



# The Compassionate Friends NEWSLETTER

Manhattan Newsletter

HOLIDAY 2015 Vol. XXVII No. 4

*“The sorrow for the dead is the only sorrow from which we refuse to be divorced. Every other wound we seek to heal - every other affliction to forget. Not this wound we consider it a duty to keep open - this affliction we cherish and brood over in solitude”.*

*~ Washington Irving (1783 - 1859)*

## CHRISTMAS PAST, CHRISTMAS PRESENT

As the holidays approach, most bereaved parents feel anxiety, apprehension and some little bit of fear. The past is gone along with our beautiful children. We live in the now, the new reality, of holidays without our children.

This will be the fifth Christmas without my son Todd. It will be my fourth Christmas without his children. And yet, I find that on some small level, I am looking forward to the holiday. I imagine the Christmases of the past when Todd was growing up and after he started his family. I also imagine Christmases of the future where Todd’s children share in the traditions their Dad so dearly loved. But that won’t happen.

I have come to accept that wives and children go on with their lives. I have come to accept that my son’s children will not be a part of their father’s family, his heritage or his legacy. That is the reality.

But I have also found that wonderful people can help make the holiday special. I do very little at Christmas. Some shopping...most of it on the internet,

*(Continued on page 2)*

## CHRISTMAS WITHOUT MY CHILD

Last night we held our Compassionate Friends chapter meeting for November: the topic was Holidays and Grief. We met in small groups to discuss how we are going to get through this most difficult of times. While we found no single answer, we did make some discoveries about ourselves. We also found some basic ways to take control of our lives.



In our group of eleven were several newly bereaved parents. Deep sorrow and anxiety were apparent in each face as we opened the dialogue –a discussion of the holiday season without their children. This

anxiety and deep sorrow immediately became mine; I am that parent, I am still on the first leg of what may be a long journey without my child. Their tears were mine as we talked.

As the discussion progressed, I could see a bit of each parent’s tension slowly release. I felt as if I could read their minds: give me some answers, tell me I will survive this, tell me how you did it.

*(Continued on page 9)*

**TELEPHONE FRIENDS** - When you’re having the kind of day that you feel only another bereaved parent or sibling can understand, we are willing to listen and share with you. Don’t hesitate to call our Manhattan Chapter phone for meeting information (212) 217-9647. However, if you need to speak with someone please call one of the following volunteers: Jacquie Mitchell (eves) (347) 414-1780jacquienytcf@verizon.net .

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**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MEETINGS** are always the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.  
**Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church,**  
55th and 5th Avenue. Enter at 7 West 55th street.  
**We start PROMPTLY at 7:00PM.**

*The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. We are a group of bereaved parents who are seeking support in our grief or are able to give it. Among us, your religion, your race, your politics, your job or social standing are not important. We care about your grief –the tragedy that each of us has shared– and how we can grow through it, not back to the person we were but to the person we can become.*

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**CHRISTMAS PAST...** (continued from page 1)

a little in local stores. I send cash to my son's children. I don't know who or what they are these days, but cash is something far better than something that has no significance to them. I do get pleasure in a few things. I buy small toiletries for nursing home residents. I buy a gift for my Dad's sister who is now 88. I buy for my Mom's sister, my cousin her husband and her daughter. I buy for my best friend. That's enough buying. My husband and I decide whether we want something special for the two of us and if so, we buy it. Otherwise, we skip the gift giving. We won't be decorating this year, but we haven't decorated for five years.

We have changed our traditions... traditions that Todd loved so much. It is simply too painful to do this alone. We spend time with my family and a few friends. We marvel at the wonder that is Christmas for children. John and my aunt cook, and my cousin and her daughter and I clean up in the big country kitchen of my cousin's home. Gifts are exchanged. There is no Christmas tree but the three acres in front of the house are decorated with all kinds of lights and lighted figures. Santa and his reindeer are in the front garden. angels, reindeer and more gather in the west pasture and front yard. the house is framed in lights. it is quite lovely. for me that is enough.

Christmas will never be what it once was, but I no longer dread the holidays as I once did. Some of my comp-assionate friends have returned to old traditions

with their surviving children and maybe even with their grandchildren. Each of us learns to deal with the holidays in our own way. Each year I am a different person with a new perspective on the holidays. Next year I may decide to skip it all or immerse myself in the season. My truth is ever changing.

Find what is right for you. Pressures from others mean nothing. You chose whether a celebration is in order. You choose how to celebrate. You chose the old traditions or you choose some new ones... maybe you choose nothing and decide to go with the flow of the moment. As bereaved parents, you will always remember your child at Christmas, but as the years add up and grief starts to release its grip on your soul, you may find that you can keep your child in your heart and have room for the spirit of Christmas as well.

The holidays do get better. Life does get better. The days will gradually become softer and sweeter. The nights will ease into gentleness. Friendships will again have luster, and relationships will become deeper and more meaningful. That is the future for each of us. The present is driven by where we are in our grief. So for this and every Christmas Holiday season, be who you are and mark the day as you choose. May we all have serenity throughout the holiday season and in the years ahead.

~ **Annette Mennen Baldwin**,  
in memory of my son **Todd Mennen**  
TCF, Katy, TX

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## What Does it Mean??...

by **Marilyn Maras** in loving memory of 'Georgie' Maras, 2008

What does it mean  
to pass away?  
not seeing you  
from day to day.  
  
no more phone calls,  
nor letters too,  
no greeting cards  
stating "I love you".  
  
yet thoughts of you  
are in my mind  
from sunrise 'till  
day's end of time.  
  
I lost my Mom,  
I lost my Dad.  
but grief like this  
I've never had.

You were my child  
will always be,  
in God's house now,  
from pain you're free  
  
but missing you  
not one year yet,  
as seasons change  
I can't forget  
  
the pain I feel  
as tears now fall  
from losing you  
as I recall  
  
your precious laugh  
your voice, your smile,  
try to remember  
all the while

the good we shared  
when you were here,  
the laughs, the hugs  
when you were near.  
  
Those memories  
must warm my heart  
when pain of loss  
tears me apart.  
  
Until my tears  
will fall no more  
and heaven will  
open its doors,  
  
until its time  
for me to say  
"Hello my son,  
I'm here to stay".

**A LOVE GIFT** is a donation given in memory of a child who has died, or sometimes as a memorial to a relative or friend. It can be in honor of a happy event that you would like to acknowledge. Your contributions can be in any amount, are tax deductible and are a source of income for our chapter that helps us to reach out to bereaved parents and siblings through books, programs, meetings and this newsletter. In this issue we want to thank and acknowledge the following for their generous support of our chapter and especially, our newsletter. Note, on advice from our National office, because of concerns about identity theft we have changed our format and eliminated years from birth dates and anniversary dates.

**Judy & John Ebert** In memory of their daughter **Christine Ebert**, 1/8 - 4/4, forever 35

**Renee & Herve Sande** In memory of their grandson **Caleb Sande**, 12/29 - 9/3, forever 6

**Rosina Mensah** In memory of her son, **Kofi A. Mensah, Jr**, 5/31 - 11/29, forever 21  
In memory of **Charlie Campderrich**, 1/21 - 12/12, forever 23  
In memory of **Donald Brown**, 10/8 - 8/19, forever 16

**Siblings** - We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends. We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters. Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us. Sometimes we will need the support of our friends. At other times we need our families to be there. Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be. We cannot be our dead brother or sister, however a special part of them lives on with us. When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak. Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life. Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends©

## MY FIRST FIVE YEARS AS AN ONLY CHILD

I've been without my brother for five years. I guess the hard part is over now. Sometimes I think I have aged 30 years in the past five. In a strange way, these past five years have been the best and worst years of my life. I have accomplished the many things of a typical young adult learning to drive, graduating from high school, going to college, and starting a career.

Every one of my accomplishments has been clouded by the fact that my brother George is not here to share each milestone, and is not achieving any more milestones for himself. He was cheated of so many things. He will never graduate, get married, have children or travel. He will never grow old, and I will never have a brother to grow old with. I'll never have nieces and nephews. The sibling relationship, usually the longest relationship of one's life, has been cut short for us. In these five years, although I have learned to accept that he is not coming back, the difficult part is dealing with it day by day.

My relationship with George ended just when we started to become friends. The childish fights and other annoyances of having a big brother were changing to real conversations and to having an occasional ally. I am angry about all the things that we have missed and all the things that will never be, and I guess I always will be. Five years heals a lot of wounds, but the hurt will always be there, no matter how many years pass.

In these past five years, I have been forced to grow up too fast. I have been forced into a new outlook on life. I have felt lonely and alone. I now realize that I will never be the same person as before. Maybe I am a better person because of what I have been through. Five years ago I never thought I would survive, but I am still here dealing with it every day. I don't know what the next five years will bring, but at least I have made it this far.

--**Kristin Steiner**. TCF. Staten Island, NY

## TIME

I thought that time was healing  
All the hurt you left behind  
That empty spaces could be filled  
My arms, my heart, my mind

And though my body looks the same  
As it did when you were here  
The emptiness grows inside me  
More with each passing year

I thought that time was healing  
All the heartbreak and the pain  
That as the tears were fading  
Soon I wouldn't feel the same

And though I can be smiling  
And you think that I'll survive  
The pain is in my blood now  
I have nowhere else to hide

I thought that time was healing  
All the loss a mother feels  
That now you live within my heart  
I had you near me still

But I need so much to touch you  
To hold you close once more  
And those memories I'm told are mine  
Can never be as before

I thought that time was healing  
All the while the mask was being worn  
That underneath a new me  
Was waiting to be born

But now I find I am the mask  
It helps to keep me safe  
And though my heart is breaking  
You won't see it on my face

I thought that time was healing  
All those tears my eyes have seen  
That aching arms that miss you  
Could be satisfied with dreams

But here I am, in pain again  
And healing stands alone  
And a mother weeps, the world can see  
For a child who can't come home

Written by **Connie DeVol**  
In Memory of her son **AJ DeVol**  
[ckdevol@comcast.net](mailto:ckdevol@comcast.net)

## THANKFULNESS

**At this time of year, when it is oftentimes difficult to find things to feel thankful for, we are all truly thankful for the following:**

**THANKS** to those who had the courage to walk through our meeting room doors for the first time, as well as those who continue to come to meetings - not only for themselves - but also to reach out to newly bereaved members.

**THANKS** to those members, family and friends who support our chapter with their donation (Love Gifts) to help ensure that our chapter will exist for those who need us now and in the years to come.

**THANKS** to those who share their children, siblings and grandchildren with us at meetings through their personal stories, their tears, and, yes, laughter.

**THANKS** for those with their ready hugs, listening ears, and shoulders to cry on.

**THANKS** to past and present chapter leadership and all the volunteers who have helped keep our chapter a supportive and hopeful place for our members.

**THANKS** to those members who share treats, help us set up and clean up after meetings, and all the many important things that they do to support each other.

~ **Cathy Seehuetter**, TCF St. Paul, MN

“

Where are you? I have been searching for your continuation in a space that seems finished. I have wanted to believe you still exist somewhere else, somewhere separate, but near to me.

I need only to look inside. I will find you there, bright and whole, shining steady at the end of a silver thread of love that will connect us forever to the most powerful truth that has ever been or will ever be. ”

~ **Molly Fumia**  
Safe Passage

## The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting©

unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon.

As candles are lit at **7:00 p.m.** local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.



**The Compassionate Friends**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all  
children who have died

**Worldwide  
Candle  
Lighting®**

*... that their light  
may always shine.*

**Sunday, December 13, 2015  
7 PM Around the Globe**



Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 19th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WWCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

On **Sunday, December 13th** our Manhattan Chapter will join the Worldwide Candle Lighting by having our ceremony at **The Affinia Hotel - 31st Street at Seventh Avenue.**

Doors will **open at 5:45** and our program will begin promptly at **6:45** so that candles will be lit at **7PM.**

There will be an ongoing slide presentation of all of our children. You are invited to submit two photos - a "sunrise" (young) photo and a "sunset" one taken shortly before his or her anniversary date.

Photos should be emailed in .jpg format to:  
**[photosmtcf@gmail.com](mailto:photosmtcf@gmail.com)**

**PHOTOS MUST BE RECEIVED NO  
LATER THAN NOVEMBER 25TH**

Refreshments will be served. *Be sure to bring a framed photo that can be displayed in the ballroom during the evening.*

### **IN ADDITION:**

Our chapter will be sponsoring the National Office the week of **December 21st.** If you want to submit a short message and photo of your child, that will appear for the week on the TCF National website, send that to : **[jacquienytcf@verizon.net](mailto:jacquienytcf@verizon.net)** by December 5th

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## ...and for that, I am so grateful.

Strange things time markers. July 14th was Peter's birthday. If he had stayed with us, he'd be 44.

Instead he's forever an indelible 22. He's been gone 22 years. We have been without him as long as we were with him. Interesting that he is so present in my life, I feel like I had him longer than I've suffered without him present.

Less than a year after Peter died, a little grey kitten fell into our lives. He was born under a truck... and a lucky star. After a wonderful 21 year run, my Boomer joined Peter, Max, Daisy, Sammy, Ginger, Middle and Fluffy the day before Peter's birthday.

Having lost Peter, my child, I'm a bit confounded at how sad I feel about this loss. After all, he was just a cat. But I've learned that losing my child was about losing the love - or thinking in the beginning, that all love was lost. The worst had happened. My grief was so all consuming I never imagined I could feel bad about any other loss. So it started me reflecting once again on how dark and hopeless everything was 22 years ago and how far I've traveled on this tear stained path. Far enough to grieve the loss of my cat. Except that this grief, I know, will pass.

*"Motherhood is like Alabama - you can't trust the descriptions in the books, you have to go there".*

*- Marni Jackson, journalist*

So true. And so is grieving the loss of a child. You can't trust descriptions in the books... maybe those written by a bereaved parent. Only those of us who have been there know how it feels. And since there is no language adequate to describe what this catastrophe feels like, we speak in metaphor to civilians and find the most solace in the company of others who travel with us. No explanations necessary. We just know.

*On becoming a parent -*

*"Everything we did was a first, first bath, first walk, first drive in the car, it was like we walked into an alternate universe that looked just like the old one, but all the rules were different and we had to relearn how to live".*

*- Soleil Moon Frye, Actor*

Wow. Couldn't this quote have been made by a newly bereaved parent instead of a new parent? In our alternate universe we have a slew of firsts; all painful and designed as markers leading to what we naively think will be the end of mourning. The first week, the first month, first birthday, Valentine's Day, Spring, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Summer, Fall, Halloween,

Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years...anniversary. That dreaded first anniversary when each day in the final week brings us back to thinking "last year it was his last Monday...Tuesday...Thursday...Saturday...", anticipation of that commemorative first anniversary taking our breath away. Once again, all the rules are different and we have to relearn how to live.

I am the mother of just one child - and he is no longer present. The memory of him is as vivid as if he was here yesterday. I see his image in my mind's eye and I hear his booming voice and contagious laugh. I am so sorry he only had 22 years with us, but I am even sorrier for me for all I've lost as a result of his leaving. And yet - my life is richer for having had him and having the memory of all that he was. If I had never had a child I would never have known the intensity of love that Peter brought to my life. That ignorance would not have been bliss, for it would have denied my understanding and empathy for so much of life's connections. At the 22nd anniversary of his passing, I know Peter was and still is the best thing that ever happened to me. Despite the pain and sorrow of his passing, Peter continues to bring value to my life, and for that, I am so grateful.

**Marie Levine, 2015**

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## GIVING THANKS

I cannot hold your hands today.

I cannot see your smile.

I cannot hear your voices now,

My children who are gone.

But I recall your faces still,  
the songs, the talks, the sighs.

and story times, and winter walks,  
and sharing secret things.

I know you helped my mind to live  
beyond your time with me.

you gave me clearer eyes to see.

you gave me finer ears to hear,

what living means, what dying means,  
my children who are gone.

So here it is Thanksgiving Day,  
and you are not with me.

And while I weep a Mother's tears,

I thank you for the gifts you were,

and all the gifts you gave to me,

my children, who are gone.

**~Sascha Wagner**

The answers were all different; the reassurances of parents who had lost their child and survived that first heartbreaking holiday were there. Some of the answers came from the newly bereaved as they explored their inner feelings. We found consensus on one important factor: we must give ourselves permission to do what makes us most comfortable. We are not the caretakers to the world right now; we must take care of ourselves. If established traditions bother us, then we must turn to something else. What is the point of pouring salt into this open wound? Perhaps next year or the year after, when the wound is not so fresh, we will want to return to former traditions. Perhaps not.

Through tears and some light laughter, we realized that we are not invincible. We are not responsible for the happiness of friends and extended family. We do not have to meet the expectations of others. We must accept our emotional limitations and the psychological and physical toll that grief takes on us. We must slow down and change our perspective. We must do what is right for us, especially during the holidays.

Most of those who had been through at least one holiday season without their child felt that making changes for the first year or two was a positive step forward. We found that talking honestly with our family about our feelings might make them feel temporarily uncomfortable but it did clear the air about expectations. We agreed that limiting our casual social relationships negated the need to make explanations regarding our lack of interest in holiday celebrations. By “dropping out” we also eliminated obligations in many areas. This gives us the freedom to choose simplicity over stress, essentials over hassles and flexibility over anxiety. This gives us the opportunity to live in the moment, go where our emotions take us and listen to our hearts.

While we all agreed that the holidays are overwhelming for parents whose children have died, we also agreed that we are each individuals and we each perceive the world differently. Some of us want and need the old traditions during the holiday season. Some of us need to be with people who are not part of our grieving process. Others among us felt that solitude and simplicity were the answer.

The answer to the question of how we get through the holidays is found within each one of us. We each have our own truth. The challenge, we decided, is to honor that truth and hold the line against external pressures.

A few of our newly bereaved parents could barely choke out a word or two. Others were more vocal. While grief consumes some of us for many, many years, others appear to “go with the flow” of life very early in their grief. What feels right for one of us may be abhorrent to someone else. One universal truth did emerge from our conversations: we miss our beautiful children and love them as deeply as when they walked beside us. We live in this purgatory each day of the year, but during the holidays it seems most oppressive. Our children have been torn from our lives forever. Daily life and special traditions will always reflect the deep void that has become our reality.

We need our Compassionate Friends at the holiday season. We need to know that others have walked this road, have lived this nightmare and have managed to survive. We each continue to rediscover hope through our Compassionate Friends. And in finding that hope we have given and received the purest gift of the season: the possibility of peace.

**Annette Mennen Baldwin**

In memory of my son, **Todd Mennen**

TCF, Katy, TX

November 9, 2005

## A TRIP TO THE EASTERN REGIONALS TCF CONFERENCE

In King of Prussia, PA, October 9th to 11th it was the weekend of the Eastern Regional Compassionate Friends Conference. Five of us from the Manhattan Chapter of TCF gathered at the church on W55th St to make the drive to join a score of other members from the Chapter and about 300 or so more TCF members in King of Prussia. As I leave to go to a conference, I always wonder why I am going to spend a weekend away with hundreds of other parents who have lost children – sounds depressing. After I get there and spend time with so many others navigating life going forward in the same boat sharing common experience at a conference, it is always a good feeling being in a small world where I don't have to be careful thinking, talking, crying about my son, Ben.

Friday arrival was busy – our two hour trip to the Radisson was three – we were having such a good time talking while riding on the NJ Turnpike, no one remembered to watch for our exit and we went 20 miles past it. Thank you GPS mapping systems for guiding us to where we needed to go.

We got to our rooms, picked up our packets at registration, and each picked up our child's rose for the Reflection Room. We wrote messages to our children and posted them with the roses on a Wall of Remembrance that kept growing in meaning as more people arrived. I came back often to the Reflection Room; it just felt right to be there and think about my Ben and the families attached to each of the roses on the wall.

After dinner, (the food throughout the conference was superb), we heard a moving talk by Richard Gilbert, and took off to the club to see our own Jordan Ferber perform. Can you imagine a comedian performing to an audience of bereaved parents??? Tough crowd, you'd think. But Jordan, gets it and somehow knows how to make even the bereaved laugh, don't ask me how. He was really on that night and I laughed like I haven't laughed in the four years since Ben died. Thank you, Jordan. I slept well that night.

On Saturday we had a day of workshops covering a multitude of topics – some for people in virtually every phase of the grieving process. The choices were well thought out and wide ranging. I learned something about myself, something about my comrades in grief, and something about TCF in every one. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner were superb with thoughtful and moving presentations to follow each one from Alan Pedersen, Gloria and Heidi Horsley, BJ and Doug Jensen, and Alicia Franklin. A half

dozen of us from NYC sat at the same table each meal along with people we met from the Philadelphia area. So we met new people and made new friends, but had people most familiar nearby for comfort when the stories told became really moving. Thank you friends, it all just worked.

Sunday morning was time for breakfast, a moving and uplifting presentation by Alicia Franklin, and the butterfly release. Each of us received an envelope with a butterfly inside. As I walked outdoors, I opened the envelope and watched the butterfly awaken to the air outside, climb out of the envelope and fly off on its journey to come. Watching the butterfly, I had plenty of time to watch and think about my own journey, Ben's journey through life, and think about the journey's to come - hoping our journeys will be as beautiful and uplifting as the butterfly flying off to freedom.

The Eastern PA chapters just did a fantastic job. Thank you all. I look forward to the next regional conference – but before that, I'm going to Scottsdale, AZ for the National TCF Conference in July.

~ **Dan Zweig**, TCF Manhattan

First I want to give thanks and praise to God who is the keeper of my soul. I thank the Compassionate friends organization for affording me the opportunity to attend the Eastern Pennsylvania Regional conference, October 2015. I needed this conference! My sweet, darling daughter Claris died March 26, 2013. I use to say when talking to people, "Claris was my daughter," but no, Claris IS my daughter. Coming to monthly meetings at the Compassionate friends helps me get through my pain. I was looking in Claris eyes the day she died. I was so angry. I couldn't cry. Now I am a weeping willow. I cry just walking in the church door but for some reason, while my son and family cried and wept at the passing of Claris, I was too mad. Words can't really express how happy I'm to have gone to the conference. Everything was so good! I was able to let my hair down, socialize with the people, we all had that thing in common. The conference theme, "From a broken heart emerges hope and healing," is very fitting for what I got out of it because for the first time the tears just flowed. BJ Jensen and her husband and their love in motion artistry was heartfelt. Every time they performed I cried. Mary, a woman I met gave me long lasting advice on forgiveness. Thanks Mary. The sibling group's sharing helped me put the pieces together in my mind. Claris left a brother behind.

I can't name every person individually so I will say thank you for every introduction, every workshop, oh Gosh, I could go on and on. I'm just so happy I cried! Tears clean the soul.

~ **Crystal Glover**, TCF Manhattan

## THE TCF REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA - A CITY OF BEREAVEMENT AND HOPE

Indeed, this felt like a whole city. This was a place made up of about two hundred and fifty people, all family members of a very special tribe - related to each other through our kids, or grandkids, or siblings. The conference allowed us to show our understanding of and identifying with each other through our unbearable grief, as we were holding each other when the tears kept falling and falling... And indeed, it was very hard for me to leave that city of those bereaved relatives of mine and to get back to the hustle bustle of New York City and my daily life. On the ensuing mornings, upon waking up, I kind of kept looking for them to be there for me... I wished we could have more of the presence of each other, all of the time, be with each other all of the time, support each other all of the time... Namely, to live, perhaps, in a city that we built just for us, where the only qualifications for admission would be being A BEREAVED PARENT, A BEREAVED GRANDPARENT, or A BEREAVED SIBLING...

So much for wishes, but that is what a powerful impact the regional TCF conference at King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, had on me.

Of the workshops offered, I particularly remember AFTER DEATH COMMUNICATION by Bill Guggenheim, the author of the book HELLO FROM HEAVEN. As he told the workshop participants, Mr. Guggenheim had been involved for many years in research about after life communications, namely: Direct and spontaneous communications people had from loved ones who had passed, without the involvement of a medium. This workshop reduced my doubts about the existence of the after life, and made it look a lot more real. There came, once again, the hope that, perhaps, I will someday be reunited with my son, after all. I will definitely read the book. NOW I HAVE MORE HOPE!

Another workshop that I found quite beneficial was NOW CHILDLESS, presented by Kay Bevington. Having lost her only child, Kay founded the organization ALIVE ALONE, for parents who lost their only child or all of their children (information about ALIVE ALONE can be found on the internet). This workshop dealt with issues specific to now childless parents, such as: Where do we direct our need to nurture? Who are we going to leave our assets to? How do we survive the holidays? What do we do on Mother's Day? To me, Kay could be something like a role model. A very strong woman, it seems, she has traveled the bereavement road for twenty years ( I have been there two and a half years only). Listening to her, I began to think that perhaps I, too, could survive it all. NOW I HAVE EVEN MORE HOPE!

There were many more workshops such as: DEATH BY SUICIDE; DEATH AFTER A LONG TERM ILLNESS; DEATH OF A TROUBLED CHILD; HOPE IN THE EARLY YEARS; HOW DIFFERENT CULTURES GRIEVE, ; GRIEF IN FATHERS AND SIBLINGS; HOPE IN THE EARLY YEARS; GRANDPARENTS

GRIEF. REINVESTING IN LIFE, and even HUMOR IN GRIEF. I wished there were more time to go to them all... There were also speakers during meals and sharing sessions.

I could not conclude this writing without expressing my deep gratitude to our own Jacquie Edwards-Mitchell, for arranging a ride to the hotel for some of us. Thank you, Dan Zweig, for driving and getting us there. Special thanks to my fellow riders, who were real family throughout - while in the car as well as at the table, during meals, particularly when I felt I was falling apart crying. And thank you, conference organizers, for planning it all - with so much love and devotion... Before I forget, I must also thank our own Jordon Ferber, a standup comedian, for making us laugh with his presentation, in spite of it all.

Now back in New York City, I miss that City of Bereavement and Hope of mine... I am looking forward, therefore, to be there again soon - at the next TCF conference.

~Rachel Gordon, TCF Manhattan

I registered for the Philadelphia 2015 Regional Conference after my first meeting at the Manhattan chapter. For the first time since May 7, 2015 when my brother Philip passed, I was not alone.

I attended the conference without expectation. My first evening there Jordon Ferber headlined a comedy show where he brought the house down with tears of laughter. It felt so good to laugh like that again.

Bright and early Saturday morning the workshops began. With every workshop I found insight from the siblings who shared their stories. That evening we had keynote speakers and music from BJ and Love In Motion, who touched our hearts and souls, and a beautiful candlelight ceremony led by Alan Pederson. There was not a dry eye in the room.

Sunday morning we were all waiting in anticipation to see if Mother Nature would cooperate so we could have the butterfly release. After our closing ceremonies the temperature rose just enough to set the butterflies free. Afterwards we all said our good byes.

From the tragic death of our beloved children and siblings we've come together to be a part of this strange club that unites and supports all in acceptance, compassion and love.

Thank you to all the people at TCF who touched my life that weekend. Thank you for your wonderful stories that helped enlighten me. Thank you for your support and guidance and mostly for allowing me to share my story in such a safe and nurturing haven.

~Lisa R. Sulzer, TCF Manhattan

## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CHAT SCHEDULE

**Go to:** [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org), and click on CHAT. Times are Eastern Standard Time.

EDT	9:00-10:00AM	8:00-9:00PM	9:00-10:00PM	10:00-11:00PM
MON			<b>General Bereavement Issues &amp; Grandparents/Stepparents</b>	<b>General Bereavement Issues &amp; Men's Chat</b>
TUE			<b>General Bereavement Issues, Bereavement over 2 years &amp; Pregnancy Loss/Infant Death</b>	<b>General Bereavement Issues &amp; Pregnancy Loss/Infant Death</b>
WED	<b>Newly Bereaved</b>		<b>September 11 Families &amp; Siblings</b>	<b>General Bereavement Issues</b>
THU		<b>No Surviving Children</b>	<b>General Bereavement Issues &amp; Siblings</b>	<b>General Bereavement Issues</b>
FRI		<b>Suicide</b>	<b>Special Needs Children</b>	<b>General Bereavement Issues</b>
SAT				<b>General Bereavement &amp; Siblings</b>
SUN	<b>Siblings</b>		<b>General Bereavement Issues &amp; Siblings</b>	<b>General Bereavement Issues &amp; Siblings</b>

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***We Need Not Walk Alone***  
TCF National Magazine  
1 yr. subscription \$20

**Deadline for Newsletter article submissions:**  
Fall: August 1st Spring/Summer: April 1st  
Winter: February 2nd Holiday: October 1st

**Mark Your Calendars!**  
Our next Chapter meetings are Tuesdays:  
NOV 10 DEC 8 JAN 12 FEB 9 MAR 8  
NOV 24 DEC 22 JAN 26 FEB 23 MAR 22

### OUR COMPASSIONATE FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS

Brookhaven	2nd Friday	(631) 738-0809	Staten Island	2nd and 4th Thursday	(718) 983-0377
Flushing	3rd Friday	(718) 746-5010	Syosset (Plainview)	3rd Friday	(718) 767-0904
Manhasset	3rd Tuesday	(516) 466-2480	Twin Forks/Hamptons	3rd Friday	(631) 653-9444
Marine Park, Bklyn	3rd Friday	(718) 605-1545	White Plains	1st Thursday	(914) 381-3389
Rockville Centre	2nd Friday	(516) 766-4682	HOT LINE		(516) 781-4173
Rockland County	3rd Tuesday	(845) 398-9762			



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