. It is not abnormal for this to continue for a lengthy period of time. Couples who are successful in managing to weather this crisis together: (1) keep the communication open as much as possible; (2) recognize their distress and the changes in themselves, and work to express both in the healthiest possible fashions; (3) insure their expectations of one another are appropriate and give each other permission to grieve individually as necessary; and (4) find ways slowly to integrate all of the changes into the marriage.

*(4) If a parent and couple are "healthy," the mourning will last longer than most people expect — up to a few years.* The duration of mourning varies according to the particular loss, its circumstances, the mourner, and the conditions surrounding the mourner. Nevertheless, it is now known that mourning a beloved person may take years of acute grief and that the long-term mourning process takes much longer, with some aspects of mourning never being entirely finished; i.e., there always may occur subsequent experiences which can trigger in us temporary upsurges in grief for our child (e.g. when his brother gets married and he is not there or when it is Thanksgiving and her place is empty at the table). It constitutes neither pathological nor unresolved grief, nor does it mean that acute mourning still

persists. Bereaved parents must recognize that mourning the loss of any major person, especially a child, will mean continuing throughout the rest of life to encounter times when the pain of the loss is brought back and the absence made more acute at that moment, which causes a temporary upsurge in grief. As long as this doesn't interfere too long with your continuing to move adaptively into the new life without your loved one, such reactions need not be incompatible with healthy adaptation for the rest of your life.

**(5) Parental grief declines over time in a steadily decreasing fashion.** Like all types of grief, parental grief fluctuates much more than society expects. In the case of the bereaved couple, parents initially may be more similar in their grief and then, from two to five years after the death, grow further apart before coming closer together again. It is suggested that this is because a mother's grief often increases for several years after the two-year point following the death, while the father's tends to decrease.

Therefore for a period of time they become more discrepant from one another. It is important to realize this so that if it occurs you can be aware of it and act to manage its disruptive effects on you and your spouse.

**(6) Parents who lose children usually end up with a divorce.** Despite the prevalence of the belief, it is positively untrue that parents whose child dies inevitably are headed for a divorce. The death of a child places an enormous strain on a relationship, but it has *not* been proven to destroy it. In fact, Dennis Klass' study of TCF parents suggests that it is precisely because parents who survive their grief (i.e., as a result of the positive growth that can come from loss) no longer wish to remain in unhealthy relationships, and this is one reason for divorces following a child's death. When parents do divorce, more often than not it is due to their having had significant problems before the child died, and the death only brought the long-term issues to a head. Although there is no question that the loss of a child and the ensuing grief does stress a marriage, do not think you must end up with a divorce. Some parents actually become closer after their child's death.

**(7) Loss only brings pain and devastation.** Despite the agony of losing their child and the long-term effects of such a loss, many bereaved parents have worked enormously hard to develop some positive gains out of their loss (e.g., beginning support groups, reordering their priorities, developing better family communication, establishing closer relationships, etc.) While they never would have chosen to lose their child to achieve these gains, they are determined to choose healthy responses to it. You can do this as well.

**Summary:** Myths hurt all bereaved parents. The more accurate information you have, the better prepared you will be not only to encounter the vicissitudes of parental grief, but to minimize the negative effects of such misinformation.

### A Love Song

The mention of my child's name may bring tears to my eyes, but it never fails to bring music to my ears.

If you really are my friend, please don't keep me from hearing the beautiful music  
It soothes my broken heart and fills  
my soul with love. Nancy

~ Seaman Williams, TCF/Central Jersey Chapter

### Beach Havens

As the tide of grief goes down,  
New beaches are revealed.  
Their sand, it's true,  
Is wet,  
And barnacles protrude.  
But wear your rubber shoes  
(hot pink would be preferred).  
Step dainty on the shore;  
A storm-thrown log  
Will give you rest.  
Now sit and sun yourself,  
And dream of those you love.

By Cathy Sosnowsky  
In memory of Alex Sosnowsky  
Reprinted with permission;  
Holding On; Poems for Alex

### PLEASE LET ME MOURN

I've never lost a child before, and I don't understand all these emotions I am feeling. Will you try to understand and help me?

**Please let me mourn.**

I may act and appear together, but I am not. Oftentimes it hurts so much I can hardly bear it.

**Please let me mourn.**

Don't expect too much from me. I will try to help you know what I can and cannot handle. Sometimes I am not always sure.

**Please let me mourn.**

Let me talk about my child. I need to talk. It's part of the healing. Don't pretend nothing has happened. It hurts terribly when you do. I love my child very much, and my memories are all I have now. They are very precious to me.

**Please let me mourn.**

Sometimes I cry and act differently, but it is all part of the grieving. My tears are necessary and needed and should not be held back. It even helps when you cry with me. Please don't fear my tears.

**Please let me mourn.**

What I need most is your friendship, your sympathy, your prayers, your support, and your understanding love. I am not the same person I was before my child died, and I never will be. Hopefully we can all grow from this shared tragedy.

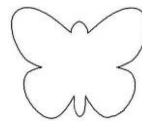
**Please let me mourn.**

God gives me strength to face each day and the hope that I will survive with His help and yours. Time will heal some of the pain, but there will always be an empty place in my heart.

**Please let me mourn.**

Please let me mourn and thank you for helping me through the most difficult time of my life.

~ Lonnie Forland, TCF/Northwood, IA



Happiness is a butterfly, which when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.

~Nathaniel Hawthorne



## OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

CHILD		PARENTS
NATHAN ANDERSON.....	43.....	DIANE & JAY FENSKE
REAGAN NICOLE COLLINS.....	3.....	NICOLE UHLICH & JACOB COLLINS
MICAH J CROSBY .....	40.....	CRAIG & GLORIA CROSBY
KENT ALAN HANSEN .....	31.....	DOUGLAS HANSEN
JAYSON P HAUGEN.....	38.....	PAULETTE HAUGEN
ADYSON JEAN KNUDSEN .....	6.....	KRISTIN & MICHAELKNUDSEN
ANNIE PAGE LEGGIO.....	22.....	JOSEPH LEGGIO
ALIVIA PAIGE MORTENSON .....	19.....	DANIELLE MORTENSON
SAMUEL JEROME NOESKE.....	15.....	JERRY & AMY NOESKE
PAUL A OLSON .....	46.....	SHIRLEY OLSON
DYLAN ROMAINE .....	9.....	AARON & TRICIA ROMAINE
ALBERT C "SONNY" SKAR.....	67.....	DARLENE SKAR
NICHOLAS JOSEPH SWANSON.....	31.....	GREG & ALICE SWANSON
SCOTT ANTHONY TOBOLT.....	44.....	JOHN & MARY TOBOLT
JEFFREY M WEBBER.....	49.....	JUANITA WEBBER

## ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
NICHOLAS LEE BAILEY .....	11.....	PAUL & KARA BAILEY
DAVIN BAUCK.....	2.....	DEAN & DIANE BAUCK
PAMELA KAYE BJERKE .....	2.....	DARLENE SKAR
REAGAN NICOLE COLLINS.....	3.....	NICOLE UHLICH & JACOB COLLINS
KEVIN DILLENBURG .....	1.....	LOYSE PORTER
BRANDON WILLIAM THOMAS KLUTH.....	5.....	BRENDA KLUTH
ADYSON JEAN KNUDSEN .....	6.....	KRISTIN & MICHAELKNUDSEN
DAVID R KOSAK.....	3.....	BRUCE & MYRA KOSAK
BENJAMIN KOTTA .....	18.....	ARLEN & JULIE KOTTA
MICHELLE KUTTER .....	15.....	JIM & JODY KUTTER
JAMIE CLIFFORD OLSON .....	8.....	GLENNIS OLSON
JOHN THORVAL PEARSON .....	2.....	EDNA MAE PEARSON
ASHLEY PERRINE.....	4.....	BRAD & BRENDA MERGENS
JOSE DANIEL SAUVAGEAU .....	4.....	MARY BJERKE
CORA WAGNER .....	1.....	DONNA J WAGNER

Please check out our Chapter website's page for 'Our Beloved Children' ([www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourchildren.html](http://www.tcffargomoorhead.org/ourchildren.html)). 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](mailto: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.

Hope is a rare gift that, if we are lucky, comes to us with the power to heal our lives. I've come to know that the deepest sense of hope often springs from the hardest lessons in life. It is in the darkest skies that the stars are best seen.... perhaps it is divine irony that within the darkest moments we are capable of revealing the greatest light, demonstrating what is best with humanity.

~ Richard Paul Evans

# SIBLING PAGE

## Awake

*(Birds, crickets. Wind in the trees. I finally hear these things)*

For two years I was asleep. Asleep, like the long shadows outside my cloudy house, where the sounds of laughter fell silent against the drenched walls. My senses were frozen: no taste, smell, feeling, or noise could penetrate the safe, bulletproof wall I built around myself. My life had become a perpetual winter. Numbness was all I felt. Smells, like flowers blooming in the spring, freshly-cut grass in the summer, apple pie cooking in the oven in the fall, and the smell of the newly decorated Christmas tree in the winter, were lost. I would stare out the bleeding windows, into the grey sunlight. Every day was the same as the day before. I was on a train speeding blankly through a storm; everything outside the window was a dark blur. I kept my head low, and dove forward into daily life, never really understanding what was going on around me. The storm lasted two years, and finally the sun breached the clouds. I no longer saw the flashing lights. I no longer heard the piercing sound of the heart monitor as her heart fell silent. I no longer felt the coldness of her skin and the rough hospital sheet. Instead, I began to see her smile. I saw the way her eyes would glow and widen when she smiled or laughed. I saw the look she made every time I hugged her spontaneously; rolling her eyes in a look of annoyance, but a smile appearing, erasing any of her unconvincing pretenses. I saw my sister. For the first time, I heard myself laugh. The curtains opened and allowed light and color to fill my life.

It took two years to realize that after every freeze there is a thaw, after every winter there is a spring, after every ending there is a beginning. I found the glue to piece my life back together. I realized that even though the puzzle that connected my sister and me together was broken, it could still work.

A piece would always be missing, but the other half was capable of functioning and having fun. The grey shadows disappeared, and sunlight took its place. The occasional shadow would emerge, but I found ways to fight the shadows off and stay happy by keeping the warmth and light of the sun visible and strong. The numbness, like Novocain, wore off and I was able to realize that even though this huge part of my life was missing, everything would be ok, and things would get better. I found hope and strength.

My sister's death has been painful, but also encouraging. I have transformed into a person I am proud of. I have found who I am, and much of this has to do with the growth I experienced after her death. I have developed a sense of self and confidence, none of which I had before my sister died. This change and self-realization though, wasn't something that happened in a day. Slowly, I began to wake up. It could have been a number of events that spurred this change; whether it was excelling in school, getting my first horse, or celebrating traditions we had halted after her death, I realized things will get better, and everything will work out. I can't put a finger on what was the actual cause of this transformation. It happened gradually. I began to realize that there were plenty of things to look forward to, and it was possible to be happy and keep her in my heart. I also realized that even though she died, I still had an entire life to live. I decided to live this life for her. For the both of us. I will never have late night conversations under the covers with my sister, or sing incredibly ridiculous songs at the top of our lungs, but it will be these memories that carry me through life. No matter what happens in life, things will always get better, they may never be the same, but it will get better.

~ Amanda Geisinger, Mt. Vernon, N.H.

## The Surviving Child

How hard it must be to physically lose your brother or sister and emotionally lose one or both of your parents. Yet, the surviving child deals with this most of the time. We, as parents, speak of how a part of use died and will never be the same. Who is more aware of this than our children, no matter what the age - even as an infant we can sense a difference in someone's touch or voice? Our children have spent most of their lives trying to "figure out" and "deal with" us. Now all of a sudden, they find they have lost all knowledge as to how we will show our emotions, interact with others, and, most important, relate to them. We cannot even be sure of our stability when grief strikes us; yet the surviving child must learn to adapt quickly.

Here are a few suggestions to help the surviving sibling cope with a world that has been changed sometimes in a matter of a few seconds.

A. Acknowledge the need for honesty - do not try to hide your grief from them.

B. Avoid the non-supportive who rob both adults and children of their right to grieve.

C. Provide a time when age appropriate release of grief can be experienced. Such as drawing, writing, playing with others, or simply acting out their emotions.

D. Provide good role models for them - other bereaved siblings.

One of the hardest things I have done in my life is to bury a child, but the next hardest thing has been to parent surviving siblings. I wish you patience and understanding while you are faced with this enormous job.

~ Andrea Simoni, TCF/Cumberland Co., NJ

## MY BROTHER'S EYES

I search for my brother's eyes in my son; and in me I see his smile.  
With my offspring all around me; I hold on to him for awhile.  
Although he died so long ago he continues to live still.  
In this one's laugh and that one's hand - I always feel a thrill.  
My family laughs when I find the likeness - the features that remind.

They say I'm making it all up and that I must be blind.  
But I have memorized it all and find him in little ways.  
His eyes, his smile and gestures are still with me today.

~ Nina Danielson, Cape Cod, MA  
Dedicated to my brother Moss

## Not the Same

He was a very nice man, like so many others, and yet he was so different.  
His quick smile and gentle ways were like those of others and yet, he was so uncommon.  
He was kind and loving with unshakable faith like others, and yet he was so unique.  
He was a dutiful soldier who gave his life like many others, and yet he was so special.  
The same as others? No  
Not to those who knew and loved him.  
He was himself, and individual, and he was my brother!

~ Pam Miller Farrell, TCF/Evansville, IL

Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to.

~ Vicki Harrison

### "I Know How You Feel — My Dog Died"

These words can bring murderous rage to the hearts of bereaved parents when spoken by well meaning, but errant, friends. I never actually had this experience, but several of my friends did, and the result was always the same - a compelling desire to strangle the person with one's bare hands.

On the morning of December 21, my husband and I said a tearful final goodbye to Gretchen, our beautiful Doberman, who had been a constant companion, loving friend, protector, and source of great joy for nearly eight years. She was, in a word, magnificent.

The pain and feelings of sadness are tremendous. As I look around at the empty bed, the dish in the kitchen, the favorite toy, I am overwhelmed with an intense sense of loss and sorrow. Memories of happy times, daily rituals and the unconditional love that only a pet can give assail from all directions. Tears flow uncontrollably. I really hurt.

No, it can't compare with the loss of my son. This pain will pass before long; we will get another dog (although there can never be another Gretchen); in years to come, we will remember her with love and wonderful memories; she will never be forgotten.

But it is *not* the same. I know this because I have lost a child. Only one who has walked this road can know that no other loss, no matter how profound, can compare with the death of a child. If I had not had this experience, I, too, might be tempted to say, "I know how you feel - my dog died."

We must endeavor to understand that these words are spoken from the heart - from someone whose pain is intense and who knows no better point of reference. And we must pray that those who speak these words will never know. . .

My pain is assuaged somewhat by my firm belief that Gretchen is now in the loving care of my beloved Robert, who will enjoy and love her as we did. She is in good hands. I know they are having a wonderful time.

~ Carole Ragland, TCF/Houston West Chapter, TX

"Grief can be a burden, but also an anchor. You get used to the weight, how it holds you in place."

~ Sarah Dessen, *The Truth About Forever*

### Musings

Isn't it strange that things we once took for granted, have changed so much? Things like the soft wings of a brilliant colored butterfly, or the radiant colors in the sky at dawn and sunset or perhaps a song we heard in passing or a movie, we once took for granted. But now, these very same things can bring on tears and leave us feeling a deep sense of longing. Why? Are these not the same as before? What changed? We did. The things we once took for granted are now viewed with much more than human eyes. We now experience these things through the eyes of a broken heart.

I believe grief gives us a very different view on things. A heart bruised and broken by loss has a new tenderness and compassion. Just look inside yourself at how your views have changed. I also believe this is our children speaking to us saying...look at the beauty and know that I am still near.

~ Sheila Simmons, TCF/Atlanta

reprinted from TCF Atlanta Newsletter July/August 2002

### BUTTERFLIES AND RAINBOWS

You came to me on a butterfly's wing so very long ago.  
What God had in His plan for us how could we possibly know.  
I watched you laugh and play and dream as you grew into a man.

How beautiful you were to me as you chased rainbows in the sand.

It's incomprehensible to think that you have gone away.  
And you won't be coming back again not even for a day.  
Two years have come and gone since then and the sun still rises in the sky.

Butterflies and rainbows still exist and I have stopped asking why.

Your light shines brightly in my heart and always will my dear.  
You are with the rainbows there and I'm with the butterflies here.

~ Robyn Bell, TCF/Valley Forge, PA

Whose is this cherub smile that on the mantel rests – forever silent lips and eyes of brown? I knew him once too short a time a lifetime ago.

Excerpt from "A Lifetime Ago" by Heinz Scheuenstuhl, 2009

### Knowledge

And what of the mystery?

All those unknowable things

What makes us human

Where does our energy go

Carbon, nitrogen, sulfur, hydrogen ...

All the elements go back

But what of that animating energy

Is there such a thing as a soul?

It is all right not to know

One does not need

To be filled up with myths and illusions

You can seek knowing

Yet admit

Not to have the answers

There is much I do not know.

Some days are harder than others

Holding as they do

Joy and sorrow

Overwhelming sometimes

Putting one foot in front of other

Can be hard to comprehend.

~ Melissa Anne Schroeter, TCF/Rockland County, NY

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### COME SIT WITH ME

Come sit with me awhile and let me hold your hand,  
I understand your sorrow and know you need a friend.

I understand the pain that lies within your heart,

I have felt the silent screams that tear you all apart

I know about the sleepless nights that last so very long,

I understand the emptiness when you hear that special song.

Come share with me your memories and let me be

Your friend, you can cry, laugh or say nothing at all,

And I will understand.

Come sit with me my friend, I'll try to help you through.

I understand my friend, for I have been there too.

~Judy Peckinpugh, TCF /Empire, CA

**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.

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  
(Please note that if you have already submitted a permission slip, you do not need to submit another one)

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### ***Differences Between A Man's Grief and A Woman's Grief***

I have attended many support groups since my daughter, Kristina's death May 26, 2008. I have observed differences in how grief is experienced in men and how grief is experienced in women. I have also heard it said by many leaders and in many articles how unique grief is to each individual. So even though I feel I can make some generalizations based on what I have personally seen and heard, there will invariably be many exceptions.

My opinion is that the difference in how grief is experienced is at its peak in the earliest days, weeks, and months of the grief journey. There may still be differences after six months and to a lesser extent after a year, but over time as grief is processed men and women seem to become more similar in handling grief. I have noticed how men differ from women when they speak at support group meetings. Many men will choke up and become unable to speak. Women may become very emotional, but most women still can speak even if it is with difficulty. Also, the men seem to be more of one extreme or the other, either they become too choked up to speak, or they can speak about their loss with apparent ease. Many women need to have a number of friends to repeat their story over and over. Men, on the other hand, have very few friends they choose to share with, and many times no one at all. Another difference I have experienced more myself than observed at meetings is called "compartmentalizing". I assume I am not the only one to experience this because I ran into a description of this in a book also.

It seems like men in general have difficulty with verbalizing about their loss. Many times it seems to bring on an intense emotional experience which has happened to me at times. I think it is for that reason many men do not attend support group meetings. Many times men will attend one meeting and never return. A number of those tried to speak at a meeting and found themselves unable to speak because of being too choked up. Women seem to be able to speak even at times they become emotional. This has varied widely in the groups I have attended, sometimes women can speak fairly freely and other times have a great deal of difficulty.

There is a video/book called "Tear Soup" that deals with the subject of loss from many causes. The premise is that grief can be from many things, not only from a death. The video portrays the man keeping off to himself while the woman is talking to many others. This seems to me like a realistic portrayal based on what I have heard in support groups.

In my opinion this is most relevant in the first few weeks after a loss, as the shock starts to wear off the men will socialize more, but not necessarily talk about their loss. Women will look for people to talk to from the beginning. My experience was similar to men in general, I had one special person that I talked to about my feelings of grief, rather than many. It seems that women are better than men at listening, especially when it comes to feelings, and the person I talked to was a woman. She was willing to take a call about anytime, although for me the early morning hours were the most common time for intense sadness. I will never know what would have happened if there had not been that special person to listen to me.

The concept of "compartmentalizing" I have found varies so much between people that some people seem to understand the concept immediately when it is introduced into a conversation and others seem to have no idea what it is. In my opinion this compartmentalizing is more common to men than women, but by no means exclusive. A leader in one of my support groups feels a more logically minded person is more prone to this compartmentalizing than a person who is not as logical in their thinking. In my reading I don't find this to be supported. In any case the way this is manifested is the rational side of the mind "knows" the truth, understands the death, but the emotional side does not. For me it was the strangest feeling when this was more intense, how

can you know that something has happened and "feel" like it has not? I have had this sense of "unreality" become more intense and less intense at various times. Even after two or three years these feelings resurface at holidays, these feelings of "unreality". The explanation given for this in books I have read is that it is the mind's way of protecting itself. From that perspective the grief journey is more difficult for those that do not have so much of a gap between rational understanding and emotional understanding.

While the grief journey for men and woman starts out very different they become more similar over time. Men tend to stay off to themselves in the early months of grief, then gradually resume being more social. The people that have strong compartmentalizing in the early months of grief, more men than woman, find that this lessens over time.

~ Lance Beigh, TCF/Of The Greater Kankakee Area, IL

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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
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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 15<sup>th</sup> 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.