

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.

How Men and Women Grieve Differently

April 14 Meeting

Grief is handled differently by each one of us and it is very hard work. Many bereaved parents have found that our grief differs greatly from the same process in our spouse or significant other. It is a fact that men and women grieve differently. At our April meeting, we will address this important issue in the form of a unique panel. Please join us as we learn from each other. You might just be enlightened as to “why they do that,” or “why don’t they do this.” Our regular sharing groups will follow. We hope you will be with us.



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

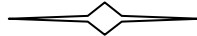
Attending your first TCF meeting can be difficult. Feelings can be overwhelming. We have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Please attend two or three meetings before deciding if TCF is right for you. There are no dues or fees. If you choose, you need not speak 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.

TCF 2013 National Conference

Save the date: July 5-7, 2013 in Boston, MA



Visit the National TCF Website, <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>, for more information and to learn about the **Frankfort, Kentucky Regional Conference April 5-6, 2013**. Speakers include TCF Board Member Chuck Collins and special guest presenter, Michael Nunley, who will conduct a workshop on grief/music and perform Friday evening. Registration fee is \$60 per person. Location: The Capital Plaza Hotel. Theme: Walking Towards Stars of Hope.



Daisies in Huge Handfuls

“Pick more daisies” was the most popular expression in our family.

I picked it up from a magazine article about a 94-year-old lady in Kentucky who, when asked what she would do differently if she had her life to live over, responded “I would ride more merry-go-rounds; I would take more chances; I would eat more ice cream and less beans; I would have more real troubles but fewer imaginary ones; I would climb more mountains; I would swim more rivers, and I would pick more daisies.”

Our son, Mark, seized the daisy expression as the theme both for his life and his entrance exam essay at UCLA. It helped him live his brief eighteen years—and his essay helped him get an academic scholarship. Daisies became our family flower. They marked our attitude about living. And they marked our son’s memorial service [1992]. After it was over, his friends and fraternity brothers each threw a daisy into the ocean. Daisies still mark his grave every week.

It has taken me almost two years to return to really thinking about daisies and what that quote by a 94-year-old lady really means. During that time I made a pretty big mess of things. I did the best I could, but I was often going through the motions outside, but empty inside.

To me, what this quote means is we really do have to pull ourselves together again and go on. Dr. Charles Heuser, a former pastor at our church, notes “Going through the steps of grief is like walking through the valley and shadow of death. Keep walking, but don’t camp there.” Our children would not want us to “camp there,” but to go pick more daisies—to somehow live an even more meaningful life in their name.

As I go on I am truly a different person. I don’t suffer fools or superficiality very well any more. As one of my best friends said, “I get tired of beige people.” Yet, I will drop everything to help another bereaved parent. I certainly have more “real troubles and fewer imaginary ones.” But it’s OK—I like myself better that way.

And I am returning to embrace life each day again. But this time I am following my heart instead of my “expected career.” I am taking more chances, climbing more unfamiliar mountains, and picking daisies in huge handfuls.

Mark would want it so.

Rich Edler
TCF, South Bay/Los Angeles



On a Rosebush Full of Blooms

On a rosebush full of blooms, there is occasionally one rose more fragile than the rest. Nobody knows why. The rose receives the same amounts of rain and sun as its neighboring blooms; it receives the same amounts of water and of food from the earth; of clipping and tending and gentle encouragement from the gardener. Its time on earth is neither more nor less significant than that of the other blooms alongside. Its stresses are neither greater nor fewer. Its promises of development are just as rich. In other words, it has all the necessary components to become what it is intended to be: a beautiful flower, fully open, spreading its fragrance and color for the whole world to see and enjoy.

But for some inexplicable reason, once in awhile a single rose doesn't reach maturity. It's not the gardener's fault. It's not the fault of the earth, nor of the rain, nor the sun. But neither is it the fault of the rose. For some roses, even the touch of the gentle spring rains leaves bruises on the petals. The sun's rays—so soft and warm to some flowers feel searing to others. Some roses thrive while the fragile ones feel buffeted by inner and outer ghostwinds.

So it is that sometimes, despite the best growing conditions, and best efforts of the gardener, and the best possibilities and predictions for a glorious blooming season, a particularly fragile rose will share its glow for awhile, then fade and die. And the gardener and the rosebush and the earth and all around grieve.

We are never ready for a loss. Not for the loss of a promising rosebud, nor for the loss of a friend or relative whose life appears ready to unfold with brilliant color and fulfillment. In the midst of our grieving, we can be grateful we were in the garden during the same season. We can remember and celebrate the glimpses of color and fragrance and growth that were shared. We can love the fragile rose and the fragile soul for the valiant battles won, and the blooming that was done. And as our own petals unfold, we can remember the softness and beauty of those who touched us along the way.

Ernestine Clark
TCF, Oklahoma City, OK

NO WINTER LASTS FOREVER;

NO SPRING SKIPS ITS TURN.

Prayer for Spring

*Like Springtime, let me unfold
And grow fresh and new
From this cocoon of grief
That has been spun around me.
Help me face the harsh reality of
Sunshine and renewed life
As my bones still creak from
The winter of my grief.
Life has dared to go on around me
As I recover from the insult
Of life's continuance.
I readjust my focus to
Include recovery and growth
As a possibility in my future.
Give me strength to break out of
The cocoon of my grief.
But may I never forget it as
The place where I grew my wings,
Becoming a new person
Because of my loss.*

Janice Heil
TCF, Vancouver, Canada

The Stream

I went to the river to meditate. The river was wide, clean, and flowing rapidly. I picked up a tree limb and broke it into four pieces of approximately equal size, one to represent each member of my family, including my son, who had recently died. As I tossed each piece into midstream, I silently named it as it began to drift.

My 19-year-old daughter's piece drifted off first, but quickly was channeled by a crosswind, and promptly returned to the shore.

My wife's piece started, then drifted past some rocks and eddies, and after traveling fifty yards, also returned to shore.

Mine started slowly, made it past some rocks, whirlpools, and an entanglement of logs, and after traveling 250 yards, it also returned to shore.

But the piece that represented my son drifted directly to the swift mainstream, accelerated, and floated off on pure, clean water to points unknown in the glistening and gleaming light.

Ed Kuzela
TCF, Atlanta, GA

Daffodil Time

Sometimes in our grief we become workaholics. We rush, rush, and rush, never stopping to “smell the roses.” We are afraid that if we stop, or even slow down just a little, all those memories and thoughts of our dead child will come flying back, and we’ll drop down to that black hole of grief again—so we don’t stop or even slow down a little.

When I was in the fifth grade we had to memorize some poetry. I still remember lines from the poem “Daffodils”: “*When oft upon my couch I lie, in vacant or in pensive mood, They flash upon that inward eye, Which is the bliss of solitude.*” For a couple of years after my daughter’s death I could not, I would not allow myself to get into a vacant or pensive mood, because it wasn’t daffodils that flashed upon my inward eye, it was always my daughter who was there—and there was no bliss.

Things change. Time helped to heal the raw open wound. Now, after four years, I can allow myself to have those vacant or pensive moods, and I can see the daffodils along with my daughter. My bliss is bittersweet, sometimes more bitter than sweet, usually more sweet than bitter, but it is bliss as those memories flash upon my inward eye. I have accepted that which cannot be changed. I do NOT like it; I have accepted that she is dead. As I lie there, in vacant or in pensive mood, I am careful that those memories that I allow to flash upon my inward eye are the happy ones, not the sad or unhappy ones. They are more like roses than daffodils, though. They do have thorns that hide just below the beauty. But I can do it now. I can take time to “smell the roses.” And so can you. Try it. In small doses at first, then larger ones. You owe it to yourself—and to your family—and to your child.

Tom Crouthamel
TCF, Sarasota, FL

A Rose

*Sunlight dancing in the branches
Of the birch tree at my door.
Meadow stretching smug and lazy
Darker, greener, than before.*

*Wind as warm as hugging children,
Clouds so round and very close,
And on one small grave there trembles.
Lovingly, an early rose.*

Sascha

Renewal

*In the first warm days of springtime
when the winter chill is through,
each waking thought and closing prayer
begins and ends with you.*

*Like the daffodil and crocus
that survive the bitter snow,
my soul is gently lifted up
and is warmed by sunlight’s glow.*

*It’s a time of fresh renewal,
a beginning—not an end.
And, oh, how much I miss you,
my daughter and my friend.*

*So I’ll take the warmth of springtime
and hold it close to me,
to help me through the winter storms
till your face once more I’ll see.*

Priscilla Kenney
TCF, Northshore/Boston, MA

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.
We all know it is there.
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

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, will receive a yellow half-sheet 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).

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

In order to meet printing deadlines, all donations and original poems or articles must be received by the meeting day of the preceding month to be considered for the next issue of the TCF Nashville newsletter. 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.

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.

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.

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.

Crocus

*In the front garden
Close by the door,
Bloom golden crocus.
They've been there before.*

*When you were quite little—
So young and so small—
We planted some dozens
One day in the fall.*

*They slept o'er the winter
There under the snow,
Then in the springtime
Bloomed with a glow.*

*You learned about flowers,
How they sleep and they grow.
You loved so to find them—
Peeking out from the snow.*

*You had such a wonder!
You loved life so much!
Do these early blossoms
Remember your touch?*

*They'll bloom there again
Year after year.
A small drop of sunshine,
A small golden tear.*

Joan Schmidt
TCF, Holmdel, NJ

