



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

September & October 2023

Newsletter

Volume 23 No.9 & 10

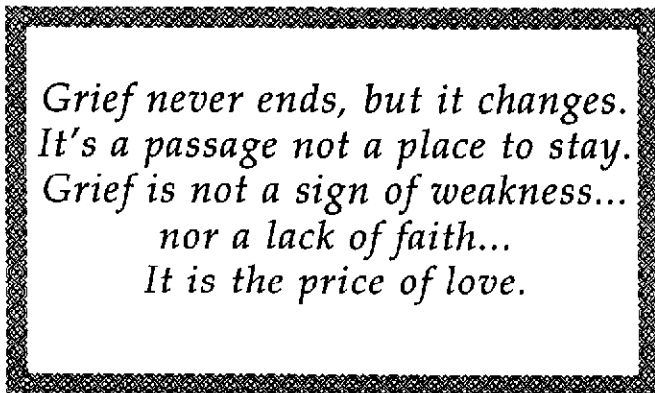
Dedicated with love to all children who have died and their parents, families, friends...

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.



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

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 12, 2023 6:45 - 8:45 pm
October 10, 2023 6:45 - 8:45 pm

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

DIRECTIONS:

Take 1-95 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. It will be 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 Sterling House's 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

Zoom Co-ordinator

Kristen Cable

Newsletter Editor

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Hospitality

Dee Tutka

Community Outreach and Librarian

Michele Peloso

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

CONTACT NUMBER: 475-882-9695

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
CHRISTOPHER R. VIERA	September 3	GABRIELLA JOSIE MARIN-RINO	October 4
VANESSA CHRISTINA MONTES	September 3	ADAM MICHAEL SMITH	October 4
JOSEPH VITTORIO, JR	September 4	MARIYAH MIYLENA NAKHOUNE	October 5
SCOTT NISHBALL	September 4	MICHAEL SCOTT LOFARO	October 6
STEFANA MONHOLLEN	September 5	JOHN STEMPERT	October 6
DANIELLE R. METATOS	September 6	CHRISTOPHER WALLING	October 7
JOSEPH CONRAD TURSI	September 6	JASON WALOWITZ	October 8
MICHAEL JAMES JR.	September 7	ROCCO BONAVIDA	October 12
NICOLE LAQUESSE	September 7	LAWRENCE MORRELLI	October 12
CHUCKIE ROTOLO	September 8	LINDA MEDINA	October 13
DAVID E. CILENTO	September 8	JENOE VARGA	October 14
MICHAEL WRIGGLESWORTH	September 8	VIVIANA ROSE CAVALLI	October 14
ROBERT YOUNG	September 10	JAMES (TOMMY) STUART	October 14
JOSEPH MCFADDEN	September 11	LORENZO Z. DEADERICK	October 15
MARYBETH ESPOSITO/HERR	September 12	DAVID EHMAN	October 17
DANIEL SOUZA	September 13	CARL ANTHONY JOHNSTON	October 17
CRAIG ARSENAULT	September 15	JASON GLATZ	October 17
WILL RYAN	September 16	RYAN PATRICK FORD	October 17
ROBERT CARBONE	September 17	WILLIAM POTZ	October 18
JONAS BLACKWELL	September 17	DION PROKOP	October 19
DAVID SAMPSON	September 19	MASHA ROBINSON	October 19
TEVIN GORDON	September 19	ALLAN BARNETT WEINER	October 21
VINNIE MALIANO	September 20	EDDIE CASEY	October 22
ALEX PAUL FAKHOURY	September 20	PETER BUTANOWICZ	October 26
ERIK JASON DOBYNS	September 21	JOSEPH KOWALCZYK, JR.	October 28
STEPHEN F. ZURAW	September 22	DEBRA NAPOLITANO	October 30
JUSTIN JOSEPH MARGITAY-BALOGH	September 25	TIMMY GAROFALO	October 30
ROBERT SMUNIEWSKI	September 25	MATTHEW JOHN EVANS	October 30
ANTHONY EDWARDS	September 27	DARREN ROBBINS	October 31
JUSTIN MICHAEL SPRAY	September 28		

BIRTHDAYS

*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.*

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
VANESSA CHRISTINA MONTES	September 3	THOMAS PATRICK DALLING	October 4
JEREMY SAXE	September 4	MICHAEL ESPACH	October 4
SHAWN WATSON	September 5	DEIDRE STEWART	October 5
RICHARD C. BENNETT, JR.	September 5	THOMAS J. HENTHORN JR.	October 5
BRIAN WATCKE	September 5	JOHNNY CORSA	October 12
SHERRI A. MUNZ	September 7	WILL RYAN	October 13
CHRISTOPHER WALLING	September 7	SCOTT NISHBALL	October 14
HOLLY FLANNERY	September 7	ROBERT CARBONE	October 14
KYLIE FLANNERY	September 7	JOSEPH VITTORIO, JR.	October 16
NICOLE LAQUESSE	September 8	DION PROKOP	October 16
DARREN ROBBINS	September 8	LEIGH SABO	October 16
MICHAEL PATRICK GIANOLA	September 9	ANDREAS (AJ) JUSTESEN	October 18
MATTHEW PERRY	September 11	JOSE A. SUAREZ	October 18
GREGORY ROBERT SANTOS	September 11	DOUGLAS C. COLE, JR.	October 19
CHRISTINE ANN SOLTIS	September 13	JAMES WORSHAM	October 19
PAUL WILLIAM MINAR	September 14	JENNIFER A. BATTISTA RUSSO	October 20
MICHAEL ROE	September 15	LISA MARIE MANCINI	October 21
BRIAN PETER PETRUCCELLI	September 16	JOSEPH CONRAD TURSI	October 21
ADAM MICHAEL SMITH	September 16	KATRELL BOHANNAN	October 23
GEORGE ANDREW DIROCCO	September 21	MATTHEW SCOTT LOFARO	October 23
MELISSA ERIKA MANCINI	September 22	CONOR ROBERT BOWEN	October 25
ANTONIO GONCALVES	September 22	ROBERT J. MURPHY	October 26
KIRA MICHELLE DAVIS	September 22	JALYN FRANCIS	October 27
SETH ROBERTS	September 23	JOEY CLANCOLA	October 27
BRANDON MICHAEL VELEZ	September 23	CARMINE J. MUNZ, JR.	October 29
LINDA A. POPPA	September 24	KOREY JORDAN	October 31
SEAN RUSSELL	September 25		
MARC ROSEN	September 25		
MICHELE BROADLEY	September 28		
ADAM EDWARD NDREU	September 29		
MILES JON JENNESS	Septcember 29		

Angelversaries

A Compassionate Voice

A Vacation With My Child. A Glimpse into a TCF National Conference By Gwen Rice TCF Bridgeport, CT chapter

The Compassionate Friends National Conference was held in Denver, Colorado this past July of 2023.

There were numerous workshops offered on a variety of grief related topics. No matter where you are on your journey, there should be something that pertains to your interests. There were workshops related to specific causes of death, those on health, spirituality, and just surviving this terrible reason for being in TCF.

Similar to previous conferences, there was time to meet with others on Thursday evening, listen to keynote speakers at the opening session on Friday morning, at Friday lunch, as well as on Saturday.

One of my personal favorites was Jill Colucci, a singer and songwriter. Jill was at the conference in Houston last year and here again in Denver. Jill is a bereaved sibling who has endured much loss in her life. She has written some beautiful songs to honor her loved ones.

Of course, the conference had the Saturday evening Candle Lighting Ceremony with over 825 in attendance in which Alan Pederson sang "I Will Remember You" along with Jill Colucci on guitar. This is always a ceremony that brings a lot of tears and hugs as we remember all of our beautiful children, grandchildren, and siblings who have gone too soon.

On Sunday morning the "Walk to Remember" had over 400 participants, carrying signs and pictures of loved ones,

as we walked to the Colorado State Capital.

If you have never attended a conference, I highly recommend you giving it a try. If you are very newly bereaved, it could be a bit too overwhelming. However, you are free to come and go as you see fit. If a workshop or an event is too difficult for you, it is perfectly acceptable to get up and leave. You will be able to find some alone time in the Reflection Room or you can just spend some time in the company of others who understand your pain.

For me, it has been over 19 years, and I still attend the conferences. I get to take a "vacation with my son" in a new city to explore. I am free to speak as much or as little about my son Sean with others who are always willing to listen. My fellow bereaved parents would never think that if I speak about Sean that I'm not "healing" or that I am "stuck in grief," or that "I am now sad and crying." I am certain you have heard these statements and other ridiculous ones, as well.

When I am with others at the conference, I am in a safe zone. I love to hear about their child, grandchild, or sibling. It is our loved ones who have brought me and others together. I have met many people throughout the years and usually know someone who will be at the conference, and if not, I know I will meet someone new and have a connection.

Next year, the conference will be in
New Orleans, Louisiana
from July 12 -14 2024
I hope to meet you there!

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 loving memory
of
Justin Joseph
Margitay-Balogh
for his heavenly

September 25th birthday

With heartfelt cherished memories,
Mom

Words to Comfort, Words to Embrace

"For what is it to die, but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun.

And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered.

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.

And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb.

And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance."

*From Lebanese author
Kahlil Gibran's The Prophet
(1923)*

"There is sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power.

They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues.

They are messengers of overwhelming grief... and unspeakable love."

*-Washington Irving, 19th century
American author*

The Shoreline TCF Chapter in Conn. Will Host Its Walk to Remember

WALK to REMEMBER

In honor of all children gone too soon

Date: Saturday, September 30, 2023

Time: 10:00 AM to register - Walk begins at 11:00 AM.

Place: Quinnipiac River Linear Trail at the Community Lake Park
291 Hall Ave. (Rte 150) Wallingford, CT 06492

(Park is located right off Exit 65 of Wilbur Cross Parkway)

The Walk goes on rain or shine, and there is no fee to walk.

All family and friends are invited to attend along with leashed dogs. The trail is paved and level and easy for wagons, strollers, and walkers. We will conclude our event with a Bubble Launch. As we join together in honor of all children gone too soon, let us never forget the motto of The Compassionate Friends:

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE

-Mary Lemley, Chapter Leader TCF Shoreline Chapter

Compassionate Thoughts



At Last, At Last

At last, At last!
This exhausting work of grieving
Has ever so gradually
Come to a point of achieving
Some goals...some directions,
Some peace...some hope,
More patience with self,
More strength to cope.

Margie Turbyfill
TCF, Knoxville, TN

"The links of life
are broken,
but the links of love
and longing
never break.

Gates of Prayer,
Reform Judaism
Prayerbook

I saw and heard the human spirit reach out from recently bereaved to offer concern and comfort to even more recently wounded parents. That is the awful mystery of this work. As we need help, we often get help - by trying to help others. It doesn't work for everyone, that's true. ...but enough of it does work to surround the whole group. We are not alone.

Jim Bain, TCF Central CT