



The Compassionate Friends

of the Mohawk Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WALK TO REMEMBER

In the spirit of friendship and as a way of honoring the memories of our children, siblings, and grandchildren, our chapter will be holding a memorial walk on October 13th, 2018 at 12:00pm, at Griffis Park, in Rome, NY. We hope not only that you will join us, but that you will also invite your friends and family members to participate. Our event is open to the public.

Here are the details:

- Sign-in for the event will be from 10:00am-11:45am at Spresso's, 160 Brooks Rd, Rome, NY. Spresso's will also be open and has great coffee, pastries and breakfast sandwiches.
- There will be a short opening ceremony at 12 noon and then the walk will begin.
- The walk route will be 2 miles starting from Spresso's, participants may walk any portion of the route.
- There will be no charge for the walk, but we ask that you consider making a donation, which will go towards our future outreach efforts to families who have experienced the death of a child.
- We will have a machine available on site to make buttons with your children's picture.
- Cost per button is \$5.00 or 3 for \$10.00. If you wish to have buttons made, bring a wallet size photo or copy of a photo of your child, on the day of the walk, or email a JPEG picture of your child by October 10th at tcfmo-hawkvalley@gmail.com and tell us how many buttons you would like made.
- If you do opt to have your buttons made on the day of the walk, and would like 10 or more, please register or sign in early, so we can have them done before our walk starts.
- Please make a copy of registration form for each friend or family member that will be walking. You can scan and email your forms to Stacey.borst@yahoo.com or call her at (315)271-6822 to register, request additional registration forms or ask questions. Registration is required for the walk.

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Monthly Meeting:

2nd Tuesday of each month

7:00pm-8:30pm

Stittville United Methodist

Church

9066 Main St.

Stittville, NY

4th Tuesday of each month

6:00pm-7:30pm

The Good News Center

10475 Cosby Manor Rd

Utica, NY 13502

What I Wish More People Understood About Losing A Child

Four and a half years after the death of my oldest son, I finally went to a grief support group for parents who have lost children. I went to support a friend who recently lost her son. I'm not sure I would've gone except that when I was in her shoes, for years ago, I wish I would have had a friend to go with me. Losing a child is the loneliest, most desolate journey a person can take and the only people who can come close to appreciating it are those who share the experience.

The meeting was a local chapter of The Compassionate Friends, an organization solely dedicated to providing support for those who have lost children, grandchildren or siblings. The facilitator was a tall gentleman who had lost his 17 year old son eight years ago. He opened the meeting by saying that dues to belong to the club are more than anyone would ever want to pay. Well, he couldn't be more correct: no one wants to belong to this group.

The group of incredible survivors included parents whose children had been killed by drunk drivers, murdered, accidental overdose, alcoholism, suicide and freak accidents. The children's ages ranged from 6-38 years old. When hearing the stories, I had a visceral reaction to being part of this "club", but was also humbled by the greatness of these mothers and fathers.

Most of what I share in this article came from the meeting, but also from my own experience of having lost a child and being four years into that lifelong journey of healing from deep grief. The following five tips can be your compass to help you navigate how to give support to grieving parents on a sacred journey they never wanted to take.

1. Remember our children.

The loss of children is a pain all bereaved parents share, and it is degree of suffering that is impossible to grasp without experiencing it first hand. Often, when we know someone else is experiencing grief, our discomfort keeps us from approaching it head on. But we want the world to remember our child or children, no matter how young or old our child was.

If you see something that reminds you of my child, tell me. If you are reminded at the holidays or on his birthday that I am missing my son, please tell me you remember him. And when I speak his name or relive memories relive them with me, don't shrink away. If you never met my son, don't be afraid to ask about him. One of my greatest joys is talking about Brandon.

2. Accept that you can't "fix" us.

An out-of-order death such as child loss breaks a person (especially a parent) in a way that is not fixable or solvable—ever! We will learn to pick up the pieces and move forward, but our lives will never be the same.

Every grieving parent must find a way to continue to live with loss, and it's a solitary journey. We appreciate your support and hope you can be patient with us as we find our way.

Please don't tell us it's time to get back to life, that it's been long enough, or that time heals all wounds. We welcome your support and love, and we know sometimes it's hard to watch, but our sense of brokenness isn't going to go away. It is something to observe, recognize, accept.

3. Know that there are at least two days a year we need a time out.

We still count birthdays and fantasize what our child would be like if he/she were still living. Birthdays are especially hard for us. Our hearts ache to celebrate our child's arrival into this world, but we are left becoming intensely aware of the hole in our hearts instead. Some parents create rituals or have parties while others prefer solitude. Either way, we are likely going to need time to process the marking of another year without our child

Then there's the anniversary of the date our child became an angel. This is a remarkable process similar to a parent of a newborn, first counting the days, then months then the one year anniversary, marking the time on the other side of that crevasse in our lives.

No matter how many years go by, the anniversary date of when our child died brings back deeply emotional memories and painful feelings (particularly if there is trauma associated with the child's death). The days leading up to that day can feel like impending doom or like it's hard to breathe. We may or may not share with you what's happening.

This is where the process of remembrance will help. If you have heard me speak of my child or supported me in remembering him/her, you will be able to put the pieces together and know when these tough days are approaching.

4. Realize that we struggle every day with happiness.

It's an ongoing battle to balance the pain and guilt of outliving your child with the desire to live in a way that honors them and their time on this earth.

I remember going on a family cruise eighteen months after Brandon died. On the first day, I stood at the back of the ship and bawled that I wasn't sharing this experience with him. Then I had to steady myself, and recognize that I was also creating memories with my surviving sons, and enjoying the time with them in the present moment.

As bereaved parents, we are constantly balancing holding grief in one hand and a happy life after loss in the other. You might observe this when you are with us at a wedding, graduation or other milestone celebration. Don't walk away—witness it with us and be part of our process.

5. Accept the fact our loss might make you uncomfortable.

Our loss is unnatural, out of order; it challenges your sense of safety. You may not know what to say or do, and you're afraid you might make us lose it. We've learned all of this as part of what we're learning about grief.

We will never forget our child. And the fact, our loss is always right under the surface of other emotions, even happiness. We would rather lose it because you spoke his/her name and remembered our child, than try and shield ourselves from the pain and live in denial.

Grief is the pendulum swing of love. The stronger and deeper the love the more grief will be created on the other side. Consider it a sacred opportunity to stand shoulder with someone who have endured one of life's frightening events. Rise up with us.

Source:

Author: Paula Stephens at MindBodyGreen.com

Birthdays

Julie Attridge	Sept 1st
Makhi Gillman	August 7th
Robert Burke	October 14th
Ethan Bush	August 5th
Dillon Chafee	September 11th
Kimberly Russo	August 18th
Kenneth Warner	October 16th
Jeff Forber	August 13th
Roasalee Bristol	September 27th
Angelo Flemings	October 4th
Jason Goss	September 28th
Nicholas Iannotti	August 18th
Richard Jones	October 9th
Jennifer Moore	October 20th
Alexa Nowak	August 23rd
Joseph Pocchiari	August 18th
William Pope	October 6th
Alyssa Findlay	August 5th
Adam Rhoades	September 20th
Kyle Riedman	August 7th
Stephen James	October 13th
Patrick Morreale	September 10th
Kimberly Russo	August 18th
Jason Southwick	October 4th
Christopher Tine	September 26th
Jenny Bradfield	October 16th
Jordan Wiater	October 27th
Amanda Wilkinson	September 4th

Angelversaries

Julie Attridge	October 17th
Tommy Fort	September 8th
Abigail Bohstedt	August 1st
Mahki Gillman	August 12th
Ryan Braunlich	September 18th
Joseph Bulger	October 24th
Robert Burke	September 22nd
Barnett Garguilo	September 4th
Ethan Bush	August 5th
Dillon Chafee	October 8th
Kenneth Warner	September 13th
Jason Goss	August 29th
Gordon Holtzer	August 5th
Sean Jewett	October 3rd
Jessica Keib	September 19th

Angelversaries

Christopher Keisel	September 12th
Matthew Kress	October 11th
Matt Larkin	October 9th
Alyssa Findlay	September 5th
Michael Scavo	October 2nd
Corinne Smith	August 4th
Melissa Brewer	August 6th
Avery Demarsh	October 17th

“Grieving Mother”

The day my child died
 I became somebody new
 A totally different person
 Someone I never knew

I am not who I used to be
 I am definitely not the same
 The only thing that hasn't changed
 Is the spelling of my name

I cry more than I ever did
 I break down quite a lot
 My heart hurts everyday
 The pain will never stop

A mother gives her child life
 And a love unlike no other
 When that is taken all away
 She then becomes a grieving mother

Chapter Steering Committee

David Roberts, Chapter Leader
 Cheri Roberts, Chapter Treasurer
 Stacey Borst, Newsletter Editor
 Debbie Cathey, Special Projects
 Kelly Colbert, Community Advocate
 Brandi Fleming, Community Advocate
 Bill Fleming, Community Advocate
 Stacy Wurz, Website

Al Visconti, Regional Coordinator
 (518) 756-9569
 Altchny@gmail.com

Mission

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.

Vision Statement

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

Acknowledgements

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