



The Compassionate Friends

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

JULY & AUGUST 2018

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

Monthly Meeting:

JULY 11, 2018

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: Appropriate Expectations in Grief

**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:

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Accepting the Unacceptable

"I will never be able to accept the death of my child." Does that sound familiar? Have you said that? Not surprising. That is one, if not the most, difficult thing we have to do to get to the other side of the long dark tunnel of grief.

What does "accept" mean? One parent told me he would never accept his daughter's death, because he said "accept" means to "agree, approve, to consent to," Obviously, in that context no one in their right mind would "accept" their child's death. But there are other meanings to "accept": "believe to be true," "acknowledge." We do not like the sound of those words either, but at some point, accept them, in order to get on with our lives.

By stating we will not accept it, what is accomplished? ... Will it make it not true? If only it were that simple. Then I would be 100% in favor of denial. But it doesn't work that way. There are some things that cannot be changed, no matter how hard we may want them to be.

One example: My husband had a heart attack a little more than a year after Eric's death. He vehemently denied he had had a heart attack. ... He continued on with his HEAVY smoking. Then came his stroke. He is now badly paralyzed on his left side. He cannot deny his stroke. And he cannot go back, and accept his heart attack, change his way of living and perhaps avert the stroke. So what did his denial accomplish? It made things worse.

So it is with us. Denial won't work. At some point in time, we know it has happened. I realized for myself, it was when I could say "Eric died." I could say the word "dead." It took quite a long time. I could say "I lost a son" but not "he died." One day it just came out. It actually shocked and upset me. But afterwards, looking back, I realized that was a big step for me. Not a happy one, but it was one of my turning points.

All of the "stages" of grief that we go through are hard. There is nothing easy about it. As Darcie Sims said... "grief hurts." That almost seems like too mild a statement. The feeling is impossible to put in words. It's devastating!!

"Grief work" takes time and effort. I wish there was an easier way for all of you. I can only give you the hope and encouragement that you, too, can make it. Be kind to and patient with yourself. God Bless!

Mary Ehmann, TCF, Valley Forge, PA., In Memory of my son Eric

When I grieve, when I stand by others as they grieve, even in the midst of seemingly unbearable sorrow, grief becomes a way to honor life - a way to cling to every fleeting, precious moment of joy.

~ Courtney Davis, Nurse Practitioner

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 items have been deleted from the internet version of our 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**

Golden Scrapbook

A treasure cache of memories
 A scrapbook in my mind
 A baby boy with big blue eyes
 A golden hair I find.
 A toddler grabbing marshmallows
 His little fist closed tight
 A first grader with brand new books
 Brave and proud and bright.
 A picture here—a feeling there
 I shuffle them together
 And sort them over constantly
 Although I know I’d rather
 Not have to search for memories
 But still I must—I find
 Add page on page on page on page
 To the golden scrapbook in my mind.

Lois Gardner, TCF Junction City, CO

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Life Can Be Good Again

Don Hackett, TCF, Kingston, MA
In Memory of my son, Olin

For nearly sixteen years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the sounds that marked his presence. Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of finding life once more.

He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong.

Life still had meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the years before his coming. Indeed, even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give it purpose and resolve.

Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process but I know that this is much easier to write than it is to experience.

I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unremitting pain that engulfed me in those early years. Working through them was the most demanding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years.

Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing. Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual.

These points included:

- Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.
- Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem unable to help us in our time of deep trouble and need.

- The accepting, at last, the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.
- Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends, and surviving siblings, our love for whom seems shrouded behind the totality of our grief.
- Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through writing a book, planning trees, sustaining scholarships, or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention.
- A time comes for many to find new homes, jobs, and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives.
- Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us to grasp today and tomorrow with hope.

No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.

Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy, and his shortcomings live on in me.

No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life. Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.

Is this not our goal, to heal, to find strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

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Cherish those moments you spent together and live your new life now with a renewed commitment to living as fully as possible.

~ Darcy Sims

Laugh Healing Your Grieving Soul

Alan Wolfelt PhD

- Humor is one of the most healing gifts of humanity. Laughter restores hope and assists us in surviving the pain of grief.
- Don't fall into the trap of thinking that laughing and having fun are somehow a betrayal of the person who died. Laughing doesn't mean you don't miss the person who died. Laughing doesn't mean you aren't in mourning.
- Sometimes it helps to think about what the person who died would want for you. Wouldn't he or she want you to laugh and continue to find joy in this life, even in the midst of your sorrow?
- You can only embrace the pain of your loss a little at a time, in small doses. In between the doses, it's perfectly normal, even necessary, to love and laugh.
- Remember the fun times you shared with the person who died. Remember his or her sense of humor. Remember his or her grin and the sound of that unique laughter.
- I've heard it said that laughter is a form of internal jogging. Not only is it enjoyable, it is good for you. It's good exercise. Studies show that smiling, laughing, and feeling good enhance your immune system and make you healthier. If you act happy, you may even begin to feel some happiness in your life again. Isn't this what your loved one would want for you?

If this is your first vacation since your child died, you may find you really don't want to go at all, but feel pressured by previous commitments or other children's needs. Try to leave yourself an escape route. Go – but with the understanding that if it's too much, you can come home. Just having that agreed to ahead of time and knowing that choice is available to you may make it an easier time for you.

Mary Cleckley TCF/Atlanta, GA

Helping Others Help You – Ten Rules for Self-Healing

1. Tell friends to call you often. Explain that after the first couple of months you will need their calls.
2. Tell your friends to make a specific date with you; none of this “we must get together for lunch.” Remind them that you're bound to have “down” times, and their patience would be appreciated.
3. Tell them to please feel free to talk about the person that has died — and don't avoid that person's name.
4. It's important for friends to understand that you may appear to be “doing so well” but on the inside you still hurt. Grief is painful, it's tricky and it's exhausting.
5. Ask your friends to care, but not to pity you.
6. Make plain that friends and relatives can still treat you as a person who is still in command and can think for yourself.
7. Tell your friends that it's all right to express their caring. It's OK for them to cry; crying together is better than avoiding the pain.
8. Let your friends know too, that it's all right to say nothing. A squeeze or a hug are often more important than words.
9. Let people know that they can invite you to socialize, but that you might decline.
10. Ask your friends to go for walks with you. You and your friends can “walk off” feelings. Walks promote conversation and help fight depression.

By Ruth Jean Loewinsohn

Grief is a passion to endure. People can be stricken with it, victims of it, stuck in it. Or they can meet it, get through it, and become the quiet victors through the active, honest, and courageous process of grieving.

Bereaved Parents of the USA
Baltimore, Maryland, August 2008

“When you survive loss....everyone is quick to tell you how strong you are, and how tough you must be. But actually, no one has a choice to survive grief do they.....it’s not optional. You just have to cry in the shower, sob in your pillow and pray you will make it.”

Zoe Clark-Coates

The loneliest walk you will ever walk is the walk down the road of grief.,,,,

Author Unknown



You Were On My Mind.....

When I woke up this morning... You were on my mind. You were on my mind.

You with that genuine enthusiasm, like a kid with his first bicycle.

You with the curiosity and excitement that dads love to be there for.

There's so much of you still with me. Still with us!

It's not fair that we feel cheated or that we won't share your ways anymore.

But in reality, after all the tears and inner feelings of pain and sadness pass

We will have joy and great happiness because we shared your days. Your laughter. You.

And when I wake up each morning It will be OK that you were on my mind...

You are on my mind. That's a special place for you to be, because it will be forever.

~Michael Tyler TCF Lighthouse Chapter, Lewes, DE.

THE GIFT OF SOMEONE WHO LISTENS

Those of us who have travelled a while
Along this path called grief
Need to stop and remember that mile,
That first mile of no relief.
It wasn't the person with answers
Who told us of ways to deal.
It wasn't the one who talked and talked
That helped us start to heal.
Think of the friends who quietly sat
And held our hands in theirs.
The ones who let us talk and talk
And hugged away our tears.
We need to always remember
That more than the words we speak,
It's the gift of someone who listens
That most of us desperately seek.

Nancy Myerholtz, TCF Waterville/Toledo, OH

Tears are not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength. Our tears testify to our life. And loving calls for great courage, for in loving, we always risk getting hurt.

We cry – women and men – because we’ve lost someone or something precious. While every loss is an invitation to new life, growth is always scary. But the tears that spring from our love can help us find healing and renewal.

And with healing comes new courage, enabling us to say, “I am determined to honor myself and those I love by going on and living.

Seattle-King County TCF Newsletter

They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what never dies.

William Penn

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



JULY & AUGUST 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.

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.