



The Compassionate Friends

Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2014

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

Monthly Meeting:

September 10, 2014

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

Topic: Staying Healthy Mentally & Physically

**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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AUTUMN FEELINGS

During the coming months, we will see many changes taking place in the world around us. The amount of daylight is decreasing, nights are becoming chilly, we'll often need sweaters or jackets as we venture forth each day. In New England during the fall, the most dramatic change we notice is that of the trees trading their green summer outfits for the brilliant reds, oranges and gold of autumn.

Many of us who are bereaved parents find ourselves feeling tense and depressed when the earth awakens in the spring. We may also experience these feelings when the dramatic changes of autumn occur. A wise lady said to me, "Our bodies respond to the changing seasons." She was right, they do! And they respond by feeling. It seems to me that all of the grief feelings that I have—emptiness, sadness, anger, loneliness, guilt, depression—are all intensified as the world of nature around me changes. Sometimes, however, we can draw strength from situations that seem, on the surface, to be negative.

A few weeks after Linda's death, I heard from two friends within a few days of each other. One said, "You know when I'm troubled, I get out and walk until I find something in nature that I've never seen before. I look at it and think about it and I am renewed." The other friend, who has some physical disabilities, wrote me a note in which she said, "Whenever I feel discouraged I find something in nature to study and I am renewed." I think that hearing from these two friends within just a few days of each other had to be more than a coincidence. I feel that there was an important message there for me, and I've tried to act on it.

I can draw strength from an early morning walk, from birds at our feeder, from a rainbow, a ladybug and the many beautiful sights in nature. I slow down, think about these things and observe their intricacy and beauty. I attempt to draw some of their energy into myself. We have to slow down, try to realize what is happening to us, and be receptive to the energy that is in the natural world for us.

When I'm down because it's a sparkling clear, colorful autumn day and Linda isn't here to experience it with me, I have to feel that pain, then let it go so that the natural beauty and energy around me can strengthen and renew me. Let yourself experience autumn—the emptiness and aching that you feel. Then try to let go of those feelings, just enough to let the wonder and beauty of the season into yourself, one day at a time.

Evelyn Billings TCF, Springfield, MA

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 information has been taken out of the internet version of this 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.

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The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all children who have died

**Worldwide
Candle
Lighting®**

... that their light may always shine.

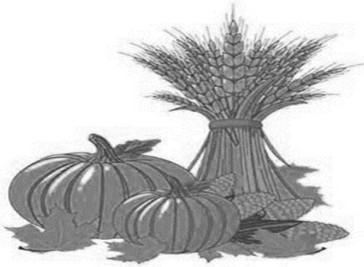
**Sunday, December 14, 2014
7 PM Around the Globe**



True Words

*“You will not always hurt like this”
-these words are true.
If they do not reach
your heart today,
do not reject them;
keep them in your mind.
One morning—
not tomorrow perhaps,
But the day after tomorrow,
or the month after next month,
One morning the dawn will wake you
with the inconceivable surprise;
Your grief will have lost
one small moment of its force.
Be ready for the time
when you can feel for yourself
that these words are true:
“You will not always hurt like this”*

Sascha Wagner, Wintersun



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 or call her at 979-335-6070.

Our Children Remembered On Their Angel Day

Angel Day	Child's Name	Parents/Family/Friend

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taken out of the internet version
of this newsletter.**

Grief is not a mere word, but a journey through the pathways of our heart. To where our journey leads us is never certain, but is painful just the same. Grief should not be measured by pain, but also by love. To love is to hurt, to hurt is to heal, to heal is to accept. No grief is ever the same. Please be kind to yourself.

By Susie Cross in memory of her son, Jasper Burns, 3/16/83 to 2/11/99

Meeting Dates and Discussion Topics*

September 10, 2014—Staying Healthy Mentally and Physically

October 8, 2014—When to Ask for Help

(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.)

What about Parents of Troubled Children?

At one of our meetings we discussed a subject that is not new. "Why did MY child have to die? He was so good. I was a good parent, a good person. There are so many 'bad' kids out there whose parents probably wouldn't care. Why couldn't it have been one of them?" Those thoughts probably sound familiar to many of us. Let's look at them from a different perspective.

Perhaps the child was especially good or gifted. However, it is quite common, in our grief, to remember only the good things, sometimes even putting the child on a pedestal. In the beginning, there is nothing wrong with that. We need all the comfort we can find. But it is wise for us to remember some of the trying times which humanize our dead children yet do not diminish our love for them one bit.

What about the parents of a troubled child? Do they really hurt less or care less? I think not. It is the nature of a parent to nurture, to care for and to love their offspring. To love them more than life itself. The parent of a troubled child might have a harder time adjusting to their loss. Their parenting job may have been very difficult and heartbreaking. Their list of "if onlys" may be longer than ours.

What are their memories? The immediate ones may be very sad and painful. They may have to dig deeper into the past to remember the good times. For these parents, the desire to go back in time may be very intense. Guilt may also be more intense. We all make mistakes, some wrong decisions; we are not perfect. Why do we expect it of ourselves? We are human beings, subject to all the human frailties. So, if some children go through rebellious times, it does not make them bad kids, or their parents bad, either. Learn to forgive yourself for being human!

We tend to forget that our children's lives are influenced by many things outside the family. Peer influence and pressure is tremendous. Once children enter school, it becomes more difficult to "control" and influence them. They are pulled from all directions. Yet parents assume responsibility for all of the problems.

I hope that parents who have gone through troubling times with a child who has since died will realize that no harm is meant by bereaved parents expressing thoughts such as those cited earlier. There is not one bereaved parent who would wish this pain on anyone else. Although we hear those words spoken, what we are really hearing are the sounds of pain and anguish. Another form of the old question "WHY?"

No matter how your child lived, and no matter how he died, our hearts go out to all parents who are suffering. The bottom line is, we love our children no matter what. That is what unconditional love is all about.

Mary Ehmann, TCF, Valley Forge, PA

PLEASE....

Please.... don't ask me if I'm over it yet. I'll never be "over it."

Please.... don't tell me he/she's in a better place. He/she isn't here.

Please.... don't say "at least he/she isn't suffering." I haven't come to terms why he/she had to suffer at all.

Please.... don't tell me you know how I feel, unless you have lost a child.

Please.... don't tell me to get on with my life. I'm still here, you'll notice.

Please.... don't ask me if I feel better. Bereavement isn't a condition that "clears up."

Please.... don't tell me " God never makes a mistake." You mean He did this on purpose?

Please.... don't tell me " at least you had him/her for 'so many years.' "What year would you choose for your son or daughter to die?

Please.... don't tell me God never gives you more than you can bear----who decides how much a person can bear?

Please.... just say you are sorry.

Please.... just say you remember him/her if you do.

Please.... just let me talk if I want to.

Please.... let me cry when I must.

Please....

A Compassionate Friend
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The Good Fight

Before our son's death turned our lives upside down, I cannot recall spending any time in cemeteries. One or two elderly relatives, who had lived out their span, are in cemeteries now, and their loss is felt at holiday gatherings.

When I was a child, our Sunday school class once took a tour of the pre-Revolutionary cemetery behind the historic old church I attended. I remember being shocked at the number of tiny markers for the very young who, our teacher said, were so susceptible to diseases in those colonial days. We were simply told that people had large families then because they knew illness would take some of the children. We were never exposed to the notion that this was a tragedy to these real people of so long ago.

Many years later, when my grandmother was in her eighties, she told me that the child born before her died at the age of three. At the age of thirteen, Grandmother was stunned to find her mother caressing this child's clothing and weeping in the attic of their home in the rolling hills of Kentucky. I was a parent then and I thought, "Well, of course Grandmother's mother was sad, but she had other children." I didn't know, did I? Who among us did?

Now when I go to my son's marker, I examine the other headstones carefully. Did everyone in the family live to an acceptable age? When I find one that clearly indicates the death of a child, I study the parents' markers closely. How long did they have to live without their child? Sometimes the number of years takes my breath away. I am to learn from this. Others "made it." So can I.

Without Compassionate Friends I wouldn't have had a clue as to HOW they made it, and I probably would have given up on the effort. I read the inscriptions on these older markers to see if they provide any clues as to what helped those before me carry on. I found one that summed it up. It read: "LIVING, YOU MADE IT GOODLIER TO LIVE; DEAD, YOU MADE IT EASIER TO DIE."

So—we are to endure. We do know what it was to live, but now we have the added dimensions of courage, love and steadfastness. And, though we no longer hope for our own death as a release from the pain, we, unlike most "other people," will not fear it when we have finished "fighting the good fight."

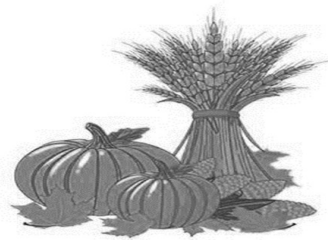
Pat Kuzela TCF, Atlanta, GA

Halloween Magic

Halloween has always been a special holiday time. I regret that our son only had a one time experience at this magical time of year. I remember as though it were yesterday, the wonder in his face, how he tried to eat the candy through his mask, how he said thank you without coaxing. Then I think of all the parents whose child never had the opportunity and I am grateful for that one time.

It's hard watching all the other children trick-or-treating and yet there is something special about this season that comforts me. As I watch the trees around me, I am reminded that there is a beauty even in their drying leaves. There's a special aroma, a breath-taking color scheme, and if you listen, a rustling in the air. I believe there is a message in fall. I believe God wants us to know that death is like a change of season, that our children now know far more beauty than we can ever imagine. Like the tree that lives on through the barren winter and comes alive again in spring, our children are not gone. THEY LIVE!

Nancy Cassell, TCF Momnuth Co., NJ



Lessons in Life

Adapted by Joanne Cacciatore for bereaved parents

I've learned people don't care how much you know
until they know that you care.

I've learned to avoid judging others so I think what I say,
not say what I think.

I've learned that it's taking me a long time to become the person I want to be.
I've learned that a child who has lived just moments
can be your greatest teacher.

I've learned that you can keep going long after you think you can't.

I've learned that we are responsible for what we do, no matter how we feel.

I've learned that heroes are people who do what needs to be done
regardless of their personal circumstances.

I've learned that learning to forgive takes a lot of practice.
I've learned that friends can become strangers,
and strangers can become friends.

I've learned that ignorance isn't an excuse for the lack of compassion.
I've learned that ignorance begets ignorance.

I've learned that some people will never, ever get it.'

I've learned some people love you dearly, but just don't know how to show it.

I've learned that true love continues to grow, even over the longest distance.

I've learned that the community of sorrow is the strongest of all.

I've learned that it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others.
Sometimes you have to learn to forgive yourself.

I've learned that no matter how bad your heart is broken the world doesn't stop for your grief.

I've learned that your life can be changed in a matter of minutes.

I've learned that writing, as well as talking, can ease emotional pains.
I've learned to trust myself.

I've learned that the people you care most about in life
are taken from you too soon.

I've learned that you should always leave loved ones with loving words.
It may be the last time you see them.

I've learned that love isn't measured by the amount of time you have with someone.

I've learned that some sorrow is so deep that it has no words. But so is love.

What has your child taught you?

ARTICLES AND POEMS FOR NEWSLETTER

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

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

I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become.” –C.G. Jung

We are each of us angels with only one wing, and we can only fly by embracing one another.” –

Luciano De Crescenzo



Don't be reckless with other peoples heart's, and don't put up with people that are reckless with yours.

Kurt Vonnegut

Do not believe that sheer suffering teaches. If suffering alone taught, all the world would be wise, since everyone suffers. To suffering must be added mourning, understanding, patience, love, openness, and the willingness to remain vulnerable.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh



The Compassionate Friends
Sugar Land—SW Houston Chapter
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for Bereaved Families**



SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER, 2014

Anniversaries of the Heart

“The holiest of all holidays are those kept by ourselves silent and apart; The secret anniversaries of the heart.”
~Henry W. Longfellow

With these words, the poet describes the universal human experience of the deeply moving events that occur in our lives; for me, and I suspect for you, the words apply most often to the times of loss or sorrow or grief. Those days should be and, indeed shall be, secret and honored anniversaries of the heart — not to be abandoned nor dismissed as though they were just another day, which they can never be. But there are other days as well which are holy holidays — days which only we celebrate because they are secret from or unrevealed to most. They are the days of firsts, the days of achievement, the days of graduation, the days of recognition, the days of laughter and joy, the days of hugs, and maybe even the days of happy tears. Thankfully, they can be just as special as the others. None replaces another as no day in our lives replaces any other but each takes its proper place in the whole cloth which is ours. For some, the fabric is tightly woven like canvas with the threads of myriad events crammed close together while for others who live to be quite old...the threads are looser like burlap. But for each, our days are woven together — the weak with the strong, the bright and the dull, the beautiful and the painful — to make the tapestry of our existence. Like every thread is important to the strength and usefulness and beauty of the cloth, so is every day, every secret anniversary of our hearts, to the calendar of our lives.

Dr. James W. Clark
Friend of TCF, Nashville, TN

(Note: This moving essay was written and presented by Dr. Clark to good friends of his on the fourth anniversary of the death of their daughter, whose funeral he had conducted.) October 2010, TCF Nashville, TN