

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.

March 11 Meeting Askit Basket

Bereaved parents are often plagued with questions regarding their grief. This meeting will provide an especially good opportunity for those of us who are farther along in our grief to give the benefit of our experience to those who are just beginning their sad journey. If there is something bothering you, bring your questions for the basket. We invite our old-timers to come and lend a hand.

Ah, this beautiful world! Indeed, I know not what to think of it. Sometimes it is all gladness and sunshine and heaven itself lies not far off; and then it suddenly changes and is dark and sorrowful and the clouds shut out the day.

In the lives of the saddest of us there are bright days when we feel as if we could take the great world in our arms. Then come the gloomy hours, when all without or within is dismal, cold and dark. Believe me, every heart has its secret sorrows, which the world knows not; and oftentimes we call a man cold when he is only sad.

~Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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

We must learn to let go as easily as we grasp
or we will find our hands full and our minds
empty.

~Leo Buscaglia

I find that it is not the circumstances in which
we are placed, but the spirit in which we meet
them that constitutes our comfort.

~Elizabeth King

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.

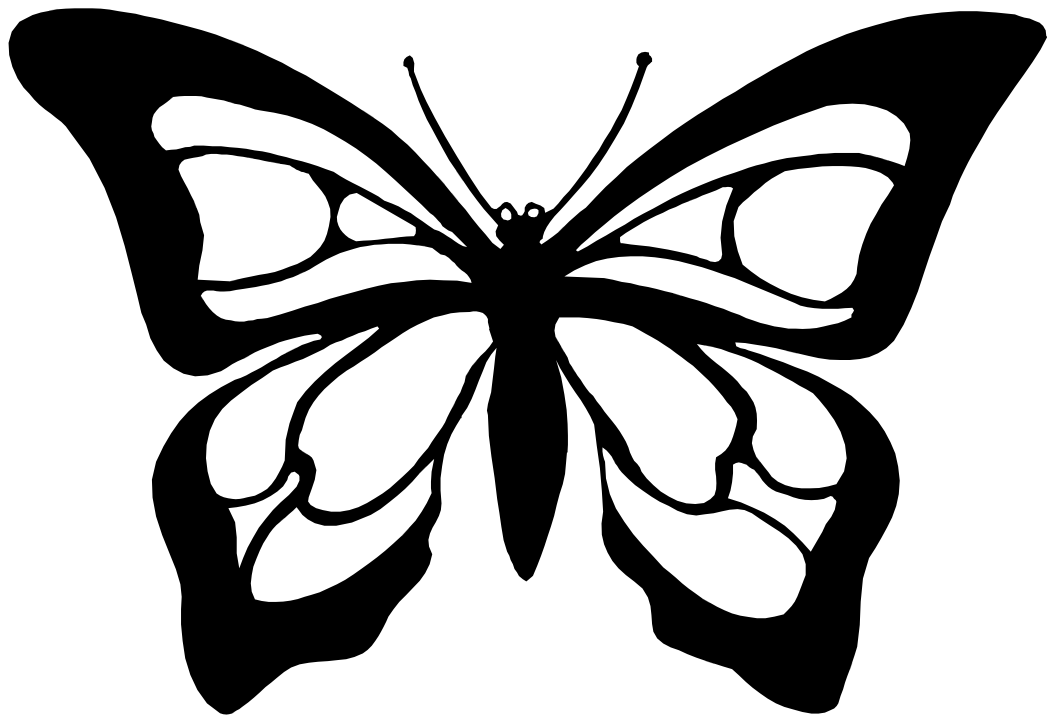
The “Let Us Remember Them” Listings

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.

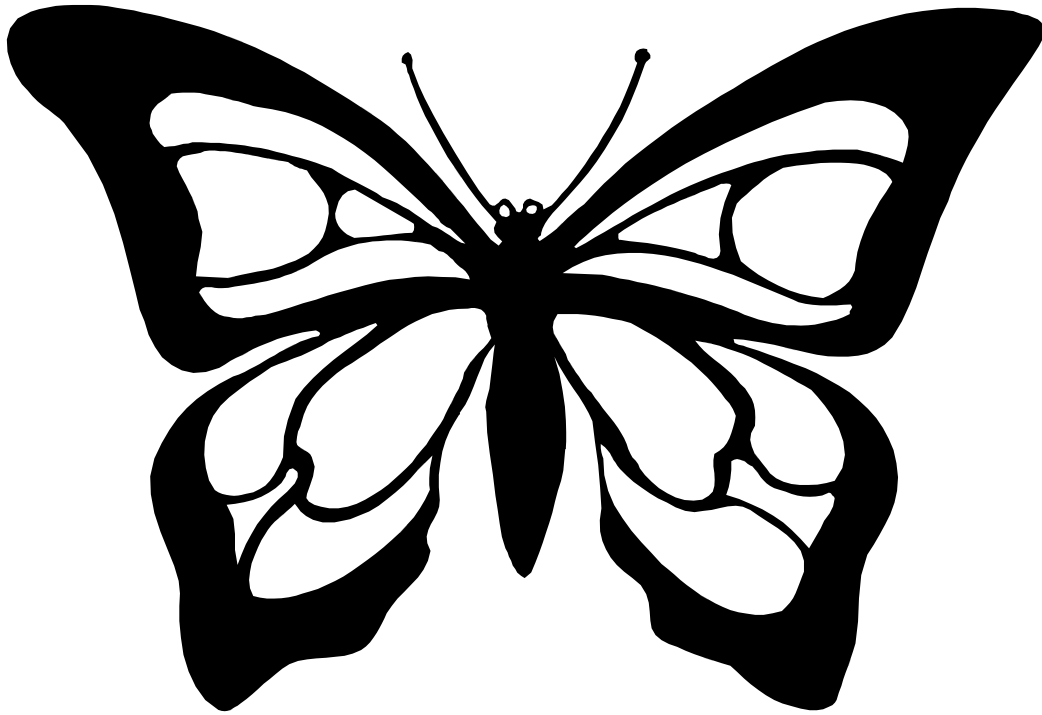
TCF Website

Go to the TCF Website at 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.

Let Us Remember Them



Gifts of Love and Remembrance



A Daughter is a Loving Gift

*A daughter is the sweetest gift a lifetime can provide,
A blessing and a constant source of happiness and pride.
A daughter means such precious thoughts, so many come to mind.
Like the magic that she adds to life that cannot be defined.*

*A daughter means fond memories of a little girl at play,
And all the carefree joy she brought to every passing day...
A daughter means dreams fulfilled and everything that's dear,
A treasure to warmly cherish a comfort through each year...*

*A daughter is always thought about and so often spoke of,
For she is very close in heart because a daughter means...love.*

~ In memory of Brooke Ann Capogreca

As we grieve the loss of our children and one another's, we begin to find a different kind of love than we expected to experience.

Rosalie Baker
TCF, Rochester, NY

The Butterfly, My Son

*Every time I see a butterfly,
I think of you, my son.
Colors so bright and yet subdued,
I think of you, my son.*

*From small to the largest Monarch,
I think of you, my son.
Flight so irregular, yet so purposeful,
I think of you, my son.*

*So quiet and majestic,
I think of you, my son.
And then you take flight and are gone,
I think of you, my son.*

*From cocoon to the end, God has purpose,
I think of you, my son.
Every time I see a butterfly,
I think of you, my son.*

C. Gordon Jones
TCF, Knoxville, TN

Don't Look For Me Among the Tombs

*Don't look for me among the tombs,
My life has just begun.
But raise your eyes to the endless skies,
You'll see me in the sun.*

*Hear me in every robin's song,
The rustle of the leaves.
My smile will be in every rose,
My song the summer breeze.*

*I'll be the nodding daffodil
That ushers in the spring.
I'll kiss the earth in summer
With every gentle rain.*

*In every sparkling dewdrop,
In every grain of sand,
Every velvet snowflake,
In every mother's hand.*

*For I am LIFE and LOVE unchained
Where God and I are one.
Don't look for me among the tombs,
My life has just begun.*

*In memory of Mike Floyd
by Susan Vaughn
Aunt of Angel Floyd
TCF, Nashville, TN*

Some Day

*Pain like this, I never knew existed
until one fateful day,
Life so cruelly and unfairly insisted
without giving me any say.*

*Derek, Cody, and Taylor, you were the loves of my life.
You gave me such joy and laughter.
My heart is broken, cut by the sharpest knife.
I no longer have my babies to look after.*

*They say time heals so I'm trying to go on,
with your memories etched in my heart.
Your pictures I so longingly look upon,
to sustain me while we're apart.*

*I hope to see you again some day,
I have to believe it's true.
That day, when upon you, my eyes lay,
this pain I endure will finally be through.*

I love you my angels.

Always and forever your mommy

*Teresa Delgado
TCF, Nashville, TN*

It's the Music That Bonds the Soul

*The room you once lived in
Doesn't look the same.
The people who used to call you
Never mention your name*

*The car you used to drive
They may not make anymore;
And all the things you treasured
Are boxed behind closed doors.*

*The clothes you set the trends by
Are surely out of date.
The people you owed money to
Have wiped away the slate.*

*Things have changed and changed
Since you went away.
But some things remain the same
Each and every day.*

*Like the aching in my heart—
A scar that just won't heal.
Or the way a special song
Can change the way I feel.*

*Brother, you must know that the music
Bonds us and will keep us close;
Because secretly I know in my heart
It's the music you miss the most.*

*So let the world keep turning,
Time can take its toll.
As long as the music is playing
You'll be dancing in my soul.*

*Stacey Gilliam
TCF, N. Oklahoma City, OK*

Amnesia, or Whatever Happened to 1986?

I can recall in near-perfect detail that day in February 1986 when Nicholas died. It's as though I have a videotape in my head that I can rerun at will, seeing and hearing everything that happened. I can tell you each person I talked to at the funeral and where we were standing when we spoke. It's almost eerie, because apart from events that related specifically to Nicholas and my grief work—holidays, special days and TCF meetings—1986 does not exist in my memory.

My husband, John, and I had a running argument for a while about which year we put the new roof on the house. He said '86; I said '87. He kept trying to trigger my memory. "Don't you remember...?" I didn't.

Life evidently went on in our house during the year and the next. My other children grew taller and their lists of accomplishments grew longer. One daughter graduated from high school and the other graduated from diapers. I know these things happened and that I participated in them. I just don't remember them. The lights were on, but apparently no one was home.

Yes, I do make jokes about my "amnesia," but mostly it leaves me with a deep sense of regret. Just as I am coming to terms with the loss of Nicholas, I find that I've lost a big chunk out of my life. The older kids are on their own now, and the little ones are six and nine. My mind doesn't remember a three year old girl and a six year old boy. I have a vision of Scott coming to me and saying, "Mom, do you remember when my first tooth fell out?" and I'll have to say, "I'm sorry son, it must have been the year Nicholas died—I don't remember you that year."

The next year was even worse, memory-wise. Having passed all the important "firsts" in my grief, 1987 is a total blur. These years are lost to me, and I can't get them back. Sadly, this is not an uncommon loss for the bereaved parent. Time doesn't stand still.

I'm told that I did function reasonably well during that time as a mother-wife-daughter-sister-friend. But when a child dies, our day-to-day routines and relationships go on automatic pilot while every corner of our being is filled up with grief.

I am able to treasure the memory of my son's first day of kindergarten only because I took lots of pictures that day. During those first two years especially, it was difficult for me to take pictures because it was so painful to see my family moving ahead without Nicholas. But the point is, it *did* move ahead, and now I want that time back.

There isn't much you can do about grief amnesia, but you can lessen its long-term effects. If I could relive 1986 and 1987, I'd buy a notebook and label it "Amnesia Diary." I'd put it out so that I and my family could record anything I'd like to remember. And I'd take lots more pictures, even if I didn't develop the film right away.

Preserve your memories and avoid (as much as possible) another tragic loss. As desolate as you may feel right now, you will want your life back some day—ALL of it.

Linda Moffatt
TCF, St. Louis, MO

Beautiful People Don't Just Happen

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 grief work is difficult and slow, it is also enriching and fulfilling. The most beautiful people we know are those who have known defeat, suffering, struggle and loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, sensitivity and understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Reflections on TCF

While at a gathering of long-time friends I was asked about my work with Compassionate Friends and if, after all these years, I still needed the group. I responded that I really didn't need to go anymore since it had been over 13 years since Tracy died, but I really felt I wanted to pay back and help those that follow as others had helped us. One friend said, "Does it really ever go away?", to which I confirmed that it does not.

I was actually taking the easy way out of the conversation, which we often do. The room was crowded and noisy and I didn't feel going into great detail due to the surroundings and also because of the person who asked. On the way home, thinking about this, I became upset with myself and also with my friend for her remarks since this had happened before. She had compared my loss of Tracy to how she felt when her son had polio when young; however, he made a complete recovery. I should have seized the opportunity and answered more thoroughly—really telling in more detail how life is after the death of one's child.

Telling that it still hurts, a hurt that will always be in my heart. Telling of the many reminders that pop up from everywhere verifying that our children have died. Telling that we can only imagine how big they would be now and what they would be doing with their lives, who would they marry, and how many grandchildren would they give us. Telling how just reading the local paper and seeing their friends graduating, being married, or having a baby makes us realize what we have missed. Telling even though I don't want to, I envy those who have all their children living with them and how hard it is to listen when they brag about the family get-togethers and celebrations, especially in their Christmas letters. The list could go on and on with hows, whos and whats, for there are so many more.

Yes, I still need you, my Compassionate Friends. You are as much a part of me as my immediate family and you ARE family. I need to know you are there to support me when I slip back in my grief, just as I will always be there to support you in your need. Life is good again and we want it to be. I can never return to others all the love and help received from Compassionate Friends, but I try.

Jo Saulisberry
TCF, North Nevada Chapter, Carson City, NV

Sharing

Everybody has SOMETHING.

Some call it faith.

Some refer to fate, destiny...religion...God...a belief.

It does not matter what you call it; but in your moments of deepest sorrow, KNOW that it is there. Don't be afraid to question it. Doubt it. Hate it. Curse it. Hide it. Scream at it. Test it. But KEEP it.

One day your grief will be resolved.

Then you will be able to acknowledge it, accept it, be grateful for it, understand it, SHARE it.

Only then can you LIVE it. I call mine FAITH: what do you call YOURS?

Shirley A. Melin
TCF, Fox Valley Chapter, Aurora, IL

Friends are angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly.

~Anonymous

What a Friend Leaves Behind

*At first it seemed to make no sense,
To experience something so immense.
Seeing our daughter, Pride, depart this life.
Now its just us, me and my beautiful wife.*

*Then it happens almost without thinking,
Into the pit of despair we find ourselves sinking.
To be hauled out time and again,
By those who care and love us, our friends.*

*The time goes by and we grow in strength,
And the healing happens at some great length.
The occasional moments of happiness that feel good,
With them we share as only good friends could.*

*They ask how we are doing quite often,
In nervous attempts, our hurt, to soften.
It makes the telling of our loss easier with time,
And they have learned, asking is not a crime.*

*The compassion for us they often display,
Will be remembered till our dying day.
We live our lives slowly toward the end,
Days made easier by each of those we call friend.*

*When they're not near us so we can touch,
We love them and miss them so very much.
What they leave behind when they go away,
We can't fathom how to repay.*

*So we thank them as often as we dare,
And hope they understand how much we care.
The hope they give us never ends,
These wonderful people, our dear friends.*

*Dan Gardner
TCF, Nashville, TN*