

Remind yourself to be patient, to be kind to yourself. You are not a failure, you did the very best you could, and you would surely have given your own life to save your child's. You did not fail; life just isn't always fair. These feelings, and others as bizarre, may cause you to think you are going crazy. Ask any bereaved parent of some years and they will all tell you they thought the same thing at some time. You are a changed person now, you will never again be the same as you were before your child died. Someday you will accept that fact: Out of the ashes of grief you can grow, if and when you choose to do so. Look around you to the other bereaved parents; you will find role models and hope in them. There will be many tears, allow them, they are healing and necessary to survival and recovery.

Many of us suffer from the lack of ability to concentrate. It is a common complaint. We can't think, we can't remember from one minute till the next and we have no idea what we've read when we finish a page. Be patient, giving time and some effort you will return to normal.

Hang on to any shred of your sense of humor that you can, even a small chuckle now and then can break your tension and give some relief. It may be a while in coming but one day you will laugh again. I know you can't believe it now but you will.

You will have a strong need to talk. You will find that you can talk more than one person can listen, so seek out several good friends who will let you talk to them. You will find some at the Compassionate Friends meetings. You will need to tell your child's story over and over again. You will need to talk about the whole life and death and what you are going through now. Talking is therapeutic. Talk and talk, and talk, until your story is told.

At night you may go over the events again and again and again, night after night. This is called obsessional review. Sleep disturbances are not unusual. We either can't sleep or sleep too much.

We suffer guilt real and imagined. We recall punishments and in turn punish ourselves with them when at the time the punishment was probably fair. We go through the "if only's." If only we had or hadn't....

Beware of isolation. We need to be with people, not alone. When we isolate ourselves with no one to talk to about our feelings, we become depressed: and isolation plus depression equals suicidal feelings and that spells real trouble.

We are fatigued, lack motivation, we suffer numerous physical complaints, headaches, stomach disorders, we are either nervous or feel dead inside... many and sundry are our complaints, most of which are normal and to be expected in this time of enormous stress and always we ask ourselves and others, "Why?" "Why me?" "Why my child? Simply because life isn't always fair, my friend....

Your world is topsy-turvy now, nothing makes sense, nothing fits....family balance is upset, the numbers are all wrong, there is one too empty chairs at the table now, so you choke on your food and think of the empty chair. Grocery shopping is a nightmare because your child's favorite food greets you from the shelves of every aisle; you don't dare think of holidays because you know you'll never survive them without your child. Your child's birthday and the memory of all the joy of that day looms like a mountain far too high to climb. ...some days all you want is for the pain to stop. Some days you just can't get out of bed. Some days you work hard and fast like something has possessed you. Every day you cry. You find you are very lonely even in the midst of a crowded shopping mall. You want to scream at the busy, happy people, "Don't you know my child is dead?" How can they go on as if nothing has happened?" No matter how many people you are with, you are lonely.

Compassionate Friends understand: each one of us has had a least one child die. We know what you are going through. We don't pretend to have all the answers, but we want to share this time of your life with you. We want you to know you are not alone.

By Fay Harden TCF Tuscaloosa, AL
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New Meeting Location

The new location of the Waterbury Chapter of TCF is:



**The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center
1075 Chase Parkway, Waterbury**

From downtown Waterbury, go up West Main Street and that turns into Chase Parkway. It is almost to the end on the left hand side across from Naugatuck Valley Community College. It is also exit 18 off Route 84.

If the doors are locked when you arrive, please call Sharon's cell phone at (860) 384-1398.