



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.

NOVEMBER 2023

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 14, 2023

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.





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

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1951-Pamela Ann Roberson, Daughter of Doris & Dale Hockstra
2005-Carson Hayes Gurgonus, Son of Amber Gurgonus
1976-Bryan Belveal , Son of Linda Belveal
1974-Michael Shrum , Son of Mike & Melva Shrum
1980-Michael Brent Police, Son of Jack & Sally Police
1984-Phillip Matthew Terrell, Son of Phillip & Mary Jo Terrell
1968-Jenny Nolan Burgess, Daughter of Jenelle Chamberlain
1998-Samantha Alonso, Daughter of Joanna Alonso
1985-Alan Jerome Austin, Son of Rhonda Austin
2004-Brett Collins, Son of Bill & Geri Collins
1978-Shelly Vick Hopkins, Daughter of Brandon & Paula Lansford
1985-Erin Johnson, Daughter of Rebecca Johnson
2012-George Milo Morfin, Jr., Son of Diana Abidin
1988- Katrina Martinez, Daughter of Amy Kohl
1991- Devyn Sloterdijk, Son of Janet Sloterdijk
2004- Lhwhyh Yhshrhal, Son of Taneshia Carey
1985- Adam Kujawa, Son of Larry and Sara Kujawa
2014 -Luke Curry, Son of Lynsy Curry
1989- Kellie Martin, Daughter of Denise Martin
1979- Bryan Selby, Son of Dennis Selby
1978- Nicole Speir, Daughter of Sue Speir
1974- Keri, Daughter of Darlene McGhee
1977- Wes, Son of Darlene McGhee
1993- Michael Jansen, Son of Mike and Linda Jansen
1987- Jacob Hamburg, Son of Faith Hamburg
1978- Matthew Lopez, Son of Rick Lopez
1972- Bruce Young, Son of Barbara Young

***Today I celebrate the life you lived and the blessing that you were to me
during your time on Earth. I remember you. I feel you.***

I know you exist in my heart and elsewhere.

I love you.

Today, in your honor,

I celebrate Life.



Lighting a candle, remembering a life

NOVEMBER ANGEL DATES

2010- Trace Thornton, Son of Nina Thornton
2007- Garrett Conrad Ford, Son of Leigh Heard
2009- Makaylin Angel, Daughter of Jennifer Edwards
2005- Ava Helena Wallheimer, Daughter of Angela Wallheimer
2007- Kate Bronstein, Daughter of Pat Gallien
2008- Melissa Ellen Blackbird, Daughter of Will & Pam Blackbird
2008- Charles James Booth, Son of Mary Booth
2005- Ryan Matthews, Son of Frances Matthews
11/19 Jonathon Kuta, Son of Larry & Terri Kuta
2009- Lance Anderson, Son of John & Dianna Brumley
2009- Phillip Matthew Terrell, Son of Phillip & Mary Jo Terrell
2007- Megan Kathleen Ratliff, Daughter of Ann & Garvon Ratliff
2011- Nancy Elizabeth Gonzalez, Daughter of Dulce Gonzalez
2010- Kristen Roberts, Daughter of Tom & Geneva Montgomery
2012-George Milo Morfin, Jr., Son of Diana Abidin
2014 -Kristi Whitehorn Hill, Daughter of Susan Whitehorn
2014 - April Ann Ulrich, Daughter of Doug & Josette Tharp
2015- Baron Neelley, Son of Bo & Allison Neeley
2015- Sean Weinstein, Son of Steve & Sherry Weinstein
2015- Creighton Heslop, Son of Barry & Kris Heslop
2015- Marc Pournier, Son of Jolena Pournier
2014- Jamie Leonard, Son of Carrie Newman
2018- Angelique Duncan, Daughter of Rosalyn Fagen
2019- Bonnie Baszkiewicz, Daughter of Eve Baszkiewicz
1974- Keri, Daughter of Darlene McGhee
2016- Galencia Symone, Daughter of Titilayo Traylor

My Angel Day

***Yes Mom, this is my Angel Day
From my earthly life, I know I left quite soon
But only to enter my greatest reward in Glory
Far beyond the moon***

***Today you'll perform your loving rituals
And do your best to keep my memory aware
Yes Mom, this ritual is for both of us
For I am both here and there***

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 14th at 7pm.

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our newest members, **Janey Chambless lost her granddaughter Kennedy Jane Parks in February of this year.** 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!



**The Houston Northwest Chapter of The Compassionate Friends
Candle Lighting Service will be held
Sunday, December 10, 2023
Time: 6:30
Trinity Lutheran Church
5201 Spring Cypress Rd.
Spring, TX 77379**

We will hold our Candle Lighting Ceremony at Trinity Lutheran Church. The Klein Collins Theatre students will provide the presentations. Food and drinks will be provided by the chapter. There will be a remembrance slide show of our children. Email 3 or 4 pictures of your child along with their name, birth and angel dates to Darry Heino (darrylheino@gmail.com). Please have them sent in by December 4th to allow time to construct the video.

A NEW THANKSGIVING

On Thanksgiving morning 1991, I was standing at the sink, peeling potatoes. The turkey was in the oven, the pies were cooling on the sideboard. Just another normal holiday morning. At 10:30 the phone rang. I was closest, so I answered it.

That call from the San Diego medical examiner changed my life forever.

Within seconds our whole household was in chaos and shock our beautiful daughter Nancy had been killed in a car accident earlier that morning.

How could this be? I had just talked with her less than 24 hours before. She had wished us a "happy Turkey Day" and closed her call with "I love you, Mom." That was to be the last time I would hear her voice.

How did I get from that day of wrenching pain to this day nine years later? The simple answer is: a minute, an hour, a day at a time....putting one foot in front of the other, reaching out for people who had been where I was.

The first Thanksgiving after Nancy's death was the most difficult. I couldn't bring myself to cook or even look at a turkey. The decorated paper plates and napkins in the store were sickening to me. My solution to the turkey was to serve prime rib instead. That strategy got me through the next two Thanksgivings.

One of my watershed moments came on the fourth Thanksgiving after Nancy's accident. My surviving children wanted the traditional turkey-and-trimmings dinner. They missed the old ways. The truth is, they had moved forward and they wanted me to take that step also.

Reluctantly, I obliged, but with a heavy heart. With red roses nearby and her candle lit, we gathered together and counted our blessings.

Today with love and support of family and friends, I will once again prepare the Thanksgiving dinner. It will always be "different." I can't change what was. I can, however, choose to embrace the life I have now. There is so much more to be grateful for. Not a day goes by that I don't count my blessings. Among the greatest of these is the love of family and friends, and peace in my heart.

I truly believe that those blessings can be yours, too. Time, tears, love of family, good friends, and reinvestment can lead you there.

Mary Conway
TCF, Nashville, TN
In Memory of my daughter, Nancy

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

I'm thankful this Thanksgiving
That my grief is not so new.
Last year it was so painful
To think of losing you.
Death can't claim my love for you
Though we are far apart,
Sweet memories will always be
Engraved upon my heart.
Time can never bring you back.
But it can help me be
Thankful for the years of joy
You brought our family.
To all the parents with grief so new
I share your loss and sorrow.
I pray you find with faith and time
The blessings of each tomorrow.

Charlotte Irick
TCF, Idaho Falls, ID



To Our Family and Friends

The "Holiday Season" is a time of family – festive gatherings, worshiping together, sharing love and gifts, and cherished memories. For the bereaved parent, these aspects of the season are precisely what makes us dread its arrival.

The absence of our child when the "whole family" gathers seems to accentuate our incomplete family. We are sorely reminded of "how it used to be" and don't want to accept what is now. We need patience and understanding of our family and friends to help us through the holidays as best we can.

We may want to change the way we spend Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Hanukkah. If the family traditionally gathers at one house, perhaps the gathering place could be changed, especially if the gathering home is that of the bereaved. If we do prepare the meal, be aware that we may not have the energy we have had in the past and will need a lot of help.

Perhaps we'll try to avoid the holiday altogether by going away for a few days. Whatever our thoughts are for coping with the day, please take our feelings into consideration when you make your plans.

For some of us shopping for gifts is a painful experience. The stores' festive decorations and music belie our mood, as we feel forced into participating in the "season." We think longingly about that special gift we won't be buying this year. Again, our depression saps us of the energy to do the things we have done in the past, and we need your understanding for the things that remain undone.

Perhaps the single most helpful thing you can do for us is to include our child in the holidays. We want to hear his/her name, to have you recall fond memories of their lives, to know that you, too, are feeling their absence and remembering them with love.

Getting through the holidays is a rough task for bereaved parents. We need to handle them in a way that we feel is best for ourselves and our families. We ask for your love and support during this especially difficult time.

Marge Henning
TCF West Orange, NJ



GRATITUDE.... THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude. I did not come upon this insight. I learned it from Dennis Prager, a wonderful and gifted man who is both author and talk show host for KNBC radio in Los Angeles. I give him all the credit. But I have thought a lot about this idea after my son, Mark, died five years ago tomorrow.

At first I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during The Compassionate Friends meetings. These were the people who seemed to have somehow re-entered the land of the living. How dare they greet each other with hugs. How dare they laugh. How dare they appear normal when their children have died. But over the last seven years I have learned three valuable lessons:

- Life goes on and we must too. Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that it's 11:00 in the morning and we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt. But then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget. But we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life. We choose to enjoy friends again. We choose to go out to dinner again. We choose to laugh again. I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us. The pain does not bring our child back. It only makes us miserable without end.

- Become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost. I see people in our chapter meetings who have gone through "every parent's nightmare" and want no part of life again. But, I ask that these compassionate friends also think about the ways they have been

blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize: health, other children, a loving family, a career they enjoy, financial security, life in a free country, a faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse who they love. Nobody has it all. But compared to most of the world, we have a lot.

- The life we now lead will be better than it would have been. That does not make our child's death a good thing. It just means that our child's life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be better because our child lived, and we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don't "sweat the small stuff." We know what matters because we know what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt because we, too, have been there. We "know how they feel."

And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten. Each of us would do anything in the world to go back in time, but we can't. It is up to us now to go forward, and we can.

Richard Edler
TCF South Bay/LA, CA

In Memory of my son Mark Edler

As published in We Need Not Walk Alone, 1999 Anniversary Issue



JUST FLOW WITH THE SEASON AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

We're well into November and it's almost time to take the "January pill". After Tricia died I decided I'd invent a pill you could take the week before Thanksgiving and when you came to, it would be January! I'm still working on the invention. In the meantime, I know many of you are already dreading the approaching holidays.

The true spirit and meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas are not necessarily exemplified by some of our "traditions". You are re-evaluating many aspects of your life so let this also apply to the coming holidays. You will not always feel as you do now. You will find joy in holiday activities, but maybe not in all the things you once thought so very important.

Flow with the season and with your sadness, knowing strength will come as you work with what you can do without overtaxing yourself. Resolve to be as generous with your energy as you can and as selfish as you have to be to protect the emerging person you will become as a result of your loss. This person can be truly beautiful and loving because of what you have learned through grief.

You will miss your child; no magic potion can wipe the pain away. Enjoy what you can—you deserve some pleasure. And may some measure of peace overtake you before this year ends.

Elizabeth B. Estes
TCF Augusta, GA
In Memory of Tricia

THANKSGIVING



You may ask, “What do I have to be thankful for now that my child is dead?” After the death of a child, where is the joy in a day off from work? What pleasure can we derive from sitting around a table when someone is missing, and an uttered prayer of thanksgiving echoes hollow in our hearts?

Maybe we have been concentrating on the loss which has brought the overwhelming sorrow of death, and have forgotten the complete joy of life. When I remember laughing brown eyes, a mischievous grin, a scraped knee that Mommy could fix, a new word learned, even the memory of the realization that I had a baby boy, I have a great deal to be thankful for. I had 2 1/2 years of a dream come true, and I’m truly thankful I had my child.

Sure, the agony of grief, the anguish of losing my precious child to death, the torture of wanting to see that child grow and mature and the pain of never knowing, rips me up.

There is no Thanksgiving in entertaining these thoughts, so this month I am going to concentrate on the Living of my child, the Life that brought me so much joy. In this I am thankful that Evan was born, thankful that he lived, thankful that even for those short 30 months—I lived them too. Even so, as he lived once, I live now and want a productive life.

I am thankful I have come that far in my grief work to know I want to live and remember the good times without sorrow. And, I am thankful for my husband, who stood by me during the rough times. The husband who is the father of the child of our love. In him I have found my child, in our marriage I have found love, and that love taught us how to love that child. I am also thankful for you, my real friends—Compassionate Friends.

Edie Kaplan
TCF Ft. Lauderdale, FL
In Memory of my son, Evan



You have it easily in your power to increase the sum total of this world's happiness now. How? By giving a few words of sincere appreciation to someone who is lonely or discouraged. Perhaps you will forget tomorrow the kind words you say today, but the recipient may cherish them over a lifetime.

Dale Carnegie

THE KEEPERS OF MEMORIES

You make friends because you have things in common.
We are friends because of our children.
The older ones, the younger ones,
the one who never even had a chance to breathe.

They are our reason for being.
Our heartbeat, our life's blood.
Whether we have lots of memories or only a few,
we are joined by an unbreakable bond.

We are the ones left behind, to remember
and carry the torch for those we remember so lovingly.
We are there for ourselves and each other.
Because we understand the pain of loss.

We must also be there for those who unfortunately join our ranks.
Because we are the parent of lost children,
the bruised hearts,
the keepers of memories.

Cheryl Pelletier
TCF Concord NH



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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