



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.

OCTOBER 2016

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

Cypress Creek Christian Church Community Center
6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room 20
Spring, Texas 77379

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

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, 11th)

We are located between Stuebner-Airline and Kuykendahl, about 2 miles North of FM 1960 West. The Community Center is located behind the church, between the courthouse and Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the church/community center parking lot. Follow the posted signs to our meeting room.

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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.....

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

2008-Maxwell B. Heath, Son of Carrie & Dirk Heath
1986-Brendon Chase Mooney, Son of Richard & Joan Mooney
1981-Amanda Cristina Ramirez-Velazquez , Daughter of Cynthia Cruz
1986-Tara Michelle Rose, Daughter of Angie Rose
1972-Grant Koval, Son of Linda Koval
1983-Kevin Donat, Son of Diane Donat
1999-Joselito C. M. Boquilon, Son of Raulito & Kim Boquilon
1980-Felipe Danny Sanchez, Son of Lupe Sanchez
1968-Travis Davis, Son of Sharyl Davis
1988-Kayla Lower, Daughter of Lori Morris
1994-Braden Hughes Patton, Son of Sherill and Chase Patton
1963-Robert Elizeus, Son of Joanne Wycoff
1988-DeAndria Sharee Anderson, Daughter of Rawn & Loretta Stephens
1989-Michael Vincent Ledwig, Son of Mary Ann Ledwig
1985-Jenny, Daughter of John and Debbie Ryan
1975-Aimee Hurst, Daughter of Doris Odell
1967-Julie Less, Daughter of Jim Less, Sister of Susan Less
1994-Vanessa Whitford, Daughter of Russell & Nury Whitford
1981-Michael Haner, Son of Jeanne Haner
1991-Jacob Landon, Son of Brenda Landon
1971-Tony Dizona, Son of Rosemary Dizona



***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

OCTOBER ANGEL DATES

2010 Delaney Womack, Daughter of Carrie & Eric Womack
2010 Sean Hengel, Son of Laura Hengel
2004 Kristal Randolph Gilbert and Unborn Son,
Daughter and Grandson of Josephine Babineaux
2009 Travis Davis, Son of Sharyl Davis
2009 Patrick Noel Jernigan, II, Son of Juanice Jernigan
2009 BreAnna Brashear, Daughter of Julie Jones
2004 Kristine Ashley Bergaila, Daughter of Kathleen Livingston
2008 Bryan Russell Lewis, Son of Olga Lydia Lewis
2008 Shane Woodson, Son of Theresa Woodson
2008 Kayla C. Ladner, Daughter of Stephen Ladner
2009 Natalia Lopez, Daughter of Melissa Lopez
2007 Deborah Levy, Daughter of Pat Morgan
2011 Katelyn Holmes, Daughter of Melinda Holmes
2012- Kimberly Wise, Daughter of Patsy Grubbs
2009- Allison, Daughter of Ingrid Todd
2013-Braiden Mainor, Grandson of Barbara Herring
2011-Nevaeh Ramirez, Daughter of Amy Ramirez
1995-Christina, Granddaughter of Barbara Thomas
2007-Ryan Gibler, Son of Susan Gibler
2010-Donna Weston, Daughter of Roberta Ware
2014-David Arthur, Son of Cathy Arthur
2014-Brayon Molden, Step-Son of Reagan Molden
2013-Korie Joiner, Daughter of Julie and Brad Joiner
2015-Kacie Joiner, Daughter of Julie and Brad Joiner
2015-Christopher "Cole" Knight, Son of Ken and Jan Knight
2014-Tony Dizona, Son of Rosemary Dizona
2015-Lindie, Daughter of Beth Shelton



CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is **Tuesday, October 11 th. at 7pm.**

Parents that have lost an infant, toddler, or have had a miscarriage or stillbirth will meeting on Thursday, October 13th at 7pm. For more information contact Julie Joiner at 832-724-4299 for more information.

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

Our warmest welcome to our newest member **Monika Heino, she lost her son Justin in 1983.** 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.

"A Special Remembrance"

Chapter members please consider submitting a short story about your child for our newsletter. Tell us about the happy times of your child's life, their hobbies, the school they went to or where they worked. Did they have siblings. Or you may consider sharing your grief journey with others so they will come know there is hope after the darkness. Send your articles to me, Linda Brewer at llbrewer67@hotmail.com

Love Gifts – A Way to Remember

There are no dues to belong to Compassionate Friends, because we have already paid the ultimate price; the loss of our loved one(s). A Love Gift is a gift of money given in honor of a child, who has died, or a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help support our Chapter. Your gifts are tax deductible and are used to reach out to other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Your gifts support this newsletter, our TCF Library, and other Chapter expenses.

***Seeking help is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength....
It takes bravery to be vulnerable with another person.***

Save the Dates:

**A Day with Mitch and Alan"
October 22, 2016**

**A Full Day Workshop for Healing and Hope along with a Butterfly
Release**

"A Day with Mitch and Alan" workshop is for bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings, as well as professionals in fields supporting the bereaved. This full day of awareness, led by two bereaved fathers, Mitch Carmody and Alan Pedersen, shares what they have learned on the long and difficult journey of processing grief.

Mitch Carmody, author and grief expert, and Alan Pedersen, executive director of The Compassionate Friends, combine music, art, love, and laughter to help the bereaved navigate through the dark waters of loss and recovery. Topics include: Proactive Grieving, The Power of Vulnerability & Somatic Integration, Healing Guilt & Regret and Complicated Grief, and Signs, Dreams and Synchronicities.

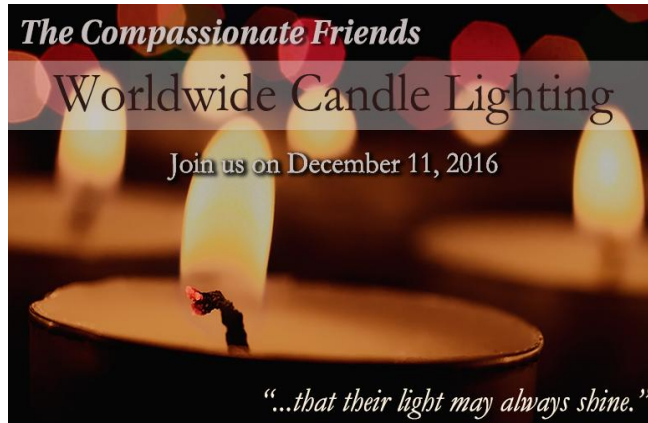
They are 'Facilitators of Proactive Grieving' not only because that describes best what they do but more globally describes an emerging paradigm shift in how we process the devastating losses that occur in our lives.

Registration deadline is October 1, 2016. \$30 cost includes the full day workshop, morning coffee, box lunch and a butterfly release. For professionals, the \$70 cost (\$100 at door - if available) also includes 6 CEUs as this workshop has been approved for continuing education credits for Social Workers, LPCs and LMFTs by the Texas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

The workshop will be conducted Saturday, October 22, 2016, at the Westbury United Methodist Church 5200 Willowbend Blvd. Houston TX. Doors open at 8:00am with the workshop beginning at 9:00am. Walk-in registration (if space is available) will not include lunch.

Sunday, December 11, 2016

**The Compassionate Friends
Worldwide Candle Lighting**



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

July 28-30, 2017
40th TCF National Conference
Orlando, Florida



The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Orlando, Florida, will be the site of the 40th TCF National Conference on July 28-30, 2017. "Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope" is the theme of next year's event, which promises more of this year's great National Conference experience. The 2017 Conference will be held at the the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Here's a topic for discussion. Let's talk about it at our next meeting.

Unresolved Grief

There is no definite point in time or a list of symptoms that define unresolved grief. It may also be used to describe grief that does not go away or interferes with the person's ability to take care of daily responsibilities.

Unresolved grief tends to be more common in people who:

- Are unsure how they feel about the person they lost.
- Have a negative opinion of themselves (low self-esteem).
- Feel guilty about the loss, such as people who think they could have prevented a serious accident or death.
- Think the loss was a result of unfairness, such as losing a loved one as a result of a violent act.
- Experienced the unexpected or violent death of a loved one. People who experience a traumatic loss are at risk for developing [post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#).
- Experience a loss that others might not recognize as significant, such as [miscarriage](#).

How people express unresolved grief varies. People may:

- Act as though nothing has changed. They may refuse to talk about the loss.
- Become preoccupied with the memory of the lost person. They may not be able to talk or think about anything else.
- Become overly involved with work or a hobby.
- Drink more alcohol, smoke more cigarettes, or take more medicines.
- Become overly concerned about their health in general or about an existing health condition and see a doctor more often than usual.
- Become progressively depressed or isolate themselves from other people.

In addition to the list above, teens may show unresolved grief by using illegal drugs, taking part in illegal activities (such as stealing), or having unprotected sex. They may also become more accident-prone, avoid their friends, and have difficulty completing school work.

Young children may show unresolved grief by developing behavior problems or expressing fears about being alone, especially at night.

People with unresolved grief who do not seek treatment are more likely to develop complications such as depression as a result of grieving.



Dormant Anger Erupts Unexpectedly

Over three years ago, just 15 months after my son was killed in a traffic accident, a Dodge Ram dual cab truck that was traveling at 55 miles per hour when it ran a stop sign struck the vehicle I was driving. The front end of my car was ripped from the frame, the hood was crumpled and car spun from the impact. The other driver was cited for running the stop sign. A very credible witness gave his statement. Three months later I had neck surgery for the injuries sustained in the accident. The facts were simple in my mind. He ran the stop sign. I stopped. He was negligent. His insurance company paid for my car that was totaled but stopped talking to me when the adjustor heard about the necessary surgery that was performed a month later.

Mediation failed. The defense postponed the trial eleven times. The attorneys for the defendant's two insurance companies dug in. Delay, deny, debate...the mantra of all defense attorneys now became my reality.

Finally we had a court date. The players knew their lines...the diminutive judge whose campaign election funds are donated by the attorneys who practice in his court, the four well-dressed defense attorneys, my attorney and his associate...all knew the rules. All played the game well. This was their theater, their play, and their world. I was not happy with the pre-trial instructions that ruled out much of the evidence. But I wanted my day in court. I'd served on many juries, but I had never seen this side of the courtroom. It was a revelation.

All went fairly well with the testimony of the eyewitness and the policeman who had handled the accident scene. Then it was my turn. My attorney began asking me questions and suddenly, out of somewhere in my soul, anger akin to a long dormant volcano arose. I repressed it after my attorney asked me if I was angry. That was my hint: be sweet, be likeable, Harris County juries are notorious for stingy awards. I settled back down until the louder of the six defense attorneys began asking his carefully prepared questions.

I spoke over him. I responded with no small amount of hostility. He baited me, and I swallowed the hook. The volcano unleashed. I raised my voice, became animated in my anger and finally drew the judge's wrath. I even interrupted the judge to say I was sorry. The judge raised his voice to top volume, berating me for failing to answer the questions in a single word, for continuing to respond while the defense attorney was talking. The judge gestured wildly at the court reporter, explaining that she couldn't write the words of two people at one time. Someone who was very important in his own world had chastised me. But more significantly, I had discovered something about myself: the anger that had erupted from within me like a volcano was not caused by the accident, the neck surgery, the legal-eagle games, the courtroom setting or the judicial stage.

I discovered that the repressed anger that I had managed to contain for over 4 1/2 years was still alive and well. Much was learned that day by this bereaved mother. As the volcano of anger erupted, the truth was so apparent to me that I smiled at my naivety.

Since my son's death, I have intentionally placed myself in situations where the people are gentle, positive, upbeat, balanced and not aggressive and violent in their actions or words. Subconsciously I knew that my anger was still there, and I didn't want to tempt the fates; the anger caused by the death of my only child was not going away. Now it had become apparent that my anger had to be addressed. So I brought it to the forefront of my mind as my husband and I drove home. I examined it closely, seeking an answer.

Sitting quietly that evening I realized that my anger has surfaced from time to time since my son died but never in such a nerve jolting eruption. When I realized the depth and scope of that anger, when I acknowledged its existence, when I faced it down, the volcano quietly went back to simmer. I must be very careful about quick retorts, actions without thought, words spoken in haste. I must be conscious of my anger during the process of releasing that anger in a gradual way. One day the anger volcano will become dormant.

Our grief journeys are life-long. I will always feel the many emotions that accompany the death of my only child. But each emotion has moderated over the years. My anger will be less raw, just as the other negative emotions and feelings have become less pronounced over time. Actively identifying each enemy that lives in my psyche has enabled me to address it. Negativity cannot fester when exposed to the light of hope. And, yet, I must always remember that I am still a work in progress. We are all a work in progress.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX



Honoring Unhappiness

I have re-read the book *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl more times than I can count. In it, Frankl quotes from a paper written by Edith Weisskopf-Joelson, who had been a professor at the University of Georgia. She wrote, "Our current mental-hygiene philosophy stresses the idea that people ought to be happy, that *unhappiness* is a symptom of maladjustment...in the present day culture of the United States, the incurable sufferer is given very little opportunity to be proud of his suffering and to consider it ennobling rather than degrading...so that he is not only unhappy, but also ashamed of being unhappy."

It is my hope that all bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings will have the chance to feel that our unhappiness is honored and respected by others suffering similarly. I hope we will find validation, whether from the embrace of others at chapter meetings, from words read in a newsletter, or from conversations with other bereaved parents and siblings. I hope we will not be ashamed of being unhappy. And when our time is right, I hope we may find some moments of joy and peace even as we keep our grief for our lost children and siblings.

Peggi Johnson
TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA

Losing My Son to Drugs

The death of my child brought a pain like no other, and made me question every parenting decision I've made

BY: DIANNEE CARDEN GLENN

I thought for a minute. On the surface, losing a child to overdose is no different than losing a child to disease, violence or an accident. I don't think the loss itself is any more or less painful. The level of grief over losing a child is only linked to the immeasurable love you had for them in life.

When you lose a child, nothing is ever the same again. Parents are not supposed to outlive their children. Every facet of your life has a memory of your child. Every room in the house, every trip in the car, a song, a picture, a book, a walk in the park. There is a hole in your heart that will never be filled. You search and search for answers that just aren't there. Holidays, birthdays are never the same.

You dial their phone number to tell them something and then it hits you that the phone is in your purse — but you still let it ring so that you can hear his voice: "Hello, this is Michael. I'm sorry I missed your call but leave a message and I'll call you back." You don't know why you carry it and keep it charged, but it is comforting to know it is there. That message will be the only connection ever to what his voice sounded like.

You save his clothing unwashed in a plastic bag so that you can open it and still smell his smell lest you forget. You close your eyes, breathe deep and for just a minute he is there with you. You beg, you bargain, you plead to wake up and make it all not true. You find that tears are healing. You walk up the sidewalk from the car to the cemetery and put flowers and balloons and mementos on a plot of grass, because that is the place that has his name on it, the last place you saw the box that held his body.

You hear and smell and feel things that can't possibly be there. And you talk — you talk to the dead. You work on your religion, because you have to believe that there is a better place, another place where angels sing and there is no more pain. Losing a child is a pain like no other. It creeps up on you. You go to the grocery store and as you walk past a box of Cap'n Crunch cereal, tears begin to roll down your cheeks. When you feel so much pain, it seems impossible that people can just pass by with their shopping carts, why they go on with their lives like nothing has happened. You wonder why they can't tell that someone important is missing.

What is different about losing a child to overdose? Losing a child to addiction means you didn't get to say goodbye, and you have to deal every day with the stigma of being a parent whose child died from drug use (if you are brave enough to be truthful about the cause of death). You question your every decision. You look for what you did wrong, what you didn't say, why you didn't have a second sense that something was wrong. You look back over the years, dissecting each part of their life — looking for clues. And you look at yourself and ask all of the what-ifs. You look for blame but mostly you blame yourself. You find an online group of mothers just like you, where there is no stigma and everyone has the same questions and feels the same pain with no judgment. You force yourself to read the coroner's and toxicology report hoping there is an answer there. And you cry — a lot



October's Memories

October's here, the air is bright,
The leaves decked out in fancy dress,
The clouds in shapes of animals
Hang in the sky so blue.
This was our time of year, your favorite.
How many times did you come in,
Cheeks glowing, eyes sparkling,
Smelling of the leaves you jumped through
As a child and even after you grew up.
How many times did you say
"Just smell, just feel the air.
I love it, crisp,
With a hint of winter coming."
Our time, but now only my time.
Time to dream dreams that won't be.
Time to wish wishes that can't come true
Time to remember & treasure each day we had together.
Time for October's memories.

Arden Lansing, TCF, Northfield, NJ



Remember Life

I do not ask that you forget your dear departed. I want you to remember. I only ask that you remember more than the moment of death, more than the funeral, more than the house of mourning.

Remember life! Remember the whole life, not the final page of it.

Rabbi Maurice Davis, TCF/Baltimore, Maryland

RESISTING RESENTMENT

I have been aware for years now that battling a descent into self-pity is pretty much a daily struggle. More recently, I am noticing how much I struggle with resentment.

I am at an age when many of my friends have children who are nearing adulthood or have reached adulthood. As a consequence, their lives are focused on graduations, new jobs, new apartments, weddings, and grandchildren. None of those things are happening for me and I am finding it hard. I don't resent the friends who are enjoying those life pleasures; in my own weirdly stunted way, I am happy for them. But I do resent that those things aren't going to happen for me.

Didn't I change an equal number of diapers? Didn't I nurse children through all the miseries of childhood maladies? Didn't I pack all those school lunches? Didn't I cheer at all those soccer games? I know I did.

I know I carefully assembled Easter baskets and tried to be creative about Halloween costumes. I played Santa. I never missed a Parent/Teacher conference. I organized elaborate birthday parties. I even provided pick-up and delivery service for a tuba for two years.

I cooked dinners for the Youth Group. I made gingersnaps and date nut bars and pumpkin streusel muffins (his favorites). I fixed daily BLTs in August when the tomatoes were ripe.

But my son will never graduate from college. He'll never get married. He'll never have a career. He won't have children. He won't call me on my birthday or negotiate with me about when and for how long to visit. And I resent it.

I go to Crate and Barrel, or Bed, Bath & Beyond, or Pottery Barn and I select wedding gifts from a registry. I send checks for graduations. I buy gift cards from Target for baby showers. And I resent it.

~ Peggi Johnson TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA

I Never Believed...

I never believed I would see another season change with gladness. I never believed I would see the world again without the haze of tears. I never expected to actually laugh again. I never felt my smile would return and feel natural on my face. I never hoped for another day when I would not want to die. I never envisioned a world that could again be bright and full of promise. I believed that all that had passed from me the day he died and went away, never to return. But I was wrong, and I know that in the fullness of your grieving, you too will come to understand that life goes on...that it can still have meaning...that even joy can touch your life once more.

Don Hackett
TCF Hingham, MA

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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