

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.

October 13 Program:

Handling the Holidays

The holidays are coming. How do you deal with this special time of the year when you're hurting so badly? Your child has died, and all the traditions of the past seem impossible to navigate. Some members of our chapter who have managed to memorialize their child or children during the holidays, as well as make these days special for their other family members, will share with us solutions they have found to be helpful.

We would especially like for our old timers to come with their experiences and suggestions for handling the holidays. Our newly bereaved friends need you. We're hoping to help make this a gentle season for all bereaved parents—a time for remembering the love and blessings our children brought us rather than the anguish of losing them.

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



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 6 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	Ron and Darlene Henson	615-789-3613
Small Child	Kenneth and Kathy Hensley	615-237-9972
Alcohol/Drug Overdose	Ed Pyle	615-712-3245

Who was That Person? An Eight Year Retrospective...

Who was that person? He looks like me. He talks like me. But I don't think I know him anymore.

Who was that person? He had so many friends. He was popular at cocktail parties and told good jokes. Today, he seeks out one person he can really talk to and that is enough. His contact list is a lot smaller, but so much more important.

Who was that person? He had such different priorities. He skated over life like an ice skater on a frozen pond. He never thought about how cold the water was. Now he reaches out to people who hurt because he knows how they feel. He has felt the ice water.

Who was that person? He had an orderly chronological sense of time. Now the world is divided forever into simply "before" and "after."

Who was that person? He used to rush through dinner or cut the family vacation short to get back to the office. Now he thinks back to the family times as the most wonderful times of his life. He knows what is irreplaceable.

Who was that person? He used to worry about so many troubles, most of which never happened. Now he spends most of his time in the present. He appreciates today's sunset, simple things, and good friends. He knows how precious each moment is.

Who was that person? He used to think about what he wanted to get out of life. Now he thinks about how grateful he is for the gifts he has had.

Who was that person? He used to measure his goals in terms of where he was going. Now he focuses on what his life will have been about. He asks less and less why his child died and more often: "Why did he live?"

Who was that person? He had never heard of The Compassionate Friends. Now they are his best friends. And he knows that by helping someone else through TCF, he also helps himself.

Who was that person? I don't think I know him anymore.

Richard Edler
reprinted from TCF National Magazine

Why Is This Grief So Different?

Grief following suicide includes all the emotional, physical and behavioral responses usually found after a loss. Yet, because suicide is like no other death, the grief following this loss may also feel different. It is a death that begs an explanation; and when research for that explanation is exhausted, there will still be the unanswerable, haunting question "Why?" which has echoed down throughout the centuries.

What the search reveals, however, is that most suicide victims would have preferred to live, but at the time felt they could not. There is some scant comfort in knowing that your loved one was not so much choosing to leave you as choosing to end their own private despair. But whether the death was an attempt to end the pain or an impulsive act, the pain is now left on your doorstep...

Excerpted from *Suicide, the tragedy compounded.*

*A friend said to Socrates who had wept for his dead son,
"Why do you weep? Nothing can bring him back."*

Socrates replied, "That is why I weep."

I Can Choose:

To Be a Survivor	Or	Be a Victim
To seek out people and resources who will listen and care when I need support	OR	retreat from life and isolate myself from sources of support.
To search for meaningful things to give my life a sense of purpose	OR	decide I have no hope or purpose in life and that I have nothing to live for.
To realize that loss is only one of the many factors in my life	OR	see myself only as a bereaved parent and allow this to blacken and disrupt all aspects of my life.
To communicate with family and friends when I need information and help	OR	wait for others to discover what I need, getting angry and pitying myself when they don't.
To accept what is gone and out of my control and act on what I can do	OR	constantly pity myself over what has changed and what I can't do.
To try to understand how my family feels—they hurt too	OR	feel that absolutely no one can understand me and what I am going through.
To look for ways to fight back against negative feelings	OR	feel that I am helpless and at the mercy of fate.
To talk about fears with someone I trust	OR	bottle up fears and horrors that are unexpressed and let them have power over me.
To accept my grief as a recovery process in my recovery from loss	OR	be ashamed of my grief and pretend all is well to protect others' discomfort.
To be angry at the circumstances of the death and seek comfort and strength from God or others	OR	blame God for my circumstances and become angry, bitter and alienated from Him.

Adapted from *Positive Patterns of Survival*
A segment of the *I Can Cope* course
TCF, Australia

Something to think about...

A whole and happy person has to fight battles, suffer from exhaustion, overcome bad memories, possibly do some forgiving, accept responsibility for his words and actions, and endure life's trials and challenges. After being wounded so cruelly by the deaths of our children, it seems easier to draw in and let the world go by, and maybe this is a necessary state to some extent during that year of firsts. But it is not productive health-wise to allow it to become a lifestyle. Some people have *actively* grieved for the rest of their lives. In effect, two deaths occurred: their child's and their own. It's important to consider that we have a choice concerning the paths our lives will follow. Also, we need not feel guilty about feeling improved and happier down the road from our child's death. Our children would not want us to be unhappy.

Helen Armstrong
TCF, Pikes Peak, CO

Hope

It is the gift of hope which reigns supreme in the attributes of The Compassionate Friends.
Hope that all is not lost. Hope that life can still be worth living and meaningful.
Hope that the pain of loss will become less acute and, above all else,
the hope that we do not walk alone, that we are understood.
The gift of hope is the greatest gift that we can give to those who mourn.

Reverend Simon Stephens
TCF Founder

Trick or Treat

*The night is dim
And the pumpkins grin
At children on the porch.*

*The doorbell rings
“Trick or treat” they sing.
My heart burns like a torch.*

*The Dracula’s face
And a princess in lace
Are peering in at me.*

*How I’d love to ask
“May I lift your mask?”
And hiding, there you’d be!*

*You’d get such a kick
From that silly trick.
But disguised you must stay.*

*In the wind that blows
My heart still knows
You’re playing October charades.*

Kathi Slief
TCF, Tulsa, OK

Nature’s Rainbows

*We held them in our parent arms
For days or weeks or years.
Now we hold them in our hearts
And cry the darkest tears.*

*The cord attached to children,
Eternally fine and strong.
We never leave the missing,
It holds us all life long.*

*Our children now inside us –
Our souls tattooed with gold.
Their love, their words, caresses,
Are hugs that we still hold.*

*If we are open to the knowledge,
That they aren’t completely gone,
We will sometimes feel their touching,
Sometimes soft and sometimes strong.*

*When they show us nature’s rainbows,
We can feel their proud delight,
Sending signs to show they’re living,
Only far beyond our sight.*

Genesse Gentry
TCF, Marin County CA

People Think

*People think we’re fine, you know.
They say, “Oh, siblings heal so fast.”
But they don’t know the empty feelings
Of our longing for the past.*

*People think we’re fine, you know.
“Look how they’ve resumed their lives,” they say.
But they don’t know of our troubled heart
Or the loneliness from day to day.*

*People think we’re fine, you know.
“See how they’re getting over it?” they surmise.
But, they don’t know that we’ve
Learned to laugh and smile
Only to complete our broken heart’s disguise.*

Mary Matthews
TCF, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Scribblings

*The scribblings of a child
How precious can they be,
The scribblings of a child.
It depends on where you find them—
Sometimes on the table,
Sometimes on the floor,
Sometimes on the bottom of a dresser drawer.*

*The scribblings of a child
What joy comes to my soul.
When on a certain given day,
In an unsuspecting way,
The scribblings I discover
Are of a child who’ll write no more.*

Mary Pauley
TCF, LaGrange, IL

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.

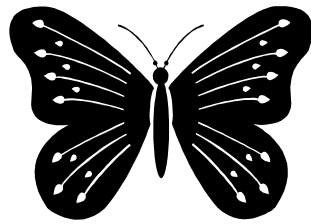
Diane Castellano, LCSW is a grief counselor there for children and their families. Call her at [615 327-1085](tel:6153271085).

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.

The ultimate goal of the grief work is to be able to remember without emotional pain and to be able to reinvest emotional surpluses. While the experience of the grief work is difficult and slow and wearing, it is also enriching and fulfilling. The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss and have found their way out of depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross
From: *Death: The Final Stage of Growth*



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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