

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.

TCF Video To Be Shown

The Compassionate Friends helps us to cope with the death of a child. It is where one can turn for support when the devastation of the loss seems overwhelming. The vision of TCF is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped. The Compassionate Friends has produced a video describing the story of the organization as told by testimonials from some of those most involved with the organization. It includes the executive director, board members, chapter members and siblings. This video will be shown at this month's meeting followed by a brief discussion by local chapter members explaining how TCF has helped them in their grief journey. Please join us.

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

Shared joy

Is double joy

Shared sorrow

Is half sorrow.

Swedish Proverb

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

Newsletter Deadlines

In order for donations and contributed poems or articles to be included in the following month's newsletter, we must receive them no later than the Wednesday after the chapter meeting. Any donations received after that date will be included in the next month's issue. Please send them to TCF, P. O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205.

Religion and TCF

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.

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.



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.

TCF Video on Channel 19

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 P.M.

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.

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The Wounded Heart

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the last to enter the realm of Bereaved Parents. But for now, right now, it is OUR HEARTS that are freshly wounded and OUR HEARTS in need of mending.

Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss; to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt, and anger; and to release their well of tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life.

A wounded heart, not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony, will be as an abscess to swell and undermine, erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed.

The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

Nancy Green
TCF, Livonia, MI

The Holidays Are Behind Us

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of each, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there amongst all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out on a winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the great energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows.

We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb; a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard; our throats tight from the muscles pulled by tears, shed or unshed; our chests banded tightly by the muscles of a mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we, too, in our searching, find places of warmth and change and love and growth, deep within.

Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be warmed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope, or of new acceptance, or of new understanding, or of new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love of our child, forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

Marie Andrews
TCF, Southern Maryland

Life is circular. It does not end. It is not linear. Just look at the obvious in front of our nose. The sun sets and rises again. Energy never gets "lost," but just changes form. Seeds become plants. Leaves do not die—they decay, become fertilizer for seeds, and are reborn again. Clouds become rain, become ocean, evaporate and rise, and become clouds again. Parents lead to children. Then children become parents. Nothing in nature just stops. Life everywhere goes on.

From *Into the Valley and Out Again*
By Rich Edler, TCF, South Bay/Los Angeles

Beatitudes for Those Who Comfort

Blessed are those who do not use tears to measure the true feelings of the bereaved.

Blessed are those who do not always have a quick “comforting” answer.

Blessed are those who do not make judgments on the bereaved’s closeness to God by their reaction to the loss of their loved one.

Blessed are those who hear with their hearts and not with their minds.

Blessed are those who admit their uncomfortableness and put it aside to help the bereaved.

Blessed are those who do not give unwanted advice.

Blessed are those who allow the bereaved enough time to heal.

Blessed are those who continue to call, visit, and reach out when the crowd has dwindled and the wounded are left standing alone.

Blessed are those who know the worth of each person as a unique individual and do not pretend that they can be replaced or forgotten.

Blessed are those who realize the fragility of bereavement and handle it with an understanding shoulder and a loving heart.

By Jackie Deems
From *Bereavement Magazine*, May 1989

New Year’s Resolutions for Bereaved Parents

-That I will grieve as much and for as long as I feel like grieving, and that I will not let others put a timetable on my grief.

-That I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.

-That I will cry whenever and wherever I feel like crying, and that I will not hold back my tears just because someone else feels I should be “brave” or “getting better” or “healing by now.”

-That I will talk about my child as often as I want to, and that I will not let others turn me off just because they can’t deal with their own feelings.

-That I will not expect family and friends to know how I feel, understanding that one who has not lost a child cannot possibly know how it feels.

-That I will not blame myself for my child’s death, and I will constantly remind myself that I did the best job of parenting I could possibly have done. But when feelings of guilt are overwhelming, I will remind myself that this is a normal part of the grief process and it will pass.

-That I will not be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help if I feel it is necessary.

-That I will commune with my child at least once a day in whatever way feels comfortable and natural to me, and that I won’t feel compelled to explain this communion to others or to justify or even discuss it with them.

-That I will try to eat, sleep, and exercise every day in order to give my body strength it will need to help me cope with my grief.

-To know that I am not losing my mind and I will remind myself that loss of memory, feelings of disorientation, lack of energy, and a sense of vulnerability are all normal parts of the grief process.

-To know that I will heal, even though it will take a long time.

-To let myself heal and not to feel guilty about feeling better.

-To remind myself that the grief process is circuitous—that is, I will not make steady upward progress. And when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depression, I will tell myself that “slipping backward” is also a normal part of the grief process and these moods, too, will pass.

-To try to be happy about something for some part of every day, knowing that at first, I may have to force myself to think cheerful thoughts so eventually they can become a habit.

-That I will reach out at times and try to help someone else, knowing that others will help me to get over my depression.

-That even though my child is dead, I will opt for life, knowing that is what my child would want me to do.

Nancy A. Mower
TCF, Honolulu, HI

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The New Year Comes

The New Year comes

*When all the world is ready
For changes, resolutions—
Great beginnings.*

For us, to whom

*That stroke of midnight means
A missing child remembered,
For us, the New Year comes*

More like another darkness

*But let us not forget
That this may be the year
When love and hope and courage*

Find each other somewhere

*In the darkness
To lift their voice and speak:
Let there be light.*

Sascha Wagner
TCF, Des Moines, IA



Born Still

*Life was going to be so good with you
We happily anticipated your coming
We so looked forward to your laughs
And cries, even your dirty diapers*

*We were going to buy a rocking chair
So we could lull-a-by you to sleep
Your crib was bought and set up
months in advance
You were expected
You were wanted
Your every move was noticed*

*But then your movements ceased
Why were you so still?
Your body was there inside me
But your life had slipped away
You had not arrived before you were gone*

*The shock, the tears, the intense sadness
We hold your precious little body
in our arms
You have your father's face
You are so delicate, so fragile
We are scared, and lonely, and empty
We miss you so*

*Goodbye Sweet Baby
We will never know the way you were to be
We never saw your smile or the color of your eyes
There was no reason
We needed you so*

Linda Dawson Draper
TCF, Portland, Or

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Infant Death

A family was gathered in the hospital where a couple's twelve-hour-old infant daughter had died. The sister of this couple said, "It's so hard to hold her, it makes it all so real." She had spent only hours with her niece and already was feeling the impact of this child's death. If it takes only hours for an aunt to feel the loss, how can we begin to explain the impact on the parents?

Miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death are not thought to be significant because the parents didn't really know the baby. Even with a loss early in pregnancy, the parents know the baby. Once a pregnancy is confirmed, the parents think about the baby all the time. This child is a part of their daily lives. They form a mental picture of the baby and plan what college he or she will attend. Names are chosen and rooms are decorated. In the book, *Swimmer in the Secret Sea*, a couple walks through the woods and pretends the baby has already been born and is swinging along between them, holding onto their hands. After their son is stillborn, the doctor says, "The baby looks perfectly normal. There's no reason why you can't have another child. Laski (the father) listened numbly. He

thinks, "That's what has been at stake, our wish for a child, any child, not this particular child who swung down the road between us. They can't know how special he is. They point to the future. But we're here, forever, now."

Parents are sometimes encouraged to have another baby as soon as possible in the belief that they will then forget about the baby that died. Most parents do go on to have another child, if able, simply because they are in the family-building part of their lives. They know it will not take away the pain or replace the child that died.

Some parents have a need to get pregnant again right away and others want to wait for awhile. As long as the mother is healed physically, whenever the parents feel ready for another pregnancy is the right time.

Occasionally parents experience some difficulty getting pregnant again and find it takes longer than it did before. Others have no difficulty achieving a pregnancy, but find even a few months a stressful wait.

Getting through the next pregnancy can be an emotional roller coaster. On one hand is the joy and hope for the new baby and on the other hand is the vulnerability and fear that what happened before may happen again. However, because they feel so exposed, parents now worry about everything that could happen, not only what caused the previous loss.

There is little support for parents who experience an infant death. Because many people see infant loss as insignificant and easily forgotten, they offer either no support or support only in the first few days or weeks. After that time, parents are assumed to have healed and forgotten.

If there are other children in the family, it is seen as being easier. "At least you have other children" is what these parents are told, as if that makes the loss easier. Since grief is overwhelming and takes so much energy, parents with other children may need extra help with caretaking. If no one offers, frequently parents find it difficult to ask for the help they need.

Parents need to know that it is okay to ask for help or to take life easy and be good to themselves. Remember, grief can heal only if you let it.

JoAnne Matzke
TCF, Hinsdale, IL

For Baby

*Like a miracle
You happened
You were there
I was a flower
Beginning to bloom
Bursting with life
Then you were gone
Like music never written
Existing only in my dreams
And I love you still....*

Stacy Hooks
TCF, Savannah, GA



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Snow



Every snowflake that falls is unique and has its own individual design. There are beautiful patterns in each snowflake and even the tiniest of flakes have their own markings. These patterns change again and again — even after the flake touches the ground. Each snowflake is a cause for wonder, each flake is one of a kind. No two are exactly alike. Like the snowflake, our beautiful children were each unique and special; some we only dreamed about and some danced upon the earth. They filled our lives with wonder and transformed our world. We held them too briefly, but we will hold them in our hearts forever. We shall remember them always. At this time of remembering, it may help to reflect upon how our lives have been enriched by the love we have given and the love we have received from our children. Our children leave treasures behind that time can never take away.

Denise Falzone
TCF, Lake Area, MI

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