



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



We need not walk alone.

Volume 6, Issue 3

Tyler, Texas

March 2005

Monthly Group Meeting

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

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The Meeting Agenda

6:30 p.m.

Meeting will begin with drinks and refreshments followed by announcement of birthdays and anniversaries and reading of the Credo. We will then have open discussion.

8:00 p.m.

Meeting will close by recognizing our childrens' names. Feel free to visit after the meeting or check out books from our library.

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Why Me?—The Unanswerable Question

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?"

They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"Why me?" is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the "Why me?" will answer itself.

Polly Moore ~ TCF, Nashville, TN

Helping Someone Survive

A death by suicide triggers great amounts of anger and guilt. However, some of those feelings can be balanced by struggling to see that the suicide was not so much a deliberate, hostile act, but a gesture of utter hopelessness and despair. Reminders that a person was so driven by emotional whirlwinds that it was impossible to sense any ray of hope, can temper considerably the emotional impact of a death by suicide.

One of the best responses to a suicide that I have ever heard came through a sermon delivered by a pastor of a young man who shot himself. With great eloquence, his pastor was able to convey tremendous hope through these words: "Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage, and only God knows how this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul."

Victor Passchin, Reprinted with permission of Bereavement Publishing, Inc.

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.

“...as long as we are alive we have the capacity to continue to love even that which is no longer a part of our daily reality.” —Deborah Morris Coryell

Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting last month.

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.”

Book Review

Good Grief: Healing Through the Shadow of Loss
by Deborah Morris Coryell

Book Review by Meg Avery, TCF, Lawrenceville, GA

I bought this book a couple weeks ago and finally picked it up a few nights ago, and randomly opened it to this page. These paragraphs really said a lot to me and made me think a lot about the comments some unthinking people tell us bereaved parents about how we have to put our grief behind us and move on. Like we're supposed to forget about our child and carry on as though everything is fine, yeah, right. Let them be in our shoes and try moving on. Like Jayne wrote, we are moving on. We have changed, grown, reached out, been through hell and back and it has changed our lives, unlike some people who are still rooted in the same spot they were in 4 years ago, but they can tell us to move on.

"Healing our grief means continuing to love in the face of loss. The face of loss—what we see—is that someone or something is gone. The heart of loss teaches us that nothing—no thing—we have ever known can be lost. What we have known we have taken into ourselves in such a way that it has become part of the very fabric of our being. It is part of who we are and as long as we are alive we have the capacity to continue to love even that which is no longer a part of our daily reality.

This means that we will need to "change our minds" about many notions that we have had about loss: that what we can no longer "see" is gone. That what we can no longer touch doesn't continue to live. That if there is no response, the relationship is over. Close your eyes and see that which you can no longer touch; that which is gone from your presence. Reach inside of you to the feeling of touching, hearing, smelling, being with your experience of what you believed was lost.

Remember. We are haunted by societal fears that we should not continue to stay connected with what is gone, what is past, what has been lost. There is a pitfall here, a caveat, symbolized by Dickens Miss Havisham: be wary of that part of us that might want to live in the past. The challenge is to bring the past along with us in such a way that we haven't lost anything. We don't ignore the challenge because of the pitfall. Truth to tell, we could not forget our past if we wanted to. What we choose to leave in the past, we can. What we choose to continue loving, we can. We are being asked to give new form to what was contained in an earlier relationship. Our grief becomes the container for what we feel we have lost and in the process of grieving we come into some new wholeness. We create a way to incorporate, literally to take into our bodies, that which has become formless.

Like the caterpillar, we go into a cocoon to a safe place so that the old self can dissolve and a new self can be created. Like the art of losing, this metamorphosis is not automatic. It does not happen simply in the course of time. Rather, it is a self-conscious act. Grief can be a path to self-realization because in the process of grieving we acknowledge that which we chose not to lose. In the art of losing we can choose who we will be. We break, but we break open so that we can include more of life, more of love. We get bigger in order to carry with us what we choose to continue loving."

The next chapter begins with this quote: "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."



We need not walk alone.

“With the passing of years, I have learned that if I can hang on for just a little longer, these emotions—strong as they are—will pass and I can live again with the longing hidden deep inside my breast.” —*Shirley Muller*

Announcements

NEW MEETING TIME! Please make note of our new meeting time listed on the front page of this newsletter.

We will be holding our Annual Butterfly Release on May 14. This year you may purchase individually cased butterflies to release for \$10 each. Contact us if you would like more information.



Love Gifts

David & Teresa Terrell in memory of Andy Terrell
Victor & Margie Newman in memory of Jeremy Newman
Steve & Sherri Tutt in memory of Lisa Tutt
James & Dina Defenbaugh in memory of Neil Defenbaugh



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.

Where Do I Go?

Now that you're gone, where do I go

to see your fair smile
to hear your tingling giggle
to smell your dank hair after a swim
to listen to your questions
to touch your gentle cheek
to feel your bear hug?

Where do I go

to share all my years of wisdom
to find someone who'll tell me truth
to answer the phone that won't ring
to tell you I'm sorry
to know that I am loved and
to pour out my love and my tears?

I shall go

to the pictures that hold you forever
to the books we shared
to the music you taught me to love
to the woods we explored as one
to the memories that never fail
to the innermost reaches of my heart
to where we are always together.

Marcia Alig ~ TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, NJ

Feelings and Emotions

Therapists often encourage individuals to “deconstruct” and “reconstruct” themselves through a complex process that takes many, many years. In this evolution of the person, the psychological makeup, past and current environmental influences and many other factors play into the slow, yet simultaneous, deconstruction and reconstruction. Usually this is done without a great deal of emotional upset at any one time.

Unlike the patient who chooses to meet with a therapist, parents of children who have died have been suddenly and completely “deconstructed.” They have been involuntarily thrust into the dark totality of personal deconstruction. The emotions and feelings that comprise this deconstruction are overwhelming. Parents who have lost a child to death will refer to their personal deconstruction as a total numbness followed by a deep pit, a dark hole, an abyss, a total loss of self, a purgatory of pure torture and a multiplicity of the deepest, saddest, most painful feelings and emotions known to the human race.

Reconstruction for parents is the most extremely difficult work one can choose to undertake. It is often much easier to bury emotions, hide in alcohol, denial, depression and other aberrant behaviors. Underlying psychiatric disorders can surface and take over lives and families after a parent has lost a child. Strange things happen to us—we are more accident prone, we don't want to get up in the morning, word retrieval and names and places slip from our minds, we over-eat, we under-eat, we slide mentally from conversations in mid sentence. We avoid old friends who don't understand. We do not seek new relationships. We lock ourselves in our homes or offices and shut the world out. The deconstruction is devastating.

How do we start reconstructing our feelings and emotions? That is the question we are posing at this month's meeting. All in attendance will be parents who have lost children. All will have a story to tell; many will have suggestions about coping skills and emotional recovery that cover a period of their grief. Some will come to listen, to absorb, and to reach for hope, to find an answer or two on this long emotional journey.

We encourage you to think back to the last normal day of your life and remember the first emotion you felt when your child died. Bring yourself forward in your grief; if you have the opportunity, write down some thoughts on your feelings and emotions as time progressed. This is painful work, but it is helpful when you are ready to open up and talk about the reconstruction of your emotions and feelings.

Think about where you are now in your grief and compare it with last week, last month, last year, two years ago and longer. Jot those thoughts down. Let's talk—as only parents who have lost a child to death can talk to each other.

Annette Mennen Baldwin ~ TCF, Katy, TX





We need not walk alone.

"If only they knew that when I speak of him, I am not being morbid. I am not denying his death. I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For twenty-six years he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded and loved—this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief." —Jan McNess

March Birthdays



Roozbeh Arianpour
3-25-80 ~ 6-6-03
Son of Farideh Arianpour



Michael Schmidt
3-11-83 ~ 2-10-03
Son of Patricia Jeffery



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



Kenny Ivy
3-10-65 ~ 5-12-85
Son of Jo Anne Ivy



Charles Bryan Meadows
3-18-80 ~ 1-19-03
Son of Charles & Lynda Meadows



Toni Wood
3-10-79 ~ 9-29-03
Daughter of Tami Wooldridge



Timothy Andrew Lever
3-23-69 ~ 6-3-04
Son of Elsie Ford



Lisa Tutt
3-20-87 ~ 7-30-04
Daughter of Steve & Sherri Tutt



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



Neil Defenbaugh
10-20-81 ~ 3-27-04
Son of James & Dina Defenbaugh



Allen Price
4-11-77 ~ 3-29-04
Son of Deborah & Floyd Holcomb



Robert McMahon
7-18-72 ~ 3-6-92
Son of Dana Wright



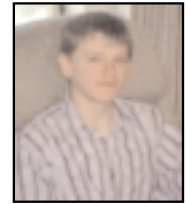
Gary Dean Arnold
9-17-57 ~ 3-7-04
Son of Betty & Harold Arnold



Phillip Kuhn
12-28-73 ~ 3-27-03
Son of Carolyn R. Kuhn



Kayla Smith
11-7-89 ~ 3-5-04
Daughter of Debbie Smith



Joshua Andrews
6-21-88 ~ 3-14-04
Son of Tawna Andrews



Amanda Stone
3-25-85 ~ 9-7-03
Daughter of
Glen & Mary Kay Stone

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 matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains within you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still alive." —Kitty Reeve

From Pain and Agony to Joy and Glory

In loving Memory of Jeremy Wayne Newman
4-15-80 to 1-10-02
Forever in Our Hearts

My name is Margie and I want to share my story with you.

I am married and have two wonderful boys and a wonderful husband. I had the perfect life and I was in control—or so I thought.

January 10, 2002, my life was turned from being in control to a nightmare with no desire to control anything or even the desire to live. My son, Jeremy, age 21, was killed in a two-car collision 1.8 miles from home. His car caught on fire and he was burned beyond recognition.

My life forever changed on that date. I don't have to explain the despair, the emotional rollercoaster, the devastation, the hell I felt. I feel sure if you are reading this you already know the pain and all that happens when you bury a child.

We had to wait a week for positive ID from dental records that it was for sure our Jeremy in that burned out car. We had the funeral—which is a blur to me—and then life went on. It was living that was so hard to do now.

I was so angry at God and the world and wanted to die more than anything. My pain was so intense I wanted to die to escape the pain. I could not function as a rational, caring human being anymore. I prayed for death daily. I went along in this hell for two years and only breathed because it came natural. I just went through the motions of each day not caring.

Finally, after two years of this, I realized I could not do this alone. Praying for death didn't work. Not caring didn't work. The world still turned despite my pain. I fell to my knees and asked God for forgiveness and to please help me. It was not an instant answer but in the coming days I began to feel an unexplainable peace. I could even laugh again and I could feel joy again.

I still miss my Jeremy, and its been three years since I last saw him, but I can now cope and I have hope and blessed peace. No amount of money could have ever gotten that for me—it was the saving grace of God that did that.

I look back at my life now and I am so sorry I wasted so much of it not knowing our loving and giving Lord. I had been saved as a teenager but never really walked with God, I only called upon Him when I needed Him. I now can say I have a real daily living relationship with the Lord and I can never thank Him enough for what He has done for me and so many others.

I know that one day I will see Jeremy again and at that time we will never be separated—and that brings me much comfort. I found in all this struggle with losing Jeremy that nothing or no one could help but the Lord.

Please don't think I am some "religious fanatic." I know we hear stories all the time about people who find "religion" in the midst of their pain, this is not what happened to me. I found a real and living and loving Lord who wants the best for all of us. And when we hurt, He hurts too. It's not about finding "religion," it's about finding hope and strength and courage and love. When all that has been taken away, only the Lord can give us those things.

I write this letter in hopes that it will bring you hope and blessed peace. Yes, I lost a child and my heart will forever miss him, But in all that pain something good did come.

Grief is a long and hard, and sometimes life-changing experience. As someone once said, "grief can make you bitter or better." I hope it makes us all better and helps us to see the really important things in life.

*To God be the Glory
Sweet Memories,
Margie Newman ~ TCF, Tyler, TX*



The Compassionate Friends of Tyler

PO Box 9714 • Tyler, TX 75711

We are happy to send our newsletter to you. We hope that it is helpful to you to be kept informed of chapter resources and activities and that you still wish to receive our newsletters that contain excellent material relating to grief issues.

To keep our mailing list current, we do ask to hear from you each year making sure that our information is correct and that you still wish to receive our mailings. If we did not hear from you in the last year please indicate any appropriate choices below and return the form to the address at the bottom of this page.

Your name: _____

Child's name: _____ Relationship: _____

Birth Date: _____ Death Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Please check any of following that apply.

Please continue sending the newsletter.

Please include my child's name and picture in the slide presentation at the Candle Lighting Ceremony.

Please include my child's picture and information on the TCF-Tyler website.

Please do not send the newsletter.

I am enclosing a memorial to support The Compassionate Friends in the amount of _____

Please make check payable to TCF

In memory of _____

The continuation of this chapter's work depends on donations. If you have not taken the opportunity to give a donation in memory of your child please consider taking this time to give a gift that will help reach out to other newly bereaved parents.

We must have your written permission on file to use your child's name and/or picture in the newsletter and/or at the Candle Lighting. Permission may be withdrawn at any time by written request. This information is used to maintain our Chapter Database. It is confidential and is only utilized for Chapter activities such as the newsletter. Permission may be withdrawn at any time with your written request.

(Signature) Date: _____

Please return completed form to:

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

Please return completed donation form to:

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

We rely entirely on voluntary donations to support our group. With your help we can continue to provide our valuable services to everyone affected by the loss of a child.

Yes, I would like to make a donation in the amount of \$ _____ . (Please make check payable to TCF)

My donation is made in honor and in memory of _____.

Tyler TCF greatly appreciates your support. These 'love gifts' are used to provide our monthly newsletter, printed materials, website, special events, our library and more.

I don't think you ever stop giving. I really don't. I think it's an on-going process. And it's not just about being able to write a check. It's being able to touch somebody's life. —*Oprah Winfrey*



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