



The Compassionate Friends

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

JULY & AUGUST 2016

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

Monthly Meeting:

July 13, 2016

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: Heart & Soul of Mitch and Alan

**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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THE STORM OF GRIEF

It comes like a huge thunderbolt—shocking and deafening you to all else around you. Suddenly the world that has been so bright is black and desolate. There seems to be no hope.

The tears come like torrential rains. The winds of reality come, and your body is torn by the pains and fears caused by the storm. Even when the tears stop for a while, the dark clouds loom over you, threatening you with more tears and more pain.

Most passersby can't help you through the storm because they have never been caught in one like it—and some don't seem to care. There are a few who will reach out their hand and try to pull you from the storm, but the storm must be endured. And then there are the special ones—the ones who are willing to walk with you through the storm. Usually these are people who have been there before and know the storm can be survived. After a time, the torrential rainstorm turns to showers and then the showers come less often. But the clouds don't go away. The sadness and pain remain, but they become more bearable.

Eventually, as the clouds begin to part, there may even be a rainbow—a sign of hope. And as the sun begins to shine a little more, flowers of memory will blossom to be enjoyed. I don't think the showers will ever end; but I believe as they get farther apart, the sky will get bluer, we will see more rainbows, and the flowers will bloom more and more. Perhaps it's even good to have a shower now and then—to cleanse our souls and to revive those special flowers of memory.

~ Mary Jo Pierce, TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

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

Love Shares for
June & July, 2016
will be posted in
the September/October, 2016
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.

Fireworks

You used to run around with a sparkler in your hand, pretending you were a Minute Man or a Patriot drummer. It didn't matter, there was time for all.

You'd wrap a rag around your head and take your toy drum, and tromp around the yard. Whatever you were on those wonderful nights, you loved it!

And we watched and laughed as you waved your tiny flag, thinking maybe you were the one who really understood what we celebrated.

Now the drum is gone and no one gets sparklers any more. The yard is quiet on the Fourth of July. Do you still march and play the drum for others?

Author unknown

Bread Crumbs—Finding Our Way Back

Bread crumbs are all we have.

They are what is left behind after the death of our child. They are our memories and our mementos.

A bread crumb is the little answering machine cassette tape that says “Hi, it’s me. Leave a message at the beep.” We may be the only people with a cassette tape in our safe deposit box. It’s not much, a few quick words, but it’s his voice—a small crumb from the original.

A bread crumb is his favorite shirt that I still can’t part with, so I wear it for good luck on special days. A bread crumb is the last Father’s Day card he wrote in his own hand before he went off to college.

Thanks for everything Dad, especially the \$. My years at home were better than words can say and I never took anything for granted. I’ve had the best childhood anyone could have. Thank you for the ideas and opportunities I grew up with. I love you. Mark

I call these things crumbs because they are a disappointing piece of the real thing, but treasured because they are all we have.

I also think there is a second way of looking at this. Bread crumbs are a part of children’s stories symbolizing signposts along the way to help lead us out of the forest—to find our way back to the land of the living, at least if the birds don’t eat them.

I like to think that the return from grief is like finding our own way out of the forest. The way is marked by great changes or signposts if we will only follow the bread crumbs. I think of them as gifts left behind by our children. They change us and they lead us out of the forest—but at a very different place than we first went in. Here are three I have found. Maybe you will find others.

Crumb One —We pick up a new sense of what is important and what is not. We suffer fools, superficial cocktail parties, and convenience friends poorly. We seem to develop an immediate impatience for the meaningless and the trivial. On the other hand, we pick up an incredible sensitivity to the world around us that we did not have before. We watch the news differently. We value people more than things. We live more in the moment and less in the future because we know that sometimes “tomorrow doesn’t come.”

Crumb Two —We find our real self on the road back. After the loss of a child and a period of emptiness, we do eventually come back. But we come back differently—and I believe better—than the person

that entered that awful forest. With our new understanding of priorities, we listen again to “that still small voice” that we silenced in the race to climb the career ladder or have the “perfect life” or do what our parents or teachers thought we “should” do. We find new courage to be the person we really are.

We begin living from the inside out instead of the other way around—from a sense of what is important, not what is expected. From a life of “what’s in it for me?” to “how can I help you?” We discover new and compassionate friends, and sometimes drift away from old ones. We go from a thousand name Rolodex of contacts to a handful of people we love. We often also find our spiritual center and an inner peace. We become unafraid to die, at the same time we are beginning to live again.

Crumb Three—We pick up one more gift that I have noticed. We seem to get anointed with an ability to help someone else. You know what I mean. We didn’t want it. We didn’t ask for it. But we got it, anyway. It’s almost like a giant invisible radar screen gets mounted on our head and we now pick up vibrations from other people in need. And we find that we really can help. People seek us out. People who don’t know what to say when a child dies call us and ask: “Could you please go over?” We know we can and will, if only to listen.

I am reminded of the story of a little boy who arrived home late from school. “Where have you been?” his mother asked. “I was helping Timmy who broke his bike,” the child answered. “But, Honey,” the mother said. “You don’t even know how to fix a bike.” “I know Mom,” came the reply, “But I was just helping him cry.”

Sometimes we can just help someone else cry, and that is enough. Unlike most other people, we can walk directly up to a bereaved parent or sibling, look them in the eye, and say, “I know how you feel.” That is what TCF is all about. And in helping another person, we help ourselves heal too.

So, what do we do with these new gifts or bread crumbs left along the way for us? New priorities. A new sense of self. And the ability to help someone else.

These are definitely good things. They did not come from the death of our child. Nothing good comes from the death of a child. As Rabbi Harold Kushner said in Seattle: “there is no silver lining.” But there is change. These changes come after the death, when we recognize that we can’t change what happened, but we can change what we do about it.

(Con’d on Page 6)

Bread Crumbs—Finding Our Way Back (Con'd from Page 5)

One day our surviving son, Rick, put his arms around us in a family hug and said: “Okay Mom and Dad, now that we are a family of three instead of four, we each have to live our lives one-third better.” That, more than any other moment in our grief, marked our turning point.

My wife has a reoccurring dream. She is in Heaven many years from now and she greets our son. “Okay, Mom,” Mark says, “So tell me everything you did after I died?” On that day she will be proud to answer: “I lived the rest of my life one-third better in your name.”

I suspect most bereaved parents divide their lives into those two distinct stages of time: before and after the death. What we do in Stage Two we do in our child's name.

And because we do it, the world after our child died in some small way is changed forever. And when the world in some small way is changed forever, then our child's life continues to make a difference.

And when our child's life continues to make a difference, he or she is never entirely gone.

Rich Edler
In Memory of his son Mark

Rich Edler 1996. Permission to reprint granted by the family and by We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends.

Grieving is such a roller coaster ride. One day we think the worst is over, that we're really beginning to pick up our lives again. The next day—or hour— it's as though it was all fresh, and we have made no progress at all. We need to remember that recovery from grief is not a smooth, uphill path. There will be many setbacks, many side paths onto which we are led, before we can continue our journey out of the valley of sadness. We're doing as well as we can and these setbacks are part of the progress. Accept them when they come. Take a deep breath and continue on.

From Healing After Loss— Martha Whitmore Hickman



Grief

*I had my own notion of grief.
I thought it was a sad time
That followed the death of someone you love
And you had to push through it
To get to the other side.
But I'm learning there is no other side.
There is no pushing through
But rather,
There is absorption.
Adjustment.
Acceptance.
And grief is not something that you complete,
But rather you 'endure'.
Grief is not a 'task' to finish
And move on,
But an element of yourself--
An alteration of your being
A new way of seeing.
A new definition of self.*

Author Unknown

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Anita & R.C. Kyle in loving memory
of their son

Kevin Grant Kyle
4/21/67 –7/11/08

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

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

Grief Never ends, but it changes.
It is a passage, not a place to stay.
The sense of loss must give way
If we are to value the life that was lived.

- Lois Wyse

A Promise

The colors of life change as we go through grief.
We begin black and white;
Then gray settles over us, seeping into our pores, surrounding us,
Smothering us for a long period of time; then slowly the colors change.
We may not even be aware of their changing 'til one day we see a rainbow,
And know it was meant for us.

Faye Harden TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

I'm Beginning

I'm beginning to know your children
From the things I heard you tell.
From the pictures that you've brought here
I think I know them well
Our hurt and sorrow are immense
I'm not sure where to start.
Compassion after all is
Your Pain in my heart.
My thanks to you for listening
To words wrung from my soul.
We are The Compassionate Friends
That's all I need to know.

Jack Brown TCF Louisville

Bereaved Parents

Different ages
Different stages
Different issues
Same pain
Daily strain
Occasional tissues
Our children have died
Often is all we know
A fact we fear to hide
Despite our ever-present woe
We live with pride
Though broken-hearted
To love, remember, and grow

Victor Montemurro TCF Medford, NY

There's no summer vacation from the broken heart...but sometimes fragments of hope can be found in the most unlikely places....at the most unexpected times. May it be so for each of us.

Author Unknown



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Honoring 21 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families



JULY & AUGUST 2016

Losses and Gains

In time of grieving,
you may encounter
Other unexpected losses...

Friends you counted on
may not be able
to stand with you,
may not be able
to give themselves to your need.

But you will also find
some unexpected gains:
people you never counted on
will be your friends
and stand with you
and give you strength.

They are the treasure
you will learn to cherish,
when you begin to heal.

~Sasha Wagner