

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families

APRIL 2010

Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month at 7:45PM (ending at 9:30PM). We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall at Valley Forge and Henderson RDs, King of Prussia, PA. Phone on meeting evenings only is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Ann or Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule Please Mark Your Calendar

April 6 General Sharing PLEASE NOTE THIS IS THE FIRST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH see page 4
May 6 General Sharing & Death by Suicide
July 2-4 33rd National Conference, Arlington, VA

We encourage newsletter writings from our members. You may also submit articles written by others, please include the author of all articles submitted. **The cut-off date for newsletter entries is the 15th of the preceding month.**

ARTICLES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE NEWSLETTER EDITORS.

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends, or to receive our newsletter. Your tax deductible donations given in memory of your loved one enables us to defray the cost of chapter expenses, particularly the newsletter, meetings, and our outreach to the newly bereaved. **Please include any special tribute you wish printed in the newsletter along with your gift.**

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: RECORD KEEPER, DIANA CLARK
PLEASE SEND ALL OTHER CHAPTER MAIL
TO CHAPTER CO-LEADERS
ANN MURRAY or RHONDA GOMEZ**



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NEW FRIENDS

Cathy Siciliano, son *Anthony* (26)
Shirley & Lex Bono, son *Greg* (17)
Carol Curtiss, grandson *Kurt* (27)

We welcome our newly bereaved friends, and are sorry for the cause that brings you. Having been in the depths of despair, we know that it is difficult to share our pain and personal feelings. It is important that you attend three or four meetings before evaluating the benefit of our group to you. Our meetings offer confidentiality, unconditional love, compassion and understanding to all of you.

MARCH REFRESHMENTS

Lisa & John Russo, son *Casey's* birthday
Ann Murray, son *Brian* anniversary
Rose Cote & Jamie Weaver, son & brother *Mark* anniversary
Ben Breskman, in honor of his son *Brian*
Linda DePasquale, in honor of her son *Thomas*

Anyone wishing to donate refreshments (cheese & crackers, fruit, cakes, cookies, etc.) in memory of loved ones, please call **Rhonda Gomez or Ann Rapoport (484) 919-0820**, or you may sign the refreshment chart located on the refreshment table. Beverages are provided by the chapter.

LOVE GIFTS

Diana Clark in loving memory of my grandson *Alexander* (7) on the one year anniversary of his passing (April 5th). You are forever in our heart and thoughts.

Rose Marie Cote in loving memory of my son *Mark J. Cote* (35).

Janie & Joseph Dougherty in memory of our son *Brendan K. Dougherty* (23). It comes with a prayer to all parents who have lost a child, experiencing a deep hole in their hearts never to be imagined.

William & Carol Meehan in memory of our son *Patrick W. Meehan* (22) who left us 17 years ago on 2/11. His 40th birthday will be in March and that is reason to celebrate. Love Bill & Carol Meehan.

Lyla T. Paulson in memory of my daughter *Kimberly Paulson* (29) on her birthday March 4th.

Arthur & Nancy Singer in loving memory of our son *Jeffrey Vincent Singer* (35).

Acme Rebate from SuperValu inc.

PHOTOS FOR THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE MEMORIAL BOARD

Last year Frank Gomez attended The Compassionate Friends National Conference held in Portland, OR. He hand carried 8 x 8 matted photos of Valley Forge family's loved ones. Frank personalized each matte in color. We were very impressed when Frank returned our son & grandson's laminated display. We will cherish this memento from the conference which we were unable to attend.

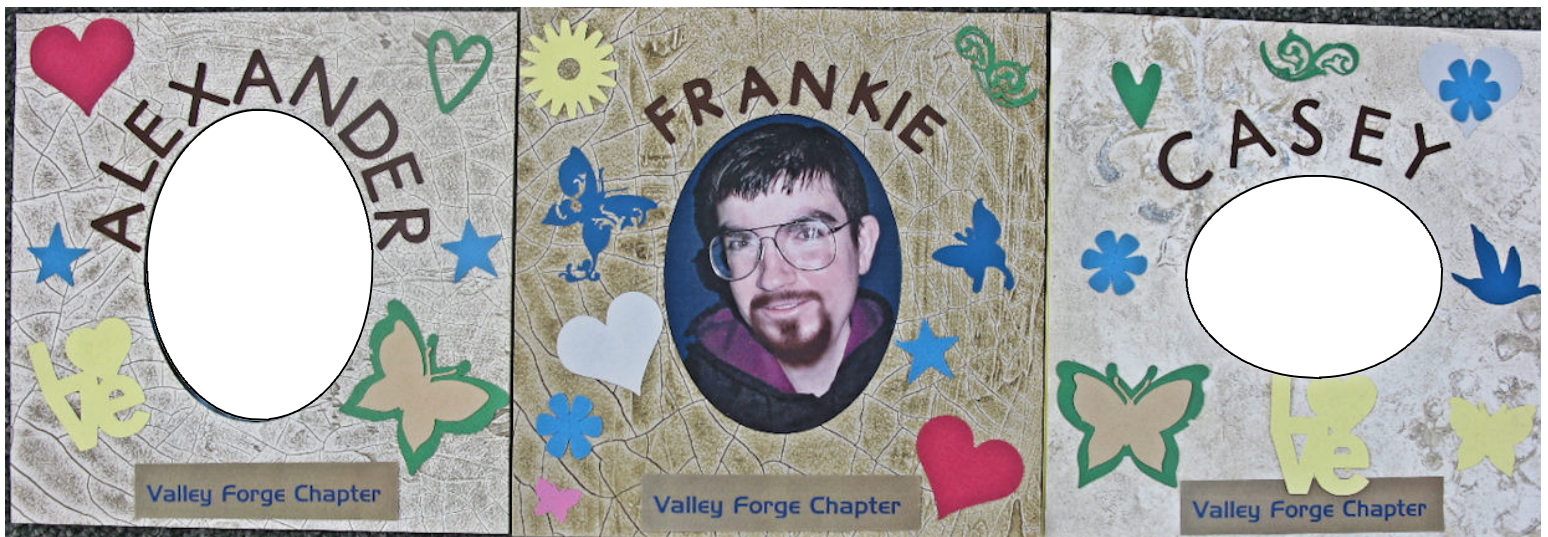
Frank has designed sample mats as shown below. The mats are 8" x 8", in color and each background is a different pattern. Check out the Valley Forge website (www.tcfvalleyforge.org) to see the sample in color.

You do not have to attend the conference to participate in this project. **His goal is to take as many personalized matted photos of our loved ones as possible** with him to the TCF 33rd National Conference in Arlington, VA in July. They will be displayed with many other loved ones. Thanks to Frank's generosity, there is no charge for this service.

If you wish to participate in this project, we are asking that you send your photo early to allow him time to design the matte to frame it. Be sure the photo fits in a regular business size envelope and the name of the loved one(s) is written on the back. If you place a light weight card board in the envelope it will help to keep the photo from being damaged. Sorry, he cannot accept photos as email attachments. His printer's colors are not accurate.

Send to: Frank Gomez
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343

All mats will be displayed at the National Conference, and upon his return, Frank will laminate the matted photo (Many attendees take photos of the memorial boards and the flash will reflect off the laminated surface). He will bring them to the August meeting so you can pick them up. If you do not plan on attending the August meeting, please enclose \$2.00 to cover return postage for your matted photo.



TCF - VALLEY FORGE APRIL MEETING DATE CHANGE

Our April meeting date conflicts with Good Shepherd Church's Maundy Thursday service on April 8th. We have rescheduled our TCF meeting for **Tuesday**, April 6th at 7:45PM.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

We do not want to remove anyone from our newsletter mailing list who is benefiting from receiving it. We hope it is a help to you while going through your grief, giving you better understanding of your feelings, and letting you know "**We need not walk alone**". A newsletter helps to keep our TCF family informed of local and national events. We consider this an important function of our program.

We are asking if you have email, would you consider receiving your newsletter in email format. You will receive your copy earlier if you opt to receive it by email. If you chose to use the email method of receiving your newsletter, you will have the option to switch back to the old method. If you wish to receive the newsletter by email please contact: Frank Gomez fgomez@hybridpoplars.com

ACME REBATE PROGRAM DISCONTINUES APRIL 25TH

Thanks to all those who have been supporting this program.

The tape saver program will be discontinued April 30, 2010.

Please send all your receipts postmarked no later than April 25th.

Please forward register receipts to Marie & Ken Hofmockel (see address on page 1).

IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY

It's been 8 years, Denny, since you went away.
But, for us it seems like yesterday.
As the seasons come and go,
We remember how you loved them so.
The Winter it was always the snow.
In Spring how you loved to watch things grow.
The Fall was football with all the force,
And Summer was the shore, of course.
So, you see my son,
no matter how long you're away.
For your Mom and Dad,
It will always seem like yesterday.

Gwen Kearns TCF – Valley Forge, PA

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

It is not easy returning to the world of normalcy when your world is upside down. It is not easy to stop being a mother or father to your child that has died. The thought for the day is a word – patience – patience with yourself who suddenly and powerlessly has been thrown into this horrid nightmare; patience with your spouse who always seems to be having an up day when you are having a down day; patience with relative and friends who wish to help but seem to hurt, with hollow advice and logical words; and patience with time, for it takes time to adjust, and time can move so slowly. PATIENCE!

Rose Moen TCF/Carmel – Indianapolis, IN

OUR CHILDREN & SIBLINGS LOVED, SADLY MISSED AND REMEMBERED

Each month some of us must face those special, but difficult days of birthdays and anniversaries. This Month we ask your thoughts and prayers for the parents/siblings/relatives of the following children: **Additions or corrections to this list should be given to the editors, Marie & Ken Hofmockel.**

**We will no longer list the birth and death years of deceased persons in our newsletter.
We have concerns this information could be misused, and result in an adversity for the families.**

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Lucille Bagwell, son *Lew* 4/17
Leslie Brown, son *Scott* 4/3
Phyllis & James Casey, son *Jim "Jimmer" Casey* 4/18
Martin & Mary Conway, son *Neal* 4/8
Linda DiPasquale, son *Thomas* 4/26
Ginny Ebert, son *Jason* 4/17
Stephanie Grier, son *John "JD" Grier* 4/15
Nancy & Gerald Hall, son *Douglas Hall* 4/15
Othell & William Heaney, son *Roger Heaney* 4/17
Jeanne R Helmers, daughter *Betsy Helmers* 4/7
Cynthia Hornyak, daughter *Meredith* 4/1
Robert Huss, son *Daniel* 4/18
Dennis & Lois Ianovale, son *Dennis* 4/18
Dorothy & Carl Johnson-Speight, daughter *Carlana Speight* 4/6
Janine Johnston, daughter *Ashley Sankus* 4/19
Millie Jones, grandson *Shawn Dian* 4/18
Roxanne Kamilatos, daughter *Dina* 4/29
Susan Kelleher, son *Jake* 4/24
Karen & Francis Legieko, son *John Francis Legieko* 4/8
Lynne & John Malloy, son *David Gross* 4/13
Betty Manzi, grandson *Ronnie T. Seal, Jr.* 4/17
Elaine Marino, son *Mark Joseph Marino* 4/20
Michelle & Chris Mazzio, son *Brendan Mazzio* 4/18
Robert & Marjorie Meckley, son *Douglas Meckley* 4/25
Bob & Janet Milnazik, daughter *Kim* 4/24
Sheila & Mike Mullin, son *Matthew* 4/10
Marlene Patrone, son *Richard Patrone* 4/20
Rosemary Peterson, son *Donald R. Peterson* 4/18
Thomas & Mary Jane Poore, son *Bradley Poore* 4/25
Jacqueline Rider, son *Josua Rider* 4/7
Thelma Rosen, son *Thomas Grisafi* 4/24
Marie Shippen, son *Michael Morgan* 4/19
Art & Carol Silverman, daughter *Cheryl Beth Silverman* 4/23

APRIL BIRTHDAYS continued

Barry & Sigrid Snow, son *Robert Snow* 4/28
son *Kevin Snow* 4/19
James & Betty Treichler, son *James Treichler Jr.* 4/21
Ann VanLandingham, son *Eric VanLandingham* 4/21
Ellen & Dale Weaver, son *Jeffrey M. Weaver* 4/12
Linda Weaver, daughter *Krista "Binky" Weaver* 4/29
Christine & Raymond Welker, son *Zachary Graham* 4/23
Jackie Wesley, daughter *Teresa Ellen Wesley Hough* 4/25

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

Jim Bailey, son *Brendan Bailey* - 4/16
George & Anne Beerley, daughter *Jennifer Beerley* - 4/19
Leslie Brown, son *Scott* - 4/4
Diana Clark, grandson *Alexander* - 4/5
Amber-Todd Clark-Warrick, son *Alexander* - 4/5
Tom & Irene Cornely, daughter *Colleen* - 4/26
Judy & William Cosgrove, son *Michael Cosgrove* - 4/17
Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Cox, daughter *Christen Fox*, - 4/26
Anton & Maureen DeMaioribus, daughter *Ann DeMaioribus* - 4/23
Ed & Sue Duffy, son *Peter* - 4/11
Nancy & David Dykty, brother *Jim Sutton* - 4/16
Marian Glennie, daughter *Susan Martini* - 4/12
Joanne Haley, son *Douglas Haley* - 4/3
Walt & Adele Higgins, son/stepson *Brian* - 4/17/
Sharon Hirst, son *Tom* - 4/16
Susan Kelleher, son *Jake* - 4/14
Joan Kellett, son *Daniel Thomas Kellett* - 4/29
Lynn Kivlen, son *Brien Kivlen* - 4/26
Susan & Richard Leimbach, son *Sean Duffy* - 4/2
Becky & Alan Logsdon, son *Nathaniel Logsdon* - 4/29
Elaine Marino, daughter in law *Lisa Marino* - 4/12
Jennifer McGowan Clark, brother *Joseph McGowan* - 4/15
Joan Morefield, son *Robert* - 4/29
Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy, daughter *Marian Mountjoy* - 4/16
John Mscisz, grandson *Liam John Williamson* - 4/6
Mary Mulholland, son *Joseph McGowan* - 4/15
Sheila & Mike Mullin, son *Matthew* - 4/25
Barbara & Jeff Norris, son *Greg* - 4/1
Marlene Patrone, son *Richard Patrone* - 4/17
son *Alfred M. Patrone, Jr.* - 4/17

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES continued

Maureen & David Rich, daughter *Mallory Kirby Rich* - 4/26
Jacqueline Rider, daughter *Michelle Connelly* - 4/14
Harry & Carol Schultz, son *Brian Andrew Schultz* - 4/18
Joy Conard Settles, son *R. Gary Korn* - 4/30
Barry & Sigrid Snow, son *Robert Snow* - 4/28
Edward & Mary Stimson, son *Keith Stimson* - 4/7
Fred & Irene Sutton, son *Jim Sutton* - 4/16
Tracey Sutton-Vitabile, brother *Jim Sutton* - 4/16
Allan Thomas, wife *Zinta Thomas* - 4/23
Harry & Lynne Urian, son *Mike* - 4/22
Shirley Weir, son *Robert H. Weir* - 4/22
Joan & Ed Young, son *Jed Young* - 4/2

FORGIVE UNTIL FOREVER

Grieving is a fierce and over-whelming expression of love thrust upon us by a deep and hurtful loss. Yet, grieving is frequently such an entanglement of feelings that we often fail to recognize that ultimately forgiveness must be an integral part of our grief and healing. For what is love if forgiveness is silent within us?

We learn to forgive our children for dying and ourselves for not preventing it. We begin to forgive our God or the fate we see ruling our universe. We start to forgive relatives and friends for abandoning us in their own bewilderment over the onslaught of emotions they sense in our words and behavior. I believe we must be open to the balm of forgiveness. Through its expression in our lives, be it through thought, word or deed, we find small ways to seek life once more. Deep within us, forgiveness is capable of treading the wasteland of our souls to help us feel again that which has not died.

It is the beginning of release from the dominance of pain, not from the continual hurt of missing those that we have lost, but from lacking the fullness of the love we shared with our child. That love lives with strength inside ourselves and yet our beings are so entrapped in a whirling vortex of anger, despair, frustration, abandonment and depression that we often feel it only lightly. Let us heed the quiet message heard so softly in the maelstrom of the spirit. Forgive, forgive, and forgive until forever. Let love enfold our anguish, helping us to grow and strive beyond this hour to a rich tomorrow.

Don Hackett, TCF, Hingham MA

SHARED THOUGHTS ON HOW DEATH CHANGES OUR WORLD

Sometimes grief is more comfortable when we can hide out in the winter. It seems to be a more acceptable season to be lethargic, low-spirited, and less productive. Now, that the dormant plants are popping up, preparing for their glorious showing, it can add to our depression. We can not match the energy, proudness, or courage the blossoms display as they return to show off their beauty. We often feel if anything is going to return to life again, it should be our child or sibling. Spring can cause resentment, when there are no signs of our loved ones returning to life.

For those of us who believe in eternal life, Easter offers much hope, and is paramount in accepting the death of our child or sibling. But, that does not erase our missing, yearning, anger, and all those human emotions we experience when the separation of our child or sibling takes place. It is very difficult when they precede us in death. Most of us don't even try to understand or find reason in it.

Our world changed when that special loved one entered our lives, they became part of our reason for living. When they left, our world became shattered. Time to grieve and lament over our loss is important. Time and distance alone doesn't heal. As painful as it is, we need to remember their living, loving, and impressions they left on the world, and particularly on us. Facing the profound sadness that we have to live without our child seems an impossible task, and to expect to enjoy life again is out of our realm of thinking.

Grief seems to intensify everything we are. This can cause our anger, impatience and emotions to get in our way of daily living. It can erode our trust and destroy our self-esteem. It is impossible for us to be at our best for communicating with those around us. Particularly, when we appear outwardly in control, and give a false impression to those trying to help us.

It takes a lot of healing to become functional again. Healing is loving again, both ourselves and others. There are those who can help us get through our tragedy, but it needs to be someone who can share our sorrow, not those we have to shelter from our pain. It is very important that we express our gratitude for their concern, so they know what is helpful to us.

For those fresh in their grief, barely getting through each day, it is impossible to envision ever reinvesting in life again. I know, for I have been there. But the pain does soften, and one day, you too, will be glad there is a tomorrow. Life will never be the same, but it can be productive, rewarding, and I hope you will one day look to your future with anticipation for what it holds for you. But, for now, my thoughts and prayers are with you as you struggle with your pain.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

**A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the contents of one's heart,
chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take it and sift it,
keep what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness, blow the rest away.**

Diana Carik

WE MISS YOU SO

Your smile
Your laughter
Your way of lifting our spirits
Your sunny glow
Oh, how we miss you so

Your affection
Your sweet nature
Your way of listening
Your charm
Oh, how we miss you so

We long for your touch
To see your beautiful face
To talk and reminisce
We would love that so much

You left this world
With such an impact on us
We can't talk about you
Without making a fuss

So, we'll think of you
In all our days to come
Look forward to being with you
Probably brood and cry some

We'll also smile and laugh
In memories of you
That's what you did for us
What lucky people we were to have you!

So, watch over us
Enjoy your peace and know
We'll be together someday
But, oh how we miss you so!

Lisa Lebowitz
TCF Orange Park/Jax.

BELIEVE

In the rising of the sun
and in its going down,
We remember them.

In the blowing of the wind
and in the chill of winter,
We remember them.

In the opening of the buds
and in the warmth of summer,
We remember them.

In the rustling of the leaves
and the beauty of autumn.
We remember them.

In the beginning of the year
and when it ends,
We remember them.

When we are weary
and in need of strength,
We remember them.

When we are lost
and sick at heart,
We remember them.

When we have joys
we yearn to share,
We remember them.

So long as we live,
they too shall live,
for they are now a part of us
We remember them.

from *GATES of PRAYER*
Reform Judaism Prayer book

A GRANDPARENT’S POINT OF VIEW

The death of a child is the most tragic thing that can happen to anyone. It affects so many lives - family, friends, and even strangers.

I lost my grandchild through death, and only a grandparent can understand the love a grandparent has for a grandchild and the loss that is felt when the child dies. For a grandparent, it is a double loss. Not only is your grandchild gone, but you also watch your child die each day. The smile that was always on her face is no longer there. The hurt is so deep and the questions so many. You feel helpless as a parent. You can’t kiss the hurt away as you did when she was a child. You have no answers for her questions, for you don’t understand the many feelings that you are experiencing yourself. Each day you hope and pray for a little ray of sunshine to show on her face. You search for a little something to say or do that will comfort her. It seems that there is no end to the suffering.

As time goes slowly by, the healing process begins. In time, a ray of hope will show on her face and a smile will make her eyes light up again. She will turn to you for what little comfort you can give to her. There will always be a part of you that is gone, but in time, you can learn to live with the part that is still here.

Ruth Eaton, TCF, Savannah, GA

WHAT A GRANDMOTHER IS

A grandmother is a lady who has no children of her own, so she likes other people’s little girls. A grandfather is a man-grandmother, he goes for walks with boys, and they talk about fishing and tractors and things like that.

Grandmas don’t have to do anything except be there. They are old so they shouldn’t play hard or run. It is enough if they drive us to the market where the pretend horse is and have lots of dimes ready. Or as they take us for walks they slow down past things like pretty leaves or caterpillars. They should never say “hurry up.” Usually they are fat, but not too fat to tie the kid’s shoes. They wear funny underwear and they can take their teeth and gums off. It is better if they don’t typewrite or play cards except with us. They don’t have to be smart, only answer questions like why dogs chase cats or how come God isn’t married.

They don’t talk baby talk, like visitors do, because it is hard to understand. When they read to us they don’t skip words or mind if it is the same story again.

Everyone should try to have one, especially if you don’t have television because grandmas are the only grownups who have got the time.

Thoughts of a 6 year old girl , TCF Atlanta

DOUBLE GRIEF

The death of my grandchild
And the grief of my son
Pull on my heart strings
And I am undone.

In secret I mourn beyond relief
for I have been given a double grief.
God, help me to deal with the pain and sorrow
Of living without the hope of tomorrow.

Andy Cipriano
TCF, Tallahassee, Fl

WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR

Every time that I am in a group of bereaved parents, I hear people say things like, "I wish my child hadn't died" or "I wish I had him back." That wish, unfortunately, can never come true.

The other wish I hear is, "I wish my friends (or church, or neighbors, or relatives) understood what I am going through and were more supportive." This is a wish that has some possibility of coming true if we are able to be honest and assertive with the people around us. What do we wish others understood about the loss of our child? Here is a partial list of such wishes:

1. I wish you would not be afraid to speak my child's name. My child lived and was important and I need to hear his name.
2. If I cry or get emotional if we talk about my child. I wish you knew that it isn't because you have hurt me; the fact that my child died has caused my tears. You have allowed me to cry and I thank you. Crying and emotional outbursts are healing.
3. I wish you wouldn't "kill" my child again by removing from your home his pictures, artwork, or other remembrances.
4. I will have emotional highs and lows, ups and downs. I wish you wouldn't think that if I have a good day my grief is all over, or that if I have a bad day I need psychiatric counseling.
5. I wish you knew that the death of a child is different from other losses and must be viewed separately. It is the ultimate tragedy and I wish you wouldn't compare it to your loss of a parent, a spouse, or a pet.
6. Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn't shy away from me.
7. I wish you knew that all of the "crazy" grief reactions I am having are in fact very normal. Depression, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and the questioning of values and beliefs are to be expected following the death of a child.
8. I wish you wouldn't expect my grief to be over in six months. The first few years are going to be exceedingly traumatic for us. As with alcoholics, I will never be "cured" or a "former bereaved parent", but will forevermore be a "recovering bereaved parent".
9. I wish you understood the physical reactions to grief. I may gain weight or lose weight, sleep all the time or not at all, develop a host of illnesses and be accident prone, all of which may be related to my grief.
10. Our child's birthday, the anniversary of his death, and holidays are terrible times for us. I wish you could tell us that you are thinking about our child on these days, and if we get quiet and withdrawn, just know that we are thinking about our child and don't try to coerce us into being cheerful.
11. It is normal and good that most of us reexamine our faith, values, and beliefs after losing a child. We will question things we have been taught all our lives and hopefully come to some new understanding with our God. I wish that you would let me tangle with my religion without making me feel guilty.
12. I wish you wouldn't offer me drinks or drugs. These are just temporary crutches and the only way I can get through this grief is to experience it. I have to hurt before I can heal.
13. I wish you understood that grief changes people. I am not the same person I was the moment before my child died and I never will be that person again. If you keep waiting for me to "get back to my old self", you will stay frustrated. I am a new creature with new thoughts, dreams, aspirations, values and beliefs. Please try to get to know the new me -- maybe you'll like me still.

Instead of sitting around and waiting for our wishes to come true, we have an obligation to teach people some of the things we have learned about our grief. We can teach these lessons with great kindness, believing that people have good intentions and want to do what is right, but just don't know what to do with us.

Do you remember how Pavlov, the famous psychologist, rewarded his dogs for doing the right thing? Their behavior repeated! If a neighbor sends a plate of cookies on the day of your child's birth, tell her how much you appreciated her remembering your child. If a relative jots a note in a Christmas card and says he is thinking about you during this difficult time, write back and thank him for acknowledging your pain. If by accident a friend mentions your child's name and it makes you cry, you may not be able to thank them at the time, but you can tell them later how important it is to talk about your child. Whether one of your wishes is fulfilled by accident or through great sensitivity, reward others for what they have done for you. Chances are good that they will repeat these kindness' on other occasions and perhaps your wish of having more understanding friend and relative will come true.

Elaine Grier, Philip's Mom, Atlanta Chapter