



The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MARCH & APRIL 2018

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

Monthly Meeting:

March 14, 2018

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: Surviving 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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"Getting on With Life"—What Does It Mean?

Of all the statements and spiritual platitudes quoted at me since my son Daniel's death, the phrase that I hear most frequently makes me squirm the most. "You have got to get on with your life." Recently I quit squirming long enough to ponder the meaning behind this phrase that is usually said to the bereaved in the form of a command. Exactly what does this phrase mean? What are people implying when they say it?

I was pregnant when Daniel died, and three months later I gave birth to a baby girl. Wasn't that getting on with life? I nurtured my three children, took them to school, the park and birthday parties. Now wasn't that going on with life? I even cooked dinner at least four times a week!

At first after Daniel's death, I would have liked to literally stop my life and be buried next to my son, but I kept existing. Like a plastic bag tossed about by the wind, I was fluttering, being carried by the events of life. Seasons came and went. In the spring, I planted marigolds and tomato vines. In the autumn, I jumped in fallen leaves with my children. I continued; I am still continuing to live.

Now I may be bereaved, but I am by no means a fool. As I ponder the meaning behind "getting on with life," I know exactly what those who say this have in mind. "Forget your dead child. Quit grieving. You make me uncomfortable!" Getting on with life means don't acknowledge August 25, Daniel's birthday, anymore. Forget how he slid down the snowy bank in the recycle bin, sang in the van and ate Gummy Bears. Forget he had cancer, suffered and died at only age four. Don't see the empty chair at the dinner table, don't cry, just live!

Some who are more "religious" would like to believe that a bereaved parent can claim, "My child is safe and happy in heaven. Therefore, why should I yearn for him?" Perhaps I pose a threat to certain types because I have let it be known I question God. I weep. I have been angry. I miss my Daniel. Maybe old friends feel if they hang around me too long I might convince them that a few of their illusions about life are just that, illusions. As my cries of anguish are heard, there are those who can only think how to make me be quiet. To stop my heartfelt yearnings, they say quite sternly, "You must get on with your life."

I am living. I do move on with life with Daniel in my mind and in my heart, although he is not physically here as I continue to live and to love. To sever his memory totally from my life would cause destruction and damage that would ruin me. To push Daniel out of my life and not be able to freely mention his name or write and speak about who he was on earth would only bring more pain to my life. I'd shrivel up. Comfort for me comes in remembering with smiles how he drew with a blue marker on his sister's wall, ran outside naked and picked green tomatoes. For the reality is, getting on with life means continuing to cherish Daniel.

Alice J. Wisler, Bereavement Magazine, Sept./Oct. 2000



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

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LOVE SHARES

In Memory of

Given by

Personal information has been deleted from 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 and can be sent to our Chapter Treasurer:

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Wish You Were Here

By Steve Tutt ~ TCF, Tyler, TX

You'd be nineteen if you were here
But why you're gone still isn't clear.
Your things are still all in your room
As if you'd be returning soon.
Spongebob waits there by the door.
Your shoes are still there on the floor.
Your friends are all young women now.
They're working jobs or college bound.
Sometimes we see them and they say
We miss her so, wish she had stayed.
Your boyfriend's in the Army too
And by the way, he still loves you.
You thought his love was not so true
And that some other girl he'd choose.
But near two years have passed on by
Still to your grave he goes to cry.
Your niece and nephews miss you too,
And talk of the things you used to do.
Your Mother's going to be alright
And doesn't cry so much at night.
She puts the flowers on your grave,
And scrapbook pictures tries to save.
And me, I'm still the same old Dad,
The same old routine like I had.
I work real hard to make a way
To pay some bills and pass the day.
I'm not as funny as before
My world's not happy anymore.
I don't let on the pain I feel
But deep inside the hurt is real.
Time passes by year after year,
Life goes on with seldom a tear.
One wish I have, a wish so clear
My wish most of all, I wish you were here.

~Dad

The Robin's Song

It's spring once again. Our part of the world is turning back towards the sun; trees are leafing out; wildflowers are blooming. Robins are again singing to one another. And, I believe, also singing to those who are grieving.

Before my daughter Lori died in the summer of 1991, I was under the misperception that only the English robin had a glorious song. That smaller, red-breasted scalawag of a bird delights all who hear it, and I had felt that we in the United States had been short-changed when they'd mis-named its larger, boring, American cousin the same sweet name. All I'd ever heard our robins do was cheep!

Then one spring day in the year after Lori died, during one of the darkest times of my grief, my ears and heart flew open with surprise at a song I heard outside my window. I distinctly heard, in the midst of my pain, a bird singing loudly and clearly, —Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio! . . . Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio! I went outside to see what marvelous bird might have been sent to sing to me. I could barely see the bird at the top of the neighbor's poplar tree, so, while hoping this exotic, magical bird wouldn't fly away while I was gone, I went to find our binoculars.

Rushing back, I could hear the bird from each room in the house. After adjusting the binoculars, I was truly amazed to see one of our —boring American robins come clearly into view! As he continued singing clear as day, —Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheerio! I marveled at this special message and wondered if my robin was the only one who sang these words. So I looked it up in my *Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* and found that my robin was not an anomaly, but that robins are considered the true harbinger of spring, singing —Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily.

I stood there that day filled with wonder. I wasn't hearing things; there it was in the bird book: —Cheer-up, cheer-up, cheerily. I thought to myself, —Cheerily . . . No, that isn't what I hear. We had lived in England for a year and our family, especially Lori, who loved to put on an English accent, often said —Cheerio! to one another when we meant, —Goodbye or —See you later! There was no doubt in my mind as I stood there listening. It WAS cheerio. Lori could have found no more

perfect way to try to cheer me up AND say —hello!

Nine springs have passed since then, and although I will always deeply miss Lori's physical presence in my life, those darkest of times are thankfully now mostly in the past. It is spring once again and as I hear the robin singing so hopefully in the highest branches, it takes me back to that first spring song, and I smile, remembering. And I think of all those who are now in the darkest depths of their own grief and pray they too will hear this lovely song.

From *Catching the Light – Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child* By Genesse Bourdeau Gentry, TCF Marin & San Francisco, CA

This Life I Live

They sometimes tell me,
Just move forward in life
You should not grieve so
Won't you get over it and just let go?

"I just can't let go"
Is the answer I give
"I hope you'll never have to understand
How it is, this life I live"

It seems there's seldom a day to pass
As friends turn away from me and let out a sigh
When they see from nowhere,
An unexpected tear, fall from my eye

You see, the memories are all I have left
And they sometimes bring on tears
And also bring on so many great smiles
With memories kept fresh, I'll live out my years

Loral and Macy live right here in my heart
Where their life's memory, I vow to preserve
As I work so hard every day
To show all the love they deserve

They would want to be remembered forever
It is my intent to hold that memory open
They know that I'll never let them go
That's a promise that will never be broken

Yes my friends, life does go on
And I know you are quite concerned
But fortunately, you can't understand
What happened, when Macy and Loral left this land

PawPaw (Donald Moyers), TCF Galveston County, TX
In Memory of Loral and Macy

We're Only Human

“Guilt Days”: There is neither rhyme nor reason to when they will occur, even eight and a half years after my daughter Nina’s death. I had one just the other day. I suppose it didn’t help that it was a dreary stereotypical Minnesota day in February with depressingly gray skies and temperatures outside registering teeth-chattering, sub-zero cold with just enough snow fall to make venturing out problematic. These surroundings made it quite easy, even without any apparent good reason, to plummet into a “blue funk”. My state of mind then heads in a negative direction ultimately sliding into a bottomless pit of senseless guilt.

In my experience with my friends who are bereaved parents, most admit that they experience this same phenomenon. I don’t think there is anyone among us who can say after the death of their child that they don’t regret something that they did or didn’t do, said or didn’t say to that child while they were living. It doesn’t matter that the reasons for our feelings of guilt may be unfounded or even seem foolish, the fact remains that we have them.

For example, on birthdays or holidays where I would customarily give a gift, if inexplicably I recall the “toy cash register incident,” I am guaranteed an instant “guilt day.” In explanation, year after year Nina requested a toy cash register for a present; even to an age that I thought was unreasonable to want such a thing. For some reason, unbeknownst to even me, in my eyes it was a silly gift; something that she couldn’t possibly really want or even use once she got it. Needless to say, I never bought it for her. I can tell you, though, that even to this day when I walk through the toy department and I see a toy cash register I feel a deep sadness and tears come to my eyes because I didn’t buy her the so-called “silly” present that she obviously really wanted.

Just innocently strolling through a toy department and seeing a toy cash register can begin a domino effect of guilt feelings, a chain reaction of remembering even the tiniest self-perceived slight or any incident that I wish I could take back where Nina is concerned. Such as the time she wanted me to give her a ride to Girl Scouts, which was only four blocks away from our house. I had a migraine headache and could barely lift my head off the pillow and therefore couldn’t give her one. So she hopped on her bike and about a block from our house hit a bump in the road and was thrown over the handlebars breaking her collarbone! Even though I know realistically that I couldn’t have done anything different considering the circumstances, when I am in the throes of a “guilt day,” the thought of that particular occurrence can send me in a downward spiral of culpability.

In actuality, chances are pretty good that if my daughter were alive today and I brought up these two happenings from the past she would probably tell me that I was correct in thinking she would have tired quickly of the toy cash register, and that she knows I couldn’t physically have driven her to Girl Scouts with a migraine; that she never blamed me for the collarbone fracture in the first place. But because our child who died cannot give us confirmation that they understood our reasoning and that our actions were “okay” with them, we are left to wonder what they were thinking and feeling regarding the particular situation that makes us feel guilty. Therefore, when we are having a “guilt day” our tendency is to blow it out of proportion and thereby imagine the worst.

Expressing those feelings of guilt to a trusted friend or family member can be helpful. Talking about your feelings may also help you to let some of it go. That person may even remind you of something you had forgotten about on those days when you are sucked into a vortex of guilt and rendered incapable of remembering any of the positives. For example, a dear friend reminded me—one time when I was bushwhacked by a “guilt day”—of something she thought was extra special I had done for my daughter; something that she thought went above and beyond the call of duty as a mother. Nina had called me from school to sweetly beg me to pick up a Valentine’s gift for her boyfriend. One of the gifts was glow-in-the-dark stars like she had on her bedroom ceiling. She told me where to get them (a specialty store at a mall about 30 minutes away). I could tell by her voice how important it was to her, so I dropped everything and off I went to the mall. Little did I know that it would take three trips to three separate malls in different parts of town before I found a store that had any left in stock! Luckily, I made it home just minutes before she and her boyfriend arrived. I recall her exquisite smile and hugs of genuine thanks for my efforts. I remembered how gloriously radiant and pleased she looked when she came upstairs to show me the red shirt with the Tweety-Bird (her favorite) insignia on the turtleneck collar that her boyfriend had given her. Thankfully my friend steered me in the direction of these happy memories and positive reflections of Nina’s last Valentine’s Day and thereby broke the cycle of more negative thinking.

I believe that no one is harder on themselves than bereaved parents. Even as irrational as it is, we feel that we failed as our children’s guardians, that we should have been super-human and able to protect them from cancer, drunk drivers, criminals, drugs, depression, congenital illnesses, and a host of other unspeakable evils with the potential to take away their precious lives.

The bottom line is that we are not invincible or perfect; we are only human. We did the best that we could with what we had to deal with at the time. Our children know this; they love and forgive us for our own humanness and associated imperfections, and I believe would want us to forgive ourselves as well.

With gentle thoughts, Cathy L. Seehuetter ~ TCF, St. Paul, MN Chapter

Eight Beatitudes For A Grieving Parent

Phil Dindia, Seattle-King County TCF

Blessed are you who say a loud No at the death of a loved one – and still say Yes to life in and around you.

Blessed are the memories of a life cut too short, for so it is that they forever live.



Blessed are the tears that come on special days for they keep you in touch with the softness of your being and ease your heart.

Blessed are the wonder-filled memories and the tears as you look at their pictures for they reveal how well you have loved and been loved.

Blessed are those who reach out to you even without words, for they know the inexpressible depth of your sorrow.



Blessed be the life you continue to live, and may time and your sharing ease your sorrow.

Blessed be you who reach out and find those who are grieving, even as you continue your life's journey without them.

Blessed is that beautiful life you made together, and may your sorrow be eased by the memory of your love



"Mourning is one of the most profound human experiences that 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 (1980)

"An important way to cope with grief is having an outlet, be it interpersonal, be it artistic, that will allow you to not have to contain your grief, but will give you an opportunity to express it, to externalize it to some degree."

—R. Benjamin Cirlin

Some Thoughts About My Journey

By Allen Roth, TCF, Mason County Chapter, WA

Some thoughts about my journey:

- At first I thought...
- ...I would not survive her death.
- At first I thought...
- ...I would never care about my living.
- At first I thought...
- ...I would never have life goals (dreams) again.
- At first I thought...
- ...the cycle of pain and numbness would never end.
- At first I thought...
- ...I would never enjoy nature again.
- At first I thought...
- ...I would never feel the beauty of a caring hug.
- At first I thought...
- ...I would never love again.

I was wrong about all of these things and others.

I wish all of you the resolve and strength to continue on your path to your future. There is a future worth living, be patient, be gentle, you will make it.

"You are so strong"

Empty words
 That don't touch the reality
 That my life has become.
 Walking through fog
 Incredible pain
 Searching for the beloved face
 I crave to see
 The voice that I strain to hear over the noises
 Of people who have no idea
 Of what the world has lost

Charisse Smith ~ TCF, Tyler, TX

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

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P. O. Box 231, East Bernard, TX. 77435

Honoring 21 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families



MARCH & APRIL 2018

THE SHARING OF GRIEF

I cannot carry this burden alone,
the road is too steep and the pain too great.
I shall only get to the top of the hill if I am able to
lean on a firm shoulder whose strength lies in the
reality of the feet which bear its weight.
The sharing of grief is the only solution to the
crisis that surrounds bereavement in our age.
To share a person's sorrow is to accept their reality and to
acknowledge the fact that none of us is immune from death.

Rev Dr Simon Stephens, Founder of The Compassionate Friends