

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 #3 at 2545 Park Plaza 37203, just north of Centennial Park off of 25th Avenue, North. We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.

October 12 Program:

Handling the Holidays

The holidays are coming. How do you deal with this special time of the year when you're hurting so badly? Your child has died, and all the traditions of the past seem impossible to navigate. Some members of our chapter who have managed to memorialize their child or children during the holidays, as well as make these days special for their other family members, will share with us solutions they have found to be helpful.

We would especially like for our old timers to come with their experiences and suggestions for handling the holidays. Our newly bereaved friends need you. We're hoping to help make this a gentle season for all bereaved parents—a time for remembering the love and blessings our children brought us rather than the anguish of losing them.

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**.....Ron and Darlene Henson
615-789-3613
- Small Child**.....Kenneth and Kathy Hensley
615-237-9972
- Alcohol/Drug Overdose**.....Ed Pyle
615-712-3245

WE HAVE A NEW MEETING PLACE:

2545 Park Plaza 37203

*We will continue to meet on the second Sunday of each month at 3:00 p.m.
Our new building is 2545 Park Plaza, HCA Building #3. We look forward to seeing you there.*

Doing Too Well

He told me that he had called because he was concerned about his wife. It had been five months since their child had died, and she wasn't doing well. I asked him what she was doing that bothered him, and he told me that she was crying a great deal, wanted to talk about their child much of the time, wasn't sleeping well, was up a good part of the night wandering around, as a matter of fact—wanted to go to the cemetery almost every day, spent a lot of time looking at the child's pictures, and didn't want to change anything in "the" room.

And I asked him how he was doing. He told me he was doing fine. He had been working 13 or 14 hours a day. He hadn't always worked that much, but had been for the past two or three months. He said he didn't need to talk about their child or look at the pictures because he had put it all behind him; he had accepted it, and he thought she would be better if she would do the same. Sleep? Well, he slept fine. He'd found that a few drinks before he went to bed, plus a tranquilizer when he awakened in the middle of the night and more of each on the weekend, helped him quite a bit.

Now, if she's doing "poorly" and he's doing so "fine," why is it, do you suppose, that I keep worrying about him?

Mary Cleckley
TCF, Atlanta, GA



No Words Spoken

*If I saw you again
I would just take every part of you in.
I wouldn't waste time with foolish words
For what words could I say?*

*I would study each feature
Of your beautiful face.
And take in the moment of
Standing face to face.*

*To just look in your eyes
And to feel your love.
To reach out and touch you
And give you a hug.*

*To be swept away by the
Happiness of you near.
And to communicate our love for each other
Without even one word!*

Laura Rebick
TCF, Central Jersey

Yes Grandparents Do Grieve!

Thank goodness, someone stepped up and said it. "Hey, this child was and is my grandchild and I hurt too!" Not looking for sympathy, but wanting the world to know that yes, the mother and father are hurting from the loss of their little angels, but Granny and Grandpa loved these children with their hearts and souls...totally and unconditionally! I read these letters that are sent to me every day. My heart hurts for these parents for the loss of their children. But please, let us not forget any of the grandparents, whose loss is twofold. Once for their child who is hurting so and once for the loss of their grandchild. I always thought my grandchildren would outlive me. At least that's the way it's supposed to be. It doesn't always work out that way. So yes, my heart also hurts for the grandparents too. (Grammy to Victoria King 04/17/98-04/11/99)

Wanda Bryant
Vidalia, GA

***"A real friend is one who walks in
when the rest of the world walks out."***

Walter Winchell

Autumn Tears

We look back on September and we realize that somehow we made it through those dreaded first days of school. Whether it was the anticipation or the actual days that were the worst, we survived. We used our faith, our support systems or just plain hard work and made it over yet another hurdle. We watched small children heading for their first day of kindergarten, listened to excited teenagers talk of high school and heard stories of children leaving home to attend post-secondary school. Somehow we rode the waves of grief and found ourselves ashore again.

As these waves subside new ones will build as we head into the holidays that speak of, and to, children. Halloween will soon approach and for some, painful memories. Thanksgiving arrives to exemplify family and togetherness and Christmas [and Hanukah] loom ahead. These special days are forever reminders of our loss—the costumes we'll never sew, the empty chair at turkey dinner, the fun and magic we'll never share with someone we love. Forever reminders that our child has died.

To survive when these events and anniversary days come around let's find time to think of the good memories we have—the announcement of our long awaited pregnancy at Thanksgiving dinner, the look of excitement on our son's first Halloween night, the vision of our daughter helping prepare the turkey dinner. These holidays will always be reminders that our child died. Let us also make them reminders that our child lived! They left us memories more precious than any others to hold and celebrate!

Penny Young
TCF Powell River, British Columbia

Trick or Treat, Now and Then

For me, Halloween marks the beginning of the holiday season. This used to mark the start of an emotional decline that ran straight through Valentine's Day. October has Halloween, November has Thanksgiving Day, December has my birthday, my Cathie's birthday, and Christmas. January has New Year's Day (the day the accident happened) and January 13 (the day she died). So when Halloween came, I would just as soon have gone to sleep and not wake up until sometime in February.

As the children came to the door and called out, "Trick or Treat!" I would cringe because I would think of how I would never hear Cathie say those words again. That was THEN...Now, fifteen years later, I am able to hear those words. And as I hand out their "goodies," I inwardly thank them for letting me remember when Cathie did go trick or treating and had so much fun. I have those oh-so-very-good memories. They are good memories NOW...And it's all of those good memories that keep me going, even after all of these years.

Cherie Gordon
TCF N. Dade/ S. Broward, FL



Connections

*Connections were so easy then,
Little noticed as they slid by –
A hug, a kiss, a call at school,
A shopping trip, a lullaby,
An evening walk, a family meal,
A pat on your back for a job well done.
We thought they'd last for all our days,
Then in a blink, the connection's gone.
Connections come much harder now,
But we know they still occur –
A presence sensed, a flower placed,
Someone remembers who you were,
A song we shared, a game we played,
A candle lit, a message sent to you.*

*To others they seem strange indeed,
These silly things we do.
They hurt and yet they warm our hearts
And make our spirits soar.
Brief and tenuous though they may be
For a moment we connect once more.
They're fleeting as a butterfly,
The connections that these bring.
They come and go so rapidly –
As fragile as a bouncing balloon,
As slender as a string.*

Richard Dew
TCF, Knoxville, TN

Nibbling At Life's Pleasures

Most mothers I know are pretty selfless creatures. When there's not enough meat to go around, Mom takes a second helping of beans. There's probably nothing she'd rather do than iron Missy's cheerleader uniform at midnight. And why would she want a new Easter dress when the old polka dot polyester still fits? Altruism aside, every mom needs a smidgen of pleasure in her life to help maintain her sweet disposition.

To reward myself for being a hardworking wife and mother of three active boys, I allowed myself an occasional indulgence...a long, hot bath in a tub filled to the brim, a good book (preferably one that would make me laugh), and my favorite guilty pleasure, a Skor bar. I liked to eat it a piece at a time, sucking off the chocolate before I crunched down on the tooth-jarring English toffee. If I managed to finish a Skor with fillings intact, it was a triumph. And if I could read a good book while soaking in a hot tub and munching on a Skor bar, well, life just didn't get any better.

Then one day I found out how life couldn't get any worse, when my three year-old son, Blake, died suddenly from meningitis. Guilt and self-hatred overwhelmed me. What kind of mother wouldn't recognize how sick her child was and rush him to the hospital? How could I have been so blind, so stupid? As his mother, he trusted me to care for him, and I let him down.

My once-carefree existence became a series of gray days followed by black, sleepless nights. I ate, but only to stay alive. I took short, cool showers, but only to get clean. I never picked up a book unless it dealt with grief. Driven by guilt, I convinced myself that I no longer deserved any of life's pleasures. Besides, how could I ever enjoy anything again with Blake gone?

One night, some months after Blake died, my husband, Jeff, left to take our boys to basketball practice. The dishes were done, the house was spotless, and the long, empty evening loomed ahead of me. I went into the bedroom, flopped on the bed and curled up with the cat. On the nightstand I spotted a book a friend had given me. "Funny," she had said. "A great read." Well, it wasn't a grief book so I wasn't interested. Idly, I picked it up anyway and read the first page. Before I knew it, I was hooked. Suddenly, I heard a strange sound, somewhere between a hack and a hoot. The cat jumped and looked at me in alarm. I had laughed! It was a creepy, creaky laugh, rusty from months of disuse, but a laugh nonetheless. Did I just have fun? Yipes! I couldn't do that! I snapped the book shut and shoved it under the bed.

The next morning I took a shower as usual, only this time I lingered for three minutes instead of two and I turned the temperature up a notch so it was almost warm. I dressed and headed for the grocery store, where I careened down the aisles grabbing stuff from the shelves and trying not to look at the treats I used to buy for Blake. While reaching for a package of sugarless gum at the checkout, I caught sight of a

display of Skor bars. I quickly looked away, but to my amazement, a Skor bar leaped onto the conveyor belt with my other groceries. Before I could put it back, the sacker had bagged it and it was mine.

I broke the speed limit getting home, dashed inside, and guiltily pitched the Skor bar on the highest shelf of the pantry. Later, when I opened the pantry to get a can of tuna for my lunch, a small voice from above called out, "*Pat, oh Pat, I'm here. Come and get me.*" I slammed the door and started furiously chopping pickles for tuna salad. But the voice in the pantry became more insistent. "*Pat, I'm here and I'm delicious!*" A Skor-deprived woman can only stand so much. I flung open the pantry, stood on tiptoe, snatched the talking Skor bar, and ripped the wrapper open with my teeth. In a frenzy, I broke off a piece and popped it in my mouth. Hungrily, I sucked the chocolate off and crunched down on the rock-hard toffee. Lord, it was good! To my amazement, the heavens didn't open and swallow me. Lightning didn't strike me dead. For the first time in months, I REALLY enjoyed myself! I chucked the tuna back on the shelf and piece by piece, I relished the rest of the Skor bar. Then, with chocolaty fingers, I grabbed a handful of Cheetos and a couple of Oreos, and washed them down with a Yoohoo. It was the best lunch I'd had in months.

Later, as I was putting clean towels in the linen closet, I heard a familiar voice echoing from the bathtub, "*Pat, I missed you. Wouldn't a hot bath feel good? Why don't you fill me up?*" Trying not to be alarmed that voices were orchestrating my behavior, I obediently ran hot water in the tub, but only half-full. I didn't want to go overboard. Peeling off my clothes, I hopped in. And as I sank into the heavenly, steamy water, I closed my eyes and thought of Blake. He knew how to live! He packed more living into three years than some people do into thirty. He ran faster, climbed higher, laughed louder than any little kid I ever knew. He savored life, every aspect of it. No nibbling at life for him! He broke it off in chunks and devoured it.

Right now, because of my grief, I could only nibble at life's pleasures. But I knew Blake wouldn't want me to live a guilt-ridden, joyless, life. He would want me to buy a SIX-PACK of Skor bars, fill the tub to the brim with the hottest water, grab a good book, and soak and eat and read until the water turned cool and I was all pruny.

And, by golly, some day I'd do just that. *For Blake. For Blake's mommy.*

*Patricia Butler Dyson
TCF Beaumont Texas
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The national magazine of The Compassionate Friends
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—◆—
Happy times do not cheapen our grief.

Rich Edler
TCF South Bay CA

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

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.

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. See www.nationalshare.org

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.

Come Little Boy

*Come little boy, and sit in my lap,
 And I'll tell you about another
 While I rock you to sleep,
 Singing the lullabies he loved.*

*Come little boy, whisper your dreams,
 And I'll marvel at them.
 Later, when the house is dark,
 I'll whisper them all to him.*

*Come little boy, hold my hand
 And I'll teach you to walk
 While I tell you
 How proud another would be.*

*Come little boy, and learn about him.
 I have so much to share.
 Promises I made to him
 To teach you these things.*

*Come little boy, sit by my side
 And share your wonderful
 Adventures with me
 While I share some of his with you.*

*Know little boy, he wanted so much to be here
 To show you the world
 And watch you grow.
 But Heaven, for him, would not wait.*

*Come little boy, and play with me,
 And I'll tell you the names
 Of your dinosaurs
 Taught to me by another.*

*So come little boy,
 And I'll tell you why I love you like no other.
 Someone taught me to the fullest ...
 Your brother.*

*Come little boy, on a hot summer's day,
 And I'll teach you to fish.
 Will you like it like the other?*

Maggie Melendez
 From Bereavement Magazine July/August 2001

CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 14, 2014

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 5, 2014. 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 czirrs@gmail.com
 Be sure to include your child's name in the e-mail**