



The Compassionate Friends

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

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2017

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

Monthly Meeting:

Wednesday, November 8, 2017
Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: Holiday Blues and How To Cope With It All.

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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Love Gifts should be sent to:

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

It's Ok!

It's Okay to Grieve:

The death of a child is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed and, somehow, our dear one returned. Such hurt!

—It's okay to grieve.

It's Okay to Cry:

Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing, and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to "level off" and continue our cruise along the stream of life.

—It's okay to cry.

It's Okay to Heal:

We do not need to "prove" we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel "guilty," for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death. It's a healthy sign of healing.

—It's okay to heal.

It's Okay to Laugh:

Laughter is not a sign of "less" grief. Laughter is not a sign of "less" love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh.

—It's okay to laugh.

Marianne Waite, TCF El Paso, TX

Celebrating Our Children's Birthday



Please see insert for
July, August,
September and October
birthdays

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:

Douglas Ledkins, 431 Old Colony Dr.
Richmond, TX 77406 (713) 515-9906
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I am doing fine

I said I'm doing good
Then I turned my head and cried.
I smiled and told my eyes to sparkle
Then I turned my head and cried.
I told a joke and laughed heartily
Then I turned my head and cried.
I offered comfort and encouragement
Then I turned my head and cried.
I did what has to be done
Then I turned my head and cried.
Then I turned my head and cried.
And felt my broken heart.

– Charlotte Roberts TFC/Montgomery

Do They Know?

Do they know what its like to lose a son and have to go on living?
For him to lose the future that he was supposed to live
For me to lose mine.
Do they know?
Do they know what its like for every day to be a lost dream?
To see others reach the pinnacles that should have been his
His dreams left to die
Do they know?
Do they know the sadness that I carry for what is forever lost?
For the shared moments that make up a life together
Never to exist now
Do they know?
Do they know the physical pain of missing him every single day?
To yearn for a hug, a spontaneous gift of love given so easily
Never taken for granted again
Do they know?
Do they know that I now live in a world forever changed?
That I know a moment lost can never be regained
Never waste a moment
Do they know?
I hope with every breath in me that they never have to find out for themselves.
That they get to watch their children grow up and grow old
To see the dreams yet to be lived.
I hope they never know...

– Sue McCubbin April 2010

Taken from Work Related Grief Support Newsletter July 2010.

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 is 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.

“So it's true, when all is said and done,
grief is the price we pay for love.”

— E.A. Bucchianeri,
Brushstrokes of a Gadfly

FEAR

Tom Crouthamel, TCF, Sarasota/Bradenton, FL

Fear is the constant, nagging companion of every bereaved parent who has surviving children – and there isn't a darn thing we can do about it.

A surviving child needs to live a “normal” growing-up child's life. As parents, we MUST hold back, MUST “let go”, and NOT be so “overprotective” of our child(ren) so that we screw up their growing-up time and deprive them of the experiences they need to mature into adulthood.

Our hell of the fear of loss of another child must not become their hell of being overprotected. Fear. It doesn't go away. WE must control it ... but please don't ask me how.

“Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape.... there is something new to be chronicled every day.

” CS Lewis adaptation

Please see the enclosed insert for the anniversaries of children passing away in July, August, September & October.



Save the date! December 10, 2017 at 6:30 pm.

First Presbyterian Church
502 Eldridge Road
Sugar Land, Texas

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

The Sugar Land/SW Houston TCF Chapter will host a local Candle Lighting on Sunday December 10, 2017 at the First Presbyterian Church, **This event will be held in the large meeting room in the same building as our meetings are held.** Please note that this is different from years past. Registration begins at 6:00 p.m. and the program begins at 6:30.

After the program, we will have for refreshments and fellowship. Each family is asked to bring a snack to share with others.

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

**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@clc.net or call her at 979-335-6070.

**Meeting Dates and
Discussion Topics***

November 8, 2017—Holiday Blues and How To Cope With It All.

December 3, 2017—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.)*

“Our grief journeys are not about closure; they are about adjustment and staying connected.” “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 following is a letter from the father of the first Las Vegas victim identified, Sonny Melton. He speaks the raw emotion of the most painful experience of a lifetime. He speaks of his faith, not to profess his beliefs to others, but to simply state what is helping him. While Compassionate Friends is inclusive to all beliefs, our organization should not exclude or deny the ability to speak freely about what helps each of us along this horrific journey so we need not walk alone.

Tony's Mom
Debbie Rambis, Executive Director of the National TCF

My Thoughts about Sonny and heroes.

If my calculations are correct, In my 62 years, I have seen about 22,623 sunrises in my life. As of this past Sunday morning, I had never really experienced one that I couldn't find at least some good in and I had never, ever hated anyone. And I mean that, not anyone. Well, as of 12:57 am Monday morning Oct. 1, 2017, I am now well acquainted with both horrible things, a hated day and a hated person.

That's the moment I received the telephone call that everyone, especially a parent fears.

The words came fast from the phone's speaker, too fast as I tried to wake up and shake the sleep stupid feeling off. 30 seconds later, I prayed to be sleep stupid, drunk, having a nightmare or crazy. But, as they say, it is what it is. James Sonny, my youngest son at 29 years of age, was dead. Bullets in his back as he lay over his wife, protecting her as best he could with all he had available, his body. Shot by some sick bastard too cowardly to even look him in his eyes as he snuffed the life out my child. Oh No, this guy did it from 32 floors up and 300 yards away.

As I understand it now, it was just bullets fired wildly into a crowd of about 20,000 country music fans. A crowd where Sonny just happened to be with his wife, listening to music. However, this crowd turned out to be a target of several acres in size with a 99% chance to make a hit on a human body with most every

single shot fired into it. And in this sea of carnage, Sonny was a hero right up until the bullets pierced his back and lungs and he couldn't go on.

But my tale of heroes doesn't end there folks, not at all. As Sonny and Heather ran away from the sniper, he always kept his own body between the danger and his wife. A running human shield. Heather says he had his hands on her shoulders and she felt him get hit and start to fall. And even though she was only a few yards from the safety of a concrete retaining wall, she stopped and turned around to kneel by his side. She made a quick exam and yelled for help as dozens of others fell around them. Bullets hitting the concrete so near that the resulting dust irritated her eyes. But she stayed right there and started CPR there out in the open on the cold ground in a last ditch chance to save her husband. Don't you see, Heather is a hero also. Protected by nothing more than the grace of God's invisible hands, she stayed with him and I'm comforted now knowing my son didn't have to die alone.

And that's not all! Suddenly out of the blue came two more angels. These angels were in the form of two young concert goers who chose not to hide or run away. These two guys braved the hell of that killing field that must have resembled the Marines landing on Omaha Beach. They ran to Sonny and Heather, picked him up and carried him all the way to their pickup truck. There, they loaded Sonny and two other victims into the bed of the truck and raced to the closest hospital. One guy driving, the other helping Heather give CPR to Sonny. We don't even know these guys names, they asked for no praise or reward. They just said they were sorry they couldn't have gotten to Sonny quicker. They are heroes!

But, it just wasn't enough. Heather cried as hope slipped away and the doctors in the ER pronounced him dead. Sonny was an ER Nurse himself. Once when I asked him why, he just smiled and in a matter of fact way said

(Continued on Page 6)

My thoughts about Sonny & Heros

(continued from Page 5)

“I want to help save people’s lives”. Well, he lived up to that high standard until the very bitter end.

I know I’m not the first to feel these horrible things, like grief and loss and I’ll certainly not be the last, but I sure wish I could be. Because it hurts, man I mean it really hurts.

A few years ago, I had a really good friend who was an American Indian. (Now dead from the cancer that robbed him of life in the end) His people have a prayer that he often recited that always touched my heart. I can’t remember it word for word, but I have repeated it often in my own words. “Please God, let me live honorably and when I take my last breath, let me die standing tall protecting my family”. I haven’t had the opportunity to finalized those words yet for me, and it may not even be in my future. But Sonny did. He stood the final test. He was Just a good guy, doing what good guys do. He was a hero.

I truly thank our Lord that we had Sonny for these past 29 years and I like to believe I even helped him a little grow into the great young man he was.

Susan, Janie and I made the 5 hour flight to Las Vegas without a total breakdown only because of the employees of Southwest Airlines who went above and beyond to help, one flight attendant even took us by the hand to his personal car and drove us to find Heather in this strange city. I say this so that I don’t lose sight of the fact that there also good people everywhere.

My hatred of the shooter may diminish given enough time, again I’m not the first to bare this burden. But right now, that’s not an option. As an ex cop, I share the frustration of the SWAT officer we heard about who was crying because the shooter killed himself before the cops could breach the door and take care of that ugly business themselves. Like I said, a coward.

To all the folks who have tried to call or text me or Janie or Susan, please don’t be mad if we didn’t answer. Or If I’ve misspelled words in this letter, it’s difficult to see clearly through tear filled eyes. We are all just overwhelmed right now. Prayers for Sonny, Heather, Susan and Janie and I are appreciated beyond belief. The grief has us now firmly in its relentless grip and this evil day has lasted way too long. Once again my prayer is to just be sleep stupid and have this sadness go away, even for just a few hours till I wake to my new, changed and darker world.

Copied from the National TCF Facebook Page

COPING WITH OCTOBER

Tracy Stackhouse, BP/USA, Central Arkansas

The coming of autumn with the beautiful colors of the leaves and their falling will bring different emotions to different families. Maybe your family had a tradition of driving through particularly scenic areas. Maybe the child you lost was the one who raked the leaves. Perhaps all of this will simply be a reminder that winter and a barren landscape are coming.

Halloween is a favorite holiday for most children, but it can be hard for bereaved parents. This formerly innocent holiday, the yards decorated as graveyards with markers and ghosts and skeletons, the stores of unhappy spirits that must walk the earth, all have a completely different impact on us now.

Many of us have opened the door to give out treats and been faced with a costume so similar to one our child wore for a Halloween past that either we really want to pull aside the mask to see the face behind or we want to dream that this was one last visit from our precious child.

Some parents have surviving children who still want to join in the fun – and, oh, how hard it is to “trick or treat” when you feel the victim of the ultimate “trick”.

Stop and think – What can you do differently? For autumn and its beauties and chores, what routines can you change? Hire someone or ask a friend who has been offering to help and asking for specific tasks. Maybe you could do it together. For Halloween, take surviving children to a carnival (many schools and churches sponsor these). Or, if a carnival was an every year event, go to the zoo or go door-to-door this year. If you don’t have surviving children wanting to celebrate, maybe you can leave your house dark and go to a movie and skip the holiday. In any event, planning ahead will help you get through a difficult time.

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

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

Grief is not a DISORDER,
a DISEASE or a
sign of WEAKNESS.
It is an *emotional, physical
and spiritual necessity,*
the *price you pay for love.*

The ONLY cure for grief
is to grieve.

-Earl Grollman

People don't always need advise.
Sometimes all they really need is
a hand to hold,
an ear to listen and
a heart to understand them.

-Author Unknown

Nothing will ever be the same after
your child has died, but you can
heal if you have the courage to live
through the mourning process and
have the willingness to embrace the
healing process.

By Elizabeth Horwin
We Need Not Walk Alone Magazine
Spring/Summer 2016 issue

You don't **GET OVER IT**,
you just get through it.

You don't **GET BY IT**,
because you can't get around it.

It doesn't '*get better*'
it just **GETS DIFFERENT.**

Everyday.....
Grief puts on a new face.....

- Wendy Feireisen

There will always be
a **PROFOUND SENSE OF LOSS**
for what *could have been.*

- Nancy Friedlander

I wish people could understand
how completely
DEBILITATING child loss is...
it's **MIND,**
HEART and
SOUL CRIPPLING.

- Angela Miller (A Bed for My Heart)

Courage is **NOT** *having the strength* to go on;

It is *going on* when you
DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH.

- Theodore Roosevelt



The Compassionate Friends

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

Honoring 21 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families



SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2017

“It is the gift of HOPE which reigns supreme in the attributes of The Compassionate Friends.

HOPE that life can still be worth living and meaningful.

HOPE that the pain of loss will become less acute, and above all else,

The HOPE that we do not walk alone, and that we are understood.

The gift of HOPE is the greatest gift that we can give to those who mourn.”

~Rev. Simon Stephens – Founder