

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.

September 13 Reflections on the 32nd Annual Conference of The Compassionate Friends

The members of the Nashville Chapter who attended the TCF National Conference in Portland, Oregon in August will relate to us highlights of the conference. They will tell about the banquet speakers, workshops, and other events they took part in. Following this time together, we will break up into our regular small sharing groups. Please join us.



Annual Picnic September 26!

Our annual TCF Nashville Family Picnic is a wonderful time to spend together with our families.

Details on page 4.

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

Attending your first TCF meeting can be difficult. Feelings can be overwhelming. We have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Please attend two or three meetings before deciding if TCF is right for you. There are no dues or fees. If you choose, you need not speak a word at a meeting. We are an international, non-denominational group, offering support and information to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. We Need Not Walk Alone.

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.

LOST POTENTIAL

Last year I attended a workshop presented by a specialist in grief named Dr. Cable. Dr. Cable said many important things about the grief process, but as a bereaved parent one thing stuck in my mind. He said that if you ask a bereaved person to describe his deceased mother, he will say, "Oh, she was so sweet. She always wore flowered dresses and loved to bake cookies." But, if you ask a bereaved parent to describe her deceased child, she will say, "Oh, he would be five this year and just starting kindergarten," or, "She would be twenty-two this year and graduating from college." You see, we bereaved parents grieve the lost potential of our children. Our children don't stop growing in our minds. We grieve again and anew each year as our child would have been a different age.

Chris Anderson
TCF, Walla Walla, Washington

Together We'll Walk the Stepping Stones

*Come, take my hand, the road is long.
We must travel by stepping stones.
No, you're not alone; I'll go with you.
I know the road well; I've been there.
Don't fear the darkness, I'll be with you.
We must take one step at a time,
But remember we may have to stop awhile.
It is a long way to the other side
And there are many obstacles.*

*We have many stones to cross,
Some are bigger than others.
Shock, denial and anger to start,
Then come guilt, despair and loneliness.
It's a hard road to travel, but it must be done.
It's the only way to reach the other side.*

*Come, slip your hand in mine.
What? Oh, yes, it's strong.
I've held so many hands like yours.
Yes, mine was one time small and weak like yours.
Once, you see, I had to take someone's hand
In order to take the first step.
Oops! You've stumbled, go ahead and cry.
Don't be ashamed, I understand.*

*Let's wait here awhile and get your breath.
When you're stronger we'll go on,
One step at a time.
There's no need to hurry.*

*Say, it's nice to hear you laugh. Yes, I agree.
The memories you shared are good.
Look, we're half way there now.
I can see the other side.
It looks so warm and sunny.
Oh, have you noticed, we're nearing the last stone
And you're standing alone.
And look, your hand, you've let go of mine.
We've reached the other side.*

*But wait, look back, someone is standing there.
They are alone and want to cross the stepping stones.
I'd better go, they need my help.
What? Are you sure?
Why yes, go ahead. I'll wait. You know the way,
You've been there.
Yes I agree, it's your turn my friend—
To help someone else cross the stepping stones.*

Barb Williams
TCF, Ft. Wayne, IN

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.

Picnic set for September 26

Mark your calendar. For a wonderful afternoon of friendship and fun, a time for remembering our children and for bringing our families together, please join us for our annual chapter picnic. We will gather on Saturday, September 26 at 3:00 P.M. in Fannie Mae Dees Park, Shelter 1. The park is located at 2400 Blakemore Avenue in Nashville. A map can be viewed on our website at www.tcfnashville.org. Barbeque, drinks and paper goods will be provided by the chapter. We ask each family to bring a dish large enough to serve eight, according to the starting letter of your last name, as follows:

A-G: Dessert or chips

H-M: Cole slaw, baked beans, salad or other side dish

N-Z: Main dish other than barbeque

Plan to bring lawn chairs or a blanket, balls and bats or other games. Restroom facilities and play equipment are nearby. This event is for families and friends, you do not have to be a bereaved parent to attend. All ages are invited. The picnic tables are under a large shelter in case of a shower. There will be a brief candle lighting ceremony in memory of our children at the close of the event. Plan to spend this afternoon with your TCF family and get to know each other better!

TCF National Organization Now On Facebook

Please visit and help promote The Compassionate Friends National Organization's new Facebook page by becoming a fan. You can get there by clicking on the link from TCF's national website home page at www.compassionatefriends.org. Or, you can log into Facebook and search for The Compassionate Friends/USA.

"We want this to be both an informative and supportive place for those of us who are mourning the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild," says TCF's Executive Director Patricia Loder. "All are welcome to leave messages and talk about their child and their grief. As in our meetings, we especially appreciate shared insights about anything that has brought you comfort, hope, or some measure of peace."

Our Facebook page will provide a forum for free and open conversation. While messages will be reviewed, they will not be screened before they are posted. So we are asking members to be gentle and respectful of one another and to use common sense in their posts—no offensive language, no overt selling of products or services and no religious proselytizing. Also, keep in mind that all opinions expressed are those of the individual poster and do not necessarily reflect those of The Compassionate Friends, Inc. or its sponsors.

In addition to the social support aspect, The Compassionate Friends/USA Facebook page will have information about upcoming events such as conferences, the Walk to Remember, and the Worldwide Candle Lighting. Please visit often and contribute to the conversation.

In the near future, TCF will also be expanding our social media presence in Twitter. Watch for an announcement. These social media initiatives are important to TCF because they will help increase public awareness about our organization and better enable us to fulfill our mission to help bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents.

For more information, you may call TCF's National Office toll-free at 877-969-0010 or write Wayne@compassionatefriends.org.



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

Get Well Soon Poem

*I know our loss is very great
but I'm sure many people can relate
I know its hard to say good-bye
don't hold back your tears!
It's ok to cry.
Just hold my hand and we will
stand up high
We will gather strength from one another
hugging and holding each other
we will find each other and
together we will be
once again, a family*

*Alyssa Flora, age 13
In memory of her brother Bryson, age 9*

A Name for My Pain

*I have given a name to my pain—
it's called "Longing."
I long for what was,
and what might have been
I long for his touch and smell of sweat;
I long to hold him one more time.
I long to look on his beautiful face
and impress it upon my memories and heart.
I long to return to the day before
and protect him from his death.
I long to take his place,
so he may live and have sons too.
I long for time to pass much faster,
so my longing and pain will lessen.
Will they?*

*June Williams-Muecke
TCF, Houston West Chapter*

The Love Still Flows Between Us

“Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren’t so crushing!”

Sound familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous “ouchies” can compare with the hurt we now feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet, most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have.

So...we are stuck with this pain, this grief; and what do we do with it? Surely we *can't* live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few commonly recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines.

What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and liveable...some day.

TIME...the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child...the first word, first tooth, first date, first car...now we don't have that measure anymore.

All we have is TIME and it only seems to make the hurt worse!

So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME...to hurt, to grieve, to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be “crazy” and TIME to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress through grief against anyone else. Be your own timekeeper.

Don't push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and then moments...but don't expect them to go away.

We will always hurt. You don't get over grief...it only becomes tolerable and liveable.

Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost, try thinking of how much you had. Try letting the good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn't lose our child...HE DIED. We didn't lose the love that flowed between us...it still flows, just differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn't love so very much, it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I'm very, very glad I loved!

Don't let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of the loving times you shared.

Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY.

Darcie Sims
TCF, San Antonio, TX

*All who have been touched by beauty are
touched by sorrow at its passing ~*

Louise Cordana

A Grandparent's Point of View

The death of a child is the most tragic thing that can happen to anyone. It affects so many lives—family, friends, and even strangers.

I lost my grandchild through death, and only a grandparent can understand the love a grandparent has for a grandchild and the loss that is felt when the child dies. For a grandparent, it is a double loss. Not only is your grandchild gone, but you also watch your child die each day. The smile that was always on her face is no longer there.

The hurt is so deep and the questions so many. You feel helpless as a parent. You can't kiss the hurt away as you did when she was a child. You have no answers for her questions, for you don't understand the many feelings that you are experiencing yourself. Each day you hope and pray for a little ray of sunshine to show on her face. You search for a little something to say or do that will comfort her. It seems that there is no end to the suffering.

As time goes slowly by, the healing process begins. In time, a ray of hope will show on her face and a smile will make her eyes light up again. She will turn to you for what little comfort you can give to her. There will always be a part of you that is gone, but in time you can learn to live with the part that is still here.

Ruth Eaton



Those Anniversaries – What Do I Do?

The anniversary of a child's death often is anticipated with the fear of having to relive the horrors of that day when it happened. Birthdays remind us of happier days, of hopes and dreams and aspirations—now moot. What do we do with these days? How can we make them meaningful? Members of our TCF chapter were asked what they do to commemorate their children's special days. Perhaps their responses will give you some helpful ideas.

1. I donate a book, written by my son's favorite author, to the public library.
2. For our son's last birthday, we took him to Gatlinburg. Now the whole family returns there each year on his birthday.
3. We release balloons (biodegradable, of course) with messages to him.
4. We have a special family dinner with her favorite food and cake, and share memories of her with each other.
5. We make a donation to TCF or another charity in his memory.
6. My husband and I spend the day together just talking about his birth—remembering the small things.
7. We send flowers for our church altar in our child's memory. (Also, lilies at Easter and a poinsettia at Christmas.
8. We eat at her favorite restaurant.
9. We take flowers to the cemetery.
10. We plant flowers at his grave.
11. We light a candle and let it burn all day beside his picture.
12. Chicken Nuggets (her term—actually Chicken Nuggets are at a different fast food chain) at Burger King were her special birthday treat, so we go there each year on her birthday.
13. Since we can't give our little boy a toy, we give one to another child—preferably a stranger.
14. We write letters to her and read what each other has written
15. I publish a poem in my local paper.
16. We put a memorial in the paper.
17. I watch a video of my child, look at photographs—and remember, with love.

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TCF, Nashville, TN

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If you attended a meeting in the past and haven't been back, make the effort to come again. Every meeting is different and every combination of the group is different. And remember this always and foremost—by coming to a meeting and sharing yourself and your experiences, your child or sibling becomes known to others who never had the opportunity of knowing them. How much more special a gift can we give ourselves than that?

Martha Brunet
TCF, Clarksville, TN