



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

**August 2015**

Upcoming Meeting: August 4, 2015

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

Westminster Presbyterian Church

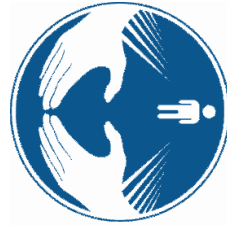
3801 E. 26th Street

Sioux Falls, SD

*There is no religious affiliation.*

[www.compassionatefriendsofsiouxfalls.com](http://www.compassionatefriendsofsiouxfalls.com)

**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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*If you are no longer interested in receiving this newsletter,  
please contact us at:  
[rstoeker53@gmail.com](mailto:rstoeker53@gmail.com)*

The Compassionate Friends  
Sioux Falls SD Area Chapter  
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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 psychiatric 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](mailto:tcfsiouxfalls@yahoo.com). The questions will be forwarded to Dr. Watson-Miller without identifying information and will be used in future columns.

*QUESTION: If you aren't with your child's father anymore, how do you go about talking about your grief with a new partner that hasn't experienced a loss?*

ANSWER: The easy answer to this question is . . . it depends. I can think of a few things that might need to be considered. After having lost a child, many people find that the most difficult question to answer is, "how many children do you have?" This is generally an easy conversation topic but not so for parents who have lost children. To make it even more difficult, there are generally a host of other questions that follow – like "where do they live?" You may choose to defer these questions until you are comfortable talking about your child.

I think the most important question is, how long has it been since your child died and how comfortable are you in sharing this information. If your child's death is relatively recent and your emotions are still very raw, it would not be a good time to be in a new relationship or sharing the information with a new partner. If you have found peace with the issue, you may want to share it – in a manner that lets the other person know you are OK with discussing it. It is good to prepare yourself for any eventual reaction from the new partner because they may not know how to talk about it – this is probably new to them and may make them uncomfortable.

Another thing you may want to consider is how long you have known this new partner and how much value you put on this relationship. New relationships by their very nature are relatively superficial and neither one of you probably knows the other well enough to know how to respond to this information. If it is a new relationship, you may re-experience the sense of abandonment you felt after your child died if the new partner decides to leave the relationship. If the relationship is a longer term relationship and both of you are secure in the relationship, it is probably easier to talk about and, hopefully, less threatening to the relationship.

So, ideally, if you have made peace with the topic and you have a secure relationship with someone you can trust with this information, you could share it with them and also share the gifts you have come to recognize as a result of your lived experience. It's OK to share it earlier if you wish - there just may be a greater risk to the relationship that will leave you feeling confused and hurt.

With compassion always,

Rebecca J. Watson-Miller, Ph.D.  
Licensed Psychologist

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*We would like to hear thoughts or experiences from any other Compassionate Friends members who have faced this situation. If you have anything to share, please send an email to [kristin.tcf@gmail.com](mailto:kristin.tcf@gmail.com) We would appreciate your contribution.*

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.

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### The Compassionate Friends

National Office: 877-969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org



### *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 Beth & Tom Masterson



In loving memory of



In loving memory of



Lindsey Ann Masterson

Chad Holm

From Chad, Cindy, & Jim Holm

### 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.

## WHAT DO I DO WITH MY CHILD'S THINGS?

This is a problem that faces all bereaved parents. We discuss it from time to time at our meetings. Some of us keep the child's room just as it was before the death. We don't want anything touched or moved. Some of us find solace in giving things away to close friends or relatives. Knowing that someone we love is wearing our child's clothes or playing with his or her toys brings us comfort. Some of us find we can deal with only a few items at a time: clothes one month; books another; perhaps toys a few months later.

Some of us find that, as time goes on and we would have gotten rid of the things anyway, it becomes easier. For instance, after a while we realize that if the child were still alive, he/she would have outgrown the clothes. Then it's easier to give them away. Or he would have graduated from college this year and therefore would no longer use the study desk or clock radio. We can give these things away in the normal time sequence.

The important thing is not to let others rush us into doing something before we are ready and not to let ourselves feel guilty about the amount of time it takes us to make decisions. When the time is right and the decision is right for us, we'll know what to do.

*Nancy Mower  
TCF Honolulu, HI*

## 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:

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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



## Like the Butterfly

It fluttered above my head  
Weightless in the soft breeze.  
I reached up my hand  
It lit on my finger.

Waving glistening wings gently,  
It looked at me for timeless moments.  
I smiled, reaching deep and  
Finding all those cherished memories.

As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,  
I knew we had said hello once more.

*Leslie Langford  
TCE, North Platte, NE*



## A Butterfly to Remember

Kirk and Michelle Lee joined several other members of the Sioux Falls Compassionate Friends at the 8th annual Asera Care Hospice Butterfly to Remember memorial event. It was a peaceful and meaningful night as butterflies were released in honor of our loved ones.

We would like to thank Asera Care for all the effort put into this most special event and for honoring our chapter of The Compassionate Friends.

# Playing the Blame Game

Don't should on yourself. *Anonymous*  
Or others. *Aaron Pueschel*

Have you seen the movie, War Games? If you have, recall that final scene. The clock on the WOPR is ticking down to world annihilation. David, the teenage computer whiz, is locked into grim battle against Joshua, the computer. They are involved in a simulated game of Global Thermo Nuclear Warfare. The game is imaginary but the consequences are deadly. David asks Joshua to engage in Tic Tac Toe. Will Joshua learn the lesson of Tic Tac Toe in time to save the world? The huge screens at NORAD go crazy with defense strategies and results, all the same in the end, world annihilation. Still the clock keeps ticking. The games whiz by like a blur on Joshua's computer screen. The Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles are beginning to launch. Global holocaust is imminent! Zero hour hits!! A pause. Nothing happens. Joshua's computer voice breaks the silence, "Strange game. The best move is not to play the game at all. How about a game of chess?" The world is saved. Joshua learned the winning strategy for Global Thermo Nuclear Warfare. Don't play the game.

After a son or daughter dies, surviving family members can be sucked into a game like Tic Tac Toe, or Global Thermo Nuclear Warfare. So often its results are very tragic also. It is the Blame Game. Child loss leaves families with overpowering feelings of helplessness, despair, anxiety, outrage, and hurt. The pain is so immense, family members feel the need to strike out at each other. Placing blame is a normal reaction after child loss.

While blaming others is a normal reaction, I am learning to use one word with a lot of caution. It is should. I think about stories from the Old West with the folklore on the shootouts. Think about it. So many of those shootouts ended in much bloodshed. There weren't any winners.

Now replace shoot with should. Homes of grieving families can be places of "shouldouts", where in place of loaded guns, people point loaded fingers. Think of these words as bullets.

"You should have been a better father."

"You should have been a better mother."

The loaded finger also creates self inflicted wounds. Ever say something like this, "I should have paid more attention to who Susie's friends were," or, "I should have recognized the danger signals when Billy was reaching out for help." All of these reactions are to be expected.

Whenever I have wanted to fix the blame for Carl's death on someone, I have found it worthwhile to take a step back and analyze what fuels my desire to fix blame. Often my blame is fueled by anger. Anger, which is a normal response to a youngster's passing. This starts to take a bit of the edge off.

Also, I am so thankful that when I have been at my lowest, even my angriest, I have found trusted friends to talk to. These friends, some of whom are parents experienced in child loss, give me healthy perspectives to look at my feelings.

What about when the finger of blame is pointed at me by someone else? Usually, it is someone I love deeply. What do I do? My immediate response is to load my finger, point, and shoot, or should back at them. Of course, that accomplishes absolutely nothing except to turn the circumstances into something even more horrific. My late father-in-law would talk to me in his gentle, indirect way. Hold steady. Evaluate the situation. He would remind me that the person pointing the finger at me was hurting because they loved Carl too. He gave me a perspective on the other person's feelings while validating my own feelings.

Blame is not necessarily negative. Remember, the root of blame is often anger. Anger can be the catalyst for grieving families to bring about positive changes. It fuels the desire to bring about something good from something bad. Anger was, for me, an ingredient in getting TCF started here in Visalia.

There's fixing the blame, and then there's playing the Blame Game. Fixing the blame for a child's death is normal and later subsidies. Playing the Blame Game is different. The winning strategy for the Blame Game is simple. Don't play it. Nobody wins. Everyone loses. Pause. Take a step back. Analyze what fuels the desire to place blame of your child's death on someone or you. Find a trusted friend to talk to. You will be glad you did.

Be good to yourself. Aaron.

*Aaron Pueschel*  
*In Memory of my son, Carl*

## NO VACATION

There is no vacation from your absence.  
Every morning I awake I am a bereaved parent.

Every noon I feel the hole in my heart.

Every evening my arms are empty.

My life is busy now, but not quite full.

My heart is mended, but not quite healed.

For the rest of my life

Every moment will be lived without you.

There is no vacation from your absence.

*Kathy Boyette  
TCF, Gulf Coast, MS*

## Cemetery Moms

Jessica's Mom found another elephant to perch on Jess' headstone. She sits on the next grave marker with her arms wrapped around her knees, rocking and telling the latest about the court case that plays out her agony in the local newspaper. It was one year ago that her daughter innocently hung out with her long-time friends, boys who stole a gun they didn't think was loaded. Dads, siblings, grandparents and friends come too, but today, only Cemetery Moms are here.

Music comes from Keith's section of Clinton Grove Cemetery, where Civil War soldiers rest with the county seat's first settlers, and now our children. Keith's mother brings a tape player to comfort her while she plants and prunes and fusses over every leaf and petal. The music he wrote and performed couldn't drown out the teasing, bullying and pressure of high school and, she tells us, he ended his life.

Not far, a different Jessica's mother plants purple-blue flowers to match her daughter's purple headstone-imported from Europe-favorite color of the girl who was expected to survive heart surgery.

A grave away from my son is John, who also ended the life that had overwhelmed him. He is Jessica-the-elephant-collector's cousin. In four years, I have never seen John's mother here. She is the one who discovered her son in the garage. So we tend John's place, planting and watering around the statue representing John's pug dog.

My own little Steven lies in this section among the other young ones. He lost the battle with lifelong medical problems. I've come to change the poem in the outdoor frame next to Steven's blue headstone-blue for little boys and angels. Jessica's mom listens to how Steven "told" me to buy that little Raspberry Punch rosebush for the gravesite. (He "blew raspberries" when he was contented, which I believe he is now.)

We guess at who left some token of love for Jess. There are no car pools or school activities or passing off outgrown clothes to occupy our time and our talk. Not even the latest surgery or teenage crisis. In winter, I come Fridays, and eat my lunch in my car parked alongside our kids' section. Jessica's mom says not to worry if I don't get here every day this summer to water the impatiens; she comes every day with her sprinkling can. We are the Cemetery Moms.

*Linda May  
TCF Troy, MI  
In Memory of Steven*

## Our Children Remembered—August

Child's Name	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Parents
Ryan James Travis	2-Aug	8-Apr	Judy & Dick Travis
Daniel James Litterick	3-Aug	28-Jul	Bonnie & Jim Litterick
Chad Butterfield	3-Aug	27-Sep	Gary & Sandy Butterfield
Elijah Chad Nordhausen	4-Aug	4-Aug	Chad Nordhausen & Amber DeVary
Jennifer Job-Massa	9-Aug	18-Jun	Julie & Tom Job
Mily Diane Hoven	10-Aug	10-Aug	Richard & Jessy Hoven
Timothy Dean Thielsen	10-Aug	22-May	Kathy Hines
Noreen Moss	13-Aug	14-Mar	Evelyn & Norman Ykema
Ryley Joe Peer	13-Aug	30-Jul	Chuck & Wendi Peer
Kyle Swier	13-Aug	31-Oct	Gene & Shirley Jones
Aecho Bryanna Holmes	13-Aug	1-Sep	Terri & Toby Lang and David & Jodi Holmes
Hali Strom	14-Aug	2-Jan	Todd & Jill Strom
Adam Millekan	15-Aug	8-Jun	Bruce & Mary Millekan
Valencia Shepherd	18-Aug	12-Feb	Cashimaria Stroud
Deidre Keyvn Lockwood	19-Aug	28-Oct	Wendy Lieberg & David Lockwood
Allen J. Blom	19-Aug	15-Feb	Arie and Clazina Blom
Amy Jean Ellingson	20-Aug	9-Nov	Al & Nancy Ellingson
Troy Trankle	21-Aug	25-May	Ron & Jo Trankle
Jacob Thomas Cassutt	22-Aug	29-Apr	Tom & Deb Cassutt
Davis Nordquist	22-Aug	20-Aug	Darryl & Mary (Hansen) Nordquist
Landon Paul Wulf	23-Aug	21-Jan	Amie & Myra Wulf
John Rosebrock	26-Aug	9-Dec	Norma Robinson
Jason Alan Rollings	26-Aug	17-Jun	John and Darlene Rollings
Rodney Allen	27-Aug	27-Aug	Rita F. & Larry D. Plucker
Geoffrey D. Lang	27-Aug	28-Jun	Kathy & Jerry Lang
Lyle Lee Pavlis	29-Aug	24-Apr	Harold & Iona Pavlis
Cassie Mandeville	29-Aug	14-Sep	Holly Wheeler (mother)
Chad Michael Holm	30-Aug	14-Sep	Wanda Williamson (grandmother)
John M. Ellsbury	30-Aug	12-Feb	Cindy & Mike Holm
Tabor A Larsen	30-Aug	28-Dec	Michael M. & Susan H. Ellsbury
Jackson Jan Hullinger	24-Apr	1-Aug	Monica Larsen
Collin Paul Plucker	12-Feb	1-Aug	Morgan & Gretchen Hullinger
Robert James Redder	5-May	1-Aug	Rita F. & Larry D. Plucker
Darwin John Smith	21-Oct	4-Aug	Jim & Deb Redder
Kayla Marie Cleveland	24-Jul	5-Aug	Donald & Charlotte Smith
Neil Simon Birkeland	25-Nov	6-Aug	Mark & Lisa Cleveland
Scott James Krier	23-Jan	7-Aug	Janet (Birkeland) Dirks & Ron Birkeland
Lindsey Ann Masterson	19-Jul	9-Aug	Ron & Beverly Krier
Janalyn Neva Erickson	5-Apr	10-Aug	Tom & Beth Masterson
Joel Olmann	24-May	13-Aug	Neva M. & the late Clarence Erickson
John D. Stamage	11-Sep	15-Aug	Lynn & Anita Olmann
Adam Michael Smith	17-Sep	15-Aug	Doug & Lisa Stamage
Ryan Scott Hohn	3-Nov	15-Aug	Tim & Judy Smith
Brent Allen Jacobson	19-Dec	16-Aug	Brian & Melody Hohn
Carnie Sjomeling	29-May	17-Aug	Marlyn & Beverly Jacobson
Steven Tyrrell	23-May	17-Aug	Jerry & Jeannette Sjomeling
Mathew Steven Brooke	9-Jul	21-Aug	Tom & Rose Tyrrell
Aaron Steven Hanson	9-Dec	30-Aug	Mike & Artyce Brooke
Maddie Thompson	28-May	30-Aug	Dawn Hanson & Steve Hanson
Phillip Inskip	28-Dec	31-Aug	Chris & Jeri Lynn (Howe) Thompson
Lee Matthew Ennis	29-Mar	31-Aug	Dorothy Inskip
			Yvonne & Leo Ennis