

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



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

Chapter Leaders: Joe and Melanie Ladd, (615) 361-7996, email: joeandmel@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor: Melanie Ladd, (615) 361-7996, email: joeandmel@comcast.net

Outreach Coordinator: Jayne Head, (615) 264-8184, email: alanandgraysonsmom@comcast.net

Regional Coordinator: David Gibson, (615) 356-1351, email: davidg14@bellsouth.net

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.

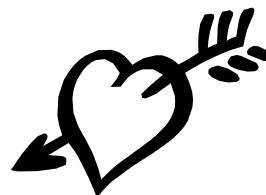
Mementos of Our Children February 9

We all have things that are precious to us, that either belonged to or remind us of our beloved children. At this month's meeting, we invite you to bring any one thing that can be shared briefly with the rest of the group. This memento 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.

A Thought for the Day

The melody that the loved one played upon the piano of your life will never be played quite that way again, but we must not close the keyboard and allow the instrument to gather dust. We must seek out other artists of the spirit, new friends who gradually will help us to find the road to life again, who will walk that road with us.

Rabbi Joshua Liebman
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL



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

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.

Sharing

Sharing is a community organization interested in helping parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn infant. The parent support group meets the second Thursday evening of each month at 7 p.m. in the Administrative Board Room at The Women's Hospital at Centennial Medical Center located at 2221 Murphy Avenue (between 22nd and 23rd Ave).

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.

Times for TCF Videos

Do you have a question about what you're feeling? This informative 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. and Fridays at 11:30 A.M. and 5:00 PM.



CHAPTER INFORMATION

The Birthday Table

In the month of your child's birthday, a table will be provided at our meeting where you can share photographs, mementos, your child's favorite snack or a birthday cake, a bouquet of flowers—anything you'd like to bring. We want to know your child better, so please take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the wonderful day of your child's birth and for us to become better acquainted.

The “Let Us Remember Them” 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 have not been able 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. You need notify us only one time.

Newsletter and Donations Deadlines

Remember that all newsletter submissions and monetary donations need to be received no later than the day AFTER the monthly meeting. Any suggestions for improving the newsletter are always welcome.

Religion – A Continuing Theme

The principles of The Compassionate Friends state that TCF reaches out to all bereaved parents across the artificial barriers of religion, race, economic class or ethnic group. Further, TCF espouses no specific religious or philosophical ideology. Despite our nondenominational status, many writers indicate that they have found comfort in their faith and some have shared their anger and loss of faith. The opinions and beliefs expressed in letters, articles and poetry are those of the contributors.



Know Your Chapter Volunteers

It is no accident that we have a smooth running chapter. Without the hard work of our volunteers, many things we take for granted would not be done. Take a minute to thank these people for their love and time to make the road a little easier for all our bereaved families. A special word of appreciation is extended to all who help set up and rearrange the meeting room each month, and to those who help facilitate the sharing groups.

Jayne Head is our Treasurer and Outreach Coordinator. She sends letters and materials to the newly bereaved and to professionals.

Carol Renfro is our Chapter Librarian.

Lamar Bradley serves as our Chapter Web Master. He also makes our beautiful permanent photo name tags.

Ann Lewis sets up our beautiful birthday table each month.

Paula and Mike Childers set up the refreshment area.

Joy Bradley is our warm and friendly greeter, seeing to it that new members are well taken care of.

Jean Reischman writes a note to each new parent after they attend a meeting.

Joy Bradley and Sue Mather write comforting notes to parents for the first two years on the birthdays and death anniversaries of their children.

Jackie Friends sends an acknowledgement card for each donation.

Melanie Ladd edits the newsletter.

David and Peggy Gibson check the mail, monitor the mailing list, process donations and renewal slips, run labels, and take helpful brochures to schools when needed.

Deanna Brown prepares the newsletters for bulk mailing.

We have a fine telephone team. These people rotate on a weekly basis, checking the voice mail and returning calls from bereaved parents and professionals. They are Donna and Bandy Wenning, Ed Pyle, Robin Hunt, and Lamar Bradley.

Our chapter publicity is handled by Donna Reagan, who sends notices and announcements to the newspapers. Also, as our Literature Secretary, Donna sets up the brochures available at every meeting.

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.

Burden of Grief

*As I struggle with words to find answers
Reading and writing my pain
The pages grow blurred before eyes that are tired
From this crushing emotional drain.*

*The relief that comes from the writing
Parallels what I feel when I read—
To open myself to the torture of loss
Seems to soothe this unbearable need.*

*There's no pleasure in life at this moment
It's an effort to get through the day
And I labor to stay above water...*

*But the shoreline is so far away.
So I pick up a pen, or a book about grief
And it serves as a raft for a while.
And I hope, as my tears fall on pages of pain
That I'll learn once again how to smile.*

*As I swim toward the shore of acceptance
I pray for the peace of belief
That heaven's your home and you're waiting for me--
Then I'll finally be free of this grief.*

From *Tracey, an Extraordinary Child* © 1995
by Sally Migliaccio, TCF, Babylon NY

A Struggle With Anger

Sometime after we have lost a child, we struggle with anger. Initially it may not be there and we may even have a sense of smugness that we don't feel angry, that we've risen above it. I know I've felt this way. Some may never feel angry, but for others, like myself, it can be very difficult to cope with.

The anger can take many forms. Anger at God (Why does He allow any parent to experience this pain?) If we don't allow ourselves to be angry at God (I may need Him), then we take it out on other people. They did not help enough or they did not call or visit, we think. There is a smoldering ache that sees neglect and uncaring silence. Or, we become very angry at some stupid remark someone has made. "You are lucky he did not suffer." I am not lucky at all, my son is dead.

Sometimes our anger is directed at the person who died, some circumstances more fertile ground than others for anger. Sometimes it is toward other grieving parents, perhaps specifically for supposed neglect. ("Why weren't you watching her more carefully?") Often, the anger is against ourselves, for not doing what we feel we should have done. At times it is less specific (Why am I not coping better? or Why am I not over it yet?) For many parents, there is the third party at whom the anger is directed: the murderer, the drunken driver, or medical personnel.

In many cases there is an overwhelming great, big ANGER, with no specific direction. "It's not fair!" But things not being fair did not stop the anger. When I realized this, I became aware I was taking my anger out in a diversionary channel.

People who had hurt me, sometimes many years ago, injustices I had suffered, all surfaced, often with great clarity and detail and my anger became directed toward those people. A justifiable anger, after all, because I had been hurt and it was more comfortable to live with that than the non-specific anger. Perhaps you can identify with this diversionary anger, too?

How do we deal with this anger? It is most important to allow it to be. You are angry, very angry because your child is dead and it is not fair. Your faith hasn't seemed to help and people have said stupid things. Visitors have stopped coming. It is okay to be angry about all of this. It is normal, other bereaved parents feel the same way.

Realizing I was normal and that my feelings and diverted anger were shared by others, helped me to keep balanced. I had a very supportive friend, who listened when I ranted and raved over imagined and real hurts. Being able to express those feelings often dissipated much of their force. I could picture in my mind Jonathon, who had died at age 21, smiling and saying, "Let it go, Mum, life is too short." For him it was too short.

Because of him, I am choosing to let the anger go. I have read many times in The Compassionate Friends newsletter to be gentle with myself. Now, as time goes by, I'm learning to be gentle with others, too. Jonathon would be pleased with the progress I'm making.

Margaret Baird
Kingston, Jamaica

Circles

*How do you bear it all?
The cry came from a mother
Whose son had died only weeks before.
We were in a circle, looking at her,
Looking around, looking away.
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.
How do we bear it?
I don't know,
But the circle helps.*

WRITING YOUR CHILD'S STORY

The possibility of forgetting even the smallest detail of our child's life is a fear most of us have. In truth, over the months and years, many of these details do dim. Writing them down is a way to keep from losing these memories. This way, we will not only have a permanent remembrance of our child for ourselves, but this will also be a legacy for other family members. Here are some suggestions.

--Write in a spiral notebook. This way nothing you write will be lost.

--Begin at the beginning. Write all the details of your child's life from his birth to his death day.

--Use your child's pictures to help remind you of occasions and happenings over the years. Ask friends and relatives to tell you anything they remember about your child. (This may make them a little uncomfortable at first, but let them know how important it is to you.) Also, write any thoughts and feelings you remember having at the time.

--Record the bad things your child did and said in his life as well as the good things. It is important to write both the child's good and bad sides so we can remember him as the real person he was.

--Write about your child's death. Record as many details surrounding it as you care to retell. Write about the days before his burial, the funeral, the day after, two weeks, a month, and so on. Record how others helped.

--Write a letter to your child. Include: What I wish I had said to you. What I wish I had not said to you. What I wish I had done. What I wish I had not done. What I wish you had done. What I wish you had not done. What I wish I could ask you. What I would like to tell you. Pour out your feelings to your child. Tell him of your anger, your guilt. Tell your child how you love him. Tell your child goodbye.

Don't worry about whether you write well. Don't worry about form or grammar. Just write. Keep your notebook handy. Write anytime you feel you want to say something to him, or when you remember some detail that suddenly comes to mind. When you have trouble sleeping, write down the things that keep coming into your mind.

Writing about your child or to your child will be emotional. It will probably make you cry. Don't let this stop you. Crying can be extremely helpful in releasing your tensions and will help you with your grief work.

**REMEMBER--WRITING IS JUST
TALKING WRITTEN DOWN.**

Margaret Gerner
TCF, St. Louis, MO

(Editor's note: the following tips on writing as therapy are compiled from original ideas and various other sources for use in newsletter workshops at national TCF conferences.)

SOME TIPS ON WRITING AS THERAPY

Write for yourself. You need never show your writing to anyone else unless you just want to.

Writing is talking written down. It can relieve all the pent-up emotions that, if not released, can fester and hinder healing, causing even greater pain.

Write what you are feeling at the moment. Forget about sentence structure, spelling, grammar, etc. Just write.

Don't hesitate to write your confusion, your anger, your daily questions and moments of sheer misery. Let the tears fall. (If you write by hand, pencil won't be smudged by tears like ink will.)

Don't throw anything away; file it and take another look at it in six months or a year. It will tell you where you have been in your grief, will give you some sense of having made progress; then you may want to take it from there.

Make two lists: Using only one or two words, list all the things your child liked; then list all the things your child didn't like. This will provide a surprisingly good profile of your child.

Write letters to your child. Say the things you'd like to say if he were still living. Say the things that frustrate you because he is not still living. Explain to your child that you could not keep him from dying – that even though he has died, and you must go on living, you will always love and miss him.

Try Poetry. One suggestion is to write your child's name vertically on a page; then use the letter on each line as a beginning of a sentence about the child. Don't worry about rhyme, rhythm, or form.

Always date your material. This will give you a frame of reference in the future when you read what you have written – and very likely, you'll see how very far you've come in your healing.

Sometimes

*Sometimes something clicks
and with a tear, remembrance of the pain
and the loneliness flood the heart.*

*Sometimes something clicks
and with a smile, remembrance of the love
and the laughter flood the senses.*

*And there are times when nothing clicks at all
and a voice echoes through the emptiness and numbness
never finding the person who used to fill that space.*

*And sometimes
the most special times of all
a feeling ripples through your body, heart and soul
that tells you that person never left you, and he is
right there with you, through it all.*

Kristen Hansen
Bereaved Sibling
Kentfield, CA

What Do I Do With My Child's Things?

his is a problem that faces all bereaved parents. We discuss it from time to time at our meetings.

Some of us keep the child's room just as it was before death. We don't want anything touched or moved.

Some of us find solace in giving things away to close friends or relatives. Knowing someone we love is wearing our child's clothes, or playing with his or her toys, brings us comfort.

Some of us find we can deal with only a few items at a time: clothes, one month; books, another; perhaps toys, a few months later.

Some of us find that, as time goes on and we would have gotten rid of the things anyway, it becomes easier. For instance, after awhile we realize that if the child were still alive, he or she would have outgrown the clothes. Then it's easier to give them away.

Or, he would have graduated from college this year, and therefore would no longer use the study desk or clock radio. We can give these things away in the normal time sequence.

The important thing is not to let others rush us into doing something before we are ready, and not to let ourselves feel guilty about the amount of time it takes us to make decisions.

When the time is right, and the decision is right for us, we'll know what to do.

TCF, Honolulu, Hawaii

Our Act of Love

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 so 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*

The Sun Still Comes Up

*The loss of a loved one is nearly unbearable
If not for my faith in God where would I be
To constantly feel the emptiness in my soul
But as always the sun still comes up.*

*The days seem longer and unpredictable
My memories wade in and out
The tears come and they go unexpectedly
But as always the sun still comes up.*

*Do I let feelings flow or tuck them deep inside
It hurts so to let them surface*

*And I feel by not I'm denying the emotion
But as always the sun still comes up.*

*Memories are there for a reason
That special someone helps make you who you are
Cling to the experiences you were given
But as always the sun still comes up.*

*Look to the clouds in the sky and know
Your loved one has peace we do not know
Cherish the memories both bad and good
Remember as always the Sun Still Comes Up.*

Glenda Barnett-Streicher
TCF Nashville, TN

