



The Compassionate Friends

North Shore-Boston Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Newsletter

January 2025

To all those newly bereaved, who are receiving this newsletter for the first time and to all our Compassionate Friends, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that you and your family have many friends. We, who received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow, now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help. You are not alone in your grief.

Meetings are held the 1st Monday and 3rd Wednesday of each month In Person at 7:00PM at the Aldersgate Methodist Church, 235 Park Street, North Reading at 7:00 P.M. We also hold an Online meeting via Zoom on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:00PM. We are a self-sustaining organization with no funds except what we receive through donations from members and newsletter recipients. Please join us at a meeting.

Grief support after the death of a child

The Compassionate Friends is a national nonprofit, self-help support organization that offers friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. There is no religious affiliation and there are no membership dues or fees.

The secret of TCF's success is simple: As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward and both are helped to heal.

The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

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The Compassionate Friends, Inc.
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PH: 630-990-0010
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Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday, 1/22/25
7:00 PM

Online Video Meeting

Please contact tcfnoshoreconnect@gmail.com if you would like to attend

Topic: Open Sharing Session

Monday, 2/3/25
7:00 PM

In-Person Meeting

Please contact tcfnoshoreconnect@gmail.com if you would like to attend

Topic: Will I Laugh Again?

Wednesday, 2/19/25

In-Person Meeting - 7:00 PM

Please contact tcfnoshoreconnect@gmail.com if you would like to attend

Topic: Open Sharing Session

-and-

Sibling Group Online Video Meeting - 7:30 PM

Please contact Aimeeb15@gmail.com if you would like to attend

Topic: Finding Out Your Sibling Died

Wednesday, 2/26/25
7:00 PM

Online Video Meeting

Please contact tcfnoshoreconnect@gmail.com if you would like to attend

Topic: The New Normal

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TODD MacDONALD

Todd, our beloved Son,
at this time of year,
your sister Tracy, Mom and Dad
remember you and your many friends
as if it were yesterday
that we laughed with you
at your many stories
and watched your adventures
trying to capture the antics of
"Jake the Wondercat" on video.
I do hope he was waiting
for you across the Rainbow Bridge
as you made your way
into your next adventure.



Be well my son, until we meet again!

Mom, Dad and Tracy

-and-

BRIANNA LEE PAUL

*It will be sixteen years since you
left your body behind and continued your journey.
You have taught us so much since your passing.....
Our relationship continues because the love continues.
Our grief changes but will always be with us and why shouldn't it?
Our pain is deep and real but it is our pain not yours.
You are OK and always will be.
While we grieved a life that was too short,
you have taught us that it was whole and complete.*



Love you Bee
Mom, Dad, Erin and Eden



By Anita Brewer-Siljeholm

This past October brought the 20th anniversary of the death of my son, David. He was 14 when he died in a road accident on his way to elementary school. It was a long time ago, but for us time shrinks easily.

Some months before the anniversary I began to feel that 20 years is an important milestone that I wanted to mark, somehow, in our journey, and the way soon came to me – music. Over the years a wide community of family and friends had helped us continue to love David and find ways to receive his love, and I realized that in part I wanted to say ‘thank you’ while bringing us together again. Music can be both intensely personal and openly shared, like grief.

The details appeared early. A date, a special venue, a long list of invitees and email addresses, the music program, plans for refreshments, and finally the invitation itself. Suddenly I was anxious; could I handle such a public event, even after 20 years? Would I lose my nerve and dissolve? Would his passing suddenly ambush me? But it didn’t, and eventually, about 130 people were invited, a mix of family with old and new friends. The venue was a beautiful 1904 chapel.

To play the concert I invited a composer and pianist that I like. While he had not known my son, he responded well: yes, he would play and help to arrange the program. As the date approached, the music expanded, as if unfolding on its own. In addition to the pianist, my stepson, a professional percussionist, offered to play a solo on snare drums, as well as a special piece to accompany the piano. A former neighbor who is an accomplished choral singer offered to sing a stunning solo in German. My nephew’s partner offered to play a Bach cello piece. A musical mother in my son’s class offered to play an extraordinary chorale on the piano, and helped me choose two songs for us all to sing. Each musician wanted to speak briefly about their piece and why they wanted to play, and there would be other words as well; my daughter and her first cousin each wanted to speak, one reflecting on her journey, the other portraying his cousin.

In a tiny grassy park next to the venue we arranged for a tent to shelter the 100 or so guests in case of rain, where we could offer tea and coffee and finger foods suitable for late afternoon. That day, the sun shone over the enclosure, which had a clear top and walls. On the tables with white tablecloths and flowers were food and drinks, some photos, and the beautifully decorated guest books from my son’s services 20 years ago. After the concert people greeted one another, chatted, and moved slowly through the late fall sunshine. Several people said they felt my son was there, his spirit present beyond our faculties.

Yet it was the music that transfixed us, the unusual mix of voices and pieces in the program, that lifted our thoughts, not only of my son but I am sure of others that we had lost. As the concert began, the music took on its own life, each musician offering their love differently and without reserve. I listened raptly, enfolded into the

audience, each piece so different, like the passages of life. My gratitude to them, to my son, and for the magic of the afternoon was immense. Today, after 20 years, I can't say where the journey goes, and I still long for my son. But I believe the waypoint of that afternoon's music filled me with so much awe, peace, and gratitude that I feel more strength for the course to come, whatever it may be.

—

POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH

Posted on January 10th, 2025

The shock and the pain blew me out of my world. All of the necessary activity of those days kept me connected with others, those who knew and cared. Then, all of the rituals of death were over.

Everyone went home. Their lives returned to normal.

Normal no longer existed for me. The regular world felt surreal. Everyone was behaving like they did before, and I was no longer a part of that world.

Surreal – real but not felt as real any more. In most cultures, people are assumed to be in deep grief for the first year after a death, and then they emerge from that state, and slowly re-integrate into their community. Space is given for grief. Grief is honored and respected.

In this Western culture, grief gets immediate attention and then it's somehow supposed to be something to move past. People do not move past their past traumas. They grow larger emotionally to be able to know, feel, and remember their traumas while also becoming more capable of being present in their current lives. This is called Post-traumatic Growth. When people are allowed the space they need to grieve, when their grief is not curtailed, they will learn to hold both the painful reality of loss along with the love they still feel for the person who died. From there, their lives expand to hold both past, present, and future. Their emotional world deepens, compassion and wisdom grow.

I am a psychologist specializing in working with people who have been severely traumatized. What I already knew about trauma helped me enormously when my son died. I let myself grieve deeply. I didn't try to 'move on'. I knew our culture's response to death was inadequate, superficial, and, at times, harmful to the grieving person. I keened, wailed, sobbed, and cried, the intensity coming down over time, naturally. Meanwhile, I knew I needed to integrate this loss into my life and future, so that my son's legacy in my life would be a good one, in honor of him. Deep grief makes those around us very uncomfortable. They want to fix it, make it better, and that actually makes it harder because it tells the grieving person that they're 'too much'. So, the grieving person has a choice – grieve alone, or stifle the grief and maintain contact with others. This is a horrible dilemma, because when people are traumatized, they need the presence of others. They need good, warm, comforting contact with people who know and care about them. Human contact helps people heal. When there is no one around, the grieving person suffers in isolation, or becomes numb to their own pain in order to stay in connection. Sadness slides into depression. Friendships become distant. Some people may feel the world isn't real any more, or the world is real and they're not. Those are dissociative mechanisms – derealization and

depersonalization. They are like circuit breakers in the nervous system, lowering the 'charge' by disconnecting the emotions.

Many people experiencing deep grief are also very familiar with the symptoms of PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – intrusive thoughts, avoidance, numbing out, nightmares, problems with sleep. It would be helpful to take the “Disorder” off of that diagnosis. It’s Post Traumatic Stress. It’s a human response to trauma. It would be inhuman to not have a response to this kind of huge trauma. The responses are normal. The problem is finding ways to help calm the nervous system and integrate the all-too-intolerant emotions of loss, anguish, and try to build a life without someone who is now gone.

One of the common traps for people who have lost others is the “I should have” trap. “I should have known.” “I should have been able to stop this.” This is a normal first level thought process. It happens commonly right after the death. For a short time, it may be helpful, backtracking in the mind to find clues that may have been missed, or possible solutions that weren’t tried, etc. That’s a way the mind tries to learn what can be learned to prevent this from happening again. It normally goes away with time. However, sometimes it doesn’t. Sometimes it gets stuck. When that happens, it’s usually a wish in disguise. “I wish I had known.” “I wish I had been able to stop this.” The wish is real, and if it is experienced as a wish, it doesn’t tend to cause distress. It expresses a truth – a wish that this loss could have been prevented. It can be harmful, however, if it’s felt as a ‘should’. “I should have known,” and “I should have been able to stop this” turn into an assumption of omnipotence. None of us has that kind of all-knowing and all-powerful control. We are all simply human, doing our best with what we do know and actually can do, and that’s limited. We do have influence over others, sometimes a lot. However, none of us has control over others. We just don’t. So, we use our influence as best we can, and our knowledge and whatever power is available, and sometimes that’s enough. And, sometimes it’s not.

The feeling of everything being surreal that comes after the funeral, when everyone returns to their normal life, and we no longer have a normal life, marks the start of a new way of living in this world. We are part of it, and often feel apart from it. The challenge is to expand – to honor our grief, deepen our compassion for ourselves along with everyone else, and notice how we grow. Post traumatic growth is what we can do for ourselves, in honor of those we lost, so that their legacy in our lives is a good one.

BY: Lynette Danylchuk, PhD., is a Clinical Psychologist who has worked in the field of trauma and dissociation for over 30 years. She is a past president of the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD) and has received ISSTD’s Lifetime Achievement Award. She has just completed the second edition of the book she and Kevin Connors co-authored, "Treating Complex Trauma and Dissociation: A Practical Guide for Navigating Therapeutic Challenges."




January Birthdays


Shane Michael Loizides son of Janet Sutcliffe sibling of Branden Loizides
 Todd MacDonald son of John and Janet MacDonald
 Daniel M. Scafidi son of Martin and Barbara Scafidi / stepson of Sandra Scafidi
 Geoffrey Gonzalez son of Iris Gonzalez
 Maria Lorraine Andrews daughter of Michelle Smith
 Neal Richard O'Brien Jr. son of Neal and Nancy O'Brien
 Craig Gentleman son of Mary and Jack Gentleman
 Christina Laura-Ann Saviano Daughter of Laurie Saviano
 Jonathan (Jed) Lazar son of Jon and Noreen Lazar
 Darien Sanford-Castro son of Diane Sanford
 Christopher Michael Rollins son of Nancy & Rick Rollins
 Zachary Doyle Hilton son of Patricia Doyle
 Katherine Stephanie Grant daughter of Laurie Grant
 Robert Kagacha son of Sarah Kagacha
 Mario Miller son of Maria Sallese
 Alex Vitale son of Rob and Robin Vitale
 Nathaniel (Nate) Doiron son of Stacey and Linus Doiron and grandson of Dorothy Molley
 Faith-Ena Davianna Watkins daughter of Andria Nemoda and Michael Watkins
 Brian Robert Pellegrino nephew of Alyse and Joe Bonfiglio
 Lucas Kump grandson of Linda Bump
 Tina Lee Ducharme daughter of Deb Linnehan




January Angel Dates

Aram Karakashian son of Pat and Garo Karakasian
 Deirdre Helene Olson daughter of Catherine E.B. Olson
 Glenn Buttrick son of Heidi Scott
 Peter Costas son of Barbara Costas, Sibling of Alaine Costas
 Victor Vogis son of Victor and Margo Vogis
 Jonathan Corey son of Reenie McCormack and Ron Corey
 Brianna Lee Paul daughter of David & Melinda Paul sister of Erin and Eden Paul
 Robert Anthony Viera son of Arlene Viera
 Courtney Marie Corning daughter of Ginny & Jack Corning
 Christopher Muraca son of Maria Muraca
 Jessica Cormier daughter of Walter Cormier and Barbara Melesciuc sibling of Nicole Cormier
 Joel Wesley Lindquist son of Roy and Mariann Lindquist
 Matthew Dalimonte son of Patti Dalimonte
 Julia Elizabeth Vanella daughter of Joseph Vanella, Jr.
 Kaleigh Lambert granddaughter of Irene Lambert
 Shane Lambert grandson of Irene Lambert
 Faith-Ena Davianna Watkins daughter of Andria Nemoda and Michael Watkins
 Quinlan Weekes son of Lindsay and Jaunel Weekes
 Eliot Lee Bennett son of Eric and Elizabeth Bennett
 Robert DeCarlo son of Janet DeCarlo Staples
 Katy Warde daughter of Peg Warde
 Daniel Rogers son of Donna Rogers
 Anthony Diaz son of Gail Scimone
 Paulyne Mbowa daughter of Julius Mbowa
 Elizabeth "Liz" Chandler daughter of Kimberly Surrette



	<p>Our telephone friends are here to help you if you feel the need to connect with someone outside of our usual meeting night. We are not professionals – we are all bereaved parents seeking to find a way through our grief.</p> <p>Please be considerate in the timing of your calls to these volunteers.</p>	
Beverly	Carmen Pope, son, 3 days, anencephaly; son, 11, boating accident	978-998-4087
Reading	Sheila Thabet, son, 19, Pedestrian accident, Son 20, accidental overdose	781-670-0335
Gloucester	Melinda & David Paul, daughter, 20, sudden cardiac arrest	978-771-6345
Haverhill	Crystal Chambers, sibling, 28, cause unknown	508-523-2810
North Andover	Catherine Olson, daughter, 27, pedestrian accident	978-681-8341
Salem, NH	Regan Burke, son, 8, pneumonia/cardiac arrest	603-264-9391
Winchester	Reenie McCormack, son, 20, drowning	781-729-1878
Woburn	Nancy Whipple, son, 22 months, cancer	781-938-5840

TCF North Shore-Boston Chapter Website Sponsorship

In order to help cover our chapter website fees, we invite our members to sponsor our chapter website for 1 month in memory of their children, grandchildren or siblings. The monthly website sponsor donation is \$25 per member and the maximum number of sponsors per month is 2. Sponsors may post a message to their children, grandchildren or siblings; this message will be displayed in the Website Sponsor column on the Home page of our website and will also appear in our chapter newsletter.

If you would like to sponsor our chapter website, please contact our Website Manager via email: tcfnoshoreweb@gmail.com

Website sponsor signup sheets are also available at our monthly in-person meetings.

*The light
remains*

There are some who bring
a light so great to the world,
that even after they have gone,
the light remains.

no one told me
how scared i'd be
after my person died.
to know i'd have to take on
so much life without them here.
the thought of decades passing by
and they won't appear for one second.
that terrifies me more than it makes me sad.
how do i make it to old age. to my last breath.
how will i carry this fear until i am no longer.
when the weight of forever never gets lighter.
and the wait of forever does not end until i do.

sara rian



Love Notes



In memory of Deirdre "Dee Dee" Olson,

Dearest Dee Dee: You left us at 27 years- soon to turn 55 years (December 3rd). You are loved more deeply now than ever before. We truly miss your beautiful smile and amazing personality. A more selfless person, there never was. Your angel date is January 29th 2025. Knowing you are in God's hands; gives us peace. We love you.

Mom and Kendra



This section is reserved for personal messages in memory of our children, grandchildren, and siblings. Donations received help to cover the operating costs of the chapter; monthly meetings, refreshments, newsletter mailing, etc. While not expected, any donations are always appreciated.

Thank you to all who continue to leave donations in the box at every meeting

Love Notes are a way to share a message in memory of your child/grandchild/sibling. Donations received with Love notes help with the cost of publication of this newsletter.

Please send your Love Notes with donation by mail to

Bob Boulanger, 42 Chatham Rd. Billerica, MA 01821, or give them to the leader at the monthly meetings.

Please use the form below to assure notes are posted exactly as you want them. Love Notes for the next newsletter must be received by the **15th of the previous month**.

Love Gifts for future dates may be sent at any time; month to be published: _____

Love Gift from _____ In memory of _____

Message:

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person or just the right words that will help you in your grief or comfort you. Remember we have all been there and even though circumstances may be different, we really do understand. You are not alone.

TO OUR SEASONED MEMBERS

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back.... remember hearing from others farther along than you...“your pain will not always be this bad it really does get better” Come to the meetings and share your wisdom. Show others that there is hope, from someone who has found it.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
c/o Bob Boulanger
42 Chatham Road
Billerica, MA 01821

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIALS
PLEASE FORWARD



The Compassionate Friends
North Shore-Boston Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

NEWSLETTER – January 2025



National Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

***** CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.TCFNoShore-Boston.org *****

Help us save money and paper.....

To receive these newsletters via email please send an email to the editor
tcfnoshorenews@gmail.com