

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 #3 at 2545 Park Plaza 37203, just north of Centennial Park off of 25th Avenue, North. If the chain at the street entrance to Building 3 is not down, do not lower it. Drive back to Building 1 at 2501 Park Plaza. Enter the parking lot there, then drive down to the third building. We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.

September 14 Meeting Cultivating Hope: The Journey Though Loss

Dr. Gina Frieden will be our guest speaker on Sunday, September 14. She is Assistant Professor of the Practice in Human and Organizational Development at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University and Director of the Human Development Counseling program.

An overwhelming sense of despair and anguish can follow the loss of a child. Hope nurtures the soul and leads to a renewed sense of purpose and meaning. Gina will share with us multiple paths and unique strategies that assist grievers in mourning and adaptation. Join us to hear one of our favorite speakers and build hope together September 14. Regular Sharing Groups will follow this talk.

WE HAVE A NEW MEETING PLACE: 2545 Park Plaza 37203

We will continue to meet on the second Sunday of each month at 3:00 p.m. Our new building is 2545 Park Plaza, HCA Building #3. The exterior is a dark brown color with dark tinted windows. The chain should be down at the street entrance to our parking lot which faces the entrance to our building. If the chain is blocking the entrance to Building 3, do not take it down. Drive back to Building #1 at 2501 Park Plaza. Go in that entrance and drive through the parking lots past Building #2 and on to #3. Come on in and you will see the signs directing you to room 110. We look forward to seeing you there.



Our August program featured a panel of nine TCF Nashville members who attended the 2014 National TCF Conference in Chicago. It was inspiring to hear them speak of the love and acceptance they experienced there, as well as the things they learned to help them on their grief journey. They all related the feeling of being at home with a truly compassionate family at this great conference.

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Dallas, Texas, will be the site of the 38th TCF National Conference July 10-12, 2015. "Hope Shines Bright ... Deep in the Heart" is the theme of next year's event, and will be held at the Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas. We'll keep you updated with details in this newsletter, and you can read about it on the national website, www.compassionatefriends.org, as well as on the [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) as details become available. Plan to be a part of next year's heartwarming experience.

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



“I have been trying to make the best of grief and am just beginning to learn to allow it to make the best of me.”

Barbara Lazear Ascher

About Compassion

We do know about compassion well enough, don't we? Compassion means empathy—identifying with someone else's experience. For instance, one of the most important components of compassion is also the most difficult to achieve: it is the loving willingness and ability to suspend one's own wisdom and convictions in order to acknowledge and fully recognize someone else's experience. This is often primarily an emotional experience.

There are lots of genuinely caring people, like me. We are compassionate most of the time—we listen well, we do not necessarily have to have our opinions heard at all times. Yet often (and with the most loving of intentions) we give advice and comfort from our own point of view. Of course, the advice is mostly very good advice. The comforting comes from deeply valid and patently useful insights. But does it come too soon? Should it come at all?

The best advice, reasoning or uplifting comments are of limited value to those in grief. What they need is emotional, spiritual and even practical "soul support." The word compassion means, after all, a passion shared, "feeling life together." Have you ever been with someone who, for a time genuinely tried to understand and know your experience? Someone who did not try to reduce, divert or diminish your grief, someone who accepted the way you felt, accepted your reasons, did not contradict you? That is the greatest gift of compassion: to have at your side a person who accepts your grieving life as closely as possible, without imposing advice, critical comments (however gently offered) or trying to "soothe" your feelings by means of an emotional veil.

Think about it: when someone stands with you, listening to your experience, this works something like an orthopedic cast (not an elegant comparison, but...) It supports the broken spot, keeps it from sustaining further damage, allows it to heal. It leaves to your own inner strength the chance to overcome, rather than straining your grief with admonitions, cautions, well-intentioned advice. It reflects the part of you, now hidden, that will be strong enough to survive. If only for a while, someone's compassion braces you against the winds of pain, like the tender tree needs a brace until its roots can hold its own.

Compassion does not require agreement with what may seem like unreasonable notions (grief is not "reasonable.") Compassion means accepting grief reactions without trying to "fix" them. Thus we support the griever in finding her/his own (slow) solutions—an indispensable tool for survival, healing and restoration. And in accepting a griever's reactions, we give one of the other great gifts which compassion provides: We are also saying, "I believe in you. Trust yourself."

Sasha Wagner
TCF, Aurora CO

Deep in my Heart

*Happy little memories
Go flitting through my mind,
And in all my
Thoughts and memories
I always seem to find
The picture of your face, my child,
The memory of your touch,
And all the other little things
I've come to love so much.*

*You cannot go
Beyond my thoughts
Or leave my love behind,
Because I keep you in my heart
And forever in my mind,
And though I cannot tell you,
I think you know it's true
That I find daily happiness
In every memory of you.*

Ruby Gibson
TCF, Anderson, SC

*It's not what happens to us, but what we do with
what happens to us that matters.*

Dr. Howard Olds
Brentwood United Methodist Church
At the funeral service for a small child

Beyond Surviving

Hundreds of books have been written about loss and grief. Few have addressed the aftermath of suicide for survivors. Here again, there are no answers; only suggestions from those who have lived through and beyond the event. I've compiled their thoughts.

1. Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with "why" it happened until you no longer need to know "why" or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings but all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy – you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will act on those thoughts.
8. Remember to take one moment or one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. Don't panic if emotions return like a tidal wave. You may only be experiencing a remnant of grief; an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and with others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you *what* or *how* to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as The Compassionate Friends or Survivors of Suicide groups. If not, ask a professional to help start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, i.e. headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, etc.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and go beyond just surviving.

Iris Bolton
TCF, Savannah, GA

Birthdays That Will Never Be

*Today is your birthday and here I stand
At your grave with flowers in hand
For this is the day that you were born
That you're not here, it's a day to mourn
I stand here and tears run down my face
I want to hold you and feel your embrace
To hear "Mom, I love you" just once again
To have things the way they should have been
It hurts that flowers I have to give you
That parties and presents will no longer do
To sing "Happy Birthday" with ice cream
and cake*

*That this can't be makes my heart break
Because all I have are the ones gone past
The birthdays of yesterday will have to last
But I wish you "Happy Birthday" and remember
those days
Of your joy and laughter and gentle ways
In those ten years you were such a pleasure
I'm thankful the memories are mine to treasure
This day will never be the same for me
As I think of the birthdays that will never be*

Carolyn Bryan
In loving memory of John Michael Bryan
TCF, Orange Park/Jacksonville

The Living Shrine

*A shrine there is
within our house
A shrine created
with my spouse
A shrine to call
the thoughts so dear
Of our child
no longer here.*

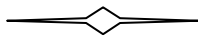
*A shrine not of
the morbid climes
But rather one
of happy times
Of days gone by
when in our mid
We shared in life
this wondrous kid.*

*This shrine is not
of wood and stone
For it is housed
in flesh and bone.
It does not have
an altar place
Nor will you find
a display case.*

*Contained there is
that memory
Of thoughts we hold
in reverie
A shrine of deeds
we hold in pride
When our newborn
was by our side.*

*No others see
our thoughts of gold
About our child
who now lies cold
But we shall keep
within our mind
This honored place
Our living shrine.*

Guy Rall
TCF, Houston/West, TX



In three words, I can sum up
everything I've learned about life:
It goes on.

Robert Frost

Healing Does Happen

Parents sometimes ask, "Does it ever get any better?" From my own experience and that of many parents to whom I've talked, I can truthfully say, "Yes, it does." However, it takes time, and it takes work.

When our daughter died, the pain was almost physical at first. I thought of her all day, every day. I found that what helped me most was keeping busy, not trying to take in the finality of it all at once, receiving the support of friends, family and church and my believing that our daughter was now with God. I tried to concentrate, as time progressed, not on what I had lost, but on what she had gained.

I felt in my grief that it was a choice of being over-controlled or out of control, so I decided to choose the former. From my present perspective, I think this was a mistake. Our family, I think, would have worked through our grief in a better way had we been more open with each other about the grief we felt. I think that many of the problems we faced after our daughter died were really due to our grief, which was unrecognized and unresolved because it was unexpressed. It was compounded by the earlier death of our infant son, who had been born prematurely and for whom we had not been encouraged to grieve fully when he died.

At that time, fourteen years ago, we were not aware of any guidelines for the grieving parent. It was difficult to find the sense of direction which some excellent books on grief now offer. I have learned more about grief and the grieving process in the almost three years of involvement with The Compassionate Friends than I had in the previous eleven. Slowly, however, we did begin to heal. Memories, even happy ones, at first had been only painful; now they began to bring some smiles. From sorrow and regret we moved to acceptance.

Life is different; we are not the same people, but we are happy again. We have been fortunate in the birth of our son, who is not a replacement for our other children, but who does help us feel more like a family again. We now are more appreciative of the time we have together and do things we might earlier have put off until "someday." Of course, we have times when we become irritated or upset with each other; family life often can lead to some friction. But we also realize that minor irritants are not major problems.

The sky we see is no longer the leaden gray of grief and has not been for many years. This is not to say we never have an unhappy moment. Our children have died; we will always regret this and wish it were not so. But now we deal more with the memories of grief, rather than grief itself. Our sky is blue although there still is, as Father Ken Czillinger expressed it, a small puff of cloud which will always remain. Our lives are different now but happy. My wish for you is that this will soon be true for you as well.

Barbara Cook
TCF, Birmingham, AL

CHAPTER INFORMATION

The “Children Remembered” Listings

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on pages 2 and 3 in The Children Remembered list, 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.

TCF Nashville Sibling Support

We encourage siblings from teens to adults to come support one another at our monthly chapter meetings. Siblings face a unique and complicated grief journey and are finding hope and healing through our Sharing Groups.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

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.

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).

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. See www.nationalshare.org

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.

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.