

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.

How Men and Women Grieve Differently

November 13 Meeting

Grief is handled differently by each one of us and it is very hard work. Many bereaved parents have found that our grief differs greatly from the same process in our spouse or significant other. It is a fact that men and women grieve differently. At our November meeting, we will address this important issue in the form of a unique panel. Please join us as we learn from each other. You might just be enlightened as to “why they do that,” or “why don’t they do this.” Our regular sharing groups will follow. We hope you will be with us.



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

Candlelight Memorial Service Scheduled for December 11 in HCA Auditorium

The December memorial service will be here before we know it. It is important that **everyone** wishing to have their child's photo in the memorial service follow very carefully the instructions on page 7 of this newsletter. There is a submission deadline that **MUST** be strictly adhered to. We invite all of you to enjoy this opportunity to see your child on the big screen! If you have not attended the candlelight memorial service, we encourage you to do so. This is a very moving and powerful program. All family members, siblings and friends are invited.

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National Office P. O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696—Phone 630 990-0010 or Toll free: 1-877 969-0010

TCF Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

National Office email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Dealing With Grief After Your Child Dies

From TCF meetings and the newsletter, I've learned five key things that helped me handle my grief. May I share them with you?

- Allow yourself to face and experience the pain of grief. The sooner you can bring yourself to meet it head-on, the sooner you will begin to work your way through it. You cannot escape or just hope it will go away, because the only way out is the way *through*.
- Remember, this is your grief. No one else understands exactly how you feel— not even the other parent. Don't let anyone else set the agenda. You have the right to do it your way and on your timetable.
- Be especially patient with your spouse and other grieving family members. They will grieve differently from you—even though it's for the same child. Allow them the same freedom for individuality that you need.
- Know that bizarre mood changes and feelings of apathy, numbness, losing your mind, anger, and hopelessness are normal. Be patient with yourself as your system struggles to repair itself from the devastating blow.
- Believe that time is on your side. The amount of time needed varies with each person, but things will get better. Of course, nothing will ever be the same, but you will learn to build a new and meaningful life in which you can function productively.
- We who have been through this experience have a special love for newly bereaved parents. We have felt much that you are feeling, and we have survived. The situation will improve, you can make it. We are here to reaffirm that whenever you need it.

Jeanne Bucsela
TCF, Atlanta, GA

Legacy

Memories are a legacy
of hope and courage,
left to help us go on
when the giver is gone.

Sascha

Thanksgiving Article

An excerpt—

A very difficult area of functioning is coming to grips with the knowledge that there is absolutely no way of getting around holidays despite your best efforts to avoid them. And they are horrendous times for many years. Their pain cannot be minimized. But they still must be faced.

One family, trying to avoid Thanksgiving—which was the dead child's birthday as well—decided that family gatherings were no longer for them. They would travel or simply ignore the festivities.

One day the mother came upon her ten-year-old daughter crying and asked what was wrong. "She was sobbing," reported the mother. "All the children in school had told of their plans and made table decorations for the holiday and Lynn felt completely removed from her classmates. She cried that she was not only deprived of her brother who was dead, but she couldn't even have Thanksgiving dinner and a turkey!

"I listened to her and held her in my arms and cried. What she was saying made sense. After all, we still had three living children. They also mattered. That night I talked to my husband and we decided that, no matter how bleak and empty it would be, we would have a traditional Thanksgiving dinner."

The mother said the family sat around the table, very quietly at first. The father said grace and thanked the Lord for a bountiful meal. When he was through, their ten-year-old said she had something to add, "I want to thank Mommy and Daddy for making this very special dinner for our family. And most of all I want to thank you God for having let us have my brother, Eric, for six years."

The mother, who will never forget what her daughter said, told me there was not a dry eye at the table for a few minutes. But gradually, as the meal progressed, they made an effort to discuss why the holiday was celebrated. From there, the parents told of amusing experiences at Thanksgiving dinners in their younger years. The mother said she planned to tell the stories to lighten the atmosphere just as carefully as she planned the menu. By the time the meal was over, the parents discovered what had been built up in their minds as unsurvivable had become just another turning point.

There will be many such turning points as you work your way forward. You have already survived what you were certain you could not live through—the death of your child. Turning points, plateaus, are merely steps in coping and nothing more. As you go through each holiday, each season, each happy-sad occasion, you will gain strength from having passed beyond yet another painful event.

From *The Bereaved Parent* by Harriet Schiff

The Battle

It seems we're all alone, like a few army troops in the jungle, struggling to stay alive and keep our sanity. Sometimes, right when it seems it's over and you can go home, you're ambushed, and you realize you're at the beginning. Later, after this happens over and over again, you know you'll be fighting forever; grief is a battle that cannot be won but just gets easier to live with. I'll always love and remember my big brother. As my battle goes on and others begin, we all can come together and try to overcome this everlasting battle—GRIEF.

Justin Jenkins

When an Adult Child Dies

If Joe were five years old instead of forty-five,” Josie remarked, “then maybe everyone would understand my grief.” Josie’s comment reflects the problems that many parents face when an adult child dies. While the loss of a child of any age is devastating, often support and understanding from others are diminished if the child is an adult.

Children are not supposed to die before their parents. When they do, it may shatter beliefs—assumptions about the world. The world may seem like a more dangerous place. Parents, too, may feel guilty about surviving the child.

When a child is older, relations can be complicated. There may still be a sense of unfinished business. Frank’s daughter, Jenn, was “daddy’s little girl.” As she got older, they still got along well. But when Jenn died, Frank felt bad that “it had been a long time since I really made a fuss over her, told her I loved her.”

There are issues unique to the death of an adult child. One is support; others may not recognize how much the parents are affected. Some may even make remarks like, “At least you got to raise him or her.” While that may be true, the bonds between a parent and child remain strong. Relationships may even be stronger now that they no longer share living space and are relating to one another as adults.

Support, too, may be focused elsewhere. Your child may have left a spouse or children. Everyone, yourself included, may be focused on their grief. While each person’s grief is unique, a few principles may help you as you cope with the death of an adult child.

Acknowledge your own grief. While seeking to help others, recognize that this loss deeply affects you. Your ability to help others will be affected by how well you attend to your own grief.

Seek out support. You may find it valuable to be with others who have experienced similar losses. Groups such as The Compassionate Friends are for parents who had children of all ages die. These groups offer a safe place to talk about your grief, suggestions for coping, and reassurance that others share your responses.

Grieve together. You may be reluctant to share your grief. You may want to protect survivors from your pain. Yet this just leaves everyone to grieve alone. Sharing stories, memories and rituals can be helpful to everyone. At the same time, remember and respect that each person grieves in his or her own way. Even when we grieve together, it does not mean that we have to grieve alike.

Dr. Kenneth J. Doka, Editor
Journeys—Newsletter of Hospice Foundation

When an Adopted Child Dies

Many issues in bereavement are not unique to those of us who have had an only child or all our children die. Among these are the perceptions the world at large often holds regarding the depth or quality of parental grief following the death of an adopted child.

There are moments when adoptive parents feel the weight of these misperceptions. Sometimes it comes through an ill-chosen word, an overheard comment, or in the perplexed eyes of others in the days and weeks following death. There are times when others even say, “Well, you can always adopt another one, can’t you?” And in certain situations, it can even be heard in the tentative voices of adoptive parents, momentarily intimidated or confused by attitudes completely in variance with their own torn lives, their own unremitting agony.

It is time to remind society that parenting is not a biological function. Certainly conception, pregnancy, and birth are biological, but the love involved in parenting and nurturing lies on an emotional plane quite apart from the body. Indeed, it has long been apparent socially that childbirth and successful parenting have little, if anything, in common.

We adopted Olin when he was ten, several months short of his eleventh birthday. The decision for adoption was made among the three of us and we often discussed it in the years to follow. We concluded that adopted children are the *only* youngsters who can be absolutely certain that they were sincerely and lovingly wanted. This did not imply that other children were always in doubt. But we felt that it remained fact that only the adopted could know for sure, particularly when that child was old enough to be involved in the decision.

Another little known fact is that psychological studies have time and again determined that the bonding between adopted children and adoptive parents is the same as in biological families, and it is not uncommon for the bonding to be even deeper. But we who have adopted have always been aware of this. In bereavement, let us never surrender to doubt.

If you are an adoptive parent, and your child has died, please be assured that The Compassionate Friends and other groups within the bereavement community know that your grief is as true and as deeply rooted as that of other parents. Your joy in parenting and your agony in devastation is the same. In deep love you chose to parent. From the wellsprings of that same love, you walk a lonely and shadowed road to healing.

Don Hackett
TCF, Kingston, MA

Days of Thanks

*In a year when much was given,
Much was taken, too.
So we pause and give our
Thanks for what now is.
Think, too, of what once was,
And we are grateful for*

*The threads of lives gone by.
Threads that enrich the fabric
Of this, the life we know.*

Lois Wyse
TCF St. Paul, MN

CHAPTER INFORMATION

The Birthday Table

In the month of your child's birthday, a table will be provided at our meeting where you can share photographs, mementos, your child's favorite snack or a birthday cake, a bouquet of flowers—anything you'd like to bring. We want to know your child better, so please take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate the wonderful day of your child's birth and for us to become better acquainted.

What is the Yellow Slip?

Please return your yellow renewal slip. After a year on the newsletter mailing list, those names that were added in that month of a previous year, will receive a yellow half-sheet asking that their subscription be renewed. This is simply to keep our mailing list and the information in it current. If you do not send the yellow slip back, we must assume that you no longer want the newsletter. Although you are given an opportunity to make a voluntary donation, there is no cost involved in your subscription. The newsletter is our gift to you for as long as you wish to receive it. You may request that your name be returned to the active list at any time simply by calling 615-356-4TCF (4823).

Religion and TCF

The Principles of The Compassionate Friends state that TCF reaches out to all bereaved parents across the artificial barriers of religion, race, economic class, or ethnic group. Further, 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.

Newsletter Deadline

In order to meet printing deadlines, all donations and original poems or articles must be received by the meeting day of the preceding month to be published in the next issue of the TCF Nashville newsletter. All donations and submissions are greatly appreciated.



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). Call 615 342-8899 to confirm dates and times.

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.

CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 11, 2011

Regardless of past participation, **every family wishing to take part in the memorial service MUST return this form.** We need to receive it no later than Saturday, December 3, 2011.

Do NOT send photos to the TCF P.O. box—they might get bent or damaged.

Mail to:
Steve & Paige Czirr
1623 Fair House Road
Spring Hill, TN 37174

Instructions: A computerized process (Power Point) is being used to display our children's pictures on the big screen. An original 5x7 photo (no copies, please) may be used. If a 5x7 is not available, any size will do; however, the 5x7 or larger is easier to process. The original photo will be returned to you at the memorial service while the image will be stored for use next year. **Place a sticky note on the back of the photo with the child's name clearly printed. Do not write on the photo itself.**

Child's name: _____
Please print the name as you wish it to be read at the service along with phonetic pronunciation, if needed.

_____ I will attend and am enclosing an original photo of my child. (First time in the memorial service.)

_____ I will attend and am enclosing a different photo of my child to be used in place of the photo you have from last year's service.

_____ I will attend and would like for you to use the photo you have saved from last year.

_____ I will attend and would like for my child's name to be called and I'll light a candle, but I will not have a picture shown.

Your name _____ Phone _____

You may alternatively e-mail your child's picture to Steve Czirr at sczirr@att.net.
Be sure to include your child's name in the e-mail.

Holiday Gifts for Children Needed

Each year, our chapter donates holiday gifts to children at a worthy establishment that works with children who are not living at home and are under care for the holidays. Since things went so well with Youth Villages in years past, it has been decided to provide gifts to them again this year. The children range in age from 6 to 18. For many of these children, these will be the only gifts they receive this holiday season. If you would like to help this year, you may participate by bringing new UNWRAPPED gifts to the TCF December 12 Memorial Service. Below is a list of the most requested items.

Gifts:

CD Players
MP3 Players
Gameboy games (teen rated)
Playstation games (teen rated)
Costume Jewelry (like that found in the malls at Claire's)
Remote control cars and planes
Girly things like journals, gel pens and scrapbooking items
Model cars
Board Games
Baby and Barbie dolls and accessories
Lego sets
Trucks
Disney movies
Watches (boys and girls)
Gift cards

Stocking Stuffers:

Matchbox cars
Small notepads
Pens and pencils
Candy
Jewelry
Hygiene products
Billfolds and wallets
Cute little change purses for girls
Makeup items
Socks
Gift cards for fast food restaurants

Once again, remember, these items may be brought in gift bags with tissue paper, but DO NOT WRAP the gifts. Youth Villages staff does the wrapping as it helps them to more evenly distribute the donated items.

Laura Lee Parker

*When we begin this journey called life,
We are never promised it will be without strife.
Challenges and mistakes cause us stress and pain,
But with each scar left behind, life lessons are gained.
Lara Parker knew life was not always a breeze,
But she persevered—even when things did not come with ease.
A beautiful little girl with dark eyes and a big smile,
She had a sweet spirit that could love for miles.
Green beans were her favorite morning, noon or night,
So “Beaner” became her Daddy’s nickname right.
To love and be loved became Laura’s mission and plan,
She learned it all from taking Jesus’ hand.
Her parents and siblings she cherished and adored,
With all the Parker crew, Laura was never bored!
Her imagination was captured by fantasy and delight,
Fairies were a symbol of her dreams taking flight.
She longed for peace, harmony and love,
And prayed for those blessings to her Father above.
She was eager to give others the benefit of the doubt,
She never wanted to judge them for what they were about.
She learned so much more about what love really means,
When Jonathan became the source for her most lofty dreams.
A proud mamma who adored her precious little boy,
His smile and sweet hugs gave her immeasurable joy.
Though her life has ended far too soon,
Her strength and love through him will bloom.
Her call would be to overcome hatred, bitterness, revenge and spite,
So that Jonathan may know peace and live in love’s light.*

Ginger Johnson Broslat
Submitted by Laura Lee’s mother,
Rosie Parker
TCF Nashville, TN



The Connection

*When I’m walking in the sunshine,
I’m walking in your love.
When I’m walking in the rain,
Your tears fall from above.
Your laughter is the bird
In song outside my window.
Your spirit passes by
Each time I hear the wind blow.
When I smell the blooming flower,
Your fragrance lingers there,
And in the water’s reflection
Your face is shining fair.
You come to me in many ways*

*Each one different from before,
In the rainbow shines your eyes,
Your whisper I hear
As the waves brush the shore.
You always find a way to reach me,
Just when I miss you most,
Making that connection,
When I’m feeling lost.
Through our bond of love,
This connection will always be
A special part of you,
And a special strength to me.*

Jan K. Shell
TCF, Annapolis, MD