



The Compassionate Friends

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

JULY & AUGUST 2014

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

Monthly Meeting:

July 9, 2014

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: Balloon Liftoff

**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: *Providing Grief Support After the Death of a Child*

"The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again."

—Simon Stephens, founder of The Compassionate Friends

The words of TCF's Founder, Simon Stephens, resonate with those who have come to The Compassionate Friends hoping to find a purpose in a life that suddenly seems so empty.

Whether your family has had a child die (at any age from any cause) or you are trying to help those who have gone through this life altering experience, The Compassionate Friends exists to provide friendship, understanding, and hope to those going through the natural grieving process.

Through a network of more than 650 chapters with locations in all 50 states, as well as Washington DC, Puerto Rico, and Guam, The Compassionate Friends has been supporting bereaved families after the death of a child for four decades.

The National Office and its staff also provide many levels of support to our chapters, as well as individual responses to those who call on the phone, contact us through our website, or send an e-mail that simply says, "My child has died. Help me!" We will be here as long as you need us. That is our commitment to you.

**Time has proven that in caring and sharing comes healing.
*We welcome you to The Compassionate Friends.***

This was taken from The Compassionate Friends National Website which can be found at <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>

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 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.

AND THE ROCKET’S RED GLARE

I watched the spectacular bursts of colors. It was always such a treat. The star bursts, the swirls, the straight ones, making their noisy banging trajectories into the night time sky.

Throughout these exciting displays, tears ran down my face. Inconceivable that I am here to enjoy this and you, my beautiful Cheryl, are not.

Then new thoughts rolled through my mind. Perhaps you are viewing the fireworks and many more from a higher vantage point, where the colors and designs shine more vividly. Perhaps you are seeing and understanding things that I can neither see nor understand. Perhaps your world is filled with rainbows and flowers and butterflies. Perhaps you are surrounded by love, music, beauty and unbounded joy. Perhaps my love. I can only hope...

~ Carol Silverman, Elkins Park, PA

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“Different Strokes for Different Folks”

Being the Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends is a wonderful and fulfilling venture. I get to wake up every morning and help fulfill our mission that "all who need us will find us and all who find us will be helped." One of the things I love most about our organization is that we work very hard to provide support to grieving parents, grandparents and siblings in a setting that they are comfortable with. My experience last week was a validation that we are truly meeting people right where they are, in a format in which they feel safe and secure.

On Monday I talked to a woman who told me she had attended her first TCF chapter meeting just 13 days after the death of her son 9 years ago in a motorcycle accident. She told me that she doesn't believe she would have survived her loss without the hugs, ears and friendship of her Compassionate Friends family. This woman has never seen our TCF website or Facebook page or visited a TCF chat room.

On Tuesday I exchanged emails with a gentleman who has been participating in one of our TCF chat rooms for nearly 5 years. He likes the anonymity and safety he feels sharing his story about the death of his granddaughter from cancer within the comfort of his own home. He has found tremendous support from many close friends who he has never met or talked with. This gentleman has never attended a chapter meeting, read our newsletter or viewed our Facebook page.

On Thursday I had the opportunity to spend 45 minutes on the phone with the mother of one of the children killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary school shootings near Newtown, Connecticut. This single mom was so overwhelmed in the early days of her grief with the cameras and media attention from this national tragedy that it was difficult for her to find a quiet time and space to grieve. She said that receiving the TCF newsletter from our Rockville Centre, New York chapter of TCF was a lifeline for her. She said the information provided was invaluable and helped her so much. This woman has never attended a TCF chapter meeting, visited our website or Facebook page or participated in a chat room.

On Friday I talked with a young woman who wanted me to know that the TCF Facebook page for siblings has literally saved her life. Her brother died by suicide in October of 2013. A friend shared a TCF Facebook post of ours with her 5 months ago and she was instantly drawn to read it and follow us religiously every day. This young woman has never seen our website, attended a chapter meeting, received a newsletter or visited one of our chat rooms.

What an insightful week it was to communicate with 4 different people who all found comfort and support from TCF, but in very different and unique ways. One from a TCF meeting, one a chat room, one from reading a TCF newsletter and one from our Facebook page. I am proud that our organization is willing to evolve and grow so we can continue to be at the forefront of meeting the needs of those grieving the death of a child, grandchild or sibling of any age from any cause.

My dear friend the late Darcie Sims expressed it so well when she told me that when it comes to grief, "one size does not fit all." My vision for TCF is that we continue to expand and grow by providing support across all spectrums and platforms. I look forward to serving this organization by working hard to insure that every family who faces the loss of a child, grandchild or sibling will indeed find us in whatever format they deem comfortable. In 2013 TCF reached over 750,000 people through our various channels of support. My commitment is to continue reaching out across all avenues to make sure that all who need us will find us and all who find us will be helped. Our message is simple, you need not walk alone.

Alan Pedersen

Online Support

The Compassionate Friends offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions.

LEARNING HOW TO SMILE AGAIN

When my daughter died, the pain was so overwhelming, the thought that I could ever feel any ounce of happiness again seemed ridiculous. In those early days of grief, the mere idea of being happy didn't just feel impossible, it felt wrong.

During the first year after her death, I recall an evening when my husband insisted I sit down with him and our three boys and watch a funny show on TV that we had watched regularly as a family for years. My husband was able to recognize that in the wake of their sister's death, our boys needed life to return to as "normal" as possible in order for them to cope and feel safe, and that didn't just mean regular daily routines—it meant a return to the personal interactions with us that they had been so used to.

Begrudgingly, I sat down to watch the show. During the show, something was so funny that for the first time since her death, I actually felt the urge to laugh. Instead of laughing, I actually bit the inside of my cheeks to force myself NOT to smile. At that time, the idea that I could ever be happy again felt like a betrayal of my daughter.

The logic (or lack thereof) went something like this: if I allowed myself to be happy, it would mean that I was okay with the fact that she had died. Looking back, I think the self-imposed state of misery served several purposes.

First, it was a matter of basic survival. The pain of losing a child is so overwhelming and so intolerable; many people say they feel numb early on. I think it is similar to the body's natural defense mechanism of passing out while experiencing physical pain that is completely overwhelming. When the initial numbness started to wear off after her death, I found myself trying to suppress ALL emotions, not just the pain and guilt. In reality, this misguided effort only suppressed everything BUT the pain and guilt.

Second, when my daughter died, life as I knew it ended. I was living in a world that suddenly felt alien and intolerable. Not only did I feel like I could never be happy again, I felt outright angry that people around me were happy. To smile, laugh, and have fun again felt like it would mean there was no longer the possibility I would wake up from this nightmare I was in. I would have to accept she really did die and life did go on.

In a convoluted way, the pain had become the biggest connection I had to my daughter. I could no longer see

her, touch her, hold her, or hear her sweet voice. Family and friends stopped talking about her because it had become too painful for them. The pain of missing her was what kept her present in my thoughts almost every minute of my waking hours. It's what I talked about at the support groups. Talking about her was painful because she was no longer here, but it meant I was still talking about her and acknowledging the continuing importance of her place in my life and in my heart.

Before my daughter died, I had heard several times the old adage that those who have died wouldn't want to see their surviving loved ones living in sorrow and misery. I don't think I fully understood or appreciated what that meant until I was faced with it myself. Sorrow and pain will come no matter what. However, we can unknowingly allow ourselves to get stuck in it because it may feel like the only connection we still have to the loved one we lost.

Over time, the notion of happiness as a betrayal of my daughter faded. At some point, I gave myself permission to smile and to be happy again. I don't think there was any specific moment I can pinpoint, but instead, it was a slow realization that life was going to go on without her physically here whether I liked it or not. It helped that I still had four other children --one born after she died—and the joy and happiness that they bring into my life is undeniable.

The pain of losing her has not gone away, but it does not occupy as much room as it once did. Just like I have chosen to allow myself to smile and be happy again, I have chosen to focus less on my daughter's death and more on the happy memories of my daughter's life. I choose love and happiness, and I can't think of a better way to honor her memory.

- Maria Kubitz, TCF-Contra Costa Chapter
in loving memory of Margareta Kubitz

INSTANT

We dance with each instant
From first one to last
And some seem predestined
Others by chance-
And though we crave knowledge
Sometimes we don't know
Yet there's peace in an instant
When we breathe and let go

Jan Reich Philadelphia 6-9-13
In memory of all of our children

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

Chapter members are encouraged to write about their grief journey and submit for publication in this newsletter at mjward@elc.net.

Bereaved Parents

Different ages
Different stages
Different issues
Same pain
Daily strain
Occasional tissues
Our children have died
Often is all we know
A fact we fear to hide
Despite our ever-present woe
We live with pride
Though broken-hearted
To love, remember, and grow

*Victor Montemurro
TCF Medford, NY*

Summerwind

The one who owns this summer is not here,
Not here to know the tender summerwind,
Not here to share the glowing and the song.
The one who owns this summer does not live,
Not live to touch the richness of this day,
This day in summer when you are alone.
Weep to the summerwind, weep and love again
The one you remember.

Sascha Wagner

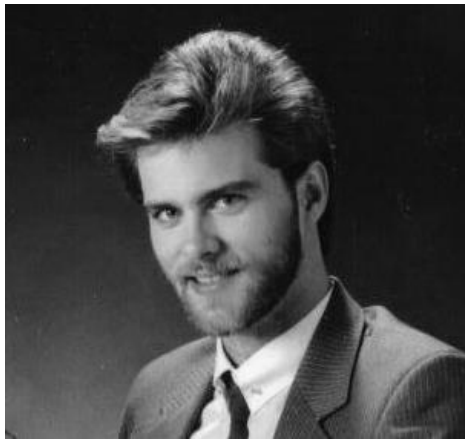
Far beyond the clouds above, a special garden grows with love. Special flowers of many blends are the children of The Compassionate Friends.

-Sam Rosenberg, TCF/KY

Bits And Pieces of Grief

"I can only bite off chunks of grief in bits and pieces. How else would I manage to get out of bed?"

~Desire' Aguirre



The printing of this newsletter was sponsored by Anita and R. C. Kyle in loving memory of their son Kevin Grant Kyle, 4/21/67 to 7/11/08

A Letter to my Mom!

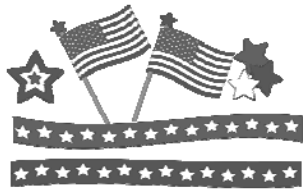
Author unknown

*As I sit in heaven
And watch you everyday
I try to let you know with signs
I never went away
I hear you when you're laughing
And watch you as you sleep
I even place my arms around you
To calm you as you weep
I see you wish the days away
Begging to have me home
So I try to send you signs
So you know you are not alone
Don't feel guilty that you have
Life that was denied to me
Heaven is truly beautiful
Just you wait and see
So live your life, laugh again
Enjoy yourself, be free
Then I know with every breath you take
You'll be taking on for me*



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**



JULY & AUGUST, 2014

*The Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter of
The Compassionate Friends*

Invites you to their

Annual Balloon Lift-Off

Wednesday, July 9, 2014

7:00 p.m. - Registration and writing
balloon messages

7:30 p.m. - Program begins

Family and friends are also invited to attend. After the
program, cake and punch will be served. Join us as we
remember our precious children.

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