



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter

September/October 2025

Newsletter

Volume 25 No. 9 & 10

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.

*"Bereavement is a darkness impenetrable
to the imagination
of the unbereaved."*

-Iris Murdoch

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:

TCF c/o Leslie Minasi, 34 Cedar Hill, Easton, CT 06612

Email: contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

TCF Website: www.tcf-bridgeport.org

Facebook: www.Facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter

National Office Address:

The Compassionate Friends

P.O. Box 446

Wheaton, IL 60187

630-990-0010 877-969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

Regional Co-Ordinator

Mary Lemley

203-483-9935

Mklem43@aol.com

MONTHLY MEETINGS

When: Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of Every Month year-round. If the Stratford School system lets the children out early or if school is closed due to inclement weather, Sterling House will be closed and the meeting for the month will be cancelled.

Our next two meetings will be held on:

September 9, 2025 6:45 – 8:45 pm

October 14, 2025 6:45 – 8:45 pm

**Where: Sterling House Community Center
2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT 06614**

Directions:

Take I-95 North from Bridgeport. Get off Exit 32 West Broad Street. At the end of ramp, go straight to the second traffic light which is Main Street. Turn left. Sterling House Community Center is a Victorian Brick House on the opposite side of the street. Park in Sterling House's parking lot. Use back entrance. We meet in the large room. Phone: 203-378-2606

Please bring a canned good or nonperishable food item to the meeting for the Food Pantry.

If there is inclement weather and the meeting is cancelled, an email will be sent to our chapter members.

Bridgeport/Stratford & Vicinity Chapter

Steering Committee

Chapter Co-Leaders

Dr. Charles Kochan and Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Secretary: Janet Spray

Treasurer/Website Coordinator: Leslie Minasi

Zoom Coordinator: Kristen Cable

Online newsletter: Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Michele Peloso

Hospitality: Dee Tutka

Community Outreach and Librarian: Michele Peloso

Why Anger Can Be an Ally During the Grieving Process

- Cynthia Vejar PH.D. "Meaning Connections"

The role of anger in grief is often misunderstood. But it plays a valuable role.

When we think of grief, we picture sadness, sorrow, or numbness. But what about anger? Though it is a recognized part of grief and trauma, it is often overlooked and misunderstood. Recognizing and understanding anger can help us process grief more effectively rather than feeling caught off guard by its intensity.

When we experience grief and loss, it's not uncommon to find a sense of injustice lurking nearby. The mantra "life isn't fair" is amplified in the face of death, illness, betrayal, and other forms of loss, and as such, "grief isn't fair" becomes just as relevant. This sense of unfairness can fuel anger, and anger becomes the voice of that which is unjust and unpredictable.

Anger isn't just a vicious emotion; it's a functional part of our survival instinct and helps us respond to threats in a protective manner. Its volatility serves to increase our alertness and readiness for action. Grief can leave us feeling vulnerable and powerless. But anger when channeled appropriately can give us the courage to speak up, push for change, and reclaim a sense of control.

As a way of understanding the normalcy of anger, it can be viewed as another way of processing negative or overwhelming emotions-just from a different angle. Sadness and guilt tend to turn inward, manifesting as feelings of self-blame or deep sorrow. Anger is more outward facing, directed at people, situations, and real or perceived injustices. Anger is OK; destructive anger is not.

So how can a person lean into the healthy properties of anger and leave the destructive kinds behind? It's important to recognize and accept the presence of anger rather than suppress it. If ignored, anger doesn't just disappear-it finds a way out! When grief gives rise to anger, it's important to recognize these feelings. A person should practice self-compassion and realize that anger isn't the enemy; instead, it's like a warning light on the dashboard of a car, there to help us in the only way it knows how.

We can be in control of our anger by finding healthy ways to express it-whether through creative outlets, by talking to loved ones, engaging in physical activities, or by seeking professional help. Techniques like mindfulness, journaling, or deep breathing can also help us observe our anger without being consumed by it.

Anger is not something to fear or withhold; it is a powerful emotion that can steer us through the complex process of grief. By acknowledging its presence, understanding its purpose, and channeling it in healthy ways, we can use anger as a tool for healing rather than allowing it to become an obstacle.

Just as grief is a journey, so too is learning to navigate anger. By embracing both, we open ourselves to the possibility of growth, self-discovery, a clear path on which to make decisions, and ultimately, emotional resilience.



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

Please make out your "Love Gift" check to:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter
c/o Leslie Minasi, treasurer
34 Cedar Hill Road, Easton, CT 06612

You can also use PayPal for your love gift by logging into
Contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

Please include the wording for the love gift.

Happy 35th Birthday

Lauren,

My Beautiful and Precious Angel

I miss you,

and I Love You the Most.

Love, Mom

Words to Comfort, Words to Heal

An Autobiography in Five Chapters

Chapter 1

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in, again.
I can't believe I am in this same place.
But, it isn't my fault.
It takes a long time to get out.

Chapter 3

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it there.
I fall in...it's a habit...
But my eyes are open.
I know where I am. It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

Chapter 4

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

Chapter 5

I walk down a different street.

Our Children

Loved, Missed, and Remembered....

May we keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing these birthdays during September and October in our thoughts and in our hearts.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Darrell Bennett | September 2 | Daniel Souza | September 13 |
| Sincere Pettway | September 2 | Craig Arsenault | September 15 |
| Christopher R. Viera | September 3 | Will Ryan | September 16 |
| Vanessa Christina Montes | September 3 | Robert Carbone | September 17 |
| Joseph Vittorio Jr. | September 4 | Jonas Blackwell | September 17 |
| Scott Nishball | September 4 | David Sampson | September 19 |
| Stefana Monhollen | September 5 | Tevin Gordon | September 19 |
| Danielle R. Metatos | September 6 | Nashia DuBois | September 19 |
| Joseph Conrad Tursi | September 6 | Vinnie Maliano | September 20 |
| Michael James Jr. | September 7 | Alex Paul Fakhoury | September 20 |
| Nicole Laquesse | September 7 | Erik Jason Dobyns | September 21 |
| Chuckie Rotolo | September 8 | Stephen F. Zuraw | September 22 |
| David E. Cilento | September 8 | Justin Joseph Margitay-Balogh | September 25 |
| Conor Poholek | September 8 | Robert Smuniewski | September 25 |
| Michael Wrigglesworth | September 8 | Anthony Edwards | September 27 |
| Robert Young | September 10 | Justin Michael Spray | September 28 |
| Joseph McFadden | September 11 | | |
| Marybeth Esposito/Herr | September 12 | | |

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

| | | | |
|----------------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|
| Jeresa June Mincey | October 1 | | |
| Dexter Hill | October 1 | | |
| Gabriella Josie Marin-Rino | October 4 | Jason Glatz | October 17 |
| Adam Michael Smith | October 4 | Ryan Patrick Ford | October 17 |
| Mariyah Miylena Nakhoune | October 5 | William Potz | October 18 |
| Michael Scott Lofaro | October 6 | Dion Prokop | October 19 |
| John Stempert | October 6 | Masha Robinson | October 19 |
| Christopher Walling | October 7 | Darren Joseph Reidy | October 19 |
| Jason Walowitz | October 8 | Allan Barnett Weiner | October 21 |
| Rocco Bonavita | October 12 | Edward "Eddie" Casey | October 22 |
| Lawrence Morrelli | October 12 | Peter Butanowicz | October 26 |
| Linda Medina | October 13 | Joseph Kowalczyk Jr. | October 28 |
| Jenoe Varga | October 14 | Debra Napolitano | October 30 |
| Viviana Rose Cavalli | October 14 | Timmy Garofalo | October 30 |
| James (Tommy) Stuart | October 14 | Matthew John Evans | October 30 |
| Lorenzo Z. Deaderick | October 15 | Darren Robbins | October 31 |
| David Ehman | October 17 | | |
| Carl Anthony Johnston | October 17 | | |



OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED, AND REMEMBERED...

SEPTEMBER ANGELVERSARIES

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

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Graziano Sollenne | September 1 |
| Noel Lucinda Senerchia | Found Sept.3 |
| Vanessa Christina Montes | September 3 |
| Jeremy Saxe | September 4 |
| Shawn Watson | September 5 |
| Richard C. Bennett Jr. | September 5 |
| Brian Watcke | September 5 |
| Phillip Weisgable Jr. | September 5 |
| Sherri A. Munz | September 7 |
| Christopher Walling | September 7 |
| Holly Flannery | September 7 |
| Kylie Flannery | September 7 |
| Nicole Laquesse | September 8 |
| Darren Robbins | September 8 |
| Michael Patrick Gianola | September 9 |
| Matthew Perry | September 11 |
| Gregory Robert Santos | September 11 |
| Christine Ann Soltis | September 13 |
| Paul William Minar | September 14 |
| Michael Roe | September 15 |
| Brian Peter Petruccelli | September 16 |
| Adam Michael Smith | September 16 |
| George Andrew Dirocco | September 21 |

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Melissa Erika Mancini | September 22 |
| Antonio Goncalves | September 22 |
| Kira Michelle Davis | September 22 |
| Seth Roberts | September 23 |
| Brandon Michael Velez | September 23 |
| Linda A. Poppa | September 24 |
| Sean Russell | September 25 |
| Marc Rosen | September 25 |
| Michele Broadley | September 28 |
| Adam Edward Ndreu | September 29 |
| Miles Jon Jenness | September 29 |

Love's heart
that was once broken
by loss
is restored to love
by the heart
compelled to love.

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED...

OCTOBER ANGELVERSARIES

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| | |
|----------------------------|------------|
| Valerie F. Poppa | October 2 |
| James (Jamie) Medveg | October 3 |
| Thomas Patrick Dalling | October 4 |
| Michael Espach | October 4 |
| Deidre Stewart | October 5 |
| Thomas J. Henthorn Jr. | October 5 |
| Johnny Corsa | October 12 |
| Will Ryan | October 13 |
| Scott Nishball | October 14 |
| Robert Carbone | October 14 |
| Joseph Vittorio Jr. | October 16 |
| Dion Prokop | October 16 |
| Leigh Sabo | October 16 |
| Andreas (AJ) Justesen | October 18 |
| Jose A. Suarez | October 18 |
| Douglas C. Cole Jr. | October 19 |
| James Worsham | October 19 |
| Jennifer A. Battista Russo | October 20 |
| Lisa Marie Mancini | October 21 |
| Joseph Conrad Tursi | October 21 |
| Katrell Bohannan | October 23 |

| | |
|----------------------|------------|
| Matthew Scott Lofaro | October 23 |
| Conor Robert Bowen | October 25 |
| Robert J. Murphy | October 26 |
| Jalyn Francis | October 27 |
| Joey Clancola | October 27 |
| Carmine J. Munz Jr. | October 29 |
| Korey Jordan | October 31 |



Dormant Anger Erupts Unexpectedly

By Annette Mennen Baldwin in memory of her son, Todd Mennen TCF, Katy, TX



Over three years ago, just 15 months after my son was killed in a traffic accident, a Dodge Ram dual cab truck that was traveling at 55 miles per hour ran a stop sign and struck the vehicle I was driving. The front end of my car was ripped from the frame, the hood was crumpled, and my car spun from the impact. The other driver was cited for running the stop sign. A very credible witness gave his statement. Three months later I had neck surgery for the injuries sustained in the accident.

The facts were simple in my mind. He ran the stop sign. I stopped. He was negligent. His insurance company paid for my car that was totaled but stopped talking to me when the adjustor heard about the necessary surgery that was performed a month later.

Mediation failed. The defense postponed the trial eleven times. The attorneys for the defendant's two insurance companies dug in. Delay, deny, debate... the mantra of all defense attorneys now became my reality. Finally, we had a court date. The players knew their lines...the diminutive judge whose campaign election funds are donated by the attorneys who practice in his court, the four well-dressed defense attorneys, my attorney and his associate... all knew the rules. All played the game well. This was their theater, their play, and their world. I was not happy with the pre-trial instructions that ruled out much of the evidence. But I wanted my day in court. I had sat on many juries, but I never experienced this side of the courtroom. It was a revelation.

All went well with the testimony of the eyewitness and the policeman who had handled the accident scene. Then it was my turn. My attorney began asking me questions, and suddenly, out of somewhere in my soul, anger akin to a long dormant volcano arose. I repressed it after my attorney asked me if I was angry. That was my hint: be sweet, be likeable. Harris County juries are notorious for stingy awards. I settled back down until the louder of the six defense attorneys began asking his carefully prepared questions. I spoke over him. I responded with no small amount of hostility. He baited me, and I swallowed the hook.

The volcano unleashed. I raised my voice, became animated in my anger, and finally drew the judge's wrath. I even interrupted the judge to say I was sorry. The judge raised his voice to top volume, berating me for failing to answer the questions in a single word, for continuing to respond while the defense attorney was talking. The judge gestured wildly at the court reporter, explaining that she couldn't write the words of two people at one time.

Someone who was very important in his own world had chastised me. But more significantly, I had discovered something about myself: the anger that had erupted from within me like a volcano was not caused by the accident, the neck surgery, the legal-eagle games, the courtroom setting, or the judicial stage. I discovered that the repressed anger that I had managed to contain for over 4 1/2 years was still alive and well. Much was learned that day by this bereaved mother. As the volcano of anger erupted, the truth was so apparent to me that I smiled at my naivety.

Since my son's death, I have intentionally placed myself in situations where those that I am with are gentle, positive, upbeat, balanced and not aggressive and violent in their actions or words. Subconsciously, I knew that my anger was still there, but I didn't want to tempt the fates; the anger caused by the death of my only child was not going away. Now it had become apparent to me that my anger had to be addressed. I brought it to the forefront of my mind. As my husband and I drove home from the courthouse, I examined it closely, seeking an answer.

Sitting quietly that evening, I realized that my anger had surfaced from time to time since my son died but never in such a nerve jolting eruption as I experienced today. When I realized the depth and scope of my anger, when I acknowledged its existence, when I faced it down, the volcano quietly went back to simmer.

I realized that I needed to be very careful about replying in quick retorts, behaving without thought, and speaking words in haste. I also realized that I had to be conscious of my anger during the process of releasing it in a gradual way. By being vigilant of its effect on me and others, I was hopeful that one day the anger volcano would become dormant.

Our grief journeys are life-long. I will always feel the many emotions that accompany the death of my only child. But each emotion will moderate over the years. My anger will become less raw, just as the other negative emotions and feelings have become less pronounced over time. Actively identifying each enemy that lives in my psyche has enabled me to address them. Negativity cannot fester when exposed to the light of hope. And yet, I must always remember that I am a work in progress. **We are all a work in progress.**

Hiding Behind The Mask



I think we as bereaved parents wear masks 12 months out of the year, not just on Halloween. Perhaps on Halloween we should just wear our grief-stricken face and care not if we are noticed.

How many masks do you wear - even in a week - or a day?

So you wake up in the morning feeling the pain, with the knowledge that your child is no longer here. Do you “mask” that face with your normal face to say good morning to your spouse? You know you can take the mask off and cry in the shower – it somehow feels good to release some of those tears.

When it is time to wake the children up for school, do you put on the cheerful, positive mom mask? After dropping the children off at school, you realize that you can once again remove the mask and feel.

Soon you will be pulling into the parking lot of work – and you get the next mask out – the mask of the competent professional. WOW! That’s a lot of mask changing in a short time.

Strange isn’t it how the MONSTER pain of grief makes us put on masks to cover the pain, often to those who really care and who perhaps are putting on their masks to cover their pain when they see us?

Maybe we could all be so much better off if we removed our masks and let the Monster pain of grief out.

From Bereaved Parents, USA