

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • 615 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: www.tcfnashville.org
 Lamar and Joy Bradley, Chapter Leaders, 615 889-1387, email: lbradley1@mindspring.com
 Candan & Dan Gardner, Newsletter Editors, 615 855-2900, email: gardner3@tcfnashville.org
 Jayne Head, Outreach Coordinator, 615 859-2256, email: alanandgraysonsmom@comcast.net
 David Gibson, Regional Coordinator, 615 356-1351, email: davidg14@prodigy.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.

Nashville TCF Fifteenth Annual Balloon Release June 10

Families and friends of TCF are cordially invited to gather at our regular meeting place for this very special event.

Please plan to arrive early in order to have time to write a message to or about your child. (Paper, pens and biodegradable balloons will be provided.) The notes will be attached to the balloon's ribbon.

We will walk to Centennial Park as a group for a brief ceremony of a reading and music. Following this, the balloons will be released and we will watch as they sail to the heavens until they are finally out of sight.

Immediately following the release, refreshments will be served. Any snack or treat that you can bring to share will be most appreciated. Please use disposable containers.



“Mom got the flowers, dad got the money and everyone told me to be good.”

Melissa, age seven

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

Proud

I was rather proud of an answer to a sticky question that we all have discussed. After telling a friend that my youngest had been killed three years ago, he said, “Then you have two children left?” “No, I have three children. One of them is dead.” Unkind? Maybe, but I don't feel so, for the next time it comes up to him, he will know better how to handle such a question. I figure I just made it easier for the next guy.

TCF, Bluegrass Chapter, Lexington, KY

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., Fridays at 11:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., and Saturdays at 10:30 A.M.

CHAPTER INFORMATION

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.

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.



The Compassionate Friends 30th Annual National Conference To be held in Oklahoma City July 20 through July 22



One of the best experiences a bereaved parent can have is to attend a TCF national conference. Here you will meet other bereaved parents and siblings, you will hear fine speakers, and you will have the opportunity to attend several helpful workshops and sharing sessions. A high percentage of the people who attend are within the first year of their child's death.

Go to the TCF Website at www.compassionatefriends.org to get registration forms and all the information you will need to attend this wonderful event.

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

Let Us Remember Them

In the month of their births, the month of their deaths—and always, with love

Gifts of Love and Remembrance

The following voluntary donations will help The Compassionate Friends to be here for the families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow. Thank you.

For Grandparents

Know that your grief over the loss of your grandchild is legitimate. You have the need and right to grieve. Learn more about the grief process, not only so you will know that what you are experiencing is normal, but it will help you know that your grieving child is not “going crazy.” Find someone with whom you can share your thoughts and feelings about your grandchild’s death.

Know that (this year) will be difficult for you as well as your grieving child. Don’t expect too much of yourself this year. Your grieving child will be especially needing you this year. Find ways to include memories and/or memorabilia of the dead child....

Know that however you plan (for this new year) it will not be as it has been in the past. Your yearly events will never be the same because your grandchild will never be there again. Know, too, that it does get easier as the years go by. Take this opportunity to cement a very special relationship with your grieving child by being sensitive to his/her needs...in this coming year.

Margaret Gerner, MSW
TCF, San Luis Obispo, CA

For My Hero

*When my son died, I thought
You would hold me and comfort me
And make everything right
Like you always did.*

*You never let me down before.
When you couldn't fix things,
I was furious with you.
You wouldn't even talk or cry
Or throw things
Like I did.*

*When you didn't grieve my way,
The right way, I thought
You love him less
And said so.*

*Now I know you didn't let me down.
You cried, you cared, you did the best
That any man in pain could do.
And I forgive you
For not being Superman
Or me.*

*Pat Dyson
TCF, Beaumont, TX*

Husband

*I see the grief
Behind your earnest eyes.
(You would give anything
to have your child again.)*

*I feel the helplessness
Behind your silent anguish.
(You would give anything
to take this hurt away.)*

*I know you learned
To keep your tears in hiding.
And you were taught
Few words to speak for solace—
Not yours, not mine.*

*I see the grief
Behind your earnest eyes.
And I will know
To understand and trust you.
Loving.*

Sascha

Missing a Dad

*All good things come to an end.
Just like things you give and spend.
Lots of good things come and go
Like summer coming
And melting ice and snow.*

*I heard going to heaven
Is like going through a tunnel
And then it feels like a funnel.*

*I also heard that there is a light
With friendly voices at their might.
Everyone does this, I have heard,
From a blue whale to a hummingbird.*

*I know many who have gone through
Like my dad, and our dog Ubu.
I miss them both very much
Along with wrestling with Dad and such.*

*Mom says the only thing that won't die
Is love hovering higher than the sky.
I know many who may die before me,
But their memories will always stay
And not one
Single
Key
Can get them out again.*

*Peter Griffith, age 11
February 8, 2000*

(Peter is the grandson of Maggie Griffith, TCF, Nashville, TN. His father, her son, Drew Griffith, a Maine State Trooper, was killed while on duty on April 15, 1996.)

Having a good Day

*How pleasant it was, this sunny day,
To laugh at happy moments that came our way.
The sky was blue and a gentle breeze
Made a sighing sound through the trees.*

*Its times like this we are in disbelief
That we aren't doubled over in our grief.
It means we've moved forward since then,
And soon we'll be with our little girl again.*

*Dan Gardner
TCF, Nashville, TN*

Love Never Goes Away

“**W**hy does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren’t so crushing?” Sound familiar?

All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous “ouchies” can compare with the hurt we now feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet, most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have. So...we are stuck with this pain, this grief, and what do we do with it? Surely we can’t live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few commonly recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable...some day.

Time...the longest word in our grief. We used to measure time by the steps of our child...the first word, first tooth, first date, first car...now we don’t have that measure anymore. All we have is time, and it only seems to make the hurt worse!

So what do we do? Give ourselves time...to hurt, to grieve, to cry. Time to choke, to scream. Time to be “crazy” and time to remember.

Be nice to yourself! Don’t measure your progress through grief against anyone else’s. Be your own timekeeper.

Don’t push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and then moments...but don’t expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don’t get over grief...it only becomes tolerable and livable.

Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost—try thinking of how much you had. Try letting the good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn’t lose our child...he died. we didn’t lose the love that flowed between us...it still flows, just differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn’t love so very much, it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I’m very, very glad I loved!

Don’t let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of the loving times you shared. Even though death comes, Love Never Goes Away!

Darcie D. Simms
TCF, San Antonio, TX

No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing. At other times it feels like being mildly drunk, or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says. Or perhaps, hard to want to take it in. It is so uninteresting. I dread the moments when the house is empty. If only they would talk to one another and not to me. Do I hope that if feeling disguises itself as though I shall feel less? Aren’t all these notes the senseless writings of a man who won’t accept the fact that there is nothing we can do with suffering except to suffer it? Who still thinks there is some device (if only he could find it) which will make pain not to be pain. It doesn’t really matter whether you grip the arms of the dentist’s chair or let your hands lie in your lap. The drill drills on.

From *A Grief Observed*
By C. S. Lewis

Dads Need Hugs Too

When a child dies, everyone has such compassion for the mother. Months after the death, people still ask how she is doing. There is always a shoulder available for her to lean on to release some of her pain.

Let's not forget the father. The child was a part of him, too. That child was his son, to play ball with, coach in sports, watch sports with, or collect baseball cards. Or she was his daughter, his princess, the most beautiful girl that ever lived. Daddy's perfect angel.

Fathers hurt deeper than mothers sometimes because there is no release for their pain, no one there to listen to them say, "I feel terrible. I miss my child so much." Or "Today reminds me of when" The longer fathers keep silent, the more hurt they have to keep inside, pushing it deeper and deeper to make room for more.

The next time you see a father that has lost a child, don't forget to ask how he is today and give him a hug or just put your hand on his shoulder to let him know you see his pain. Dads need hugs, too.

Kathy Hunsicker
TCF Lehigh Valley, PA

Come, Let Me Take Your Hand

Come, let me take your hand. For where you must walk, I too, have walked. The road that we must walk is not one that we would choose to walk; it is a difficult road, full of many obstacles.

Yes, we are still fathers. We love and remember our sons or daughters who have died. Their death has left us with a hole in our heart, an ache in our stomach, a pain in our chest and eyes that cannot see as they are filled with tears.

We must grieve because we dared to love and it is through grief that we will recover. We may never have the life that we once had, but we can build another life. Our heart will heal, our pain will lessen and we will be able to talk about our son or daughter without the tears. There will come the day when we dare to laugh again.

Paul Kinney
TCF, Louisville, KY

One of the many mixed feelings a father will have on Father's Day will be one of failure—failure as a protector of his child who has died. The roles of protector and father are synonymous. The father's duty is both to love and to protect that child from harm. A man may intellectually know he did his best, but the child, his charge, is still painfully absent on this Father's Day.

Dick Moen
TCF, Indianapolis, IN

The ultimate goal of the grief work is to be able to remember without emotional pain and to be able to reinvest emotional surpluses. While the experience of the grief work is difficult and slow and wearing, it is also enriching and fulfilling. The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss and have found their way out of depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross
From: *Death: The Final Stage of Growth*

A Father on Father's Day

Fatherhood is a wonderful and privileged word. I am a father, a bereaved father, who lost a son. Although it will be eight years in August of this year, I still miss him every day. Maybe I should miss him a little more on Father's Day, because someone, somewhere once decreed that Father's Day be a special day to honor your father. So, according to that mandate one might suppose that I should because I may have subconsciously (or forcibly?) calibrated the threshold of that pain, of that missing, so it is constantly within me every day of the year, but at a lower level than in the beginning, and not as devastating. In life, and with minor fluctuations, it is there. Yes, I wish my son were here on Father's Day, but so do I wish he were here every day.

However, I will celebrate Father's Day this year, because, thank God, I have a remaining son whom I cherish. For you bereaved fathers who have lost your only child, more than one of your children, or all of your children, there are no words that can adequately express my sorrow for the depths of your grief and anguish. There is no way that I can truly feel the pain that you feel, but as someone wisely and compassionately said to me in my despair, "I wish I could take your pain away from you."

Perhaps some of us might agree that Father's Day is a cruel day for bereaved fathers, just as Mother's Day is a cruel day for bereaved mothers. If that be so, I hope we can elicit some sweet memories of our beloved children from kinder days to treasure, to help alleviate the pain, and to enable us to pass the day with some degree of serenity. May I repeat that which was said to me, which was of consolation to me when I desperately needed it: "I WISH I COULD TAKE YOUR PAIN AWAY FROM YOU."

And bereaved fathers, may you find peace, as much as is possible, on Father's Day and on every day of the year. I hope next Father's Day will be better.

Dave Ziv
TCF, Bucks Mont Chapter, Warrington, PA