



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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TCF of POTOMAC, MD

TCF meets the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM

Potomac Presbyterian Church 10301 River Road Potomac, MD 20854 TCFPotomacMD.com

Summer 2014

The Compassionate Friends Mission

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a national self help organization offering friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved families who have experienced the death of a child or sibling. TCF members provide information and support. Volunteers run the more than 660 local chapters in the U.S. and TCF has chapters in many other countries.

The Compassionate Friends: P.O. Box 3696 Oak Brook, IL 60255-3696 National Website:
WWW.Compassionatefriends.org

Leader Katherine Bloom
Co-Leaders Nancy Frank
Mary Mandeville
Treasurer George Beall
New Members Barbara Beall
Remembrances Mary Nader
Librarian Lilyan Heupel

Outreach Mitzi Sereno
Hospitality JoAnn Gelman
Newsletter Katherine Bloom
Google Group Mgr Barry Gordon
Members at Large Rob Goor
Barbara Gordon
Debbie & Daryl Thornton

Be like the bird that, in pausing in her flight while on boughs too slight, feels them give way beneath her,



and yet sings, knowing that she hath wings

Letter from the Editor

It's June! Summer! Time for a little relaxing, and vacations. Yes, vacations. Are you ready? I don't mean have you made hotel reservations or packed a suitcase. I mean are you ready to *allow* yourself to have a vacation. To the newer bereaved parent, this would feel like a betrayal to the loss they are feeling, a betrayal to their beloved child. The mere thought of smiling, much less laughing and feeling happy would be a sacrilege. And yet, there does come a time when this will change. We cannot know in advance when it will happen, there is no timetable for grief.

This grief journey is one you must travel now. In the beginning, it can feel like crossing an ocean without a compass on a dark night with no stars to guide you. I, myself, have absolutely no sense of direction, so when I began my journey, I was completely lost at sea. Over the past 5 years, I've begun to notice the stars, one by one, leading me... somewhere.

Our grief journey could also be compared to taking a road trip vacation to a new place, before there was radar, mapquest or GPS systems. We had to take a paper map, complicated and cumbersome, at best. We could not refer to them while behind the wheel. We would read the map and start out. Then came a fork in the road. Right or left? Make a choice and realize miles later, we were wrong. So back we go and start over. And this is how we travelled, over and over again. Sometimes we had a travelling companion who could help guide us. We had to trust they could read a map or we could end up going in circles. Who among the bereaved can say this isn't how our journey feels. Starts and stops and getting lost. There are guard rails along the side of the road, we may, now and then, scrape them. It's okay, we won't crash or fall off.

So, when will you be ready to allow yourself to start the journey and for those a little farther along, when do we allow ourselves to begin to

enjoy the scenery again? It's all still out there, waiting to be noticed. Sooner or later, you will let yourself listen to the radio in the car again, and one day you'll realize you've begun to sing along with a favorite song, maybe one your child loved to sing loudly in the shower. You may even cry a little, that's okay, too. Smile through your tears, let your heart and mind embrace the world again. Then, one day, you may decide to even make a hotel reservation, pack a bag and step away from your grief, for a few days, or week or two.

I know at first, this sounds like heresy, but, truly it's possible. About 18 months after Kira died, my aunt, whose husband had died 2 months after Kira, wanted to get away. She invited me to accompany her on a 10 day cruise. I was torn between my own grief and my need to help my aunt through hers. So I went... out to that sea. The stars were out, there was a captain who knew where he was going. I was along for the ride. Some nights I cried in my pillow, knowing Kira would never be able to have a trip like this. Every evening my aunt and I went to the piano bar for a cocktail. Before I sat down, I asked the piano player to play a song for me – and for Kira, knowing I was the only one who knew I was sending this message to her. Never once in 10 days did I forget her, but I was still able to be company for my aunt and even feel some enjoyment of the trip itself. Sure, I knew once I got home, my grief would still be there on the shelf, Kira looking back at me in a photo. I knew I had not “gotten over it”. I knew the daily struggle and sadness would always be there for me. All this, and yet I allowed myself this little break, this vacation.

It takes some courage and strength, and love, to be able to take a vacation after losing a child. Maybe not for a year or two, or five, however, one day you start to pack a bag. Take sunscreen, not guilt with you. Let yourself hear the music of life again. Your child will be in your heart listening with you.

My Dream

A journal entry May 5,2014
by Craig Spirka

I dreamt again of Lesley last night. In my dream, she was just a little kid, maybe seven or eight, putting earrings into her pierced ears. Happy, smiling, beautiful. And I was happy, too, just watching her, even after I woke up. Then I remembered she was gone, and I shivered.

Ever since I lost Lesley, life has been so bitter-sweet. Every lovely childhood memory is tinged with sadness, and every sad thought of her passing is back-lit by the happy recall of her light and love. It is strange that my heart can consistently hold such two conflicting emotions simultaneously. But it can, and this secret of the wounded heart is silently shared by all the members of my local chapter of the Compassionate Friends child-loss support group, which will be meeting tomorrow evening. I am looking forward to being with "my people" again.



Dear Andrew

Letter to my son October 22,2010
by Rob Goor

I said it aloud a few weeks ago. I said it in a large group, where many people heard me. I have never said it aloud before, not even to my most trusted friend. I have never said it in my deepest thought, not even in late night solitude, when truth stares wonderingly into the mirror of dream-glazed eyes. What have I said? I said, "I have come to a place in my life and my grief, where I have found peace." Yes, Andrew, I have found peace. I have found peace with what I know and what I will never know. I am at peace with what I feel and what I do not. I am at peace with who I am and who I am not.

There, now I have written it. And now I am writing to you, that I may understand what I have said and what it means. My son, I have written you so many letters over the years – letters full of discord, full of questing, full of pain. Now, this letter is different because I am different – even more different that at the time of my last letter. I don't know how visible these differences are to others because people are such subtle reflecting glasses.

In any case, I am on new ground, writing to you about this. I don't know how to write about peace. How do I write about the absence of turmoil, the absence of anguish? How do I write about the absence of pain and anger so close to the surface that they suffused my life for so long?

Oh, I'm still sad, sad for you, sad for all my losses, but especially yours. Yet that sorrow has gone deep within me, and like a liquid, it has found its level in every cell and every

pore, flowing simultaneously to every extremity and to my core, so that it is an integral part of me.

In retrospect, back at the beginning, I read poetry and being patient with sadness, but, while it resonated in my brain, I never fully understood it until now. My future was written in my grief and pain and I needed time to read and comprehend it. I needed to know the truths of life and being, and to internalize them. Perhaps one of those truths is about peace.

For so much of my life, even that now distant part before your death, I thought about that peace, true peace, was an absence of discord, to end to troubling thoughts, a space where my mind would no longer drive me crazy. I wondered if I could ever find peace in my life. I wondered if serenity would forever elude me.

After you died and for a long time, I stopped thinking about finding peace. After what happened to you, I knew, deep in my heart that peace would never be attainable. Instead, I suppose, I tried, one day at a time, merely to accept whatever I felt, whatever I thought. And so, I confess, it was with no small surprise that I heard myself say aloud, before people I mostly had never met, that I have found peace. And there it is again, that phrase that seems so pregnant with meaning. But what meaning?

I can certainly tell you what this feeling of peace is not. It is not an end to worry, to fear, to anger. I am still, a human being. But I no longer struggle with these so-called negative expressions of self. I no longer fight against these natural by-products of caring, about myself and others, and I no longer subject myself to self judgement on the basis of my internal make-up.

But what is it, this peace? I can tell you what now I know. I know that I have been mistaken about peace all along. I know that

peace is no mere absence. It is not a void, a vacuum in the place inside me where intense energy once defined my very being. It is not like outer space, whose tranquility is merely a lifeless emptiness. If my peace were such a pressureless void, nature would find a way to fill it. Ideas, thoughts, feelings would come tumbling in, haphazard and tumultuous, and any initial perception of accord would quickly drown in a deluge of random vortices – a tortuous plasma of conflicting white hot feelings.

No this peace is definitely a presence, not an absence. It is an acceptance, a form of being. It is the living presence seemingly of another species. It is the organic extension of another dimension. It is timeless and yet of the moment. It is more than the tranquility of the ocean depths, for that is but the inertia of water's weight, ponderous and insensible. This peace is solemn, yes, but sensible and even sensitive. It does not seek to crush, but to reach out, to share by harmonizing all that it touches. It is a soft melody that sings in the beating of the heart, soundlessly, hoping that all can hear. This peace is the soul of passion and compassion. It knows death and yearns for life. It comprehends and respects age and it embraces youthfulness, without need of youth. It is a positive pressure that exactly balances within against without, above against below, open against closed. It is the soft voice of experience, and even wisdom, and it is no longer silent.

It says, "Come to me with your woes and I will share my caring. Come to me with your sorrow and I will share my understanding. Come to me with your despair and I will share my hope."

And I hope that you, too, have found peace, my son.

Love,
Dad



37th National Conference Chicago, Illinois July 11-13, 2014

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Chicago, Illinois, will be the site of the 37th TCF National Conference on July 11-13, 2014. "Miles of Compassion through The Winds of Hope" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great national conference experience. The 2014 conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Rosemont, just minutes from the airport. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Early registration for the conference will be \$90.00 for Adults, \$40.00 for Children (9-17), and \$40.00 for Full-Time College Students.

The Hyatt Regency O'Hare, 9300 Bryn Mawr Ave., Rosemont, IL 60018, is now accepting reservations for TCF's National Conference. To make your reservation, please access the following link, which will take you directly to TCF's reservation portal on the Hyatt's website. Conference attendees are receiving a discounted room rate. We anticipate a large attendance for the conference, so we encourage you to make your reservation as soon as it is convenient for you.

Reservations can also be made by calling the hotel directly at 888.421.1442 and please mention The Compassionate Friends when reserving your room. Please visit Rosemont's website, www.rosemont.com, for information on local area dining and activities.

Sponsorships

A variety of sponsorships are available and can be found here, [37th National Conferences Sponsorships Reply Form](#). To confirm your sponsorship, please call Lisa

Corrao at the National Office, fill out the form and e-mail it to lisa@compassionatefriends.org, or fax it back to us at 630.990.0246. Questions? Please contact us at 877.969.0010.

The Sibling Group

Andrea Keller runs the Sibling Group and her contact information is as follows:

She has a Closed Facebook Page - MD/DC/VA Adult Loss Support Group
Facebook: Andrea Blank Keller Email: Andreakeller@Yahoo.com Cell: 301-802-1855

The Google Group

As many of you know by now, Barry Gordon has started a Google email group. Many of us are already writing to one another, and Barry invites everyone in our chapter to participate. Many of the emails recount very intimate feelings about our loved and lost children. The responding emails offer insight and comfort. The email address, in case some have not received it is:

Compassionate-Friends-Potomac@googlegroups.com. We all thank Barry for undertaking this challenge and encouraging us to share our thoughts during the days when the Group does not meet.

Newsletter Contributions

The Potomac Chapter wants to hear from each of you, to share your ideas and feelings. To hear about what works for you in handling your grief, and what doesn't. What helps you cope, and how you deal with new situations.

Please send articles, stories, poems, or quotes for the next newsletter to

Katherine Bloom @ Katherinx@aol.com

Please forgive any misspelled names or typos

LOVE GIFTS

Barbara & Barry Gordon
Lauren & Allison Keller
Colleen Boskin
Katherine Bloom
Bonnie & David Hodsdon
Barbara Tatge
Rita & Walter Pancik
Nathalie Silver
Barbara & George Beall
Mary Lescak

Jonathan (Blank)
Uncle Jon
Patrick (Elasik)
Kira
Kira
Alexander (Finamore)
Bruce (Liebowitz)
Celine
Barbara
Mark (Kellams)



The Compassionate Friends is a self supporting, non-profit organization solely dependent on LOVE GIFTS and other donations for operating expenses of all TCF chapters. If you would like to send a LOVE GIFT in memory of your child or another other loved one, or in honor of any occasion, it would be greatly appreciated. LOVE GIFTS are fully Tax Deductible. There is a basket at monthly meetings with Love Gift envelopes.

You may mail Love Gifts to:

George Beall
798 Kimberly Court E
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Gifts received by the monthly meeting deadline will be acknowledged in the next newsletter.

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED



March 2014

Colleen Boskin	Patrick (Elasik)
Chris & Terry King	Terry
Kate Mitchel	Colleen
Doris & Carl Sensabaugh	Tammy

April 2014

Corinna Bell	Colleen
Patricia DeSimone	James (McIharne)
Laura & Kevin Heenan	Matt
Robert LaJeuness	Elijah
Nancy & Fritz Schultz	Steven (McGrath)
Barbara & Ted Tate	James
Ulder Tillman	William (Engram)

May 2014

Katherine Bloom	Kira
Larry Bloom	Kira
Nancy & Gregory Cox	Bradley
Rebecca Domaruk	Paul
Sandra Giger	Robert (Yin)
Robert Goor	Andrew
Barbara & Barry Gordon	Jonathan (Blank)
Rita & Richard Hegelson	Andrew
Sharon Kahout	Shayne Ann
Sandi McGee	Thomas (Mizerek)

June 2014

Angela & Sherman Davis	Joshua
Brigitte & Stephan Ladish	Gwenola
Heather Najjar	Kyle (Kolobow)
Donna & Howard Parzow	Brian (McClure)
Riah & Josh Taylor	Aiden
Debbie & Daryl Thornton	Crystal
Claire Wilk	James