



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 2019

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, October 8th)

at

**Cypress Creek Christian Church
6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room #3
Spring, Texas 77379**

The Church is located between the courthouse and Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the church parking area. We meet in Room #3 which is down six steps off the main lobby of the Church on the Library side. Follow the posted signs to the 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
1982-Nathan Waldron, Son of Dan Waldron
2007-Sean Michael Gonzalez, Son of Rick & Jazmin Gonzalez
1990-Patrick O'Masters, Son of Laurie Martin
1992-Jerret Macias, Son of Betty Macias
1979-Angelique Duncan, Daughter of Rosalyn Fagen
1992-Kelsey Jackowski, Daughter of Camille Jackowski





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
2016-Corey Cole, Son of Tim and Cheryl Cole
2016-Jeffrey Scott Byers, Son of Deanna Young
2016-Amy Lynn Kramberger, Daughter of Nancy and Ken Thornton
2017-Reagan Ottnat, Daughter of Stacy Ottnat
2017-Bryce Cook, Son of Faye Cook
2018-James Ropp, Son of Janet Ropp



CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, October 8th. at 7pm.

Save the Date:

Sunday, December 8, 2019
The Compassionate Friends
Worldwide Candle Lighting
at

NEW LOCATION

Trinity Lutheran Klein
5201 Spring Cypress Rd.
Spring, TX 77379



This year we will hold our Candle Lighting Services at Trinity Lutheran Church Klein, 5201 Spring Cypress Rd., Spring 77379. As in past years the Jersey Village High School Players will perform for us. There will be readings and performances by the JV Players. A message board and of course the candle lighting at 7pm. Bring a picture of your child. All friends and family are welcome to attend the 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.

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



COURAGE

My brother died three years ago when he was seventeen years old. It was an accident when he fell while hiking in the mountains. I was fifteen and my brother was my hero. I would do anything to make him proud. When I lost him, I could have just given up. I have the courage to love people even though I know that I could lose them. I had many opportunities to just forget everyone else and lose myself. My brother was my best friend and when he died I could have too.

I decided that he would not have wanted me to throw my life away. I try my hardest to work hard in school and live up to what his expectations would have been. I am not living just for him. I am living for myself. A lot of people like to escape their problems by drinking or doing drugs. Alcohol and drugs only make problems worse because escaping a problem is not solving the problem. Self-respect means knowing who you are and treating yourself with dignity. I want people to look at me and to respect me. Staying in school and working to my potential is essential for respect. People cannot respect those who do not respect themselves. As Shakespeare said, "This above all else, to thine own self be true."

I do not make choices based on what the popular decision is. I base my thoughts and ideas on what I believe is right and important. I know that my brother would have been proud of me, because I made it through the most difficult time in my life, without him. I kept living when I lost the most important person in the world to me.

Courage is to keep fighting even though it looks like you are going to lose. When he died, I felt the world crash down on me. Everything I ever hoped for just seemed empty. Even now sometimes it will just hit me that my brother is gone. I have to keep on living and facing the world because that is what life is all about. Sometimes things happen that seem impossible to face. If I do not face my problems, who will?

Life is not supposed to be easy but it is not devastating either. There are so many wonderful things that happen and I have to have the courage to realize it. Life is not just a long line of problems. It is also a long line of answers. I need courage and self-respect to find these answers. I have to trust myself and my future that everything will work out. It always does. The answers to life's problems can only be found through hard work and belief in yourself. My belief in myself comes from a big brother who always had faith in me.

Patricia Kelley
TCF Richmond, VA

In Memory of my brother, Sean 8/24/76 - 8/28/93



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

The Loss of A Child

The moment I knew that you had died, my heart split in two
One side filled with memories, the other died with you.

I often lay awake at night, when the world is fast asleep
And take a walk down memory lane, with tears upon my cheek.

Remembering you is easy, I do it every day
But missing you is a heartache, that never goes away.

I hold you tightly within my heart, and there you will remain
Life has gone on without you, but it will never be the same.

Don't tell me that you understand, don't tell me that you know
Don't tell me that I will survive, how I will surely grow.

Don't tell me that this is just a test, that I am truly blessed
That I am chosen for the task, apart from all the rest.

Don't come to me with answers, that can only come from me
Don't tell me that my grief will pass, that soon I will be free.

Don't stand in pious judgement, of the bonds I must untie.
Don't tell me how to grieve, don't tell me when to cry.

Accept me in my ups and downs, I need someone to share
Just hold my hand and let me cry, and say
"My friend, I care"

~Author Unknown~



**When you turn your grief into remembrance, you are magnifying
the life of the loved ones you lost and allowing other people to get to
know them in some way.**

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
August 1, 2014



Spirit Gifts

Grief is such an individual journey. We are cast on its path without our consent, enveloped by a depth of pain we never dreamed existed. We all have times when despair and loneliness threaten to engulf us.

But we do have one companion on this lonely, unsought road: our child who died. I think there is never a moment in the day when a part of me is not connected to Philip, to our years together—and to our present relationship. Our journey through grief is a good-bye to the physical presence of our children, but it is never good-bye to their spirits and to the essence of their beings. Philip lives inside me now, and the same gifts he gave me when he was physically alive are still available to me through his spirit. In some ways, those "spirit gifts" are stronger, because they are contained and undiluted within me.

When the days get unbearably hard, when I think of all this wonderful young man missed by not getting to live out his life, I try to remember to focus on the present Philip, the one inside me. I try to integrate his gifts into my life, sometimes seeing through his eyes, thinking from his heart and mind. Often when I walk in the hills, I'll hear his voice: "Pay attention, Mom." (He noticed the details in nature so much more than I.)

No matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains within you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still alive.

...May the spirit of the child who lives so deep within your heart help you through this month and through every moment of the re-establishing of your life.

Catharine (Kitty) Reeve
Newsletter Editor, TCF Marin and San Francisco Chapters, CA
Reprint permission granted by author to TCF
In Memory of my son, Philip

Your Compassionate Friend

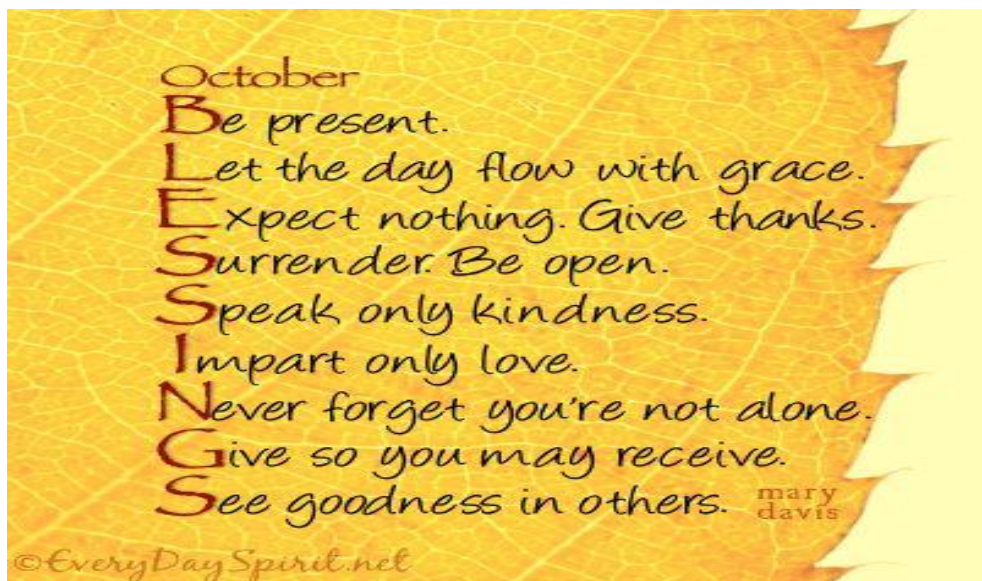
**By: Steven L. Channing
The Compassionate Friends, Winnipeg, Canada**

**I can tell by that look friend, that you need to talk,
So come take my hand and let's go for a walk.
See, I'm not like the others - I won't shy away,
Because I want to hear what you've got to say.
Your child has died and you need to be heard,
But they don't want to hear a single word.
They tell you your child's "with God", so be strong.
They say all the "right" things that somehow seem wrong.
They're just hurting for you and trying to say,
They'd give anything to help take your pain away.
But they're struggling with feelings they can't understand
So forgive them for not offering a helping hand.
I'll walk in your shoes for more than a mile.
I'll wait while you cry and be glad if you smile.
I won't criticize you or judge you or scorn,
I'll just stay and listen 'til your night turns to morn.
Yes, the journey is hard and unbearably long,
And I know that you think that you're not quite that strong.
So just take my hand 'cause I've got time to spare,
And I know how it hurts, friend, for I have been there.
See, I owe a debt you can help me repay
For not long ago, I was helped the same way.
As I stumbled and fell thru a world so unreal,
So believe when I say that I know how you feel.
I don't look for praise or financial gain
And I'm sure not the kind who gets joy out of pain.
I'm just a strong shoulder who'll be here 'til the end-
I'll be your Compassionate Friend.**

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



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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