

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



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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.

July 12 Meeting Addresses Help, Healing, and Hope

Dr. Gina Frieden, Assistant Professor at Vanderbilt University and Director of the Human Development Counseling program, will be our speaker for the July 12 meeting. She conducts research in the areas of adult development, loss and life transitions, and counselor training. Her clinical practice in the community includes counseling and psychoeducation in the areas of bereavement, stress and life transitions and strengthening relationships. She teaches courses in grief and loss, developmental psychology and counselor training.

While loss is an individual process that is unique to each person, losing a child means at least for a time, feeling disconnected from the world as we have known it and even with one's own sense of identity. Dr. Frieden will address some practical ways to engage help, healing, and hope through different phases of grief.



*Shadows often lengthen—and sometimes sadness
comes stealing up from the place of remembering—for sadness is but a shadow—
a shadow that is fashioned from love's bright sunlight shining upon a treasured memory.*

Winston A. Abbott
Come Walk Among the Stars
TCF Babylon, NY

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

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Are You Moving?

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us 44 cents to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved; then we pay another 44 cents to mail it back to you. This is in addition to the original bulk mail cost. It would help a great deal in both time and money if you would notify us immediately of any address change so your newsletter can reach you right away. You may call, write or email the chapter leaders or the newsletter editor. Thanks for your help.

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 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.

July's Child

*The fireworks race toward Heaven,
 Brilliant colors in the sky.
 Their splendor ends in seconds
 On this evening in July.
 "Her birthday is this Saturday," I whisper with a sigh...
 She was born this month, she loved this month,
 And she chose this month to die.
 Like the bright and beautiful fireworks
 glowing briefly in the dark,
 They are gone too soon, and so was she...
 Having been, and left her mark.
 A glorious, incandescent life, a catalyst, a spark...
 Her being gently lit my path, and softened all things stark.
 The July birth, the July death of my happy summer child
 Marks a life too brief that ended without rancor, without guile.
 Like the fireworks that leave images on unprotected eyes,
 Her lustrous life engraved my heart with love that never dies.*

Sally Migliaccio
 TCF Babylon, NY

The Missing Goes On

*Are the grim, leaden skies somewhat brighter?
 Have I learned even black clouds might part?
 Has the pain that once battered me morning and night
 Finally lifted a bit from my heart?*

*"Not so!" I whisper, defensively.
 Grief's claws are STILL raking my soul.
 I've battled this sorrow for many a year
 To wrestle away its control.*

*I've an uneasy truce with unbearable pain
 Most times it's quiescent within.
 Then there are times when with teeth bared it strikes
 And I'm thrust back to raw grief again.*

*I've waged a fierce war for relief from the pain
 Feeling guilty for wanting some peace.
 Though I know that less pain doesn't equal less love,
 I am torn between pain and release.*

*My daughter was born in the month of July
 And July is the month when she died.
 She molded my life in the years she was here.
 In death she continues to guide.*

*I love her no less than I did in her life
 And I've learned that the missing goes on...
 So if misery takes time off for a night
 It will surely return with the dawn.*

Sally Migliaccio
 TCF, Babylon, NY

Independence Day

The Fourth of July, Independence Day, Our Nation's Birthday. Whatever you call it, we celebrate America's Independence from England on July 4th each year. As a nation, we have endured for 200+ years to become a significant independent and powerful force in the world. We were founded on the principles of equality and religious tolerance, of equity and opportunity, and of rights and responsibilities. Several generations of men and women have defended our precious freedom with their lives. As we celebrate this year, let's take a moment to remember those who paid the ultimate price for freedom – and to remember their families. It is sometimes easy to think only of the glory of their sacrifices, and to overlook the sacrifice of their families. War is never glorious, no matter how romantic the notion created by Hollywood. War has casualties that go farther and deeper into the fabric of our nation than we may realize. Those who died are buried with fanfare, as befits a nation's fallen valiants. And their families learn to go on, just as we have, in spite of their loss. But think for a moment of those who were declared missing in action, or who were prisoners of war. Their families must endure, often for years, and sometimes without an end to their pain and loss. Remember all of our nation's fallen when you celebrate this year. Remember those ceremoniously laid to rest; remember those who were captured, imprisoned, even tortured; remember those whose fate remains unknown. And remember, too, the families of all of them. Death, no matter how noble, is never easy for those left behind. We send our thanks to the veterans – living, dead, and missing – and their families.

Tom and Sondra Wright
TCF Tucker, GA

Epilogue

*Beyond the history of grand events,
behind the memory of battles fought,
of freedoms lost and won,
there stand the silent legends of this earth,
the monuments of human joy and sorrow,
a sky of laughter on a sea of tears.*

*And they who cried the tears
—their children fallen,
sisters, brothers dead—
with lives washed over by relentless grief;
they fought the battles seldom writ in stone.*

*And they who cried the tears
and laughed the laughter
(though we may not be told
their name and place),
they share with us the history of coping,
of courage tested and enduring hope.*

*And they who cried the tears
and laughed the laughter
are history, as much as swords at war,
as much as grand events and freedoms won.*

*And all who ever mourned
—the whole world over—
are quietly with you and me today,
to walk with us
through grief to hope and healing.*

From *The Sorrow and the Light*
by Sascha Wagner

We Who Were Left Behind

*We who were left behind
To know the shadows,
We who were left behind
To touch the night,
We who were left behind
To find each other,
To heal the darkness and
To share this day*

*We who have turned once more
To hope and loving
Though we were given graves
And lifeless children—*

*We hear them now
These children and their song
Reminding us
Reminding us again
That we must fill the time
We spend in life
With understanding
Tenderness and peace.*

Sascha Wagner
TCF Des Moines, IA





The Compassionate Friends
32nd Annual National Conference
Mountains of Compassion
Roses of Love
August 7 – 9, 2009
Doubletree Hotel Lloyd Center
Portland, Oregon
'City of Roses'



Registration forms may be found on the TCF Website

www.compassionatefriends.org

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 Pittsburg, PA

Grief and Vacation Time

Be gentle with yourself. Don't expect too much on your first vacation. Remember, as bereaved parents, the first time we do anything without our kids is tough, whether it is going to the movies, shopping or on a vacation.

Plan to do some grief work because you will...planned or not. Give yourself the freedom to change your plans if you had a bad day.

Know that your child will be on your mind just as if you were at home.

Plan a vacation that is restful. You need all the rest you can get. An exhausted body will depress you.

If you have surviving children, plan some activities especially for them. Remember that vacation time is difficult for them too.

Allow yourself to enjoy your vacation. You are not being disloyal to your child if you do. New experiences in new places with new people can refresh you. However, when you do something that your child would have enjoyed, you will probably still hurt.

Going away and coming home can be especially difficult for the newly bereaved. Know that this is normal, but keep in mind that it will be better in time.

Anne Baklarz
 TCF Pittsburg, PA

Summer Thoughts

Summer is a time when things naturally slow down, a time when many are waiting for the orderly routine of their lives to begin again. For those of us in grief whose lives are already in limbo, it can seem endless if we let it. Seeing children, babies, and teenagers is not easy for us, and we see them everywhere from shopping centers to beaches. Everyone is out living, loving, enjoying carefree activities with their children, and we want to scream, "It's not fair!" I was sitting on my patio one evening at dusk recently listening to the shouts of children playing, and I was crying as I remembered the sounds that my child used to make. I became very depressed as I thought what a long summer this was going to be.

In my reverie, I was reminded of a recent comment that I had heard at a TCF meeting: "My child was such a loving, giving person. He would not want me to waste my life being bitter." I also remembered a good friend telling me to "count my blessings" and naming all the things I had to be grateful for. I was furious at the time. Nothing that I had to be grateful for could compensate for the fact that my child was dead.

Now, sitting in the twilight of this early summer evening, I began to see things differently. I was determined that this summer would not be an eternity; I would not let it be. I decided first of all to stay busy. I know I can find plenty to do if I only take the time to look. I am also going to try to enjoy the simple things that used to give me so much pleasure, like working in my garden, and flowers. I then decided to try to be truly grateful for the blessings that I have, like my husband, my surviving children, my job, friends, etc.

It has been almost five years for me, and I know that last year this would not have worked. Of course, I still have times of sadness. I know I always will, but I have decided that in the process of grieving, we close so many doors that the only way to recovery is to reopen them gradually at our own pace.

I know I will never be the same person I was before the death of my child but I hope eventually in some ways I will be a better person because suffering can be beneficial if we learn and grow through it. A year ago I didn't feel this way, and I know I still have a long way to go, but in the meantime, I know the greatest tribute to my child will be to enjoy this summer as he would have done.

Libby Gonzalez
TCF Huntsville, AL

The Elephant in the Room

*There's an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around it.
Yet we squeeze by with "How are You?"
And "I'm fine."
And a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.
We talk about the weather.
We talk about work.
We talk about everything else—except the elephant in
the room.*

*There's an elephant in the room,
We all know it is there.
We are thinking about the elephant as we talk.
It is constantly on our minds.
For you see, it is a very big elephant.
But we do not talk about the elephant in the room.
Oh, please say her name.
Oh, please say "Barbara" again.*

*Oh, please let's talk about the elephant in the room.
For if we talk about her death,
Perhaps we can talk about her life.
Can I say "Barbara" and not have you look away?
For if I cannot, you are leaving me
Alone...
In a room...
With an elephant*

By Terry Kettering
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Storytellers in the Circle of Weavers

*They come to tell their story
in the circle of weavers.
Because it is a story of love,
it is also a story of pain.
They tell how they wove their fabric,
with care, with many threads.
They tell how the fabric was ripped beyond repair.
The sound of that long, final tear
is in their voices, and in the air.
It follows them relentlessly, everywhere.*

*The silence at the end of the story
could be the end.
But in the circle of weavers,
it is not the end. Torn threads begin to stir.
Back and forth,
across and around the circle,
the weaving begins.
The threads are torn, and broken,
but there is life and power
in the weaving of them.*

*Pain and loss can be respected.
They cannot be changed.
But new cloth can be woven,
of caring, and understanding.
Even with broken threads,
In the circle of weavers.*

Elizabeth Morris
TCF Concord, MA

