



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
September 2023

Volume 40 Number 9

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 for 2023 will be quarterly instead of monthly

Next Meeting
September 14, 2023

Dates to Remember

Mom's meeting - 6:30 pm on September 28th @ Randy's Diner Too - **NOTE** meeting half hour.

Annual Worldwide Candle lighting - December 10th at 7 p.m. local time
Angel Of Hope Memorial Service
December 6th at 7 pm

LOVE GIFTS

Jane Haine in memory of her daughter, Linda A Haine
Merry Watters in memory of her great-grandson, Colt Bruce Watters
Jim & Jody Kutter in memory of their daughter, Michelle Kutter

Butterfly Decals

Lance & Tashara Ditch in memory of their son, Whylix Edwin Ditch
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 September 28th. For more information, please contact Sheryl at 701-540-3287 or visit our website at www.tcffargomoorhead.org.

Sound Familiar?

I seem to be falling apart. My attention span can be measured in seconds, my patience in minutes, and I cry at the drop of a hat. I forget things constantly. The morning toast burns daily. I forget to sign my checks. Half of everything in the house is misplaced.

Anxiety and restlessness are my constant companions. Rainy days seem extra dreary. Sunny days seem an outrage. Other people's pain and frustration seem insignificant. Laughing, happy people seem out of place in my world. I am normal, I am told. I am a newly grieving person.

~ Eloise Cold, TCF/Phoenix, AZ

Day Dreams

Sometimes I wander to a distant corner of my mind
Where I find myself in a place so serene
That I can erase today's pain and sadness
And there I'll just dream
I imagine I'm so near you and watching
As you're doing all the things little Angels do
You are so happy and so beautiful
With your snow white wings and halos too
This wondrous place you're in is heaven
Warm with love and nestled in the rainbow's array
Your softness and heavenly glow is a joy to see
As you play and sing praises to the Lord each day
I see you cradled in the Master's loving arms
I imagine your eternal bliss and glory
Where in this place you have no burdens
And each day you tell the Lord's great story
I'll dream of your beautiful mansion
Beside the streets paved with gold
Standing on the banks of the river of life
What a beautiful sight to behold

All these things dwell somewhere deep within my mind
Taking me so far away from all my sadness and grief
I can only believe that while in these secret moments
My little Angels are sending me this blessed relief
Macy and Loral, I know you feel my presence
As my mind drifts into this distant somewhere
I can hear your sweet Angel voices singing
"MeMaw and PawPaw, we'll be waiting for you up here"
~ "PawPaw" Donald Moyers, TCF/Galveston County, TX
In Memory of Macy and Loral

The Butterfly in Our Lives

Most often we hear, in our Compassionate Friends circles, of the butterfly representing the lives of our children who have died. Their spirit lives on and our memories live on, often in fleeting moments. But I think the butterfly's life cycle — metamorphosis could just as easily represent our own lives. We seem to fit the four stages of the cycle. 1) THE EGG: When we are small, we are protected, changing, and living in a somewhat small and safe world — much like the butterfly egg attached to a leaf somewhere. 2) THE CATERPILLAR: The caterpillar is much like our lives before the death of our child or children. We go through the day doing what we need to do. We grow a lot and we change somewhat slowly. We devour many things in daily life — work, church, Little League. And then the child is gone. We change. 3) THE COCOON: After the death of our child, we shut ourselves off from so much because of our grief. We often encase ourselves in the blanket of grief and depression — that is what protects us from the horrible pain. 4) THE BUTTERFLY: The pain lessens, and we begin to heal as we work through the grief process, and we begin to see a ray of light — a little color. Some of the weight is removed. We break open our cocoon and begin to reach out ever so slightly and touch life again, just to see if it will hurt too much. As we discover the brighter days and brilliant colors of life, we become more like the butterfly. We are free to once again be a part of life and we can move about more easily and begin to take some of the nectar from life.

~ Dale Tallant, TCF/Tulare, CA

WHERE ELSE

WHERE ELSE - can you come into a group of complete strangers and talk about the death of your child?
WHERE ELSE - can you know that you are not alone in your bereavement?
WHERE ELSE - can others sincerely say to you "I know how you feel . . .?"
WHERE ELSE - will you not hear "It's time you were over it and start getting on with your life" and other unwelcome advice?
WHERE ELSE - can you cry without feeling shamed or laugh without feeling guilty?
WHERE ELSE - can you just listen and not talk if you don't want to?
WHERE ELSE - can you reach out to newly bereaved parents who are experiencing the grief and pain you have felt?
WHERE ELSE - can you share the love and memories of your child(ren) with others?
WHERE ELSE - NOWHERE ELSE BUT AT THE
COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.
~ Dave Ziv, TCF/Warrington, PA

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

SEPTEMBER MEMORIES

Many of our new members have lost children of school age. Even for those whose children died before they could go to school or after they finished with school, September often brings painful memories. Seeing children with brand new clothes and the latest craze in lunch boxes and book bags, lined up for the bus brings back memories for all of us. For some, we see children our child's age, progressing to the next grade when he or she will never have that experience. For some, we remember putting our child on that bus, the last minute rush to replace outgrown clothes and buy school supplies. For some, the pain is from the dreams we had of seeing our child go to school, dreams that our child never lived long enough to bring to fruition.

Some of us have younger children who are now "passing" in age our dead child, who should have been the older brother or sister. In my case, I have one daughter left and I remember shopping for back-to-school clothes for two. I can't help but wonder what size Colleen would be wearing now. She'd be 12. Colleen rode in one of those little buses because she was handicapped. My mom used to hold her at the front door of her house, swaying back and forth saying, "Tick tock, here comes the bus." I often think of that when I notice one of those little buses. Even after 5 years, I still look for #77, her bus.

I guess what I'm trying to say is two things. First, we're all in this together. We all have the same pains, just different variations. Second, we all have to expect that moments of nostalgia and longing will be with us ALWAYS. The pain does dull, somewhat, with the years, but tears will always spring to your eyes at certain moments. The special days will always tug at our heartstrings in a way that non-bereaved parents will never fully understand.

At least we have each other; people who know what we're feeling and who understand our pain. I'm glad we can be here for each other.

~ Kathy Hahn, TCF/Lower Bucks, PA

SCHOOL IS OPENING

For some of us this is a period of deep, unuttered hurt. Only the pain of the holidays may be deeper.

As these doors open once again, and as the opening weeks pass, let us remember and reach out to those for whom the school bell is no longer calling. For these parents, that is an endless tolling.

Let us all offer the assuring hope that today's doleful tolling will instead, someday, become an evoker of memories... remembered images that will dance upon your heart, forming an echo of love on which healing may poise itself to soar, to bring the darkness of pain to light.

~ Don Hackett, TCF/Hingham, MA

HOW CAN I TELL THEM?

How can I tell them that the grief they feel today will fade with the merciful, steady march of time? They won't, nay, can't, believe--as I did not when I was told. Shall I say to them, "While memories never die, the sharp and bitter edges blur.?" And there will come a time to them as it has come to me, when happy memories transcend the bad, and life again is good. I know so well the hurt they feel, and also know that each of us must find their own way out. No matter how deeply friends may care, it is a private struggle we must wage.

~ Mary N. Moore, TCF/Toms River, NJ

Little Baby

Little baby who was not to be.
You were a person... at least to me.
Would your eyes be blue?
Or hazel and dark?
Would you caw like the crow?
Or sing like a lark?
Would you have ten little fingers and ten tiny toes?
A rosebud mouth, a turned up nose?
Would you be laughing and happy,
Or somber and quiet?
Would you run and jump or rather be still?
Would you like to read, or prefer to play?
None of my questions will have an answer.
Your chance to live will never be.
The only thing I truly know ...
Little baby,
We would have loved you so!
- Joan D. Schmidt, TCF/Spotswood, NJ

"Surrender"

Grief is the process of exhuming all that has been, examining its precious contents, and lovingly preparing it for reburial.

She grasped my hands tightly, staring into my eyes, past the tears, both hers and mine, into the struggle of my understanding.

"I'll cry with you," she whispered, "until we run out of tears Even if it's forever. We'll do it together."

There it was ... a simple promise of connection. The loving alliance of grief and hope that blesses both our breaking apart and our coming together again.

Where once the scar left by death was a painful reminder of lost love, that same love will someday claim the power to transform that scar into a permanent remembrance of joy.

After days of wandering in the uncertain pain of my grief, of hiding from my fear, of begging to be brought back safely, I have finally come home to face the occasion of my wandering, and to dwell again in the certainty and safety of myself.

- from Safe Passage by Molly Fumia

THE FALL OF FALL

What is it about the season, That takes me back in time

Everything I do, I find you are on my mind.

Haunting dreams find me

At night when I try to sleep

And every little detail is replayed,

and the sadness falls so deep.

Something about the close of summer

Seems to bring it back

Making it so hard to move onward and stay on track.

Something about the dying and fading of the trees

Brings my heart to sorrow, with the falling of the leaves.

How I long to stop it, to keep the fall away

But time marches on, and summer just won't stay.

I know with the fall, winter's not far behind

Another lonely season, and the memories flood my mind.

I cry my tears of sorrow, and pray for spring to come

A rebirth of the earth, and the warmth of the sun.

It makes the memories softer and gentler to recall

But now my life is saddened with the nearing of fall.

~Sheila Simmons, TCF/Atlanta Online Sharing



OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED BIRTHDAYS

CHILD		PARENTS
JORDAN AABERG.....	33.....	JANICE AABERG
JORDAN AABERG.....	33.....	RODNEY JENSEN
NATHAN ANDERSON.....	46.....	DIANE & JAY FENSKE
HARPER DEKKER BLAKE	13.....	JADEN & MENDI BLAKE
LINDA HAINE.....	67.....	JANE HAINE
KENT ALAN HANSEN	34.....	DOUGLAS HANSEN
JAYSON P HAUGEN.....	41.....	PAULETTE HAUGEN
CHASE HRON	24.....	MICHAEL & STACEY HRON
ADYSON JEAN KNUDSEN	9.....	KRISTIN & MICHAELKNUDSEN
ANNIE PAGE LEGGIO.....	25.....	JOSEPH LEGGIO
KEVIN LOIBL.....	59.....	GERTRUDE LOIBL
ALIVIA PAIGE MORTENSON	22.....	DANIELLE MORTENSON
SAMUEL JEROME NOESKE.....	18.....	JERRY & AMY NOESKE
DYLAN ROMAINE	12.....	AARON & TRICIA ROMAINE
SCOTT ANTHONY TOBOLT.....	47.....	JOHN & MARY TOBOLT
JEFFREY M WEBBER.....	52.....	JUANITA WEBBER

ANNIVERSARIES

CHILD		PARENTS
JORDAN AABERG.....	33.....	JANICE AABERG
JORDAN AABERG.....	3.....	RODNEY JENSEN
DAVIN LOREN BAUCK	5.....	DEAN & DIANE BAUCK
MEAGAN (MARGHEIM) BAUER	3.....	SUSAN & BOB MARGHEIM
PAMELA KAYE BJERKE	5.....	DARLENE SKAR
JEFF "BONZO" BRENNAN.....	4.....	CLAYTON & GLORIA BRENNAN
KEVIN DILLENBURG	4.....	LOYSE PORTER
JOHN CHARLES FRISCH.....	4.....	ARLEEN FRISCH
JEFFREY ANTHONY JAEGER.....	2.....	ROGER & CHERIE JAEGER
BRANDON WILLIAM THOMAS KLUTH.....	8.....	BRENDA KLUTH
ADYSON JEAN KNUDSEN	9.....	KRISTIN & MICHAELKNUDSEN
KEVIN LOIBL.....	3.....	GERTRUDE LOIBL
JAMIE CLIFFORD OLSON	11.....	GLENNIS OLSON
JOHN THORVAL PEARSON	5.....	EDNA MAE PEARSON
ASHLEY PERRINE.....	7.....	BRAD & BRENDA MERGENS
JOSE DANIEL SAUVAGEAU.....	7.....	MARY BJERKE
KORBIN KURT STEINWEHR.....	2.....	MAZY STEINWEHR
CORA WAGNER	4.....	DONNA J WAGNER

ON "PICKING UP THE PIECES"

Had someone say to me not too long ago that she was glad to see that I was "picking up the pieces and going on." Well, I am picking up the pieces all right -- but what she doesn't know is that they're almost a whole set of new pieces! I haven't been able to go on as though nothing about me has changed since my child died. I'm a different me, and I am still learning about how the new me reacts to old situations.

I am finding that this new set of pieces doesn't exactly fit together all nice and neat like a jigsaw puzzle. Some of the old pieces are still hanging in there, but they don't quite mesh with some of the new pieces. I am in the process of grinding off through edges now, hoping eventually for a better fit, one that I can live with more comfortably. Time, patience and hard work are helping me accomplish this.

How are the rough edges on your new pieces coming along?

~ TCF Valley Forge, PA

SIBLING PAGE

ALAN'S ROOM

After my twin brother Alan passed away I was constantly looking for ways to keep his memory alive. Soon after the funeral I helped design the gravestone. When the first anniversary neared I started the scholarship his friends had long promised.

I often worried that besides having his name on a cemetery stone that Alan would be forgotten. I wanted his nieces and nephews to be able to know him. Alan, a Philadelphia resident, worked full time for the Philadelphia Corporation for the Aging doing public relations. He also was a freelance writer and volunteered for many arts and AIDS organizations.

With another brother married we had an empty room, which I wanted to be about Alan. The room includes articles that he wrote and articles about him, posters for projects he promoted and some he helped design. Above the double windows are Playbills for shows he promoted, each listing his name. One had a post-it note "Save this, this is my first"; I saved them all.

Included are interviews with Phyllis Diller, Lucie Arnaz and a Diana Ross biographer. An article, with his picture, at a Special Olympics event he coordinated, publicized and wrote about is also displayed. One project he developed was the "Senior Great American Smokeout". All of the Philadelphia nursing homes participated on the same day the American Cancer Society had their annual "smokeout". At the time of his death the project was nominated for an award.

The one item I am most proud of is the press release announcing his last job. He was asked to write his own press release. He once said he couldn't believe he got paid for a job he loved so much!

The room, 130 square feet, contains 55 framed items, which tell of Alan's career, interests, and love of life. His nieces and nephews will get to know their uncle, who-as his oldest brother said-did more in his thirty years than 95% of us do over an entire lifetime.

~ Daniel Yoffee
In Memory of my brother, Alan

Lament

Losing a sibling is like
Losing sight –
A certain vision is gone
A certain hope
Born in childhood has ended
You're left to love till the end –
There is an eternal fluidity
That is gone forever
Whereas before all you knew
Was for always –
There is a sadness
That remains constant
In the knowledge
That death brought
When your sibling is gone.
~ Ann Ley, TCF/San Francisco CA

I am here. Let's heal together. ~ a friend

ALL THE THINGS I MISS

I sometimes think about all the things I miss about my brother.

There are a lot—some painful, some I never would have believed at the time that I would miss. And I find that what I miss the most are the things that should have been.

I bought my first car the year he would have turned sixteen. He should have been here to ask to borrow the keys—not that I would have given them to him—but he should have been here to ask.

He should have been a senior this year, getting ready to face a world with no more summer vacations and deciding what to do with his life.

All the things that should be:

He should be here when I fall in love to tease me and give his opinion of the man I choose.

He should be here when I have a child to be godparent and uncle, friend and confidant.

He should be here to get married and have kids of his own so that I can be an aunt and a sister-in-law.

He should be here to celebrate when things are good and to commiserate when things are bad.

My brother was my friend and my foe in a way that only little brothers can be. And as I sit here and think about my brother, what I think the most is he should be here.

I love and miss you little brother.

~ Shannon Odessa Stiener, Lowell, IN

Why Can't I Let Go

You were always my hero.
I always wanted to be like you.
You were my younger brother,
Still, I always looked up to you.
You were always there for me,
Even when things were at their worst.
You helped me through my hardest trials,
And we always made it through.
Now as I sit here, writing these words,
Remembering you and times gone by, I'm
Trying to say good-bye.
Nineteen years are just too many,
To just let you go,
I can't believe you're gone, you died,
And left me here alone.
Some days I'm fine, some days I'm low,
But most days, I just miss you so.
It was you and me,
But now, what do I do?
Each night I ask why?
Why I'm so angry?
Why I can't cry?
Why I can't let you go?
I know we'll see each other again,
But the years seem so long.
I long for the day I'll see you again.
Waiting for me with open arms.
Brother, I love you and miss you so.
But now I need you most.
This time in my life is oh so hard,
I just can't let you go.

~ Stephen Welch, TCF/St Louis, MO

A View 14 Years Later--Facing Grief in the Workplace

Monday morning. I was down. As they say, "Rainy days and Mondays always get me down." But, this Monday was particularly despairing. Susan, our bright, blue eyed, blond haired 16-year-old child had died in an auto accident the previous Tuesday night. Having taken the customary three days funeral leave, this Monday was my first day back at the office.

It was awkward. Awkward for me and awkward for my fellow employees. People seemed apprehensive to talk about anything. How in the world does one co-habit with grief and work? There is no energy, no drive. How did other bereaved parents 'get on' with their lives and grieve?

I remembered Guy. His 16-year-old son died in a car accident. Immediately, he stopped associating socially with those that he worked with. I wondered why. They had had so much fun. Within a year I heard that he changed jobs.

I remembered Al. He was a banker. After his 18-year-old son died, he threw himself into his work. He was in his office by 7 a.m., and he was at the office or at a community meeting until after 9 p.m. Within a year he was elected President of the Chamber of Commerce and within two years he was President of his Rotary Club. I wondered if this was what "they" called 'denial'? The 'word about town' was that he and his wife were not getting along well. In conversations years later, he admitted that he absolutely refused to discuss the son. But, his wife had the need to share memories. He wished that he had been advised as to what to expect.

Within an hour, I was roused from this wondering by a visit from our senior vice president. He is a wonderful and compassionate fellow, and I am convinced that he meant well when he determinedly announced, "We have created several new programs and promotions for you to head up." Being a marketing manager, I should have found this an exciting and challenging opportunity. *Wrong.*

He obviously felt that I should have been kept busy so I would not mourn, or grieve. Little did he know that what I needed was rest. Or, that what I wanted was to have a heart attack. He could not have known that getting out of bed each morning and going to work was a major challenge. And, little did I know that I should have educated him and my fellow employees.

Lesson #1. I do not believe that we can hide from or run away from our grief by becoming workaholics, putting on an armor of 'busy' as a defense. I believe that we simply delay the inevitable grief. Further, I believe that changing jobs and losing whatever support system that may be at our jobs could be devastating. It certainly would have been for me.

So here it was that really awful Monday. Within minutes I would be asked the same question that has been asked probably a million times to every bereaved father around the world, in every nation, and in every language, "*How is your wife doing?*"

Lesson #2. People speak in code. Question: "How is your wife/husband doing?" Translation: "How are you?" "How are you doing?" I believe that people honestly care, but they do not know what to say. It is up to us to educate them. In an outstanding article, "Facing Grief" in the April, 1996 issue of *Personnel Journal*, it was reported that a significant 74% human resource managers interviewed acknowledged that they were at a loss for words or that they were self conscious about what to do for the bereaved.

Lesson #3. Acting as if nothing has happened does not work. I could not deny the existence of Susan Stanley. I remember standing in front of a mirror and saying over and over and over again, maybe five or ten minutes at a time: "*Our daughter died. Our daughter died.*" Why? Because in my job I meet new people constantly. And, I'll bet you know exactly the question that always comes up--that's right, "How many children do you have?" or, "Do you have children?" I had to be in a position of telling the truth. So, I had to confront myself with information.

Lesson #4. Since we have not control over our emotions and the circumstances, we must learn to accept and manage that change. Managing this change means realizing what is going on. For instance, we bereaved may express a shortness of temper toward our fellow employees when they talk about their children and grandchildren. We may think this completely thoughtless of them, especially about 2:30 each afternoon when the office phones light up with sons and daughters calling to tell mom that they have had a wonderful day at school.

Here we are in an office situation. Our fellow office worker was talking on the phone that morning to her married daughter about their newly born grandchild. That afternoon that same coworker asked if we will help her with something. Bingo. The "buckshot effect." We are mad with everybody and everything. We bereaved are depressed, and we scramble to find answers, to find peace, to find the 'quick fix'. Pending holidays are horrible and birthdays and anniversary dates are especially difficult times.

Lesson #5. I believe we should meet grief on its own terms, that we should take control. This may mean taking vacation days on birthdays and anniversary days. It may mean saving vacation time during the holidays to take a trip.

Being in control means, I believe, calling on our supervisor to establish priorities and communicate exactly how we are doing and what we are feeling. I remember finding it very difficult to concentrate and I remember being fatigued. Being unable to concentrate, I found it helpful to sit with that senior vice president occasionally and review what I was working on and to set intermediate goals and priorities.

Is there a possibility of telecommuting from home via phone, modem, fax? Does the company offer flextime? Coming to work earlier than others and therefore, leaving earlier? Or, are there others who can pick up some of the more involved duties for a time?

Lesson #6. The real paradox: Only by allowing ourselves to feel the most intense and shattering pain can we move toward a life in which pain is not the center.

So how do we co-habit with grief and our careers? Do you remember when you started your career? Or, do you remember your first day on your job? We looked good. Our shoes were polished, our hair fixed. Our clothes pressed. But, at the same time everything was so unfamiliar. Strange. We started, we took those baby steps. We set small goals.

Well, guess what? Here we are again. Starting all over. Taking those baby steps . . . trying to learn to live again . . . setting those small goals. There is the knowledge that the vast majority of us survive the painful bereavement process, and many find new meaning and purpose to our lives. Many will themselves become the company bereavement specialist, nurturing employees who suffer the loss of a loved one, and advising coworkers on how they can best support their teammate.

~ John H. Stanley, TCF/Southern Piedmont Chapter, NC
In Memory of my daughter, Susan Stanley

Reprinted with permission of the author and *We Need Not Walk Alone* - Copyright 1998

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

Your Name: _____

Child's Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

Date: _____

(Signature)

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

COPING WITH MEMORIES

Memories are a bridge between the past and the present. In an abstract, though none the less real sense, you can teach your child, be with him or her, by crossing the bridge, remembering, but herein lies the pain — you have to go back to the past because he or she is not physically present.

The memories that you have of your child, whether of happy or unhappy times, or perhaps of how he or she looked, felt, sounded — all of these are precious, special, and sometimes can be so painful that you want to block them to escape the anguish. This is normal, natural. And yet the loss of your memories would leave a large gap. Perhaps the most difficult to deal with are the sudden, unexpected stabs that can occur at any time. When an association with your child comes out of the blue — perhaps a piece of music or a can of spaghetti in the supermarket — whatever it is that throws you, by to remember to breathe deeply and slow/, and it will help. Remembering is important because even when it is painful, healing is taking place.

~ Jenny Kander, TCF/Johannesburg, SA

Allowing Grief in our Society

One of the biggest problems I had with my grief was in allowing myself to grieve. I was caught up in the societal expectations I had grown up with: "Don't cry," "Be brave," "Keep a stiff upper lip." When I look back I can see how harmful that was. I was filled with "shoulds" and "should nots," "oughts, and ought nots." I never stopped and asked myself WHY I should not or ought not. If I had, I would have realized that I was only doing what society expected me to do. Society was telling me to do what was necessary to make it comfortable. Society couldn't handle my negative emotions. Society, for me, was my friends and relatives. I could laugh and be happy with them, but I dared not cry or show unhappiness with them. If I did, I made them uncomfortable, and I wasn't to do that.

My soul cried out for release of my emotions. I wanted to cry and scream and lash out at the world in my anger. I wanted to confess my guilts. I wanted to tell someone I hurt so terribly. I wanted to talk and talk about Arthur. But I could not, I should not, I ought not. I was a victim of not only the most devastating thing that can happen to a person--his child's death---but also of a society that denied death and the emotions that resulted from the loss of the most important part of one's life.

Those were society's expectations in 1971. They are not much different today. There are some small breakthroughs being made in respect to how society looks at death, dying and grief by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and others, and groups such as Make Today Count, SIDS, and, of course, The Compassionate Friends. But society is far from allowing negative emotions, much less allowing our sharing our pain with them. We can change that.

With every great change that society has made there had to be a beginning. There had to be small changes in people, and ideas grew until many people changed. So it is up to us, each in his own way, to work toward changing society's expectations for the grieving person. We can begin with our own family and friends. We must tell them of our needs in our grief and ask them to help us.

This will not be easy at first. We, too, are part of that death denying society. We, too, have in the past been uncomfortable with another's negative emotions., but we must try. Specifically, we must tell our relatives and friends that we need to talk about our child and our grief. At the same time, we must tell them we know it is uncomfortable for them. Honesty and openness are necessary. We must be patient with them. We are going to find friends or relatives who refuse to listen or allow us to discuss our feelings and emotions. Some will be completely unable to help us. Their own life experiences will not allow them to get close to our pain as we are asking them to do. With these people we must try not to be critical and think they are unfeeling or do not care. With gentle persistence we will at least have let them know how they can help us. Whether they help us or not must be their choice.

Our children's' deaths have made us painfully aware of the needs of bereaved parents. It has also made us aware that there is little knowledge in our society of these needs. Each of us can do something to raise this awareness in others. Hopefully, ten or twenty years from now society will look at the grieving person and say; "It's OK to cry," "Tell me about your loved one," "I'll listen to your angers, your guilts, and your fears and not judge," and we will be able to say that we were a part of that change.

~ Margaret Gerner, TCF/St. Louis, MO

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
OF THE F-M AREA
PO BOX 10686
FARGO ND 58106

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #1625
FARGO, ND

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**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.