



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

July & August 2020

Newsletter

Volume 20 No. 7&8

Dedicated with love to all children who have died, and their parents, families,

The Compassionate Friends

(TCF) is a national non-profit, self-help support organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to families grieving the death of a child of any age from any cause. There is no religious affiliation and no individual membership fees or dues are charged.

Founded in England in 1969, TCF was established in the United States in 1972. Presently, under the provision of the not-for-profit national organization, there are more than 700 local chapters in operation throughout the United States.

Mission Statement:

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers very intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provide highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

*"Grief is the last act
of love
we can give
to those we loved.
Where there is deep grief,
there is deep love."*

Please contact us at 475-882-9695. Leave your name, number, and message, and we will return your call.

Please send all correspondence to the following address:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter
P.O. Box 112
Stratford, CT 06615

Monthly Meetings

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing is now the new standard. The steering committee of the TCF Bridgeport/Stratford Chapter is dedicated to the emotional well being of its members, and we are committed to helping you through this difficult time.

Until the government of CT deems it safe to resume activities, **our meetings will be held virtually**. On the day of the meeting, you will be receiving an email with instructions on how to log on and join the meeting on the app **Zoom** or from your phone.

Date: Second Tuesday of each month

Time: 6:45 pm - 8:45 pm

Place: Virtual Reality through Zoom or phone

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out and contact us at our

TCF Bridgeport/Stratford email:
contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

Bridgeport/Stratford & Vicinity Chapter Steering Committee

Chapter Co-Leader

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Chapter Co-Leader

Dr. Charles Kochan

Secretary

Janet Spray

Treasurer

Leslie Minasi

Website Co-ordinator

Leslie Minasi

Newsletter Editor

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Hospitality

Dee Tutka & Anne Castaldo

Community Outreach and Librarian

Michele Peloso and Anne Castaldo

Bridgeport Chapter's New E-Mail Address:

contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

TCF Bridgeport's New Website Address:

www.tcf-bridgeport.org

Bridgeport Chapter's Facebook Website:

www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter

National Office

The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 3696
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Editor's Notes

Tidings of Peace are sent to you during these months of summer. Summer is a time when life naturally slows down. Summertime sounds so easy. It's a time to go barefoot, time to leave the windows open, time to bask in the sun, time to barbecue on the outdoor grill, and time to go on road trips. But, for those of us in grief, summer can often be a nightmare. Everywhere we go, we see babies, children, teenagers, and young adults enjoying their summertime, and our bodies jolt as we search for our own absent child who enjoyed this time of the year with a passion!

Surrounded by summer fun, a bereaved parent needs only to look around, and there will be painful thoughts of what was and what should be. When we are faced with all the living, loving happy families with their children, we want to scream, "It's not fair!"

We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures with our absent child. The other way to feel summertime is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer present.

We have been diminished by the death of our child. I know that I am not the same person I was before the death of my child, but I hope that I have become a better person. I know the greatest tribute to my child will be to enjoy this summer as best I can as my son would have done. After many years, I can walk down the beach and enjoy the solitude or laugh when I see a toddler. I can listen to the joy of children laughing, and it warms my heart. Yes, I miss my son immensely, but I know he enjoyed every minute of this season, and I know that's what he'd want for me.

So for those of you who are not as far along the journey, what can you do?

You've read it many times. You have to find your own way and your own peace—always leaving yourself room to escape if it becomes necessary. If you can find any enjoyment and relaxation, relish it...you deserve it, and it does not mean you don't care. It simply means you are healing.

One day you will be grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, while trying to deal with your child's absence with all the grace of which you are capable.

Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don't wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel. Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But, we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in

the shadows of this golden summertime, don't hide your sorrow. The grief of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings unexpressed can burn into your existence with harmful force.

You can be both brave and honest. You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. Revealing sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. After you have expressed the painful sorrow *you once kept hidden, you may find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summer times with your beloved child.* Soon after, you may be ready to embrace all future summer times.



*Taking one step at a time,
Claudia Margitay-Balogh*

THE RIGHTS OF THE BEREAVED - INDEPENDENCE DAY -

Independence Day is our Country's anniversary as a free and independent nation. As Americans, we have learned to exercise our rights that were so sorely earned. But what are the rights of the bereaved parent? Our freedom can sometimes be stifled by well meaning people.

AS A BEREAVED PARENT, YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO:

- * Miss your child, even after many years.
- * Talk about your child that died as you would your living children.
- * Cry when some small remembrance hits you like a brick.
- * Tell people how you really feel when they ask.
- * Grieve in your own way, and in your own time.
- * To be happy again!

Bereaved parents have a right to express their feelings of grief: to exercise their expressions of loss: to remember their loved one lived!

So, dear parents. **CLAIM YOUR FREEDOM TO BE YOU. ...AND ONE DAY YOU WILL CLAIM YOUR INDEPENDENCE FROM GRIEF! !!!!!**



*Nancy Cassell
TCF-Monmouth County Chapter*

Grieving, Healing, Growing...

As broken hearts mend slowly, as one attempts to put the pieces of his or her life back together after a crisis, he or she may discover that most of the pieces are missing. While others are fragmented and scarred beyond recognition, these "pieces" will no longer "fall into place."

The battle within the human psyche is an all-consuming one: the pain is intense, leaving ugly scars etched deeply into the soul and invisible to the eye. In the face of adversity, one must battle the enemy with a fierce determination to survive at all costs. Hence, the mind will seek ways to shield itself from further onslaught.

The dictionary defines defense mechanisms as those reactions which serve to protect the self against something harmful, whether that threat is real or imagined. Defense mechanisms provide a safety net for our sanity. They "cushion" the blow between actual crisis and continuation of life. They permit us to slowly absorb the reality of the situation or loss. In this healthy and God given way, pain is confronted, dealt with, and dissolved without overwhelming us.

When a person refuses to confront his pain and allow its expression, then the normal use of defense mechanisms break down and become unhealthy. Pain does not cease to exist. It will not lie hidden within the ruins of a broken heart indefinitely; eventually, it will demand release. Grief unattended may later disguise itself in the form of anger, resentments, or chronic depressions. The loss of a child and the cherished dreams of his or her future may develop into very real

physical illnesses, such as migraine headaches, ulcers, diverticulitis, or other maladies.

In order to remain healthy, we must choose to deal with our pain and not ignore it or push it away. We cannot, physically or emotionally, afford to pretend that our grief does not exist. We must allow the tears to flow and provide healing. We must verbalize disappointments and anger in order to prevent the inner rage. We must allow our minds the freedom to "remember" and give our hearts permission to break. It is only when we embrace the nightmares will they disappear. Sometimes we have to hurt in order to be healed... but the choice is ours and the question remains: do we really want to be well?

*From an article by:
Debby Grogan, R.N.
TCF, Atlanta, GA*

HERE'S WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT GRIEF

It's not linear.
It's not predictable.
It's anything but smooth
and self-contained.
Someone did us a grave injustice
by implying that mourning has
a distinct beginning, middle & end
Hope Edelman

Have you ever noticed the many mixed-up, confusing emotions involved in grieving? On the one hand, you rest, on

the other hand, you feel like you don't want to move at all. You feel desperately alone, and yet you don't want anyone around. You feel scatter-brained, forgetful, and yet frantically meticulous. You feel like crying at nothing and sometimes laughing at anything. (Or do I have that backwards?) Being in a crowd of people is fine as long as they don't talk to you. And yet if they don't talk to you, you feel as if nobody cares. You want so desperately for someone to mention your child, to remember the life that once was. And yet, it can make you furious if ALL they want to talk about is the dead one and never even mention the living ones. Grief settles over you like a hot blanket. You're as cold as the winter snow. Grief presses on you like a steam roller. You're floating in a bubble above yourself. Grief boxes you in on four sides and introduces you to a pain no one should have to know.

But then, once again, you begin to feel compassion. You relate to other parents who have had an experience similar to your own. And eventually, with a light as sharp as a sunburst, you hear yourself saying your child's name with an unfamiliar smile on your face. You remember some of the funny times and feel laughter building in your throat. One morning you notice the Sun's shining. Many days, months, and possibly years have passed unnoticed...and somehow, you are still here. Even though your child is still... There. You feel your heart swell with a love you never even knew could exist. And you find a place in your life for something called (dare I say) peace.

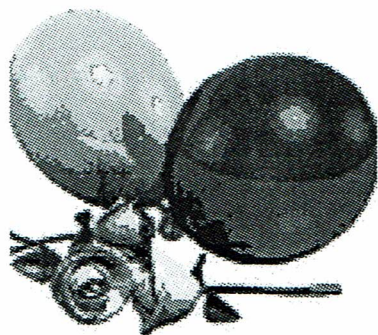
And then, ever so gently, the memories enfold you in a warmth as soothing as a cold shower on a hot summer day, so you find you WANT to remember. And tender memories of Love lift you to unreachable heights, to the brightest of stars, to the loveliest touch of your child.

*Dana Gensler,
Kentucky TCF*

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

We all know how difficult these special days - Birthdays and Death Anniversaries - can be. This Feature in our newsletter helps us to be aware of who is facing these special days each month. We ask that you keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing such dates during July & August in your thoughts and in your hearts.

ANNA MARIA RINO	July 1	BARBARA YOUNG	August 2
KIM THIBODEAU CHIARALUCE	July 2	DAN O'SULLIVAN	August 3
ERIC S. HULTZBERG	July 4	PAUL WILLIAM MINAR	August 5
CHRISTIAN LAWRENCE RUTTER	July 4	BRIAN BELL	August 7
JOSEPH SANTE CAJIGAS	July 6	ROBERT MANGANO	August 8
MICHAEL ESPACH	July 6	CLAIRE ANN DESTEFANO	August 8
ERIN BABINEAU	July 12	THOMAS J. HENTHORN JR.	August 8
JEREMIAH SHANNON SALVATORE	July 12	JAMES MEDVEGY (Jamie)	August 9
ALEXA RAE HERON	July 13	STEVEN C. BELENCHIA	August 9
JODI DAVIDOWSKI	July 14	PETER BRADFORD KOVACS	August 9
ADAM GARDNER	July 14	DAVID ANTHONY GIERULA	August 9
CHARLES ROBERT MARTIN	July 15	DOUGLAS C. COLE, JR.	August 11
GINA DECHELLO	July 16	MICHELE BROADLEY	August 12
SOMMER LIEIGH BOKINA	July 17	AVA JANE HOWERTON	August 12
LAILA SYDNEY WALTERS	July 17	JEREMY SAXE	August 13
RICHARD ELIOT BONOSKY	July 18	JOEY CLANCOLA	August 13
DANIEL QUIRK	July 19	KOREY JORDAN	August 13
FRANK ARGONESE	July 19	GEOFFREY GARDNER	August 13
MARCI BYITECK	July 21	ANDREAS (AJ) JUSTESEN	August 15
KYLE JEFFREY GEDNEY	July 21	BRANDON GIORDANO	August 17
Senior Airman LAWRENCE MANLAPIT III	July 21	ANTHONY MICHAEL TEIXEIRA	August 17
SEAN EAREL	July 23	DANIEL LAWRENCE TOOLE	August 18
MELISSA ERIKA MANCINI	July 23	CARMINE J. MUNZ, JR.	August 18
BOBBY PROVENZANO	July 23	VICTORIA "TORP" LYNN KOETSCH	August 21
SCOTT McCLENATHAN	July 26	KATRELL BOHANNAN	August 22
LISA READ	July 30	KASANDRA SANDERS	August 22
		LORI ARGONESE	August 23
		AARON THOMAS HINE	August 25
		DANNY STEIN	August 26
		JAMIE RITTER	August 27
		KEITH McCARTHY	August 27
		JOHN PATRICK FLANAGAN	August 27
		CHRISTOPHER PAPP	August 27
		BARBARA ANNE MINAR	August 27
		DIANA-ALEXANDRA BREAZ	August 28
		JASON WILLIAM CANNON	August 29
		TAMIKA CAMERON	August 29
		MICHAEL DAVID BUGLIONE	August 30



*Our wish is that
this day
of remembrance
will bring you
gentle peace.*

BIRTHDAYS

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

A life that touches the hearts of others goes on forever.

JOEL ALEXIS NIEVES	July 1	JENNIFER D. GUSTAFSON	August 1
MARISSA IRENE IRWIN	July 4	MARIA SKENDERIS ISOLA	August 1
KATIE FONTNEAU	July 4	SARAH FOLEY	August 3
KEVIN SUTHERLAND	July 4	AARON HINE	August 6
WENDY JOAN CARPENTER	July 4	EDWARD GLOVER	August 6
FRED A. POPPA, JR.	July 5	GREGORY HARTZ	August 7
BETH LOGAN	July 8	ALEX PAUL FAKHOURY	August 7
SABINA ELIZABETH CECCARELLI	July 9	HERB GULLBERG IV	August 8
GEOFFREY GARDNER	July 9	JOSEPH DAVID LONGO	August 8
KEVIN MICHAEL KOCHAN	July 10	NEIL GEORGE SWEETMAN	August 10
TONY BROWN	July 11	DENISE GLOVER	August 11
DJ ART	July 12	CLAIRE ANN DESTEFANO	August 11
BRIAN STAPLETON	July 15	DAVID ANTHONY GIERULA	August 12
JOSEPH MICHAEL KLINKO	July 15	JAVIER DANIEL COSME	August 14
SHAUN DOWD	July 15	JESSICA BURROWS	August 16
BRIAN MICHAEL CANCELLIERI	July 15	JEFFREY YALE	August 17
TEVIN GORDON	July 15	JOSHUA GALPIN	August 18
ERIC A. JONES	July 16	BRIAN BELL	August 21
LAILA SYDNEY WALTERS	July 17	CARLO MINASI	August 22
ANGELINA JOY PEARSON	July 18	LINDA MEDINA	August 25
SOMMER LIEGH BOKINA	July 19	JODI DAVIDOWSKI	August 26
STEFANA MONHOLLEN	July 20	MARGARITA B. RAMOS	August 28
ROBERT MANGANO	July 20	PHILLIP DIVINCENZO JR.	August 28
JAMES (TOMMY) STUART	July 20	JOLENE DECIUCIS	August 31
KYLE JEFFREY GEDNEY	July 21	CHARLES BERSZAKIEWICZ	August 31
SUSAN WOESSNER	July 22		
WILLIAM CLEARY	July 23		
JON MALONE	July 29		
CHUCKIE ROTOLO	July 30		

*"No matter how much time has passed,
I still feel your touch, see your light,
and will love you eternally."*



Angelversaries



The Compassionate

Corner

Just To Say...

Written By Leslie Minasi

MOTHER OF CARLO MINASI

Hi:

I just wanted to share with you my thoughts and emotions from this morning.

I went on a bicycle ride as I often do - I exercise a lot for my head - it tempers some of my anxiety and allows me to settle down a bit.

I try to keep the rides short as work is always on my mind - it's very stressful, and I never get to the point where I feel I am caught up.

But this morning I was missing Carlo so much, (I often cry on my bike rides) I went to his special place.

Easton people will know this spot - you go about a mile into the woods down an abandoned road, and in the middle of nowhere, there is a wooden bridge over the water. There have been a lot of bears in the neighborhood recently, but I figured "oh well"

It was so peaceful there! Nothing but the water, the birds singing, fish, frogs, and the dragonflies.

I was staring into the slowly moving water, and I was thinking about empathy, and how Carlo was the most empathetic person I know. I am not sure what the dictionary says, but to me, I realized empathy is having another person validate your feelings, try to understand them, and not offer reasons or solutions.

As I came to this realization, a dragonfly I have never seen before landed right next to me. It was almost a metallic green - I have never seen anything like it before, and green is Carlo's favorite color.

It sat with me for a while, and then took off. I really felt Carlo's presence for a moment - like it was him telling me he is with me. I always told him I would never let him go.

And I never will.

In the Morning

From wherever you are
you smile at me.

"Find life for both of us"
you say.

"Find peace for both of us"
you say.

"Find strength and love and hope for both of us
because you are my mother."

Sasha Wagner

*Give yourself permission to grieve -
do not deny any feelings that cry from within.*

*Grief, more than any other emotion,
lets you know who you are.*

And some day you may even find

"The peace that passeth all understanding."

Sasha Wagner

Love Gifts



A "Love Gift" is a donation given in memory of our children by family or friends who wish to support the work of our chapter. There are no fees or dues to belong to The Compassionate Friends. All contributions are voluntary. Our Bridgeport & Vicinity Chapter depends solely on donations to fund our meetings. A Love Gift will help pay for expenses such as our website, meeting place, newsletter, telephone, Candle Lighting Event, books, brochures, and supplies which help to assist grieving families. These gifts are much needed and are always welcome. "Love Gifts" are acknowledged every two months in the newsletter. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

The Compassionate Friends is a registered 501(c) (3) organization.

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter
 c/o Leslie Minasi,
 P.O. Box 112, Stratford, CT 06615
 Please make out the check to:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter.

Since the newsletter is published 6 times a year, please note that if you want to commemorate a birthday or anniversary in the exact month, **please send the love gift in advance.** All love gifts will be acknowledged as promptly as possible. The chapter leadership is grateful for your contributions of any amount.

Compassionate Verse

*Don't tell me that
 you understand.
 Don't tell me that
 you know.
 Don't tell me that
 I will surely grow.*

*Don't come at me
 with answers
 That can only come from me.
 Don't tell me how
 my grief will pass,
 that I will soon be free*

*Accept me in my ups and downs.
 I need someone to share.
 Just hold my hand
 and let me cry,
 And say,
 "My friend, I care."*

-Author Unknown

Carlo,
 We love you
 with all of our being.
 You are always
 with us
 in
 our hearts and souls.
 Always!
 Love,
 Mama & Papa

Let sun and rain
 and wind and flowers touch your heart,
 yes, even touch
 that hidden place inside,
 where sorrow weeps.
 Because the sun
 and rain
 and wind
 and flowers
 are part of sorrow
 with the touch of hope.

TCF Bridgeport Chapter "Love Gift" Form

Name _____
 Address _____ City _____
 State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____ E-Mail _____
 Message _____
 Love Gift \$ _____

Thank you!

Compassionate Words

Dear Annie column written by Annie Lane
featured

in the Connecticut Post on Friday, December 27, 2019

Dear Annie:

I lost my wife of 32 years, and two months after, I lost my son. I will never same. How can I get through this?

Grieving

Dear Grieving:

There are no words to lessen the pain, but the following is my attempt to help you endure it.

Reach out for support.

Find therapists in your area who specialize in grief at:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/grief>.

Look into grief support groups in your community. If you are religious, see if your place of worship hosts a grief support group or can refer you to one. If you don't like one therapist or a support group try another.

Take "breaks."

The weight of grief is so crushing. It's important for your mental and physical health to seek out moments of respite, however brief. so if there is something that brings you the slightest bit of joy or lightness (that is not self-destructive, gravitate toward that. It could be something as simple as watching a funny TV show to suppress your sadness; it's to give yourself a tiny bit of rest from the all-consuming work of grief.

Pay tribute to your wife and son in ways they'd approve.

Look at old photos or videos. Reminisce about them to others. Participate in or support activities that were dear to them in life. Talk to them aloud all you want.

Honor your grief.

Don't let anyone tell

you how or when to grieve. You might find that well-meaning people bring up the "five stages of grief." though that model can be helpful, it is not all-encompassing or prescriptive. (Even Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, who introduced the concept, wrote later in her career that the stages are not meant to be linear and that she regrets their oversimplification.) Wherever you are, you are right on time.

Grief is love.

The immense heartache you're feeling is an extension of your love for your son and wife. They are with you even in this. That same love will also give you strength to endure ultimately.

Though you'll never get over this, you will get through it. I am truly sorry for your loss.

Life has touched us
with the aching edge
of special grief.

Now, life is waiting
for the moment
when
we can be comforted
by new compassion
and by deeper
strength.

Then,
life will touch us
with the timeless
light
of special
love.