



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

of Green Bay

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter by and for Bereaved Parents

Sept/Oct 2009

Our Mission Statement:

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families who have experienced the death of a child. The primary purpose is to assist them in the positive resolution of the grief experience upon the death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health. The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved families. The object is to help those in their communities to be supportive, including family, friends, employers, co-workers and professionals.

FALL

Jeanne Davis, Chapter Leader

It is hard to believe that summer is over! Even though summer is technically still here until September, the cool evenings we have been having, school starting, and football games being played, are all signs that fall is here.

Fall is and always has been my favorite season. The crispness of the air, the beautiful colors of the leaves on the trees, the smell of leaf and wood smoke, the sky full of birds traveling south, "talking" with one another as they go by, these are all part of this wonderful world that we live in. Sometimes we are so "down" and preoccupied with our child's death, and we are working so hard to just get through each day, that we are unable to appreciate what is going on in the world around us. I hope that all of you will be able to feel and see the wonders of fall.

Try to take a few minutes each day and look around. If you can focus on a beautiful tree or leaf, smell the chrysanthemums in the garden, or bite into a fresh apple that was just picked, your day will seem brighter. Those few minutes are well worth it. If you are up to it, go to a high school competition of any sport. The enthusiasm of the young people participating in these events is contagious.

Yes, sometimes it hurts. We want our children to be there with us, enjoying these activities or any activities that we do as a family. But, it also gives us renewed hope that life goes on and that there is happiness and excitement in the world. I hope that you can find some beauty and peace in the fall months ahead.



The Green Bay Chapter of The Compassionate Friends

meets the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m.
at First United Methodist Church, 501 Howe Street, Green Bay.
(Enter the parking lot off Monroe at Doty)

For further information contact:

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Monthly Support Group

Thursday, September 17, 2009, 7 p.m.

Sheila DuLuca, Pastoral Associate and Family Life Director at Resurrection Church will speak on "Children and Grief".
Sharing afterwards.

Thursday, October 22, 2009 7 p.m.

John Hansen, Funeral Director, Hansen Funeral Home, will be speaking to us tonight. His topic will be announced at a later date.
Sharing afterwards.

TAKING THE RISK TO BLOOM AFTER A LOSS

Life and death give us lessons to learn everyday. If we're aware, we notice the lessons in the media, on bumper stickers, in conversations and through our experiences; but, what do we do with them? Do we heed them and heal ourselves by making different life choices? Or do we choose to stay stuck in our chosen state causing our own "death" in our grief?

Often, we become so accustomed to life's bombardment of information that we choose to view life from our surface level of involvement. We notice the signs, "Accidents Happen", "Divorce Happens", "S--- Happens", "Change Happens"; but, one of the invisible and most uncomfortable signs that many choose to ignore is "Grief Happens". One problem with this sign is that we, who are in grief, do not have placards giving us directions as to the flow of the grief process. Further, people who don't understand grief and loss and others who prefer to disregard it sometimes cannot support those who are grieving. Therefore, to survive a grief experience, those in grief hopefully learn that they are ultimately responsible for their own grief process (and changed life) and that "Things do not change, we do" (Henry David Thoreau).

What many people who have not experienced grief, or those who choose to ignore it, do not understand, is that grief is not an event that occurs for a certain length of time and then reaches a final ending. The reality is, grief is a life experience that one endures and one that lasts, over a lifetime. The lack of this acknowledgement can lead to a tremendous amount of pain for the griever in terms of their reaction to others' comments like "you should be over your grief by now", "you need to move on", "you're crying too much", or an insinuation that you are mentally unstable because of your reactions to the grief.

One of the life lessons from bereavement is that "Grief Happens" too. It occurs at all times and any time whether it's anticipated or totally unexpected. Because grief is a life-long process, we can be caught unprepared for our reaction at any time in our early grief process or beyond. While we are moving through our grief, we might think that we are progressing quite well; but, the pain of our grief can surface at the most inopportune, most surprising moments.

Depending upon the means by which our loved one died, we can re-experience the trauma of the moment of death, the moment we found out about the death, or our reaction at any time surrounding the death. This is common to relive those events during bereavement. But, since grief cannot be scheduled, many find themselves overcome with the resurfacing of their pain during pleasant and/or normal activities of life.

All of us can expect these assaults on our hearts without notice or forewarning because grief cannot be controlled. You may be listening to the radio, watching television or a movie, see a person, hear a comment, taste a food, or smell a fragrance and grief can unexpectedly envelop you. An unforeseen reminder can surprise you at anytime. One can expect these episodes because we surely can't control when this might occur in our lives. With time, the frequency of these episodes may diminish; but, we need to know and accept that because grief is centered in the heart and because grief is a part of who you are now, the reminder of your pain may wash over you at any time.

I have survived many of these moments since my son Zac's death on October 1, 2000; but, I was totally taken aback when a song was sung in church recently that transported me back to my grandmother's funeral that occurred forty years ago. I had tears in my eyes and could not sing the song. It made me realize that yes, "Grief Happens" anytime, anywhere. And, I am a different person because of my grief and this is my world now. Further, I know I need to take responsibility for how I live my life differently and I must be aware of the lessons I have learned from the deaths I have grieved.

Yes, "Grief Happens". Grief will be with us the rest of our lives and it will change who we are. But, we can also choose to be aware of and learn from the lessons that grief teaches us. Anais Nin's comment about change supports what the bereaved learn through the life lessons of grief. "There came a time when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom". I wish you the strength to blossom in your grief.

Chris Mulligan, Afterlife Agreements: A Gift From Beyond



GIVING BACK TO FRIENDS WHO HELPED YOU GRIEVE

Grief is isolating. You may become so isolated that you are barely aware of your friends' help. Sure, you remember their phone calls and sympathy cards; but, you may not see the scope of their caring. As I discovered, the support of friends is necessary for grief reconciliations.

On a Friday night in February of 2007, my elder daughter died from the injuries she received in a car crash. On Sunday, just two days later, my father-in-law succumbed to pneumonia. I sobbed when I saw their photos on the same page of the newspaper. Friends saw the photos, read the obituaries, and were ringing the door bell an hour after they received the paper.

Eight weeks later, my brother had a heart attack and died. Again, my friends rallied to help. Nine months after the dual death weekend, my former son-in-law died from the injuries he received in another car crash. His death made our twin grandchildren orphans and my husband and me their legal guardians. Tragedy after tragedy, my friends provided a foundation of support, a foundation strong as steel, and it has never faltered.

According to the article, "Trauma, Loss and Traumatic Grief," posted on The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies Website, survivors need to find a support system. This system may include friends, clergy, or others who have experienced traumatic loss. "It may take some time to identify friends who can be good listeners," the article notes. All of my friends were good listeners, thank goodness.

Judith Viorst writes about the values of friendship in her book, **Necessary Losses**. She thinks close friends contribute to our personal growth. "We will frequently turn – for reassurance, for comfort, for come-and-save-me help – not to our blood relations; but, to friends," writes Viorst. With the support of family and friends, I've created a new and happy life. It was time to return their kindness.

I'm giving back by listening. Listening was the greatest gift my friends gave me. More important, they listened without judging. Instead of my friends listening to me, I am now listening to them. I hear stories about family relationships, wedding plans, and grandchildren. These stories remind me of the similarity of our lives.

I'm giving back by speaking. When a church friend called and asked if I would be willing to give a sermon, I agreed. My sermon was about saying "yes" to life after loved ones die. After the service, many church members thanked me for sharing my story. One said, "I wanted to stand up and applaud." Others described the memorials they had established in honor of their deceased loved ones.

I'm giving back by volunteering. When I agreed to serve as secretary of a state organization, my husband was concerned. He didn't think I had time to raise our grandchildren, manage the household, maintain a writing career, and carry out the duties of the office. "I only need to take minutes eight times," I explained. "Besides, they need me." The president was relieved to fill the office and I was glad to help out.

I'm giving back by comforting. Experience with grief has increased my sensitivity. When I meet someone who is grieving, I encourage them to talk about their deceased loved one. Also, I ask their permission to give them a hug. Sending friends copies of my grief books is another way I offer comfort.

Are you emerging from the darkness of grief? If so, maybe it's time to give back. According to certified psychotherapist Derek P. Scott, giving back can be a form of personal growth. In his article, "Understanding and Working with Multiple Loss," Scott says mourners may move from meaninglessness to "a sense of reconnection to the soul's purpose." Giving back has enriched my soul and it can do the same for you.

Harriet Hodgson, From the Open to Hope Foundation



AUTUMN

In the fall

When amber leaves are shed

Softly-silently

Like tears that wait to flow

I watch and grieve.

My heart beats sadly

In the fall,

'Tis then that I miss you

Most of all.

-Lily de Lauder,
TCF Van Nuys, CA

REMEMBRANCES

I have always enjoyed visiting cemeteries and reading the epitaphs on the gravestones. Cemeteries contain beautiful gravestones, artwork, and sentiments from the living to the deceased. Here are just a few that have caught my eye from my wanderings and readings.

Gone are the living,
But, the dead remain,
And not neglected,
For a hand unseen,
Scattering its bounty like a summer rain,
Still keeps their graves and
their remembrance green.

Epitaph from gravestone of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Your memory is our Keepsake
With which we will never part.
God has you in his keeping
We have you in our hearts.

Epitaph from unknown gravestone

Ye whose afflicted spirits know,
For a lost child a parent's woe,
Here drop the tender tears,
For innocence from being born,
In infant beauty's opening morn,
Serenely slumbers here.

Epitaph from gravestone of Joseph Lee Mckee

Then shall the dust
Return to the earth
As it was,
And the spirit shall return
Unto God who gave it.

*Epitaph from the gravestone of John & Sarah Foss,
New Hampshire*

Beneath this stone lies children five,
Endearing objects when alive,
Though long in silence here they lay,
They certain will revive again,
At that blest hour may they be found,
Clad in Christ's vestments all divine,
Triumphant from the ground,
May they like constellations shine.

Epitaph from unknown gravestone

She has gone to learn that wisdom,
Which this world can never teach.

Epitaph from unknown gravestone



Remembering Our Children

During the two months that each newsletter covers, we include your child's birthday and the anniversary of your child's death – if we know those dates. Based upon TCF National policy, we will not print the year of your child's birth or death.

BIRTHDAYS

Jesse Mason (son of Jeff Mason)	Sept 2	Van Jarchow (son of Mike & Dixie Jarchow)	Oct 24
Leslie Blasing (daughter of Jeanne Donart)	Sept 5	Shane Hopfensperger (son of Mike & Joann Hopfensperger)	Oct 28
Matthew Kiefer (son of Mary Jo Hempel)	Sept 8	Troy Milan (son of Pam Milan)	Oct 28
Wendy Johnson (daughter of Tom & Debbie Johnson)	Sept 12	Jaysen Calkins (son of Kate Calkins)	Oct 30
Megan Mae Vincent (daughter of Mark & Connie Rissling)	Sept 13	ANNIVERSARIES	
Melissa Schmeisser (daughter of Steve & Mickey Schmeisser)	Sept 14	Kristin Metsa (daughter of Bethany Metsa)	Sept 7
Susan Nickel (daughter of Mike & Judy Parins)	Sept 18	Cam Wendt (son of Lon Wendt)	Sept 22
Jessica VanStraten (daughter of Sue VanStraten & Randy Merryfield)	Sept 22	Craig St. John (son of Debra St. John)	Sept 25
Kyle Larson (son of Lance & Janis Larson)	Sept 30	Troy Milan (son of Pam Milan)	Sept 28
Mark Shafer (son of Bruce & Pat Shafer)	Oct 1	Nick Hietpas (son of Bruce & Diane Hietpas)	Sept 30
Michelle Schmidt (daughter of Diane Kroll)	Oct 8	Caitlin Van Duyse (daughter of Brenda VanDuyse)	Oct 4
Lee Dagner (daughter of Sheri Dagner-Seese)	Oct 9	Matthew Kiefer (son of Mary Jo Hempel)	Oct 4
Matthew Arnold (son of Carrie & Bob Arnold)	Oct 10	Jaysen Calkins (son of Kate Calkins)	Oct 16
Chad Seitzer (son of Sandi & Fred Seitzer)	Oct 10	Shaun Davis (son of Dan & Jeanne Davis)	Oct 17
Kerri Kirsch (daughter of Joyce Howell)	Oct 22	Gary Glebke (son of Joyce Glebke)	Oct 25
		Doug Cole (son of Don & Karol Cole)	Oct 25

Love Gifts Were Recently Given By:
 Sandra Scheffen in loving memory of Sam Compton
 Mrs. Carmen Vincent in loving memory of Roberta Jean Glebke

Other TCF Contact Information

The Door County Chapter meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month at the Door County Memorial Hospital in Sturgeon Bay. Call 1-800-589-2669 (voicemail).

The TCF of Kewaunee County Chapter does not meet at the time.
Call Dorothy Konop at 920-863-8003 for information.

The Fox Valley Chapter of TCF meets at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of the month in Neenah at Faith United Methodist Church, 1025 Tullar Road. Call Deb Schultz at 920-725-6340 for information.

Oneida, WI, has a new chapter that was recently chartered. They meet the 3rd Tuesday of each month from 6:30pm at Parish Hall – 2937 Freedom Road, Oneida, WI. Contact Jean Williquette at 920-469-4135 for more information.

To contact the **National Organization:**

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

P.O. Box 3696,

Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696

Phone Toll-free: 877-969-0010

Web site: www.compassionatefriends.org



To contact the **TCF Regional Coordinator:**

Jim Staniforth

4705 Eisenhower St.

Oregon, WI 53575

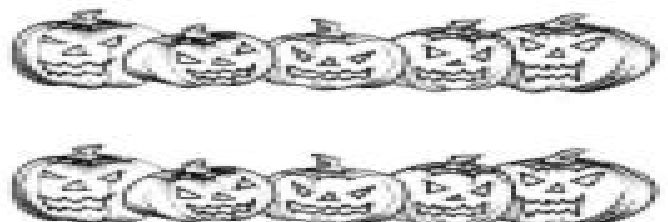
Phone: 608-835-7493

Thoughts for the Day

We talk a lot of special days being difficult; birthdays, death dates, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Had anyone ever thought about Halloween? I remember the first one after Jon's death, all day was like any other, hard; but, not different. I came home and sat down to supper and when the doorbell rang, I fell apart. Suddenly the need for a goblin was overwhelming and I dissolved in tears. I managed to fill the treat bags and close the door, lean against it, and give way to the screams that came occasionally; but, not often. I remembered the getting ready for the party he was going to the year before. The trip to the other side of town for face paint, trying to look like the Kiss album, the loud laughter of the children as they saw each other. Someone gave me a picture of them, mine with his mouth spread wide open as he laughed. Ah, laughter; he left legacies of laughter in so many places. There are things that I miss, the things he gave to me and to others. This year on the hallowed eve of All Saints Day, I can celebrate

for him. There may be some tears, they do not last as long now, or come as often; but, I make no apology for them. But for my son, laughter is mine to give. This child was filled with it. He filled our home with it and he filled the halls of his school with it. For him, I need to pass it on as best that I can. I have a vision of him painting faces of the smallest of Heaven's younger generation, and giggling, making it a fun place for all. Where ever he was, fun was there. I can imagine Heaven no other way.

*Originally published in TCF Bluegrass Newsletter,
November 1980, Jo Hepburn*



Sibling Contact for TCF Green

Bay:

Erin Lund

E-mail: EML1015@aol.com

Phone: 920-562-232

Resources for siblings:

The national organization of TCF
has resources for siblings.

Visit the online Sibling Resources Page
at
www.compassionatefriends.org

HELP US FILL THIS PAGE! *If your child, of any age, would like to contribute an article, poem, drawing or website they've created about their sibling or their grief journey, please send it to us, either by mail or email. Please include your child's name and age. If you are an adult sibling reading this, we invite you to share your reflections about losing a brother or sister. It will help others on their journey.*

Only Surviving Siblings: Am I an Only Child Now? *By Daniel Yoffee*

In families with only two children, the siblings often look out for and protect each other, which makes the loss of one even more difficult for the surviving child. The brothers and/or sisters looked forward to a long and enjoyable future, never thinking that they would be separated. There was the assumption that the siblings would grow old together, reminiscing about the past. Not only are there the intense sadness and feelings of total devastation; but, the surviving sibling may feel a huge sense of responsibility for the future care of the parents. While both siblings are alive, there might not be much thought about the loss of a parent, as they believe they will always be there to help each other make decisions

when the time comes, that they would always go through everything together.

Another concern is that the surviving sibling won't have any family to rely on to remember the past. With the loss of a sibling, we are left an immense grief and a "new reality" that we never wanted, never asked for. The anguish and loneliness are overwhelming. Those who have no surviving siblings to share their thoughts, feelings, memories, and pain are left to deal with a wider range of issues. Bereaved parents often have a hard time with the question "How many children do you have?" Many only surviving siblings also have a hard time dealing with similar issues. They may not be up to

explaining what happened. It often depends on the relationship to the person asking. The best choice is to answer whichever way is easier emotionally. Another question surviving siblings often ask themselves is "am I an only child now?" The sibling who has died will always be their brother or sister; but, they may want to spare themselves the pain of people's reactions to hearing of the death (or just the pain of having to say it, which is hard enough). It is so difficult to process the fact that this one person, who shared the past, will not be a part of their future. It's good to remember that no matter how the question is answered, we will always be an older or younger brother or sister.



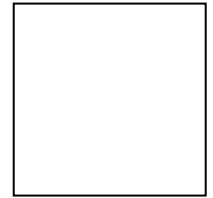
Believe, when you are most unhappy, that there is something for you to do in the world. So long as you can sweeten another's pain, life is not in vain."

-Helen Keller



The
**COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

of Green Bay
PO Box 211
Green Bay, WI 54305



Our monthly
support group
meets next on

Thursday,
Sept 17
at 7 p.m.

at First United
Methodist Church,
off Monroe at Doty.
Call 920-496-0629
for information.

We need not walk alone!

WELCOME

We welcome you with compassion, love and hope. It is always difficult to say “welcome” to people coming to our meetings for the first time because we are so very sorry for the reason they came. For some, the first meeting or two can be rather overwhelming, especially if they are newly bereaved. We hope that anyone feeling that way will return to at least a couple more of our meetings. Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings, regardless of the age at which their child died or the length of time that has passed since that day.



THE FRIEND

The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing...not healing, not curing...that is a friend who cares.

-Henry Nouwen-

If you have access to a computer, please check out our website at: www.tcfgreenbay.org