



The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2014

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

Monthly Meeting:

February 12, 2014

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: When My Heart is Broken

**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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THIS CAN BE A CONSTRUCTIVE IF NOT A HAPPY YEAR

By Margaret H. Gerner, St. Louis Chapter of BP/USA

Happy New Year??? "How can it ever be again?" "How will I ever make it through another year of this torment?" When we are hurting and so terribly depressed, it is hard to see any good in our New Year but we must try.

First, we must hold on tightly to the idea that we will not always be this miserable, that we will someday feel good again. This is almost impossible to believe, but even if we don't believe it, we must tell ourselves over and over again that it is true – because it is! Many parents whose children have died in the past will attest to this. Remember, also, no one can suffer indefinitely as you are suffering now.

Second, we must face the new year with the knowledge that this year offers us a CHOICE – whether we will be on our way to healing this time next year or still be in the pit of intense grief. We must remind ourselves that, if we choose to be on our way to healing by the following year, we must work to get there and that work entails allowing ourselves to go through our grief, to cry, to be angry, to talk about our guilt, to do whatever is necessary to move towards healing.

Third, we must look for good in our lives and find reasons to go on and accept the fact that our continued suffering will not bring our child back. Many of us have other children and a spouse for whom we must go on. Most important, we have our own lives that must be lived. Most of us know that our dead children would want us to go on!

No, this coming year may not be a happy one, but it can be a constructive one. Through our grief we can grow and become more understanding, loving, compassionate and aware of the real values in life. Let us not waste this New Year.

A JOURNEY TOGETHER NEWSLETTER OF THE
BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
VOLUME X NO. 1 Winter 2005 (January, February, March)
<http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/>

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 mjward@elc.net 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 mjward@elc.net.

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, 1830 Landmark Drive
 Richmond, TX 77406 (281) 341-5985
 Doug_Ledkins@whitetucker.com

Birth Date	Child's Name	Parents/Family/Friend
<p>Personal information has been deleted for the internet copy of this newsletter.</p>		

WHY ME? - The Unanswerable Question

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?" They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"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
 TCF Nashville, TN

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 copy 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.

Grieving is as natural as crying when you are
Hurt, sleeping when you are tired,
Eating when you are hungry,
Or sneezing when your nose itches!
It’s nature’s way of healing a broken heart.

Rabbi Earl Grollman
Calhoun, Michigan TCF Newsletter

Valentines in Heaven

Are there Valentines in Heaven?
Are there Red Hearts everywhere?
Do they line the golden streets,
Or is that very rare?
I wish that I could send you one,
Right through Heaven’s Gate,
To say how much we miss you,
On this special date.
I’d like to send a Candy Heart,
That is printed, “I Luv U,”
And maybe you would whisper back,
“I know, I Luv U too.”

Marilyn Rollins
TCF Lake-Porter, IN
For All Our Children

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THIS I CAN SHARE WITH YOU

By Marilyn W. Heavlin

I have not experienced the death of my only child,
 but some of us have.
 I have not experienced a child dying by suicide,
 but some of us have.
 I have not watched my child fight a terminal illness,
 but some of us have.
 None of us would dare say "I know just how you feel".
 Even if our experiences are similar,
 no two situations are exactly alike.
 But I can say
 I remember the pain when my child died.
 I remember the feelings of insanity.
 I remember the feelings of aloneness.
 I remember wishing I could die.
 I remember wanting to share something with my child,
 but he wasn't there.
 So, my friend, our experiences have parts in common
 and parts that are different!
 So, why should we listen to each other?
 Do we have anything to share?
 Do you know what heartbreak feels like?
 All of us do.
 Do you know the numbness of grief?
 All of us do.
 Do you know what it's like to have empty arms?
 All of us do.
 So, let's learn what we can of our commonalities.
 We loved a child, but our child left too soon.
 THIS WE CAN SHARE WITH YOU

A JOURNEY TOGETHER NEWSLETTER OF THE
 BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA
 VOLUME IX NO. 1, WINTER 2004
 (January, February and March)
<http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/>



Mourning is the constant re-awaking that
 things are NOW DIFFERENT.

Stephanie Erisson

VALENTINE LOVE—NEW MEANING
 FOR BEREAVED PARENTS

Though winter's delicate, lacy snowflakes may remind us of the lace trimmed hearts of February's valentines, the mourning heart seems frozen in time. The bitter winds of loneliness blow mournfully through our souls. Death has tapped us on the shoulder, introducing his brother, Grief, who has moved into our hearts to take up unwelcome residence. Worn and exhausted by our pain, we have little energy to evict the intruder. It's hard for us to remember that the sun still faithfully shines behind the clouds that have obscured our vision.

Love is apparently the thought of the season, and we are reminded of its tenderness at every turn. But a piece of the fiber of our lives has been torn away, and love seems a vague and unfulfilled promise that belongs only to others. Hearts and flowers, lace and love, romantic verse and melody seem to have been abandoned us as we grope in the darkness of our beloved's absence. Will the pain ever end? Will the hope and joy and renewal once again warm the frozen places in our hearts?

Gradually, as the hurt begins to soften, the thawing relief of healing slowly begins to melt the icy grip of our pain; hope does begin to spring eternal. Roses, traditional in February, remind us that summer will return.

It's unlikely that we will ever again perceive the usual symbols of love in quite the same way as before, but in many ways our concepts of genuine love will be stronger, richer and less assailable. Frivolous and shallow affection are absent from our thoughts. Deeper commitments and more demonstrative attention have become our new marching orders. In costly lessons, we've learned firsthand how fragile and fleeting life can be, and we are now resolute in our determination to announce to our remaining dear ones the importance of our bonds with them. We abandon the intimidation of "limits" such as archaic notions that "men" mustn't cry or say "I love you" or that we're too busy to pay attention to someone's needs.

As little by little, our pain softens and recedes, and we learn that suffering is but for a season, we also learn the LOVE doesn't die. In our emotional lives, Valentines can now take on a new significance as precious reminders of the love that still exists on both sides of life. Love lives within our hearts and even Grief cannot steal it away. Love is our bridge over the rainbow.

—Andrea Gambrell/reprinted from Bereavement Magazine www.bereavementmagazine.com

Memories . . . A Time for Smiles . . . A Time for Tears

As I wondered in my mind why the ache in my heart was worse than it had been for a while, I suddenly remembered. In my memory I went back to September 20, 1991. It was the last time Greg would be in the hospital. He was five months into his illness.

When Greg's doctor examined him at the clinic, he told Greg that he would have to go into the hospital again. We had long ago lost count of the times he had been in the hospital. When his doctor left the examining room, Greg looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, "When is this going to end?" As I put my arms out to him, with tears in my eyes and my heart breaking, I said "I don't know, Greg." He hugged me so tight.

While at work on September 24th, I got a call from Greg's doctor. He said Greg was ready to come home from the hospital. He told me in these exact words, "Greg's heart is failing fast, he is going to die." I will never forget those words for as long as I live. I felt like a knife had been put in my heart.

When I went to the hospital to get Greg, he was sitting in a chair in his room. We looked at each other and I said, "I need a hug!" As my son was hugging me, he said that he didn't want anyone feeling sorry for him. And he wanted to live as normal a life as possible in the time he had left.

Greg chose to die at home. It was his last wish. He was afraid to die alone, but he was never afraid to die. There were many times over the next few months that he said he was ready to die. I promised him that he would not die alone. We were with him day and night.

When I spoke with Greg's doctor a few days later, he told me that when he told Greg he was dying, the most peaceful look came over Greg's face. Greg knew it wouldn't be long and he would be free. He would be at peace and he would no longer be ill.

Three and a half months later, on January 4, 1992, Greg was at last set free. He died peacefully and we had kept our promise. He did not die alone. Our lives changed forever. As I held our son, who was now in God's hands, I didn't think our lives would ever be normal again. Our hearts

were broken and part of our future was gone.

Though our hearts may never be mended, we have picked up the pieces of our shattered lives and we struggle on. Our life is as normal as it will ever be.

Then there are times like these. A memory bringing me to the brink of tears. Then I wonder if I will ever get through the memories of Greg's illness without tears. There are so many memories of those 8 ½ months. Some memories make me smile, but most make me cry.

This grief business is a strange thing. It can creep up on me and bring tears, sometimes before I realize why those tears are there. But then I remember, and once again I work my way through it. The ache in my heart isn't as sharp as it used to be, but it isn't gone. It probably never will be.

But our child is gone. How thankful we are to have been Greg's parents. How thankful we are that Greg gave us 20 years of memories. Twenty years of love.

Jean Van Ruth
TCF of Madison, WI

In Memory of my son, Greg

We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine
of The Compassionate Friends.
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Tomorrow Will Be Better

When my son died, I felt like there would be no tomorrow. I didn't want a tomorrow. I wanted yesterday with its promise of joy and perfection. I wanted my son to be alive. But he was gone.

Now, when life gets me down, I remember the joys of yesterday, think of all that I was given, take measure of all that still needs to be done, and I promise myself that tomorrow will be better because I will work very hard to make it better.

My grandmother often told me, "If you think you can, you're right. If you think you can't, you're right. What do you think?" As a child I thought this was strange. As an adult, I know it to be true.

Tomorrow *will* be better. Tomorrow I will, once again, tell my mind to stop the negative thoughts. And my mind will do exactly that, as I command my ship of grief.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
TCF Katy, TX
Forever remembering my son, Todd Mennen

**If I can, I'll come again, Mother,
From out my resting place.
Tho' you'll not see me, Mother,
I shall look upon your face.
Tho' I cannot speak a word
I shall harken what you say.
And be often, often with you
When you think I'm far away.**

By Alfred Lord Tennyson

The sun still shines
when you see no
light in sight. The
flowers still bloom
when your heart is
weeping. Life will
continue to move
even though you
feel stuck and one
day soon the love
around you will
give you the
strength to rise

ENDOWMENT
By Sascha
Also from "Wintersun"

**Hope gives us vision for regaining
the tenderness of memories.
Hope carries us through
to survival and healing.
Hope offers us courage
for acceptance and overcoming.
Hope gives us
new spirit and new laughter.
Hope is among the greatest gifts
to be found in time of sorrow.
But hope cannot restore
what is lost to death.
Hope can only go forward
and make us new.
Give space to hope in your life.**

PROMISE
Grief walks with you today,
your constant companion.
but in the morning,
tomorrow,
the sunrise of hope waits for
you.

Sascha
From WINTERSUN

**TAKE THE LOVE
OUR CHILDREN
GAVE US
AND PASS IT ON!**

By Darcie D. Sims
From FOOTSTEPS

**"Grief is like a long valley,
a winding valley where
any bend may reveal
a totally new landscape."
—C.S. Lewis**

And if I go, while you're still here...
know that I live on, vibrating to a
different measure, behind a thin veil
you cannot see through.

You will not see me, so you must
have faith. I wait for the time when
we soar together again, both aware
of each other.

Until then, live your life to its fullest
and, when you need me, just whisper
my name in your heart. I will be
there.

By Emily Dickinson

Grief is the loudest
silence I have
ever heard.

- Angie Cartwright

"Mourning is one of the most profound human
experiences that it is possible to
have. The deep capacity to weep for the loss of a
loved one and to continue to
treasure the memory of that loss is one of our
noblest human traits."
—Shneidman

One day you wake up and realize you must have survived it because you are still here,
alive and breathing. But you don't remember the infinitely small steps and decisions you took
to get there. Your only awareness is that you have shed miles of tears on what seems to be an
endless road of sorrow. One day—one glorious day you wake up and feel your skin tingle
again and you forget just for an instant that your heart is broken –and it is a new beginning.

-Susan Borrowman
TCF, Kingston, Canada



The Compassionate Friends
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**Honoring 20 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families**



JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2014



A Valentine's Day Wish



How I wish I could bring our children back to us for Valentine's Day—24 hours we could spend telling our children of our love.

But, alas, we are doomed to spend another Valentine's Day without our beloved children. Others who have not lost a child, tend to take for granted these special days. A card that says "I love you, Mom and Dad" should be carefully folded and saved in a special place. All too many parents consider these cards to be renewable commodities. There's no need to save this one—"we'll always get another one next year."

For many of us, next year came and there was no card. Tears of sadness replaced tears of joy on this special day. But for many of us the memories remain of those Valentine's Days gone by. Because our child's love remains with us, our child will never truly be gone.

This year on Valentine's Day, let us shed tears of joy that we were given even a short time with our child—for this, no matter how short, can never be taken from us.



Wayne Loder
TCF Lakes Area, MI

