

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: www.tcfnashville.org

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The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

Welcome: The Nashville chapter meets at 3:00 P.M. on the second Sunday of each month in the HCA building on Park Plaza just north of Centennial Park off of 25th Avenue, North. Inside, you will see our sign and someone will greet you. We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.

David and Nancy Guthrie Speak

August 9

David and Nancy Guthrie are twice bereaved parents. Since the publication of Nancy’s book, *Holding On to Hope*, David and Nancy have shared what they’ve learned from their experience in numerous ways, including speaking around the country, through their book, *When Your Family’s Lost a Loved One*, and the GriefShare video series. David and Nancy will use their time with us to focus on the impact grief has on a marriage and ways couples can help each other through grief and grow closer through grief rather than grow apart. Please join us as they share their story.



SAVE THE DATE!

The date for our annual TCF Nashville Family Picnic is September 26, 2009 at 3:00 in Fannie Mae Dees Park. Watch for the details in next month’s newsletter.

Phone Friends

We have all experienced the pain of losing a child. We understand and would like to listen. If you can’t reach one of us, feel free to call another person on this list.

- Accidental Death**Mike and Paula Childers
646-1333
- AIDS**.....Joyce Soward
754-5210
- Drug/Alcohol Overdose**.....Ed Pyle
712-3245
- Illness**.....David and Peggy Gibson
356-1351
- Infant**.....Patti Drexler
834-8892
- SIDS**.....Kris Thompson
931 486-9088
- Murder/ Suicide**.....Joe Ladd
361-7996
- Small Child**.....Kenneth and Kathy Hensley
237-9972

Attending your first TCF meeting can be difficult. Feelings can be overwhelming. We have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Please attend two or three meetings before deciding if TCF is right for you. There are no dues or fees. If you choose, you need not speak a word at a meeting. We are an international, non-denominational group, offering support and information to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. We Need Not Walk Alone.

CHAPTER INFORMATION

What is the Yellow Slip?

Please return your yellow renewal slip. After two years on the newsletter mailing list, those names that were added in that month of a previous year, will receive a yellow half-sheet asking that their subscription be renewed. This is simply to keep our mailing list and the information in it current. If you do not send the yellow slip back, we must assume that you no longer want the newsletter. Although you are given an opportunity to make a voluntary donation, there is no cost involved in your subscription. The newsletter is our gift to you for as long as you wish to receive it. You may request that your name be returned to the active list at any time simply by calling 356-4TCF (4823).

Help for Bereaved Children

The Grief Center at Alive Hospice now provides individual counseling for grieving children and teens, as well as their family members. Also, **an ongoing children's support group is being offered.** For further information, please call Lauren Thurman, CMSW, Children's Grief Counselor, at 615 963-4829.

The "Children Remembered" Listings

At your first TCF meeting you are asked to sign a registration card that gives us permission to add your child to the We Remember Them list on page 3 in the monthly newsletter. If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed, please let us know, printing the exact way you'd like the child's name to appear, the child's birth and death dates, and the parents' or primary caregivers' names as they should be listed. You may call the newsletter editor at 615 361-7996, drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205, or email us at davidg14@prodigy.net. We'll be glad to include them.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Survivors of Suicide

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings and receiving their helpful newsletter, you may call the Crisis Center at 615 244-7444.

TCF Web site —A Treasure for You

When you log onto the TCF Web site at www.compassionatefriends.org you will find a wealth of information about TCF and grief—poetry and articles, chat rooms, grief in the news, other chapter Web sites and numerous other resources. Check it out.

Alive Hospice Support Group For Bereaved Parents

The first Thursday of each month, an ongoing support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at 615 963-4674. For general grief (loss of parents, adult siblings, etc.) call 615 963-4732, leave a message and a counselor will return your call.

A Compassionate Friend



*A compassionate friend will take your hand,
They will sit, and listen, and understand.
You don't have to hold back and pretend,
They know your thoughts and can comprehend.*

*A compassionate friend lets you open your heart,
With them you don't have to play a part.
You can talk, or cry, or even complain,
But, with them, you never have to explain.*

*A compassionate friend will help you to live,
Whatever you say, or do, they will forgive.
They, too, know your hurt will never go away,
So they will listen and let you have your say.*

*They have been down this endless path,
So somehow they can help your wrath.
If anyone can help your heart to mend,
It has to be a compassionate friend.*

*Kathryn A. Pelky
TCF, Traverse City, MI*



“The bond among grieving parents is close. It is unfathomable. It cannot be entered into by outsiders, but it is known to each of us. A quick look, an acknowledgment, and we know immediately the agenda of suffering we have in common and that there is no fact of our lives more important than this: I HAD A CHILD WHO DIED.

Over the months and years we will learn to say it more calmly. Yet each time we say it—and we must, it is a part of our learning our own terrible truth—the heart will jump, the stomach contract, the tempo of the body will shift in acknowledgment: I HAD A CHILD WHO DIED.”

*Martha Whitmore Hickman
From I Will Not Leave You Desolate
Some Thoughts for Grieving Parents*

Bryan Houstrup and Joe Philpott at Allegra Print & Imaging, 601 Grassmere Park, donate the printing, collating and stapling of this newsletter each month as a gift to the families of TCF. Deanna Brown and her family label, sort and mail the newsletter in loving memory of their son, Marcus Dean Brown. We are very grateful for these people and their generosity to all of us.

On a Rosebush Full of Blooms

On a rosebush full of blooms, there is occasionally one rose more fragile than the rest. Nobody knows why. The rose receives the same amounts of rain and sun as its neighboring blooms; it receives the same amounts of water and of food from the earth; of clipping and tending and gentle encouragement from the gardener. Its time on earth is neither more nor less significant than that of the other blooms alongside. Its stresses are neither greater nor fewer. Its promises of development are just as rich. In other words, it has all the necessary components to become what it is intended to be: a beautiful flower, fully open, spreading its fragrance and color for the whole world to see and enjoy.

But for some inexplicable reason, once in awhile a single rose doesn't reach maturity. It's not the gardener's fault. It's not the fault of the earth, of the rain, nor the sun. But neither is it the fault of the rose. For some roses, even the touch of the gentle spring rains leaves bruises on the petals. The sun's rays are so soft and warm to some flowers, yet feel searing to others. Some roses thrive while the fragile ones feel buffeted by inner and outer ghostly winds.

So it is that sometimes, despite the best growing conditions, and best efforts of the gardener, and the best possibilities and predictions for a glorious blooming season, a particularly fragile rose will share its glow for awhile, then fade and die. And the gardener and the rosebush and the earth and all around grieve.

We are never ready for a loss of a promising rosebud, or for the loss of a friend or relative whose life appears ready to unfold with brilliant color and fulfillment. In the midst of our grieving, we can be grateful we were in the garden during the same season. We can remember and celebrate the glimpses of color and fragrance and growth that were shared. We can love the fragile rose and the fragile soul for the valiant battles won, and the blooming that was done. And as our own petals unfold, we can remember the softness and beauty of those who touched us along the way.

Ernestine Clark
TCF, Oklahoma City, OK

Just for Today

Just for today

I will be happy!

Just for today

I will search for and find

A new beauty to gladden my heart

As in the days of my long ago.

Just for today

I will put yesterday with its pain

behind me

And bask in the warmth of today.

I will lift up my eyes to sunshine,

Let my fingertips touch

The glad rays of a new day.

My peace shall not be of yesterday or

tomorrow,

My peace shall be of today!

Mary Wildman
TCF, Moro, IL

Summerwind

The one who owns this summer is not here,

Not here to know the tender summerwind,

Not here to share the glowing and the song.

The one who owns this summer did not live,

Not live to touch the richness of this day,

This day in summer when you are alone.

Weep to the summerwind,

Weep and love again

The one you remember.

Sascha



Grief over the death of a child is the hardest work that most of us will ever do. While we all wish for the pain to stop, we need to remember that we grieve intensely because we loved intensely. It is unrealistic to expect the grief to ever totally go away because the love we have for our child will never go away. Our grief is an act of love and is nothing for which we should be ashamed.

Elaine Grier
TCF, Atlanta, GA

What is Left?

When a child dies, you ask, among other questions, what is left? A beautiful, sensitive intelligent son has chosen to end his life. What can be left after such a crushing blow? Others will point out that you have a spouse, other children or grandchildren, perhaps relatives and friends. They are all left. Perhaps you have a career that is left. And yet how meaningless all of those are to a bereaved parent who is suffering the most devastating loss of all. So you continue to search for what it is that is left.

You read books on bereavement, scarcely remembering what you have read; you attend meetings, talk with others who have suffered a loss like yours. If you are fortunate, you have one or two good friends who, while they cannot fully understand, are there to love and listen. Perhaps there is a therapist who guides you in your search for an answer. But for a long while everything you read or hear has little meaning, and certainly cannot provide the answer to your question. Or can it? Does all that you have read and heard and experienced finally come together and answer the question of what is left?

For me it does. The answer was thirteen months in coming, but how clear it seems now. I am left. That's it! I am left and I have been left with the love of Scott. It is a new love, it is different, more intense, it is undemanding, it need not be reciprocated, there are no strings attached. I love this love of Scott's. It warms me and comforts me. It is a wonderful love, but I cannot keep it. It would be wrong to do so; this love is too precious to keep to myself.

I am left with love to spare and love to share. It will never run out. He will always be with me to replenish it. I have found my answer! I am left to share Scott's love with you.

Betty Stevens
TCF, Baltimore, MD

Asking the Question "Why?"

Asking "why did my loved one do this?" is the question that haunts most survivors of suicide. The outside world demands to know from us, and we don't know ourselves.

For some of us there were definite clues that our loved ones were depressed or that something was wrong. We either knew they were in pain but not the extent of it, or we did know the extent and tried everything we knew to get help for them.

For others, the suicide was completely out of character. Many people who end their lives are extremely good actors and actresses. They only allow us to see what they want us to see. In either instance, for many, we never thought it could really happen to us, to our loved ones, and to our families. It doesn't make sense.

The best explanation was described to me by Iris Bolton, Director of the Link Center in Atlanta, GA, author of *My Son, My Son* and survivor of her son's suicide. After years of searching for *why*, Iris found as close to an answer as she will have. It came from another mother who had lost her son by suicide.

THE CUP ANALOGY

There is a cup of water sitting on a table. It is so full, it is rounded at the top. One or two drops of water are added to the cup and it spills over. We want to blame the last two drops, but in an empty cup it would not spill. It was not the water already in the cup, because if left alone, it would not have spilled. It was a combination of all the drops of water in the cup that came before AND the last two drops that caused the water to spill.

In a person's life, the water in the cup is symbolic of all the hurt, pain, shame, humiliation, and loss not dealt with along the way. The last couple of drops symbolize the "trigger events." It is the combination of everything in that person's life not dealt with and the last one or two things that caused our loved ones to lose hope.

For us, we must find a way to pour out the water along the way. This may be through talking it out, writing it out, whatever works for us. We must learn to deal with our pain in a way our loved ones could not. The analogy allowed me to let go of the search for "why" and to find a different way of dealing with my pain.

Tracy T. Dean, M.S. National Resource Center for Suicide Prevention and Aftercare.
Reprinted from *The Mind/Body Connection in the Aftermath of Suicide* from the Link Counseling Center, Atlanta, GA
Reprinted from *Survivors of Suicide Newsletter*, Nashville, TN

One day you wake up and realize you must have survived it because you are still here, alive and breathing. But you don't remember the infinitely small steps and decisions you took to get there. Your only awareness is that you have shed miles of tears on what seems to be an endless road of sorrow. One day—one glorious day, you wake up and feel your skin tingle again and you forget just for an instant that your heart is broken—and it is a new beginning.

Susan Borrowman
TCF, Kingston, Canada

But You're Absolutely Normal!

Grief is a normal reaction to loss, and it shows up in many ways you might not expect. If you've...

- been angry with doctors or nurses for not doing enough,
- been sleeping too much or not enough,
- noticed a change in appetite,
- felt no one understands what you're going through,
- felt friends should call more or call less or leave you alone or invite you along more often,
- bought things you didn't need,
- considered selling everything and moving,
- had headaches, upset stomachs, weakness, lethargy, more aches and pains,
- been unbearable, lonely, and depressed,
- been crabby,
- cried for no apparent reason,
- found yourself obsessed with thoughts of the deceased,
- been forgetful, confused, uncharacteristically absentminded,
- panicked over little things,

- felt guilty about things you have or haven't done,
- gone to the store every day,
- forgotten why you went somewhere,
- called friends and talked for a long time,
- called friends and wanted to hang up after only a brief conversation,
- not wanted to attend social functions you usually enjoyed,
- found yourself unable to concentrate on written material,
- been unable to remember what you just read,

...you're normal. These are all common reactions to grief. They take up to two years (or more) to pass completely, but they will pass. You'll never forget the person who has died, but your life will again become normal, even if it is never exactly the same.

Take care of yourself. You will heal in time.

Joanne Bonelli
TCF, Greater Boise Area, ID

A Tear Fell

*I rode by your school by chance today
And I just happened to look that way
The boys all had their ball caps on
Then I remembered my son was gone
Just when I thought I was doing so well
Before I knew it—a tear fell
Then on Sunday as I sat in church
I look around and missed you so much
I saw other boys in their Sunday suits
And I remembered you were just as cute
People all think I'm doing so well
They don't know—today a tear fell
When I'm reminded of what might have been
It's gets too hard to hold it in
When life will catch me off my guard
That's when I seem to be hit so hard
It seems all roads lead back to you
As I take each day and try to get through
They say time makes it better, but I cannot tell
I only know—today a tear fell.*

Carolyn Bryant
TCF, Orange Park, Jacksonville, FL

*When your mind
cannot find
an answer,
open your heart
and ask
for peace.*

Sascha

The End of Summer

On the beach, cool breezes blow across the water, but the sun's rays feel warm upon my face. The ocean laps gently at the shore. I see one golden haired lad with shovel and pail filling the moat around his carefully constructed sandcastle.

I remember another golden haired boy of years long past, wearing his bright red swimsuit, busy at his task and oblivious to all around him. Carefully, patiently, he fills and empties his pail again and again, molding and shaping the sand until he has it just right, until his perfect castle is completed. He runs to me, eyes aglow with pride, his dimpled smile stretched from ear to ear. He dances around me.

"Mommy, come see! It's finished! It's perfect!" We stand and admire it together. One bucket of sand turned upside down, a tiny trench encircling it. To us, it's a perfect sandcastle.

But then it happens. A wave, much bigger than the rest, washes away his labor of love. His green eyes fill, his lip quivers momentarily and then he squares his shoulders and announces, "Oh, well, I'll begin again tomorrow."

And now, recalling that other sunny summer day, my own eyes fill with tears, my own lip quivers, until I remember that I, too, can square my shoulders and begin again—tomorrow.

Betty Stevens
TCF, Baltimore, MD