



# The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MAY & JUNE 2017

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

## Monthly Meeting:

**MAY 10, 2017**

Always the second Wednesday

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

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

**Topic: How to survive  
Mothers/Day Father Day**

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.

## Graduation Day

Today is Graduation Day — a day when children don the cloak of adulthood. They leave the structure of their home to find the structure of their lives.

They scatter in many directions — each to the beat of his own drum, each to follow his own heart.

Today is Graduation Day — and I am sad.

My child will not be among his classmates as they are handed their diplomas.

My child will not participate in the proms, and excitement of this time. My child will not be there. Is he forgotten?

Does not one mind remember him or one heart feel his presence? Please, Lord, let him be a part of this day even if I don't know it.

Let one person for one second think of him and say, "I wish Jim were here today."

For today is Graduation Day — for everyone else's children, but not for mine — not for mine.

I could wax philosophical and say that he has already graduated — that he has made the most important step of all.

But this doesn't help the ache in my heart or fill the hole left there. On other days, I can sometimes feel okay that he is in heaven, but, today, I want him here.

I want him to go to the prom and wear the cap and gown and receive his diploma. I want to see his smile and take his picture and rent his tux.

I want him going to college and choosing his courses and deciding what his future will be. I want — it does no good to want or to wish. These things can never be. I must face this day as I've faced a thousand others — with longing, with pain, and with strength — God's strength.

This is what keeps me from crumpling into a ball of despair — this is what keeps me from giving up and giving in — this is what keeps me from looking down in abject helplessness and lets me look up with new hope. The strength from God gives me the strength to live — and the strength to love — and the strength to continue.

Today is Graduation Day — I think I can live through it — I think I can overcome what it brings with it — I know I can find my way once again through the longing, through the darkness, through the pain, 'til once again I see the light of tomorrow. Yesterday was Graduation Day —

and I'm still here....

In memory of Jim Abbott, Susan Abbott, Quincy, IL

## **Celebrating Our Children's Birthday**



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](mailto: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](mailto: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:

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<b>Birthday</b>	<b>Child's Name</b>	<b>Parents/Family/Friend</b>

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for Internet version of this newsletter.

No one is asking us to forget, to turn away from all that we loved and cherished in the one we have lost. We couldn't do that even if we wanted to.

The task before us - and it can take a very long time - is to incorporate this grief and loss into the rest of our lives, so that it doesn't continue to dominate our lives. It's no longer the first thing we think of when we wake up in the morning, or the last thing we relinquish before we sleep.

A child said to his mother, in regard to the outpouring of kindnesses after his father's death, "There are so many good things. There's just one bad thing."

The "bad thing" will always be there, but when it begins to take its place among the good things life offers, we're on our way. Even in my sadness I will be open to new adventure

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

## 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 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.

## ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

Chapter members are encouraged to write about their grief journey and submit for publication in this newsletter at [mjward0123@gmail.com](mailto:mjward0123@gmail.com)

## A Father's Grief

My son, a perfect little boy of five years and three months, had ended his earthly life.

You can never sympathize with me; you can never know how much of me such a young child can take away. A few weeks ago I accounted myself a very rich man, and now the poorest of them all.

Ralph Waldo Emerson  
In a letter to Thomas Carlyle

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## Our Children Remembered On Their Angel Day

Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

**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.

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@elc.net](mailto:mjward@elc.net) or call her at 979-335-6070.

## Meeting Dates and Discussion Topics\*

## **May 10, 2017—How to handle Mother's Day/Father's Day After Losing a Child.**

## **June 14, 2017—What Memories did your Child Leave You**

*(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.)*



**My computer crashed and I lost lots of data. If your child's name is not included on our birthday/angel anniversary lists, please let me know. My email address is [mjward0123@gmail.com](mailto:mjward0123@gmail.com).**

### Create a Memory Garden

The physical activity of working and tending to a garden can give comfort and quiet time to remember the special memories that you once shared. Creating a memory garden will help you feel closer to those you have lost and create a tribute to the one you loved for the rest of his/her friends and family members to heal. To begin a memory garden, find a private place or choose a location that has meaning. Remember to plant from your heart. Choose plants that evoke memory, fond regards and celebration of life.

#### Things to Consider When Creating Your Garden:

- Start simple. Plant a few things each year.
- Plant their favorite flowers or choose flowers that you love or that have special significance and plant those.
- Plant during their favorite season and choose flowers, plants or trees that are in season at that time. For example, if they loved spring, plant bulbs.
- Plant the flower of their birth month, namesake plants, or plants that represent their initials. Select flowers in colors that he/she loved.
- Choose flowers with their favorite fragrances or certain scents they loved. For example, if they loved the smell of lavender, include a lavender plant in the garden.
- Select flowers and plants with special meanings. For example, pink carnations mean "I'll never forget you" and yellow roses represent friendship. Roses have names that might describe your loved one.
- Include statues and remembrance gifts throughout the garden. If they loved dogs, include a small statue of their favorite breed. Add a small plaque describing what is in the garden and its significance, or put their favorite phrase or poem on it.

- If possible, try and include a bench in the area. This way, friends and family have a place to sit and reflect on special times that were shared.
- Your memory garden project can involve the whole family. Not only could the best "memory flowers" be chosen, but once in bloom, flowers could be pressed as mementos for the family album or scrapbook.

SOURCE: [www.1800flowers.com](http://www.1800flowers.com)

### A MOTHER'S THOUGHTS

Our day ... a very special day ... a day that is set aside especially to honor all mothers.

Mother ... a beautiful word. What other word could you use to best describe giving birth to, nursing, loving and caring for a tiny, helpless human being, a gift of life to treasure? But weren't we taught that once you gave a gift to someone, you never take it back? What went wrong? Mine was taken away from me. Does that mean that I wasn't worthy to be a mother, that I was failing, that I didn't appreciate the gift? The gift was too precious to be given for keeps. It was only loaned to me for a short while.

Even in my sorrow, I feel special, for I know the true meaning of the word mother. I have reached the ultimate, from the joy of giving birth to the sorrow of death. I belong to a special group who truly knows the meaning of the word mother.

Would I have not accepted the gift if I had known the terrible loss I would feel when it was taken away from me? NO, I would still hold out my hands and accept such a precious gift, for to love and to cherish a child, even for a short while, is worth every fear.

This year, on Mother's Day, I'll shed my tears, but let them be as a soft summer's rain — a rain that nourishes the earth, tears that heal and cleanse the heart.

Vera Babb, TCF St. Louis, MO

## Fathers in Grief, A Paradox for Today's Male

The loss of your child can be crippling and leaves deep scars. It changes who we are and how we look at life and how we relate with the world. Five or six years out is still early in the spectrum of child loss but close to the point where positive rebuilding can begin. One thing that I have discovered that helps pull you out of the canyon of despair is compassion for others. It is in giving that we receive and in healing that we are healed. In the first few years, it is hard to even help yourself much less others and we mechanically maintain, weep a lot and lick our wounds while clinging desperately to everything of our child and, in secret, wish to join them. We rejoin the real world at our own time and it happens when it is right for us. Everyone's journey is different but what remains the same is the huge void that is left in our lives. How we fill it is up to us. I believe we need to fill it with something positive for others that creates a legacy of good in our child's name. We now become their legacy and we substantiate our child's life by the way we live ours.

In our "modern day" society, it is especially difficult for fathers to grieve openly, caught in a catch 22 of how to express the deep pain we are experiencing. Men don't cry, men do not emote, men do not hug (maybe at the funerals), men don't go to support groups, men don't call in sick because they are screaming inside; we are the man of the family. Fathers are the fix it guys, the protector, the strength and the rock the family needs for support. More times than not people will ask a father "How is your wife doing? This must be extremely hard for her."

The modern male is now given (by women and therapists) license to show emotions, to cry, scream, hug and express their deepest emotions and fears; to let it out. The irony of this is that if he does emote and the family has never seen this behavior, it is taken as a sign of weakness and the spouse and other family members feel they have lost their safety net, their rock of support, and feel even more helpless and rudderless on this journey of pain. If this happens, he may again "clam up" to help with his family and deal with his own pain later. He finds that "letting it out" is an axiom of sophistry and, in doing so, he feels he is letting his family down. Indeed a paradox for the wanna-be sensitive Dad. Most men cry alone in their cars on

the way to work and they explain that the red eyes are due to allergies or a late night. When my father died when I was age 14, my Mom told me I was the man of the family now. I did not cry. I did not grieve. It was not until years later when my losses became overwhelming that I did finally let it out and express my emotions for the loss of my father. It has been 16 years now since Kelly died and I still cry with my wife when we feel our loss together or even when I hear a special song like "Wind Beneath My Wings" and I do not care who is present. You love hard, you grieve hard and it is supposed to hurt. When you recognize your own pain and express it, you automatically become more empathetic to others in similar pain and can help relieve theirs. Heck, now I cry at hallmark card commercials. I can't help it.

When people tell us to find closure, or move on and don't dwell on it, we can but not how they think we should. We find closure in what will never be, let go of the what ifs, the shoulda-woulda-couldas and move on with the knowledge that our children are forever by our side, only in a new relationship. We live in one sphere of existence, our loved one who has died in another, but with faith, undying love and the desire that we can connect at the seam where our two worlds meet. Love never dies. In America we are allowed a few weeks to "get over it" and get back on track. The dead are wrapped up neatly, so to speak, and put away and their names unspoken. I find this totally unacceptable. It has been almost 16 years and I still talk about Kelly every day and always will. We will always be bereaved parents but we will not always be experiencing the pangs of grief. Like arthritis, we learn to live with it the rest of our lives and also realize that we shall still have flare ups of pain and discomfort as we move on through the years.

Mitch Carmody  
[www.heartlightstudios.com](http://www.heartlightstudios.com)  
<http://www.proactivegrieving.org>.

"There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept, things we don't want to know but have to learn, and people we can't live without but have to let go."

~ Author Unknown

How can it be that there is such a COLOSSAL GAP  
between what *we think we know* about  
grief and mourning and  
what we *actually find out* when it comes to us?

-Jim Beaver

The Loudest sound  
in the world  
is the Absence  
of a child.

-Jodi Picoult, Author

### *Whatever we do-*

going or not going to  
our children's graves,  
sleeping with a toy or  
closing the door to their rooms -

*has only to be what we each need,*  
what we require to make it through  
*each day without them.*

There is NO OTHER YARDSTICK.

-Elizabeth Edwards

"The Grand essentials of happiness are:  
something to do, something to love and  
something to hope for"

-Allan K. Chalmers

### Gardening

Hands grimed...

Nails torn...

Back bent...

And momentarily...

Grief Spent

### Father's Day

One of the many mixed feelings a father will have on Father's Day will be one of failure...failure as a protector of his child who has died. The roles of protector and father are synonymous. The father's duty is both to love and to protect his child from harm. A man may intellectually know he did his best; but the child, his care, is still painfully absent on this Father's Day.

Dick Moen, TCF Indianapolis

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart,  
and you shall see that in truth you are weeping  
for that which has been your delight.

~ From The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran

### SECOND YEAR

Why is my grief different in the second year?  
Why do I feel so much more empty in the  
second year?

Why do I cry more, again, in the second  
year?

Is it because I am more alone and the world  
has moved on?

Has the world forgotten that you ever lived?  
Is it because I realize "with my heart" that  
you are not coming back?

That forever is a long time?

Is it because all of the "firsts" are over and I  
must move on?

Why is my grief different in the second year?  
Because, my child, you are still gone.

Eleanor Oberle/TCF  
in memory of her son Dan Oberle



## 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



MAY & JUNE 2017

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### A Mother's Love

By Joy Morning TCF/Phoenix, AZ

I need no pictures  
to remember your warm smile;  
the lines of your face  
are embedded in my memory of you.  
I gave you life in one second of pain,  
for which you returned years of yourself -  
sometimes quiet, sometimes noisy,  
but always thoughtful.

Sometimes  
I hear a voice that sounds like you,  
and I pause.

That pang of hurt  
stems from a tiny empty spot  
you have left in my life.  
I carried you in my womb,  
then later in my arms,  
but I will carry you  
in my heart forever