

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.

August 14 Meeting Reflections on the 34th Annual National Conference of The Compassionate Friends

Members of the Nashville Chapter are attending the 34th TCF National Conference in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota July 15 - 17. A national conference of The Compassionate Friends is unlike any other conference you may ever attend. As always, this conference provides fresh insights, ideas, and a renewed bond with other bereaved parents. Our members will relate to us highlights of the conference as our program on August 14. They will tell about the banquet speakers, workshops, and other events they took part in. Also, they will bring us an announcement of the location of the 2012 conference. Plan early to attend next year! Following this time together, we will break up into our regular small sharing groups. Please join us August 14.



Save the Date: Annual Picnic September 24!

Our annual TCF Nashville Family Picnic
 at Fannie Mae Dees Park
 is a wonderful time to spend together

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**.....Ruth Edwards
615-353-8547
- Small Child**.....Kenneth and Kathy Hensley
615-237-9972
- Alcohol/Drug Overdose**.....Ed Pyle
615-712-3245

The Old Yellow Truck

Several weeks ago, I sold my old, rusty, yellow pickup truck. I placed an ad in the Baltimore Sunday paper which read: *For Sale—1978 Toyota pickup truck, 119 K miles—as is \$450. Call.*

Someone called, paid me \$400, and drove away — all in the same day. I should have been happy to get rid of it, but instead I ended up feeling depressed. If I could have advertised the truck in our TCF newsletter, the ad would have read:

For sale (regretfully) 1978 Toyota pickup truck used by college student when he was home for weekends or semester breaks. Provided safe transportation through a snowstorm for his last New Year's Eve. Four-speaker stereo radio with rock music stations pre-selected. Ashtray clean except for old bank receipts. Truck used by father for hauling things while thinking about son. Priceless. Don't call.

It has been eighteen months since my son died, and yet it is still difficult to part with certain things — even things that did not belong to him. This is a problem with which we are all faced. What to keep? What to let go? The practical side of us says these things are no longer needed, so we should get rid of them. The heart says my son owned these things or used them; they bring back memories, so we should keep them.

There is not a right or wrong answer as to what we keep or what we let go. I reassure myself by noting that these memories of my son didn't leave with that old yellow truck. They will remain locked in my heart forever.

Gary Piepenbring
TCF, Penn, MD

Night Agonies

*In the deepest part of the night,
when I am alone with my blackest grief,
I reach deep inside myself and measure
the depth of my love for my child.*

*I focus on these feelings,
now made unequivocal by death,
and realize that an emotion so strong, so pure
cannot be obliterated by the physical act of dying.
My love lives on.*

*This link to my child remains, unbroken, unaltered.
This bond, the strongest two people can share,*

*But how can it remain, if my child does not?
A solid bridge must have a secure footing
on either side.*

*The strength of the love that flows to my child
from the deepest part of my being
remains as it was in her life.*

*I must conclude it is still anchored in the very fiber
of my child's soul — on the other side of death,*

*With the reawakened awareness
of the connection of our love
I find proof of her continuance, a soothing reassurance
that though she is no longer with me,
she still IS.*

Sally Migliaccio
TCF, Babylon, NY

Any Child's Death Diminishes Me

What difference does it make whether a child is stillborn or dies after some years of life?

She spoke of the lack of memories because her child was stillborn. He commented on the deep pain brought by those very memories which remind one of what is lost!

When it comes to a child's death, does the type of death matter? Is a murder worse than an accident? Suicide worse than chronic illness? Teenage worse than the older adults? Stillborn worse than teenage?

I've tried to be thankful that Jeanie wasn't murdered. That she did not commit suicide. That she and those dear boys did not linger, comatose. Or die from prolonged illness. I could not find thankfulness though I have sought diligently for it within my deepest being!

The death of a child, whatever the age or circumstances, brings its own guilt and anger. Its own despair and questioning. Any child's death diminishes the parents who loved that child. And, for those bereaved parents, that death is surely the worst. Their grief the most severe!

Robert F. Gloor
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

Mackie

*She soared into our lives,
Before she was due,
And captured all our hearts,
With the first breaths she drew.*

*We watched as she struggled,
Determined to live.
Inspired by all the love
Her family could give.*

*She fought many battles.
Some were large, some small.
With calm understanding,
She conquered them all.*

*With each new victory,
She soared to new heights,
From T-ball and scouts
To dancing in tights.*

*Grades of A-one hundred,
Her goals she set high.
To score any less,
Sometimes made her cry.*

*So quietly she spoke,
Often hard to hear.
As her confidence grew,
Her words became clear.*

*Many lives she has touched,
With a love so pure.
Of her strength and courage,
You were always sure.*

*Like a butterfly's life,
Hers was all too brief.
So our memories now
Are mingled with grief.*

*Her last battle was long,
And her heart was weak.
She continued to fight,
Unable to speak.*

*A victory this time
Just was not to be.
Battles are over,
She can now soar free.*



Kathy F. Wilson
in loving memory of her niece,
Mackenzie Jordan Smith
Daughter of Pat and Lisa Smith
TCF, Nashville, TN

Some Ways To Help A Grieving Spouse

- Assign top priority to your marriage relationship.
- Cultivate transparency, openness, and honesty.
- Accept the pain that you feel. Be willing to share it and to listen to your spouse's expression of the pain he or she is feeling.
- Be patient with your spouse and with yourself. Recognize that your spouse is probably not at the same place in the grief process as you, and that is okay.
- Don't expect your spouse to be your only source of healing.
- Keep working at communicating. Give special attention to your affection for each other. Learn and practice the gestures of love. Remember to stay in touch physically; the importance of human touching and hugging is hard to overestimate.
- Allow or create space in your relationship. Everyone is entitled to a degree of privacy with their feelings, including their grief.
- Allow yourselves to enjoy life and each other. Be willing to laugh together, as well as to cry together. Work at finding some fun things to do together.
- Help each other to remember that life is more than this child who has died. As important as this child is to you, as much as you feel pain over his or her death, your marriage relationship involved far more than this child.

Howard Cupp
TCF, Norman, OK

The Mention of Her Name

*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 are really my friend,
Let me hear the beautiful music
of her name.
It soothes my broken heart
And sings to my soul.*

Nancy Williams
TCF, Marlboro, NJ

SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

When a baby dies, normal symptoms of grief are varied. Parental reactions and intensity of feelings may differ. Typical reactions include the following:

- Crying, loneliness, a feeling of isolation.
- A need to talk about the death and the details of what happened.
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, depression.
- Anger, guilt, blame.
- Loss of appetite, overeating, sleeplessness, irritability.
- Inability to concentrate, comprehend or remember.
- Loss of goals and aims in life, a sense of desolation about the future.
- Aching arms, phantom crying, frequent sighing.

The first year can be especially difficult when parents ask themselves painful questions or torment themselves with the following statements:

- Why did this happen to my baby, my child?
- Why did this happen to our family?
- Why didn't I know something was wrong?
- Why didn't I go to the doctor sooner?
- It's all my fault!
- If only.

There may be no adequate or satisfying answers to these questions or statements. Anger and guilt are common reactions and usually accompany grief. Try to share and express these feelings as a way of releasing them, eventually forgiving yourself and others. Also, many parents find it helpful to take time to acquire information that deals specifically with this loss and to become familiar with the problems associated with infant death.

TCF, Vancouver Island Chapters

Stillbirth, Miscarriage and Infant Death

A baby's death is one of the most painful and traumatic experiences a parent will confront in a lifetime. Although nothing can take away the pain you feel right now, it may be helpful to know what others have experienced or found comforting as they struggled to deal with the intense grief that followed the death of their child.

It is important to give yourself permission to grieve. Grieving the death of a baby may last far longer than you and others expect. Frequently those around you may be uncomfortable with the intense emotions you experience. Be patient with yourself and do not expect too much too soon.

No matter what age, your child was and is a part of you, and when your baby died, so did many of your hopes and dreams for the future. Choosing a name as well as having a funeral or memorial service can help affirm that you are a parent and have the right to grieve as long and as intensely as necessary.

Starting Small

*Forgiveness is especially important
at times of grieving.
Forgiveness is especially important
for the griever.
Forgiveness must not be forced.*

*Begin with small easy things.
First forgive what
you can forgive without straining.
Then try forgiving some deeper
disappointments – one at a time.*



Sascha

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Are you Moving?

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us 44 cents to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved; then we pay another 44 cents 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 and receiving their helpful newsletter, you may call the Crisis Center at 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. SHARING meets the second and fourth Thursday evenings of each month at 7 p.m. in the Administrative Board Room at The Women's Hospital at Centennial Medical Center located at 2221 Murphy Avenue (between 22nd and 23rd Ave). The phone number is 615 342-8899.

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.