



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

April 2015

Upcoming Meeting: April 7, 2015

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

Westminster Presbyterian Church

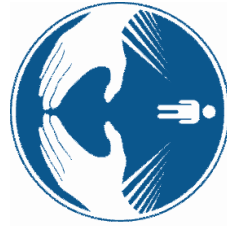
3801 E. 26th Street

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.



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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

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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: Please tell me how talking with a counselor or therapist will help me deal with my child's death. Nothing can be said that will ever, EVER, make my loss bearable!

ANSWER: You are so right in your assessment that nothing a therapist can say that will make your loss bearable. As you might guess, your loss (and your healing) are much more complex than simply having someone say the right words. I will try to answer your question in stages, much as healing comes.

Immediately following the loss of a child, people are generally in shock and do not know what they need. Simply having someone who understands be present "with you," and providing a safe environment for you might be sufficient. I remember when my son died and my professors and colleagues came to the house. They did not try to "fix" our pain, they were simply "with us" in our emotional grief. I coined the term "witness" to describe that time. They were a container for our grief, like a warm blanket, and it was very comforting.

After the funeral and when everyone else has gone home, you may find yourself feeling lost and alone. Knowing someone can talk with you while you sort out the confusion of what has happened and to remind you to be gentle on yourself is very useful. Although people may have very good intentions when they utter the words, "if there's anything you need . . ." you may find out that they are not available to you. They may be afraid of making you cry, or may not know what to say, and some may avoid you all together, particularly if they have living children. It is a reminder to them that sometimes children die and it could happen to them.

After about the first year people who have been available to you may begin to wonder why you are still grieving. Our culture is not very understanding of the grief process. They may even begin to realize that you are no longer the same. They may visit less often, leaving you even more alone with your grief. I believe that the first year following the death of a child is a whirlwind and that the grief process is just beginning as you approach the first anniversary and realize how profoundly your life has changed. You may find that now is the time you seek out a therapist to talk with – someone who will be available to you and comfortable allowing you to say whatever you need to say. When you are working with a therapist you trust and can rely on, it is good to have that stability in your life amidst the wreckage in the wake of your loss.

Remember – grief is a process; not an event. Each step will have unique experiences in it for you. The role of the therapist is to help you integrate your loss in a way that is meaningful to you.

With compassion always, Dr. Watson-Miller, Ph.D.

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

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The Compassionate Friends

National Office: 877-969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

The March meeting of The Compassionate Friends was held on March 3, 2015, with 14 members present. A good discussion was held regarding the following questions: "What brought you to TCF? What were you hoping to find? Why do you continue to come?" If any members who were unable to attend have thoughts on these questions, we would love for you to contact one of the leaders and share your thoughts.



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

Grief and sadness knits two hearts in closer bonds than happiness ever can; and common sufferings are far stronger than common joys.

Alphonse deLamartine

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.



In case of inclement weather on the night of our monthly meetings, a cancellation notice will be put on the **Keloland Closeline**. Please refer to this site in the future if there is any question as to whether or not the meeting will be held.

www.keloland.com/weather/closeline/

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)	GOLD (\$150)	SILVER (\$100)	Fiberglass Repair
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		Dr. Richard Howard	

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

April Love Gifts

From Andrea and Joel McCartney



In loving memory of

Darlene Grace Harmon



In loving memory of

Jade Thie



From First Premier Bank



From LeAnn and Kevin Krull



In loving memory of

Ryan Gorter

John and Juanita O’Gorman



In loving memory of

Erin Geary



For My Compassionate Friends

How is it that I know you?

How’d you get into my life?

Sometimes when I look at you,

It cuts me like a knife.

I do not want to know you,

I don’t want to cross that line.

Let’s both go back into the past,

When everything was fine.

You’ve held me and you’ve hugged me,

And dried a tear or two,

Yet, you’re practically a stranger,

Why do you do the things you do?

Of course, I know the reason,

We are in this Club we’re in,

And why we hold on to each other

Like we are long-lost kin.

For us to know each other,

We had to lose a kid,

I wish I’d never met you,

But, I’m so thankful that I did.

Marilyn Rollins

TCF Lake/Porter Counties, IN

Do I Have To?

Mom, do I have to stop loving my brother because he is not here?
Will I forget all about him because he's not near?
I remember all the things we did together, even though we were very young.
I laugh and feel warm each time I think of a particularly funny one.
Sometimes I get so angry that he's no longer here to share,
But I know he knows it's only because of how much I still care.

I miss him, so even though at times we didn't agree,
Just knowing he was there made things feel safe for me.
He always felt he had to be my strong, protective big brother,
And that's a bond we'll always share forever with each other.

He tried to protect me even when he, too, was just scared.
No, I won't stop loving that big brother of mine,
Not now, not ever, not till the end of time.
He will always be a part of what makes me be me.
And that's the part of our love that will live eternally.

*Jackie Rosen
TCF N.Dade/S. Broward, FL*

When You Lose an Only Child

The loss of an only child is neither greater nor less than the loss of one of many children. However, the loss of an only child is experienced differently. It is different because you lose your parenthood, which is such a large part of the life of any parent.

1. With the death of an only child, you lose the one person who could use all of the love you had to give every hour of every day. One of the secrets of parenthood is that from birth, children teach us that we have a greater capacity for unselfish love than we thought possible. When your only child dies, you may feel that you are drowning in the parental love your heart continues to generate for the child you have lost.
2. With the death of an only child, you lose so much of your own future that was tied to your child's future. The first day of school, sports, learning to drive, a first crush, a first date, a first heartbreak, high school, college, career, marriage, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren. Your only child lost all of this from his or her future. And so did you.
3. With the death of an only child, you suffer many tiny losses that cause pain only another grieving parent can comprehend. You have lost the joy of checking the cereal aisle to see if Cocoa Puffs are on sale. You have lost the reason to keep up with the top ten hits on the pop music charts. You have lost the joy of caring what prize is in a box of Cracker Jack. You have lost the joy of getting up early on a Saturday morning for kids soccer, basketball, or bowling. You have lost the reason to hope for a December snow. You have lost the person who thought you made the best cocoa on a cool December evening. For me, I lost a gentle, kind, generous child who loved, watched for, and shared beautiful sunsets.

The loss of an only child is a devastating loss. Your child has lost his or her life. And you have lost an important piece of your own life, your parenthood. The Compassionate Friends chapter near you is there to help you acknowledge and grieve these losses by sharing your pain with others who have known their own pain.

*Bill Snapp
TCF Atlanta (Tucker)
In Memory of my son, Bill Snapp*

I Wanted So Much for You

In honor of my baby who died	
I wanted so much for you, my sweet little baby, I wanted to change your diapers, not my life. I wanted to work with you, not my grief. I wanted to dress you, not bury you in your last dress. I wanted to hear the sounds of your crying for me at night, Not my own sounds of crying for you at night.	I wanted to give you life, not have you see death, I wanted to show you off, not go on alone without you. I wanted to comb your soft and silky hair, not save a lock of it.
I wanted to see you grow, not the grass upon the grave, I wanted to see you asleep in your nursery, not in the casket.	I wanted to pick up after you, not put down my dreams of you I wanted to hold you in my arms, not have empty arms, I wanted to walk late with you at night, and now I feel so alone I wanted so much for you, My newly born, newly gone—baby and child that I longed for. I wanted so much more—I wanted you.

Marria LaFond Visscher

A Stepparent's Thoughts

I am a bereaved stepparent – *Stepfather* to be exact. Robin Ann Craney, my stepdaughter, was killed at the hands of a drunk driver on June 8, 2001. She was 17 years old.

I have a son named Greg. His Mom remarried so I saw him on weekends, did the trips, and long summer visits as many divorced parents do. I did not get the chance to be a part of his life and see him every day. I got to hear about his activities and accomplishments *all* after the fact. When you marry someone with kids, you get another chance.

After several months of dating my (now) wife Cindy, I finally met her kids, Chris and Robin. Robin was almost 7 years old at the time. I remember that first meeting clearly because she wasn't feeling so good. She ended up getting sick and had to go home. What a first meeting that was!

After that, I became totally involved in the lives and activities of both of the children. I remember one of those nights well! Cindy and I attended parent-teacher conferences for both kids, a Cub Scout Pack Meeting and a Girl Scout Brownie Meeting...not bad for a single guy, who had been unmarried for 13 years!

Over the years, I got to know Robin's likes, dislikes, and all of her friends – *and she had a lot of friends!* I attended and participated in all of Robin's activities, supporting her in her many endeavors – including gymnastics (her favorite). I was there when she had migraine headaches, running her to the doctor when her Mother couldn't, encouraging her, supporting her – all the things Dads do for their kids. I want to tell you in no uncertain terms, being a stepparent is so much harder. You get the responsibility and, often times it seems, none of the respect. "Mom said I could so I don't have to listen to you" or "You can't tell me what to do, you are not my dad" and so forth. I tolerated and dealt with her emotional outbursts when she became incensed at anything (sometimes it seemed everything) during the teen years. All *Dads* know how trying those times can be!

Now I am a bereaved stepparent...the one in a kind of "no man's land." I am not biologically connected to Robin; I sometimes feel like an outsider around people who were *once* a family - Mother, Father, Son, and Daughter. Many of our friends have worried about Cindy and Chris. They often ask me "How is Cindy doing?" or "Is Chris OK?" Although I knew and lived with Robin for 10 years, very few ask, "How are *you* doing?" I am only the *stepparent*. The idea that this tragedy cannot be as devastating to me as it is to Robin's "real family" is incomprehensible.

One definition for the word father is "father figure: one often of particular power or influence who serves as an emotional substitute for a father." This is what I was for Robin. She loved to push my buttons – but that was part of our relationship – as frustrating as it could be. Robin is the only daughter I will ever have. I was every bit a *father* to her. I love her and I miss her.

We, the stepparents of children who have died, grieve for our children too. *Only* society puts the "Step" in the name. *Parent* is still the biggest part of who we are. We hurt because they were our children too - often without the support and understanding that is demonstrated towards the biologically connected parents. These beautiful children with whom we developed emotional bonds are now gone out of our lives; and we, too, endure the same feelings of loss and sadness.

Tony Cinocco
In memory of Robin Ann Craney
TCF, Denver, CO

Our Children Remembered—April

Child's Name	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Parents
Jill Kathleen Jorgensen	3-Apr	6-May	Mill & Eunice Jorgensen
Scott Peter Nelson	5-Apr	9-Sep	Brenda Parisien
Janelyn Nawa Erickson	5-Apr	10-Aug	Neva M. & The Late Clarence Erickson
Erin Marie Geary	6-Apr	21-Jan	John & Juanita O'Gorman
Tatum Marie Lockwood	6-Apr	28-Oct	Wendy Lieberg & David Lockwood
Julian Phillip Freitag	6-Apr	9-Jun	Ginny Freitag
Eric Lee DeNooy	7-Apr	9-Mar	Carroll & Deb DeNooy
Toby Colwes	7-Apr	25-Sep	Sarah Colwes
Alexander Brent Schumacher	7-Apr	4-Oct	Brent and Denise Schumacher
Anthony Jude Bookhoff	8-Apr	8-Apr	Vernon & Rose Marie Bookhoff
Jason Jon Smith	8-Apr	28-Nov	Alger & Marilyn Smith
Zachary Wullstein	8-Apr	8-Apr	Ron & Maehelle Wullstein
Jon Andrew Plucker	8-Apr	8-Apr	Ron & Mary Plucker
Vernon John Bookhoff	9-Apr	3-Jul	Vernon & Rose Marie Bookhoff
Reilly Allen McCoy	11-Apr	23-Apr	Mike McCoy & Kim Melin
Greg Gengler	12-Apr	8-Mar	Jim & Ria Gengler
Lyn Christianson Smart	17-Apr	21-Jun	Lindy & Ron Smart
Tanner Becker	17-Apr	24-Jun	Mark & Julie Becker
Josie Thompson	18-Apr	10-Sep	Leri Lynn (Thompson) Howe & Chris Thompson
Maddox Alan Churchill	18-Apr	26-Nov	Jeremy & Melissa Churchill
Karen Mary Ann Bookhoff	22-Apr	12-May	Vernon & Rose Marie Bookhoff
Rogue Dan Story	23-Apr	24-Apr	Jason and Sarah Story
Jackson Jan Hullinger	24-Apr	1-Aug	Morgan & Gretchen Hullinger
Lance Buseman	24-Apr	23-Jul	Marry and Joyce Buseman
Ryan Poss	28-Apr	27-Dec	Jim & Darla Poss
Pamela Ehde Lais	30-Apr	17-Oct	Carol & Art Ehde
Rene' Jean Becker	17-Mar	1-Apr	Terry (deceased) & Collette Gesinger
Brielle Ciara Gonzalez	4-Nov	2-Apr	Welter and Crystal Gonzalez
Mathew Fortin	25-Jun	4-Apr	Mary Fortin
Curtis Darek Dawson	3-Oct	5-Apr	Terry Dawson & Judy Strough
Cole Dearduff	17-Feb	6-Apr	Judy & Roger Dearduff
Tara Bulleman	14-Oct	6-Apr	Tom & Trish Bulleman
Samantha Dawn Larson	16-Sep	7-Apr	Marcy & Dale Larson
Ryan James Travis	2-Aug	8-Apr	Judy & Dick Travis
Jamie Boetel	20-Feb	9-Apr	Shari & Gary Boetel
Jessica DeLaTorre	18-Nov	9-Apr	Dawn Semmler
Bradley Joe Odens	12-Feb	9-Apr	Richard and Carolyn Odens
Jenny Lee Sundermann	8-Dec	15-Apr	Lisa & Todd Sundermann
Tom Rosebrock	4-Jul	15-Apr	Norma Robinson
Amanda Marie Boll	18-Oct	15-Apr	Allen & Tracey Boll
Norwyn Ykema	14-Feb	21-Apr	Evelyn & Norman Ykema
Casey Steven Braun	16-Sep	21-Apr	Laure J Braun
Gretchen Mae Mueller	24-May	22-Apr	Bill & Mary Beth Mueller
Lyle Lee Pavlis	29-Aug	24-Apr	Harold & Iona Pavlis
Troy Matthew Quail	22-Jan	25-Apr	Ordell & Shirley Quail
Shane Pew	12-Feb	26-Apr	Jeff Pew (deceased) & Susan Pew
Courtney Rae Rothschadl	6-Nov	28-Apr	Craig Rothschadl
Jacob Thomas Cassutt	22-Aug	29-Apr	Tom & Deb Cassutt