



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 2013

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, 8th)

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



***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, Daughter of Patsy Grubbs
- 2009- Allison, Daughter of Ingrid Todd



A Love Song

The mention of my child's name may bring tears to my eyes. But it never fails to bring music to my ears.

If you are really my friend, Please, don't keep me from hearing the beautiful music of his name. It soothes my broken heart and fills my soul with love.

**Nancy Williams
TCF New Jersey**

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is **Tuesday, October 8th** at 7pm. Our topic for discussion this month is "Surviving the first year"

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

To our new members we offer you our warmest welcome! 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.

MEMORY TABLE

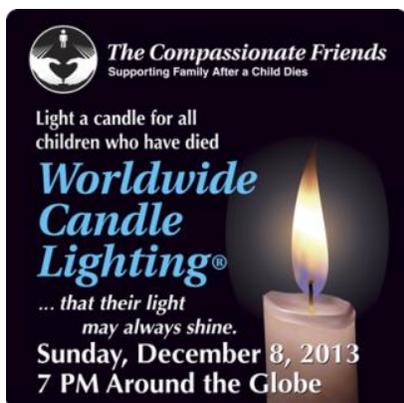
Please don't forget the "Memory Table" at our monthly meetings. If your child was born or died this month, (**October**) please bring something to share with the group. It could be a photo, a cherished item such as a trophy, a stuffed animal, a scrapbook, something your child wrote, or anything you would like to bring and place on the "Memory Table".

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.

To Our Old Members

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. THINK BACK...what would it have been like for you if there had not been any "oldies" to welcome you, share your grief, and encourage you? It was from them you heard, "your pain will not always be this bad; it really does soften." Come join us and support our new families.



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.

Articles & Poems for Our Newsletter

If you would like to submit a poem, writing or a brief article about your child or your grief journey for our newsletter, please email them to me, Linda Brewer at llbrewer67@hotmail.com. I will be happy to include it in the next newsletter.

Compassionate Friends Offers Grief Related Webinar Series

The Compassionate Friends is expanding its outreach to bereaved families by offering a series of free online grief related seminars. The webinars, to be held once per month, are on various grief topics and guests are well-known experts in the field.

Webinars have included such topics as "Handling Grief Through the Holidays," "Getting 'Stuck' and 'Unstuck,'" "Caring for Your Health While Grieving," and "Coping with Guilt During Bereavement." These webinars were recorded and are available to view on demand on TCF's national website.

To reserve a seat for the next webinar or to view the previous month's webinar visit our [website](#). Webinars are being archived in TCF's [Webinar Library](#)

I expect to pass through the world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness or abilities that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

~William Penn~

The Magic Light of Day



Often, when I think of you it's in the morning light. Or other times, I find that it is in the soft twilight. Somehow in those early hours or in the dusk of day – I feel our connection soundly, from your place so far away.

There's something very special about soft and dim sunlight that lets me know you're by my side and everything's alright. Not many would believe it's true, for heaven is far away. But all I know is – there you are, with me every day. You walk with me and comfort me, and somehow let me know. You'll guide the way along my life and meet me when I go.

Kathie Winkler
TCF Middleburg Heights, OH

Candles in the Night

Candles flame in darkness,
flicker, steadily glow,
bringing light from shadows
and help to soothe me so.

My daughter, like the candles,
gave my life true light.
I use the candle's beacon
to connect us in the night.

As I light the candles,
my wish and my request
is that she'll see my signal
and know my love's expressed.

As her light joins my lights,
our worlds touch and flame.
As I snuff out the candles,
I softly say her name.

Genesee Bourdeau Gentry
from *Stars in the Deepest – After the Death of a Child*

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



There's Help —The Power In Talking

One of the most valuable things you can do is talk it out with a good listener. We now know that the stress level of bereaved people can be cut in half when they talk about the death to someone who does not judge or advise them.

Having someone as a backboard to hear your thoughts bounced off is the greatest gift you can receive. Too often, everyone wants to make you feel better, so they try to advise rather than listen.

Remember, repeating your story is healthy. Talking about your loved one, the illness and/or death, works like a sponge. Each time you talk, a little more of the pain is squeezed out and the need to talk about the incident becomes less. It's as if your story is being framed within your mind. Soon you can hang it on the wall. You'll always have it there to look at whenever you want, but you no longer have to carry the whole thing around with you and be burdened and controlled by the past.

There will be times when no one is around to listen. You'll need to do something different. Talk into a tape recorder. Keep a journal to write down your thoughts and feelings. Buy a journal just for this purpose. Select a color that you like and write when there's no one around and you need to talk. Talk out loud as you write if it makes you feel better.

Write a letter to your loved one who died. This can be a very powerful process. Share your thoughts and feelings. Pour them out on paper. You may feel emotionally drained afterwards. If so, nurture yourself. Examples: Wrap yourself in a blanket and take a nap, watch a movie, or hold and/or pet the family pet. You may even find it helpful to write a letter back from the person who died.

Others have found that just talking aloud or into a tape recorder was helpful. Some stand in front of the mirror to talk. As a friend once said to me, "Don't worry about talking out loud to yourself. It's good to have a conversation with an intelligent person." However you do it, remember: "Talking it out is one of the best medicines of all."

While some people won't want to listen to you, you'll also find they can say some really stupid things. Offer them suggestions for kinder, more compassionate words they can use with bereaved people. It will help them to help you and others more effectively because some people really want to help, but just do not know how.

When you go to a support group you will find others who understand. You will meet other mourners with similar feelings and problems. They can provide tremendous emotional affirmation. Why not come to the next meeting? This group of bereaved parents listens, even to those who say nothing. Come, listen, share if you want to, receive love and compassion. You do not have to walk alone. Come walk with us.

*Extracted from More Than Surviving—Caring for Yourself While You Grieve , by Kelly Osmont, MSW
Reprinted from TCF Cape Fear Chapter, Wilmington NC August 2003*



Back To School

Strange things happen to you when your child dies. You'll fail if you try to make sense of most of it.

Both my children had finished high school when my son died, yet I found the beginning of school- especially that first year - to be difficult. The bus stops in front of my home for the neighborhood children. Suddenly, as they all gathered to wait for the bus, I found myself reliving those simple, happier days of old; longing for them actually. It was a painful time.

Now, if I, whose children were grown and gone, had a problem with school starting, those of you who do have school age children must know that your pain is normal. It's another reminder that life goes on - with or without our children - and acknowledging that hurts! I came to the conclusion that it was all right to pine for happier times and it was nothing to get upset about. As with many remnants of grief, I recognize it, allow it and then get on with my life.

Maybe you're like me, you'll always be a little nostalgic about school starting. That would probably have been true even if my son had lived. Maybe you, too?

Mary Cleckley,
TCF - Atlanta, GA



“There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are messengers of overwhelming grief...and unspeakable love.”

- Washington Irving
author of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow
From Homicide survivors newsletter, Summer 2011

What do I do with my child's things? TCF, Honolulu, Hawaii

This is a problem that faces all bereaved parents. We discuss it from time to time at our meetings. Some of us keep the child's room just as it was before the death. We don't want anything touched or removed.

Some find solace in giving things away to close friends or relatives. Knowing someone we love is wearing our child's clothes, or playing with his or her toys, brings us comfort.

Some of us feel we can deal with only a few items at a time; clothes one month ; books another, perhaps toys a few months later.

Some of us find that as time goes on we would have gotten rid of the things anyway, it becomes easier. For instance, after a while we realize that if the child were still alive, he or she would have out grown the clothes. Then it's-easier to give them away.

Or your child would have graduated from college this year, and therefore would no longer use the study desk or clock radio. We can give these things away in the normal time sequence.

The important thing is not to let others rush us into doing something before we are ready, and not to let ourselves feel guilty about the amount of time it takes us to make decisions.

When the time is right, and the decision is right for us, we'll know what to do.



When you accept what has happened, you aren't acknowledging that it is okay but rather, that you know you must find a way to keep growing and living-even if you don't feel like it...Don't let grief be your constant companion...Realize that your grief is born out of unconditional love for your child and rejoice in that love which will never end... Embracing life again is not a sign that you have stopped missing your child, but an example of a love that is eternal. –

WISCONSIN PERSPECTIVES NEWSLETTER, SPRING 1989,

It's Okay to Grieve

It's Okay to Grieve.

The death of a child is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed and, somehow, our dear one returned.

Such hurt!
It's okay to grieve.

It's Okay to Cry.

Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to level off and continue our cruise along the stream of life.

It's okay to cry.

It's Okay to Heal.

We do not need to prove we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel guilty, for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death.

It's a healthy sign of healing.
It's okay to heal.

It's Okay to Laugh.

Laughter is not a sign of less grief. Laughter is not a sign of less love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. It's okay to laugh.

Patricia Lufty Nevitt
TCF Austin, TX

Like the Butterfly

*It fluttered above my head
Weightless in the soft breeze.
I reached up my hand
It lit on my finger.*

*Waving glistening wings gently,
It looked at me for timeless moments.
I smiled, reaching deep and
Finding all those cherished memories.
As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,
I knew we had said hello once more.*

Leslie Langford
TCF, North Platte, NE

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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