

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 at 2501 Park Plaza 37203, 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.

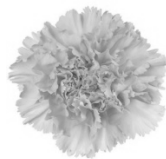
May 11 Meeting: *Honoring Our Memories*

The May meeting is an especially poignant one because it always falls on Mother’s Day, and since the June meeting is not on Father’s Day, we like to give special attention to the role of both mothers and fathers in the lives of their children. If you have a special memory of a particular Mother’s Day or Father’s Day, we hope you will come prepared to share it with the group. We will honor all mothers with special readings and there will be a picture board to display your child’s photo. (Please bring a photo 5”x7” or smaller.)

This has always proved to be a very meaningful meeting—a safe place to be on a day filled with memories. We’d like to share it with you.

Keeping our tradition, each person in attendance will be given a mini-carnation to wear in memory of their children.

Regular sharing groups will follow.



The *carnation*’s scientific name is *Dianthus*. ‘*Dianthus*’, roughly translated, means “flower of love”

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.

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

All-Outdoor Balloon Release and Picnic: June 8 – Centennial Park!

The Mother's Day Card

*You handed it to me
With never a word
Your eyes shone with feelings
That no one else heard.*

*When I opened the envelope
I wasn't prepared.
Instead of the humor
We so often shared,*

*There were flowers and rainbows
And butterflies at play
In a beautiful meadow
On a sunshiny day.*

*Inside was a verse
Like a sentimental song,
As though you knew
That you'd soon be gone.*

*This card must last me
A very long time.
Is that why you chose
Such a special rhyme?*

*At the bottom inside
The heart you had done
You wrote, "I love you, Mom,
From Scott, your only Son."*

xxox

*Kathi Pittman
TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL*



37th National Conference
Chicago, Illinois
July 11-13, 2014

Registration is now open for this year's TCF National Conference.

Go to www.compassionatefriends.org for more information.

Remembering the Moms--

*who didn't have anyone to turn to and
traveled this road alone...*

*An old woman rocks quietly with her eyes closed.
Her mind reaches back to a place she saves,
A place sacred to her,
A place she can only visit when alone.*

*Her thoughts drift around in her head,
At times almost drowning her as she remembers.
She can again feel for a moment,
She can again dream for a moment.*

*She sees him in her mind,
She feels him in her heart...
He is her child.*

*The child not recognized by others,
The child that left as quickly as he came.*

She rocks, she hums.

*She hums 60 years of lullabies,
Never heard by her baby's ears.*

*She rocks, she hums,
And tears fall to her breast.*

She is still a mother...

by Lori Ayrault

A Bereaved Mother Is...

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who thinks she will spend the rest of her life with this horrendous feeling inside.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who has to learn how to live all over again.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who wishes they would take Mother's Day out of the calendar.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who has to learn to accept the loss of her beloved child and uses what she has learned to help others.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who can again learn to smile, to look forward to the future and get excited again because her Compassionate Friends were there when she needed them.

Zel Hester
TCF, Atlanta, GA

To My Dearest Wife

*I searched to find a card for you,
One with something special to say.
They were all very trite.*

*I decided to write
My own, for this Mother's Day.*

*To wear the name "Mother" is an honor.
It requires a heart loving, giving and true.
In all the world, there is no one else
Deserves this more than you.*

*You carried her for ten and a half months.
We wanted, worried, then wept.
When she was born, she also died.
There is no measure for our pain's depth.*

*She changed our lives so totally,
We will never be the same.
The truth of this shows in what I deeply know:
You are a mother in more than just name.*

*I remember when we laid her to rest.
I said, "We've buried a part of us."
But in my mind and heart I feel
A part of her lives within us.*

*If I could, I'd bring her back,
So you could hear our baby say,
"I love you, mom. I'm doing fine.
Happy Mother's Day."*

A bereaved father
TCF, Salem, OR

Mothers and Fathers

*A mother's love for children is a very special thing,
Filled with all the many days that motherhood can bring.
Days when children misbehave and try your patience so,
Days when they are sweet and kind and let their loving
feelings show.*

*A father's love for children is very strong and pure.
There's no problem that a child may have which a father
cannot cure.*

*A parent's love for children is a never-ending thing.
It lasts from day to day and year to year, through
summer, winter, fall, and spring.*

*That special love continues still when someone's child
has died,*

For the feelings that a parent has are impossible to hide.

Jean Hotopp
TCF, Fox Valley, IL

Bent But Not Broken

To the mother who has lost her only child, or has no surviving children, the thought of Mother's Day sends a stabbing pain that only the ones of us who are in this situation can understand. We begin to notice Mother's Day cards slipped in right after Valentine's Day along with the Easter cards. Even before Easter the TV advertising starts. We try to blot this all out but our subconscious keeps reminding us, the day is coming closer.

For the first two years we celebrated Mother's Day for my mother and sister very quietly. The third year after my daughter Shawna's death, we decided to go to a local restaurant featuring a nice buffet. We arrived early hoping to avoid the crowd. A very flustered hostess greeted us and found a table for us. The tables had been pushed close together to accommodate more people. It was already becoming very crowded. She asked the question, "How many mothers?" It was then we noticed the flowers she was carrying. Someone managed to stammer out, three – three mothers. She handed us each a flower, while glancing around to find a table for the next group of people. She didn't notice the one she handed me was pretty battered.

My sister wanted to give me hers or get another. "No, it's ok," I said. The stem was bent, but not broken completely. A wilted tired flower was hanging from the stem.

I brought it home and propped it up in a glass of water to revive it. You see, I could identify with that flower.

As a mother without my child, I have felt so bruised and battered. Somehow through all the pain, tears and loneliness, like the flower, I have been bent but never quite broken.

Donna Frechec
TCF, Enid, OK

What is Loss?

I have a friend who never married; who never had a child. She never lost a husband as I did; She never lost a child as I did.

Last night... I wept for my friend...

Gwen Brown
TCF, Winnepeg, Canada

Graduation Day

Graduation Day: A day cherished by the graduate and his or her parents; one of the long-awaited "rites of passage" to the new status called "adulthood."

Laughter is heard among the students; tears of joy and nostalgia from the parents. The teachers heave sighs of relief and feel a mixture of accomplishment with just a tinge of sadness for the days of laughter and childhood attachments that must be left behind.

Awards are given.
Gifts are received.
Parties are planned.
Future plans are discussed.
New goals are dreamed.

There are hurdles to climb. Disappointments are intermingled with successes. All of these things are a part of life for those fortunate enough to have survived the dangers and pitfalls of this complicated society in which we live. There was no prom night at our house. There were no award ceremonies to attend. There was no graduation gift to buy. There was no college to choose. There was no future to plan. Jimmy doesn't live here anymore. His home now is a neatly trimmed patch of grass with bright-colored flowers; a tombstone inscribed with love; a small space carefully tended and watched over lovingly by someone who finds it most difficult to cope, to accept, to go on, or to find joy or peace in anything.

Tears are a way of life now, and spare time is filled with emptiness.

There is sorrow now for a cheerful young boy who will soon be forgotten by all but a few.

Broken dreams.
Unanswered prayers.
Disbelief.
Loss of faith.

And maybe years of endurance of a situation so unacceptable, so intolerable, that from the inner depths, a scream is stifled. With one word my entire being cries out, "WHY?"

Ann Ianni
Bereavement Magazine

When a Sibling Dies

The death of a child is a family crisis no less for the siblings than for the parents. Surviving siblings may feel abandoned because grieving parents no longer have the emotional energy to care for them. They may feel unloved as they experience family friends putting the deceased child on a pedestal. They may feel incredibly guilty, remembering every bout of sibling rivalry, every unkind word and every slammed door. They may feel unworthy to be alive, longing for answers to explain why their brother or sister died and they didn't. And they may, therefore, seek conscious or unconscious ways to self-destruct: running away from home, using alcohol and other drugs, taking on characteristics of the dead sibling and thus diminishing their own image.

Following are suggestions children have shared about how parents can help them when a brother or sister has died:

- Let them choose whether or not they want to see their sibling at the funeral home. Let them choose some of the music, write or read a memorial to their brother or sister, go with you or alone to the cemetery visits.
- Share with the siblings all factual information as it becomes known. Being "left out" only enhances a growing sense of not being important to the family.
- When you see children who remind you of your child, point them out to the siblings and explain the grief spasm it has caused. Mysterious behavior enhances the siblings' fear of being left out.
- Ask the siblings to be with you occasionally as you grieve. If you always grieve in private, the emotional distance between you will widen.
- Talk with siblings both about pleasant memories and unpleasant memories of the dead child. This prevents pedestal placing.
- Don't tell siblings to "be strong" for someone else. That is too great a burden to carry.
- Understand that it may be easier for siblings to talk to friends, or another trusted adult, than to parents. They desperately do not want to add to their parents' devastation so may seek counsel and understanding elsewhere.

Janice Lord
TCF, Anne Arundel City, MD

Survivors of Suicide

Time heals all wounds is not necessarily true for survivors of suicide. Time is necessary for healing, but time is not enough. Shared feelings enrich and lead to growth and healing.

From within the circle, we talk about the past. I hear cries for fathers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters and friendships we thought would last.

And we ache for the arms of a loved one, of a time too short lived and of questions left more piercing than a knife. Oh, the questions come hauntingly, pressing your mind, when a loved one takes their own life.

In the circle I dare reach out my hands. In the circle, help me see there's a plan for me.

And my story becomes yours as we struggle through the pain. In the circle, we remember their names. We have daydreams of the future, about how we thought it might be, with regrets of conversations that might have been the key.

We are angry and confused as we struggle for our breath. Our hearts cry out in anger in what has been labeled a senseless death.

We have good days and bad days, and without a trace, in the circle, tears and smiles meet as we gather strength together. Sons and daughters, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters and friendships felt deep in our souls, memories and moments left clinging to us, and questions of how to let go.

Donna Braddy (SOS)

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Are you Moving?

Each time a newsletter is returned to us with an incorrect address, it costs us to retrieve it in order to find out where you've moved; then we pay again 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, 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. Diane Castellano, LCSW is a grief counselor there for children and their families. Call her at [615 327-1085](tel:6153271085).

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.