

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: www.tcfnashville.org

Chapter Leaders: Joe and Melanie Ladd, (615) 361-7996, email: joeandmel@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor: Melanie Ladd, (615) 361-7996, email: joeandmel@comcast.net

Outreach Coordinator: Jayne Head, (615) 264-8184, email: alanandgraysonsmom@comcast.net

Regional Coordinator: David Gibson, (615) 356-1351, email: davidg14@bellsouth.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.

October 11 Meeting- Facing the Holidays

The holidays are coming. How do you deal with this special time of the year when you're hurting so badly? Your child has died, and all the traditions of the past seem impossible to navigate. Some members of our chapter who have managed to memorialize their child or children during the holidays, as well as make these days special for their other family members, will share with us solutions they have found to be helpful. Our regular sharing groups will follow. We hope you will be with us.



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	361-7996
Small Child	Kenneth and Kathy Hensley	237-9972

Candlelight Memorial Service Scheduled for December 13 HCA Auditorium

The December Memorial Service will be here before we know it. It is important that **everyone** wishing to have their child's photo in the Memorial Service follow the instructions on page 6 of this newsletter very carefully. There is a submission deadline that **MUST** be strictly adhered to. We invite all of you to enjoy this opportunity to see your child on the big screen! If you have not attended the Candlelight Memorial Service, we encourage you to do so. This is a very moving and powerful program. All family members, siblings and friends are invited. More info to come.

CHAPTER INFORMATION

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.

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 email the TCF National Office at nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org or call 1-877 969-0010.

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.



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.

The Heart Remembers Always

*And when we have remembered everything,
We grow afraid of what we may forget.
A face, a voice, a smile? A birthday? Anniversary?*

*No need to fear forgetting,
Because The Heart Remembers Always.*

Sascha

THE STORM OF GRIEF

It comes like a huge thunderbolt – shocking and deafening you to all else around you. Suddenly the world that has been so bright is black and desolate. There seems to be no hope.

The tears come like torrential rains. The winds of reality come, and your body is torn by the pains and fears caused by the storm. Even when the tears stop for a while, the dark clouds loom over you, threatening you with more tears and more pain.

Most passersby can't help you through the storm because they have never been caught in one like it – and some don't seem to care. There are a few who will reach out their hand and try to pull you from the storm, but the storm must be endured. And then there are the special ones – the ones who are willing to walk with you through the storm. Usually these are people who have been there before and know the storm can be survived.

After a time, the torrential rains turn to showers, and then the showers come less often. But the clouds don't go away. The sadness and pain remain, but they become more bearable.

Eventually, as the clouds begin to part, there may even be a rainbow – a sign of hope. And as the sun begins to shine a little more, flowers of memory will blossom to be enjoyed. I don't think the showers will ever end, but I believe as they get farther apart, the sky will get bluer; we will see more rainbows; and the flowers will bloom more and more.

Perhaps it's even good to have a shower now and then – to cleanse our souls and to revive those special flowers of memory.

Mary Jo Pierce
TCF, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Newly Bereaved...

What Now?

Even those of us with steadfast faith find our belief system shaken after the death of a child. We seek, in various ways, to make sense of an often senseless tragedy. Whether our loss was a result of illness, accident, suicide, or murder, the questions are the same: "Why? Was it God's will? Is my family being punished for some (probably imaginary) sin? Could it be that there is no God (for the loving God of our religious training would not allow such a terrible thing to happen)?"

I agonized over these, and many other unanswerable questions in my grief following the death of our daughter Susan last year. My faith in God was not sufficient—I could not accept her death as part of some "Master Plan." A long held belief in reincarnation, karma, and reunion in the afterlife became much less certain and reassuring, for it became much more important and I was afraid to believe. Some of us will, over a period of time, find either a new belief system or a return to the old that allows us to be at peace with our loss. Others will acknowledge there are no acceptable answers for now, and let the issues rest. It does not matter which path we follow, but it is vital that, no matter how long it takes, we find a way to cease investing all our emotional energy in a quest that has no end. We must, in my opinion, learn to concentrate upon ourselves—some of us for the first time in our lives. We, the survivors, have a duty to ourselves, our families, and to the memory of our children not to dwell in the world of what was or what might have been, but to re-enter, as soon as we are able, the world of reality; to do the very best we can with the rest of our lives. The question we must really ask is not "Why?" but "What now?"

Carol Babush
TCF, Atlanta, GA

Autumn

*In the fall
When amber leaves are shed,
Softly—silently
Like tears that wait to flow,
I watch and grieve.
My heart beats sadly in the fall;
'Tis then I miss you most of all.*

Lily de Lauder
TCF Van Nuys, CA



After October

*and if there be a perfect month,
for me, it is October...
with days and nights like laughing fauns,
with mornings bright and sober.
when wind will dance in sudden glee
to do the autumn-sweeping
or cloud and fog and wistful rain
can move a heart to weeping.
and in October you were born,
four days before November...
and four years later you were gone,
my little son, my only son,
I love you.
and remember. . .*

sascha

WHY ME? —The Unanswerable Question

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?"

They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"Why me?" is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the "Why me?" will answer itself.

Polly Moore
TCF, Nashville, TN

Just an Infant

We had a fine discussion, you and I, talking about those who don't understand our loss and how we feel.
Peers in grief.

And then you asked my son's age at death, and I could see your change of attitude as I replied "three months."
Our talk was over.

Having lost an older child, you decided that what we both felt couldn't be the same, for your child was with you longer.
And my child was "just" an infant.

But our loss and our pain are not that different, for through the death of our children, we have lost the same thing:
Dreams of the future.

Yes, you have more memories than I, but we have both lost the tomorrows of our children, and that pain knows no minimum age.
God, it hurts.

All of the things we've wished for our children, with no regard to age, now will not come to pass.
That future is gone.

Yes, my son was an infant, but that does not lessen the love that I have, as the age of your child does not affect your love.
Love is an ageless emotion.

And when my young son died, he carried away in his little hands as many dreams, hopes, and love as your child did when he left.
I miss you, Alex.

Doug Hughes
TCF, Cincinnati, OH

For Baby

*Like a miracle
You happened
You were there
I was a flower
Beginning to bloom
Bursting with life
Then you were gone
Like music never written
Existing only in my dreams
And I love you still...*

Stacy Hooks
TCF, Savannah, GA

Just Ten Weeks

*For just 10 weeks
I had you to myself.
And 10 weeks seems too short a time
For you to have changed me so profoundly.
In just 10 weeks I came to know you...
And to love you.
You came to trust me with your life.
Oh, what a life I had planned for you!
Just 10 weeks.
Then I lost you.
I lost a lifetime of hopes,
Plans, dreams, and aspirations.
A slice of my future simply vanished overnight.
Just 10 weeks.*

*It wasn't enough time to convince others how
Special and important you were.
How odd, a truly unique person has died recently
And no one is mourning the passing.
Just 10 weeks.
And no "normal" person would cry all night over
A tiny 10 week fetus, or get depressed and withdrawn
Day after endless day.
No one would, so why am I?
You were just 10 weeks, my little one.
But it seems you only needed 10 weeks
To make my life so much richer and give
Me a small glimpse of eternity.*

Susan Erling
TCF, St. Paul, MN

Ten Healing Rights for Grieving Children

By Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Dr. Wolfelt is a clinical thanatologist and director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition, in Fort Collins, Colorado. This article is reprinted with permission from Bereavement Magazine, 8133 Telegraph Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920-7169, [719] 282-1850.

Author's note: This "bill of rights" for grieving children is intended to empower them to help themselves heal – and to help direct the adults in their lives to be supportive as well.

Someone you love has died. You are probably having many hurtful and scary thoughts and feelings right now. Together those thoughts and feelings are called grief, which is a normal (though really difficult) thing everyone goes through after someone they love has died. The following ten rights will help you understand your grief and eventually feel better about life again. Use the ideas that make sense to you. Post this list on you refrigerator or on your bedroom door or wall. Re-reading it often will help you stay on track as you move toward healing from your loss. You might also ask the grown-ups in your life to read this list so they will remember to help you in the best way they can.

- 1. **I have the right to have my own unique feelings about the death.** I may feel mad, sad, or lonely. I may feel scared or relieved. I may feel numb or sometimes not anything at all. No one will feel exactly like I do.
- 2. **I have the right to talk about my grief whenever I feel like talking.** When I need to talk, I will find someone who will listen to me and love me. When I don't want to talk about it, that's okay, too.
- 3. **I have the right to show my feelings of grief in my own way.** When they are hurting, some kids like to play so

they'll feel better for awhile. I can play or laugh, too. I might also get mad and scream. This does not mean I am bad, it just means I have scary feelings that I need help with.

- 4. **I have the right to need other people to help me with my grief, especially grown-ups who care about me.** Mostly I need them to pay attention to what I am feeling and saying and to love me no matter what.
- 5. **I have the right to get upset about normal, everyday problems.** I might feel grumpy and have trouble getting along with others sometimes.
- 6. **I have the right to have "griefbursts."** Griefbursts are sudden, unexpected feelings of sadness that just hit me sometimes – even long after the death. These feelings can be very strong and even scary. When this happens, I might feel afraid to be alone.
- 7. **I have the right to use my beliefs about my God to help me deal with my feelings of grief.** Praying might make me feel better and somehow closer to the person who died.
- 8. **I have the right to try to figure out why the person I loved died.** But it's okay if I don't find an answer. "Why" questions about life and death are the hardest questions in the world.
- 9. **I have the right to think and talk about my memories of the person who died.** Sometimes those memories will be happy, and sometimes they might be sad. Either way, these memories help me keep alive my love for the person who died.
- 10. **I have the right to move toward and feel my grief and, over time, to heal.** I'll go on to live a happy life, but the life and death of the person who died will always be a part of me. I'll always miss this special person.

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 5"x7" photo (no copies, please) may be used. If a 5"x7" is not available, any size will do; however, the 5"x7" 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 _____