



The Compassionate Friends of Canada

When A Child Dies...

National Newsletter - December 2017

National Office

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Transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope.

- Reverend Simon Stephens, Founder, TCF

To Advocate or not to Advocate

We all grieve differently. In fact, finding our own unique style of processing tragedy may be among our earliest tasks of grieving. We need to discover what works best for us. Some of us are emotional grievers. We are able to cry freely and express our emotions easily, whether through speech, writing or the creative arts. The TCF model, with its Sharing Circle, fits our needs well.

Some of us are instrumental grievers. We “do it by doing”. We work things through by digging in the garden, building birdhouses, or devoting ourselves to a cause. TCF members who are instrumental grievers may often be found working behind the scenes, perhaps doing fundraising, monitoring a website, or distributing information packages.

I’m making a guess that Vince Leitao of Toronto may fit into the latter category. He contacted Eileen and Andy Bond, our Chapter Development team, a couple of years ago about possibly starting a TCF chapter in the Toronto area. He soon found, however, that he needed to focus his energies on a more immediate goal: to secure enhanced bereavement leave for parents in Ontario after a child has died, a cause that came to be known as “Jonathan’s Law”. We are happy, therefore, to pass along this recent, positive message from Vince:

Subject: Update on Jonathan's Law

Hello everyone,

I am really pleased to inform you that the government of Ontario adopted Jonathan's Law into their Bill 148 (an act to amend the employment standards act 2000). This Bill 148 underwent third reading on November 22, 2017, and has passed. Royal assent is expected before the end of the year and will be effected on the 1st of January 2018. With this amendment in effect, Ontario parents whose child dies will be entitled to a 104-week leave of absence with their jobs protected. This is a very compassionate act by Ontario.

We agree with Vince, and we invite all of you to visit the website that he created: <http://www.vinceleitao.com/jonathans%20law.htm>. The story of Jonathan's Law is just one of eight tabs, including Bereavement, Resources for the Grieving, and For Family & Friends.

Anyone who is interested in the specific wording of the amendment can reference the **Ontario Employment Standards Act, 28 Section 49.5, Child Death Leave, Entitlement to leave.**

So if this initiative has been in the works for more than two years, why are we just telling you about it now, you might ask. The reason is that we follow **The Seven Principles of The Compassionate Friends**, which in the third item states: *We do not participate in legislative or political controversy.* TCF Canada and TCF Chapters never involve themselves in the discussion or promotion of other causes, even when there appears to be a common or beneficial goal.

Here's a copy of the **Seven Principles** for future reference:

The Seven Principles of The Compassionate Friends

The Seven Principles were written by the late Art Anderson of Star Lake, NY, and follow the philosophy of the original Society of The Compassionate Friends, which was founded in Coventry, England, January 28, 1969, by Rev. Simon Stephens and co-founding parents, Joe and Iris Lawley MBE.

I. TCF offers friendship and understanding to bereaved parents

- We have learned that the death of our child has caused a pain that can best be understood fully by another parent.
- Knowing that all need love and support, we reach out as our own grief subsides to those who still feel alone and abandoned.

II. TCF believes that bereaved parents can help each other toward a positive reconciliation of their grief

- We understand that each parent must find his or her own way through grief.
- We know that expressing thoughts and feelings is part of the healing process. We offer an opportunity for sharing and learning from other bereaved parents.
- We do not offer professional psychotherapy or counseling.
- We seek the cooperation and the support of the professional community but do not depend on it for supervision or formal guidance.
- We welcome the opportunity to share with the professional community what we have learned about the needs of bereaved parents.

III. TCF reaches out to all bereaved parents across artificial barriers of religion, race, economic class or ethnic group

- We espouse no specific religious or philosophical ideology.
- We support our activities through voluntary contributions and assess no dues or fees.
- We do not participate in legislative or political controversy.
- We express our individual views on controversial subjects with respect and consideration for those who may disagree with us.

IV. TCF understands that every bereaved parent has individual needs and rights

- We never suggest that there is a correct way to grieve or that there is a preferred solution to the emotional and spiritual dilemmas raised by the death of our children.
- Everyone deserves an opportunity to be heard.
- No one is compelled to speak.
- All have the responsibility to listen.

V. TCF helps bereaved parent primarily through local chapters

- We have established local chapters to provide sharing groups that create an atmosphere of openness and honesty.
- We believe that local chapters should be autonomous in all matters except those affecting other chapters or the organization as a whole.
- We believe that chapters succeed most frequently if there are three or more founders, at least two of whom are a year or more from their loss and including at least one father and one mother.

VI. TCF Chapters belong to their members

- We treat what is said at meetings as confidential and what we learn about each other as privileged information.
- We recommend that attendance at meetings by the media, by students, or by other observers be permitted only with prior announcements and with the consent of the chapter members.
- We realize that some time must be spent on organizational programs and financial matters but we prefer to keep this to a minimum and out of the regularly scheduled TCF meetings.

VII. TCF Chapters are coordinated nationally to extend help to each other and to individual bereaved parents everywhere

- We maintain a national office to serve us by assisting in the development of new chapters, by offering support and consultation to existing chapters, and by responding to bereaved parents where there is no local chapter.
- We have learned that it is often easier and more effective to provide program material and educational services by working together at the national or regional level than to work alone.
- We seek opportunities to share with society the insights our grief has brought us so that future bereaved parents may receive needed understanding and support.
- We encourage other family members, especially siblings, to share in our task of mutual support.
- We acknowledge our responsibility to support our local and national goals by contributing what we can of our time, our talent, and our resources.

These seven principles were adopted by the U.S. National Board of Directors in 1981, endorsed by the National Board of TCF of Canada, November 2, 1986.