**July 2016 The Compassionate Friends Volume 30● Number 7**

 ***THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS***

 **P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (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.

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*Welcome: The Nashville chapter meets at 3:00 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month in the American Builders & Contractors (ABC) Building, 1604 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210 . Park and enter at the rear of the building.*

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

**July 10 Meeting:**

**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**………….…………..…….……KrisThompson

 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

 ***Ask It Basket***

B

ereaved parents are often plagued with

questions regarding their grief. If there is

something bothering you, bring your questions

for the basket. This meeting will provide an

especially good opportunity for those of us who

are farther along in our grief to give the benefit

of our experience to those who are just beginning

their sad journey by addressing the questions. We

invite our old-timers to come and lend a hand. Together

we can find the support we need.

Our regular sharing sessions will follow this program.

**The Chocolate Kiss**

I

t was a sweet chocolate kiss that I got that day, the last kiss I would ever have from my son, Jared. Had I known when I leaned over to get that chocolate kiss that I would never again see your sweet face, your naked bottom running down the hall after a bath, see you asleep in bed with Rabbit and your silky rag, or hear you say “I wuv you,” I would never have leaned over and got that chocolate kiss. But now that you are gone, I’m so glad that God let me have that last sweet kiss.

Anna & Wayne Holeman

TCF, Atlanta, GA

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National Office P. O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696—Phone 630 990-0010 or Toll free: 1-877 969-0010

TCF Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) National Office email:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

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**That First Summer Vacation**

S

ummer time is quickly drawing near and with it you may be planning a vacation. If you have recently suffered the death of your child, that first vacation can be very difficult. I would like to share with you our experience the first time we took a vacation after our son, Paul, died. I have included some suggestions to help you through your first vacation and to help you plan around your grief. Our son, Paul, died in November from leukemia. He had been ill for 8 years. The last couple of years were very hard for us and we were not able to go on any vacations because of his illness. The next August we decided to go on a big trip to Hawaii like we had always wanted to do. We made our plans and we felt at the time that our grief was far enough along that we could enjoy ourselves. It was a very difficult vacation for our whole family. Each of us seemed unable to have a good time. We talked a lot about Paul. He was everywhere, in our thoughts and minds. We all knew how much he would have loved the beauty of Hawaii, the ocean with all its beautiful waves just right for surfing, and all of the sea life we saw when we went diving. It was very hard to have a good time and I soon realized we were all having problems coping with Paul’s absence.

As I look back and remember our vacation some six years later I know that even though we did not have a great time, our vacation did serve a purpose in our grief. We were together as a family in strange surroundings and we were grieving. We started working hard on our grief during that vacation, and I know now it was a GOOD vacation. If you are planning a vacation, here are some suggestions that may help: Be gentle to yourself. Don’t expect too much on your first vacation. Remember, as bereaved parents, the first time we do anything without our kids is tough, whether it be going to the movies,

shopping, or on a vacation. Plan to do some grief work because you will, planned or not. Give yourself time enough on the trip if you have a bad day you can just do what you feel like doing. Know that your child will be on your mind day and night just as he or she is at home. Our grief goes with us. Plan a vacation that is restful. You need all the rest you can get at this time. Plan to do something your child would have loved to do, but did not get a chance to. Do this in his or her memory.

If you plan to visit relatives for the first time since your child’s death, remember they mean well even if they seem insensitive with their remarks. They have not lost a child and can’t see through your eyes. If you have other children, remember them. They are also having a hard time coping on this vacation. Plan some activities that will be especially for them. Be especially careful to communicate with your spouse. Plan a vacation that is suitable for both of your needs. Remember you are both grieving for the same child, but we all grieve differently and in our own way.

 If you have been maintaining your child’s grave site and feel guilty leaving it unattended, let a family member or friend see to it while you are away. You need not feel guilty and it could fill a need for one of your family members or friends, allowing them to help. You will have a memorable vacation even though it will be difficult. You will look back on it as I have done and see it as another growing experience as you find your way through the grief work of a bereaved family. I hope all of your vacations are nice this summer. Enjoy them for our kids.

Diana Hammock

TCF, Central Coast, CA

***Summer’s Dusk***

*Cicadas hum as twilight strikes*

*Their cadence growing faster as light blends with night.*

*Fireflies twinkle at the edge of the lawn*

*Twirling through trees and low branches.*

*The hot, heavy air of the day floats off with the light*

*As laughter and whoops echo through the mist.*

*Chubby bare legs encased in bright rubber boots*

*clomp through the grass in cadence with crickets.*

*While large plastic nets scoop through the air*

*Spectacular in their miscalculation.*

*Bright bare feet run through the moist grass.*

*Laughter hangs in the air*

*Twining with the firefly trails.*

*It’s a perfect summer dusk*

*Except—*

*One pair of boots sits,*

*Kicked off at the edge of the deck*

*Splattered with rain and mud*

*Waiting for you*

*In vain.*

Lynne Hudson

 Tributes-Issue Forty-One

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***Just Thinking About***

 ***My Precious Son***

*Your birthday is coming soon —*

*You will be sixty!*

*You would have been a gorgeous sixty.*

*With gray at the temples —*

*Your warm, beautiful brown eyes —*

*With lashes an inch long.*

*Your face tanned and so handsome.*

*At any age, when you walked into a*

 *room, everyone noticed —*

*When you were three feet tall or*

 *six feet tall!*

*What I miss most, my son,*

*Is the kind of man you became;*

*A devoted husband*

*A doting father*

*A generous friend*

*And a caring, loving son.*

*What rings in my ears is*

*When you called at night,*

*And I was asleep,*

*Dad would say, “Burt called. He said, ‘Tell*

 *Mom I love her.’”*

*It keeps ringing in my ears!*

 Lenore Brown

 TCF, Baltimore MD

**But it Hurts Differently**

T

here is no way to predict how you will feel. The reactions to grief are not like recipes with different ingredients and certain results. Each person mourns in a different way. You may cry hysterically or you may remain outwardly controlled, showing little emotion. You may lash out in anger against your family and friends, or you may express your gratitude for their concern and dedication. You may be calm one moment - in turmoil the next. Reactions are varied and contradictory. Grief is universal. At the same time it is extremely personal.

Rabbi Earl Grollmon

***Older Grief***

*Older grief is gentler.*

*It’s about sudden tears swept in*

*By a strand of music.*

*It’s about haunting echoes of*

*First pain at anniversaries.*

*It’s about feeling his presence for an*

*Instant one day while I’m dusting his room.*

*It’s about early pictures that invite me*

*To fold him in my arms again.*

*It’s about memories blown in*

*On wisps of wood smoke and sea scents.*

*Older grief is about aching in gentler ways,*

*Rarer longing, less engulfing fire.*

*Older grief is about searing pain*

*Wrought into tenderness.*

Linda Zelenka

TCF, Orange Park, FL

**For Some Dumb Reason**

W

hat I cannot understand is how some men will run to someone else to get a small splinter out of their finger, but will refuse to ask directions when driving, and will drive and cuss for hours without asking for assistance. The biggest “splinter” I ever got was when my daughter died. I needed help. Ministers, funeral directors, friends, co-workers, doctors, psychiatrists, couldn’t help. They couldn’t ***know*** what I was going through. One friend whose son had been murdered said, “Go to a Compassionate Friends meeting.” He knew!

 I went to a TCF meeting. No one “took the splinter out,” no one offered any “how-to’s” No one told me, “you should…” No one could, or tried, to take away my pain. But they had been there! They knew, and because they knew, it helped.

 What I had walked through in my grief, some had walked through before me. That knowledge has assisted me in my travel through this pain. I am glad that I wasn’t too macho, too proud, or too blind to go to that first TCF meeting. I still have a hole in my gut, my eyes still well up at odd times, but I know that I am not crazy. I know that I am not alone. I know that others have gone through the same thing, and for some dumb reason, that helps.

Tom Crouthamel

TCF Sarasota, FL

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**One Balloon**

O

ur family moved from Andrews, Texas to Houston, Texas in 1983. In February of 1984, I was working in my backyard, when I found a deflated balloon. There was a note on the balloon. The note was from a mother, expressing her love for her daughter. The way the note was written, I knew that the daughter had died. The note expressed so much love that it penetrated through my heart. Little did I know that my own son would die in 1995, and I would be sending him notes.

Niecy Moss,

TCF, Houston-West, Texas

A Single Parent’s Experience

M

y only child, Aaron, died at age 19. Aaron and I had always been very close. I had raised him by myself since he was three. His death was a devastating shock. The following issues and dilemmas are among those I encountered that were different from those faced by bereaved parents who are not alone.

* A Strong Sense of Isolation. When your child dies, the world seems to tumble around you. It feels particularly frightening to a single parent. We need others to help us balance our upside-down world, to encourage us to keep hanging on when it seems to be unbearable.
* Inconsistency. As every hour of every day seemed like a challenge to “get through,” the only person I knew I could depend on was me! Needing to be strong for myself at

times seemed just too much. I longed for someone I could depend on to reassure me when I was feeling emotionally distraught.

* Sharing Emotions. Research shows that 25 percent of the stress from the loss of a loved one can be relieved by simply sharing with another person your thoughts, feelings and ideas. But every time we, as singles, feel the need to express what’s going on inside our minds and bodies, we have to seek someone out. We dread finding that all our friends are busy or not home, knowing we may end up feeling more rejected than when we began.
* Sharing the Work. A single parent who has other children at home has a special burden. Not only is the parent grieving over the loss of a child, he or she must also go back to work for a living, try to maintain stability at home for the remaining children, and handle the normal, everyday household problems. Additionally, that parent must devote attention to the remaining children.
* Sharing the Special Memories. As a single parent, you have no one who remembers that child as you do and who can share those memories with you. If you have other children, you will be able to reminisce with them. I continue to share with others my son’s unique qualities, so he won’t be forgotten, but it requires so much

explaining to those who didn’t know him that the joys of sharing such memories are often lost.

* Support From the Opposite Sex. As we’ve learned, getting emotional support from a non-bereaved person is difficult; dating and seeking emotional support adds another level of stress.
* Making Decisions and Facing Major Events Alone. I was left with all the decisions. I sorted all his possessions. I decided how and where to bury the ashes. Such tasks were grueling to face alone. I wanted someone to share the responsibility.
* The Need for Touch. My personal observation is that bereaved people have a strong need for touching and hugging. The contact not only feels good but can have a

healing quality. Being single means there’s no spouse nearby to provide that gentle touch on the back or that consoling hug when the pain erupts.

* Grieving At Your Own Pace. The only benefit to grieving alone is that single parents do not have to worry about disturbing another’s sleep as we cry during the night or hold back our tears when a spouse’s spirits are high.
* Special Strengths. One of the assets is the strength we’ve gained during our struggles as single parents. We might never have discovered that inner strength if we had not been alone.

Excerpted from an article by Kelly Osmont

TCF, Portland, OR

Surely there is no journey as lonely, or one embarked on with more pain, than the walk a grieving parent takes through the wilderness of grief.

Martha Bittle Clark

*Are You Walking With Me, God?*

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**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, may receive a yellow half-sheet in their newsletter 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). or emailing davidg14@bellsouth.net.

**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**

All donations and original poems or articles for the TCF Nashville newsletter must be received by the meeting day of the month preceding the publication month. 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 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. See www.nationalshare.org.

**Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents**

For general information about Grief Support Services at Alive Hospice, please call the main number: 615 963-4732 or email griefsupport@alivehospice.org. Diane Castellano, LCSW is a grief counselor there for children and their families. Call her at 615-346-8554. Contact John Baker at 615-346-8364 for bereaved parent support or individual counseling.

**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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on chapter locator.

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***Time***

*Time The time has passed when I would awake*

 *in the middle of the night and relive*

 *the death of my child.*

*The time has passed when I would sit*

 *patiently waiting to hear his footsteps*

 *on the front porch, just one more time.*

*The time has passed when I would find myself*

 *curled up in the middle of the night*

 *with his picture or his favorite shirt*

 *and cry myself to sleep.*

*The time has passed when I would look at other*

 *kids his age and wonder why God*

 *had to choose to take mine.*

*Time has a way of healing the broken heart,*

 *but time can never take the memories*

 *that I cherish in my heart.*

*The memories of my child, his smile, his walk,*

 *the way he talked, his smell, his touch,*

 *the way he said my name.*

*These are the things, as time goes by,*

 *that I will hold onto and cherish.*

*The times of my child.*

 *Janice O’Neal*

 *TCF, Nashville, TN*

**Hope as a Goal**

H

ope for a healed future and a new normal life is difficult to see in the shadow of the loss of a child. Hope is always present in our lives but must be sought, perhaps as a goal. Don’t ever give up hope that your pain will subside and that some day a peaceful feeling will take its place. This attainment of peace does not happen overnight, unfortunately.

Keep sight of your goal and someday it will be a reality.

Janet Sonnen

TCF, Salem, OR

***A Friend***

*I need a friend to sit with me,*

*To help me struggle through*

*The sadness and the anger,*

*The crying I will do.*

*I need a friend to sit with me,*

*To help me work this out,*

*The guilt and all the anguish,*

*The times I’ll want to shout.*

*I need a friend to sit with me,*

*To help me through my pain,*

*The longing and the emptiness,*

*The need to speak his name.*

 Lilly Barstow

 TCF, Abbotsford, BC, Canada