

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.

September 9 Meeting: Grandparent Grief Panel TCF Conference Report

It has been said that grandparents experience double grief: they grieve for their grandchild and they grieve for their son or daughter as they watch them grieve for their own child.

This month a panel of our own TCF members will share their experiences as grieving grandparents. If you are a bereaved grandparent, or if you know one, we hope you will gain some insights and hope from this panel.

We hope you can be present for this month's meeting. Regular sharing groups will follow the program.



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
646-1333
- AIDS**.....Joyce Soward
754-5210
- Illness**.....David and Peggy Gibson
356-1351
- Infant**.....Jayne Head
264-8184
- SIDS**.....Kris Thompson
931 486-9088
- Suicide**.....Ruth Edwards
353-8547
- Small Child**.....Kenneth and Kathy Hensley
237-9972
- Alcohol/Drug Overdose**.....Ed Pyle
712-3245

Save the Date: Annual TCF Picnic October 6

Our annual TCF family picnic at Fannie Mae Dees Park is a wonderful time to spend together with our families.

Details on page 5.

Sibling Sharing Table

Siblings have a unique grief and TCF Nashville wants to meet these special needs. Please let us know of siblings who may be interested in attending a 'Siblings Only' sharing table for siblings 16 and older.

Reading Is a Haven... Not a Place to Hide

Some people like to read. Some people live to read. Since I was a child I have read about four books a week. So it was only natural that I develop a new reading style when my son died in December of 2002. For a week I read Todd's obituary over and over again. I had written it. Was it suitable? I second guessed myself about that for some time.

The week after Todd's death I began reading short poems, articles and short stories. I would find myself stopping and starting, re-reading a line over and over again until it finally penetrated my brain.

After a month I began reading books again. It was difficult, but I found books which were suitable to my current state of mind. Books about peace, serenity, self-help, death, the afterlife. Soon I found a web site devoted to grief resources. I ordered several books and devoured them.

Reading helped to fill the giant hole in my spirit; it helped me to realize that others had walked this road and had actually survived. I was certain for the first three months after Todd's death that I wouldn't survive; in fact, I didn't want to survive.

Finally I decided to read the types of books I had always read....history, biography, mysteries, current events analysis, funny books, sad books, books with a message. I lived in my books; for a brief period I didn't exist....the only reality was the book I was reading.

Not everyone reads. Some parents spend great amounts of time in thoughtful reflection, in prayer, in meditation. Others watch television and movies. Many retreat within themselves, too emotionally pummeled to talk. Others lose themselves in their work. All balance is removed from each life, no matter what we choose.

And that's what had happened to me. I had removed the balance from my life by escaping into books. After almost three months of reading, withdrawing into other worlds and living in books, I went to a meeting of the Compassionate Friends. I realized I was not balanced, grounded or centered. I realized, too, that escaping into alternative realities was not the answer.

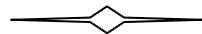
That first meeting was frightful. My life consisted of work and home and nothing else. I imagined all kinds of terrible scenarios. But yet, I went. I met caring parents who seemed to have their lives in order. The second meeting was better; by the third meeting I was talking....in short sentences.

Gradually over more than two years, I became a participant in the meeting and in the process. I volunteered to help....just a little at first, then more as time went on. I went to seminars. I sorted through the pain, the agony, the horror I was feeling. I began to achieve a balance.

My husband and I began spending weekends in the country with my family. This was a positive change for me. A friend would stop at my office and bring lunch every week. I invited a few people to our home. I couldn't see it then, but I was on the road to becoming "rebalanced". My reality is different now: my only child is dead. Much of who I am is wrapped in being Todd's mom. But my "rebalanced self" has a changing perspective. I have become more grounded through the Compassionate Friends. Sharing my feelings and listening to others has helped me to become centered and balanced. Reading is still my passion, but it is not my life.

Each of us finds an escape from the world after the death of our child.....something to revise our history and help us survive. But eventually we must seek balance, find ways of coping with our soul-shattering loss and ground ourselves in our new reality. The Compassionate Friends has done all of that for me. But I had to take the first step.

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



LOST POTENTIAL

Last year I attended a workshop presented by a specialist in grief named Dr. Cable. Dr. Cable said many important things about the grief process, but as a bereaved parent one thing stuck in my mind.

He said that if you ask a bereaved person to describe his deceased mother, he will say, "Oh, she was so sweet. She always wore flowered dresses and loved to bake cookies." But, if you ask a bereaved parent to describe her deceased child, she will say, "Oh, he would be five this year and just starting kindergarten," or, "She would be twenty-two this year and graduating from college."

You see, we bereaved parents grieve the lost potential of our children. Our children don't stop growing in our minds. We grieve again and anew each year as our child would have been a different age.

Chris Anderson
TCF, Walla Walla, Washington

TCF Picnic Set for October 6

Mark your calendar. For a wonderful afternoon of friendship and fun, a time for remembering our children and for bringing our families together, please join us for our annual chapter picnic. We will gather on Saturday, October 6 at 3:00 p.m. in Fannie Mae Dees Park, Shelter 1. The park is located on the corner of 24th Avenue and Blakemore Avenue in Nashville. The shelter is on 24th, about a block from Blakemore. A map can be viewed on our website at www.tcfnashville.org. Barbeque, drinks and paper goods will be provided by the chapter. We ask each family to bring a dish large enough to serve eight, according to the starting letter of your last name, as follows:

A-G: Dessert or chips

H-M: Cole slaw, baked beans, salad or other side dish

N-Z: Main dish, other than barbeque

Plan to bring lawn chairs or a blanket, balls and bats, or other games. Restroom facilities and play equipment are nearby. This event is for families and friends; you do not have to be a bereaved parent to attend. All ages are invited. The picnic tables are under a large shelter in case of a shower. However, if heavy rain is occurring or if you have any question as to whether the picnic will take place, please call our Chapter Leaders Lamar and Joy Bradley at (615) 889-1387.

There will be a brief candle lighting ceremony in memory of our children at the close of the event. Plan to spend this afternoon with your TCF family and get to know each other better. See you there!

Healing Takes Time

*Did you wake up in the morning
with tears in your heart?
And did you say to yourself
"I should not feel like crying,
not like this, every morning"?*

*But you do know the truth, don't you?
When life deals us such a tragic blow,
such enormous damage,
we need many mornings to recover.
We need more than a few moments
to heal.*

*Take for yourself the grace
of one quiet healing-step at a time.
Trying to rush the work of grief
will slow down your renewal.*

*You only need to remember
that you WILL recover some day.
You only need to remember
that we all have our own measure.
And we all heal at our own pace.*

Sascha

About Feeling Guilty

*Do you blame yourself?
Are you strangled by the burden
of things you think you "should have done,"
as if these were the things
that killed him?*

*Dear Griever,
take time to realize
that death is not in your hands,
and blame is not the answer.*

*Try to relinquish
this relentless torment
Hold your heart now
with the tenderness
that human grief deserves.*

Sascha



Time Heals

*They told me that to comfort me
When my child died.
Four years and two children later
I think maybe they lied.*

*Friends and family tried their best.
God sheltered me under his wing.
Still, the mother inside me
Cries for that child,
And time hasn't changed a thing.*

*The gaping wound granulated to a scar.
The tears are now slower to spill,
But deep in my heart there's an empty hole
That only that child could fill.*

*No, I don't really think that it's true about time,
For I know that the love bond remains.
Time never heals the loss of a child,
You just learn to cope with the pain.*

Marsha Fredrickson
TCF, SD

September and a New School Year

To most people school means:

*The kids out from under foot, caps on.
Buying a new lunch box, new clothes and the usual
school supplies.
Fixing breakfast and trying to get it eaten.
Getting to a school bus on time.*

*What does school mean to a mother who has lost a
child?*

*Watching other children filled with excitement.
A little boy who should be in kindergarten.
A brother who must go off to school by himself.
A teacher who must reach out to a class, when her little
one won't be in school this year.
A mother sending two children off, when there should be
three.
Many tears, behind smiling faces!*

Patsy Hedges
TCF, Frederick Co., MD

Our Many Special Days

The beginning of the school year each fall seems to signal the coming holidays. The commercial market starts stocking school supplies just after the Fourth of July; shortly thereafter, by late summer the school supplies are crowded out by all the paraphernalia of Halloween! A glimpse of Thanksgiving whizzes by and it is an all out affront on the Christmas season. After the death of our child we stumble around each year looking for the appropriate way of handling these seasons that once had so much joy to them.

But the calendar holidays are far from the only "Special Days" that bereaved parents face. Our child's birthday and death date are especially hard days but also are the days relating to their illness or other events that relate to their death date and funeral or memorial. The most obvious days are not always the only hard days to live with. Rainy days, snowy days, starry nights can all trigger tugging emotions. Tuesday for laundry day may be the hardest day all year long.

No bereaved parent will have the same feeling of a special day or have the same special day because our children were different people to each person. Because of this, like in everything else in our grief work, we have to allow space for each other's "bad" days.

Each passing year after the death of our child finds us relating to special days differently each year. It is a continuing process never to return to that which used to be. As the years pass and we work hard at our "grief work" we will heal but that does not mean being like we were or doing the things we used to do. We are an evolving new person learning to live again.

Gerry Hall
TCF, South Central, MO

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 2 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

Survivors of Suicide

There is a caring SOS group in Nashville. For information about meetings, 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.

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.

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.

I Am Your Sister and Always Will Be

“I am your sister and always will be.” That’s how Susie signed her cards to me. After a while, she shortened it to, “I am...” And of course I knew the rest of it. Susie was two and one-half years younger than I. She was alive one evening talking on the phone to Mom about the Oscars and to Dad about moving. The next day she was found. Whatever it was--it ended her life and changed mine forever.

There was a wonderful side of my sister that I didn’t pay enough attention to. She was a kind and loving person, always ready to shelter lost animals and lost souls. When she was in a good mood, her smiles warmed my heart. Yet I spent most of my life wishing that things were different: wishing that she thought more of herself, wishing that she would take my advice, wishing that she were happier, wishing that we could accept each other.

Now, for two years, I’ve done nothing but wish she were here so we could have another chance to work at our relationship. Now, I wish that I had been able to give her my unconditional love & support. (She needed it and deserved it.) Now, I wish that I could have been with her that night so she would not have been alone. Now, I wish that I would have held her in my arms and told her how very much I loved her. Because, Susie, I am your sister and always will be.

Michele Walters
TCF Baltimore, MD
In Memory of my sister, Susie



In This Place

*Brave hearts, you are here. You have traveled
a dreadful distance. You have come,
seeking solace, understanding, hope,
threads to patch what death’s so cruelly undone.*

*In this place you can relax and breathe . . .
the coats of others’ expectations taken off.
Walk into this place as into an oasis
where draughts of love and memories can be
quaffed.*

*In this place all names can be spoken;
in this place each one’s story can be told.
We will not be discouraged by your sorrow;
in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.*

*Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting;
we do not count how many tears are shed.
Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage,
for the long and winding road we see ahead.*

*And those we love are pleased we are together,
smile down on us, and bless these days,
glad for every tiny step we are taking
as they send their light to guide us on our ways.*

*Traveling with us as we journey onward,
sending strength for what the miles may bring,
they are a part of everything we do that matters -
in every dance we dance, and every song we sing.*

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
The 2004 Compassionate Friends National Conference