

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.

March 11th Meeting Addresses Grandparent Grief

Polly Moore, bereaved parent and grandparent will be our March meeting speaker. Our beloved Polly is not really a “guest” speaker as she is one of TCF Nashville’s own. Polly was a longtime member of our chapter and served as Chapter Leader in the mid 1990’s. She has since moved and is active in the Estill Springs, Tennessee chapter. She has recently completed two terms on the TCF National Board of Directors and is now the Regional Coordinator for Tennessee.

Grandparent grief has been described as a two-edged sword..... working through your grief after the death of a grandchild while witnessing your own child dealing with the death of their son or daughter. Helping grandparents navigate through this maze will be the topic for our March meeting. Gaining insight on this topic will also be useful to parents whose own parents are still living. Don’t miss this special afternoon with Polly Moore. Our regular sharing sessions will follow the program.



We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children’s and grandchildren’s lives. Our grief is two-fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As we walk by our child’s side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

Susan Mackey
TCF, Rutland, VT

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
- Murder**.....Joe Ladd
615-727-3284

SUICIDE: How Do We Say It?

From the moment we learned of our daughter's death, I knew that the word "suicide" had the power to erase her life while emblazoning her death in neon letters in the minds of her friends and colleagues. During the unremitting misery of those early days, I even toyed with the idea of telling no one she was gone, willing her to stay alive in the thoughts of those who knew her, forgetting that I'd already notified our family and closest friends. It was a fairy tale wish I contrived as a way of allowing myself a momentary escape from the unthinkable reality of her death. If her death were never acknowledged, would she still be here?

My fantasy vanished in the cold light of the days that followed. I knew that we could never dishonor Rhonda's memory by concealing her suicide. I wrote a letter to friends and relatives, informing them of the events leading up to her death. I hoped my letter would quell the inevitable whispers by openly acknowledging her depression and her decision to end her own life. I implored them to speak often and openly about her to us; to do otherwise would deny her existence.

I never intended to embark on a campaign to confront, let alone eradicate, the stigma of suicide. What mattered the most was that we who loved Rhonda must not let the circumstances of her death diminish her memory or her accomplishments. I explained that she had "taken her own life" or that "she died of suicide." An expression I refused to use then and refuse to use to this day, is the despicable "committed suicide," with its implications of criminality. Historically, that term was an instrument of retaliation against the survivors, and it has no place in today's enlightened society.

Many people prefer to say, "completed suicide," but as a parent who witnessed my child's twenty-year struggle against the demons of clinical depression I don't care much for that, either. "Died of suicide" or "died by suicide" are accurate, emotionally neutral ways to explain my child's death. My first encounter with suicide occurred many years ago when my dentist, a gentle family man in his mid-thirties, took his own life. Since that time, I have known neighbors, relatives, friends and other hard-working, highly respected individuals who died this way. I've facilitated meetings in which grieving parents declined to speak about their children because they couldn't handle the group's reaction.

Rhonda was a gifted scholar, writer and archaeologist who, like my mother, suffered from adult-onset manic depression (also called bipolar disorder). She made a lasting contribution in her field, and a wonderful tribute to her life and her work appeared in *American Antiquity, Journal of the Society for American Archaeology* (October, 1994).

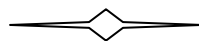
Both my daughter and my mother suffered tremendously in their struggles to conceal their illness. Neither of them won that battle, but my mother responded to medications that minimized the highs and lows, and she died of cancer at eighty-seven. Sadly, doctors never discovered a magic formula that could offer Rhonda the same relief. She ended her own life at age thirty-six, after a year of severe depression that was triggered by life stresses beyond her control. I saw her battle firsthand, and I witnessed her valiant struggle to survive. She wanted desperately to live; she died because she thought she had no alternative.

In his revealing book, *Telling Secrets*, the great theologian Frederick Buechner describes his father's suicide, which occurred when Buechner was just a boy. The conspiracy of silence that was imposed on Buechner and his brother had a profound effect on their development and their relationships with other family members. "We are as sick as our secrets," he concludes.

We whose children have taken their own lives must do all that we can to help eradicate the secrecy and stigma that surround their deaths. If we allow these to persist, we allow their lives to be diminished. We owe our children more than that.

Joyce Andrews
TCF, Sugar Land, TX

The national Board of Directors of The Compassionate Friends has officially adopted the terms "died by suicide" or "died of suicide" to replace the commonly used "committed suicide" or "completed suicide." All TCF publications have been updated to reflect the new language, and TCF chapters, as well as the community at large, are being asked to use the new terminology when discussed.



I find that it is not the circumstances in which we are placed,
but the spirit in which we meet them that constitutes our comfort.

Elizabeth King

TCF 2012 National/International Conference
Costa Mesa, California Site of 35th TCF/USA National Conference
and 5th International Gathering!

The Compassionate Friends/USA is pleased to announce that, in conjunction with the 35th National Conference, it will also be hosting
The Compassionate Friends 5th International Gathering.

The combined conference will be held July 20-22, 2012 in beautiful Costa Mesa, California.

"We welcome to this conference all who are grieving the death of a child, for grief is a universal language and one that TCF'ers around
the world know all too well," says TCF/USA Executive Director Patricia Loder.

The International Gathering will include a Spanish workshop and sharing session
for our Hispanic/Latino families and bilingual families.

Because many of those attending will be traveling long distances from countries around the world, special excursions are being
planned for before and after the conference, so everyone is invited to combine their stay with visits to some of California's great
attractions. Special events related to the conference will be held from Wednesday, July 18 through Monday, July 23.

There will be an impressive lineup of popular keynoters
as well as more than 100 workshops to be held on most topics related to grief after the death of a child.
In addition, those wishing to attend and stay at the host hotel may now make reservations!

You can now make reservations for the conference host hotel. Although The Compassionate Friends has arranged a room block for the
conference that includes every room within the Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa hotel, we recommend that you reserve your room
early if you wish to stay at the host hotel. Because our national conference includes the International Gathering, there is little doubt
that all rooms will be filled. Room charge is \$129 per night plus tax of approximately 11%. The room block is available July 17-24.

For details, registration, and hotel reservations link, go online to <http://www.compassionatefriends.org> and click on News and Events.

Let's have a good representation of our Nashville chapter at this wonderful conference.
Please let our chapter leaders know if you are planning to attend, or even just wishing you could!

TCF "Online Support Community" Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing

The Compassionate Friends national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This
program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving
the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation
among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more
specific sessions. These include "Pregnancy and Infant Loss," "Bereaved 2 Years and Under," "Bereaved 2 Years and Over," "No
Surviving Children," "Survivors of Suicide." There are also sessions for surviving siblings.

The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and
click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.

The Magic of You

What can I do to get better? This is the question most often asked by newly bereaved parents, as if the right actions could work a miracle. They are seeking easy rules, methods or steps of healing.

But there are none. There are no special words, no miraculous system, no magic wand to take the pain away. There is only time, hard work, and compassionate support. Grief is a process which must be allowed to function thoroughly in order for healing to take place. There are no short cuts. Attempts to ease the process such as through alcohol or drugs often and either end in disaster or in complicating the grief process.

There is no magic. There is only you, the bereaved person, who must decide yourself to work within the process to resolve your grief.

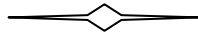
No one else can do it for you, but others can help by supporting your grief rather than searching for magic words to wish it away. Others can help within The Compassionate Friends by providing models of healed parents who are willing to listen and share.

You can help yourself by being patient with grief instead of searching for easy methods. You can help yourself by learning about the grief process.

You can help yourself by sharing your story with others and listening to their stories. You can help yourself by reaching out to others is the source of your own healing.

Magic pills or incantations? There are none. Look to yourself. The Compassionate Friends can help, but you alone determine the progress of your grief. The magic of healing is within yourself.

Marcia Alig
TCF, Mercer Area, NJ



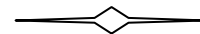
On Dealing with a Violent Death

1. Generally it takes 18-24 months just to stabilize after the death of a family member. It can take much longer when the death was a violent one. Recognize the length of the mourning process. Beware of developing unrealistic expectations of yourself.
2. Your worse times usually are not at the moment of a tragic event—then you're in a state of shock or numbness. Often you slide "into the pits" 4-7 months after the event. Strangely, when you're in the pits and tempted to despair, this may be the time when most people expect you to be "over" your loss.
3. When people ask how you're doing, don't always say, "Fine." Let some people know how terrible you feel.
4. Talking with a true friend or with others who've been there and survived can be very helpful. Those who've been there speak your language. Only they can really say, "I know, I understand." You are not alone.

5. Often depression is a cover for anger. Learn to uncork your bottle and find appropriate ways to release your bottled-up anger. What you're going through seems so unfair and unjust.
6. Take time to lament, to experience being a victim. It may be necessary to spend some time feeling sorry for yourself. "Pity parties" sometimes are necessary and can be therapeutic.
7. It's all right to cry, to question, to be weak. Beware of allowing yourself to be "put on a pedestal" by others who tell you what an inspiration you are because of your strength and your ability to cope so well. If they only knew!
8. Remember, you may be a rookie at the experience you're going through. This is probably the first violent death you've coped with. You're new at this, and you don't know what to do or how to act. You need help.
9. Reach out and try to help others in some small ways at least. This little step forward may prevent you from dwelling on yourself.
10. Many times of crisis ultimately can become times of opportunity. Mysteriously your faith in yourself, in others, in God can be deepened through crisis. Seek out persons who can serve as symbols of hope to you.

Healing can happen if you receive two things.—
knowledge and human support. The best available tool is the "grief cycle," but for most people the cycle will not be complete unless they share their grief with someone who has been through a similar experience.

Father Ken Czillinger
Cincinnati, Ohio



I Heard My Father Cry

*Feeling so helpless and sad
Listening from the room next door
Over my ears using every pillow I had
I couldn't take it anymore.
His pain came from deep inside
Cries turned into screams.
What he felt he could no longer hide—
The loss of his only son took away his dreams.
His sighs echoed off the walls
He couldn't seem to pull himself together
As our eyes met at the end of the hall
I realized this hurt will be with him forever.
With eye so sad, he looked right through me.
No knowing what to say, I didn't even try.
This is something I never expected to see
But now I know that real men do cry.*

Karen Keck, Sibling
TCF, Sacramento Valley, CA

CHAPTER INFORMATION

The “Children Remembered” Listings

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on page 3 in The Children Remembered, please let us know, printing the exact way you'd like the child's name to appear, the child's birth and death dates, and the parents' names as they should be listed. You may call the database manager at 615 356-1351, drop us a note at TCF, P.O. Box 50833, Nashville, TN 37205, or email us at davidg14@bellsouth.net. We'll be glad to include them. You need to contact us only once, unless any of your information changes.

Picture Name Tags

If you will bring a clear picture of your child, wallet size or larger, to a TCF meeting, Lamar Bradley will make a beautiful permanent name tag with your child's picture on it for you to use each month. You will also have an opportunity to select your own butterfly to accompany the photograph. The original photo will be completely safe with Lamar and will be returned to you at the following meeting. The best part of this is that there is no charge. A big thank you goes to Lamar for unselfishly giving his time and talent.

We Need Your Help

If you know a family outside the immediate Nashville area who has experienced the death of a child, regardless of age or cause of death, and you have access to the address (and phone number) of the parents, it would be most helpful if you would call us with that information. Our mission is to reach every bereaved family in Middle Tennessee, but we have to know about them in order to give them the support we ourselves have received. If you know the child's name, birth date, date of death and cause of death, so much the better. Our outreach chairperson will send a warm letter of sympathy and information about TCF along with appropriate brochures and articles. There will be no demands made upon the parents, and the information you provide is strictly confidential.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Alive Hospice Support Group for Bereaved Parents

A support group for bereaved parents meets at Alive Hospice. For details, please call John Baker at 963-4674.

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.

Survivors of Suicide

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings, you may call Samantha Owen at 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. Check it out.

When You Are Bereaved, It Is Alright to...

Scream in the shower.
Yell in the car.
Howl at the moon.
Cry anywhere you like.
Misplace your glasses.
Lose the car.
Forget your own name.
Put milk in the cupboard,
Toilet paper in the refrigerator,
And ice cream in the oven.
Beat up a pillow.
Stomp on the ground.
Throw stones in a lake.
Change grocery stores if it hurts.
Wear one black shoe and one navy.
Have tear stains on your tie.
Eat French fries for breakfast,
Toast for lunch,
And peanut butter for dinner
(as long as you eat).

Write him a letter.
Bake him a cake.
Smell his clothes.
Celebrate his life on his birthday.
Talk to your pets; they understand.
Leave his room the way it is
For as long as you like.
Say his name just to hear the sound.
Talk about him to others.
Tell loved ones what you need.
Say no when you feel like it.
Cancel plans if you want.
Have a bad day.
It's alright to hurt.

And one day, when you're ready...
It's alright to laugh again.
Dance and feel pretty.
Have a good time.
Look forward to tomorrow.

Sing in the shower.
Smile at a friend's new baby.
Wear make-up once more.
Go for a day, a week,
And even a month without crying.
Celebrate the holidays.
Forgive those who failed you.
Learn something new.
Look at his pictures
And remember with happiness,
Not pain.
Go on with your life.
Cherish the memories.

And one day when it's time...
It's alright
To love again!

Vicki Tushingam

