



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.

AUGUST 2026

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

at

**Trinity Lutheran Church
Family Life Center, Room #116
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 116.

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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.



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

2003-Makaylin Angel, Daughter of Jennifer Edwards
1999-Devin Wood, Son of Natalie Wood
1970-Lisa Renee Sanders, Daughter of Jim & Peggy Holland
1988-Shaun N. Finley, Son of Barbara Finley
2002-Samantha Short, Daughter of Linda Short
1988-Trace Thornton, Son of Nina Thornton
1988-Honey Khan, Son of Amra Khan
1963-Lloyd Ross (Rossi) Moore, Jr., Son of Carolyn Moore
1988-Matthew Peterson, Son of Sharon Peterson
1983-Fallon Ginther, Daughter of Lisa Ginther
1983-Travis Walden, Son of Janet Walden
1961-Terry Shannon Pauling, Son of Howard & Jean Pauling, Brother of Vicki Hyde
1995-Cheyenne Crocker, Daughter of Beth & Nick Crocker
1983-Christine Marie Frazier, Daughter of Steven R. Frazier
1980-Molly Long, Daughter of Carolyn Long
1955-Tony King, Brother of Carolyn Moore
1968-Dillon R. Howland, Jr., Son of Rachel Howland
2001-Emily Crocker, Daughter of Beth & Nick Crocker
1980-Ryan David Dodson, Son of Diane & David Dodson
1985-Derek Johns, Son of Shauna & Jeff Crook
1990-David Morgan, Son of Brent & Martina Morgan
1998-Katelyn Holmes, Daughter of Melinda Holmes
1989-Danielle Basford, Daughter of Jerry & Laurie Basford
1988-Samual Johnson, Son of Tim Johnson
1970-James Loveless, Son of Bob & Frances Loveless
1960-Kimberly Grubbs, Daughter of Patsy Grubbs
2013-Elias Reyes, Son of Crystal Reyes
2013-Jasmins Potter Jr, Son of Jasmins & Erika Potter
1984-Justin McHan, Son of Ronnie & Linda McHan
1993-Forrest Gadler, Son of Tanya Gadler
1998-Tremaine Robinson, Son of Toya Robinson
1993-Cathrine Breeding, Daughter of Barbara Breeding
1997-Wesley Hundl, Son of Sharon Mondrik
1987-Marc Pournier, Son of Jolena Pournier
Ariel & Athena Suniga, Daughters of Selena Suniga
1980- Jessica Nicole Driskell, Daughter of Patricia Ann Tull
1984 - Justin Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer
1986 - Chad Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer
1991 - Eric Garcia, Son of John & Louise Garcia
1991 - Dylan Fojtasek, Son of Marie Fojtasek
1979 - Shawna Merchant, Daughter of Bitsy Hatch
2006 - Kay Lee Welch, Daughter of Joel Welch and Brandy Brandt
1986 - Andrew Madden, Son of Margaret Madden
2019 - Hudson Curtright, Son of Steve and Mitzi Curtright
2009 - Ember Doyle, Daughter of Jennifer Doyle



Lighting a candle, remembering a life

AUGUST ANGEL DATES

2008- Dillon & Alex Gussie, Sons of Debbie Benavides
2009- Nicholas (Nick) Skala, Son of Judy Skala
2007- Alan Jerome Austin, Son of Rhonda Austin
2003- Brian D. Klaus, Son of Johnny & Ginger Klaus
2011- Cherelle Luter, Daughter of Sylvia Green
2012-Landyn Elizabeth Tickle, Daughter of Matthew & Shelby Tickle
2013-James Loveless, Son of Bob & Frances Loveless
2013-Colton Alderson, Son of Jimmy Alderson
2013-Elias Reyes, Son of Crystal Reyes
2013-David Kerpchar, Son of Sally Kerpchar
2012-Misty Smith, Daughter of Terri DeMontrond
2008-Adam Brown, Son of Greg & Debbie Brown
2014-Gene Ware, Son of Roberta Ware
2014-Ginger Ware, Daughter of Roberta Ware
2014-Giavanna Calista, Daughter of Nicole Kelley
2015-Luke Curry, Son of Lynsy Curry
1983-Justin Ross Heino, Son of Darryl Heino
2015-Kellie Martin, Daughter of Denise Martin
2014-Hunter Smith, Son of Lee Smith
2017- Kahlid "Kal" Albaba, Son of Ramsey Albaba
2018 - Ethan Tyler Brown, Son of Erica Poorbaugh
2017 - Nelly Rosa, son of Mariano Jonell Rosa
2017 - Jacquelynn Borel, Daughter of Rebecca Borel
2020 - Roxane Rucker, Daughter of Deborah Maly
2021 - Mark Kramer, Son of Carol Kramer
2022 - Gabriella Grace Pena, Daughter of Servando & Jeanne Pena
2021 - Ryan Wyckoff, Son of Marlena Wyckoff
2024 – Daniela Raynes, Daughter of Vickie Pace

CHAPTER NEWS

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

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our newest member, **Rocky and Kaitlyn Howard, they lost their son Forest May 2026.** 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.

TCF Southwest Region Day of Hope and Healing, October 17, 2026

The Southwest Region is planning a ***Day of Hope and Healing*** for all TCF members from each chapter in the Southwest Region on **Saturday, October 17.** The event will be held in Houston. Additional information, including the venue, times and registration details will follow.

For the Newly Bereaved

We welcome you, we are sorry for the cause that brings you to us and we know how devastated you are. We have all been there. Nothing is required of you and there are no dues or fees. You need not speak a word or you can share. Attending your first meeting does take courage, but our members who attend find a comforting network of support, friendship and understanding that only friends who have "been there" can give. Based on our experiences, we suggest you attend three or four meetings before evaluating the benefit of our group to you. Just come, be as comfortable as you can and let us walk with you.

Meetings are a place to talk about your child, a place to remember the joys of their life and the pain and struggle of living without them. It is a place to meet other parents who have in fact survived what may seem impossible to you right now.

Meetings are not "the answer." Grief is not a problem to be solved and meetings are not "pity parties" although there are tears and sadness, but there is also hope.

Meetings do not bring about closure. You close on a house, not the death of a child.

May you find your own peaceful solution to fit your individual needs for coping with special dates which are painful after losing your child. We are here to help.

Janet G. Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX



Book Review

Janet Ropp, a member of our chapter, has written a book, “Dear James”, about her son’s death due to drug addiction and specifically about her journey through grief. Although the book addresses addiction, it has wide application to anyone’s grief over losing a child. Janet is a skilled writer and the book is her love letter to James.

One specific reference in her grief journey that applies to all of us is addressing “Well Wishers”. She writes, “Their love was real, but miss directed, tangled in fear of saying the wrong thing or making the pain worse.” So Janet put out in a Facebook post.

"I need you to ask me how I'm really doing." Not as a greeting. Not as a formality. But as a question you are prepared to sit with - even if the answer is messy, long, or unfinished. "I need you to look me in the eyes." That simple act reminds me that I am still seen. Still here. Still human.

"I need you to ask me about James." Say his name. Speak about him. Tell me your memories. Because avoiding his name doesn't spare me pain - it deepens it. Silence makes him feel erased. Every time someone speaks his name, it's like a small spark of his light returns to the room. In those moments, I remember that he still exists--not only in my heart, but in the hearts of everyone who loved him. "If you truly want to help me, please don't tell me to reach out if I need something." Because the truth is, I don't know what I need. My mind is foggy. My body is heavy. My heart is barely beating. In the depths of grief, even the smallest decisions feel impossible. Choosing feels like work. Asking feels like burdening others. The energy required to identify a need - and then voice it - is more than I often have. What I needed was for people to take the lead. Tell me what you're going to do. If you want to sweep my floors, say so. If you want to bring dinner, tell me when you'll be here. If you want to run an errand, just do it. Make it specific. Make it tangible. –

The book is available on Amazon. I would invite everyone to read about Janet’s journey. Also, please check our Chapter’s library of books.

David Hendricks
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter

Shards of Grief Linger after Murder

On a dreary night in December, a knock came at our door with news that would forever alter our lives. The news was that Anne, our only daughter, had been kidnapped and brutally murdered by persons or a person unknown. The shock, disbelief, anguish and anxieties over the next several months, a small piece of the grieving process, were extraordinary, and I have often wondered how we survived.

There was the extreme rage at the person who was responsible for taking Anne's life for no reason except for the pure pleasure of destroying good. But we survived.

There was the awful anger against the legal system for being so callous and insensitive to the needs of the family and friends. The wounds from Anne's death were already deep and unhealing, but listening to and reading about the insinuations and innuendoes by the lawyers made the wounds grow deeper and deeper. The impression was given the family must endure punishment for allowing our daughter to be in the wrong place. This caused a feeling of guilt. But we survived.

There was the fear that Anne would become just another statistic, and the person responsible would go unpunished. Now the fear exists that the person will be released from prison to repeat his acts of violence. I am afraid that fears are addictive and one replaces another. Perhaps the worst fear is, when your faith in God is at its lowest ebb, that you will never be able to respond to normal stimuli again and regain all that faith. All the fears are real; but so far we have survived.

These, I suppose, are normal reactions as the result of a violent act. I believe these anxieties delay a normal (so-called) grieving period until after the culprit has been found, tried and sentenced. After these three things happened, I do know a terrible burden was lifted from our shoulders and we could restart living our lives. Somehow we survived.

How did we survive? After much reflecting, I firmly believe we survived by recalling the positive aspects of Anne's life and character. Each individual is endowed with certain instruments, and we hear the music of their lives long after they are gone.

Anne's instrument of love of life was a blessing, and we still can hear the melodies of her song in the night. These melodies cannot be taken away, and they are more valuable than diamonds to us.

Anne's instrument of hope for a future in which to achieve her goals and have some effect on society was the backbone of her dream. The songs of hope in work, in life and the goodness of heart cannot be destroyed by evil or circumstances. Today is gone, but we still hear the songs of hope for tomorrow. These songs of hope, heard in the night, sustain us.

Anne's instrument of faith that she would lead a productive life and achieve both her spiritual and material goals was music in her heart. The faith she had in herself, her family and her friends transmits to us, urging us to proceed with our lives. The music of her faith is still a beacon in the night.

We will not believe Anne's dreams have ended, but we believe they will find their place in the world to come. The music that was set in motion by her love, hope and faith will move, everlasting, in sweet memories forever. The wounds from the loss of a loved one cannot be healed by words or deeds. These terrible burdens are borne by each of us in our own way and, hopefully, we survive.

Bill Boggs
In memory of Anne
TCF, Atlanta, GA



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



By: Beth Crocker
In Memory of
Cheyenne Crocker and Emily Crocker

Being a bereaved parent is not what I expected, starting with the fact that I didn't expect to be a bereaved parent. Who does that?! I mean, no one EXPECTS to be faced with burring their child. We, as new parents, are so focused on making sure we provide a strong childhood and upbringing to our new child that we refuse to allow those darker thoughts to enter our minds. We don't even want to take up the offer we all get in the mail to sign up our new babies for Gerber's Life Insurance that pays us if our child dies. WHO DOES THAT?! Yes, it would have been smart for us to do that, wish we had.

Then when we were faced with burying our second child, we found ourselves without that baby life insurance again. Then, when we had our HEALTHY third child, we STIL DID NOT DO IT! This time we knew he was healthy, so we didn't want to risk taunting Death. The point is that as a human race, it is natural for us to be positive and hopeful in our daily lives, more so when parenting our children, so when we find ourselves living what we never expected, we are not prepared.

It's been nearly 20 years since our oldest, Cheyenne, passed. A few less since we lost Emily. We have been living the cliché "Life goes on" journey. Our son is nearly 11 now, healthy and loved, if not a bit spoiled. Yes, we have good days... even GREAT days. I thank God for those days. They are needed to balance those days that will never go away. Those days that hit without warning, unexpectedly. There are lots of things that happen that we don't expect when our children die. How we react to them will determine how our lives unfold after our children die. Below is a list of a few of those unexpected things, and the reactive choices we are faced with. The trick for a grieving parent is to choose wisely so our lives will have opportunities for greatness again.

I didn't expect that the grief process after losing Emily, our second child to bury, would move faster, or be easier. At times I didn't think it did, but it did. Each day we were faced with the returning pain, and we had to choose to reject it or embrace it. By embracing it, we were in (a bit) more control. We used it to recognize the love we still have for our girls. We used it to recognize our own strength and ability to get through it as experienced bereaved parents. Then we could (still can) face each day knowing we are better for having known and loved our children. We are better and stronger than most other people.

I didn't expect to be faced with the almost celebrity style respect and admiration we often get from others who "can't imagine" what we live with. I don't like it, it makes me very uncomfortable because I'd rather have my girls back. I know they just want to help us see how strong we are, but it's weird.

I didn't expect to ever feel whole again, but I do... usually. I've learned that what Patrick Swayze said in "Ghost" is true... "The love stays with you". The love is them, still here, just in a different form. So I take it and run with it. I remind myself that I am a

better person for having been their mom, and that means I AM WHOLE, despite the fact that my heart is not.

I didn't expect... get ready... to hear my husband say the loss of his mom is more difficult than burying his two little girls. WHAT????!!!! Yes, it's true. HOW????? ...the pain of loss is built up of the memories and the relationship shared. They had a VERY SPECIAL and very rare mother son bond, built on 57 years of life together. It's hard to explain, harder to understand, but I think I'm getting it.

Everyone grieves differently, based on the relationship, and how it was left at the time of the death. We can prepare all we want, or ignore all the signs telling us we need to prepare. Either way, death comes to us all. How we choose to live with it will define how our lives unfold. I miss my girls more than words can say. Anyone who has buried their child knows this gut wrenching misery. There was a time when I feared this day, the day I would say that my girls are JUST PART OF MY JOURNEY. The day that I would say my life is MORE than being their mom. I didn't expect I could ever say this. ...but I do now, and it's OK. It has not lessened the love or weakened the memories one bit. The LOVE never dies, so neither do they.



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

**DEATH TAKES THE BODY.
GOD TAKES THE SOUL.
OUR MIND HOLDS THE
MEMORIES. OUR HEARTS
KEEP THE LOVE. OUR
FAITH LET'S US KNOW WE
WILL MEET AGAIN.**

AMEN



NEWSLETTER

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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