



The Compassionate Friends

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

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2018

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

Monthly Meeting:

September 12, 2018

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: To Be Decided

**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:

Treasurer

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THERE WERE NO STRANGERS

Alice Monroe, TCF, Mesa County, CO (August 2001)

There is a *tenderness* among bereaved parents. A gentleness far beyond “normal” interactions with people in everyday life. We speak softly to each other and silently acknowledge our mutual vulnerability and fragility. That doesn’t mean we might not hurt each other from time to time through a misunderstanding, but it seems to me, the hurt is never meant to be. We have hurt enough already.

Somehow, there is *forgiveness* among bereaved parents. Forgiveness that comes from knowing we are just struggling human beings trying to make the best of our lives that will have, forever, an empty hole.

There is a quiet *beauty* among bereaved parents. A beauty that comes out of the experience of being hit with such pain and love all mixed together that words completely fail us.

There is *courage* among bereaved parents. The courage to get up, get dressed, and face another day.

We look to each other for the tenderness, the forgiveness, the beauty, and the courage. How often we say, “I’m so glad to know you... but I wish we had not met like this.” And then we often add, “But, would I... could I... have ever felt so close if it wasn’t for the pain?” Strange, isn’t it, how there are hidden gifts in the middle of unspeakable agony?

The closeness of bereaved parents and siblings is universal. I just returned from the National TCF Conference in Washington, DC, where 1,500 people, from all over the world and every walk of life, attended. It didn’t take a name tag to identify each other. Formal introductions weren’t necessary. The question, “What do you do for a living?” never came up. The words most often spoken were, “Tell me about your child (or brother or sister).” There were no strangers. Even if you were not there... you were there. *The invisible link ... is love.*

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
<p>Personal Information has been deleted from the internet version of this Newsletter.</p>	

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 and can be sent to our Chapter Treasurer:

**Douglas Ledkins, 431 Old Colony Dr.
Richmond, TX 77406 (713) 515-9906
Doug_Ledkins@whitetucker.com**

One More Day.....

Last night I had a crazy dream
A wish was granted just for me -
It could be for anything.
I didn’t ask for money
Or a mansion in Malibu
I simply wished for one more day with you.
One more day, one more time
One more sunset, maybe I’d be satisfied -
But then again, I know what it would do -
Leave me wishing still for one more day with
you.

- Diamond Rio

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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.

My Gifts From Amy

Suzanne Owens, TCF, W. Columbia, SC

I recently experienced the one year anniversary of my precious daughter Amy’s death, a day that we as parents never want to happen. I was distressed as it really sank in that this was real and very final. Last year at this time I had been in such a state of shock that now, looking back, I began to realize the daze I was in for several months. This year I was in no such daze – the pain was all too real.

What could I do with this day? How could I make it through? In my pain I remembered one of the first things I had said when Amy died. I had expressed thankfulness for all the things she had taught me by being in my life. As I thought of this now, I began to write down all the many things. Soon I found I was taking my list a step further and listing all the things I had learned since Amy’s death. I began to see my list as a list of gifts from Amy.

Before Amy’s death I had thought of myself as a religious person, going to church, believing in God, even knowing several Bible verses by heart. I was wrong. I have only now begun to see the difference in religious and spiritual. Only now, after Amy’s death, have I embarked on my very own spiritual path. What greater gift could my child have left me!

I took my list and put it in a box, wrapped it up and tied it with a bow. I put the box in my closet. This time next year I will open the box and celebrate all the wonderful gifts my daughter has given me. And I’m sure I will add more as the years go by.

It takes strength to make your way
through grief, to grab hold of life and
let it pull you forward.

Patti Davis

Shards of Grief Linger after Murder

On a dreary night in December, a knock came at our door with news that would forever alter our lives. The news was that Anne, our only daughter, had been kidnapped and brutally murdered by persons or a person unknown. The shock, disbelief, anguish and anxieties over the next several months, a small piece of the grieving process, were extraordinary, and I have often wondered how we survived.

There was the extreme rage at the person who was responsible for taking Anne's life for no reason except for the pure pleasure of destroying good. But we survived.

There was the awful anger against the legal system for being so callous and insensitive to the needs of the family and friends. The wounds from Anne's death were already deep and unhealing, but listening to and reading about the insinuations and innuendoes by the lawyers made the wounds grow deeper and deeper. The impression was given the family must endure punishment for allowing our daughter to be in the wrong place. This caused a feeling of guilt. But we survived.

There was the fear that Anne would become just another statistic, and the person responsible would go unpunished. Now the fear exists that the person will be released from prison to repeat his acts of violence. I am afraid that fears are addictive and one replaces another. Perhaps the worst fear is, when your faith in God is at its lowest ebb, that you will never be able to respond to normal stimuli again and regain all that faith. All the fears are real; but so far we have survived.

These, I suppose, are normal reactions as the result of a violent act. I believe these anxieties delay a normal (so-called) grieving period until after the culprit has been found, tried and sentenced. After these three things happened, I do know a terrible burden was lifted from our shoulders and we could restart living our lives. Somehow we survived.

How did we survive? After much reflecting, I firmly believe we survived by recalling the positive aspects of Anne's life and character. Each individual is endowed with certain instruments, and we hear the music of their lives long after they are gone.

Anne's instrument of love of life was a blessing, and we still can hear the melodies of her song in the night. These melodies cannot be taken away, and they are more valuable than diamonds to us.

Anne's instrument of hope for a future in which to achieve her goals and have some effect on society was the backbone of her dream. The songs of hope in work, in life and the goodness of heart cannot be destroyed by evil or circumstances. Today is gone, but we still hear the songs of hope for tomorrow. These songs of hope, heard in the night, sustain us.

Anne's instrument of faith that she would lead a productive life and achieve both her spiritual and material goals was music in her heart. The faith she had in herself, her family and her friends transmits to us, urging us to proceed with our lives. The music of her faith is still a beacon in the night.

We will not believe Anne's dreams have ended, but we believe they will find their place in the world to come. The music that was set in motion by her love, hope and faith will move, everlasting, in sweet memories forever. The wounds from the loss of a loved one cannot be healed by words or deeds. These terrible burdens are borne by each of us in our own way and, hopefully, we survive.

~Bil Bogs In memory of Anne TCF, Atlanta, GA

Autumn

In the fall

When amber leaves are shed,

Softly—silently

Like tears that wait to flow,

I watch and grieve.

My heart beats sadly in the fall;

'Tis then I miss you most of all.

Lily de Lauder
TCF Van Nuys, CA

"You can shed tears that he is gone,
 or you can smile because he has lived.
 You can close your eyes and pray that he'll come back,
 or you can open your eyes and see all he's left.
 Your heart can be empty because you can't see him,
 or you can be full of the love you shared.
 You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,
 or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
 You can remember him only that he is gone,
 or you can cherish his memory and let it live on.
 You can cry and close your mind,
 be empty and turn your back.
 Or you can do what he'd want:
 smile, open your eyes, love and go on..."

~David Harkins~

Trust yourself! You will
 recover your courage in
 your own time at your
 own pace. Trust yourself!

Sascha Wagner

When grief is deepest,
 words are fewest.

Ann Voskamp

"Today I wrote a note to a bereaved mother. I wanted to say don't believe all those sympathy cards. The ones that say "time heals" and "God only takes the best" and "may your sorrows be lessened." You'll only be disappointed. I wanted to say this is the most heart-wrenching, chest crushing, breath stealing tragedy on earth.

I wanted to tell her there will be days she wants to die, and friends who will not understand some of the things she does or says.

I wanted to tell her she will still feel her child's presence at times, sometimes so strongly that it is as if they are dancing just at the edge of whatever activity is going on. And other times she might not feel their presence at all.

I wanted to tell her that her life will not go back, that she will never be the same, because a piece of her left with her child.

And that, even though the pain does not go away, somehow her soul will eventually make enough room so she can hold it all- the grief, the pain, the joy and the love.

I wanted to tell her... but I didn't.

Instead, I wrote this ~~~ I'm sending love, for words are pointless right now. And that is the truth."

Wonderfully written by Susi Costello

"Afterglow"

I'd like the memory of me
 To be a happy one. I'd like
 To leave an Afterglow of
 Smiles when day is done.
 I'd like to leave an echo...
 Whispering softly down the
 Ways of happy times and
 Laughing times and bright
 And sunny days. I'd like
 The tears of those who
 Grieve to dry before the
 Sun of happy memories
 That I leave behind when
 Day is done.

Author Unknown

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

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



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 2018

OUR CHAPTER NEEDS YOUR HELP

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.”

The Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter of the Compassionate Friends is in dire need of volunteers to take over leadership rolls within the chapter. Our present leaders have served over ten years and are ready to step down. There is, however, no one who has offered to step up and take over. Our steering committee is all but non-existent. If we cannot find willing volunteers to take over the reins of our chapter we will have no other option but to disband. Even though we know that our organization has helped so many bereaved parents in the past and there will be so many more that will need our help in the future, we feel we have no choice. Please help us keep our chapter open. With Compassionate Friends, they need not walk alone.

If no volunteers come forward, we will have no choice but to close our Sugar Land/SW Houston chapter of TCF after the December, 2018 Candle Lighting.

Please contact Tricia Scherer at dkrmom@hotmail.com or Marguerite Ward at mjward0123@gmail.com if you are willing to become part of the leadership of our chapter.