

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 11 Meeting Reflections on the 33rd Annual National Conference of The Compassionate Friends

Several members of the Nashville Chapter are attending the 33rd TCF National Conference in Arlington, Virginia June 30 – July 4. As always, this conference provides fresh insights, ideas, and a renewed bond with other bereaved parents. Our members will relate to us highlights of the conference as our program on July 11. They will tell about the banquet speakers, workshops, and other events they took part in. Also, they will bring us an announcement of the location of the 2011 conference. Plan early to attend next year! Following this time together, we will break up into our regular small sharing groups. Please join us July 11.



Save the Date: Annual Picnic September 25!

Our annual TCF Nashville Family Picnic at Fannie Mae Dees Park is a wonderful time to spend together with our families.

Mark your calendar!

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
727-3284
- Small Child**.....Kenneth and Kathy Hensley
237-9972
- Drug/Alcohol Overdose**.....Ed Pyle
712-3245

CHAPTER INFORMATION

The “Children Remembered” Listings

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on page 3 in The Children Remembered, 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' names as they should be listed. You may call the database manager at 615 356-1351, drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205, or email us at davidg14@bellsouth.net. We'll be glad to include them. You need to contact us only once, unless any of your information changes.

What is the Yellow Slip?

Please return your yellow renewal slip. After a year 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 615-356-4TCF (4823).

Picture Name Tags

If you will bring a clear picture of your child, wallet size or larger, to a TCF meeting, Lamar Bradley will make a beautiful permanent name tag with your child's picture on it for you to use each month. You will also have an opportunity to select your own butterfly to accompany the photograph. The original photo will be completely safe with Lamar and will be returned to you at the following meeting. The best part of this is that there is no charge. A big thank you goes to Lamar for unselfishly giving his time and talent.



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. Call 615-342-8899 to find out meeting time and place.

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.

The Death of an Only Child or All Children

The following are some of the ways that the grief after the death of an only child or all children differs from the grief of those who have surviving children.

There is no one to “parent.” There are no other children for whom to do the things we have been in training to do. There is acute frustration in not being able to do what we know we can do – parent.

The loss is complete for those who have no hope of other children, or for single parents who can never have the same mixture of a child with that child’s other parent.

We find we have a lot of time and energy and no direction for it. Our spouse, the dog, the cat, a foster child, baby sitting, or having the nieces and nephews over does not compensate for our loss of directed energies.

Our physical space – the house, the car, or perhaps the shopping cart – is not filled with anyone. It is quiet and sometimes the sound of that silence is deafening.

If we cannot have another child, we have lost our future. We may never have grandchildren and the questions arise, “Who will take care of me in my old age?” or “What do I have to look forward to?”

Reactions from other people may be different. Do they still regard me as a parent? Our place in life has changed and other people perceive that. When we are faced with the question of “How many children do you have?” it is more difficult for those of us who have no other living children. The question really becomes “Am I still a parent?”

We may have a tendency to idolize the lost child or children beyond what is natural for the grief process because we have no other children to remind us of what is normal for a child. We have no one else with whom to make a comparison.

As the years go by, concern increases that no one around us will ever have known our child or children and talking about them will become more difficult or unnatural in this company. How will we express ourselves in ten, fifteen, or twenty years? Who will want to know about our dead child or children when the people we know will probably be grandparents by that time? We question if after this length of time we are still a parent at all.

When children die at different times, it seems support diminishes with each loss. Generally, people seem to feel that by now we know how to handle the loss because we have been through it before...that perhaps losing all our children blurs the loss of an individual child.

The death of an only child may prompt a feeling of negating the usefulness of several years of the past and we might feel “What a waste of time, energy and love to have it taken away.” Sometimes we feel “Was it really worth it?”

What we have worked to accomplish and accumulate in our lives can no longer be left as an inheritance for our children.

We have all heard that time will heal all wounds. I believe we need to take control of that time and change the passive waiting into active doing.

We need to seek new outlets for the energy we formerly put into parenting. We might find it helpful to use others who have never been parents as role models or resource guides for building our future. We need to keep a growing edge on life as we reluctantly turn our eyes from the past to the future. We can do it more easily if we seek new interests, new knowledge, new friendships, and, most of all, if we seek new life. Piece by piece we can put the puzzle back together, finding the completeness which comes with total reinvestment and redirection of our energies and love.

Edie Kaplan
TCF, Broward Co./Greater Ft. Lauderdale



*Hold on to what is good
Even if it is a handful of earth
Hold on to what you believe in
Even if it is a tree which stands by itself
Hold on to what you must do
Even if it is a long way from here
Hold on to life
Even if it is easier to let go
Hold on to my hand
Even when I have gone away*



A Name for My Pain

*I have given a name to my pain—
it's called "Longing."
I long for what was,
and what might have been
I long for his touch and smell of sweat;
I long to hold him one more time.
I long to look on his beautiful face
and impress it upon my memories and heart.
I long to return to the day before
and protect him from his death.
I long to take his place,
so he may live and have sons too.
I long for time to pass much faster,
so my longing and pain will lessen.
Will they?*

June Williams-Muecke
TCF, Houston West Chapter

Shards of Grief Linger after Murder

On a dreary night in December, a knock came at our door with news that would forever alter our lives. The news was that Anne, our only daughter, had been kidnapped and brutally murdered by persons or a person unknown. The shock, disbelief, anguish and anxieties over the next several months, a small piece of the grieving process, were extraordinary, and I have often wondered how we survived.

There was the extreme rage at the person who was responsible for taking Anne's life for no reason except for the pure pleasure of destroying good. But we survived.

There was the awful anger against the legal system for being so callous and insensitive to the needs of the family and friends. The wounds from Anne's death were already deep and unhealing, but listening to and reading about the insinuations and innuendoes by the lawyers made the wounds grow deeper and deeper. The impression was given the family must endure punishment for allowing our daughter to be in the wrong place. This caused a feeling of guilt. But we survived.

There was the fear that Anne would become just another statistic, and the person responsible would go unpunished. Now the fear exists that the person will be released from prison to repeat his acts of violence. I am afraid that fears are addictive and one replaces another. Perhaps the worst fear is, when your faith in God is at its lowest ebb, that you will never be able to respond to normal stimuli again and regain all that faith. All the fears are real; but so far we have survived.

These, I suppose, are normal reactions as the result of a violent act. I believe these anxieties delay a normal (so-called) grieving period until after the culprit has been found, tried and sentenced. After these three things happened, I do know a terrible burden was lifted from our shoulders, and we could restart living our lives. Somehow we survived.

How did we survive? After much reflecting, I firmly believe we survived by recalling the positive aspects of Anne's life and character. Each individual is endowed with certain instruments, and we hear the music of their lives long after they are gone.

Anne's instrument of love of life was a blessing, and we still can hear the melodies of her song in the night. These melodies cannot be taken away, and they are more valuable than diamonds to us.

Anne's instrument of hope for a future in which to achieve her goals and have some effect on society was the backbone of her dream. The songs of hope in work, in life and the goodness of heart cannot be destroyed by evil or circumstances. Today is gone, but we still hear the songs of hope for tomorrow. These songs of hope, heard in the night, sustain us.

Anne's instrument of faith that she would lead a productive life and achieve both her spiritual and material goals was music in her heart. The faith she had in herself, her family and her friends transmits to us, urging us to proceed with our lives. The music of her faith is still a beacon in the night.

We will not believe Anne's dreams have ended, but we believe they will find their place in the world to come. The music that was set in motion by her love, hope and faith will move, everlasting, in sweet memories forever. The wounds from the loss of a loved one cannot be healed by words or deeds. These terrible burdens are borne by each of us in our own way and, hopefully, we survive.

Bill Boggs
TCF, Atlanta, Georgia

Smiling

*I could feel you smiling
as I opened the book today.
It felt like, "Good for you, Mom."
This will help you on*

*I love that small connection,
Of knowing that you're there.
It's such a special feeling,
A rainbow I can wear.*

Sascha

Get Well Soon Poem

*I know our loss is very great
but I'm sure many people
can relate
I know its hard to say good-bye
don't hold back your tears!
It's ok to cry.
Just hold my hand
and we will stand up high
We will gather strength
from one another
hugging and holding each other
we will find each other
and together we will be
once again, a family*

*Alyssa Flora, age 13
In memory of her brother Bryson, age 9*

A Letter to My Brother

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here. Why? How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer. How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life? What will I do? How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real, so near? Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, the unfairness of losing you. I miss you. I think of you every day and feel you in my heart always. Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason. Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime's worth. You blessed us with your presence, your specialness. I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left as a legacy. You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

Robin Holemon
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

After my brother's funeral, someone told me I was handling my grief well. "No," I responded. "I am not doing well at all. If I were, I would crumple up on the floor and let my grief flood this room. As it is, I am stoically holding it all in because there's no one here who could be comfortable if I let it out."

Doug Manning
From *Don't Take My Grief Away*

Vacations

Vacation time is upon us again. You may be having trouble with that very thought. My only advice is to go where it is most comfortable for you. Large places with many people may not be the answer this year. The family oriented spots may make it more obvious that one of your blessings is missing. It may be that you are locked into plans that were made before the tragedy of your child's death. You may hesitate to change these plans if they involve other people. I, personally, could only be with people who understood my feelings in the beginning. If the other people involved are not sensitive and understanding, you may want to reconsider your plans. Good, warm, caring friends who will allow you to be wherever it is that you are can be a great comfort. Keeping it simple with a back door through which you can escape if necessary, can be the best answer. Going away and coming home can be a problem in the beginning. Know that it is normal.

Whatever it is that you do and wherever it is that you go, I hope you will keep in mind that it won't always be this painful. IT WILL BE BETTER. Be patient. If you can find peace and enjoyment, do it. You deserve it and it doesn't mean you don't care.

Mary Cleckley
TCF, Atlanta, GA



*Life, like the ocean,
Is vast and forever
And sorrow, but a shadow
That moves over the sea.*

John Grey
TCF, Birmingham, AL



