

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

P. O. Box 50833 • Nashville, TN 37205 • (615) 356-4TCF(4823) • Nashville Website: www.tcfnashville.org

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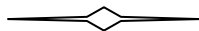
The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

Welcome: The Nashville chapter meets at 3:00 P.M. on the second Sunday of each month in the activities room of Blakemore United Methodist Church, 3601 West End Avenue, Nashville, TN 37205. Enter on the Bowling Avenue side. We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.

March 8 Meeting

Sharing Mementos of Our Children, Grandchildren 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 March 8 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.



We may not be able to make the sun shine for you, but we can hold your umbrella.

Ann Swann
TCF, Boise Area



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.

The Arts

*The arts are what make life worthwhile,
But I gave it up due to the loss of a child.
The desire has left me to draw and paint,
The creative juices have become quite faint.
This death in part has all but taken its toll,
The whole is stronger than individual soul.
The need to express can be for the faint hearted,
My painting has stopped but my writing started.
And I write these words to express my belief,
That the arts have come full circle through grief.*

For Molly Harbert Williamson

Jere Williamson
TCF, Nashville, TN

The Month of In Between

*In between Winter
And in between Spring,
Your death has left me
Feeling in between.
In between this world
And in between the next.
Since you died
Nothing's the same.
I no longer feel like I belong,
Yet I haven't wings for heaven,
Though I have no heart for earth.
So I'm somewhere with March.
I'm somewhere in between.*

Naomi Holzman
TCF, Volusia/Flagler, FL

Gardens of the Heart

*How comforting are our memories
They sustain us in our sorrow
And give us reassurance
As we face a new tomorrow.*

*And though the world seems barren
When our loved ones depart
Their memory blooms forever
In the gardens of the heart.*

TCF, Houston, TX

March Winds

*He raced against the wind
As if his very life depended upon it.
Eyes bright, cheeks glowing
From the still almost chilly March wind,
Throwing me a smile now and then
To make sure I was watching. I was,
And when I caught a smile I applauded.
His effort so great for one small boy.
I don't remember now
If his kite ever flew—sometimes,
In spite of heroic efforts, they don't.
But I remember the day
The nip in the air
His cheeks glowing
His fresh, clean smell
My afternoon of playing catch
With his smiles...
I remember every year
When March winds begin to blow.
Even if he had not died
Long after the age of flying kites,
I still would remember.
Maybe if he were still here,
Teaching his own small boy
The delicate art of flying kites
And catching his own smiles,
It wouldn't hurt so much
When March winds begin to blow.*

From *Songs from the Edge*
By Faye Harden



Minds and Hearts

*I think of you,
Away from me now,
Yet close in ways
Of mind and heart.
I close my eyes.*

*A clear picture now;
And hope time is good –
It will never separate
The minds and hearts,
Never tear the picture.*

Lezlie Langford Peterson
TCF National Sibling Newsletter

March – A Month of Transition

The first day of any new month seems reason enough to pause, perhaps, and reflect on the significance or meaning that each of us might associate with a new month. For me, March has always signified a time of transition, a slow but steady emergence from the dark depths of winter into the first, but sure, signs of spring. Something like the “light at the end of the tunnel.” This spring will have a different meaning for each of us. For some, especially the newly bereaved, there will be a reluctance to accept it—a feeling of longing for the child with whom we would have liked to share it. You may wish to ignore the signs of this year’s spring, but it will happen anyway—you don’t have to enjoy it. Your sorrow is too new to let you enjoy anything. We understand this feeling. It’s part of the guilt we feel for surviving the loss of a child. It just won’t seem fair to you that the world goes on much the same as before.

Others of us, with the aid of time, sometimes much time, can face spring with a little more resolve. The resolve to accept things the way they are. Somehow we learn to recognize our limitations, and we stop hurting ourselves with guilt or with the responsibility to change things. There is no way to change the fact that our children have died. The only thing we can change is ourselves. Those children will always be with us in our minds and our hearts. When we become secure in that belief, we will have changed. The changed person can accept life again and still be faithful to the memory of his child.

Bob McCollough
TCF Burlington Chapter

Newly Bereaved...Thoughts for you when you get depressed:

- Don’t ever try to understand everything—some things will just never make sense.
- Don’t ever be reluctant to show your feelings—when you’re happy, give in to it.
- Don’t ever be afraid to try to make things better—you might be surprised at the results.
- There is always somebody there for you to reach out to.
- Don’t ever forget that you can achieve so many of the things you can imagine, imagine that!
- Don’t ever stop loving.
- Don’t ever stop believing.
- Don’t ever stop dreaming your dreams.

TCF, Orange Coast, CA

Letting Go

Recently I received an award for volunteering in the community. I was honored to receive it. Some of the people in my life mentioned that it looked like I had “let go” of the pain of losing my child. “Let go?” Of course, they don’t understand.

But when the award was mentioned at our monthly Compassionate Friends meeting, a bereaved mother made an interesting observation that touched my heart and reminded me why I need this special group to keep me centered and balanced.

“I remember that article you read to us last Mother’s Day....the one your son wrote about how proud he was of you,” she said. “Wouldn’t it be great to put that article in our memory book with the newspaper article about your award? He was right about you. He was proud of you.”

What a great idea! What a wonderful way to bring my son into my life even though he is no longer on this plane. That’s what Compassionate Friends do.....they help to bring our children into our lives even though our children are no longer alive. For a few hours each month, our children return to us. We’re proud parents who can share our children’s stories and keep our children in our lives.....without explaining why we won’t be “letting go.”

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

A Need for Change?

How would you feel, if someone said to you, “If my child died, I’d feel like dying too.”? It is hard to know what to make of it, exactly. Is it a sympathetic comment or rather the opposite? And does it matter how it is meant or only how we react to it? A TCF friend of mine, Caroline, didn’t make a big issue of it but she didn’t let it pass, either. She answered, “But I do feel like dying,” which cut the conversation very short. Caroline told me later that it almost felt like an accusation, as if she hadn’t cared much about her son.

Of course she thought that. I had the same reaction when something similar was said to me a few years after my daughter [Milya] died...One of my colleagues...said: “You are so brave. I’m sure I wouldn’t cope if I lost one of my children.” I wasn’t as quick with an answer as my friend Caroline. In fact, I didn’t know what to say, so I just mumbled something silly. My colleague meant well but her remark hurt. I still remember it, years later. She was wanting to say how terrible it was and how hard it must have been for me but I was hearing smugness: she loved her children more than I had loved my daughter. I couldn’t have loved Milya very much because I was obviously coping.

Caroline and I aren’t the only ones that have been upset by “wrong” comments. All of us have experienced something like it. It can take a long time before we accept that people would probably be horrified if they realized how hurtful their remark or behavior was.

It is almost impossible to avoid being hurt, though. How can others understand what we go through? In our “before” lives,

we would take an insensitive comment or action in our stride. But we are so vulnerable now, we are so raw under our skin that we can take almost anything as hurtful. It is very difficult for other people to deal with us; we are very sensitive and also unpredictable: something trivial can upset us in the morning and we might cope with it in the afternoon.

We could shut ourselves away from the outside world, but that is not always possible and it doesn’t solve anything. I can only see two answers and they’re both up to us. One way is to tell others when we feel hurt. That is hard but the other person stands to learn from it. It may also give us a sense of not being completely powerless...The other way is for us to change our own reactions. That is even harder. Why should we be the ones to change, when we are suffering so much? We have a right to expect support and understanding, and now we are supposed to understand others and forgive them for hurting us? Put like that, it seems very unfair. Trying to alter our outlook doesn’t always work but can you see any other way? People do not mean to hurt us or imply we were not good parents. They just lack imagination and they have been lucky in life—so far.

Changing our way of thinking requires a lot of emotional energy and it can take a long time. It can also give us more protection than almost anything else. The alternative may well be our poor hearts being hurt over and over again. And that is no alternative.

Eva Lager
TCF, Perth, Western Australia



The Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas, 300 Reunion Blvd., Dallas, TX 75207, is now accepting reservations for TCF's National Conference, July 10-12, 2015.

Conference attendees are receiving a discounted room rate of \$129. We anticipate a large attendance for the conference, so we encourage you to make your reservation as soon as it is convenient for you.

Plan to be a part of this year's heartwarming experience.

CHAPTER INFORMATION

The “Children Remembered” Listings

If you are unable to attend TCF meetings and would like for your child to be listed on pages 2 and 3 in The Children Remembered list, 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.

TCF Nashville Sibling Support

We encourage siblings from teens to adults to come support one another at our monthly chapter meetings. Siblings face a unique and complicated grief journey and are finding hope and healing through our sharing groups.



BEREAVEMENT RESOURCES

Alive Alone

Alive Alone is an organization to benefit parents whose only child or all children have died. Visit their website at www.alivealone.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.

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

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.

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.

Two poems from The Poems of Sascha Wagner:

Spring Waiting

*Winter's end is almost here.
Crocus struggle in the snow.
Sunlight has a softer glow.*

--Is the winter long this year?

*Spring waits, watching for a cue...
not to rush your grief away,
but to be there, when you say.*

--Spring is waiting, friend, for you.

*Find a little time for spring,
even if your days are troubled.
Let a little sunshine in –
let your memories be doubled.*

*Take a little time to see
all the things your child was seeing –
and your tears will help your heart
find a better time for being.*



Companion Sojourners

The dictionary defines the word “sojourn” as temporary place where one may stop, rest, visit, dwell, abide and lodge. The Compassionate Friends is an organization of fellow sojourners. At our monthly meetings we stop for a while to find respite from a world that does not understand what it means to lose a child. We find a safe dwelling where there are others who are just like us. We don’t need to have any special skills to be a sojourner. As bereaved parents we instinctively reach out to one another.

Those of us who have been on our journey for a while are drawn to comfort the others who have more recently embarked on their path of grief. We don’t need to say any special words. A discerning look, a listening ear, or a gentle touch can be balm the other person needs to give them a moment’s solace. We are companion sojourners, wounded healers and compassionate friends.

Janet Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

