

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

NEW MAILING ADDRESS: P. O. Box 8283 • Hermitage, TN 37076 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) •

Nashville Website: www.tcfnashville.org



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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 at the ABC (Associated Builders and Contractors of Greater Tennessee) Building, 560 Royal Parkway, Nashville, TN 37214 (**SEE NEW MAILING ADDRESS ABOVE**).

We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.

April 9 Program:

Attending the TCF National Conference—a panel discussion

Our April 9 program will consist of a panel of our own members who have attended several National TCF Conferences. They will share heartwarming memories of their conference experiences and helpful tips such as how to sign up, enjoy the traditions of the conference, how our children are honored and remembered during the event, the sibling program, and other facets of this enriching and supportive event. See page 6 of this newsletter for some general information about the conference.

Our regular sharing tables will follow. We hope to see you there.



Newsletter Renewal Deadline this month!

Periodically we review our mailing list to make sure that people who receive our newsletter still wish to receive it, and ensure we are making the best use of gifts and donations to keep operational costs down. Everyone who wants our newsletter may receive it free of charge, but some may no longer want it.

If you wish to continue receiving the newsletter, you must complete the form on page 7 and return it.

If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, you don't need to return it and your name will be removed from our mailing list.

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 DeathMike and Paula Childers
615-294-4959

AIDS..... Joyce Soward
615-754-5210

Illness..... David and Peggy Gibson
615-308-2520 or 615-504-4307

Infant..... Jayne Head
615-264-8184

SIDS.....Kris Thompson
931-486-9088

Suicide.....Ron Henson
615-789-3613

Alcohol/Drug Overdose.....Ed Pyle
615-712-3245

*We remember our children with love and gratitude. We miss their faces,
their voices and their smiles. And we do not forget--*

In the month of their births—

Patrick Jonathan Bruce, Jr.
(Jon)
April 18
Son of
Patrick and Pam Bruce

Sherry Hooten
April 15
Daughter of
James and Ann Flatt

David Benton Lowe
April 26
Son of
Charles and Teresa Lowe

Daniel Wayne Vick
April 5
Son of
Wayne and Marsha Vick

Mark Joseph Dinkel
April 27
Son of
Richard and Kathleen Dinkel
Brother of Amy

Michael Hunt
April 13
Son of
Robin Hunt

Viktoria "Tori" Nicks
April 22
Daughter of
Brad and Amanda Nicks

Janessa Dian Wellman
April 24
Daughter of
Timothy and Debra Pharris
Granddaughter of
Glen and Dian Wellman

Kenneth Elberson
April 17
Son of
Harry and Winnie Elberson

**Christopher Lincoln
Kingsborough**
April 21
Son of
Paul and Lydia Kingsborough

Mark "Brutus" Ryman
April 2
Son of
Charlie and Gay Ryman

Don Bruce Winters
April 16
Son of
Jerry and Loretta Winters

Aaron Garner
April 30
Son of
Don and Vicki Garner

Stacy Leigh Kraft
April 10
Daughter of
Keith and Meryl Kraft
and Terry Kornman

Christian Thompson
April 14
Son of
Chris Thompson

Ryan Lee Wiseman
April 18
Son of
Roger and Deborah Wiseman



And in the month of their deaths

Christopher Jay Bradley
April 20
Son of
Lamar and Joy Bradley

Michael Hunt
April 21
Son of
Robin Hunt

Andrew Morris Pack
April 19
Son of
Wayne and Cassandra Pack

Bert Rich
April 7
Son of
Shirley Rich-Brinegar

Taylor Martin Davies
April 16
Son of
Roy and Barbara Davies

Kevin Moncrief
April 5
Son of
Sandra Merkel

Matthew Douglas Pate
April 30
Son of
Melanie Pate

Laurie Lynn Shriver Robert
April 21
Daughter of
Warren and Donna Jones
and George Shriver
Sister of
David, Bekki, and Bonnie

Chad Flatt
April 18
Son of
James Flatt and Ann Flatt

Joshua Hovies
April 19
Son of
Alicia Hovies

Viktoria "Tori" Nicks
April 29
Daughter of
Brad and Amanda Nicks

Brandon Allen Payne
April 10
Son of
Terry and Kimberly Payne

Lindsay Ware
April 8
Daughter of
Scott Ware

Gifts of Love and Remembrance

We are deeply grateful for the voluntary gifts of love that make it possible for The Compassionate Friends to offer comfort to those families who do not know today that they will need us tomorrow.

*Laura Buchanan
in Loving Memory of her grandson,
Kamden Joseph Hayes*

*Mike & Kay Duncan
in Loving Memory of their sons,
Jon Ashley Duncan
and
Jamie Duncan*

*Don and Sherry Eakes
in Loving Memory of their grandson,
Taylor Christian Brewer,
son of
Justin and Tracy Brewer*

*Rosemarie Moore
in Loving Memory of her son,
Jason Rice*

*Belinda Darnell Murray
in Loving Memory of
Roy James Davies
and
Taylor Martin Davies
sons of Roy and Barb Davies*

*Susi Trabue
in Loving Memory of her daughter,
Helen (Chelsea) Howard*



*Jerry and Loretta Winters
in Loving Memory of their son,
Don Bruce Winters*



Each month, Allegra Marketing (615-360-3339) donates the printing of this newsletter as a gift to the families of TCF. Deanna Brown and her family assemble, label, sort and mail the newsletter in loving memory of her son, Marcus Dean Brown. We appreciate so much these people and their generosity to all of us.

**To benefit TCF, go to the [Kroger website](#) and click on "[Community Rewards](#)"; then follow the instructions on that page. After that, when you shop at Kroger, swipe your Plus Card or key in your phone number when you check out, and Kroger will donate dollars to TCF. It's a free and easy way to support your chapter.*



At times, the pain of separation seems more than we can bear;

but love and understanding can help us pass through the darkness toward the light.

And in truth, grief is a great teacher,

when it sends us back to serve and bless the living.

Thus, even when they are gone, the departed are with us,

moving us to live as, in their higher moments, they themselves wished to live.

We remember them now;

they live in our hearts;

they are an abiding blessing.

Jewish mourners' Kaddish

Healing Versus Recovery

I have heard the terms “healing” and “recovery” used interchangeably to refer to the goal of processing grief.

I would like to propose the idea that recovery carries with it the assumption of an injury or illness and that when the necessary repair has taken place, the person will return basically to the same person he or she was previous to the injury or illness.

When a child dies, there is, indeed, an injury of massive proportions. All systems—physical, mental, and spiritual—are affected. There is physical pain, emotional retching, spiritual upheaval, and struggling. All this may be occurring simultaneously. Though there may not be bleeding in the physical sense, there is emotional hemorrhaging. The body and psyche are in crisis. Bereaved parents are often unable to eat; they may experience sleep disturbances and disorientation. Believe it or not, all these reactions are normal. Grief is a normal part of life. This is not a mental illness or some chemical imbalance of the brain. What is not normal is to experience the death of a child.

The major difference between recovery and healing is that the goal is not to return to who we were before our child died. That goal is impossible to achieve. To continue to try to achieve a goal of recovery is to assume that life will be basically the same, with a few minor adjustments. We’ll set one less place at the table, buy less food, feel sad on holidays, crying a bit more. Our lives have been permanently and irrevocably changed. Part of the healing process is accepting that not only has our life changed, but that we are, in fact, becoming different people. The becoming is the healing.

During this process, we examine every facet of our lives and our belief systems. This is a journey, not a “repair.” By living through this journey, we become different people. True, we may basically look the same, but we are not the same as before our child died. We look at life in a new way. Our interests change and our priorities change. We will never look at a child the same way again. We have a new and deeper level of understanding and compassion for those experiencing pain—all kinds of pain. We have a different understanding of spirituality. We ourselves feel new and different. We carry some of the old person with us through the healing process, but we emerge different.

We are healing, not recovering.

Birdie Tracy
TCF, Shoreline, CT



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

Storytellers in the Circle of Weavers

*They come to tell their story
in the circle of weavers.
Because it is a story of love,
it is also a story of pain.
They tell how they wove their fabric,
with care, with many threads.
They tell how the fabric was ripped beyond repair.
The sound of that long, final tear
is in their voices, and in the air.
It follows them relentlessly, everywhere.*

*The silence at the end of the story
could be the end.
But in the circle of weavers,
it is not the end. Torn threads begin to stir.
Back and forth,
across and around the circle,
the weaving begins.
The threads are torn, and broken,
but there is life and power
in the weaving of them.*

*Pain and loss can be respected.
They cannot be changed.
But new cloth can be woven,
of caring and understanding.
Even with broken threads,
In the circle of weavers.*

Elizabeth Morris
TCF, Concord, MA

The mention of my child's name

*May bring tears to my eyes.
But it never fails to bring
Music to my ears.
If you're really my friend,
Please don't keep me
From hearing the beautiful music;
It soothes my broken heart
And fills my soul with love.*

Nancy Williams
TCF, Central Jersey, NJ

Asking the Question “Why?”

Asking “why did my loved one do this?” is the question that haunts most survivors of suicide. The outside world demands to know from us, and we don’t know ourselves.

For some of us there were definite clues that our loved ones were depressed or that something was wrong. We either knew they were in pain but not the extent of it, or we did know the extent and tried everything we knew to get help for them.

For others, the suicide was completely out of character. Many people who end their lives are extremely good actors and actresses. They only allow us to see what they want us to see. In either instance, for many, we never thought it could really happen to us, to our loved ones, and to our families. It doesn’t make sense.

The best explanation was described to me by Iris Bolton, Director of the Link Center in Atlanta, GA, author of *My Son, My Son* and survivor of her son’s suicide. After years of searching for *why*, Iris found as close to an answer as she will have. It came from another mother who had lost her son by suicide.

THE CUP ANALOGY

There is a cup of water sitting on a table. It is so full, it is rounded at the top. One or two drops of water are added to the cup and it spills over. We want to blame the last two drops, but in an empty cup it would not spill. It was not the water already in the cup, because if left alone, it would not have spilled. It was a combination of all the drops of water in the cup that came before AND the last two drops that caused the water to spill.

In a person’s life, the water in the cup is symbolic of all the hurt, pain, shame, humiliation, and loss not dealt with along the way. The last couple of drops symbolize the “trigger events.” It is the combination of everything in that person’s life not dealt with and the last one or two things that caused our loved ones to lose hope.

For us, we must find a way to pour out the water along the way. This may be through talking it out, writing it out, whatever works for us. We must learn to deal with our pain in a way our loved ones could not. The analogy allowed me to let go of the search for “why” and to find a different way of dealing with my pain.

Tracy T. Dean, M.S. National Resource Center for Suicide Prevention and Aftercare.

Reprinted from *The Mind/Body Connection in the Aftermath of Suicide* from the Link Counseling Center, Atlanta, GA

Reprinted from Survivors of Suicide Newsletter, Nashville, TN

When Grief is New: Reminders

- Try not to imagine the future; take one day at a time.
- Allow yourself time to cry, both alone and with your loved ones.
- Don’t shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
- Try to be realistic about your expectations of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. If each of us is unique and different, how can there be perfect understanding?
- When a good day comes, relish it. Don’t feel guilty and don’t be discouraged because it doesn’t last.
- Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles. Drink lots of water, take stress-type vitamins, rest (even if you don’t sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body to heal as well as your mind.
- Share your feelings with other compassionate friends and let them share with you. You will find that as you begin caring about the pain of others, you will start to come out of your shell—a very healthy sign.

Mary Ehmann
TCF, Valley Forge, PA



The Elephant in the Room

*There’s an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around it.
Yet we squeeze by with “How are You?”
And “I’m fine.”
And a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.
We talk about the weather.
We talk about work.
We talk about everything else—except the elephant in
the room.*

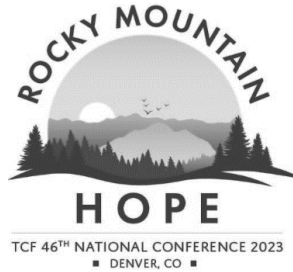
*There’s an elephant in the room,
We all know it is there.
We are thinking about the elephant as we talk.
It is constantly on our minds.
For you see, it is a very big elephant.
But we do not talk about the elephant in the room.
Oh, please say her name.
Oh, please say “Barbara” again.*

*Oh, please let’s talk about the elephant in the room.
For if we talk about her death,
Perhaps we can talk about her life.
Can I say “Barbara” and not have you look away?
For if I cannot, you are leaving me
Alone...*

*In a room...
With an elephant.*

Terry Kettering
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Bereavement Publishing Inc.

The TCF 46th National Conference



July 7 – 9, 2023 in Denver, Colorado

We are very pleased to announce The Compassionate Friends (TCF) 46th Annual National Conference in Denver! TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences.

Unique and cherished highlights of our conference include our heartfelt Saturday evening Candle Lighting Program, Sharing Sessions, Keynote Addresses, Healing Haven, Butterfly Boutique, Crafty Corner, and Silent Auction. Our weekend of inspiration, sharing, and learning is followed by the Walk to Remember on Sunday morning.

This year's conference will be held at the Sheraton Denver Downtown. Reservations can now be made online at TCF's website www.compassionatefriends.org. Our discounted room rate with the Sheraton is \$159 per night plus tax. Please note that each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. We also have pre-conference activities that are offered on Thursday evening, that attendees find beneficial. We look forward to seeing you in Denver!

Symphony

When I was a young musician my dad liked to tease me by playing the notes of the C-Major scale: "DO-RE-MI-FA-SO-LA-TI..." Then he would stop, step back and wait for my reaction. No matter where I was, my response was certain. It would drive me absolutely *crazy* until I rushed to the piano and played the final note that would make the scale complete.

I feel much the same way about Lindsay at times. Five years ago we opened the pages of a manuscript and began what appeared to be a very interesting overture in our lives. We didn't just open a book, we were the composers and she was our composition. The love and promises grew within me, along with a multitude of ideas and plans we had for the way things would be. We were shaping the future—ours, the baby's and the world's.

We had only concluded the prelude when the book suddenly and abruptly closed with the clashing of cymbals, just as tightly as the lid on her tiny white casket. There was a supreme silence in her death, but our hearts thundered on as the pounding of tympani drums. I could plead, I could cry, but I could not change what happened. I tried to bargain with God. I tried to deny it. I tried to run from it. For a while, I tried to pretend it didn't hurt. Our lives were overshadowed by an ominous quality—life was uncertain, death was not. We could

not escape it. No matter how hard I tried to understand, it was far beyond my comprehension. I chased my "elusive dream" in circles, around and around, until I was utterly exhausted from the effort.

I am her mother, and yet her life seemed so incomplete, without purpose or accomplishment. It was my responsibility to mold and shape her life, and I thought I had been denied that privilege until I talked with my TCF friends. I discovered we can open the pages of our book again. We are still her parents, and she can still make a difference in someone's life—but only if we allow ourselves to let her. Only I can write the notes that complete her life. And I know now the last note will never be written until we hold her in our arms again. (Then it will sing forever!)

I thought the symphony was over; that the pomp and circumstance of her life had been stilled, but that is not true. It is playing, yet in a different way than we ever dreamed or originally planned. The melody becomes more beautiful each time we touch another person with love and understanding, and that feels very comforting to us. I believe she would approve.

Dana Gensler
TCF, South Central Kentucky



COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NEWSLETTER RENEWAL

If you wish to continue to receive the Newsletter free of charge, please check the information below and return this form no later than April 30 to: TCF, P. O. BOX 8283, HERMITAGE, TN 37076

Check one:

- My name and mailing address on the label on the other side is CORRECT.
- My name and mailing address on the label on the other side is NOT CORRECT. Make changes below:

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

List my child's name in the Children Remembered column in the months of their birth and death.

Child's name _____ Birth _____ Death _____
mo/day/yr mo/day/yr

Son of _____

Daughter of _____

- Don't list my child's name in the Children Remembered column in the months of their birth and death.



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

For general information about grief support services and groups at Alive, please call the Grief Line at: 615-963-4732 or email griefsupport@alivehospice.org. They offer eight-week groups, ongoing monthly groups, family group and Little Hearts Club for children who have experienced the death of a sibling. Services are in Franklin, Nashville, Hendersonville, Lebanon, and Murfreesboro.

Sharing

SHARING is a community organization for parents who have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of an infant. The website is sharingmiddletn.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.

Attending your first TCF meeting can be difficult. Feelings can be overwhelming. We have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Please attend two or three meetings before deciding if TCF is right for you. There are no dues or fees. If you choose, you need not speak a word at a meeting. We are an international, non-denominational group, offering support and information to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. We need not walk alone.

The Compassionate Friends

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April 2023

The Myth of Closure

“**W**hen will I begin to feel better? When will I return to normal? When will I achieve some closure?” grievers often ask. Closure, our culture tells us, will bring about a tidy ending, a sense of completion. Some grievers hope that the desired magical closure will occur after the funeral or memorial service. Others are confident it will come once they have cleared out their loved one’s room. Or maybe after a special personal ritual. Or perhaps after the first anniversary comes and goes—surely then, we will have closure, we think. We pray.

The reason we long for closure, of course, is because we would like to neatly seal away all of this pain. We would like to close all of the sad, confused, desperate, angry feelings out of our life. We would like to put all of this behind us.

Closure. What an odd concept really, as if we could truly close the door on pain—turn the lock and throw away the key. The truth is far more complex, of course.

Closure is for business deals. Closure is for real estate transactions. Closure is not for feelings for people we love.

Closure simply does not exist emotionally, not in a pure sense. We cannot close the door on the past as if it didn’t exist because, after losing someone dear to us, we never forget that person or the love we shared. And in some ways, we never entirely get over the loss. We learn to live with the loss, to integrate it into our new identity.

Imagine if we really could end this chapter in our life, completely. It would mean losing our memories, our connections to those we love. If we really found closure, it would ironically hurt even more because the attachment would be severed. And this attachment is vital to us—the memories are treasures to be held close, not closed out.

Perhaps it is better to think in terms of healing. Yes, we can process our pain and move to deeper and deeper levels of healing. Yes, we can find ways to move on and channel our pain into productive activities. Yes, we can even learn to smile again and laugh again and love again.

But let’s not ever think that we’ll close the door completely on what this loss means, for if we did that, we would unwittingly close the door on all the love that we shared. And that would truly be a loss too terrible to bear.

by Ashley Davis Prend, ACSW
Hospice of North Idaho
reprinted from TCF Southern Oregon Chapter Newsletter