

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.

August 12 meeting Sharing Mementos of Our Children

We all have things that are precious to us, that either belonged to or remind us of our beloved children. At this month's meeting, we invite you to bring any one thing that can be shared briefly with the rest of the group. This memento can be something that your child treasured, something your child gave you or you gave to him, or something that simply reminds you that your child lived and was loved, even if his or her life was very short (a footprint, baby blanket, hospital bracelet, etc.) Please join us August 12 as we share sweet remembrances of our dear children.

We will also have a short report on the July National/International TCF Conference from Steve and Paige Czirr. Small sharing groups will follow this program.



Save the Date: Annual Picnic October 6!

Our annual TCF Nashville Family Picnic
at Fannie Mae Dees Park
is a wonderful time to spend together
with our families. Please plan 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	646-1333
AIDS	Joyce Soward	754-5210
Illness	David and Peggy Gibson	356-1351
Infant	Jayne Head	264-8184
SIDS	Kris Thompson	931 486-9088
Suicide	Ruth Edwards	353-8547
Small Child	Kenneth and Kathy Hensley	237-9972
Alcohol/Drug Overdose	Ed Pyle	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.

It Is True

*“You will not always hurt like this.”
These words are true.*

*If they do not reach your heart today,
do not reject them:
keep them in your mind.*

*One morning—
not tomorrow perhaps,
but the day after tomorrow,
or the month after next month.*

*One morning the dawn will wake you
with the inconceivable surprise:
Your grief will have lost
one small moment of its force.*

*Be ready for the time
when you can feel for yourself
that these words are true:
“You will not always hurt like this.”*

Sascha

Thought for the Day

It is not easy returning to the world of normalcy when your world is so upside down. It is not easy to stop being a mother or father to your child that has died. The thought for the day is a word — **patience** — patience with yourself who suddenly and powerlessly has been thrown into this horrid nightmare; patience with your spouse who always seems to be having an up day when you are having a down day; patience with relatives and friends who wish to help but seem to hurt with hollow advice and logical words; and patience with time, for it takes time to adjust, and time can move so slowly. **PATIENCE!**

Rose Moen
TCF, Carmel-Indianapolis, IN



If I had a single flower for every time I think of you, I could walk forever in my garden.

Claudia Grandi

Thoughts from a Parent Who Lost an Older Child

Perhaps I had my child longer than you had yours, but thirty-eight years does not seem long. Perhaps there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me, even if your memories are memories of only one or two days. Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine. In thirty-eight years there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three granddaughters who now live three thousand miles away from me.

My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the “acceptable” diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are placed in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with the help of four treatment centers, the recovery was not to be. One day at a time, my recovery is taking place. The pain, after two and one half years, has gone to a place where it can be tolerated.

My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same: my child has gone to a place where I cannot go, and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one-day-at-a-time, enriched because my son came through my body into my life.

Helen Godwin
TCF/Orange Park-Jacksonville, FL

What Are We Waiting For?

My brother-in-law opened the bottom drawer of my sister's bureau and lifted out a tissue-wrapped package. "This," he said, "is not a slip. This is lingerie." He discarded the tissue and handed me the slip. It was exquisite: silk, handmade, and trimmed with a cobweb of lace. The price tag with an astronomical figure was still attached. "Jan bought it the first time we went to New York eight or nine years ago. She never wore it. She was saving it for a special occasion. Well, I guess this is the special occasion."

He took the slip from me and put it on the bed with the other clothes we were taking to the funeral home. His hands lingered on the soft material for a moment. He slammed the drawer shut and turned to me. "Don't ever save anything for a special occasion. Every day you're alive is a special occasion."

I remembered those words through the funeral and the days that followed when I helped him attend to all the sad chores that follow an unexpected death. I thought about them on the plane returning home. I thought about all the things she hadn't seen or heard or done. I thought about the things that she had done without realizing that they were special.

I still think about his words and how they've changed my life. I read more and dust less. I sit on the deck and admire the view without fussing about the weeds in the garden. I spend more time with my family and friends and less time in committee meetings.

Whenever possible, life should be a pattern of experience to savor, not endure. I try to recognize those moments now and cherish them. I don't save anything. We use our good china for every special event — such as losing a pound, getting the sink unstopped, or discovering the first camellia blossom. I wear my good blazer to the market if I feel like it. I don't save my good perfume for special parties. "Someday" and "one of these days" are losing their grip on my vocabulary. If it's worth seeing, hearing or doing, I want to see, hear, and do it now.

I am not sure what my sister would have done had she known that she wouldn't be here for the tomorrows we all take for granted. I think she would have called family members and a few close friends. She might have called a few former friends to apologize and mend fences for past squabbles. It's these little things left undone that would make me angry if I knew my hours were limited — angry because I put off seeing good friends, angry because I hadn't written certain letters that I intended to write, angry and sorry that I didn't tell my husband and daughter often enough how much I truly love them. I am trying not to put off, hold back, or save anything that would add laughter and luster to our lives. Every morning, when I open my eyes, I tell myself that it's a special day.

Marcia Alig
TCF, Mercer Area, NJ

Forgive Unto Forever

Grieving is a fierce and overwhelming expression of love thrust upon us by a deep and hurtful loss. Yet, grieving is frequently such an entanglement of feelings that we often fail to recognize that ultimately forgiveness must be an integral part of our grief and our healing. For what is love if forgiveness is silent within us? We learn to forgive our children for dying, ourselves for not preventing it. We begin to forgive our God or the fate we see ruling our universe. We start to forgive relatives and friends for abandoning us in their own bewilderment over the onslaught of emotions they sense in our words and behavior.

I believe we must be open to the balm of forgiveness. Through its expression in our lives, be it through thought, word or deed, we find small ways to seek life once more. Deep within us, forgiveness is capable of treading the wasteland of our souls to help us feel again the love that has not died.

It is the beginning of release from the dominance of pain, not from the continual hurt of missing those we have lost, but from lacking the fullness of the love we shared with our child. That love lives with strength inside ourselves and yet our beings are so entrapped in a whirling vortex of anger, despair, frustration, abandonment and depression that we often feel it only lightly.

Let us all heed the quiet message heard so softly in that maelstrom of the spirit. Forgive, forgive and forgive unto forever. Let love enfold our anguish, helping us to learn to grow and strive beyond this hour to a rich tomorrow.

Don Hackett
TCF, Hingham, MA

Summerwind

*The one who owns this summer is not here,
Not here to know the tender summerwind,
Not here to share the glowing and the song.*

*The one who owns this summer did not live,
Not live to touch the richness of this day,
This day in summer when you are alone.*

*Weep to the summerwind,
Weep and love again
The one you remember.*

Sascha

Nothing in life is preparation for the loss of a child...

Carolyn & Lauren Bessette's family

In Nancy's Garden

*I know a place where Beauty lives
If you happen upon it, what peace it gives
I traveled there down a river of tears
On the back of a dragon called "Rage and Fear"*

*Its walls are made from iron-will parts
But its gate is fashioned from a tender heart
And there at that gate a voice in my ear
Bid me to enter, "I'm so glad you are here"*

*The rich scent of roses filled the air
A riot of color was everywhere
"Come and lie down on the soft, green grass
In a moment all your confusion will pass"*

*Then I heard her laugh, a small choir of bells
Light silver notes that rose and fell
I could almost see each one as it danced
And I followed along like one in a trance*

*As I lay down on the grass as she'd asked
I sensed a shift in the air as near me she passed
Felt the silk of her hair as it brushed 'cross my cheek
And the warmth of her breath as she started to speak*

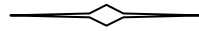
*"I was a spirit in human attire
And now I've come home and laid rest desire
It's unfulfilled yearnings that steal away peace
But here in this place, I've found release*

*"In your time you will join me, not early or late
At just the right moment the eternal awaits"
The sky there was dazzling, brilliant and white
Tho no sun seemed to cast its light*

*Then just for an instant in that magical place
I caught a glimpse of her sweet, lovely face
And she said, "From your grief, let your soul take pardon
For I am so happy here inside my garden"*

*Then she kissed me farewell, as I closed my eyes
And when I awoke, to my surprise
On the pillow on which I had been crying
A single red rose was now lying.*

Janna Jewel
in memory of Nancy Conway,
daughter of Mike and Mary Conway
TCF, Nashville, TN



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

The melody of the child who played upon the piano of my life will never be played quite that way again, but I must not close the keyboard and allow the instrument to gather dust. I must seek out other artists of the spirit, new friends who will help me find the music of life again, creating new tunes and harmonies to enhance the melody which will always sing in my heart.

Carol Cavin
TCF, Lavonia, MI

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Are you Moving?

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us 44 cents to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved; then we pay another 44 cents 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 the Crisis Center at 615 244-7444.

Sharing

SHARING is a community organization interested in helping parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a newborn infant. SHARING meets the second and fourth Thursday evenings 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). The phone number is 615 342-8899.

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.

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.

This Mixed-up Grief

Have you ever noticed the many mixed-up, confusing emotions involved in grieving?

On the one hand, you feel restless; on the other hand, you feel like you don't want to move at all. You feel desperately alone, yet you don't want anyone around. You feel scatterbrained, forgetful, and yet frantically meticulous. You feel like crying at nothing, and sometimes laughing at anything. (Or do I have that backwards?) Being in a crowd of people is fine as long as they don't talk to you. And yet, if they don't talk to you, you feel as if nobody cares. You want so desperately for someone to mention your child, to remember the life that once was. And yet it can make you furious if ALL they want to talk about is the dead one, and never even mention the living ones.

Grief settles over you like a hot blanket. You're as cold as the winter snow. Grief presses on you like a steamroller. You're floating in a bubble above yourself. Grief boxes you in on four sides and introduces you to a pain no one should have to know.

But then, once again, you begin to feel compassion. You relate to other parents who have had an experience similar to your own. And eventually, with a light as sharp as a sunburst, you hear yourself saying your child's name with an unfamiliar smile on your face. You remember some of the funny times and feel laughter building in your throat. One morning you notice the sun is shining. Many days, months, and possibly years have passed unnoticed ... and somehow, you are still here. Even though your child is still... there. You feel your heart swell with a love you never even knew could exist. And you find a place in your life for something called (dare I say) peace.

And then, ever so gently, the memories enfold you in a warmth as soothing as a cool shower on a hot summer day, so you find you WANT to remember. And tender memories of love lift you to unreachable heights, to the brightest of stars, to the loveliest touch of your child.

Dana Gensler
TCF, Louisville, KY

Congratulations to the Nashville Chapter

In July, 2012, the Nashville Chapter of The Compassionate Friends observed the 25th anniversary of its founding. Seventeen bereaved parents attended that first meeting in July 1987, seeking support and comfort in their grief. Word spread, and now some 45-60 people attend regular meetings on the second Sunday of each month. Thanks to the generosity of HCA (Hospital Corporation of America), we have been allowed to meet, free of charge, in their headquarters building every one of those Sunday afternoons. We even meet on Mother's Day every year, and occasionally on Easter, but always on the second Sunday. Bereaved families need the comfort of consistency, knowing there will always be a safe place for them on that designated day.

From the very first month, an informative and helpful monthly newsletter has been produced, now going out to an average of 500 bereaved families and professionals in the Middle Tennessee area. Through the work of faithful volunteers, the chapter has become a solid and respected entity in this community—newly bereaved parents are contacted within a few weeks of their loss, and are added to the newsletter mailing list; professionals know about this chapter and readily recommend us to their patients. Informative brochures for teachers and guidance counselors are immediately taken to local schools when a student has died. There are no dues or fees and because of the quality of our services, there has never been a need for fund raisers—voluntary donations, for which we are most grateful, have provided the financing needed to support this work.

Even after reaching a peaceful resolution of their own grief, many of our members continue to attend meetings in order to be there for those whose children have just died. They recognize that helping is healing. This is what The Compassionate Friends, and specifically the Nashville chapter of TCF, is all about. Our goal is that we be available to those parents, siblings and grandparents who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow. When this terrible loss occurs, we want them to know that they need not walk alone.