



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

December 2010 Newsletter

WNY Chapter #2303

Batavia, NY 14020

The Mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

Upcoming Meetings

December 16, 2010-Christmas Program & Candle Lighting
January 20, 2011
Meetings are held at
The Holland Land Office Museum
131 W. Main St
Batavia, NY 14020
Meeting Times: 7 -8:30pm

National: The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

PO Box 3696. Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Toll Free 877-969-0010. Fax 630-990-0246

Our Regional Contact; Al Visconti
altcfny@gmail.com

Visit our local web site: www.tcfowny.org

Also Special Thanks
To Our Register Coordinators & Greeters
Mae and Larry Wheeler

National Website Compassionatefriends.org

The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again. "

*Simon Stephens, Founder of The
Compassionate Friends*

To include your child or children on our web site, bring a photo along with a short story about them to the meeting. Pat will forward the information to our Webmaster so that your child or children can be remembered.

Our Birthday Table - Parents/Grandparents: We have a Birthday Table at our TCF meetings. If you would like to share your child's favorite cake or anything that will help you remember their birthday with others who are open to "celebrating" with you, please take this opportunity to share with us. You may bring photos and other mementos to the meeting as well.

The chapter is here for everyone. Please let us know what you are struggling with at this time. We will use that as our topic for an upcoming meeting.

If you know of someone who has suffered this ultimate loss, please let us know. We will send them our newsletter and invite them to share their grief with those of us still walking that path.

Pat has discontinued making bricks, however she is making concrete stepping-stones. She can put your child's name & dates if so desired. She has several different molds available and paints the names to your color or she can paint a brick & then paint the info on it. Just call Pat with your desire 219-4570

OUR CHILDREN LOVED AND REMEMBERED

December Birthdays

Christopher, son of Laurie & Eric Claus

December 2

Michael Pittaro, son of Margi DuBois

December 6

Reed, son of Reed Vogel & Chris Stoddard

December 10

Patricia, daughter of Genevieve Mahoney

December 15

December Remembrance Dates

Jenna Helene, daughter of Sharlene & John

Pratt

December 6

Krista, daughter of Al Visconti

January Birthdays

Barry, son of Hazel & Jerry Spotts

January 25

Please contact Pat Wheeler if any of your child(ren's) information is incorrect or missing. Phone 219-4570 or email at wwpatsuw@aol.com or mail to home address at
447 Ellicott St
Batavia, NY 14020

The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

For Bereaved Parents

Twas the month before Christmas and I dreaded the days,

That I knew I was facing-the holiday craze.

The stores were all filled with holiday lights,

In hopes of drawing customers by day and by nights.

*As others were making their holiday plans,
My heart was breaking- I couldn't understand.*

I had lost my dear child a few years before,

And I knew what my holiday had in store

When out of nowhere, there arose such a sound

I sprang to my feet and was looking around,

Away to the window I flew like a flash,

Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash

*The sight that I saw took my breath away,
And my tears turned into smiles in the light of the day.*

When what to my wondering eyes should appear?

Was a cluster of butterflies fluttering near?

With beauty and grace they performed a dance,

I knew in a moment this wasn't by chance.

The hope that they gave me was a sign from above,

That my child was still near and I was loved.

The message they brought was my holiday gift,

And I cried when I saw them in spite of myself.

As I knelt closer to get a better view,

One allowed me to pet it-as if it knew

That I needed the touch of its fragile wings,

To help me get through the holiday scene.

*In the days that followed I carried the thought,
Of the message the butterflies left in my heart*

That no matter what happens or what days lie ahead,

Our children are with us-they're not really dead.

Yes, the message of the butterflies still rings in my ear,

A message of hopes a message so dear.

And I imagined they sang as they flew out of

sight,

"To all bereaved parents " we" love you tonight!"

-By Faye McCord- TCF, Jackson, MS

Children, Grief, You and the Holidays

A young mother whose son was killed in a fire started by outdoor Christmas lights expressed her fear of the upcoming first Christmas following his death. She did not have the energy to carry on as usual, and she was getting messages from the family that they expected her to do just that. Through grief support, she was able to adapt her holidays to fit her and her surviving child's needs. She needed permission to change the routine because she felt the old routine would be too painful. She chose to go away for the holidays and reported a surprising success of getting through them. She also gained hope that one day she might be able to enjoy the holidays again because she felt empowered to be in control of how she celebrated, if she celebrated. Following the death of a loved one, there are many firsts. One of the most difficult firsts can be the holidays. The following are some thoughts on how to help your family cope through the holiday season.

Caring For Grieving Children

1. Prepare children for changes in routine. It is perfectly acceptable to make changes in holiday routines, perhaps even preferable, but remember to prepare children well in advance for changes to holiday traditions.
2. Include children and teens in planning. A family meeting to decide what changes will be appropriate for celebrating the holidays can alleviate a child's feeling of being left out.
3. If a child appears to need extra reassurance during the holidays, remember they may have feelings of sadness, guilt, etc. that they are struggling with.
4. Children may "regress" (find comfort in earlier behaviors) during the stress of the holidays.
5. Children need opportunities to express their feelings and fears. Plan a ritual for remembering your loved one around the holiday season.
6. Plan some extra time to spend one to one with your children during the holidays. Don't let the world dictate your schedule.

Caring For Yourself

1. You are the best one to know what you need for caring for yourself. Be kinder to yourself than you have ever been during the holiday season.
2. There is no right or wrong way to grieve OR to spend the holidays. Choose activities or solitude based on your needs.
3. Watch out for over commitment during the holidays. Say "no."

4. Treat yourself.

5. Give yourself credit for accomplishing the "firsts" as they come along.

6. Be with people you want to spend time with. Say "no" to those you feel would need more energy than you have to give. Remember Your Loved One

1. Buy a gift for your loved one. Give it to someone who needs it. You will receive twice the pleasure. (This may be too difficult for someone whose loss is recent.)
2. Donate money to a special cause in your loved one's name or volunteer your time and/or talents.
3. Contribute a poinsettia to your church sanctuary (or to a local nursing home or school) in your loved one's name.
4. Talk about the deceased with those you are comfortable sharing. Plan a time for remembering. Set a place for them at the table, hang a stocking, retell stories of them.

Anniversary Dates

1. An anniversary of the death of a loved one can cause anxiety and stress, which are normal grief reactions.
2. Give yourself permission to feel your own feelings about the day and plan how you want to spend your time.
3. Remember that anticipation is sometimes worse than going through the actual day. Don't allow others to dictate the extent to which you observe the day.
http://www.christianworks.org/griefworks/articles/grief_holidays.shtml

“Forever in My Heart” Wristband

Great holiday gift. The Compassionate Friends offer “Forever in My Heart” wristbands that have been very popular and are perfect for a giveaway. The wristbands are swirled blue and white durable silicone with two butterflies framing the popular saying. They are priced at \$ 2.50. If we don’t have any in stock we will gladly order them.

If you know of any groups or organizations wanting a Presentation of what “ The Compassionate Friends provides to grieving Families

Please contact Pat Wheeler
585-219-4570
716-601-9648
wwpatsuww@aol.com

Wish List

Postage Stamps, Gift Cards to Wal-Mart, Tops, Office Max, Kmart, Mailing Labels (Avery 8160) Envelopes, and Ink Cartridges for HP # 940- colors as well as black.

Monetary Donations

Thank you so much to our Donor this month

Margi DuBois in memory of her son Michael Pittaro
December 6

The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends.

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

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“ THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.”

To the Newly Bereaved

When your child has died, suddenly it seems like all meaning has been drained from your life. When you wake in the morning, it's difficult to get out of bed, much less live a "normal" life. All that was right with the world now seems wrong and you're wondering when, or if, you'll ever feel better.

We've been there ourselves and understand some of the pain you are feeling right now. We are truly glad that you have found us but profoundly saddened by the reason of your visit. We know that you are trying to find your way in a bewildering experience for which no one can be truly prepared.

When you're newly bereaved, suddenly you find yourself on an emotional roller coaster where you have no idea what to expect next. Here are thoughts on some of what you maybe experiencing or feeling:

- You're in shock from what has happened and a numbness surrounds you to help shield you from the pain
- You find yourself in denial. Your child cannot be dead. You expect to see your child walk through the door any moment. You see your child in the faces of others walking down the street.
- You wonder how someone can feel this much pain and survive.
- Thoughts of suicide briefly enter your mind. You tell yourself you want to die and yet you want to live to take care of your family and honor your child's memory.
- You want to know how the people around you can go about their day as if nothing has happened don't they understand that your life everything that meant anything to you has just happened? Your purpose in life is gone.
- You rail against the injustice of not being allowed the choice to die instead of your child.
- You find yourself filled with anger, whether it be at your partner, a person you believe is responsible for your child's death, *GOD*, yourself, and even your child for dying.
- You yearn to have 5 minutes, an hour, a day back with your child so you can tell your child of your love.
- Emotionally you blame yourself for the death of your child even though rationally you know that you were not to blame you most certainly would have saved your child if you'd been given the chance.
- Thoughts of "what ifs" enter your mind as you play out scenarios that you believe would have saved your child.
- Your memory has suddenly become clouded. You're shrouded in forgetfulness. You'll be driving down the road and not know where you are or remember where you're going. As you walk around, you may find yourself being involved in "little accidents" because of the haze you're in.
- You feel that you are going crazy.
- You feel greed sadness and depression as you wrestle with the idea that everything important to you has been taken from you. Your future has been ruined and nothing can ever make it right.
- Either you can't sleep or you sleep all the time. You feel physical exhaustion even when you have sleep.

- You no longer care about your health and taking care of yourself it just doesn't seem that important anymore.
- You're feeling anxiety and great discomfort you're told they're panic attacks.
- The tears come when you least expect them
- Your appetite is either gone or you find yourself overeating.
- If you have surviving children, you find yourself suddenly over protective, not wanting to allow them out of your sight. Yet you feel like a bad parent because it's so difficult to focus on their needs when you're hurting so bad yourself.
- You find yourself reading the same paragraph over and over again trying to understand what someone else has written.
- You find there's a videotape that constantly plays in an endless loop in your mind, running through what happened.
- You find that your remaining family at home grieves the loss differently and you search for a common ground, which seems difficult to find.
- You find your belief system is shaken and you try to sort out what this means to your faith.
- Old friends seem to fade away as you learn they cannot comprehend the extent or length of your grief
- Things you liked to do which seemed so important before now seem meaningless.
- Placing impossible deadlines on yourself, you go back to work, but find your mind wanders and it's difficult to function efficiently and some days, at all. Others wonder when you'll be over "it," not understanding that you'll never be the same person you were before your child died and the passage of time will not make you so.
- New friends come into your life who understand some of your grief because they've been there themselves.

When you are newly bereaved, you don't see how you can put one foot in front of the other, much less survive this loss. You'll never "recover" from your loss nor will you ever find that elusive "closure" they talk of on TV but eventually you will find the "new me". You will never be the same person you were before your child died. It may be hard to believe now, but in time and with the hard work of grieving (There is no way around it); you will one day think about the good memories of when your child lived rather than the bad memories of how your child died. You will even smile and, yes, laugh again someday as hard to believe, as that may seem.

*From The Compassionate Friends Website (National)
September 2010*