



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



*We need not walk alone.*

Volume 5, Issue 12

Tyler, Texas

December 2004

## Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, December 21, 6:30 p.m.  
Clinical Associates of East Texas  
2010 Sybil Lane, Tyler, Texas

### Topic

Surviving the Holidays

### Contact

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Chapter Leader ..... Tina Loper

Chapter Co-Leader ..... Pat Settle

Newsletter/Web Site ..... Mary Lingle

## National Organization Information

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

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[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

## 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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## Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that emptiness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would.

This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children.

Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive.

Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can. We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name and for that one moment the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand.

For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief.

We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

*Jim Lowery ~ TCF, Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter*

## Chapter Chat

The candle lighting is coming up and we are hoping that you all have invited friends and family to come and honor the memory of your child. Pat, Mary and I know that this month is a tough one and we hope that coming together on this night will bring some peace and comfort to everyone.

We would like for each and every one of you to know how much it means to us to be here for you. This event is not only a night for us to remember our own children but a way to show support for all the other families here and across the globe as well.

We would like to thank everyone for coming and helping out with the Christmas tree at Lacks. We have had an impressive amount of donations already and hope you continue to encourage everyone you know to donate canned goods for the Food Bank. Lacks will be accepting canned goods through the 18th.

*Sweet memories—Tina, Pat and Mary*



**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.*

“When I come to the end of my journey and I travel my last weary mile, just forget, if you can, that I ever frowned, and remember only the smile.”  
—Author unknown

## Welcome

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

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.”

## A Holiday To-Do List:

As a reflection back on the past 13 (Wow! has it really been that long?!) Christmases, I would like to share some ways that I have handled the holidays, as well as some additional thoughts. This time of the year is bitter-sweet for me now, as opposed to the first Christmas without my older brother, David. That was the worst.

At any rate, I can handle November and December much better now. I suppose I've learned a little along the way, and gained strength each year. Nonetheless, the anniversary of his death always gets to me. Unfortunately, it falls between Thanksgiving and Christmas on December 9th. Here's my list of suggestions for honoring a sibling whom you have lost, and on simply making it through yourself:

1. Hang that stocking. Go ahead. Put up your sibling's stocking. It isn't as though your brother or sister never existed, and isn't still a part of your life.
2. Write a poem or letter to your sibling and put it in the stocking.
3. Put up a tree, or continue with your holiday traditions. Yes, this is VERY difficult. But for most of our siblings, this was their favorite time of year. Celebrate how blessed you have been to have had your sister or brother for holidays past. Decorate the way THEY would have wanted to, instead of the way you would do it.
4. Create a “memory” box. This is simply a box of belongings from your sibling, or pictures of your sibling, etc. Wrap it in festive holiday paper, and put it under your tree if you have one.
5. Buy a gift for your sibling. Maybe it is something they truly would have wanted for the holidays, maybe it's something the two of you would have enjoyed together or gotten a good laugh out of. This can be VERY therapeutic.
6. Go somewhere that your sibling would have wanted to go—the beach, a movie they would have liked, a favorite restaurant, wherever. “Share” this time with your sibling. This is also good on their birthday. Celebrate that they had a life and that they are a part of yours!
7. Bake a favorite holiday goody of your sibling's.
8. Get together with your family and cry (and LAUGH—it's OK to do this) at some great family memories from years past that involved your sibling. Share thoughts on great places you may have visited for the holidays, or anecdotes of you and your sibling trying to peek at what your gifts were ahead of time.
9. Put together a photo album of your sibling. This could be of your sibling's life in general, or of a specific subject, like the sport your sibling played, or holidays past. 10. Give your album to your parents. Cry (and LAUGH!) at the pictures and the memories they generate.

I hope that you are blessed this holiday season, and that my suggestions are helpful. Please know that the holidays get easier with time, and that you WILL make it through, even though it may seem impossible.

Amy Baker Ferry ~ TCF, Heart of Florida Chapter



...that their  
light may  
always shine.

Light a candle for all children who have died.  
2nd Sunday in December, 6:30 p.m.



*We need not walk alone.*

"Grief is neither an illness nor a pathological condition, but rather a highly personal and normal response to life-changing events, a natural process that can lead to healing and personal growth. The transition through this difficult time is the courageous journey." —*Sandi Caplan and Gordon Lang, in Grief's Courageous Journey: A Workbook*

## Announcements

**Our Annual Candle Lighting Memorial** will be held on December 12th at the First Baptist Church of Gresham, located at 16844 CR 165 Tyler Road (behind the Dairy Queen in Gresham). The ceremony begins at 6:30 p.m., and candles are lit in memory of our children at 7 p.m. For 24 hours straight, candles stay lit in every time zone around the globe for one hour to remember our NOT FORGOTTEN children.



If you would like, you may bring a photo of your child, at least 8x10, to display at the service. We have to have a signed release before we can use your child's photo.

Family and friends are invited. Candles are provided.

If you find that this time of year is especially tough because of the holidays, maybe your involvement in our candle lighting ceremony will bring some comfort. We appreciate your help!

For more information, please call (903) 581-2831, (903) 780-7104 or visit our Web site at [www.TylerTCF.org](http://www.TylerTCF.org).



## Love Gifts

Mary Delaney in memory of her son Ryan Delaney

Farideh Arianpour in memory of her son Roozbeh Arianpour

Sam Smith in memory of his daughter Stacey Smith

Joyce Stewart in memory of her granddaughter Stephanie Settle

Danny & Pat Settle in memory of their daughter Stephanie Settle



## 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](mailto: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.

## Handling the Holidays

Christmas and Chanukah, two holidays rich in tradition and intimately connected with children, are often especially difficult for bereaved families. What you do, or don't do, may depend on whether or not you have young children or grandchildren who should not be deprived of the joy the holidays can bring.

Try to finish shopping well in advance so that you are not inundated by holiday displays and music which the stores seem to initiate earlier and earlier each year. You might want to shop by catalog or the internet. Take advantage of the people who said to let them know how they can help and ask them to shop or do holiday chores for you.

In consultation with your immediate family, decide which traditions you wish to keep and which you want to change. As you progress in your journey through grief, you may find that you are able to reinstate some traditions you could not handle in the beginning.

Do things at different times or in different places if that works for your family. You may want to observe the holidays by yourselves, rather than take part in large gatherings. If you do take part in family or other gatherings, feel free to mention your child if you want to. If others are uncomfortable, it's their problem. Do not let them make you feel guilty for talking about your child or crying. You might want to explain in advance that this is a difficult time for you and that talking about your child and even shedding some tears are necessary for healing.

Memorialize your child in some way. Light special candles; have a special Chanukah menorah; fill his or her stocking with messages of love; have a special tree or decorate the tree with special ornaments; buy presents for a needy child of the same age; make charitable donations; volunteer in a hospital or homeless shelter.

Try attending a TCF or other memorial service. While difficult, this may allow you to express your feelings in a caring and comfortable atmosphere.

Savor any moments of happiness as a special holiday gift. Your children would not want you to be miserable. Honor them by remembering them with love.

*Stephanie Hesse ~ TCF, Rockland County, NY and North Palm Beach County, FL*

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.





*We need not walk alone.*

"Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. Love still stands when all else has fallen."  
—Author unknown

### December Birthdays



**Salvador Estrada**  
12-11-79 ~ 11-3-01  
Son of Charlotte Estrada



**Sarah Harvey**  
12-12-89 ~ 4-26-04  
Daughter of Brian & Lisa Harvey



**Renee Seale**  
12-21-63 ~ 7-13-90  
Daughter of Lana Kay Taylor



**Erica Smith**  
12-21-88 ~ 10-25-03  
Daughter of Todd & Sabrina Thoene



**Jonathan Reynolds**  
12-14-98 ~ 11-16-02  
Son of Addison & Debra Reynolds



**Shannon Scheffler**  
12-21-70 ~ 8-22-03  
Daughter of Dolly Mobley



**Daniel Anderson**  
12-27-79 ~ 5-15-95  
Son of Kerry & Cheryl Anderson



**Stephanie Settle**  
12-22-81 ~ 5-27-98  
Daughter of Danny & Pat Settle

### December Anniversaries



**Tiffany Johnston**  
12-29-81 ~ 2-20-98  
Daughter of Sherrel & Greg Smith



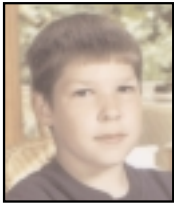
**Ryszard Spakovsky**  
12-2-80 ~ 2-20-98  
Son of Sherrel & Greg Smith



**Jake Higgins**  
6-29-77 ~ 12-4-03  
Son of Donna & Joel Griffin



**Gina Forest**  
8-22-62 ~ 12-9-98  
Daughter of Joice Bass



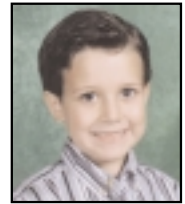
**Zackery Browne**  
12-14-89 ~ 4-13-02  
Son of Timothy & Kay Browne



**Heath Hopson**  
12-8-87 ~ 4-23-01  
Son of Karen Hopson



**Tosha Minatrea**  
8-11-82 ~ 12-30-99  
Daughter of Tim Minatrea



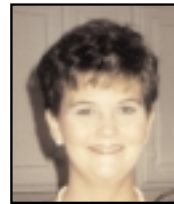
**Christopher Loper**  
4-28-94 ~ 12-21-00  
Son of Tina Loper



**Christopher Fisher**  
12-18-82 ~ 6-22-03  
Son of Grace & Tom Fisher



**Adam Knott**  
12-20-79 ~ 3-20-03  
Son of Bobby & Virginia Knott



**Cheryl Cook**  
4-25-73 ~ 12-10-02  
Daughter of Connie Graebner

**Thank you** for your generous donations to TCF of Tyler. These 'love gifts' allow us to provide our local chapter with special events, the TCF Newsletter, our Web site and more!

**Please share your stories, poems or love messages for inclusion in our newsletter.**





*We need not walk alone.*

"No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear." —C.S. Lewis

## River Reflections

I just got back from a river rafting trip, where I found myself thinking about my brother a lot. He died 16 months ago of an overdose of morphine. I don't know why it happened; it happened.

I didn't see the beginning of his life—he was three years older, but I saw the end. I can look at it now and see it in its entirety—his 33 years of living that I so much counted on and expected to last another 70 or 80 years. I thought I would always have him to talk to—about life, about family, and about ourselves.

The river was a meditative place for me. The rhythm of the oars, the gentle motion of the raft, the shore gliding by, the gurgle of the water as it seeped into and back out of our raft—all of this provided just enough stimulation and was hypnotic enough that I didn't want to do anything but sit and think.

For a few days on the river, I floated without any of my day-to-day concerns, without the usual level of tension standing behind me. What rose to the surface, visible in the clear water of my mind after the silt of all my worries sank to the bottom, were thoughts of my brother.

Nat would have liked this trip. The rough beauty of the terrain and the quiet power of the water would not have been lost on him. He would have noticed the beauty of the full moon and the light on the canyon walls as the sun rose and set.

I have felt a lot of anger at him for dying, for taking his own life, for engaging in an activity so dangerous, for playing Russian roulette, for committing suicide. He left no note, he didn't say good-bye; he left a wife and two sons whom he loved very much but who, like me, were not enough to keep him alive.

It wasn't the anger, though, that I felt on the river. I just remembered him. Grief is at its sharpest when, after a death, he all of a sudden flashes into focus so real and so present that I can hear his voice as if he has just spoken to me. I can imagine the scent of his hair, remember the texture of his face as I touch it, and I can see him walking and talking as if he were only there a moment ago.

At these times, the grief flares up; the wound feels fresh and sharp with memories of the love, the charm, and the grace. I realize both with gratitude and with anguish for the wound this reality carries, that he is not someone I can let go. These memories will come to me for the rest of my life. He is truly a part of me. He is mixed up in my blood and my bones and the electrical impulses of my brain. And in whatever way all of these things go together to form a soul, he is a part of that too. There is no escaping him. This is the gift and the price of love—it doesn't end.

My brother was there in the river's sand and mud, in the full moon, the constantly flowing cold water, the clear dry air, the red canyon walls, and the blue sky. And he was there in me. And I was there, alive and more appreciative than I would have been before he died. I was more aware of my connection to my surroundings—that one day my body will be river mud, water, and bones like driftwood. What form my love will take then, I don't know. Maybe if there is a river and desert light offering delight to someone's senses, that will be enough. I don't know.

*Emily Moore ~ TCF, Los Angeles, California*

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