



The Compassionate Friends

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

MAY AND JUNE 2015

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

Monthly Meeting:

May 13, 2015

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: Ways to Remember Your Child

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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Humor and Survival

By Mary Cleckley

Recently, my daughter paid me one of the highest compliments a bereaved parent can hope to receive. Having made a change in her primary care physician, her new doctor was taking her history and he reached the place where he inquired about her parents' health. He started with me, and my daughter just started laughing and said, "You're not going to believe her history." With that she ran off my litany of woes, both past and present. Her doctor asked if I had gone out looking for things to happen to me. She said she assured him that wasn't the case and she added, "In spite of all of it, she has never lost her sense of humor."

Now, I consider that a compliment because I'm sure there were times she couldn't have said that. I tell you this because, when one of our children dies, we seem to lose other things, as well. One of them seems to be our sense of humor. We are hard put to find things that tickle our funny bone. Life becomes tedious and surviving becomes a deadly serious business. After a few months, when something strikes you as humorous and you laugh, you'll find that the old devil guilt makes his presence known.

If this happened to just a few bereaved parents, you would probably think it was somehow warranted guilt but how do you account for it happening to practically every bereaved parent? Most of us were good parents who never intentionally did anything that warranted the feeling of guilt, except maybe loving our children too much.

Next time you're tempted to laugh, go ahead! Laugh long and hard. You'll feel better after you do, for, eventually, you come to realize that laughing does not mean you're "all over" your child's death. It just means you needed some relief from all that pain that comes with grieving. Those of us who allow humor to become a part of our lives again survive better. If someone nearby hears you laughing and attributes it to problems with your mental health, just tell them that that's mental health, all right, but it's no problem!

Be gentle with yourself as you grieve. You're not getting a grade on your efforts; there are no Oscars for "Best Performance as a Griever." There is no easy, quick way out of a grief-storm.

-Lynn Eib

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 deleted for 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.

Graduation Time

By Peggy Gibson, TCF Nashville, TN

It’s June and graduation time again. Your child would have been among those wearing the cap and gown, walking down the aisle to the ever stirring “Pomp and Circumstance.” Now there is a vacant spot in the line. Should you attend? Can you stand the pain? Will people think you are strange?

As always you must follow your heart. So, go if you’d like to and don’t hide your tears. It’s quite all right to miss your own child while celebrating the achievements of others. Just remember that your instincts are the most important ones; that no one else can make this decision for you, and that it doesn’t really matter what other people think. It was your child who died. This is your pain and you have the right to feel it and deal with it in your own way – and may a bit more healing take place in the doing.

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The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Dallas, Texas will be the site of the 38th TCF National Conference on July 10-12, 2015. "Hope Shines Bright...Deep in the Heart" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great National Conference experience. The 2015 Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas. More details about this event can be found on the TCF National website as well on our TCF/USA Facebook Page.

For the first time in many years, the National Compassionate Friends Conference will be held in Texas this year. Mark your calendars for July 10-12, 2015 and plan to participate in this unique opportunity for a multiplicity of professionally guided workshops on a wide array of topics. You will be able to fill as much or as little of your days with workshops that are uniquely tailored to you and your grief journey. Sibling workshops are also available.

The Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas, 300 Reunion Blvd., Dallas, TX. 75207 is now accepting reservations. To make your reservation, please access the link on the Compassionate/Friends.org page, which will take you directly to TCF's reservation portal on the Hyatt website. Conference attendees are receiving a discounted room rate of \$129. We anticipate a large attendance for the conference, so we encourage you to make your reservations as soon as it is convenient for you.

The Texas chapters have long lobbied for a conference here in Texas. We have so many grieving parents in our rapidly growing state; this is a unique opportunity for each of our members to utilize a wonderful tool that has helped thousands of bereaved parents on their grief journey. The conference begins on Friday

and ends on Sunday morning with the memorial "Walk to Remember" which allows each chapter member to participate in carrying the chapter banner with pictures of all of our children. This is a most moving, yet elegantly simple, event for each of us.

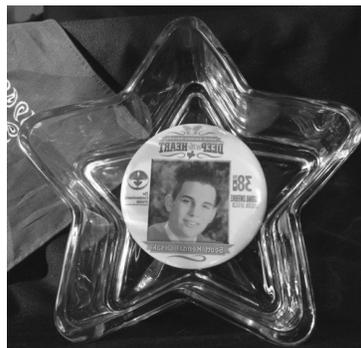
From the sign-in on Friday to the Walk to Remember on Sunday, you will find much healing, helpful and hopeful information for your grief tool box. Each bereaved parent will choose from workshops and other events for a unique experience. We encourage each of our members to attend this wonderful event that is being held so close to home. Every one of us will benefit from this phenomenal opportunity. We hope you choose to attend. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Taken from the Katy Texas TCF Chapter May, 2015 Newsletter

Sponsor a Shining Star

This year's Conference Committee will offer a "Shining Star" with your child's photo featured on a photo button. Each glass star is approximately 6" wide. The minimum donation for each picture submitted is \$15.00. If you cannot attend the Conference and would like the star sent to you, then an additional \$6.00 donation is requested to cover postage and handling. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks after the Conference for your "Shining Star" to reach you.

The Shining Star can be ordered [online](#) or by mailing in an [order form](#). Please look on the National TCF website for more information.



Designed by
Denise Orsak.

Picture of her
son, Scott
Kendal Orsak

A FATHER MOURNS TOO

I just watched another TV commercial for cologne, which is the first sign of the approach of Father's Day. Like other fathers, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen—my son's life, an opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are his age, a chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called my own father the night before to wish him a happy Father's Day, and I will go to the cemetery to place flowers on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time and then return home to my wife and new infant son. This year we will have a greater measure of peace because of the birth of our son, but I shall always have a hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I die.

Like many bereaved fathers, I have felt misunderstood about how a father should mourn and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such a belief in the strength of maternal love and do such a good job ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at my son's memorial service was how was my wife dealing with this tragedy, to the longtime friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark commercial, it seems that many around us have difficulty understanding a father's grief.

So, support and love is needed and needed badly. Of course, we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. I hope that bereaved fathers will not be forgotten on Father's Day. It is often said that we don't often talk of our emotional needs and are reluctant to show our pain, but we too need love when we hurt. Please remember us on Father's Day and remember that the cute little commercials that hurt mothers in May take their toll on fathers in June. ♥

Doug Hughes TCF Las Vegas, NV

Bent But Not Broken

By: Donna Frechek, Enid, OK

To a mother who has lost her only child, or has no surviving children, the thought of Mother's Day sends a stabbing pain that only those of us who are in this situation can understand. We begin to notice Mother's Day cards slipping in right after Valentine's Day along with the Easter cards. Even before Easter the TV advertising starts. We try to blot this all out, but our subconscious keeps reminding us the day is coming closer.

For the first two years after my daughter Shawna's death we celebrated Mother's Day for my mom and my sister very quietly. The third year, we decided to go to a local restaurant. We arrived early to avoid the crowd. The hostess greeted and seated us. She asked the question, "How many Mothers?" It was then we noticed the flowers she was carrying. Someone managed to stammer out "Three. Three Mothers." She handed us each a flower. She didn't notice the one she gave me was pretty battered. My sister wanted to give me hers or get another. "No," I said, "it's ok." The stem was bent, but not broken completely. A wilted, tired flower was hanging from the stem.

I brought it home and propped it up in a glass of water to revive it. You see, I could identify with that flower. As a mother without my child, I have felt so bruised and battered. Somehow, through all the pain, tears and loneliness, like this flower, I have been bent, but never quite broken.

Far beyond the clouds above
A special garden grows with love.
Special flowers of many blends
Are the children of The Compassionate
Friends.

~Sam Rosenberg

Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Needs Your Help!

Our chapter needs 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.”

Our organization is in desperate need for a librarian for our chapter library, steering committee members who will help plan monthly meetings, help with refreshments for meetings, help facilitate meetings, help set up and clean up after monthly meetings and annual events like the July Balloon Lift Off and the Annual Candle Lighting Event, and help to give bereaved parents hope as they begin their grief journey. It does not take a large amount of time to fill any of these needs. Often by helping others you are also helping yourself in your grieving journey.

If you can find it in your heart to help our TCF Chapter, please plan to attend our next Steering Committee meeting which will be held Wednesday, May 20, 2015 at 7 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church, 502 Eldridge Road, Sugar Land, Texas. If you have any questions, please call Marguerite Ward at 979-533-0099.

*"Whatever we do--going or not going to our children's graves, sleeping with a toy or closing the door to their rooms--has only to be what we each need, what we require to make it through each day without them.
There is no other yardstick."*

~ Elizabeth Edwards~

“When your mind cannot find an answer, open your heart and ask for peace.” —Sascha

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTER

Chapter members are encouraged to write about their grief journey and submit for publication in this newsletter at mjward@elc.net.

“When Thomas was killed we went to our first TCF meeting about six months into our grieving process. For many years we went each month and after each meeting we felt as if a little bit of the pain was taken away.” —
Bill & Terry Bruggemann



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Sugar Land—SW Houston Chapter
P. O. Box 231, East Bernard, TX. 77435

Honoring 20 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families



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HOPE SHINES BRIGHT

DEEP *in the* **HEART**

38th NATIONAL CONFERENCE | **DALLAS, TEXAS JULY 10-12, 2015**

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