

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



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

Chapter Leaders: Lamar and Joy Bradley, (615) 889-1387, email: lamar.bradley@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor: Melanie Ladd, (615) 513-5913, email: melanierladd@gmail.com

Treasurer: Mike Childers, (615) 646-1333, email: michaelc1333@gmail.com

Outreach: David Gibson, (615) 356-1351, email: davidg14@bellsouth.net

Regional Coordinator: Polly Moore, (931) 962-0458, email: lolly39@aol.com

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 #3 at 2545 Park Plaza 37203, just north of Centennial Park off of 25th Avenue, North. Enter the parking lot at the 2501 Building (#1), then drive down to the third building. The entrance faces the parking lot. 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 10 Meeting Reflections on the 37th Annual National Conference of The Compassionate Friends

Several members of the Nashville Chapter attended the 37th TCF National Conference in Chicago, Illinois July 11-13. A national conference of The Compassionate Friends is unlike any other conference you may ever attend. As always, this conference provides fresh insights, ideas, and a renewed bond with other bereaved parents. Our members will relate to us highlights of the conference as our program on August 10. 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 August 10.

WE ARE MOVING TO OUR NEW MEETING PLACE:

2545 Park Plaza 37203

BEGINNING AUGUST 10!

We will continue to meet on the second Sunday of each month at 3:00 p.m.

To reach our new building enter the HCA parking lot at 2501 Park Plaza (our old building-- #1) and continue driving through the parking lots, past Building #1, past the next building and on down to the third HCA building which is 2545 Park Plaza. The exterior is a dark brown color with dark tinted windows. (You cannot enter the lot for the new building from the street because there will be a chain across the entrance there and it must not be moved.) Once you arrive at Building #3, you will see the main entrance facing the parking lot. So just come on in and you will see the signs to direct you to room 110.

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



The Gift of Someone Who Listens

*Those of us who have traveled a while
Along this path called grief
Need to stop and remember that mile
The first mile of no relief.*

*It wasn't the person with answers
Who told us of ways to deal
It wasn't the one who talked and talked
That helped us start to heal.*

*Think of the friends who quietly sat
And held our hands in theirs.
The ones who let us talk and talk
And hugged away our tears.*

*We need to always remember
That more than the words we speak,
It's the gift of someone who listens
That most of us desperately seek.*

Nancy Myerholts
TCF Waterville Toledo

Should the sweet remembrances of those things which so delighted us when he was alive only afflict us now? Since he gave us so much pleasure while we had him, so we ought to cherish his memory, and make that memory a glad rather than a sorrowful one. Remember also how much good you still possess. Because one page of your book is blotted, do not forget all the other leaves whose reading is fair and whose pictures are beautiful. We should not be like the miser who never enjoys what he had, but only bewails what he loses.

Written by the Greek philosopher, Plutarch, 46AD-120AD, to his wife after the death of their son

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

When Life Goes On

*What is it, I wonder,
That we set our hope upon?
There must come a point in this
Grieving process when
The choice is in my own hands.
In dark moments,
I played with the idea of death, listened to it,
Enjoyed it as one might enjoy the
Sweetness of forbidden fruit.
But no, I made a decision.
As impossible as it seems,
I must learn to live without my child,
For I really have no other choice.
It may take many years,
Much longer than others expect,
But a time must come when
I have to accept her death
In order to accept her life,
And accept my own as well.*

*Just as surely as my child
Walked toward eternal life,
I, too, must walk toward my own light;
Finding a way through this
Tunnel of darkness
To the brightness of a new day.
And in my own time
Learn to live again,
With laughter, love and joy.
For myself, for my child,
For those still in need.
And so, just for this moment,
Just for this day,
I set my hope
Upon tomorrow.*

Dana Gensler
TCF, South Central KY

When a Sibling Dies

The death of a child is a family crisis no less for the siblings than for the parents. Surviving siblings may feel abandoned because grieving parents no longer have the emotional energy to care for them. They may feel unloved as they experience family friends putting the deceased child on a pedestal. They may feel incredibly guilty, remembering every bout of sibling rivalry, every unkind word and every slammed door. They may feel unworthy to be alive, longing for answers to explain why their brother or sister died and they didn't. And they may, therefore, seek conscious or unconscious ways to self-destruct: running away from home, using alcohol and other drugs, taking on characteristics of the dead siblings and thus diminishing their own image.

Following are suggestions children have shared about how parents can help them when a brother or sister has died:

- Let them choose whether or not they want to see their sibling at the funeral home. Let them choose some of the music, write or read a memorial to their brother or sister, go with you or alone to the cemetery visits.
- Share with the siblings all factual information as it becomes known. Being "left out" only enhances a growing sense of not being important to the family.

- When you see children who remind you of your child, point them out to the siblings and explain the grief spasm it has caused. Mysterious behavior enhances the siblings' fear of being left out.
- Ask the siblings to be with you occasionally as you grieve. If you always grieve in private, the emotional distance between you will widen.
- Talk with siblings both about pleasant memories and unpleasant memories of the dead child. This prevents pedestal placing.
- Don't tell siblings to "be strong" for someone else. That is too great a burden to carry.
- Understand that it may be easier for siblings to talk to friends, or another trusted adult, than to parents. They desperately do not want to add to their parents' devastation so may seek counsel and understanding elsewhere.

Janice Lord
TCF, Anne Arundel City, MD

The Back-to-School Pressure Cooker

The end of summer can put siblings into their back-to-school pressure cooker. Whether this is the first year, or later, our kids may be dealing with comments or questions from peers, teachers, counselors, about their brother or sister. Or perhaps no one is talking, because no one knows what to say. Feelings of loneliness, being different, being left out, can surface—and sibling rivalry? Remember if you will how intense it could get between all your children. What kind of competition existed between them during the school year, or what kind of comparisons were made: athletics, grades, friendships, extra activities?

That kind of emotion is often forgotten when a child dies. But as your children go back to the classroom, to the athletic field, they may see those reminders each day. When they bring home these feelings, positive and negative, they need a place to express them without being judged or compared to their siblings.

We want to remember the good. But we have to remember that no child was always good! To forget that is to make a martyr of our dead child—possibly at the expense of our living children. Our surviving children need special support at this time of year, too. They need to be reassured that they are still lovable—that they can be forgiven for any anger or resentment they may feel toward their brother or sister—that perfection is not a requirement for loving. They need to be reassured that they are separate, unique individuals, not imperfect replacements for the child who has died. They need a safe place to talk, to let out their own concerns, anxieties and fears. They too are grieving and need a lot of support, especially during the back-to-school rush.

Cindy Cooper
TCF, St. Louis, MO

Summer Delight

Where is the child who skipped through the sprays of summer rain and laughed his way into my heart? Where is the boy who climbed my trees and spied on me from behind the leaves? Where is the child with the suntanned legs who ran Fourth-of-July races in green parks? Where is the sleepy child who wrapped his arms around my neck and said, "When I grow up, I gonna marry you, Mom?" He's here.

He twines around our past, around my future, and takes me back home, and makes me young again as sure as summer comes. A suntanned spirit with an impish grin still whispers in my ear that stars are not stars at all but lightening bugs he's captured in a jar. In his youth he's my summer's glow, the sunshine in my garden, my comfort on long hot, summer nights of remembering.

Where is the child that once played among my summer flowers? He darts and runs away as I idly dream of yesterday, at once elusive yet so near. Oh, I'm sure he's here. I'm sure I saw him just a minute ago. Or was it just a touch of summer madness that made me think I'd greeted him?

Oh, where is that child of summer gladness? His laughter slides down summer rainbows and captures me with unbound glee. His summer brownness runs barefoot on my heart. With sun-bleached hair, he smiles at me from photos from summers past, and I remember love.

Fay Harden
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

marriage, and most importantly, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. Your only child lost all of this from his or her future. And so did you.

With the death of an only child, you suffer many tiny losses that cause pain only another grieving parent can comprehend.

You have lost the joy of checking the cereal aisle to see if Cocoa Puffs are on sale.

You have lost the reason to keep up with the top ten hits on the pop music charts.

You have lost the joy of caring what prize is in a box of Cracker Jacks.

You have lost the joy of getting up early on a Saturday morning for kids' soccer, basketball, or bowling.

You have lost the reason to hope for a December snow.

You have lost the person who thought you made the best cocoa on a cool December evening.

For me, I lost a gentle, kind, generous child who loved, watched for, and shared beautiful sunsets.

The loss of an only child is a devastating loss. Your child has lost his or her life. And you have lost an important piece of your own life, your parenthood.

Bill Snapp
TCF, Atlanta (Tucker) GA



When You Lose an Only Child

The loss of an only child is neither greater nor less than the loss of one of many children. However, the loss of an only child is experienced differently. It is different because you lose your parenthood, which is such a large part of the life of any parent.

With the death of an only child, you lose the one person who could use all of the love you had to give every hour of every day.

One of the secrets of parenthood is that from birth, children teach us that we have a greater capacity for unselfish love than we thought possible.

When your only child dies, you may feel that you are drowning in the parental love your heart continues to generate for the child you have lost.

With the death of an only child, you lose so much of your own future that was tied to your child's future. Things like: the first day of school, sports, learning to drive, a first crush, a first date, a first heartbreak, high school, college, career,

Silence and the Stars

*Let me have silence and the stars,
If you would give me peace.
Words are too brutal. Say not one.
Silence will give my heart release.*

*Let me have darkness and the storm,
Lightning and angry rain.
Thoughts that are mine shall ride the wind.
I must forget this haunting pain.*

*Let me have silence and the stars,
Stillness in early dawn.
Hearts that are sad can sing once more.
Life and its song must linger on.*

From *A Life of Poems*
Elizabeth Teal (1920-1999)

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.

What is the Yellow Slip?

Please return your yellow renewal slip. After a year on the newsletter mailing list, those names that were added in that month of a previous year, will receive a yellow half-sheet asking that their subscription be renewed. This is simply to keep our mailing list and the information in it current. If you do not send the yellow slip back, we must assume that you no longer want the newsletter. Although you are given an opportunity to make a voluntary donation, there is no cost involved in your subscription. The newsletter is our gift to you for as long as you wish to receive it. You may request that your name be returned to the active list at any time simply by calling 615-356-4TCF (4823).

Religion and TCF

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.

Newsletter Deadline

In order to meet printing deadlines, all donations and original poems or articles must be received by the meeting day of the preceding month to be published in the next issue of the TCF Nashville newsletter. All donations and submissions are greatly appreciated.



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.

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.