



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS INC.

International Organization Offering Friendship and Understanding to Bereaved Parents

MIAMI COUNTY CHAPTER NO.1870

March 2022 NEWSLETTER Vol. 31 No. 2

Facebook page “The Compassionate Friends of Miami County Ohio Chapter 1870”.

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WE KEEP HIM CLOSE, ALWAYS: HOW I SURVIVED THE LOSS OF MY TEENAGE SON

Written by Bereaved Dad, Thomas Harding.
His book, *Kadian Journal*, is published by Penguin
Random House. Twitter @thomasharding

Seven years ago, my 14-year-old son, Kadian, was killed in a road accident. This is the advice I'd give myself back then. When I was asked recently to speak about my "grief journey" to a group of bereaved parents, my first reaction was that it wasn't such a good idea. I was very worried that it would trigger something in me. Because seven years ago, I watched my 14-year-old son Kadian ride down a hill on a bicycle, and into a road where he was struck by a truck. He died in front of me. I was also anxious about making generalizations – after all, everyone's experience is different. There is no blueprint or boilerplate for how to cope with such a calamity. I didn't want to cause anyone additional pain.

I decided to take a pass.

Later, I took my dog out for a walk in the hills behind our house. And there, up in the yew tree forest, I thought some more. What if I had heard someone speak on this subject seven years ago? What would I have liked them to say? What would have made a difference to me back then?

So, here is what I came up with.

The first thing I would say to my seven-year-younger-self is this: I am so sorry for your loss. I am so, so sorry for your loss.

That awful question came up in conversation when I met strangers: how many children do you have? There are some people who will struggle to say this. Who will be awkward and embarrassed and overwhelmed. But not me.

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****New Meeting Location Announced****

Meetings are now being held at:

Zion Lutheran Church

14 W Walnut St

Tipp City, OH 45371

(located on the corner of Main and Third Street, handicapped accessible, entrance by parking lot on W. Walnut St.)

Next Meeting: March 24, 2022

7:00pm

Topic: Show & Tell

**A special "Thank You" to chapter member Barb Lawrence who has been the Treasurer for many years!*

As of February Cindy Glaser took on the role of chapter treasurer. Thank you Cindy for stepping into this important role in the chapter.

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Plain and simple, this is a catastrophe. It is horrible. Terrible. Disgusting. Awful. Life-changing and unfair.

I am truly sorry.

The second thing I want to say is that I am still here. Seven years later. Still breathing. Still standing. Still talking. There is a future ahead. I didn't always see it that way.

One of the worst moments for me happened after I had just seen the ambulance take Kadian's body away. I found myself in a car on my way back to my parents' house, where my daughter Sam was waiting. She was 13, and I had to tell her about her brother. That he was dead. It was an impossible task.

When I told her, Sam collapsed to the floor. I held her. We cried together for a long while. And then she said something that had an immediate impact and has stuck with me ever since. "We must live every moment to the full," she said, "because Kadian can't." And so, I made the commitment, then and there, to live every moment to the full. It's been a guiding light for me.

Then there was Graham, our neighbor, who had lost his teenage son in India four years earlier. I asked him how he was doing, and he said that he was "accommodating" to it. I thought about this a lot. Accommodating. Not getting over, or moving beyond, or turning the page – all of which sounded wrong to me, almost disloyal. But accommodating. It sounded strange to say, but it felt right.

A few days later, I saw a tree growing in a hedgerow near our house. I looked closer at its large roots, extending down around an enormous boulder and into the ground. And this is what I realized Graham meant by accommodating. The large boulder lies there forever, cold, inert; but somehow the tree had found a way to build a life around it.

And so, we began to rebuild our lives around this awful event. And one of the first things I learned was that our son's death had changed the key relationships around us. This was both unexpected and unnerving. The profound trauma and shock amplified our existing relationships, so those that were good were now great, and those that were not so good were now appalling.

Fortunately, my sister Amanda had said something just after we lost Kadian: "You have permission to do anything that makes your life better." This get-out-of-jail-free card was incredibly helpful. Whereas in the past I might have worried about hurting someone's feelings, now when my wife and I made decisions, our only concern was how it would protect us and our daughter. As a result, we avoided those family and friends whom we now found toxic. Seven years later, we have reconnected with some of them, but the relationships are different, more shallow, more managed. Most we have not. And that's OK.

For a while I was mad. I cried a lot. So did my wife. One breakfast, our daughter asked us if we could try to limit the crying hours, perhaps to daylight hours. She said it so nicely that we laughed. Mostly we succeeded. At first, my wife and I tried to do everything together. It felt safer. I could take care of her; she could take care of me. And then we realized that this was actually making things worse, that we had different needs at different times. This was a big moment for us. To keep our sanity, we had to walk the journey close, but separate.

Such strategies helped, but still I was unable to avoid the triggers that kept on coming: seeing Kadian's body in hospital; receiving his death notice; reading a sensational headline in the newspaper; shutting down his mobile phone account; going out for dinner and then seeing the fourth chair empty; attending a family occasion where all the grandchildren were there, but him. Each time feels like a punch to the stomach, like being told for the first time that our son had died. My marriage was always strong. We met when I was 18 and she was 23. But the death of our son has brought us even closer.

And then there was that awful question, which came up in conversation when I met strangers: how many children do you have? At first, I said "two". Then I was asked their ages. I would pause and give Sam's age – 13, then 14, then 15, now 20. Then I would say that we also have Kadian. He was aged 14 – when he died. And this almost
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always exploded the conversation. Typically, people would not know what to say. Most changed the subject, some even turned away. A few would be curious. How did he die, they would ask? Or the real shocker: was he wearing a bicycle helmet? Why did they ask this? Did they want to establish guilt? Of course, he was wearing a helmet.

For a while I told people I had one child, but it felt so unbelievably disloyal that I stopped almost at once. Now I give a limited amount of information, and if the inquiry moves in a direction I wish to avoid, I simply say, "I do not wish to talk about that," and move the conversation gently on. But there's another question people ask: how are you and your wife doing? I know where it's coming from because one or two people went further and mentioned a statistic that the stress of losing a child leads to breakups.

At first, I responded with anger. How dare they challenge my marriage, which I rely on every day just to get by? Then I found numerous studies that undermined the bogus child-bereavement-leadsto-marriage-breakups claim and quoted these at anyone who dared bring the subject up. But I quickly realised that the questioners just looked at me as if I were crazy, which I was. Now, when people ask, I keep it simple. My marriage to Debora was always strong. We met when I was 18 and she was 23. But the death of our son has brought us even closer. I loved my wife before Kadian died. I love her even more after.

A few weeks after we lost Kadian, my instinct was to go back to work, to keep busy, to distract myself, and so that's what I did. I helped a friend with his book-keeping and ran a real estate brokerage. At the same time, I had just sold my first book to a publisher and was about to start a round of edits. I hoped that by trying to return to some semblance of normality, it might give me comfort in a world that had become, overnight, abnormal, uncontrollable and unreliable. But I found there were some things I could do and others I could not. I learned that I could not deal with people. I responded badly to tension and conflict. Any problem, however minor, triggered a massive anxiety attack.

So, I gave up everything except my writing, which suited me fine. I was by myself, working in a safe environment that I could control. My wife also found that she could no longer stay in her job. Between us we had lost 80% of our income. Before long, not only were we having to deal with the traumatic loss of our son, the emotional impact on our daughter, PTSD and social alienation, but also the real prospect of losing our house.

So, what would I tell my seven-year-younger self about this?

I certainly would not deny how hard it is. Nor would I say, everything's going to be fine – because it is not. But I would say, you'll find a way to get through it. And when you can't, you will need to find people who will help. Which in my case is a hard sell, for I am not someone who finds it easy to ask for help. But sometimes you have no choice. So, I would tell myself to get over my pride. And that it's OK to borrow money if you need to – you will find a way to pay it back. And that those people who love you will want to help you if they can.

I would also say that it's OK to lie on the couch and watch TV, if that's what makes you feel better. And I would tell myself, it's fine to drink whiskey. But I would add, be careful. Try not to drink too much. If it doesn't make you aggressive or depressed, and doesn't give you a headache the next day, fair enough – but still, watch out.

And I'd also say, at some point you may want to speak to a therapist. But give yourself permission to say that this person is not the right fit. Because a therapist is like a girlfriend or boyfriend – the chemistry has to be right. And when it is right, listen to them.

Even then, it's not easy. It wasn't easy when my therapist said I should consider taking medication. "I'm not that kind of person," I said. "What kind of person is that?" my therapist asked, kindly. "Well, someone who is broken, traumatized, grieving, lethargic, unable to perform basic functions, lying on the couch all day watching box sets, drinking too much whiskey" And of course, I realized I was that kind of person. So, I took the pills, and this helped me get through. Until it was time to come off, which I did, slowly and carefully, and again with help. And now I'm not on them, though I still like watching box sets. I still give myself permission to take time out when I need it, because sometimes the world's just too much.

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And then I would say to seven-year-younger-self: enough of all that. Please tell me about Kadian. Because that's one of the ways to keep him close. So, here's a story about Kadian...

Each summer, we go camping with friends and family, melt marshmallows over the fire, fly kites and remember Kadian.

Two months after he died, his art teacher came to our house, holding a bag. She explained that Kadian had been working for weeks in pottery class on a project. He was going to give it to me for my birthday. It was a white ceramic cube with a pedestal inside, which was turned by a stiff crank. Above the top was carved his favorite slogan from Apple: "Think different". There was so much about this that was Kadian: generous, inventive, creative, artful, thoughtful, kind.

He and I had recently painted his bedroom silver in honor of Apple, which had been a wonderful father son time. We laughed a lot, our faces and arms covered with silver paint. And now here was this object, magically arriving at our door. Impossibly arriving, after he was no longer here. Because though Kadian is gone, he is still very much here, at least in part.

How do we keep him with us? We tell stories about him to our friends and keep pictures of him around the house. Each year we take his birthday off and go for a walk. Each summer, we go camping with friends and family, eat good food and drink good drink and melt marshmallows over the fire and fly kites and remember Kadian as we go. We keep him close. Always.

And though we grow older, and he died at 14, somehow, he is ageing with us. Of course, he is not here, and to tell you otherwise would be a lie. More than anything, I don't want to lie. I say again, his death is, was, will be terrible.

So, my dear younger self, my hurting, confused, troubled, broken me. If you can, try to be grateful for your time together. Be angry, truly angry, for what you have lost. Shout at the sky. Smash some plates. Scream at the world. Why would you not? But remember the good times. The laughs, the hugs, the moments of joy. The special, private moments that only you know. Write them down if you can. Or talk about them with people who also remember. Or sing or paint them or find another way. For he was magic, and in your life. Not for long enough, that's for sure. But if you can, be grateful.

The moments will pass. They will become hours, then days, then weeks and years. Your dear, darling, beautiful child will still be missing. Not here. But also, somehow, here, too. And in front of you, let's hope, will stretch the next seven years, and perhaps the next. So, try and do what Sam said: live each day to the full. Because you can.

~from "The Journey Together", The National Newsletter of the Bereaved Parents USA Spring 2021 issue

For more information and resources regarding Bereaved Parents USA go to bereavedparentsusa.org
Including articles, newsletters and Bereaved Parents USA conference information.

NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE?

A listening ear is sometimes the best medicine.

Kim Bundy (suicide)	573-9877
Pam Fortener (cancer)	238-4075
Donnie Fortener (cancer)	760-2238
Pam Fortener (siblings)	238-4075
Cathy Duff (auto accident)	473-5533
Jackie Glawe (auto accident)	478-3318



Chasing Butterflies

So many times I wonder now
 How will I make it through?
 As years go flitting by me
 Taking memories of you
 Elusive, fragile, here and there
 I chase and cast my net
 Tiny pieces of our long agos
 I fear I might forget
 Like a thousand butterflies
 So many, yet too few
 Each one a treasured moment
 Each one a part 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
 So I will chase each memory
 Seen through this Mother's eyes
 Until I'm with you once again
 I'll be chasing butterflies

~Donna Gerrior
 TCF Pasco County, FL
 In Memory of Rob

CHAPTER NEWS

Upcoming meetings:

****Note front page for new location of meetings****

Mar - Show & Tell
Apr - To Be Announced

*Thank You
 for your love gifts!*

- ★ *My sincere apologies to the following families who made Love Gifts in the month of December and were not acknowledged in the February newsletter. Barb Lawrence, treasurer in 2021. Our sincere thanks to:*
- ★ *Ann Flory for the Anniversary Love Gift in memory of her daughter, Elizabeth Flory Duff, 04/1975 -- 01/2005.*
- ★ *Dennis & Susan Ream for the Love Gift in memory of their daughter, Kristen Nicole Ream, 03/1974 -- 08/2011.*
- ★ *Mark & Jeri Sweitzer for their Love Gift in memory of their son, Mark W. "Markie" Sweitzer, 05/1990 – 05/2020.*
- ★ *Love Gifts should be made out to:
 The Compassionate Friends and mailed to **Cindy Glaser, 5255 Rudy Road Tipp City, Ohio 45371.**
 Please send your donation by the 15th of the month prior to the month you want your child remembered in the newsletter.*

Our Children Lovingly Remembered

March Birthdays

Child—Parent, Grandparent, Sibling

Ava Nicole Lisky - Kathy Russell
 Bill Meadows - Fred & Pat Meadows
 Claire Landis - Chelsea Landis
 James Hatfield - Betty White
 Jordan Elizabeth Glawe - Jeff & Jackie Glawe
 Kaitlynn Ariana Yvonne Preston - David Preston
 Kyle L. Bryan - Jeanette Bryan
 Michael David Rhoades - David Rhoades
 Michael Talbot Sharpe - Amy Kasprzak
 Paul William Knisley - Kim Knisley
 Susan Eileen Lawrence - Barb Lawrence
 Taylor Davis - Barbara Davis
 Zachary James Dyer - Rod & Kelley Dyer



March Angel-versaries

Child—Parent, Grandparent, Sibling

Cassandra "Cassie" Campbell - Dawn Duff
 Erika Leigh Wetzel - Susan Wetzel-Philpot
 Jacquelyn Elizabeth "Jackie" Ahlers - Bob & Peg Ahlers
 Jerrid Younker - Susan Fogt
 Jerrid Younker - Frank Younker
 Michael Talbot Sharpe - Amy Kasprzak
 Paul William Knisley - Kim Knisley
 Ryan Patrick Gilhooly - Constance Gilhooly



Every effort is made to publish accurate information regarding the birth and remembrance dates. Please let me know if there is an error in the listing, in order to correct our records. If you receive this newsletter and you have not given us the name and dates for your child, but want them listed here, please contact me. - Jackie Glawe/Editor

While others are just living their lives
 I am trying to find a life worth living

While others go on with daily tasks
 I am working on tasks to get me
 through another day without you

~Jackie Glawe, TCF Miami County of Ohio,
 in memory of daughter Jordan

When you turn your grief
 into remembrance,
 you are magnifying
 the life of the loved ones you lost
 and allowing other people to get
 to know them in some way.

~Author unknown

FREE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HOPE
& HEALING AFTER LOSS
CONFERENCE
MARCH 14, 2022
A virtual experience

In need of a dose of hope? Please join Open to Hope for our International Day of Hope and Healing after Loss with experts in the field of grief and loss devoted to supporting the bereaved. Our mission is to provide an uplifting day of hope and healing to those grieving the loss of a loved one.

Shari O'Loughlin, CEO of The Compassionate Friends, will be presenting in the afternoon, *Finding Hope Through Sharing Our Grief – Peer Grief Support*.

A Range of Topics on Grief, Loss, and Hope

Growth from Grief
Widowhood
Military Loss
Loss of a Child
Supporting Grieving Children
Sibling Loss
Parent Loss
After Death Communication
Physical Healing After Loss
Finding Meaning After Loss

“The International Day of Hope and Healing After Loss is a free online experience brought to you by the Open to Hope foundation with the mission of helping people find hope after loss. Our expert presenters have generously donated their time, talents, and advice to share with you..”
-- Dr. Gloria Horsley and Dr. Heidi Horsley - Open to Hope

***To register for this free virtual event go to opentohope.com**

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

When a child dies, grief is a family affair. It hits Mom and Dad and siblings with equal despair. Mom cries and cannot get out of bed. Dad holds in emotions and leaves much unsaid. Sisters and brothers simply cannot understand why death came and dealt this kind of hand. No one acts as they should and nothing is the same. The family wants to draw together but seems to share only pain.

Someone must be responsible when a child dies. Each family member thinks in some way it's them, and cries. But no one is responsible for things we cannot control.

So reach out to each other and keep the family whole. Don't let the difference in how you each grieve change the love in your family or its belief. Be strong when you can and weak when you must. Love each other with kindness and trust to keep the family love and you will all survive. We who have been there and made it through together can say that holding on to each other will make love last forever.

~Jacki Rosen, South Broward/North Dade TCF





**The
Compassionate
Friends**

Miami County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

2445 N Montgomery County Line Rd
Tipp City OH 45371

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization which offers support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Only a person who has experienced the trauma of losing a child can fully understand the pain and suffering involved.

*We gather to listen) to share) and to support each other in the resolution of our grief. We need not walk alone. we are *The Compassionate Friends.**

MISSION STATEMENT ... 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.

If you are receiving our newsletter for the 1st time,

it is because someone told us that you might find it helpful. To find out more about The Compassionate Friends, please call our Chapter Leader, Kim Bundy (937) 573-9877. We cordially invite you to our monthly meetings held on the fourth Thursday of each month. Nothing is ever expected of you. You don't have to speak a single word. Parents who do attend, find comfort, support, friendship and understanding from others who have also lost a child. You do not have to come alone - bring a family member or friend with you.

You need not walk alone!



IF YOU ARE RECEIVING THIS NEWSLETTER, AND WISH TO HAVE YOUR NAME REMOVED FROM OUR MAILING LIST, PLEASE CALL OR TEXT (937) 478-3318 AND LEAVE A MESSAGE.

Thank you.