



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



We need not walk alone.

Volume 5, Issue 7

Tyler, Texas

July 2004

Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, July 20, 6:30 p.m.
Clinical Associates of East Texas
2010 Sybil Lane, Tyler, Texas

Topic

We Cherish Our Child's Name

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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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What Grieving People Want You to Know

- I am not strong. I'm just numb. When you tell me I am strong, I feel that you don't see me.
- I will not recover. This is not a cold or the flu. I'm not sick. I'm grieving and that's different. I will not always be grieving as intensely, but I will never forget my loved one and rather than recover, I want to incorporate his life and love into the rest of my life. That person is part of me and always will be, and sometimes I will remember him with joy and other times with a tear. Both are okay.
- I don't have to accept the death. Yes, I have to understand that it has happened and it is real, but there are just some things in life that are not acceptable.
- Please don't avoid me. You can't catch my grief. My world is painful, and when you are too afraid to call me or visit or say anything, you isolate me at a time when I most need to be cared about. If you don't know what to say, just come over, give me a hug or touch my arm, and gently say, "I'm sorry." You can even say, "I just don't know what to say, but I care, and want you to know that."
- Please don't say, "Call me if you need anything." I'll never call you because I have no idea what I need. Trying to figure out what you could do for me takes more energy than I have.

So, in advance, let me give you some ideas:

- Bring food.
- Offer to take my children to a movie or game so that I have some moments to myself.
- Send me a card on special holidays, birthdays (mine, his or hers), or the anniversary of the death, and be sure to mention her name. You can't make me cry. The tears are here and I will love you for giving me the opportunity to shed them, because someone cared enough about me to reach out on this difficult day.
- Ask me more than once to join you at a movie or lunch or dinner. I may say no at first or even for a while, but please don't give up on me because somewhere down the line, I may be ready, and if you've given up, then I really will be alone.

Virginia A. Simpson

Chapter Chat

It's July and we are now over half way through another year. If you are like us, you find yourself amazed that you have made it through another day, let alone another month or year. The month of December is fast approaching and that brings our annual candle lighting memorial. We would like to extend an invitation to anyone who feels like they have the time to help with planning and participating in this event. There will be a list of things that we will need help with posted on the Web site soon. Please let us know if you are able to help.

This brings us to our next topic, the Web site. If you have not had a chance yet to visit please do so at www.TylerTCF.org. While you're there, feel free to sign up for our Meeting Reminders and Announcements List. We are very excited to have this resource and believe it will be an effective outreach tool. We are open to suggestions and input. Your insight is helpful and important to us.

Take care,
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 you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight."
—Kahlil Gibran

Welcome

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

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.”

The True Meaning of the Meeting

A misty, cloudy Thursday night in March found me, once again, driving to the Compassionate Friends Meeting. Tonight a friend would meet me; she lost her 21 year old son seven years ago in an automobile accident. She has never sought counseling or attended a group meeting. She was always an introvert; the death of her son increased that tendency.

Together we walk to the meeting room. She’s asking a few questions, but I’m doing much of the talking. A mom whose only child has been dead for 63 weeks is explaining to this woman who has endured so much for so long about coping with unimaginable loss. There’s an irony here. There’s also a reason.

Attending my first TCF meeting one year ago was not easy. The pain was brutally raw. The loss was unimaginable. I was reliving the death of my son in my mind, over and over and over and over. I wasn’t angry. I was devastated. I wasn’t blaming anyone but myself. Could I have done something differently and changed the course of events? This was my big question. My soul was an empty void, my heart broken, as another friend pushed me along into that first meeting. I’m glad she did. It made all the difference.

So tonight my friend signs in for the first time and makes a nametag. We look at the books and brochures. We talk. Melinda greets us: as always, welcoming the newcomer, extending her sincere, sweet and pure condolences to my friend. Other parents talk with us and soon the meeting begins.

Tonight’s topic, ironically, is “letting go of the if only’s.” We all talk about our regrets, how we dwelled on them. Some are still dwelling. Others are moving away from the darkness of regret into the light of affirmation: affirmation of our love for our child, affirmation of the decision to go on and make the best life possible, affirmation to remember the life of our child and honor our child’s memory.

My friend joins in, hesitant at first, but soon contributing. Talking of death, of loss, of going forward, of focusing on the positive, of not dwelling on the horror, of eliminating the negative (including people) from her life. I begin to think about her losses (there are many) and her classically introverted personality. Yet here she is openly talking about private pain. And then it hits me. She is among kindred souls in this room tonight. Each of us has had losses of a magnitude that cannot ever be measured. She is comfortable with these gentle people who weep for their dead children, whose voices break in mid-sentence, whose silences often say more than any words could possibly convey.

The meeting goes by quickly. My friend has to leave to pick up a toddler grandchild. We say quick goodbyes to the others and walk quietly to the parking lot. I mention the Mothers’ Retreat, but I know she has made commitments to care for grandchildren while her daughters work. Getting here tonight required a lot of juggling, but I am glad she did it. Her lonely, private struggle has come to an end. Now she knows she is not alone, there are others just like her: kindred souls who need her as much as she needs them. We go our separate ways in the parking lot and she shouts, “I love you.” I love you, too, Sherri, my kindred soul.

Annette Mennen Baldwin



We need not walk alone.

"Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal." —Irish Saying

Announcements

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

Sam Smith in memory of Stacy Smith



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

July Birthdays



John Wallace
7-1-1980 ~ 2-2-1999
Son of Barbara Wallace



Robert Lynn McMahan
7-18-1972 ~ 3-6-1992
Son of Dana Wright



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

Stephen "Chadwick" Williford
7-4-1962 ~ 8-19-2000
Son of Janet Marie Dobbs-Neal

July Anniversaries



Jamie Allen
5-24-1975 ~ 7-8-2001
Son of Cindy Allen



Caleb Scott Jones
2-27-1986 ~ 7-24-2003
Son of LeeAnn Colwell



Brian Christopher Harris
6/8/1972 ~ 7/29/1999
Son of Jolyn & Richard Harris



Brian St. Clair
4-24-1960 ~ 7-26-1997
Son of Janet St. Clair



Renee Seale
12-21-1963 ~ 7-13-1990
Daughter of Lana Kaye Taylor



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



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"It has been said, 'time heals all wounds.' I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind, (protecting its sanity), covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens. But, it is never gone." —Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy

Grief is Not Quicksand

Often, a survivor fears that if he shows his sadness, there will be no end to it. If you are among those who feel that you do not know how intense, lengthy or deep your expression of grief may be, you may find yourself thinking that it would be impossible—or at least very difficult—for you to pull out of grief's deep pit to do all the things you need to do before or after the death. Being afraid of getting sucked down into a hollow of "no return" is not realistic. Grief is not quicksand. Rather, it is a walk on rocky terrain that eventually smoothes out and provides less challenge—both emotionally and physically. For example, you may think: I will fall apart and won't be able to function if I start to show how I feel. Replace such thoughts with the more realistic: I will let go for a time, release what I feel, and will be able to function better as a result of having vented the feelings that are an ever-present burden.

Carol Staudacher

Family

A family has been described as a group of people whose trouble is that the youngsters grow out of childhood, but the parents never grow out of parenthood.

How true that is, and how painful when one is a grandparent whose grandchild has died. Grandparents carry dreadful burdens that are frequently never mentioned. When a child dies, grandparents bear the grief of the death of a loved boy or girl compounded by the pain of watching their own adult child, the dead child's parent, writhe in an agony they are powerless to ease.

It is a double grief.

Harriet Sarnoff Schiff

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

There is a sacredness in tears.
They are not the mark of weakness, but of power.
They speak more eloquently than 10,000 tongues.
They are the messengers of overwhelming grief,
of deep contrition and of unspeakable love.

—Washington Irving

Your Compassionate Friend

I can tell by that look friend, that you need to talk,
So come take my hand and let's go for a walk.
See, I'm not like the others—I won't shy away,
Because I want to hear what you've got to say.
Your child has died and you need to be heard,
But they don't want to hear a single word.
They tell you your child's "with God," so be strong.
They say all the "right" things that somehow seem wrong.

They're just hurting for you and trying to say,
They'd give anything to help take your pain away.
But they're struggling with feelings they can't understand
So forgive them for not offering a helping hand.

I'll walk in your shoes for more than a mile.
I'll wait while you cry and be glad if you smile.
I won't criticize you or judge you or scorn,
I'll just stay and listen 'til your night turns to morn.

Yes, the journey is hard and unbearably long,
And I know that you think that you're not quite that strong.
So just take my hand 'cause I've got time to spare,
And I know how it hurts, friend, for I have been there.

See, I owe a debt you can help me repay,
For not long ago, I was helped the same way.
As I stumbled and fell thru a world so unreal,
So believe when I say that I know how you feel.

I don't look for praise or financial gain,
And I'm sure not the kind who gets joy out of pain.
I'm just a strong shoulder who'll be here 'til the end—
I'll be your Compassionate Friend.

Steven L. Channing ~ TCF, Winnipeg, Canada



We need not walk alone.

"The heart of grief, its most difficult challenge, is not "letting go" of those who have died, but instead making the transition from loving in presence to loving in separation." —*Thomas Attig*

Feelings

(For Tracey, Always)

Her clothing is folded in tidy array
How it was left is how it will stay.
Her desolate dresser silently weeps
In the still of the night, when everyone sleeps.

The closet continues to guard and protect
Items hanging on hangers, forlorn with neglect
The bed she adored, where she bounced high with glee
Cries invisible tears when no one can see.

The bathtub she splashed in will not again see
Someone who will love it as fiercely as she.
It sits idle now, no longer a "star"
And asks (in its way) if I know where you are.

The house that she lived in, the yard where she played
Are missing the landscape of love that she laid.
Her numerous playthings, her once favorite toy
Languish mournfully now without any joy.

This dwelling called "home" has relinquished its heart,
That gift from the one who was forced to depart.
Now it withers from grief—is spirit extinct
and we watch through our tears as the walls seem to shrink.

Our angel was gone in the blink of an eye
She took the light with her that day in July.
Yet now there are times when my heart feels her near
Then I know she's not left me—her love is still here.

Sally Migliaccio ~ TCF, West Islip, NY

Circle

How do you bear it all?
The cry came from a mother
Whose son had died only weeks before.
We were in a circle, looking at her,
Looking around, looking away,
Tears in our hearts, in our eyes.
How do we bear it?
I don't know,
But the circle helps.

*Eva Lager ~ TCF/Western Australia
(Eve's daughter, Milya Claudia Lager, died
by suicide on March 4, 1990.)*

July's Child

Fireworks race toward heaven
Brilliant colors in the sky.
Their splendor ends in seconds
On this evening in July.
"Her birthday is this Saturday,"
I whisper with a sigh.
She was born this month,
She loved this month
And she chose this month to die.

Like the bright and beautiful fireworks
Glowing briefly in the dark
They are gone too soon, and so was she
Having been, and left her mark.
A glorious incandescent life,
A catalyst, a spark...
Her being gently lit my path
And softened all things stark.

The July birth, the July death of
my happy summer child
Marked a life too brief that ended
Without rancor, without guile.
Like the fireworks that leave images
On unprotected eyes...
Her lustrous life engraved my heart...
With love that never dies.

*Sally Migliaccio ~
TCF, Babylon, Long Island, NY*

Terrible Twos

In memory of Jennifer Privett

Jenny,
Since your death, you have missed:
2 birthday anniversaries,
2 Halloweens,
2 Thanksgivings,
2 Christmases,
2 summers and swimming pool sessions,
2 school openings,
2 sizes of shoes and clothing,
2 children who died of heart conditions and
2 pictures of them now sit beside yours,
too many children who died
too soon
too young.
Your Mom ~ *Susan Privett*



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