



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.

FEBRUARY 2022

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, February 8, 2022)

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

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

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.



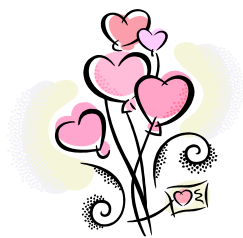


Our Children, Siblings, and Grandchildren Remembered

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Natalia Lopez - Daughter of Melissa Lopez
Devin Giblin - Son of Tanya Giblin
Ryan Mitchell Smith - Son of Anne-Marie Smith
Jonathon Kuta - Son of Larry & Terri Kuta
Jeff Shinsky - Son of Margaret Butler
Jason Allen Denbo - Son of Donna J. Denbo
Jason Lucher - Brother of Kerri Lucher
Ryder & Levi Wagner - Sons of Susan & R.J. Wagner
Jason Robert Kramberger, Son of Nancy & Ken Thornton
Charlotte Caldwell, Daughter of Jason & Rebecca Caldwell
Colton Alderson, Son of Jimmy Alderson and Julia Ware
Patrick Bull, Son of Tom & Gayle Bull
Christopher Gibler, Son of Susan Gibler
William Michael Shaw, Son of Mary Kay Martin
Katherine Collins, Daughter of Kevin & Paula Collins
Miller LaCour Wade, Son of Burton & Julie Wade
Moriah Clay, Daughter of Kim Clay
Amelia Tayloe, Daughter of Matthew & Misty Tayloe
Race Killen, Son of Wendy Killen
Sean Weinstein, Son of Steve & Sherry Weinstein
Creighton Heslop, Son of Barry & Kris Heslop
Jonah Basile, Son of Malea Basile
Anthony Pietrzak, Son of Joshua Pietrzak
Gerald Jennings, Son of Candy Jennings
Roxane Rucker, Daughter of Deborah Maly
Alex Coogan, Son of Tim and Amy Coogan
Kayla Cannon, Daughter of Janet Cannon





FEBRUARY ANGEL DATES

Lisa Renee Sanders - Daughter of Jim & Peggy Holland
Gregory Whitney Vinson, Son of Lance & Marilyn Vinson
Travis Walden, Son of Janet Walden
Jeff Walker - Brother of Stephanie Thrift
Matthew Brown - Son of Cathy Brown
Ryan Mitchell Smith - Son of Anne-Marie Smith
Michael Shrum, Son of Mike & Melva Shrum
Jerry Dwight Tanksley, Jr., Son of Virginia Tanksley
Christy Wempe, Daughter of Ann & Lance Parks
David Morgan - Son of Brent & Martina Morgan
Emily Crocker, Daughter of Nick & Beth Crocker
David Hendricks II, Son of David Hendricks
Leah Elizabeth Davis - Daughter of Ron & Laura Davis
Logan Xavier Venegas, Son of Rochelle Snyder
Ryder & Levi Wagner, Sons of R.J. & Susan Wagner
Amber Eileen Schulze, Daughter of Lisa Schulze
Joshua Hucklebridge, Son of Elaine White
Sloan Nagy, Son of Tammy Johnson
Tiffany Driscoll, Daughter of Dan & Cindy Driscoll
Ryan Moody, Son of Gloria Moody
William Michael Shaw, Son of Mary Kay Martin
Katherine Collins, Daughter of Kevin & Paula Collins
Miller LaCour Wade, Son of Burton & Julie Wade
Wesley Hundl, Son of Sharon Mondrik
Athena Suniga, Daughter of Selenia Suniga
Jonah Basile, Son of Malea Basile
Danielle Spivey, Daughter of Mark & Donna Spivey
Chance Barton, Son of Sherry Barton
Danielle Devillier, Daughter of Wendy Devillier



CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, February 8th. 7pm. at Trinity Lutheran Church, Family Life Center #204.

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our new member, Carolyn Kocina, lost her son Beau Kocina October 2021.

We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. We come together from all walks of life. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

45TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE AUGUST 5 - AUGUST 7



TCF 45th National Conference
Houston, TX • August 5-7, 2022

The Compassionate Friends is currently seeking workshop presenters for the 45th TCF National Conference in Houston

In life I **LOVED YOU** dearly
In **DEATH** I love you **STILL** ..
In my **HEART** you hold a place
NO-ONE could **EVER FILL**.
all-greatquotes.com



LOVE IS IMMORTAL

Many of us will resent the lengthening of time between our child's life and our own present. Others may welcome the increasing distance in the hope that time itself will be a balm to pain. Yet, all of us perceive, beyond all the hype and expectations, that new years and seasons are merely calendar events.

Whatever problems we have had in the past will follow us into the present. There is no inner demarcation with hurting behind and joy ahead.

Each of us has the same opportunities now as we had before. We can permit time to simply pass, or we can work to mold its passage into constructive growth.

In the deaths of our children we have discovered with certainty that we lack the means to control the most cherished elements of our lives. But we also know that within each of us is the potential to rise above the debilitating anguish we have experienced.

Time continues to move forward and most of us have been too damaged to even play the games of resolutions and dance the rites of spring. We are beyond the futility of such exercises. But, let us each confront this moment and time with an inward commitment to recovery, to living the hours which comprise our existence with the fullness and love of which we are capable.

Hurting will ultimately lessen. Pain will slowly become more bearable. Fears and guilt will gradually pass away. But love, that inner dance of the heart which leaps to our child's name or the memory of an especially close experience that bears only the mantle of endless joy, will not pass away. All else, fame, fortune, distress and dismay, wealth and power, even ourselves, will at last be done.

But love...Love is immortal...May the immortality of love grow secure and healthy again within each of us.

Don Hackett
Plymouth, MA
From ALIVE ALONE



Forever In My Heart

You are forever in my heart
The day will come, I know
When all the rain has fallen
And the sun begins to show

I'll think of you in all I do
Your warmth will touch my face
You'll twinkle in the starlight
And be held in each embrace

So please do not be saddened
If a tear for you I shed
But we had dreams and wishes
Which I'll safely keep instead

Although it hurts, I understand
You'd somewhere else to be
Our time together has not passed
You'll always be with me

In every day, in every way
You'll always be a part
My precious little angel
You're forever in my heart



**As long as I live, you will
live.**

**As long as I live, you will be
remembered.**

**As long as I live, you will be
loved.**

--Unknown

SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE

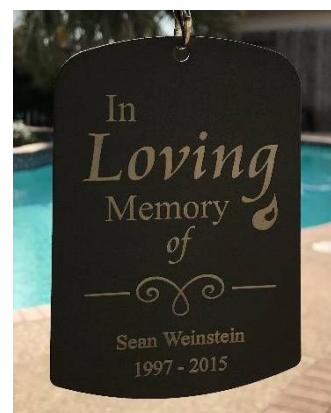
Sean Weinstein

We all get discouraged as the days pass, as more and more people either forget that our child is forever a part of our lives and they do not talk of them or celebrate them except when we bring them up. Some of us may have a great support system, but I am sure that all of us are desperate that our child's memory has not been forgotten. We do not hear much from the people that we would expect to hear from. It is very depressing and becomes a great source of frustration at times. This has occurred to us over the 2 years since we lost our precious child Sean. One of Steve's co-workers has checked up on us every three to four months and we meet for lunch and talk freely about Sean. This is more than we get to talk about him to just about everyone we know, except for parents who have also lost their children. This last time we met for lunch we were touched beyond belief when she gave us a beautiful and precious gift. She also shared with us some words she found on Facebook which she found to be very appropriate for everyone. For all of us who share the same daily frustrations that we do, it only takes one person to make a difference and we hope you all experience this at some time. We are honored to be able to show you this precious gift and the profound words that she also found and shared with us.

Steve & Sherry Weinstein
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter

On each tube of the wind chime is written:

*Memories,
They remind us of people and things we hold dear.
They bring smiles, laughter and sometimes tears.
No matter what others may do or say,
Nothing will ever take these memories away.
Memories are more than just a link to the past,
Sometimes they're all we have that will last.*





1-17-2022

Dear James,

I miss you! Somehow these words feel empty. I've said them over and over during these past three years with the unconscious hope that these words would somehow bring you back. I've used these words to shadow and cover the guilt that I feel. I've said these words so many times, they now feel tired. I do miss you in the real sense, but time has elapsed, and I've fallen into a routine of saying the words without feeling the words. I feel tired and drained of all I have had to give, offer or accept.

I poured everything I had into raising you and your sister as a single mom. I poured everything I had into grieving over the last three years and now it takes so much energy to continue saying these three tiny words. There was always the underlying hope that if I said them enough, you would return, and this would all be a dream. The hope that this wasn't my fault or by some slim chance, I had made the cut for mother of the year.

Drugs stole your precious life. They ate away at our reality as a family and distorted your beliefs about who you were. I was losing you long before you were gone. I was missing you while you were still alive. I was missing myself. I longed for the days and times when we could both be happy and free and enjoy each other's company. I looked forward to the future, when the drugs would be a thing of the past and we could sit and carry-on hour-long conversations. My hopes and beliefs that you could overcome this "phase" all but shattered on October 13th, 2018. From that moment on I continued to miss you. I miss the hopes and dreams I had for you...for us. I miss the connection we once had and the struggles we shared together. I miss listening to your innocent sense of humor and your colorful facial expressions. You were wise, intelligent and so intuitive for your age. You were a beautiful soul, and I am so sorry I didn't always appreciate these things when you were here. You were always loved beyond words and actions. You had the ability to carve out a beautiful future, but then it was over! Over before it began!

I do miss you James...with all of my body and soul. As I write, these three little words are no longer empty, but full of emotion. Full of love and heartbreak at the same time. Being your mother was a gift and I am so grateful that I had 19 years with you, but I still miss YOU! Not the memories or the hopes and beliefs that only come from my mind. I miss my Son...the person I once knew, the small innocent child, the curious adolescent and the wandering teenager. I love you now as I loved you then and because of that...I will always miss you!

Janet Ropp
Loving memory of my son James Ropp
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter



LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY

"Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren't so crushing." Sounds familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous "ouchies" can compare with the hurt we feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have, so...we are stuck with this pain, this grief and what do we do with it? Surely we can't live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable...some day.

TIME...the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child...the first word, first tooth, first date, first car...now we don't have that measure any more. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse.

So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME...to hurt, to grieve, to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be "crazy" and TIME to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress through grief against anyone else's. Be your own timekeeper.

Don't push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and then moments...but don't expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don't get over grief...it only becomes tolerable and livable. Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost, try thinking of how much you had. Try letting good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn't lose our child...HE [SHE] DIED. We don't lose the love that flowed between us...it still flows, but differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn't love so very much, it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I'm very glad I loved. Don't let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of the loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!

Darcie D. Sims

*"If there ever comes a day when we
can't be together, keep me in your
heart, I'll stay there forever."
- Winnie the Pooh*



Broken Heart Syndrome

One afternoon, I was channel surfing looking for something to watch when I came across the Oprah Winfrey Channel. She was interviewing a woman named Madonna Badger. On Christmas Day, 2011, Madonna's 7 year old twins, a boy and a girl, her 9 year old daughter and her parents all died in a horrific house fire. She spoke of the unrelenting grief and sorrow she has suffered in the years since. I was riveted to the television screen as she recanted her story. As she talked, she coined a phrase that I had never heard of before to describe her pain, "Broken Heart Syndrome." It is a temporary condition that is brought on by extreme stressful situations, such as the death of someone deeply loved.

I thought, finally there is a label for the intense pain and suffering that those who grieve feel! Broken Heart Syndrome is an identifiable condition brought on by stressful situations, such as the death of a loved one. Broken Heart Syndrome is also called *takotsubo cardiomyopathy*. Broken Heart Syndrome manifests as a temporary disruption of the heart's normal pumping function or with even more forceful contractions, while the remainder of the heart functions normally. Symptoms can include chest pain and shortness of breath. It effects more women than men. It is attributed to a reaction to a surge of stress hormones.

After my daughter died, I suffered with intense bouts of pain on the outer left muscular wall of my upper torso. An EKG revealed no abnormalities. Seven years later, I still never know when this pain might reoccur. I have however connected my episodes with certain stressors, such as; my child's birth and death dates, holidays and special occasions.

Although doctors are just now learning about this condition, the good news is that broken heart syndrome is treatable and the discomfort should abate with time. If you think you might be suffering from broken heart syndrome, you should discuss it with you physician.

Let us all take care of our own hearts this Valentine's Day.

Janet Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX



Valentine Message



I send this message to my child
Who no longer walks this plane,
A message filled with love
yet also filled with pain.

My heart continues to skip a beat
When I ponder your early death
As I think of times we'll never share
I must stop to catch my breath.

Valentine's Day is for those who love
And for those who receive love, too
For a parent the perfect love in life
Is the love I've given you.

I'm thinking of you this day, my child,
With a sadness that is unspoken
As I mark another Valentine's Day
With a heart that is forever broken.

*The pain of today
Shares space with the
Memories of love
Love does not change
Love is not broken
Love never dies
Love is FOREVER*

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www.TheGriefToolbox.com

www.facebook.com/griefftoolbox

~Tanya Lord



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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