



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



We need not walk alone.

Volume 5, Issue 6

Tyler, Texas

June 2004

Monthly Group Meeting

Tuesday, June 15, 6:30 p.m.
Clinical Associates of East Texas
2010 Sybil Lane, Tyler, Texas

Topic

Men Do Cry

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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

In This Issue...

Welcome	2
A Simple Thing	2
A Letter to My Brother	2
Announcements/Love Gifts	3
Birthdays/Anniversaries	3
Why We Still Go to TCF	4
This Mixed-Up Grief	4
Poems	5

A Father Mourns Too

I just watched another TV commercial for cologne, which is the first sign of the approach of Father's Day. Like other fathers, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen—my son's life, an opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are his age, a chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called my own father the night before to wish him a happy Father's Day, and I will go to the cemetery to place flowers on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time and then return home to my wife and new infant son. This year we will have a greater measure of peace because of the birth of our son, but I shall always have a hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I die.

Like many bereaved fathers, I have felt misunderstood about how a father should mourn and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such a belief in the strength of maternal love and do such a good job ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at my son's memorial service was how was my wife dealing with this tragedy, to the longtime friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark commercial, it seems that many around us have difficulty understanding a father's grief.

So, support and love is needed and needed badly. Of course, we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. I hope that bereaved fathers will not be forgotten on Father's Day. It is often said that we don't often talk of our emotional needs and are reluctant to show our pain, but we too need love when we hurt. Please remember us on Father's Day and remember that the cute little commercials that hurt mothers in May take their toll on fathers in June.

Doug Hughes ~ TCF, Las Vegas, NV

Chapter Chat

We would like to thank everyone who made the butterfly release a success. We were able to reach so many people and the turnout was fantastic. We are planning to sponsor this event on a yearly basis and hopefully will continue to reach families and give them hope. We would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Sam Smith who, once again, touched us with his incredible music and words. Let us know your thoughts on the butterfly release. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please note the new e-mail address to send pictures, submissions to the newsletter, and requests for mail-outs and updates about upcoming events. We have a new newsletter editor and look for exciting changes in our upcoming editions. We also have a new Web site at www.TylerTCF.org. We will begin very soon to plan the candle lighting for December 12th, 2004. Thanks again to everyone for your continued support and input.

Sweet memories,
Tina Loper
Pat Settle
Margie Newman

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.

"Tearless grief bleeds inwardly."
—Christian Nevell Bovee

Welcome

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

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 Simple Thing

“You don’t know how much I miss having someone to throw the football with...”

Isn’t it odd how the simple things we say to one another can trigger deep, deep sadness, how our whole world can seem to come to a complete stop, when we have lost someone very important to our lives? Or is it? Actually it is a natural response. It has been six and one-half years since our son died, and we have spent that time studying and actively working through our grief. We knew instinctively from the beginning that we must face it squarely. We discussed that day he died how we must deal as best we could with each problem, each emotion, when they arose, no matter how strange it may be or how difficult.

Right away we purchased all the books we could find on grief. Our desire to learn about these strange feelings we were having was strong, our appetites insatiable. And we have come far in these years and in our dedication to know what was happening to us and why. We have only recently discussed that we felt that we are no longer actively grieving for our son. We feel we have recovered from grief. Intellectually we know there will be periods of sadness sparked by memories. Our studies have taught us this. We feel we can not only deal with this but welcome it as a reminder of him and his value to us, for his death represents so much more than merely a person leaving our lives. The shock waves of loss will probably go on forever when we have moments of need of him. Perhaps the simple things caused us to miss him the most—like preparing for homecoming at our university and having no one to toss a football with...

I often think of throwing the ball away—it often needs air even though it’s only handled occasionally by my husband—but I know it would be a fruitless act because there are so many other reminders—musical instruments lying mute, the brown fedora collecting dust. We have learned to laugh again—to participate in life again. But today, oh today! How sad I felt. how quickly the tears came when my husband said, so sincerely, so quietly, “You don’t know how much I miss having someone to throw the football around with...” I felt my heart break again.

Tomorrow we will teach the dog to catch a Frisbee, but it will never be the same. It won’t ever be the same again.

Fay Harden ~ TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

A Letter to My Brother

Suddenly you’re gone. I’m still here. Why? How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer. How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life? What will I do? How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real, so near? Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, the unfairness of losing you. I miss you. I think of you every day and feel you in my heart always. Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason. Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime’s worth. You blessed us with your presence, your specialness. I have only to think of you to feel the joy you’ve left as a legacy. You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

Robin Holemon ~ TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL



We need not walk alone.

"The most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or touched—they are felt by the human heart."
—Helen Keller

Announcements

Calling all volunteers! Please consider volunteering for our candle lighting ceremony 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 ceremony 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

Pat and Danny Settle in memory of Stephanie

Janet St. Clair in memory of her son Brian

Barbara Miller in memory
of her granddaughter Amanda Stone

Victor and Margie Newman
in memory of Jeremy Newman

Mary and Erin Lingle in memory of Candice



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

June Birthdays



Jackie Heerd
6/30/1946 ~ 2/22/1981
Daughter of Larry Batte



Thomas E. Carroll, II
6/2/1973 ~ 11/13/1993
Son of Linda Carroll



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

June Anniversaries



Roozbeh Arianpour
3/25/1980 ~ 6/6/2003
Son of Farideh Arianpour



Christopher Fisher
12/18/1983 ~ 6/22/2003
Grandson of Grace Fisher



Michael A. Rucker
1/18/1993 ~ 6/1/2002
Son of Brandy Rucker
Pearson & Grandson
of Shelba Putnam



Mark Turner
10/3/1966 ~ 6/19/1977
Son of
Clayton & Pat Turner

Randy Rounsavall
10/14/1951 ~ 6/19/2003
Son of
Margaret Rounsavall

Tammy Kay Brown Roberts
5/17/1972 ~ 6/10/2000
Daughter of
Kenn & Ann Somerville

Christopher Pope
11/10/1990 ~ 6/19/2003
Son of Brenda Pope



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"Where grief is fresh, any attempt to divert it only irritates."
—Samuel Johnson

Why We Still Go to TCF

"Are you still involved with that group? Aren't you over it yet? Why do you go?"

These are questions I often hear now that it has been more than seven years since Mark died. I suspect you hear them too. There are easy answers. But not everyone understands, unless you have been there. Here are ten I can think of:

1. Because we never want the world to forget our child, so what we do we do in his or her name.
2. Because when we reach out to help someone else, we also help ourselves.
3. Because someone was there for us when we needed it most; now the best way to say "thank you" is to pass it on by being there for others.
4. Because it is the one thing we do that can bring something positive out of tragedy.
5. Because we have found in TCF better friends and closer bonds than we ever thought possible. Here we can cry and hug people even if we don't know their last name or what they do for a living. And it doesn't matter.
6. Because few people are qualified to walk up to a newly bereaved family and say, "I know how you feel." And because we can, we must.
7. Because sometimes we need to talk, too, and to remember and share. We are further along than many around us, but we never forget.
8. Because many of us believe that one day we will meet our child or brother or sister again, and he or she will ask, "So what did you do with your life after I left?" And we will have an answer.
9. Because our presence might help newly bereaved families understand that they will survive and even laugh again.
10. Because we love cold coffee, cookies and hard metal chairs.

Richard Edler ~ TCF, South Bay/LA, CA

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

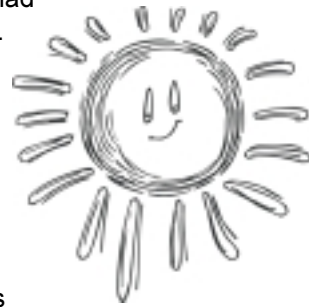
This Mixed-Up Grief

Have you ever noticed the many mixed-up, confusing emotions involved in grieving?

On the one hand, you feel restless; on the other hand, you feel like you don't want to move at all. You feel desperately alone, yet you don't want anyone around. You feel scatterbrained, forgetful, and yet frantically meticulous. You feel like crying at nothing, and sometimes laughing at anything. (Or do I have that backwards?) Being in a crowd of people is fine as long as they don't talk to you. And yet, if they don't talk to you, you feel as if nobody cares. You want so desperately for someone to mention your child, to remember the life that once was. And yet it can make you furious if ALL they want to talk about is the dead one, and never even mention the living ones.

Grief settles over you like a hot blanket. You're as cold as the winter snow. Grief presses on you like a steamroller. You're floating in a bubble above yourself. Grief boxes you in on four sides and introduces you to a pain no one should have to know.

But then, once again, you begin to feel compassion. You relate to other parents who have had an experience similar to your own. And eventually, in a moment as sharp as a sunburst, you hear yourself saying your child's name with an unfamiliar smile on your face. You remember some of the funny times and feel laughter building in your throat. One morning you notice the sun is shining. Many days, months, and possibly years have passed unnoticed—and somehow, you are still here. Even though your child is still—there. You feel your heart swell with a love you never even knew could exist. And you find a place in your life for something called (dare I say) peace.



And then, ever so gently, the memories enfold you in a warmth as soothing as a cool shower on a hot summer day, so you find you WANT to remember. And tender memories of love lift you to unreachable heights, to the brightest of stars, to the loveliest touch of your child.

Dana Gensler ~ TCF, Kentucky



We need not walk alone.

"Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break."

—William Shakespeare

When Fathers Weep at Graves

I see them weep
the fathers at the stones

taking off the brave armor
forced to wear in the work place

clearing away the debris
with gentle fingers

inhaling the sorrow
diminished by anguish

their hearts desiring
what they cannot have—

to walk hand in hand
with children no longer held—

to all the fathers who leave a part
of their hearts at the stones

may breezes underneath trees of time
ease their pain

as they receive healing tears
...the gift the children give.

*Alice J. Wisler
For David, in memory of our son Daniel
August 25, 1992-February 2, 1997*

Dad

by Scott McFarlane ~ 9/20/65 to 1/22/96

I've watched his eyes grow tired, Liquid full with pain
from having to put dreams aside.

I recall leathery hands, large and warm as they
covered mine. I now realize caring that hid behind a
stone face, and hopes that patiently waited as I
searched for my own space.

I still hurt from times I couldn't succeed, I beg for
more time to show him the respect he needs. I see
his eyes, they still hold their light and I

Want him to wish me a million more good nights.



Catching Butterflies

It often hurts to come upon reminders of
my son

Tho' often since I lost him I would search
around for one

Which always brought on sadness and
the tears that I would shed

Were caused by names or faces, all
things that I would dread.

But then one day I came upon a man
who'd lost his son

I found that things I ran from, he
wouldn't even shun.

But rather he would treasure and I said
I wondered why

He told me that he called them "Catching
Butterflies."

This view of his intrigued me; I wanted
to hear more

And learned that he took all of them and
carefully would store

All of the reminders that I chose to push
away

He would tuck deep down inside his
heart each and every day.

Now a name or likeness when catching
me off guard

Does not upset me as it did and I don't
find it hard

For now instead I see these times as
opportunities

To see my son awakened in these new
fresh memories.

Dottie Williams ~ TCF, Pittsburgh, PA

What Candice Would Say

I'm sorry big sister, I can't play with you.

I'm sorry grandpa, I can't go to the zoo.

I'm sorry daddy, you can't kiss me goodnight.

I'm sorry mommy, you can't hold me tight.

No one knows why, no one can guess.

But I can't play right now,

I've gone to rest.

Mary Lingle ~ TCF, Tyler, TX





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