



The Waterbury, CT Chapter of

# The Compassionate Friends

Sept/Oct 2011

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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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## **An Article A Father Wrote on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Son's Passing**

~excerpts taken from notes from a speaker/ counselor known only as Neal at a Johannesburg, Africa meeting

Grief colors everything we see and do including the roles we adopt. We view life through different glasses in much the same way as we don't rosy glasses when we are over-optimistic and blue glasses when we are down-hearted. Clear glasses when things are going well and green glasses during summer. During winter or times of distress, we may be wearing our grey glasses to view life.

Other people around us give us a period of respite then ask us to resume our old roles. We need to educate others that our roles in their lives have changed and their roles in our lives have changed. Just as we have resigned from our old lives, they are fired from their old roles.

We adapt the old roles in a new way. One of two things happens to our old roles we never resume them or we do them in a new way.

To expect of us that we enact our roles in the old way is unreasonable. So some of our roles and others around us are fired and then rehired.

One of two things happen to others we discard them or we re-align ourselves with them. They have to realize that we are new and re-invented and we have an unusual story to tell; one that makes dinner table conversation go in a completely new direction. We need to tell our story over and over again.

More than likely we are going to be preoccupied with things of the after-world. Death has become a companion and when we have finished our journeys, it will scare us less than before.

We have a depth to us that makes us a little intolerant of silliness, frivolity and the silly illusions of life. It is hard to invest in the things we invested in before. Our bodies are going to change. Our dreams are going to change. The way we love will change. Our marriages are now under a lot of pressure and deserve a lot more attention. We are far more compassionate and understanding of pain and suffering. We know pathos. We are more able to deal with uncertainty. We are still the same.

Neal concluded by reading the following excerpt from a letter that a client of his had written and had given him permission to quote from the letter.

"Please experience me as I am and not as you think I should be. I have transformed and emerged out of the cocoon of ignorance and paradisiacal bliss. I have seen the other side of life; I have visited the landscape of suffering and know all its twists and turns and I need to tell you this story of mine. It will require of you that you listen carefully and without prejudice.

You do not know this land, how can you; so I will teach you about it graciously. At times, I may be angry at you for not knowing this place of desolation and suffering, and other times I will forgive you for not knowing. I will often treat you in a way that makes you feel what I am feeling, I ask you to forgive me for this; but it is a strange experience being me. Often I wonder why people do not visit this place of their own accord.

I guess nobody wants to know this kind of sadness unless they have to. My journeys there have made me wiser, stronger, more compassionate, cynical, sad and bitter. It's strange, but all of those qualities can be in the same person at the same time. I have returned to your world a different person and if you want to get to know me as I am now then we can meet and share with each other and if not, I will leave your space."



By Robert & Beverley Petzer, May 2001  
Reprinted from TCF Atlanta Online, June 2011