



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

Bridgeport, CT Chapter

May/June 2026

Newsletter

Volume 26 Number 5 & 6

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.

*"I will befriend my grief
and in doing so, learn
that it is not my enemy."*

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D

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, Rd, Easton, CT 06612

Email: contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

TCF Website: www.tcf-bridgeport.org

National Office Address:

The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 46
Wheaton, IL 60187
630-990-0010 877-969-0010

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:

May 12, 2026 6:45 – 8:45 pm

June 9, 2026 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 the side entrance with the ramp. We meet in the large room downstairs. Phone: 203-378-2606

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

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

A Survivor's Alphabet: Empathy

"Where were you when I needed you?" Ever find yourself saying words like that? Ever look for comfort at a point of greatest need and wonder why it doesn't come or help? Family and friends try their best to let us know they care. It never seems enough for just what we need at the critical moment.

What's going on? Family and friends, in expressing their sincere words of comfort and love, are relieving their own anxiety. In their attempts they often bypass our more critical need. It's like two trains passing each other in the night. They meet but quickly go their separate ways.

What we have received is sympathy which, by itself, gives temporary comfort and relief but has little long-lasting effect. It may or may not touch the point of hurting with enough impact to relieve. What is better is a sensitivity to hurt where it is and a response to that hurt that mirrors the crisis itself.

What is needed is not sympathy but empathy.

Empathy is made up of the following:

Listening. *What do you hear when you hear? Isn't it amazing how often we hear, but we do not listen. You and I hear the concert while the violinist listens for pitch and tone. We tell a mechanic the engine runs "rough" while he listens and notes that something is wrong with the valves. Developing the skill of listening enables us to be more sensitive to actual need where it occurs. A cry for help may be more, or less, than what we think we hear. Someone is hurting and needs relief, now. Being with that person we listen and are given clues of what to say and do that will bring the greatest relief. It's not for us to set the agenda; the other person in their hurt and pain does.*

Understanding. *By careful listening it's amazing what we can learn that we only surmised before. We learn that our agenda can be put "on hold" while the hurting person is considered as top priority. We learn that words do not always have the weight we give to them; a touch will do far more. Maybe just being there without thinking that we have to do something helps. Whatever it is, we are there for the other person, and they know it; they are given just what they need at that given moment.*

Value. *This tacit understanding gives strength for building trust. A bond is created whose value will be noted long after the crisis is over. Friendships are developed that are long lasting. New understanding between family members creates a climate of love. Personal self-esteem is given a boost which has a value of its own. We understand others and they understand us and a network is established of support and caring.*

Empathy is "LUV" actively supporting and sustaining to develop strength for times of crisis. It goes beyond in creating long lasting relationships that give personal vitality to each of us.

© 1999 Jesse Baker, in honor of his daughter Vera

Reprinted from the Heart of Florida Chapter newsletter, May 1999.

Love Gifts



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**

Jonathan Thomas Simko

Jonathan, the years are going by like seconds, and although you are further away in time, you are still with us in love.

Our love will always keep us together.

Happy Heavenly Birthday, Jon

Love, Mom, Dad, and Justin

Dear Bryce,

We love you and miss you every day and always.

Mom & Dad

*"It's been a hard two years without you,
my beloved son, Gio"*

You are always in our minds, forever in our hearts, and missing you so much.

Love, Mom and Sammy

In Honor of My Dear Son **Stephen Medeiros**

On His **Birthday (June 4th)**

On His **Angelversary (June 29th)**

*You are missed, loved,
and thought about every day!*

Love, Mom

In loving memory of
Jake Beddoe 5/5/1995 - 5/27/2020

*We miss you each and every day!
Love, Dad, Mom, Carly, Kirk & Amy*

In loving memory of
Bridget Grace Cable

on her Angelversary

"You've been gone 7 years. You only lived to 14. Why baby, Why?"

A Love Gift
To Our Buddy, Kevin
from Mom and Dad

Love Gifts continued...



In Loving Memory
of our beautiful son
Kevin Corcoran

"We miss you so much. Not a day goes by without thinking of you. You are always in our hearts!"

Love, Mom & Dad

A Love Gift
in memory of
Emily Annette Pastore

12-26-1996 to 9-6-2025
"We love you, sweet baby!"

In Loving Memory
of
Sean Garrett Rice
on his Angelversary

FOREVER LOVED! Mom

In Loving Honor on
the Angelversary of
Daniel Quirk

We love you and miss you much.
Mom, Dad, Matt, John

Compassionate Wisdom

*"Anything that is human is mentionable,
and anything that is mentionable
can be more manageable.*

*When we can talk about our feelings,
they become less overwhelming,
less upsetting, and less scary.*

*The people we trust
with that important talk
can help us know
that we are not alone."*

-Fred Rogers

To my beloved Son
Justin Joseph Margitay-Balogh

ON HIS ANGELVERSARY MAY 31, 2003

You are loved beyond words
and missed beyond measure!

An Angelversary Gift in Honor of

Darren Reidy

*"We love you, Darren, and we miss
you every day."*

Joseph Anthony Peloso IV

Not a minute, an hour or a day goes by
that we don't miss you.

Love you forevermore, Mom and Dad

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

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

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Joseph Salomon	May 1	Joel Alexis Nieves	May 17
Charles Pataky	May 1	Jose A. Suarez	May 18
Paul-John Heron	May 1	John "Zachary" Naber	May 19
James Hrzic	May 2	James Carbone	May 20
Karen Bruno	May 3	David John O'Hare	May 20
Amber Kingersky	May 3	Jessica Burrows	May 20
Brian Michael Cancellieri	May 4	Nicholas Cavanaugh	May 20
Shawn Gerte	May 4	Denise Pietrowski	May 22
Danny Murphy	May 5	Ronnie Hill	May 23
Carl R. Wennerstrand Talbot	May 5	Charles Anthony Curcio	May 23
Jeffrey Brandon Alaska	May 5	Christopher M. Tokarski Jr.	May 24
Jake Monroe Beddoe	May 5	Sabina Elizabeth Ceccarelli	May 25
Shaun Dowd	May 6	Herb Gullberg IV	May 25
William Mariano Vargas	May 7	Neil Heilweil	May 25
Nina Teresa Poeta	May 9	Finley Rhia Maguire	May 25
Kenneth A. Bartek Jr. (KJ)	May 9	William J. Savo	May 26
Patrick J. Dubee	May 11	Curtis Bucci	May 26
Jeremy Collins	May 12	Brian Laneuville	May 27
William A. Baker IV	May 13	Jessie Ebstein	May 27
Conor Robert Bowen	May 13	Ryan Edward Simpson	May 27
Chelsea Marie Cunha	May 13	Jennifer D. Gustafson	May 28
Jake Panus	May 13	Bryce Leo Costawong	May 28
Brian Tuzik	May 14	Shawn Watson	May 29
Edward Torrence	May 14	Joseph D. "Trey" Warren III	May 30
Jon Malone	May 16	Francis Apgar	May 30

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

June Birthdays

Ethan Thornton	June 2	Thomas John Lee	June 18
William Gagliardi	June 2	Annette Kemeza	June 20
Stephen Joseph Medeiros	June 4	Halle Root	June 20
Christopher Robert Etes	June 5	Holly Flannery	June 22
Jonathan Simko	June 5	Angelina Joy Pearson	June 22
John Sinto	June 6	Jordon Pierson	June 22
Cheryl Petretti	June 9	Christopher Michael McEttrick	June 23
Susan Wolssner	June 10	Allison Grace Edwards	June 24
Torin Gregory Bond	June 11	Issiah Matthew Van Wagner	June 26
Jennifer Leibowitz Antonier	June 11	Joseph David Gagliardi Sr.	June 30
John Samuel Smith	June 11	Jafar Karzoun	June 30
Ron Cristiano	June 12		
Brian Peter Petruccelli	June 12		
Margarita B. Ramos	June 13		
Edward J. Stamper IV	June 15		
Katie Fontneau	June 18		
Brian Castrillon	June 18		
Adam Edward Ndreu	June 18		
Thomas John Lee	June 18		



OUR CHILDREN, LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED... MAY ANGELVERSARIES

May we keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing these Angelversaries during May and June in our thoughts and in our hearts.

Jafar Karzoun	May 1	Jason Glatz	May 17
Michael Joseph Hurta	May 2	Robert Young	May 17
Kathleen Elleen Baye	May 3	David Sampson	May 17
Karen Bruno	May 4	Daniel Lawrence Toole	May 18
Steven Wall	May 5	Peter Bradford Kovacs	May 19
Eric David Johnson	May 6	Tate Arletta Scheer	May 19
Christopher R. Perez	May 6	Sarah Cynthia Koury	May 20
Jeremy Collins	May 7	Peter Butanowicz	May 22
Bryce Leo Costawong	May 7	John Brady Chapin	May 24
David E. Cilento	May 8	Justin Michael Spray	May 25
Carl Anthony Johnston	May 9	Michael Ryan Durkin	May 26
Jeremiah S. Salvatore	May 9	David Michael Vogt	May 26
Salvatore A. Darigo Jr.	May 10	Nicholas Cavanaugh	May 26
		Joan P. Burby Tellone	May 27
Derick James Springer	May 10	Melissa Stupak Montuori	May 27
Bridget Grace Cable	May 10	Jake Monroe Beddoe	May 27
Edward J. Stamper IV	May 11	Jeffrey Brandon Alaska	May 27
William (Billy) A. Slossar	May 12	Kasandra Sanders	May 28
Finley Rhia Maguire	May 12	Daniel Quirk	May 28
Ryan Thomas Walsh	May 13	Marissa Nicole Sanders	May 29
Christopher Papp	May 14	Craig Arsenault	May 29
Edward Angelo Pipkin	May 15	Brian Laneuville	May 29
Tiarra Web	May 15	Ronald Allen Jr.	May 30
Mariyah M. Nakhoun	May 15	Crystal Lynn Hayden	May 30
Joseph "Trey" Warren III	May 16	Justin Margitay-Balogh	May 31
Sean Garrett Rice	May 16	Lawrence Morrelli	May 31
Torin Gregory Bond	May 16		

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED, AND REMEMBERED... JUNE ANGELVERSARIES

Alexander J. (AJ) Aguilar	June 1	Sean Earel	June 23
Joseph Salomone	June 1	Paul Steven Keeler	June 23
Scott McClenathan	June 2	Darren Joseph Reidy	June 24
Peter Ronald Radzwillas	June 2	Danny Stein	June 25
Chris Leahy	June 4	Stephen F. Zuraw	June 25
Francis Apgar	June 6	Roger Nealley Jr.	June 26
Adele Adesuwa Iyamu	June 7	Brian Castrillon	June 28
Jonathan Simko	June 7	Joann Simko Fasenella	June 28
Jayden Chetlen	June 7	Giovanny A. Avendano	June 28
Barbara Young	June 8	David John O'Hare	June 29
Christian Ferris Rakoczy	June 9	Justin Smith	June 29
Howie Tassitano	June 10	Andrew J. Donnellan	June 29
Jessie Ebstein	June 10	Stephen J. Medeiros	June 30
Neil Heilwell	June 11	Lori Argonese	June 30
Caydence Sharon	June 15	Richard Eliot Bonosky	June 30
Lawrence P. Manlapit IV	June 16		
Christopher R. Viera	June 17		
Steven C. Belenchia	June 17		
Ashley Joy	June 17		
Christopher Rivera	June 17		
Joseph Anthony Peloso IV	June 18		
Alan Richard Hoffman Sr.	June 20		
Anna Maria Rino	June 22		
Gabriella Josie Maria Rina	June 22		



What Do Our Brains Do When Confronted with Grief?

By Bob Baugher, PhD



The brain, that three-pound organ, can solve complex problems, invent new things, and create wondrous works of art. However, in responding to people and events, our brain is sometimes quite simple in the way it works. Think of the brain as having two major functions: (a) to reduce pain and (b) to make sense out of the world around it. When we're uncomfortable, hurt or when someone offends us, what does our brain do? It cries out to stop the pain. When we encounter physical or emotional distress, our brain insists, "Stop this discomfort and stop it now!"

The death of a child is not only painful, it makes no sense. When people hear of this tragedy, their brains may attempt to come to the rescue by finding something-anything-that will give this horrible event some meaning, some reason for existing. In its discomfort, pain, and confusion, our brain does whatever it can to reduce it. As a result, the brain quickly invokes phrases such as: "It was God's will," "Everything happens for a reason," "God needed another angel." Upon uttering such words, the brain concludes, "Yes, that'll help make sense of this tragedy" as well as reduce some discomfort. So, with one phrase the brain has dealt with its two major functions: reducing pain and making sense of the world.

In response to the grief of another person, the brain finds ways to soothe itself by what psychologists call Ego Defense Mechanisms. They serve the dual brain function by simultaneously reducing pain and making sense of a situation. *Rationalization* is the queen of Defense Mechanisms. Why? Because people use it all the time to feel better. Its function involves the use of false excuses for one's behavior. When a person is confronted with the question, of why in the world did you offer a cliché to a person in grief, the rationalizing answer that bubbles up is: "Well, I was only trying to help." When asked, "When speaking with your friend, why don't you bring up the name of his deceased child," rationalization once again comes to the rescue. "Oh, I didn't want to make my friend feel bad by reminding him of what he lost." Until people know better, they will protect their brains by rationalizing their actions or nonactions. What we need are those who are brave enough to fight against their own brains and not be tempted to make sense out of a senseless situation! We need that person who will allow us to hurt, permit us to cry, and just listen.