

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • 615 356-4TCF(4823) or 646-8940•Nashville Web Site: 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.

February 13 Meeting Mementos of Our Children

For this meeting, we invite you to bring a memento of your child to share with the group. This can be something that your child treasured, something your child gave you or you gave to him, or something that simply reminds you that your child lived and was loved, even if his or her life was very short (a footprint, baby blanket, hospital bracelet, etc.) Please join us.

Let's Go Home

Let's go home –
 My eyes pleaded to my husband.
 We don't belong here.
 This is crazy – these people are still hurting.
 Two, five years later and they are still coming here.

Let's go home. We don't belong here.
 We won't, we can't be like that. Perhaps –
 If I don't speak,
 If I don't tell them why we came –
 It won't be true.

But wait... Why are they laughing?
 They all lost children, yet they are laughing
 at something somehow.
 And wait... Why am I nodding at what he's saying?
 Why do I feel I must say something to that couple
 who are in this nightmare even less time than we?

They all seem to know what I'm feeling –
 without my even saying it –
 Just not flinching at my tears.
 That steady, endless stream of tears that seems to never stop.
 Perhaps – One day I'll join their laughter –
 Let's wait – Perhaps we shouldn't leave just yet.

Sandy Fein
 TCF, Manhasset, NY

I Slept Like a Baby

For the first month after my daughter died,
 I slept like a baby –
 I really did!
 Slept a couple of hours, woke up crying,
 slept a couple of hours, woke up crying,
 slept a couple of hours...

Tom Crouthamel
 TCF, Sarasota, FL



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
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

BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Survivors of Suicide

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings and receiving their helpful newsletter, you may reach Tina Benson at one of the following: Write to SOS, P.O. Box 40752, Nashville, TN 37204; call 615 244-7444; email nashsos@webtv.net; or fax 615 383-9714.

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, a periodic children's support group is being offered. For further information, you may call Lauren Thurman, CMSW, Children's Grief Counselor, at 615 963-4829.

Alive Hospice Support Group For Bereaved Parents

Every other Thursday, an ongoing support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at 615 963-4674.

Times for TCF Videos on TV Channel 19

Do you have a question about what you're feeling? This thirty-minute program about grief and The Compassionate Friends can be seen on Channel 19 (Community Access Channel) in the Nashville area. Two videos are shown, with a break between them giving information about the Nashville chapter. The program may be seen on Mondays at 2:00 P.M., Tuesdays at 8:30 A.M., Wednesdays at 10:00 A.M., Thursdays at 7:30 A.M., Fridays at 11:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., and Saturdays at 10:30 A.M.

CHAPTER INFORMATION

What is the Yellow Slip?

Please return your yellow renewal slip. After two years on the newsletter mailing list, you may receive a yellow half-sheet asking that your subscription be renewed. This is simply to keep our mailing list and the information in it current. If you do receive the yellow slip but fail to return it, 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. You may request that your name be returned to the active list at any time simply by calling 615 356-4TCF (4823).

Change of Address?

Due to the large number of newsletters we deliver each month, it is essential to keep our database up-to-date. We must rely on you, the recipient, to let us know if you have moved. We ask that you help us by remembering to let us know when you have a change of address so the newsletter will reach you each month. Thank you.

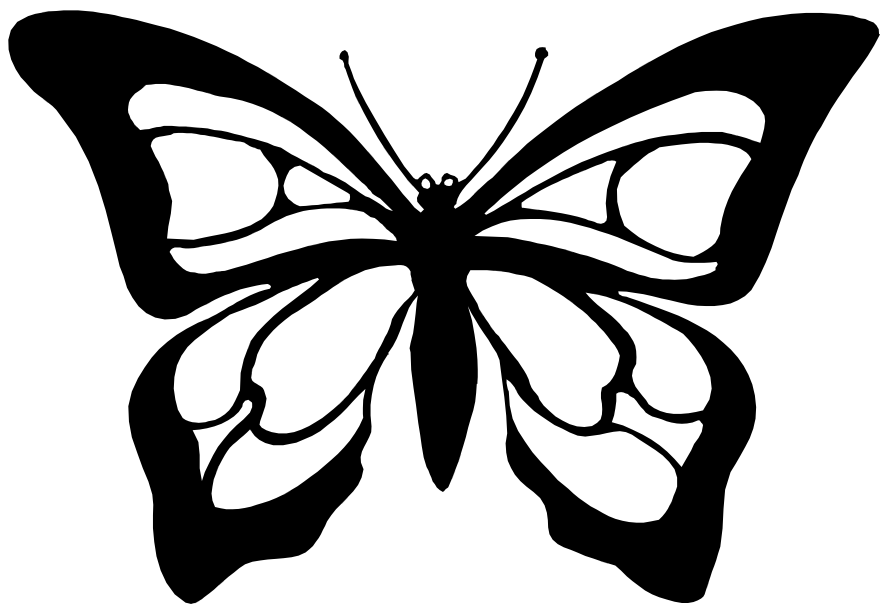
The "Children Remembered" Listings

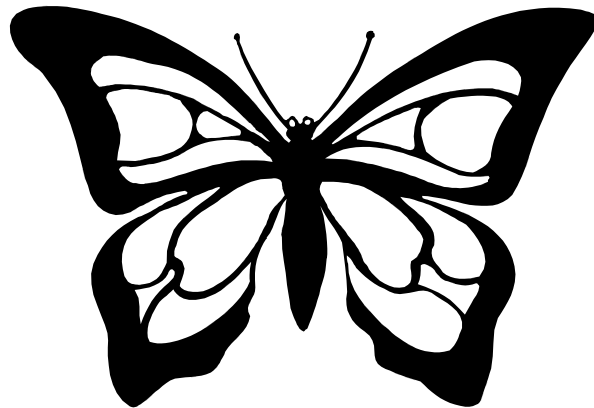
At your first TCF meeting you are asked to sign a registration card that gives us permission to add your child to the "Let Us Remember Them" list on page 3 in the monthly newsletter. If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed, please let us know, printing the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

TCF Web Site

Go to the TCF Web site at www.compassionatefriends.org to find a wealth of information about TCF and grief—poetry and articles, chat rooms, grief in the news, other chapter web sites, including Nashville, and numerous other resources. Check it out.

NOTE: TCF Nashville Newsletters are now available on our Chapter website. <http://www.tcfnashville.org>





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.

“How Many Children Do You Have?”

Shortly after my son died, I realized that this question was going to be bothersome. Each time someone asked me about the number of children, I struggled with the answer. I soon decided I was not going to let this become a problem. I thought about how I felt about my choice of answers and chose the one that met my needs in the beginning. I had a surviving daughter, but I know for me to say “one” would seem a denial on my part that my son had lived, and that wasn’t right for me.

In the beginning, when I still needed to tell people that my son had died, I would tell in detail about his accident when the question about how many children came my way. As the months passed and I had told the story enough times, I found that it wasn’t necessary to go into detail any more. My needs had changed, and I rethought my answer.

Now, when I am asked how many children I have, I answer, “I had two children.” The criteria I used in determining if I go any further is whether the person asking is going to be a continuing part of my life. If so, they need to know about my son, and I tell them. Otherwise we will be constantly dancing around the fact. Better, I think, to have it out in the open.

If, on the other hand, the person asking is simply passing through my life, then I feel no need to go any further than “I had two children.” Seldom does anyone catch the “HAD” instead of “have,” and pursue it. If they do, or if they ask follow up questions about ages or professions, I tell them first that my 26 year old son was killed in an accident. Then I tell them about my daughter who is alive and doing well, this gives them a choice. They can either acknowledge my son’s death and ask questions or they can ignore that and ask about my daughter. I am comfortable either way. If they are embarrassed, I see that as their problem. Just to show you how different we all are, however, my husband feels comfortable answering, “We have one child.” That is what is right for him and that is what he should say. You decide what is right for you – then Say it. That way you defuse that powerful question and it loses its ability to traumatize. Don’t let it be a problem.

Mary Cleckley,
TCF Atlanta, GA

To My Husband

Your tears flow within your heart,
 Mine flow down my cheeks.
 Your anger lies with thought and movements,
 Mine gallops forward for all to see.
 Your despair shows in your now dull eyes,
 Mine shows in line after written line.
 You grieve over the death of your son,
 I grieve over the death of my baby.
 But we're still the same, still one,
 Only we grieve at different times
 Over different memories and at different lengths.
 Yet we both realize
 The death of our child.

Pam Burden
 TCF, Augusta, GA

A Message to My Wife

The years of our marriage are few
 When measured against a lifetime.
 We have encountered a joy
 And shared confidence in our future.
 We have known hope's ending
 And have borne the death of dreams.
 We have, together, been diminished.
 Even minor aspirations have eluded
 Our grasp in cruel shadow of the loss of our child.
 Yet, we still share our lives,
 And though the bitterness, we once knew has fled
 We have grown enough to sense
 A return of laughter – an uplifting
 To shatter the dimness, to remind us
 That tomorrow will come and
 Dreams may again be born.

Don Hackett,
 TCF, Hingham, MA

Catching Butterflies

It often hurt to come upon reminders of
 my son.
 Tho' often since I lost him I would
 search around for one
 Which always brought on sadness and
 the tears that I would shed
 were caused by names or faces,
 all things that I would dread.

But then one day I came upon a man
 who'd lost his son.
 I found that things I ran from, he
 wouldn't even shun.
 But rather he would treasure and I said
 I wondered why
 He told me that he called them
 "Catching Butterflies."

This view of his intrigued me; I wanted
 to hear more.
 And learned that he took all of them and
 carefully would store
 all of the reminders that I chose to push
 away,
 He would tuck deep down inside his
 heart each and every day.

Now a name or likeness when catching
 me off guard
 Does not upset me as it did and I don't
 find it hard.
 For now instead I see these times as
 opportunities
 to see my son awakened in these new
 fresh memories.

Dottie Williams
 TCF, Pittsburgh PA

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows how great the hurt is. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

Helen Steiner Rice

Our Valentine Cookies

*The Valentine's Day Cookies
won't taste so good this year.*

I stirred in the sugar, but you were not here.

Frosting – pink on the tip of your nose.

Days spun too swiftly – my biggest woe!

Did the time have to come so very soon

When you weren't here to lick the spoon?

My heart would dance and I would sing

To feel you tug at my apron strings.

But instead I'll toil with the rolling pin,

And rely on mind's eye for your silly grin.

When the heart shapes are baked, mine will still ache.

But I'll always love you, for goodness sake!

*Kathy Slief
TCF, Tulsa, OK*

We are alike; at the same time we are very unlike. Our stories are different, our solutions are different, our ways of handling our grief are different, but we are alike in that we all hurt to the depths of our capacity to hurt. We experience many of the grief symptoms alike and we are alike in our need for help. While we cannot give each other definite answers or take away each other's pain, we can help each other by simply being there and listening to each other.

*Dennis Klass
TCF, St. Louis, MO*

Winter Solstice

The year has turned again.

As quickly as it came, it runs away.

The year has turned.

*Again before us waits another string
of sparkling celebrations.*

How fine and welcome are the holidays.

How sharp and painful are the holidays.

*Dark with the light, grief with the joy, life
tumbles on.*

Sacha

Alone

Alone in the dictionary means:

1. Without anybody else.
2. Without any others being included or involved.

But to me alone is something very different. Alone is losing a friend, a love, a brother.

On February 14, 2004, I was to go to my father's house alone, only to come back the very next day to find out that I would be alone for the rest of my life.

I don't need a dictionary to know what alone is.

Alone is February 14, 2004.

*Marina Moore, Age 11
TCF Tucson, AZ*

Little Baby

Little baby who was not to be,
You were a person – at least to me.

Would your eyes be blue?
Or hazel and dark?
Would you caw like the crow?
Or sing like a lark?

Would you have ten little fingers
and ten tiny toes?
A rosebud mouth?
A turned up nose?

Would you be laughing and happy,
or somber and quiet?
Would you run and jump or rather be still
Would you like to read, or prefer to play?

None of my questions will have an answer.
Your chance to live will never be.

The only thing I truly know –
Little baby, we would have loved you so!

*Joan D. Schmidt
TCF, Central Jersey*

Those Difficult “Firsts”

I remember New Year’s Eve, December 31, 1994. Nina loved any opportunity that called for a celebration. She invited a couple of her high school friends over, planned games, tried some new recipes, and bought her customary bottle of sparkling apple cider to drink out of plastic champagne glasses. Nina rivaled Martha Stewart when it came to her enthusiasm for entertaining! Her friends stayed overnight and their joyful laughter could be heard well into the wee hours of the morning. Luckily, I have such a sweet, pleasant memory of what turned out to be the last New Year’s Eve with our Nina.

Because of those “Lasts,” we are faced with the “Firsts.” With only two days left of the year..., I was tempted to write about New Year’s resolutions. However, since I make my resolutions on the first and notoriously break them by the second, my credibility is definitely in question! But,...it seemed like a good time to mention what for many of you will be the beginning of those difficult “Firsts” – the first holidays, first birthday, first death anniversary, the first family vacation without your child, and so on. Unfortunately, this is an area that I am qualified to write about because, of course, I have “been there.”

I know that, in particular, those who are newly bereaved face the new calendar with apprehension because of those “Firsts.” Whether there is a major holiday in that month or not, each one brings its own emotional challenges. For those whose children sadly died before they had memories of what their child had done the year before, the calendar speaks to them of shattered dreams and hopes that died along with their child. For the rest of us, it is the bittersweet recollections of years past. With February come memories of hand-made Valentines with childlike scribbles of “I love you Mommy & Daddy.” Maybe March brought attempts at kite flying and April dying Easter eggs. May and June with Mother’s and Father’s Day and the stab of pain in your heart that your child is not here to celebrate such important days with you. Fourth of July celebrations and summer vacations, school clothes shopping, the excitement of meeting new teachers and new friends. In October carving pumpkins and trying to decide what costume to wear trick or treating. And then right back to those most painful of months where in a short time span we are thrust into family-centered Norman Rockwell-like celebrations of Thanksgiving and at Christmas where our loved ones who are missing are so conspicuously absent. When we enter in our child’s birthday and the anniversary of their death it is frankly overwhelming. It is no wonder that at each ... meeting we hear the same words spoken over and over again, “This has been a very hard month.”

I cannot imagine facing these “Firsts” without the support of The Compassionate Friends. I sadly think of even a few decades ago when there weren’t any groups like TCF to assist those whose children had died. Those unfortunate parents were only allowed the time of the funeral to grieve. Then the expectation was, especially if they had other children, to get on with their life for those surviving family members. They buried their child, and many times, because they weren’t allowed to, never spoke of them again, as if they had never existed. They didn’t have other bereaved parents to walk the grief path with them and to validate that what they were feeling was “normal,” for us, anyway. They didn’t have another mother or father who had been down that same path available to tell them that though the “Firsts” are difficult, most often the anticipation of the day is worse than the day itself. They didn’t have the veterans of TCF to assure them that they too would rediscover the ability to laugh and find reasons to live again.

Though it is unrealistic to think that the holidays and any of the other special days will ever be the same again, I, and so many others in our group of The Compassionate Friends are here to tell you that they do gradually become easier to bear. Undoubtedly, the holidays will always be tinged with sadness but we, who have made it past the “Firsts” and the “Seconds” and beyond, are present at each Compassionate Friends meeting, or only an e-mail or phone call away. We want to help, in any way that we can, those of you who are on this grief journey.

Please remember always - you are *not* alone.

With gentle thoughts,

Cathy Seehuetter
TCF, St. Paul, MN

Just For Today

Just for today I will try to live through the next 24 hours and not expect to get over my child's death, but instead learn to live with it just one day at a time.

Just for today I will remember my child's life, not his death, and bask in the comfort of all those treasured days and moments we shared.

Just for today I will forgive all the family and friends who didn't help or comfort me the way I needed them to. They truly did not know how.

Just for today I will smile no matter how much I hurt on the inside, for maybe if I smile a little, my heart will soften and I will begin to heal.

Just for today I will reach out to comfort a relative or friend of my child, for they are hurting too, and perhaps we can comfort each other.

Just for today I will free myself from my self-inflicted burden of guilt, for deep in my heart I know if there was anything in this world I could have done to save my child from death, I would have done it.

Just for today I will honor my child's memory by doing something with another child because I know that would have made my own child proud.

Just for today I will offer my hand in friendship to another bereaved parent, for I do know how they feel.

Just for today when my heart feels like breaking, I will stop and remember that grief is the price we pay for loving and the only reason I hurt is because I had the privilege of loving so much.

Just for today I will not compare myself with others. I am fortunate to be who I am and to have had my child for as long as I did.

Just for today I will allow myself to be happy, for I know that I am not deserting him by living on.

Just for today I will accept that I did not die when my child did. My life did go on and I am the only one who can make that life worthwhile once more.

Vicki Tushingam
For Bereaved Parents