

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.

Annual Balloon Release Set for June 12

The June meeting is a special one, for it marks the date of our annual balloon release in memory of our children. Families and friends of TCF are cordially invited to gather at our regular meeting place for this very special event.

Please plan to arrive early in order to have time to write a message to or about your child. (Paper, pens and biodegradable balloons will be provided.) The notes will be attached to the balloon's ribbon.

At 3:00pm we will walk to Centennial Park as a group for a brief ceremony. Following this, the balloons will be released and we will watch as they sail to the heavens until they are finally out of sight.

Immediately following the release, refreshments will be served. Any snack or treat that you can bring to share will be most appreciated. Don't miss this wonderful event!



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	Patti Drexler 834-8892
SIDS	Kris Thompson 931 486-9088
Murder/ Suicide	Joe Ladd 727-3284
Small Child	Kenneth and Kathy Hensley 237-9972
Drug/Alcohol Overdose	Ed Pyle 712-3245

*Time lets you heal
 Love lets you remember
 Give thanks for love and time.*

Sascha

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.



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 now open for early 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.

Parents

*Problems, dilemmas,
Flat tires, dead lights,
Father, the fixer,
Making things right.*

*Scraped knees, hurt feelings,
A painful ordeal,
Nurturing mother,
Helping things heal.*

*When Death comes calling,
What will they do
To cope with disaster
And get themselves through*

*The Hell of their lives
Going up in smoke,
And the healer is sick
And the fixer is broke?*

Richard A. Dew, M. D.
TCF Knoxville, TN
from Rachel's Cr



No person can sum up the life of another. Life is too precious to be passed over with mere words which ring empty. Rather it must remain as it is remembered by those who loved and watched and shared. Such memories are alive, unbound by events of birth and death. And as living memories, we possess the greatest gift one person can give another.

Charles Gaines
TCF Sugar Land-SW Houston

Farewell, small balloon... Sail on...

*Farewell, small balloon,
Sail on...
Colorful and carefree.
God speed you on your journey
As you float high into the heavens.
If only we could take flight...
And like you, slip the bond that holds us here.
And one day we shall.*

*Farewell, small balloon.
Sail on...
You are our appointed messenger.
Carry our love with you
To those that await your arrival.
Our own dear children who have gone
before
Watch eagerly as we gaze upward
Ever with us, yet so far away.*

*Farewell, small balloon.
Sail on...
You contain everything necessary
To carry you far away.*

*But you can only carry the smallest
portion of our love
For our precious children.
An unseen hand will part the veil
Between our world and theirs
Allowing the travelers to pass.*

*Farewell, small balloon.
Sail on...
Growing ever smaller as we watch.
Further away from us
And ever closer to those we love.
Tiny colored specks, our balloons first
appear.
With their outstretched arms
They await our gifts of love.
Guided from our hearts to their hands.*

*Farewell, small balloon.
Sail on...*

Lamar Bradley
TCF, Nashville, TN

The Butterfly in Our Lives



Most often we hear, in our Compassionate Friends circles, of the butterfly representing the lives of our children who have died. Their spirit lives on and our memories live on, often in fleeting moments. But I think the butterfly's life cycle — metamorphosis could just as easily represent our own lives. We seem to fit the four stages of the cycle.

THE EGG: When we are small, we are protected, changing, and living in a somewhat small and safe world — much like the butterfly egg attached to a leaf somewhere.

THE CATERPILLAR: The caterpillar is much like our lives before the death of our child or children. We go through the day doing what we need to do. We grow a lot and we change somewhat slowly. We devour many things in daily life — work, church, Little League. And then the child is gone. We change.

THE COCOON: After the death of our child, we shut ourselves off from so much because of our grief. We often encase ourselves in the blanket of grief and depression — that is what protects us from the horrible pain.

THE BUTTERFLY: The pain lessens and we begin to heal as we work through the grief process, and we begin to see a ray of light — a little color. Some of the weight is removed. We break open our cocoon and begin to reach out ever so slightly and touch life again, just to see if it will hurt too much. As we discover the brighter days and brilliant colors of life, we become more like the butterfly. We are free to once again be a part of life and we can move about more easily and begin to take some of the nectar from life.

Dale Tallant
TCF, Tulare, CA

Death of an Adult Child

Just as the family grieves the infant, the young child, and the adolescent, so do they grieve the death of their adult child, who is at the same time part of themselves and yet a separate person who has contributed to their lives over the years. For elderly parents who no doubt have known other losses, being predeceased by their child is intolerable and unnatural and produces a special sense of injustice and guilt. The natural order of the elderly dying and the young living is reversed. Many parents would willingly exchange their own lives for the life of their child. To have lived beyond their child seems intolerable. Cards, messages of support, phone calls are for the most part directed to the widows and surviving children. Grief on the death of one's child is not bound by age or circumstances.

From *A Child Dies*
by Joan Arnold and P. Gemma

A Grandparent's Lament

My seven-year-old grandchild was killed in a tragic accident. We had such wonderful times together. He was the shining light of my life and now he is gone. I feel sorry for my daughter and son-in-law, but they have lots of support from caring friends. No one seems to understand my agony. Grandparents mourn too.

The grandparent-grandchild relationship is very special. With quality time they provide the biggest laps, make few demands, and give many gifts. It has often been said that parents aren't supposed to bury their children. But neither are grandparents supposed to bury their grandchildren. When a child dies, both parents and grandparents have lost a part of their future—one of the most horrific blows that human beings can endure.

There is a double assault of grieving for a grandchild while witnessing the suffering of your daughter and son-in-law. Your grief work may be different. Memories and attachments are not the same. Each of you has been rocked in individual paths to the very depths of your being in the attempt to patch together pieces of your shattered lives. You must find a way to express what you are feeling or this suffering will stay inside you and fester. Seek out those with whom you can share your heartbreak. Pour out these emotions of grief and if necessary, repeat them time and again. Perhaps keep a journal for your eyes alone to flood out your sorrow. But most of all, talk. Talk to your friends, family, neighbors, clergy, support group or a professional counselor. How sorely you need their expressions of help, warmth, and understanding.

The death of your grandchild may also result in an even closer relationship with your daughter, son-in-law, and the rest of your family. Recall the unforgettable memories of the past as you search for a meaningful future. Even in your overwhelming despair you will realize that part of that child's life will live with you forever.

Rabbi Earl A. Grollman
From *Journeys*, April 2002
Newsletter of the Hospice Foundation of America

Sound Familiar?

*I seem to be falling apart.
My attention span can be measured in seconds,
My patience in minutes, and I cry at the drop of a hat.
I forget things constantly,
The morning toast burns daily.
I forget to sign my checks.
Half of everything in the house is misplaced.
Anxiety and restlessness are my constant companions.
Rainy days seem extra dreary.
Sunny days seem an outrage.
Other people's pain and frustration seem insignificant.
Laughing, happy people seem out of place in my world.
I am normal, I am told.
I am a newly grieving person.*

Eloise Cold
TCF, Phoenix, AZ

It's June

It might have been her wedding. It was supposed to be his graduation day; his friends are there—he is not. You had always planned to take them to Disneyland, but it is too late for that, now. When they died, they took some of your future as well; they took your dreams for them. They left a hole in your life and you will never feel completely whole again.

Should you accept those invitations to weddings and graduations? Only you know what is comfortable for you.

Give yourself all the room you need, no matter what anyone else says. Perhaps this year, you will want to send a card or gift instead of attending the event.

One mom said she left a graduation with mixed emotions. She ached for her son's place in line, getting his diploma; but she also felt honored to have been invited by her son's friend and proud when they brought her flowers "for Jim," and she loved hearing all the stories about her son that they shared.

What you have left is the love you feel for them, the memories that they left you—these will always be a part of you. In this way, they are a part of your future.

This is a very sad and difficult time for you, so do something nice for yourself today. Isn't that what your child would have wanted?

L. F. Skagit
TCF, Mount Vernon, WA

Father's Day

Every father believes in his role as protector of his family. He has been assigned the job of fixer and problem solver. He has been told since his youngest days that he must be strong—must not cry.

But each father among us has had to face that point where no amount of fixing, problem solving, and protecting has been able to stop our child's death. And, inside, we must ask ourselves about our failure, and we must face our lack of omnipotence.

Father's Day is often a forgotten holiday, overshadowed by the longer-standing tribute to mothers. But for the bereaved father it is a poignant reminder of bitter sweetness: sweet in the memory of a loved, now lost child; bitter for the death and pain and recognition of the inability to have stopped what happened.

Fathers do not often have a chance to share their hurts and concerns. Often they are unable to do so, a remnant of childhood learnings about the strength and stoicism of "big boys." A father may even be uncomfortable opening up to his wife, and the wife who pushes him to talk may be pushing too hard.

Father's Day does not have to be a time when everyone pours out of the woodwork to say, "I'm sorry we haven't talked. Let's do it now." But it can be a time when the family gives Dad a hug, does something special, helps with the chores and mostly, lets him know how important and needed and loved he is. It is some of these things that he has lost with the death of a child. And, like Mother's Day, the day set aside for fathers does not have to be limited to a Sunday in June. It can be any day and every day.

Fathers often show their hurt differently, often internally. **But they do hurt.**

Gerry Hunt
TCF, White River Junction

The Awakening

*This morning, upon my husband's pillow,
A tear.
Last night I heard no weeping
I felt no rhythmic shaking
Yet there it is;
Glistening, silent testimony to pain.*

*Quickly I reach to blot it
As if one swift brush
Could set the world right again
But something stays my hand,
Stops me to wonder:
Am I the cause of weeping?*

*In my life is much sorrow,
Dreadful longing and emptiness
That even my husband cannot fill.
Sorrow brings sleepless nights in fear
Of other phone calls and ambulances;
More longing and emptiness.*

*My husband shares this loss
But men don't cry;
They nod bravely and tend to detail
Make arrangements and give support.
Yet, there it is upon his pillow:
A tear.*

*Have I given way to grief
And forgotten one who shares?
Have I made no room for his tears
In the flood of mine?
Am I the reason he weeps
Only in the silence of night?*

*I close my hand
To leave the tear drying there.
No more will I blot out his pain
To tend to mine,
For we must share
In order to live: together*

Marcia Alig
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, NJ

One of the many mixed feelings a father will have on Father's Day will be one of failure—failure as a protector of his child who has died. The roles of protector and father are synonymous. The father's duty is both to love and to protect that child from harm. A man may intellectually know he did his best, but the child, his charge, is still painfully absent on this Father's Day.

Dick Moen
TCF, Indianapolis, IN

CHAPTER INFORMATION

The “Children Remembered” Listings

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on page 2 in The Children Remembered, please let us know, printing the exact way you'd like the child's name to appear, the child's birth and death dates, and the parents' names as they should be listed. You may call the database manager at 615 356-1351, drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205, or email us at davidg14@bellsouth.net. We'll be glad to include them. You need to contact us only once, unless any of your information changes.

Picture Name Tags

If you will bring a clear picture of your child, wallet size or larger, to a TCF meeting, Lamar Bradley will make a beautiful permanent name tag with your child's picture on it for you to use each month. You will also have an opportunity to select your own butterfly to accompany the photograph. The original photo will be completely safe with Lamar and will be returned to you at the following meeting. The best part of this is that there is no charge. A big thank you goes to Lamar for unselfishly giving his time and talent.

We Need Your Help

If you know a family outside the immediate Nashville area who has experienced the death of a child, regardless of age or cause of death, and you have access to the address (and phone number) of the parents, it would be most helpful if you would call us with that information. Our mission is to reach every bereaved family in Middle Tennessee, but we have to know about them in order to give them the support we ourselves have received. If you know the child's name, birth date, date of death and cause of death, so much the better. Our outreach chairperson will send a warm letter of sympathy and information about TCF along with appropriate brochures and articles. There will be no demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly confidential.



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.

Alive Alone

Alive Alone is an organization to benefit parents whose only child or all children have died.

Visit their website at www.alivealone.org.

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.