



# The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2015

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

## Monthly Meeting:

**FEBRUARY 11, 2015**

Always the second Wednesday

**Time: 7:30 p.m.**

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

**Topic: Scrapbooking & other ways to remember your child**

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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The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Dallas, Texas, will be the site of the 38th TCF National Conference on July 10-12, 2015. "Hope Shines Bright ... Deep in the Heart" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great national Conference experience.

The 2015 Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas, 300 Reunion Blvd., Dallas, TX 75207. They are now accepting reservations. To make your reservation, please access the link on the National website, which will take you directly to TCF's reservation portal on the Hyatt's website. Conference attendees are receiving a discounted room rate of \$129. We anticipate a large attendance for the conference, so we encourage you to make your reservation as soon as it is convenient for you.

A variety of sponsorships and volunteer opportunities are available. Please check out the National website or call or email Lisa Corrao at [lisa@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:lisa@compassionatefriends.org). If you have any questions you can call the National office at 877.969.0010.



### 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

## LOVE SHARES

In Memory of	Given by
Personal information has been deleted for Internet Version of 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.

### A New Year Is For Hope

It has been a different number,  
 Days have gone by.  
 We’ve accumulated more time  
 Between ourselves and our child/siblings death.  
 We may have rearranged our  
 Perspective - have different  
 Ideas about what is most  
 Important and what hardly matters.  
 In this New Year, we know that  
 There will be ups and downs, some  
 Good moments and some bad moments,  
 And if we take just one moment,  
 Just one hour just one step at a time...  
**TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT.**

~Joan Schmidt  
 TCF, Central Jersey

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## The TCF Journey

There is a well-known saying that states, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.” Then there is a joke that says, “But I don’t want to go.” That was my loud cry as I began my long journey down the road of grief after my son Michael died. What a journey it has been—a journey that has led me from tears to laughter, despair to hope, doubt to faith, hell to the beginning of peace and serenity.

One thing is certain, I never could have come this far on my journey without The Compassionate Friends. I will never forget the first TCF meeting I attended. I walked into a large room and saw many people there laughing and talking. I thought to myself, “What is going on here? Don’t these people know that after your child died you will never laugh or smile again? They must not love their children as much as I love my son! This group is not for you.” However, I found myself going to the meetings every month in spite of my reservations.

Often I heard people at my TCF meetings talk about well meaning friends who would say, “Time will make things better.” Yes, the passage of time does soften the pain; but it is what we DO with our time that helps us to heal. Grief is work—hard work—but it is the only way to truly heal.

Once I met a mother whose child had been dead for ten years. All I could think was, “It is hell living ONE day without my son. How can I survive for ten years without him?” Then I learned that you live ONE DAY AT A TIME or even minute to minute if necessary.

Probably the most important thing I learned at TCF was that I had CHOICES. I could choose to be bitter and angry the rest of my life or I could choose to be happy. I could choose to drop out of the human race or I could choose to go on living. I CHOSE LIFE. The best testament I could give to my son’s life was to go on living myself.

How do you go on living? TCF showed me how. I learned to “forgive” myself. Yes, I made mistakes, but it was okay. I am a human being. I am not perfect. I learned not to

should” on myself and not to let others “should” on me (as in “You should go to the family party.”) It’s okay to be angry. However, it is better to roll up your car windows and scream as loud as you can instead of screaming at your spouse or children. Love yourself. Do something nice for yourself.

All of these things are hard to do; but you keep going to TCF meetings. You keep listening and try to apply in your own life the suggestions you hear from the other members. You reach out to help someone else in TCF who is hurting. Your help can be as simple as saying, “Hello, I am here to listen.” It is in this reaching out to help someone else that the miracle of TCF happens. You HEAL YOURSELF when you give to someone else what you have received from TCF. May we always reach out to others to heal and be healed on our journey!

Judy Bonura  
TCF Metro New Orleans Chapter

## The Hidden One

We are a family of five  
(one of us is hidden)  
I keep her safe and warm in my heart,  
holding tight lest she slip away.  
Her birth was whispered  
(rather than heralded)  
in the hallways, hotel rooms,  
the recovery room and nurses’ station.  
She is but a fleeting memory  
A dream as soft as a cloud,  
As delicate as the misty morning  
on which she was born.  
She slipped into and out of our lives  
As quietly as the moon appears  
And glides across the evening sky  
To fade away in the dawn of a new day  
And the harsh reality of the sun.

Debbi Jones, Gainesville, FL  
Permission granted for use by TCF

## New Year's Resolutions For Bereaved Parents

I resolve.....

That I will grieve as much, and for as long, as I feel like grieving, and that I will not let others put a time table on my grief.

That I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.

That I will cry whenever and wherever I feel like crying, and that I will not hold back my tears just because someone else feels I should be "brave" or "getting better" or "healing by now."

That I will talk about my child as often as I want to, and that I will not let others turn me off just because they can't deal with their own feelings.

That I will not expect family and friends to know how I feel, understanding that one who has not lost a child cannot possibly know how it feels.

That I will not blame myself for my child's death, and that I will constantly remind myself that I did the best job of parenting I could possibly have done. But when feelings of guilt are overwhelming, I will remind myself that this is a normal part of the grief process and it, too, will pass.

That I will not be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help if I feel it is necessary.

That I will commune with my child at least once a day in whatever way feels comfortable and natural to me, and that I won't feel compelled to explain this communion to others or to justify or even discuss it with them.

That I will try to eat, sleep, and exercise every day in order to give my body the strength it will need to help me cope with my grief.

To know that I am not losing my mind, and I will remind myself that loss of memory, feelings of disorientation, lack of energy, and a sense of vulnerability are all normal parts of the grief process.

To know that I will heal, even though it may take a long time. To let myself heal and not to feel guilty about feeling better.

To remind myself that the grief process is circuitous - that is, I will not make steady upward progress. And when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depression, I will tell myself that "slipping backward" is also a normal part of the grief process and these moods, too, will pass.

To try to be happy about something for some part of every day, knowing that at first, I may have to force myself to think cheerful thoughts, so eventually they may become a habit.

That I will reach out at times, and try to help someone else, knowing that helping others will help me to get over my depression.

That even though my child is dead, I will opt for life, knowing that is what my child would want me to do.

Nancy A. Mower  
TCF - Honolulu, HI

### The Sharing of Grief

I cannot carry this burden alone, the road is too steep and the pain too great. I shall only get to the top of the hill if I am able to lean on a firm shoulder whose strength lies in the reality of the feet which bear its weight. The sharing of grief is the only solution to the crisis that surrounds bereavement in our age. To share a person's sorrow is to accept their reality and to acknowledge the fact that none of us is immune from death.

Rev. Dr. Simon Stevens  
Founder of The Compassionate Friends

**ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER**

Chapter members are encouraged to write about their grief journey and submit for publication in this newsletter at [mjward@elc.net](mailto:mjward@elc.net).

The passage of time does not cause our grief to end,  
but its softening touch helps us to survive.

-Wayne Loder

*Memories*

Unique as snowflakes impossible to hold but for a moment, yet when one is gone there is another gliding down upon the first until they become blankets of protection against the storms of loneliness. Memories.....gentle memories

Marcia F. Alig  
TCF Mercer NJ



The children who were with us in the rush of life let them now be with us in the peace of spirit.

Sascha Wagner  
From "Wintersun"

**What My Child Has Taught Me**

I've learned that you can keep going long after you think you can't. I've learned that learning to forgive takes a lot of practice. I've learned that friends can become strangers, and strangers can become friends. I've learned that ignorance isn't an excuse for the lack of compassion. I've learned that some people will never, ever - "get it". I've learned that the community of sorrow is the strongest of all. I've learned that no matter how bad your heart is broken the world doesn't stop for your grief. I've learned that your life can be changed in a matter of minutes. I've learned that the people you care most about in life are taken from you too soon. I've learned that you should always leave loved ones with loving words, it may be the last time you see them. I've learned that love isn't measured by the amount of time you have with someone. I've learned that some sorrow is so deep that it has no words. But so is love.

Taken from the Bluegrass TCF Chapter January, 2011 newsletter

*Reading Corner*



The Grieving Garden:  
Living with the death of a child

by Suzanne Redfern & Susan K. Gilbert  
Hampton Roads Publishing Co.

Every year, some two million parents in the U.S. suffer the death of a son or daughter. The unnatural sequence of the child's preceding the parent in death creates a wrenching loss and overwhelming emotional and spiritual disorientation. Most of these bereaved parents find relief from their isolation only in the company of others like themselves. The Grieving Garden offers the support, understanding, and ultimately comfort and hope, from those who have shed the same tears over the death of a child.

The Grieving Garden is a ground-breaking book that invites bereaved parents into personal conversations with a diverse group of fathers and mothers who share the same loss. The text is free of distracting and heavy-handed editorializing, expert opinion, or unwanted advice. Instead, readers are welcomed into a community of common understanding one they may enter at will, at their own pace, for reassurance and hope.



**The Compassionate Friends**  
Sugar Land—SW Houston Chapter  
P. O. Box 231, East Bernard, TX. 77435

Honoring 20 Years of Support and Friendship  
for Bereaved Families



**JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2015**

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## Wintersong

Season of lights, season of love and peace  
Season of shadow, season of memories  
Season of warmth and joy, season of secret tears:  
Give us the courage to laugh again  
Give us the vision to hope again  
Give us the power to love again  
For all our new seasons  
And all our new years

From WINTERSUN  
by Sascha