



The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter

November 2019 Newsletter



A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents

Chapter Leader Notes



GRATITUDE WITH A GRAIN OF SALT

(I can't take credit for the clever title. Someone else came up with it.)

The holidays are upon us. "Upon us" can be quite literal in that the seasonal holidays can bring a weight and burden to grieving parents and siblings that other people don't understand. The obligatory gratitude, smiles and good cheer are simply annoying noises to a griever whose emotions and psyche have experienced extreme and profound reaches that others have not. Apathy is often a comfortable state to remain in until it improves someday – and it will.

Feeling apathetic and left out is normal. It is not a choice but a reaction. Some of the distancing that may happen during the holidays is also a means of protecting oneself from further triggers and little cuts of pain. Each griever is not only experiencing the loss of their loved one but also mourning the loss of a time in their previously shared lives when there was fun, happy anticipation, warmth and togetherness.

It is difficult to feel gratitude when you don't feel inner peace or happiness.

If other people try to push you into the holiday or make you feel guilty for being apathetic or sad, just remember – you are not responsible for any other adults' happiness.

As everyone sits around the dining table at Thanksgiving, telling what they are grateful for, some of us will have difficulty answering the question. It is good to be mindful of that

feeling and alteration in your thinking. However, there may be a way to start refocusing your thinking and changing your mindset ever so slightly.

The purpose of this little exercise is simply to provide some balance to your new life and mindset.

Grief makes people feel angry, cheated, lonely, anxious, sad and depressed. The danger is, that point of view, can permeate and impact their entire worldview, making it more negative and cynical.

A study was done where one group of people were asked to record five things they were grateful for each week for 9 weeks. The second group was asked to record 5 problems they encountered each week for 9 weeks and a third group just recorded their week's events. The group that recorded their gratitude felt that their lives were better and they were more optimistic.

So, when you find yourself feeling negative, angry and isolated, just think "Yes, I also have X to be grateful for." It may be just a pleasant memory or home-delivered pizza or your dog. See if it helps your outlook. And it will also prepare you if you are asked to share one thing that you are grateful for at your Thanksgiving dinner.

As for me, I am always grateful for a little salt.

Wishing you a gentle Thanksgiving,



Toni



GIFTS OF LOVE

A love gift is a gift of money or of time given to the Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter of the Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child who has died, but donations can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of your chapters. Love gifts are acknowledged each month in the newsletter.

Thanks to Timothy & Marilyn Grace
For sponsoring the newsletter
in memory of their daughter
Megan Candice Grace

"Gifts of Love" in remembering our children and siblings help to pay for Newsletters, Postage, Books for our Lending Libraries and Resources, Memorial Services, Candle Lightings, Telephone and Outreach, and Dues to the National TCF Office. Thank you.

Meetings

Lake Villa Meeting
Northern Illinois Chapter TCF
November 21 - 7:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.
Millburn Congregational Church
19073 W Old Grass Lake Rd
(Corner of Old Grass Lake Road & Rt. 45
Lake Villa, IL 60046

Holy Family Church
December 5
7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
450 Keller Street, Waukegan, IL 60085
Meeting in Room 4
Open discussion
Enter by church office then down the hall to
Room 4 on right.

"Tenemos un cuarto nuevo para las reuniones- Salon
4. Entre por la oficina de la iglesia y sigue en el pasillo
al Salon

Open Discussion

(OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND
SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN
NOVEMBER & DECEMBER CONTINUED FROM
PAGE 3)

Andrew Muno
December 15
Son of Darlene Muno

Scott Ewing
December 16
Son of Alan & Renee Ewing

Nick Battis
December 24
Son of Susan Battis

Please let me know if I have omitted a child, misspelled a name or have published an incorrect date. I know how important it is to bereaved families to have their children remembered. vszech@comcast.net

Low Fat, Lite Holidays

Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D.,
CHT, CT, GMS
Puyallup, Washington



I'm tired of low fat; I'm tired of fat free. I'm tired of thinking rice cakes are good; they're not the same as Oreos! I'm tired of trying to be creative in my thinking, my eating, my living, and I'm tired of dreading the holiday season. In fact, I'm just plain tired!

The holidays will be here soon enough. I think they actually start right after the 4th of July because that's when the clothing ads feature sweaters and winter coats. WHO can think of wearing wool when it's 103! Am I crazy or is the rest of the world nuts?

I'm tired of dreading almost half of each year because some marketing expert thinks it would be "cute" to have Jingle Bells echoing through the frozen food section in the middle of August. If I have to start thinking holiday in July, and it takes more than a few weeks to "recover" from The Holiday Season after it's over, then I really am spending almost half of each year coping with the holiday blues. And I'm tired of that!

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OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

Each month we remember the children who are sadly missed. Please take a few moments, place them in your thoughts, and remember them on their day together with their parents. None of us ever forget our special days and messages that say "I care" help us to get through them. Our children's lives will go on, as long as we remember them and celebrate their lives.

BIRTHDAYS

Heidi Anne Hermann	November 2	Daughter of Bonnie Brackus
Nick Battis	November 3	Son of Susan Battis
Jeremy M Govekar	November 12	Son of Maggie McGaughey
Lisa Rosemann	November 16	Daughter of Pat & Craig Rosemann
Stephanie Andrea Zamarron	November 16	Daughter of Vicky Zamarron & Juan Mungula Granddaughter of Alejandra Rodriquez & César Rojas
Nathan Clyde	November 17	Son of Valerie Clyde Sister of Michaela Clyde
Douglas Ramsay	November 17	Son of Carlene Ramsay
James McClintock	November 18	Son of Charles "Chip" & Louise Knoll
Marcia Castillo	November 19	Daughter of Sissy & Arthur Castillo
Amy Jo Baldwin	November 21	Daughter of Mike & Sheila Baldwin
Amanda Lauren Cecchi	November 22	Daughter of Kim & Steve Cecchi
Mitchell Rodefer	November 24	Son of Dennis & Susan Rodefer
Zachary Taylor	November 30	Son of Mike Taylor & Karen Adams-Taylor
Tracie Musich	December 4	Daughter of Trisha Musich
Rafael Villanveva	December 9	Son of Victoria Villanveva
Joey Frase	December 11	Son of Cathy Frase
Anthony Clemente	December 12	Son of Becky Wolf
Ryan James Nichols	December 12	Son of Jackie & Jim Nichols
Alina Booras	December 13	Daughter of Amanda Booras
Daniel Wang	December 15	Son of Millie Yu
Kerrin Fleming	December 16	Daughter of Barbara Fleming
Zack A Maslanich	December 18	Son of Karen Zimmerman
Mark Yates	December 20	Son of Linda Hegg
Barry J Grazier	December 22	Son of Robert & Mary Ann Grazier
Raphael E Vidal	December 24	Son of Raphael & Mirtha Vidal

ANNIVERSARIES

Lila Ruffolo	November 1	Daughter of Jenny & Rick Selle
Andrew C Perkins	November 3	Son of Richard & Thelma Perkin
Rachel Salomonson	November 15	Daughter of Toni Nesheim & Denny Salomonson
Erin Dinklenburg	November 16	Daughter of Kelli Brooks
Kyle Glueck	November 17	Dolores Krason
Aaron Barrera	November 18	Son of Tammie & Ernie Barrera
Megan Candice Grace	November 18	Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace
Nicole Parfitt	November 19	Daughter of Robin Parfitt
Shane Betar	December 1	Son of Leia Betar
Nathan Enright	December 5	Son of Martin Boyle
Mike Reardon	December 6	Son of Sonia & Jim Reardon
Alyssa Burnstine	December 6	Granddaughter of Judi & Stan Veoukas
Sean Jones	December 6	Son of Octavine Jones
Mitchell Rodefer	December 6	Son of Dennis & Susan Rodefer

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23RD ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING DECEMBER 8



WE REMEMBER THEM

**Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting Ceremony
Sunday, December 8, 2019**

6:30 p.m.

**Millburn Congregational United Church of Christ
19073 W. Old Grass Lake Rd, Lake Villa, 60046**

Candles are provided.

**You are invited to stay for refreshments after
the ceremony.**

**You are welcome to bring a dessert or snack to
share, if you like.**

SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

By Mary Cleckley,
Former member of the Board of Directors of BP/USA

If this is our first year at surviving the holidays since your child died, it is important that you accept that there are no magic words to get you through November, December and January. I'm sure you already know these months will not be the fun days you have experienced in the past. Rather than fun days, let's try to at least make them no worse. Give yourself permission during these months to fall apart when you need to and you'll probably need to! That person you lost is very important and you have that right. Better still, you have that need.

Let's talk first about tears. When you need to cry, do it! Tears are healthy. They are a sign that you are doing well, for you are allowing your grief, rather than denying it. You can't move ahead through the grief process until you've become well acquainted with the normal

signs of grief. The people who care about you may feel uncomfortable when you are obviously grieving. If they haven't experienced this loss themselves, they don't understand your needs now, any more than the old proverbial man on the street. Remember how unprepared you were for the deep pain of grief? It's important that you let those caring people know that you are profoundly changed by this tragedy.

It's the time of year when friends and neighbors plan parties. Some may invite you no matter if it's the last thing on your mind. If you do decide to attend, please leave the back door open in case you need to escape. Some may mistakenly think it's possible to keep you so busy that you'll forget that your child died. You know that's impossible. No matter how well intended these plans are, they are the wrong plans for your family. Don't worry about the impact on your friends.

Thanksgiving can cause problems if you aren't ready to sit around a turkey trying to act thankful! It probably is going to be awhile before you have that ability again. You may consider having pizza that day and just pretend it's just another day. Grief can make you do strange things! You may find you need to change lots of things that have been the ways you have observed the holidays in the past. For instance, you may decide not to have a Christmas tree this year. Some will see this as weird, but those of us who have made that same decision think it makes perfect sense. Maybe you'll ignore the holidays and run away to places where holidays aren't uppermost in most minds—maybe the beaches in Florida or California or the skiing in Colorado or a cabin in North Georgia. Maybe this is a good time to explore the treasures of New York City, Washington, D.D. or New Orleans.



You will survive the holidays better if you take control of them. Some think they have no control of anything but, if you feel that way, you probably haven't explored the possibilities that are available to you. Your brain is very curious.

If someone suggests things that are different, it rushes around madly trying to come up with a few. Here's a plan for you. First, get input from

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(Surviving the Holidays continued from page 4)

your family members for their suggestions. You already know that small children don't take too kindly to changing anything. Maybe they'll be happy about seeing what Santa brought. Afterwards, go to a nearby skating rink. Have hot dogs for all later. Also, consider some of the things in the previous paragraph.

Maybe your needs keep you at home. If so, plan to do it the easiest way. Can another member of your family have the meal? Can others bring favorite items of food to help with the meal? If not, can you have the meal on Christmas Eve. Some people do that instead of having it on Christmas Day. It leaves Christmas Day itself not so rushed. Any change seems to help. Go to a different place of worship. It's okay to cry. Sit in the back so you can either cry in peace or, if you feel a need to, you can leave.



If you feel Christmas cards are needed this year or a very few presents, could a relative or friend help with the addressing and shopping?

If you must shop yourself, select a place where there is less atmosphere such as music and decorations. Take advantage of the discount stores. Things don't have to be perfect. Give up perfections this year. Everyone will understand. Don't over-do. You're already tired. Grieving is exhausting. Next year or the one after that or when-ever, you'll be ready to resume some of the old traditions. Maybe not! Some traditions may never be done again. It's up to your family.

Take care of yourself physically. If you are in a depressed state, don't make it worse by overdrinking or overeating or too much caffeine. Take time for you. Read in a quiet place. Exercise by running, walking or swimming. Rest. Eat nourishing food. Establish priorities and make a list of them. Check them off as you accomplish them. This helps to maintain control. Seek help if you need it. Call one of the telephone friends listed in your newsletter or call one of your friends. Seek professional help if you feel you need it. Whatever you do, don't isolate yourself! Withdrawal is not the answer. It's important to know that you are not alone. Others out here care and understand. I am one of them. We do not have to walk this lonely road alone.

Your attitude is important. You can/will survive. You have greater strength than you know. You have already survived the worse thing that can happen. Stay flexible. If the plans you made don't seem right now, dump them! Do something on the spur of the moment

that does seem right. Care not if other people don't agree or that your brain isn't too excited about it. Out-smart them all!

The New Year is ahead. Let's hope for better days. The holidays will come again and one of these days you and your family will have figured out how to survive the holidays now that things have changed for the better. Know that there will be more peaceful days ahead for you and your family. Take it as a promise!

Gifts of Love

by Cathy Seehuetter ~ TCF, St. Paul, MN

As I type this, it is the day after Thanksgiving. People in the retail business say that it is the biggest shopping day of the year. Before Nina died, I was one of those crazy shoppers who on that day sat out in the parking lot of whatever store that opened at 6 a.m. waiting for them to open their doors so I could shove my way into whatever "blue light special" was being offered. My children's wish list in hand, I was ready to power shop 'til I dropped. But that was then, and this is now. Five Christmas shopping seasons later, my life, as all of our lives, has changed irrevocably as one precious child is no longer on that shopping list.

Not too long ago, I was in a fitting room trying on some clothes when I overheard the conversation between mother and teenage daughter in the room next to me. There was a volatile exchange of words between the two of them as the mother was trying to hustle her daughter along. She kept saying to her, "You know, I don't have all day to waste because you can't make up your mind." The heated discussion continued and concluded with the girl's mother saying, "That's it! I am never taking you shopping again!" That phrase sent a chill down my spine. It took everything in my power to keep from bursting from my fitting room and



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(Gifts of Love continued from page 5)

admonishing that mother; tell her that I would give anything to have my daughter alive so that she could cause that so-called "inconvenience" that obviously hers was causing her. I then realized that in this woman's agitated state it would only fall on deaf ears. It has been four and a half years since my daughter died and I still go into the shops that we frequented and see some adorable outfit hanging on one of the mannequins and think, "Nina would have loved that." She was my shopping buddy. She could never say no to an invitation to go shopping. And it wasn't just shopping for herself that she loved. From the time she was very young, she loved buying gifts for others. She would scrape whatever money she had saved from birthdays, etc. to buy a small gift for each of us. Interestingly, the gift she gave me our last Christmas together was an angel. At that time, I had not even started the angel collection that I have now since she died.

Be prepared to find "gifts" from your children when you unpack your Christmas decorations for the first time. It seemed as if each box I opened there was something left there from her, something that I had long forgotten about: one box contained a picture of her in a Santa hat smiling that brilliant braces-laden grin, another her carefully crafted handmade ornaments, another one a hand-written card in her just-learning-to-print handwriting, and on and on - so many memories. I realized that in a sense, these were Nina's gifts to me now that she wasn't physically here. She was giving me the gifts of memories - beautiful memories that were given in love. Those memories will only increase in value as the years go on. They are invaluable because they are yours and yours alone - no one can ever take those priceless memories away. Though they may hurt now and probably always will but not as intensely, give yourself a gift - the gift of emotion and allow those healing tears to fall. Give yourself time to grieve.

If I could give each of you a gift, I would want to give you the gift of peace, as much peace as you can possibly find. And the hope that you can remember some of the joy and love that was yours from Christmases past.

~reprinted from Holiday Memories

(Low Fat, Lite Holidays continued from page 2)

Most people think the holidays start sometime in November, but for me, they never really stop. I can get depressed any time of year and blame it on the holidays (except for the month of August). There

are no holidays in that poor month, but just being August is reason enough to be depressed.

My reds and greens can turn to blue at any moment. It only takes a few notes of a song, a whiff of real food (low fat does not smell heavenly) or a trace of a memory to send me into the dumps. We can recycle pain anytime, but somehow, once the displays are up in the stores and the weather turns cooler than before, the downhill slide towards The Holidays intensifies.

By Halloween, I'm bracing for those days and by Thanksgiving, the thought of being cheery is often simply too much to bear. Gifts? Right! What could I possibly find, wrap, give or get that would lighten this load? Icicles form around my heart and The Holidays are only colored with despair. I've forgotten where I stashed the gifts I did manage to buy during the sidewalk sales last summer, and that recipe for low-fat fruitcake was copied down and promptly misplaced (for which my family and friends should be eternally grateful!)

By November, I've run out of options, however, and no matter how creative I am, there is no denying the approach of those days when the rest of the world looks far happier than I have been or will ever be.



Even their voices are cheery as we slip past each other on the icy sidewalks! It grows dark at 4:30 in the afternoon, and there is little comfort in a carrot on a wintry day. I'm tired of low-fat substitutes for happiness. I'm tired of bracing for the memories that flood back to better times and for fearing the sights and sounds that only serve to remind me of what isn't anymore.

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(Low Fat Lite Holidays continued from page 6)

Can anyone stop the holidays please? Can anyone find a fat substitute that really tastes like mom's pumpkin pie? Can anyone figure out a cure for the pain of these memories? Probably not. So, as long as we are stuck with the approaching holidays and as long as we remain determined to be healthy and keep up the good low-fat fight, what can we do to turn this season of despair into a season of hope? Where are the beacons of light (recipes?) that make low fat anything acceptable?

Handling the holidays is not deciding how to eliminate the fat, the pain, the memories from our lives, but rather, learning how to live with the hurt instead of being consumed by it.

BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF

Know that hardly anyone is as happy as you think they might be. We all have our hurts to hide. We are always in a hurry. We want things to be better now. Do what you can this season and let it be enough.

BE REALISTIC.

It will hurt, especially if there is an empty chair at the table. Don't try to block bad moments. Be ready for them. Lay in a supply of tissues (a roll of toilet paper is more efficient). Anticipation is often far worse than reality. Let those hurting moments come, deal with them and let them go. Leave the word "ought" out of this holiday.

PLAN AHEAD.

Grieving people often experience a lack of concentration. Make lists. Prioritize everything. Decide what is really important. (Breathing and potty time rank right up there!)

REDEFINE EXPECTATIONS.

Be honest in what you expect to be able to do. We live in a world of oughts and shoulds and suffer from guilt because we cannot meet our own expectations. You can't buy away grief, although you might be tempted to try.

BE KIND AND GENTLE TO SELF

Figure out what you should do, balance it against what you are capable of doing and then compromise. Forgive yourself for living when your loved one died.

LISTEN TO YOURSELF

Find the quiet space within where all the answers live. As you become aware of your needs, tell family members and friends. Keep some traditions; choose which ones. Don't toss out everything this year. You can always try changing a routine. Try whatever pops into your head. You can always scrap it if it doesn't work.

TAKE CARE OF SELF PHYSICALLY

Eat right (toss some chocolate chips into the oat bran; gift wrap some broccoli; ban low fat for one glorious meal!) Exercise (or at least watch someone else). Jog your memory!

HOLD ON TO YOUR POCKET BOOK and CHARGE CARDS.

SCREEN ALL HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES.

- Will it be the holidays without it?
- Why do you do this activity? Tradition, habit, obligation?
- Do you have to do this, or can others do it for you?
- Do you like doing it?
- How could this activity be done differently?

GIVE YOURSELF THE GIFT OF EMOTIONS.

Put the motion back into the emotions. Toss a Nerf brick when you're angry, or pound a pillow. Go outside and yell while you shovel snow. Find a way to express the intensity of your feelings in a personally, nondestructive way.

BUY A GIFT FOR YOUR LOVED ONE.

Give it away to someone who would otherwise not have a gift. It is the giving, the exchanging of love that we miss the most. When you share love, it grows.

HANG THE STOCKINGS; PLACE A WREATH ON THE GRAVE.

Do whatever feels right for you and your family.



(Continued on page 8)

(Low Fat Lite Holidays continued from page 7)

SHARE YOUR HOLIDAYS

Ride the ferry, visit a soup kitchen or nursing home, spend an evening at the bus station. There are lots of lonely people who could use your love and caring.

WORK AT LIFTING DEPRESSION

Take responsibility for self. We cannot wait for someone else to wrap up some joy and give it to us. We have to do that for ourselves. Think of things you enjoy and give yourself a treat. (One cookie will not cause mounds of fat to be deposited on your hips- a dozen, however, might!

UNDERSTAND THAT HEARTACHES WILL BE UNPACKED.

As you sift through the decorations, appreciate the warm, loving memories of each piece. Don't deny yourself the gift of healing tears.

ASK FOR HELP

Make a help-on-a-stick sign and stand on the porch, waving it. Someone will notice (but may not stop). Just because you ask for help does not guarantee you will get some, but if you never ask, no one will ever know how much you might need a hug.

LEARN TO LOOK FOR JOY IN THE MOMENT.

Learn to celebrate what you do have instead of making mental lists of what you're missing. Change the way you look at things.

LIGHT A SPECIAL CANDLE

Not in memory of a death, but in celebration of a life and a love shared! Never forget that once someone loved us and we loved back. No one can deny that gift exchange!

Can anyone stop the holidays please? Can anyone find a fat substitute that really tastes like mom's pumpkin pie? Can anyone figure out a cure for the pain of these memories?



LIVE THROUGH THE HURT

Joy can return to warm your heart. I'm tired of low-fat life, and I'm tired of dreading the approaching holiday season. I can't live with my entire being focused on fat grams and painful memories. So, since I can't eliminate fat completely and if I get rid of the memories, I must also get rid of the remembered joy, I'll just have to do what I can and forgive the rest. The holidays are survivable just as fat is manageable. I'll have to run a few more miles and shed a few more tears, but I'm not going to let yesterday use up today, and if I do find something wonderful to eat or a terrific memory to cherish, I'll enjoy them all.

I will not allow fat or pain or fear or sadness to ruin the entire season. It may not be the same as before we became health-conscious or bereaved, but whatever it is can be something and that just may be the beacon of hope in this season of despair. Grab the fruitcake and the low-fat turkey and get moving to the rhythms of this holiday season-the season where love and memory lighten the heart and chase the gloom. Skip the fat, shed the tears, light the candle and find the light. Make this holiday season full of lite and light and love: the best seasoning of all!

~reprinted with permission from Grief Digest, Centering Corporation, Omaha, NE 402-553-1200. www.griefdigest.com

“You are so strong”

Empty words
That don't tough the reality
That my life has become
Walking through fog
Incredible pain
Searching for the beloved face
I crave to see
The voice that I strain to hear over the noises
Of people who have no idea
Of what the world has lost.

Charissa Smith, TCF/ Tyler, TX

LOVE GIFTS

Enclosed in a check in the amount of _____ to be used as follows (check all that apply):

In loving memory of _____

In honor of _____

Sponsor the newsletter for _____ (month) (\$25 pays ½ monthly cost)

Pay for a book for the chapter's Lending Library _____

Check here to keep receiving the newsletter _____

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that in order for your child to be included in the "special days" list each month in the newsletter, you must fill out this form that gives us permission to list this information. If you are making a donation please make the check payable to **The Compassionate Friends. Return to Tammie Barrera, 821 Roberts Road, Winthrop Harbor, IL. 60096** Julyson2@gmail.com

We welcome your comments and/or items submitted for use in the newsletter. Short articles, poems, or book reviews are always appreciated. Please include author of any written works. Send your items for the newsletter to Vicki Szech at vszech@comcast.net or 31023 Prairie Ridge Road, Libertyville, IL 60048.

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families. Its' mission is to assist them in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others to be supportive
TCF National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522 3696 - PH 877-969-0010 - Fax: 630-990-0246

The Compassionate Friends home page can be found at www.compassionatefriends.org
There are seven TCF Internet chat sessions weekly. To participate, visit the TCF home page and select the "Chat" button.

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