

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.

February 10 Meeting

Sharing Mementos of Our Children and Siblings

We all have things that are precious to us, that either belonged to or remind us of our beloved children. At this month's meeting, we invite you to bring any one thing that can be shared briefly with the rest of the group. This memento can be something that your child treasured, something your child gave you or you gave to him, or something that simply reminds you that your child lived and was loved, even if his or her life was very short (a footprint, baby blanket, hospital bracelet, etc.) Please join us February 10 as we share sweet remembrances of our dear children. Of course, we encourage grandparents and siblings to participate by bringing a memento of their grandchild, brother or sister. Small sharing groups will follow this program.



Announcing: TCF Nashville Sibling Support

Along with our regular sharing tables every month, TCF Nashville now offers a Sibling Sharing Table for teenagers and adults. Siblings are frequently referred to as the "forgotten mourners" because the attention of family members and friends is directed toward the parents. For some reason, our society fails to recognize the depth of love we feel for our brothers and sisters and the consequent grief felt at their passing. Aside from our parents, our siblings are the only people who have always known us. The purpose of our sharing groups is to offer comfort and support to those who have experienced the death of a sibling and to promote the exchange of ideas and wisdom. We ask you to encourage all grieving siblings to join us and support one another on their unique journey. Together, we can make a difference.

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

A Lesson From the Geese

Have you ever wondered why migrating geese fly in V formation? As with most animal behavior, there is a good reason from which we can learn a valuable principle of mutual aid.

- As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an *uplift* for the bird following. By flying in their V group formation, the whole flock adds 71% more flying range than if each bird flew alone.
- Whenever a goose falls out of the group formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the *lifting* power of the bird immediately in front.
- When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into formation and another goose flies at the point position.
- The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep their speed.
- When a goose gets sick, wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow him down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he is either able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own, with another group, or catch up with the flock.

And so it is with The Compassionate Friends.

From TCF, Malta

From Sascha Wagner, poet laureate of The Compassionate Friends:

In the Morning

From wherever you are
you smile at me.
“Find life for both of us”
you say.
“Find peace for both of us”
you say.
“Find strength and love and hope
for both of us,
because you are
my mother.”



Sunshine Thought

Deep in winter, my friend,
when life is darkest,
it is very important
to try thinking
one small sunshine thought
every morning, early.
Try your best...

Our beloved Sascha Wagner wrote from her own grief for her two children, Eve and Nino, with words of understanding and encouragement that truly resonate with grieving parents and their families. More writings by “Sascha”—that’s how she typically signed her work—have appeared in TCF chapter newsletters than those by any other author. Following Sascha’s death in 2003, the executor of her estate awarded the copyrights to Sascha’s writings to The Compassionate Friends. For that we are grateful.

FOR GRIEVING SIBLINGS

When an Adult Loses A Brother or Sister

The loss of a brother or sister is always an emotionally wrenching experience, but when adults lose a sibling they may face potentially debilitating emotional issues that are often unrecognized.

Adult sibling loss often falls into the category known as “disenfranchised grief,” where someone is denied the opportunity to grieve. Sympathy from family and friends is mainly directed toward the parents and/or the spouse of the deceased, not the surviving brothers and sisters. Adults losing a sibling may receive little emotional support and may subtly be made to feel guilty for grieving too long. They can feel forced to hide their emotions and lack the means to resolve their grief. The result can be a years-long struggle with low-grade depression unless several major tasks are undertaken to get through the necessary grieving process?

-Seeking a new identity. Siblings form a part of the background from which you live your life. They’re essential to your sense of who you are. It takes time to learn how to live your life again in a changed world. You don’t “get over” this as much as “grow through” it.

-Facing the loss of a future without your sibling. When a sibling dies you lose both the actual person, and the part he or she would have played in your future. Significant events in your life—marriage, the birth of children, job successes and failures—will all underline the reality that your brother or sister is not there to share them. Such events, no matter how wonderful, will have a bittersweet flavor.

-Overcoming compulsive care-giving. The desire to protect others—perhaps parents, a spouse, or their own children—can take the form of compulsive care-giving for some adults who lose a sibling, and can complicate their own grief process.

Putting your own grief process on hold can be carried too far. When bereaved siblings project their own sad feelings onto others, and then take care of those others, it becomes counter-productive. Compulsive caregivers focus so much energy outside themselves that they become empty inside and may become clinically depressed.

To help resolve this compulsive care-giving, you need to confront your own sadness and pain, own it, and feel it deeply in order to grow through the grief. You may need to talk about every miniscule detail of the death, and express the associated feelings over and over until you wear out the pain.



-Dealing with trauma. Certain types of deaths, such as losing a brother or sister to an accident, suicide or homicide, can be especially traumatic for the surviving sibling. Our minds can process only so much information at one time. Sudden deaths can be an overwhelming, traumatic stimulus. Trauma may also occur if you helped nurse a brother or sister through a disfiguring disease, or witnessed their suffering.

Recovery from trauma involves working through the pain, and articulating thoughts and feelings about the loss to a trusted person. While this long process is going on, you can gain strength by working to increase your self-esteem. Each step that you take toward becoming your best self will create a corresponding rise in self-esteem. You will then be strong enough to handle another ‘piece’ of your grief.

-Overcoming guilt. The sibling relationship is by nature ambivalent—we both love and sometimes hate them. When they die, we often forget the nice things we did and remember the name-calling and hateful thoughts, setting ourselves up to feel guilty. In our memories of the relationship, we may feel that we failed to be as kind or generous as we should have.

Underneath these thoughts lies the fact that we, as humans, do not like to feel powerless or helpless. We could not prevent our sibling’s death, so we pretend to ourselves that if we had been there, or had taken some particular action, things would have been different. It usually takes another person to hear about our guilt, to help us bring it down to size.

When an adult sibling dies, you may feel as though a part of you died, too. Remember, however, that a part of your sibling also lives on in you. Instead of going into hiding with your feelings, meet them head-on. Talk to a counselor or share your feelings with someone who will listen. Don’t let your grief take over your whole life. You can enter fully into life again.

P. Gill White, Ph.D., L.P.C., N.C.C.

(Dr. White is a Licensed Professional Counselor in private practice, and also the author of [Sibling Grief: Healing after the Death of a Sister or Brother](#)

“Children lose so much when a sibling dies. When they lose their brother or their sister, they lose their family as they know it. They lose their parents, at least temporarily, because parents are so disabled by their own grief. Their place in the family is forever changed, and so is the family itself. And they have fewer tools to handle it with than adults.”

Judy Davis, Director of The Sibling Project
From TCF, Nevada

“Mom got the flowers, Dad got the money, and everyone told me to be good.

Melissa, age 7

The Hidden One

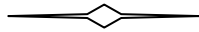
*We are a family of five
(one of us is hidden)
I keep her safe and warm in my heart,
holding tight lest she slip away.*

*Her birth was whispered
(rather than heralded)
in the hallways, hotel rooms,
the recovery room and nurses' station.*

*She is but a fleeting memory
A dream as soft as a cloud,
As delicate as the misty morning
on which she was born.*

*She slipped into and out of our lives
As quietly as the moon appears
And glides across the evening sky
To fade away in the dawn of a new day
And the harsh reality of the sun.*

Debbi Jones, Gainesville, FL
Permission granted for use by TCF



The TCF Journey

There is a well-known saying that states, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." Then there is a joke that says, "But I don't want to go." That was my loud cry as I began my long journey down the road of grief after my son Michael died. What a journey it has been—a journey that has led me from tears to laughter, despair to hope, doubt to faith, hell to the beginning of peace and serenity.

One thing is certain, I never could have come this far on my journey without The Compassionate Friends. I will never forget the first TCF meeting I attended. I walked into a large room and saw many people there laughing and talking. I thought to myself, "What is going on here? Don't these people know that after your child died you will never laugh or smile again? They must not love their children as much as I love my son! This group is not for you." However, I found myself going to the meetings every month in spite of my reservations.

Often I heard people at my TCF meetings talk about well-meaning friends who would say, "Time will make things better." Yes, the passage of time does soften the pain; but it is what we DO with our time that helps us to heal. Grief is work—hard work—but it is the only way to truly heal.

Once I met a mother whose child had been dead for ten years. All I could think was, "It is hell living ONE day without my son. How can I survive for ten years without him?" Then I

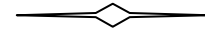
learned that you live ONE DAY AT A TIME or even minute to minute if necessary.

Probably the most important thing I learned at TCF was that I had CHOICES. I could choose to be bitter and angry the rest of my life or I could choose to be happy. I could choose to drop out of the human race or I could choose to go on living. I CHOSE LIFE. The best testament I could give to my son's life was to go on living myself.

How do you go on living? TCF showed me how. I learned to "forgive" myself. Yes, I made mistakes, but it was okay. I am a human being. I am not perfect. I learned not to "should" on myself and not to let others "should" on me (as in "You should go to the family party.") It's okay to be angry. However, it is better to roll up your car windows and scream as loud as you can instead of screaming at your spouse or children. Love yourself. Do something nice for yourself.

All of these things are hard to do; but you keep going to TCF meetings. You keep listening and try to apply in your own life the suggestions you hear from the other members. You reach out to help someone else in TCF who is hurting. Your help can be as simple as saying, "Hello, I am here to listen." It is in this reaching out to help someone else that the miracle of TCF happens. You HEAL YOURSELF when you give to someone else what you have received from TCF. May we always reach out to others to heal and be healed on our journey!

Judy Bonura
TCF Metro New Orleans Chapter



A Sibling's Point of View

*There are times
When I see a fiery sunset
Or the silver glow of the moon,
And I see my brother,
And feel the peace that he still exists.
But these times are few,
And most of what I see is
What he is missing.*

*Cry now, my silent tears,
Quietly so no one hears.
They don't know the pain I go through
Day after day,
And through the years.*

Alissa Roeder
TCF, Pikes Peak, CO

The Chair

*I have a Chair that sits by me as I work throughout each day
A Special memory of my son who stopped along his way.
His laughter and his smiles brought Joy, a break away from time.
I loved the Chair where he sat, the visits were his and mine.*

*One day there came a time in life when vacant sat the Chair.
No longer was it occupied by the son who loved it there.
An empty seat was left, but he had taken care
To prepare his life upon this earth to sit in Heaven's Chair.*

*The Chair he has in Heaven is right there by the King.
His wondrous face he looks upon as softly Angels sing.
The Chair he has is beautiful and has its own story.
Alongside Jesus they commune as he beholds God's glory.*

*This earthly Chair holds memories dear that only Love can see.
I know the loss is all but gain when once again we meet.
My son will greet me at the gate and together we will stand.
He reaches out to take my Chair from a carpenter with a nail-scarred hand.*

*Save me a Chair,
Love you Son,
Mom*

Laura Thrasher
TCF, Nashville, TN

(Note: 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.)

At the December Memorial Service each year, many of you bring gifts for the children in the care of Youth Villages. The letter below from the Youth Villages Development Manager to our Chapter Leader expresses how much your donation is appreciated.

Dear Lamar,

Thank you so much for the very generous donations of toys, clothes and gifts from the Compassionate Friends to Youth Villages for our Holiday Heroes program again this year! It's hard to believe that we have been together now for 7 years!

Thank you so much for thinking of us every year – this year your gifts were needed more than ever! We provided Christmas gifts for over 1,015 children – almost 200 more than last year! You are so wonderful to our children and I want you to know that there is no way possible that we could be as successful as we are without fantastic people like you.

Thanks so much for giving Christmas to so many children who have never received anything and all the others for whom it's been a very long time – it has made a huge impact on their lives! You are truly our heroes and we are forever grateful!

Please share this with everyone and let them know how much we appreciate all that they have done for us! Have a wonderful 2013!

Sincerely,

Greg Schott
Development Manager
Middle Tennessee Youth Villages

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Are you Moving?

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 on time. You may call, write or email the chapter leaders or the newsletter editor. This information is at the top of page 1. Thanks for your help.

PLEASE NOTE: 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 meeting day 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, 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.

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.