



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Miami Valley Chapter Newsletter

TCF Chapter No. 1732, P.O. Box 292112, Kettering, OH 45429 (937) 640-2621

March-April 2016

Website: <http://www.miamivalleytcf.com>

E-mail: miamivalleytcf@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE for our Butterfly Release!

Saturday, June 18, 2016

More info to follow ...

I will not forget you.

You are in my waking thoughts,
my sweetest memories,
my dearest dreams.

I will not forget you.

You have touched my soul,
opened my eyes,
changed my very experience of the universe.

I will not forget you.

I see you in the flowers,
the sunset,
the sweep of the horizon
and all things that stretch to infinity.

I will not forget you.

I have carved you on the palm of my hand.

I carry you with me forever.

~Ellen Sue Stern via mariposatrust.org

**Chapter meetings are on the
third Wednesday of the month
at Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church
Corner of Bigger Road & Wilmington Pike
Kettering, Ohio**

Directions: from Rt 35, exit at Woodman Drive,
go south approximately 4 miles to Wilmington Pike,
turn left, church is about 1/2 mile on right

OR

from I-675, exit onto Wilmington Pike (Exit 7),
go north 2 miles. Church is on left, just after David
Road

Upcoming Meeting Schedule and Topics

**Wednesday, March 16th, 7pm
Ask It Basket**

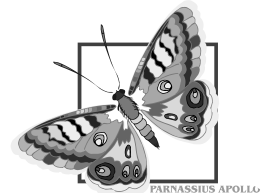
**Wednesday, April 20th, 7pm
Myths and Misconceptions About Grief**

We are all broken ...
that's how the light gets in.

~Ernest Hemingway

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

~Helen Keller



We welcome contributions to the Newsletter, whether composed by you or found in your reading!

*The Compassionate Friends— A self-help organization offering friendship, understanding,
and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.*

*Thank You for your "Love Gifts"
in remembrance of these loved ones ...*

- ♥ Rae Lynn and Mark Cummin, in memory of her son,
David Van Trease
- ♥ Tammie Spence in memory of her son,
Shannon Mason
- ♥ Virginia and Edman Gray in memory of their
daughter, Elizabeth Louise's birthday on
February 19th
- ♥ George and Maribeth Freiburger in memory of their
son, Scott, who died March 23, 1996
- ♥ Richard and Mary Miller in memory of their son,
Brad
- ♥ Dolly Brunner, in memory of her daughter,
Erin Quigley's angel date, 2/7/14

*And thanks to ALL who gave anonymously!
(Please contact us if we have made an error or if
we accidentally omitted any love gift)*

Every donation we receive is greatly needed and equally appreciated and is used to further our vision, "That everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped."

**Please send your "Love Gifts" (tax deductible)
to**

**The Compassionate Friends,
Chapter # 1732
Karen Brown, Treasurer
P. O. Box 292112
Kettering, Ohio 45429**

Chapter financial reports are available at the planning meetings.

**If you'd like to designate your gift for a particular use, such as a
new library book or a newsletter mailing, or towards an event such as the
Butterfly Release, please let us know!**

***Did you know that your United Way contributions can be designated to our
local Miami Valley TCF Chapter #1732?***

The Compassionate Friends
Miami Valley Chapter #1732, Dayton, OH 937-640-2621

Chapter Support Meetings
3rd Wednesdays, 7pm, Sugarcreek Church

Planning Team Meetings
(all are welcome!)
2nd Thursdays, 7pm, LaRosa's
2801 Wilmington Pike near Dorothy Lane

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Other Nearby TCF Chapter  
Miami County TCF, West Milton, OH  
Contact Barb Lawrence 937-836-5939  
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Other Local Dayton Area Support

- *Miami Valley Hospital Perinatal Loss Hot Line, Pregnancy
Loss/I Infant Death 937-208-6363
- *Oak Tree Corner, Grief Support for Children 937-285-0199
- *Survivors of Suicide 937-226-0818
..... www.suicidepreventioncenter.tk
- *Hospice of Dayton Grief Support 937-256-4490
..... 800-653-4490
- *Crossroads Hospice Grief Recovery 937-312-3170
..... 800-603-6673
- *HEALing Together, Franklin, OH Miscarriage, Infant &
Toddler Loss, Parent/Grandparent Support 513-705-4056

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Other Resources

- \*Alive Alone, Support for Death of Only Child or All Children  
Kay Bevington, VanWert, OH: [alivalon@bright.net](mailto:alivalon@bright.net)  
419-238-1091, [www.alivealone.org](http://www.alivealone.org)
- \*American Association of Suicidology  
[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

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Websites to check out:

www.thegrieftoolbox.com
Tom Zuba www.TomZuba.com
Paula Stephens www.crazygoodgrief.com
Paul S Boynton www.beginwithyes.com

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The Compassionate Friends national magazine "We Need Not  
Walk Alone" is available free through an online subscription at  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) - click on "sign up for national  
publications". If you do not wish to subscribe, you can still view  
the magazine in the archive once the next issue has been pub-  
lished.

What if there is no way to "overcome" or "beat" or expedite grief? What if there is no tool or intervention or spirituality or pill that will expunge it from our lives? What if the only 'answer' to grief is to grieve, the only cure for suffering is to suffer? What if the only solace for pain is to deeply feel it without judging it, without seeking to change it, without taking ourselves from its center with drugs or alcohol or pills or shopping or food or television?

Grief and suffering and pain: no one wants to feel them. And yet, they are inherently part of the human condition especially when death touches the one we so deeply love. To fully inhabit grief — with its darkness and eventual illumination — its agony and evolving beauty — its hurdles and reluctant triumphs — takes courage, requires a fierce heart. This is because in today's happiness-rapture culture, to be real or honest or authentic about any feelings other than the "good ones" is rarely encouraged.

Ironically, this happiness-seeking oft produces the opposite effect: disconnection, disharmony, and discontent. Disingenuousness rings a bell in our soul, it sounds a warning of peril: we must be honest with ourselves and others or authentic and enduring joyfulness will not be ours again.

For many of us, when our true emotions can be seen and held, when our experiences of loss are respected by others, instead of judged by others, and held as sacred and meaningful, we can begin our own long road into a deeper healing than we've ever known.

I made a vow in 1994 after my little daughter died: *As long as grief speaks to me, I will listen. As long as grief calls me by name, I will look its way. As long as grief stands by me, I will stand by it.*

As long as I love her, I will unflinchingly dig into the depth of my heart to unearth my warrior self, the one who has within her the courage to carry grief my whole life.

I hope each of you are surrounded by safe others who will honor you and your grief ...

~Dr. Joanne Cacciatore 2/8/16©

~find Joanne on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/joanecacciatore](http://www.facebook.com/joanecacciatore)

Those that have not experienced the death of a child, grandchild, or sibling, probably wouldn't understand the depth of longing for your child. The deep sadness of not being able to hold your child or watch them as they grow and experience life. Those of us that are on this journey are bonded together, no matter your occupation, skin color, religion or your geographic location. Our hearts are joined as we share not only our children, but also our grief journey. We don't know each other .... *but we do.*

~Karen Cantrell, Frankfort, KY-TCF

When we meet real tragedy in life, we can react in two ways — either by losing hope and falling into self-destructive habits or by using the challenge to find our inner strength.

~Dalai Lama

The heart of grief,  
its most difficult challenge,  
is not "letting go"  
of those who have died  
but instead making the transition from loving in presence  
to loving in separation.

~Thomas Attig

Grief is not a disorder,  
A disease or a sign of weakness.

It is an emotional,  
physical and spiritual necessity,  
the price you pay  
for love.

The only cure for grief  
is to grieve.

~Earl Grollman

## ***Everything Doesn't Happen For A Reason***

I emerge from this conversation dumbfounded. I've seen this a million times before, but it still gets me every time. I'm listening to a man tell a story. A woman he knows was in a devastating car accident; her life shattered in an instant. She now lives in a state of near-permanent pain; a paraplegic; many of her hopes stolen.

He tells of how she had been a mess before the accident, but that the tragedy had engendered positive changes in her life. That she was, as a result of this devastation, living a wonderful life.

And then he utters the words. The words that are responsible for nothing less than emotional, spiritual and psychological violence: *Everything happens for a reason*. That this was something that *had* to happen in order for her to grow.

That's the kind of bullshit that destroys lives. And it is categorically untrue.

It is amazing to me that so many of these myths persist - and that is why I share actionable tools and strategies to work with your pain in my free newsletter. These myths are nothing more than platitudes cloaked as sophistication, and they preclude us from doing the one and only thing we *must* do when our lives are turned upside down: grieve.

You know exactly what I'm talking about. You've heard these countless times. You've probably even uttered them a few times yourself. And every single one of them needs to be annihilated.

Let me be crystal clear: if you've faced a tragedy and someone tells you in any way, shape or form that your tragedy was meant to be, that it happened for a reason, that it will make you a better person, or that taking responsibility for it will fix it, you have every right to remove them from your life.

Grief is brutally painful. Grief does not only occur when someone dies. When relationships fall apart, you grieve. When opportunities are shattered, you grieve. When dreams die, you grieve. When illnesses wreck you, you grieve.

So I'm going to repeat a few words I've uttered countless times; words so powerful and honest they tear at the hubris of every jackass who participates in the debasing of the grieving:

*Some things in life cannot be fixed. They can only be carried.*

These words come from my dear friend Megan Devine, one of the only writers in the field of loss and trauma I endorse. These words are so poignant because they aim right at the pathetic platitudes our culture has come to embody on an increasingly hopeless level. Losing a child cannot be fixed. Being diagnosed with a debilitating illness cannot be fixed. Facing the betrayal of your closest confidante cannot be fixed.

They can only be carried.

I hate to break it to you, but although devastation can lead to growth, it often doesn't. The reality is that it often destroys lives. And the real calamity is that this happens precisely because we've replaced grieving with advice. With platitudes. With our *absence*.

I now live an extraordinary life. I've been deeply blessed by the opportunities I've had and the radically unconventional life I've built for myself. Yet even with that said, I'm hardly being facetious when I say that loss has not *in and of itself* made me a better person. In fact, in some ways it's hardened me.

While so much loss has made me acutely aware and empathetic of the pains of others, it's made me more insular, predisposed to hide. I have a more cynical view of human nature, a greater impatience with those who are unfamiliar with what loss does to people. Above all, I've been left with a pervasive survivor's guilt that has haunted me all my life. This guilt is really the genesis of my hiding, self-sabotage and brokenness.

In short, my pain has never been eradicated, I've just learned to channel it into my work with others. I consider it a great privilege to work with others in pain, but to say that my losses somehow *had* to happen in order for my gifts to grow would be to trample on the memories of all those I lost too young; all those who suffered needlessly, all those who faced the same trials I did early in life, but who did *not* make it.

I'm simply not going to do that. I'm not going to construct some delusional narrative fallacy for myself so that I can feel better about being alive. I'm not going to assume that God ordained me for life instead of all the others so that I could do what I do now. And I'm certainly not going to pretend that I've made it through simply because I was strong enough; that I became "successful" because I "took responsibility."

There's a lot of "take responsibility" platitudes in the personal development space, and they are largely nonsense. People tell others to take responsibility when they don't want to understand.

Because understanding is harder than posturing. Telling someone to "take responsibility" for their loss is a form of benevolent masturbation. It's the inverse of inspirational porn: it's sanctimonious porn.

Personal responsibility implies that there's something to take responsibility for. You don't take responsibility for being raped or losing your child. You take responsibility for how you choose to lie the wake of the horrors that confront you, but you don't choose whether you grieve. We're not that smart or powerful. When hell visits us, we don't get to escape grieving.

(continued next page)

This is why all the platitudes and fixes and posturing are so dangerous: in unleashing them upon those we claim to love, we deny them the right to grieve.

In so doing, *we deny them the right to be human. We steal a bit of their freedom precisely when they're standing at the intersection of their greatest fragility and despair.*

No one—and I mean no one—has that authority. Though we claim it all the time. The irony is that the *only* thing that even *can* be “responsible” amid loss is grieving.

So if anyone tells you some form of get over it, move on, or rise above, you can let them go.

If anyone avoids you amidst loss, or pretends like it didn't happen, or disappears from your life, you can let them go.

If anyone tells you that all is not lost, that it happened for a reason, that you'll become better as a result of your grief, you can let them go.

Let me reiterate: *all of these platitudes are bullshit.*

You are not responsible to those who try to shove them down your throat. You can let them go.

I'm not saying you should. That is up to you, and only up to you. It isn't an easy decision to make and should be made carefully. But I want you to understand that you can.

I've grieved many times in my life. I've been overwhelmed with shame and self-hatred so strong it's nearly killed me. The ones who helped—the only ones who helped—were those who were *there*. And said *nothing*. In that nothingness, they did *everything*.

I am here—I have lived—because they chose to love me. They loved me in their silence, in their willingness to suffer with me, alongside me, and through me. They loved me in their desire to be as uncomfortable, as destroyed, as I was, if only for a week, an hour, even just a few minutes. Most people have no idea how utterly powerful this is.

Are there ways to find “healing” amid devastation? Yes. Can one be “transformed” by the hell life thrusts upon them? Absolutely. But it does not happen if one is not permitted to grieve. *Because grief itself is not an obstacle.*

The obstacles come later. The choices as to how to live; how to carry what we have lost; how to weave a new mosaic for ourselves? Those come *in the wake* of grief. It cannot be any other way.

Grief is woven into the fabric of the human experience. If it is not permitted to occur, its absence pillages everything that remains: the fragile, vulnerable shell you might become in the face of catastrophe.

Yet our culture has treated grief as a problem to be solved, an illness to be healed, or both. In the process, we've done everything we can to avoid, ignore, or transform grief. As a result, when you're faced with tragedy you usually find that you're no longer surrounded by people, you're surrounded by platitudes.

### **What to Offer Instead**

When a person is devastated by grief, the last thing they need is advice. Their world has been shattered. This means that the act of inviting someone—anyone—into their world is an act of great risk. To try and fix or rationalize or wash away their pain only deepens their terror.

Instead the most powerful thing you can do is acknowledge. Literally say the words: “*I acknowledge your pain. I am here with you.*”

Note that I said *with* you, not *for* you. *For* implies that you're going to *do* something. That is not for you to enact. But to stand with your loved one, to suffer with them, to listen to them, to do everything *but* something is incredibly powerful.

There is no greater act than acknowledgment. And acknowledgment requires no training, no special skills, no expertise. It only requires the willingness to be present with a wounded soul and to *stay* present, as long as necessary.

Be there. *Only be there*. Do not leave when you feel uncomfortable or when you feel like you're not doing anything. In fact, it is *when* you feel uncomfortable and like you're *not* doing anything that you must stay.

Because it is in those places—in the shadows of horror we rarely allow ourselves to enter—where the beginnings of healing are found. This healing is found when we have others who are willing to enter that space alongside us. Every grieving person on earth needs these people.

Thus I beg you, I plead with you, to be one of these people. You are more needed than you will ever know.

And when *you* find yourself in need of those people, *find* them. I guarantee they are there.

Everyone else can go.

~From the national TCF Facebook page, 10/20/15: by Tim Lawrence 10/19/15 ©The Adversity Within, Tim's blog on FB and Twitter, dedicated to examining resilience in the face of adversity while inspiring readers to stand headstrong in their grief.

**National TCF**

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.,  
P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696  
(630) 990-0010

Toll-Free Number: 1-877-969-0010

TCF web site:

<http://www.compassionatefriends.org>

**TCF Regional Coordinator for Ohio**

Dean Turner

Email: [Edean234@aol.com](mailto:Edean234@aol.com)

or phone: 614-402-0004

**Miami Valley TCF Chapter Leaders**

Tom Gilhooly and Richard Miller

937-640-2621

<http://miamivalleytcf.com>

Tom and Dick honor their sons,  
Ryan Gilhooly and Brad Miller,  
through their service.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

***Saturday, June 18, 2016***

***Miami Valley TCF Chapter  
Butterfly Release***

***more info to follow ...***



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*March-April 2016*