

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.

Meaningful Music – March 14 Program

Our March program will explore music in several forms and its powerful capacity to comfort and help with healing after the death of a child. A variety of musical selections will be played (in part) and discussed briefly, after which others will be asked to share what role music has played in their own grief journey. Our own Nashville members and former chapter leaders, Mike and Paula Childers developed this program for the 2008 National TCF Conference and are gracious to share it with us. Be sure to attend.

The Gift

*What can you do for me, you say.
You can bring me a gift, a gift today.
Say my son's name, say it loud and clear,
Help others to remember that he once was here.
Speak of his antics, his joys, his pains,
Talk as if he were here again.*

*Remind me of the laughter he brought to you,
Sit down and tell me a story or two.
I'll let you do the talking 'cause it's ever so rare
That you would even bring him up; why, some won't even dare.*

*What gift could you give me, what words can you say
That would make my heart lighter as I face the day?
The song of his words, the music of his name,
How wonderful it would be just to hear it again.*

Rose Thompson
*Trophies and Treasures
Living with Grief*



*Hope is a tender song
distant or near.
Music that waits for you;
Patiently waits
till you find it and hear.*

Sascha

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

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 to Lamar for unselfishly giving his time and talent.

We Need Your Help

If you know a family outside the immediate Nashville area who has experienced the death of a child, regardless of age or cause of death, and you have access to the address (and phone number) of the parents, it would be most helpful if you would call us with that information. Our mission is to reach every bereaved family in Middle Tennessee, but we have to know about them in order to give them the support we ourselves have received. If you know the child's name, birth date, date of death and cause of death, so much the better. David Gibson, our outreach chairperson, will send a warm letter of sympathy and information about TCF along with appropriate brochures and articles. There will be no harassment, no phone calls, and no demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly confidential.

PLEASE NOTE: Children at TCF Meetings

It is always painful for newly bereaved parents to be with babies and small children, but it is even more difficult to see them at a TCF meeting where grief is heightened. The presence of a baby can be very disturbing and distracting to others, especially to those who have themselves lost one, and a TCF meeting is not an appropriate place for youngsters where they see visible pain in their parents and other members. We want you to be with us, but since we promise each parent who has lost a child a safe place at our meetings, we urge you to make other arrangements for your little ones.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents

A support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at 963-4674.

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).

Survivors of Suicide

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

Other TCF Chapters

There are several other chapters of The Compassionate Friends you might want to know about. Anytime you are in their vicinity or feel the need to talk with other bereaved parents, feel free to attend their meetings. Also, when you personally know a newly bereaved family in one of these towns, please call the chapter number and give them the information so they can make contact with the family. To locate a chapter, you may call the TCF National Office at 1-877 969-0010, or go to www.compassionatefriends.org and click on chapter locator.

Grieving in Pairs

How many times have people said, “Well, thank god you have each other.” How many times have you felt “each other” to be entirely inadequate at meeting your need?

We hear of the rocky road parents may encounter in their marriage after the death of a child. We sometimes see in ourselves a touchiness or quickness to become irritated that wasn’t there before. It always seems that my “bad” day is my wife’s “good” day, or the day she wakes up crying was the day I had planned on playing tennis.

Or sometimes, even more difficult, we both have a bad day and find no help from the other in pulling things back together. How can one person hold up another when he is himself face down in the mud.

Every person grieves differently. This is a rule that even applies within a family. And the needs of every individual are different. While you may need to talk and talk and talk, your spouse may need some time alone to reflect inwardly.

You have both been through the worst experience of your life. And, while at times you can face “recovery” as a team, sometimes you must develop the patience to be able to wait out certain needs—alone or with someone else. Realize that no matter how it shows, your partner hurts too.

Gerry Hunt
TCF, River Junction, VT

Journey

*I lived awhile like one who dwells
Always in that dark world apart
Where loneliness and pain rule all
And memories can pierce the heart.*

*It is an awesome place, and vast:
Anger and guilt are mountains there
I've climbed, and struggled on through seas
Of tears, regrets, loss and despair.*

*Although I thought I came alone,
Love followed even there, I learned...
Time, too, became my friend until
Hope, faith, and at last – joy returned.*

*The world of grief had much to teach
In recompense for what I lost
I value all those lessons, but
You must not ask how high their cost.*

Mary W. Helms
TCF, Morris, NJ

The Magic of You

What can I do to get better? This is the question most often asked by newly bereaved parents, as if the right actions could work a miracle. They are seeking easy rules, methods or steps of healing.

But there are none. There are no special words, no miraculous system, no magic wand to take the pain away. There is only time, hard work, and compassionate support. Grief is a process which must be allowed to function thoroughly in order for healing to take place. There are no short cuts. Attempts to ease the process such as through alcohol or drugs often end either in disaster or in complicating the grief process.

There is no magic. There is only you, the bereaved person, who must decide yourself to work within the process to resolve your grief.

No one else can do it for you, but others can help by supporting your grief rather than searching for magic words to wish it away. Others can help within The Compassionate Friends by providing models of healed parents who are willing to listen and share.

You can help yourself by being patient with grief instead of searching for easy methods. You can help yourself by learning about the grief process.

You can help yourself by sharing your story with others and listening to their stories. You can help yourself by reaching out to others, for helping others is the source of your own healing.

Magic pills, or incantations? There are none. Look to yourself. The Compassionate Friends can help, but you alone determine the progress of your grief. The magic of healing is within yourself.

Marcia Alig
TCF, Mercer Area, NJ

Life's Bargain

Life made us a bargain when we first came into this world: That as surely as we live, someday we will die; as surely as we laugh, someday we will cry. All of the assets that life and health and joy bring are balanced on earth by hate, disease, and sorrow. Our sorrow is the price we pay for all the love and joy we took so freely. We wouldn't weep such bitter tears if our laughter had not been so sweet for years. If the price I pay for loving David is the pain and sorrow I now have, I still think I got a bargain to have had him for thirteen years. If the only way to avoid the pain is to also avoid the pleasure of loving someone, then love with all your heart and soul, and mourn their loss the same, and count your life a bargain for having loved.

Dale Trevathan
TCF, Tulsa OK

But in time I did smile. I did laugh. It must be the subconscious guilt within ourselves that denies us the right to smile or laugh. It happened—I don't remember how long it was—at least several months after Ken's death, I think. I have seen parents at a TCF meeting, whose loss is recent, with a tear-stained face, smile when someone at the meeting says something that tickles the funny bone. How many of us have heard our non-bereaved friends say to us, "How can you go to that support group? It's all doom and gloom!" How wrong they are! Of course we cry at TCF, but there are moments of laughter, too. Crying and laughter, after all, are often interchangeable, such as crying at weddings, at graduations, and giggling inappropriately at the sight of someone taking an unceremonious pratfall on a slippery sidewalk.

Perhaps laughter is also the beginning of nature's way of mending, of healing us.

Dave Ziv
TCF, Southampton

Counting

*Time to count the crocus on the lawn
(seven white, four yellow, thirteen blue).*

*Windy sunshine breathing ice away
And the trees are trying to be new.*

You're not ready for spring, you say?

But spring is ready for you!

Sascha



Getting Better

*My tears feel warm on my cheeks now
...not burning hot
Is this a sign I'm 'Getting Better'?*

*When I cry now I am most often alone
...in the car, or the shower
Or, sometimes taking a walk.
I do not cry in public or feel as much panic...
Is this a sign I'm 'Getting Better'?*

*I sleep the night thru sometimes...
And awaken without tears...for a while...
They come now while I'm brushing my teeth...
Or making coffee...
And always gone before I say "Good Morning."
Is this a sign I'm 'Getting Better'?*

*I am able to hug again...
And laugh and read and eat...
Is this a sign I'm 'Getting Better'?
Yes, I think so...but when does the pain end?*

*Perhaps when I no longer ask,
"Is this a sign I'm 'Getting Better'?"*

Shirley Blakely Curle
TCF, Little Rock, AR

How Can I Smile Again?

After the death of a child, how many of us, as bereaved parents, might say to ourselves, "How can I ever smile again? How will I ever be able to laugh again?" I know I felt that way after the death of my son. I have heard bereaved parents, especially during the early days after the loss, say, "I suddenly found myself laughing at work—how could I have done that?"

After my son died, I went back to work one week after the funeral, and one of the first things I had to do was attend a department meeting. At one point someone made a humorous remark. Everyone laughed except me. One of my coworkers, seeing my poker face, called across the table, "Come on, don't look so sad." There were other times, too, when people thought I should not be so glum, that I should be smiling or laughing. Once, while riding in my car pool, the driver turned around to me after observing my mask-like expression in the rearview mirror and exclaimed, "Smile!" I remember retorting with some acerbity, "You smile."

TCF National Conferences: Find Friendship, Understanding, and Hope!



"Reflections of Love, Visions of Hope" is the theme of The Compassionate Friends 33rd National Conference which will be held in Arlington Virginia July 2-4, 2010. The event will be held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City promising a beautiful venue for the 33rd TCF National Conference. Independence Day will not only feature our Walk to Remember, but will include a world-class display of fireworks over the National Mall, visible from Arlington.

A national conference of The Compassionate Friends is unlike any other conference you may ever attend. It is a place where you can go and know that you truly are not alone as you travel your grief journey. Every person comes for the same reason—a child has died. It is a place where “friendship, understanding, and hope” are more than just words.

For over three decades The Compassionate Friends has held national conferences in different locations, from the east coast to the west coast, from north to south. Today it's normal to have 1100-1400 bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents attend. Of that number, it usually is the first TCF National Conference for nearly 40 percent of the attendees. Those new to TCF conferences are given a special butterfly sticker to wear so that others may notice and give them special hugs. Everyone feels they are in a place where they belong. We often say that those at the conference are friends you simply have not yet met.

At each conference, there are many activities, but you decide what is right for you. There are more than 100 workshops (but don't think these are work—they're really a time for learning and sharing). Many areas of grief are covered by the workshops. There are workshops for bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. And there will be many workshops for those who have no surviving children. You'll find a hospitality room, a reflection room, the Butterfly Boutique, and a complete and stocked bookstore. There are very interesting and well-known speakers who address the Opening Session, the Friday afternoon banquet, the Saturday evening banquet, and the Sunday closing. You'll marvel at the quality of entertainment geared for those attending. There's also a special candle lighting ceremony to conclude the Saturday evening banquet. If you like a more intimate time with others, join in the evening sharing sessions of your choice.

But don't miss the Walk to Remember Sunday at 8 a.m. prior to the closing. As many as 1300-1400 carry the names of more than 10,000 children from across the country who will always be remembered. Some fly in from across the country just to participate in the Walk!

Several TCF Nashville members will be attending this year. How about you? Go to The Compassionate Friends national website, www.compassionatefriends.org, the national e-newsletter, our Facebook Page, or *We Need Not Walk Alone* for updated information on this year's TCF National Conference. The conference registration rate will be only \$85 for adults and \$35 for siblings under 18 until late registration, which will begin June 1. See photos of the 2009 Conference on the Facebook Page. You might see someone you know from the Nashville chapter!

Find out for yourself why notes like this are received after our conferences:

"I always feel like I'm wrapped in a cocoon of compassionate love when I'm at a TCF National Conference. This is one of the greatest healing tools available to a bereaved family."

Tissues, Tears, and Treasures

A circle of chairs and boxes of tissues,
A roomful of tears and emotional issues.
Frightening at first, I did not want to enter
Into this strange group, and be in the center.

What I soon learned, as we sat side by side,
We were bound by the love of our children who
died.
Each shattered heart,
Desperately seeking a moment of peace,
From the pain and weeping.

So many things different and yet all the same,
Hearts lost in a fog of loss and pain.
Those who have journeyed, much further than me,
Reached out in comfort, listened quietly.

Each shattered heart spoke, and the tissues were
passed,
We never avoid speaking of the past.

This circle of friends, have found a bond.
And here I'm still known as "Tony's Mom."
Slowly, I've found
I can reach out to others
Who are newly bereaved, fathers and mothers.
Strength I have found in this
Circle of chairs,
To grieve and to heal
And to show that we care.

*Diane Barta
TCF Portland, OR*

