



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 2023

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

Our next meeting is Tuesday, October 10, 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

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.



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
1986-Taryn Tidmore, Daughter of Renee Tidmore
2005-Gabriel Tuschl, Son of Brian & Lyndi Tuschl
1994-Erin Elena Moretz, Daughter of Patricia Moretz
1996-Christian Carr, Son of Ivonne Carr
1986-Carl Mercer, Son of Kathy Calhoun



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
2021-Kayla Cannon, Daughter of Janet Cannon
2021-Brayden, Son/Stepson of Bill & Lisa Miluszusky
2021-Beau Kocina, Son of Carolyn Kocina



CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, October 10th. at 7pm.

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our newest members, **Patty Learned, lost her granddaughter Kennedy Jane Parks in February 2023.** 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.

Save the Date
Compassionate Friends
Worldwide Candle Lighting date this year:
Sunday, December 10, 2023



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.

Our Child's Birthday

Many bereaved parents begin to have trouble as the time of their child's birthday grows near. Even those whose child has died a number of years ago. The ache that is in their heart is always there and the yearning for their child is never more strong than around the time of their child's birth. The greatest gift you could give to a parent who has lost a child is to listen intently as they reminisce and share memories of their child. Call a special friend who has lost a child on that child's birthday and encourage them to talk about him or her. Or better yet, invite your friend to coffee or lunch so you can look into their eyes and they can feel your compassion and empathy. Many parents relish the opportunity to share pictures of their child with others. If your friend likes doing this, ask that they bring photos, a scrapbook or mementos of their child. It will help to spark fond memories of a happier time. Make your list ahead of time. Ask your friend questions in order to draw them out such as; do you remember how you felt when you were anticipating the birth of your child? How did you feel when they were born? How did you come to pick your child's name? What was your child like as a baby? How old was your child when they took their first step? What was their first word? Do you remember your child's first day at school? What was their favorite color? What was their personality like? Did your child take after someone in your family? Did your child have a beloved pet? Did your child enjoy a special hobby or activity? Do you have any stories to recant about a memorable family vacation or gathering? What was their favorite holiday? Did your child have a favorite book, song or movie? Do you remember any heartwarming or funny stories about your child? What was your child's personality like? The list could go on and on. Just stop and think about it for a moment. You can also make your own list and give it to a trusted family member or confidant to ask you when it's time for your child's birthday. The point is to draw the parent out. Try and get your friend to remember the beautiful sweet story that was their child's life and not to focus only on their passing. Once they get started they will recall wonderful things that were once forgotten. A child's death is only a small moment of time in their short lives. Remembering a child's life in this way can be a very cathartic and healing experience for a parent whose child has died. As bereaved parents, we know all too well that most of the people in our lives do not want us to speak of our child. I can't think of a better gift to give to another parent who is like we are than to talk about, honor and celebrate the life of their child.

Janet G. Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

Remembering your child is a healing experience for you and all bereaved parents. Please share some of your wonderful memories, a special story, a holiday, a vacation, or anything you would like to tell us about him or her. We would be happy to share your story in our newsletter. Thanks David

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



Autumn Memories

My son and I always enjoyed the autumn season. Yes, when we lived in the cold zone, we knew that winter’s winds and snows were on the way. But, yet, we took time to enjoy the beautiful array of colors that nature gave us as a final salute to the growing season.

Todd and I raked leaves in the autumn. I had purchased a home in a town on the Mississippi River bluffs; the home had been built in the 1860s and I am sure some of the trees were well over 50 years old. The leaves would fall and we would rake. We made a game of it. Sometimes his best friend, Allen, would come over and help. The boys would jump into the piles and laugh with delight. We'd create a big pile and rake it to the concrete so that it could be burned. I can still see Todd laughing and dancing around that fire. His pure childhood joy was contagious.

Todd and I loved to look at the changing leaves along the bluffs of the river. We would drive on weekends and find the best view. Then we'd park and marvel at nature's wonder. The big bluffs, the turning leaves, the eagles soaring above us. Ducks flying south....even the occasional group of geese overhead...honking, honking as they journeyed to a warmer climate.

The light is different in the autumn...it's diffused somehow. It's different than the light in any other season. Autumn sun was our favorite light. It seemed less harsh, more forgiving, gentler in a strange sort of way. That was another time and another place.

Now in the autumn I remember all the special times I shared with my child. Looking at leaves, collecting leaves, raking leaves.....we did this together, just the two of us. "Mom, when are we going to go look at leaves?" Todd would ask. That was my cue to load up some soft drinks and sandwiches and head out on the first sunny Saturday. We'd repeat this ritual until the leaves had all fallen and it was time to rake.

When we moved to the Houston area, Todd was 12, and we talked about the seasons. He told me about his great memories of leaves and drives and time together. He said he would miss autumn with me. That made me feel good. These were memories that we shared, of a time when it was just Todd and me for those special moments. Looking back, I am so glad that I spent the time to make memories. I thought I was making memories for my child, but in fact, I was making memories for us both. And now those memories are my memories.....good memories.....memories that I will cherish always.

Here it is autumn again. Soon Todd will be gone five years. The memories are flooding back: the first day of each school each year, the changes as he grew to become a man. High school, college, graduate school....all began in the autumn. Autumn marks the beginning of many good memories for me. I listen as the school bus stops in front of our house to pick up today's children. Once in a while I go to the door and watch them load up, chatting with each other as they take their seats. I think of my 12 year old son, getting on that bus in front of our home for the first time: the first day of school in Houston. And for a moment, just a fleeting moment, I think I can see him sitting at a window seat, waving at me. Waving goodbye.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX
October, 2007



Thoughts from a Parent Who Lost an Older Child

Perhaps I had my child longer than you had yours, but thirty-eight years does not seem long. Perhaps there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me, even if your memories are

memories of only one or two days. Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine. In thirty-eight years there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three granddaughters who now live three thousand miles away from me.

My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the "acceptable" diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are placed in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with the help of four treatment centers, the recovery was not to be. One day at a time, my recovery is taking place. The pain, after two and one half years, has gone to a place where it can be tolerated.

My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same: my child has gone to a place where I cannot go, and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one-day-at-a-time, enriched because my son came through my body into my life.

Helen Godwin
TCF Orange Park-Jacksonville, FL



GRIEF: OUR ACT OF LOVE

"I had a child who died." How simple these words are, yet how painful they are to say. The death of a child is the harshest blow life has to offer; it destroys our trust in the world at the most basic level. Grief is our total response to the death of a child; our body, mind, emotions and spirit all react to the loss. While many of us wish to stop the intense grief work we are doing, we find it impossible for many reasons.

First, grief is an act of love, not a lack of strength or faith. The more we loved our child, the greater will be our grief. The more integrated our lives were with the life of our child, the more we will miss his or her very presence. The intensity of our grief is often representative of our love.

Second, grief is a necessary process that we must go through in order to maintain our wholeness and sanity. If we do not grieve, we will not heal. One of the earliest and hardest lessons we bereaved parents learn is that men and women grieve differently; women, in general, grieve more openly than do men, and women, on the whole, are more comfortable verbally expressing their feelings of loss. While segments of our culture indicate it is more "manly" not to cry, we know this is not true.

Grief work also helps us to complete unfinished business with our child and close the past relationship that we had. We will never “get over” the loss of our child, nor would we ever really want to. We are who we are partly because of our relationship to that child. Our lives will always be influenced by our son or daughter, but most of us will eventually learn to live a meaningful life, despite our tragedy. Our child will always be with us in spirit and in love, and we often feel a need to hold on to tangible items, such as toys or clothes, to maintain that feeling of closeness. But, intense grief work allows us to let go of the relationship we had and create a new relationship with our child. Our remembrances, love and feelings of oneness with our child can never be destroyed. I cannot see nor touch my Philip, but I vividly remember him. I have completed earthly mothering, but I still have an intense mother-child relationship with my son.

Grief over the death of a child is the hardest work that most of us will ever do. While we all wish for the pain to stop, we need to remember that we grieve intensely because we loved intensely. It is unrealistic to expect that grief to ever totally go away, because the love we have for our child will never go away. Our grief is an act of love and is nothing for which we should be ashamed.

Elaine Grier
TCF Atlanta, GA
In Memory of my son, Philip



AN EMPTY CHAIR

The first wedding was two years after Alan, my twin-brother, passed away. My second oldest brother was getting married. I was waiting for the question, "When was I going to get married?" I was never asked so I couldn't use my prepared response, "When Alan could be my best man."

I thought if I did get married I would have an empty chair next to me. If Alan couldn't be my best man, I didn't want anyone. My brother's name would appear in the program (that he would have designed) as honorary best man.

This year I turned thirty-six, it was my sixth birthday without Alan. At the restaurant we had made a mistake, the reservation had been made for one too many. I had ended up sitting next to an empty chair.

Although I thought, I was doing better, no longer crying at family events. I now realize that I will not have an empty chair at my wedding, if I can ever bring myself to get married without Alan being there. The loss I feel will always be there but it's much worse seeing an empty chair.

Daniel Yoffee
In Memory of my brother, Alan



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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