

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.

July 10 Program: Dr. Frank Lewis to speak

We are pleased to announce Dr. Frank Lewis, Pastor of First Baptist Church in downtown Nashville will be our guest speaker this month. Dr. Lewis is a bereaved sibling who has previously been associated with The Compassionate Friends in Alabama and in Nevada. Those of us who have heard him in the past have been struck by his warmth and vitality. We have found his understanding of the grief of parents as well as siblings to be right on target. Join us and help welcome him to our meeting. Regular sharing groups will follow.

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**.....Ruth Edwards
615-353-8547
- Small Child**.....Kenneth and Kathy Hensley
615-237-9972
- Alcohol/Drug Overdose**.....Ed Pyle
615-712-3245
- Murder**.....Joe Ladd
615-727-3284



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

*A note to the newly bereaved...
(and a reminder to the rest of us)*

The first months and years after bereavement can be terrifying. It seems as if the pain stays at a monotonous peak; it seems as if one's mind will be lost at any moment. And although most of us "get better" after the first terror we usually do not realize that until we look back, years later. When we think about it: This state of affairs is almost "reasonable." After such an overwhelmingly traumatic experience, we can fall – as it were – to the end of the world. Coming back from there is bound to be slow beyond our imagination and fraught with reversals. So far, no one has found a method to avoid this painful journey back. But perhaps it will help to know you have already begun to travel... You will find it is a long journey, and desperately hard -- and you may almost want to stay where you are. But you will realize later that the wind of tomorrow is already stretching your sails, and life awaits you across the sea. If you only knew...

Sascha



Choosing Life

It will never be the same. Never." As a bereaved parent, you have often heard or said these words to express grief's profound feelings of sorrow and disorientation. Your life has suddenly taken an unexpected course that appears both uncharted and endless. Bewildered, you vainly search for pathways back to your former life, until you confront the reality that there is no way back. Your child is dead forever. It is then that you may say, "...never the same." This is the aspect of grief that Simon Stephens, TCF founder, calls "The Valley of the Shadow." It is that very long time between the death of your child and your reinvestment in life. *Between*. It is not supposed to be a permanent resting place. Although some people do take up residence in the valley, it is a transition from the death of your child to life with renewed purpose. The key to this transition is yourself. You must choose between life and the valley. You and only you can decide. And you must make that decision again and again, each day. Giving in to the hopelessness of the valley is tempting. Choosing to move on toward life requires a great deal of work. You must struggle with the pain of grief

in order to resolve it. It is a daily struggle full of tears, anger, guilt and self-doubt, but it is the only alternative to surrendering yourself to the valley. Little by little you choose to move on. Little by little you progress toward the other side of the valley. It takes a very long time, far longer than your friends or relatives suspected. Far longer than you had believed – even prayed – that it would be. When one day you find yourself able to do more than choose merely to live but also how to live, you will know you are leaving the valley of the shadow. There will still be more work to do, more struggle and choosing. The valley, however, stretches behind rather than in front of you. When you have resolved your grief by reinvesting in life, you will be able to realize that nothing is ever "the same." Life is change. We would not have it be otherwise, for that is the valley of the shadow. Change has the promise of beginning and the excitement of discovery. Life is never the same. Life is change. Choose life!

Marcia F. Alig
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey

Gentle Reminders

*With gentle reminders I am blest,
Soft surprises on me are pressed,
As when I, gazing at the moon,
Feel your presence as my guest.*

*When I hear the cry of a loon,
Or catch a brief snatch of a tune
That we once shared some time ago,
You seem so near, I'm not alone.*

*I sense your breath as breezes blow
And your soft kiss in flakes of snow.
In mists sometimes your form I see,
Or in the sunset's afterglow.*

*I often feel you here with me.
Your soul from body now set free
Has the welcome ability
Gentle reminders to bring to me.*

From *Rachel's Cry*
By Richard A. Dew, M.D.
TCF, Knoxville, TN

Recognizing Unsuccessful Grief

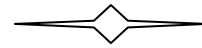
All of us who have searched for healing following the death of a child, grandchild or sibling know the roller coaster of emotions that are part of our grief process. We know there is no “quick fix” that magically lets us get on with our lives, and grief can be physically exhausting. We cannot go back to what was! And time, in and of itself, does not heal.

Although there is no set schedule for grieving and there will always be a hole in our hearts, many of us in TCF have found that within a year to eighteen months, we are beginning to make some progress—granted the progress may seem minute to the bereaved. Grief therapists have learned that if death is from prolonged or serious illness there is grieving during the illness. The second year of grief may be as intense or even more emotionally devastating than the first year. However, no two people have the same grief timetable. If we feel that we are not making progress, is there some way to determine whether or not we may need professional help or evaluation or at least reassurance? The following considerations may help you decide:

- Extended withdrawal from the world around you and prolonged inability to accomplish normal tasks or participate in everyday activities.
- Self-imposed isolation where you do not want to be around anyone—friends, family or others.
- Becoming too scared to be alone. You must have someone around all the time.
- Anger or guilt that (a) is out of proportion, (b) does not fit the circumstances, (c) extends for a long time without retreating, or (d) may be directed toward or imposed on others close to you.
- Depression that is exaggerated, unremitting, prolonged and occurs in original intensity years after the loss.
- Anxiety that interferes with going away from home.
- Dependence on alcohol or medications to cope or forget.
- An emotional “logjam” resulting from an accumulation of losses over the years.
- Contemplating or attempting suicide to “get away from it all” or to join your child.
- Self-caused illness or physical health problems that do not go away, or the inability to separate the real from the imagined. This kind of illness is different from the “ailments” that most of us experience during the anniversary of our loved one’s death.
- Placing your child on a pedestal and forgetting his/her imperfections; or being unable to redirect your activities or to shift your focus, so that you can honor your child in a positive way.

- An absence of grief or a numbness, anxiety, sadness, or any kind of overall attitude that negatively affects others around you, including over-protectiveness of your loved ones.
- Converting all emotions into one or two favorite or “safe” emotions—like anger, boredom, or despair—which become all you are feeling, taking the place of grief.
- When talking does not seem to help or there is no one able to listen.

Libbyrose D. Clark, TCF, Deep East Texas
From information provided by
Vera Baron, LPC, and Ray Johnson, CSW



I Wonder

When did the sadness stop covering everything?

I don't know.

*It must have first been for moments,
then maybe hours,
days eventually.*

*Then for a long time
no longer ever-present,
but just below the surface
waiting for a thought to trigger it.*

*Now, the ingredients of my life
are suffused with contentment and joy,*

*but even so,
sadness can surface
unexpectedly*

*as the dark shape of loss
stirs the cauldron*

*and tears are added to the soup of life,
salty still,*

*but not as bitter
or overpowering,
adding an important flavor
to the whole of me.*

Genesee Bourdeau Gentry
From *Catching the Light*



You don't heal from the loss of a loved one because time passes;

You heal because of what you do with the time.

Carol Crandall



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 and receiving their helpful newsletter, 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). Call 615 342-8899 to confirm dates and times.

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.

Save the Date: Annual Picnic September 24!

**Our annual TCF Nashville Family Picnic
at Fannie Mae Dees Park
is a wonderful time to spend together
with our families.**

Mark your calendar!



Register Now for TCF National Conference July 15-17 in Minneapolis/St. Paul Minnesota

Compassionate Friends national conferences have always been a great healing experience for bereaved families and TCF's 34th National Conference July 15-17, 2011 in Minneapolis/St. Paul Minnesota will be no exception. With the motto "Shining Stars – Guiding Hope," the conference is open for registration.

Our members can register for the conference online or by downloading a conference registration brochure from the national website. If you don't have Internet access, you can also call the National Office Toll Free at 877-969-0010 to be sent the registration brochure or pick one up at this month's meeting.

This conference, which is anticipating 1200 to attend, will feature more than 100 workshops covering most areas of grief after the death of a child, including workshops for those with no remaining children, and also a complete program for bereaved siblings. Sharing sessions, a Reflection Room, Hospitality Suites, Butterfly Boutique, and a complete bookstore will be available at the conference, as well as an orientation for first-timers. There will be Friday afternoon and Saturday evening banquets culminating with a remembrance candle lighting at the close of the Saturday banquet. Special entertainment provided free Friday evening is the comedy "How to talk Minnesotan The Musical," the longest running stage play in the state. For full information, visit TCF's National Website at www.compassionatefriends.org and go to "TCF 2011 National Conference – Minneapolis" under News & Events.