



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

March & April 2021

Newsletter

Volume 21 No.3 & 4

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

## 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.

#### An Irish Blessing

*"May you always have a warm fireside in winter,  
A soft breeze when summer comes,  
The warm, soft smile of a friend,  
and someone's compassionate listening ear."*

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 Address**  
The Compassionate Friends  
48660 Pontiac Trail #930805  
Wixom, MI 48393  
(630)990-0010 (877)969-0010  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Regional Co-ordinator**  
Mary Lemley  
203 483-9935  
[Mklem43@aol.com](mailto:Mklem43@aol.com)

## Monthly Meetings

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing and wearing a mask 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.

Since the cases of the COVID virus have continued to rise in CT, **our meetings will NOT be held at Sterling House Community Center**, 2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT 06615 but will continue **virtually on Zoom** until further notice. 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. Please continue safety protocols!

**Date:** Second Tuesday of each month

**(March 9, 2021 & April 13, 2021)**

**Time:** 6:45 pm - 8:00 pm

**Place:** Virtual Reality  
through Zoom or phone

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out and contact us at: [contact@tcf-bridgeport.org](mailto:contact@tcf-bridgeport.org)

## Bridgeport/Stratford & Vicinity Chapter Steering Committee

### Chapter Co-Leaders

*Dr. Charles Kochan and Claudia Margitay-Balogh*

### Secretary

*Janet Spray*

### Treasurer

*Leslie Minasi*

### Website Co-ordinator

*Leslie Minasi*

### Newsletter Editor

*Claudia Margitay-Balogh*

### Hospitality

*Dee Tutka*

### Community Outreach and Librarian

*Michele Peloso*

### Resource Facilitator

*Anne Castaldo*

### Zoom Co-ordinator

*Kristen Cable*

Bridgeport Chapter's New E-Mail Address:

**[contact@tcf-bridgeport.org](mailto:contact@tcf-bridgeport.org)**

TCF Bridgeport's New Website Address:

**[www.tcf-bridgeport.org](http://www.tcf-bridgeport.org)**

Bridgeport Chapter's Facebook Website:

[www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter](http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter)

# Grieving, Healing, Growing

## March is a month of renewal.

The dormant trees begin to stir; the birds optimistically sing of spring; the winds, sometimes violent, wake us up. Perhaps, we need a "shake" out of our winter lethargy -an awakening.

There is that urge to plant, to nourish, to grow a tree or flower. There is the primordial urge to feel our hands digging in the warming earth. Perhaps, we plant because we know that someone will see the results, as we have enjoyed the results of other's work. It could be called a debt of renewal, a repayment for that which we have enjoyed. As we nourish small seedlings, we visualize the end results. That tree might die as our children did. It may flourish beautifully or meet ultimate disaster, but if that tree does well, it could be a source of great pleasure and beauty for many coming years. We can believe that a seedling will be a glorious tree enjoyed by many.

It's a nice dream.

"To all things there is a season," and as life goes by, we simply cannot afford to miss the seasons, the renewals, the chances for new growth. Regardless of our grief and regrets, life goes on, and we must try not to miss a season. Life simply will be, whether we participate or not. Someone will benefit from constructive growth if we can find the energy to make the effort.

Severe grief, for a time, reduces our interest and our ability to participate fully in life. With a low energy level and little initiative and with our hopes for the future severely damaged, it requires great effort for the bereaved to learn again how to enjoy the small thanks that make up most of our lives. Our hopes for the future are so damaged that there is little incentive to work today for the future. The things that exist today com-

prise the basics of our future. We run a risk and a danger of missing the good things that are to be because we do not have the wish to participate in the things that are today.

Although we need a time of some withdrawal, some time to ponder the unanswered questions, some time to heal, we also need to be aware of the life that is passing. Regardless of our grief, life simply goes on, and there is much good that we risk losing if we stay too long in a state of suspense of the present and a sad review of the past.

A part of learning to "accept the unacceptable" is to learn to make the effort to sort out the good memories *and take them with us into a future that will be happy* again.

There comes a time when the harsh winter of our grief will give way to some awakening; a time when we, like nature, can shake off some of the lethargy and feel the renewals life offers.

Our choice is to remember that we could not control the advent of disaster. We can only control our response. Our choice is now only in the way in which we respond to the necessity to pick up the threads of our life and go on.

We owe it to ourselves, The Compassionate Friends, to make a positive effort. We can hope that those buffeting winds of March can help us awaken to the renewals of spring and put the "winter of our disaster" in its place, now apart of our on-going lives.

Dayton Robinson, Tuscaloosa, AL TCF

### DAFFODILS

In the spring I will bring daffodils to you with a prayer  
after the cold, snowy winter is over and gone.

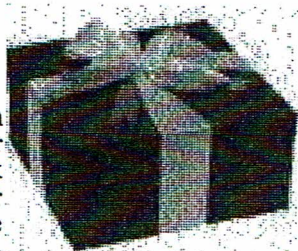
I will sit on the grass and sing the songs that we shared,  
knowing your boundless spirit still lives on.

I've walked the path of sorrow; it's helped me to grow.  
Through the tears have come my strength and my healing..  
My heart, once wounded and broken,  
is mended and filled with deep love for everyone in all I do.

And every warm, sunny spring,  
I will bring yellow daffodils - and cherish the memories of you.

Sharon Cordaro TCF, Inland Empire CA

# 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.

## Signs From Above

On a clear, winter morning in February, I was shoveling my driveway for the 3rd time in 3 days. I was thinking about a neighbor whose child had died just a few days earlier. My heart felt crushed, holding my own grief for my child Bryce, with hers.

After I finished shoveling, I was panting and very warm despite the cold temperature. I sat down on a patio chair and rested my sore neck by letting my head fall all the way back.

And that's when I saw it ... the sky was empty and blue, except for a single, moving cloud. And on the cloud was a rainbow. For an exquisite 30 seconds or so, this 'moving rainbow' silently made its way across the sky, just for me.

It was Bryce saying, "Hi, Mom. I'm always here. Do not despair. I love you."

*-Trina Wong TCF Bridgeport, CT*

Remembering  
 and  
 Honoring  
 the life of  
**James Guenther Dina**  
**(Jamey)**

on his Angelversary (March 14)  
 with love from  
 his mom and dad

In Loving Honor  
 of  
**Kevin Michael Kochan**  
 on his  
 Birthday  
 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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

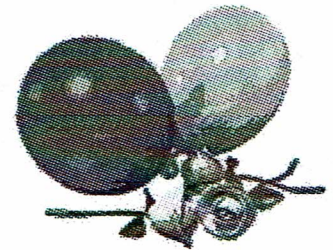
Thank you!

# 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 March and April in your thoughts and in your hearts.

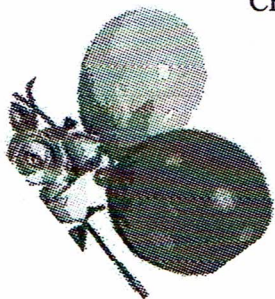
MILES JON JENNESS	March 1
ANGEL GRACE McMANUS	March 1
WILLIAM (BILLY) RUDOLPH	March 1
JOSEPH DAVID LONGO	March 3
BRANDON SEAN LYNCH	March 4
MATTHEW MAKAR	March 5
LINDA POPPA	March 6
STEVEN SPRAY	March 6
JOSEPH MINNIX	March 7
BETH LOGAN	March 7
SHERRI A. MUNZ	March 8
KEVIN MICHAEL KOCHAN	March 8
TONY BROWN	March 9
BRIDGET GRACE CABLE	March 9
DEIDRE STEWART	March 10
JOVANNI NATAL	March 10
NANCY P. KELLER	March 11
MATTHEW PERRY	March 17
MICHAEL ROE	March 17
JOAN P. BURBY TELLONE	March 17
JOHN E. MURPHY, JR	March 18
GREGORY HARTZ	March 19
JESSICA ELIZABETH KOLARIC	March 21
THOMAS PATRICK DALLING	March 22
WILLIAM (BILLY) A. SLOSSAR	March 22
OZZY ZACK	March 23
CHRISTOPHER JOSEPH HALEY	March 24
DAVID MICHAEL VOGT	March 24
MARISSA NICOLE ARGUETA	March 27
JOHNNY CORSA	March 27
MELISSA STUPAK MONTUORI	March 29

AMY ELIZABETH CLEVELAND - JOHNSON	April 3
MARC ROSEN	April 3
RYAN THOMAS WALSH	April 3
JALYN FRANCIS	April 4
CHARLIE BERSZAKIEWICZ	April 6
KEVIN SUTHERLAND	April 8
MICHAEL JOSEPH HURTA	April 9
CHRISTINE ANN SOLTIS FILAKOVSKY	April 9
AMBER PHILLIPS	April 10
SCOTT MILO	April 11
COREY MICHAEL CERRONE	April 13
SETH ROBERTS	April 15
JOSHUA GALPIN	April 19



SCOTTY THOMAS	April 23
JOLENE DeCIUCIS	April 23
NICK FELISKO	April 24
JUSTIN SMITH	April 24
ANTONIO GONCALVES	April 25
ERICA A. JONES	April 25
TATE ARLETTA SCHEER	April 25
LEIGH SABO	April 28

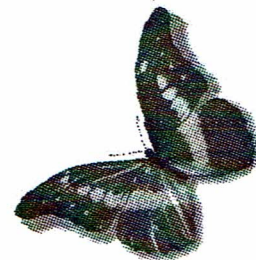
## Birthdays



# Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

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

JASON WILLIAM CANNON	March 1		
ROY H. SMITH, JR	March 1		
ANGEL GRACE McMANUS	March 1	COREY MICHAEL CERRONE	March 29
GRACE MARIE EVANKO	March 2	TIMMY GAROFALO	March 30
JOHN NAPOLITANO	March 3	CHRISTOPHER McETTRICK	March 30
KAREN WIEGMAN	March 4		
MICHAEL JAMES JR	March 4		
LEO FARRELL	March 6	DAVID STANCZYK	April 1
CHARLES PATAKY	March 8	BOBBY PROVENZANO	April 1
BRANDON GIORDANO	March 9	DAN O'SULLIVAN	April 2
CHRISTIE LEA ENDRE	March 10	WILLIAM J. SAVO	April 4
RYAN PHILLIPS	March 12	JOSEPH SANTE CAJIGAS	April 4
JOSEPH MCFADDEN	March 13	DANIEL SOUZA	April 4
CHRISTOPHER TOKARSKI, JR	March 13	FRANK ARGONESE	April 5
ALEX RECUPINO	March 14	ANNETTE KEMEZA	April 7
JAMES (JAMEY) GUENTHER DINA	March 14	PAOLO GUEVERA	April 7
RYAN EDWARD SIMPSON	March 14	JOHN SAMUEL SMITH	April 9
VICTORIA "TORI" LYNN KOETSCH	March 16	JOSEPH F. MINNIX	April 10
JERESA JUNE MINCEY	March 17	AUSTIN BUONI	April 12
JARED ARTHUR LEVINE	March 17	THOMAS REDGATE	April 18
ERIK JASON DOBYNS	March 17	JENNIFER McLEOD	April 20
BERNARD E. KOETSCH II	March 18	GARY SALVATORE BELLARD	April 21
THOMAS VAZZANO	March 18	ANDREW BOBKO	April 23
DAWN KOSARKO	March 18	MARCUS RAMOS	April 24
BRIAN TUZIK	March 19	AALIYAH GABRIELLE DUNN	April 24
TAMIKA CAMERON	March 20	SCOTTY THOMAS	April 24
BRANDON SEAN LYNCH	March 21	CHRISTOPHER R. ETES	April 24
LAURIE POVINELLI	March 21	WILLIAM A. BAKER IV	April 26
CARL R. WENNERSTRAND TALBOT	March 21	JOHN McPADDEN	April 27
KEITH DRAP	March 23	ADAM GARDNER	April 29
KIM THIBODEAU CHIARALUCE	March 26		
JENOE VARGA	March 26		
MICHAEL ROWLEY	March 27		
DAWN ANN KALMAN	March 27		
JIMMY PIFER	March 27		
DIANA-ALEXANDRA BREAZ	March 28		



## Angelversaries

# COMPASSIONATE WISDOM

## Didn't I Just Think That?

Perhaps you've heard someone say, "When are you going to get over your child's death?" or "You should just get on with your life."

What does that person mean?

As bereaved parents, our lives are going on 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and we continue to care for our families, work, prepare dinners, and occasionally go to movies. We still do all the ordinary, daily things.

Does that person really mean that I should never mention my deceased child's name again because it makes him or her feel uncomfortable?

Strange how it's okay for other people to reminisce about their children's lives, but they look unsettled when we do the same. People don't realize that we need to reminisce also - it verifies that our child lived. It lets the love out. They talk about their child's future - col-

lege, marriage, career, but when I say, "I wonder what my son does in Heaven? I hope he isn't hassling God," they look stunned and want me to "get over" this.

We think about our children in death as we thought about them in life - pondering their whereabouts, their well-being. Our parental instincts and concerns continue. How can we tactfully educate without alienating others and still feel free to express ourselves? And, when appropriate, to feel comfortable mentioning our child's name?

Let us try to understand the discomfort of others if they have not been touched by death as we have been. Let us gently thank them for allowing us to share our memories and our dreams, for parental love is never severed, even by death.

*Nancy Green*

TCF of Livonia, Michigan

## A Personal Reflection on Smiling and Laughter

After the death of a child, how many of us, as bereaved parents, might say to myself, "How can I ever smile again?"

I know I felt that way following the death of my son. I have heard bereaved parents, especially during the early days after the loss, say, "I suddenly found myself laughing at work; how could I have done that!"

After my son died, I went back to work after the funeral, and one of the first tasks I had to do was attend a department meeting. At one point someone made a humorous remark. Everyone laughed, except me. One of my co-workers, seeing my poker face, called across the table, "Come on; don't look so sad." There were other times, too, when people thought I shouldn't be so glum, that I should be smiling or laughing. Once, while I was riding in my car pool, the driver turned around to me after observing my mask-like expression in the rear-view mirror and exclaimed, "Smile!" I remember retorting with some acerbity, "You, smile."

But, in time I did smile. I did laugh. It must be the

subconscious guilt within ourselves that denies us the right to smile or laugh. It happened - I don't remember how long it was - at least several months, I think.

I have seen parents at a TCF meeting, whose loss is recent, with tear-stained faces, smile when someone at the meeting says something that tickles the funny bone. How many of us have heard our non-bereaved friends say to us, "How can you go to that support group? It's all sadness and gloom!" HOW WRONG THEY ARE! Of course, we cry at TCF, but there are moments of laughter, too. Crying and laughter, after all, are often interchangeable, such as, crying at weddings or at graduations and giggling inappropriately at the sight of someone taking an unceremonious pratfall on a slippery sidewalk.

PERHAPS LAUGHTER IS ALSO THE BEGINNING OF NATURE'S WAY OF MENDING, OF HEALING US.

*Dave Ziv*

Bucks, Montana TCF chapter

## Compassionate Wisdom

### IT IS ALL ABOUT ATTITUDE!

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company...a church... a home...an organization. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it, and so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitude!

*-submitted by Linda Maitan & Ron Friedman*

### POSITIVE EMOTIONS AND THE GRIEVING PROCESS

Available evidence suggests that it is indeed possible for the bereaved to enhance their positive emotions. One approach for enhancing positive emotions is engagement.

Many studies have shown that becoming involved in activities that engage one's interests is quite effective in enhancing positive emotions. In fact, cognitive and behavioral interventions for depression have often relied on this approach. Being involved in an engaging activity can break the grip of negative thoughts, at least temporarily. Examples of engaging activities include going shopping, attending a sporting event with a friend, taking your dog for a walk, or going to the library. Involvement in an engaging activity will increase a positive affect more than involvement in an activity that is less engaging. However, experts concur that involvement in just about any activity is better than not being involved. Because bereavement is often accompanied by a profound loss of interest in life, it may be difficult initially to become engaged in particular tasks. A strategy for breaking through resistance is to just spend five minutes on a potentially engaging task and telling oneself that I can stop after that. In most cases, the bereaved will continue with the task after the five minutes is up.

Utilizing this approach can empower one to reclaim control of one's life after the death of a child. Research shows that just a small increase in positive emotions can produce beneficial effects. The more one engages in activities, the more positive emotions will continue to increase. This can result in an upward spiral of well-being characterized by better relationships within the family, a greater feeling of productivity, and a greater appreciation of what life still has to offer.

*-Camille Workman PhD*

# COMPASSIONATE INSIGHT ON ANXIETY DURING THE PANDEMIC

On Tuesday, February 9, 2021 at our monthly meeting on Zoom, we were fortunate to have John Pacheco, *MSW, ACSW, LCSW, LADC* as our speaker. John, who is a dear friend of our chapter's co-leader Dr. Charles Kochan, is the director of Personal Growth Concepts which has offices in Stratford and Naugatuck, CT. In his talk, John gave an insight into the understanding of anxiety as well as techniques to control anxiety.

Anxiety is a feeling usually based on a negative projection of what we think may happen to us. As John explained, "a lot of awful things have happened to me, but only a few of them really happened." In other words, anxiety is not reality based. Anxiety occurs because of what our minds tell us. Fear, on the other hand, is reality based. Fear occurs when there is an immediate threat to our well-being. Because of this imminent danger, our bodies immediately go into a fight or flight mode of action.

Needless to say, the pandemic caused by the COVID virus has caused many to feel anxious. Since feeling anxious can cause symptoms such as nervousness, restlessness, rapid breathing, difficulty focusing, insomnia, and gastrointestinal problems, it is important to proactively deal with it.

The way one should proceed, according to Mr. Pacheco, is through the following stages.

1. By **Acknowledgement**: Let yourself know you are anxious.
2. By **Permission**: Give yourself permission to be anxious for a short time.
3. By **Inquiry**: Reflect on what you are thinking. Ask yourself how likely will what you are thinking really happen. Consider the probability that what you are thinking will really happen.
4. By **Transition**: Change your negative thinking by challenging the thought. To do this, give 3 positive statements to combat 1 negative thought.

It certainly has been a challenge to be living through a world-wide pandemic. Yet, even though we have felt varying degrees of anxiety through these many months, most of us have found ways to cope with anxiety.

When the participants on Zoom were

asked to mention some coping strategies, we found commonalities. Watching the news was limited while others took a total break from the news. If one read the news, it had to come from a reliable source. Recognizing the things that we still could control such as having good hygiene, following the measures recommended by the CDC, practicing self-care, reaching out to friends via the phone or on Zoom, and seeking professional help from a licensed mental health professional if necessary gave us a more positive outlook. Moreover, many continued to take daily walks while others practiced yoga, meditation, breathing techniques, mindfulness, and relaxation. Utube videos and phone apps helped in these areas.

On the subject of meditation, John reminded us that the mind of a person being brought up in a western culture is much different than that of a person living in an eastern culture. Our brains have been trained to always "be on the go." Hence, it is difficult for those of us who meditate to completely have a silent mind. We should let the thought come in but then let it go. The goal is not to attach further thoughts to that initial thought.

It is important, during this time of physical isolation, to reach out to others and have meaningful conversations. Finding a person with a compassionate listening ear is vital. As John stated, "A burden that one holds is doubled while a burden that is shared is halved."

It has often been said that living in the past causes depression while living in the future leads to anxiety. What we must do is live in the present as mindfully as possible. We must strive to be in the present which for grieving parents is also very painful. But given time and conscious effort, the present becomes doable. John ended his session by giving this visual example: "Yesterday is a cancelled check, tomorrow is a promissory note, and today is cash. **Spend it wisely.**"

*-Claudia Margitay-Balogh TCF Bridgeport, CT*