



# The Compassionate Friends

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

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2016

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

## Monthly Meeting:

**Wednesday,  
September 14, 2016**

Always the second Wednesday

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

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

**Topic: Goals for Growth**

**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.

### Chapter Co-Leaders

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## Register for “A Day with Mitch and Alan” Workshop for Bereaved Parents

A Day with Mitch and Alan, a workshop for bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings as well as professionals in fields supporting the bereaved. This full day of awareness, led by two bereaved fathers, Mitch Carmody and Alan Pedersen, shares what they have learned on the long and difficult journey of processing grief.

They are “Facilitators of Proactive Grieving” not only because that describes best what they do but more globally describes an emerging paradigm shift in how we process the devastating losses that occur in our lives.



Registration deadline is October 1, 2016, \$30 cost includes the full day workshop, morning coffee, box lunch and a butterfly release. For professionals, the \$70 cost (\$100 at door-if available) also includes 6 CEUs as this workshop has been approved for continuing education credits for Social workers, LPCs and LMFTs by the Texas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

Doors open at 8:00 am. The workshop begins at 9:00 am. Walk in registration (if space is available) will not include lunch.

The event will take place at Westbury United Methodist, 5200 Willowbend Blvd, Houston, TX 77035 which has generously provided space for this workshop. Part of the guiding principles of The Compassionate Friends is respect of everyone’s beliefs and espouses no specific religious or philosophical ideology.

Phone: (812) 249-5452 to make reservations with Debbie Rambis, the Regional Coordinator for Southern Texas.

**Saturday, October 22, 2016**  
**9:00 am\* - 4:30 pm**  
**Westbury United Methodist**  
**5200 Willowbend Blvd**  
**Houston TX 77035**



### 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 omitted 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.

### School Starts

Strange things happen to you when your child dies. You’ll fail if you try to make sense of most of it.

Both my children had finished high school when my son died, yet I found the beginning of school—especially that first year—to be difficult. The bus stops in front of my home for the neighborhood children. Suddenly, as they all gathered to wait for the bus, I found myself reliving those simpler, happier days of old; longing for them actually. It was a painful time.

Now, if I, whose children are grown and gone, had a problem with school starting, those of you who do have school age children must know that your pain is normal. It’s another reminder that life goes on—with or without our children—and acknowledging that it hurts! I came to the conclusion that it was all right to pine for happier times and it was nothing to get upset about. As with many remnants of grief, I recognize it, allow it and then get on with my life.

Maybe you’re like me, you’ll always be a little nostalgic about school starting. That would probably have been true even if my son had lived. Maybe you, too?

Mary Cleckley ~ TCF, Stone Mountain, Georgia

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Our Children Remembered On Their Angel Day

Angel Day	Child's Name	Parents/Family/Friend

Personal information has been omitted  
from the Internet version of  
this newsletter.


"Sometimes our light goes out but is blown again  
into flame by an encounter with another human  
being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those  
who have rekindled this inner light."  
  
—Albert Schweitzer

**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.  
See prices below:

- 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\***

- September 14, 2016—Goals of Growth**
- October 12, 2016 –20 Faces of Grief**

*(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.)*

“Right now...take a moment, close your eyes and remember the smile of your child!” “Memories will bring you love from the past, courage in the present, hope for the future.” “The heart remembers always.”

The Poems of Sascha Wagner

“To spare oneself from grief at all cost can be achieved only at the price of total detachment, which excludes the ability to experience happiness.”

—Erich Fromm

## WHY NO ONE CALLS

Another quiet day. No phone ringing, no doorbells to answer. Alone with my thoughts again. There was a time when the phone never stopped demanding my time and my home had a revolving front door. But it's quiet now. I'm not sure if I miss it or not. It was a dreamlike, confusing time, but there was an energy in the room. As numb as I was, I could still feel it. Now, just stillness.

People came. People called. "I'm so sorry", "What happened?", "Is there anything you need?" There wasn't really. They brought food, but I couldn't eat. They brought me tea but I couldn't drink. They led me into my room for a rest, but I couldn't sleep. They wanted to do something for me, but I couldn't tell them what that was. Making the funeral arrangements was like moving in an altered state of consciousness. One foot in front of the other. .... next step. Speaking words but not actually hearing what I was saying. Nodding to this and that but having no idea really what I was agreeing to. It all got done. Somehow.

"Beautiful service", "He looks so peaceful", "His battle is over".....all the acceptable phrases. "Yes, yes, wasn't it?" "Doesn't he?" "It is over for him, yes." But not for me. The battle goes on for me. I am the survivor, but I survived what? The war within me rages on. All the guests have gone home now. Burying my son is over now. But it isn't over for me. I am slowly awakening from this nightmare of whirlwind responsibilities to realize that this is forever. My son is gone forever. Forever! All the flowers, all the sweet words, all the pictures, videos and words of comfort are over. I look around and I am alone.

At first, they still called. "How are you doing?" "Do you need anything?" But what could I say. Invitations came but I couldn't seem to get up the energy to go. I would try and force myself, only to crawl back to the comfort of my room and my memories. People hesitated to talk about him. I'm sure they didn't want to upset me. They don't know what to do. But I need to talk about him. I need to feel he was here, he mattered, he existed - still exists on some level. I don't want to let him go completely. But, it is too hard for most. So, after a while, they stop calling. They can't bear to hear the emptiness in my voice or see the sorrow in my eyes. I try to make conversation but it is without interest really. They know it too, but are polite.

At gatherings, my eyes follow theirs but I don't really hear them. I feel like a stranger in a foreign land. I hear everyone speak but I can't understand what they are saying. Everything sounds like a frightening buzz around me. I am not of their world any longer. I see with different eyes, I think different thoughts, my mind goes to places they wouldn't know of. I am disconnected and they sense it. Self preservation is instinctual. So they

move away. It's too hard for them. .... After all, it could be them.

So, I exist in a void. I move, I speak, I do errands, I walk the dog. But I don't laugh much anymore. I don't have a quick joke or witty remark at the ready any longer. I can't even seem to remember that person. I miss her. How I wish I could go back to before. I long to be free of this hurt and anger and bewilderment. I don't even want to be around me any longer. Who would? I come to understand why my phone is silent, why no one calls any more.

From the Prose and Poems of Deborah Streb  
Rochester, NY Chapter



## PERMISSION TO LAUGH

After our son died, I was able to cry and get my sorrow and heart-wrenching feelings out from inside of myself. What I couldn't do was to laugh and not feel "pangs of guilt". I thought, how can I laugh again—my child cannot laugh anymore!? I'll never hear his one-of-a-kind laugh again on this earth. My son will, somewhere, think I do not love him. Others will think I don't love him. Many reasons ran through my mind each time a small laugh could come out.

Into my second year of grief, I was sitting at a banquet at our National Conference. A bereaved father was our speaker for the evening. In his message to us that first evening, he said, "I give you permission to laugh" in referring to our weekend and beyond that time. There it was—someone out of love and their own grief, gave me permission. It has stuck with me to this day. It was as if our son had given me that right to laugh again, because he was such a humorist as a little boy. So, I pass this on to you for all our children who have died. We "give you permission to laugh".

In loving memory of Donald L. Trimmer  
by his mother, Linda Trimmer

## Newly Bereaved... Riding the Waves

I feel as if I have been body surfing in the ocean, cruising at the tops of the waves, enjoying the ride - then suddenly, being bodyslammed into the sand. Unable to move, the waves rush over me, pounding and crashing onto me. Occasionally, the tide recedes, and I lay breathless on the wet, sandy shore.

I cannot move. I wiggle my toes, squint, open my eyes, and see the rest of the shoreline. While my view is obscured by my tears, the salty sea, my straggly hair, and my prone position, there is some daylight. Just as I prepare to roll over and maybe get to my knees, the waves of grief lap at my toes and suddenly crash upon me once more. Unable to withstand the power of the waves, I fall to the beach once again.

Finally, the tide recedes again, but I still cannot move. I am bone tired from my past efforts. I am aware of noise around me. I can hear the chirping birds, and feel the warm sun. The laughter of children beckons me to once again open my eyes. Helping hands are touching me, encouraging me to rise up. Gentle hands soothe me with their light touch. Warm hugs embrace me. It feels good for awhile ... until the voices drift on down shore, leaving me along with the setting sun.

I marvel at the beauty and thank God for His presence. It becomes dark again. The wind blows in, bringing dark clouds and a chill to the air. I shiver, and the sense of calm and peace is not so reassuring. The tide is at my ankles, and my toes sink into the sand. I can do this. I can stand up against this set of waves - maybe. Or, maybe it's easier to lie down and let them roll over me.

Better yet, I wade out further, a little deeper, challenging the waves of grief. And then - surprise - I lie down and float. The waves roll under me, crashing harmlessly on the shore. As I float, I look up at the rising moon. The waves lull me to sleep in the moonlight. Maybe, just maybe, I will rest well.

Maybe, I can ride these waves. Maybe a new sunny day is coming.

--Bereavement Magazine, 5125 N. Union Blvd.,  
Suite #4 Colorado Springs, CO



## For Both of Us

I will look at this world  
for both of us.  
I will laugh with the birds,  
I will sing with the flowers,  
I will pray to the stars,  
for both of us.  
I will remember  
how many things  
on this earth  
were your joy.  
And I will live  
as well as you  
would want me to live.

~The Poems of Sascha Wagner

## Question Never Answered

Why me? Why did this happen to my family? No one has the answers.

Why was someone so young taken away? No one can tell me.

Why wasn't it me instead? No one can say.

Why are we left behind with the pain? No one has a clue.

Will the pain ever ease? With the happy memories, maybe a little.

When will we stop waiting for her to come home? Maybe tomorrow.

When will we see her again? No one can be sure - someday.

Could she possibly miss us as much as we miss her? Only time will tell - when we are together again.

Who knows this kind of pain of loss? Anyone who has lost a child.

Bonnie L. Harris TCF, Richmond, VA

**ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER**

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

When our special sadness comes to call —  
when we remember more than we can  
bear. When courage falters — shadows  
everywhere: Then let us reach and touch  
and share — We, who are friends.

~ Author Unknown ~

**As you interact with friends, here are  
some important things to avoid:**

1. Avoid saying "I'm okay" or "I'm fine." If this is not true, it will impair their ability to care for you. If it is true, give them more information about what is going better so they can join in your encouragement.
2. Don't feel like your answers have to be a little better every time you see them. Change doesn't occur on an uninterrupted incline. Don't give in to the temptation of thinking you're going to disappoint them if you admit you're not doing as well as you were last time.
3. Pray honestly; not "spiritually." Prayer is an easy time to become fake and cliché. It can be refreshing and strengthening to pray honest prayers to God. That is what a large number of the Psalms are—honest, public prayers during seasons of suffering.
4. Avoid those who think they can cheer you up. The journey through grief is about more than being happy again. If that is someone's primary focus at this stage, then they are likely not the best companion for this journey.
5. Don't hurry yourself. Structure so that you have an idea of what is "next" but it contains no pacing guide. Trying to measure the process is most often counterproductive. If you "gave yourself" two months to grieve, how would you know if you were half way there in one month? Chances are, pace would become a distraction from the process.

Taking the Journey of Grief with Hope  
Brad Hambrick, M.Div. Th.M

**The Miscarriage**

There has been a death in the family,  
No eulogy, no coffin,  
No funeral, no black  
And yet, there has been a death in the family.  
No undertaker, no hearse,  
No cemetery, no grave.  
And yet, there has most assuredly  
been a death in the family.  
No belly, no fullness,  
No lifeline, no baby.  
There has been a death in the family.

--Linda Wasmer Smith TCF, Portland, OR

**“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



## 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 2016

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### Thanks

**Thanks to the friend** who did know the right words to say:  
"There is a group in town that might help you."

**Thanks to the parent** who somehow found the courage to call  
that phone number and find out about "that group."

**Thanks to the mother** who went to that first meeting knowing  
it would really hurt to talk—and talked.

**Thanks to the dad** who said after the first meeting that he  
could never come back—but did.

**Thanks to the parent** who, at the fifth meeting, put her arms  
around a "new one" and said: "They really can help."

**Thanks to the mom** who, for the first time, was again able to  
bake cookies—for her "Compassionate Friends."

**Thanks to the homemaker** who could never talk in front of  
people—who became a facilitator.

**Thanks to the six-foot father** who cried in front of the other  
men—and didn't say he was sorry.

**Because of you**, we will be able to help someone we don't  
even know—next month.

John DeBoer ~ TCF, Omaha, NE