

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • 615 356-4TCF(4823) or 646-8940•Nashville Web Site: [www.tcfnashville.org](http://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 25<sup>th</sup> 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.*

## March 13 Meeting

John Baker, counselor for the Grief Center at Alive Hospice, will discuss one of the most common emotions accompanying the loss of a child, guilt. Guilt is a widely shared emotion among all bereaved parents regardless of how a child died. We invite you to be a part of this discussion.

### Submissions to the Newsletter: Deadline and Guidelines

We need to receive donations or articles and poems by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to publication. Please include the name of the author, for it cannot be used without giving proper credit.

Due to space limitations and the fact that shorter articles and poems generally make a greater impact on the reader, it is suggested that you keep this in mind when submitting material for the newsletter.

Our membership is made up of people from many different cultures and religious traditions, so we make it a policy not to publish material that is specifically religious in nature. This is not, in any way, an anti-religious stand but simply a matter of respect for and acceptance of each of our parents.

### 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

## There is Love in our Pain, Memories in our Grief, and Hope in our Sharing

Some people come to a meeting soon after the death of their child, while others wait six months to a year before making it to that first meeting. There have been those who have suffered their loss five, ten or fifteen years ago when there was nothing like this available to them, who come now because their family and friends no longer want to talk about it. Much to their surprise, many of these "older" members are helped by the thoughts and insights expressed by the newly bereaved. Compassionate Friends is for anyone who is actively grieving regardless of how long ago the death of the child occurred. It's never too late.

Mary LaTour  
TCF Dallas, TX

## **BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES**

### **Survivors of Suicide**

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings and receiving their helpful newsletter, you may reach Tina Benson at one of the following: Write to SOS, P.O. Box 40752, Nashville, TN 37204; call 615 244-7444; email [nahsoss@webtv.net](mailto:nahsoss@webtv.net); or fax 615 383-9714.

### **Help for Bereaved Children**

The Grief Center at Alive Hospice now provides individual counseling for grieving children and teens, as well as their family members. Also, a periodic children's support group is being offered. For further information, you may call Lauren Thurman, CMSW, Children's Grief Counselor, at 615 963-4829.

### **Alive Hospice Support Group For Bereaved Parents**

Every other Thursday, an ongoing support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at 615 963-4674.

### **Times for TCF Videos on TV Channel 19**

Do you have a question about what you're feeling? This 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**

### **What is the Yellow Slip?**

Please return your yellow renewal slip. After two years on the newsletter mailing list, you may receive a yellow half-sheet asking that your subscription be renewed. This is simply to keep our mailing list and the information in it current. If you do receive the yellow slip but fail to return it, 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. You may request that your name be returned to the active list at any time simply by calling 615 356-4TCF (4823).

### **Change of Address?**

Due to the large number of newsletters we deliver each month, it is essential to keep our database up-to-date. We must rely on you, the recipient, to let us know if you have moved. We ask that you help us by remembering to let us know when you have a change of address so the newsletter will reach you each month. Thank you.

### **The "Children Remembered" Listings**

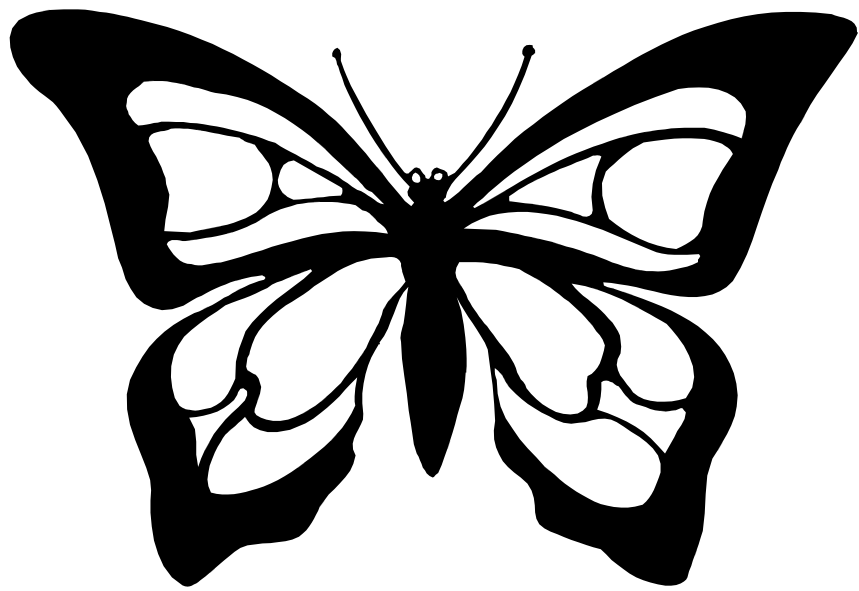
At your first TCF meeting you are asked to sign a registration card that gives us permission to add your child to the "Let Us Remember Them" list on page 3 in the monthly newsletter. If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed, please let us know, printing the 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](mailto:tcf@tcfnashville.org). We'll be glad to include your child's name.

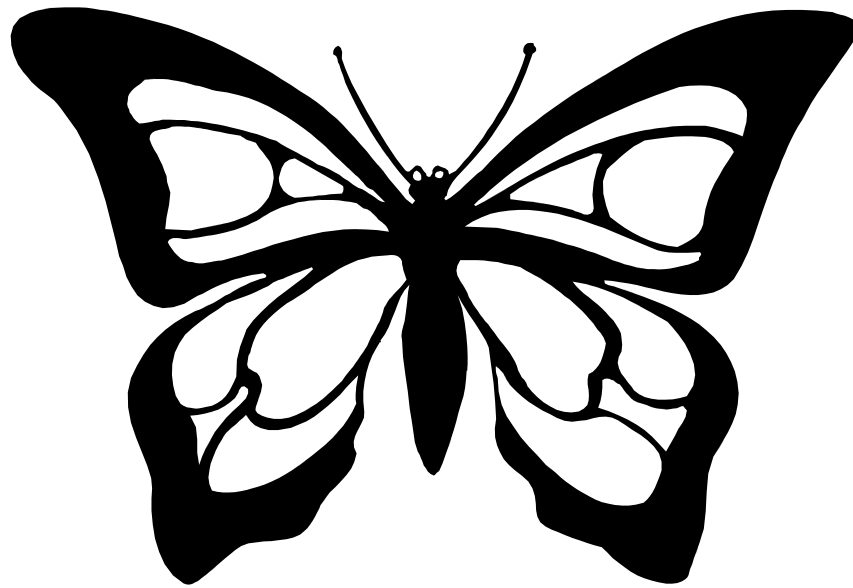
### **TCF Web Site**

Go to the TCF Web site at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) to find a wealth of information about TCF and grief—poetry and articles, chat rooms, grief in the news, other chapter web sites, including Nashville, and numerous other resources. Check it out.

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





## Beyond Surviving

Hundreds of books have been written about loss and grief. Few have addressed the aftermath of suicide for survivors. Here again, there are no answers; only suggestions from those who have lived through and beyond the event. I've compiled their thoughts.

1. Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with "why" it happened until you no longer need to know "why" or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings but all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy – you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will act on those thoughts.
8. Remember to take one moment or one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. Don't panic if emotions return like a tidal wave. You may only be experiencing a remnant of grief; an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and with others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you *what* or *how* to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as The Compassionate Friends or Survivors of Suicide groups. If not, ask a professional to help start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, i.e. headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, etc.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and go beyond just surviving.

Iris Bolton  
TCF, Savannah, GA

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## Any Child's Death Diminishes Me

What difference does it make whether a child is stillborn or dies after some years of life? She spoke of the lack of memories because her child was stillborn.

He commented on the deep pain brought by those very memories which remind one of what is lost!

When it comes to a child's death, does the type of death matter? Is a murder worse than an accident? Suicide worse than chronic illness? Teenage worse than the older adults? Stillborn worse than teenage?

I've tried to be thankful that Jeanie wasn't murdered. That she did not commit suicide. That she and those dear boys did not linger, comatose. Or die from prolonged illness. I could not find thankfulness though I have sought diligently for it within my deepest being!

The death of a child, whatever the age or circumstances, brings its own guilt and anger. Its own despair and questioning. Any child's death diminishes the parents who loved that child. And, for those bereaved parents, that death is surely the worst. Their grief the most severe!

Robert F. Gloor  
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

## *Second Anniversary*

*Yes, I'm an adult over 40  
And Tom, "little brother" was 25  
When he died, returning from his bar exam.*

*So what? Does grief have an "end age?"  
Does someone 40+ not die too losing a  
sweet, small playmate?*

*I see him learning to roller skate  
I'm running beside the bike.  
First game of the Cardinals' season  
And, scared, in the stands,  
A "gorilla" running wild.*

*Sleepy, at a drive-in running around the zoo -  
All that, and as an adult, I knew him too.*

*At graduations,  
Proud in his own pad  
Pouring Spanish champagne*

*Tireless breaking wood feeding a hungry campfire  
Cooking eggs for all sharing dreams.  
This sibling remembers, and grieves.*

*Jeanne Brady  
TCF, Olathe, KS*

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## *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*

*I remember how I used to watch over you,  
Tried to teach you the things you should do.  
I can remember the things I would say  
As I tried to guide you along the way.*

*But since you've gone, and our lives have changed,  
It seems the roles have been rearranged.  
Sometimes it feels like it used to be,  
Only you're the one watching over me.*

*I know in my mind that you're not here;  
Yet there are times when you feel so near.  
I've learned if I let the love flow through,  
I'll get to keep a part of you.*

*For though death comes – the love never goes away.  
You're presence is with me every day.  
For my guardian angel you now will be,  
And you're the some who'll watch over me.*

*Carolyn Bryan  
TCF, Orange Park, FL*

## *For Mimi... and all Beloved Grandmothers*

*Mimi, I knew you well.  
I spent my last second summer  
Trailing behind you,  
Slipping into the soft cocoon of your arms,  
With sweet love eyes.*

*Mimi, you were my best of all friends.  
You had the clearest of smiles for me,  
Your lap was my finest haven,  
You said yes to all of my most mad wonderings.*

*Mimi, I loved you most proudly.  
I gave you the baby-pat of my hand,  
I ran toward your voice,  
I sat with you on the porch swing,  
Swaying with you, a love rhyme.  
I danced in the glow of your delight.*

*Mimi, I remember you well.  
I am the echo of your heart,  
The memory of your future,  
Your forever child.  
Mimi, I love you.*

*Mary Butenas  
TCF Atlanta, GA*

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## *Turning Point*

*Dawn does not so much break as it happens  
Dark slides into light so slowly my eyes  
Adjust without thought, as faint pink ribbons  
Turn to streamers of orange in eastern skies.  
So goes my grief with no strident fanfare.  
Sadness and grieving have been all I know.  
Then, for a brief moment, it is not there.  
Imperceptibly then the moments grow,  
Until I laugh without guilt. Life's more worthwhile,  
I don't feel as compelled to visit the grave.  
I can remember some good times and I smile.  
There was nothing dramatic and I have  
Had no revelation, no special thing.  
I just felt a bit better sometime last spring.*

*– Richard A. Dew  
Rachel's Cry*

## 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

## *Adjustments*

Went to the field with a heart heavy as stone,  
I have lost my riding partner so I just rode all alone.

But watched the group she rode with, they had fun,  
It reminded me of the past and her place in the sun.

Tried to draw picture of children as I have for years,  
But have lost my oldest subject to sadness and tears.

We have removed things that cause pain and grief,  
And we don't go out in public, to parties for relief.

Vacations are a safe place and the same safe place,  
Old friends have not been replaced with a new face.

We only have our family as our friends these days,  
Death has caused lives to change in untested ways.

The future I am told will not be so dark and black,  
But things are altered forever, we can never go back.

Jere Williamson  
TCF Nashville, TN

# *The Compassionate Friends*

**P.O. Box 50833  
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