



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.

FEBRUARY 2024

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

(Our next meeting is Tuesday, February 13, 2024)

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.

Chapter Leader:

David Hendricks
936-441-3840

dbhendricks@hotmail.com

South Texas Regional Coordinator:

Gene Caligari

gcaligari7@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor:

Linda Brewer 936-441-3840

llbrewer67@hotmail.com

National Headquarters, TCF

P.O. Box 3696

Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696

1-876-969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

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.





Our Children, Siblings, and Grandchildren Remembered

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Natalia Lopez - Daughter of Melissa Lopez
Devin Giblin - Son of Tanya Giblin
Ryan Mitchell Smith - Son of Anne-Marie Smith
Jonathon Kuta - Son of Larry & Terri Kuta
Jeff Shinsky - Son of Margaret Butler
Jason Allen Denbo - Son of Donna J. Denbo
Jason Lucher - Brother of Kerri Lucher
Ryder & Levi Wagner - Sons of Susan & R.J. Wagner
Jason Robert Kramberger, Son of Nancy & Ken Thornton
Charlotte Caldwell, Daughter of Jason & Rebecca Caldwell
Colton Alderson, Son of Jimmy Alderson and Julia Ware
Patrick Bull, Son of Tom & Gayle Bull
Christopher Gibler, Son of Susan Gibler
William Michael Shaw, Son of Mary Kay Martin
Katherine Collins, Daughter of Kevin & Paula Collins
Miller LaCour Wade, Son of Burton & Julie Wade
Moriah Clay, Daughter of Kim Clay
Amelia Tayloe, Daughter of Matthew & Misty Tayloe
Race Killen, Son of Wendy Killen
Sean Weinstein, Son of Steve & Sherry Weinstein
Creighton Heslop, Son of Barry & Kris Heslop
Jonah Basile, Son of Malea Basile
Anthony Pietrzak, Son of Joshua Pietrzak
Gerald Jennings, Son of Candy Jennings
Roxane Rucker, Daughter of Deborah Maly
Alex Coogan, Son of Tim and Amy Coogan
Kayla Cannon, Daughter of Janet Cannon
David Brace, Son of Julia Hine
Micheal Holberg, Son of Sally Holberg

FEBRUARY ANGEL DATES

Lisa Renee Sanders - Daughter of Jim & Peggy Holland
Gregory Whitney Vinson, Son of Lance & Marilyn Vinson
Travis Walden, Son of Janet Walden
Jeff Walker - Brother of Stephanie Thrift
Matthew Brown - Son of Cathy Brown
Ryan Mitchell Smith - Son of Anne-Marie Smith
Michael Shrum, Son of Mike & Melva Shrum
Jerry Dwight Tanksley, Jr., Son of Virginia Tanksley
Christy Wempe, Daughter of Ann & Lance Parks
David Morgan - Son of Brent & Martina Morgan
Emily Crocker, Daughter of Nick & Beth Crocker
David Hendricks II, Son of David Hendricks
Leah Elizabeth Davis - Daughter of Ron & Laura Davis
Logan Xavier Venegas, Son of Rochelle Snyder
Ryder & Levi Wagner, Sons of R.J. & Susan Wagner
Amber Eileen Schulze, Daughter of Lisa Schulze
Joshua Hucklebridge, Son of Elaine White
Sloan Nagy, Son of Tammy Johnson
Tiffany Driscoll, Daughter of Dan & Cindy Driscoll
Ryan Moody, Son of Gloria Moody
William Michael Shaw, Son of Mary Kay Martin
Katherine Collins, Daughter of Kevin & Paula Collins
Miller LaCour Wade, Son of Burton & Julie Wade
Wesley Hundl, Son of Sharon Mondrik
Athena Suniga, Daughter of Selena Suniga
Jonah Basile, Son of Malea Basile
Danielle Spivey, Daughter of Mark & Donna Spivey
Chance Barton, Son of Sherry Barton
Danielle Devillier, Daughter of Wendy Devillier
Gabriel Tuschl, Son of Brian & Lyndi Tuschl
Antonio Ramos Jr., Son of Rosaura Aguirre
Erin Elena Moretz, Daughter of Patricia Moretz
Kennedy Jane Parks, Granddaughter of Patty Learned & Janey Chambless
Michael Holberg, Son of Sally Holberg



CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, February 13th. 7pm. at Trinity Lutheran Church, Family Life Center #204.

Mark your calendars for our March 12th meeting. Dr. Glenn Wilkerson, President and Founder of The ARKGroup and former Minister of Cypress Creek Christian Church will be our guest speaker.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members - We're Glad You Found Us.
We welcome Valerie Trevino, she lost her daughter Eliana Albarran September 2023; and Carrie Bakeeff, she lost her son Logan Padgett in December 2022.
We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. We come together from all walks of life. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

SAVE THE DATE
47th. COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NATIONAL CONVENTION
JULY 12 - 14, 2024
NEW ORLEANS, LA

One of our members, Debbie Castelo has attended a TCF Convention and would like to share her experience.

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Please consider joining me and fellow CF members at the convention this year. I attended in 2022, two years after losing my son, Eric, to suicide.

Eric's cause of death left me feeling like no one could feel the pain of losing a child in this particular way, that is until I was able to go to sessions specific to my circumstances. At the convention. One was for loss by suicide and another addressed issues with a difficult or troubled child. The latter session proved the most beneficial. Even though it was not specific to suicide, it turned out every parent in that room was living with the fact that their child took his/her own life. The instructor most appropriately and consistently addressed the guilt a parent lives with and had us repeat many times out loud, "I did everything I could given the information I had at the time." The relief was instant for me, and I could tell it was for others as well. I use this mantra of sorts every time I have the slightest feeling of guilt. I try to share this with others, especially the newly bereaved, regardless of their child's cause of death, since as parents, we are wired to feel guilty when we can't or couldn't protect our child.

The convention will offer many general sessions as well as those specific to circumstances. You will NOT feel alone anymore! You will also learn about setting up scholarships, among the many other ways you can ensure your child is not forgotten. New friendships will be forged, and you can even laugh together without the guilt!

As the date of the convention gets closer, scholarships for attendance will be available. Start planning now to attend with us!

Debbie Castelo
Eric's Mom
TCF Northwest Houston
Chapter

If you have attended a TCF Convention please consider sharing your experience with others. You can email me at dbhendricks@hotmail.com Thanks David





Forever In My Heart

You are forever in my heart
The day will come, I know
When all the rain has fallen
And the sun begins to show

I'll think of you in all I do
Your warmth will touch my face
You'll twinkle in the starlight
And be held in each embrace

So please do not be saddened
If a tear for you I shed
But we had dreams and wishes
Which I'll safely keep instead

Although it hurts, I understand
You'd somewhere else to be
Our time together has not passed
You'll always be with me

In every day, in every way
You'll always be a part
My precious little angel
You're forever in my heart



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 Wilson-TCF New Jersey

LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY

"Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren't so crushing." Sounds familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous "ouchies" can compare with the hurt we feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have, so...we are stuck with this pain, this grief and what do we do with it? Surely we can't live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable...some day.

TIME...the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child...the first word, first tooth, first date, first car...now we don't have that measure any more. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse.

So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME...to hurt, to grieve, to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be "crazy" and TIME to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress through grief against anyone else's. Be your own timekeeper.

Don't push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and then moments...but don't expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don't get over grief...it only becomes tolerable and livable. Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost, try thinking of how much you had. Try letting good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn't lose our child...HE [SHE] DIED. We don't lose the love that flowed between us...it still flows, but differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn't love so very much, it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I'm very glad I loved. Don't let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of the loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!

Darcie D. Sims



Broken Heart Syndrome

One afternoon, I was channel surfing looking for something to watch when I came across the Oprah Winfrey Channel. She was interviewing a woman named Madonna Badger. On Christmas Day, 2011, Madonna's 7 year old twins, a boy and a girl, her 9 year old daughter and her parents all died in a horrific house fire. She spoke of the unrelenting grief and sorrow she has suffered in the years since. I was riveted to the television screen as she recanted her story. As she talked, she coined a phrase that I had never heard of before to describe her pain, "Broken Heart Syndrome." It is a temporary condition that is brought on by extreme stressful situations, such as the death of someone deeply loved.

I thought, finally there is a label for the intense pain and suffering that those who grieve feel! Broken Heart Syndrome is an identifiable condition brought on by stressful situations, such as the death of a loved one. Broken Heart Syndrome is also called *takotsubo cardiomyopathy*. Broken Heart Syndrome manifests as a temporary disruption of the heart's normal pumping function or with even more forceful contractions, while the remainder of the heart functions normally. Symptoms can include chest pain and shortness of breath. It effects more women than men. It is attributed to a reaction to a surge of stress hormones.

After my daughter died, I suffered with intense bouts of pain on the outer left muscular wall of my upper torso. An EKG revealed no abnormalities. Seven years later, I still never know when this pain might reoccur. I have however connected my episodes with certain stressors, such as; my child's birth and death dates, holidays and special occasions.

Although doctors are just now learning about this condition, the good news is that broken heart syndrome is treatable and the discomfort should abate with time. If you think you might be suffering from broken heart syndrome, you should discuss it with your physician.

Let us all take care of our own hearts this Valentine's Day.

Janet Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX



GRIEVING IN PAIRS

How many times have people said, "Well, thank God you have each other." How many times have you felt "each other" to be entirely inadequate at meeting your needs?

Alarming statistics are available telling us of the rocky road parents encounter in their marriage after the death of a child. We sometimes see in ourselves a touchiness or quickness to become irritated that wasn't there before. It always seems that my "bad" day is my wife's "good" day, or the day she wakes up crying was the day I had planned on playing tennis.

Or sometimes, even more difficult, we both have a bad day and find no help from the other in pulling things back together. How can one person hold up another when he is himself face down in the mud?

Every person grieves differently. This is a rule that even applies within a family. And the needs of every individual are different. While you may need to talk and talk and talk, your spouse may need some time alone to reflect inwardly.

You have both been through the worst experience of your life. And while at times you can face recovery as a team, sometimes you must develop the patience to be able to wait out certain needs alone or with someone else. Realize that no matter how it is shown, your partner hurts, too.

Gerry Hunt
TCF White River Junction, VT



When I Was There

When I was there with you and lived my life as your son
I knew you loved me with all your heart; I felt it from day one.

I never once regretted having chose you for my mom and dad,
and although our time together was short, please don't stay sad.

You see, when I was with you I learned so very much, and I took
with me to my other life all my memories of your love...

I share it with the other kids I've met since I've arrived,
we all have memories of those special times, and
please never doubt that we're alive...

We are busy helping others and we watch over you with pride
as we see you helping others and giving of your time.

I see sometimes when you think of me you are sad that I am gone,
but remember that I'm still with you; you just can't see me tag alone,

I go with you on your travels, and yes that's me in your dreams at night;
I still look the same, just maybe a little more handsome in this light...

Here there is no sadness, Mom, only joy and love and peace,
and here is where I'll wait, until you can come and live with me...

In my world now there is no rush, things just happen day by day,
so take your time and enjoy life, have a little fun, it really is okay,

And when you make your journey to this place where we're all one,
remember, I'll be waiting and I'll always be your son...

By: Sharon Hauber
In memory of her son Spence



Let Life Be Renewed

By: Kitty Reeve

As I write, I await the airport van and the beginning of a year of living overseas. It is the realization of a lifelong dream, and I know how fortunate I am.

The feeling of being fortunate is as much about the fact that I want the dream again as it is about having it happen, however. For many years after Philip's death life became something to be endured. The energy for dreams, much less working to achieve them, was zero. Unfortunately, you know this road well, also.

I write about this renewal of life because it means so much to me, and because I did not expect it.

It is startling (and gratifying) to find my old enthusiasm for life ratcheted up several notches, and the energy for work surfacing again. In other words, I am living with some of myself that had been submerged all these years since Philip died. It is good to have that back, however tempered. I never thought it would return.

When I mentioned my experience to another bereaved parent, she said. "I must admit that I have experienced similar feelings of renewed energy for life. In the process of the daily activities of our lives and the continuous interaction with people, we are moving on, and so, to hear your renewed interest in life is understood, and I rejoice."

It isn't that the renewed investment in life is as it was before our children died. It is tempered, more thoughtful, restrained in some ways. I can't believe anyone could face the horrible trauma we all have and not see life through different eyes. But what's important is that the aching pain of the first few years can indeed give way to a desire to live and a true interest in life. I had given up on having my former enthusiasm and vitality back, but it returned on its own. I am as surprised as anyone else.

If you are feeling renewed and more alive, perhaps you'll share your feelings with another bereaved parent. It is the holding out of hope that enables many of us to keep going through the darkest days of those early years.

Kitty Reeve, a journalist, is a former newsletter editor for the Marin and San Francisco Chapters of TCF. Her son, Philip Ganote, was 26 years old when he died on August 16, 1994. Article taken from We Need Not Walk Alone Summer 2002



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.

Laura Hengel
281-908-5197
linnemanl@aol.com
Auto Accident

Pat Morgan
713-462-7405
angeltrack@aol.com
Adult Child

Connie Brandt
281-320-9973
clynncooper@hotmail.com
Auto Accident

Beth Crocker
281-923-5196
thecrockers3@comcast.net
Multiple Loss
Heart Disease

Julie Joiner
832-724-4299
Dtjb19@gmail.com
Multiple Loss
Infant Child

Loretta Stephens
281-782-8182
andersonloretta@sbcglobal.net
Auto Accident

Lisa Thompson
713-376-5593
lisalou862@yahoo.com
Auto Accident/Fire

Pat Gallien
281-732-6399
agmom03@aol.com
Organ Donor

Leigh Heard-Boyer
281-785-6170
boyerbetterhalf@yahoo.com
Substance Abuse

FOR FATHERS:

Nick Crocker
832-458-9224
thecrockers3@comcast.net
Multiple Loss
Heart Disease

David Hendricks
936-441-3840
dbhhendricks@hotmail.com
Auto Accident

Glenn Wilkerson
832-878-7113
glennwilkerson@thearkgroup.org
Infant Child