



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 2021

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, October 12, 2021)

at

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

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

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

You Are Not Alone

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

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

To the Newly Bereaved

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

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

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

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





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

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
2001-Dylan Wheeler, Son of Gavin and Rachel Wheeler



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
2019-Chantal Warfield, Daughter of Jacqueline Smith
2014-Jake Hickford, Son of Henry Hickford



CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, October 12th. at 7pm. The next Zoom meeting will be Tuesday, October 26th at 7pm.

**Save the Date
Compassionate Friends
Worldwide Candle Lighting date this year:
Sunday, December 12, 2021**



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.



Reflections On The Loss Of My Children.
By: Nancy Thornton
April 12, 2017

Today marks the 6 month anniversary of my beautiful, amazing daughter's death. I miss her beyond words. She was diagnosed with Vasculitis 4 years ago and her last 2 years involved 24/7 care. So, I am traveling this journey through grief, again. In 2011, my son died from a reaction to a new prescription he had been given less than 2 weeks prior.

So, now I sit here feeling very empty and alone. Missing my children, focusing on the fact that there isn't a living person on this earth who will ever call me "mom" again. Like most of you, when I was younger, I just assumed I would be a mom. I would watch them grow and they would be here to help me as I grew old. That's all gone now. No more dreams, just memories.

That all being said, I want to address just how do we face going on, a future without our children? I am blessed with a wonderful husband who has supported me through these horrific losses. He wasn't their biologic father - he was more than that - he was a true, loving dad and I will always be grateful for that.

But what about the rest of the people in our lives? Family and friends. Families can be a positive support, or, sometimes not. Hurtful things are sometimes said. Not intentionally, of course, but, rather because they don't know what to say. Those closest to us are pained to see us in pain. They want us to "move on," thinking this advice will help us push through, not only for the bereaved parent but for those who are witnessing our pain. It's up to us to acknowledge that it's difficult for the entire family but it's okay to tell them that this is our journey to travel in our own way and in our own time. There will be no end for us. A part of our heart is gone forever. It's just like when people are hesitant to say our child's name for fear of upsetting us - they don't realize our children are on our minds all of the time and it is comforting to have our child remembered. To hear their name or a story about our child, have them included on special days or holidays, reaffirms their place in the family. Here's the tough part - it may be up to us, the parent to **tell** our family what we need.

Our friends usually will all be there for us in the beginning but then, one by one, they often seem to disappear. It's truly a time when we find out who is there for us for the long run.

The most common phrase is "call me if you need anything."
Seriously? Your drowning in sorrow and struggling to get out of bed in the morning after tossing and turning through sleepless nights. Do you need anything? Sure, to go back in time to when your child was alive, when your life was "normal." You need for this nightmare that is now your life to end. So, you don't call because what you need is not something anyone can give you.

My only advice is to call, especially to that one person you may know who will be there, unconditionally, for you. Who will come and just listen, hold your hand, let you cry; we all need that one person. It may be a family member or it may be a friend. Also, attend Compassionate Friends meetings, everyone there knows what you are going through and will listen to your story and support you through your journey.

You will survive, but it takes time, understanding and forgiveness for those that don't/can't understand. Reach out, you are not alone. At some point, you will be able to look back on your life with your child and smile, remembering the good times, focusing on life.

I wish everyone on the most horrific journey of their life, peace.

Nancy Thornton
In Memory of my Loving Children
Amy Lynn Kramberger 3/9/73 - 10/12/2016
Jason Robert Kramberger 2/28/75 - 3/23/2001

Remembering Amy Kramberger

Amy was the daughter of Nancy Thornton and the step daughter of Ken Thornton. I first met Amy at a Compassionate Friends meeting when she came with her mom. She was a vibrant, passionate and personable young lady with an idea of starting a sibling group in our chapter.

But oh how she missed her brother Jason who died in 2001. Jason and Amy were very close and his death profoundly affected Amy.

I can understand as I watched my daughter Erin go through lots of torment and anguish over the loss of her brother David. They grew up together, experienced life together, were friends and the loss of her sibling was devastating.

Nancy was active in the Dallas chapter of TCF and she was a big part of our chapter for several years before health issues took their toll. Nancy is now a twice bereaved parent.

Amy always spoke at our meetings and offered insight into sibling grief. She was a bright child who brought bright light to our meetings and to my life.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Nancy and Ken.

David Hendricks
October, 2016

Since this date, and even before this date, Nancy has experienced many health issues including losing her eyesight. Yet, Nancy courageously battles on. She is able to focus on good memories and blessings, but underneath it all "anguish" is her companion.

David Hendricks
October 2021

ANGUISH

After 21 years of being the chapter leader and facilitator, and after observing and being with grieving parents at our monthly meetings, and after watching the newly bereaved struggle to get through the door for their first meeting, I believe if there is one word that describes what bereaved parents feel, it is the word anguish.

Anguish is defined as extreme mental or physical pain or suffering. Synonyms are agony, torment, distress, angst, misery, sorrow, grief, heartache, desolation, despair and torture. All of us can relate to these words, and it often seems like all of these feelings happen at once.

After my son David died in an automobile accident in 1997, I received a note from my friend Ed Devlin in Taos, New Mexico. Ed's adult daughter had died of cancer the previous year, and shortly thereafter his wife, while driving their two granddaughters, had pulled out in front of a concrete truck and all three were killed.

Ed's note was short. It read, "I understand your anguish". That has stuck with me. It's also why The Compassionate Friends works. We understand each other's anguish.

David Hendricks
In Memory of my son David
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter



Choosing Life

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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~

Forgive Unto Forever

Grieving is a fierce and overwhelming expression of love thrust upon us by a deep and hurtful loss. Yet, grieving is frequently such an entanglement of feelings that we often fail to recognize that ultimately forgiveness must be an integral part of our grief and our healing. For what is love, if forgiveness is silent within us? We learn to forgive our children for dying, ourselves for not preventing it. We begin to forgive our God or the fate we see ruling our universe. We start to forgive relatives and friends for abandoning us in their own bewilderment over the onslaught of emotions they sense in our words and behavior.

I believe we must be open to the balm of forgiveness. Through its expression in our lives, be it through thought, word, or deed, we find small ways to seek life once more. Deep within us, forgiveness is capable of treading the wasteland of our souls to help us feel again the love that has not died.

It is the beginning of release from the dominance of pain, not from the continual hurt of missing those we have lost, but from lacking the fullness of the love we shared with our child. That love lives with strength inside ourselves and yet our beings are so entrapped in a whirling vortex of anger, despair, frustration, abandonment, and depression that we often feel it only lightly.

Let us all heed the quiet message heard so softly in that maelstrom of the spirit. Forgive, forgive, and forgive unto forever. Let love enfold our anguish, helping us to learn to grow and strive beyond this hour to a rich tomorrow.

Don Hackett
TCF Hingham, MA
November 21, 2000



AUTUMN TEARS

We look back on September and we realize that somehow we made it through those dreaded first days of school. Whether it was the anticipation or the actual days that were the worst, we survived. We used our faith, our support systems or just plain hard work and made it over yet another hurdle. We watched small children heading for their first day of kindergarten, listened to excited teenagers talk of high school and heard stories of children leaving home to attend post-secondary school. Somehow we rode the waves of grief and found ourselves ashore again.

As these waves subside new ones will build as we head into the holidays that speak of, and to, children. Halloween will soon approach and for some, painful memories. Thanksgiving

arrives to exemplify family and togetherness and Christmas looms ahead. These special days are forever reminders of our loss—the costumes we'll never sew, the empty chair at turkey dinner, the fun and magic we'll never share with someone we love. Forever reminders that our child has died.

To survive when these events and anniversary days come around let's find time to think of the good memories we have—the announcement of our long awaited pregnancy at Thanksgiving dinner, the look of excitement on our son's first Halloween night, the vision of our daughter helping prepare the turkey dinner. These holidays will always be reminders that our child died. Let us also make them reminders that our child lived! They left us memories more precious than any others to hold and celebrate!

Penny Young
TCF Powell River, British Columbia
November 21, 2000



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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