

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 at 2501 Park Plaza 37203, 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.

April 13 Meeting

Meaningful Music

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.



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
615-646-1333
- AIDS**.....Joyce Soward
615-754-5210
- Illness**.....David and Peggy Gibson
615-356-1351
- Infant**.....Jayne Head
615-264-8184
- SIDS**.....Kris Thompson
931-486-9088
- Suicide**.....Ron and Darlene Henson
615-789-3613
- Small Child**.....Kenneth and Kathy Hensley
615-237-9972
- Alcohol/Drug Overdose**.....Ed Pyle
615-712-3245

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.

GIFTS OF LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE

We are deeply grateful for these voluntary gifts of love that make it possible for The Compassionate Friends to offer comfort to those families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow

*Lou and Vickie Carrillo
In loving remembrance of
their son,
Louis Carrillo*

*Jim and Billie Jo Coursey
In loving remembrance of
their daughters,
Phoebe Ann Coursey and
Heidi Coursey*

*Edward and Linda Peerman
In loving remembrance of
their daughter,
Melanie Porter*

*Melanie Porter
In loving remembrance of
her daughter,
Anna Jo Peery*

*Shirley Rich
In loving remembrance of
her son,
Bert Rich*

*Patricia Story-Howeth
In loving remembrance of
her daughter,
Jennifer Lynn Howeth-Malone*

*John and Georgia Warren
In loving remembrance of
their son,
John David Warren
(Johnny)*

*Jerry and Loretta Winters
In loving remembrance of
their son,
Don Bruce Winter*

Each month, Allegra Print & Imaging, 601 Grassmere Park, donates the printing of this newsletter as a gift to the families of TCF. Deanna Brown and her family assemble, label, sort and mail the newsletters in loving memory of her son, Marcus Dean Brown. We are very grateful for these people and their generosity to all of us.

Choices

*The issue, finally distilled to its essence,
is revealed as not so much who you were
as who your example inspired us to be.
Because we walked beside you in life,
we grew strong enough to handle grief,
determined enough to endure emptiness,
wise enough to cry when hurting,
brave enough to start over every day.*

*We are different people from the ones
who accompanied you on your journey.
We don't think the same or look the same
and we certainly don't feel the same.
Every event plowed and furrowed our souls,
shaping us into fields of unconditional love
capable of bearing an inexhaustible harvest
that will always and forever exceed our need.*

*Our choices in the new world thrust upon us
are whether we shall limit our experience
to daily memories of grief, pain and sorrow,
or opt for deliberate expansion of heart and mind.
Whether we shall define your passing as the ending
of all we cherished and sought and dreamed,
or lean into the loss to reveal an opening
we never thought possible or let ourselves see.*

*An opening that beckons and promises
a transcending, a separation from the grief
everywhere-present like the fine dust of an explosion.
A hidden place where tears give way to freedom,
hearts recover and songs begin to play again.
A shelter where your legacy of victory heals,
revealing the power of seeking joy in sorrow
and the bliss of finding peace in what is.*

Depression

Depression is a natural result of grief. It comes to all of us. You may experience all or just some of the following. We hope that recognizing the symptoms and then working on the suggestions for coping will enable you to work through it. It can be done.

Symptoms And Solutions

A key symptom of depression is a feeling of deep pervasive sadness and hopelessness that lasts for longer than two weeks. Other typical symptoms may be:

- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Insomnia or sleeping much more than usual
- Inability to enjoy anything
- Apathy/restless or anxious behavior
- Preoccupation with thoughts of suicide, or wishing to be dead
- Loss of interest in sex
- Difficulty in concentrating and making decisions
- Poor memory
- Can't cry/ won't cry/ can't stop crying
- Feelings of guilt
- Withdrawal from friends and relatives
- Headaches/backaches (more frequent illness or colds)
- Self-criticism, pessimism, discouragement
- Neglect of appearance
- Irrational anger
- Alcohol and drug use to "medicate"

Some Suggestions For Coping With Depression

- Acknowledge your depression
- Accept responsibility for alleviating it
- Depression serves a purpose, face it and work through it
- Talk, it could help avoid serious depression
- Redirect energy into constructive channels to help create more pleasure in your life (trips, night out, etc)
- Exercise. It helps you to relax, work off tension and sleep better
- Lean into your pain. Allow yourself to experience the many feelings you get such as anger and guilt. Express them! Scream, hit a pillow, cry!
- Get involved with others, volunteer
- Try deep breathing, it stimulates physical energy
- Good nutrition is very important
- Think pleasant thoughts as hard as that may be, just one moment at a time
- Avoid alcohol as it is a depressant
- Work on self-esteem; do something that you do well; be kind to yourself
- Remember, you do have a choice. Depression is manageable and does not have to ruin your life

If the depression becomes so severe that suggestions such as these do not help you, PLEASE don't hesitate to seek professional help.

From *Support Newsletter POMC, Inc.*
TCF, Greater Cincinnati Chapter

Jen Lynn

*She came into our lives,
Heaven sent, I always said
God meant for her to be here.
From the first breath she took
She captured our hearts forever.*

*We all watched her grow from
Two curly little Buffy pigtails,
To the cute little cheerleader
She always wanted to be,
Even performing for the Queen of England.*

*She had many struggles.
From wanting to socialize to
Never wanting to accomplish her studies.
But she seemed to
Always conquer them all.*

*Many lives she has touched,
With her love so true.
She would soar through leaving
Love only as she could give.
First puppy love to everlasting love
As only Jen would give.*

*Soaring through our lives just
Like a beautiful butterfly.
Her life was still so brief
Our memories are tangled with
The grief we all share.*

*Leaving sweet Hannah for us to
Love and enjoy, her memories
Live through this beautiful child.
As she watches over all of us
God has taken her home.*

Patricia Story-Howeth
TCF Nashville, TN

Springtime's Burden Becoming Promise

Seasonal changes are difficult for many bereaved parents. This is often most true as winter yields to spring. The land seems to throb with life once more as young buds emerge and robins return from their sojourn in the South. Lilacs bloom and the breeze carries their fragrance. Woodland animals begin to lose the leanness of winter hunting or quiet hibernation.

The day is longer and filled with renewed vitality to match its length. It is as if a cold hand had loosed its bitter grip and the earth is reborn. It is this quality of resurrection that seems so bitter. For as we struggle in the darkness of loss, all around us is the vigorous rush of life breaking forth in colors and song. But our children do not come forth. They dwell in the land of death and the netherworld of our anguish.

But, I believe we can see as well the promise inherent in spring's unfolding glory and grasp the continuity its return affirms. Last fall we saw an acorn, but this year we see the tender shoot of an infant tree. From gnarled, dead-looking stumps, the cut-back rose sends tendrils of green to drink the sun.

In each full cycle of our planet around its sun, we encounter irrefutable testament to renewal. In this, we sense the defeat of death. This is the time of year when twilight surrenders to darkness. We stand by the new earth, hear the chorus of night creatures and sense the rebirth that has no end. Stand silently then, beneath the constancy of the night sky and upon the rejuvenating earth and sense our children, constant and growing too, yet beyond our sight. Life continues. There are no endings. There are only beginnings. That is the promise of Spring.

Don Hackett
TCF, South Shore, MA

Symphony

When I was a young musician my dad liked to tease me by playing the notes of the C-Major scale: "DO-RE-MI-FA-SO-LA-TI..." Then he would stop, step back and wait for my reaction. No matter where I was, my response was certain. It would drive me absolutely *crazy* until I rushed to the piano and played the final note that would make the scale complete.

I feel much the same way about Lindsay at times. Five years ago we opened the pages of a manuscript and began what appeared to be a very interesting overture in our lives. We didn't just open a book, we were the composers and she was our composition. The love and promises grew within me, along with a multitude of ideas and plans we had for the way things would be. We were shaping the future—ours, the baby's and the world's.

We had only concluded the prelude when the book suddenly and abruptly closed with the clashing of cymbals, just as tightly as the lid on her tiny white casket. There was a supreme silence in her death, but our hearts thundered on as the pounding of tympani drums. I could plead, I could cry, but I could not change what happened. I tried to bargain with God. I tried to deny it. I tried to run from it. For awhile, I tried to pretend it didn't hurt. Our lives were overshadowed by an ominous quality—life was uncertain, death was not. We could not escape it. No matter how hard I tried to understand, it was far beyond my comprehension. I chased my "elusive dream" in circles, around and around, until I was utterly exhausted from the effort.

I am her mother, and yet her life seemed so incomplete, without purpose or accomplishment. It was my responsibility to mold and shape her life, and I thought I had been denied that privilege until I talked with my TCF friends. I discovered we can open the pages of our book again. We are still her parents, and she can still make a difference in someone's life—but only if we allow ourselves to let her. Only I can write the notes that complete her life. And I know now the last note will never be written until we hold her in our arms again. (Then it will sing forever!)

I thought the symphony was over; that the pomp and circumstance of her life had been stilled, but that is not true. It is playing, yet in a different way than we ever dreamed or originally planned. The melody becomes more beautiful each time we touch another person with love and understanding, and that feels very comforting to us. I believe she would approve.

Dana Gensler
TCF, South Central Kentucky

Sweet Baby Girl

*It's been five long years,
Yet it feels like only yesterday
Since we held you and kissed you goodbye,
That early Easter morning.*

*So few memories to hold onto,
As we left the hospital with empty, aching arms.
Gone were the hopes and dreams we had for you.
Replaced with only the intense pain and tears of grief.*

*How could we say goodbye...
When we never really had a chance to say hello?
Your footprints will remain on our hearts forever,
Time cannot diminish our love for you.*

Debbie and Clay Pearson
TCF, Winnipeg, Manitoba



The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Chicago, Illinois, will be the site of the 37th TCF National Conference on July 11-13, 2014.

"Miles of Compassion through The Winds of Hope" is the theme of this year's event.

The workshops and activities at every conference are life changing. Three of our own Nashville parents, Donna Regan and Steve and Paige Czirr will be presenting workshops this year.

Early registration for the conference will be \$90.00 for Adults, \$40.00 for Children (9-17), and \$40.00 for Full-Time College Students.

Visit the National TCF Website, <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>, to register or for more information.

They've Got Each Other

*Quiet comes the dawn through curtained windows,
Quiet as their breathing, pretending sleep.
Carefully not touching, for fear stray
Spasms betray silent sadness and sobbing,
Or, even worse, be misconstrued as a
Prelude to intimacy and rejected.
Finally, stirring with elaborate
Stretching and yawning, they confront the day.
"How did you sleep?" "Fine, and you?" "Okay."
Quickly completing the morning ritual,
Newly self-conscious they dress. At breakfast
They speak in simple questions and answers,
Avoiding sharing, lest control be lost.
With an automatic, chaste peck on the cheek
They part with a secret sigh of relief.*

*Why don't you talk
To me? You're like a lump.
Sullen and surly
You snap off my head
If I mention his name.
You don't even cry.
You haven't been back
To the grave. Not once!
I don't think you care.
You sit and mope or
You just work, work, work.
What's the matter with you?"*

*Why won't she stop talking?
It tears me apart
To constantly dwell on him.
It's all I can do
To not break down and cry.
Must she visit the grave?
I can't stand that place!
I need to be alone.
With some peace and quiet
I can make it through.
Thank God, I have my work.
What's the matter with her?"*

*"How was your day?" "Fine, and yours?" "Okay."
Stiffly the afternoon ritual is done.
After another question and answer meal
And an awkward, near workless evening
Of vacantly reading and watching TV,
With reluctance they rise and retire to rest.
"Help me," she silently screams at him.
"Hold and console me," his soundless reply.
Suppressing the love they're desperate to keep,
They motionless lie and mutely weep.
Quiet comes the night through curtained windows,
Quiet as their breathing pretending sleep.*

*How could you possibly
Think about that?
And with him barely
Six months gone from us?
You men are all alike.
You have no conception.
Don't you understand?
Nine long months in me,
I carried him there.
I nursed and nurtured,
Now nothing. I'm numb.
I can't just pick up
And get back into
Life and work and sex.*

*"Damn! Why'd I do that?
I knew she wasn't
In the mood for romance.
She never is anymore.
It's not enough
That I've lost a son,
I've lost my wife, too.
Doesn't she realize?
My future is gone.
I am so lonesome.
I need to hold her
And be held in return
Am I now so repulsive
We can't even touch?"*

Richard A. Dew, M.D.
From *Rachel's Cry—A Journey Through Grief*

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Are you Moving?

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved; then we pay again to mail it back to you. This is in addition to the original bulk mail cost. It would help a great deal in both time and money if you would notify us immediately of any address change so your newsletter can reach you right away. You may call, write or email the chapter leaders or the newsletter editor. Thanks for your help.

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.

Newsletter Deadlines

In order for donations, articles, poems and other material to be included in the newsletter, we must receive them by the second Sunday 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.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Survivors of Suicide

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings, you may call 615 244-7444, or go to the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network at TSPN.org, and you will find a list of all Tennessee SOS locations.

Sharing

SHARING is a community organization interested in helping parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn infant. Call 615 342-8899 to confirm dates and times of meetings.

Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents

A support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at (615) 963-4674. Diane Castellano, LCSW is a grief counselor there for children and their families. Call her at [615 327-1085](tel:6153271085).

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.