



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

September & October 2020

Newsletter

Volume 20 No. 9 &10

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 550 active 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.

*"My heart lifts,
in solidarity and longing,
toward all who have suffered
as I have.
May we find and uphold
one another."*

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**

National Office

The Compassionate Friends
Shari O'Loughlin CEO
P.O. Box 700
Jensen Beach, Florida 34957
(630)990-0010 (877)969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Regional Coordinator

Mary Lemley
203 483-9935
Mklem43@aol.com

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
(September 8, 2020 October 13, 2020)

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:

Editor's Notes

Tidings of peace. It's not unusual for men and women to express their grief in different ways when their child dies; something that can, unfortunately, lead to a lot of hurt and misunderstanding.

When our only child died, I thought that my husband would sit by my side, and we would cry together continuously. This was far from reality. Yes, I sat and cried, but my husband was busy reclaiming a part of the house that once was his art studio. He was busy altering and fixing while I reached out to all I knew through the telephone. I needed to tell the story of how our son died. I told the story over and over again while the tears poured unceasingly down my cheeks. As the summer months continued in this pattern, my husband once exclaimed that if he hears the story once more, he will go insane!

Needless to say, we were dealing with our son's death in very different ways, and we had to seek a professional to help us understand our behavior. We learned that *no two people—no matter their gender—grieve alike*. There is no right way to grieve, yet, if someone is a reserved stoic in life in general, that person is likely to grieve as a reserved stoic, or if someone else finds it easy to express emotion in life, then that person will be more likely to show grief by expressing emotion.

We also learned that even though we both lost the same child at the same time, the grief process itself is not a shared experience. It is an extremely personal journey that no two people will travel the same way. Our most important step was to recognize that we will continually grieve very differently from each other.

We were also told that society and culture influence grief. Men are often taught from an early age to suppress their feelings. Our culture says men should be strong and protect their families. Often in everyday circumstances when the wife is upset about something, the husband tries to fix the problem. There is nothing a husband can do to "fix" the problem of losing a child which leaves him feeling helpless to help himself feel better or to help his wife

who is hurting so deeply.

Furthermore, men are often not as communicative or as demonstrative as women and may feel uncomfortable talking about their feelings. Dad may think talking or crying will be too upsetting for his wife while, Mom sees her husband's silence as a lack of love for their child because she does not see his real feelings. In fact, friends will usually ask the husband how his wife is feeling rather than asking how he is doing. Such neglect of Dad's feelings may add pressure for him to get on with the business of living. Unfortunately, this mind set can encourage a denial of his grief.

Women usually grow up learning that it is okay and natural for them to express their feelings. Mom learns to show her feelings to those she hopes will understand. If Dad is uncomfortable with tears, Mom may feel stifled and restrict her grief to privacy and friends.

It is no wonder that a husband's and wife's different responses to grieving can bring serious repercussions to their relationship and marriage, but there are steps that can be taken.

If you and your spouse feel totally out of synch with one another, you may find it helpful to seek out the services of a therapist who specializes in working with bereaved parents. Sometimes, what is needed is a neutral third party to remind you to be patient with your partner and with yourself which is no easy task when you are both raw with emotion and wounded to the depths of your being.

Also, keep an open line of communication and share your thoughts and emotions. Accept your differences and acknowledge each other's pain. Assure one another of your commitment to your relationship. Be caring about each other's feelings and needs. But, above all, talk and continue to talk about the child that will always live in your hearts and minds.

*Claudia Margitay-Balogh
Take one step at a time.*

Grieving, Healing, Growing...

Myths and Realities About the Impact of Grief on the Marriages of Bereaved Parents

(Myth 1) As the same child has died, each parent experiences the same loss. Reality: As parents, each of us has experienced our child differently and had a unique relationship with that child. Therefore, both bereaved parents are mourning different losses, and these will be what will influence what one misses and when one misses it (e.g., one parent may miss the opportunity to talk with the child after school, while the other especially may miss watching football games on Sunday).

(Myth 2) Spouses will tend to be more similar than dissimilar in their grief. Reality: At latest count, people grieve according to 32 different sets of factors, each of which influences anyone's grief resistance. Grief is highly idiosyncratic, as individualistic as a fingerprint. Spouses are no more alike necessarily in their mourning than are strangers. Loving one another, or living in the same house, does not make individuals respond to loss similarly.

Some of the major factors contributing to differences between parents include: type and quality of the relationship with the child; sex-role conditioning; personality and coping behaviors; past experiences with loss; social, cultural, and religious backgrounds; social support received; reliance on drugs and alcohol; and physical health. Spouses will have to give each other wide latitude for their differing experiences of grief.

(Myth 3) Once a couple can learn to manage their grief, they will be back to themselves again. Reality: A major loss always changes the bereaved somewhat. Parts of us die when someone we love very much dies. Most of us continue on, but we are altered by the impact of the loss and the adaptations to it that have been required of us. We not only will have to learn how to relate in a new way with our deceased child (i.e., we still can have a relationship with that child, but it must be a different type now that he or she is dead). We also must learn how to relate to the rest of the world, including our spouse, in new ways to accommodate the changes in us occasioned by the loss.

Especially during the long period of acute grief, in which the absence of our child painfully teaches us repeatedly that he or she is gone, it may be very difficult to relate to our spouse because of our pain and distress.

Our communication with each other may have deteriorated; our sexual relationship may not be what it once was or it may have disappeared entirely. It is not abnormal for this to continue for a lengthy period of time. Couples who are successful in managing to weather this crisis together: (1) keep the communication open as much as possible; (2) recognize their distress and the changes in themselves, and work to express both in the healthiest possible fashions; (3) insure their expectations of one another are appro-

priate and give each other permission to grieve individually as necessary; and (4) find ways slowly to integrate all of the changes into the marriage.

(Myth 4) If a parent and couple are "healthy", the mourning will last longer than what people expect-up to a few years. Reality: The duration of mourning varies according to the particular loss, its circumstances, the mourner, and the conditions surrounding the mourner. Nevertheless, it is now known that mourning a beloved person may take years of acute grief and that the long-term mourning process takes much longer, with some aspects of mourning never being entirely finished; i.e., there always may occur subsequent experiences which can trigger in us temporary upsurges in grief for our child (e.g. when his brother gets married & he is not there, or when it is Thanksgiving and her place is empty at the table). It constitutes neither pathological nor unresolved grief, nor does it mean that acute mourning still persists. Bereaved parents must recognize that mourning the loss of any major person, especially a child, will mean continuing throughout the rest of life to encounter times when the pain of the loss is brought back & the absence made more acute at that moment, which causes a temporary upsurge in grief. As long as this doesn't interfere too long with your continuing to move adaptively into the new life without your loved one, such reactions need not be incompatible with healthy adaptation for the rest of your life.

(Myth 5) Parental grief declines over time in a steadily decreasing fashion. Reality: Like all types of grief, parental grief fluctuates much more than society expects. In the case of the bereaved couple, parents initially may be more similar in their grief and then, from two to five years after the death, grow further apart before coming closer again. It is suggested that this is because a mother's grief often increases for several years after the two-year point following the death, while the father's tends to decrease. Therefore, for a period of time they become more discrepant from one another. It is important to realize this so that if it occurs you can be aware of it and act to manage its disruptive effects on you and your spouse.

(Myth 6) Parents who lose children usually end up with a divorce. Reality: Despite the prevalence of the belief, it is positively untrue that parents whose child dies inevitably are headed for a divorce. The death of a child places an enormous strain on a relationship, but it has not been proven to destroy it. In fact Dennis Klass' study of TCF parents suggests that it is precisely because parents who survive their grief. (i.e. as a result of the positive growth that can come from loss) no longer wish to remain in unhealthy relationships, and this is one reason for divorces following a child's death. When parents do divorce more often than not, it is due to their having had significant problems before the child died and the death only brought the long-term issues to a head. Although there is no question what the loss of a child and the ensuing grief does stress a marriage, do not think you must end up with a divorce. Some parents actually become closer after their child's death.

(Myth 7) Loss only brings pain and devastation. Reality: Despite the agony of losing their child and the long-term effects of such a loss, many bereaved parents have worked enormously hard to develop some positive gains out of their loss (e.g., beginning support groups, reordering their priorities, developing better family communication, establishing closer relationships, etc.) While they never would have chosen to lose their child to achieve these gains, they are determined to choose healthy responses to it. You can do this, as well.

Myths hurt all bereaved parents. The more accurate information you have, the better prepared you will be not only to encounter the vicissitudes of parental grief, but to minimize the negative effects of such misinformation.

*Therese Rando, Ph.d.
TCF National Newsletter*

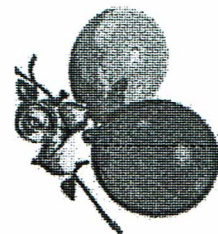
Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

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 September and October in your thoughts and in your hearts.

DARRELL BENNETT	September 2	JERESA JUNE MINCEY	October 1
SINCERE PETTWAY	September 2	DEXTER HILL	October 1
JOSEPH VITTORIO, JR	September 4	GABRIELLA JOSIE MARIN-RINO	October 4
SCOTT NISHBALL	September 4	MICHAEL SCOTT LOFARO	October 6
STEFANA MONHOLLEN	September 5	CHRISTOPHER WALLING	October 7
DANIELLE R. METATOS	September 6	ROCCO BONAVIDA	October 12
JOSEPH CONRAD TURSI	September 6	LAWRENCE MORRELLI	October 12
MICHAEL JAMES JR.	September 7	LINDA MEDINA	October 13
NICOLE LAQUESSE	September 7	JENOE VARGA	October 14
CHUCKIE ROTOLO	September 8	VIVIANA ROSE CAVALLI	October 14
DAVID E. CILENTO	September 8	JAMES (TOMMY) STUART	October 14
MICHAEL WRIGGLESWORTH	September 8	LORENZO Z. DEADERICK	October 15
ROBERT YOUNG	September 10	DAVID EHMAN	October 17
JOSEPH MCFADDEN	September 11	CARL ANTHONY JOHNSTON	October 17
MARYBETH ESPOSITO/HERR	September 12	JASON GLATZ	October 17
DANIEL SOUZA	September 13	RYAN PATRICK FORD	October 17
CRAIG ARSENAULT	September 15	WILLIAM POTZ	October 18
WILL RYAN	September 16	DION PROKOP	October 19
ROBERT CARBONE	September 17	MASHA ROBINSON	October 19
JONAS BLACKWELL	September 17	ALLAN BARNETT WEINER	October 21
DAVID SAMPSON	September 19	PETER BUTANOWICZ	October 26
TEVIN GORDON	September 19	JOSEPH KOWALCZYK, JR.	October 28
VINNIE MALIANO	September 20	DEBRA NAPOLITANO	October 30
ALEX PAUL FAKHOURY	September 20	TIMMY GAROFALO	October 30
ERIK JASON DOBYNS	September 21	MATTHEW JOHN EVANS	October 30
STEPHEN F. ZURAW	September 22	DARREN ROBBINS	October 31
JUSTIN JOSEPH MARGITAY-BALOGH	September 25		
ROBERT SMUNIEWSKI	September 25		
ANTHONY EDWARDS	September 27		

*May the sweet memory
of the child you love,
SHINE brightly on this birthday.
Our wish is that this day of
remembrance
will bring you gentle peace.*

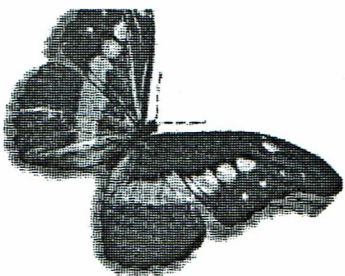
BIRTHDAYS



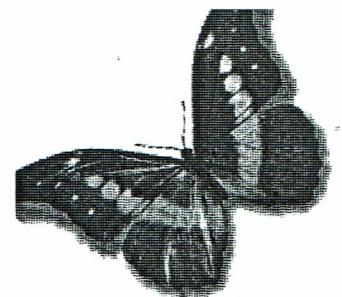
Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

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

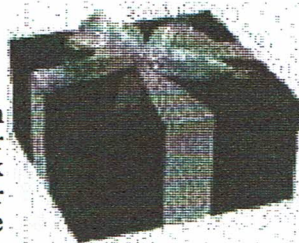
GRAZIANO SOLLENNE	September 1	VALERIE F. POPPA	October 2
NOEL LUCINDA SENERCHIA	Found Sept. 3	JAMES (Jamie) MEDVEGY	October 3
JEREMY SAXE	September 4	THOMAS PATRICK DALLING	October 4
SHAWN WATSON	September 5	MICHAEL ESPACH	October 4
RICHARD C. BENNETT, JR.	September 5	DEIDRE STEWART	October 5
BRIAN WATCKE	September 5	THOMAS J. HENTHORN JR.	October 5
SHERRI A. MUNZ	September 7	JOHNNY CORSA	October 12
CHRISTOPHER WALLING	September 7	WILL RYAN	October 13
HOLLY FLANNERY	September 7	SCOTT NISHBALL	October 14
KYLIE FLANNERY	September 7	ROBERT CARBONE	October 14
NICOLE LAQUESSE	September 8	JOSEPH VITTORIO, JR.	October 16
DARREN ROBBINS	September 8	DION PROKOP	October 16
MATTHEW PERRY	September 11	LEIGH SABO	October 16
GREGORY ROBERT SANTOS	September 11	ANDREAS (AJ) JUSTESEN	October 18
CHRISTINE ANN SOLTIS	September 13	JOSE A. SUAREZ	October 18
PAUL WILLIAM MINAR	September 14	DOUGLAS C. COLE, JR.	October 19
MICHAEL ROE	September 15	JAMES WORSHAM	October 19
BRIAN PETER PETRUCCELLI	September 16	JENNIFER A. BATTISTA RUSSO	October 20
MELISSA ERIKA MANCINI	September 22	LISA MARIE MANCINI	October 21
ANTONIO GONCALVES	September 22	JOSEPH CONRAD TURSI	October 21
SETH ROBERTS	September 23	KATRELL BOHANNAN	October 23
BRANDON MICHAEL VELEZ	September 23	MATTHEW SCOTT LOFARO	October 23
LINDA A. POPPA	September 24	CONOR ROBERT BOWEN	October 25
SEAN RUSSELL	September 25	ROBERT J. MURPHY	October 26
MARC ROSEN	September 25	JALYN FRANCIS	October 27
MICHELE BROADLEY	September 28	JOEY CLANCOLA	October 27
ADAM EDWARD NDREU	September 29	CARMINE J. MUNZ, JR.	October 29
MILES JON JENNESS	September 29	KOREY JORDAN	October 31



Angelversaries



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.

*In Memory of
our daughter
Dawn Kosarko
who loved the month
of October
and who wrote poetry.
Love forever,
Mom & Dad*

Fall
*Unseen souls call
Entangled in the wind
Dancing through the trees
A new season begins.*

(Halloween poem)
by
Dawn Kosarko



Andy,
Not a day goes by
that I don't think
about you.
I love and miss you t erriby.
Love, Mom

**In Loving Memory
of
Andrew Bobko**

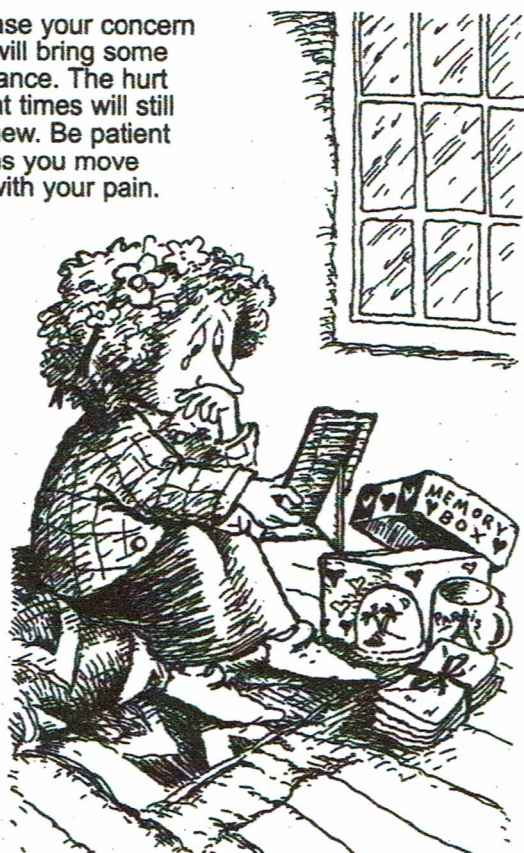
**In Loving Memory
and Honor
of
Kevin Michael Kochan
on his
Anniversary
with love,
from his dad and mom
Dr. Charles and Sharon Kochan**

TCF Bridgeport Chapter "Love Gift" Form

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

"Healing Thoughts for Troubled Hearts"

Time won't erase your concern or loss, but it will bring some emotional distance. The hurt lives on, and at times will still feel painfully new. Be patient with yourself as you move through time with your pain.



Sometimes well-meaning loved ones tell us to "get over it" and "move on." While we do need to heal, it is also important to honor your feelings at this time. Don't allow yourself to be rushed.

JUST FOR TODAY

Just for today I will try to live through the next 24 hours and not expect to get over my child's death, but instead learn to live with it, just one day at a time.

Just for today I will remember my child's life, not his death, and bask in the comfort of all those treasured days and moments we shared.

Just for today I will forgive all the family and friends who didn't help or comfort me the way I needed them to. They truly did not know how.

Just for today I will smile no matter how much I hurt on the inside, for maybe if I smile a little, my heart will soften, and I will begin to heal.

Just for today I will free myself from my self-inflicted burden of guilt; for deep in my heart I know if there was anything in this world I could have done to save my child from death, I would have done it.

Just for today I will honor my child's memory by doing something with another child, be it my own, or someone else, because I know that would make my child proud.

Just for today I will offer my hand in friendship to another bereaved parent, for I do know how they feel.

Just for today I will allow myself to be happy and enjoy myself, for I know that I am not deserting my child by living on.

Just for today I will remember that even death cannot take away the special love we shared.

And Just for today I will accept that I did not die when my child did; my life did go on, and I am the only one who can make life worthwhile once more.

From the San Angelo, TX Newsletter

The Compassionate

Corner

Just To Say...

Written By Holly Konstantino
Bridgeport, CT Chapter

I lost my child today. She's just gone; she went away.
It's so hard to understand why God chose this for His plan.
Time goes on, yet time stands still. It really is a bitter pill.
Now it's been many months - nothing's changed; it just still hurts.
22 forever in my heart. This pain - it cuts you like a dart.
I lost my child last year. All the pain it's still right there.
As life goes on and life goes by, I try to hide this pain inside.
I lost my child; it's been three years. Still I cry so many tears.
The pain it cuts you like a knife - knowing she will never become someone's wife.
My heart it hurts so very bad - so thankful for the memories we had.
I lost my child; it's been so long, yet nothing's changed except she's gone.
Tears still fall, my heart still breaks. God please help me find some strength.
She's my angel, but it's not the same. On sunny days it feels like rain.
I long for her to come back home. It makes me feel so alone.

*Written in memory of my beautiful angel Kadeelyn
Love and miss you so much,
Mom*

CHALLENGE and CHANGE

As I look back over the past six years since our son died, I realize how much I have changed. When we talk about grieving, we often forget to mention that we grieve, too, for the person we were before our child died. We might have been energetic and fun-loving, but now are serious and absorbed.

Our friends and family miss the old us too, and their comments show it. "Don't you think it's time to return to normal?" "You don't laugh as you used to." They are grieving for the person who will never be the same again.

Like the caterpillar that shrouds itself in a cocoon, we shroud ourselves in grief when a child dies. We wonder, our families wonder - when will we come out of it? Will we make it through the long sleep? What hues will we show when we emerge? If you've ever watched a butterfly struggle from the safety of the

cocoon, you'll know that the change is not quick or easy - but worth the effort!

We begin to mark our struggle from the cocoon of grief when we begin to like the new us. When our priorities become different and people become more important than things; when we grasp a hand that reaches and reach in turn to pull another from the cocoon, when we embrace the change and turn the change into a challenge, then we can say proudly: "I have survived against overwhelming odds." Even though my child's death is not worth the change in and of itself, the challenges give me hope that I can be happy. I can feel fulfilled again. I can love again.

*-Sherry Mutchler
TCF, Appleton, Wisconsin*