



The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MAY AND JUNE 2016

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

Monthly Meeting:

May 11, 2016

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: Cherish the Name of Our 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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Am I Still A Mother?

Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF, Katy, TX

It has been more than three years since my only child, Todd, was killed in an automobile accident. The circumstances of the accident included my husband as the driver of the vehicle. Following the accident my former daughter-in-law filed a wrongful death suit against my husband and me. She has also terminated our relationship with Todd's children and eliminated any possibility of normal grandparent time spent with our three granddaughters. In the past two years we have seen our granddaughters for 5 hours and the time spent was meaningless. The message has been sent that we are no longer a part of Todd's children's lives.

My husband has held up remarkably well as long as he isn't forced to replay the accident in his mind over and over again. I don't want the details and have never looked at the pictures of the vehicle. To this day I do not want to know the extent of my child's injuries or the amount of suffering he underwent. I wonder about his last moments, his last thoughts. And then I wonder: Am I still a mother?

I was a good mother to Todd; my life centered on raising him to persevere and be the kind, gentle, goal oriented, loving man that he became. My relationship with him as an adult was so rewarding, so full of joy. I enjoyed listening to my adult child and exchanging ideas with him. I shared the important facets of his family life, the birth of his children, babysitting on a moment's notice or when no one else would, so that he and his wife could take some time off for a vacation. Discovering who my grandchildren were and how they perceived the world was enlightening and fulfilling. Watching his children grow and become individuals was a great joy to me. Watching him become a strong and gentle parent made my heart sing.

And so I wonder: Am I still a mother? My son no longer lives. I defined myself as a mother for over 35 years. My finest accomplishment was raising my son to become the fine man that he was. Now the bond between mother and child is broken. Life's paradigm has shifted. Or has it?

Am I still someone's daughter and someone's granddaughter? Of course I am, even though I have lost my parents and grandparents. So, I am still a mother. I think of my son each day, and I remember the good and bad times, the tough decisions, the structure, the letting go, the building of ideals and sense of honor and duty to family. But most of all I remember my child's love and my love for my child and the incredible journey of raising my child.

So, when people ask me if I have children, I say, yes, I have one son and four grandchildren. I am a mother and a grandmother. Circumstances and the actions of others have altered my reality, of course. I realize, too, that my son's legacy and influence will have little impact on his children. But my son is my son forever. I am a mother. I am Todd's mother. In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

Remembering the person I have loved allows me to slowly heal. Healing doesn't mean I will forget. Actually, it means I will remember. ~ Donna Morgan

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 deleted On 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.

Sometimes

Sometimes, something clicks, and with a tear of remembrance of the pain and the loneliness floods the heart.

Sometimes, something clicks, and with a smile remembrance of the love and the laughter floods the senses.

And there are times when nothing clicks at all and a voice echoes through the emptiness and numbness never finding the person who used to fill that space.

And sometimes the most special times of all a feeling ripples through your body, heart, and soul that tells you that person never left you and he’s right there with you through it all.

Kristen H., TCF Kenifield, CA

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Frelon Boyd Wiley
October 16, 1956 to June 16, 2000

The Treasure of a Loving Memory

It has been sixteen years since our son, Frelon Boyd Wiley, prepared for death by reciting The Lord’s Prayer (St. Matthew 6: 9-13). The Lord’s Prayer is our forever, loving connection with Frelon.

Jack and Holla Wiley



The Lord’s Prayer

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”



Jack and Holla Wiley sponsored the printing of this newsletter in loving memory of their son, Frelon Boyd Wiley.

TO BEREAVED FATHERS...

Trevor and Audrey Roadhouse, Regina, SK, Canada

...who ache, but feel they must carry on. ...who are frightened, but can’t show their fear. ...who are angry, but cannot strike out. ...who are lonely, but have to smile. ...who grieve, but must be strong. ...who love, but are afraid to show their love. ...whose tears cannot fall.

Bereaved fathers are often desperately tragic people caught in a trap of society’s expectations. Our co-workers, friends and family expect that we will, indeed, be strong – that we will do all in our power to ensure that life carries on. They expect that our behavior and temperament will remain consistent, and that through our attitudes and actions others will be able to observe our will to survive despite the enormity of our loss.

Unfortunately the world does not always work the way we want. Bereaved fathers do ache. We are afraid and angry. We are lonely and we cry in silent places. We question our sanity and our will to survive. We want to run and hide from our sorrow. And we carry a heavy burden of guilt for not “living up” to society’s expectations.

As difficult as it may be, take the risks and develop the courage to express the way you feel.

In memory of Robert Tristan Roadhouse
(1/15/74-2/12/84)

From Reflections from the Heart, TCF, Canada

Mother’s Day

Mother’s Day will soon be upon us and we mothers will be remembering our children who are absent but yet so much a part of us, filling our hearts and renewing memories. I wish for each of you a peaceful day. Yes, it will be very poignant and for the recently bereaved, more painful, but believe me, it does get better. We remember them with gratitude for having given us that most precious of all gifts – their love.

Helen Prokop TCF, Bridgeport, CT

Mother's Day, "Before" and "After"

While sorting through boxes and bags, it is not unusual for me to find something unexpected. It happened just the other day. Sifting through a box, I came across a wrinkled, somewhat yellowed piece of lined school paper. I carefully unfolded it only to find a drawing of a stick-mom and stick-daughter standing along side a mammoth daisy. The mom and little girl were holding hands with huge lop-sided grins on their faces. In her little girl just-learning-to-print handwriting were the words, "Happy Mother's Day, Mommy. I love you, Kristina."

Even six years later, little "gifts" such as these can bring fresh tears. It is times like these that I am glad that I was an incredible pack rat, especially when it came to saving things that my children have made. I can picture my then-blond, petite little Nina (her nickname), with the wispy hair, bent over the kitchen table, crayon in hand, creating that handmade card filled with love. Memories of breakfasts in bed, only to return to the kitchen after finishing the "gourmet" meal served with tender care, to find it in such disarray that it took hours to clean up!

Even through the tears, these are the sweetest memories. As I type this, I look at another gift from a Mother's Day past; a little statue of a harried mom, surrounded by mop, broom and bucket, that says, "World's Greatest Mom," chosen for me at a neighborhood garage sale. I came across it accidentally shortly after Nina's death, unearthing it from its hiding place. I wondered to myself, why had I packed it away. Did Nina know that I did and did she think that, by doing so, I hadn't appreciated her gift? Did I ever thank her for it along with the other garage sale items that she proudly brought home to me, or did it show on my face that I really didn't need any more "junk" around the house? Sometimes resurrecting these treasures can bring unpleasant feelings of guilt as we wonder if our children knew how much their little gestures of love meant to us. When our child dies, it becomes easy to second-guess ourselves, trapped in our fixations and exaggerations of the negative things that may have occurred during our child's life.

The first Mother's Days after Nina died was a grief-numbing blur, as it occurred only three days following her death. Unlike previous joyful dinners out with my four children pampering their mom, we spent the day making funeral arrangements and choosing a casket for one of them. In the early evening, I overheard it said to someone else, "Happy Mother's Day." I turned to my own mother and apologized for having forgotten. I could not imagine ever celebrating another Mother's Day again. I am sure the dads have these same feelings on Father's Day. My heart goes out to them, because I think we forget that they, just like us, grieve and hurt, too.

For those mothers and fathers who have lost their only child, I have been saddened by stories told to me by them of attending church on Mother's Day Sunday and when the pastor asked the mothers in the church to please stand, they were undecided on whether they should stand or not. I hope that they will always remember, and the fathers as well, "Once a mother, always a mother; once a father, always a father." We are forever their parents.

If we are fortunate to have surviving children, they are often forgotten as well. In the early days, we become obsessed with the one who is missing. My own children showed quiet patience with this. I often wonder if they thought "What about us? We're still here!" Now with almost seven Mother's Days behind me, I try to accentuate what I do have. This does not happen overnight. I found that in celebrating my surviving children, I could still honor Nina's memory and find ways to include her as well. I have developed a ritual where I get up early on that morning and bring flowers out to the cemetery. I bring a flower and a note to some of the mothers that I know who have buried children there to tell them I am thinking of them and their child. There is something very healing when reaching out to others. I then sit by my daughter's grave-site on the spring-green grass listening to the sweet call of a robin. I bring her a flower and write in her journal telling her how thankful I am to be her mother, how much I love and miss her. That is our private time together; the rest of the day is spent honoring my other children.

Mother's Day and Father's Day are holidays especially created for us. Try to get through them the best that you can, in whatever way feels right for you. Truly, only you know what that is. Whether it is alone those first few years or with people that you love and who understand, do something that you find comforting. It is your day, for you were the giver of a precious life—you held a miracle in your arms. Even as powerfully destructive as death is, even that cannot take those memories away from you—they are your child's gift to you.

With gentle thoughts and peace on your special day,
Cathy L. Sehuetter ~ TCF, St. Paul, MN

**"Recovering from suffering is not
like recovering from a disease.
People don't come out healed; they
come out different."**

- David Brooks, columnist
with NY Times

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

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

“Grief Attacks”

When grieving we can be going along and everything seems to be okay. Then out of nowhere grief hits full force. These are not set backs, they are a part of the grieving process.

“Grief is a passion to endure. People can be stricken with it, victims of it, stuck in it. Or they can meet it, get through it, and become the quiet victors through the active, honest, and courageous process of grieving.”

Bereaved Parents of the USA,
Baltimore, MD – August 2008

They came ... so briefly and touched our lives with a spark of love. Let us find this spark and warm our lives with the memories of our children’s fragile gift.

And though our arms are empty,
Our hearts know what to do
Every beat of my heart says
“I Remember You”

Remembrance

I see your smile in the brightness of the summer sun.
A gentle breeze is the touch of your hand on mine.
A wave breaks softly on the shore and I hear you whisper, "Remember me."
A winged bird begins its flight into the distant sky.
The sound of children’s laughter fills the air.
The evening stars become your eyes, and I reply...
"You are ever near."

Pricilla Kenney ~ TCF, Kennebunk, ME

THE EXISTENCE OF LOVE
Marjorie Pizer

I had thought that your death was a waste and a destruction, a pain of grief hardly to be endured.
I am only beginning to learn that your life was a gift and a growing and a loving left with me.
The desperation of death destroyed the existence of love, but the fact of death cannot destroy what has been given.
I am learning to look at your life again
Instead of your death and your departing



“The path to peace is found by searching, by reaching out to every resource available. We will reject much of what we find; but if we search, we will find what we need.” —

Annette Mennen Baldwin

“‘Why me?’ is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the ‘Why me?’ will answer itself.” —Polly Moore



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



MAY AND JUNE 2016



The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Scottsdale, Arizona, will be the site of the 39th TCF National Conference on July 8-10, 2016 at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess. "Hope Rises on the Wings of Love" is the theme of this year's event. Look for details on the national website as well as the TCF/USA Facebook Page. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Please call the TCF National Office at 877-969-0010 for more information.