

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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

JAN/FEB 2009

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

- Jan 8, General Sharing & Loss by Suicide**
Please see top of page 2
Please note January meeting is scheduled for the second Thursday
- Feb 5 General Sharing**
- Mar 5 General Sharing & Loss by Suicide**

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



Valley Forge Chapter

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Please note that the date of the January 2009 meeting will be held on January 8th, since the first Thursday falls on a holiday, New Years Day.

NEW FRIENDS

Rosemary Peterson, son *Donald R. Peterson (28)*

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

DECEMBER REFRESHMENTS

Ann Rapoport, in honor of her son *Brian Rapoport (17)*

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

Victoria Bayle, in memory of my precious son, *Bobby D. Bayle III*

Nina Bernstein, in memory of my son *Andrew Voluck*

Meyer Bobrow Family Foundation, in memory of *Steven Schneibolk*.

Brandywine Hundred Chapter of TCF, DE, in loving memory of *Douglas Hofmockel*

Janie & Joseph Dougherty, in memory of our son *Brendan K. Dougherty*.

It comes with a prayer to all parents who have lost a child, experiencing a deep hole in their hearts never to be imagined.

Robin Hayman, in memory of my son *Gray Bradley Hayman*.

Jacob & Rachel Himmelstein, in memory of our son *Benjamin Himmelstein*

Joyce & Vern Kaiser, in memory of our son *Brian Kaiser*

Joan Kellet, in loving memory of my son *Danny Kellett*

Gloria & Jerry Koval, in loving memory of our son *Steven Koval*

Melvin & Rhoda Kreiner, on occasion of our daughter *Anna Kriener's* 40th birthday.

Maxine & Timothy Lurowist, in memory of our daughter *Kristine Lurowist*

Patricia & Willard McLain, in memory of our son *Gary J. McLain*.

Marti & Joe Purifico, in memory of our son *Jeffrey Purifico*.

Joan & Earl Reigel, in memory of our daughter *Melissa Reigel*.

Roxborough Manayunk Lions Club, in memory of the deceased *children & siblings of Valley Forge Chapter members*.

Priscilla Thoroughgood, in loving memory of my daughter, *Kendra Enoch* on her birthday.

Dolores & Frank Yanni, in memory of our son *David Yanni*.

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 dates of deceased persons in our newsletter. We have concerns this information could be misused, and result in an adversity for the families.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Nancy Althouse, daughter *Donna Lee Althouse*
Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian*
Robert & Joan Auch, sons *Ronny Auch & Ryan L. Auch*
George & Anne Beerley, daughter *Jennifer Beerley*
Dawn Bergstresser, son *Alan Roy Bergstresser*
Mr. & Mrs. Blosky, son *Kevin*
Joyce Caperilla, daughter *Jennifer*
Tom & Irene Cornely, son *Daniel J. Cornely*
Ron & Laia Dans, son *Peter Cannon*
Bill & Donna Deasey, daughter *Michelle Deasey*
Cynthia & Robert Dilorenzo, son *Scott*
Derek & Kamala Hill, brother *Kris Bellamkonda*
Sharon Hirst, son *Tom*
Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner*
Arlene and Bob Krauss, son *Fred*
Ed & Linda Lincul, son *Matthew*
John & Nancy Logue, daughter *Kaitlyn Logue*
Kathleen & Hugh Martin, Jr., son *Colin John Martin*
Debra McKinley - Hastings, brother *Ken*
Gerald & Margaret Milice, son *Gerald Milice*
Christine Miraglia, son *Ralph Miraglia*
Rose & Mike Orlando, son *Michael*
Carleen Panaccio, son *Bret*
Barbara Pearl, son *Jason Seth Pearl*
Teresa and Ron Perkins, daughter *Allison*
Robert Pickle, daughter *Cynthia Pickle*
Sheldon & Joan Plam, son *Michael Tobiah Plam*
Michelle Pollart, brother *Mark Andrew Steffler*
Mary Jane Pollart, son *Mark Andrew Steffler*
Ann Gill Price, son *Douglas Gill*
Christine and Richard Purkiss, son *Adam Clark*
Steve & Joann Reynolds, son *Chris*
Elise Rice, husband *James W. Rice, Sr.*
Margaret & Robert Rooney, daughter *Sharon Rooney*
Marie Scartozzi, granddaughter *Christine Marie Scartozzi*

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS continued

Lynn&Stephen Scartozzi, daughter *Christine Marie Scartozzi*
Barbara Smisko, daughter *Linda*
Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith*
Ruth Thomas, son *David George Thomas*
Joanne Thorpe, grandchild *Zachary*
Patricia Trippley, son *William*
Weldon & Marie Tyson, daughter *Lisa M. Tyson*
Don & Natalie Wallace, son *Zachary George*
Eden & Barbara Warren, daughter *Karen M. Moncuso*
Carolyn Ways, son *Robert Goodman*
Shirley Weir, daughter *Susan Weir-Grays*
Robin Zelenak, brothers *Ronny Auch & Ryan Auch*

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian*
Susan Bonfiglio, son *James Bonfiglio*
Barbara Brooks, son *Jeb*
Linda & Joe Carty, brother *Joe Clerico*
Patricia & Ben Clerico, son *Joseph Clerico*
Irene & Abbe Cohen, nephew *Scott Alan Rosenthal*
Bobbie Coyle, son *Whitney Coyle*
Dorothy & G. Robert Daily, Sr., son *David*
Helen Dietrich, son *Joseph Dougherty*
Susan Dillman, daughter *Heather Lynne Dillman*
Mary Dion, daughter *Theresa*
Janie & Joseph Dougherty, son *Brendan K. Dougherty*
Donna & Stanley Edwards, son *Stanley Austin Edwards*
Carol & John Ellis, son *Daniel M. "Doodles" Ellis*
Mary Ann Erdek, nephew *Joseph Clerico*
Robert & Kathy Gelinas, son *Bobby Gelinas*
Sofie & Lige Grahm Jr, son *Richard Grahm*
Robert & Kathleen Grossi, son *James Michael Grossi*
Nancy & Gerald Hall, son *Douglas Hall*
George & Kay Hartman, son *Thomas R Hartman*
Jeanne R Helmers, sister *Mary Ann Helmers Kemme*
Patricia Hofmeister, daughter *Patti L Gallagher*
Tammy & Allen Howard, daughter *Brianna Nicole Howard*

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES continued

Kathleen & John Leeper, son *Shaun Michael Leeper*
Joan Lippre, son *John*
Liz & Joe Loeper, son *Jamey*
Vivian & Kenneth Maahs, daughter *Kirsten*
Anna E Marchese, son *Matthew Paul Marchese*
Kathy Mason, son *Avery Mason*
Julie & Richard May, son *William L. May*
Diane Mazzagatti, son *John Pirocchi, Jr.*
Michael & Maria McFadden, daughter *Rachel McFadden*
Linda & Jim McGrath, son *Paul Drew McGrath*
Sue McMaster, cousin *Laura*
McNally, daughter *Beth Ann McNally*
Mary C. Monahan, grandson *Shaun Michael Leeper*
John & Mary Ann Murphy, son *Thomas Patrick Murphy*
Betty Jane Peters- Neilson, son *Russell F. Peters, Jr.*
Connie & Richard Nolan, son *Christopher Nolan*
Jim & Bobbi O'Brien, daughter *Beth Hubbard*
Peggy & John O'Brien, son *Rick O'Brien*
Elizabeth Orbann, daughter *Linda Elizabeth Johnson*
Carleen Panaccio, son *Bret*
Thomas & Demetra Patukas, son *George Thomas Patukas*
Rosemary Peterson, son *Donald R. Peterson*
Robert & Jean Phillips, son *Robert Phillips*
Lyla T. Poulson, brother *Joe*
Joe & Marti Purifico, son *Jeffrey*
Vernice Quattlebaum, daughter *Gwendolyn Y. Ashe*
Roy Redman, daughter *Carol*
Pamela Reese, daughter *Laura Ann Peskoff*
Jeri Reinert, father *Albert Volpe*
Carol Robinson, son *Jim Kearney*
Margaret & Tom Saunders, daughter *Katie*
Bernice Scheinfield, son *Richard Scheinfield*
Janet & Jonathan Schultz, friend *Scott Alan Rosenthal*
Carroll & Christine Siquett, daughter *Tammy Marie Siquett*
Michael P. Smith, son *Michael*
Patricia & Bertram Snead, son *James Christopher Snead*
Ray & Lorraine Spear, daughter *Kimberly Jean Spear*
Shuchi & Peter Stanger, sister *Urvi Thanawala*

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES continued

Thomas & Sara Thiermann, daughter *Heather Bruce Thiermann*
Allan Thomas, son *Vernon Odins*
Joanne Thorpe, grandchild *Zachary*
Doris Tierney, son *Tom Tierney*
Cara Tripodi, brother *Christopher Tripodi*
Janice Vanderslice, son *Gregory Vanderslice*
Pat Villante, daughter *Patty*
Don & Natalie Wallace, son *Zachary George*
Bethany & Alvin Walton, bother/son *A.J.*
Alice Weaver, daughter *Kristen*

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Madeleine Adler, son **J. Peter Adler**
William & Charlotte Bodulich, son **William W. Bodulich**
Ann Bruner, sister **Katy Wade**
Cecile Buonocore, son **John Buonocore, III**
Donna & Gregory Class, daughter **Megan Maria Class**
Liz & Scott Conaghan, brother **Jan**
Marie D'Angelo, son **Mark Anthony**
Jim & Ruth Fairley, son **David Fairley**
Rochena & Pat Fatale, son **Mark Longan**
Charlie & Jill Fick, son **Michael Sternberg**
Robert & Kathy Gelinas, daughter **Krystal Gelinas**
John Gething, son **Adam Gething**
Laura Giordano, son **Peter**
Marian Glennie, daughter **Susan Martini**
Sandra Greenly, son **Michael Greenly**
Cathy Grosshanten, son **Gary**
Toni & Joseph Hanusey, son **Joseph Hanusey, Jr.**
George & Kay Hartman, son **Thomas R Hartman**
Jean & James Hayden, son **LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden**
Othell & William Heaney, son **Kevin**
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter **Noreen Schmucker**
Charles & Jane Hills, son **Chuck Hills**
Thomas & Virginia Hoesch, son **William E. "Buddy" Hoesch**
Marlene Hoffman, brother **Barry Hoffman**
Sally Ivory, son **Jimmy Ivory**
Joan Jagers, son **John Costello**
Debra Keevill, son **Brandon**

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS continued

Shirley & Philip C. Kennedy, son Philip V. Kennedy
Margaret & Edward Kiefski, Sr., son Edward Kiefski, Jr.
Lynette Lampmann, son Shawn
Joseph & Kathy Leahan, daughter Samantha
Herb & Adaline Leir, daughter Kimberley Dawn Leir
Liz & Joe Loeper, son Jamey
Sharon Martin, brother Shawn Lampmann
Julie & Richard May, son William L. May
Jennifer McGowan Clark, brother Joseph McGowan
Sue McMaster, cousin Laura
Kathleen Mitchel, brother Jeffrey Hathaway
Audrey Morasco, son Christopher Morasco
Mary Mulholland, son Joseph McGowan
John & Mary Ann Murphy, daughter Maureen Murphy
Dale & Helen Ninneman, son Dale Ninneman II
Connie & Richard Nolan, son Christopher Nolan
Emil Nunez, son Oliver Nunez
Roberta Pertuch, grandson Wilhelm Raucher
Robert & Jean Phillips, son Robert Phillips
Carol Phipps, daughter Casey
Mike & Cheryl Raniszewski, daughter Amanda Nicole Raniszewski
Joan & Earl Reigel, daughter Melissa Reigel
Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, mother (Bubbles) Theresa Volpe
Tony & Toni Riccardi, son David Riccardi
Jacqueline Rider, son Matthew Rider
Barbara Rossman, daughter Kickole Lyn
Francine Safir, youngest brother Howard (Howie) Richard Safir
Linda Sandlin, brother LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden
Bernice Scheinfeld, son Richard Scheinfeld
Melinda & Craig Schewe, son Nathan Schewe
Judy & Lin Schleicher, daughter Quinna Marie Schleicher
Frank and Kay Shinnors , son Erik Shinnors
Charles & Norma Skibbe, son Mark Steven Skibbe
Janemarie Smith, daughter Beth Jovanovic
Margaret & Wade Stallard, son Wade Hampton Stallard, III
Elaine & Joe Stillwell, son Denis E. O'Connor, III
Robert & Nancy Thompson, friend J. Peter Adler
Esperanza & Libardo Toro, daughter Maria Eugenia Toro
Barbara Torrens, brother Robert Birmele
Henry & Elizabeth Weaver, grandson Donald Smith, Jr.
Gisela Witte, son Bruce G. Edlund
Tammy Wood/ Jerry McKenna, son Richie Wood
Herb Zucker, daughter Eileen Zucker Horn

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Marilynn Anton, cousin/godmother *Douglas Hofmockel*
Lillian Aquilante, son *Nicholas*
Jeannette Barnett, daughter *Jeannette Rojo*
Nina Bernstein, son *Andrew Voluck*
Peg Brown, son *Ken*
Donna & Gregory Class, daughter *Megan Maria Class*
Allison Crowder, daughter *Amber*
Harold & Marcia Epstein, grandson *Andrew Voluck*
Danielle Evelyn, son *Samir*
Nick & Fran Fioravanti, son *Nicholas J. Fioravanti, Jr.*
Rita & Thomas Gibbons, daughter *Patricia Gibbons*
Jack & Freda Gross, daughter *Linda Joy Gross*
Charles and Cindy Hafner, daughter *Carolyn Hafner*
Yvonne Heatley, brother *Brian J. O'Rourke*
Christine Hertzog, son *Nicholas*
Charles & Jane Hills, son *Chuck Hills*
Marlene Hoffman, brother *Barry Hoffman*
Marie & Ken Hofmockel, son *Douglas Hofmockel*
Robert Huss, son *Daniel*
Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner*
Sandi Kensicki, sister *Rose*
Tobie & Herman Kessler, daughter *Beth Kessler Waasdorp*
Rhoda & Melvin Kreiner, daughter *Anna Kreiner*
Lynette Lampmann, son *Shawn*
Sue Lawlor, son *Jim*
Marie MacCaughern, daughter *Theresa Peazzoni*
Carl & Josie Malitsky, daughter *Cynthia Malitsky*
Sharon Martin, brother *Shawn Lampmann*
James & Mary Beth Mattiford, son *Scott Mattiford*
Debra McKinley - Hastings, brother *Ken*
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan*
Alexandra Milas, mom's sister *Demitra Vallianos*
Jeffrey & Christine Miller, daughter *Teresa Leanne Miller*
Leonard & Thelma Miller, son *Lowell Bruce Miller*
Kathleen Mitchel, brother *Jeffrey Hathaway*
Fran & Kathy Moran, daughter *Denise Nicole Moran*

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES continued

Rose M. Morott, daughter *Katherine A. Berg*
Anthony & Mary Morrell, son *Andrew Michael Morrell*
Deone Morrison, son *Tod Morrison*
Dale & Helen Ninneman, son *Dale Ninneman II*
Joseph O'Neil, daughter *Beverley A. Schlotterer*
Melanie O'Rourke, brother *Brian J. O'Rourke*
Kevin O'Rourke, brother *Brian J. O'Rourke*
John & Therese O'Rourke, son *Brian J. O'Rourke*
Stephanie Phelan, brother *Brian J. O'Rourke*
Carol Phipps, daughter *Casey*
Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, son *Thomas Reinert, Jr.*
Jacqueline Rider, son *Matthew Rider*
Morris Romano, daughter *Diane Romano Donovan*
Eric & Loretta Rudolph, son *Joseph Rudolph*
William Russell, son *Andrew Russell*
Sandra & John Salemmo, son *John C. Salemmo, Jr.*
John & Marie Sanders, son *Robert Sanders*
Ruth Schmitt, son *Robert Schmitt, Jr.*
Pamela Schneibolk, brother *Douglas Hofmockel*
Priscilla Shober, son *Jeffrey R. Shober*
Aileen Snader, son *Scott R Snader*
Diana Sody, grandson *Craig Sody*
Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith*
Nancy Sullivan, granddaughter *Megan Sullivan*
Ellen & Frank Svitek, daughter *Kate Elizabeth Svitek*
Greg Swider, sister *Kelly Swider*
Mary Ellen Swider, daughter *Kelly Swider*
Kathy Thomas, daughter *Alicia Minnick*
Alan & Jean Thomas, son *Alan W. Thomas, Jr.*
Marilyn Toole, son *Ted Toole*
Ann VanLandingham, daughter-in-law *Rita VanLandingham*
Eden & Barbara Warren, daughter *Karen M. Moncuso*
Carolyn Ways, son *Robert Goodman*
Laura & Leo Weishew, brother *Steven McGowan*
Frank & Dolores Yanni, son *David Yanni*
Rose Yanni, nephew *David Yanni*

SHARED THOUGHTS ON GRIEF AND THE NEW YEAR

Most of us have a new perspective about the New Year since our children or siblings have died. For some it is a relief to close the door on the year of our tragedy, and try to perceive the new year with small rays of hope. But, for others it was the last year we shared our life with our loved one, and can't bear to see that segment of our life close. Each of us view new seasons differently, for most of us it is a difficult time.

First of all we must allow ourselves to grieve, both privately and with other family members. We can't expect other family members to grieve exactly as we do. Each needs space to salve their own needs, which may be different than ours. We find it helps to set time aside for our grief. Perhaps, that is why going to Compassionate Friends meetings is so healing for many, where we devote the evening to dealing with our feelings, and hoping for suggestions from others who have "made it through".

It is important to take care of ourselves physically, for bad health can alter our mood, and how we respond to the daily happenings in our life. We need to be considerate of other family members, for they are also struggling to get their lives back together. Both kindness and antagonism will snowball, and return back to us. It helps to put all we possibly can into being kind and considerate to those around us. This does not mean taking abuse, or ignoring our own needs.

If a good hour, or day, comes our way, relish it, we deserved it. Sometimes this causes some guilt on our part. We must remember, the last thing our child or sibling would want, is for us to feel guilt for a moment of peace. The love we have for our children, is usually matched in return with love for us. So, I'm sure they are glad when we can have relief from the terrible torment we are going through.

We **must** try to see some good in the new year, and a reason to go on. When newly bereaved, it is difficult to even want to look for good things. Everything looks so trivial compared to our loss, for we are so depressed, and hurting so bad. For those of us who are further along in our grief well remember how difficult it is to believe anything about "getting better". We now know it does get tolerable, and you too, will make it through. You will not always be so miserable, it takes a lot of work to get there. Healing comes through sharing, crying, feeling guilty and angry, or any aspect of grief it takes for us to move forward.

We do grow through our grief, by becoming more loving, understanding, and compassionate to those around us. Most of us have refined our priorities, and have no time for trivial complaints of others, for we now know there are greater things in life to be concerned with. We have learned the true meaning of desperation, and know it comes from broken people, not broken appliances.

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

**I cannot see your face, but my heart holds the sound of your voice
And the soft brightness which is your soul. *Amy Lowell* "The Touch of You"**

TO MY BIG BROTHER

You were the best big brother.
You were such a true true friend.
You were someone to whom I could always
talk and always could depend.

Its hard to believe that you are not here.
Smiling, laughing ... Oh, I feel a tear.

I think back on many times gone by
and I just keep asking myself, why?
But, it makes me smile and it makes me laugh.
To think back on sweet memories of the past.

Moving up from Osborne Street
and joining a new school.
Greg and Grant were always there
even when we joined the pool.

Then we went off to Ocean City
to spend our summers at the shore.
The sand would drift the ocean roll
and the gulls would often soar.

I watched you go through LaSalle,
and then off to Penn State too.
I was your little sister
who was so very proud of you.

I think of you quite often.
For your thoughts I'd give a penny.
Did you know I had a son last year.
I know he'd love his uncle Denny.

You'll be with me forever.
And although we are apart.
You live forever in my memories
and always in my heart.

Kimberly Kearns Minetola, Phila., PA
for her brother, **Dennis Kearns, Jr.**

EACH LIFE AFFECTS ANOTHER'S

We may not always realize that everything we do
Affects not only our lives but touches others, too.
A single happy smile can always brighten up the
day

for anyone who happens by.
And a little bit of thoughtfulness that shows
someone you care,
Creates a ray of sunshine for both of you to share.

Yes, every time you offer someone a helping hand,
Every time you show a friend you care and under-
stand.

Every time you have a kind and gentle word to
give,
You help someone find beauty in this precious
life we live,

For happiness brings happiness,
and loving ways bring love,
And giving is the treasure
that contentment is made of.

Author Unknown

I'M TIRED OF BEING STRONG

“Forgive me Lord, but I’m tired of being some of
the things I’ve tried so hard to be ... I’m tired of
being so capable, so efficient. I’m tired of the
compliment, ‘You are such a strong person, I ad-
mire your strength’. I’m tired of being considered
so patient and understanding that people dump
their troubles on me. I’m tired of being so cheer-
ful. I want to be free to be cross and complain and
not get a ‘buck up, old chap’ routine. I’m tired of
being considered so independent, so strong.
Sometimes, at least sometimes, Lord, I want to be
weak and helpless, able to lean on somebody, able
to cry and be comforted. Lord, I guess there are
just times when I want to be a child again, running
to climb on my mother’s lap.”

Marjorie Holmes “Hold Me Up a Little”

SHARING A PRIVATE GRIEF

The other day someone said to me, "My grief is too private to share." I think we all feel that way sometime. We are saying two things when we say that. First, "You couldn't possibly know how I feel." And second, we are saying, "I hurt so much, I'm not about to tell of my anguish and leave myself open to your judgment of my feelings." We have to protect ourselves, but, in protecting our privacy are we forgetting anything? Is it possible that our friends also grieve; that they, too, miss our child and hurt for us in ways we don't let them express? Is it possible that our friends are not judging us and that in not giving voice to our sorrow we are closing the door to the healing love that may be in store for us? It is probable that our friends don't know what to say to us. People have no trouble wishing us "happy birthday", "get well soon" or "have a good day", and mean it. But, it is hard for people to express their sorrow, often because they are afraid of hurting us. That they don't express their grief isolates us. **Sometimes we have to encourage others** to address the issues closest to our hearts - for our own protection.

Pat Ryan / TCF, Silverdale, WA

THE PATH

My world lay shattered around me. Gone were the flowers and the sun. The path ahead looked dark and threatening. I heard a voice saying, "You have to travel this path alone."

"I don't want to go down that path. I can't." I protested. "I liked the old path."

"The choice is yours," said the voice, "but you may never go back to the old path. You may stay here at the crossroads where anger and pain will keep you company and wither your spirit. Or, you may runoff into the surrounding woods and pretend you are going somewhere, but you will become disoriented and lost. The only peace is to be found at the end of the path ahead."

"If you have the courage to set forth upon the new path and keep struggling through the storms, you will discover depths in yourself that you never knew existed. If you reach out you will find those who have already traveled this difficult way and are there to support and guide you. Though it seems impossible now, your path will become beautiful again, as will your spirit. You will emerge from the desolation a stronger, wiser, and more compassionate person. Then you too can turn and extend your hand to those who are still on the way."

I made a choice. I picked up the remains of my life -- my aching heart and wounded spirit, my broken dreams and disbelief -- and wrapped them carefully in my blanket of grief. Holding them closely to me, I walked steadfastly ahead into the storm with faith in the promise of peace on the other side.

Sharron Cordaro, Riverside, CA

A boy was flying his kite. He kept adding more spools of string to make it go higher. A woman walked by and said, "you have that kite flying high." And the boy agreed. The woman left and went about her business. On her way back, she looked up toward the kite and said, "I do not see your kite." The boy agreed. She asked, "Then why don't you let go of it?" The boy answered, "I can't. I can still feel it tugging." **This is the plight of bereaved parents.**

TCF of Tilton, GA

I cannot carry this burden alone. The road is too steep, and the pain too great. I shall only get to the top of the hill if I am able to lean on a firm shoulder whose strength lies in the reality of the feet which bear its weight. The **sharing** of grief is the only solution to the crisis that surrounds bereavement in our age. To share a person's sorrow is to accept their reality, and to acknowledge the fact that none of us is immune from death.

Excerpt - DEATH COMES HOME by Simon

A Moment of Help

After I lost my son Nino to a drowning accident, a young scientist walked into my office at Denver University. He was always extremely detached in his interactions with people, so I was not surprised that he asked almost casually whether I was feeling better.

I could not answer his question, because I had already started to cry. "Would you rather not have had a son at all?" he wanted to know. I shook my head and cried harder.

He handed me his handkerchief and said firmly, "I suppose you need to cry yourself well." And without even a hint of emotion, he sat down facing me.

In the presence of so much detachment, I managed to recover my "composure." But the visitor took my hand and held it silently, until I began to cry again. Then he said, "Keep crying. You are not well yet ..."

I will not forget this encounter. It told me two things when I very much needed to hear them. First; the expression of grief is necessary. And second; after a great sorrow, we can expect - in time - to be "well" again.

Sascha Wagner

"And a little child shall lead them" ---
He has, she has, they have, they all have.
Our children have led us to this gathering of friends.
At the beginning of this new experience, we were like children.
We had to learn to stand again, we had to learn to walk again.
We had to learn to walk one step at a time.
We stand, we fall, we stand again.
We try to stand alone, and we keep falling.
We reach for support -- we stand a little longer!
We reach for a hand - we learn to walk!
But, remember, my friend,
Just like a little child,
We must learn to walk ... one step at a time
We are lucky.
We reached for Compassionate Friends.
We need not walk alone.
There is always a hand to help us, each step of the way ...
Along the road of healing.

Tina Goodale, Brien's mom Valley Forge, PA

TAKE THE TIME . . . TO HURT, TO CRY. . .

Wordless and worldless -- Endless and forever, grief goes on --
It takes the best -- And leaves the rest an empty shell -- Life is Hell.

David was dead four months when I wrote that in my journal. Time is my enemy. As I envisioned the future of my life, I saw only a vast expanse of desert - dry, parched, and empty.

It is now a year and a half since David's death, and I recognize that time has become my friend. Now, when I look to the future, I see hills and valleys - struggles, to be sure, but, also, moments spent at the summit. What has happened? Time is healing.

Take the time . . .

To hurt . . . The pain is great and the temptation to run away is great. But, there is no avoiding, no escaping the hard feelings. If you cover them over, they only re-surface later in a potentially more destructive way.

To cry . . . It may feel like once started, you can never stop. But you have every reason to cry, and when you have cried enough, you will stop.

To "fall apart." . . . If you have a broken leg, you would not expect yourself to function at full capacity right away. Your wound is much greater - you have a broken heart. Confusion, inability to concentrate, lethargy, imagined glimpses of your dead child are a normal part of the grieving process and do not mean that you are going crazy.

To be "selfish." . . . Mourning is an egocentric time, a time for turning inward and introspection.

To "identify" . . . and seek out resources in your environment that can help: friends, clergy, Compassionate Friends, a counselor. Talk to them.

Having done all that - having lingered in the valley of the shadow - it is time to begin the climb out.

Take the time . . .

To engage again in activities that were once pleasurable. They may hold no joy the first few times; someday they will and that will be all right.

To laugh without guilt. Savor the good moments in the day, brief though they may be. Through your child, you can re-discover the beauty of a sunset.

To care for your health. Grieving is a physio-, as well, as psycho-logical stress. Your body needs protection.

To be patient. Wanting to live again and learning to live again takes time. The path out of the other side of the valley is steep, and we all often stumble. But with time - time spent doing the work of grief - you can find the path to a world made richer by your love.