



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

July & August 2022

Newsletter

Volume 22 No.7&8

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.

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.

"The way through the sadness and the grief that comes from great loss is to use it as motivation to generate a deeper sense of purpose."

-His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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

Regional Co-ordinator
Mary Lemley
203 483-9935
Mklem43@aol.com

Monthly Meetings

As we continue through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Steering Committee of our chapter will monitor the situation and adhere to the Governor's mandates. Presently, we will continue to have **in-person meetings at the Sterling House Community Center**, 2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT06615. Wearing masks is optional. **The in-person meetings will no longer be televised virtually on Zoom due to inadequate attendance.**

Date: Second Tuesday of each month
July 12, 2022 & August 9, 2022

Time: 6:45 pm - 8:45 pm

Place: Sterling House

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out and contact us at contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

Please bring a non-perishable food item for the food pantry.

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

TCF Bridgeport's New Website Address:
www.tcf-bridgeport.org

Bridgeport Chapter's Facebook Website:
www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter

GRIEVING, HEALING, & GROWING...

Reflections about Time and Change

written by
Dennis Klass TCF, St. Louis, MO

I often wonder what people are thinking when they say, "You'll get over it." Sometimes it sounds to me as if they are talking about a case of mumps or my despair at income tax time. But what can they mean when they say it about my grief? Maybe they mean that grief is just an interruption of life. Their theory seems to be that life is basically happy - buying stuff, working, watching TV - but that a time of death and grief is an unnatural sad time in that happy life.

I cannot agree with that view.

Time can lessen that hurt. The empty place we have can seem smaller as other things and experiences fill our life. We can forget for periods and feel as if our child didn't die. We can find sense in the death and understand that perhaps this death does fit into a bigger design in the world. We can learn to remember the good and hold on to that.

But, we cannot "get over it" because to get over it would mean we were not changed by the experience. It would mean we did not grow by

the experience. It would mean that the child's death made no difference in our life.

There is an interesting discussion in the Talmud, an ancient Jewish writing. Those Jews had the custom of rending their garments - literally tearing their clothes - to symbolize the ripping apart that death brings. But the question was raised. "After the period of mourning, could I sew the garment up and use it again?" The teachers answered "Yes, but when you mended it, you should not tuck the edges under so it would look as if it had never been torn." This symbolized the fact that life after grief is not the same as before. The rent will show. The next question was, "Can I sell that garment?" The teachers answered, "No. The rending and mending of our life is ours, and others cannot wear it."

No, we don't get over it. We change and grow. Our life has a difference which is ours alone. Perhaps as Compassionate Friends we can help each other make that difference; the kind of difference that increases the world's supply of compassion, love, and healing.

Patience - Patience - Patience

Oh, how much we need to develop Patience! Patience! with ourselves...with our husbands...with our wives...with our children...with friends.

Starting with yourself...use Patience! to help you accomplish the things you used to be able to do quickly...but now you don't even seem able to get started, and if you do, you can't seem to stick to the job and get it finished. Be Patient! Give yourself a little longer, but by all means when you set yourself a job to do, keep working at it until it's finished.

So many of us admit that we have apathy toward doing many things which seemed ordinary and easy before, things which are now just too difficult to think about. If old hobbies simply don't interest you any more, try something new. Above all, doing something for someone else may turn out to be the best thing you ever did... for yourself and for them.

Remember...GIVE YOURSELF PATIENCE!

- Mary LaTour TCF, Dallas 1 TX

"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.

Please send your check to:

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. Please state what you would like written. All love gifts will be acknowledged as promptly as possible. The chapter leadership is grateful for your contributions of any amount.

Compassionate Friends

Has Meant for Me ---

Survival in an often unfair world;

Unspoken understanding of seemingly unbearable pain;

Sharing - dividing that pain and making it bearable

Caring - reaching out to one another;

Joy - in the delight of another's progress;

Love - instant and unquestionable

because of our mutual but uncommon loss.

-Fay Harden TCF, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Compassionate Verse

A Compassionate Friend

A compassionate friend will take your hand;
They will sit and listen and understand.
You don't have to hold back and pretend;
They know your thoughts and can comprehend.

A compassionate friend lets you open your heart;
With them you don't have to play a part.
You can talk or cry or even complain,
But, with them, you never have to explain.

A compassionate friend will help you to live;
Whatever you say or do, they will forgive.
They, too, know your hurt will never go away,
So, they will listen and let you have your say.

They have been down this endless path;
So, somehow, they can help your wrath.
If anyone can help your heart to mend.
It has to be a compassionate friend.

*-Kathryn A. Pelky,
TCF Traverse City, MI*

Grief Is Like a River

My grief is like a river -
I have to let it flow,
But I myself determine
Just where the banks will go.
Some days the current takes me
in waves of guilt and pain,
But there are always quiet pools
Where I can rest again.

I crash on rocks of anger -
My faith seems faint indeed -
But there are other swimmers
Who know that what I need
are loving hands to hold me
When the waters are too swift,
And someone kind to listen
When I just seem to drift.

Grief's river is a process
Of relinquishing the past
By swimming in **Hope's** channels,
I reach the shore at last.

-Cynthia G. Kelley, TCF, Cincinnati, OH

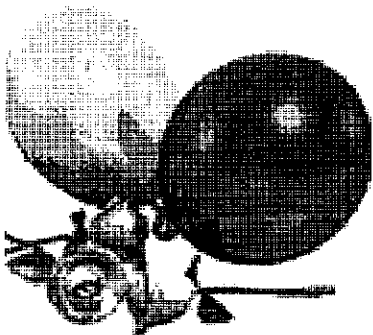
Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

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	ERIC ALLEN	August 3
CHRISTIAN LAWRENCE RUTTER	July 4	PAUL WILLIAM MINAR	August 5
MEGAN JANE ARSENAULT	July 4	BRIAN BELL	August 7
CHRISTIAN FERRIS RAKOCZY	July 4	ROBERT MANGANO	August 8
JOSEPH SANTE CAJIGAS	July 6	CLAIRE ANN DESTEFANO	August 8
MICHAEL ESPACH	July 6	THOMAS J. HENTHORN JR.	August 8
ERIN BABINEAU	July 12	JAMES MEDVEGY (Jamie)	August 9
JEREMIAH SHANNON SALVATORE	July 12	STEVEN C. BELENCHIA	August 9
ALEXA RAE HERON	July 13	PETER BRADFORD KOVACS	August 9
JODI DAVIDOWSKI	July 14	DAVID ANTHONY GIERULA	August 9
ADAM GARDNER	July 14	DOUGLAS C. COLE, JR.	August 11
CHARLES ROBERT MARTIN	July 15	MICHELE BROADLEY	August 12
GINA DECHELLO	July 16	AVA JANE HOWERTON	August 12
SOMMER LIEIGH BOKINA	July 17	JEREMY SAXE	August 13
LAILA SYDNEY WALTERS	July 17	JOEY CLANCOLA	August 13
RICHARD ELIOT BONOSKY	July 18	KOREY JORDAN	August 13
DANIEL QUIRK	July 19	GEOFFREY GARDNER	August 13
FRANK ARGONESE	July 19	ANDREAS (AJ) JUSTESEN	August 15
MARCI BYITECK	July 21	BRANDON GIORDANO	August 17
KYLE JEFFREY GEDNEY	July 21	ANTHONY MICHAEL TEIXEIRA	August 17
Senior Airman LAWRENCE MANLAPIT III	July 21	DANIEL LAWRENCE TOOLE	August 18
SEAN EAREL	July 23	CARMINE J. MUNZ, JR.	August 18
MELISSA ERIKA MANCINI	July 23	VICTORIA "TORI" LYNN KOETSCH	August 21
BOBBY PROVENZANO	July 23	KATRELL BOHANNAN	August 22
SCOTT McCLENATHAN	July 26	KASANDRA SANDERS	August 22
MARK TORRESO	July 28	LORI ARGONESE	August 23
LISA READ	July 30	AARON THOMAS HINE	August 25
		PETER RONALD RADZWILLAS	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.

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

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



Angelversaries



Rose-Colored Glasses



There are some days when nothing helps. Silent pain echoes across the heart, leaving tear stains, and shattered dreams. It hurts to move, to think, to breath; it even hurts to be. On those days, when memories burn scars deep into the soul, there seems little relief.

All the coping tricks we have tried in the past seem to fail us, and we are left with a pain so deep that we fear we will be consumed by it. We firmly believe that we shall never again find hope or joy in this world.

Our own death often seems the only escape.

That despair comes at the bottom of the valley. We have all stumbled across those treacherous rocks-many of us more than once. Just as we begin to think that we might survive, something tumbles us back into the darkness, and we are sure we have drowned.

What then? It is as if we are left without our dreams or our memories. Existence had become a void, filled with nothingness-not even hurt. On those days, we cannot even feel our pain. We come to know that we can never return to the Land of Make-Believe where Humpty Dumpty is put back together without a trace of the jagged edges where he broke into a million pieces and where everything lives happily ever after.

Those are the days when we must "put on" our rose-colored glasses and learn to "see" in new ways. I always carry my rose-colored glasses with me because I never know when such a day is going to happen. My special glasses give a rosy hue to even the most dismal of views; but more important people look at me differently. Maybe they see me differently because I see things in a new way.

Just putting on my rose-colored glasses gives me a lift I know that whatever I am looking at or feeling hasn't really changed. I have changed! Whenever I have dared to laugh in the face of pain, the pain didn't change or go away. I simply changed the way I saw the pain or the emptiness or the hurt of grief.

Rose-colored glasses are simply a dramatic (and perhaps a little silly) change in perspective. But what's wrong with being silly sometimes? If I can catch my breath and gain a few seconds of relief from

the emptiness of my grief, then they have created a miracle for me.

Wearing rose-colored glasses isn't denying anything. Rather, it is claiming it all. It is searching for joy and light and life, even in the darkest of corners. Love is the reason we hurt, but on those days when all we can see is the hurt, then we fear we may be losing the love. Life does become good and warm and loving once again, but only when we have learned to trust enough to move through the hurt and to claim even that which hurts so terribly. It is a part of us, and as such cannot be ignored or abandoned.

Looking at the world though rose-colored glasses isn't being a Pollyanna; it's being real in the most honest sense. It is an attempt to both accept and live *what is instead of turning it all away and denying that love ever existed.*

If you ever laughed with your loved one, you have already worn rose-colored glasses. Don't forget them now. They helped you conquer mountains before, and they will help you to see the other side of grief, someday.

Don't wait for joy to come to you-go find it. Search for it; insist on it every day Wearing rose-colored glasses is a change in perspective, nothing less. It is not a choice between pain or no pain, but how we manage the pain we feel.

The trick to those days is learning to live with what you've got instead of wishing something else had happened. As you pick your next step through the valley, remember that the rocks are everywhere, but so is the path! Don't let death rob you of your heart spaces - the place where your loved one lives. Don't let death dominate the spring places in your heart. Don't let death rob you of your rose-colored glasses.

*Darcie D. Sims, TCF, Austin, TX
From " Why Are the Casseroles Always Tuna?"*

Planning a Wedding for a Surviving Sibling

Of all of the events we look forward to enjoying with our children, I think weddings have always been pretty high on my list. So many images come to mind: colorful dresses on smiling bridesmaids, pretty bouquets of freshly scented flowers, a radiant bride walking arm in arm down the aisle with her proud dad, a nervous groom in awe of his beautiful bride. New beginnings, sacred moments to be cherished forever, friends and family gathered to witness and celebrate the union of two lives.

Four years ago we were preparing for the marriage of our younger daughter, Debbie. She was engaged in the fall and was planning for a wedding the following spring. A wedding to plan, so much to do, so much to look forward to-however, for our family this was the beginning of yet another bittersweet time. Debbie's only sibling, Anna, had died suddenly from brain cancer six years previous.

Those were very traumatic, life-changing years for our family and close friends. Every area of our life was touched by the bitter pain that loss brings, as we slowly adjusted to the reality that Anna's earthly presence was no longer with us. There were constant reminders that all the hopes and dreams we had for her had died, as well. Oh, how she loved weddings. She recorded every wedding ceremony broadcast on television. As parents, we grieved that fact that she would never marry. We would never share in the joy of planning and celebrating her wedding day.

In those early years of grief, I felt as if I would never find joy again. I certainly felt that I would never have the energy to help in planning a wedding for her younger sister. The thought of witnessing and celebrating Debbie's marriage only brought pain and tears. My heavy heart was sorrowful and ached over the losses Anna's death brought to her sister. Now the time had come. Debbie was engaged, and we had work to do!

Much to my surprise, the next several weeks and months of planning were the most joyous times I had experienced since Anna's death. As mom and daughter, Debbie and I made many memories together-and Anna was always with us. She was always part of the process. We would frequently find ourselves remark-

ing.-If Anna were here she would take care of this, or - Anna would not like wearing that dress. It was as though she was guiding our every step.

Including the deceased child in the wedding can be a difficult topic. Most of the moms I have talked with regarding the marriage of a surviving child express the need to somehow have the deceased sibling remembered in some way. Sometimes the surviving child is afraid to discuss this with the parent, for fear of stirring up emotions.

The bride or groom-to-be need not fear addressing the subject. Most parents have these thoughts right below the surface, and there usually is much relief when the issues are openly discussed. It could also be the other way around. The parent might be afraid to bring up the subject with the surviving child. Communication is important, so that everyone's feelings can be expressed. Working through these feelings before the wedding will help the actual day to be more of a time of happiness and celebration, rather than sadness and pain.

As Anna's mom, I was relieved, excited, and grateful that Debbie wanted to remember her sister on this important day. I can honestly tell you that this did not detract in the least from the happiness and excitement of the wedding day. This was Debbie's day, and my day to be mother-of-the-bride. There was sadness that Anna was not physically present, but she was there making sure that this was a day filled with joy, love and hope. It was so much fun from beginning to end.

If you are a bereaved parent with a surviving child who is planning a wedding and want to remember someone who has gone too soon, I would like to share some of the ideas that others have used to incorporate the memory of their loved one into the day.

When one of Anna's college friends married, she had a floral arrangement around the unity candle that included things that reminded her of deceased loved ones. These persons were listed in the program. She had a purple crayon for Anna. (Anna taught preschool - purple was always a favorite!)

(continued on page 8)



(Continued from page 7)

Another of Anna's college friends had a votive holder with five candles that she and the groom lit in memory of loved ones, including Anna.

Anna's college roommate had a single candle of remembrance for all her loved ones who had died, and released butterflies following the service.

Our Debbie did not have a maid of honor, only bridesmaids. She asked her only surviving grandfather to step in for her sister to sign the marriage license as a witness.

Debbie had a maid-of-honor bouquet made up for Anna, to be placed on her grave.

Debbie's sister and the couple's deceased grandparents were listed in the program under a picture of a butterfly, with the words, "Forever in our hearts". Pictures of these persons were also included on a bulletin board during the reception.

Debbie borrowed the necklace and earrings that her sister wore to her junior prom. She carried an old hankie that belonged to her grandma, and a piece of her other grandma's wedding dress was sewn onto her tiara.

One couple had a bouquet of white roses, each representing a loved one who had died. Another couple had individual pillar candles on a table with flower rings around them. These were lit before the service began.

At another wedding reception, the bride and groom made a toast to all those loved ones who had

died, stating their names, and expressing gratitude for the ways they had touched their lives.

Most importantly, talk about this subject well ahead of time. As a parent, make your needs known. However, respect the desires of the bride and groom. This is their day and their choice. Even if the deceased sibling is not remembered in a tangible way, be assured that she/he continues to live on in the hearts and minds of all who knew and loved her/him.

I add a couple of suggestions for the bereaved. When you are a bereaved parent, grandparent or sibling, weddings can be like a time bomb. Know that this day has the potential for many emotions to surface. It is okay to have a few tears of sadness, as well as joy - carry tissues! It is also okay to enjoy yourself and have fun. Wear comfortable shoes. It is also alright not to join in absolutely everything; know your limits. When your friends ask how they can help, delegate! Save your energy for what is really important. While keeping your deceased child close in your heart, enjoy this time with your surviving child and make some new memories together.

If you feel the need for extra support during your grief journey, attend a meeting of The Compassionate Friends where you will find that you need not walk alone.

Wishing you many warm memories,

*Paula Funk, Anna's Mom,
TCF/ Safe Harbor Chapter,
Petoskey, MI*



Summer is here! Summer means vacation - is that a painful thought for you right now? Are you dreading the thought of returning to a regular vacation spot? Are you wanting to escape the whole thought of a summer vacation? Are you thinking of avoiding crowds and extended family?

Whatever it is that you do and wherever it is that you go, the hope is that you will keep in mind that it won't always be this painful. It will get better.

Be patient. If you can find peace and enjoyment, do it. You deserve it.

The journey of families who experience the death of a child is never an easy one. You are encouraged to keep sharing as you move through this journey. By sharing, you will become both a giver and a receiver and realize that you can continue to move forward and to live a full life.