



The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2017

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

Monthly Meeting:

February 8, 2017

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Registration of new members and library opens at 7:00 p.m.

Topic: Tear Soup

**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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Reflections on a New Year

We begin a new year, one that many of us enter with reluctance. After all, it means another year away from our child and another year to be lived without the physical presence of the one we have lost. Apprehensive about any new challenges that we may be called upon to face in our broken condition, we call out, "Wait, I'm not ready yet!"

The death of our child changed the course of our life; nothing will be the same again. But it also has shaped us into who we are today. And it will continue to do so as we learn to incorporate this loss into who we are to become.

Have you found that you have already begun to live differently? Compassion toward others is more profound. Trivial things are no longer important. Appreciation for life, and those in our lives, is paramount. We're living the same life—differently.

Tragedies, disappointments, and heartaches combine with beauty, love, and joy to fashion our life. These are all a part of life, and our challenge is to incorporate them into our world. The difference that our child's life has had upon the world continues through us.

So, rather than being fearful of the challenges that lie ahead, perhaps a better question to consider at this time might be: What opportunities will present themselves in the coming year to honor this loss that is already a part of our life? Our child has become more integrally entwined into our being than ever before. We bring him or her to every situation that we encounter. How can we make that situation better because of this bond?

The start of a new calendar year is a good time to remember that we are in the midst of life. It is not perfect. Nor is it one that we might have chosen. But, our struggles do not put life "on hold." Rather they are a part of life itself! Our life is ours to make the most of, with many gifts that we can share with others. There is no better time than the present to gather up the pieces and recognize the uniqueness that we each call "me"—a uniqueness made more wonderful because of our child's presence in the life we choose to live.

Paula Staisiunas Schultz
In Memory of Melissa and Jeff

Author biography, 2002: Paula and her husband Bob live in Chicago, Illinois., where Paula serves as co-editor of the South Suburban Chapter newsletter. Their son, Jeff Schultz, is currently a student at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. Their daughter, Melissa Schultz Cleaves, and her husband, Jeff Cleaves, had been married seven weeks when they died in a car accident on Thanksgiving weekend, 1999.

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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 mjward0123@gmail.com 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 mjward0123@gmail.com

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:

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How Long Does It Take?

Joan D. Schmidt, -Central Jersey TCF

A question that first and second year bereaved parents would like answered. Make this condition finite, please!

As long as it takes; that's how long It takes. It's not about forgetting. It's about hurting. And I know that if I am alive 20 years from now and I happen to look at a blue sky with puffy clouds and think of my son, Fred, and figure how old he'd be, and what he'd be doing, and what his children would be doing - I'll hurt..

And I know if I can switch my train of thought from what is not, to what was, a happy memory, I'll be able to smile through the tears.

We don't stop hurting, ever. But so many things occur each day, so many events and thoughts and happenings intervene, that our focus is shifted. The death of our child changes from the main concern in our life to one of many.

A life may stop; but the love goes on. To love deeply is to be vulnerable.
For all our days.

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

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LOVE SHARES

In Memory of

Given by

Personal information has been
deleted from the
internet version of this newsletter.

Consider giving a Love Share in your child's memory. Help us continue our mission to help grieving parents. All Love Shares are tax deductible.

Our stories may be different
But inside we're all the same,
Struggling to find new meaning,
Trying to ease our pain.

With courage we face tomorrow
And try to understand
Though death has left its sorrow
We honor our children's memories
By learning to live again.

~Debbie Dickinson TCF, Naperville, IL

GRIEF

Verne Smith, TCF, Ft. Worth, TX

GRIEF: is sometimes silent. Like snowflakes falling on a dark winter's night ... but never peaceful or serene or pretty like the pure white snow. When grief is silent, the tears seem to turn to ice, like the snowflakes, before they reach our eyes.

GRIEF: is sometimes raging. Like a monstrous thunderstorm... with all its fury and lots of lightning striking our hearts at every angle. When grief is raging, the tears come in torrents, like the rain, and flood our soul.

GRIEF: whether it be silent or raging . . . HURTS.

Our Children Remembered On Their Angel Day

[illegible]

**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.

Meeting Dates and Discussion Topics*

February 8, 2017—Tear Soup

March 8, 2017—To Be Decided

(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.)

Valentine's in Heaven

Are there Valentines in Heaven?
Are there Red Hearts everywhere?
Do they line the golden streets,
Or is that very rare?
I wish that I could send you one,
Right through Heaven's Gate,
To say how much we miss you,
On this special date.
I'd like to send a Candy Heart,
That is printed, "I Luv U,"
And maybe you would whisper back,
"I know. I Luv U too."

Marilyn Rollins
TCF Lake-Porter, IN
For All Our Children

Valentine Love-New Meaning for Bereaved Parents

Though winter's delicate, lacy snowflakes may remind us of the lacetrimmed hearts of February's valentines, the "mourning" heart seems frozen in time. The bitter winds of loneliness blow mournfully through our souls.

Death has tapped us on the shoulder, introducing his brother, Grief, who has moved into our hearts to take up unwelcome residence. Wearied and exhausted by our pain, we have little energy to evict the intruder. It's hard for us to remember that the sun still faithfully shines behind the clouds that have obscured our vision.

"Love" is apparently the thought of the season, and we are reminded of its tenderness at every turn. But a piece of the fiber of our lives has been torn away, and love seems a vague and unfulfilled promise that belongs only to others.

Hearts and flowers, lace and love, romantic verse and melody seem to have abandoned us as we grope in the darkness of our beloved's absence. Will the pain ever end? Will the hope and joy and renewal once again warm the frozen places in our hearts?

Gradually, as the hurt begins to soften, the thawing relief of healing slowly begins to melt the icy grip of our pain; hope does begin to "spring eternal". Roses, traditional in February's favorite holiday, remind us that summer will return.

It's unlikely that we will ever again perceive the usual symbols of love in quite the same way as before, but in many ways our concepts of genuine love will be stronger, richer and less assailable. Frivolous and shallow affection are absent from our thoughts. Deeper commitments and more demonstrative attention have become our new marching orders.

In costly lessons, we've learned firsthand how

fragile and fleeting life can be, and we are now resolute in our determination to announce to our remaining dear ones the importance of our bonds with them. We abandon the intimidation of "limits" such as the archaic notions that "men" mustn't cry or say "I Love You" or that we're too busy just not to pay attention to someone's needs.

As little by little, our pain softens and recedes, and we learn that suffering is but for a season, we also learn that LOVE doesn't die. In our emotional lives, Valentines can now take on a new significance as precious reminders of the love that still exists on both sides of life. Love lives within our hearts and even Grief cannot steal it away. Love is our bridge over the rainbow.

~Taken from the Bluegrass TCF Chapter
Newsletter January/February 2012 newsletter

Wintersun

The Poems of Sascha Wagner Dedicated to Randy Misita, Son of Bernie and Tony, brother of Angela

There are those days in winter
When your world is frozen
Into a vision of eternal ice,
When earth and air
Are strangers to each other,
When sound and color seem forever gone.
There are those days in winter
When you feel like dying,
When life itself surrenders you to anguish,
To total mourning and to endless grief.
And then it happens: from the bitter sky,
A timid sun strides to his silent battle
Against the grey and hostile universe –
It changes ice to roses, sky to song.
And then it happens that your heart recalls
Some distant joy, a gladness from the past
A slender light at first, then larger, braver,
Until your mind returns to hope and peace.
Let memories be beauty in your life,
Like song and roses in the wintersun.

Just for Today for Bereaved Parents

-- Vickie Tushingham

Just for today I will try to live through the next 24 hours and not expect to get over my child's death, but instead learn to live with it just one day at a time.

Just for today I will remember my child's life, not his death, and bask in the comfort of all those treasured days and moments we shared.

Just for today I will forgive all the family and friends who didn't help or comfort me the way I needed them to. They truly did not know how.

Just for today I will smile no matter how much I hurt on the inside, so that maybe my heart will soften and I will begin to heal.

Just for today I will reach out to comfort a relative or friend of my child, for they are hurting, too, and perhaps we can comfort each other.

Just for today I will free myself from my self-inflicted burden of guilt, for deep in my heart I know if there was anything in this world I could have done to save my child from death, I would have done it.

Just for today I will honor my child's memory by doing something with another child because I know that would have made my own child proud.

Just for today I will offer my hand in friendship to another bereaved parent, for I do know how they feel.

Just for today when my heart feels like breaking, I will stop and remember that grief is the price we pay for loving, and the only reason I hurt is because I had the privilege of loving so much.

Just for today I will not compare myself with others. I am fortunate to be who I am and have had my child for as long as I did.

Just for today I will allow myself to be happy, for I know that I am not deserting my child by living on.

Just for today I will accept that I did not die when my child did, my life did go on, and I am the only one who can make that life worthwhile once more.

Love And Hope

By Kerry Marston, TCF, Grand Junction, CO

On a cold winter day the sun went out
Grief walked in to stay
I turned away from the unwanted guest
And bid him be on his way.

Grief was merciless, he brought his friends,
Loneliness, Fear and Despair.
They walk these rooms unceasingly
In the somber cloaks they wear.

Every so often now, Love pays a call
She always has Hope by her side
I welcome Love as well as Hope
For I thought surely they had died.

Love counsels Grief in a most gentle way
Bids him be still for a while
Then Love walks with me through
memory's hall And for a time...I can smile.

As long as you mention
my name, I live !

African Proverb

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

Chapter members are encouraged to write about their grief journey and submit for publication in this newsletter at mjward0123@gmail.com

Go into your grief, for there
your soul will grow

Carl Jung

Your suffering needs to be respected.
Don't try to ignore the hurt,
because it is real.
Just let the hurt soften you
instead of hardening you.
Let the hurt open you
instead of closing you.
Let the hurt send you looking
for those who will accept you
instead of hiding from
those who reject you.

~Bryant Gill

**Grievors use a
very simple calendar.**

Before & After

~Grief Diaries

Grief comes in 3 stages:
The beginning....
The middle....
And the *rest of*
Your life.

~all-greatquotes.com

But grief is a walk alone.

Others can be there, and listen. But you will walk alone down your own path, at your own pace, with your sheared-off pain, your raw wounds, your denial, anger, and bitter loss. You'll come to your own peace, hopefully.....but it will be on your own,
in your own time.

~Cathy Lamb

Grieving is Like Having Broken Ribs,
On the Outside, You look Fine
But With Every Breath, it Hurts.

~Greg Behrendt (slightly Modified)
Healing Hugs

I'll be your legacy
I'll be your voice
You live on in me
So I've made the choice
To honor your life
By living again
I love you
I miss you
I'll see you again.

~Written by Alan Pedersen
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The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land—SW Houston Chapter
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Honoring 21 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families



JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2017

With every new year I miss you more ...

Another year, we muster up cheer,
Not that we don't count our blessings.
Words left unspoken, hearts still broken,
For the deceased child we're still missing.
We are getting stronger, the journey's far longer,
Than any we'd think we could endure.
May we grow in our faith, may
He grant us His grace,
For a condition in which there's no cure.
To every hurting soul, on whom grief has taken it's toll,
Please know that there are those who support you all the way,
We don't have to meet, for we share the same grief,
It is your tender heart I lift up today.

Michelle Thomason, TCF, Portland, OR