



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



We need not walk alone.

Volume 5, Issue 8

Tyler, Texas

August 2004

Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, August 17, 6:30 p.m.
Clinical Associates of East Texas
2010 Sybil Lane, Tyler, Texas

Topic

End of Summer

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The Meeting Agenda

6:30 p.m.....Fellowship
7:00 p.m.Welcome; Announcements;
Introductions; Topic
7:15 p.m.....Open Forum
9:00 p.m.Additional Fellowship &
Refreshments

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Forgive Until Forever

Grieving is a fierce and overwhelming expression of love thrust upon us by a deep and hurtful loss. Yet, grieving is frequently such an entanglement of feelings that we often fail to recognize that ultimately forgiveness must be an integral part of our grief and our healing. For what is LOVE, if forgiveness is silent within us?

We learn to forgive our children for dying, ourselves for not preventing it. We begin to forgive God or the fate we see ruling the universe. We start to forgive friends and relatives for abandoning us in their own bewilderment over the onslaught of emotions they sense in our words and behavior.

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

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

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

Don Hackett ~ TCF, Hingham, Massachusetts

Chapter Chat

We would like to emphasize to everyone that at our monthly meetings we have a birthday table set up. Remember to bring pictures or any other mementos that are special to you. We make time to share these memories and to acknowledge our childrens' birthdays; something we might not have the opportunity to do otherwise.

We now have our own bumper stickers! How exciting! Along with the Web site, this will aid in spreading the word about our organization and give people the information to find us. We hope that everyone will help in this cause by putting one on your vehicle. The bumper stickers are available for a \$2 donation. You may get them at our monthly meetings or by sending a request to: TCF of Tyler, P.O. Box 9714, Tyler, TX 75711.

Sweet memories,
Tina, Pat and Mary



I brake for butterflies!
www.TylerTCF.org

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.



We need not walk alone.

“Who better to soften the wound of another than he who has suffered the wound himself?” —*Thomas Jefferson*

Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting in July.

We deeply regret the circumstances that brought you to our TCF Chapter. The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, not-for-profit, self-help organization that offers support and understanding to families who have experienced the death of a child. You are cordially invited to attend our monthly meeting (always the third Tuesday of the month). The meeting is open to everyone and free of charge. You are free to talk, cry or to sit in silence; we respect the individuality of mourning. Comments shared in the meetings remain confidential.

Our chapter is operated entirely by volunteers dedicated to furthering the work of TCF. Your voluntary, tax deductible donations honor your loved one(s) in a meaningful way by enabling us to print and mail this newsletter and meet other expenses involved in reaching out to other grieving families (100% of funds are used for this outreach). Donations, along with the name of the person being honored, may be sent to:

The Compassionate Friends of Tyler
P.O. Box 9714
Tyler, Texas 75711

To Our New Members

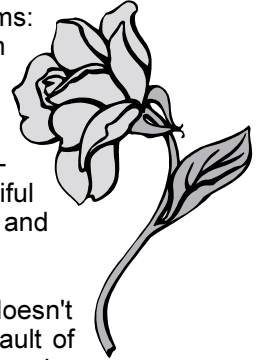
Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third or fourth meeting might be the time you will find the right person—or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

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. Each meeting we have new parents. 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 get softer.”

Rosebush Full of Blooms

On a rosebush full of blooms, there is occasionally one rose more fragile than the rest. Nobody knows why. The rose receives the same amounts of rain and sun as its neighboring blooms: it receives the same amounts of food and water from the earth, of clipping and tending and gentle encouragement from the gardener. Its time on earth is neither more nor less significant than that of the other blooms alongside it. It has all the necessary components to become what it is intended to be: a beautiful flower, fully open, spreading its petals and fragrance and color for the world to see.



But for some reason, once in a while, a single rose doesn't reach maturity. It's not the gardener's fault, nor the fault of the rose. So it is that sometimes, despite the best growing conditions, the best efforts of the gardener, the best possibilities for a glorious blooming season, a particularly fragile rose will share its growth for awhile, then fade and die. And the gardener and the rosebush and the earth and all around grieve.

We are never ready for a loss, not for the loss of a promising rosebud, whose life appears ready to unfold with brilliant color and fulfillment. In the midst of our grieving, we can remember the glimpses of color and fragrance and growth that was shared. We can love the fragile rose and the fragile soul for the valiant battles won and the blooming that was done. And as our own petals unfold, we can remember the softness and beauty of those who touched us along the way.

Ernestine Clark ~ TCF, Oklahoma City, OK

Please Be Gentle

An Afterloss Creed

Jill Englar ~ Westminster, Maryland

Please be gentle with me, for I am grieving. The sea I swim in is a lonely one, and the shore seems miles away. Waves of despair numb my soul as I struggle through each day. My heart is heavy with sorrow. I want to shout and scream and repeatedly ask, “Why?” At times, my grief overwhelms me, and I weep bitterly, so great is my loss.

Please don't turn away or tell me to move on with my life. I must embrace my pain before I can begin to heal. Companion me through my tears and sit with me in loving silence. Honor where I am in my journey, not where you think I should be.

Listen patiently to my story. I may need to tell it over and over again. It's how I begin to grasp the enormity of my loss. Nurture me through the weeks and months ahead. Forgive me when I seem distant and inconsolable. A small flame still burns within my heart, and shared memories may trigger both laughter and tears. I need your support and understanding. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. I must find my own path. Please, will you walk beside me?

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We need not walk alone.

“Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work—you don't give up.” —Anne Lamott

Announcements

“I brake for butterflies!” TCF bumper stickers will be available soon! Check our Web site for details!

Calling all volunteers! Please consider volunteering for our candle lighting memorial held in December. This is a special event to remember our special children. If you find that this time of year is especially tough because of the holidays, maybe your involvement in our candle lighting memorial will bring some comfort. We appreciate your help!



Call (903) 581-2831, (903) 780-7104, or visit our Web site at www.TylerTCF.org for more information.



Love Gifts

Todd and Sabrina Thoene
in memory of their daughter Erica Smith

Phyllis Cavazos in memory of her son Chad



Newsletter Submissions

TCF Tyler welcomes all submissions to our newsletter. Send articles, poetry, love messages and scanned photos to:

TCF Tyler
5401 Hollytree Drive, 1204 • Tyler, Texas 75703
Or e-mail text and photos to: info@TylerTCF.org

We reserve the right to edit for space and/or content. Deadline for submissions is the 3rd Tuesday of each month. TCF Chapters may copy articles from this publication provided credit is given to the author and the original source.

Errors and Omissions: Please notify us if any of your information is incorrect.



Visit us online at www.TylerTCF.org

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

Wee Small Hours

“*In the wee small hours of the morning...*” is a good way to describe the loneliness of grief. When death visits our homes, our families or our friends, it leaves grief, loneliness, and desolation in its wake. How do we survive? Is continuing worth the pain? How do we face another day, or hour or minute? Why should this have happened to me? What can I do to stop the pain?

“*In the wee small hours...*is the time I miss you most of all.” During that time no ray of light or relief from grief seems possible. Nothing seems to work right. However, we can find our way into a sunlight both bright and warm, both invigorating and encompassing. The help we so urgently need to find our way out may be the unexpected phone call, the hand reaching out to assist, the letter or card sent in sympathy, or the friend who encourages us to talk and talk some more

We need not question how that help finds us. It is enough that it is there when it is most needed. It is enough that we can reach out and find a compassionate friend. And when we do, we begin to fill the wee small hours—with large and wonderful memories of our loved ones

Roy P. Peterson, March 22, 1994 ~ TCF, Lexington, KY



We need not walk alone.

"We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey."
—Kenji Miyazawa

August Birthdays



Brennen Applegate
8-10-69 ~ 1-22-01

Son of C.R. & Kathryn Applegate



Gina Forrest
8-22-62 ~ 12-9-98

Daughter of Joice Bass



Crystal Greene
8-6-82 ~ 11-13-01

Niece of Audrey & Claude Mapps



Tasha Nichole Minatrea
8-11-82 ~ 12-30-99

Daughter of Tim Minatrea



Ron Mitchum
8-3-70 ~ 4-15-00

Son of Glenda Mitchum



Christal Murphy
8-14-72 ~ 4-22-03

Daughter of Debbie Johnson

August Anniversaries



Justin Dover
9-14-89 ~ 8-15-02
Son of Stacey Dover



Jill Rozell
3-14-84 ~ 8-2-02
Daughter of Peggy & Terry Rozell

Shannon Scheffler
12-21-70 ~ 8-22-03

Michael Holdway
6-18-52 ~ 8-3-93
Spouse of Kathy Dowdy Holdway



Ryan Delaney
7-10-1980 ~ 7-20-2003
Son of Mary Delaney

Editor's Note: We apologize for missing Ryan's Birthday and Anniversary in our July issue.

Is it Easing?

I heard your name today and my heart did not skip a beat, nor was my mind flooded with the emotion of losing you. I heard your name today and it did not bring back the terrible hurt feelings of when you first left me.

I heard your name today with a calmness that surprised me. Many another child carries your name, and it had been torture hearing it and seeing the smiling faces on those little girls.

But today I knew—I found out—what others in my footsteps found out and tried to tell me. The hurt will ease; but the memories, the love, the good times will never go away.

Phoebe C. Redman ~ TCF, Bradenton, FL

I Can See You

I can see you when a friend visits your grave,
I can see you when I hear your favorite music,
I can see you when your dog howls as you taught him,
I can see you when the stars shine brightly,
I see you in my mind's image when the summer rain cools
the desert brush,

When spring buds emerge with new growth,
When winter chills the air,
When I see young lovers look into each other's eyes and
make promises, have goals and dreams.
In my intense pain, I hear you whisper, "I'm O.K."

I cannot see you when others are uncomfortable with me,
When I can't even mention the anniversary of your death,
When someone unwittingly said I have two children and I
wanted to scream that I have three, now and always.

Please be kind and allow me to see him in my own way
because he exists in my world and I see him when
you let me.

Cindy Nevins ~ TCF, Tucson, AZ

Our new bumper stickers are available for a \$2 donation. You may get them at our monthly meetings or by sending a request to: TCF of Tyler, P.O. Box 9714, Tyler, TX 75711.





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When the world says, "Give up," hope whispers, "Try it one more time."
—Unknown

Death of a Child: What's it Like at 10 Years?

January 11, 2002...Ten years? Sometimes it seems like yesterday.

Sometimes it seems like it never happened. Most of the time it is somewhere in between.

By Richard Edler

It has been 10 years today since Mark died.

When I wrote [Into the Valley and Out Again](#) I chronicled first one day, then one week, then the first month and year. Now it is 10. Here are my thoughts:

The hurt never goes away. We never forget. We never get over it. We don't want to. We hurt so much because we loved so much. But the focus on death and the event fades and the warmth of good memories replaces it. Oh, we can still go back there in an instant. Back to the call, the moment, the good-bye. Back to the night that will forever separate our life between "before" and "after." But we now go back less and less. Time helps a lot.

I have fewer friends. Better friends, mind you, but fewer. I am out of the circle now. My Rolodex is cold. My networking, which used to be razor sharp, has atrophied. My power lunches have become tuna fish sandwiches. But the amazing thing is how much I don't care. I miss some special people so I go out of my way to stay in touch. And that is enough.

I have new and different priorities. I move through life a little slower, a little more tuned to life around me, and to life gone too soon. I brake for sunsets. I hurt for the people who share this walk with me. Since Mark died, hundreds and then thousands of children have died. I feel for them and for their families in a way I could never have understood before. I value people more than things, moments more than milestones, and I no longer equate what I do with who I am.

I am not having the life I expected to have. I recall an old saying, "Man plans...God laughs." Dennis Prager, an author and Los Angeles radio talk-show host, said that unhappiness equals image minus reality. What he meant is that you are unhappy when your image of where you should be is dramatically different from where you really are.

When a child dies, the reality of the life we are going to have is altered forever. I am no longer going to be Mark's dad. I am no longer going to join him at UCLA football games. I am no longer going to be a grandfather to the children he will never have. If that gap between image and reality is a recipe for unhappiness, well, then the reverse is also true. If you "solve" the equation of happiness, happiness equals image matched closely with reality. So I have had to change my image to match the new reality.

I like my new life better. This makes me feel guilty because I would trade my life in an instant if I could have Mark back. But I really do like the person I have become since Mark died. I don't even know that person from 10 years ago. Back then my life purpose was to run a large advertising agency. Today, it is to give back in gratitude for the joy of the life I have been given. I want to make Mark proud. I want to be a blessing to others. And I want to enjoy the journey, too. I still have a grief that goes unspoken. Who will listen at 10 years? Yes, I still miss Mark. But I miss him quietly and silently. I grieve for his loss; for the loss of the person he would have become (he would be 28 now, but instead is forever 18); and also for the loss of the life I would be having if he were here.

I have an overwhelming sense of gratitude. I have been blessed beyond measure. I have a surviving son who has given me more joy than I could imagine any parent having...and now a beautiful daughter-in-law, and a granddaughter. Gratitude is one of the most helpful and healing things you can do on your grief journey. And with gratitude comes thanks. So in gratitude, Kitty and I made a list this week of the people who were there for us when we needed them most. These are the people who dropped everything in their lives on a moment's phone call and rushed to our side. These are the people with whom we are joined forever, and who, no matter how far they drift, or what unimportant spats we might have, will always have a special place in our heart. You make your own list. Then find those people wherever they are, and say thank you.

I choose joy over sadness. If there is one overriding thought in these years, including 10 TCF conferences in a row, it is simply this: Grief is inevitable; misery is optional. It does no good to sit in a hole. It does no good for the loss of one life to lead to the loss of two.

What does do good is doing good. To decide to lead the second part of your life differently and better than you would have before...in your child's name. When we do that...when we do one small act of kindness we never would have done before...when we reach out to other bereaved parents because we can and because we have been there...then the world is changed in some small way for the better, and then the actions we take become a living tribute to our child's life. And then that child is never entirely gone.

And that, my fellow compassionate friends, is how it looks at 10 years for me.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Rich Edler, 58, past president of TCF's national board, author of [Into the Valley and Out Again](#) and treasured friend to many in TCF's extended family, died suddenly and unexpectedly on February 16. He had completed this article for *We Need Not Walk Alone*, TCF's national magazine, just over a month earlier.] —Spring 2002, *We Need Not Walk Alone*, Reprinted with permission





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