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# The Compassionate Friends

## Bereaved Parents of the USA

### Anne Arundel County Chapter

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**October, 2003**

[www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org](http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org)

Your input is important. We can use information found in other newsletters, but we would like for our newsletter to be OURS. If you would like to contribute something to be included in our newsletter, please do not hesitate to send it to us. Don't worry if it's not poetic or profound. We are interested in how you feel and how you cope with your particular situation. Please send in any comments you may have to my attention by the 20th of each month.

We would appreciate hearing your response to the following questions. We will print the responses in the December newsletter.

1. What did you do that helped you to survive the first holiday season after your child died? (Remember, for some it was a total change, and others nothing).

2. Are the holidays a source of pleasure for you now? (Many of us need to know that there might again be eager anticipation down the line for us).

3. Is your deceased child remembered in any specific way over the holidays? (Do you do anything special in his/her honor?)

4. Shopping is always hard as we often feel "disloyal" not being able to buy for your dead child. Have you found a solution that helps?

5. If you could send a short message to newly bereaved parents this holiday season, what would it be?

Please send your responses to these questions by November 1st. Thanks for helping!

Lisa Beall

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### **GOALS OF BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA**

- to educate families about the grief process and all its complexities as it applies to the death of a child at any age and from any cause.
- to aid and support those who are suffering such a loss, regardless of race, creed or financial situation.
- to provide a library at each meeting place where members may borrow books with up-to-date information about the grief process.
- to supply the telephone numbers of other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who are able to offer support to other more newly bereaved families.
- to inform and educate members of the helping professions who interact with bereaved parents as to the nature and duration of parent/sibling/grandparent bereavement.
- to provide monthly meetings with sharing groups and occasional informative programs.

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*The printing and mailing of this newsletter has been donated by  
Ann and Noel Castiglia  
in memory of the life of  
Tria Marie Castiglia*



The Compassionate Friends  
Bereaved Parents of the USA  
Anne Arundel County Chapter  
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Newsletter is published monthly  
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Programs: OPEN

It is our sincere hope that you will find comfort somewhere in this newsletter. It is our intention to offer you hope in knowing that you are not alone. We encourage you to write about your feelings and to share your feelings with others who understand...your compassionate friends.

Material to be printed "in memory of" must be sent to the editors 6-8 weeks in advance of the newsletter in which you wish the item to be printed. **December submissions are due by October 20th).**



Our **lending library** is available to help you understand and deal with your grief. Most of our materials have been donated in memory of a child. When you have finished with them, please return them at our monthly meeting or mail them to the post office box listed above.

Thank you.

**The Compassionate Friends** is a non-profit self-help organization. We operate on donations from the community we support and concerned professionals in order to produce our newsletter, Service of Remembrance, library, and other needed services. Donations are tax deductible.

**Refreshments at our monthly meetings:** A sign-up sheet is on the refreshment table at the meeting or you may call Rebecca Fitzmorris (410-987-9175) to sign up. Drinks, ice, and paper products are provided by the chapter.



**Inclement weather on a meeting night -** meeting canceled if Phase 1 of the Snow Emergency Plan is in effect at 5:00 p.m.

**MEETING INFORMATION**

October 2, 2003; Doors open at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

Calvary United Methodist Church

301 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis

Park in the back of the church

**PROGRAM: ART THERAPY FOR DEALING WITH GRIEF**

**NEXT MONTH:**

November 6, 2003

**PROGRAM: SILENCE OF SNOW**

**TELEPHONE FRIENDS**

Sometimes we feel the need to talk to someone who understands the pain we feel and will listen to us. When you have questions to ask, a need to talk, or have a difficult day, these people welcome your call.

**Marie Dyke, single parent, daughter, 17, only child, car accident**

**410-969-7597 Janet Tyler, daughter, 5 and brother, 33, car accident**

**410-360-1341 Tia Stinnett, miscarriages and infant death**

**410-721-6457 Sandy Platts, infant death**

**OTHER RESOURCES:**

\* **Baltimore-metro area of The Compassionate Friends** of Maryland and Bereaved Parents of the USA, (410-321-7053).

\* Stephanie Roper Committee, **for victims of violent crime**, Anne Arundel County chapter representative is James Donnelly (410-544-1473).

\* The Compassionate Friends, **Reston Satellite Group (support group for parents who are now childless)**, second Saturday of the month, 1:00 p.m. at North County Government Center, Reston District Police Station, 12000 Bowman Town Drive, Reston, VA. For info., contact Linda Nielsen (703-435-0608, InLvMemory@aol.com); Harriet Evenson (703-525-9311); Sharon Skarzynski in MD (410-757-5049).

\* **Seasons, a suicide support group**, 3rd Tuesday, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Lutherville (Dorothy Schanberger, 410-803-2098).

\* **Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS)** meets the 1st Tuesday of each month from 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., at Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park (410-987-2129).

## CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

### Upcoming Meeting Topics

#### **October 2: “The Use of Art Therapy in Dealing with Grief”**

Sharon Strouse, ATR, is an Art Therapist with 17 years of experience using the creative process to heal and grow. On October 11, 2001 Sharon lost Kristin, her 17 year old daughter. Kristin, who was a freshman at Parsons School of Design in New York City, ended her own life. Over the past year, Sharon has turned to the creative process as a means of dealing with her own grief and pain. She will share with us, the process of her own journey and the powerful use of image in healing.

#### **November 6: “Silence of Snow”**

Lynn Rosenberg is the author of *Silence of Snow*. “Thirty years – almost half a lifetime – should be enough to dim the memory of the death of a loved one. But some memories are indelible; a lifetime can pass and the memory is as vivid as the day it happened. The *Silence of Snow*, a memoir written by a mother whose son died of leukemia thirty years ago, is proof that the sorrow from the death of a child is forever. In telling her story with graphic yet loving detail, Lynn has not only transcended her grief but resurrected herself and her son in the process.”

### CHAPTER PLANNING MEETING

The next chapter planning meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 21st at 7:30. Meetings are held at Calvary UMC. Anyone with an interest in knowing more about the chapter and contributing ideas for effectively serving the needs of bereaved families is welcome to attend.

### WEB ADDRESSES

<b>Bereaved Parents USA home page</b> www.bereavedparentsusa.org	www.after-death.com
<b>Bereavement Magazine-</b> www.bereavementmag.com	<b>TCF Sibling Internet Chat</b> - Thursday nights at 9:00 EST: (email <a href="mailto:tcf siblingrep@aol.com">tcf siblingrep@aol.com</a> for the password)
<b>On Suicides -</b> www.pbs.org/weblab/living	<b>For bereaved parents</b> www.moms-dads.com/index2.html
<b>Paul Alexander -</b> www.griefsong.com	<b>CLIMB</b> newsletter@climb-support.org
<b>Judy Guggenheim’s Home page -</b>	

### DO YOU USE AMAZON.COM?

If you use Amazon.com, perhaps you could use the Chapter’s website to make the connection and purchase. We have a link to Amazon.com on the home page of our website. Amazon.com will give our chapter a commission of 5% of any purchases which are made through that link. Using the link does not increase the cost to the purchaser. Alert your friends, relatives, and colleagues to the link and suggest they use it as well.

Access the site at [www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org](http://www.aacounty-md-bereavedparents.org), click on the butterflies on the welcome page to enter our site, and then scroll down the first page to the bottom. On the bottom left corner is the Amazon.com graphic. Clicking on the graphic takes you to Amazon.com’s site. When it does so, it links information relevant to our chapter to the visit to the site. If a purchase is made, it will be credited to our site. Purchases made without going through that link do not get credited.

Since our chapter is a not-for-profit organization and has no dues or fees, we are dependent on donations and fund raisers. We are hopeful these commissions will help fund some of our community outreach activities.

**Sponsoring a monthly newsletter in your child’s name can be arranged through Lisa Beall ([bealls@erols.com](mailto:bealls@erols.com)). Newsletter printing costs \$150 and mailing is \$40 each month.**



Please join us for our two-mile  
**Memory Walk at Quiet Waters Park**  
 on **October 18th** at 8:30 a.m.

You can get registration and pledge forms from our website  
 or call Barbara Bessling at 410-761-9017 for more information.

**Though time and space separate us  
 I have built a bridge of lovely memories  
 to span the distance.**

TCF, Huntington, VA

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, TRACI

As I send my Happy Birthday thoughts to you beyond the blue this year, I reflect on memories of you. I'm glad that you lived life to its fullest – your friends said going anywhere with you was an adventure – and that you knew at such a young age how precious life, love and friends are. I came across what follows the other day and it brought tears to my eyes. I remember how special I felt when you sent it to me in an email because you had chosen to include me on your email distribution list with your friends. I remember how I saved this email because I knew that somehow Cortney was in your mind and in your heart when you sent it, and because I never wanted to forget to be thankful for the present. I still can't believe that just 12 months after you sent the note, you were gone from our lives.



little longer, a little tighter. You would have told them that you loved them and kissed them on the cheek. Maybe you would have told them a secret or a special memory. If you had known it was your last chance, you would have reminded them of how much they mean to you, and what an important part of your life they are. You would have told them all of the things that you especially like about them. Or maybe you just would have watched them leave without turning away so fast. I want you to know, just in case one day I don't get the chance to tell you, that I love you. I want you to know that you have made my days brighter and happier. You always find a way to make me smile even on my darkest days. And I don't know what I would have done without you all of this time. You are so special to me in so many ways. I just want you to know that you are one of the closest people to my heart and I love you now and always. And may we be forever friends."

To commemorate your birthday, I'm sharing your email note with the world because I think it's a message you would want to convey...if only you could. You introduced the message below by saying that you were really touched by this message when you read it somewhere and you ended with..."You mean the world to me, and I love you very, very much!" Back at you, Traci.

"You don't always know when you say good-bye to someone special if it will be the last time you'll be with them, and for whatever reason, they are no longer in your life. If you had known that it would be your last chance to see them, you would have hugged them a

I should have sent these words to you. I hope you know how much I loved you and I hope you felt that extra squeeze the last time we hugged outside the "breakfast joint" in South Carolina. I loved and love you, Traci. Happy Birthday. (Please squeeze Cortney for me; I miss you both incredibly.)

Terre Belt  
 A.A. Co. MD



## SIBLING PAGE



I was a sophomore in high school when my little brother Arthur was killed. As a sad coincidence, the woman who killed him was the secretary at my school. I must have seen her at school the day he died, but I am not able to consciously remember it. I can't remember seeing Arthur lying in the street either, though I know I did. All I can recall is being horrified and needing to get away from there. I took my younger sister home and never saw Arthur again. It was the dreadful beginning of a very long and painful journey.

The pain of the grief is unavoidable; so is the family disruption. What can be changed, however, is the length of the grieving process. There are things that can be done that will help or hinder this process. Unfortunately for our family, we were given no help, and we stayed a mess for a long time. I would like to share some of my experiences in the hope that they will help you to cope with your brother's or sister's death.

The first thing I remember is not knowing how to act or what to do. I felt terribly alone and awkward. I was shocked. One minute it was a nice, normal day, and the next minute everything was changed. I didn't know how I was supposed to act at school. Part of me wanted to tell everyone what had happened, and part of me didn't want to talk to anyone at all. I felt guilty for getting some comfort from the attention (I asked myself if this meant I was "glad" my brother had died), but on the other hand, I felt that people would think I didn't care when I said nothing. It hurt either way. One way I dealt with my grief was by being sarcastic and laughing whenever something painful came up. I laughed outside, but I think my friends knew I was crying inside. Many people don't know how to help us, but hopefully you will have someone you can talk to. If not, perhaps you will be able to talk at home about how you feel.

Home may become a pain-filled place. Our parents have been hurt very badly. They aren't the same parents we knew before the death. The biggest mistake I made in my grief was trying to "fix" my parents' pain. I wished for and acted in ways that I hoped would change them back to happy, whole people again. I know now that it was not my responsibility to do this. In fact, I couldn't do it, no matter how "good" I was or how much I tried to make our home pleasant; they were still sad. The bad thing was, by trying to make them better, I stuffed a lot of my own sadness, fears, and worries inside. This added even more problems

to my grief. In some ways, it felt better to worry about them instead of myself, but as I got older, those old painful memories wouldn't stay covered up anymore. It is like a splinter that gets covered up with skin and feels better until the infection sets in, then it hurts so much more when it comes out. We have to take care of ourselves and trust our parents to take care of themselves.

For years I rarely cried about my brother. I always thought that was strange. It was years before I was able to let the tears flow, and then I cried for him and for me. I cried for Arthur because he was dead and I missed him; I cried for myself because of all I had missed. I missed feeling happiness in myself and my family. I missed feeling safe and secure. I missed the attention my parents were no longer able to give me. I missed the years of carefree childhood that were ripped away. Those are all losses that siblings grieve for besides the loss of a brother or sister.

Yes, it hurts! Cry about it. Laugh about it. Talk about it. Write about it. Pray about it. Just don't try to bury it - that won't work in the long run. And you know, I can do all those things today, and it doesn't hurt nearly as much as it did when I started.

I now realize that my feelings about my brother's death were not the same as my parents' feelings. I used to think that I didn't love my brother because I wasn't as sad as long as they were. They hated the holidays, but I wanted the fun of the holidays. They couldn't be happy, but I could, especially after the first terrible set of holidays. Our parents have the right to be sad because that is how they are feeling. We have the right to be happy if that's how we are feeling. Each one of my brothers and sisters had their own feelings. Each was sad, happy, regretful in their own way and time. We grieved with our separate timetables. Sometimes we shared feelings, and many times they were different. None of us, however bad we felt, came close to having the depth of pain that our parents did. I didn't understand that then as I do now. This is an important thing to know so that we don't feel guilty about getting on with our lives.

(continued on page 8)



## OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED

Love shared can bring comfort to a broken heart.  
Please remember the following families this month.



James W. H. Alexander  
son of Sue and David Alexander  
October 12, 1970 - October 26, 1998

Richard C. Watts  
son of Fran and Tom Cease  
December 18, 1966 - October 28, 1998

Wendy Jean Bolly  
daughter of Judith and Louie Bolly  
April 6, 1977 - October 11, 2002

John Christopher Campbell  
son of Kathy and Jeff Campbell  
April 18, 1981 - October 9, 2002

Tria Marie Castiglia  
daughter of Ann and Noel Castiglia  
July 6, 1963 - October 14, 1984

Katie Fritz  
daughter of Carol Fritz  
October 29, 1977 - February 27, 1993

Christopher G. Gilmour  
son of Paul and Carole Gilmour  
October 17, 1997 - April 2, 2003

Mark C. Knepper  
son of Patricia and Joe Knepper  
June 28, 1968 - October 17, 1988

Chad William Muehlhauser  
son of Paula and William Muehlhauser  
October 3, 1983 - September 16, 1992

Jami Leigh Smith  
daughter of Rev. and Mr.s G. Smith  
October 19, 1977 - September 30, 1987

Matthew Jason Temple  
son of Karen and Jim Temple  
October 6, 19876 - April 23, 1995

Brittany Nicole Tyler  
daughter of Janet and Dan Tyler  
October 12, 1986 - August 23, 1992

Michael Lee Wallace, II  
son of Regina Offer  
February 16, 1969 - September 14, 2000





Donations may be made to offset the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, the memorial service, library books, and other literature. We gratefully acknowledge the following donations:

**Contributions through United Way, Central Md.:**

Deborah and Paul Michael, in memory of Paul Brian Michael

Peggy and Gordon Haines, in memory of Matthew Haines

Paul and Claudia Balasic, in memory of Bethany Balasic

Donna and Doug Rohrbaugh, in memory of James Ryan Rohrbaugh

JeanMarie O'Sullivan, in memory of Courtney Belt

Sandra Shockey, in memory of Daniel R. Shockey

**Contributions:**

Carol Fritz, in memory of Katie Fritz

Rita Whitby, in memory of Albert Whitby, Jr., Dave

Whitby, and Danny Whitby

Maryl and Alain de Sarran, in memory of Elizabeth deSarran

Kenneth A. Smith, in memory of Tracy Fotino

Ann and Noel Castiglia, in memory of Tria Castiglia

John and Lucille Peoples, in memory of our beloved son, Cedric John Peoples on his 35th birthday

Carol Boslet, in memory of C. Ryan Boslet

Dorothy E. Heincelman, in memory of Courtney Belt and Traci Heincelman

Sheila and James Mohan, in memory of Scott Mohan

## STARTING OVER AGAIN

As parents, how many times have we told our children to try, try again? "You can do it, just start over," we'd say, be it a coloring book not kept within the lines, learning to tie shoes, school assignments, or later, other difficulties that life brings. Little did we think that this well-meaning advice we gave out of love and concern for our children's well-being would be the words that we must follow. Hang on. Don't give up. Try again, and start over. All this now applies to us. Had the situation been reversed, we would not have wanted our children to live out the rest of their lives in pain, and unable to go on. We would have wanted them to continue, not in constant sorrow, but with hope for renewal and better days ahead.

As we have said to them - they would be throwing it right back to us - it is a hard road that you must travel, but you can do it. What you wanted for me, I want for you. Do what you have to, to find your way out of the dark tunnel, and when you fail, pick yourself up and start over again. You can do it. What we wanted for our children is no less than they would want for us. If we could hear them right now, they would be saying: LIVE, for life is not a moment. LOVE, for that is what really matters. GO ON, for we shall be together again someday.

Mary Ann Lambden  
TCF, Gloucester Co., NJ

## AN ANGEL KISS

An angel kissed my tears away  
today when I was sad.  
I wasn't feeling quite myself  
my day had been so bad.

I felt a warmth brush by me  
that quickly dried my tears,  
A gentle, kind, and loving touch  
that seemed to hold me near.

Immediately, I felt so much better  
and the day seemed brighter too.  
I guess that's just the way you feel  
when an Angel  
comforts you.



Author unknown

## SIBLING GRIEF (continued from page 5)

I remember that I used to think about things I did or didn't do with my brother before he died. I felt guilty because I didn't play with him the last time he wanted me to. Of course, I didn't know at the time that he was going to die. I remember times when I got mad and yelled at him for no reason. I felt guilty about that, too. I know now that that is just a normal part of a brother-sister relationship. I can now realize that what I did or didn't do had nothing to do with his death. We need to be careful not to take on guilt. One of my brothers had always felt

guilty because Arthur was riding his bicycle when he was killed. My brother did not kill Arthur. The woman who was driving the car did. It is important not to blame ourselves. Even if we did have a part in the death (or think we did), we need to forgive ourselves as we certainly didn't deliberately do it.

My brother's death definitely changed my life. It brought pain and unhappiness, but it also brought an awareness of other people's pain and the ability to understand and help others. I hope that you can take something from my experience and use it in your grief - and maybe you can pass it on someday too.

## MRS. BUTTERWORTH

"Every supermarket decision has a family memory connected to it. You'd never expect a package of spaghetti or a can of creamed corn to leave you crying in the aisle at the store..." (Excerpt from Charlie Walton's book, *When There Are No Words*). Every parent who has lost a child knows these words to be true. Whether it is baby food or a toddler's newly discovered favorite food, junk food for teenagers or an adult child's old time favorite, the grocery store can be a tough trip. I lost my son, Stephen, when he was eighteen, so it was the junk food -potato chips, Funyuns, French bread for pizzas, Ragu sauce, pepperoni, Cheetos, cheesebread, cereal of all kinds, Chex mix and so on that haunted me and made me not want to grocery shop. But it was the golden face of Mrs. Butterworth that brought me to my knees.

As I stared in horror at her face, I remembered sticky little handprints on the wall when the highchair had been just a little too close. I remembered a chubby little toddler sitting next to me at the table, talking seriously, his green eyes wide. "I sink I saw her wink at me," he said of Mrs. Butterworth, sounding a little like Tweety Bird. "Really!" I asked. Mrs. Butterworth always winked on the commercial - she seemed quite lifelike. I took Mrs. Butterworth and made her walk toward his plate. She tripped when she was just the right distance from his plate and syrup spilled from her head right onto his pancakes. He looked at me and I saw it coming in his eyes -laughter. There is something so precious about a toddler's laughter. It seems to start deep within and rolls from their chest until they lose their breath. He cackled, he gasped, his body shook with laughter as Mrs. Butterworth regained her footing and said, "Oh my, silly me!" He laughed even more.

Thereafter, Mrs. Butterworth made a ritual of tripping and spilling syrup onto his pancakes. Sometimes she would let out a shriek as she fell, other times she would say in an embarrassed, dainty voice about how clumsy she was or how she had tripped over her apron. Whatever she did, he rolled. When Stephen was 15, the two of us often shared a quick breakfast before rushing out the door. He usually ate pancakes that he cooked for himself and I joined him for a granola bar and a diet Coke. I was lost in thought one morning, a particularly stressful day ahead of



me, when out of the corner of my eye, I saw Mrs. Butterworth come walking toward me. She was helped by a hand as big as mine with slender fingers wrapped around her base. "So -how you been?" Mrs. Butterworth asked in a voice that tried to sound feminine but came out a little like a drag queen. She tripped suddenly and screamed in apparent horror. "Oh, crap!" she said as she stood back up. It may be the only time that Mrs. Butterworth has ever said crap -I'm not sure. I laughed until I was sick and left for work with a smile in my heart.

But now, I did not laugh or even smile when I saw her face. I cried. Other shoppers probably thought I was insane. I walked away. I couldn't look at her. Cheetos and Funyuns and potato chips had already stabbed at me over on aisle four, Captain Crunch had almost tripped me, the Tombstone Pizza had made me as cold as they were in the freezer just to look at them but the little golden-faced lady broke my heart. For the next four years, I had a peculiar interest in shortening and oil - you see, they were across the aisle from Mrs. Butterworth and I had to keep my back to her. She was an old friend, but I couldn't face her. She was an unintentional emotional grenade. It was a sad situation and such a shame for two who had been so close not to acknowledge each other's presence, but I just couldn't look at her. I always knew she was there, kindly smiling and understanding that I couldn't face her.

But just last week, I felt the golden stare strongly on my back as I once again feigned interest in the Wesson and the Crisco. For the first time in four years, I dared turn and peek at her. She boasted of 1/2 the calories - so, she too understood being mid-forties, huh? I dared turn a little more to fully face the little lady who had meant so much to Stephen and me - the fully golden one, with all the calories. The tears came, but a smile came with them. The memories that the golden face evoked were gentle, worth remembering forever. Older grief is, indeed, kinder. I put her in my shopping cart and took her home with me. She stands on one of the top shelves in my kitchen pantry, guarding my granola bars and my memories...handprints on a wall ... a toddler's laughter...a teenager making his stressed mom laugh. And Stephen, you know buddy, this morning I think I saw her wink at me.

Marcia Caarter  
Waleska, GA

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## The Compassionate Friends CREDO

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope. Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us. Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share just as we share with each other our love for our children. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

**We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.**