



**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 2015

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

E-mail: miamivalleytcf@gmail.com

The miracle, I believe, is that you got up today.
Your eyes opened
Your heart is beating ...
Your lungs expanding and contracting working to
support the very breath of life...
The death of someone you love can be catastrophic.
There are no words to describe this forever event.
Remember you are a miracle.
You are surviving and can learn to thrive again.
Please say YES to life
Even if it is in the form of a tiny whisper.

Tom Zuba
Life Coach
www.TomZuba.com

What moves through us is a silence,
a quiet sadness,
a longing for one more day,
one more word,
one more touch,
we may not understand
why you left this earth so soon,
or why you left before
we were ready to say goodbye,
but little by little
we begin to remember
not just that you died,
but that you lived.
And that life ...
*gave us memories
too beautiful to forget.*

~Author Unknown

**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 18th, 7pm
What Have We Learned? What Can We Teach?**

**Wednesday, April 15th, 7pm
Whispers**

When we lose someone we love, we discover that time does not heal everything. After a while, the ache in our heart begins to ease a bit, and we laugh again, life goes on and many times we reconnect with those still physically with us in much deeper, more beautiful ways. And eventually the good memories outnumber the sad thoughts and we begin to sense that what we thought was lost, has actually been with us all along. We can't explain it, touch it or prove it—but there are moments we catch ourselves smiling because we know it's true.

~Paul S Boynton
www.beginwithyes.com

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

- ♥ *Tammie Spence in memory of her son, Shannon Mason*
- ♥ *John & Deanna McGrath in memory of their son Jake's 31st birthday*
- ♥ *Beth Kolotkin in memory of her son, Kalman*
- ♥ *Richard & Mary Miller in memory of their son, Brad*

And thanks to all who gave anonymously!
(Please contact us if we accidentally omitted any love gift.)

Correction to our last issue: Daina & Jim Arnett's donation was in memory of their sons, Andrew and Kevin. Our sincere apologies for our error.

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

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

We depend on and are so grateful for your generous donations to continue our mission to reach out to grieving families who have lost a precious child, grandchild or sibling.

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 Candle Lighting, 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

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

Other Local Dayton Area Support

- *Miami Valley Hospital Perinatal Loss Hot Line, Pregnancy Loss/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

Other Resources

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

Websites to check out:

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

The Compassionate Friends national magazine "We Need Not Walk Alone" is available free through an online subscription at 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 published.

Grief After Suicide Loss

By Jill Lehman

Grief after suicide is always complex. In addition to the characteristics found with other types of loss, suicide loss carries an additional set of burdens. In my experience, the grief that survivors experience is more complicated, more difficult, and more intense than the grief of clients coping with other types of loss. The consequences for those left behind are far-reaching and profound.

I'd like to share some insights I've gleaned in my work with suicide survivors. By understanding some of the unique characteristics of this devastating event, you can be better prepared to support a survivor as they struggle with the aftermath of a loved one's suicide.

Discovering or Witnessing the Death

For many survivors, the initial trauma of suicide begins when they discover their loved one's body. Survivors experience a "living nightmare" when confronted with the death scene. Death by suicide is always traumatic, but it is also frequently violent and bloody. Bodies of loved ones may be found hanging or drowned. Blood and other body material may be found on the carpet, the furniture, the walls or the ceiling. Bodies may still be warm, or stiff with rigor mortis. In the worst case, survivors may have even witnessed the moment of death itself.

Those who witness these terrifying events first feel disconnected from reality, followed by overwhelming fear and anxiety. Survivors never fully forget the sights, smells, and sounds of their loved one's suicide scene. In many cases, those who discover or witness a suicide may later exhibit signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If a survivor is showing signs of PTSD or related problems, you can help by urging them to seek professional counseling as soon as possible. Many mental health professionals have specialized training in complicated grief, PTSD, and related disorders.

Potential Investigation by Law Enforcement

In most cases of suicide, law enforcement will play a role. There may be an investigation into the circumstances leading up to the suicide. For example, if a weapon was used, the police may want to determine if the weapon was obtained illegally. If the position of the body and/or weapon is deemed suspicious, there may be a homicide investigation as well.

After an investigation is complete, survivors may have to pick up the weapon that the decedent used from the police department. Finally, the spouse or next of kin will receive an autopsy report approximately one month after the suicide. The report will contain detailed descriptions of the suicide scene, including the condition of all body parts.

There are many ways you can help survivors in these situations. You can offer to accompany survivors to the police department. Having a trusted companion on these trips can be a huge relief to those in need. You can also arrange to pick up mail or answer calls for survivors and pass on the information when the time is right.

Potential Media Coverage

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the death, a suicide may make the evening news. Survivors may be inundated by phone calls from neighbors, coworkers, friends, and acquaintances who heard of the death via television or radio. Most survivors have trouble even putting sentences together after such a traumatic event. This tremendous violation of privacy only adds to a survivor's sense of confusion and disorientation, often prompting a reaction to withdraw. As a result, survivors often isolate themselves from many potential sources of support.

Media reports on suicide can also be a source of misinformation. For example, some media outlets may discover a recent loss of a job, or a relationship, and quickly attribute the suicide to these factors. When the media sensationalizes a suicide, they miss an opportunity to educate the public about the underlying factors of suicide, such as depression or mental illness. In some cases, such coverage can even act as a catalyst for "copycat" suicides.

If you have the strength and presence of mind to do so, you can volunteer to act as a liaison between the media and the survivors. This can remove a huge weight from the shoulders of the survivors, allowing them some privacy and a means to begin processing their grief.

Lack of Support

Suicide strains nearly all relationships and erodes the capacity to trust. Within families, there is a tendency to scapegoat one or more members. Outside the family, social relationships deteriorate quickly under the weight of the suicide.

It is during these times that your support can have a profound, positive influence on the life of a suicide survivor. Any support will help make the burden a little easier and will be remembered long afterward.

Stigma

The stigma of suicide continues to persist. Survivors worry about how others will perceive them. Some survivors fear they might be viewed as "defective" or in some way responsible for the suicide.

Remind survivors that no one is the sole influence in another person's life. We cannot control what others choose to do with their lives, even those closest to us. When the decedent chose to take their life, it was their decision alone.

Grief After Suicide Loss, cont.

The Emotional Turmoil of Survivors

There is no way to adequately prepare for a loved one's suicide. The grief itself is intense, and the healing process is slow. Survivors feel a variety of emotions, including shock, denial, anger, blame, sadness, and guilt. Some may even feel a sense of relief, particularly if the suicide followed a long and difficult mental illness.

It is very common for survivors to feel overwhelming despair that their loved one could find no acceptable solution other than death. Survivors also feel worthless, because the decedent "didn't think enough of them" to stay alive; survivors feel that whatever they had together with the decedent was, in a sense, meaningless. This further leads to a feeling of being rejected and abandoned by the decedent.

Almost all survivors are left with a legacy of unreasonable guilt. They ruminate on the days and weeks before the suicide, re-playing events over and over to try to figure out what they did "wrong". Survivors blame themselves for not being able to anticipate and/or prevent the suicide. As a result, survivors feel like failures, with high levels of shame, guilt, blame and responsibility.

Ultimately, survivors are haunted by the question of "Why?" Even when the decedent leaves "clues", survivors will continue to search for answers. No matter how long and hard they search, there will always be unanswered questions.

Helping Survivors Heal

Remember that you cannot "fix" the problem. Sometimes, the most important thing you can do is just be present for survivors while they grapple with their emotions. Here are some additional tips for helping survivors heal through this tremendous loss:

Refrain from judgment; try to listen with an open heart. This is more difficult than it sounds. You may have strong feelings of your own that are in opposition to the survivor's. If you find yourself becoming angry, resentful, and/or judgmental, take care of yourself by removing yourself from the situation.

Allow grief to unfold naturally at its own pace. An individual's grief is just that - individual. The tendency in American culture to rush people through their grief is unhealthy and can lead to further difficulties down the road.

Respect survivors' need to tell and re-tell the story of their loss. This is a natural response to loss and a way for survivors to process through their grief.

Expect strong emotions. Powerful emotions will occur and will lessen in time. The best way to handle strong affect is to remain calm and grounded. If personal safety becomes an issue, remove yourself from the situation and call for additional help.

Gently suggest support groups and/or professional counseling. If possible, obtain literature from agencies and or support groups in the survivor's area to give to survivors when appropriate.

Respect your limits. Helping others through grief can be a slow, emotionally draining process. Take time for self-care and to recharge yourself so you can be there for others when they really need you.

Jill Lehman is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with a private practice in Lafayette, CA. She specializes in Grief & Bereavement. She welcomes your comments and can be reached at <http://www.anemptychair.com>

(c) Copyright - Jill Lehman

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Jill_Lehman



The following piece is by Gayle Schiller via www.tinybuddha.com. Gayle is a mom, teacher, writer, and actor. She has a haiku blog at 30poundsofhaiku.blogspot.com.

"We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." ~Martin Luther King Jr.

A few years ago, when my younger son was about ten, the reality of the losses that go with living in this beautiful but flawed world suddenly hit him. I'll never forget the conversation. This was a child born two months before 9/11, and since we live in a New York suburb and my husband worked across the street from the Twin Towers, what was a loss for so many has been my son's reality his whole life. Both of my sons are in the generation of children who live in a forever-changed United States.

Gayle Schiller, cont.

My sons have also grown up with me as a mother, a person forever changed by two monumental personal losses when I was twenty and twenty-one. I am the youngest of five. Above me were two brothers, then my two sisters. Both of my brothers died in the same year when they were just twenty-three and twenty-seven years old. One brother died by his own hand after several years of battling mental illness. My other brother died in a plane crash in Pakistan with fifty-three other people just ten months later.

What my son really wanted to know that day was "Why?" Why do we live in a world like this, where people we love die? What is the reasoning behind human life including such extraordinary pain? Why?

The why of loss is the ultimate question, isn't it? I can tell you that after twenty-five years of living with the loss of my brothers, the two people I was closest to in the world, I have no answers. Yet, that *is* the answer.

We don't know why these things happen. We can't possibly fathom why terrible things have happened in human history, over and over, both in big ways and in small. How could our limited human brains possibly come up with a justification for the most horrific losses, the greatest pains? They can't. It is beyond mere human understanding. It is a waste of precious time while we who are still here try to go on with our lives.

So what do we do? How do we go on when we are faced with excruciating loss?

I was a senior in college when my first brother died, and a professor (who was also a minister) gave me a crucial bit of advice that I took to heart. He simply said, "Try not to [become bitter](#)."

It is so easy to go the route of anger, resentment, self-pity, and the should-have mentality. It is worth fighting against, because it will eat you alive. Nothing is gained. The loss happened. I was so sad for years, and I still cry sometimes about them, but there is no undoing my brothers' deaths. Trust me, I often thought time-travel would be the perfect answer to bring my brothers back because it would allow me to do something different to save them. It's ridiculous and yet the brain will go there.

The biggest load off my shoulders, and it took years, was complete acceptance that they were gone.

Then, my college professor's sage advice kicked in. Don't become bitter. It happened, so now what? I'm still here. My brothers loved me so much; the last thing they would want is for me to not live my life to the fullest. [I can hear them now: Live. Love. Be here now. Marvel at life. See the good in everything. It is there.](#) So that is what I said to my son. They weren't just words; it is how I live my life now. Life *is* good. There is beauty all around us. There is devastation and pain and people who hurt others, but who knows why? We can help others deal with pain, we can comfort others; we should do this: we are all in this crazy, beautiful world together.

Just always remember: bad things will happen, but there is more good than bad. There is more happiness than sorrow. There is more life than death. It is all around us, as long as we are open to it.

The why of loss does not have an answer. The why of *life* has an infinity of answers. I am not bitter. I am a believer that life is a mystery, but it's amazing. I am here, so I will enjoy every precious moment. It's what my brothers would want. I accept life, and I am in awe of it.

We welcome contributions to the Newsletter, whether composed by you or found in your reading. Please submit suggestions to www.miamivalleytcf@gmail.com.

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

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 27th, 2015

Our Annual Butterfly Release!



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

*Miami Valley
Chapter
Newsletter*

TCF Chapter No. 1732
P.O. Box 292112
Kettering, OH 45429

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

March-April 2015