



The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land – Southwest Houston Chapter

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2011

A self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.

Monthly Meeting:
SEPTEMBER 14, 2011
Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.
Registration of new members and
our library will open at 7:00.

Topic: Point/Counterpoint,
Women's Grief/Men's Grief

First Presbyterian Church
502 Eldridge Road
Sugar Land, Texas

Directions: Eldridge Rd. (FM 1876)
intersects Hwy. 90A two lights west
of the Sugar Land exit of Hwy 59.
The church is north of 90A, just past
the RR tracks, the second building
on the right. Enter the double doors
at the back of the building.

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Friends

This newsletter may be
reproduced and given to
anyone who may find
comfort from it.

WAITING FOR ANSWERS

Years ago, I left my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends and drove home in tears. My son, Max, had died a few short weeks before and I had been anxiously awaiting this evening. These people must have some answers, I thought. With paper and pen in purse, I was ready to take notes and do as they prescribed. I would do anything to ease the ache in my soul.

But when I walked out into the Spring air later that night, I felt betrayed. I hadn't heard any answers. Instead of learning how to leave my grief behind, it had been confirmed, made more real with expression. I knew I would miss Max forever. Now I wondered if I would grieve forever. Would it always be this way, a flash of pain aligned with every memory?

During the next months and years, I attended TCF meetings and conferences, read books, raged, kept busy, sometimes spent the day in bed. I wrote, cried and talked about Max. Slowly, I discovered the answers I had long feared were true: yes, I will grieve forever, and yes, my memories will often provoke tears. But something had changed. My grief was now more forgiving, my tears almost sweet with memory. Max's life took shape again as the anguish of his death began to recede. If I would always miss him, I would also always have him with me in so many ways. I wanted to carry his memory into the future: the joy, the lessons, and the inevitable pain. How could I do otherwise?

As I walked to my car after that first meeting, the TCF Chapter leader caught up with me. "How can I stop this pain?" I asked. She put her arm on my shoulder. "Just do what feels right to you," she said. "Listen to your heart. And we'll be here to listen, too."

Sometimes the best advice is none at all.

Mary Clark, TCF-Sugar Land, SW Houston, TX

Celebrating Our Children's Birthday



A Birthday Table is set up each month so that you can display a picture and/or any other small memento in honor of your child's birthday.

If your child is not listed on our birthday/angel anniversary lists and you wish them to be, please contact Marguerite Ward at mjward@elc.net or call her at 979-335-6070

Button Making Machine

A button making machine has been given to our chapter in loving memory of Brandi Ward. It is available for anyone who wishes to have a picture button made of their child. If you would like to have a button made, please contact Marguerite Ward at 979-335-6070 or by email at mjward@elc.net.

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. We are grateful for the faithfulness of parents, grandparents and friends who remember beloved children with love gifts. Our chapter is operated entirely by volunteers dedicated to furthering the work of TCF.

Your voluntary tax deductible donations honor your loved one(s) in a meaningful way by enabling us to offer resources, such as this newsletter, books, brochures and special programs to bereaved families in our area. 100% of the funds are used for this outreach. Donations, along with the name of the person being honored may be sent to our chapter's treasurer. You may also contribute by linking to the Kroger's Share Card (enrollment letter available). If you have any questions, please contact our chapter treasurer:

Douglas Ledkins, 1830 Landmark Drive
Richmond, TX 77406 (281) 341-5985
Doug_Ledkins@whitetucker.com

Birthday	Child's Name	Parents/Family
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Personal information has been taken out of the internet version of this newsletter.

The Question

There are so many things in life I don't understand and I don't question. There are so many things in life I fail even to see. But my child's death has caused me to question my strongest beliefs, and yet, if I could ask one question and have that one question answered, I don't know what it would be. Because even if I knew the answer to the question, I don't think my pain would be any less.

-Marietta Johnson, TCF Portland OR

Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting or received their first newsletter last month. We deeply regret the circumstances that brought you to our TCF Chapter. The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, not for profit, self-help organization that offers support and understanding to families who have experienced the death of a child. You are cordially invited to attend our monthly meeting (always the second Wednesday of the month).

Meetings are open to everyone and free of charge. The purpose of our support group is not to focus on the cause of the death or the age of the child. It is instead a place to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child. You are free to talk, cry or sit in silence, we respect the individuality of mourning. Comments shared in the meetings remain confidential.

To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. It may be the second or third meeting before you find the right person—or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

To Our Old Members

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back—what would it have been like for you if there had not been any “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you? It was from them you heard, “Your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer.”

Lovingly Lifted from TCF –Tyler Texas Newsletter

From the Desk of the Editor

I just can't do it. I thought I could, I know I should, but....I just can't do it.

This month I made a huge step in my grief journey by cleaning out one of the two rooms my Brandi had taken over in my house when she came home to live after her diagnosis of brain cancer. Those two rooms have been left just as she left them when she died five and half years ago. I finally decided I wanted more space so her childhood room was dismantled and in it's place I created a scrapbooking room. New flooring was put in and the walls were painted. It now has an entirely “new look”. Yeah me!

While I was in my cleaning out mood I decided to get new flooring and paint all the other bedrooms. After all....it had been five and a half years. Yes....she did decorate the second bedroom and yes it did hold the last memories of her life but it was just stuff. Yet...I couldn't seem to make myself get started. The more I thought about it the more depressed I got. I just couldn't do it and you know what....That is OK!

We must all travel our individual grief journey in our own way. I now have a nice scrapbooking room but Brandi's “other” room can still remain Brandi's room for a while. A time may come when I am ready to redo it but it doesn't feel right now. And you know what.....That is OK.

Remember...With Compassionate Friends,
You Need Not Walk Alone.



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Meeting Dates and Discussion Topics*

September 14, 2011—Point/Counterpoint, Women's Grief/Men's Grief

October 12, 2011—How are you different since your child's death?

November 9, 2011 —The Holidays: What's Right for You?

December 4, 2011—Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting

(We do not always stay on the topic offered for our meetings. We are here to discuss whatever you need to discuss to help on your grief journey.)

<i>Our Children Remembered On Their Angel Day</i>					
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Angel Day	Child's Name	Parents/Family	Angel Day	Child's Name	Parents/Family
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Personal information has been
taken out of the internet
version of this newsletter.

Love Shares Given In Memory of...
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SPONSOR A NEWSLETTER IN MEMORY OF YOUR CHILD.

We are now offering members an opportunity to sponsor the publishing of a newsletter in memory of their child. By offering sponsorships, not only does it help defray the costs but it is also a wonderful way to honor your child. See prices below:

Full page spread—\$200 Half page spread—\$100 Quarter page spread-\$50 Small Picture with Name/Dates -\$25

If you are interested in one of the sponsorships above, please contact Marguerite Ward at mjward@elc.net or call her at 979-335-6070.

Shards of Grief Linger after Murder

On a dreary night in December, a knock came at our door with news that would forever alter our lives. The news was that Anne, our only daughter, had been kidnapped and brutally murdered by persons or a person unknown. The shock, disbelief, anguish and anxieties over the next several months, a small piece of the grieving process, were extraordinary, and I have often wondered how we survived.

There was the extreme rage at the person who was responsible for taking Anne's life for no reason except for the pure pleasure of destroying good. But we survived.

There was the awful anger against the legal system for being so callous and insensitive to the needs of the family and friends. The wounds from Anne's death were already deep and unhealing, but listening to and reading about the insinuations and innuendoes by the lawyers made the wounds grow deeper and deeper. The impression was given the family must endure punishment for allowing our daughter to be in the wrong place. This caused a feeling of guilt. But we survived.

There was the fear that Anne would become just another statistic, and the person responsible would go unpunished. Now the fear exists that the person will be released from prison to repeat his acts of violence. I am afraid that fears are addictive and one replaces another. Perhaps the worst fear is, when your faith in God is at its lowest ebb, that you will never be able to respond to normal stimuli again and regain all that faith. All the fears are real; but so far we have survived.

These, I suppose, are normal reactions as the result of a violent act. I believe these anxieties delay a normal (so-called) grieving period until after the culprit has been found, tried and sentenced. After these three things happened, I

do know a terrible burden was lifted from our shoulders, and we could restart living our lives. Somehow we survived.

How did we survive? After much reflecting, I firmly believe we survived by recalling the positive aspects of Anne's life and character. Each individual is endowed with certain instruments, and we hear the music of their lives long after they are gone.

Anne's instrument of love of life was a blessing, and we still can hear the melodies of her song in the night. These melodies cannot be taken away, and they are more valuable than diamonds to us.

Anne's instrument of hope for a future in which to achieve her goals and have some effect on society was the backbone of her dream. The songs of hope in work, in life and the goodness of heart cannot be destroyed by evil or circumstances. Today is gone, but we still hear the songs of hope for tomorrow. These songs of hope, heard in the night, sustain us.

Anne's instrument of faith that she would lead a productive life and achieve both her spiritual and material goals was music in her heart. The faith she had in herself, her family and her friends transmits to us, urging us to proceed with our lives. The music of her faith is still a beacon in the night. We will not believe Anne's dreams have ended, but we believe they will find their place in the world to come. The music that was set in motion by her love, hope and faith will move, everlasting, in sweet memories forever. The wounds from the loss of a loved one cannot be healed by words or deeds. These terrible burdens are borne by each of us in our own way and, hopefully, we survive.

*Bill Boggs
TCF, Atlanta, Georgia*

Halloween . . . Still a Holiday to Remember

Two Halloweens have now passed since my 8-year-old Stephanie and 5-year-old Stephen left us to live with God.

Even before the kids were old enough to go trick or treating, I still recall their delight at the costumes worn by all the neighborhood kids who came to the door. I still remember how thrilled Stephen was to be handing out the candy when he was only one and half years old. We still have a picture of him holding the plate of goodies. If you look close, you can see where he took a bite out of one of the candy bars (with the wrapper on) and set it back on the plate.

I can still remember the all too few times I was able to take my children out trick-or-treating. I remember my daughter dressed up as a nurse, offering to “fix-up” all those other trick or treaters who were obviously hurting with all that fake blood they were wearing.

I remember Stephen wearing his great pumpkin outfit. We stuffed it so full of padding that when he fell down, not only did he not get hurt, he had to be physically picked up because he was flailing his arms around like a beetle on its back.

I can still see Stef holding Stephen’s little hand and patiently leading him up the walkway and helping him hold open his bag so that the candy would find its mark. She always made certain he said thank you for the candy. It usually came out “thank-woo.”

The first Halloween following their deaths I remember driving home with tears streaming down my face as I watched the other trick-or-treaters roaming up and down the streets. My wife and I fled our home, depositing bags of candy for our next door neighbors to hand out for us. Last year we found the courage to stick around and greet the ghosts and goblins who found their way to our door. The funny thing was, we felt as dressed up as the trick-or-treaters. We were wearing our “happy face” masks.

The memories are now starting to fade of the Halloweens before our children died. It won’t be too long and I’ll be leading Christopher, our new son who is now a year old, up those driveways just like I did before. I feel sad that Stef and Steve can’t be there. But you know, I have a feeling that if I hold out my hands and close my eyes, two little gloved hands will slip into mine and I’ll again hear in unison, “Just one more house Daddy!”



*Wayne Loder,
Lakes Area TCF MI*

*This article was written several
years and was reprinted in several
TCF chapter newsletters .*

When You Are Bereaved, It Is Alright to.....

Scream in the shower.
Yell in the car.
Howl at the moon.
Cry anywhere you like.
Misplace your glasses.
Lose the car.
Forget your own name.
Put milk in the cupboard,
toilet paper in the refrigerator,
and ice cream in the oven.
Beat up a pillow.
Stomp on the ground.
Throw stones in a lake.
Change grocery stores if it hurts.
Wear one black shoe and one navy.
Have tear stains on your tie.
Eat French fries for breakfast, Toast for lunch,
and peanut butter for dinner (as long as you eat)
Write him a letter.
Bake him a cake.
Smell his clothes.
Celebrate his life on his birthday.
Talk to your pets; they understand.
Leave his room the way it is
for as long as you like.
Say his name just to hear the sound.
Talk about him to others.
Tell loved ones what you need.
Say no when you feel like it.
Cancel plans if you want.
Have a bad day.
It’s alright to hurt.

And one day, when you’re ready....

It’s all right to laugh again.
Dance and feel pretty.
Have a good time.
Look forward to tomorrow.
Sing in the shower.
Smile at a friend’s new baby.
Wear make-up once more.
Go for a day, a week,
and even a month without crying.
Celebrate the holidays.
Forgive those who failed you.
Learn something new.
Look at his pictures and remember
with happiness, not pain.
Go on with your life.
Cherish the memories.

And one day when it’s time.....

It’s alright to love again!

~Vicki Tushingam

Nothing Gold Can Stay
 Nature's first green is gold,
 Her hardest hue to hold.
 Her early leaf's a flower;
 But only so an hour.
 Then leaf subsides to leaf,
 So Eden sank to grief,
 So dawn goes down to day
 Nothing gold can stay.
 —Robert Frost

“Love is stronger than death even though it can't stop death from happening, but no matter how hard death tries it can't separate people from love. It can't take away our memories either. In the end, life is stronger than death.”

Author Unknown

“Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live.”

~Norman Cousins

*“You are so strong”
 Empty words
 That don't touch the reality
 That my life has become.
 Walking through fog
 Incredible pain
 Searching for the beloved face
 I crave to see
 The voice that I strain to hear over the noises
 Of people who have no idea
 Of what the world has lost*
 Charisse Smith, TCF Tyler, TX

Friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief.

Swedish Proverb

ADJUSTED

“It’s been several years since your son died,”
 They say, “Surely, you must have adjusted by now.”
 Yes, I am adjusted—
 Adjusted to feeling pain
 And sadness and grief
 And guilt and loss.
 Adjusted to hurting and unexpected tears.
 Adjusted to seeing people made uncomfortable upon
 hearing me say “My son died.”
 Adjusted to losing my best friend because
 I’m not always “up.”
 Adjusted to people acting as if grief is contagious
 And TCF meetings are “morbid.”
 Adjusted? Oh, yes, to many things.
 Knowing I won’t hear his voice, but listening for it still.
 Knowing I won’t see him drive his Toronado,
 But staring at every one I see.
 Adjusted to feeling empty on his birthday
 And wishing for just one more time with him.
 Adjusted: As life goes on—
 To realizing I cannot expect everyone I meet
 To wear a bandage—just because I am still bleeding...

Shirley Blakely Curle



Reading Corner

Gone but Not Lost: Grieving the Death of a Child
 by David W. Wiersbe

We all expect our parents to precede us in death. No one expects to have to make their child's funeral arrangements. And the loss of a child brings with it a special and persistent manifestation of grief that can feel "like a stomachache that never ends."

Gone but Not Lost is a thoughtful gift for a family that has experienced the death of a child. Each of its brief chapters covers one element of grief, bringing the grieving through sorrow and helping them deal with feelings of anger or guilt as well as the marital strain that may follow the loss of a beloved child.

This helpful resource has been revised and updated to bring comfort to a new generation.

David W. Wiersbe has been a pastor for over thirty years and is currently serving his fourth church. He considers ministry to the grieving to be an important part of his calling and has worked with fire and rescue units as well as local support groups for the grieving. He is the author of *The Dynamics of Pastoral Care*, as well as coauthor of four books with his father, and lives in Minnesota.

Review taken from back of book



The Compassionate Friends
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Honoring 18 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families

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SEPTEMBER &
OCTOBER, 2011



A Season of Many Feelings

Fall is a season of many feelings.

Autumn is here once again, as it comes every year.
And with the leaves, my falling tears.

This time of year is the hardest of all...

My heart is still breaking, once again it is fall.
Memories once so vivid are seeming to fade.
My time spent with you seems some other age.
This season reminds me of grief and of pain,
But yet teaches hope and of joy once again.

For the trees are still living beneath their gray bark.
And you, my sweet child,
Are alive in my heart!

*By Cindy Schake
TCF, Butler, PA*

