



The Waterbury, CT Chapter of

# The Compassionate Friends

Sept/Oct 2009

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*The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help group for parents and their families who have experienced the death of a child of any age, including adult children, and from any cause. We offer hope in a network of support, friendship and understanding that only friends who have "been there" can give.*

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## Handling the Holidays

### PSSST!

Pssst! They're coming, you know. Before you know it, they're gonna be here! They do sneak up on you. You're going along, peaceful, not too many down-days, and then, almost without warning they're on top of you! Those mind-blowing, gut-wrenching, shiver-producing holidays - they're coming! Yes, starting with Halloween, then Thanksgiving, and finally, Christmas or Hanukkah, they are on us. Each with its myriad memories of our family when it was larger - each holiday tearing at us, destroying us. Damn them all!

To avoid them, there are those who recommend we do something different; travel, take a cruise, eat out rather than at home, etc. You can do these things, and they may help you get through the holidays. There is another way to beat them. Another method to defuse and defeat the downer that the holidays can be to us. Beat them to it!

Let's take Halloween. What about Halloween can tear us apart? The kids' costumes? Remembering how we went around "trick or treating" with them? I remember a very small one, who by the third house had turned into a witch - a voracious, avaricious, little greedy-guts who wanted to continue forever getting, getting, getting, more and more candy and goodies, and who cried when she had to stop and go home. Is there a children's home somewhere that can use a helping hand? Sure you may dissolve in tears, but if you can help someone else in any way, you'll be helping yourself more. Or don't shut off the lights and hide in the darkness. Open your door to the little ghosties and goblins. Try to guess who they are. Ask the little ones what their "trick" is. In their innocence they think they have to perform a trick for you, and may do a dance or something similar. Will it hurt? Maybe. Will

the tears come? Probably. But you'll have some fun, too. Hiding in the dark at Halloween is no way to live. For Thanksgiving, you can go away and escape, but how about doing the same things you did before, only now you are one short. Just use a little less salt, let your tears be the seasoning. It's okay to cry, it's okay to remember, no one will laugh at you, although they may think (and say), "you should be over it by now," but who cares?

Meet Christmas or Hanukkah head on! Hang that one special stocking. Don't be afraid of talking about the past. I remember the joy I had when I finally found out how much more fun it was to give a gift than it was to receive one. The tree lights and candles are much more beautiful when viewed through tear-blurred eyes. They have a special glow and luminosity then.

Don't worry about "spoiling" these holidays because you are sad. Ask, out loud, for the one gift you really want and need: Compassion. You'll get it.

Sometimes grief seems to be like a splinter. We treat splinters in two ways. We can do nothing, and it will slowly fester and probably become infected. We can attack it head on with a needle and gouge it out of our life. Either way it hurts. The first way hurts for a long time, the direct attack way hurts for a much shorter time. The scar is about the same.

This year, try not to dodge or hide from the holidays. Try meeting them head on!

The anticipation of the day or the event is usually much worse than the day or the event actually is. You can do it. You can't hide from 'em, and you can't avoid 'em, either. Pssst! They're coming, you know...



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