

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 older teenagers and adult siblings are welcome to attend.

How Men and Women Grieve Differently

November 8 Meeting

Grief is handled differently by each one of us and it is very hard work. Many bereaved parents have found that our grief differs greatly from the same process in our spouse or significant other. It is a fact that men and women grieve differently. At our November meeting, we will address this important issue in the form of a unique panel. Please join us as we learn from each other. You might just be enlightened as to “why they do that,” or “why don’t they do this.”



Candlelight Memorial Scheduled for December 13
HCA Auditorium – See Details on Page 2 and 7

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
- Drug/Alcohol Overdose**.....Ed Pyle
712-3245
- 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

Trust yourself!

*You will recover
your courage*

*in your own time,
at your own pace.*

Trust yourself!

Sascha

CHAPTER INFORMATION

December Candlelight Memorial – An event that you don't want to miss !!

For December's monthly meeting, we invite you to send a photo of your child to be digitally displayed on the big screen in the auditorium of our usual meeting place. This year it will be Sunday, December 13. **See page 7 for important deadline information. PLEASE NOTE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS FIRM DEADLINE.** Much work goes into the power point presentation, so late entries cannot be accepted. Please submit your photos now!

Newsletter Deadlines

In order for donations, articles, poems and other material to be included in the newsletter, we must receive them by the 15th of the month prior to publication. We welcome original material as well as copyrighted pieces; however, no material may be used without giving complete credit to the author. Please keep in mind the fact that space is limited. Also, since TCF espouses no specific religious or philosophical ideology, we ask that in your writing, you show respect for others whose beliefs might be different from your own.

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.**

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. 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.

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.

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.

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 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).

Bryan Houstrup and Joe Philpott at Allegra Print & Imaging, 601 Grassmere Park, donate the printing, collating and stapling of this newsletter each month as a gift to the families of TCF. Deanna Brown and her family label, sort and mail the newsletter in loving memory of their son, Marcus Dean Brown. We are very grateful for these people and their generosity to all of us.

A very difficult area of functioning is coming to grips with the knowledge that there is absolutely no way of getting around holidays, despite your best effort to avoid them. And they are horrendous times for many years. Their pain cannot be minimized. But they still must be faced.

One family trying to avoid Thanksgiving—which was the dead child’s birthday as well—decided that family gatherings were no longer for them. They would travel or simply ignore the festivities. One day the mother came upon her ten-year-old daughter crying and asked what was wrong. “She was sobbing,” reported the mother. “All the children in school had told of their plans and made table decorations for the holiday, and Lynn felt completely removed from her classmates. She cried that she was not only deprived of her brother who was dead, but she couldn’t even have Thanksgiving dinner and a turkey! I listened and held her in my arms and cried. What she was saying made sense. After all, we still had three living children. They also mattered. That night I talked to my husband and we decided that, no matter how bleak and empty it would be we would have a traditional Thanksgiving.”

The family sat around the table, very quietly at first. The father said grace and thanked the Lord for a bountiful meal. When he was through, their ten-year-old said she had something to add. “I want to thank Mommy and Daddy for making this very special dinner for our family. And most of all, I want to thank you, God for having let us have my brother Eric for six years.”

The mother, who will never forget what her daughter said, told me there was not a dry eye at the table for a few minutes. But gradually, as the meal progressed, they made an effort to discuss why the holiday was celebrated. From there, the parents told of amusing experiences at Thanksgiving dinners in their younger years. The mother said she planned to tell the stories to lighten the atmosphere just as carefully as she had planned the menu. By the time the meal was over, the parents discovered what had been built up in their minds as unsurvivable had become just another turning point.

There will be many such turning points as you work your way forward. You have already survived what you were certain you could not live through—the death of your child. Turning points, plateaus, are merely steps in coping and nothing more. As you go through each holiday, each season, each happy/sad occasion, you will gain strength from having passed beyond yet another painful event.

From The Bereaved Parent

By Harriet Schiff

Take Time to Grieve

If your child’s birthday or death date is approaching, TAKE TIME TO GRIEVE. The restlessness, the endless searching, the lack of concentration, the persistent gnawing pain deep in your gut; the arms that ache in agony to hold a child—or hug him just once more; the unswallowable lump—like a silent scream, stuck in your throat—this is all a part of your grief.

You cannot run away, for it goes with you. You cannot go around it, or under it, or over it. You must go through it. TAKE TIME TO GRIEVE, to feel the pain, to relive the most important experience of your life—your child’s life.

Attend to your “unfinished business.” If you are “stuck,” find out how to get beyond it. Do you need to go back to the hospital? The doctor? The autopsy report? Do you need to pour your feelings out on paper? Or write your final goodbye in a letter? Or tell that child all the things you never had the chance to say?

Remember, grief cannot be hurried, but it can be delayed. Time alone does not heal—it is what we do with that time! TAKE TIME TO GRIEVE. We do not measure our grief in months or years. We measure it in small steps of positive resolution!

Shirley Melin
TCF, Aurora, IL

Why?

When my sister died, I asked what every surviving sibling most likely asks himself: Why? For quite awhile this question gave me something to strive for, a purpose to fight for. But what I soon realized was that there was no use in asking. That question is irrelevant; the point is moot. It no longer matters why she died. The fact remains that she died, and there is nothing I can do to change that, including finding the answer to “why?” There is no such answer.

If perchance God would speak to me, would that change anything? If he would say, “Trey, I took your sister because I want her up here in Heaven,” what would that mean to me? I still lost her. I would still question God’s decision. What it comes down to, however, and although it is hard, we who have lost a sibling must accept the fact that they are now gone. Put aside the fact of why or how they died, and remember that they once lived and they will always be alive in your memory and heart. Bypass the question of why they died, and instead concentrate on how we should now live. Remember, they would have wanted it that way.

Trey Martin
TCF, Hardin County, OH
From This Healing Journey—An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings

Holiday Gifts For Children Needed

Each year, our chapter donates holiday gifts to children at a worthy establishment that works with children who are not living at home and are under care for the holidays. Since things went so well with Youth Villages in years past, it has been decided to provide gifts to them again this year. The children range in age from 6 to 18. For many of these children, these will be the only gifts they receive this holiday season. If you would like to donate this year, you may participate by bringing UNWRAPPED gifts to the TCF December 13 Memorial Service. Below is a list of the most requested items.

Gifts:

CD Players
 MP3 Players
 Gameboy games (teen rated)
 Playstation games (teen rated)
 Costume Jewelry (like that found in the malls at Claire's)
 Remote control cars and planes
 Girly things like journals, gel pens and scrapbooking items
 Model cars
 Gift cards for the malls
 Board Games
 Baby and Barbie dolls and accessories
 Lego sets
 Trucks
 Disney movies (DVD and VHS)
 Watches (boys and girls)
 Gift cards for Best Buy and Circuit City

Stocking Stuffers:

Matchbox cars
 Small notepads
 Pens and pencils
 Candy
 Jewelry
 Hygiene products
 Billfolds and wallets
 Cute little change purses for girls
 Makeup items
 Socks
 Gift cards to places like McDonald's or Burger King



Once again, remember, these items may be brought in gift bags with tissue paper, but DO NOT WRAP the gifts. Youth Villages staff does the wrapping as it helps them to more evenly distribute the donated items.

Laughter is not a sign of "less" grief. Laughter is not a sign of "less" love. It is a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It is a sign we know our dear one would have us laugh. It's okay to laugh.

Tread Gently

*Tread gently near
The tender souls
Who've lost a child,
Whose hearts are
Bruised and bleeding
For healing comes slowly,
With pain in every
Forward step
Tears in every
Backward look,
So much love still flows
For that special one—*

*Arms reach out to hold
And back to cling,
But reach forward
Only numbly,
Fearful of forgetting
Or being disloyal
By going on.
There is guilt
In laughing,
Feeling pleasure,
Even being alive.
There are questions,
Longings, heartaches.*

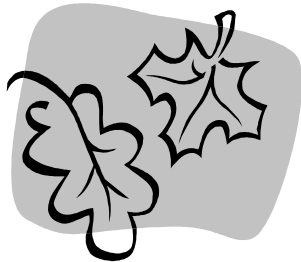
*But slowly, surely,
Strength and healing come
In God's own time—
Not as an answer,
Not as forgetting,
But as acceptance
That this pain, this loss,
Is ours to live with
And somehow,
By God's grace,
To use to bless.*

*Joan Splettstoesser
TCF, Monte Vista, CO*

Autumn In Grief's Garden

*There is an underlying
sadness to autumn.
It is the beginning of the end of things –
and fueling the flames,
its exquisite beauty
burns open our hearts,
and for those
brimming with grief,
or remembering gladness,
tears overflow
from deep within the wells of sorrow.*

From *Catching the Light: Coming Back
to Life after the Death of a Child*
Genesse Bourdeau Gentry



How Will It Be?

*Three years of holidays have gone,
How will this one be?
It's now mid-November,
blue sky, gold, russet leaves.*

*The second year almost as hard
as the first, in memory,
and last year with its dark descent,
brought me poetry.*

*What will year's end bring this time?
Just celebrations' mire?
Or will the love surrounding strong
bring peace to damp the fire?*

From *Stars in the Deepest Night:
After the Death of a Child*
Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

On the Death of a Child

When a child dies, a light goes out in the world, never to be replaced. We are overcome by pain and heartbreak which is beyond measurement, and completely unable to comprehend any meaning behind such a tragedy. The loss of such a young life, the finality of it, can hardly be fathomed. We search in vain for an answer to why a life so full of promise and unfulfilled potential has been torn away so prematurely.

Our grief and anguish is unrelenting and unyielding in its intensity. Although we know that death can come quickly, with no warning to any living creature, never in our wildest dreams did any of us imagine that one of our children should be taken—a reversal of the natural order.

At first it seems as if our lives, our souls, the very innermost substance of our being have been shattered, never to be resurrected again. Our tears, our anguish, conceal any legacy that remains of the child's existence. It is as if we are enveloped in a cloud of darkness and deep despair. The reality of the death is as unforgiving as the sky, the sea, the earth and all eternity.

The inevitability of birth, life and death blankets us with a feeling of futility about the uselessness of it all. It is hard to

remember that during the child's short and transitory time on earth, he or she contributed a unique essence of life, imprinting an image on all those who were touched. Therein lies the child's legacy—the only bridge connecting the chasm between the living and the dead. For each of us the legacies left by our children differ in detail, yet at the same time are similar with respect to the precious memories, which are all that remain to provide comfort.

At first we are inconsolable, but gradually the reaching out of heart and hand by those who understand and can respond to such a loss touches the soul, helps soothe the unbearable pain and intense suffering. Only a parent who has lost a child can give such a gift to another bereaved parent.

As in any event, there is a lesson to be learned. An opportunity emerges from the sorrow—an opportunity to sort out trivia, old resentments, to perceive with clear vision that in our lives which is truly important. The tragedy we have experienced somehow enables us to establish new and more meaningful priorities, to love and to value those who are close with a renewed sense of appreciation and awareness. If any meaning is ever again to exist in our lives, it will develop as a result of newly found sensitivity, love and compassion for others.

Chris Moon
TCF, Rio Linda, CO

First Thanksgiving

*The thought of being thankful
fills my heart with dread,
They'll all be feigning gladness,
not a word about her said.*

*These heavy shrouds of blackness
enveloping my soul,
pervasive, throat-catching,
writhe in me, and coil.*

*I must, I must acknowledge,
just express her name,
so all sitting at the table,
know I'm thankful that she came.*

*Though she's gone from us forever
and we mourn to see her face,
not one minute of her living,
would her death ever replace.*

*So I stop the cheerful gathering,
though my voice quivers, quakes,
make a toast to all her living.
That small tribute's all it takes.*

From *Stars in the Deepest Night:
After the Death of a Child*
Genesee Bourdean Gentry

A Season of Many Feelings

Fall is a season of many feelings

*Autumn is here once again
As it comes every year.
And with the leaves
My falling tears.*

This time of year is the hardest of all

*My heart is still breaking,
Once again it is fall.*

*Memories once so vivid
Are seeming to fade.
My time spent with you
Seems some other age.
This season reminds me
Of grief and of pain.
But yet teaches hope
And joy once again.*

*For trees are still living
Beneath their gray bark,
And you my sweet child
Are alive in my heart.*

Cinda Schake
TCF, Butler, PA

CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 13, 2009

Regardless of past participation, **every family wishing to take part in the memorial service MUST return this form.** We need to receive it no later than Saturday, December 5, 2009.
Do not send photos to the TCF P.O. box—they might get bent or damaged.

Mail to:
Steve & Paige Czirr
1623 Fair House Road
Spring Hill, TN 37174

Instructions: A computerized process (Power Point) is being used to display our children's pictures on the big screen. An original 5x7 photo (no copies, please) may be used. If a 5x7 is not available, any size will do; however, the 5x7 or larger is easier to process. The original photo will be returned to you at the memorial service while the image will be stored for use next year.
Place a sticky note on the back of the photo with the child's name clearly printed. Do not write on the photo itself.

Child's name: _____
Please print the name as you wish it to be read at the service along with phonetic pronunciation, if needed.

_____ I will attend and am enclosing an original photo of my child. (First time in the memorial service.)

_____ I will attend and am enclosing a different photo of my child to be used in place of the photo you have from last year's service.

_____ I will attend and would like for you to use the photo you have saved from last year.

_____ I will attend and would like for my child's name to be called and I'll light a candle, but I will not have a picture shown.

Your name _____ Phone _____

