



The Compassionate Friends *of Northwest Houston* **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

Welcome to The Compassionate Friends. We are sorry for the reason you are here, but are glad that you found us. You Need Not Walk Alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.

AUGUST 2021

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.

at

**Trinity Lutheran Church
Family Life Center, Room #204
5201 Spring Cypress Rd.
Spring, Texas 77379**

The Church is located on the corner of Spring Cypress Road and Klein Church Rd. Please enter off Spring Cypress Road. The meetings are held in the Family Life Center Room 204.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

You Are Not Alone

When your child has died, suddenly it seems like all meaning has been drained from your life. When you wake in the morning, it's difficult to get out of bed, much less live a "normal" life. All that was right with the world now seems wrong and you're wondering when, or if, you'll ever feel better.

We've been there ourselves and understand some of the pain you are feeling right now. We are truly glad that you have found us but profoundly saddened by the reason. We know that you are trying to find your way in a bewildering experience for which no one can truly be prepared.

To the Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into the chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again, I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel."

We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.





Lighting a candle, cherishing a birth.....

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

2003-Makaylin Angel, Daughter of Jennifer Edwards
1999-Devin Wood, Son of Natalie Wood
1970-Lisa Renee Sanders, Daughter of Jim & Peggy Holland
1988-Shaun N. Finley, Son of Barbara Finley
2002-Samantha Short, Daughter of Linda Short
1988-Trace Thornton, Son of Nina Thornton
1988-Honey Khan, Son of Amra Khan
1963-Lloyd Ross (Rossi) Moore, Jr., Son of Carolyn Moore
1988-Matthew Peterson, Son of Sharon Peterson
1983-Fallon Ginther, Daughter of Lisa Ginther
1983-Travis Walden, Son of Janet Walden
1961-Terry Shannon Pauling, Son of Howard & Jean Pauling, Brother of Vicki Hyde
1995-Cheyenne Crocker, Daughter of Beth & Nick Crocker
1983-Christine Marie Frazier, Daughter of Steven R. Frazier
1980-Molly Long, Daughter of Carolyn Long
1955-Tony King, Brother of Carolyn Moore
1968-Dillon R. Howland, Jr., Son of Rachel Howland
2001-Emily Crocker, Daughter of Beth & Nick Crocker
1980-Ryan David Dodson, Son of Diane & David Dodson
1985-Derek Johns, Son of Shauna & Jeff Crook
1990-David Morgan, Son of Brent & Martina Morgan
1998-Katelyn Holmes, Daughter of Melinda Holmes
1989-Danielle Basford, Daughter of Jerry & Laurie Basford
1988-Samual Johnson, Son of Tim Johnson
1970-James Loveless, Son of Bob & Frances Loveless
1960-Kimberly Grubbs, Daughter of Patsy Grubbs
2013-Elias Reyes, Son of Crystal Reyes
2013-Jasmins Potter Jr, Son of Jasmins & Erika Potter
1984-Justin McHan, Son of Ronnie & Linda McHan
1993-Forrest Gadler, Son of Tanya Gadler
1998-Tremaine Robinson, Son of Toya Robinson
1993-Cathrine Breeding, Daughter of Barbara Breeding
1997-Wesley Hundl, Son of Sharon Mondrik
1987-Marc Pournier, Son of Jolena Pournier
Ariel & Athena Suniga, Daughters of Selena Suniga
1980- Jessica Nicole Driskell, Daughter of Patricia Ann Tull
1984 - Justin Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer
1986 - Chad Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer
1991 - Eric Garcia, Son of John & Louise Garcia



Lighting a candle, remembering a life

AUGUST ANGEL DATES

2008- Dillon & Alex Gussie, Sons of Debbie Benavides
2009- Nicholas (Nick) Skala, Son of Judy Skala
2007- Alan Jerome Austin, Son of Rhonda Austin
2003- Brian D. Klaus, Son of Johnny & Ginger Klaus
2011- Cherelle Luter, Daughter of Sylvia Green
2012-Landyn Elizabeth Tickle, Daughter of Matthew & Shelby Tickle
2013-James Loveless, Son of Bob & Frances Loveless
2013-Colton Alderson, Son of Jimmy Alderson
2013-Elias Reyes, Son of Crystal Reyes
2013-David Kerpchar, Son of Sally Kerpchar
2012-Misty Smith, Daughter of Terri DeMontrond
2008-Adam Brown, Son of Greg & Debbie Brown
2014-Gene Ware, Son of Roberta Ware
2014-Ginger Ware, Daughter of Roberta Ware
2014-Giavanna Calista, Daughter of Nicole Kelley
2015-Luke Curry, Son of Lynsy Curry
1983-Justin Ross Heino, Son of Darryl Heino
2015-Kellie Martin, Daughter of Denise Martin
2014-Hunter Smith, Son of Lee Smith
2017- Kahlid "Kal" Albaba, Son of Ramsey Albaba
2018 - Ethan Tyler Brown, Son of Erica Poorbaugh
2017 - Nelly Rosa, son of Mariano Jonell Rosa
2017 - Jacquelynn Borel, Daughter of Rebecca Borel
2020 - Roxane Rucker, Daughter of Deborah Maly

YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

You are not forgotten, loved one
Nor will you ever be,
As long as life and memory last
We will remember thee.
We miss you now.
As time goes by
We'll miss you more.
Your loving smile, your gentle face
No one can fill your vacant place.

Written by the family of Odessa Anne Box

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, August 10th at 7pm. The next zoom meeting will Tuesday, August 24th at 7pm.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members - We're Glad You Found Us.

We offer our warmest welcome to our newest members. If you have walked through the door to a TCF meeting, we understand how traumatic and difficult that is to do...we have all taken that step and reach out to you in friendship and support.

As our TCF Credo says, "*We come from different walks of life...*", but the common bond we now share is the death of a beloved child, grandchild, or sibling. Others cannot understand the terrifying and debilitating emotional issues that occur in our daily lives once this event happens; a TCF member can and does!

We hope you will find our meetings and newsletters to be a source of comfort, a place where tears are allowed, no judgments are made and the hope that through this trauma, we can once again find hope and meaning in our lives.

PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS

The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. A private message will be sent prior to approval, please be sure to check your mailbox marked "Other" if you do not receive one in your main mailbox. These pages were established to encourage connection and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings grieving the death of a child, grandchild or sibling.

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/private-facebook-groups/>

Online Support

The Compassionate Friends offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions.

[Get Online Support](#)



A Little About My Wesley on his Birthday August 23, 1997– February 13, 2016

In light of my son's upcoming birthday on August 23rd, I'd like to tell you a little about Wesley John Hundl Jr. Wesley was the youngest of my 3 children, with an older brother and sister. He was born on a stormy evening in August with bright red hair and baby blue eyes. He was an absolute joy from the moment he was born and for all of his short life. He was an easy baby with a happy personality, and the only one of

my children to wake up with a big smile on his face. From that time I sang "You are My Sunshine" to him because it was so fitting.

During his elementary years he was a jokester and witty, always trying to make others laugh – at times to the teacher's dismay. He was very bright and excelled in school, especially in math and science. He was also outgoing and did a few plays, and even the Annual 5th grade Talent Show and sang a popular song. He had a really nice voice (although he'd never admit it).

As Wesley entered middle school and his adolescent years, he became shy but still excelled in school. There he also found another talent of music, when he joined the Band and learned to play trumpet. He excelled in Band and won many awards. Later, I would learn his struggle with sadness started during this time of peer pressure and bullying which is common I've read. I had no idea at the time – boys don't talk much about their feelings sadly.

Wesley continued with Band into high school and won even more awards. Because of his God-given talent, it came fairly easy to him. He continued to excel in academics and was enrolled in honor and college level classes. He was friendly with everyone, but chose his friends wisely and had a few very close ones. His senior year was a time of great struggle for him because it was the summer before when he was diagnosed with major depression and began active treatment. Because of this and all the time missed, his senior year was very difficult. I have never been so proud of him when he graduated in spite of it all. Looking back, I honestly don't know how he did it. He also went on to attend Lone Star College locally and work part-time.

Wesley was very kind and empathetic to those around him, especially his friends. He genuinely cared about others and tried to help when he could – even as he was struggling immensely. After he passed, many of his peers came to tell me stories of how Wesley had helped them get through their own issues.

The loss of my sweet Wesley is something I know I will truly never "get over" and my family will never be the same. There is always a void because a wonderful person is no longer with us.

However, we have done our best to help others and promote mental health awareness through walks and other charities. I will choose to live life as he would want – I am his legacy. I learned so much from him. Because of my sweet Wesley, I am a better Mom and a better person. As long as I am here, he will not be forgotten and his name will be spoken.

I love you, Wesley.... I will see you again.

Sharon Cash
Wesley's Mom
Houston Northwest Chapter TCF



*"Throughout our lives we are sent
precious souls...
meant to share our journey,
however brief or lasting their stay
they remind us why we are here.*

To Learn,... to teach,... to nurture,... to love."

- "Some People" by Flavia Weedn

Please Don't Discount Sibling Grief

I have come to think of sibling grief as "discounted grief." Why? Because siblings appear to be an emotional bargain in most people's eyes. People worry so much about the bereaved parents that they invest very little attention in the grieving sibling.

My personal "favorite" line said to siblings is, "You be sure and take care of your parents." I wanted to know who was supposed to take care of me, I knew I couldn't.

The grief of siblings may differ from that of a parent, but it ought not to be discounted. People need to realize that while it is obviously painful for parents to have lost a child, it is also painful for the sibling, who has not only lost a sister or brother, but an irreplaceable friend.

While dealing with this double loss, he or she must confront yet another factor: The loss of a brother or sister is frequently the surviving sibling's first experience with the death of any young person. Young people feel they will live forever. A strong dose of mortality in the form of a sibling death is very hard to take.

The feelings of sibling are also often discounted when decisions are being made on things ranging from a funeral plan to flower selections. Parents need to listen to surviving siblings who usually know a lot about the tastes and preferences of the deceased.

Drawing on the knowledge that surviving siblings have about supposedly trivial things, such as favorite clothes or music, can serve two purposes when planning funeral or memorial services. First, their input helps ensure that the deceased receives the type of service he or she would have liked. Second, their inclusion in the planning lets them know they are still an important part of the family.

I realize that people are unaware that they are discounting sibling grief. But then, that's why I'm writing this, so people will know.

Jane Machado
TCF Tulare, CA



Sibling Loss

One whose sister or brother has died has a special view of this loss. There is the loss itself, hard enough to bear, and often no one inquires how a bereaved sibling is doing with the grief. And as I've heard one sibling put it, *'I lost my brother, and my parents are so changed that I feel as if I lost them too.'* Much is changed within our surviving family.

Many of us have found the company of other bereaved siblings to be very valuable, a group of listeners who truly and full understands.

Charley Kopp
TCF Contra Costa, CA

Shards of Grief Linger after Murder

On a dreary night in December, a knock came at our door with news that would forever alter our lives. The news was that Anne, our only daughter, had been kidnapped and brutally murdered by persons or a person unknown. The shock, disbelief, anguish and anxieties over the next several months, a small piece of the grieving process, were extraordinary, and I have often wondered how we survived.

There was the extreme rage at the person who was responsible for taking Anne's life for no reason except for the pure pleasure of destroying good. But we survived.

There was the awful anger against the legal system for being so callous and insensitive to the needs of the family and friends. The wounds from Anne's death were already deep and unhealing, but listening to and reading about the insinuations and innuendoes by the lawyers made the wounds grow deeper and deeper. The impression was given the family must endure punishment for allowing our daughter to be in the wrong place. This caused a feeling of guilt. But we survived.

There was the fear that Anne would become just another statistic, and the person responsible would go unpunished. Now the fear exists that the person will be released from prison to repeat his acts of violence. I am afraid that fears are addictive and one replaces another. Perhaps the worst fear is, when your faith in God is at its lowest ebb, that you will never be able to respond to normal stimuli again and regain all that faith. All the fears are real; but so far we have survived.

These, I suppose, are normal reactions as the result of a violent act. I believe these anxieties delay a normal (so-called) grieving period until after the culprit has been found, tried and sentenced. After these three things happened, I do know a terrible burden was lifted from our shoulders and we could restart living our lives. Somehow we survived.

How did we survive? After much reflecting, I firmly believe we survived by recalling the positive aspects of Anne's life and character. Each individual is endowed with certain instruments, and we hear the music of their lives long after they are gone.

Anne's instrument of love of life was a blessing, and we still can hear the melodies of her song in the night. These melodies cannot be taken away, and they are more valuable than diamonds to us.

Anne's instrument of hope for a future in which to achieve her goals and have some effect on society was the backbone of her dream. The songs of hope in work, in life and the goodness of heart cannot be destroyed by evil or circumstances. Today is gone, but we still hear the songs of hope for tomorrow. These songs of hope, heard in the night, sustain us.

Anne's instrument of faith that she would lead a productive life and achieve both her spiritual and material goals was music in her heart. The faith she had in herself, her family and her friends transmits to us, urging us to proceed with our lives. The music of her faith is still a beacon in the night.

We will not believe Anne's dreams have ended, but we believe they will find their place in the world to come. The music that was set in motion by her love, hope and faith will move, everlasting, in sweet memories forever. The wounds from the loss of a loved one cannot be healed by words or deeds. These terrible burdens are borne by each of us in our own way and, hopefully, we survive.

Bill Boggs
In memory of Anne
TCF, Atlanta, GA



Grief Matured

I am very sad that you are in a place where you would even be reading such an article. That said ... I am happy you are reading at all. Sometimes one finds it unfeasible to read anything for months. Be patient and have faith in yourself.....your world will one day be brighter.....there really is light in the present darkness.

After the death of our son Adrian ten years ago the make-up of our world totally changed. Life as we knew it suddenly became foreign and far away. Every single view or trust that personally defined us was transformed & rewritten. The pain of this unthinkable tragedy caused horrific disorientation. Our family unit & the role that each played was off balance & totally disorganized. I remember standing motionless in the dark looking through shocked eyes of grief watching the world move along with bold audacity of "normalcy." Trying to grasp the ordinariness of daily living after the devastating loss of our 26 year old son was impossible. We were crippled & dissolved into a joyless existence, void of color; scrambling to take cover. Those early unforgettable days were long & lonely. The rippling effects were enormous! I was certain we would never survive or cope. I felt helpless watching my husband and Adrian's big brother struggle in their own private way. We were traveling the loss profoundly differently. We were in the infancy of our journey and the compass for navigation was broken.

This all sounds pretty bleak doesn't it? I share it with purpose. It helps to hear and read about the experiences of others when you are floundering around during those early days, months and years after child loss. We need and are desperate for a life-line while searching for a safe harbor. It helps to read or hear that there is possibly a future that will once again take encouraging form and perhaps even make sense.

Before I go on, I can't express strongly enough that there is no agenda as to when positive shifts come about. We all experience them at different times and definitely in no particular order. There is some instability to the shifts as well. We lose our children under many circumstances making the components of what we deal with sometimes broadly unlike. That said, every Mom & Dad suffers greatly and there are countless similarities in our voyage.

Jumping ahead to today; I have been thinking a great deal over the years of how grief matures and how it continuously changes shape. It certainly does not "go away" but the force of it softens. Eventually this unwelcome resident seemed to incorporate itself into our reconstructed lives. We began to respond to it differently....we became surprisingly familiar with it. We embraced it for what it was. Absolutely not the challenge we were looking for, as you well know. The pain decreased slowly becoming more manageable to digest. Grief still visits on the oddest occasions but we now walk with this uninvited companion. Those walks are shorter and less difficult. We developed a memory of "recovering" from waves of sadness. We

learned over time that despite the undeniable injustice of Adrian's senseless death, we were actually creeping forward without our son in this world. We in fact, experienced joy on occasion and then more often. It was shocking to gradually realize we were essentially going to come to terms with this and find quality in life again. We re-emerged as different people in some ways while discovering cheerfulness and becoming useful human beings once again. We now experience an odd sort of peace and comfort with grief. In that peace & comfort we can budge. The sadness is always there (because we can never forget our children) but certainly not "Up Front". It no longer controls us.

With much courage, determination and support "Grief" has a chance to mature and we grown-up with it. We become reconciled. How can it be otherwise? Our world is filled with unbelievable tragedy, pain & loss. There must be something built inside all of us to eventually find our way. What a gift.....otherwise the planet would come to a complete halt.

**Helen Jay
Adrian's Mom**



**Come sit with me awhile and let me hold your hand,
I understand your sorrow and know you need a friend.**

**I understand the pain that lies within your heart,
I have felt the silent screams that tear you all apart**

**I know about the sleepless nights that last so very long,
I understand the emptiness when you hear that special song.**

**Come share with me your memories and let me be Your friend,
you can cry, laugh or say nothing at all, And I will understand.**

**Come sit with me my friend, I'll try to help you through.
I understand my friend, for I have been there too.**

-Judy PeckinpaughTCF Inland Empire, CA



What a Ride

Summertime lends itself to much advertisement of exciting activities. Amusement parks in our tristate area boast of having the most "thrilling" the most "adventurous" or the most "horrifying" rides for those who dare.

Since I lost my daughter, Nicole, I feel like I repeatedly, without warning, go on the wildest amusement ride the world has ever seen. In fact, all of us who have suffered the tragedy of losing a child take sudden rides on this bloodcurdling machine. Physicists could never conjure up a ride such as this-in fact, they couldn't even come close.

The force takes us up, down, and tears us inside out. We get thrown sideways and experience sudden drops much greater than free fall. We spin at record speed mentally and internally, without ever lifting our feet off the ground. the ride is the fiercest, most frightening experience one could ever suffer through. It rages the emotions, leaving you breathless, with a feeling of urgency to share the uncontrollable adventure with those who are next. There is never a waiting line, and the park is always open.

The ticket for this ride is available only through an exclusive club. There is one catch, however-the price for this ticket is very expensive. It was our child's life, and there is absolutely no refund.

I don't want to go on any more rides.

Cindy Pekarick, Nicole's mother
TCF Camden County, New Jersey

*"Memories of love abound
In my heart and in my mind
They give me comfort, keep me sane
And lift my spirits up again."*

-Anonymous

Choosing Life

"It will never be the same. Never." As a bereaved parent, you have often heard or said these words to express grief's profound feelings of sorrow and disorientation. Your life has suddenly taken an unexpected course that appears both uncharted and endless. Bewildered, you vainly search for pathways back to your former life, until you confront the reality that there is no way back. Your child is dead forever. It is then that you may say, "...never the same."

This is the aspect of grief that Simon Stephens calls "The Valley of the Shadow." It is that very long time between the death of your child and your reinvestment in life. *Between*. It is not supposed to be a permanent resting place. Although some people do take up residence in the valley, it is a transition from the death of your child to life with renewed purpose.

The key to this transition is yourself. You must choose between life and the valley. You and only you can decide. And you must make that decision again and again, each day.

Giving in to the hopelessness of the valley is tempting. Choosing to move on toward life requires a great deal of work. You must struggle with the pain of grief in order to resolve it. It is a daily struggle full of tears, anger, guilt and self-doubt, but it is the only alternative to surrendering yourself to the valley.

Little by little you choose to move on. Little by little you progress toward the other side of the valley. It takes a very long time, far longer than your friends or relatives suspected. Far longer than you had believed – even prayed – that it would be. When one day you find yourself able to do more than choose merely to live but also how to live, you will know you are leaving the valley of the shadow. There will still be more work to do, more struggle and choosing. The valley, however, stretches behind rather than in front of you.

When you have resolved your grief by reinvesting in life, you will be able to realize that nothing is ever "the same." Life is change. We would not have it be otherwise, for that is the valley of the shadow. Change has the promise of beginning and the excitement of discovery.

Life is never the same. Life is change. Choose life!

Marcia F. Alig
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey



Phone Friends

All of the people on the following list are bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. They understand what you are going through and have all wished to be included in this list in the hope that anyone who needs to talk will reach out to them. They are willing to talk with you at any time you need their support. Some have listed the specific area in which they have personal experience but they do not intend to imply that that is the only topic they wish to talk about. We all have experienced this journey through grief and it encompasses much more than the specifics surrounding our individual loss. Having a compassionate person to listen when you are having a bad day or just need someone to reach out to when you feel overwhelmed can make the difference in getting through one more day. We have all been there and understand, please feel free to contact any one of us.

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