

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: lbradley1@mindspring.com

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

Treasurer: Jayne Head, (615) 264-8184, email: alanandgraysonsmom@comcast.net

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 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.

May 8 Meeting: *Honoring Our Memories*

The May meeting is an especially poignant one because it always falls on Mother’s Day, and since the June meeting is not on Father’s day, we like to give special attention to the role of both mothers and fathers in the lives of their children. If you have a special memory of a particular Mother’s Day or Father’s Day, we hope you will come prepared to share it with the group. We will honor all mothers with special readings and there will be a picture board to display your child’s photo. (Please bring a photo 5”x7” or smaller.) Keeping our tradition, each person in attendance will be given a carnation to wear in memory of their children. Regular sharing groups will follow.

This has always proved to be a very meaningful meeting—a safe place to be on a day filled with memories. We’d like to share it with you.



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

We survive the unthinkable. We survive for others. And then, very slowly, we survive for ourselves.
Because only through the good we do for others in her name
will the beauty of spirit, mind and body that was our daughter live forever.

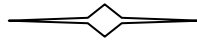
Kay Lokoff
TCF, Valley Forge, PA

TCF 2013 National Conference

July 5-7, 2013 in Boston, MA



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



Mother's Day Revisited

Many of us in TCF do not look forward to Mother's Day. On this holiday, when the whole nation is celebrating the joys of parenthood, grieving parents often feel a special anguish.

Mother's Day this year looms as a particularly difficult milestone for me. It is not only Mother's Day but also the second anniversary of the death of my ten-year-old son, Jacob. Because this day of private sadness also happens to be a day of public celebration, I decided that I should start thinking early about the occasion. I engaged in a little research about the holiday and learned a story that I think is worth sharing.

Mother's Day was the creation of a woman named Anna Jarvis in the early years of this century. Anna, who never married and never had children of her own, devoted herself to establishing a national Mother's Day as a way of honoring her beloved mother, who died on May 9, 1905. In Anna's view, her mother deserved a memorial because she had lived selflessly and endured considerable suffering - seven of her eleven children had died in early childhood. According to historians, Anna's mother mourned the deaths of her children throughout her life.

Anna insisted that the holiday always fall on a Sunday so that it would retain its spiritual moorings. Because of her efforts, President Woodrow Wilson finally proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. Although Anna couldn't prevent the new holiday from quickly becoming a marketing phenomenon, she did try. Speaking out against "the mire of commercialization" that threatened to engulf Mother's Day,

Anna attempted to preserve her creation as a true "holy day," a time for solemn reflection and prayer.

Mother's Day, then, was borne of a daughter's grief and love. More importantly, it was intended as a tribute to a bereaved mother—a brave woman who lost multiple children but who managed to live with an abiding kindness and generosity toward others. I like knowing this background, and my attitude towards Mother's Day has been colored by the knowledge. The holiday now makes me think of the common sorrow that links all bereaved parents. I feel a bond with Anna's mother that stretches over time and space. In a broader sense, the woman for whom the holiday was founded reminds me of people I've met at TCF who have continued to live productive, meaningful lives in the face of unthinkable loss.

Finally, Mother's Day in its origins symbolizes both the joy and the vulnerability inherent in parenthood. Anna's mother knew all too well that from the moment a child is born, hope and the possibility of tragedy go hand in hand. She understood the fragility of life.

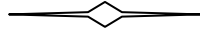
Enriched by its own history, Mother's Day is easier for me to tolerate. The coincidence of dates this year—Mother's Day and the anniversary of my son's death—is not as jarring as it once seemed. Although the commercial images of the modern Mother's Day still make me wince, I can turn off the television and envision the kind of day that Anna Jarvis had in mind: a time for quiet reflection and the sharing of cherished memories.

Barbara Atwood
In memory of Jacob
TCF, Tucson, Arizona

His Room

*Sun splinters through
The stained-glass unicorn still on the sill
Splattering black walls with color
Few things are as forlorn as a vacant room
Furniture gone, awaiting definition
Bare, yet there on the carpet
Imprints of chair and waterbed
And there is the hole he
Accidentally shot through the wall
And there and there and there
Nail holes that held pictures and posters
And eight-point antlers
And there... God, how can a place
So empty, be so full?*

Richard Dew
From *Rachel's Cry—A Journey Through Grief*
TCF, Oklahoma City, OK



Reinvestments — What Has Helped Me In My Grief Journey

Newly bereaved parents are always asking me if “it” will ever get better. I know from my journey through grief that the road is always changing. Sometimes it looks smooth and straight when all of a sudden a hairpin curve leaps in front of me without warning. Sometimes I have to maneuver through pothole after pothole.

Now I feel that I am at a fork in the road. I have choices to make on how I am going to travel this grief journey. For me the answer was obvious. With the death of my only child, I felt limited recourse. I was no longer a “practicing” parent. I would never be a grandparent. The only thing left for me to do was to help other parents who found themselves in this perilous situation.

I remember the first evening at the funeral home where my precious child was in state. The first person I went up to and hugged was a high school friend’s mother, whose own child had died eighteen years ago. I remember saying to her, “Now I know what you went through.” It is true. Only another parent whose child has died can truly understand the magnitude of the pain we all go through as bereaved parents.

The road is different for each parent. Everyone will deal with their grief in a different manner. There are many ways that parents can reinvest in life after the death of their child. This is what helped me.

Liz Hodge
TCF Southgate, MI

Anticipating Mother’s Day

Before we lost our children to death, Mother’s Day was a happy time. We each reflect back on Mother’s Days past.....gifts, cards, special memories and one day set aside to acknowledge the best in our relationship with our treasured children.

With the death of our child, this dynamic was forever transfigured. Now, instead of looking forward to this day, we grasp at anything that will keep our minds away from it. Yet the anxiety still creeps into our minds and hearts; our stomachs churn and tears fill our eyes at the most inopportune moments. The dreadful countdown begins in late April and lasts for nearly three weeks.

This is the fifth Mother’s Day I have endured since the death of my son. Each year I have the same, desperate anxiety, yet each year the day is a bit easier to handle. Each year the anticipation is far worse than the day itself.... “borrowing trouble” as my dad would say. Since my son is my only child, I do not have the comfort of other children nor do I have the need to put on a happy face. Instead, I am able to choose what I will do without feeling the burden of guilt.

The choice to embrace or ignore Mother’s Day is yours alone. Many bereaved mothers adopt a new perspective which honors their child and still gives normalcy to their family. Mother’s Day is bittersweet for us. The pain is part of the love that we will feel for our children for eternity. We wouldn’t trade one treasured moment for a cosmic reduction of our pain. Some of us plan the day carefully. Some of us just “go with the flow.” Some of us weep; some of us work. Some of us read, some of us revel in this special moment set aside just for mothers. Each of us makes a choice that is based on our own truth.

While my first Mother’s Day was filled with tears, subsequent Mother’s Days have been more subdued. The day itself is not nearly as overwhelming as the buildup of anxiety and sadness which precedes it. I have found this to be true of all holidays, birthdays, death anniversaries and special occasions. I am trying to live in the moment. When the moment of Mother’s Day happens, I will decide what I should do. I refuse to let others pressure me. I refuse to become maudlin over greeting card commercials and heart-grabbing point-of-purchase marketing efforts. I will not be manipulated by the agenda of others.

But on Mother’s Day, as on each day of the year, I will think of my son, remembering the child he was and the man he became. I will honor his life by doing the best I can with what is left of my life. I will remain in the moment and treasure my memories. And for this mother, that is enough.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

Gratitude.... The Key to Happiness

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude. I did not come upon this insight. I learned it from Dennis Prager, a wonderful and gifted man who is both author and talk show host for KNBC radio in Los Angeles. I give him all the credit. But I have thought a lot about this idea after my son, Mark, died five years ago tomorrow.

At first I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during The Compassionate Friends meetings. These were the people who seemed to have somehow re-entered the land of the living. How dare they greet each other with hugs. How dare they laugh. How dare they appear normal when their children have died. But over the last seven years I have learned three valuable lessons:

- Life goes on and we must too. Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that it is 11:00 in the morning and we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt. But then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget. But we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life. We choose to enjoy friends again. We choose to go out to dinner again. We choose to laugh again. I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us. The pain does not bring our child back. It only makes us miserable without end.

- Become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost. I see people in our chapter meetings who have gone through "every parent's nightmare" and want no part of life again. But, I ask that these compassionate friends also think about the ways they have been blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize: health, other children, a loving family, a career they enjoy, financial security, life in a free country, a faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse who they love. Nobody has it all. But compared to most of the world, we have a lot.

- The life we now lead will be better than it would have been. That does not make our child's death a good thing. It just means that our child's life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be better because our child lived, and we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don't "sweat the small stuff." We know what matters because we know what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt because we, too, have been there. We "know how they feel."

And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten. Each of us would do anything in the world to go back in time, but we can't. It is up to us now to go forward, and we can.

Richard Edler
TCF South Bay/LA, CA
In Memory of my son Mark Edler

Lilacs

*Come, look at May with me.
The world is music.
The lilacs laugh
and every meadow sings.*

*Your heart forgets to think
of spring or summer,
forgets the grief
that happened in the snow.*

*Until a memory
moves into sunlight
to bring the child,
the child who is not here.*

*Still look at May with me
and hear the music.
And—for a moment—
hear the lilacs weep.*

Sascha



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.

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.



*After the worst has happened,
 With nothing left to fear.
 The sun continues shining,
 With undiminished cheer.
 And winds continue blowing.
 And skies continue fair,
 As hearts continue bearing
 The thing they could not bear.*



Goodbye

*As the stars rise above, I see your beautiful face.
 In that very moment, I remember our special place.
 When you were born my heart sang out with joy,
 A warm body with curly hair,
 Not some little toy.
 Little darling with big brown eyes just for me
 My baby girl's finally here for the world to see.
 Then you left me way too soon.
 Now I always cry.
 My reason is I miss you so and I don't want this
 Goodbye!!*

Lovingly shared by SIDS Network Ohio Newsletter

Michelle Sonderleiter
 TCF Winnipeg, Canada



Entitled to Joy

This is grief. And it does soften over time.

*It softens like water softens rock, in its flowing, gentle, rushing, mysterious way.
 It softens like a sweet whisper of a memory that lulls you to sleep,
 knowing that love knits the bones of despair together,
 tighter, stronger, more curious, more delicious than ever before.
 Knowing that the fires of your being burn the dross of despair.
 Knowing that the chamber of the heart is strong beyond measure
 and can take it and transform the pain into joy.*

*Joy for having known this person, for a day or ten years or two months.
 Joy for having the courage to be.*

For knowing yourself in many garments.

For taking a risk to love anyone again: a neighbor, a friend, a cat, a lover, a stranger, yourself.

*The broken heart opens and mends itself.
 In the middle of the night, when no one is there but many are listening.
 Joy seeps into me.
 After all, I'm entitled.
 I'm a survivor.*

L. Nicole Dean
 In memory of Don