NEWSLETTER

We Understand!

The Compassionate Friends
Greater Omaha Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MISSION STATEMENT

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

P.O. Box 540852, Omaha, NE 68154 | 402.571.4011 | mail@tcfomaha.org facebook.com/tcfomaha www.tcfomaha.org

UPCOMING MEETINGS

NOVEMBER
Embrace the uniqueness of your grief. Dr. Wolfelt's next installment for helping with your grief. Much like you, your grief is unique.

DECEMBER
Holidays, Birthdays, and Anniversaries.

JANUARY
tentatively... another Wolfelt's touchstone, Explore your feelings of loss.

Electronic vs print? *Please update us with your current emails and addresses, many are removed from our list every month because they are no longer deliverable.*

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BIRTHDAY TABLE

In the month of your child's birthday, a Birthday Table is provided at the support group meeting, where you can share **photos**, **mementos**, your **child's favorite snack of a birthday cake**, a **bouquet of flowers**, or **anything you'd like to share**.

Please take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the wonderful day your hold was born.

GIFTS OF *love*

In this month of Thanksgiving, we would like to thank all of you who remember your child through a love gift donation to THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS. This is our only source of income so that we are able to put out the newsletter, chapter library and support group programs, offer the Worldwide Candle Lighting and Walk to Remember, and annual brick dedication.

We are truly thankful that so many of you find comfort in The Compassionate Friends.

Thank You!

— The TCF Steering Committee

Additional Worldwide Candle Lighting information on page 7

National Office: The Compassionate Friends P.O. Box 3696 Oakbrook IL 60522-3696 | (877) 969-0010 | www.compassionatefriends.org
Nebraska Regional Coordinator: Kelly Pelster (402) 676-3670 tcfneb.kelly@gmail.com

WHY HOPE ALONE IS NOT A STRATEGY FOR HEALING GRIEF

by Nan Zastrow, Grief Blog

http://griefdigestmagazine.com/2013/05/why-hope-alone-is-not-a-strategy-for-healing-grief/

Clem clung to hope when the flood waters were rising. As the Mississippi river flooded over its banks, and the levy breached, Clem watch the water rush through his neighborhood drowning the homes around him. The waves of rushing water in its fury continued to rise, and two men in a row boat sailed Clem's way. They called out to Clem and asked him if he'd like to come aboard. "No, thanks," Clem shouted. "My God will save me. He climbed to the second story of his home as the waters washed the sides of his home and continued to rise. A speed boat came by and the driver called out to Clem to rescue him. Clem answered, "No thanks. My God will save me." Finally, in a desperate attempt, Clem climbed onto his roof to escape the rising flood water. A helicopter flew over and dropped a rope calling to Clem to hold on. "I'll be okay," Clem shouted, "My God will save me!" But, Clem drowned. At the Pearly Gates, St Peter asked him why he arrived so soon. Clem told his story and said, "I thought for sure my God would save me." St Peter was a little surprised, and responded…"What more did you want? We sent you a row boat, a speed boat and a helicopter?"

Clem's actions serve as a lesson about "hope." Hope is a positive attribute, don't ever think otherwise. We live our lives with hope, most often we hope for small things. But hope without some backup plan or some strategy may be disappointing and even threatening in times of crisis. In its simplest terms, hope is a wish or a desire. It doesn't make things happen all by itself. Hope must be developed, cultivated, and nurtured to benefit from all it has to offer.

When a loved one dies, we are encouraged to look for hope. I'm a great believer in hope. I've written dozens of articles about the pursuit of hope in grief. Only recently have I accepted that hope doesn't always come easy; and it often doesn't "just happen." Maybe we expect it will bop us on the head to notify us that it is present. But hope may not come with a symphony of trumpets to announce its arrival. Like many things in life (and just like healing grief), hope typically requires some action on our part. Hope is achieved through perseverance, self-direction, planning, and commitment. In grief, hope is ultimately found through a strategy of healing. Hope alone is not the strategy. Instead, it is the catalyst for making a difference in our lives.

Looking for Hope in the Wrong Places

During grief, we may feel empty and helpless. We've lost our zest for life. The world has changed and unless we can grasp something that can give us meaning and purpose, we may be vulnerable. We can choose to drown in our sorrow or pursue a strategy. Sometimes we may be looking for hope in all the wrong places:

Hope cannot be found:

By placing blame on someone or something—believing that if we could substantiate the blame, we would have hope that things would get better.

Expecting to be rescued. Maybe we expect others to come to our rescue and bail us out from the helplessness we feel. In truth, others can be our companions, but they can't do the required healing work for us.

In speaking negatively about our circumstances in life. If we continue to seek sympathy or pity after a period of time, our family and friends may isolate themselves from us because they fear that nothing they can do will take away our sorrow.

Expecting our family and friends to be responsible for our future happiness. Though they show us love and support, they can't heal our pain. It's up to us to reconcile with our regrets, guilt, and the anger that controls our grief.

Expecting the wounds of the loss to be obliterated just through the passage of time. Time alone does not heal the pain. Without pursing a healthy outlook for the future, our wounds will only fester and deteriorate our emotional and spiritual self.

What is an effective strategy for hope?

Progress is made when we self-motivate ourselves to seek answers, understanding, and healing. Choosing positive ways to take action will heal our grief.

How to find hope in all the right places

An effective strategy for hope comes from within. It begins with a desire to find a turning point after the death of your loved one that

allows you to accept the challenges handed to you and honor your life and your loved one by making a difference.

Each of us has the ability to find hope that is unique to each of us, individually, when we are motivated to actively move beyond the pain we feel. It begins with the mindset that "things" need to change. I remember thinking, after the death of our son, " I can't go on like this anymore. Wallowing in my grief will only make me miserable. I won't allow it to destroy my relationship with my husband and family." This was the initial strategy for hope for me.

Another strategy for finding hope may be to honor with purpose your loved one's life. Consider what he or she was passionate about. What was his or her personal "cause." Then continue the "cause" or passion as a tribute. For example, perhaps your loved one cared for animals. Volunteer at the Humane Society. Or maybe cancer caused the death. Do a walk for cancer. Perhaps a flower garden was his or her passion…allow yourself to bloom in the beauty of a garden. Determine what you can do to carry on the purpose and memories of your loved one's life.

A strategy for hope is grief education. Learn all that you can about what you are going through. Understand the ramifications of allowing grief to control your life.

Recreate who you are and who you were meant to be. We are changed by significant grief experiences. Sometimes our world before isn't the kind of world we want to live in after the death. We discover more meaningful relationships, opportunities, and possibilities that can change us into someone we never dreamed we could be. I never dreamed I would write or talk publicly to people. And even if I did, talking about death and grief was the furthest thing from my mind.

Share your healing with others. Telling your story and sharing your grief journey with another bereaved person can aid them through the dark days of abandonment and fear. We all need someone to put a hand on our shoulder and say, "You can make it through this. How can I help?" Oh, what hope you give!

Giving back and sharing your compassion and empathy with those who need it. The world is hurting in so many ways, not just the death of a loved one. Many people need support , comforting, understanding, and maybe just someone to talk to. Kids and youth need to be understood. The elderly need to be acknowledged for their contributions and made to feel worthy in every stage of their lives. Food shelters require stocking. The poor and the sick need guidance to resources and healing. Lend a helping hand.

Reconnect and value family and friends. Family should be our focus in our recovery. The importance of our roots to our biological family and strengthening the ties that bind us to extended and "chosen" family will always be home base. Mend fences. Build bridges. The power of love in a circle of family and friends can be the strongest source of hope.

Faith, of course, is our greatest source for hope. It's the power that reaches beyond the ability to understand, and simply trust. When we believe that "this too shall pass", we step off into the abyss of the unknown with the power and ability to fly.

The Power of Hope:

I believe in the power of HOPE. I believe that through our grief everyone has the ability to find hope.

I believe hope is found in

- saying yes instead of no;
- loving the concept of living; dying can wait;
- turning the sad memories, to stories of the living soul;
- forgiving the unforgivable, not planning for revenge;
- counting your blessings; not your challenges;
- mending relationships instead of replacing them;
- saying, "I'll always remember", not "I'll never stop missing you;"
- getting up, instead of laying down;
- giving in gracefully, when you have nothing to gain;
- letting go, when you can't change the outcome;
- looking for the miracle; not just waiting for it to happen;
- strengthening your spiritual self, not being angry at God for your lack of faith;
- counting your steps forward; not the ones that sometimes drift back;
- saying, "what next?" instead of "why me?

Hope begins your journey. Believe in it. Trust in it. Imagine it. Build a strategy! Feel the energy! Allow yourself to be enveloped with its radiant embrace. You have begun. You will see dignity and grace in others. Compassion in the human touch. Faith in a power far greater than you. Peace in the order of all things. Wonder in the roads not traveled. Promise in what is yet to be.

LOVE GIFTS

To protect the privacy of our members, this information has been removed from the pulic version of the newsletter.

Please subscribe for a complete copy. mail@tcfomaha.org

BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY CALENDARS

To protect the privacy of our members, this information has been removed from the pulic version of the newsletter.

Please subscribe for a complete copy. mail@tcfomaha.org

LOVE GIFTS · ADDRESS CHANGE · AUTHORIZATIONS

Mail to: The Compassionate Friends, PO Box 540852, Omaha, NE 68154

YOUR NAME

ADDRESS EMAIL

CITY STATE ZIP PHONE

CREDIT CARD NUMBER

CVC EXPIRATION DATE TODAY'S DATE

Gift of $_____

Direct my gift toward: ☐ General Fund ☐ Angel of Hope
☐ Outreach (printing, postage, phone, web)

In Memory of:

Message:

2014 Authorization *Initial each selection*

____ Publish my child's name/dates in the newsletter as long as I am on the mailing list.

____ Add my child's name to the 2014 Walk to Remember Banner in my absence.

____ Use my child's photo in the December 2014 Worldwide Candle Lighting Slide Show.

____ Newsletters and notices will be sent electronically unless paper is requested.
☐ Paper ☐ Unsubscribe

CHILD'S NAME

BIRTH DATE DEATH DATE

YOUR RELATIONSHIP

December 14th, 2014

KROC Center
2825 Y Street Omaha, NE. 68107

We light a candle every year, the second sunday in December, at 7:00pm for one local time around the globe creating a 24-hour wave of light.

We invite you, your family, and friends who grieve the loss of a child any age, to join in this moving tribute, realizing you are not alone, and that your child, grandchild, sibling, or friend is remembered during the holiday season.

Submit the 2014 Authorization form [to the left] along with a photo by Nov 30th to photos@tcfomaha.org or TCF Omaha, PO Box 540852, Omaha NE 68154

You are welcome to bring a framed picture for your table.

Doors open at 6:00 pm.

Program begins at 6:30 pm.

THANKSGIVING

NOVEMBER

Cool days, chilly nights, autumn leaves changing colors, football games, apple cider and pumpkin pie. Ah. November! ... Is it November already? Oh, no! Make it go away! Just let me sleep; wake me up in January. November is here, the start of the holiday season.

This is the time of year most bereaved parents dread.

This is the time of year when thoughts turn to spending time with family and friends and celebrating. Holiday decorations start popping up everywhere you turn and holiday music begins to play at the malls and on the radio. People are busy cleaning their home, and are all abuzz with getting ready for. ... Oh, no! Thanksgiving!

Everyone is asking "what are you doing for Thanksgiving?" For the bereaved parent, especially the newly bereaved, this question can become daunting and almost horrifying. What am I doing for Thanksgiving?

Thanksgiving - giving thanks. But I don't feel very thankful.

How can I be thankful, when my child lives no more?

How can I be thankful, when he/she will never again walk through my front door? How can I be thankful, when my eyes are filled with tears?

How can I be thankful, when he/she won't be here throughout the years?

How can I be thankful, when my heart will never mend?

How can I be thankful, when l've lost my dearest friend?

How can I be thankful, when his/her hugs and kisses have now ceased?

How can I be thankful, and sit down to a feast?

How can I be thankful, when my heart is filled with sorrow?

How can I be thankful, when I can hardly make it to tomorrow?

What do you answer? What will you do this year? For some, the choice is to keep the same tradition they have in the past. Others choose to remain home and ignore the holiday completely.

There are parents who go on vacation or go out to Thanksgiving dinner at a restaurant. Newly bereaved parents may question "what am I supposed to do?" There is no standard right or wrong answer. Whatever feels the most comforting is the right answer for you. Family members or friends might disagree with your decision and say you are wrong. This often happens if you decide to break tradition, want to be alone, or decide not to celebrate at all. People can become very insistent, and tell you that Thanksgiving is about being with others. I have found that my choice has varied over the years from choosing to be alone and not acknowledge the holiday at all; to going to friends' and family members' homes; to just having dinner at home and when asked, I say, "I know that you may not like my answer, but still. I need to do what is best for me."

However you decide to spend this Thanksgiving, please remember that for however short or long your precious, awesome, amazing, wonderful child was with you here on earth, you are blessed to be their parent. You have been given a most spectacular gift—a one of a kind, unique, extraordinary child to carry in your heart, thoughts, and soul for all eternity. And this is a reason to be forever thankful.

From my home and heart to yours - may you have a blessed Thanksgiving and may it be filled with peace.

Bev Rosen Katowitz TCF, Charlotte, NC

LIGHTS OF LOVE

Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purest white

Children we remember
Though missing from our sight
In honor and remembrance
We light candles in the night

All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space
Can you see the candles burning
From this human place?

Oh, angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above

Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who know great sorrow,
But as we remember our yesterdays
Let's light one candle for tomorrow

We will not forget,
And every year in deep December
On Earth we will light candles
As.....we remember

Jacqueline Brown, TCF Peace Valley, PA

Healing Holiday Rituals for Grieving Children

WHAT HELPS WHEN IT HURTS

Holidays can be very difficult for a grieving family. Images of family togetherness and often unrealistic expectations of the holiday season are everywhere; in the malls, on television and on the fronts of greeting cards. So how does a family celebrate the holidays when a loved one is so sorely missed? Creating new therapeutic rituals and new family traditions is a good start and can be very healing.

Here are some suggestions that might help the family get started.

- ☐ Buy a strand of (battery powered) miniature lights, string them on a miniature tree, decorate it, and place at the grave. Family and friends can bring miniature ornaments to trim the tree.
- ☐ Meet at the grave site, light a candle, and sing a favorite holiday carol.
- ☐ Plant a living thing to commemorate your loved one. Make the planting a ritual with invited family and friends. Serve punch and cookies after the planting.
- ☐ If your loved one loved animals, make a donation to the Humane Society in his or her name or take the children to the Humane Society with a gift of dog or cat food. Write a gift card: Happy Holidays! (sign with your loved one's name). Have the children use the money they would have spent on gifts to purchase the cat or dog food.
- ☐ Purchase or make a Memorial Candle. Light it each evening and place it by a picture of your loved one. Also, light it beside the dinner table on Christmas Day.
- ☐ Take time to have family members share their favorite stories about your loved one on Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, Hanukkah or other holidays.
- ☐ Set a place for your loved one at the holiday dinner table. Place a candle or flower on the plate in his or her honor.
- ☐ For the Thanksgiving Holiday blessing, write your own. A good start would be: Lord, we miss and remember _____, but we are thankful for _____.
- ☐ Set aside some time before opening gifts todiscuss the non-material gifts that your loved one gave the family: Family values, morals and/or beliefs.
- ☐ Instead of signing his or her name on your holiday cards, add a symbol of your loved one: a butterfly, an angel, a bird, the sun, a star, a heart, a flower, balloons or a rainbow. Purchase a special stamp and pad with this logo on it and use it often.
- ☐ For the New Year: Make a resolution to your loved one that you will work on your healing in the new year.

by Denise Stone RN, MS Certified Grief Counselor,
From: For Those Who Give and Grieve, Volume 9, Number 2 Fall 2000

Suggested Holiday Letter to Family and Friends

Thank you for not expecting too much from us this holiday season.

The absence of our child when the "whole family" gathers seems to accentuate our incomplete family. It is difficult to cope with the "spirit" of the holidays on the radio, TV, in the newspapers and stores. We will need the patience and understanding of our family and friends to help us through the holidays as best we can.

Our family traditions may be too painful for us to continue this year. We may want to change the way we spend Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Hanukkah. Please understand this and maybe some time in the future we will have these traditions again. Whatever our thoughts are for coping with the day, please take our feelings into consideration when you make your plans.

Please allow us to talk about our child, if we feel a need. Perhaps the single most helpful thing you can do for us is to include our child in the holidays. We want to hear his/her name, to have you recall fond memories of their lives, to know that you, too, are feeling their absence and remembering them with love.

As we work through our grief, we will need your patience and support, especially during these holiday times and the "special" days throughout the year.

Thank you for not expecting too much from us this holiday season.

Love, a bereaved parent/family.

Marge Henning, TCF West Orange and Madison, WI

FIRST CHRISTMAS

It can't possibly be Christmas
without her being here.
Yet the world is singing round me,
joyful tidings and good cheer.

Though I try to put on armor
and brave the sights and sounds,
a few moments worth of shopping,
and the tears are spilling down.

I pray for strength to do it,
find a path through holidays,
look for shortcuts, good ideas,
some directions through the maze.

Then I find at last the answer:
I'll include her symbolically.
And the giving becomes perfect;
her love's flowing down, through me.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry,
from Stars in the Deepest – After the Death of a Child

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

Bobby, sometimes you come to me in the most unexpected ways. Your cousin, Kyle, called you the Velveteen Rabbit, because you were so soft as all babies are.

Although I can now enjoy Christmas with your sisters, there is still a special hurt that comes with the holidays because you aren't with us. And each Christmas Eve as I put a note to you in your stocking and light your candle, I cry as I listen to a carol that plays in the china rocking horse with a baby angel riding it. I miss you so much, it is almost unbearable.

But this Christmas morning, as we opened presents, there in the very last gift I opened, was a Velveteen Rabbit, a very special gift from your daddy. Sometimes you come to me in the most surprising ways. I love you.

- Phyllis Gabelhause, TCF, Omaha NE.

LOOKING FOR YOUR GIFT

Bereaved families often face the holidays with fear and trepidation.

Just the fact, holidays continue to go on, can cause outrage. Our sadness is monumental, and causes our bodies to resist moving on. We need to be gentle with ourselves; we are going through an emotional rehabilitation. Holidays often renew our grief, even if we are a distance from fresh grief.

We need to selectively choose what traditions are important to our family. If we over commit, we set our selves up for a let down when we cannot meet our goals. If you have some traditions that are very important and you are not physically up to doing them, you will find friends and extended family will feel honored if you ask for their help. Most people want to help you get through the holidays, but don't know what to do. Give them the opportunity to feel they are helpful in your healing.

Grieving cannot be put on the shelf until the holidays are over.

We need to take time to feel our grief, and express our sadness. We also need to take time to try and put a bit of normality in our lives. We must remember it is not disrespectful to laugh. I'm sure our loved one would want us to surround ourselves with caring people who can help us through the holidays. A caring supportive person is one who encourages us to be the best we can be, not one who expects us to be as we used to be.

Our healing will eventually cause our pain to move out and make room for our loved ones memories. We learn to make a new life for ourselves.

Holidays get better and we learn how to live again.

We tend to think of life's richest moments as being the joyous, fun filled, carefree days prior to losing our children and siblings. But, as I search for the most meaningful things that have given me strength and a real appreciation for life, they certainly do include the pain, overcoming my despair, losing my son, grandson, and six siblings. We cherish the friendships that doesn't always demand a smiling face, and those with the warm touch that says, "share your pain, let me be a part of your grief, don't worry about making us uneasy with tears, we have all been there." Much healing can take place through sharing as we learn to be very honest and courageous with our feelings, which helps us to find hope.

Hope helps to restore our love for life, and gives us the strength to survive.

This holiday we will all miss our loved ones, who are no longer with us. Though it has been through much pain, you probably have never been so close to your child or sibling, or shared such a large part of your life with them. We hope the memories that ache with pain, can also bring you thoughts of love. For those of us who are further removed from our early grief, who can look back and appreciate the strength for our struggle, the compassion from seeing other's pain, wanting to become functional human beings again so we can contribute to making a better world, are gifts our children and siblings have given to us for our survival. These gifts are greater than any fancy bow tied box can contain.

Look for your gifts and cherish them.

Marie Hofmockel TCF Valley Forge, PA

The Compassionate Friends

Greater Omaha Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

P.O. Box 540852 Omaha NE 68154-0852

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MEETING TIMES AND LOCATION

For parents, grandparents and siblings over 18

Omaha Support Group Meeting

7:00 p.m. — 1st Thursday of the month

New Cassel Retirement Center – 900 N 90th St

Fremont Support Group Meeting

7:00 p.m. — 2nd Thursday of the month

Lincoln Support Group Meeting

7:00 p.m. — 3rd Thursday of the month

Legacy Terrace – 5700 Fremont Street, Lincoln

CALENDAR 2014

november

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

6th Omaha Meeting
13th Fremont Meeting
20th Lincoln Meeting
25th Steering Committee Meet

december

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

4th Omaha Meeting
11th Fremont Meeting
18th Lincoln Meeting

Please send stories, poems or love gifts by December 1, 2014 to newsletter@tcfomaha.org

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS