



The Compassionate Friends

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

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2015

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

Monthly Meeting:

October 14, 2015

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: How to get through Anniversaries

**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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RESISTING RESENTMENT

I have been aware for years now that battling a descent into self-pity is pretty much a daily struggle. More recently, I am noticing how much I struggle with resentment.

I am at an age when many of my friends have children who are nearing adulthood or have reached adulthood. As a consequence, their lives are focused on graduations, new jobs, new apartments, weddings, and grandchildren. None of those things are happening for me and I am finding it hard. I don't resent the friends who are enjoying those life pleasures; in my own weirdly stunted way, I am happy for them. But I do resent that those things aren't going to happen for me.

Didn't I change an equal number of diapers? Didn't I nurse children through all the miseries of childhood maladies? Didn't I pack all those school lunches? Didn't I cheer at all those soccer games? I know I did.

I know I carefully assembled Easter baskets and tried to be creative about Halloween costumes. I played Santa. I never missed a Parent/Teacher conference. I organized elaborate birthday parties. I even provided pick-up and delivery service for a tuba for two years.

I cooked dinners for the Youth Group. I made gingersnaps and date nut bars and pumpkin streusel muffins (his favorites). I fixed daily BLTs in August when the tomatoes were ripe.

But my son will never graduate from college. He'll never get married. He'll never have a career. He won't have children. He won't call me on my birthday or negotiate with me about when and for how long to visit. And I resent it.

I go to Crate and Barrel, or Bed, Bath & Beyond, or Pottery Barn and I select wedding gifts from a registry. I send checks for graduations. I buy gift cards from Target for baby showers.

And I resent it.

~ Peggi Johnson TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA

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

All personal information has been deleted for 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.

THE MUSIC IS FOREVER

The Music is Forever
 One life, Like the song strummed
 softly on the strings,
 Makes music to the ears of
 those who hear it sing.
 Discordant notes and harmony,
 together make the sounds,
 But the space between the notes
 is where the meaning may be found.
 A life, may be as brief as a note on a page,
 or as long as a symphony
 with all the movements played.
 But long or short,
 the melody has its meaning though unfinished,
 And for those with ears to hear it
 the meaning's not diminished.
 Somewhere the song continues
 its sweetly singing phrase,
 The music is forever, not just for those days.
 ONE LIFE,
 LIKE A SONG,
 STRUMMED SOFTLY ON THE STRINGS,
 MAKES MUSIC TO THE EARS
 OF THOSE WHO HEAR IT SING.

~ Karen Howard TCF, Miami, FL

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**Her Best Friend's Wedding:
The Wake-up Call:**

The bride--my daughter Nina's best friend --was radiant; the groom nervous but excited; the flower girl and ring bearer adorable; the parents' shedding joyful tears; the weather near perfect...by all appearances, it looked like the ideal wedding; things were coming together as planned.

Not a thing looked out of place...to most everyone present; that is, to everyone but me, the mother of a forever 15-year-old brunette with a dazzling bracesladen smile. I tried desperately to hide my quivering lip, ignore the lump in my throat and knot in my stomach, yet lost that battle to choking sobs and a flood of tears that relentlessly streamed down my face. I watched the bridesmaids as they proceeded down the aisle, longing to see the face of my daughter, Nina, who should have been physically present, if her life were not cut short by a drunk driver. Instead, she was relegated to a small mention at the back of the program along with the couple's grandparents: "Here with us in spirit..."

I weathered the reception until it came time for the wedding party to take to the dance floor. They all had a particular dance and a song that apparently was their group of friend's "special thing". They participated in this dance and song with obvious delight. As I watched, I realized that this was something Nina, who had died eight years earlier, had never been a part of – it was as if a hand had reached down and plucked her out of the loop. And, in ways, I guess it had. At that very moment I have never felt so profoundly Nina's absence in the lives of her friends.

The few years following Nina's death, her friends (while they were high-school students) were still closely connected to her. However, since then they have graduated from college, now many have married or were on the career track. Some even have children of their own. A lot of time and distance and events had taken place in that time frame, and all of it without Nina's physical presence; to them, now a distant memory.

After some sleepless nights and much self-analysis, I came to some conclusions that I hope will help those of you who may find yourself in a similar situation someday. The wedding really became a wake-up call for me; a lot of realizations became

clear. Though other bereaved parents seemed to understand that this would be the outcome and had forewarned me, I was blind to it. They seemed to grasp the inevitable; that though Nina was paramount in my thoughts, no one else could possibly be able to think of her with the same magnitude as I. In my desperation that she not be forgotten, I seemed to delude myself into believing that should be the scenario for everyone.

For bereaved parents, one of our greatest fears is that our children will be forgotten. But after this wedding and the opinions voiced by others who knew, I think this needs to be amended. That though we, as their parents, remember our children in much more visible and personal ways, (i.e. memorial gardens, scholarships, remembrance services, balloon releases, photo buttons and pictures here, there and everywhere, and speak of them freely, with laughter and tears), others may do their remembering in much more subtle and private ways. That though we do not always see it outwardly, as we might prefer, they remember internally, by carrying our loved ones' memory more quietly in their hearts.

Life marches on. We are glad (and maybe even a little envious) that our children's friends are happy in love or successful and would want nothing else for them. But when all is said and done, even with our most valiant efforts at managing the milestones that our children may not have been able to experience, like graduations, marriages, grandchildren, and more--all of those major happenings we will never experience with our children--no matter the amount of time that goes by, their absence hurts.

We love them and always will. How could it not be painful? I tell you of my experience so that if this happens to you somewhere in your grief journey you might be able to see it in a different light. I know that I will try to remember this when I don't hear from her friends for a long time (or maybe not at all). But when I go to her grave site and see a bouquet of her favorite flowers, daisies, I know were left by her best friend, or a note written in the journal left there by a classmate that I never had met, that they haven't forgotten; that Nina had an impact on their lives and that they continue to and always will remember...but in their own way.

~ *Cathy Seehuetter/ TCF St. Paul, MN*
Written Spring 2005

But You're Absolutely Normal!

Grief is a normal reaction to loss, and it shows up in many ways you might not expect. If you've...

- Been angry with doctors or nurses for not doing enough
- Been sleeping too much or not enough
- Noticed a change in appetite
- Felt no one understands what you're going through
- Felt friends should call more or call less or leave you alone or invite you along more often
- Bought things you didn't need
- Considered selling everything and moving
- Had headaches, upset stomachs, weakness, lethargy, more aches and pains
- Been unbearable, lonely, and depressed
- Been crabby
- Cried for no apparent reason
- Found yourself obsessed with thoughts of the deceased
- Been forgetful, confused, uncharacteristically absentminded
- Panicked over little things
- Felt guilty about things you have or haven't done
- Gone to the store every day
- Forgotten why you went somewhere
- Called friends and talked for a long time
- Called friends and wanted to hang up after only a brief conversation
- Not wanted to attend social functions you usually enjoyed
- Found yourself unable to concentrate on written material
- Been unable to remember what you just read

...you're normal. These are all common reactions to grief. They take up to two years (or more) to pass completely, but they will pass. You'll never forget the person who has died, but your life will again become normal, even if it is never exactly the same. Take care of yourself. You will heal in time.

Joanne Bonelli TCF, Greater Boise Area, ID

Why Come To Meetings?

By Charlotte Miller, Central Arkansas

A family member recently asked me why I continue to come to meetings? She said, "After all, it's been 5 years since your son died. Don't you find it depressing to go to those meetings?" I stopped and thought for just a minute...it is incredibly sad to hear the stories of loss and pain, but it does not depress me. I ache for those families whose loss is more recent, where the pain is a heart savagely torn into raw pieces and where the pain seems relentless and like it will last forever. But had I not had the support of this group, I wonder if I would have made it, and kept my sanity, through the past 5 years. I know for certain that my grief journey, as hard as it has been, was made easier, and my burden lighter, because it was shared by those who truly understood my loss and who constantly reassured me that I was not losing my mind...I was just grieving.

Your Grief is as individual as your thumbprint.

If there is to be any comfort at all as we endure the loss of a child,
it would be that they are never, ever, forgotten.

Rosemarie Maki, in loving memory of Thomas

**"Every man has
his secret
sorrows which
the world
knows not; and
often times we
call a man cold
when he is only sad."**

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

**The most painful death in
all the world
is the death of a child.
When a child dies,
when one child dies...
Not the 11 per 1,000
we talk about statistically...
But the one that a mother held
Briefly in her arms...
He leaves an empty space
In a parent's heart that
will never heal.**

**Thomas H. Kean
48th Governor of New Jersey**

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

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



The Compassionate Friends

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Honoring 20 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families



SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2015

October's Memories

October's here, the air is bright,
The leaves decked out in fancy dress,
The clouds in shapes of animals
Hang in the sky so blue.
This was our time of year, your favorite.
How many times did you come in,
Cheeks glowing, eyes sparkling,
Smelling of the leaves you jumped through
As a child and even after you grew up.
How many times did you say
"Just smell, just feel the air.
I love it, crisp,
With a hint of winter coming."
Our time, but now only my time.
Time to dream dreams that won't be.
Time to wish wishes that can't come true,
Time to remember & treasure each day we had together.
Time for October's memories.

--Arden Lansing, TCF, Northfield, NJ