



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Sioux Falls Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

March 2015

Upcoming Meeting: March 3, 2015

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:15 with the exception of December.

Westminster Presbyterian Church

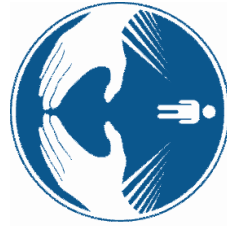
3801 E. 26th Street

Sioux Falls, SD

There is no religious affiliation.

www.compassionatefriendsofsiouxfalls.org

The Compassionate Friends is a support group for those who have experienced the death of a child at any age, for any reason.



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Sioux Falls Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

*If you are no longer interested in receiving this newsletter,
please contact us at:
rstoecker53@gmail.com*

The Compassionate Friends
Sioux Falls SD Area Chapter
2804 South Kingswood Way
Sioux Falls, SD 57106

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE PAID
SIOUX FALLS, SD
PERMIT #7225

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Q. & A.



Dr. Watson-Miller

Dr. Watson-Miller is a Clinical Psychologist who lost her own son while in Graduate School in 1997. She graduated from the University of South Dakota in 2002 and has worked in both the private and public sectors. She is on the faculty of USD Sanford School of Medicine where she teaches psychodynamic psychotherapy and provides supervision to psychiatry residents as they learn therapeutic techniques. She works from her own private practice on evenings and weekends.

Dr. Watson-Miller lost her son in a tragic automobile accident in 1997. The memories of her son standing in the bleachers as she graduated with a Bachelor's of Science in Criminal Justice and Psychology in 1995 compelled her to honor his memory by completing her education and allowing him to live through her. In her journey through grief, she has gained unique insights into not just coping, but thriving through adversity. She was gifted through her life experience by the support of her graduate program, her faith, and encouragement from others. She states, "Without adversity, we do not know how strong we really are. We have an obligation to share the gifts we have been given with others—to help them learn how to honor others through self-care and, by extension, others."

If you would like Dr. Watson-Miller to respond to your questions through this format, please email them to tcfsiouxfalls@yahoo.com. The questions will be forwarded to Dr. Watson-Miller without identifying information and will be used in future columns.

QUESTION: Parents who are newly bereaved sometimes say they can't go on living with the pain of losing a child. When should we do more than listen?

ANSWER: This is a great question. This comment is a true expression of the depth of the pain the individual is feeling. Many times, people may be concerned about someone who says this but are afraid to ask further questions because they may be uncomfortable with the response. However, it is important to explore these comments with the bereaved parent. If you are uncomfortable, working in pairs can be useful and/or finding someone else in your Compassionate Friend's Group would be a good choice.

What is important is not to over- or under-react to these comments. By staying calm and asking them if they have considered hurting themselves, the bereaved parent may feel that you have heard the depth of their pain and be willing to talk more about it. It gives the individual time to process this information with someone they are comfortable with rather than some stranger. If they make comments about hurting themselves, offer to go with them to a Mental Health Professional.

If they are not willing to talk about the comment, it may be best to ask if they are seeing a Mental Health Professional and whether they have told them about these feelings. With compassion offer to help them find an experienced Mental Health Professional.

One caveat: Do not agree to keep this a secret from others. Encourage the person to share it with the group and they will most likely find others who have had the same feelings. If they will not share it in the group, it may be useful to talk with one of the group leaders or ask about referring to an experienced mental health professional.

With compassion always,

Rebecca J. Watson-Miller, Ph.D.

Licensed Psychologist

DISCLAIMER: The responses published in the newsletter in no way suggest that there is a therapeutic relationship between the individual who submitted the question and Dr. Watson-Miller. The responses are written for the purpose of providing general suggestions to the recipients of this newsletter.

As part of remembering our children, we will have a table set up for you to bring pictures and anything you wish to share about your child during the month of your child's birthday.

TCF Leaders for Sioux Falls:

Ruth Stoecker 605-201-1426

rstoecker53@gmail.com

Peggy Mastel 605-351-8823

mpmastel@sio.midco.net

Kristin Seruyange 605-610-9432

kristin.tcf@gmail.com

The Compassionate Friends

National Office: 877-969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

February Meeting in Sioux Falls

Our South Dakota winter conditions didn't deter 18 people from gathering for the monthly meeting of The Compassionate Friends. Dividing into two groups, we talked about where we are in our grief journeys. Three birthdays were noted and parents given a chance to "show and tell". Information for Dr. Marcie Moran's grief therapy sessions was also made available.

The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow. We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.



The Gift of Love



Please send in love gifts by the 5th of the month so that they may be included in the following month's newsletter.

Your donation is greatly appreciated.

In Memory of: _____

Love Gift Amount: _____

Submitted by: _____

Address: _____

Send your love gift to:

Tami Meeker
48424 Beaver Valley Rd
Valley Springs, SD 57068

From Bev and Ron Krier



In loving memory of



Scott James Krier

The Gate to Tomorrow

There is a gate that each of us has unknowingly passed through. This gate opens only one way..... once we have passed through this gate we cannot return to the other side. Each of us stepped through the gate at a different time and in a different way. This gate opens to the world of parents whose children have died; it is their gate to every tomorrow.

There is no other place that compares with life in this world beyond the gate; there is no sorrow like the sorrow inside the gate. The numbing pain and perpetual agony we experience when first stepping through this gate are so overwhelming that we often don't immediately realize that there will be no return. But we will never return to life before the gate.

The new world inside the gate is populated with friends who are strangers and strangers who are friends.

Our perspective on life has changed forever. Few of our friends from life before the gate will linger with us now; these people are now the strangers. Our pain is all encompassing; they have lives to live, things to do, plans to make, happiness to capture. We are no longer part of their picture. Rare is the friend who stands by us inside the gate.....stands by us until one of us dies and leaves the world inside the gate.

The strangers who are now friends live inside the gate with us. Some have just come through the gate; others have been here a long, long time. But these strangers who are now friends share our experience; they understand our need to talk about our children, each life and each death. They applaud our tiny advances toward acceptance and serenity and peace.

Although we can never go back to life before the gate, we now have our compassionate friends.....once strangers but now kindred souls who share our lives and our world.

Life will not be the same again, yet life can be good again. Inside the gate we will each find ourselves with the help of our compassionate friends. They listen carefully to stories about our child. They know our child's name better than they know our name. And that's how we want it to be.....remember our children. Remember with us.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

TCF, Katy, TX

HONORARY ASSOCIATES OF COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Sponsors are considered Honorary Associates of our organization and are recognized at the level of their donation. We would like to offer our sincere and grateful appreciation to the following supporters:

DIAMOND (\$500)

First Premier Bank

GOLD (\$150)

Soil Technologies, Inc.

Heritage Funeral Home

Miller Funeral Home

SILVER (\$100)

George Boom Funeral Home

Dindot-Klusman Funeral Home

Catholic Family Services

Family Memorials by Gibson

Weiland Funeral Chapel

Key Real Estate—Jim Carlson

Minnehaha Funeral Home

Hartquist Funeral Home

Caroline Christopher

Dr. Richard Howard

Fiberglass Repair

Julie Job—Re/Max Professionals

BRONZE (\$50)

Knudson & Buseman Insurance

Shaffer Memorials

PLATINUM (\$250)

Diamond Mowers, Inc.

DE & TS (Josh Fiedler)

Sisson Printing

Special thanks to:

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—hosting our monthly meetings

MILLER FUNERAL HOME—providing cookies for our meetings

AVERA—donating the printing of our newsletters

Spring's Tears

When the sun's sharp brilliance echoes in the luminescent blue
A grin, oppressive darkness stabs my aching heart anew.
Its golden glow upon my face, the warmth of winter's sun
Holds the promise of renewal when the icy months are done.

and feel the warmth of sunshine
relish in the greening earth...
to open arms, embracing life
why can't it be YOUR birth?

It is this vow of nature's of resurgence in the spring
That bows my head, and breaks my heart; unlocks my suffering.
For you will miss again the beauty of this time of year
The growing warmth, the sunny days when life will reappear.

You were so young, your life so new when death crept in the
door,
And in my grief, beloved child, I'll ask forever more
The reason why the earth's renewed when spring comes 'round
each year

For nature has no power over death that holds you still,
And though I know, I still resent spring's early daffodil.
Oh, would that I could speak to Mother Nature face to face!
To beg she work her magic on your lonely resting place.

Yet in your grave you're silent still,
and I
condemned
am here.

Why can't it be YOUR rebirth when the gray, cold days are
done?

*Sally Migliaccio
TCF Babylon, NY
In Memory of Tracey*

Why mightn't YOU not live again to see spring's fresh new
dawn

Is There Life After This?

“You keep on living until you feel alive again.”

A lead character in one of my favorite TV series said that and I snorted in disgust. She was talking about the death of a young woman's fiance and my gut reaction was to compare her loss to mine. Of course the death of a child trumps all other losses!

When I calmed down and withdrew from the “Who Suffers Most Game”, I spent some time thinking about the advice. Is it too trite for those of us who have buried a child? Could I say it to a newly bereaved parent who begs for answers, for guidance in those early weeks and months when the death is still too painful to accept?

Our son's death happened in November, a little more than eight years ago. His birthday is in February so winter brings the crushing weight of what was and what will never be.

I cry less than I did in the first years since his passing, but I can still make myself sick by sobbing over his picture. I can say his name most of the time without crying but scratch the surface of a memory and I am haunted by loss for days.

When I talk about the passage of time with other parents who have survived the earliest stage of shock and horror, they tell me they feel the same. Outwardly, we appear to be healing and “dealing with it”. We can enjoy our other children, our grandchildren, our friends.

However, there is a huge chasm between accepting what happened and anticipating what is coming *with joy*. I realize that I must be making some progress because I picked up a flower catalog this week in the dead of winter and eagerly began to plan a flower bed that will blaze with color all summer long.

I don't know how it happened, this happy anticipation, this hint of feeling alive again. Will it last? I'll let you know how it goes.

Peggy Mastel

TCF Chapter Sioux Falls, SD

In memory of her son, Ian

Chasing Butterflies

So many times I wonder now

How will I make it through?

As years go flitting by me

Taking memories of you

Time may bring me closer

To the day I see your smile

But time can be my enemy

Stealing from me all the while

Evasive, fragile, here and there

I chase and cast my net

Tiny pieces of our long agos

I fear I might forget

So I will chase each memory

Seen through this Mother's eyes

Until I'm with you once again

I'll be chasing butterflies

Like a thousand butterflies

So many, yet too few

Each one a treasured moment

Each one a part of you

Donna Gerritor

TCF Pasco County, FL

In Memory of Rob

The Anticipation of Spring

Spring is a time for growth and renewal. As a child, teen, and then an adult, I always looked forward to spring with anticipation. The thoughts of green grass, budding trees, and blooming flowers of all varieties and colors were a welcome change from the long cold, dreary Michigan winter.

It was a magical time of year. When I was a child, each member of my family watched anxiously to lay claim to being the first to spot the familiar hop-hop of the returning robin, the first sign that spring was actually here. We could finally take off the gloves, shed our heavy winter coats and boots, and roll down the windows on the car to hear the laughter of children playing outside and smell the fresh mown grass as we'd drive down the road.

That's the way it was for me on the first day of spring 12 years ago. I remarked how beautiful the tulips looked as they danced in the wind. The trees were budding, and there was magic in the air. My kids and I shed our heavy winter coats, flinging them in the backseat, rolled down the windows of the car, and started singing in celebration of the beautiful day we were experiencing.

And then . . . ***IT*** happened.

Suddenly, undeniably, horrifically—my world, my spring, my life changed.

My 5-year-old son, Stephen, died that first spring day. His 8-year-old sister, Stephanie, my firstborn, died a few hours later, enough past midnight to list the next day on the death certificate. Gone was the laughter, the magic, the beauty of my world.

The springs that followed were no longer filled with anticipation or magic. They were dark and ugly and filled with memories too painful to talk about. I wanted nothing to do with “spring.” If H.G. Well’s time machine had existed, I would have entered it at the end of winter and fast-forwarded through spring.

As time marched on and one spring followed another, I learned an important lesson in my journey through grief. As much as I wanted to, I couldn’t fast-forward through the hard spots. I couldn’t go around them. I had to go through them slowly, like a dog paddling through water, so I could get to the other side. Somehow doing this taught me to cope, to endure, to face tomorrow and all the first days of spring that followed. It’s much like the transformation that takes place when a butterfly emerges from a dark, cold, seemingly lifeless chrysalis.

A few years ago, as winter was drawing to a close and the first day of spring was quickly approaching, I looked out the kitchen window toward the budding pear tree in the backyard and discovered it was full of chirping robins. I smiled and knew that spring somehow wasn’t going to be so bad. It was once again time to enjoy the smells of the season, the beauty of the budding trees, and the magic that the season had to offer. And I knew Stef and Steve would have wanted that for me.

Pat Loder

TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI

In Memory of Stephanie and Stephen Loder

I Am Spring

I am the beginning.
I am budding promise.
I spill cleansing tears of life
from cloudy vessels
creating muddy puddles
where single cell creatures abide
and splashing children play.

I am new green growth.
I softly flow from winter's barren hand.
On gentle breeze I fly – embracing sorrow.
With compassion, we feather nests
where winged voices sing winter-spring duets.
As frozen ice transforms to playful stream
I whisper truth – life is change.

I am spring.
I bless long, dark wintry days.
I crown mankind's pain
with starry skies
in deepest night
lighting solitary paths from sorrow to joy
as the wheel of life turns 'round and 'round.

*(written after attending a workshop presented by John Fox, author of 'Finding
What You Didn't Lose' and 'Poetic Medicine'.)*

Carol Clum

Beyond Surviving: “Twenty Five Commandments”

Hundreds of books have been written about loss and grief. Few have addressed the aftermath of suicide for survivors. Here again, there are no answers; only suggestions from those who have lived through and beyond the event. I've compiled their thoughts.

1. Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with “why” it happened until you no longer need to know “why,” or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings, but all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy – you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will have to act on these thoughts.
8. Remember to take one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. Don't panic if emotions return like a tidal wave. You may only be experiencing a remnant of grief, an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and with others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as The Compassionate Friends, or Survivors of Suicide groups. If not, ask a professional to help start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, i.e., headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, etc.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and go beyond just surviving.

Iris Bolton,
author of *My Son, My Son*

Our Children Remembered—March

Name	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Parents
Jared Brooke Winter	1-Mar	26-Oct	Tricia & Brooke Winter
Karen Marie Fratzke	7-Mar	29-Feb	Gary & Alice Parks
Darla Van Nieuwenhuizen	8-Mar	24-Sep	Lorraine & Don Van Nieuwenhuizen
Ashley King	10-Mar	19-Oct	Brenda King
Ashleigh Christine Mauseth	10-Mar	28-Sep	Keith & Lisa Mauseth
Angela "Angie" Johnson	12-Mar	29-Jun	Jo & Michael Megill (step-father)
Devin Robert Wosje	14-Mar	12-Dec	Dawn Wosje
Leslie Roe	15-Mar	9-Oct	Linda & Herb Roe
Scott Joseph Humey	16-Mar	2-Oct	Marlene & the late Joe Humey
Kevin Alan Schmit	16-Mar	17-Jul	Michael and Cindy Schmit
Rene' Jean Becker	17-Mar	1-Apr	Terry (deceased) & Collette Gesinger
Adam Lee Thompson	19-Mar	23-May	Troy and Ann Thompson
Dylan Duane Fischer	20-Mar	4-Sep	Doyle & Kathryn Fischer
Sacey Lackey	22-Mar	26-Sep	Kandy & Gene Stewarding
Sydney Anne Jones	22-Mar	4-Feb	Troy & Mary Jones
Jeffrey Dean Sharlow	24-Mar	4-Jul	Joan & (step-father) John Roth
Ethan Wingert	24-Mar	24-Oct	Jim & Renae Wingert
Asher Eugene Allen	25-Mar	2-Jul	Denny & Karri Allen
Jared Reisch	25-Mar	24-Oct	John & Brenda Reisch
Jacob Meeker	28-Mar	7-Jul	Robert & Tanni Meeker
Lee Matthew Ennis	29-Mar	31-Aug	Yvonne & Leo Ennis
Nicole M Sikkink	29-Mar	3-Jun	Dean & Janice Sikkink
Michael Ray Olson	29-Mar	28-Mar	Brian & Donna Olson
John Andrew Bartell	29-Mar	21-Jun	Andrew Bartell
Sofia Carol Martin	29-Mar	29-Mar	Breann Pyy & Lucas Martin
Jade Joseph Thie	1-Dec	1-Mar	Toby Thie & Tanni Raabe
Lee David Strameyer	7-May	1-Mar	Dave & Juliane Strameyer
Maddox Alan Churchill	18-Apr	2-Mar	Jeremy & Melissa Churchill
Zev Luna Audrey Leal	15-Sep	3-Mar	Lois Johanson (grand-mother)
Denise Gail (Faber) Meyers	28-Dec	5-Mar	Gloria & Thomas Faber
Cory Alan Bergendahl	27-Jun	7-Mar	Annette Smith
Reilly Allen McCoy	12-Apr	8-Mar	Terry & Judy Bergendahl
Eric Lee DeNooy	7-Apr	9-Mar	Mike McCoy & Kim Melin
Brett Hodges	25-Dec	10-Mar	Carroll & Deb DeNooy
Michael Jeffrey Waller	4-Jul	10-Mar	Joyce Hodges
Noreen Moss	13-Aug	14-Mar	Jeanie Young
Kevin Kerl	29-Feb	14-Mar	Evelyn & Norman Ykena
Lynn Marie Weis	22-Feb	17-Mar	Dr. & Mrs. H. E. Kerl
Kennedy Reagan Alftson	3-May	18-Mar	Frank & Donna Mae Weis
Steven C. Thrun, Jr.	21-Jun	22-Mar	Rich & Stacy Alftson
Carl DerHagopian	16-Dec	24-Mar	Sandra & (step-father) Kevin Larson
James Daryl Swanson	2-Jul	25-Mar	Carl & Mary DerHagopian
Erin Mary Moore	7-Jul	27-Mar	Barbara F Christensen
			Wayne & Tami Moore