



The Compassionate Friends of Canada

When A Child Dies...

National Newsletter - September/October 2019

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Transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope.

- Reverend Simon Stephens, Founder, TCF

In this issue we start off with dessert first – announcement of a new Chapter in Ontario:

TCF Waterloo Region

“Loss of a child of any age, for any reason....” This phrase, as sad as it is, brings people together. Following the passing of her daughter Hilary in 2016, Kim McCullough sought out many avenues to help her through her grief. Often with her husband, she attended groups and grief sessions with Bereaved Families of Ontario, The Coping Centre, and Living with Loss. These organizations provide wonderful support to many people working through grief. Many of these options were groups that met for a determined amount of time with a program end-date. Once the full session was over, Kim felt like more support was necessary, but she was unable to find a suitable support group. Without making comparisons in loss, it is true that the loss of a child is “different” from other losses. The “out of natural order” loss of a child can require the support of others who understand. During a lunch together with her friend Teresa, their talk led to the plan to begin a chapter of The Compassionate Friends in Waterloo Region. Kim was already a member of the Compassionate Friends Canada Facebook Group. Teresa and Kim have known each other since their teen years.

Teresa has experienced her own loss, as her daughter Alysa was stillborn in 1998. Kim sought out another grieving parent from the TCF Canada group: Karen, who had lost her 14-year-old daughter, Lauren, in 2018. Together these three mothers have taken steps to bring this plan to reality. With the TCF Canada application approved, venue found and the local Facebook group started, they are well on their way to being prepared for the first meeting of The Compassionate Friends Waterloo Region. They all feel that they will be filling a gap in the need for peer support of this kind in the area. [Ed: We agree!]

Karen Destun – Facilitator; Teresa MacVicar – Facilitator; Kim McCullough – Chapter Leader

Information for Facilitators ...

Over the last several months, we have conducted four telephone training sessions on Sharing Circles with a total of twenty-four Circle Leaders attending. The sessions provided helpful guidance for new facilitators and a valuable refresher for the more experienced. One of the key objectives of the training, which we believe is worth emphasizing, is to clearly define the role of the facilitator in a peer support group. The following paragraphs are based on the *“Information for Facilitators”* handbook.

The main role of the facilitator is to encourage and guide discussion among the participants. Facilitators are not professionals, they are themselves bereaved parents, but they need to be comfortable discussing the range of issues resulting from the death of a child. Facilitators do not have all the answers, or a magic wand to bring back the child or take away the pain. They do have the empathy, understanding and communication skills to allow the group to develop a safe, comfortable environment in which participants can benefit from the experiences of others.

A Sharing Circle facilitator must temporarily step back, “park” their own emotions and focus on guiding the group discussion. This means making everyone feel welcome, establishing ground rules by reading the Sharing Circle Guidelines, respecting each person’s situation and beliefs, and allowing time for each participant to share their stories. They should avoid lecturing or monopolizing the conversation and only share their personal experience to the extent necessary to encourage others who may be reluctant to do so. Overall, they should consider what will best help the group progress, rather than the needs of any individual member, including themselves. (Although on occasion, the group may decide that one person, especially a newly bereaved parent, would benefit from extra group support.) In more objective terms, the facilitator manages the process of sharing whilst also monitoring the content of the discussion.

Most importantly, facilitators should remember that as bereaved parents, they also need to respect their own grief. Attending a Circle in a non-facilitator role would be a more appropriate place to share their own stories in depth.

The next telephone training session will be in November. In addition to the Role of the Facilitator, the session covers TCF Background and Principles, Sharing Circle Preparation and Conduct, and Group Communication Techniques. If you would like to attend this session, or would just like a copy of the *“Information for Facilitators”* handbook, please e-mail NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net.

We also welcome suggestions for other training topics that would be helpful to Chapter Leaders.

Mark your Calendar - Next Training Session November 17th

A phone call...

As part of your Board’s commitment to supporting the local Chapters, between now and mid-November Directors will be making personal phone calls to the leaders of each Chapter. In a country the size of Canada, we will never be able to all meet up to put a face to each name, but at least we can have a phone conversation and hear a real voice.

What to talk about? We are not calling to “check up” on you (although we will ask you to confirm that the contact information that we have for your Chapter is current). We are calling to “check in”, so please give some thought to subjects such as: situations that have come up in meetings; topics you might want addressed in the newsletter; support materials that you might need.

And don’t forget that in between these annual phone calls, you can contact us at 1-866-823-0141 (toll-free) and at NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net.

Gone Phishing

Wikipedia's definition – "**Phishing** is the fraudulent attempt to obtain sensitive information such as usernames, passwords and credit card details by disguising oneself as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication."

Recently our organization has had experience with both Phishing and Blackmail attempts. There are numerous spam e-mails traveling throughout the world targeting those that are most susceptible including newly bereaved, the elderly, and those who are not comfortable with the technology of the internet. We all would like to think that when we receive e-mails, those sending them are honest and really have our best interests at heart. Reality dictates otherwise.

Blackmail e-mails take advantage of our understanding or lack of understanding of how the technology works. We are sometimes bullied into believing that what they are telling us is true and that they have evidence from monitoring our communications and internet browsing. They will release our browsing history, e-mails or files that they have intercepted and send it to our contact lists if we do not pay a ransom. The return address of the sender is a No Reply address and they require you to click on an attached address to complete their demands. I recently spoke with the fraud department of our local police service and they stated that many of these e-mails are routed through multiple servers around the world and usually originate offshore.

The recent fraud e-mails sent to a couple of our TCF Chapters across Canada claim to have been sent from our National Office asking for updated information from the chapter or else its e-mail accounts will be terminated. The two chapter leaders that contacted us suspected that the e-mails were spam. There may be more out there that we are not aware of.

How did these chapters get chosen? The TCF Canada website is meant to facilitate the bringing together of those seeking a chapter available to them in their area as well as supplying information materials. We list by province the chapters that are active and include phone numbers and e-mail addresses to follow for more information. We do not include names for security reasons. Anyone can browse our website and choose e-mails to send spam to, but they will not have your name if they use this route.

What can you do?

Do delete them immediately. If you question the content of the e-mail you can contact our National Office using our toll-free number (**1-866-823-0141**) for verification.

Do not click on the reply link of the e-mail. TCF Canada will never contact you without knowing your name and will never threaten you.

Do not respond to or click on any links included in the e-mail.

Gary Kachur, BOD - TCF Canada Webmaster

Bright idea:



Heaven knows, those of us who are bereaved have heard so many examples from the list of "What not to say to a person in grief". As a discussion topic, that would certainly draw out loud moans and groans and elicit many stories. But what about turning the topic around and asking, "What has someone said to you that really helped?" We did that at one of our meetings recently, and wound up hearing some really heart-warming stories. We also heard how some of the comments that had been made in the Sharing Circle by the more seasoned grievers had been not merely helpful, but even transformative. As it says in our TCF Welcome Statement: ***Share your memories, if you can, the good ones and the bad. What you say might help someone else more than you can imagine. Listen to others; you may draw strength and comfort from what others say.*** This is the successful formula that Simon Stephens refers to as "*Transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope.*"

—contributed by the TCF Victoria, BC, Chapter



Worldwide Candle Lighting Day
Second Sunday in December

Are you planning a Candle Lighting in your area?

The TCF Canada website can help you get the word out.

Send us a detailed advertisement regarding your
program - date, location, time, etc.

We will post it on the special events pages.

Forward details to:

Saskatoon@TCFCanada.net