

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.

November 11 Meeting

Getting Off the Island of Grief

Grief is one of the loneliest places to dwell. Even though we make the effort to share with others and even seek help from professionals, it is ultimately all up to us, just ourselves, in the minute by minute decisions we make in handling this grief journey. Often it feels as though no one else could possibly understand our feelings.

Our November speaker, Jason Gibson, is the director of the Babb Center for Counseling in Hendersonville and he will speak to us on the loneliness of grief. Jason has bachelor's and master's degrees from Appalachian State and Florida State Universities and is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Kentucky. He draws from his experience as a parent, clinician, and researcher to deliver practical truths that are relevant to today's family. His work has focused on supporting families and children in all walks of life including those who struggle with emotional, behavioral, and cognitive disorders. He and his wife Julie have 3 children with a fourth one due in November.

Our regular sharing groups will follow. We hope you will be with us.



Candlelight Memorial Service Scheduled for December 9 in HCA Auditorium

The December memorial service will be here before we know it. It is important that **everyone** wishing to have their child's photo in the memorial service follow very carefully the instructions on page 8 of this newsletter. **THERE IS A SUBMISSION DEADLINE THAT MUST BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.** We invite all of you to enjoy this opportunity to see your child on the big screen! If you have not attended the candlelight memorial service, we encourage you to do so. This is a very moving and powerful program. All family members, siblings and friends are invited.

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

Your Compassionate Friend

*I can tell by that look friend, that you need to talk,
So come take my hand and let's go for a walk.
See, I'm not like the others—I won't shy away,
Because I want to hear what you've got to say.*

*Your child has died and you need to be heard,
But they don't want to hear a single word.
They tell you your child's "with God, so be strong."
They say all the "right" things that somehow seem
wrong.*

*They're just hurting for you and trying to say,
They'd give anything to help take your pain away.
But they're struggling with feelings they can't
understand,
So forgive them for not offering a helping hand.*

*I'll walk in your shoes for more than a mile,
I'll wait while you cry and be glad if you smile.*

*I won't criticize you or judge you or scorn,
I'll just stay and listen till the night turns to morn.
Yes, the journey is hard and unbearably long,
And I know you think that you're not quite that strong,
So just take my hand 'cause I've got time to spare,
And I know how it hurts, friend, for I have been there.*

*See, I owe a debt you can help me repay,
For not long ago, I was helped the same way.
And I stumbled and fell thru a world so unreal,
So believe when I say that I know how you feel.*

*I don't look for praise or financial gain
And I'm sure not the kind who gets joy out of pain.
I'm just a strong shoulder who'll be here 'till the end—
I'll be your Compassionate Friend.*

Steven L. Channing
TCF, Winnipeg, Canada



A thought to ponder as you search for something for which to be thankful...

As a parent you have known love ----
Some people have never known love --- in all their lives.

From "Helping Ourselves"
TCF, OK



A Fitting Tribute

*Came the darkness of new winter
We huddled together in frozen disbelief
Lowering your precious vessel into cold unfeeling earth.
No bird sang nor shone the sun to cast mocking shadows on our
despair.
A light went out in the world that day
Leaving us to shiver in the blackness of your absence.*

*Four seasons of our sadness have passed since that bleak day.
And now we return to put cold stone above your head.
It does not seem a fitting monument for a man of joy.
Too many tears have been shed,
I can weep no more.*

*Others may not believe
But every day your spirit comforts me.
Your voice still speaks within my heart.
And while I may long for the warmth of your hands on my
shoulders
I can feel your workings in God's plan.
I believe with perfect faith that no loss is forever.*

*Today I come to bury my grief
Tomorrow may we rejoice that you have lived and loved us
Erecting a monument of joy in life's celebration
Singing a eulogy of love for the broken-hearted,
Lighting an eternal flame of hope for those in despair.
In your loving memory let us seek to perfect the world
And in so doing, perfect ourselves.*

*I believe with perfect faith
That you are forever.
Your body may lie in this sorrowful ground,
But your spirit soars with the eagles
Still rages at injustice
Reaches out in loving kindness
Dances with the ecstasy of life that never ends,
And laughs deep in the belly to cleanse us of our mortal sadness.*

*Judy Gradford
TCF Rochester, NY*



The First Yellow Leaf

*Finding the first yellow leaf...
(how it reminds me of autumn)
Finding the first yellow leaf...
(how it reminds me of time).*

*Seems like another new year now.
Not the same year I began.
Nothing reminds me of changings
Quite like a summertime gone.*

*Finding the first yellow leaf
(will it remind me of grieving?)
Everything golden in summer
Turning to gray after fall...*

Sascha Wagner



I Never Believed...

I never believed I would see another season change with gladness.
I never believed I would see the world again without the haze of tears.
I never expected to actually laugh again.
I never felt my smile would return and feel natural on my face.
I never hoped for another day when I would not want to die.
I never envisioned a world that could again be bright and full of promise.

I believed that all that had passed from me the day he died and went away, never to return.
But I was wrong, and I know that in the fullness of your grieving, you too will come to understand that life goes on...that it can still
have meaning...that even joy can touch your life once more.

Don Hackett, TCF Hingham, MA

Gifts from Amy

I recently had to take part in the one-year anniversary of my precious daughter Amy's death, a day that we as parents never want to take part in. I was distressed as it really sank in that this was real and very final. Last year at this time I had been in such a state of shock that now, looking back, I began to realize the daze I was in for several months. This year I was in no such daze—the pain was all too real.

What could I do with this day? How could I make it through? In my pain I remembered one of the first things I had said when Amy died. I had expressed thankfulness for all the things she had taught me by being in my life. As I thought of this now, I began to write down all the many things. Soon I found I was taking my list a step further and listing all the things I had learned since Amy's death. I began to see my list as a list of gifts from Amy. Before Amy's death I had thought of myself as a religious person, going to church, believing in God, even knowing several Bible verses by heart. I was wrong. I have only now begun to see the difference in religious and spiritual. Only now, after Amy's death, have I embarked on my very own spiritual path. What greater gift could my child have left me!

I took my list and put it in a box, wrapped it up and tied it with a bow. I put the box in my closet. This time next year I will open the box and celebrate all the wonderful gifts my daughter has given to me. And I'm sure I will add more as the years go by.

Suzanne Owens
TCF, West Columbia, SC

Giving Thanks

*I can not hold your hands today,
I can not see your smile.*

*I can not hear your voices now,
My children, who are gone.*

*But I recall your faces still,
The songs, the talks, the sighs.
And story times, and winterwalks,
And sharing secret things.*

*I know you helped my mind to live
Beyond your time with me.
You gave me clearer eyes to see –
You gave me finer ears to hear –
What living means, what dying means,
My children, who are gone.*

*So here is is Thanksgiving Day,
And you are not with me.
And while I weep a mother's tears,
I thank you for the gift you were,
And all the gifts you gave to me,
My children, who are gone.*

Sascha



A Season of Many Feelings

Fall is a season of many feelings

*Autumn is here once again
As it comes every year.
And with the leaves
My falling tears.*

*This time of year
is the hardest of all
My heart is still breaking,
Once again it is fall.*

*Memories once so vivid
Are seeming to fade.
My time spent with you
Seems some other age.*

*This season reminds me
Of grief and of pain.
But yet teaches hope
And joy once again.*

*For trees are still living
Beneath their gray bark,
And you my sweet child
Are alive in my heart.*

Cinda Schake
TCF, Butler, PA

Helping Yourself Through the Holidays

The stores and malls are already filled with many of the signs and sounds of the holidays. Each year the frenzies of buying and selling seem to begin earlier and earlier. The merchants want to get as much as possible out of this time of the year so the world is bombarded with the “sights and sounds” of the season.

Most individuals look forward with a certain amount of anticipation to Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and Christmas. The one who has lost a sibling or a child this past year or even years before looks to this time of the year with great dread and even fear.

They wish, in a way, that they could go to bed on November 1 and wake up on January 2 of the next year.

The first holidays after the death of a loved one may be especially difficult for the survivors. If you or someone you know is facing the holiday season and dreading feelings of emptiness, there are a number of things you can do to cope. Don't be afraid to grieve if you need to and set aside time to be alone if you want. You can also relive the happy memories by talking about your loved one to those who care.

It has been suggested that people do what they want to do, whether that means staying home, going to religious services or visiting family or friends. If you seem to enjoy this time or a special event, don't feel guilty. Experiencing joy is giving and receiving. This doesn't mean that you have forgotten your child or sibling or that you loved him or her any less.

The griever enters this time of the year with a number of questions about their grief. They have a number of fears and concerns. Let's look at some of them so we can get a better understanding of what the griever sees in most cases:

First, there is the anticipation of the pain of the holidays—the pain of facing “the first” holiday without that very special child or sibling. Then there is the fear and pain of other people being happy and joyous when you are not and are very alone. We live in a family society and while everyone else will be with family, you will be alone or missing a family member!

Solution—Try to plan ahead to be with someone and spend the day or a few days with those you love. Don't make it a taboo to talk about your loved one and balance your time with others with some time alone for yourself.

Second, the fear of preparation for the holidays—Grief is very tiring and taxing. It drains those who are grieving. The holidays are also a very busy and tiring time, as we all know. The sending of cards, the buying, wrapping, cooking and

giving of gifts. The holiday parties and even the special holiday music and programs seem to make the griever not have any energy at all. They want to be alone and not be involved.

Solution—No one says that you have to do any of those things. If it makes you feel good to cook and bake and buy, do so—if it doesn't, don't. Don't allow others to put you into their mold.

If you decide to do things, make a plan and work it. Send out a few cards a day, buy a gift at a time, not all at once. Pace yourself—don't overdo it! It is most important that you don't impose things on yourself that you can't do.

You might want to use special ways to memorialize your loved one.

Suggestions may be:

- Give a gift in memory of your child, brother or sister.
- Attend a special memorial service and pay respect to those you love and miss.
- Make a special ornament and hang it on a tree in memory of your loved one.
- Do for others and it will make you feel good.
- Organize your shopping with a specific list and a budget.
- Divide responsibilities for meals, decorating or wrapping with your family.
- Take time for others—Contact your local churches or charities for information about serving food to the homeless or collecting gifts for needy children. This may be especially helpful if you're away from loved ones during the holidays.
- Take time for yourself—Enjoy the holiday season as best you can. The purpose of the season is to create happiness. And if you are happy, those around you will be, too!
- Be careful of “shoulds”—it is better to do what is most helpful for you and your family. If a situation looks especially difficult over the holidays, try not to get involved.

And don't forget: *Anticipation of any holiday is so much worse than the actual holiday.*

Keep a balance in your life and remember that you are loved.

Lee Drake, Ph. D.
From TCF National Newsletter

My Best Suggestion

How I struggled that first Thanksgiving after Wade died to see how in the world I could possibly be thankful. The idea came to me to separate the two – what I could never be thankful for, from those things for which I was still thankful in spite of the tragedy that had come. I wrote my two lists on paper, and it helped.

Janet Reindle
TCF, Houston NW Chapter

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 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. 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.

CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 9, 2012

Regardless of past participation, every family wishing to take part in the memorial service MUST return this form. We need to receive it no later than Saturday, December 1, 2012.

Do NOT send photos to the TCF P.O. box—they might get bent or damaged.

Mail to:
Steve & Paige Czirr
1623 Fair House Road
Spring Hill, TN 37174

Instructions: A computerized process (Power Point) is being used to display our children's pictures on the big screen. An original 5x7 photo (no copies, please) may be used. If a 5x7 is not available, any size will do; however, the 5x7 or larger is easier to process. The original photo will be returned to you at the memorial service while the image will be stored for use next year.

Place a sticky note on the back of the photo with the child's name clearly printed. Do not write on the photo itself.

Child's name: _____
Please print the name as you wish it to be read at the service along with phonetic pronunciation, if needed.

_____ I will attend and am enclosing an original photo of my child. (First time in the memorial service.)

_____ I will attend and am enclosing a different photo of my child to be used in place of the photo you have from last year's service.

_____ I will attend and would like for you to use the photo you have saved from last year.

_____ I will attend and would like for my child's name to be called and I'll light a candle, but I will not have a picture shown.

Your name _____ Phone _____

You may alternatively e-mail your child's picture to Steve Czirr at sczirr@att.net.
Be sure to include your child's name in the e-mail.

Holiday Gifts for Children Needed

Each year, our chapter donates holiday gifts to children at a worthy establishment that works with children who are not living at home and are under care for the holidays. Since things went so well with Youth Villages in years past, it has been decided to provide gifts to them again this year. The children range in age from 6 to 18. For many of these children, these will be the only gifts they receive this holiday season. If you would like to help this year, you may participate by bringing new UNWRAPPED gifts to the TCF December 9 Memorial Service. Below is a list of the most requested items.

Gifts:

CD Players/ MP3 Players
Art Supplies
Gameboy/Playstation games (teen rated)
Make up for Teens
Costume Jewelry (like that found in the malls at Claire's)
Remote control cars and planes
Girly things like journals, gel pens and scrapbooking items
Model cars
Board Games
Baby and Barbie dolls and accessories
Lego sets
Trucks
Disney movies
Watches (boys and girls)
Gift cards
Stocking Stuffers:

Matchbox cars
Small notepads
Pens and pencils
Candy
Jewelry
Hygiene products
Billfolds and wallets
Cute little change purses for girls
Makeup items
Socks
Gift cards for fast food restaurants

Once again, remember, these items may be brought in gift bags with tissue paper, but DO NOT WRAP the gifts. Youth Villages staff does the wrapping as it helps them to more evenly distribute the donated items.