

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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

AUGUST 2008

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

Aug 7 **General Sharing**

Sep 4 **General Sharing & Loss by Suicide**

**Autumn Brunch - details will follow
in the September Newsletter**

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.**



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**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: RECORD KEEPER, FRANK GOMEZ**

**PLEASE SEND ALL OTHER CHAPTER MAIL
TO CHAPTER CO-LEADERS
ANN RAPOPORT or RHONDA GOMEZ**

JULY REFRESHMENTS

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

LOVE GIFTS

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Marie & Ken Hofmockel resigned as E.PA Regional Coordinators in March 2008, due to some family illnesses. We thank all those who worked so diligently to help accomplish successful Regional Conferences in 2002, 2005 & 2007. It takes many dedicated people to bring these healing events to our region.

We asked that you give dedicated support to our newly appointed Regional Coordinators, Janet & Dave Keller, from the York, PA Chapter. Janet & Dave have given much love and effort to the Eastern PA Region, for many years.

Janet & Dave joined their local York Chapter of the Compassionate Friends, after the death of their son Joe (6/1/80 - 8/21/94). They subsequently lost a granddaughter Emily Lou Miller, who was stillborn on 4/4/2000. Dave lost his brother Thomas Keller (7/3/1950 - 8/11/1963). They have 3 surviving adult children and 4 grandsons.

Janet & Dave have been leaders of the York Chapter since 1996. They will continue to serve as the chapter leaders of their chapter. They have helped to launch two new TCF chapters in Camp Hill & Gettysburg, PA. They have presented workshops at both regional and national level conferences.

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.

I miss you a little,
I guess you could say,
A little too much,
A little too often,
A little more every day.

John Michael Montgomery

A SOLITARY JOURNEY

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows how great the hurt is. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

Helen Steiner Rice

SHARED THOUGHTS ON DEPRESSION

Depression is one aspect of grief that all recognize. We feel no real zest for life. No matter how hard we try, there is no feeling of joy. It robs us of feeling much of anything, other than wanting our child or sibling back. The desperate feeling that happiness will never return, now that our child or sibling is gone, destroys our hope.

Bodily distress and physical symptoms may occur. Such as headaches, high blood pressure, sleeping difficulty, loss of appetite, not eating, or overeating. Sometimes looking for an impossible easy escape may cause the use of drugs or alcohol, which mask reality, prolongs our grief, and lowers our self-esteem.

We have to deal with our grief, though it is very painful, healing comes through facing it. It takes more than time, it is hard work. That is why we say you must work through your grief.

Remember that healing is a very slow process. We want relief before it is possible. Family and friends try to rush us through. We must take our time and talk to the right people. It is important to seek those who have experienced this depth of pain, and know the best we can do is one day at a time, and sometimes the best we can do is one hour at a time. These people will gently encourage and support us. It is vital to know others have survived the loss.

We cannot cover up, or run away from depression. It is better to release our emotions, let the tears be outside, rather than inside, for tears help to reduce tension. The feelings you hide, can't heal.

It helps to find purposeful work. It can restore self-esteem and ease the feeling we have failed. We need to prove to ourselves that we are capable of being productive, and a contributing person again. This can begin on a very small scale. We must start at the bottom and rise up again. It does not help to try more than we are capable, and cause a feeling of failure.

It is important to care for our health; depression is very draining physically and emotionally. Even though we don't care about ourselves now, that will change. It can take a lot to undo the damages that neglect causes to our health.

Depression is like being on a roller coaster, about the time we see progress, something knocks us down. The down periods become shorter as healing begins. Sometimes it is very hard to see our progress, for we constantly tell ourselves we should be better, rather than recognizing our progress.

Loss of our child or sibling is never over, they cannot be replaced. **If we work through our grief, the wound will heal. We will always have a scar, but we can learn to live with that.** The best healing comes through love, understanding, and support. And the best place to get it is through The Compassionate Friends.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge, PA

THE GIFT OF SOMEONE WHO LISTENS

Those of us who have traveled a while
Along this path called grief
Need to stop and remember that mile -
The first mile of no relief.

It wasn't the person with answers
Who told us of ways to deal
It wasn't the one who talked and talked
That helped us start to heal.

Think of the friends who quietly sat
And held our hands in theirs,
The ones who let us talk and talk
And hugged away our tears.

We need to always remember
That more than the words we speak,
It's the gift of someone who listens
That most of us desperately seek.

Nancy Myerholts
Waterville/Toledo TCF

GET ON WITH YOUR LIFE

"Get on with your life,"
I hear people say,
And those who don't say it.
are thinking that way.
"It's been quite a while -
so I just do not see
The possible gain
if you grieve constantly."

"Then take all the things
That your child held so dear.
If they give sadness,
then why keep them near
To store with the mass cards
and last lock of hair,"
And perhaps, like our child,
we'll forget they're not there.

So they think our sorrow
should end with the days
Of empty fruit baskets
and old cold-cut trays,
And all of the pain
we felt with friends near
Should wilt now like flowers
they left at his bier.

Now what do you do
to get on with your life?
You can't bury pain
that still cuts like a knife.
So I guess we're supposed to
"get on" for the crowd,
Where everyone's sign reads
"no sadness allowed."

So get on we do,
and we put on a face
That 'mid worlds of laughter
seems not out of place.
Now all of the folks
that we see every day
No longer need reasons
for looking away.

Then one day they'll ask,
"Why are you so glum?"
"You're down in the dumps -
What can it be from?"
"You've been doing so well for so long,
so it seems,"
And the seething volcano
inside of me screams.

Ken Falk

TCF Northwest Chapter, CT

AFTER THE STORM COMES THE RAINBOW

Happiness does not depend on what happens
outside of you, but rather on what happens
inside of you. It is measured by the spirit in
which you meet the problems of life.
The master secret of happiness is to meet the
challenge of each new day in remembering to
look for the rainbows as assurance God is
with us through the storms of life.

Author Unknown - TCF, Holmdel, NJ

IN MY POCKET

I have memories in my pocket. They rattle just like change.
My memories of you are treasures I carry wherever I go.
They are stored in bits and pieces, parts of a beautiful whole.
They give me comfort when I think I am alone.
Yes, I have memories in my pocket, like so much other stuff I keep there.
But of all the treasures I have, it's the memories of you that are the most precious.

Martin Baer, TCF North Short-Boston

THE MIRACLE OF YOU

Who could have know, the exquisite difference
Your brief life would make upon mine?
Who could have know, a tiny baby would
Show me the beauty of a sunrise,
Or the wonder of a rainbow,
Or the pain of a tear?

Who could have know, that an innocent little child
Would take away my fear of death
And point me in the direction of Heaven?
Who could have known that you
Would succeed where so many others have failed?

Dana Gensler, TCF - South Center, KY

The child who owns this summer is not here,
not here to know the wealthy summerwind,
not here to share the glowing and the song.

Accept me as I am
Grieving, pained,
Empty, lonely.

The child who owns this summer did not live,
not live to touch the richness of this day,
this day in summer, when you are alone.

Just love me
And allow me to feel
What I must feel.

Cry to the summer wind,
Cry,
And behold the child
You remember.

One day I will begin
To heal ~ I know
Not when. Don't be
Afraid of me ~
It is still me ~

Sascha

Let warm memories
Be as close to you
As the warmth of summer

Struggling to find
Myself ~ outside
Of this pain. Please
Just be my friend.

Sascha

Marilyn Henderson
TCF Pacific Northwest

IF I COULD SAY JUST ONE MORE THING

If I could say just one more thing;
I know what it would be.
It would not be just anything,
but from my heart to thee.

The memory of you is dear,
And very close to me.
At times, it seems too hard to bear;
my tears flow like the sea.

But when I think of all the joy,
The hard times mixed with good;
The love I feel for you will be,
forever as it should.

So then the tears begin to start
Monopoly, Nintendo too,
All the races on your wheelchair
all cause me to miss you.

If I could say just one last thing,
I know what it would be
Your smile, and the joy you bring,
I love you honestly.

Heather Livingston,
Omaha NE

HANDS OF LOVE

We, the members of Compassionate Friends
have known the tragedy which death brings.
We've lived the hurts, and the despair
And so with hands outstretched in love
We welcome you to join us,
and we promise you
That we will lend a listening ear.

Lorraine Weaver
TCF, Lancaster, PA

MY BROTHER

I heard a tear fall, not a sound,
it landed by the tree.
I heard the boy cry in the ground,
"I close my eyes to see".
The troubled lad, he knows not why,
he left his home so soon.
The time has come for him to die,
and end the silent tune.
So now I look to see his face,
and see it on the wall.
My brother is now through the race,
and he has beat us all.

Kevin Hofmockel,
In memory of my brother,
Douglas Alan Hofmockel 8/27/65 - 2/7/82
who died two months ago.

REMNANTS

Glimpses of you everywhere
Often catch me unaware.
Telltale remnants of the past;
Carefree days that couldn't last.
Echoes of a joyous laugh,
Comic books; a photograph.
Calliopes and carousels;
Haunting songs weave mystic spells.
Relics from the past will wane,
But in my heart, you'll still remain.

Author Unknown

I cleaned out the garage after he died ...
And I found our beach ball ...
I couldn't let the air out of it.
It's **his** breath in there.

From the film "Laundromat"
played by Carol Burnett

OLIN’S ROOM

There is a room in our home whose door is closed
 I open it from time to time and pause awhile.
 The red carpet is somewhat stained, an oil spill,
 perhaps.
 Hair oils darken the wall beside where the bed
 once stood.
 A candy wrapper, a popcorn kernel or two, lie
 beside the roller skates.
 All of this hid in the dark beneath the bed.
 Now the bed is gone, as are most of the clothes.
 Dressers stand alone around the desk, drawers full,
 cluttered with mementos.
 The closet holds a few tools, a batter’s cap, a down
 vest, a fish pole.
 It is Olin’s room.
 Here he lives in memory only.
 I stand quietly and remember waking him up in the
 morning starting a day.
 Within these walls we talked a lot, sharing
 experiences, hopes & dreams.
 In here I cared for him when he was sick.
 Sometimes we’d wrestle, laugh, look at papers, see
 a drawing.
 In this place I held him in my arms,
 Dried his tears, kissed him good night.

There were hard moments, too, within these
 walls.
 They have heard arguments, lectures, seen him
 placed across my knee.
 For these I feel the enduring sorrow over wrongs
 that cannot be changed.
 But mostly they witnessed hugs and closeness,
 caring and love.
 In here I catch the whispers of our yesterdays
 and know I love him still.

 Someday this room will have another use.
 A few articles have been discarded and others
 have been stored away.
 Still, there is much to accomplish before I feel
 wholly at peace herein.
 It’s like my soul:
 A little cluttered, a bit dirty, just partially picked
 up.
 In its slow transformation back to life I say my
 goodbyes.
 Mostly though, I watch my now,
 blessed and built in countless memories,
 unfold to the future.

Donald Hackett
 from “SAYING OLIN TO SAY GOODBYE”

CIRCLES

How do you bear it all?
 The cry came from a mother
 Whose son had died only weeks
 before.
 We were in a circle, looking at her.
 Looking around, looking away.
 Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.
 How do we bear it?
 I don’t know,
 But the circle helps.

Eva Lager
 TCF, Western Australia

IS IT EASING?

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

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

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

Phoebe Redman – TCF, Bradenton, FL

GRATITUDE: THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude. I did not come upon this insight. I learned it from Dennis Prager, a wonderful and gifted man who is both author and talk show host for KNBC radio in Los Angeles. I give him all the credit. But I have thought a lot about this idea after my son, *Mark*, died seven years ago.

At first, I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during The Compassionate Friends meetings. These were the people who seemed to have somehow re-entered the land of the living. How dare they greet each other with hugs. How dare they laugh. How dare they appear normal when their children have died. But over the last seven years. I have learned three valuable lessons:

Life goes on and we must too. Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that it is 11:00 in the morning and we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt. But then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget. But we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life. We choose to enjoy friends again. We choose to go out to dinner again. We choose to laugh again. I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us. The pain does not bring our child back. It only makes us miserable without end.

Become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost. I see people in our chapter meetings who have gone through “every parent’s nightmare” and want no part of life again. But, I ask that these compassionate friends also think about the ways they have been blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize, health, other children, a loving family, a career they enjoy, financial security, life in a free country, a faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse whom they love. Nobody has it all. But compared to most of the world, we have a lot.

The life we now lead will be better than it would have been. That does not make our child’s death a good thing. It just means that our child’s life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be better because our child lived, and we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don’t “sweat the small stuff.” We know what matters because we know what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt, because we, too, have been there. “We know how they feel.”

And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten. Each of us would do anything in the world to go back in time, but we can’t. It is up to us now to go forward, and we can.

Richard Edler,
Served on the The Compassionate Friends
National Board of Directors,
during his tenure he served as President.