

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 10 Program:

Dr. David Martin to speak:

**“You’re Not Going Crazy,
You’re Grieving”**

Partially retired since 2004, professor and clinical psychologist David Martin has spoken to groups on grief since 1973 from Toronto to Portland to Miami. One of TCF’s most treasured friends, David’s talk will focus on the real struggle most of us have with trying to identify what is normal in grieving. How many of us have asked the question, “Am I losing my mind?” Also, we often get messages from our friends and family that somehow we are not grieving as we should be. David says, “My deepest hope is that I can be of some help to you.”



NOTICE: Our November 10 meeting will be held in the HCA auditorium and there will be NO refreshments. We will have a birthday table for mementos and photographs, but again there can be no food. The HCA Auditorium is adjacent to our regular meeting space in the cafeteria.

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

Candlelight Memorial Service Scheduled for December 8 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.

CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 8, 2013

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, November 30, 2013. 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 czirrs@gmail.com
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
 Remote control cars and planes
 Girly things like journals, gel
 pens and scrapbooking items
 costume jewelry
 Model cars, Board Games, Lego
 sets

Baby and Barbie dolls and
 accessories
 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

DO NOT WRAP THE GIFTS

Thanks

JUST FLOW WITH THE SEASON AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

We're well into November and it's almost time to take the "January pill". After Tricia died I decided I'd invent a pill you could take the week before Thanksgiving and when you came to, it would be January! I'm still working on the invention. In the meantime, I know many of you are already dreading the approaching holidays.

The true spirit and meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas are not necessarily exemplified by some of our "traditions". You are re-evaluating many aspects of your life so let this also apply to the coming holidays. You will not always feel as you do now. You will find joy in holiday activities, but maybe not in all the things you once thought so very important.

Flow with the season and with your sadness, knowing strength will come as you work with what you can do without overtaxing yourself. Resolve to be as generous with your energy as you can and as selfish as you have to be to protect the emerging person you will become as a result of your loss. This person can be truly beautiful and loving because of what you have learned through grief.

You will miss your child; no magic potion can wipe the pain away. Enjoy what you can—you deserve some pleasure. And may some measure of peace overtake you before this year ends.

Elizabeth B. Estes
TCF Augusta, GA
In Memory of Tricia

Thanksgiving

I remember—

*the inability to chew or swallow
that first Thanksgiving after Linda died;
the choked-back tears, the sick heart,
the hollowness, the painful memories
of Thanksgivings past, and the
blessed relief sleep brought to my pain..*

I remember—

*the busyness of working as a volunteer
that second and third Thanksgiving
after Linda died;
and the good feeling it gave me of
"running away" from it all, and the
blessed relief sleep brought to my pain.*

I remember—

*the inability to prepare any of her
favorite foods that fourth Thanksgiving
after Linda died;
the tears that fell at the smell of
turkey cooking, the parade, football
games, the emptiness, the incomplete
family, and the blessed relief sleep
brought to my pain.*

I remember—

*awakening with a lightness and joy in
my heart that fifth Thanksgiving
after Linda died;
the thankfulness for having my remaining
family together, the beautiful
memories of past Thanksgivings, the
"wholeness" of me, and the blessed
relief peace brought to my pain.*

Priscilla J. Norton
TCF, Pawtucket, RI



Right now

take a moment,

close your eyes

and remember

the smile of your child!

Sascha



Dwelling on Our Loss

To an outsider, the idea of meeting with a group of people for the purpose of discussing death, our personal experiences with the death of our children, the "grief process," etc., may seem grim if not altogether morbid. All of us who are involved in The Compassionate Friends have run into someone who has asked, "Why do you do this?" or "Why don't you just try to let it go?"

The idea of "dwelling on the loss" is always stated with negative connotations, yet dwelling on the death of a child is not something we can avoid. Indeed, "dwelling" is part of the healing process. It's how we come to grips with the questions "Why, what if...?" that uncontrollably pop up in our minds, and it is how we learn to accept the unacceptable.

Certainly, there is a wealth of information in books dealing with death and dying. Our faith, our pastors, priests, and rabbis have much to contribute to our healing. Psychologists, psychiatrists and therapy may be necessary.

The Compassionate Friends encourages grieving parents to utilize any or all of the above tools, but we also realize the value of learning to verbalize, openly, publicly, the grief and the loss we feel . . . not in the privacy of our doctor or minister's office, where we are very sheltered, but openly among people who know full well how hard it is to say, "My child is dead." We do not put any pressure on people attending our meeting to say anything, but the beautiful part of this group is that it enables you to see people who are "down the long road" a way further and to realize that you will be there in time.

Are we dwelling on our loss? Absolutely. But we are learning to dwell on it constructively, to dwell on it without guilt and without the isolation we have all felt. We learn how to reach out (in time) to others with a compassion that brings healing to others as well as to ourselves.

Philip Barker
TCF, California

Endowment

*Hope gives us vision for regaining
the tenderness of memories.
Hope carries us through
to survival and healing.*

*Hope offers us courage
for acceptance and overcoming.
Hope gives us
new spirit and new laughter.*

*Hope is among the greatest gifts
to be found in time of sorrow.
But hope cannot restore on earth
what is lost to death.
Hope can only go forward
and make us new.*

Give space to hope in your life.

Sascha Wagner

Empty Places

*I drove the old way yesterday.
It'd been a while, you see.
And there, without a warning,
the pain washed over me.*

*I drove the old way yesterday
and sadness came on strong,
taken back by so much feeling,
since you've been gone so long.*

*Places seem to lie in wait
to summon up the tears,
to say remember yesterday,
those days when you were here.*

*Places where you laughed and played
are places where I cry.
These places hold the memories
that will live as long as I.*

Genesse Gentry
TCF Marin County, CA
In Memory of Lori Gentry

*It turns out that time doesn't heal all wounds.
Instead, time is a gift we're given to grow
accustomed to living with wounds.*

Bill Tammeus, *Kansas City Star*

A Sibling Dies

For Don

It is January first. My heart twinkles once again because the holidays are over. How can a season of light bring so much dark? Thirty years ago, on Christmas morning, my brother died in our home by suicide in a very violent manner. He was 23; my other brother was 24; and I was 19 years old.

Our family of five was irretrievably shattered. Don, my brother who died, was so much a part of us. He brought so much joy in his living and then so much pain in his dying. Who am I to grieve him still? The memories well up every December like a deep dark night unbidden. Anger, sadness, rejection, guilt become my Christmas ornaments. "Give me back my family - give me back my Christmas, you creep, Give me back your laughter," I want to shout at him. Who am I to miss him? Who am I to rage when he was the one in the grips of a pain so untenable that he could not speak of it, but only act upon it? Who am I to cry?

Well, I'm entitled. I'm a survivor after all. One doesn't get there on a water slide, if you know what I mean. When Christmas rolls around, I do my dance with grief once again. Some years, it's a waltz; other years a tango. It doesn't seem to matter if it's two, twenty or thirty years since my brother died, I get out my dancing shoes. I don't go looking for pain like some wacky masochist. It finds me. Some years I announce - around November 25th, "I'm over this." I act accordingly. I shop for Christmas Cards and don't go near my dancing shoes. It doesn't matter. They find me. It's not like I didn't have therapy. I've had dance therapy, art therapy, regular therapy, travel therapy, friendship therapy, biofeedback/hypnosis therapy, creampuff therapy, swimming therapy, forgiveness therapy, spiritual community therapy, law school therapy . . . Law School therapy? The fun had to end somewhere. Seriously, losing a sibling is heart wrenching and no laughing matter. It took me ten or fifteen years to truly laugh again, let alone make light of myself. That just happened this year. No doubt, because I am writing of it, rather than speaking of it, which I rarely do. It feels safer to write. Other than to therapists, I've spoken of his death to three people in thirty years. Who could understand, I felt, and why diminish his being or expose myself?

I adored my brother Don - he made me laugh like a monkey. I adore both my brothers; as a child they were my world. Not very healthy perhaps, but it worked for me. Home life was chaotic and quite frightening because my father was more than a little nuts. My mother's energy was spent containing his insanity and keeping our bodies and souls together. She was part steel, part angora. We never spoke of Don after his death. The community ostracized us; my father took a trip down devil's lane, and my mother mourned my brother until the day she died. I'm sad to say that we never had Don's picture in our home again, because the pain was too severe. It seems we could not get past it. We went to our separate corners and quietly mourned. It was different years ago; so much remained hidden. Self-healing groups were non-existent, shrinks were stigmas, and the Catholic Church unforgiving.

I couldn't save him. I was the last person he talked with on Christmas Eve. For months, I barely spoke and relived the shock daily. I ate a lot. Death by mashed potatoes. That was sure to bring him back. I retreated into a private world for several years where if I wasn't dead, I'd sure like to be. 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.

By © L. Nicole Dean
In memory of Don

This Thanksgiving



*This Thanksgiving and always,
Through the grief,
Through the tears,
Through the loneliness,
Through the fears,
WE ARE THANKFUL*



WE HAD OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Khaki Chambers
TCF, Pensacola, FL

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. Diane Castellano, LCSW is a grief counselor there for children and their families. Call her at [615 327-1085](tel:6153271085).

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.