



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS



We need not walk alone.

Volume 5, Issue 9

Tyler, Texas

September 2004

Monthly Group Meeting

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

Topic

Open Discussion

Contact

(903) 581-2831
(903) 780-7104

Web Site: www.TylerTCF.org
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Chapter LeaderTina Loper
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National Organization Information

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Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
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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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Thanks

Thanks to the friend who 'did' know the right words to say: "There is a group in town that might help you."

Thanks to the parent who somehow found the courage to call that phone number and find out about "that group."

Thanks to the mother who went to that first meeting knowing it would really hurt to talk—and talked.

Thanks to the dad who said after the first meeting that he could never come back—but did.

Thanks to the parent who, at the fifth meeting, put her arms around a "new one" and said: "They really can help."

Thanks to the mom who, for the first time, was again able to bake cookies—for her "Compassionate Friends."

Thanks to the homemaker who could never talk in front of people—who became a facilitator.

Thanks to the six-foot father who cried in front of the other men—and didn't say he was sorry.

Because of you, we will be able to help someone we don't even know—next month.

John DeBoer ~ TCF, Greater Omaha, NE

Chapter Chat

We are looking for phone friend volunteers. Please contact us if you are able to help in this area. Pat or I will let you know what this entails. Also, we have had inquiries about starting a sibling support group. We would like feedback on this.

We hope that everyone will be putting a bumper sticker on their vehicle. This along with our Web site will be a powerful and effective tool in reaching out to families that need us. We are striving to make sure that every family in this area knows that our organization exists. Buy more than one for friends and family to display, as well. The more we have out there the better.

We have also chosen a new location for our candle lighting ceremony this year and we will be giving complete details in the near future. Please get us your photos, permission forms/releases and suggestions for songs and poetry as soon as possible. You will find a release included in this newsletter. Some will receive a SASE by mail to make mailing it back easier.

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 it seems that our sorrow is too great to be borne, let us think of the great family of the heavy-hearted into which our grief has given us entrance, and inevitably, we will feel about us, their arms and their understanding.”
—Helen Keller

Welcome

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

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 Depths of Grief

We are all bereaved parents or bereaved family members. We live with the pain of loss each day, every day. We are veterans of a most unholy pain, rising each day to begin again the struggle to survive, the fight to make sense of a world that—for us—has become senseless.

Now our ranks have sadly swelled.

On the eleventh day of September many thousands of innocent people perished. The killing was as indiscriminate as it was impersonal; husbands, wives, daughters, sons, brothers and sisters died. Each life lost on that day represents, as we know all too well, a forthcoming struggle of the survivors to go on in a newly painful world that will make little sense.

As the relentless news poured in on that black day, my sorrow grew exponentially. Grief and horror mushroomed—demanding to be expressed. Tears fell as they had not in a number of years. Inside of me, the raw pain of grief blossomed anew. “What’s going on?” I asked myself. “Why this overwhelming reaction? This isn’t the first tragedy you’ve been witness to since the death of your little girl!” My pain seemed disproportionate, yet I continued to feel raw and weepy. I was unable to hinder the tides of emotion that swept over me that day, and all the days that have followed. Eventually I began to realize I was closely relating on two levels to the thousands who—without warning—had lost those most precious to them. The devastation that occurred in New York had happened in the place my heart called home, so on that level this was a personal tragedy. And as a grieving parent, I cringed at the unimaginable agony of those left behind—the weeks, months and years of anguished days and sleepless nights that lay in store for those frantic with fear on this horrendous day. I suspected that each of them was convinced that this was the most devastating day of their lives, and while I would not dispute that, I knew they were innocently unaware of the battles to come—the nightmares that lay in wait in the days and weeks ahead.

The tears I could not control were also for the innumerable acts of selflessness seen so many times throughout this horror. People put themselves at risk to help others; the injured lent a willing hand of support to those whose need seemed greater. As I watched this on television I was again so deeply moved. It seems our strongest bonds can be forged during the worst times in our lives. This lesson is one I learned first-hand when my own tragedy struck, and my anguish led me to The Compassionate Friends. There, other grieving parents held out their hands to me, and it was there I found the unwavering support that helped me survive my pain.

Now I could only hope each of these survivors would find a safe place to voice their grief.

So many have been so cruelly thrust into our world. We are here, hands outstretched, for those who need us.

Sally Migliaccio, Editor ~ TCF, Babylon, NY

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



We need not walk alone.

“I will open my heart in trust, that in ways I do not now understand, my loved one will continue to be present in my life.”
—Martha Whitmore Hickman

Announcements

“I brake for butterflies!” TCF bumper stickers are now available! Check our Web site for details!

Our Annual Candle Lighting Memorial will be here before we know it. Please consider volunteering for this special event held in December 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

Joice Bass in memory of her daughter Gina Forrest



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

What Might Have Been...What Is

I want what might have been...
And I want what is.
I want the child I do not have,
And I want the child that has come after.
I cannot choose
One or the other,
My heart wants both.
What might have been,
A sturdy lad,
Baseball bats,
Football helmets,
Squiggly worms on hooks
Dirt and mud and
Burps and booms.
What is now,
A charming girl,
Raggedy Anne,
Stuffed bears,
Curls and ribbons on hair
Tea and cookies and
Squeals and giggles.
How can I choose
From two blessings,
One gone too soon,
One here by a miracle?
I cannot...
But if I could...
I would want both...
What might have been...
And what is.

Lisa Sculley ~ In memory of Joey Sculley
7/16/92 to 10/7/92 - SIDS

Don't Steal My Grief

Don't try to make me feel better,
By quipping your cute jokes.
Don't try to rob me of my pain,
When I need it as my cloak.
I know you probably think,
You're doing me a favor,
But what you don't understand,
Is that my sadness is my savior.
Don't try to steal my right,
To express my grief in my own way.
You see, I lost my child,
And grief is the price that I must pay.
I need to feel the hurt and pain,
As it beats inside my chest.
Don't try to steal my grief,
When it's the only feeling I have left.

Faye McCord ~ TCF, Jackson, MS
In loving memory of my son, Lane McCord
(1/26/65-9/13/98)



We need not walk alone.

“Adversity often activates a strength we did not know we had.”
—Joan Walsh Anglund

September Birthdays



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



Chad Cavazos
9-24-86 ~ 4-20-01
Son of Phyllis Cavazos



Robert Attaway
9-11-99 ~ 9-11-99
Grandson of Nancy Cooke



Samantha Johnson
9-23-86 ~ 5-13-02
Daughter of Vicki Johnson

Joshua Jolley
9-28-78 ~ 5-12-02
Son of Brenda Jolley

Shantrice Willingham
9-11-02 ~ 9-11-02
Daughter of Thelma Washington

“When your mind cannot find an answer,
open your heart and ask for peace.”
—sascha

An Empty Chair

The first wedding was two years after Alan, my twin-brother, passed away. My second oldest brother was getting married. I was waiting for the question, "When was I going to get married?" I was never asked so I couldn't use my prepared response, "When Alan could be my best man."

I thought if I did get married I would have an empty chair next to me. If Alan couldn't be my best man, I didn't want anyone. My brother's name would appear in the program (that he would have designed) as honorary best man.

This year I turned thirty-six, it was my sixth birthday without Alan. At the restaurant we had made a mistake, the reservation had been made for one too many. I had ended up sitting next to an empty chair.

I thought I was doing better, no longer crying at family events. I now realize that I will not have an empty chair at my wedding, if I can ever bring myself to get married without Alan being there. The loss I feel will always be there, but it's much worse seeing an empty chair.

Daniel Yoffee

September Anniversaries



Robert Attaway
9-11-99 ~ 9-11-99
Grandson of Nancy Cooke



Tim Cole
4-15-69 ~ 9-15-97
Son of Mary Miller



Stephanie Harris
5-18-79 ~ 9-5-98



Cindy Dingler
10-18-57 ~ 9-6-99



Mary Stone
2-22-81 ~ 9-21-96
Daughter of Dick & Denise Stone



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

Shantrice Willingham
9-11-02 ~ 9-11-02
Daughter of Thelma Washington

Holli Steward
9-2-02
Daughter of Kathy Rachal



Terry Wayne Brown
7-13-69 ~ 5-27-03
Son of Claudette Brown

Editor's Note: We apologize for missing Terry's birthday in our July issue.

 **I brake for butterflies!**
www.TylerTCF.org

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.

The experience of grieving cannot be ordered or categorized, hurried or controlled, pushed aside or ignored indefinitely. It is as inevitable as breathing, as change, as love. It may be postponed, but it will not be denied.
—Molly Fumia

To Bereaved Grandparents

I am powerlessness. I am helplessness. I am frustration.

I sit here with her and cry with her. She cries for her daughter and I cry for mine. I can't help her. I can't reach inside and take her broken heart. I must watch her suffer day after day and see her desolate.

I listen to her tell me over and over how she misses Emily, how she wants her back. I can't bring Emily back for her. I can't even buy her an even better Emily than she had, like I could buy her an even better toy when she was a child.

I can't kiss the hurt and make it go away. I can't even kiss a small part of it away. There's no Band-Aid large enough to cover her bleeding heart.

There was a time I could listen to her talk about a fickle boyfriend and tell her it would be okay, and know in my heart that in two weeks she wouldn't even think of him. Can I tell her it'll be okay in two years when I know it will never be okay, that she will carry this pain of "what might have been" in her deepest heart for the rest of her life?

I see this young woman, my child, who was once carefree and fun-loving and bubbling with life, slumped in a chair with her eyes full of agony. Where is my power now? Where is my mother's bag of tricks that will make it all better?

Why can't I join in the aloneness of her grief? As tight as my arms wrap around her, I can't reach that aloneness.

Where are the magic words that will give her comfort? What chapter in Dr. Spock tells me how to do this? He has told me everything else I've needed to know. Where are the answers? I should have them. I'm her mother.

What can I give her to make her better? A cold wet wash cloth will ease that swelling of her crying eyes, but it won't stop the reason for her tears. What treat will bring joy back to her? What prize will bring that "happy child" smile back again?

I know that someday she'll find happiness again, that her life will have meaning again. I can hold out hope for her someday, but what about now? This hour? This day?

I can give her my love and prayers and my care and my concern. I could give her my life. But even that won't help.

Margaret Gerner ~ TCF, St. Louis, MO

Autumn

In the fall
When amber leaves are shed,
Softly—silently
Like tears that wait to flow,
I watch and grieve.
My heart beats sadly in the fall;
'Tis then I miss you most of all.

Lily de Lauder ~ TCF, Van Nuys, CA

Fall

It is so hard to believe that summer is over! Even though summer is technically still here until September, the cool evenings we have been having, school starting, and football games being played are all signs that fall is here. And I love it!

To me, fall is the most invigorating time of the year. The crispness of the air, the beautiful coloration of the trees, the smell of leaf and wood smoke, the sky full of birds traveling south "talking" with one another as they go, are all part of this wonderful world we live in. I hope all of you will be able to feel and see the wonders of fall.

Sometimes we are so "down" and preoccupied with our child's death, and we are working so hard to just get through each day, that we are unable to appreciate what is going on in the world around us. Try to take a few minutes each day and look around. If you can focus on a beautiful tree or leaf, smell the chrysanthemums blooming in the garden or bite into a fresh apple just picked and enjoy doing this for just a few minutes, it will make your day seem brighter. And, if you are up to it, go to a high school football game or a band competition. The enthusiasm of the young people participating in these events is contagious.

Yes, it sometimes hurts. We want our children to be there also, enjoying these activities. But it also gives us renewed faith that life does go on, and there is happiness and excitement in the world. I hope you all can find some beauty and peace in the fall months ahead.

Peggy Hartzell ~ TCF, Ambler, PA

September 14, 1999

How much I have learned since that horrendous day. I've learned that I'm not alone in my grief, That others have suffered, are suffering and will suffer The tremendous loss of losing someone they love to suicide. Two years later I also learned how grief can destroy When your father, who couldn't deal with his grief, Decided to end his pain and suffering too. I've learned I wasn't as guilty as I had thought at first, That your decisions was yours alone, That once made nobody could change it. And I've learned to stop asking the "Why?" question— That question to which only you have the answer. Some people said that I'd get over losing you in a year. After that first round of holidays, birthdays—I'd be fine. Guess what—I've learned just how wrong they were. It's now the 10th year—the 10th year of holidays, birthdays— Certainly it's not as heart-wrenching as the 1st year or even the 5th. But I'm still not over losing you and I'm still not "fine." And I doubt that I'll ever get over losing you, that I'll ever be "fine." I'm certainly not the same person I was before this all began. I guess I've reached a "new normal" though and I'm going on with life. Even though it's been the most difficult thing I've ever had to endure, At least now I'm strong enough to help those who follow on this path. But, oh, how I'd give up all I've learned for just another hour with you.

Karen C. Kimball ~ TCF, Hingham, MA



We need not walk alone.

“Hope is faith holding out its hand in the dark.”
—George Iles

Suicide: How Do We Say It?

© 1999 by Joyce Andrews

From the moment we learned of our daughter’s death, I knew that the word “suicide” had the power to erase her life while emblazoning her death in neon letters in the minds of her friends and colleagues. During the unremitting misery of those early days, I even toyed with the idea of telling no one she was gone, willing her to stay alive in the thoughts of those who knew her, forgetting that I’d already notified our family and closest friends. It was a fairy tale wish I contrived as a way of allowing myself a momentary escape from the unthinkable reality of her death. If her death were never acknowledged, would she still be here?

My fantasy vanished in the cold light of the days that followed. I knew that we could never dishonor Rhonda’s memory by concealing her suicide. I wrote a letter to friends and relatives, informing them of the events leading up to her death. I hoped my letter would quell the inevitable whispers by openly acknowledging her depression and her decision to end her own life. I implored them to speak often and openly about her to us; to do otherwise would deny her existence.

I never intended to embark on a campaign to confront, let alone eradicate, the stigma of suicide. What mattered most was that we who loved Rhonda must not let the circumstances of her death diminish her memory or her accomplishments. I explained that she had “taken her own life” or that “she died of suicide.” An expression I refused to use then and refuse to use to this day, is the despicable “committed suicide,” with its implications of criminality. Historically, that term was an instrument of retaliation against the survivors, and it has no place in today’s enlightened society.

Many people prefer to say, “completed suicide,” but as a parent who witnessed my child’s 20-year struggle against the demons of clinical depression, I don’t care much for that, either. “Died of suicide” or “died by suicide” are accurate, emotionally-neutral ways to explain my child’s death.

My first encounter with suicide occurred many years ago when my dentist, a gentle family man in his mid 30s, took his own life. Since that time, I have known neighbors, relatives, friends and other hardworking, highly respected individuals who died this way. I’ve facilitated meetings in which grieving parents declined to speak about their children because they couldn’t handle the group’s reactions to the dreaded “S” word. I’ve known parents who never returned to a chapter meeting because of negative comments about the way that their child died.

Rhonda was a gifted scholar, writer and archaeologist who, like my mother, suffered from adult-onset manic depression (also called bipolar disorder). She made a lasting contribution in her field, and a wonderful tribute to her life and her work appeared in *American Antiquity*, *Journal of the Society for American Archaeology* (October, 1994).

Both my daughter and my mother suffered tremendously in their struggles to conquer and conceal their illness. Neither of them won that battle, but my mother responded to medications that minimized the highs and lows, and she died of cancer at 87. Sadly, doctors never discovered a magic formula that could offer Rhonda the same relief. She ended her own life at age 36, after a year of severe depression that was triggered by life stresses beyond her control. I saw her battle firsthand, and I witnessed her valiant struggle to survive. She wanted desperately to live; she died because she thought she had no alternative.

In his revealing book, *Telling Secrets*, the great theologian Frederick Buechner describes his father’s suicide, which occurred when Buechner was just a boy. The conspiracy of silence that was imposed on Buechner and his brother had a profound effect on their development and their relationships with other family members. “We are as sick as our secrets,” he concludes.

We whose children have taken their own lives must do all that we can to help eradicate the secrecy and stigma that surround their deaths. If we allow these to persist, we allow their lives to be diminished. We owe our children more than that.

The Compassionate Friends of Tyler

P.O. 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: _____

E-mail: _____

Please check any of the 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 Web site. (www.TylerTCF.org)

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, Web site, Candle Lighting Ceremony or any other TCF event. 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.

(Signature) Date: _____

Please return completed form to:

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



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